THE INTEGRITY OF GEORGE MOORE

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I

Naturalist, Aesthete, Patriot, Stylist

For the purposes of criticism, George Moore has generally been treated almost as if he were four separate novelists. This fragmentation has been considered necessary in order to cope with the career of a writer whose work varies greatly in both subject matter and style. One of Moore's major novels concerns the economic struggles of a kitchen maid married to a butler; another deals with the results to philosophy of the marriage of the brightest teenager in Paris to one of the world's great philosophers. Some of the books are composed of choppy, sometimes ungrammatical sentences, while others exhibit a style as smooth as "toothpaste squeezed out of a tube."[1] Nevertheless, it seems profitless to assume that the only feature common to the novels is "their excellence."[2] Therefore, failing to find a pattern in either theme or form, most critics have turned to a study of literary influences in order to provide a basis of organization.

Moore fostered the consideration of his sources through the public announcement, in his autobiographical writings and essays, and through the press, of his enthusiasms and allegiances. In fact, it is on the basis of Moore's own statements about his novels that his work, spanning almost fifty years, has been arbitrarily divided into four chronological periods according to the literary influence

[1] Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "The Achievement of George Moore," in The Life of George Moore, by Joseph Hone (New York, 1936), p. 477.

[2] Carl Van Doren and Mark Van Doren, American and British Literature since 1890 (New York, 1925), p. 165.

assumed to predominate during those times. The three commonly accepted watersheds of Moore's career are established according to his announcement of a new fascination coupled with the public repudiation of an old master, and the four periods which result from this division have taken both their names and their dates from these public statements.[3]

Moore's early work, beginning with A Modern Lover is 1883, is considered to be Naturalistic.[4] Although these first novels were written after his return to England, Moore felt that his seven-year stay in Paris (1873-1880) entitled him to consider himself a Frenchman.[5] He affected French clothes, French ideas, a facility in the French language greater than that in English, and referred to himself as "Zola's offshoot in England."[6] In addition, upon the publication of A Mummer's Wife in 1885, he declared that he had written the first Naturalistic novel in England. Reinforcing the impression created by Moore's description of himself was the fact that the same publisher who was criticized for publishing Moore's work was also prosecuted for publishing translations of Zola's works. It is not remarkable,

[3] One of the clearest statements of this compartmentalization is in Charles Morgan's Epitaph on George Moore (New York, 1935), p. 9. See also Malcolm Brown's George Moore (Seattle, 1955), p. xii. Despite his introductory observation that Moore "embraced no fewer than seven distinct literary styles and manners" (p. xiii), Brown adheres basically to the four usual categories in considering the novels since only five of the seven styles are concerned with Moore's fiction. The fifth category is created in order to account for the belated Naturalism of Esther Waters.

[4] Arnold T. Schwab, "Irish Author and American Critic: George Moore and James Huneker," Nineteenth Century Fiction, VIII (1954), 258.

[5] Joseph Hone's The Life of George Moore (New York, 1936) is the source of all biographical details cited unless another source is specified.

[6] Hone, p. 101.

then, that critics have found extensive influence from the French Naturalists in the work falling in the "Zola period."

In 1885 Moore read Pater's Marius the Epicurean. So overwhelming was his reaction to this work, which he considered the "great atonement for all the bad novels which have been written in the English language,"[7] that he repudiated Zola because of his stylistic crudities and his failure to recognize that "mire is not more real than clouds,"[8] and declared himself to be a disciple of Pater. He attributed to the influence of Pater's writing a growing interest in the attractive aspects of environment and a new appreciation for "mildness in life."[9] And, in an excess of admiration, he imitated Pater's style to the point of parody by writing sentences "three inches long."[10]

Guided by Moore's remarks, critics have noticed a shift in style sufficiently marked to provoke denunciations of his work as mere mimicry,[11] a sincere devotion to two such diverse masters as Zola and Pater being considered impossible. Even those critics who have thought the new enthusiasm to be a sincere allegiance, however, have tended to regard it as a total conversion which involved the casting off of all Zolaesque characteristics.[12] Therefore, critics dealing

[7] Hone, p. 112.

[8] George Moore, Impressions and Opinions (New York, 1891), p. 123

[9] George Moore, Confessions of a Young Man (New York, 1923), p. 446.

[10] Brown, p. 185.

[11] For example, see James Huneker, Variations (New York, 1924), pp. 23-27.

[12] For example, see Walter Gilomen, "George Moore and his friendship with W. B. Yeats," English Studies (Amsterdam), XIX (1937), 117; Sean O'Faolain, "Pater and Moore," London Mercury, XXXIV (August, 1936),

with the "Pater period" have seldom shown much concern with the possibility that Zola's influence carried over from the earlier period.

Pater, too, paled, however, and in 1900, in despair over the "worn-out, defaced coin" which was the English language and in fury over the Boer War, Moore retreated to Ireland and its purer language.[13] Somewhat to Moore's embarrassment, he could understand neither written nor spoken Gaelic, but he considered his association with the Gaelic speakers of the Irish movement and his discovery of the folklore of Ireland to be revitalizing influences.[14] Moore dramatized his changed intentions by moving to Ireland and insisting that his nephews, under threat of disinheritance, learn Gaelic.[15] These grandiloquent gestures encouraged critics to see the true Irish Moore in the exclusively Irish subjects of his writing during this period and to notice the new style, which was smooth and lacking in idiocyncracies.[16] Rather than attempting a representation of Irish dialect, he wrote with an eye to translation into Gaelic,[17] as is

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330-338; Robert Sechler, George Moore: "A Disciple of Walter Pater" (Philadelphia, 1931), p. 19.

[13] These ideas are developed throughout the last third of Moore's Hail and Farewell: Ave (New York, 1923); see especially pp. 243, 245, 272-276.

[14] This idea is expressed throughout Ave.

[15] Ave, p. 244.

[16] For example, see Henry-D. Davray, "George Moore," Mercure de France, CCLII (15 March, 1933), 536-551; Horace Gregory, The Shield of Achilles (New York, 1944), p. 133; Susan L. Mitchell, George Moore (Dublin, 1916), p. 40; or L. Paul-Dubois, "George Moore, Irlandais," Le Correspondant, CCCXXXIII (October, 1933), 24.

[17] Graham Hough, Image and Experience (London, 1960), p. 204.

evident from his statement concerning translation. He felt the language most suited to this purpose to be "strong, flexible, but colourless,"[18] a description which is as appropriate to his "Irish" style as to his theory of translation.

Moore's impulse toward self-repatriation was eventually defeated, however, by his basic hatred of his native land.[19] His alienation from Ireland was signalized by his elaboration of a theory that no Catholic had ever written a piece of literature and that a country whose brain was enslaved by the Catholic Church could not possibly produce a literature, no matter how vital its language. Having thus formalized his estrangement past hope of repair, he declared that he had "discovered" himself to be a Protestant, and retreated to England in 1911.[20] There he found the relatively worn out language more than compensated for by the mental freedom and strength which resulted from the absence of an oppressive Church. Once more established in London, he set about to revitalize the English language by returning to what he had come to think of as the source of language--the spoken word. Through oral composition, dictating and redictating to a secretary, he developed his final style, the "melodic line."[21] His denunciations of Ireland and of Catholicism emphasized his new interests and encouraged his readers to consider that he had entered yet another phase.[22]

[18] Confessions of a Young Man, p. 389.

[19] Confessions of a Young Man, p. 379.

[20] The development and effects of this theory are treated throughout the last half of Moore's Hail and Farewell: Salve (New York, 1923).

[21] Shawe-Taylor, p. 469.

[22] For example, see Brown, p. 171-2; Hone, p. 332-4; or William York Tindall, Forces in Modern British Literature, 1885-1946 (New York, 1947), p. 287.

These four periods, then, three of them highly derivative, have been so generally accepted as inevitable categories for the study of Moore's fiction that critics have usually either confined their interest to only one of the four categories,[23] or, if dealing with the total canon, indicated their agreement with this division by dealing with the novels in the same four blocks.[24] Briefly stated, the periods include the following novels:

The Zola period (1883-1885)

A Modern Lover (1883)

A Mummer's Wife (1885)

A Drama in Muslin (1886) (This novel was entirely planned and the writing well begun before Moore read Marius the Epicurean, and therefore it is considered to precede the Pater period)

The Pater period (1886-1900)

A Mere Accident (1887)

Spring Days (1888)

Mike Fletcher (1889)

Vain Fortune (1892)

Esther Waters (1894)

Evelyn Innes (1898)

[23] For example, Sonja Nejdefors-Frisk, George Moore's Naturalistic Prose, Upsala Irish Studies, III (Lund, 1952); John Pick, "Divergent Disciples of Walter Pater," Thought, XXIII (1948), 114-128. Susan Mitchell's George Moore, though referring to works from other periods, is largely concerned with the Irish phase.

[24] For example, see John Freeman, A Portrait of George Moore (New York, 1922), especially pp. 73, 105, 128.

Sister Teresa (1901) (Moore had made considerable progress on this novel before the journey to Ireland, and since it is a sequel to *Evelyn Innes* it must be considered part of the Pater group)

The Irish period (1901-1911)

The Lake (1905) (This is the only novel included in the Irish period, the bulk of Moore's writing during these years being in other genres: a collection of short stories entitled *The Untilled Field* (1903), and autobiography, including *Memoirs of My Dead Life* (1905) and the first volume (*Ave*) of *Hail and Farewell* (1911). In addition, he collaborated with both Yeats and Edward Martyn on plays for the Abbey theater.)

The period of the "melodic line" (1912-1933)

The Brook Kerith (1916)

Heloise and Abelard (1921)

Ulick and Soracha (1926)

Aphrodite in Aulis (1930)

The legitimacy of considering these periods as exclusive categories has been argued by the frequent citation of Moore's description of himself as a "smooth sheet of wax, bearing no impress, but capable of receiving any; of being moulded into all shapes."[25] Yet

[25] *Confessions of a Young Man*, p. 299.

if his remark indicates a lack of inherent form, it should not be taken as a denial of continuity; he was not necessarily melted down and re-impressed. And just as it is unrealistic to assume that anyone's life ever comes to a complete break and fresh start, so this analysis of Moore's work in separate compartments, no matter how convenient such a framework may be, presents some serious problems.

Inevitably artificial, the division into groups according to date is complicated by Moore's constant revision of work already published. With the exception of Mike Fletcher, each of the novels was revised at least once, most of the important books being published in several editions.[26] Some of the works were changed so extensively that Moore felt the later version should be issued under a different title. Since the revisions did not necessarily fall into the same time period as the original work, they present a considerable problem in a compartmentalized analysis. For example, Moore's first novel, A Modern Lover, was reissued in 1917 as Lewis Seymour and Some Women. The revision cannot properly be considered as a manifestation of the melodic line, though its date places it in that group, since its roots are in the Zola period. However, the changes are sufficiently extensive--the writing is much smoother, the irrelevancies of plot and description have been removed, and the entire last third of the book has been recast in order to achieve a characterization of the hero more appropriate to the intent of the novel--that the book cannot be dealt with as simply another version of an item from the Zola period. The placing of such a novel is more than a mere technical difficulty.

[26] Hone, pp. 161, 498-502.

Since the theme and characters of his first novel were still sufficiently interesting to Moore three "periods" later to engage him in the labor of a total rewriting, it is apparent that his interest in his subject matter continued regardless of any other changes.

But even if revised editions are arbitrarily excluded from consideration, categories by date are subject to important "exceptions." Moore's Naturalistic masterpiece, Esther Waters, falls in the Pater period. Thematically, Vain Fortune is as Naturalistic as any work in the Zola period, even including A Mummer's Wife. Similarly, Ulick and Soracha, with its use of Irish setting, folklore and historical background, must be considered to be out of place if Moore's affinity for Ireland is thought to end upon his departure in 1911.

If arbitrary dates are not fixed, it is of course possible to group the novels on the basis of their literary influences. Even so, the extensive source study done on Moore indicates that his influences were much more widely varied than would seem to be appropriate for a man who went through only three periods of official indebtedness. For example, A Mummer's Wife has been found to be "truly Naturalistic."[27] More specifically, Zola's Therese Raquin has been credited with inspiring the general situation in the first third of the book, while La Conquette de Plassans provided the idea that Dick Lennox should be a lodger in the Ede household, and Une Page d'Amour provided a model for the personality of Kate. The theatrical milieu as well as the basic personality of actresses was suggested by Nana, just as Kate's alcoholism and degradation were derived from l'Assommoir.[28]

[27] Nejdefors-Frisk, p. 86.

[28] Milton Chaikin, "George Moore's A Mummer's Wife and Zola," Revue de Litterature Comparee, XXXI (1957), 87.

Another critic, however, has thought Kate's drunken decline was at least as much influenced by Flaubert's Madame Bovary as by Zola's l'Assommoir.[29] Yet another theory gives Balzac credit for inspiring the overall idea for the story, while the specific details of Kate's degeneration are no more than "a disciple's reproduction" of the "clinical obsessions" of the Goncourt brothers.[30] It has also been suggested that the novel is based on stories told by a boyhood friend of Moore's.[31] In other words, despite its position in the "Zola period," A Mummer's Wife reflects numerous influences other than the "official" one.

Evelyn Innes, from the Pater period, seems no more certain in its ancestry. As could be expected, of course, the influence of Pater has been seen in Evelyn's love of beauty, especially the loveliness of nature.[32] At the same time, a strong evidence of the influence of Huysmans has been noted, in the "abnormality" of Moore's "sympathetic treatment of a religious theme,"[33] in the "epicurean discussions,"[34] particularly of food, and in the "dislike of humanity" and "disgust with vulgarity."[35] The aestheticism of the book has

[29] Walter Allen, The English Novel (London, 1954), pp. 283-4.

[30] Edgar Pelham, The Art of the Novel from 1700 to the Present Time (New York, 1933), p. 232.

[31] Hone, p. 98.

[32] Sechler, pp. 77-8.

[33] William C. Frierson, "George Moore Compromised with the Victorians," The Trollopian, no. 4 (1957), 44.

[34] S. M. Steward, "J.-K Huysmans and George Moore," The Romanic Review, XXV (1934), 204.

[35] William C. Frierson, The English Novel in Transition (Norman, Okla., 1942), p. 75.

been attributed both to the influence of Gautier[36] and to Moore's efforts to write a "poet's prose" like Yeats.[37] On the other hand, the style has been found to reflect Moore's "reverence for French literature" in general, but particularly Flaubert and Balzac.[38] Turgenev, in A Nest of Gentlefolk, has been suggested as a source of the problem "of conscience,"[39] while some of the characters have been considered to be modeled on various of Moore's friends, and on Moore's own interests.[40] Thus, not only is the reader given a variety of sources appropriate to the different aspects of the book, but he may even have a choice between possible influences on the same point.

The Lake, too, is held to derive from many masters. As a representative of the Irish period, it is "alive and breathing with the atmosphere of peat and bog,"[41] and of course, inevitably reflects Moore's own boyhood in the west of Ireland. The book as a whole has been called "pure pantheism,"[42] an expression of the "spirit of symbolism,"[43] particularly under the influence of Mallarme,[44] and

[36] Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony (New York, 1951), p. 342.

[37] Stephen Gwynn, "Ebb and Flow," Fortnightly Review, n.s. CXXXIII (March, 1933), 388.

[38] A Clutton-Brock, Essays on Literature and Life (New York, 1926), pp. 169-70.

[39] Gilbert Phelps, The Russian Novel in English Fiction (London, 1956), pp. 101-102.

[40] Lloyd R. Morris, The Celtic Dawn (New York, 1917), p. 178.

[41] Malcolm Elwin, Old Gods Falling (New York, 1939), p. 97.

[42] Frierson, The English Novel, p. 84.

[43] Louis Cazamain, Symbolisme et Poisie (Neuchatel, 1947), p. 203.

[44] Ernest Baker, The History of the English Novel, IX (London, 1938), 164.

also an "offshoot of Huysmans."[45] More specifically, Dujardin has been declared the model for the character of Ralph Ellis.[46] And the technique of using descriptions of nature for the creation not of landscape but of character has been found to derive from Turgenev,[47] although these same descriptions of nature have also been attributed to the influence of Pater.[48]

In other words, the result of extensive source study has been to demonstrate that it is no more possible to adhere to these first three periods on the basis of literary influence than it is to establish them on the basis of date. For one thing, it seems reasonable to doubt that three periods are sufficient to represent the major influences on the novels concerned. If the intent is to indicate extensive dependence, would it not be more appropriate to declare a "Huysmans period" to account for A Mere Accident,[49] a "Balzac period" for Evelyn Innes in response to the extended panegyric in the first part of the book, as well as a "Turgenev period" for an adequate explanation of The Lake? Yet such fragmentation of the canon results in small help for the analysis of the total work. Therefore it may be best, after all, if source study is to provide the pattern, arbitrarily to accept only those changes which are heralded by a sea voyage to a different country.

[45] Steward, p. 206.

[46] Francesco Cordasco, "George Moore and Edouard Dujardin," Modern Language Notes, LXII (1947), 247.

[47] Phelps, p. 106.

[48] Sechler, pp. 79-81.

[49] For a discussion of extensive dependence, see Steward, p. 199.

Nevertheless, the search for influences has produced such diverse, if not absolutely contradictory, results that one eventually begins to wonder if the sum does not exceed the total of the parts. No doubt the attributions are, in the main, true. Unquestionably any writer reflects, to some extent, both his reading and his experiences in life, and perhaps the evidence of Moore's influences are closer to the surface because of his lack of formal schooling. Not having digested the usual academic program, he adopted a reading program intended to teach him how to write. Because of this plan for self-education, his writing would inevitably reflect his masters. However, the fact that the influences were more immediate and less well balanced would not necessarily point to an unusually derivative writer.

Moore's own statements about his learning processes give helpful clues to an analysis of his relation to his sources. Modifying the comparison to a "smooth sheet of wax," Moore adopted Edward Martyn's idea that he developed "from the mere sponge to the vertebrae and upward."[50] When he began to try to write, he could scarcely complete a sentence, as his letters demonstrate. His technique for solving the problems of play construction was to read some plays in order to discover how they should "look."[51] This process was not a matter of mere imitation; he considered that he had "as perfect a digestive apparatus . . . [as Nature] ever turned out of her workshop."[52] In Confessions of a Young Man he described the methods and effects of

[50] George Moore, Hail and Farewell: Vale (New York, 1923), p. 69.

[51] Vale, p. 87.

[52] Confessions of a Young Man, p. 477.

his learning, or digestive, process:

> 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 is the case in a well-ordered stomach. Shelley, who fired my youth with passion . . . is now to me as nothing: not a dead or faded thing, but a thing out of which I personally have drawn all the sustenance I can draw from him; and, therefore, it (that part which I did not absorb) concerns me no more. And the same with Gautier. Mlle. de Maupin . . . is now, if I take up the book and read, weary and ragged as a spider's web, that has hung the winter through in the dusty, forgotten corner of a forgotten room. My old rapture and my youth's delight I can regain only when I think of that part of Gautier which is now incarnate in me. (321)

This theory of digestion is central to a study of Moore's sources, for he considered his "digested" version, his memory, to be more important than the piece of literature itself.[53] And because he remembered his "sources" as they were useful to him rather than as they actually were, and because he remembered only those things which were congenial to him, it seems unjustifiable to consider him more derivative than any other writer who reads widely. It was more in the publicity he gave to it than in the borrowing itself that he was excessive.

The most serious objection to an analysis based on source study, however, is not that it tends to diminish Moore's reputation, but that it inevitably obscures the basic tendencies of his total work. Moore addressed the point himself, insisting that a writer cannot be judged on less than his total work, for "a man's work is all of a piece."[54] And, appropriately to his contention, an analysis of his total work without regard to source does, indeed, yield a basic

[53] Confessions of a Young Man, p. 343.

[54] George Moore, Conversations in Ebury Street (New York, 1924), p. 12.

pattern of both theme and form, despite the fluctuations of his style.

Thematically, Moore's concern remained constant throughout his career--he explored man's relation to his environment. That he did not simply keep rewriting the same book, however, is guaranteed by his shifting concept of environment. In his early work, he dealt with the specific segment of society in which his characters were placed. For example, in A Drama in Muslin he was concerned only with that portion of Irish landed gentry which was involved in the "marriage market." In Spring Days he examined the effects of class and family pride on a personality not suited to their demands.

But as his concept of the social environment broadened, Moore began to consider his characters in terms of their total society. Thus, Esther Waters' concern is not how to maintain her reputation upon the loss of her virtue, but rather, how to provide for herself and her son in a society where the typical fate is the workhouse for her and the "baby-farmer," and probably death, for her child. On a more intellectual level, The Lake illustrates the same impulse to analyze the whole of society. Father Gogarty's concern is not how to be a successful priest, but rather, how to be of use to himself and his society in a framework where his routine performance of "duty" is destructive rather than beneficial.

This analysis of man's function in society gives way ultimately to a consideration simply of man's function: what, finally, is human life about. The Brook Kerith, carrying for emphasis the shadow of the Christian rationale of existence, considers man's relation to God. Jesus, rescued from the cross, comes eventually to believe that, in essence, one lives because he is alive. In Heloise and

Abelard, Moore carries this pre-existential concept perhaps a step farther with the decision of Heloise against self-destruction: human life is too inconclusive to justify such a positive act as suicide. In order to declare a life to be a failure, as the act of suicide implicitly does, one must first understand what the life was intended to achieve. Yet Moore found no easy answer to the problem of existence. Unable to accept the Christian view, he could not achieve an affirmation irrelevant to worldly events, and rejecting the pessimism of Zola, he was unwilling to find doomed mankind to be a sort of cosmic whipping boy. His eventual solution was the creation of a totally indifferent universe. Having postulated a universe which does not care either way, Moore had no recourse but to return to a consideration of man himself in his unquestionable defeats and his possible successes, in order to discover the nature of mankind.

Interested in all the nuances of success and failure, Moore used the inexorability of cause and effect to depict the destruction of a weak and foolish character in A Mummer's Wife, the destruction of a strong but ruthlessly selfish character in Mike Fletcher, the success of a strong, intellectual character in The Lake and the success of a strong but blindly enduring character in Esther Waters. His overall intent can scarcely have been one of conventional morality--the use of success as a foil to accentuate the failure of the adulterous actress and the unprincipled roue--since the moral stature of his "successes," an unwed mother and a renegade priest, would surely have been called into question by his readers. Nevertheless, the reasonableness of their expectations from life, as well as their very great, if unconventional, integrity, make them desirable personalities,

and, in terms of the framework of each, justify their success.

However, Moore's universe did not always operate on the basis of comprehensible, logical cuase and effect. Cosmic caprice also interested him, whether the result was unearned success or undeserved failure. In examining this area, too, he used a variety of characters to develop his ideas. Demonstrating the concept that results depend less on the nature of the "luck" than on the nature of the person involved, Moore shows, in Vain Fortune, that success can produce somewhat ambiguous results for a sensitive personality, while in A Modern Lover, success proves to be positively destructive to a weaker personality. In the same way, Moore represents the results of unmerited defeat as being equally varied. The "accident" proves fatal in A Mere Accident, while in Heloise and Abelard a series of defeats merely provides greater opportunity for heroism.

Yet if Moore's universe did not operate strictly on the basis of cause and effect, his characters always did. His inclusion of chance in the environment was not intended as an examination of its role in the scheme of things, but rather, provided an additional opportunity for the development of his characters. Having an "almost excessive interest" in human conduct,[55] he intended always to show how people reacted, both when they got what they deserved, whether those deserts were good or bad, and when they did not. And the consistency of his observation is attested to by the fact that, over a career of almost fifty years, his concept of mankind altered almost not at all.

Moore's work gives the appearance of being much less unified stylistically, however. It is hard to believe that the writing in

[55] George Moore, Avowals (New York, 1923), p. 53.

the early works, which is so unselfconsciously inept, could have come from a man whose later reputation rested on his stylistic excellence. Yet even though one cannot fail to note the stylistic discrepancy between A Modern Lover and Aphrodite in Aulis, a chronological reading of the novels reveals a gradual development rather than the series of abrupt shifts required by a division into periods. No one book illustrates a change startling enough to justify the announcement of a totally new style.

The respect in which Moore's style showed the greatest change was in his handling of conversation. A Modern Lover is full of dull, awkward conversation which only remotely advances the plot or develops character. For example, Moore imagines the following conversation between the adulterous heroine and her estranged husband upon his having trailed her to her Paris hotel:

> "I want to see you on business; now, will you give me half-an-hour of your time? I believe you live on the third floor?"
> "I fancied all business between us had been concluded long ago; if not, you should have applied to your solicitor."
> "There are things which cannot be confided to a solicitor; will you lead the way?"
> "Why not say what you have to say to me here?"
> "Firstly, because I am tired and would like to sit down; secondly, because it blesserait mon amour propre; thirdly, because some one might come downstairs, and then you would be compromised, for I should be taken for your lover, or for another lover, and that would be stupid." (II, 41)[56]

No doubt the influence of Zola's lack of concern with style was partly influential in the exceedingly pedestrian quality of this writing. Yet the possibility that the style--or absence of it--

[56] All citations from the novels will refer to first editions.

may have been at least as much the result of inexperience and lack of knowledge is indicated by the fact that, while still in the Zola period, Moore revealed an interest in improving his technique.[57] In A Drama in Muslin, although the conversational exchanges are still largely uninspired, they tend to be shorter and are frequently given some point by a trace of humor. For example, the blossoming of romance between the heroine and the doctor treating her sister is indicated in the following sickroom conversation:

> "And do you think my sister is better to-day?"
> "I am afraid she will not begin to show signs of any real improvement until the ninth day. The malady must take its course."
> "Still I do not think she suffers so much as she did yesterday; I am sure her ankle is not so painful: the bran-poultices have relieved her of much pain."
> "I know of nothing better for a sprain than a bran-poultice."
> Then they would speak of indifferent things—of their friends, of the state of the country, of the Land Bill, of Mr. Barton's pictures. But, yielding to their emotion, they soon spoke of what was uppermost in their minds—of the MSS, on the table, of the London publisher (p. 296)

Thus even as early as his third novel, the idea had apparently occurred to Moore that the easiest solution to the problem of writing dialogue might be simply to avoid the issue. He discovered that he could make his point more skillfully by telling what people talked about than he could by representing their actual conversation.

Another improvement was the absorption of conversation into the general narrative with no pretense at a differentiation reflecting the character of the speaker. For example, a characteristic

57 Milton Chaikin discovered a "consciousness of language" even in A Modern Lover, and thought an interest in structure was indicated by the "fugal treatment" of the description of the ball in that book. See his "The Composition of George Moore's A Modern Lover," Comparative Literature, VII (1955), 262-3.

conversational passage from The Lake presents Father Gogarty talking to a fellow priest:

> 'Well, I was thinking at that moment that I've heard you say that, even though you gave way to drink, you never had any doubts about the reality of the hell that awaited you for your sins.'
>
> 'That's the way it is, Gogarty, one believes, but one doesn't act up to one's belief. Human nature is inconsistent. Nothing is queerer than human nature, and will you be surprised if I tell you that I believe I was a better priest when I was drinking than I am now that I'm sober? . . . I looked upon drink as a sort of blackmail I paid to the devil so that he might let me be a good priest in everything else. . . . If there was not a bit of wickedness in the world, there would be no goodness. And as for faith, drink never does any harm to one's faith whatsoever; there's only one thing that takes a man's faith from him, and that is woman. You remember the expulsions at Maynooth, and you know what they were for. Well, that sin is a bad one, but I don't think it affects a man's faith any more than drink does. It is woman that kills the faith in men.'
>
> 'I think you're right: woman is the danger. The Church dreads her. Woman is life.'
>
> 'I don't quite understand you.' (p. 287)

Although tending somewhat toward speechmaking, this passage demonstrates a marked improvement over the earlier examples in avoiding their obtrusive aimlessness and in maintaining a style which is so similar to the general tone of the book that it blends smoothly into the pattern of the story. The intent of the whole book—Moore's attitude both toward Ireland and toward the Church--is embodied in this low-keyed exchange. In other words, a further development of Moore's early trend toward downgrading conversation and making it functional resulted in a greatly improved technique by the time he wrote The Lake.

Beginning in Evelyn Innes and becoming more marked in The Lake, the tendency to make conversation as unobtrusive as possible reached its final stage in The Brook Kerith where the conversational exchanges

are frankly absorbed into the narrative flow, both in manner of diction and in punctuation. Quotation marks, whose atrophy began when they dropped to single marks in The Lake, disappeared altogether in The Brook Kerith. An excellent example is the passage in which Jesus, turned shepherd after his recovery from his ordeal on the cross, accidentally comes upon some crucified robbers talking to their guards:

> Put a lance into my side, a robber cried out, and God will reward thee in heaven. Thou has not ceased to groan since the first hour. But put a lance into my side, the robber cried again. I dare not, the soldier answered. Thou'lt hang easier tomorrow. But all night I shall suffer; put a lance into my side, for my heart is like a fire within me. And do the same for me, cried the robbers hanging on either side. All night long, cried the first robber, the pain and the ache and the torment will last; if not a lance, give me wine to drink, some strong, heady wine that will dull the pain. Thy brethren bear the cross better than thou. Take courage and bear thy pain. I was not a robber because I wished it, my house was set on fire as was many another to obtain recruits. Yon shepherd is no better than I. Why am I on the cross and not he? His turn may come, who knows, though he stands so happy among his sheep. To-night he will sleep in a cool cavern, but I shall linger in pain. (p. 340)

Even more unabashedly than in The Lake, as is indicated by the format, conversation here is a function of the plot and is related to character only insofar as the entire narrative is concerned with character development. This passage, achieving its impact through the unobtrusive inclusion of relevant dramatic elements, shows a remarkable change from the diffuse, posturing, non-functional conversational pattern in A Modern Lover.

The elimination of the inappropriate, the technique Moore used in solving his problems with conversation, is also basic to his handling of descriptive passages. A Modern Lover is filled with extensive descriptions whose only function is that of stage setting. These lengthy accumulations of irrelevant details seriously mar the

book. That Moore later recognized this is indicated by his revisions. For example, the long, detailed, but not particularly pointed description of the tennis courts is reduced, in Lewis Seymour and Some Women, to a few sentences indicating whose eyes the sun shines into. By the time Moore wrote A Mummer's Wife he had already hit upon the idea of using description symbolically, and throughout the rest of his career, the main variation in his descriptive techniques was in the extent to which he succeeded in excluding aimless description and in the relative awkwardness or appropriateness of the symbolism. That his underlying concept did not change is illustrated by the fact that one of the best examples of his symbolic use of description occurs in A Mummer's Wife. The early stages of the courtship of Dick and Kate take place during a tour of the local pottery factory:

> Two rooms away a huge mound of chambers formed an astonishing background, and against all this white effacement the men who stood on high ladders dusting the crockery came out like strange black climbing insects. (p. 81)

It would be hard to think of a happier choice of detail to suggest both the Naturalistic framework of the novel and the eventual fate of the heroine.

The presentation of detail carrying more than descriptive significance was not always so graceful, however. For example, in A Drama in Muslin, the following sunset description brackets a discussion of marriage and men by a group of naive girls on their last day at their convent school:

> The girdle of rubies had melted, had become the pale red lining of a falling mantle; the large spaces of gold grew dim; orange and yellow streamers blended; lilac and blue pennons faded to deep greys; dark hoods and dark veils were drawn closer; purple was gathered like garments about the loins and the night fell. The sky, now decorated with

> a cresent moon and a few stars, was filled with stillness and adoration; the day's death was exquisite, even human; and as she gazed on the beautiful corpse lowered amid the fumes of a thousand censers into an under-world, even Violet's egotism began to dream. . . .
>
> May and Violet continued the conversation; and over the lingering waste of yellow, all that remained to tell where the sun had set, the night fell like a heavy, blinding dust, sadly, and regretfully, as the last handful of earth thrown upon a young girl's grave. (pp. 18-19)

The concept is perhaps as clever as that used in A Mummer's Wife, but the grotesqueness of the statement calls attention to the figure of speech instead of signalling the end of innocence and forewarning of the deadly fate awaiting the girls.

Usually, however, Moore employed this technique to considerable effect. For example, in Sister Teresa, the two men whom Evelyn Innes is in love with are dining together. One is a mystic; but the agnostic host also has his religion:

> They sat down in a shadowy room, with two footmen besides a butler attending upon them. The footmen moved mysteriously in the shadows of the sideboard, obeying signs and whispered words, and it seemed to Ulick as if they were assisting at some strange ritual. . . . The butler's voice acquired a strange resonance in the still room; he offered Ulick many different kinds of wine, and Owen intervened in vain—Ulick only drank water. (pp. 50-51)

The passage symbolizes the fact that, for Owen, the practice of materialism has taken on ritualistic overtones, serving him in the same capacity that the Church serves Evelyn.

Equally well done is Moore's use of natural scenery in The Brook Kerith to provide more than simply the backdrop for a journey:

> He proceeded by long descents into a land tossed into numberless hills and torn up into such deep valleys that it seemed to him to be a symbol of God's anger in a moment of great provocation. Or maybe, he said to himself, these valleys are the ruts of the celestial chariot that passed this way to take Elijah up to heaven? Or maybe . . . His

> mind was wandering, and--forgetful of the subject of his meditation--he looked round and could see little else but strange shapes of cliffs and boulders, rocks and lofty scarps enwrapped in mist so thick that he fell to thinking whence came the fume? . . . Joseph noticed the hills, but the mule did not: he only knew the beginning and the end of his journey, whereas Joseph began very soon to be concerned to learn how far they were come, and as there was nobody about who could tell him he reined up his mule, which began to seek herbage . . . while his rider meditated on the whereabouts of the inn. The road, he said, winds round the highest of these hills, reaching at last a tableland half-way between Jerusalem and Jericho, and on the top of it is the inn. We shall see it as soon as yon cloud lifts. (pp. 65-66)

Man's compulsive search for signs, the multiplicity of possible interpretations of signs, the impossibility of a clear vision, the irrelevance of the search--all these ideas are implicit in this quiet, understated description of the journey.

In each of these examples, Moore has not brought in material which was irrelevant to the book in order to emphasize his theme. Rather, he has used only those symbols which arose naturally--he has taken descriptions which were first necessary to provide fullness to the work and used them additionally, but not inorganically, for symbolism. In this intent to draw the thematic statement of his novels out of the materials inevitable to the plot, Moore did not change throughout his career.

Thus despite a spectacular change in technical ability, Moore's style was no more subject to capricious alteration than were his themes. What really seems to have happened is that, in a career which stretched over fifty years and included fifteen novels in addition to numerous volumes of short stories, essays and plays, extensive practice and serious concern with both theory and technique enabled him gradually to replace the crudeness of a practically unschooled writer with the

effective, controlled writing of an expert. And in style as well as theme, the change reflects careful, discernible development rather than whimsical, irrelevant fad.

Nevertheless, Moore's writing does not simply progress from bad to good.[58] Some of his worst efforts occur in the middle of his career when, ironically, he should have been most concerned with fine writing because of Pater's influence. It is the explanation of this extreme unevenness which presents one of the greatest problems to an analysis of Moore's total work. It is difficult to understand how the diffuse, unimportant A Modern Lover can have been followed only two years later by the excellent A Mummer's Wife, which in turn was followed only four years later by the spectacularly bad Mike Fletcher. Yet if the canon is to be considered as a whole, some understanding of this fluctuation must be achieved. And since, in addition to the difficulties outlined above, the four conventionally received categories do not solve the problem, it seems that some more appropriate pattern must be found. In the following chapters, I would like to show that an analysis of the novels in relation to each other rather than in terms of their sources does yield such a pattern.

[58] Dorothy Anne Hicks Lee's contention that Moore's style "improved steadily throughout his writing career" fails to recognize the central chronological position of such spectacular failures as Mike Fletcher and A Mere Accident. See her unpublished thesis, George Moore's Development as a Novelist in Relation to French Realism (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), p. 146.

II

The Harding Novels

Of the ten novels George Moore wrote before his return to Ireland in 1901, all except Esther Waters are woven together by a variety of connections. The plots of three of them, A Modern Lover, A Mere Accident and Spring Days, though complete enough to stand as separate works, are continued in Mike Fletcher. And though Mike Fletcher, too, can be read separately, any understanding of it is enhanced by a knowledge of the previous works, since Mike's friends consist, in large part, of characters from four earlier works: Lewis Seymour, Lady Helen and Mrs. Bentham from A Modern Lover, Alice Barton from A Drama in Muslin, John Norton from A Mere Accident, and Frank Escott, Lizzie Baker, the Brookes sisters and Lady Seveley (mistakenly called Lady Seelby in Mike Fletcher) from Spring Days. Thus even though A Modern Lover, A Drama in Muslin, A Mere Accident and Spring Days are not internally related, the inclusion, in Mike Fletcher, of the main characters from all four and the plot line from three points to the consideration of these five novels as a group.

An additional connection between these early books is furnished by one recurring character. John Harding appears as either a foil or a confidant for the main character in A Modern Lover, A Mummer's Wife, A Drama in Muslin, Spring Days, Mike Fletcher, Vain Fortune, Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa. However, Harding's importance in A Mummer's Wife and the pair of novels, Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa, is sufficiently different from his role in the other novels to warrant special attention apart from the rest of the group.

In none of the novels is Harding fully drawn, his only defined function usually being that of a coffee house aesthete. Even in A Drama in Muslin, where he plays a larger part as both a mentor and suitor to the heroine, his character is very sketchily portrayed. In none of the novels does he function as much more than a psychiatric ear or propounder of epigrams. The books therefore cannot in any way be considered a series concerning Harding. Nevertheless, his presence in these otherwise not obviously related novels must indicate some connection in Moore's mind.

The fact that nine of his books are united by two overlapping strands of common characters might seem to indicate that Moore intended the creation of a total society. By re-introducing characters already described in earlier works, he could add depth to a social group larger than could be characterized within the limits of a single short novel. In fact, however, it has been noted that there is no "Moore world" in the sense that there is a "Dickens world."[1] True, Moore does introduce figures from a variety of economic backgrounds. Gwynnie Lloyd is a factory hand, Lizzie Baker a barmaid and Mike Fletcher an Irish bogtrotter. Mr. Carver is of the social climbing, shop keeping middle class while the Brookes are contentedly middle class business men. The upper classes are represented by Lady Helen, Lord Mount Rorke and Lord Kilcarney. Such a cataloging of characters indicates a greater range than is in fact represented by the novels, however, in that the books are basically concerned with members of the middle class and refer to representatives of other classes only insofar as they are involved outside their own rank.

[1] John Eglinton, Irish Literary Portraits (New York, 1935), p. 106.

It is not remarkable then, that Moore did not create a "world," since he concerned himself with only one class of society. Yet the failure of these novels[2]--and there seems no question that, though their merits vary, they are less successful than any of the other novels Moore wrote[3]--cannot be attributed simply to narrowness of scope. Instead, their mediocrity seems to result partly from their failure to function effectively as a group and partly from shared technical inadequacies which render them individual failures.

A Modern Lover is the story of a mediocre artist who owes his success to the efforts of three women. One idealizes him, one sees

[2] I do not include A Mummer's Wife and Evelyn Innes and its sequel in this group because of the special exceptions they require.

[3] In brief, Brown's evaluation of the novels was that A Mere Accident is "unsuccessful" (p. 114), Spring Days is "banal" (p. 110), Mike Fletcher is "without literary merit" (p. xiv), and that although A Drama in Muslin and Vain Fortune are better than the average of these books, they still are part of the "monotonous chain of unsuccessful efforts" which preceeded Esther Waters (p. 125). On the other hand, Esther Waters is among "the dozen most perfectly wrought novels to appear in the English realistic tradition" (p. xi), and all the novels written in the manner of the "melodic line" are considered superior because of the excellence of the technique, although Aprhodite in Aulis suffers from the effects of "illness and fatigue, not to mention age" (pp. 186-192). Hone describes A Modern Lover as being superficial (p. 106), badly written and pretentious (p. 97), A Drama in Muslin as uncertain of style (pp. 118-119), A Mere Accident as a "dead failure" (p. 130), Spring Days as not as bad as contemporary reviews would have indicated, but still not successful (p. 148), Mike Fletcher as a "catastrophe" (p. 161) and Vain Fortune as a "setback" though "not the worst" of Moore's novels (p. 174). In contrast, he considered that Esther Waters established Moore's reputation (p. 205), The Lake showed "a great advance in . . . choice and command of language" (p. 261), while Ulick and Soracha included "many lovely episodes" (p. 403). Desmond Shawe-Taylor added that The Brook Kerith and Heloise and Abelard are Moore's masterpieces (p. 469), while Aphrodite in Aulis is "vivid and delightful" though somewhat affected by weakening power (p. 485). The opinions of these men seem representative.

through him but continues to love him, and one comes to have contempt for him. Despite the title, there is remarkably little "love" in the book. Though Lewis Seymour is apparently fond of Gwynnie Lloyd, his chief interest in her is not in the least romantic. Toying with the idea of suicide because he is reduced to his last shilling, in debt to all his friends, and in doubt as to his talent because his paintings have been rejected by a most undiscriminating art dealer, his thoughts turn to Gwynnie: "He remembered that it was Friday, tomorrow she would have fifteen shillings" (I, 17). This statement is representative of Lewis's attitude toward women. From Gwynnie, Lewis receives sympathy, encouragement and money, from Lucy Bentham he receives affection, social polish and money, from Lady Helen he receives social position and money. In response to these offerings, he deserts two of the women and betrays the third. It is clear that his chief interest in women is their usefulness to him. Insofar as he "loves" anyone it is himself.

Lewis is primarily interested in social status. This desire is apparent even in the opening scenes. A major element in his interest in suicide is the attention the newspaper notice would attract from all the elegantly dressed people hurrying past him to the theater. So intense is his ambition that he sacrifices both love and art to attain the position he longs for as a socially acceptable artist.

His essential worthlessness is emphasized in conversations with Harding and the school of "moderns" he associates with. The shallowness of Lewis' perceptions in both life and art soon elicit such contempt from the group that he drifts away from them. Though Lucy's decision is harsh, she seems more than justified in deciding against

getting a divorce for him since he is so "utterly foolish, so trivial" (II, 59). That his unmerited election to the Academy is a hollow triumph is emphasized by the fact that Lady Helen, turning from him with contempt, begins a flirtation with Harding on the eve of his election. Indeed, the only person who manages to maintain belief in him is Gwynnie, the ignorant working girl who lost track of him at the very beginning of his career.

Moore, on reading this novel thirty-five years later, found "extraordinary . . . the power of the anecdote; though imperfectly written and illustrated with characters only faintly sketched."[4] The power was sufficient to encourage him to revise the work under the title Lewis Seymour and Some Women (1917). No doubt the anecdote appealed to Moore because of his interest in the definition and effect of success. Yet the justice of the latter part of the criticism is more apparent. The writing is "imperfect" to a distressing degree. There are long descriptive passages which are irrelevant and obtrusive. For example, the interview in which Mrs. Bentham arranges with an art dealer for the anonymous purchase of a certain quota of Lewis' paintings each year is described too fully to serve a merely mechanical, fact-giving function but is not pointed enough to be a complete scene. The plot, too, is stretched to include awkwardly unnecessary action: Mrs. Bentham annually makes secret trips to the continent at the demand of her blackmailing estranged husband, but no reason is given, nor are any repercussions indicated. And there are ridiculous lapses of probability, such as the fortunate happenstance of Mrs.

[4] George Moore, Lewis Seymour and Some Women (London, 1917), p. v.

Bentham's having two identical pink ball gowns.

An additional distraction is Moore's habit of "lapsing into French." This practice frequently takes the form of the unnecessary introduction of French phrases into the writing, as in this description of Lewis' conduct:

> He squandered also a great deal of money in his menus plaisirs, and when he got into full swing of Parisian life, it pleased him immensely to drive about in a voiture de remise, imitating, as nearly as possible, the petits crèves of Grevin. (II, 60)

Another instance is his failure, in reporting a statement in French, to render the narrative tag in English, as if the translation were too taxing—or forgotten altogether:

> "Oh, très bien, très bien," disait il battant discrètement les mains, "alors tu veux te débarrasser de cette grosse bête pour prendre un petit mari qui t'aimerait toute la journée. Oh, que c'est vilain." (II, 49)

Perhaps most pretentious are his inappropriate "borrowings": "the sitting-room . . . ennuied them" (II, 18).

But the major weakness of the book is no doubt that the characters are "faintly sketched." Even Lewis' personality is not particularly developed. He is presented simply as a rather feminine man who is unflaggingly selfish and is an inadequate artist. And even so important an aspect of his character as his artistic failure is not well represented. At times Moore attributes his mediocrity to his lack of talent and at other times seems to indicate laziness as the cause. Since so little is given in description of Lewis, it is hard to understand why women would be attracted to him. This problem is particularly puzzling in that the women are not characterized either. Gwynnie's attachment antedates the opening chapter and therefore

requires less explanation, but the only visible cause is that they are both young, alone, and live on the same floor of a rooming house. Mrs. Bentham, most fully developed of the three, wants to mother and inspire him. Yet considering the strength of the urges assigned to her, it is not likely that she would have waited for ten years to find a protege. Lady Helen wishes to marry him apparently because she enjoys kissing him and because Mrs. Bentham stands in the way of a serious attachment.

In short, all the characters are functional rather than real, and Moore's grasp of his plot is too unsure even to make them consistent stick figures. Thus Lewis studies so hard during the early part of his stay in Paris that when Mrs. Bentham joins him he does not know anything about the city. Yet within a short time after her arrival, he has completely deserted the studio and stays up until four o'clock every night. That this shift was the result of Moore's ineptitude and not a desire to provide moral retribution is indicated by the removal of the inconsistency in the revision, Lewis Seymour and Some Women.

The more expert handling of the revision helps point out the weaknesses of the original work. Most of the pretentious absurdities have been removed, and there is a general lightening of tone, as in the replacement of the lumbering romantic passages by gently satiric scenes. For example, the original describes the consumation of the relationship between Mrs. Bentham and Lewis in this way:

> Mrs. Bentham and Lewis were ill at ease, they could fix their attention as the hours went by; their conversation grew more and more strained and artificial; they were possessed by desires from which they could not fly, and at last, like the fisher conducts the tired fish to bank,

> love led them to the carriage, and maliciously cried "a l'hotel" to the coachman. (II, 28)

The corresponding passage in Lewis Seymour and Some Women is led up to by a discussion, on the way home, of the fact that Lewis posed naked for his art class. Arriving at the hotel, Mrs. Bentham

> passed into her room, and had not left the room more than a minute when it began to seem to Lewis that she was gone an hour. He was standing thinking of nothing in particular when a thought came into his mind of Lily Saunders's drawing. She had admired his figure, and Lucy would admire it if she saw it. But she mustn't come back and catch him in the middle of his undressing. . . . He was standing in the pose of the dancing faun when the door of her bedroom swung over the carpet and she came into the room.
>
> 'Lewis, Lewis! what have you done?' and then she began to laugh. 'Is that the pose you chose for the class?'
>
> 'No,' he answered; 'it would be impossible to keep this pose for long. The pose I took for the class is a simpler one;' and he threw himself into the pose. 'Which do you like better?'
>
> 'I don't know that I care for naked men.'
>
> 'We are so used to seeing people clothed,' he answered, 'that nakedness seems comical to us; isn't that so? I will show you another pose;' and when he had taken it he told her the lines in his figure the class had appreciated. (II, 108)

As they lie in bed together "afterwards," Mrs. Bentham gives Lewis a lecture on French history. The corresponding periods of time spent with Lady Helen are whiled away by lectures from Lewis on art. The improvement effected by these changes indicates that the book might have worked out better as a satire.

That Moore's intentions were basically realistic, however, is reaffirmed by the greater effort he made, when revising the book, to provide motivation: Lady Helen is impressed by Lewis' "aestheticising" and also wants to shock and irritate her guardians, and Mrs. Bentham does not begin struggling unsuccessfully with lover-like jealousy until she and Lewis at least have an understanding. Nevertheless, the characters remain subservient to the idea rather than

the theme and therefore are never more than functional, illustrative shells.

Lacking any fully drawn sympathetic figure, the book fails to achieve an emotional impact which might obscure Moore's polemics. In the framework of Lewis' rise, Moore is able to air his feelings about bad artists, modern painting, the role of women, the evils of an economic structure oppressive to the poor, the drawbacks of Academy rule in the arts, the emptiness of life in "society." It is for Moore's views on these subjects that the book must be read since his failure to create either vivid caricatures or believable individuals prevents the book from meriting attention as a novel.

A Drama in Muslin is a study of marriage. Or perhaps more precisely, it is a study of the role of sex in society from the point of view of women. The book traces the experiences of a group of girls during the five years following their graduation from convent school. Resolving their lives on the basis of their differing reactions to the specter of the "good match," Moore represents various degrees of social and emotional success and failure and analyzes the factors contributing to each girl's destiny.

The greatest social success is achieved by Violet Scully. She is not the most beautiful of the girls, nor does she have the largest dowry, but her disadvantages are offset by her gentleness and sympathetic nature, so that she is able to catch the season's prize bachelor, the baronet. Nevertheless, the pitiable worthlessness of the insignificant man who bears the title makes her future dubious.

Another beautiful girl, May Gould, is not sufficiently dazzled

by the expectations of society even to attempt to make an acceptable marriage. A likeable, unpretentious girl, more interested in romping with friends and admiring her horses than in carrying on the calculated flirtation requisite for social climbing, her prospects of marriage are very slim. Yet she is too high spirited to let her life "dribble away in maiden idleness" (p. 58) as do her friends, the hopelessly unmarriageable Brennan sisters. And so she falls into a series of degrading affairs, so hopeless that in response to a friend's question as to whether she loved one of the men, she responds, "No, no; it was an old man" (p. 318).

The life of the obviously unmarriageable girl is best exemplified by Cecelia Cullen's fate. As a cripple, she cannot take part in the general scramble for husbands. Intelligent enough to see the tawdriness of the marriage customs and bitter enough, because of her social isolation, to interpret all sex relations in terms of the "elegant harlotry" (p. 205) of the marriage market, she turns to covert lesbianism for gratification of her thwarted need for companionship.

Most fully developed are the careers of the sisters, Olive and Alice Barton. Olive, because of her arresting beauty, seems to have excellent prospects in the marriage market and therefore, according to the society, in life. Yet she is too foolish and vain either to catch the baronet she pursues or to succeed in her attempt to elope with a personally more desirable but socially less prominent young man. And since her mother is too ambitious to arrange, or even to permit, less than the "best" marriage, Olive wears out her time in an endless succession of useless days without ever realizing what has happened.

Alice, on the other hand, is considered hopeless by her mother. She is too plain to attract any suitors. Nevertheless, since the only available social life is geared to the effort to procure a husband, she has no choice but to perform all the rituals of dinner party and Castle season which are appropriate to her beautiful sister. Though she is apparently obedient to the social code, she, like Cecelia, is too intelligent not to see it for what it is. Not willing to live a life either of hopeless and degrading flirtation or of "cruel triviality" (p. 58), she spends her time writing. Nor is her writing unrealistically ambitious; her calm, sensible essays and stories are appropriate to her limited talents. Her contact with Harding, who sneers at the marriage market and who lives in England, reinforces her attitudes, since he demonstrates that it is possible to be happy and successful while denying the validity of the social code accepted by her entire social group. Too sensible to think she can be a sort of female Harding, however, she realizes that "a woman could do nothing without a husband. There is a reason for the existence of a pack-horse, but none for that of an unmarried woman" (p. 58). Always realistic, she not so much defies as deserts society in marrying a socially unacceptable but personally suitable man and moving to England.

In making Alice's the only successful life in the book, Moore emphasized the necessity of escaping the society. Except for the crippled and perverted Cecelia, who retreats to a convent, all the rest of the girls remain in the society. And whether defiant as is May, or obedient, as is Olive, the result is hysteria and despair, or, as in the case of Violet, hollow triumph. There seems to be no

possibility of happiness within the society. For there is no one with whom marriage would be both socially advantageous and personally desirable. Therefore a "good" marriage produces a distressing home life while a "bad" marriage invites ostracism. And the normally kind-hearted Violet's vicious reaction to her "triumph" indicates that the system is self-perpetuating.

Although the book is a total denunciation of Irish society, it is more than simply a diatribe. In some ways it is the most effective book in this group. All the characters are carefully drawn, and although they are always subservient to the plot—their illustrative functions are at times painfully obvious—each is given a personality appropriate to her function. If the writing were better, Alice Barton would be a good characterization. But her portrait lacks subtlety. It is marred by such pretentiously inappropriate statements as that "for the pain it caused her, she almost hated the invincible goodness of her nature" (p. 140).

In addition to the basically superior conception of Alice's character, the book includes some excellent scenes. When May Gould returns from Dublin after the secret ordeal of bearing an illegitimate child, her radiant good health and beauty contrast dramatically with Alice's face, worn out and pale from the drudgery of supporting May. And, though suffering from some conversational unrealities, the jealous confrontation of Alice by Cecelia upon her discovery of Alice's interest in Dr. Reed is an arresting illustration of Moore's psychological insight:

> "There is neither purity nor peace in the world; the same blackness, always the same blackness. The same horrible passion that degrades, that disgraces, that

> makes animals of us! There is no escaping from it—it is everywhere, it is eternal, it is omnipotent. . . . My last hope is gone, and I am alone in this horrible, this ignominious world. Oh that I might die, for I can bear with it no longer! And we all come, we all spring from the same abomination--vile, loathsome, detestable. Take pity, oh, take pity! let me die! Oh, God, take pity!"
>
> "Cecelia, Cecelia, think, I beg of you, of what you are saying." But when Alice approached and strove to raise the deformed girl from the pillow upon which she had thrown herself, she started up and savagely confronted her.
>
> "Don't touch me, don't touch me!" she cried; "I cannot bear it. What are you to me, what am I to you? It is not with me you would care to be, but with <u>him</u>. It is not my kiss of friendship that would console you, but his kiss of passion that would charm you. . . . Go to him, and leave me to die." (p. 232)

Yet a sympathetic tone is not constant throughout the book. Representative of a satiric element is the delightful description of "the chase" at the Castle season, the high point of the use of the hunting metaphor in relation to the marriage market. To illustrate the shamelessness with which the social climbing women pursue the marquis, forcing him into the company of their daughters whenever possible, and relentlessly watching where he bestows his attention voluntarily, Moore writes in a different vein:

> Henceforth eye, ear, and nostril were open, and in the quivering ardour of the chase they scattered through the covers of Cork Hill and Merrion Square, passing from one to the other, by means of sharp yelps and barkings, every indication of the trail that came across their way. Sometimes hearkening to a voice they had confidence in, they would rally at a single point, and then an old b-----, her nose in the air, her capstrings hanging lugubriously on either side of her weatherbeaten cheeks, would utter a deep and prolonged baying; then a little farther on the scent was recovered, and, with sterns wagging and bristles erect, they hunted the quarry vigorously. Every moment he was expected to break—fear was even expressed that he might end by being chopped. (p. 209)

It is the difference in tone between these passages which is the

key to the book's major weakness. Unsure of his method, Moore shifted from sympathy to satire, causing the novel to suffer from a diffusion of purpose. Apparently realizing that one of his failings was an inability to offer a straightforward presentation of a dramatic scene, Moore here used satire as a way out. And though his satire is in itself effective, it seems inconsistent with his primarily dramatic intentions.

In addition to the shifting focus, the book is hampered by bad writing. Necessary background information, such as Irish economic structure and the role of the peasant, is presented as dinner table "conversation" in an undigested form. Moore's own prejudices, as for example his hatred of Catholicism, are often included with a jarring inappropriateness, and he sometimes resorts to absurd epigrams, such as describing Cecelia's having understood a situation "with the quickness of the deformed" (p. 54).

Nevertheless, inadequate writing is much less frequent in this novel than it was in A Modern Lover. And although the characters, with the partial exception of Alice, remain static representations rather than becoming fully achieved people, they are sufficiently consistent and appropriate stock characterizations to make their lifeless subservience to the plot less obtrusive.

In Confessions of a Young Man, Moore wrote "Chance! What a field for psychical investigation is at once opened up; how we may tear to shreds our past lives in search of--what? Of the Chance that made us" (p. 320). A Mere Accident is an examination of the role of chance in the lives of a pair of lovers. John Norton, in disgust at the

idea of marriage, determines to become a monk. While he is drawing the plans which will convert his country estate into a monastery, he falls in love with the neighbor girl, Kitty Hare. Shortly before their wedding, Kitty is raped by a casually passing tramp. Reacting in horror against all men, she retreats to her room, and when John insists on visiting her there, leaps out the window to her death.

This is a peculiarly unsatisfactory book. Since the plot rests on accident, Moore evidently felt character portrayal to be unnecessary. Accordingly, John is Ascetic, Kitty is Innocent, and the other characters are simply names. They are all described too slightly even to constitute stock characters. And although John does undergo a change of heart in the end--he is again determined never to marry, but decides to live in the world rather than the cloister--there is no particular reason that he should do so. The reader is not even especially invited to wonder if Kitty's accident took place so that John would fulfill his destiny as a celibate. His character is not sufficiently rounded that one can discover his destiny.

The book is interesting because of two passages. On receiving a guest at his college rooms, John launches into a thirty-five page guided tour to world literature. As an indication of Moore's progress in self education and as a guide to his literary prejudices, the passage is noteworthy, but its contribution to the story is negligible.

Kitty's nightmare sequence also is interesting. The passage is composed of obvious symbols: roses, snakes, tombs, stained robes. It is probable that Moore's affinity for the Decadents is reflected here, as well as his personal interest in the grotesque. And although snakes are conventional Christian symbols, in view of the panegyric

of Pater's Marius the Epicurean earlier in the book, this figure may well echo Marius' shocking encounter with the sexuality of snakes.[5] The image is emphasized out of all proportion in view of the book's general lack of development. In addition, the artificiality of the symbolism forms a striking contrast with the subtlety of the symbolic elements in Moore's later work. Therefore, it seems probable that this extended passage is in effect an exercise in creative writing just as the passage cited above was an exercise in literary criticism. Too highly conventionalized to function as characterization and too different from the overall pace of the book to serve the plot, these two passages must be judged as distinct from the story.

In spite of the improvement over earlier works in the actual writing, this book is extremely inadequate in its total effect. John's discussion of French art suggests that Moore may have been attempting a sort of literary impressionism. But characterization is so totally lacking and symbols are so completely conventional that the result is an unsatisfactory tour de force. Nothing exists in the book except the accident.

The preface of A Drama in Muslin promised that the book would be followed by a companion piece focused on men rather than women. Spring Days is a "prelude" to that work.[6] Spring Days describes the efforts of two young men, Frank Escott and Willie Brookes, to find their role in life. The promise of an inherited income reduces both

[5] Walter Pater, Marius the Epicurean (London, 1920), I, 23.

[6] See the title page.

men to a furtive, propitiatory life. Engagingly purposeless, Frank does not pursue his artistic talent diligently enough to be anything but a dilettante; painting to him is largely a matter of having a studio. In contrast to Frank's agreeable vagueness, Willie is a marvel of records, keeping both diaries and ledgers. Yet the result is much the same. Wanting to work, he does nothing but lose money in picturesque and ingenious ways, ranging from the sale of artificial manures and vegetables raised in the family garden to the breeding of race horses.

Both men form romantic attachments considerably "beneath" themselves. Neither very clever nor very status conscious, Frank does not enjoy the class of people he should associate with as heir to his uncle's title. Yet the friends he does enjoy are too middle class to be acceptable to his uncle. Lacking the conviction to sacrifice either world for the other, he drifts pointlessly between the two. His involvement with Maggie Brookes is an attempt at compromise between the world of Lord Mount Rorke and Lizzie Baker, the barmaid whom he really is attracted to. It is a useless gesture, however, since any woman would be unacceptable to Mount Rorke. Yet Mount Rorke's attitude toward bachelorhood sits uneasily on Frank, who is too spontaneous and too conventional to be comfortable as a dedicated roue. In one of his forays into high life, he escorts Lady Seveley to the theater where his unthinking chatter is shown up as both naive and rude in contrast to the polished epigrams of Harding. Equally unable to sustain a relationship with Maggie Brookes--he dreams of being romantically drowned in the tide while she and her father are speculating on the size of the marriage settlement--he eventually

returns to Lizzie Baker. It is on this level that he can be of use. He cares for her when she is sick.

Willie is equally unsuccessful with the social group appropriate to his family position. Retreating from the people who find him boring and awkward, he involves himself with a woman of doubtful origin who has a crippled child. Although his father's disapproval forces Willie into a surreptitious life with her in rooms behind the "agency for artificial manure," she and her child offer Willie a family life he would be unable to achieve elsewhere.

Through the adventures of these two young men, Moore is able to point out the disadvantages of inheritance: it weakens initiative, it prolongs the period during which a man must please his guardian at any cost, it produces misfits by forcing men into roles not suited to them, it hinders congenial marriages and promotes social climbing.

But this novel is not a social tract. Handled with a consistently light touch, the book is often amusing. The inevitable suicide attempt is a representative example. When Maggie Brookes refuses to marry Frank, he stabs himself, and the neighbors speculate on the scene:

> Poor young man--and so goodlooking too--what will she do if he should die?--and he must die--there was no doubt of it. Maria had met Mary--that was the housemaid at the Manor House--it was Mary who had mopped up the blood. She said there was a great pool right in the middle of the new carpet under the window--they were sitting there on the ottoman when he said suddenly, "I have come to ask you to marry me, if you won't I must die." Notwithstanding this she continued to play with him--the cruel little minx--he could stand it no longer, and he pulled out a dagger he had brought from the East, and stabbed himself twice close to the heart. What will she do?--she will have to go into a convent--she won't go into a convent--she'll brazen it out. (pp. 250-51)

The half humorous treatment, however, does not sufficiently relieve

the triteness of plot. Every event is too much the expected thing for the book to be effective social satire, and the lack of character development excludes the story from any more serious category. The result is sometimes an awkward, usually an amusing examination of the pretentiousness of society.

Although it is not announced as such either on the title page or in the preface, Mike Fletcher appears to be the "Don Juan" to which Spring Days was a prelude. Mike is the unhappy possessor of a charm fatal to all--men as well as women. A nun about to be professed has fled her convent for love of him. Even Alice Barton, the same sensible sort she was in A Drama in Muslin, is attracted despite an initial aversion. It is on the basis of this incredible charm that the little boy from the bogs of Ireland rises to a seat in Parliament and a title and luxurious estate.

Accenting his rise are the downfalls of all his friends. Lady Helen commits suicide because of the desertion of her lover and because, in view of the emptiness of her life, she has not the strength or incentive to begin again. Lewis Seymour, "Don Juan in . . . middle age," has become simply "that fellow with the wide hips" (p. 80). John Norton makes a short foray into the world, which, at the end of A Mere Accident he had deemed his monastery. However, in a fit of conscience after Lady Helen's death, he burns the poetry he had written while he belonged to Mike's group and retreats to his country home. Frank Escott finally marries Lizzie Baker and suffers the inevitable disaster: Mount Rorke casts him out, he fails in his attempt to run a newspaper, and he finally is reduced to a dreary scramble for exist-

ence on a tiny allowance from his uncle. Lily, the nun Mike enticed out of her convent, dies before she can elope with him.

Despite his own success, Mike finds that the social environment which brought disaster to his friends has "grown hateful to him" after Lily's death (p. 253). A retreat to the reality of the desert, sharing the life of the Bedouins, reveals to him the shallowness of his surroundings and the futility of his existence:

> "Another day has begun. . . . Like a gray beast it comes on soft velvet paws to devour. . . . I shudder when I think of the new evils and abominations that this day will bring." . . . The temple, too, seemed to have lost youth and gaiety. No longer did he meet his old friends in the eating-houses and taverns. Everything had been dispersed or lost. Some were married, some had died. (pp. 286-9)

Then, envying Lady Helen her resolution long ago which gave her "seven years of peace and rest" (p. 272), he shoots himself, wondering all the while if somehow he had missed his calling, if he "should have lived and died a simple, honourable, God-fearing man, if he had not been taken out of the life he was born in, if he had married in Ireland, for instance, and driven cattle to market, as did his ancestors" (p. 280).

If Mike Fletcher is a disaster for the characters it includes, it is an even greater disaster for its readers. Perhaps one of the reasons for its failure is the sheer technical difficulty of including so many plot lines in such a short novel. Although the pattern is worked out with considerable care so that none of the information seems particularly out of place, still, each denouement includes a carryover of the defects of the earlier novel it refers to. Thus the personalities of both Lady Helen and John Norton are too sketchy to make their fates interesting. And the continuation of the plot

of Spring Days is as trite as was that novel. These tag ends are so unsatisfactory that it is hard to understand why Moore thought them worth working with.

Another failure is the portrayal of Mike. No doubt it is extremely difficult to create such a loveable character as Mike was meant to be. The task is further complicated by Moore's desire to indicate that a true Don Juan cannot exist in modern society. But the effort toward such a portrayal need not have resulted in the representation of a monster. And it is hard to imagine anyone being attracted to a person such as Mike. That which was intended to represent the pride of charm and success appears to be arrogance, selfishness, willful eccentricity and brutality. With the central character giving an impression so very different from the author's intention, the novel can scarcely avoid failure.

Added to the book's other defects is the lack of taste shown in the writing. Apparently assuming that Mike would be the best informed on his own virtues, Moore has assigned to him the major portion of the analysis of his personality. The speeches which result are offensive in the extreme:

> "Why do they love me? I always treat them badly. Often I don't even pretend to love them, but it makes no difference. Pious women, wicked women, stupid women, clever women, high-class women, low-class women, it is all the same--all love me. . . . And what sudden fancies! I come into a room, and every feminine eye fills with sudden appetite. I wonder what it is. My nose is broken, and my chin sticks out like a handle. And men like me just as much as women do. It is inexplicable. . . . People dislike me; I speak to them for five minutes, and henceforth they run after me. I make friends everywhere. . . . I wonder why I am liked! How intangible, and yet how real! What a wonderful character I would make in a novel!" (pp. 67-8)

Again, dazzled by his success upon receipt of the news of his inherit-

ance from Lady Seeley, he marvels: "I can make nothing of it; there never was any one like me. . . . I could do anything, I might have been Napoleon or Caesar" (p. 200). Finally, tortured by the emptiness of his life, he exclaims: "I am alone! The whole world is in love with me, and I'm utterly alone" (p. 263). The pretentiousness of such speeches would render them unacceptable in almost any context. But the dramatic structure of the book, which presumes that this posturing will be viewed sympathetically, makes them additionally objectionable.

This novel is more ponderously melodramatic even than A Modern Lover. A quiet humor, even though existing more between Moore and his readers than as part of the structure of what was basically a serious work, considerably lightened the tone of A Drama in Muslin and formed the basis of the gently satiric Spring Days. Yet there is no trace of lightness in Mike Fletcher. It is a series of offensive soliloquies from Mike, heavy handed epigrams from Harding, and strained "aestheticising" from the group of young journalists working on the Pilgrim. These unacceptable passages are strung together on the framework of a hopelessly melodramatic plot which bears no basic relation to any character, developing only the unjustified rise and fall of Mike Fletcher, a character as unbelievable as he is uninteresting. Despite its central position, gathering together as it does four of Moore's previous works, this novel must nevertheless be considered his worst failure.

As with A Mere Accident, Vain Fortune is mainly an effort to flesh out a plot intended to illustrate the role in life of accidental quirks

of fate. It is also reminiscent of A Modern Lover in describing the plight of an artist of inadequate talent--in this case, a writer. The caprice of fate in Vain Fortune concerns the will, composed in a final moment of pique, in which Mr. Burnett disinherits his young adopted daughter, Emily Watson, in favor of Hubert Price, a nephew who has never entertained any expectations of inheritance. Though the lawyers, the family, Emily and her companion, Mrs. Bentley, all feel that the best arrangement would be for Hubert to marry Emily, he falls in love with the intelligent and kindly Mrs. Bentley instead. The news that Emily has killed herself in a fit of jealous depression casts a pall over their honeymoon, just as their future as a married couple is darkened by Hubert's realization that he probably is not writing a masterpiece.

Although Moore has taken much more pains to provide acceptable motivations, the characters are really little better drawn than are those of A Mere Accident. Emily is simply the empty-headed, sweet, pretty youngster. Her suicide is less plausible than Kitty's since it is hard to imagine that she would ever do anything other than spend her life plaguing Hubert. Mrs. Bentley is gently self-sacrificing with Emily and clever at recasting plays with Hubert, but none of the incidents in the book gives opportunity for the display of particular insight or tact.

Hubert's inability to follow up his early success is not explained. The impression is given that the poverty which prevented his finishing his new work was really little more than an excuse. When his inheritance removes the financial problem, he attributes his lack of productivity to the distractions of Emily's importunity.

But with Emily no longer an annoyance, he must face the fact that he will never finish his revision properly and must be compensated for the "burden of life" by marriage to Mrs. Bentley (p. 296).

The change is not plausible. Hubert's urge to write is described as so strong that he came to the verge of starvation rather than waste his time at other work. Yet he permits himself to be distracted by the whining of a teenager. And this interruption comes after he has had one successful play which established him as "Chef d'Ecole" (p. 4) and which the critics are "still thinking about" (p. 295). Yet he comes to accept failure; he deviates from resignation only so far as to envy Emily her suicide. And although it would be acceptable to indicate that Hubert does not know the reasons for his failure, it seems a defect in characterization that Moore does not know. Harding's epigram, that "Price is only an intentionist" (p. 65), is inadequate as explanation.

The development of the story is rendered even sketchier by the triteness of many important passages. For example, Moore describes family background in order presumably to give depth to the characterization of Hubert:

> When a child, Hubert had been shy, meditative, illusive,— his mother's favourite, and the scorn of his elder brothers, two rough boys, addicted in early youth to robbing orchards, and later on to gambling and drinking. The elder, after having broken his father's heart with debts and disgraceful living, had gone out to the Cape. News of his death came to the Rectory soon after; but James's death did not turn Henry from his evil courses, and one day his father and mother had to go to London on his account, and they brought him back a hopeless invalid. Hubert was twelve years of age when he followed his brother to the grave. (p. 7)

Yet the brevity of this history, coupled with the obviousness of the details, makes the passage so unimportant as to seem irrelevant.

The conversation between Hubert and Julia Bentley upon the discovery of Emily's suicide is similarly inadequate:

> "My heart is breaking," she said. "This is too cruel—too cruel! And on my wedding night."
> Their eyes met; and, divining each other's thought, each felt ashamed, and Julia said,—
> "Oh, what am I saying? This dreadful selfishness, from which we cannot escape, that is with us even in such a moment as this! That poor child gone to her death, and yet amid it all we must think of ourselves."
> "My dear Julia, we cannot escape from our human nature; but, for all that, our grief is sincere. We can do nothing. Do not grieve like that."
> "And why not? She was my best friend. How have I repaid her? Alas! as woman always repays woman for kindness done. The old story. I cannot forgive myself. No, no! do not kiss me! I cannot bear it. Leave me. I can see nothing but Emily's reproachful face." She covered her face in her hands and sobbed again. (pp. 293-294)

The scene is so completely obvious and the statements are so devoid of sharpness that the climax lacks tension, thus reducing the effectiveness of the book as a whole.

The same failures which weakened earlier books are evident in Vain Fortune. Efforts at motivation and characterization are trite and perfunctory. The plot is thin and artificial, offering nothing more organic to the story than a bare, functional framework for the statement of the idea which is the primary intention of the novel. Although the idea in itself is interesting, this development of it is so sketchy that one wonders if it would not have been just as effective if presented simply as one of Harding's epigrams.

All these novels deal with the same group of people—the moneyed class. However, they do not so much depict that social group as present Moore's attitude toward it. He did not strive for dramatic representation of society's failings in order to create an emotional

appeal for reform. He was not dedicated to social reform. Rather, in these books, he considered those aspects of society which were interesting or annoying to him personally.

Full of happy memories of his days in the artist colony in Paris,[7] he wrote into his books long passages on the theory of art and literature, including the obtrusive discussions in A Mere Accident as well as the scattered comments on art in A Modern Lover and Spring Days, on literature in A Drama in Muslin, and on drama in Vain Fortune. In addition, disturbed that his own talent as a painter had proved to be so slight, he analyzed the adjustments required of artists with limited talents--the selling out to commercialism by Lewis Seymour, the sensible limitation of goals by Alice Barton, the retreat to fantasy by Frank Escott, the bitter despair of Hubert Price.

Thirty-one when his first novel was published, he had begun to notice that some of his friends were getting married while he was not.[8] The recognition of this difference led him to endless considerations of marriage, the reasons for it, its advantages and its drawbacks. His attitude ranged from the scathing criticism of the Irish system of arranged marriages, which he considered to be little better than a white slave trade, through the disastrous but incomprehensibly happy marriage of Frank Escott to the dubious compensation for life marriage offered to Hubert Price. The companion concern, celibacy, received sympathetic consideration in the portraits of John Norton and Mike Fletcher.

[7] See the nostalgic autobiographies, Confessions of a Young Man, and Memoirs of My Dead Life.

[8] See Hone, especially pages 56-59, 99-100, 153-154, 197.

Moore strongly felt that he did not begin to live until his father's death gave him legal and financial independence.[9] His interest in his father's death, both in the feeling of elation at his new freedom and in the feeling of guilt over that elation, is reflected in his repeated considerations of the effects of inheritance. The benefits of inheriting an adequate income are illustrated when Mike Fletcher and Hubert Price experience a sudden freedom to choose a profession on the basis of inclination rather than need. The misfortune of Frank Escott and Willie Brookes illustrates the degrading and destructive aspects of the prolonged subservience to a benefactor where the felicitous death is delayed. Another aspect of this concern is the eventual failure of an inheritance long expected, a crisis faced by Lewis Seymour and Emily Watson.

Suicide is considered in all these novels. It is in terms of self-destruction that the justification of existence is dealt with. Successful suicide is provoked by sexual violence, disappointment in love, and boredom, while wishful thinking about suicide is brought on by poverty, and disappointment in love and art. The frequency with which suicide is either thought about or committed in these books need not be taken to mean that Moore was himself eternally on the verge of killing himself. Nevertheless, he admitted that he "liked to think" that his father had committed suicide,[10] and he did seem to feel generally that the problems of existence rose from the fact not

[9] See Confessions of a Young Man, pp. 304-305.

[10] Hone, p. 308.

that life is short, but that it is long.[11]

In addition to such reflections of Moore's personal interests, these books often derive specifically from the life around Moore. For example, the general situation in A Modern Lover is almost certainly based on the life of one of Moore's Paris friends.[12] Edward Martyn no doubt furnished the model for John Norton.[13] The life of Moore's friends in Sussex supplied material for use in Spring Days.[14] Mr. Barton, in A Drama in Muslin, is probably patterned after Jim Browne, a relative of Moore's.[15] Moore's own inability to follow up an early literary success may have provoked the examination of literary failure in Vain Fortune.[16] The reduction of Moore's income which resulted from the mismanagement of his estate by a relative probably suggested the incompetent uncle in Lewis Seymour's background.[17]

Nevertheless, this use of his own experiences does not indicate that the novels are autobiographical in any strict sense. It is doubtful even that the recurring minor character, John Harding, should be

[11] See for example his statement that "life gets pleasanter as one gets used to it," Hone, p. 75, and the indications of pessimism throughout Confessions of a Young Man, especially in his thoughts of "the hopelessness of life" (p. 322) and "the inherent miseries of human life" (p. 348), and in the extended dialogue with his Conscience, pp. 464-467.

[12] Brown, p. 89.

[13] Hone, p. 130.

[14] See the description of a relationship similar to that of Frank Escott to the Brookes in Hone, pp. 125-126.

[15] Hone, p. 35

[16] His concern over adverse criticism of his own novels appears in letters quoted by Hone, see especially pp. 136, 148, 150, 161.

[17] A description of this unpleasant episode involving Moore's uncle, Joe Blake, appears in Hone, pp. 81-82.

considered autobiographical, as has been suggested.[18] Rather, he seems intended to serve as a standard of rationality against which the society can be measured. He is able to form disinterested judgements of his surroundings since he is accepted socially even though he refuses really to take part in the society. Thus his presence at the Castle parties in A Drama in Muslin indicates the existence of a world outside the restricted vision of the Irish upper class. And the fact that it is Alice Barton whom he singles out for attention serves both to emphasize his own disassociation from the social code and to lend authority to Alice's budding contempt for and rejection of the rituals of her society.

Yet Harding's function is not simply that of a proselytizer against the society. Although he encourages Alice in her dissatisfaction and helps her get started writing so that she can act upon her antipathy, he is far less partisan than these facts alone would indicate. Rather, he seems likely to have achieved a well rounded vision, since, while living in England, he knows both the Bartons and Mrs. Lawler, the neighbor whom one "doesn't know." Frequenting so many different social groups, he is not likely to reflect the pressures of vested interest in his judgements. The very fact that he appears so briefly and is so little characterized emphasizes his position as an observer only; he comments upon but does not take part in the action of the plot. And though Mrs. Barton assumes he is her daughter's suitor, neither Alice nor Harding entertains any false idea of his role. His most positive action is to reassure Alice of the sanity of her own

[18] Brown, p. 92.

opinions.

This role of unentangled observer is maintained whenever Harding appears. Nowhere else does he receive even the slight development offered in A Drama in Muslin. He simply appears, comments tersely, and accurately, on the action of the novel, and disappears without having affected anything other than the reader's understanding. For example, his contempt for Lewis Seymour, when Lewis first comes up to London, neither drives Lewis from the Academy nor spurs him on to greater efforts at understanding. Harding simply epitomizes a stance which Lewis rejects. And although Lady Helen turns to Harding in her disenchantment with Lewis, this attachment seems less to indicate an injury to Lewis than to show Lady Helen's discovery, in Harding, of the true artist whom she vainly sought in Lewis.

Harding's function could scarcely be made more explicit than it is in Spring Days. In a short passage somewhat beside the main plot, Harding, Mike Fletcher and Lady Seveley sit discussing Frank Escott and Lizzie Baker:

> "The phenomenon of love has hitherto eluded our most eager investigation; when we have traced each desire to its source and classified--"
>
> "We women will have ceased to take any interest in the matter. What a humbug you are, Mr Harding; one never knows when you are serious. But what has all this to do with that poor boy who has gone off with his barmaid?"
>
> "This: he is unquestionably good-looking, but I don't think he possesses at all the magnetism, the power--call it what you will--that I have been speaking of. He will never influence either men or women, he will never make friends; that is to say, he will never make use of his friends. He will, I should think, always remain a little outside of success. It will never quite come to him; he will be one of those muddled, dissatisfied creatures who rail against luck and bad treatment. I cannot see him really successful in anything; yes, I can, though, I believe he would make an excellent husband. I have spoken a great deal to him. He has told me a lot about

> himself, and I can see that he asks and desires nothing but leave to devote himself to a woman, to pander to her caprices. All that violent exterior will wear off, and he will yield to and love to be led by a woman. He writes a little, and he paints. I don't know if he has any talent; but he will never be able to work until he is obliged to work for a woman."
>
> "Then you think he will marry that barmaid?"
>
> "Most probably." (pp. 152-153)

These comments, particularly in view of Frank's fate, read more like an author's notebook, the character outline he prepares for his own use, than a summer afternoon's idle conversation about a friend. But the abruptly introduced analysis is typical of Harding; it is as "prophet and oracle" that he figures in these books. And it is because of his unbiased and true vision that the young men of the Pilgrim and aspiring dramatists such as Hubert Price try to impress him, seeking his concurrence before relying on their own opinions.

Although the accuracy of Harding's prophecies and the validity of his judgements indicate that he has access to Moore's vision of the plot, still, the fact that he really does not exist except through his epigrams and prophecies makes him more editorial than autobiographical. And since he never seems to affect the plots he comments on so cogently, he cannot be thought an example of deus ex machina. In fact, however, Moore did use him as another sort of crutch. The intention of each book is made clear either through Harding's comments or through the explanations offered by other characters to him as an intelligent listener.

Yet to assign the role of commentator and expositor to so undeveloped a character seems extremely ill advised. It would probably be preferable to create a genuinely autobiographical character in order to lend weight to his opinions. However, Moore leaves it to

the reader to decide that, since Harding's views on such things as art, drama, creativity and love are Moore's own, as expressed in his autobiographical writings, his estimates of character should carry the weight of Moore's authority. Or, perhaps, Moore felt that the opinions he entrusted to Harding were so manifestly "right" that they needed no vindication.

Whatever the cause, the treatment of Harding is characteristic of Moore's handling of the novels generally. Just as Harding's importance is in his opinions and not in his character or conduct, so the importance of the novels is in the idea rather than in the plot or character. And it is this basically expository intention of the books which is their greatest weakness. Although they concern the society which surrounded Moore, they are not autobiographical in much the same way that Harding is not autobiographical: they are comments upon the society rather than a representation of the society.

These books are basic to an understanding of Moore's attitude toward all the topics he treats in them--artistic and literary creativity, marriage relations, inheritance laws, Irish society, suicide. Yet they do not offer any very adequate context for the ideas presented. A knowledge of the society is assumed as a background for Moore's thoughts. These books are Moore's epigrams.

III

A Mummer's Wife and Evelyn Innes

Although they are exceptional for different reasons, three of the novels in which Harding appears--A Mummer's Wife, and the pair, Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa--demand a consideration apart from the group already described. A Mummer's Wife differs from the other books in which Harding figures in that it deals with a social background totally outside Moore's own experience. Working on a topic suggested by his publisher, Moore set about an investigation of the lives of strolling players. He spent several weeks with a touring company of players in search both of material about the mundane details of their lives and of a town sufficiently dull and ugly to furnish the setting for the opening scene.[1] Hanley, where the only recreation was church attendance and the only sight to see was a pottery factory, offered a life totally alien to Moore. He was equally unacquainted with the life of touring actors, an indigent bohemianism very different from the privileged form he had experienced in Paris. Attempting to deal with an unfamiliar character in an unknown environment, Moore depended on meticulous observation to provide a substitute for the casual references to his own general way of life which he had thought sufficient framework for A Modern Lover.

In this most naturalistic of his novels,[2] Moore evidently relied on Zola for more than his fact-gathering technique. Like Gervaise,

[1] Hone, p. 98.

[2] Brown, p. 91.

in l'Assommoir,[3] Kate skids from respectability to prostitution by way of alcoholism and association with amoral companions. And Moore documents the fall as carefully as did Zola. Yet the parallel is no more than superficial. Where Gervaise is degraded by bad luck and the evil intentions of her companions, Kate's troubles are more nearly her own. Not even Kate, in her more rational moments, is able really to blame her predicament on outside influences, for, as she explains to one of her friends, "everybody has, all my life-long, been very good to me; it is I alone who am to blame, who am in fault" (p. 407).

Yet if her environment cannot be blamed for her defeat, it is nevertheless a provoking agent. Moore speculated that "had she remained in Manchester, or had she even been placed in surroundings that would have rendered possible the existence of a fixed set of principles, she might have cured herself of her vice" (p. 345). The lack of a favorable framework constitutes an environment which, epitomized by her easy-going second husband, Dick, is "huge, kind and indifferent" (p. 398), and its harmfulness to her is clearly illustrated in the description of one of her drunken, jealous rages. After a day of solitary drinking, she lashes Dick for her misery, and, having sent him for a bottle of gin, lies in wait for him, armed with a large stick:

> Making neither sign nor stir, she allowed him to get past her, and then, raising the brush-handle, she landed him one across the back. The poor man uttered a long cry, and the crash of broken glass was heard. . . . [Dick] felt

[3] The similarity in general plot line has been extensively described by Georges-Paul Collet in George Moore et la France (Paris, 1957), pp. 127-132.

uneasily at his pockets, through which he could feel the gin dripping down his legs.

"Well, have you brought the drink I sent you for? Where is it?"

"Well," replied Dick, desirous of conciliating at any price, "it was in my pocket, but when you hit me with that stick you broke it."

"I broke it?" cried Kate, her eyes glistening with fire.

"Yes, dear, you did; it wasn't my fault."

"Wasn't your fault! Oh, you horrid wretch! you put it there on purpose that I should break it."

"Oh! now really, Kate," he cried, shocked by the illogicalness of the accusation, "how could I know that you were going to hit me there?"

. . . But Dick . . . was interrupted by a heavy blow across the face, and like a panther that has tasted blood, she rushed at him again, screaming all the while. . . . The patience with which he bore with her was truly angelic. With one stroke he might have easily felled her to the ground, but he contented himself with merely warding off the blows she aimed at him. This, from his great height and strength, he was easily able to do, and she struck at him with her little womanish arms as she might against a door.

"Take down your hands," she screamed, exasperated to a last degree. "You would strike me, would you? You beast! . . . "

How long this combat might have lasted it is difficult to say, had not Dick's attention, at a critical moment, when Kate was using the poker by turns as spear and sabre, been interrupted by the view of the landlady's face at the door, and so touched was he by the piteous dismay expressed in the usually placid face of the poor little woman when she looked round at her broken furniture, that he forgot to guard himself from the poker, and Kate, taking advantage of the occasion, whirled the weapon round her head. He saw it descending in time, and half warded off the blow; but it came down with awful force on the forearm, and glancing off, inflicted a severe scalp wound. The landlady screamed "Murder!" and Dick, then seeing that matters had come to a crisis, closed in upon Kate, and undeterred by yells and struggles, pinioned her and forced her into a chair. . . . Dick never released his hold of her, and his blood dripped upon her, trickling in large drops into her ears, and down into her neck and bosom.

"You are spitting on me, you beast! You filthy beast! I'll pay you out for this."

Then, perceiving that it was blood, the intonation of the voice changed, and in terror she screamed, "Murder! murder! He is murdering me! Is there no one here to save me?" (pp. 391-4)

Thus Kate's environment destroys her in that it is passive while an envelope of active benevolence would be required for the survival of

such a person. Weak minded and weak willed, romantic and irrational, she cannot cope with life. In her first marriage, a dull husband, a devout mother-in-law and the routines of shopkeeping restrict her to a stable, if dull, life, which she can escape safely through daydreaming and novel reading. But when she actually does escape to an environment where no one expects anything of her, where there are no rules forcing her life into shape, where she lives her daydreams both on the stage and in the carefree vagabondage of touring players, she disintegrates. Unable to impose form on her own life, she is destroyed by an environment which, in its kindly indifference, refuses to discipline her.

Such destruction, however, is far removed from the dogged cruelty of the environment of l'Assommoir. And the difference points to the importance of Moore's book. Not primarily interested in emphasizing the scientific view of the universe, not intent upon pushing for economic or moral reform, he concentrated on the analysis of character.

Nevertheless, the book undoubtedly benefits enormously from the fact that, by copying the fact finding and descriptive techniques of his French master, Moore created a vivid and objectively existing environment for Kate's story. Thus, the novel begins with a minute description of the sights, sounds and smells of a sick room. Yet unlike the relatively aimless descriptions typical of A Modern Lover, this opening passage in A Mummer's Wife is not intended simply to provide a setting. Instead, because of its climax in the asthmatic seizure of Kate's first husband, it becomes an embodiment of the novel's theme:

> He was a piteous object. A long pallid face crushed under a shock of dark matted hair, a dirty nightdress draggling round a pair of thin legs, was the meagre reality; but for the moment the grandeur of human suffering covered him, lifted him beyond the pale of loving or loathing, and invested and clothed him in the pity of tragic things. The room, too, seemed transfigured. The bare wide floor, the gaunt bed, the poor walls plastered with religious prints cut from journals, even the ordinary furniture of everyday use--the little washhand-stand with the common delf ewer, the chest of drawers that might have been bought for thirty shillings--lost their coarseness; their triviality disappeared, until nothing was seen or felt but this one suffering man. (p. 17)

More than in any other of his novels, Moore here attempts fully to describe, rather than simply to suggest, the routine action of his characters. For example, the description of Kate's elopement constitutes almost a handbook on the routine of embarkation for travelling players. Yet after everyone is on the train and settled down, Moore uses the passage for quite a different purpose. Riding opposite the "tenor, conductor, and second low comedian," Kate looks out the window, seeing that

> they were passing through the most beautiful part of Staffordshire, and she saw, for the first time, the places she had so often read of in her novels. . . . The day was full of mist, and the long soft meadows reposed peacefully in the sunlight. Along the edges of the woods the white vapours heaved, half concealing the forms of the grazing kine; and the light shadows floated on the grass, long and prolonged, even as the memories that were new [sic] filling the mind of this sentimental workwoman. Her heart beat; and silent with expectation, she savored a joy that was ineffable. It seemed to her that she was now on, or almost on, the threshold of a new life--the life of which she had so long dreamed. Her lover was sitting opposite to her, but she asked herself why they were not walking together, side by side, in those fair grassgrown places, plucking as they went the wet leaves that brushed across their way. No doubt there were birds singing there; yet in her dreams of them the clicking of needles and the rustling of silk supplied the place of their songs; and forgetting the landscape, with a sigh, she set to thinking of what they were saying of her at home. (p.176)

Rather than being simply a description of a necessary piece of action, the passage becomes a contribution to the development of Kate's character, illustrating as it does her basically romantic outlook on life and her inability to grasp the importance of the difference between her dreams and reality.

Another example of action described in order to develop character is the detailing of Kate's drunken pursuit of Dick to the theatre in Manchester where he is conducting a rehearsal:

> Her head . . . seemed as if it were going to roll off her shoulders, but a good sponging would do it good, and then a bottle or two of soda would put her quite straight--so straight that nobody would know that she had touched a drop.
>
> It took Kate about half an hour to make her arrangements. In a basin she drenched herself, and regardless of her dress, let her hair lie dripping on her shoulders. The landlady brought her up the soda-water, and seeing what a state her lodger was in, placed it on the table without a word. . . . [Leaving the house] Kate was . . . much more sober, and weak and sick she leaned back upon the hard cushions of the clattering cab. Her mouth was full of water, and the shifting angles of the streets produced upon her an effect that was very similar to sea-sickness. The rattle of London rang in her ears, and she could hear a piano tinkling, and she saw Dick directing the movements of a line of girls until her dream was brought to an end by a gulp. Oh! the fearful nausea! There was no doubt but she was terribly ill, and she did not feel better until, flooding her dress and ruining the red velvet seats, all that she had drunk came up. The vomit, however, brought her great relief, and had it not been for a little dizziness and weakness, she would have felt quite right when she arrived at the stage-door. (pp. 372-373)

Far from reflecting simply a morbid interest in the disgusting details of alcoholism, this passage furnishes information important for developing the scene which is climaxed by Kate's mad singing of the narcissistic song of her heyday: "Look at me here, look at me there,/ Criticise me everywhere./ I am so sweet . . ." (p. 379). The contrast with the days when she had to be reminded that she was supposed to

portray a "bit of a romp" is rendered both more pathetic and more horrifying as, disheveled and filthy, she "dances" in the gutter. In addition, her revolting appearance emphasizes the hopelessness of her approach to Dick in an exchange which, nevertheless, indicates to Harding the "great passion of a life" (p. 378). Because of the way in which the description of Kate's filth and depravity is handled, she becomes, as Mr. Ede did in the opening scene, something more than simply a sick and dirty woman.

Thus, although in this novel more than in any of the others, Moore closely followed Zola's pattern of careful description of action and physical surroundings, his reason for using the technique was different from Zola's. Rather than the intention to achieve the "exact description of a linen draper's shop" which he attributed to Zola,[4] Moore was attempting the exact creation of a linen draper's shopkeeper. And by keeping always in mind his goal of character creation, he was able to achieve a unity in this book which is not present in any of the other books including Harding. Because of the care with which description and action are related to character development, and because of the detail with which the environment is created, the novel constitutes an excellently vivid and living portrait.

Harding does not appear to be so out of place in Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa, since, in these two novels, Moore returns to a consideration of the world of the artist: Evelyn Innes is an opera singer. Yet Evelyn's eventual retreat to a convent points to the fact that the world Harding represents is not the central concern

[4] Confessions of a Young Man, p. 380.

of the novels. The separation of the pair of novels into two units is appropriately indicated by the two titles, although the division is much more organic and less tidy than can be indicated simply by format. In giving the books the names Evelyn used in her double life rather than presenting the work as a two volume novel, Moore emphasized the dual nature of the work. Yet the titles are misleading, since the formal division invites the reader to assume that the two novels represent the two stages of Evelyn's life, while in fact, her two worlds--religious and secular--are present throughout both works.

During the course of the two novels, Evelyn is transformed from a naive, musically talented girl into a sophisticated prima donna who finally gives up the stage to become a nun. Although in plot summary it seems unlikely, the shift from self-centered hedonist to happy nun is so carefully developed that it comes to seem inevitable. Except for the episodes which are focused more on Owen Asher, Evelyn's first lover, than upon Evelyn herself, the novels constitute an examination of the religious impulse in the form of an elaborately constructed character study. Obediently Zolaesque, Moore analyzed the contribution of Evelyn's inheritance in indicating her original position, subservient to, though not dominated by, her father. Though realizing that her talents are in vocal rather than instrumental music, she involves herself in her father's interest until Owen offers her an escape. It is a desire to pursue her destiny more than the lure of Owen's romantic life or a wish to be free of her father which prompts her to accept Owen's offer. Always more influenced by men than by ideas, Evelyn wholeheartedly and consciously adopts the values of the man who, much more than her music teacher, has "made something

wonderful" of her (EI, 141). At his bidding she studies atheism, and she imitates him in materialism. But although the surface pattern of her life shows her to be totally Owen's disciple, the sight of a church in Rome causes her to backslide toward Christianity.

Once again, however, she does not really consider acting upon her disaffection from the life she is leading until another man appears to lead her. Ulick Dean, a lover who "hardly thought of her at all as a woman to be kissed" (ST, 52), helps her to escape from Owen's worldliness. He forms a sort of way station for Evelyn between the world and the cloister, since he offers her both mysticism and sex. But though Ulick's "simple dignity made Owen's artificial dignities seem small and almost mean" (ST, 30), and though her love of nature provokes her to respond eagerly to his pantheism, eventually Ulick, too, is an insufficient guide: "He seemed to her like some woodland creature who, hearing monks chanting in his woodland, divines in some half-conscious way that an idea in which he has no part has come into the world" (ST, 30).

Turning from the woodland creature to the monk, rather than from one idea to the other, Evelyn becomes fascinated by Monsignor Mostyn, who determines to triumph over his old school mate, Owen Asher, by leading his mistress into the cloister. And although she is an eager convert as long as her new duties involve simply the discussion of her lovers with her confessor, Evelyn finds that the anonymity of the cloister, far from helping her toward selflessness, merely emphasizes the galling strength of her egotism. Unable to sacrifice her individuality, she deliberately breaks rules so that she can be singled out by punishment. In addition, she insists that religious

vocations are not all alike, in reflection of their uniform destination, but are instead as varied as the nuns are individual. This theory enables her to feel superior to the nuns who have passed directly from their homes into the convent without a taste of the world. She is disappointed when her singing has attracted enough donations to pay off the debts of the convent, feeling that "henceforth there was nothing to strive for, nothing to hope for, and every day would be the fellow of the same as the day before" (ST, 190). Her religious impulse is not able to convince her that a woman in a convent might reasonably be supposed to be waiting and hoping for God.

Unable to distinguish between real selflessness and grandiloquent self-sacrifice, Evelyn accompanies her flamboyant self-abasement with comments on how much she has given up for her new vocation. At the same time, she clearly feels herself superior to the lay sisters, whom she describes to her father as "humble folk who strive in a humble way to separate themselves from the animal, and they see heaven from the wash-tub plainly" (ST, 102). Gradually she realizes that she has not achieved the ecstatic awareness of God experienced by her sisters. And as her contact with Monsignor Mostyn dwindles after her entry into the convent, she realizes that Christianity appeals to her intellect only. Denied the emotional involvement implicit in the role of a "bride of Christ," she finds that for the first time she has pursued an idea which is not embodied in a personal relationship. The situation seems so unnatural to her that it shakes her faith.

Her route to acceptance of a less personal commitment, one not involving any particular individual, is through an awareness of the hopelessness of egotism. She has taken pride in having supported

the convent as a contemplative order, both through direct donation and by singing to attract other donors. When the convent adds a school and becomes self-supporting, she feels personally defeated, for it is only as an enclosed order that the nuns are dependent upon her and therefore constitute a tribute to her generosity and her abilities as a provider. Learning of the decision to establish the school, she feels that her work "had undone itself, it had just crumbled away, and she saw it scattering like a little heap of dust" (ST, 231). It is this recognition of the temporary quality of the individual effort which enables her finally to escape her ego and, in so doing, to achieve peace.

Evelyn's metamorphosis is rendered plausible by the subtlety with which Moore indicates her status through slightly shifting interpretations of relatively stable objects. His most elaborate use of this technique is in the development of Evelyn's personal relationships. As a naive girl she is attracted by Owen's worldly glamour. And when the dazzling shopping tour in which Owen buys her wardrobe is echoed by a shopping spree with Ulick, it is clear how completely she has absorbed Owen's values: she seems materialistic and vulgar in comparison to Ulick's other-worldliness. Yet by the time Evelyn enters the convent, it is Ulick who seems worldly, pleading for marriage and pantheistic enjoyment of natural wonders in contrast to the pure spirituality Evelyn seeks in the cloister. Within the convent walls, however, Evelyn once again is on the worldly side of the comparison. Her egocentricity and realized sexuality not only trouble her, but even threaten the vocations of some of her sisters. It is the eventual renunciation of personal involvement, with either

men or women, which produces the final state of peace: a "broken spirit" (ST, 236).

A much simpler, and therefore perhaps more obvious, example of this technique is the career of Evelyn's chestnut horses. On the day she elopes with Owen, Evelyn enviously eyes the chestnuts belonging to an obviously sophisticated woman. In Paris, although Owen must provide Evelyn with transportation, she decides that a pair of chestnut horses is too ostentatious for a music student--they will come later. On her triumphant entry into London, she rides behind her chestnut horses. Finally, locked in her convent, feeling she has lost her vocation and without even the contemptible Ave Maria to sing, she remembers her past life and thinks "Ah! those chestnut horses, what had happened to them? were they dead? Maybe they were drawing cabs" (ST, 184). Building on such recurring but slightly shifting motifs, Moore achieves a totally convincing story of psychological change.

If Moore had confined his attention to Evelyn's development, he might have avoided the split which mars the novel. Even the extensive passages of musical analysis and criticism, although not apparently connected with the story, in fact are carefully woven into the account of Evelyn's development--her increasing sophistication, her self-awareness--so that they function as part of Evelyn's story. The real division in the novels involves Moore's concern, not with the separate segments of Evelyn's personality, as the two titles indicate, but with the over-development of Owen's role. Apparently unable to resist the temptation to tell once again the familiar story, Moore introduces into this basically uncongenial

environment a representation of the clever, meretricious, hedonistic, cynical world of John Harding. Not only is this final description of that way of life repetitive, it also suffers from the same failures which marred the earlier books.

Most of the problems in Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa seem to be provoked by inappropriateness and lapses of taste. Perhaps trying to make Owen seem real, Moore succeeds only in making him seem unpleasant:

> Awaking from his reverie, he raised himself from the mantelpiece. . . . Never had he thought so brilliantly, and he regretted that no magical stenographer should be there to register his thoughts as they passed. But they were gone. . . . Resuming his position against the mantelpiece, he continued his interrupted train of thoughts. . . . That God should concern himself at all in our affairs was strange enough, that he should do so seemed little creditable to him, but that he should manage us to the extent of the mere registration of a cohabitation in the parish books was—. Owen flung out his arms in an admirable gesture of despair and crossed the room. (EI, 72-73)

That Owen rivals even Mike Fletcher in narcissism as well as vanity is indicated by Owen's thoughts while waiting to go to his mistress' bedroom:

> Standing before the glass, his heart was swollen with a great pride. He remarked in his eyes the strange, enigmatic look which he admired in Titian and Vandyke, and he thought of himself as a principle--as a force; he wondered if he were an evil influence, and lost himself in moody meditations concerning the mystery of the attractions he presented to women. (EI, 146)

But though such attempts to characterize Owen are repellent, the disruptive elements are not always intrinsically undesirable. The monologue with which Lady Duckle is introduced is charming in itself:

> 'I heard "Lohengrin" last season. I was in Mrs Ayre's box. . . . She had a supper party afterwards, and when she asked me what I'd have to eat, I said, "Nothing with wings" . . . . Oh, that swan!'

> . . . There had been moments, she said, when she thought the people on the stage were making fun of them--'such booing!'--they had all shouted themselves hoarse--such wandering from key to key.
>
> 'Hoping, I suppose, that in the end they'd hit off the right ones. And that trick of going up in fifths. And then they go up in fifths on the half notes. I said if they do that again, I'll leave the theatre.' (EI, 143)

This short insertion is the sort of writing which was amusing in Confessions of a Young Man but seems out of place in the more muted context of Evelyn Innes.

Because most of these jarring passages reflect Moore's own prejudices and postures, it seems likely that they were provoked largely by an inability to weed himself out of the work.[5] For example, the theme of the book dictates that he maintain a generally sympathetic attitude toward the Church. The violence of his own anti-Catholicism, however, makes him unable to avoid redressing the balance occasionally with such inconspicuous but no doubt satisfying jibes as the information, gratuitous since canaries do not figure in the story, that after evening prayers "the nuns and the canaries were asleep in their cells and cages" (ST, 160), or Owen's announcement

[5] Charles Morgan copes with this split by attributing Moore's bad writing to "Amico Moorini," Moore's "enemy." (p. 13). However, I think Moore's own designation of Amico Moorini as a "disciple" is more appropriate. For one thing, not all the "bad" writing is in itself bad. Much of it is simply inappropriate. Further, even when they are actually bad, these unacceptable passages closely resemble the autobiographical writing in tone. Therefore, a struggle between Moore and anti-Moore is not indicated. Rather, the conflict seems to be between Moore the outrageous poseur and Moore the serious artist. A segregation into different genres solves the conflict. Though it is shocking for the author of Esther Waters to say "I don't care how the poor live; my only regret is that they live at all," in its context in Confessions of a Young Man (p. 483), it is the expected attitude. It is because of their similarity to the impudent tone of the autobiographical writing that I assign the inappropriate passages in the novels to Moore himself rather than to an anti-self.

that "that damned, stupid creed, which has reduced half Europe to decrepitude, has robbed me of her" (ST, 43).

Moore's struggles with religion are aired formally, too. The problem of morality is examined in what amounts to an essay:

> It is true that man is a moral animal, but it is not true that there is but one morality; there are a thousand, the morality of each race is different, the morality of every individual differs. The origin of each sect is the desire to affirm certain moral ideas which particularly appeal to it; every change of faith is determined by the moral temperament of the individual; we prefer this religion to that religion because our moral ideas are more implicit in these affirmations than in those.
>
> The restriction of sexual intercourse is the moral ideal of Western Europe. It is the one point on which all Christians are agreed; it is the one point on which they all feel alike. So inherent is the idea of sexual continence in the Western hemisphere that even those whose practice does not coincide with their theory rarely impugn the wisdom of the law which they break; they prefer to plead the weakness of the flesh as their excuse, and it is with reluctance that they admit that without an appeal to conscience it would be impossible to prove that it is wrong for two unmarried people to live together. It is not perceived that the fact that no material proof can be produced strengthens rather than weakens the position of the moralist. . . . That we cannot bring abstract moralities into the focus of our understanding is no argument. As well deny the stars because we cannot understand them. (EI, 328)

Moore attempts to justify this passage by attributing it to Evelyn as an interior monologue. Yet the shift in tone makes it obtrusive and the formality of the logical pattern is not in keeping with the usual pattern of Evelyn's thoughts.

Sister Teresa offers the most surprising breach of tone. An extended description of the sale of Evelyn's belongings prior to her entrance into the convent could scarcely be less appropriate to a representation of the moral struggles of a penitent:

> Lady Ascott's literary critic . . . was a man of sixty, gaunt, and wrinkled like a pelican about the throat. He meditated, as he walked, on Harding's objections to his article on style. Harding had said he did not believe in the possibility of writing ineptitudes in good style. Harding had said that he had known Hugo, Banville and Tourgueneff and that they had never spoken of style. He had said that the gods do not talk theology: 'they leave theology to the inferior saints and the clergy,' and the critic was distressed in his chocolate-coloured overcoat. . . . It was expected that Sir Owen would blaspheme, but he was unexpectedly gentle and sad; and eventually he took Lady Southwick round the room, and explained to her that Wedgwood and Hogarth were England's great artists. He pressed a Wedgwood dinner-service upon her, urging that it would be a souvenir of himself and Evelyn. He told her that the satinwood card tables, which he had bought for ten shillings a-piece, would be sold for thirty or forty pounds a-piece, and that night at dinner Lady Southwick raised a laugh at his expense, so amusingly did she tell how his sentimental affliction would be alleviated if the sale should prove a vindication of his taste. (ST, 17-19)

This posturing, vainglorious tone, which usually surrounds Owen and sometimes extends to Evelyn when she is exhibiting Owen's influence, contrasts sharply with the manner Moore uses in his more serious examination.

The discrepancy in style between the presentation of Owen's world and the rest of the book is more than a matter of occasional lapses, however. There is a difference in tone which is evident in almost every sentence. The parallel passages in which Evelyn goes to the picture gallery in Dulwich with each of her lovers illustrate the shift. The passage involving Owen is typically cynical:

> The tale of a past love affair often served Owen as a plank of transition to another. . . . It seemed to him extraordinary because it had happened to him, and it seemed to Evelyn very extraordinary, because it was her first experience of the ways of love.
>
> 'Then it was she who got tired of you? . . .'
>
> He judged it necessary to dissemble, and he advanced the

> theory which he always made use of on these occasions— that women were more capricious than men, that so far as his own experience counted for anything, he had invariably been thrown over. The object of this theory was two-fold. It impressed his listener with an idea of his fidelity, which was essential if she were a woman. It also suggested that he had inspired a large number of caprices, thereby he gratified his vanity and inspired hope in the lady that as a lover he would prove equal to her desire. It also helped to establish the moral atmosphere in which an intrigue might develop.
>
> 'Did you love her very much?'
>
> 'Yes, I was crazy about her. If I hadn't been, should I have rushed off in my old yacht for a tour round the world?'
>
> He felt the light of romance fall upon him, and this, he thought, was how he ought to appear to her.
>
> Yet he was sincere. He admired Evelyn, he thought he might like to be her lover, and he regarded their present talk as a necessary subterfuge, the habitual comedy in which we live. So, when Evelyn asked him if he still loved Georgina, he answered that he hated her, which was only partly true; and when she asked him if he would go back to her if she were to invite him, he said that nothing in the world would induce him to do so, which was wholly untrue. . . .
>
> Evelyn's story of her mother's death would have interested him if he had been able to bestow sufficient attention upon it, but the intricacy of the intrigue he was entering upon engrossed his thoughts. There were her love of her father, her duty towards him, and her piety to be overcome. Against these three considerable influences there were her personal ambition and her love of him. A very evenly matched game, he thought, and for nothing in the world would he have missed this love adventure.
>
> At that moment the words, 'A few days later she died,' caught on his ear. So he called all the sorrow and reverence he could into his eyes, sighed, and raised his eyebrows expressing such philosophic resignation in our mortal lot as might suffice to excuse a change in the conversation. . . .
>
> He was not without a suspicion that the pictures [in the gallery] were a secondary interest; but as it was clear that to hear him talk excited her admiration, he favoured her with all he knew regarding the Dutch school. She followed attentive as a peahen, he spreading a gorgeous tail of accumulated information. (EI, 51-55)

Although essentially the same material is covered in the interview with Ulick, even to the description of an old and still painful love-affair, the manner and effect are totally different:

> It was easy to tell Ulick of the story of the three days of hesitation which had preceded her elopement.
>
> 'The Colonnade,' and 'The Lady playing the Virginal,' had seemed to her symbols of the different lives which that day had been pressed upon her choice. Ulick explained that Fate and free will are not as irreconcilable as they seem. For before birth it is given to us to decide whether we shall accept or reject the gift of life. So we are at once the creatures and the arbiters of destiny. These metaphysics excited and then eluded her perceptions. . . . She remembered the girl with whom Ulick used to play Mozart in a drawing-room hung with faded tapestries, . . . or, beguiled by the sunshine, they had walked in the park. When Evelyn asked him what they said, he answered simply, 'We said that we loved each other.' But when he returned to Dieppe three months later, all was changed. When he spoke of their marriage she laughed the question away, and he perceived that his visits were not desired; on returning to England, all his letters were returned to him.
>
> 'You were very fond of her?'
>
> 'I was in love with her. . . .'
>
> 'But you have not told me what you used to talk to her about. You used to talk about your music. . . . Then she, what did she say?'
>
> 'We used to say that we loved each other.'
>
> 'I can hardly fancy your only saying that. . .you are still very fond of her? I can see you are.'
>
> He experienced a sense of discomfort in speaking of Eliane to Evelyn. Suddenly he remembered a journey to Brittany, which they had planned together, in search of folk tales, and she asked him of what he was thinking. He noticed the slight change of expression which passed in her eyes. It passed quickly, like a light cloud, blotting the sunlight out. She was jealous of the long conversations that this unaccomplished journey to Brittany must have entailed. (EI, 249-252)

This passage, both in its sense of integrity and in its gentle, abstracted tone, is representative of the general style of the two books.

The pervasiveness of the stylistic variation is illustrated by the different ways in which extraneous material is used to enrich the plot. For example, Owen's appreciation of Balzac might be intended to furnish a background for Evelyn's Parisian life. However, the passage is so extended, and so very slightly related to their life,

that it becomes apparent that its function is something quite different. It is not that Evelyn, and in passing, the reader, is to be enlightened about Balzac, but that she is to be impressed by Owen's knowledge and insight.

In a totally different vein is the Reverend Mother's telling of the story of the little sisters of the poor. So carefully is the story woven into the flow of the narrative that it is not until Evelyn has reached her final stage of understanding that the story assumes its full importance as an illustration of the difference between the individual and the total view.

In an analysis of Moore's total work, Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa constitute much more than simply very uneven novels. Since the unevenness is a reflection of the major shift in Moore's writing during his career, these books offer an excellent opportunity for studying that shift. And the fact that both the good writing and the bad are represented in the one work emphasizes how unaware Moore was of the difference in merit between the two--a fact already illustrated by the random scattering of good novels among the generally bad writing of his early career. However, it is possible that he, too, realized, on reading Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa, where the merits of the work lay, for these books mark the end of Harding, while the style of Evelyn's private world points directly to the writing of his last, highly successful, work.

IV

Esther Waters and The Lake

Six of George Moore's novels do not share in either the set of common characters or the common social milieu represented by Harding. Unlike the earlier works, these novels are in no way interrelated, each dealing with an individual problem. It is in these novels, which entirely depart from the entanglement of an autobiographical frame of reference, that Moore's talents as a novelist are fully developed. Of the six, only two—Esther Waters and The Lake—have a contemporary setting.

Upon a casual examination, a novel like Esther Waters seems out of place among George Moore's works. Rather than being a subtle examination of the development of a personality, it is a representation of dogged, even sullen, perseverence. Instead of describing a sensitive artist, it presents a rather unfeeling workingwoman. Not concerned with cultivated pleasures or social graces, it deals in social evils. Bearing little relation either to the pretentiously epigrammatic clumsy writing of the early work or to the intricately allusive, mood creating writing of the later work, its style is simple, blunt without being awkward. Despite its position as his "masterpiece,"[1] Esther Waters seems almost to be the antithesis, rather than the epitome, of Moore's work.

Yet it is not really so solitary a performance as these

[1] See Malcolm Brown's introduction to the Norton edition (1958), p. v.

differences would make it seem. As is characteristic of Moore's better work, the novel is basically a character study. Esther Waters is a kitchen maid whose "knowledge of life was strictly limited to her experience of life" (p. 20). She is too unimaginative to dream of a more successful life, humorless to the point of being unable to take part in the sharp-tongued kitchen chatter, too insensitive to realize even that she is being courted, too literal-minded to be stirred by her religion. The only life in her otherwise unrelievedly drab personality is a violent temper which results in--appropriately--sullen rages.

Inevitably, then, the "romance" of Esther's life story involves neither ecstasy nor venom. Responding with anger and religious guilt to her more casual than romantic seduction, she so sullenly rebuffs her seducer, the footman, that he gives up his plan to marry her and runs off with another woman. Thus, it is through her own fault that she is deserted and must try to rear her son alone. Although her struggle to survive and to keep her son is a long and difficult one, her difficulties are the result of economic pressures only. Unlike similar struggles in Dickens, or in Zola, she is not faced with vicious people: usually she encounters kindness, and at worst, indifference. Mrs. Barfield gives her enough money to see her through her confinement. Mrs. Lewis keeps Esther's son, Jackie, for nothing more than his expenses. Miss Rice hires Esther at higher wages than she really can afford to pay simply in order to help her. And even the "villains" are not really of evil intent. The baby farmer, although more or less a murderer, is complying with the wishes of the majority of her patrons. And it is surely not unnatural for

the upper class mother who employs Esther as a wetnurse to worry about the possibility of the transmission of disease from a sick, dirty baby to a clean, healthy one.

When William Latch returns, spoiling Esther's chances of making a marriage which would enable her to realize the only dream she has ever had about life--the security to devote her time to the church--he intends not to annoy or persecute her, but merely to reassert his honorable intentions. And if the offer he makes is, in conventional terms, neither honorable nor glamorous--he asks her to wait on the bar at his public house and to live with him so that his wife will have grounds for divorce--it is made in the wholly laudable intention of assuming responsibility for the family he did not know he had. Although Esther's life with William is an easy and even happy one, she is never truly comfortable in it, disapproving as she does of both drinking and gambling. It is therefore not without a certain awareness of justice that she returns, at William's death, to her former station of futureless drudge. Eventually returning to Mrs. Barfield as general servant and companion, she finds in the church the contentment that she had dreamed of achieving with Fred Parsons, and, in addition, she finds the means of rearing her son to man's estate.

Accenting the dead level of Esther's emotional life--in the beginning she wants to rear her son; in the end she is glad to have reared her son--is the curve of William Latch's career. Starting as a footman, he becomes the full owner of a prospering public house, only to slide back into poverty, eventually being too poor even to buy a ticket to Egypt where he might recover from tuberculosis.

Yet his final station is no lower than his beginning. And although he rose above his normal expectations for a time, the racehorses which were his undoing were the same agent which made his fortune. Far from being dogged by misfortune, he was at least as lucky on the horses as he could have reasonably expected to be—certainly much luckier than some of his companions.

Though gambling is William's downfall, Moore carefully does not deal in stereotypes: William works hard for his money. To be sure, he develops consumption from standing around the race tracks in bad weather, but it is not the betting itself which is to blame. Rather, the fault is with the law which renders bookmaking illegal when carried out in the comfort and security of the bar, thus driving the bookies to the track. And although William comes in the end to think in terms of sin and avenging angels, such retribution resides in his own feverish thought rather than in the structure of the book. The wasting away of Miss Mary seems to hint that, even if he had miraculously won enough money to get to Egypt, a second miracle could not have been expected there. Although he feels that he has failed in his duty to Esther in not having left her a competence, the failure of an inheritance which she, as a workingwoman, can scarcely have expected in no way tarnishes the contentment of her final stage.

Thus, although Esther's stolidity makes her unique among Moore's characterizations, the rise and fall of William point to the possibility of considering Esther Waters to be a companion piece to A Mummer's Wife. William's romantic vision of a better life, assumed to be a possibility largely because he wishes for it, like Kate's daydreaming, brings him, not success, but discontent. Esther's success therefore

seems almost an answer to William and Kate. Recognizing that "we don't choose our lives, we just makes the best of them" (p. 294), she governs her every choice, after her initial disastrous temper flareup, in terms of the rationally discovered sacrifice. Her life revolves around her desire to keep her son. Toward this end, she sacrifices her own comfort to keep him from the baby farmer, she endures the disgrace of the workhouse until she can make enough to support them both, she wears rags in order to provide for him, she sacrifices her dream of life with Fred since it would cause the eventual alienation of her son. At each opportunity to choose, Esther sacrifices the seeming shortcut to success. Yet in the end, it comes to the same thing; she can finally live at peace with a congenial companion in the comfort of her church and the knowledge of having reared her son.

In a sense, Esther was as much a gambler as William, for she determined to keep her son in the face of forbidding odds. Yet her success is the result of having made always reasonable sacrifices toward an attainable goal. William, on the other hand, sacrifices his health in the pursuit of the good fortune which is his only route to an unattainable goal. The hopelessness of William's struggle is epitomized by the dinner party on Derby Day:

> "Which is the best dinner here?" he asked the commissionaire.
>
> "The East Room is reckoned the best, sir."
>
> The fashion of the shaded candles and the little tables, and the beauty of an open evening bodice and the black and white elegance of the young men at dinner, took the servants by surprise, and made them feel that they were out of place in such surroundings. Old John looked like picking up a napkin and asking at the nearest table if anything was wanted. Ketley proposed the grill room, but William, who had had a glass more than was good for him, declared that he didn't

> care a damn--that he could buy up the whole blooming show. . . . Journeyman suggested a sluice, and they inquired their way to the lavatories. Esther and Sarah were away longer than the men, and stood dismayed at the top of the room till William called for them. . . . William had ordered champagne, but it had not proved to any one's taste except perhaps to Sarah, whom it rendered unduly hilarious; nor did the delicate food afford much satisfaction; the servants played with it, and left it on their plates; and it was not until William ordered up the saddle of mutton and carved it himself that the dinner began to take hold of the company. (p. 269)

Even when his winnings enable him temporarily to live in a way which is "above himself," he remains fundamentally a servant.

William seems unconsciously to have admitted the hopelessness of the struggle in having chosen the two most glamorous of shortcuts to wealth and, therefore, to position: marriage into the leisure class, and betting the horses. But his first wife cannot really abide marriage to a servant, as he himself taunts her, and one cannot always win on the horses, as he knows. Therefore, William's real failure is not the economic one of having lost his money, but instead is the psychological one of having failed to reach an unattainable goal through miraculous means.

Esther Waters was accepted by George Moore's contemporaries to be a "good" book:[2] it pointed out the evils of drink and gambling, and presented motherhood and the church triumphant in the face of a multitude of social ills. In fact, however, the book is an intensely bitter picture of man's fate. The "success" in the book is a strictly biological one: Esther rears her child. And although he is a soldier and may be killed tomorrow, still, she has reared him. This limited triumph has been achieved at the sacrifice of every less fundamental

[2] Brown, George Moore, p. 129.

concern. Indicative of Esther's total impoverishment in every area except physical survival is the loss of her mother's books and a pair of earrings Fred had given her. Although she could not learn to read, she loved the books as a reminder of the life she had enjoyed before her father's death. And her courtship with Fred, though she did not love him, offered a brief hope of return to that earlier withdrawal into the church. In choosing to marry William rather than Fred, she realizes that she is choosing the way of life rather than withdrawal. Nevertheless, as soon as she has achieved her biological triumph in rearing her son, she does gladly accept the chance to retreat into the church.

William's fate reinforces the grimness of this picture. Although he approaches life with higher hopes, he comes to Esther's position in the end. As he lies in the hospital, dying of consumption, Esther tells him of the defeat of the horse on whom his hopes of survival are pinned:

> "I knew, I can't tell you how, but I knew the mare wouldn't win. One always seems to know. Even when I backed her I didn't feel about her like I did about the other one, and ever since I've been feeling more and more sure that it wasn't to be. Somehow it didn't seem likely, and to-day something told me that the game was up, so I asked for this book. . . . There's wonderful beautiful things in it."
>
> "There is indeed, Bill; and I hope you won't get tired of it, but will go on reading it."
>
> "It's extraordinary how consoling it is. . . ."
>
> "I was saying that I never had that feeling about Chasuble as one 'as about a winner. Did she run second? Just like my luck if she did. Let me see the paper."
>
> Esther handed it to him
>
> "Bramble, a fifty to one chance, not a man in a hundred backed her; King of Trumps, there was some place-money lost on him; Young Hopeful, a rank outsider. What a day for the bookies!"
>
> "You mustn't think of them things no more," said Esther. "You've got the Book. . . ." (pp. 347-348)

That pun is the only trace of humor in the book, and it suggests the bleakness of Moore's intent. Placing it in opposition to the "dear gold" which rejuvinates Shoreham (p. 61), and the "bet on" which brings hope to the poor (p. 293), he uses the Bible as a symbol of the loss of hope: the dying William says "Look 'ere, do you know what book this is?—this is the Bible; that'll prove to you that I knew the game was up" (p. 347). The church is a refuge only in despair, for it offers neither guidance nor relief but only promises another world. In the present world, the only success is physical existence and the only relief from despair is the renunciation of hope.

The bleakness of the theme is reinforced by the austerity of the style. The writing is simple and direct and reflects the emotionlessness of the heroine. The shifting focus of the book also emphasizes Moore's point. Thus although Esther's struggle is the central plot, Esther herself is of varying importance: in the beginning, she is the center of the action, but after her marriage to William, when her own efforts are no longer of importance to the survival of her son, it is the general life surrounding the bar which is described—the different characters who frequent the bar, the techniques of gambling—and finally, when she has retreated to Woodview, a biological success, Esther becomes part of the general scene. Like the fallen trees and the neglected garden, she is one more natural item past its prime in the broad view of the countryside.

If Esther Waters is not read in terms of the spirit of reform general in England at the time of its publication, it will reveal itself to be not so different from Moore's other work after all. Though more bitter, and unrelieved by aesthetic sidelights, its theme

is essentially the same as that of the novel which granted peace to Evelyn Innes only upon her sacrifice of hope for personal expression. And in the accuracy with which the style and mood reflect the theme, the book points to the later work where a more unusual style makes this technique more obvious. Though the book may suffer somewhat from the fact that Moore chose as his heroine a character so totally lacking in light, nevertheless, the skill of the technical achievement, coupled with the vividness of Esther's very dullness, constitute a work of outstanding merit.

The Lake, fitting more obviously into the general trend of Moore's work, clearly grows out of the better half of Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa. Like them, it is a study of the religious impulse, but in this novel the development is away from, rather than toward, the church. The Lake is the story of a young priest, Father Gogarty, who has driven the school teacher, Rose Leicester, out of the parish because she is carrying an illegitimate child. Vaguely conscious that the violence of his reaction may have been provoked by a more manly than priestly interest in the woman, he is unable to dismiss the eipsode from his mind. Upon the discovery of Rose's address after several months of anguished uncertainty over her fate, Father Gogarty begins a correspondence with her. At first, the letters are in apology and in atonement. However, he is unable to conquer the feeling that Rose is a kindred spirit. And so he continues to write to her out of loneliness and a growing fascination with her view that life involves self fulfillment more than duty.

As with Evelyn Innes, Father Gogarty's development is indicated

in terms of a gradually shifting relationship to a relatively constant personality. Starting from a conviction of and devotion to absolute right and wrong, Father Gogarty becomes aware, through the urging of his own conscience and through the reprimand of a fellow priest, that his understanding has been too rigid. Then, under a barrage of theological argument from Rose, he begins to find the rules themselves too inflexible. When his position is further undermined by Rose's obvious enjoyment of her life in contrast to his admitted discontent, he finally sheds his priestly garb, in doubt as to whether the ritual of the Church has any validity. Originally intending to chastise and instruct, he comes to seek guidance. The progression from conviction through bewilderment and increasing depression to a new, tentative, conviction is represented by the shifting tone of his interior monologue and of his letters to Rose.

Except for this shifting frame of mind, there is very little action in the book, and the few incidents that do take place are closely involved in character development. For example, the curate, Father Moran, feels driven, for no apparent reason, to visit Father Gogarty on the night he had planned to swim the lake. Had it not been for Father Moran's visit, Father Gogarty would have been drowned by a suddenly rising wind. Clearly the visit was an omen. But were the visit and the wind warnings that he should remain faithful to his duty in Garranard, or was the visit God-sent to save him from the already scheduled wind? In the end, he can conclude only: "Of what use are signs and omens if the interpretation is always obscure?" (p. 299)

Similarly, Father Gogarty's last contacts with his parishioners

serve to illustrate his final attitude toward his priestly function. His last priestly duty is to baptise Philip Rean who, stolen by one grandmother and already baptised by the protestant minister, has been half an hour a protestant. The other grandmother insists on the second ceremony not for the sake of the child's soul--although even that might have seemed questionable to Father Gogarty--but to prevent his becoming a "Black Protestant." In contrast to this ridiculous scene, which makes a travesty of the sacrament, is the human and valuable contact with Pat Kearney. Father Gogarty writes a note directing Father Moran not to chrage more than a pound for the marriage ceremony of this man who is too poor even to cover himself decently enough to apply for work. It is significant that the materialistic help takes the form of an attempt to protect the people from the clergy. In these two contacts is summed up Father Gogarty's contribution to Garranard. The uselessness of the misunderstood religious ceremony contrasts sharply with the genuine contribution he can make on the human, materialistic level, and helps to clarify his choice.

Description, as well as action, is devoted to character development. Although by the end of the book the reader has gathered a vivid picture of the woods and the lake, these physcial surroundings are never deliberately described in terms of stage setting, but are simply suggested, aspect by aspect, as they become appropriate to the progression of the mood. Thus, even the central image, the lake itself, fluctuates in significance, according to the state of mind of the observer, Father Gogarty. Early in the book, when he is first struggling with the accusations of Father O'Grady, he looks at the lake and meditates:

> He wondered what this lake reminded him of: it wound in and out of gray shores and headlands, fading into dim pearl-coloured distance, and he compared it to a shroud, and then to a ghost, but neither comparison pleased him. It was like something, but the image he sought eluded him. At last he remembered how in a dream he had seen Rose drowned. She wore a white dress, and this lake seemed like her; there were her knees, and the white gown floating, filling the stream. 'I am only thinking nonsense, but no matter. Yes, the lake reminds one of one's guilt. "Every man has a lake in his heart."' He had not sought the phrase, it had come suddenly into his mind. Yes, 'every man has a lake in his heart.' (p. 57)

Later, in a last minute quandary as to whether he should stay in his parish or go to America, he stares at the lake which is as warm as a bath, and decides that, even if, in America, "he remained to the end of his day a humble reporter, he would still have the supreme satisfaction of knowing that he had not resigned himself body and soul to the life of the pool, to a frog-like acquiescence in the stagnant pool" (p. 327). And finally, the lake becomes the destiny determining challenge, for, resting after having swum across the lake to his new freedom,

> he looked across the lake. 'A queer dusky night,' he said, 'with hardly a star, and that great moon pouring silver down the lake.' He could hear the lake's warble, 'singing,' he said, 'in the dim silence, and the lake shadowy and distant as my past life. . . .'
>
> As he dozed in the train, in a corner of an empty carriage, the spectral light of the lake awoke him, and when he arrived at Cork it seemed to him that he was being engulfed in the deep pool by the Joycetown shore. On the deck of the steamer he heard the lake's warble above the violence of the waves. 'There is a lake in every man's heart,' he said, clinging to a wet rope; he added, 'And every man must ungird his loins for the crossing.' (pp. 333-334)

Thus, in its concern with the religious problem and in its technique of presenting neither action nor description for any purpose other than the development of character and mood, The Lake is closely related to Evelyn Innes. Yet in total achievement it is far superior

to the earlier work, for it avoids the unevenness represented by the Owen Asher sections of Evelyn Innes and, by abandoning plot almost entirely, emphasizes the use of mood to establish unity. The excellence of the results may have impressed Moore both with his weaknesses and his strengths, for throughout the rest of his novel writing career, he capitalized upon the unifying possibilities of muted action and of mood.

V

The Historical Novels

All of Moore's new novels, after The Lake, were historical novels. Yet as he pointed out, his intention was not didactic.[1] He attempted simply to give a sense of history, for his use of the historical framework had very little to do with the recreation of the past. Choosing past time and, in two instances, well known stories, he reduced the importance of plot by lessening its immediacy. Such a downgrading of plot is related to the technique he developed in The Lake, where plot was rendered unimportant by an almost total absence. Relieved of the anxiety to know how the book ends, Moore's readers could be expected to devote more attention to his style. And certainly it is the manner in which these later stories are told, rather than the stories themselves, which makes them worthy of attention.

The Brook Kerith, for example, is not primarily an attack on Christianity, just as Esther Waters is not really a tract intended to alleviate the plight of unwed mothers. Instead, it is a retelling of the Christ legend in a version whose alterations make it acceptable to Moore. Taken from the cross in a coma rather than in death, Jesus is nursed back to health by Joseph of Arimathea and returns to his old monastery where he develops a new philosophy emphasizing the multiplicity of man's truth and the self-sufficiency of God. The

[1] See his letter to Edmund Gosse, reprinted in Charles Joseph Burkhardt's unpublished dissertation, The Letters of George Moore to Edmund Gosse, W. B. Yeats, R. I. Best, Miss Nancy Cunard, and Mrs. Mary Hutchinson (College Park, Md., 1958), p. 188.

importance of the book is not this philosophy itself--despite the differences between Jesus and an opera singer, there is, in the philosophies they present, a close kinship between The Brook Kerith and Sister Teresa--but rather the consistency with which this philosophy is embodied in the structure of the book.

Taking the basic premise of Jesus' teaching to be brotherly love--the sacrifice of one's self for others--Moore examines its good and bad points, and indicates its ultimate irrelevance. Jesus advocates selflessness to the point of suicide; Pilate defensively explains to Joseph that it was Jesus himself who forced the crucifixion. Nevertheless Jesus demands fanatical devotion from his followers, devotion to the point of deserting wives and children and ailing fathers. He eventually comes to realize that he sought his crucifixion, not to lead the way in self-sacrifice, but to call attention to himself as divinely appointed: he suffered from overweening pride, not excessive humility.

Another aspect of the falseness of Jesus' original position is illustrated by the encounter between Jesus, recovered from the ordeal on the cross and from the hallucinations of his preaching career, and Paul, the follower of Christ. Having intended to die in order to give point to his insistence that men should stop wrangling over points of the law, Jesus learns from Paul's report that he has merely triggered an entirely new set of quibbling arguments. Thus his attempted sacrifice is twice vain: once because it is motivated by false pride and again because it results in no real reconstruction of religious attitudes.

In replacement of the traditional death on the cross, which he

has shown to be self-aggrandizing and insane, Moore substitutes the genuine self-sacrifice of Joseph of Arimathea. Despite a denunciation from Jesus for returning to his father's sickbed, Joseph follows Jesus to the point, eventually, of deserting his father. Defying public animosity, he pleads for Jesus' body from Pilate. And, finding Jesus to be still alive on his removal from the cross, Joseph risks his life to nurse Jesus back to health. He entertains further danger by granting Jesus' wish to stay in his house even after he is physically well. And ultimately he is killed because of his connection with Jesus. Joseph's is the true self-sacrifice, for he takes his fatal risk knowing that Jesus is lost to him because of the psychic changes wrought by his ordeal. Honor and fame are no more accessible to him than is the personal gain of Jesus' friendship, for Joseph's death comes in a street fight reported only by lepers and beggars. And ten years later, he is not even called by name, but is referred to simply as "Gaddi's partner" (p. 352). In contrast to the acclaim accorded to Jesus, who did not really die on the cross, it is a singularly ignominious death for one who did truly give up his life for another.

Impelled by the physical ordeal on the cross and the emotional suffering occasioned by the loss of his friend, Joseph, Jesus comes ultimately to repudiate his earlier preaching and the invalid extremes to which it led him. Yet the change does not depend solely on these two fearful shocks. It is prepared for by a number of minor situations, in addition. Instead of the recurring physical items typical of earlier works--Esther Waters' books, Evelyn Innes' chestnut horses--the repeated items in The Brook Kerith are, appropriately enough, scraps of philosophy, both stated and embodied. For example, the idea

present in Evelyn Innes that suffering cannot be reduced but only spread around is frequently present here. The first lesson the young Joseph has from his teacher, Azariah, is that "it is hard . . . to do good without doing wrong to another" (p. 18). And when he is grown, he realizes that "giving . . . to the poor in Galilee . . . would deprive my camel-drivers of their living" (p. 136). Unable to bring himself to desert his father's sickbed, he cannot keep himself from thinking that Jesus taught that "one must learn to hate one's father and one's mother, one's wife and one's children before one can love God" (p. 182). Incidents in the lives of the characters demonstrate the validity of these thoughts. Joseph prevails upon Pilate to put an end to the robbing of caravans by crucifying the robbers. After Pilate's departure and Joseph's death, it is Jesus who organizes the shepherds in a protest at the upsurge of robbing, thus triggering a new series of crucifixions. And it is Jesus' recognition of what he has done, when he accidentally comes upon one of the crucified, that finally starts his mind to working again after the long period following his own crucifixion during which he self-protectively avoids thoughts both of the past and of the future. Emphasizing the idea that it is at this moment of recognition that Jesus finally begins to grasp the truth, the narrative for the first time shifts to Jesus' point of view. And in the series of interior monologues which follows, Jesus works out his new philosophy.

As he did in Esther Waters, Moore manipulates the focus of this novel throughout, to emphasize the point he is making. Thus, early in the book, when Jesus was more concerned with teaching than with understanding, he is presented through the eyes of those he would

teach. Joseph learns of him first through hearsay and by witnessing the ecstatic vision of a locust chewing hermit. And, except for the accidental encounter by the lakeside, he must make his way to Jesus, significantly, through the wrangling of his disciples. During Jesus' long period of shock after his crucifixion, the story is largely concerned with the details of the life around him. Told from his point of view only until he has achieved his new vision of the meaning of life, the story shifts away from Jesus again after his meeting with Paul. The futility of his hope of atonement through testifying against Paul is emphasized in the final focus on Paul, whose preaching persuaded everyone "on all matters concerning Jesus, his birth, his death and his resurrection" (p. 391).

Another of Moore's techniques which reappears in this novel is the use of verbal echoes for a cumulative effect. For example, Joseph tells his father of one of Jesus' exploits involving a "fool" who is "clearly possessed by many devils," a "poor, naked creature [who] would take a beating or a gift of food for his singing with the same gentle grace" (p. 168). The refrain of his song is "woe! woe! woe!" and when he is not singing, he wails and cries "woe! woe! woe! unto thee Jerusalem, woe! woe!" (p. 168). Shortly after the contact with this poor crazed creature, Jesus is pictured in a violent denunciation of Joseph's attendance to his ailing father. Jesus' frenzy culminates in an annunciation of general doom with the shout: "Woe, woe, woe, I say unto you . . . woe! woe! woe! unto thee, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Magdala" (p. 185). Coupled with the obviously indefensible attack on Joseph, the verbal echo suggests a madness which, though never flatly stated, is implied throughout the book.

Despite all the critical notice of its monotony and uniformity, the style, too, reflects the import of the story. Thus, embodying the advice of Esora, Jesus' nurse, the passages dealing with Jesus' recovery are written in simple language and deal with "actual things": the raking of leaves, the puppies, the homemade crutches Joseph fashions. When the story concerns Mathias, the most philosophically concerned of the brothers at the monastery, the language completely deserts the actual and refers to metaphysics only:

> Mathias's face lighted up, and, foreseeing his opportunity to make show of his Greek proficiency, he began: heaven is our intelligence and the earth our sensibility. The spirit descended into matter, and God created man according to his image, as Moses said and said well, for no creature is more like to God than man: not in bodily form (God is without body), but in his intelligence; for the intelligence of every man is in a little the intelligence of the universe, and it may be said that the intelligence lives in the flesh that bears it as God himself lives in the universe, being in some sort a God of the body, which carries it about like an image in a shrine. Thus the intelligence occupies the same place in man as the great President occupies in the universe--being itself invisible while it sees everything, and having its own essence hidden while it penetrates the essences of all other things. Also, by its arts and sciences, it finds its way through the earth and through the seas, and searches out everything that is contained in them. And then again it rises on wings and, looking down upon the air and all its commotions, it is borne upwards to the sky and the revolving heavens and accompanies the choral dances of the planets and stars fixed according to the laws of music. And led by love, the guide of wisdom, it proceeds still onward till it transcends all that is capable of being apprehended by the senses, and rises to that which is perceptible only by the intellect. And there, seeing in their surpassing beauty the original ideas and archetypes of all the things which sense finds beautiful, it becomes possessed by a sober intoxication, like the Corybantian revellers, and is filled with a still stronger longing, which bears it up to the highest summit of the intelligible world till it seems to approach to the great king of the intelligible world himself.
> (pp. 388-389)

Yet when Jesus is thinking about much the same problem as that absorbing Mathias, the reference is to his own life, in keeping with his

early habit of talking in parables:

> In the desert he had looked for God in the flowers that the sun called forth and in the clouds that the wind shepherded, and he had learnt to prize the earth and live content among his sheep, all things being the gift of God and his holy will. He had not placed himself above the flowers and grasses of the earth, nor the sheep that fed upon them, nor above the men that fed upon the sheep. He had striven against the memory of his sin, he had desired only one thing, to acknowledge his sin, and to repent. But is seemed to him that anger and shame and sorrow, and desire of repentence had dropped out of his heart. It seemed to him as he turned and pursued his way that some new thought was striving to speak through him. Rites and observances, all that comes under the name of religion, estranges us from God, he repeated. God is not here, nor there, but everywhere: in the flower, and in the star, and in the earth underfoot. He has often been at my elbow, God or this vast Providence that upholds the work; but shall we gather the universal will into an image and call it God?--for by doing this do we not drift back to the starting-point of all our misery? We again become the dupes of illusion and desire; God and his heaven are our old enemies in disguise. He who yields himself to God goes forth to persuade others to love God, and very soon his love of God impels him to violent words and cruel deeds. It cannot be else, for God is but desire, and whosoever yields to desire falls into sin. To be without sin we must be without God.
> (pp. 356-357)

Appropriately to the habits of Jesus, the whole book comes finally to seem a parable. It is the representation of a familiar thing--the Christ story--with a new significance. The story is filtered through an oral story-teller's style in a way which reduces its violence but creates a sense of history without the necessity of meticulous period detail. It is the appropriateness of style which is the keynote to Moore's success in the novel. Since it harmonizes with Moore's total intent of telling an old story with a new twist and reflects his specific intention in each scene in choice of word and detail, the style produces a sense of unity otherwise lacking in Moore's work. Thus, in The Brook Kerith, Moore demonstrated that he could use style to cope with the problems of plot as effectively as he used it to

compensate for the lack of plot in The Lake.

Heloise and Abelard is an illustration of how totally Moore was concerned with the effects of events rather than with the events themselves. In contrast to his approach to the story of Jesus, he accepted the basic facts concerning Heloise and Abelard, freeing himself almost completely from the responsibility of telling what happened. This factual similarity emphasizes the difference in tone between Moore's story and the historical version. In Moore's hands, the original love affair, although developing rapidly, is not a matter of calculated betrayal.[2] Heloise's ecstatic response to Abelard's lecture, publicly kissing his hands, and her secret trip to the Cathedral to see him, make the affair more a matter of mutual provocation than of seduction. Moore's revision of Heloise's reasons for becoming a nun also makes Abelard seem less coldblooded. Moore presents her retreat as her own idea, a renunciation designed to nullify their marriage and thereby free Abelard for a career as a philosopher in the Church. This is a considerable softening of the historical image of Abelard ridding himself of Heloise so that he can retire to a monastery after his mutilation.

Moore's characterization of Heloise is softened too. She sends for her son, Astrolabe, as soon as he is old enough to travel and finds relief from the monastic life in rearing him. Rewriting Astrolabe's life, Moore has him lured away to the children's crusade by a mad priest, picturing Heloise as a bereaved mother instead of the neglect-

[2] I have derived my estimation of the historical situation from Etienne Henry Gilson's Heloise and Abelard (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1960).

ful parent history indicates.[3] The effect of such changes is to render more attractive the characterizations of both Heloise and Abelard. Instead of the coldly self-seeking, violent, ambitious philosopher, Abelard becomes a tenderly devoted lover, mainly interested in writing and singing love songs. And rather than being a fish-wife and predatory female, Heloise becomes a loving wife, anxious to contribute to her husband's reputation.

These changes enable Moore to make a familiar point about life. On their last journey together toward their separate monasteries, Abelard and Heloise "rode in the sad belief that their lives were wasted and that their last hope was heaven" (p. 252). Once again, Moore is pointing out that it may be heroic to try to control your life and gallant to sacrifice yourself for your vision, but the partiality of man's knowledge renders the attempt inevitably destructive. In ironic contradiction of their "sad belief," Heloise and Abelard achieved the fame they sought at such great price, but since they could not know of it, their ultimate success did not alter the fact that their lives were a waste to them.

It is interesting to read Heloise and Abelard in connection with Evelyn Innes, for it contains the same dual focus on music and religion. Abelard is depicted as a man who is just as eager to write and sing love songs as to teach philosophy. Yet the division does not detract from the unity of the plot, for the dual interests are presented as aspects of Abelard's character rather than as a shift in the intention of the novel. Thus Abelard's irresponsible tour

[3] See Joseph McCabe's Peter Abelard (New York, 1901), p. 250.

as a gleeman immediately following his having left Heloise in Brittany seems an understandable reaction against all the pressure she has been applying toward a struggle for fame as a philosopher. In addition, the digression emphasizes his reluctance to return to the school in which he has lost interest.

Moore was criticized for gullibility in his literal use of the tradition of the gleemen and the courts of love.[4] And although the criticism may be justified, it is also possible, particularly in view of Moore's concept that historical novels need not recreate history, that he simply found the tradition a useful device. For the passages which concern the trouveres offer him the opportunity to discuss theories of love and marriage without specifically speculating about Heloise and Abelard. For example, at one court of love, the principle is affirmed that love cannot exist in marriage, and therefore, if lovers marry, their love dies. This edict emphasizes Heloise's efforts to avoid marriage and suggests the possibility that their love would not have assumed such mythic proportions if they had not renounced their marriage vows. In losing their happiness, they preserved their love. The point becomes important in terms of their final belief in their wasted lives.

It is true that the passages concerning gleemen detract from the book in being too long and meandering. They do not affect the unity of the structure, however, partly because they are related in theme, but also because the uniformity of the style renders the side excursions and the main plot in the same mood.

[4] Brown, George Moore, p. 179.

The gleemen do not represent the only deviation from an orderly organization. As is characteristic of Moore's later work, the narrative is saturated with apparent digressions and asides which, although individually insignificant, cumulate to support and illustrate character and theme. Thus, Madelon, the earthy servant, points out that fields are really yellow, not green. And when Heloise and Abelard stop romantically on their journey to Brittany to listen to the cawing of the rooks, Madelon insists that stopping results not in enjoying the song but in being covered with the birds' droppings. The introduction of her common sense emphasizes the romanticism of Heloise and Abelard.

Heloise's idealistic approach to life is illustrated by her reverie on looking out the window of her uncle's house. Watching the river, she thinks, "I should not have known how beautiful they [the ducks] are when swimming in a river if I had not read Virgil" (p. 81). It is the literary image rather than the physical fact which she responds to. Virgil promotes a further example of the constancy with which she separates the flesh and the spirit: "If it had not been for Virgil, she repeated, all I should have known of love was the fact that Sister Paula had had a baby and put it out to nurse in the village--a mere physical experience that befell her as it might any animal" (pp. 49-50). Working with such insignificant details, Moore unobtrusively establishes Heloise's character as so unworldly that her idealistic renunciation of her lover, and in effect, of her life, can be accepted.

Although the style of this novel is less noticeably that of the spoken narrative than was true of The Brook Kerith, it shares the long,

interlocking sentences and the overlapping trains of thought. Yet the tone is more nearly that of reverie than of monologue. The composition of a song and the theft of a child are described at the same pitch. If violence loses much of its vividness, it gains in horror. It is at least as painful to observe Heloise mending Astrolabe's clothes to try to convince herself he will return as it would be to follow him as he struggled along the road to Jerusalem. The result of the style is to emphasize not events themselves, but their results. It is this concern with the materials of reverie, as well as the length and structure of the sentences, which produces the mood.

The success of Heloise and Abelard is particularly interesting in that the novel is in many ways quite similar to Evelyn Innes and Sister Teresa. In addition to the dual interests in music and religion, both books concern a woman's struggle to endure monastic life without any real vocation. And in each case the struggle ends not with reconciliation to God but in loss of hope. There is a further though less obvious link in the fact that the historical character of Abelard before his calamity seems to have been remarkably similar to the introductory portrait of Owen Asher in coldness, arrogance and self-esteem. Yet Moore, disturbed by the harshness of Abelard's character, altered him sufficiently to suit the novel, thereby avoiding a repetition of the cause of a former failure. The adjusted portrait of Abelard, contributing to rather than detracting from the novel, furnishes a key to Moore's success.

Ulick and Soracha constitutes almost an illustrated lecture by

Moore on his creative techniques. Discussions between Moore and Alec Trusselby concerning theories of story telling bracket the tale and add to its importance. And although the story of Ulick and Soracha is in itself perhaps too much a matter of the trouveres of Heloise and Abelard transplanted to Ireland to be particularly significant in itself, it furnishes delightful illustrative material for Moore's running commentary.

Working for the effect of the folk tale, Moore achieves a flowing conversational style which, with its long, loosely connected sentences, is obviously the product of his "melodic line." Nevertheless the style is clearly distinct from that of either The Brook Kerith or Heloise and Abelard. Although vague in general effect, the focus of the narrative is highly concrete. Becoming absorbed in a small number of specific details, the style of this book falls somewhere between the Naturalistic description of A Mummer's Wife and the complete subjectivity of The Brook Kerith: the narrative does depend on factual description, and yet the representation of the surroundings is not sufficiently inclusive to present a total picture. This technique gives the story very much a folk tale flavor.

An example of Moore's method is the description of Ulick's tour of Castle Carra. The only details about the castle are contained in the first half sentence, yet the passage is not lacking in concreteness:

> On our way to the men's quarters we shall pass through the kitchens, sir, and coming from France you will be able to tell that there are other ways of cooking pork than boiling it. . . . Our cook, though a Frenchman, is very Irish through no fault of his own, for his father died when he was on the breast. In how many ways, Tadhg, canst thou prepare beans

> and pork? Ulick asked. In a dozen, Tadhg answered. Then, Tadhg, thou'lt instruct the cook, for he knows but one. I'd do it gladly, your honour, if I had more French on the tongue. Around the pots and pans you will come to an understanding! And on these words they passed through the great door into the sunny air and waited on top of the steps to admire better the pink bellies of the pigs, whose enjoyment in the sun Landrey explained by the fact that they had just come from the trough and were digesting their meal. I cast no blame upon the pigs, sir (they do all they can to become good pork), but upon the cook and an iron pot. Tadhg, said Ulick, thou'lt impart thy cooking to the wretched Norman who boils pork in a pot. I would not have believed your story, Captain Landrey, had I not heard it from your own lips! Such stories are sad, but lose some of their sadness when told on a lovely autumn morning on steps above an orchard, when damsons are darkening in the branches and the mint bed loses its scent, and the season of pork in all its multiple varieties is about to begin. (pp. 79-80)

The tendency to pay excessive attention to irrelevant detail is justified by the passage in which Ulick upbraids Tadhg for taking as an oracle "every stick and every stone, every hare and every rabbit" (p. 123). When signs and portents are omnipresent, any object or event may have some supernatural meaning in addition to its factual existence and this possibility of universal mystical connectedness renders everything appropriate. On the other hand, as Moore points out to Alec in the opening passage, a story teller cannot be expected to remember all the details every time he tells the story. Therefore, although he is devoted to specific facts, the weakness of his memory and the fluid nature of his art make it impossible to present all the details. The result is an intensely concrete narrative which is too incomplete to represent a whole, except, perhaps, on the level of mysticism where a raven and a pig can indicate a universe.

This reliance on minute detail to indicate the story as a whole is echoed in the relationship of Sir Ulick's quest to the invasion of Ireland by the Bruces. In a consultation inserted into the middle

of the story, Alec upbraids Moore that "we are mostly through the story without coming to a battle" (p. 137), and adds "I'd have had Edward Bruce the hero of the story" (p. 138). This "criticism" enables Moore to point out that he is not writing the history of Ireland. Instead, he is reflecting the history in the pillaged farmers who must live on cress, the assumed fate of the nuns of Soracha's convent at the hands of the invaders, Ulick's shocking sight of his defeated and humbled father, the superstitions of Tadhg. These incidents epitomize all Moore's familiar attitudes toward Ireland. But the mingled pity and contempt are only suggested here, not stated as in A Drama in Muslin.

Although the folk tale of Ulick and Soracha has a plot, Moore has not deserted his interest in downgrading plot. Rather than telling the story to its end, he confesses that he has run out of ideas and asks Alec to provide an ending. In thus illustrating the idea that a plot is merely a backbone invented to support a tale, he emphasizes his concept of the greater importance of the story teller's manner. Further, he proves his point by creating an entertaining story while grandiloquently refusing the assistance of the suspense which a more conventional handling would have provided.

It is not surprising, considering the age and health of the author, that Aphrodite in Aulis adds little to Moore's total work. In general, it simply constitutes a reassertion of ideas, both thematic and stylistic, already present in earlier works. Ostensibly a tale of classic Greece, it is really more concerned with the relation of celebacy, or at least continence, to artistic creativity. Developing in considerable detail an idea present in Heloise and Abelard, Evelyn Innes, Vain For-

tune and _Mike Fletcher_, Moore here presents marriage as being destructive to artists. Kebren, an actor, is completely devoured by marriage. Instead of devoting his youth to the public reading and interpretation of literature, he accepts a marriage which defeats his interest in dramatic performances by demanding his attention to his father-in-law's shipping business. In contrast to Kebren's gradual change from artist to uxorious materialist are the lives of his two sons. As a sculptor and an architect, they would have avoided marriage in their devotion to art. But their mother, Biote, who with the help of her father more or less trapped Kebren into the marriage which was his artistic downfall, also connives at the marriage of her sons.

Rhesos, the sculptor and the better artist, is more concerned than his brother over the threat which marriage constitutes to his genius. Though he does marry, he thinks of his wife more as a model than as a wife. His mother observes that "he had little more from Earine than he would have had from any other girl coming to his workshop as a pattern" (p. 286). Throughout his artistic career, he is "barely a husband" (p. 377). And it is only after the completion of his major work, the statue to Aphrodite, that he will commit himself to his marriage--a commitment symbolized by his eventual willingness to have children.

On the other hand, Rhesos' brother Thrasillos, the father of twins, is less dedicated to art and has more in common with his father. Moore does not indicate a causal relationship between children and lessened artistic achievement. Thrasillos is, from his birth, the lesser of the brothers: Otanes, the grandfather, declared the new-born Rhesos to have "a poet's head" (p. 91), while "Thrasillos's head was

not a good one. He'll always be behind Rhesos, always a laggard, without instincts" (p. 92). Evidently in Thrasillos' case an interest in marriage accompanies rather than causes diminished talent. On the other hand, Kebren's marriage to the willful and demanding Biote seems to have caused his failure of artistic achievement.

The book is more than simply three illustrations of the premise that artists should not marry. Its unhurried pace includes literary criticism, philosophical speculation, artistic theory, historical description and religious analysis. For example, Kebren, as an aspiring actor, discusses the way in which Homeric legend emerged from traditional folk stories. Also concerning the relation of literature to folk lore is Moore's editorial comment: "The poets write twenty different plays on the same subject; everything is in the telling" (p. 195). The remark is interesting in conjunction with Moore's use of historical tales. Another interesting rephrasing of one of Moore's familiar themes is Kebren's speculation on the reason behind his summons to Aulis: "The power of the Gods over men is not stinted to one generation and it may be that this journey to Aulis lies beyond the scope and business of my life, that I am but an instrument, to be thrown aside when that which is decreed is on its way to fulfillment" (p. 3). To replace Chance, which concerned him in his earlier work, Moore here analyzes the role of Fate in human affairs. The inclusion of such related but by no means essential material is rendered permissible by the relaxed tone of the work.

The first sentence of the book indicates the futility of reading for plot: "About an hour after midnight Kebren was roused from his sleep by a voice crying in his ear: To Aulis! To Aulis! Why to

Aulis? he asked, as he lay between sleeping and waking, certain that he must obey the voice, but uncertain whether he should wait till morning or begin the journey now" (p. 1). Since the general tone is one of such casual unconcern with causes and such a bland acceptance of Fate, suspense is virtually nonexistent. Prophecy need not destroy suspense since it may prove to be right, wrong, or irrelevant. Still, the acceptance of rather than the search for Destiny and the prophesies which are right, and are never assumed not to be, render the end apparent from the beginning. Thus, though he has not availed himself of an already used device--lack of action, the reader's foreknowledge of a well known story or an autobiographical narrator's tag at beginning and end--Moore nevertheless continues here the low-keyed tone characteristic of his last works.

VI

Conclusion

Throughout his long career, Moore dealt always with the same concern: man's relation to his environment. His concept of environment shifted--for Lewis Seymour and Kate Ede it was the society, while for Evelyn Innes and Jesus it was the universe--but his concept of the relationship never altered. Whether the book described the sullen Esther Waters or the learned Heloise, the consideration is the same: each character is confronted with a universe neither hostile nor beneficient and is analyzed in terms of his ability to recognize and cope with the indifference.

His work was by no means a uniform performance, however. At his worst, his characters were stilted, inconsistent and shadowy. Their conversations were awkward and pretentious. The plots were illogical and wandering. During his early career, Moore experimented with a number of techniques to overcome these difficulties. Satire furnished a temporary and partial solution, for it does not demand rounded, but merely consistent, characters. In addition, Moore's biting sense of humor rendered it an obvious possibility. But this solution, used in Spring Days and in parts of A Drama in Muslin and A Mummer's Wife, was not acceptable to him, for his purpose in writing was a more dramatic one. The trappings of Naturalism also offered a temporary success. Yet, as A Mummer's Wife demonstrates, Naturalism was not congenial to him. Even this most Naturalistic of his novels is not truly Zolaesque in theme, despite the derivation of its outward appearance. Moore's efforts at self-improvement were not markedly successful so long as he

remained within the conventional framework of plot and character development through dialogue and action. It was only when he learned to avoid his weaknesses rather than struggle with them that his talents could develop.

In Confessions of a Young Man, Moore referred to the "parasites of artistic work--ideas" (p. 456). The concept is informing. His failures are filled with these "parasites." Vain Fortune and A Mere Accident really constitute little more than a bare idea. And though such novels as A Modern Lover and Mike Fletcher are much less sparsely presented, still they lose little in plot summary: the "fiction" has added almost nothing to the idea.

In contrast, Moore's successful novels almost defy synopsis, for they are not primarily concerned with either action or idea. In Avowals, Moore wrote that "real literature is concerned with description of life and thoughts about life rather than with acts" (p. 111). If his earlier denunciation of ideas is added, the sentence can stand as a description of Moore's successful work. It is on this basis of primary intention rather than on differences in style that the good work separates itself from the inferior. Moore's "Naturalistic masterpiece" makes the distinction important. Judged stylistically, Esther Waters is more akin to Moore's unsatisfactory early work than to his achievements in the manner of the melodic line. However, if judged on the area of its concern—whether with ideas and acts or with life—its kinship to The Brook Kerith, for example, is obvious.

This distinction does not indicate that the successful work is devoid of ideas, as has, indeed, been suggested.[1] Rather, much the

[1] Joseph Hone, "George Moore," Times Literary Supplement (London) LI (February 29, 1952), 149.

same ideas are present, but in a different form. For example, on the one hand, Moore's anti-religious feeling takes the form of irrelevant lectures by Owen Asher and Mike Fletcher. Yet Moore is capable of subtle handling. In Esther Waters he establishes the Christian proselytizer as a sort of Heavenly bookmaker. In Heloise and Abelard, he introduces a mad and sadistic priest. And in The Brook Kerith, he maintains complete plausibility while climaxing Jesus' philosophical soliloquy with the speculation that God may be "the last uncleanliness of the mind" (p. 357).

Moore's anti-Irish sentiments are similarly indicative. In A Drama in Muslin, Irish society is criticized directly, both in editorial comment by the author and in Harding's epigrammatic attack. In Ulick and Soracha the apparent attitude is more kindly. Yet Tadhg falls in love with a goose; if his sex disqualifies him from being one, he is evidently to be equated with one, nevertheless. Thus, in the successful work, ideas neither disappear nor lose their violence. They merely change their form and function.

Moore wrote to Gosse that "life would not be so wonderful or so beautiful were it not that everything is linked and I think it unwise not to recognize these links."[2] This concept of cosmic relatedness is the key to Moore's successful fiction. If everything is related, the links form a webbing rather than a chain. Plot, therefore, need not progress inflexibly from cause to effect. Rather than a straight forward chain of events, a central focus from which thought and action radiate would seem appropriate. Operating on such a basis,

[2] Burkhardt, p. 64-65.

Moore could include almost any thought or act, for he was not limited to a logical progression which would require economy of action. Rather, apparently extraneous material was rendered actually necessary in order to demonstrate this universal linking. If everything is related to everything else, concepts can be expressed more accurately in the accumulation of endless detail than in the statement of ideas. Thematic development thus becomes a matter of accretion rather than exposition. In such a framework, asides do not hinder the progress of the work, they add another fragment to the slowly gathering significance.

It is this concept of structure as accumulation which gives Moore's superior work its distinctive texture. And in the melodic line, the long, overlapping sentences, endlessly strung together, reflect the idea that all things are linked. The only requirement of such a structure is that every event be presented in such a way that the universal links are revealed. Moore discovered that a uniform mood would guarantee the appropriateness of his thoughts and illustrations. Thus he found that mood was the only unity required.

In addition to helping to form the dividing line between failure and success, this formulation contributes to an understanding of Moore's final achievement. There would seem to be little common ground between a nobleman of ancient Greece and a modern British charwoman. Despite the differences in their social environment, however, they do meet at one point: they confront the same universe. It is this concept, evidently, which concerned Moore. And it seems just, therefore, to say that though there is no "Moore world," there distinctly is a Moore universe. It is in the vivid and artistic representation of this universe that Moore's contribution lies.

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