# Sturge Moore

and the

Life of Art

Frederick La Gwynn

University of Kansas Press Lawrence 1951

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#### TO THE MEMORY OF

#### STANLEY PERKINS CHASE (1884-1951)

AND

HERBERT WEIDLER HARTMAN, JR. (1901-1945),

BELOVED TEACHERS AT BOWDOIN COLLEGE

#### Sturge Moore Was

one of the most exquisite poets writing in England.

-WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

a poet and artist of rare gifts, a critic of delicate discrimination, and an exquisite lyric poet.

-John Masefield

certainly one of the most sensitive poetic susceptibilities of the period.

-EZRA POUND

in his best poems, the greatest English poet of his generation.

-LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

one of the great poets of the twentieth century, and one of the four or five best British poets of the century.

-Yvor Winters

[a poet with] an energy of conception in his best poetry and flashes of an incalculable intuition which will make posterity wonder why we wrote and talked so little about Sturge Moore.

—Desmond MacCarthy

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The Pennsylvania State College 1951

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Thou findest parables;
With fond imagination
Adorning truth
For the successive
Unpersuaded
Generations.

-Sturge Moore, Aforetime.

## Introduction

ESPITE the enthusiasm of poets like Yeats and Pound and of critics like Desmond MacCarthy, Yvor Winters, and Douglas Bush, the work of Thomas Sturge Moore<sup>1</sup> has remained an unknown quantity to most readers and even to most students of modern literature. One does not have to search long to explain this fact. Like Hardy, Sturge Moore wrote too much verse for us to cope with easily, but unlike Hardy's, this too much consists mostly of narrative and dramatic pieces that are too long. His shorter poems do not readily commend themselves to anthologists, since they seem eccentric and fragmentary when dissociated from the core of his total work. The combination of his dominantly mythological subject matter, moralistic impulse, and traditional poetic diction is somewhat less than magnetizing to a modern reader, and his intellectuality lacks the ease and wit we currently find congenial. Finally, he is no confessionalist; our unpersuaded generation prefers self-revelation to revelation in poetry, and distrusts the oracular manifestation of certainty. And where modern poetry attempts to approximate integration, Sturge Moore is content to describe it—an almost heretical practice in the era of critical formalism.

He is, nevertheless, an important poet and a unique figure in modern culture. He was an Englishman who lived from 1870 to 1944, who found his way from the brambles of Victorian Art for Art's Sake to the thinly populated high plateau where the Greek tradition of wholeness and resolution has come to rest. He moved freely in several artistic realms: he was a poet, a critic of art and literature, a wood-engraver, a dramatist and stage-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Although he began as "T. S. Moore," he followed Yeats's advice to change to "T. Sturge Moore" in order to differentiate himself from George Moore and from the Thomas Moore who sang through Tara's halls. "Sturge Moore" soon became the surname; it was even hyphenated on his daughter's registration of birth.

designer. In an age when Yeats dominated mythopoesy, Sturge Moore rivaled him by inventing a tensile myth of spiritual conflict that sustains much of his poetry. More than any poet writing in English in his time—except Yeats—he devoted himself to the life of art and of the spirit.

Yeats far outranks Sturge Moore in the hierarchy of poets, but their similarities are noteworthy. Both had little formal education, a lack that plagued and favored them in their lifelong pursuit of knowledge. Both attended art school briefly and served an apprenticeship to Pre-Raphaelite modes and ideals. Both were dedicated to Beauty and had particular predilections for exotic beauty, yet each was haunted by a puritan conscience inherited from his mother's family. Neither had much feeling for common humanity; each felt at home in the rarefied atmosphere or artificial and ceremonious drama, of formal incantation, esoteric symbols, fantasy and myth.

The differences between the two poets are perhaps more instructive. Yeats, if not a first-rate dramatist, was a highly dramatic poet and man. He was primarily a poet of passion and intensity, and secondarily a religious seeker after arcane truth. Sturge Moore's talents, on the other hand, were more reflective, more pictorializing, and more didactic. Although the mythologies of both poets focus on the ideal of absolute Beauty—the Nemesis of Sturge Moore's Platonic myth and the Complete Beauty (Phase 15) of Yeats's cosmic system—the Irish poet's ideal does not encompass moral goodness, as the English poet's does. Yeats's responsibilities begin in dreams; Sturge Moore's in the rational decisions of conscience. As far as Yeats is concerned, as his poem "The Choice" states with unusual clarity,

The intellect of man is forced to choose Perfection of the life, or of the work. . . .

Or as he wrote A. E. sometime in 1898, the only way art can be moral is for it to be good art. Sturge Moore's final choice is between the integrity of conscience and the deceptive joys of sensuous beauty, love, and happiness. Yeats's Vision would have led him to God; Sturge Moore's vision of immaterial reality led him right back to man. Yeats was a mystic manqué, Sturge Moore a humanist.

With the aim of furthering this humanist's reputation—but without trying to elevate him to a rank where he does not belong—I have written his biography as demonstration of his devotion to the life of art; I have extracted the raison d'être for this life from the amorphous mass of his writings on esthetics and morals; and I have tried to show how this unique figure promulgated the virtues and vices of Hellenism and Hebraism by an original poetic myth embodied in his best work.

In this process I have hewn to ideology and left the critical analysis of poetic technique for another time and place. But the most casual reader of Sturge Moore's actual work<sup>2</sup> will soon recognize the individuality of the poet's style—it can be identified in almost any handful of lines picked at random—and he may be put off by it. The mode of twentieth-century poetry consciously attempts to merge the dancer with the dance. Sturge Moore's talents lie along more traditional lines, rhetorical lines, and his importance depends more on substance than on form or on the combination of the two. Few can read him for the pure

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Readers unfamiliar with Sturge Moore will find the following verse and prose items most rewarding (in *The Poems of T. Sturge Moore*, Collected Edition, 4 vols., 1931-33): Vol. I—"Joy" (1914), "Love's Faintness Accepted" (1904), "Further Prayer" (1931), "Plans for a Midnight Picnic" (1905), "From Titian's 'Bacchanal'" (1904); Vol. II—"The Dying Swan" (1899), *Aforetime* (1919), "At Bethel" (1899), "Two of the Lord's Anointed" (1899), "Adapted from the Cover of This Book" (1932); Vol. III—*Medea* (1920), "Echoes from Circe's Hall' (1932), "To Leda" (1904), *Blind Thamyris* (1920), *The Sea Is Kind* (1914), *The Rout of the Amazons* (1903), *The Centaur's Booty* (1903), "Value and Extent" (1932); Vol. IV—"The Still Voice" (1910), "A Torrent" (1930), *The Powers of the Air* (1920); and "The Closing Door," *Life and Letters*, II (Feb. 1929), 81-97.

enjoyment of rhythmical or phrasal felicity. He made no concession to the reader, and he expected every concession from the reader. Like Chapman and Browning, whom he admired, and Meredith, whom he did not, he had little respect for a paramount standard of metrical smoothness and intellectual clarity. Of the several English metres he employed, none is handled outstandingly, unless it be the short line (apparently borrowed from Arnold) with which he often balanced an often undistinguished blank verse. Occasionally, even his vocabulary is more colorful than communicative. He is fond of obsolete and dialectal words, and although he uses them less consciously and less often than Hardy or Doughty, he has none of Hopkins' flair for spotlighting unusual words to give them fresh and therefore legitimate interest. Too often Sturge Moore's poetic counters are debased Miltonic currency.

Any reader can go on to note the roughnesses that militate against the pure pleasure of reading Sturge Moore. There are prosy lines, concessive rhymes, and an Arnoldian excess of queries and exclamations. There is the minor but typical ineptness of such a poem as "Light Heart" (Collected Edition, I, 13), which has a seven-line refrain to each of its three three-line verses. A more subtle vice is the frequent lack of logical progress, of climax, of wholeness. The poet's overwhelming gift for original metaphor often leads him to add a trope where none is needed, involving the reader in a labyrinth of hastily carved culde-sacs. Sometimes there are three images hopelessly mingling abstraction and concreteness, as in the following description of Brynhild (The Unknown Known, p. 32)—in a subordinate clause at that:

Scarce had the rapture of the ride, sunshine, And buoyant air established their enchantment And wrought her being passive as will music,

Till consciousness form but a single ear While thought and will Lie like sunk navies under an ancient sea Which moans forever 'neath a foreign yoke. . . .

This is poetic proliferation rather than progress. One can correlate it with Sturge Moore's failure to pass a free-hand drawing examination at art school: like Rossetti, whose painting occasionally hides anatomical disproportion beneath drapery, Sturge Moore's poetry often depends on the strokes of attached metaphor to cover initial uncertainty. And although he once advised his friend Robert Trevelyan to "Think always of the long poem and of the whole poem, not of single lines," it is plain that he himself was often charmed by the by-products of his own fancy even when he allowed them to drain back into the central process and clog it up.

The gist of the matter is that even as Sturge Moore's predilection was for painting rather than music, so "his word values remained visual rather than auditory" (as Desmond MacCarthy put it); and that although he passed many hours of his life reading verse aloud, he had a blind spot for the melodic line and the natural incantation of poetry. He was a moralist, not a charmer, and although his writing contains a number of melodious and graceful poetic units, the modern reader must finally hold Sturge Moore valuable for the moral core of his work rather than for its organic structure or merely fetching expression.

It is therefore to the whole rather than to the unit that we must look for Sturge Moore's achievement, despite the "flashes of an incalculable intuition" of which Desmond MacCarthy has spoken, and despite Yeats's and Masefield's application of the word *exquisite* to his poetry. And if, on the other hand, it seems quixotic for Yvor Winters to label Sturge Moore one of the four

great poets of the twentieth century, it still seems to be an extreme extension of a worthy impulse. For Thomas Sturge Moore, in his life and in his writing, has explored the major senses of man—the religious sense and the moral sense and the artistic sense—in a significant and individual manner, and he has come forth with a history and a pattern of attainment for those who wish to use these senses to the fullest. Humbert Wolfe once said of G. K. Chesterton: "You can apply any epithet of distaste to him that you like, but you can in no circumstances, unless you are blind and deaf, call him a minor poet." It is time that we recognize Sturge Moore's special majority.

# Part One Sturge Moore's Career

# Boyhood: 1870-1885

OTHING in Thomas Sturge Moore's background or upbringing forecasts his later unworldiness—unless it be the religious persuasion of his mother's family. The Sturges, who have lived in Gloucestershire for over four hundred years, are a prominent Quaker family; their most famous son is the Victorian abolitionist and philanthropist, Joseph Sturge. There was no orthodox Quakerism in Sturge Moore's immediate family; his maternal grandparents, Henry and Lydia Sturge, were first cousins who (according to hearsay) were expelled from the local Friends' meeting upon marriage. Although Sturge Moore himself grew up in an atmosphere of Baptist puritanism, he compounded his grandparents' lapse by marrying his first cousin once removed, the granddaughter of Henry Sturge's second wife.

Sturge Moore's father and grandfather were both physicians. Dr. George Moore, of Plymouth, after studying and practicing in London, finally settled and died in Hastings. A remarkable man, he produced a dozen volumes on disease, medicine, and religion (*The Power of the Soul over the Body*, 1845, went into six editions); and one book of verse, *The Minstrel's Song and Other Poems* (1826), makes him the only family predecessor in his grandson's vocation.

His son, Dr. Daniel Moore, first married Anne Sarah Miller; Dr. Moore's second marriage, to Henrietta Sturge, resulted in three daughters and four sons, of whom Thomas was the oldest. With Anne Miller Moore's daughter, it was thus a large Victorian family of ten, half male and half female.

воуноор: 1870-1885

Thomas Sturge Moore was born in Hastings at 3 Wellington Square on March 4, 1870. A year or so later, Dr. Moore moved his family to a south London suburb, gave up his medical practice, and devoted himself to educating his children before they went to day-school. With the help of "Mrs. Mortimer's" popular Reading without Tears he taught them to read; and he grounded them in writing, arithmetic, geography, and English history. At the age of three, each child began piano-lessons with his father, but only the musically talented—Sturge Moore was not among those—were encouraged to continue. Henrietta, his favorite sister, was the most adept, and she later received professional musical training.

Dulwich Wood Park, on Sydenham Hill in Upper Norwood, was a new development, and the Moore home there, nostalgically called "Hastings Lodge," was a detached red-brick house. There was a half-acre of garden with three oak-trees remaining from the ancient wood, but the Moore children did much of their playing in the spacious grounds of Prince Albert's Crystal Palace, which then dominated Sydenham Hill.

One of Dr. Moore's reasons for moving to Norwood was to be near Dulwich College, a boys' school founded by the Elizabethan actor, Edward Alleyn. It was a large school, and almost all the boys—sons of middle-class London suburbanites—were day-pupils. From 1879 to 1884 Sturge Moore walked daily to Dulwich for the only academic schooling he was ever to receive.

He was a sickly boy suffering from the after-effects of scarlet fever. Because of continual absences from classes and backwardness in study he fell far below the standard of his age, and he withdrew from school just before his fourteenth birthday. The difficulties of grammar, syntax, and punctuation that plagued his entire literary life, and the distrust of scientific scholarship, which later worked advantage and disadvantage to his philosophic exposition, are obvious partial results of this inadequate education. Yet a delightful manuscript describing the activities of a school club to which he belonged in his last year gives evidence that he had a normal and even occasionally healthy boyhood.

The Boomerang Club had only four members, two pairs of brothers: C. J. and W. H. Paton, and Sturge Moore and his third younger brother, George, later the prominent neo-realist philosopher and professor at Cambridge. The Patons and the Moores formed the club "chiefly for Cricket, Tennis, Football, secondly for Archery and Butterfly and Moth Collections," later adding "Distinction in Composition." It was no visionary enterprise: the brothers maintained a constant schedule of athletic matches and literary competitions, and compiled a bi-monthly manuscript magazine, The Boomerang, whose ninth and last extant issue ran to sixty-six pages.

Sturge Moore took his part and held his own in all competitions, athletic and otherwise. Perhaps his most versatile performance came in the "Boomerang Dramatic and Pugilistic Entertainment," which the Paton and Moore brothers produced in their homes in January 1885. In a pastiche of English history and sports, Sturge Moore played the parts of Charles I, Fairfax, and Felton, recited "Rule, Britannia," and wrestled and boxed. The account of his interpretation of Felton must be preserved:

Felton the murderer of the Duke of Buckingham was personated by Mr T. Moore unfortunately that gentleman was not quite villain enough for the occassion [sic] but he tried to look very fierce and snapped his pistol boldly and killed the Duke at both performances although the pistol missed fire each time. At several of the rehe[a]rsals he did not come on when he was wanted or forgot his pistol, but he overcame these deficiencies before an audience and acted very creditably. On receiving his sentence of death in the next scene he did not seem very greatly overcome, in fact at some of the rehe[a]rsals he and the judge seemed to think it a joke, but this too he overcame in the performances.

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Like many other English boys, the Patons and Moores were amateur naturalists, and *The Boomerang* sporadically mentions their collections of beetles and butterflies. Yet they were also given to more humanistic inquiry, to judge from the report of a closely fought debate in which the Paton brothers took the side of the Ancients against the Moores as Moderns. T. S. Moore—who later wrote two dozen books based on the Greek *paideia*—submits that with modern languages one can get his living "in a mercantile way," or by teaching, "Or by traveling over the continent with some rich gentleman's son." Anyway (he goes on), most of the classics are translated, and "if not, you can get it done for a few pounds."

The Patons won the debate, but one of Sturge Moore's arguments leads to further consideration. A writer, he says, can express himself much better in French and English than in Latin or Greek "because there are more words and therefore more graduations of meaning." For at this time he is already interested in literary expression, and it is in the pages of *The Boomerang* that his first stories and poems appear.

As librarian of the Boomerang Club's eighty-four books, he handled and read verse classics like Shakespeare, Longfellow, and The Ingoldsby Legends; juvenile romance of the Kingston, Ballantyne, G. A. Henty, and Peter Parley school; and books of natural history. The thirteen-year-old boy's literary production pretty well follows the subject-matter of these books: his verse retails heroic legend and his prose features either medievalism or schoolboy realism. "The Old Castle" is all about a count and his retainers and a feast and a wedding; "The Three Young Naturalists" is, properly enough, about three young naturalists. But "A Christmas Story" combines the elements: in King Christopher Alexander Broadsword's castle, a girl ("Margerrett") loses herself in a room of glass and then a room of gold, but she

воуноор: 1870-1885

is finally rescued by two nice English boys named Alfred and Alick.

For the sake of the record, here is the first poem of a canon that comprises some 50,000 lines of verse:

KING RICHARD SLAYS SALADIN

King Richard went forth On a bold crusade Amused on the voyage By Blondle [sic] who played

Of fights which were fought In day's [sic] gone by And when at length The vessels did lie

Safe in the harbour Richard was the first To spring on the land He swore & he cursed

When he saw the Saladin Coming jauntily forth But he soon ran him through And came back to the north [.]

In these juvenilia, Sturge Moore showed himself no more and no less of a "literary" person than his fellows; his brother and the Patons shared equally in the space and merits of contributions to *The Boomerang*. Even in the verse competitions, it was George who accumulated "70.6" points to his brother's "60.25," with the Patons placing second and fourth. And although Sturge Moore was adept at story-telling and frequently entertained his brothers and sisters with flights of invention, he was considered neither literary nor artistic, and it is to a later period that one must look for his imaginative development.

### II

# Apprenticeship in Art: 1885-1895

TURGE MOORE left Dulwich College early in 1884, while his three younger brothers stayed on; for the next year or so, Dr. Moore taught the fourteen-year-old boy and his sister Henrietta at home. While Daniel, George, Annie, and Sarah went on to Cambridge (Daniel became a Fellow in Physics at Trinity and later took orders), the rest of the Moore children remained free from university patterns.

Sturge Moore's uncle by marriage, the Reverend Georges Appia, a Lutheran minister in Paris, used to come to London every year for the Protestant "May Meetings," and in the spring of 1884 Marie Appia came with her father to see the Moores. In the summer, Sturge Moore and his father returned the visit in Paris and went on to spend three months at Torre Pellice, in the Valdensian valley of Piedmont, where the Appia family had a pleasant home, and where Sturge Moore was to spend many holidays for the rest of his life. He was entranced by the green hills and warm air and most especially by the powerful mountain torrent in the valley.

O polished volume of live force, now pure Skylight to cool dwelling under rock, Now hurling back the sun, wanderer sure To find the easy path, wizard to mock Boulder and cliff with an inverted double, Complete a globe beneath each domèd bubble!

he estatically wrote forty-five years later in "A Torrent." And Hieron's confession, which begins *The Closing Door* (1929),

cannot be entirely fictional: "My boyhood spent many a long afternoon trying to find a station in which the rock would be seen inverted in the water." Marie Appia, whose younger brothers and sisters had died, took a fancy to her English cousin, a "daring companion" (she later called him) who blithely induced her to wade in the torrent. The summer was the beginning of a sixty-year sequence.

On returning to England Sturge Moore kept up his part in the Boomerang Club and its bulky magazine. But his last contribution, "The Mystery: a School Story of 1868," sounds a new note of sensibility and observation in one sentence by describing "the blue sea and the ring of white foam w[h]ere it dashed on the hard sea sand and the white and brown sailed fishing boats." This concern with pictorial color accords with the news that he had become chairman of the Boomerang's "Sketching Committee"; they are both given point by his entering Croydon Art School in 1885.

Like Rossetti and Yeats, Sturge Moore began to live when he entered on his apprenticeship to the fine arts. Croydon is not far south of Norwood, but art school is leagues away from boyhood. And 1885 is the year of *Marius the Epicurean*, the magic book that represents, as Eliot has said, "the point of English history at which the repudiation of revealed religion by men of culture and intellectual leadership coincides with a renewed interest in the visual arts." At fifteen, Sturge Moore gradually turned away from organized religion to the religion of beauty. His father and mother were resolute Baptists; not only did the entire family attend services in Upper Norwood twice every Sunday, with a half-hour hymn-session before dinner, but they said prayers every morning before breakfast. Like many other Victorian young men and women of intellect or feeling, Sturge Moore fell under the spell of Renan and Huxley and under-

went a religious deconversion, although his later Biblical poems give evidence of his continued absorption in Old and New Testament literature. In discussions with his father at meal-times, he incidentally involved his brother George in agnosticism. He was "a far readier talker than I," Professor Moore has written, "and far more fertile of ideas."

The ease and fertility must have owed something further to the pair of artists who had come into Sturge Moore's life. At the Croydon Art School there was a magnetic instructor, twenty-two years old, gifted and handsome. To the boy of fifteen, Charles Hazlewood Shannon (1863-1937) was a modern Apollo. He was a minister's son from Lincolnshire; he had been a good football player and a fervent high-churchman at school; and he had all the boyish humor and charm of the Little Billee whom Du Maurier was to create a decade later in *Trilby*.

Shannon roomed in Kennington with a naval officer's son, an artist named Charles Ricketts (1866-1931), who had left Croydon and whom Sturge Moore was not to meet for two years. But over this time, as Sturge Moore later recalled, Shannon "had created a Ricketts in my mind, without report of any physical trait, but merely by frequent assertion of his ability to evolve compositions, to pick out good work, and to remember all he had seen."

Sturge Moore apparently made as little progress at Croydon as he had at Dulwich—he failed a free-hand examination six times—and in 1887 Shannon was able to persuade him to transfer to Lambeth Art School, where Ricketts was teaching. At seventeen, then, Sturge Moore finally met the fabled Ricketts and became his pupil in engraving—probably the most consequential single event in his life. If Shannon was Apollo, Ricketts was Socrates and Leonardo combined.

His first sight of Ricketts was of a young man who "looked in those days, with his thin colourless face and long light hair, more like a dandelion puff than anything else." But as he followed Ricketts' movements and talk, in the brown-papered studio which—like the studio in *Trilby*—was placarded with reproductions of the masters, the seventeen-year-old Sturge Moore knew that Charles Ricketts was "incomparable."

I have never met [Sturge Moore writes] a more energetic or a more rapid mind. He was perpetually absorbed either in the study of what he admired or in creation. Like a motor-launch hampered in a crowd of tubs, he was always producing collisions and soreness; but his extreme generosity forgot both that you had crossed him and that he had hurt your pride, before you could. He drew any of us who could follow in his wake. Shannon was always just astern, we others straggled out at various distances, and most stopped off or were lost sight of.

The paintings of Ricketts and Shannon are not now in favor, yet the pair's devotion to art and to each other over a period of half a century is still a legend in art circles. In their prime, Sturge Moore recalls, "Each was the other's complement, but neither easily indulged the other; their union was more bracing than comfortable." They were artists and connoisseurs, dilettantes in the best sense of the word, not sciolists like Aubrey Beardsley. Shannon mastered the techniques of oil, pastel, water-color, lithography, etching, mezzotint, woodcut, printing, photography, and furniture design, yet Ricketts outdid him by being sculptor, jeweler, writer, dramatist, and musician as well. All his life Ricketts walked from room to room conducting unheard music; he wrote an opera, Nail, which Sir Thomas Beecham produced in 1919. He was, moreover, an excellent designer of stage scenery and costumes, his greatest success being the décor of Saint Joan (1924) for his friend Shaw.

Although Ricketts later made a fortune from his Rossettilike combination of artistic taste and mercantile acumen, he and Shannon were rather poor at the time of meeting Sturge Moore. So it came about that when the pair discovered and rented Whistler's Vale house in 1888, they asked Sturge Moore and a friend of his known as "the dark Clarke" to take workrooms there and thus help pay the rent. The Vale (long since obliterated) was a cul-de-sac off the King's Road in Chelsea containing four houses. Ricketts and Shannon took the semi-detached Number One, and later the artist Reginald Savage lived next door. William De Morgan owned Number Three, occasionally tenanted by Walter Sickert and his first wife. The fourth house belonged to the landlord of the Vale, a recluse named McGuire.

Whistler had inhabited and decorated Number One: traces of apple-green paint remained on the paneled dado, and daffodil yellow impregnated the walls. The ascetic new tenants (probably in imitation of their idol Puvis de Chavannes) soon painted the studio walls a bare white, and by other decoration brought an atmospheric austerity to their retreat. However, they furnished the reception-room luxuriously, and sprinkled old masters, Chinese bird-cages, Empire chairs, Morris chintzes, Georgian silver, and Grecian statuettes in the dining room. Their later houses became more and more elaborate; like the Goncourt brothers, Ricketts and Shannon seemed to enjoy living in a museum.

"The Valeists," as Oscar Wilde called them, rarely left the Vale, but they maintained contact with artistic London by their "Friday evenings," when many artists and writers came to see them—Wilde, Shaw, Yeats, John Gray, Wilson Steer, William and John Rothenstein, Sickert, Savage, Roger Fry, Charles Holmes—and Sturge Moore, who lived at home but spent most of his time at the Vale. There was various and impassioned conversation till all hours, punctuated, towards morning, by a

high tea. Five years before, Sturge Moore had been engrossed in the butterflies and boxing of the Boomerang Club. Now, at eighteen, he became an esthete in Oscar Wilde's London.

Wilde felt at home in the Vale. "I am taking you to the one house in London where you will never be bored," he once told a friend before a Friday evening. "What a charming old house you have," he had exclaimed on his first visit, "and what delightful Japanese prints." Ricketts later commented dryly: "The room was dark, not too clean, and a few cheap prints by Hokusai alone gave it gaiety." Sturge Moore met Wilde only once, undoubtedly on the occasion sharply described by Rothenstein: "I wonder whether [Wilde] knew how gross, how soiled by the world, he appeared, sitting in one of the white scrubbed kitchen chairs next to Ricketts and Shannon and Sturge Moore."

What first brought Wilde to the Vale was a desire to compliment the artists on the first publication of *The Dial*, "one of those juvenile ventures common enough in France, but, at the time, rare in England," as Ricketts looked back on it. The first issue appeared in 1889, composed almost entirely of work by Ricketts and Shannon, John Gray, and Savage. With a disregard for Wilde's pontification that no more issues should appear since all perfect things were unique, the Valeists published four more, in 1892, 1893, 1896, and 1897. Like its contemporaries—*The Hobby-Horse, The Yellow Book, The Savoy, The Pageant, The Dome*, and so on—*The Dial* looks shoddy and garish today. As William Morris said of the third issue, the talent and the aberration of talent are in about equal proportions.

Yet there is a certain romantic charm about *The Dial*, with its large quarto pages, superb reproductions of bad painting and drawing, and excellent typography lavished on inconse-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>He viewed "poor Oscar's" later public disgrace dispassionately: "What strikes me most is the total absence of morality in the ideas of both his partisans & censurers," he wrote R. C. Trevelyan (June 7, 1895).

quential stories and articles. Its manifesto—"The sole aim of this magazine is to gain sympathy with its views"—has permeated a hundred little magazines since; it is the motif of the "youthful venture," the call to young enthusiasm. As Gordon Bottomley recalled the very heaven:

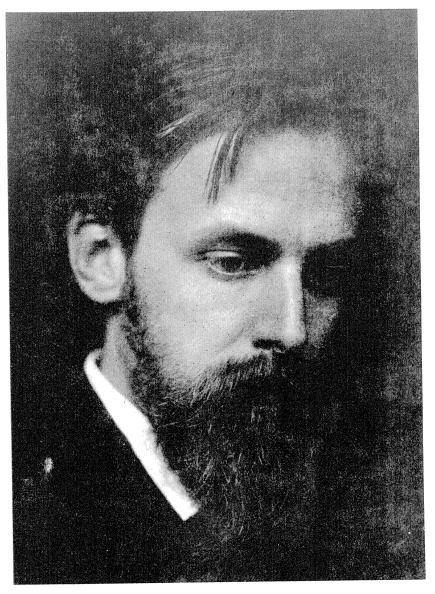
What days could ever be so long
As those our pristine Summers poised
O'er a charmed valley isled among
Their bright slow-breaking tides unnoised?
Then Dials were new and came to stir
A passionate thirst within the eyes;
Each dawn was a discoverer
Of poets unearthly wise.

And although *The Dial* is definitely of the decadence, it was in the 1892 issue that the regenerate Sturge Moore published his first work.

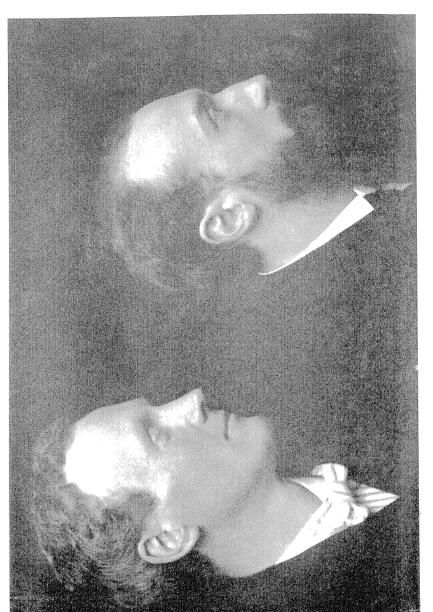
He actually burst into print. His contributions to the second Dial—ten poems, an article on Maurice de Guérin, and a short-story entitled "King Comfort" and reminiscent of The Boomerang—dominate the issue, and indeed (as the editors said) "made possible the publication." To the three remaining issues he gave seven short poems, six wood-engravings, one short-story, a translation of part of De Guérin's Le Centaure, and his first long poem, Danaë. It was an impressive, if nepotistic, beginning of a long literary career.

In 1896 and 1897, the last years of *The Dial*, Shannon and J. W. Gleeson brought out another polytechnic annual called *The Pageant*, to which Sturge Moore contributed three poems and one woodcut, "Pan Island," whose powerful mass and clarity of detail make it his best engraving.

He had made more progress at the Lambeth School than at Croydon. In the modeling classes, where in 1891 he and the sculptors Henry Poole and Alfred Turner were studying under



STURGE MOORE IN THE 1890's



CHARLES SHANNON AND CHARLES RICKETTS

Queen Victoria's favorite artist, William Powell Frith, Sturge Moore won a prize of thirty shillings, which was supposed to be spent on books. Knowing of two Hokusai prints which Ricketts and Shannon coveted but could not afford, he bought them for his friends, much to the disgust of the School's headmaster, who temporarily substituted a book at the prize ceremonies. One hopes that these Hokusais were the ones Wilde admired but not those cited by Ricketts as "a few cheap prints."

In 1888 Dr. Moore had moved his family to a house called "Woodthorpe" in Sydenham Hill Road, east of the Crystal Palace. His artist son had made other new friends at Lambeth School, among them Alfred Hugh Fisher and Harry R. Mileham, and he exchanged teas and took long walks with these young men and with his brother George, thus leavening the omnipresent influence of the Vale. He spent August of 1893 walking in France with Mileham, and made a cycle trip there with Henry Poole the following summer. He improved his French, the only foreign language he was to learn, and increased his admiring acquaintance with nineteenth-century French literature. His first published poem was "To the Memory of Arthur Rimbaud," and he had already acquired a hero-worship of Flaubert.

In 1892 G. E. Moore went up to Trinity, Cambridge, where he was to remain most of his life; and although Sturge Moore had little interest in academic mores, he visited Cambridge frequently and saw something of George's undergraduate friends. In 1894 he met Robert Calverley Trevelyan, then twenty-two, who was to be his most faithful and sympathetic friend until his death. Trevelyan vividly recalls Sturge Moore at this time:

He was so completely unlike all my Cambridge friends both intellectually and in appearance. He was tall and slender, with refined features and hands; and he had a thin straggly light brown beard, at a time

when beards were more out of fashion with young men than they are now.... He had not only shown me his own poems..., but was ready to talk all day about literature and art....

What impressed me most was not so much his wide knowledge of English and French literature—far wider than my own—but the maturity of his critical judgement.... From [Flaubert], and in a lesser degree from Matthew Arnold, he had learnt an aesthetic creed that was far more comprehensive, more cosmopolitan than any I had come across. It is true that he knew little of the classics, except through translations; but as with the youthful Keats, it was Greek legends, and the vision of Greece that chiefly inspired his romantic imagination, and supplied it with congenial themes . . . .

The one art to which he did not seem to be sensitive was music . . . .

This year also saw the beginning of a new and important project at the Vale. Oscar Wilde's suggestion that Ricketts should design books finally flowered when Will Rothenstein brought W. Llewellyn Hacon, a wealthy patron of the arts, around to the Vale. Hacon bought the house and moved in, while Ricketts and Shannon took a "dark old house" nearby at 31 Beaufort Street, and set up an art-shop, The Sign of the Dial, first in Regent Square and later (1899) in the Strand. The Vale circle still came to Ricketts and Shannon on Friday evenings, and it expanded to include Hacon, Max Beerbohm, D. S. Mc-Coll, Charles Conder, and Lucien Pissarro (son of Camille Pissarro). Even the dark old house took on the air of sweetness and light which Ricketts and Shannon generated in all their surroundings.

With Morris' Kelmscott, the Vale Press of Hacon and Ricketts is probably the most important instrument in the revival of fine printing. The fifty Vale books, beginning with *The Early Poems of John Milton* in 1896 and ending with Sturge Moore's revised *Danaë* in 1903, may not be (as Murdoch has called them) "without doubt the loveliest books ever issued," but their clear classical typography and make-up are in attractive contrast to the gothic composition of Morris' work.

Besides contributing Danaë, Sturge Moore edited six items for the Vale Press. Three of them were Shakespearean, all decorated by Ricketts: The Passionate Pilgrim (1896), the Sonnets (1899), and the Vale Shakespeare, an ambitious enterprise of thirty-seven volumes issued monthly from 1900 to 1903—a lovely piece of printing and binding. He also translated and illustrated Maurice de Guérin's Centaure and Bacchante (1899), and saw Poems from Wordsworth and Doctor Faustus through the press (1902, 1903).

Along with the Vale, Sturge Moore was associated with Lucien Pissarro's Eragny Press, also founded in 1894, and with the artistic establishment which Pissarro and his wife later maintained at "The Brook" in Hammersmith, London. He did three bad wood-engravings for an Eragny book, had his Little School published by Pissarro (1905), and wrote A Brief Account of the Origin of the Eragny Press (1903).

By 1895 Sturge Moore could no longer be considered a young apprentice in art, although he continued to depend on his father, rather than on his talents, for financial support. Shannon had worked hard to make him into a painter. With Rossettian materialism he had pointed out to the younger man that "literature was not rewarded in proportion to the time and effort expended but that watercolours were far more justly priced"! As Rossetti with Morris, however, Shannon could not transmute literary talent into easel technique. "Ricketts might make a painter of Holmes," Sturge Moore wrote forty years later, "but Shannon failed to make one of me."

There are those who would say that Ricketts and Shannon failed to make painters of themselves. Like the Pre-Raphaelites, they found themselves with no living master to follow, but unlike Rossetti and Hunt and Millais, they turned wholeheartedly and even exclusively to masters long since dead. Most of their

work betrays this consecration to the revealed religion of beauty. "Highly gifted as they were," the disarming Rothenstein has written, "like the rest of us they belonged to a period of decline. I think that Ricketts in his heart knew this."

Possibly this was why it was Shannon rather than the sophisticated Ricketts who made a comparative success at painting and gained a professional reputation. If he did not have genius, he at least had a talent for showing his work to best advantage. For seven years after moving to the Vale, he refused to exhibit his pictures, calling attention to the fact that many artists unconsciously relaxed their standards by trying to show or sell everything they painted. It was not until 1897 that he came into public notice by exhibiting four pictures, two of which ("The Wounded Amazon" and "A Portrait of Sturge Moore") won gold medals at Munich. He never catered to the vogue, but went his own way, as Sturge Moore was to do.

There was an ease about Shannon that contrasted sharply with Ricketts' intense application. But later in the relationship, and most likely as a result of his fellow's tension, Shannon developed such symptoms as nervous indigestion, and he would not even work in the same room with Ricketts or show him his canvases until they were completed. In this compressed atmosphere Sturge Moore was the safety valve. He sat to Shannon and helped him print his lithographs. He and Shannon played ping-pong and took cycling trips through the English countryside. Charles Ricketts could never learn to cycle.

There was never an open break between Ricketts and Shannon or between Ricketts and Sturge Moore; the poet always remained a disciple of the master and a friend to both men. Yet he naturally saw less of the pair after his marriage in 1903,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Shannon also did two lithographs of the poet: "The Modeller (T. Sturge Moore)" (1891) and "T. Sturge Moore in a Cloak" (1896).

and even as early as 1895 he had his own establishment and was beginning a literary activity peculiarly his own. It is therefore convenient to round off the Ricketts-Shannon idyll here.

The pair continued their ménage à deux, although the handsome Shannon occasionally alarmed Ricketts by making friends with charming ladies. In 1929 Shannon fell and suffered a concussion that sent him into insanity. Ricketts' heart was broken, and he died two years later at sixty-five. Shannon lived on in lunacy, describing a recurring dream or crying "Splendid!" when shown a painting. The end of the long relationship came in 1937 when Sturge Moore and a handful of devoted friends attended Charles Shannon's funeral.

The Valeists were remarkable men, and it is not difficult to understand their effect on their followers. When Ricketts died, Yeats wrote to Sturge Moore (October 31, 1931): "I... feel that one of the lights that lit my dark hours is gone." Gordon Bottomley confessed that "for thirty years I never wrote anything without thinking what he would say about it. . . ." Perhaps Rothenstein's comment on Bottomley's letter is the simplest and best summary of Charles Ricketts: "I, too, looked back gratefully to the evenings with Ricketts . . . . I missed his hearty laughter, his enjoyment of the good things of life, his quick response to the subtleties of art. He was the civilized man, personified." More civilized but less of an artist than Rossetti, more versatile but less healthy than Morris, Charles Ricketts is one of the great figures of Victorian artistic enterprise. And it was his knowledge and his taste that formed the most immediate authority to which Sturge Moore was ever to appeal. For nearly half a century the disciple bore witness to the master's significance for him, by dedication of his own work to Ricketts and by constant quotation and citation in writing and conversation.

Up to a point, Charles Ricketts was a good influence on Sturge Moore. He opened up the panorama of the classical, Renaissance, and pre-Impressionist European arts to him. He taught him the craft of wood-engraving and various skills of working with the hands. He implanted an interest in the theatre, and passed on the lore of play construction and production. Most important of all, he stimulated the younger man's historical and mythological imagination by exhibiting his own in action. As a corollary, Ricketts emphasized the importance of preserving a balance in one's own taste between the conviction of individual preference and the weight of established tradition. And there was a combination of colorful luxuriousness with puritanical austerity in Sturge Moore that must have found encouragement in Ricketts' similar dualistic nature.

Yet Charles Ricketts was also a bad influence, as the disciple came to realize. In the first place, no one should exert the power over another that Ricketts exerted on Sturge Moore—and on Charles Shannon. Like Rossetti, whom he so much resembled³ (Ricketts' mother was Italian, incidentally), Ricketts had an Einflusslust, an overwhelming penchant for imposing his own predilections on other men. His taste in artists and writers became Sturge Moore's; except for the saving remnant of Goethe and Matthew Arnold and the late discovery of Paul Valéry, Sturge Moore's pantheon consisted of Flaubert, Baudelaire, Rossetti, Dürer, Reynolds, Blake, Puvis de Chavannes, and the Symbolist poets—the same group that Ricketts idolized. There

Yeats several times encouraged Sturge Moore, who apparently knew "the floating stories" of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (letter, Yeats to Sturge Moore, Nov. 24, 1921), to write a life of Rossetti,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> After reading Hall Caine's Recollections of Rossetti (1882, 1908), Yeats wrote to Sturge Moore (Nov. 7, 1921?) that he "was constantly reminded of Ricketts—he must when very young have formed himself on Rossetti. I cannot define the resemblance but I am sure of it. There is the same apparent lack of philosophy with the same occasional philosophic insight and there is the same occasional over generosity of praise—but there is something beyond all that which I cannot get at."

is something stultifying and Swinburnian in the enduring extreme enthusiasm of both men for these artists and writers. I further think that there is some connection between this lasting hero-worship and the fact that the painting of Charles Ricketts (and of Shannon) and the poetry of Sturge Moore show very little change in technique over the span of years. Although the poet made numerous changes in his 300 poems, the revisions betray no particular pattern of development.

Camille Pissarro once pointed out that Ricketts was "not a painter, but a literary man who has a story to tell," and Ricketts himself admitted that he was "unashamedly literary." Following the advice of Puvis de Chavannes and the practice of Rossetti, Ricketts turned to the old masters and to literature for inspiration and subject matter in his painting. The mode carries over into Sturge Moore's poetry, and while the poetry derives vertebrate articulation from the use of traditional themes, a large dose of it (like a large dose of William Morris' poetry) sometimes makes a reader yearn for just one personal poem, one breath of contemporary life, one situation or atmospheric condition entirely independent of the poet's own reading. It is fair to assign some of the blame to Charles Ricketts for overemphasizing literariness in his major contribution to Sturge Moore's education.

And so the debt to the brilliant connoisseur must be pronounced equivocal. The pupil came to understand this in later years, and occasionally regretted the strictness and limitations of his early guidance. Yet fortunately, if Ricketts' was the strongest personal influence on Sturge Moore, it was not the only one.

### III

## Art and Life: 1895-1910

#### 1. The New Poet

IKE many another young poet, Sturge Moore printed his first separate work privately. The pamphlet Two Poems (1893) comprises a double sonnet ("About Hope"), half of which was later reprinted; twenty-three Spenserian stanzas (lumped under the title "Mountain Shadows") which he wisely never republished; and a woodcut illustrating a line in the second poem—the whole dedicated to his mother and father. Sturge Moore always thought of "Mountain Shadows" as his first poem, and it is not unpleasant to note that, like Keats and Yeats, he began with awkward Spenserian chunks.

Besides this pamphlet and his contributions to *The Dial* and *The Pageant*, he published no verse until his first book in 1899; doubtless he was following Shannon's sensible animadversion against turning everything to account. In the meantime, he began "A Winter Night's Revel," a comedy about private theatricals (never published) and later a comedy called "The Two Ugly Men," which he worked on for years without success. He also wrote an *Antigone* and a *Persephone*, which he later regretfully came to regard as mere experiments in Spenserian cantos. Like Keats again, he was entranced by reading Greek legends in Lemprière, and he went on further to acquaint himself with the faded hierarchy of Apollodorus.

Sometime in mid-1895, Sturge Moore's parents and his sister Sarah moved to Torquay on the south coast of England, while he set up house at 39 South Grove on Highgate Hill in

the north of London with his sisters Henrietta and Helen and his youngest brother Joseph. Here brother George and Robert Trevelyan used to visit from Cambridge, and from here he himself made occasional excursions to Richmond to see Ricketts and Shannon and the Michael Fields, and to Torquay to visit the other half of his family.

It was at Highgate that he did his first lasting work in mythological poetry, although only one of the nine pieces he worked on was published in this period, and two of them waited more than thirty-five years. In Greek legend, he wrote Omphale and Herakles, the Medea monologue, Aphrodite against Artemis, The Rout of the Amazons (originally called "Laomedon's Upper Field"), and Orpheus and Eurydice, and he revised Danaë. His three Biblical dramas—Absalom, Mariamne. and *Judith*—were first written in this period, and the long poem on Wagner's Brünnhilde, published in 1939 as The Unknown Known, was first planned in 1898, as was Roderigo of Bivar (1925), a play based on the legend of the Cid. He even contemplated an early British play like Locrine. Most of these pieces were submitted to Trevelyan for criticism, and it is to Trevelyan that he communicates (apparently in 1897) the typical enthusiasm of a young poet coming across the tractable material of ancient legend: "This moment I have just finished reading of Mariamne in [Flavius] Josephus. It is unimaginably beautiful—far, far richer than I supposed. I shall have to bind myself hand and foot not to spoil it by self-indulgence . . . . It is a chance such as few men have had granted to them. Unworthy me, alas!"

These long poems do not come to fruition until later; it is a collection of forty-one shorter items that forms Sturge Moore's first—and I think best—book of verse. The Vinedresser and Other Poems was published in July 1899 by the Unicorn Press,

when the poet was twenty-nine. It contains a variety of types: songs, sonnets, narratives, translations, classical and Biblical poems, and poems about paintings—the multifarious harvest of his broadcast sowing in the 1890's. A dozen of his best short poems grace this book.

The critics shot praise and blame at *The Vinedresser*, but most of them welcomed the debut of "a new poet," and the book sold satisfactorily. Laurence Binyon told his friends that "the publication of *The Vinedresser* was the most important literary event since Keats brought out his first volume." And Professor Grierson recalls that "some of us thought it [the title-poem] the most accomplished first poem that had ever appeared in English—too accomplished perhaps...."

Binyon's review in *The Literary Year-Book* for 1900 was the first enlightened notice of Sturge Moore's poetry, and its dicta are amazingly pertinent to the whole body of verse that was to follow the small green volume. *The Vinedresser*, wrote Binyon,

disclosed a more remarkable gift than any first book of verse of recent years. It has puzzled the critics, who have contradicted each other more than usual about it. This was perhaps to be expected. It is very original, and originality is always disquieting; and it offers several stumbling-blocks.

Mr Moore takes a broad, a too broad view of rhyme; his thought, often difficult, always demands serious attention; his images at times are thronged to confusion; the rhythm is apt to be choked with short words and to strain through shoals of consonants.... These faults, which lie on the surface, could be discerned and exposed by the stupidest of reviewers; and though the merits are plain enough, they are not fully revealed until the volume has been read attentively and re-read. For the defects which I have noticed are but the weakness and excess of rare and admirable qualities ....

For my part I cannot but hope that Mr Moore will purge himself of certain awkwardnesses of manner which seem caught from Browning, such as the too frequently omitted relative; that he will care more for "divine limpidity"; that he will not allow his great pictorial gift to overcharge his verse; and that he will learn sometimes to be content with less

expression to the eye, in order to be more expressive to the ear. But his faults are all faults of excess, not of lack; they are as nothing to his excellences; he is equipped for great things; and his present performance suffices to make some of us look forward to his future with the confidence of conviction.

If Sturge Moore had heeded Binyon's advice, he would have guaranteed his future. And I venture to say that if Binyon had edited *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, which came out the following year, Sturge Moore would have gained a larger audience immediately and permanently. As it was, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch chose to represent the new poet with "A Duet," a faulty poem whose badness lies in both excess and lack. The habits of anthologists are discouragingly apparent in the fact that "A Duet" became the new poet's most often-reprinted poem.

In the first decade of the new century, Sturge Moore went on to set up as a mythopoet. Of the ten books of verse he published from 1900 to 1910, eight are lyric, idyllic, and dramatic poems based primarily on Greek legend. Aphrodite against Artemis and Omphale and Herakles are plays, and they are variations on their creator's central theme of moral tension. The other six books—The Centaur's Booty, The Rout of the Amazons, The Gazelles and Other Poems, Pan's Prophecy, To Leda and Other Odes, and Theseus; Medea, and Lyrics—are less stringently conceived and executed; the first two have a special beauty unmatched in English romantic poetry. The poet imposed an artificial unity on these six pieces by issuing them (from October 1903 to November 1904) as brown-paper-covered pamphlets priced at a shilling, and then having them bound together and published in 1906 as Poems. They were reviewed extensively, and the pamphlets are collectors' items today.

Absalom (1903), a prosy 3000-line political tragedy, is as different from the brown-covered booklets as it is from The

Little School: a Posy of Rhymes (1905), which Pissarro printed at the Eragny Press and which John Lane sold in New York at ten dollars a copy. The Little School consists of twenty-five indifferent poems for children and four bad woodcuts for no one in particular. But its raison d'être is interesting. Sturge Moore had met Laurence Binyon, the scholar-poet of the British Museum, in the late nineties, and in June 1899 Binyon had taken his friend to Limpsfield, south of London, to meet the Pye family. Sturge Moore liked William Pye's accomplished daughters, Sybil and Ethel, and was especially impressed by the Socratic method which the nineteen-year-old Sybil used in teaching a group of five young children. At her request he wrote the poems of The Little School (refurbishing two from The Dial); the children liked them, learned them, and began writing verses themselves. It was a successful experiment.

Binyon had also introduced him to a young Irishman named William Butler Yeats, who had some fame as a poet, journalist, hermetist, and as a member of the Rhymers' Club that met, a little self-consciously, in the Cheshire Cheese tavern. Sturge Moore was shocked and stimulated by this gifted dandy who had also begun a poetical career by attending art school.

"You must know my murderer," Yeats said, leaving me on the 'bus that had brought us from Westminster where Binyon had made us acquainted. This "murderer" proved to be Masefield, who had told him that in childhood he had struck a fork into a governess's hand with intent to kill. This Irish paring-down of statement to startle was new to me in 1898 [probably 1899]. His derision of the puritanical and scientific bases of my bringing up roused me to contend as much as his witty dreamsoaked talk delighted me. He was nearly five years my senior, so that he held on his way with less and less gainsaying from me.

Forty-five years later, Wilfrid Gibson called up a glorious moment of meeting Yeats, Binyon, and Sturge Moore in a Holborn tea-shop:

Binyon
Grave-eyed and gentle; Yeats with lank dark hair
And dark eyes flashing like the moonlit waters
Of some lone Irish lough; and Sturge Moore, faun-like,
With a long straggly beard of russet brown:
And I remember how I sat enthralled,
A raw lad listening to those poets talking—
Those poets in their thirties and the prime
Of their creative energy, discussing
Tolstoy's heretical 'What Is Art?'—Yeats, pouring
A stream of scintillating eloquence
In his broad-vowelled brogue; and Sturge Moore, piping
Keen commentary; while, for the most part, Binyon
Sat silent, pondering like some Indian god
Rapt in calm introspective meditation.

Yeats had known vaguely of Sturge Moore only as a member of Ricketts' close-knit group, but he too was impressed by the junior poet. In 1936 Yeats recalled: "When the Rhymers' Club was breaking up, I read enthusiastic reviews of the first book of Sturge Moore and grew jealous. He did not belong to the Rhymers' Club and I wanted to believe that we had all the good poets; but one evening Charles Ricketts brought me to a riverside house at Richmond and introduced me to Edith Cooper. She put into my unwilling hands Sturge Moore's book and made me read out and discuss certain poems. I surrendered. I took back all I had said against him."

Thus began a close friendship that continued through periodic meetings and numerous letters until Yeats's death forty years later. The older poet drew the younger into a variety of enterprises. He took him to meetings with Arnold Dolmetsch and Florence Farr to learn the technique of chanting verse. He helped elect him to the Royal Society of Literature. He sometimes persuaded him, along with Ezra Pound, to attend the séances which Yeats wanted to mean so much. There were occasional colorful activities, such as the expedition on January

18, 1914, to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's cottage in Sussex, where Yeats, Pound, Sturge Moore, and a dozen other poets read metrical eulogies to the old man and then presented him with a marble box containing the verses. Sturge Moore designed covers for Yeats's later books and bookplates for his family; in the 1920's the artist-poet engaged in a spirited epistolary discussion of ontology with the occultist poet, who was reading formal philosophy for the first time. In the last decade of his life Yeats's example and encouragement were a substantial stimulus to Sturge Moore's waning literary production. Throughout the friendship there were periodic meetings and numerous letters, and Sturge Moore was severely depressed when his friend, born five years before him, died, five years before he himself was to die.

Yeats's mention of Edith Cooper introduces another friendship that bulks large in Sturge Moore's life and work in the early part of the century. In the introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), Yeats says that in fifty years of writing he had been influenced by three literary schools—one of which was that of Michael Field and Sturge Moore. If it was not actually a "school," it was certainly a close relationship formed on personal affection and common literary subjects and techniques. Next to that exerted by Ricketts and Shannon, and by Yeats himself, the greatest personal influence on Sturge Moore was probably that of Katherine Harris Bradley (1846-1914) and Edith Emma Cooper (1862-1913), who were known to the eighties and nineties and early 1900's as Michael Field.

"Michael" (Katherine) was "Henry's" (Edith's) aunt and the dominant member of the pair, but both had promising literary talents which they combined. Lauded by Browning when their first book appeared in 1884, they went on to publish some thirty volumes of tragedies and lyrics, although—partially because of the discovery that they were two women instead of one man-they never received much further critical or popular acclaim. Yet they were far from being lukewarm old maids, and they made their own impression on late Victorian and Edwardian sensibility. "I never left their company without seeming to tread on air," Rothenstein says. "Yet woe to one who fell short of their expectations." Works and Days, the selection which Sturge Moore and his son published in 1933 from Michael Field's voluminous journals, charmingly exhibits the Fieldian powers, cited by Rothenstein, of invoking ethereality and of verbally impaling contemporaries. The latter gift is the more engaging. Ruskin shows a "speckled silliness" in dealing with women; Lewis Morris, "depressed with his fatal popularity . . . envies those who are not dominated" by Tennyson. W. M. Rossetti is "a wax-work of his brother," Pater a frog, D'Annunzio a "truculent insect"; and Edith has difficulty in refraining from cutting Yeats's hair, "which dribbles in a Postlethwaite manner from his brow."

Rothenstein had introduced the ladies to Ricketts and Shannon in 1892, and they had contributed to *The Dial*, but Sturge Moore did not really meet them until the turn of the century, when (while he was "house-dogging" 8 Spring Terrace, Richmond-on-Thames, for the artists during the time they were abroad) he went to dine at "The Paragon," Michael Field's eighteenth-century river-house. It was a strange pair he came to know: "Their manners, though a second nature, were more elaborate than any I had encountered, and intimidated me . . . . They insisted on evening dress, and clothes I wore so rarely were a barrier in themselves." It was not long, however, before he established a *rapport* and "touched a fellow-feeling in regard

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Pages 215-16, which describe Browning's son "Pen" with great frankness, gave libelous offense to that unfortunate, and were leafed over.

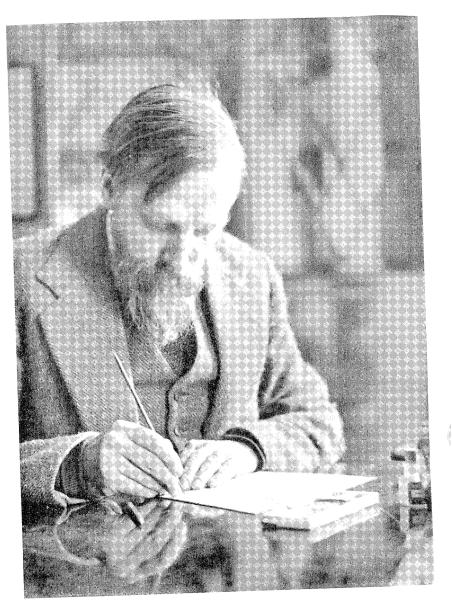
to poetry which was in many ways more intimate than I could feel with Yeats or even with Binyon."

Michael and Henry had a dog, not a cat, and its death was partially responsible for their conversion to Catholicism in 1907; previously they had been frank though decorous pagans. Henry died of cancer in 1913, after much suffering, ignorant of the fact that Michael also had a malignancy, which took her off the following year. Both poets refused all comforts of morphia—because they wished to keep clear heads for their work. They were extraordinary women, with a joint Flaubertian devotion to the life of art paralleled only by that of Ricketts and Shannon.

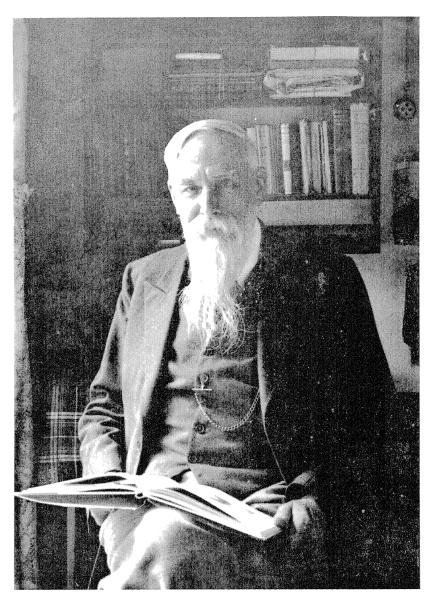
In September 1901 Sturge Moore left his family and moved from Highgate to 21 Fitzroy Street (in Bloomsbury), where the artist-poet Selwyn Image, later to become Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Oxford, maintained "Hobby-Horse House" within the purlieus of London's Montparnasse. A year later, he moved again, taking a house at 20 St. James Square, Holland Park, in Kensington, once again with his favorite sister Henrietta. But his bachelor days ended in 1903, for he became engaged to his cousin and childhood friend, Marie Appia, on June 28 and married her on November 26.

Mademoiselle Appia had kept him waiting a long time—he was now thirty-three—and her high spirits and French charm brought a new sustenance to his life that the brilliance of the Ricketts-Field circle had naturally failed to supply. Charles Ricketts was not happy to see his disciple leave him, but there was no hard feeling in the end; Ricketts became godfather to the first-born, and the poet continued to make a weekly call on the artists for the rest of their lives.

The Sturge Moores had two children: Daniel Charles (born November 5, 1905), and Henriette Hélène Rebècca (born June 17, 1907), named for her two grandmothers, who had been



STURGE MOORE IN MIDDLE AGE



STURGE MOORE IN OLD AGE

"He was like his beautiful face; a prophet, a seer, a boy, and a kindly jester." (John Copley)

stepsisters. "Riette" Sturge-Moore, a gifted designer of stage scenery and costumes, has made a reputation in London and provincial theatrical circles. Her brother, who calls himself D. C. Moore, has had a career that includes Cambridge, Australia, and the London *Daily Chronicle*; during World War II he broadcast to the French underground from the B.B.C., and has since become associated with Radiodiffusion Paris. Sturge Moore, who once wrote Trevelyan that he would like to live in France, at least acquired a Francophile and bilingual family.

Sturge Moore's father-in-law, the Reverend Georges Appia, was a delight to him. A strong-minded Lutheran minister, he was also a painter, and, "excepting Ricketts" (Sturge Moore wrote Trevelyan after Appia's death in 1910), "the most vital personality I have ever come across." For a while Appia took the place of Sturge Moore's own parents; Mrs. Moore died in December 1903 and Dr. Moore in August of the following year. Fortunately for their son, who had been worrying about the financial rewards of writing verse, there was a legacy transmitted from two wealthy maternal uncles. Professor Moore, who published his seminal Principia Ethica and "The Refutation of Idealism" in 1903, recalls that "I and my brothers and sisters had now sufficient private means to enable us to live in moderate comfort without needing to earn anything." Materially and emotionally, there was now a fairly substantial background for Sturge Moore's literary fecundity.

#### 2. The Renovation of the Theatre

Like his preceptor Matthew Arnold, Sturge Moore developed a consuming interest in the stage. He became a playgoer during the nineties, making the trip into town to see Ibsen and Stephen Phillips, Elizabethan plays and Savoy operas,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Patience "knocks all other English literature into a cocked hat in point of form," Sturge Moore wrote Trevelyan (December 27, 1900).

ART AND LIFE: 1895-1910

Mrs. Pat Campbell and Flora Robson in Pelléas et Mélisande, Sarah Bernhardt and Gabrielle Réjane in L'Aiglon, and—a number of times—Bernhardt's triumphant Phèdre. Under Ricketts' influence, he had acquired an admiration for Wagner, and had gone to Munich in the summer of 1895 with George and Hettie Moore to hear The Flying Dutchman, Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, and the complete Ring, which stirred him to begin his long poem on the hoard and the tragic lovers, as it had once briefly stirred Arnold twenty years before. The Greek drama had made a lasting impression on him; editing Shakespeare steeped him in the English classic; his friend Yeats was persuasive about the possibilities of modern poetic drama; and Ricketts doubtless awakened him to the intricacies of stagecraft. With Binyon, the Pye girls, and their friends Mona Wilson and Flora Mayor, Sturge Moore formed a Literary Theatre Club which produced Henry IV and Binyon's Oenone. Trevelyan sent him a notice of the Stage Society, founded in 1899 to present Shaw and Ibsen on Sunday nights, and he was soon caught up in the age-old allurement of "that most complicated of implements, a theatre," as he described the medium.

He began his career in the literary theatre by trying to persuade Forbes-Robertson to put on *Mariamne*. It was in 1899, in the actor's dressing-room, that he apparently had his first contact with the professionalism of the stage. The locale, which he described at length to Trevelyan in a letter of March 15, impressed him: "The laurel wreaths and their streaming dowdy ribbons, trophies of his triumphs, were piled up against his bookcase, there were plans for a new theatre on his sofa, and a large photo of Mrs. Pat framed and on an easel; besides there was a miscellany of old armour, photos, books, inkstands, etc., drawings and pictures of all sorts." The actor-manager did not buy *Mariamne*; he was flattering to the tyro but he said that of

all modern poetic plays, only The Cup and A Blot in the 'Scutcheon "were really practicable for the stage."

In January 1901, Ricketts and Sturge Moore enthusiastically discussed the project of a theatre society for "Roman drama," to be managed by the poet, a theatre "in which the scenery would be done on a new decorative, almost symbolic principle"—a notion that had "haunted" Ricketts for years. By July, the group, labeled the Literary Theatre Club, had come into being and was reading Sturge Moore's *Aphrodite against Artemis* at the Dalston Theatre for possible presentation. Ricketts' account of the reading must be quoted at length:

Miss May Morris had been persuaded to read the part of Phaedra. We all met like conspirators at the Austrian Restaurant, chaperoned by L. Binyon. The party consisted of a batch of mere boys, Miss Morris (rather patronizing us all), and a good-natured middle-aged actress, Miss [Florence] Farr, who has appeared in countless efforts to stage Ibsen, Shaw, etc. Moore wore an old straw hat with a wavy brim, he handed each of us a twopenny tube ticket; we looked like a school treat . . . . Inside the Dalston Theatre there was a pandemonium of charwomen, cleaning the place; clouds of dust on the stage, with a rural cottage in the corn for a background. When the curtain was raised, the bunch of young chaps who were to read the chorus of Greek girls became so nervous that this was cut out. Enter Miss May Morris from left. "Am I to come on now?" Then follows a tragic speech in a soft, inaudible voice, answered inaudibly by Binyon, punctuated by loud conversational noises from the charwomen: "Arris, are you there?"—with street noises and an occasional street child peeping through the scenery door. When the play was over and the stage properly strewn with corpses, the curtain man was nowhere to be found, though corpse after corpse sat up and called out, "Curtain!" Then Phaedra in a tart voice said, "Curtain, please!", and a scene-shifter turned round and said, "'Oo says so?" When told by Aphrodite, the only professional, what we wanted, he said, "You mean the Act drop, Miss?"

Ricketts' last sentence tells us a great deal about the author of *Aphrodite against Artemis*: "I was charmed watching T. S. Moore, who listened with a rapt face to the sound of his 'winged words,' impervious to the comedy of the whole adventure."

ART AND LIFE: 1895-1910

The play was not actually produced until April 1, 1906. By this time, with the money received from the Vale Press Faustus, Sturge Moore had formed a limited liability company, taking 150 shares that gave him final decision in the group's policy. His play received a semiprofessional performance, with a Ricketts décor, and with Florence Farr as Phaedra and Gwendolen Bishop as Aphrodite.

William Archer's review of Aphrodite against Artemis was violently unfavorable; under the caption, "A Rival to Euripides," Archer attacked the ambitious playwright, asserting that "after last night's exhibition, he may be urged, and even implored to hold aloof from drama." When Ricketts wrote Archer a sensible, scholarly letter, pointing out the merits of his friend's play, the critic reprinted the letter and came back with one and a half columns of abuse. All this had little effect on Sturge Moore, who went right ahead with plans to do Wilde's Salomé. As he wrote Trevelyan (April 9, 1906), "I think I have learned a great deal off my first theatrical experience and hope to learn more off Salome."

The production of Salomé on June 10 and 18, 1906, at King's Hall in Covent Garden, also involved a curtain-raiser called A Florentine Tragedy, which Wilde had begun in Florence on a trip with Lord Alfred Douglas in 1893, the year he wrote Salomé. The faithful Robert Ross found some 400 lines of the play among Wilde's posthumous papers, but without an opening scene. ("It was characteristic of the author to have finished what he never began," writes Ross, in a manner worthy of his master.) William J. Locke had already written a play, Flower o' the Rose, based on a verbal account of Wilde's idea, and had seen it performed in June 1904. But Ross asked Sturge Moore to finish Wilde's script, and the poet turned out 250 lines of blank verse surprisingly in keeping with Wilde's style. A Flor-

entine Tragedy is no tragedy, and it is not very Florentine; it is simply romantic fustian wrapped about a cinquecento triangle, a fugitive piece from Sardoodledom, a hangover from Scribe. But within the realm of half-hour curtain-raisers, it is a good enough play. It became popular immediately, receiving many English performances and being translated into Russian, German, French, and Hungarian. In Germany it approached the vogue of Salomé.

The first presentation, with Ricketts sets and costumes, was apparently a good one, and the audience—which included Hardy, Shaw, Yeats, George Moore, Beerbohm, Symons, and Israel Zangwill—was enthusiastic, giving three calls for the *Tragedy* and four for *Salomé*. The latter, which had not previously been performed in England, owing to the official anathema against Biblical drama, *épata la bourgeoisie*, and no illustrated paper would publish photographs of Salomé's notorious dance.

Encouraged by this artistic and scandalous success—it actually cost £30—the Literary Theatre began plans for a production of Shaw's "A Dream of Don Juan in Hell," the part of Man and Superman (1903) not usually performed, but the project was too ambitious and had to be canceled. The next event in Sturge Moore's theatrical career was a performance of The Persians of Aeschylus on March 23, 1907, at Terry's Theatre, by the Stage Society; as a member of the Chorus the poet made his only appearance on the stage. He was admitted to membership in the Society the following season, and by 1912 was sitting with Shaw, Gilbert Murray, and others on its Council of Management.

A further dramatic enterprise was the founding of the "Masquers" on March 28, 1905, when Sturge Moore joined Yeats, Arthur Symons, and Gilbert Murray in a gallant plan to

give classic, foreign, and contemporary "plays, masques, ballets and ceremonies." The Masquers' Society ended abortively a few months later, however, owing to the pressure of other work on the principals.

As a kind of text for all this activity, one may apply two articles Sturge Moore published in *The Monthly Review* for 1902—"A Plea for an Endowed Stage" and "The Renovation of the Theatre." Although these two pieces should have been printed in reverse order, they comprise together one of the most vigorous and readable essays their author ever wrote.

Under an uncredited epigraph from his idol Matthew Arnold—"The theatre is irresistible; organize the theatre"—the enthusiast presents practical plans based on two main convictions: the notion, understated in Shavian terms, that "a nation's intellectual amusements should be worthy to rank with its physical exercises. . .," and the neo-classic dogma that the theatre should "refine and ennoble our common speech, our outward behaviour."

Sturge Moore's program calls for a clique of the passionate few—the kind of group of which he was currently a part—who believe that "the standards of theatrical performance in this country are unnecessarily low; and that they can help to raise them." This clique must first address a cultivated audience that has enough wealth and leisure to underwrite dramatic experiment. It should present simple, esthetic plays, such as give fewest occasions for the virtuosity that stains the commercial stage—plays acted with an open and obvious sincerity, with a nicety and passionate love of perfection, and chiefly utilizing the effects produced by elocution.

Yet the clique of aristocratic enthusiasts is only a temporary measure, Sturge Moore submits, and it must "recognise the right moment for constituting itself a public body." When

this time comes, it must form the nucleus of an endowed national theatre—that lovely dream which, for so many devotees, the Athenian and French stages have always embodied. Only the agency of an endowed stage can combat the catering to public taste, the long-run system, the anti-repertory bias, and the underpayment of dramatic artists that characterize the commercial stage.

It is not unpleasant to find a man like Sturge Moore, an artist who dwelt so much in the realm of the imagination, proceeding for all the world like a lesser Bernard Shaw to demolish the evils of organization and supplant them with specific, if undemonstrated, improvements.

#### 3. Art and Life

Besides the multifarious activity of writing poetry and renovating the theatre, Sturge Moore maintained a tangible interest in the fine arts. He attended occasional lectures by Binyon, Roger Fry (who lived with Trevelyan), and other estheticians. In December 1898 he showed some of his woodcuts at the Van Wisselingh Gallery, with Ricketts and Shannon, Pissarro, Savage, and others, in "the first exhibition of original wood-engraving" in England. In May 1904, a dozen prominent draughtsmen, lithographers, etchers, and wood-engravers formed the Society of Twelve, for the purpose of consolidating interests and encouraging exhibition. Sturge Moore was one of the twelve, along with Muirhead Bone, Cameron, Clausen, Conder, Gordon Craig, Augustus John, Legros, Nicholson, Rothenstein, and, as always, Ricketts and Shannon. They added new names at the annual shows: Orpen, Dodd, Strang, and Walter Sickert. Sturge Moore contributed a number of woodcuts and designs for book-covers; under Ricketts' guidance, he had taken

up this delicate and rewarding art, which he was to practice successfully almost to the end of his life.

In addition to printing woodcuts in the Vale and Eragny Press books already mentioned, he did a frontispiece for a limited edition of William Penn's *Some Fruits of Solitude* in 1901 and two cuts in 1903 for *The Venture*, "an annual of art and literature" that had one of the most distinguished and anomalous beadrolls of writers in modern English letters, from Francis Thompson to Somerset Maugham.

In May 1900 he made a trip to Madrid with Ricketts, who was gathering material for a book about the Prado Museum,<sup>3</sup> and he began one of his best poems while standing enraptured before the Titian *Bacchanal* in the gallery. But his most energetic art-work was in the field of criticism and esthetics. Binyon commissioned him to do a book on Altdorfer for the Artists' Library series, and he made a foraging expedition to German and Austrian museums in the summer of 1899 to see the pictures he was to write about. He saw the book published in 1900; two years later he edited a collection of Altdorfer's woodcuts for the Little Engravings Classical and Contemporary series.

Next was a 350-page book on Dürer (1905) in the Library of Art series. Reviewers generally liked Albert Durer [sic] for its refreshing departure from orthodox patterns of art criticism; G. K. Chesterton wrote a laudatory review in The Daily News, and Arthur Symons sent Sturge Moore a letter of praise which so pleased him that he wrote Trevelyan (February 19, 1905): "I feel rather like having a prolific time and have got out the plot of my comedy ['The Two Ugly Men']."

The reviewers also liked his *Correggio* (1906), which is a hundred pages shorter than *Durer* and much more readable.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The Prado and Its Masterpieces (1903); revised and retitled The Art of the Prado (1927).

Correggio is vitiated by prolonged polemic against the critic Bernard Berenson (incidentally a great friend of Trevelyan); yet the Times reviewer was moved to conclude: "It is a strong thing to say, but we doubt whether in any of the myriad books which have been produced in England in recent years on art and art criticism anything has been written which gets more completely to the heart of the matter than Mr. Moore's chapter called 'A Halt and Two Pictures'." Durer and Correggio were published in both New York and London, and were reprinted there in 1911, the only books of Sturge Moore's criticism that attained the popularity necessary for reissue.

He continued to widen his audience by publishing a number of magazine articles. In 1901 he wrote "In Defense of Reynolds" as an answer to Sir Walter Armstrong's Sir Joshua Reynolds, First President of the Royal Academy, and in 1902 he defended Rodin from the strictures of D. S. McColl. (Seventeen years later, he and McColl had a long epistolary battle in The Times over metrics.)

These and his other articles of the period, three esthetic and three literary—"The Idea of Proportion" and "The Idea of a Canon of Proportion for the Human Figure" (both 1904), "Charles Baudelaire" (1907), "William Blake, Poet and Painter" and "Flaubert and Some Critics" (both 1908), and "Aesthetic Aims" (1910)—all come to flower in his book Art and Life in 1910, which, with Armour for Aphrodite (1929), is his most seminal work in prose. Art and Life is a summing-up of everything Sturge Moore had learned and practiced since that signal day in 1887 when he had met Charles Ricketts; and its Flaubertian conclusions were to remain with him always.

### IV

# Man of Letters: 1910-1930

ALTHOUGH Sturge Moore's spirit was never really at home in the effervescent professional world of arts and letters, it always hovered there, and the record of his production and circulation for the rest of his life is impressive. One may consider the years from 1910, when he was proposed for election to the Royal Society of Literature, to the early 1930's, when he was a candidate for Poet Laureate and when his collected poems appeared, as the third period in his long career.

### 1. People, Poems, and Plays

In 1911, chiefly through Yeats's efforts, he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, an election that must have meant a great deal to a poet whose books never really sold well and whose adverse critics outnumbered his articulate admirers. Yeats, Binyon, and Trevelyan's brother George were members of the Academic Committee, which had been newly formed to give active encouragement to English writers and to proceed along the lines of the French Academy; doubtless they had much to do with Sturge Moore's elevation to the Academy and to the Committee.

But he did little to enhance his new eminence by publishing (in *The English Review* for January 1911) a short story, the last of the only three he ever printed. "A Platonic Marriage" describes the grotesque relationship between a normal man and a woman eighteen inches tall. It is a poor story in every way. The Vigilance Society considered it not only poor but indecent; they asked Austin Harrison, editor of *The English Review*, to

stop sale of the issue. But Harrison was a sanguine soul, and he immediately stirred up a ferment against persecution. "He talks of it proving the greatest trial in the cause of literature since the Vizetelly case," Sturge Moore desperately wrote Trevelyan on January 18, "and seems to expect to go to prison . . . if you can get any people of importance to come forward in my behalf I shall be very grateful." Robert Trevelyan responded gallantly, but the whole affair finally blew over without a trial. Only Harrison was dismayed; he complained that Sturge Moore had "deserted" him by not producing "another still more red flag to wave at the Vigilance Society," as the poor author complained a year later.

A happier undertaking was his career as a public speaker, which began sometime in 1910-1911 with a paper on Matthew Arnold. In September 1911 he appeared at Morley College in London, where his brother George had previously given a series of lectures. The poet talked about "The Best Poetry," a phrase he borrowed from Arnold and a topic he utilized at least four times again—at the Poetry Society in January of 1912, at the Royal Society of Literature in March, and twice in print.

The Poetry Society, according to its manifesto, was founded in 1912 "as the Poetry Recital Society to promote a more general recognition and appreciation of Poetry by encouraging the public and private reading of it and developing the art of speaking verse," a practice that had always engaged Sturge Moore's interest. He became an active member of the Society—he was a vice-president along with Noyes, Chesterton, Blunt, and Newbolt—and he gave a number of talks at its meetings in Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop and in various London homes.

Sturge Moore and his family now moved to 40 Well Walk

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Henry Vizetelly (1820-1894) was fined and imprisoned for publishing Zola's works in England in 1888-1889.

on Hampstead Hill, where they were to remain permanently, except for evacuation to the Trevelyans' in Dorking during both World Wars and a seven-year sojourn in Hampshire in the 1920's. Hampstead has for a long time been a retreat of artists and writers, and Well Walk, which in the eighteenth century led to a popular chalvbeate well and spa, is one of Hampstead's loci litterarum. Keats walked in the patch of grove that still shelters the Heath end of the street; John Masefield lived at Number 13 across from Sturge Moore; and Constable painted some of his loveliest landscapes from the very house which Sturge Moore bought. This "comfortable little house," Constable wrote a friend in 1827, is "situated on an eminence..., and our little drawing room commands a view unsurpassed in Europe, from Westminster Abbey to Gravesend. The dome of St. Paul's in the air seems to realize Michael Angelo's words on seeing the Pantheon: 'I will build such a thing in the sky'."

Number 40 was also the scene of a modern literary romance. When Sturge Moore and his wife were shopping for a house in Hampstead, an agent sent them to Number 42. Arriving at Number 40 by mistake, they were greeted with no little surprise by a Professor and Mrs. Ernest Weekley, the tenants. The Weekleys were moving, it was true, but they had considered it private intelligence, since Mrs. Weekley, the former Frieda von Richtofen, was about to run away to Germany with D. H. Lawrence.

It was in 1912 that Sturge Moore met a foreign poet whose talent and personality engaged his sympathies, who later came to live behind him in Hampstead, and to whom he gave much time and energy in literary aid. Rothenstein had met Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) in India and liked him as a man and as a representative of the undervalued or misunderstood Bengalese culture; he consequently introduced Rabindranath to English men of letters on the poet's first visit to England in 1912.

Ezra Pound and Yeats soon became ardent disciples, but some, like Stopford Brooke, balked at being "absorbed into the All," or like Shaw, wondered how many wives Old Bluebeard had.

Sturge Moore wrote Trevelyan that he was only mildly impressed by Tagore at first: "His unique subject is 'the love of God.' When I told Yeats that I found his poetry preposterously optimistic, he said, 'Ah, you see, he is absorbed in God.' The Poet himself is a sweet creature, beautiful to the eye in a silk turban. He likes Keats and Wordsworth best of English poets, has read everything, including my work."

But it was not long before he was won over to the Bengalese seer. In the following year he helped him translate his poems into English, sitting "long hours day after day by Tagore's side trying to realize the port and mien of his idiom . . . ." These verses were then published as The Crescent Moon with a cover designed by Sturge Moore. Tagore dedicated his book to the English poet, who reciprocated in 1914 by inscribing a section of The Sea Is Kind and writing a poem to Rabindranath; Marie Sturge Moore also translated The Crescent Moon into French. There was a later collaboration on Tagore's The Fugitive (1921), and Sturge Moore's blank verse version of Karna and Kunti drew praise from its author as the best English rendering of any of the originals.

It was in December 1912 that Edward Marsh arbitrarily began a period of "renascence" by issuing the first of five biennial anthologies, called *Georgian Poetry*. Although Sturge Moore was forty-two and thus over the general age limit of thirty-five to forty, Marsh included his *A Sicilian Idyll*, giving him more space than any other poet. Now, Sturge Moore is no Georgian, and Marsh rightly excluded him from succeeding volumes (along with Chesterton, Trevelyan, and two others) under the rubric: "A few of the contributors to the former volume are not

represented in this one, either because they have published nothing which comes within its scope, or because they belong in fact to an earlier poetic generation, and their inclusion must be allowed to have been an anachronism."

In World War I Sturge Moore confined his efforts to pen and ink. As he wrote Trevelyan in 1915, "I came to the conclusion that I was far more suited to drill imaginations and language than to be drilled for Home Defence, though I would willing[ly] go to help with the wounded if an op[p]ortunity occurred...." Accordingly, he wrote fifteen war poems between 1914 and 1920, publishing a number of them in The Times and other periodicals. From June to October 1919, his articles on "Some Soldier Poets" appeared in The English Review; these appeared in book form, with added chapters, in 1919, with "The Best Poetry" appended as if to excuse the evanescent nature of the other essays. For Some Soldier Poets is admittedly journalistic: "These essays are occasional. They are incomplete and tentative, as must be every reply to a fortuitous demand. I have not chosen my themes by any deep affinity<sup>2</sup> or because I had a native bent for studying them, but because they were thrust before me and some of my thoughts flocked out to meet each."

Perhaps the closest Sturge Moore came to the war was in May 1916 when the Channel steamer "Sussex," on which his wife was traveling, was torpedoed and not located for twelve hours. It was an agonizing wait for the sensitive persons concerned.

His wife and children had never really enjoyed perfect health, and after the war, doctors advised a removal to the country. He chose Petersfield in Hampshire so that Dan and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> But Sturge Moore did base his remarks on Rupert Brooke, as well as the poem "Agathon to Lysis" (*The Sea Is Kind*), on a personal affection for the younger poet, whom he saw frequently in the days before 1913, when Brooke began his world travels.

Riette could attend Bedales School there. But although he had insured the education of his children, he had earned an annual average of only £36 from 1913 to 1919, from writing and designing; the cost of living had risen, and the expenses of moving to the country were great.

The faithful Trevelyan now came to his aid in a way that reflected credit on all involved. With the support of several fellow-writers, Trevelyan presented a petition to Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, asking a civil grant for the straitened poet. The document succinctly designated Sturge Moore's position in the world of English letters. After calling attention to his numerous publications and literary activities, and to his art-work and international exhibiting, Trevelyan asserted: "We hold that it is to his honour that he has never done work below his own high standard, though he has lived a life of continual intellectual activity & has been neither idle nor improvident, and it has been his misfortune that popular remunerative writing is not within the compass of his gifts." In 1920 he received a Civil List Pension of f,75 annually for life, to be paid beginning with the previous year. In thanking Trevelyan for his opportune help, Sturge Moore gave typical evidence of his literary energy: "I am already looking forward to a settled existence which will enable me to take up my Judas again and perhaps do a small tragedy on the Danaid subject, though I think with other names, if I can find possible ones. Do you know of a book about ancient Mexico [?] it seemed to me that I might perhaps find a background there."

The Sturge Moores lived at "Hillcroft," Steep, Petersfield, in Hampshire, from 1919 to 1927, while Dan and Riette attended Bedales, the first coeducational boarding school in England. Their father took an active interest in Bedales, giving

readings, speaking at Sunday assemblies, and even teaching a class in esthetics in 1924-1925.

Sturge Moore's extended units of poetry continued along the path of classical or Biblical drama and narrative. Marianne and Judith, two plays from Hebrew history, both published in 1911, did not please the critics, although The Nation and The Saturday Review were moved to print stock-taking articles on the poet in January 1912. Judas, which he had begun in September 1910, was not published until 1923, by which time it had accumulated some 4,000 lines of confused bulk.

He made one incursion into Germanic legend, and two into Spanish in this period. Roderigo of Bivar (1925), based apparently on an incident in Corneille's Le Cid (1636) and on Southey's compilation, The Chronicle of the Cid (1808), is a melodrama of chivalric honor, while He Will Not Come (first printed in the Collected Edition in 1933) is an undistinguished Don Juan "drama to be overheard from behind a curtain." Tyrfing, one of Sturge Moore's best poetic dramas, is an expansion of part of the Old Norse Hervarer Saga ok Heithreks Konungs; it was printed with Medea and Niobe in Tragic Mothers (1920).

Nineteen-twenty, indeed, was a good year for the poet's reputation. Not only did he publish *The Powers of the Air*, the prose keystone of his mythopoetic structure, but also his finest poetic play, *Medea*, his engaging dramatic reverie *Aforetime*, and his symbolic apologia in prose, *Blind Thamyris. The London Mercury* broached a bibliography of the poet's work in this year, the enlarged *Little School* (1917) was reprinted in America, and something like official American recognition came when Louis

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Through the agency of an American bibliophile, Dr. H. T. Radin, *Roderigo* was published at Mt. Vernon, N.Y., by Bruce Rogers and W. E. Rudge.

Untermeyer included "The Dying Swan" and "Silence Sings" in Modern British Poetry: a Critical Anthology.

Sturge Moore's last publication of mythological poetry was Mystery and Tragedy (1930), which consists of two dramas, Psyche in Hades and Daimonassa. While the latter is organized on a level of surface behavior, the former contains much of the material from which one can abstract Sturge Moore's subtle ethic. In 1930 his Nine Poems was published at the Halcyon Press in an edition limited to 125 copies—one of the most beautiful pieces of typography and binding I have ever seen. And finally in 1931-1933, Macmillan brought out The Poems of T. Sturge Moore in four volumes, printed by the Alcuin Press, with symbolic covers designed by the poet.<sup>4</sup>

He went to great trouble to arrange his poems for this edition. The introductory note reads: "The items of this collection are not arranged chronologically because such an order is merely intellectual. The attempt to sort them by theme proved also frequently more reasoned than pleasing. There remained the much more arduous effort in which I have no doubt failed. Ideally each poem should appear among neighbors which enhance its effect. This is what those with the gift succeed in doing for flowers." One would have to agree that the arrangement did entail an "arduous effort" and that it has "no doubt failed." To arrange poems in a book like flowers in a vase would require each poem itself to be compact, quickly comprehensible and easily recalled, and of striking singularity; otherwise no one poem could enhance its neighbor's effect. A diligent reader must conclude that most of Sturge Moore's poems lack the particular symmetrical beauty of individual flowers. In-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Macmillan published 1,500 sets, priced at twelve shillings sixpence per volume. The project was a commercial failure, and many sets were remaindered; in 1939, Dauber and Pine in New York sold sets at \$2.79.

stead, they are centrifugal, they introduce a host of images and ideas of which usually no one is dominant, and they have to be solved anew each time they are approached. Although Wordsworth's arrangement of his 1815 *Poems* is thematic (except for the famous distinction between Poems of the Imagination and Poems of the Fancy), Harper's remarks on Wordsworth's allocation might be applied, with some qualifications, to Sturge Moore's: "Abandoned by ordinary good sense to the guidance of pedantry, he divided his poems, in this edition, according to that inexplicable system of his own making which has done as much as anything else to repel honest readers, the apology therefor set down in the Preface, being no explanation at all, but a further provocation to wonder." Or, as Lamb baldly asserted on the same topic: "There is only one good order, and that is the order in which they were written."

We must consider this collected edition to be Sturge Moore's bid for recognition as an important English poet; the chief reviews over the period 1931-1934 (listed in the Bibliography) resolve themselves into those that accept him as such and those that deny him any more significance than that of an eccentric anachronism. Of the latter, there is a minority of three. In those reviewers who get beyond the vagaries of style and subject, one finds an exciting appreciation of the poet's unique stature. As L. A. G. Strong says, the Collected Edition comprises "a corpus of poetry which no longer allows any excuse for neglecting one of the most distinguished of living poets."

J. V. Cunningham, writing in the Roman Catholic organ *Commonweal*, goes further and adduces a reason: "Moore is a major poet because he defines and subjects the central moral temptation of our time: that spiritual pride which would overreach natural limits." And Yvor Winters, "that master moral ideologist" (as Ransom has called him), takes over Cunning-

ham's point of view in a long review that occasioned controversy both at the time of appearance and when embodied in Winters' *Primitivism and Decadence* (1937). Professor Winters' third and fourth sentences are extravagant, but they may be quoted as an uncommon example of Sturge Moore's engagement of critical approval: "These two volumes contain poetry, I believe, that has been equalled by not more than two or three living writers, and more great poetry than any living writer has composed.

"In my opinion Mr Moore is a greater poet than Mr Yeats." Yet Mr. Winters was the only one who believed this, and the bulk and specious arrangement of the Collected Edition kept the public at arm's length. Sir John Squire suggested that a one-volume selection, preferably not made by Sturge Moore himself, would greatly assist his reputation, and so Mrs. Sturge Moore brought out the Selected Poems in 1934, the eighty-odd items having been chosen by friends. There was a cover by Charles Ricketts, similar to that of Yeats's Collected Poems of the year before, and there were scattered but exceedingly helpful notes by the poet himself. Although the book was not reviewed, it completed the traditional pattern of presenting a poetical canon.

Sturge Moore's interest in the literary stage never flagged. He continued to attend performances of plays; mythological drama interested him most—Oedipus, Gluck's Orfeo, and Synge's Deirdre of the Sorrows, to cite three varied examples of kind—but he was also concerned with other types. In 1919 he tried to organize a Stage Society production of James Joyce's Exiles (1918), an action that heartened Joyce's return to Zurich from the British Isles, though the performance did not take place until February 14, 1925. The Ibsenish nature of Exiles precludes any claims for Sturge Moore's early appreciation of

Joyce's original genius; yet the English poet mentioned the Irish writer sympathetically in the 1930 *Criterion*, and in 1927 he signed a letter of protest against the bowdlerized pirating of *Ulysses* by Samuel Roth.<sup>5</sup> It is still to his credit that he attempted to produce Joyce's play at a time when its author stood in need of funds and reputation.

Sturge Moore continued to encourage and participate in productions of his own work. The Stage Society presented Judith on January 23-24, 1916, at the Queen's Theatre, once again with Ricketts décor. Lillah McCarthy (formerly Mrs. Harley Granville-Barker and later Lady Keeble) was Judith, and though there were only twelve days for the actors to learn their parts, she "acted the sword episode so splendidly that Arnold Bennett immediately wrote a more extensive *Judith* to frame her," as Sturge Moore graciously notes. England's laws still forbade Biblical drama in public, but (as Miss McCarthy later wrote) "the Censor—reacting, perhaps, to the freer manners of wartime, had deigned to license" Judith. Yet while the audience was enthusiastic about Sturge Moore's play, the press, guardians of British taste and morality, was violently hostile; The Times did admit that "the gory still has a certain lingering charm"! "Of course [Ricketts wrote in his journal] our Press has damned Wilde, Maeterlinck, kept away D'Annunzio, Hofmannsthal, Claudel, as it kept back and damned Ibsen in the past. Our censorship has impeded works of art only. Sophocles, Ibsen, etc., even Shaw is persecuted . . . . Barker has failed, Shaw is right, we hate the theatre in England." And Marie Sturge Moore spiritedly wrote Ricketts: "Oh! Ces critiques! Ils sont comme des roquets qui aboient à tout passant, ne sachant pas distinguer une procession de prèlats ou un cortège de noce d'un

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This petition, drawn up by Archibald MacLeish and Ludwig Lewisohn, must be the longest (167 names) and most distinguished list of contemporaneous writers ever assembled on one page.

troupeau de vaches! . . . Mais leurs os iront blanchir la poudre des chemins."

Perhaps Bernard Shaw was the only one to preserve a critical acumen in the melee. A month after the performances of *Judith*, he was still writing to Sturge Moore, asserting that the play really begins after the murder of Holofernes, that the dramatic questions were What became of Judith? and Who wanted to marry her? Charles Ricketts answered the questions: "I imagine no one, and that she was invited out to dinner less and less owing to her tendency to refer to the story of Holofernes and what she had felt. They probably gave her a State funeral."

Four of Sturge Moore's verse-dramas were presented in town and country. The Bedales School put on Tyrfing on November 4, 1922, and Medea early in July 1923, with Hilda Thompson in the leading roles. Mrs. Penelope Wheeler (who had impersonated the stern goddess of Aphrodite against Artemis in 1906) took the part of Medea in a holiday entertainment in John Masefield's music-room at Boar's Hill (January 1-3, 1925); Hardy's Queen of Cornwall shared the program. It was an "absurdly inadequate performance," Sturge Moore wrote Trevelyan years later, given "on a howling New Year's night to half a dozen frozen mortals," although Mrs. Wheeler was excellent. Lady Norah Legge was Psyche in Psyche in Hades in July and August, 1927, at Sir Thomas Legge's Fair Rising House in Steep; and Mrs. Wheeler took the title role of Niobe in a performance at the Wheelers' London house on February 9 and 11, 1930.

Late in 1929 Robert Trevelyan suggested a joint presentation of *Medea* with Trevelyan's *Meleager*, the cost of production to be underwritten by Trevelyan. The two old friends spent much of the spring of 1930 in preparation, Sturge Moore producing his own play and designing masks and costumes which

Ethel Pye executed; he also procured the huge imitation rock demanded by the play—an item which finally cost £11. Mrs. Wheeler headed the cast of both Medea (which included Sylvia Legge and Sturge Moore's daughter Riette) and Meleager at the Rudolph Steiner Hall in London on March 31 and April 1. The older poet's report to the younger commented: "I am afraid both performances were ragged and had little ensemble. Mrs. Wheeler had far too much on her hands to give either you or me her best. [But thank you] for the opportunity of trying Medea again and for all I have thereby learnt." But he wrote no more plays, and this was the last presentation of his dramatic work he was to see.

#### 2. Art, Esthetics, and Literary Criticism

In reviewing his activities (to supplement Trevelyan's pension petition in 1919) Sturge Moore noted that his woodcuts had "been invited to exhibitions at Munich, Leipsic, Paris, Budapest, Venice, and to the Graphic Arts at London." (He might have added New York, where he exhibited in 1915-1916.) By 1934 he could have pointed out four critical treatments that devoted much space to appreciation of his work in wood: Martin Hardie's Catalogue of Modern Wood Engravings (1919), Cecil French's T. Sturge Moore: Woodcuts Selected from his Work (1921), Herbert Furst's The Modern Woodcut (1924), and French's "The Wood-Engravings of T. Sturge Moore" in The Print-Collector's Quarterly (1931).

At the end of his life he could also look back on a large number of bookplates and covers for books he had designed. Of the bookplates, perhaps "The Virgin and the Unicorn," made for Campbell Dodgson and shown at the Arts and Crafts show at the Royal Academy in 1926, is the best known, though readers of poetry find more interest in the plates he made for Yeats, Mrs. Yeats, and their daughter Anne.<sup>6</sup>

He designed the covers for most of his own books from 1915 on, but except for the unicorn and Arabian tree on the Collected Poems, they are crude and obvious emblems that add little to the integration of book with contents. He seemed to be more successful in conceiving symbolic manifestations of other people's work, and (as Yeats pointed out) his beasts were always better than his human figures. Perhaps his finest achievement is the series of decorations for De l'Isle-Adam's Axël in a translation by H. P. R. Finberg with a preface by Yeats, the whole elaborately published in 1925 by Jarrolds at three guineas a copy. The designs do not "illustrate but retrace the book's theme in a graphic idiom suggested by Villiers de l'Isle Adam's own images," as the table of contents puts it. A writer in The London Mercury speaks for many when he comments: "I can think of no modern book in which the illustrator and the printer have each played so well the other's game, or in which both of them have played up so well to the author himself."

Yeats's admiration for Sturge Moore's imaginative engravings led to commissions for the covers of Responsibilities (1916), The Wild Swans at Coole (1919), Selected Poems (1921), Four Plays for Dancers (1921), The Tower (1928), The Winding Stair (1933), and Last Poems (1940). The process of completing the Tower cover may stand as typical. Yeats sent Sturge Moore the poems dealing with the symbol of the tower and also photographs of the real Thoor Ballylee. "I need not make any suggestions," he added, "except that "The Tower' should not be too unlike the real object, or rather that it should suggest the

<sup>\*&</sup>quot;The bookplate you did for my wife was a masterpiece . . . ," Yeats wrote his friend when he ordered one for his daughter. And when the Irish poet received £50 from Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine, he sent back £40 and asked Sturge Moore to take the rest and do a bookplate for him. The designer completed the job but would not accept pay.

real object—I like to think of that building as a permanent symbol of my work plainly visible to the passer by. As you know all my art theories depend upon just this—rooting of mythology in the earth." When the medal was finished Yeats wrote: "Your cover for a "Tower' is excellent[—]a most rich grave & beautiful design & admirable like the place & I am all the more grateful because I may see but little of that place henceforth." And later he reflected: "It is interesting that you should have completed [my] tower symbolism by surrounding it with water."

While Sturge Moore practiced art, he also continued to preach it. Armour for Aphrodite (1929) is, with Art and Life (1910), the handbook to his esthetic, and the notions therein had been presented, in print and in pulpit, during the previous two decades. For example, "The Theory and Practice of Taste," a lecture he gave at the Leicester School of Art in 1916, was reprinted in Armour for Aphrodite; Ought Art to Be Taught in Schools? (delivered at the Birmingham Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1923) and "Style in Painting" (delivered to the Faculty of Arts in 1929 at a symposium with Chesterton, Eugene Goossens, and Eric Gill), along with several notes he contributed to various journals, no doubt might as well have been included. Armour for Aphrodite itself is the result of the informal class in esthetics he taught at Bedales School. The book's 200 pages consider, in the author's typical sporadic fashion, almost all the questions of beauty, creation, value, taste, and criticism that vex the minds of estheticians. But its essence is an impassioned plea for artists and writers to devote themselves to a religion of beauty established on a dogma of enlarged experience and disciplined awareness. As a long French review concluded, if the book is "parfois confus," it is "un livre de foi";

If Aphrodite's armor is "un peu pesante," it is still strong and lovingly made.

Sturge Moore's literary criticism was part and parcel of his esthetics, yet for present purposes we may isolate a number of items published in the two decades from 1910 to the early thirties. Hark to These Three Talk about Style (1915) is, according to Ezra Pound, a prose "triologue between three nice men in tweed suits concerning the nature of style and the beautiful [. It] is, so far as I am concerned, a mere annoyance, and I will therefore refrain from reviewing it." (Pound goes on to praise Sturge Moore's poetry discriminately.) Most readers will agree with Pound that Hark to These Three is a discursive and anticlimactical book.

Ever faithful to his idol, Sturge Moore contributed three polemical appreciations of Flaubert to journals in 1914, 1921, and 1927. The first is a seventeen-page review of eight books on Flaubert, and the last is a review of Lewis Piaget Shanks's Flaubert's Youth. With the second—a long and querulous letter to The Times attacking its leading article of two weeks previous (on the occasion of Flaubert's centenary)—we are drawn into a consideration of an unfortunate aspect of Sturge Moore's nature. This is an instinct for public controversy, which, indeed, comes to an engulfing eruption in 1919-1920, when he engaged in three epistolary quarrels, in The Times, in To-day, and in The London Mercury.

The *Times* controversy is of staggering proportions. It began, innocently enough, with a letter of Sturge Moore's in January 1919 on the subject of metrics in English poetry, but before it ended in March, no less than seven persons had involved themselves in a total of nineteen letters, some of the letters being three columns long. Battle Number Two graced the pages of the *Mercury*; the combatants were Sturge Moore

and one H. W. Crundell, the subject of dispute was literary borrowing, and the blasts numbered eight, of which the last is the most satisfying: "This correspondence is now closed.—Editor." The final quarrel was a brief encounter in Holbrook Jackson's To-day, among Sturge Moore, S. P. B. Mais, and James Mackereth, over the merits of Mackereth's poetry; each contestant contributed one letter. None of the letters in the three disputes added anything to Sturge Moore's reputation.

Although Sturge Moore was "disappointed" in T. S. Eliot's poetry (as he wrote Trevelyan on January 19, 1923), he was impressed by his "great intelligence and good even severe feeling," and found him (July 12, 1927) "extremely polite and complimentary to me . . . . " And it was no small pleasure to discover a market for eight articles and reviews and one poem in Eliot's Criterion from its inception in 1922 to 1931. The first contribution, "The Story of Tristram and Isolt in Modern Poetry," had been written twenty years before, and the reviews of books on Flaubert and Blake were of course based on a lifetime's acquaintance with these writers. But "A Poet and His Technique," which appeared in the June 1926 Criterion, was a new and enthusiastic appreciation of Paul Valéry, whose work Sturge Moore had discovered a few years before, doubtless through Julien Monod, a cousin of Marie Sturge Moore, and Valéry's patron, agent, and friend.

Since the youthful days when he first read Blake and Arnold and Flaubert, no writer had made such an impression on him as Valéry did now. "I am growing to like his poetry more and more," he wrote Trevelyan in May 1925, "even when I think it too difficult and am very impressed by his two platonic dialogues . . . ." In the summer of 1925, Sturge Moore and his wife called on Valéry in Paris, and the two poets spent an hour and a half talking. The Englishman afterwards reported to

Trevelyan: "I am getting quite deep in him and the deeper I get the more I enjoy and admire ...."

All this activity possibly justified Sturge Moore's election to the Royal Society of Literature thirty years before. But it was, of course, on the basis of his poetic production that he was now proposed (according to a family tradition) as one of the seven candidates for the post of Poet Laureate in the vacancy created by Bridges' death. It was inevitable that he should not be selected—the honor went to his friend John Masefield—since he was not a popular poet in any sense of the word, and he had never written a line to England's glory except in a handful of warpoems. Yet it was not ungratifying personally to belong to the company of august finalists in the signal event.

## V

# The Closing Door: 1930-1944

N 1929 Sturge Moore published a double dialogue in prose called The Closing Door, an excellent dramatic adumbration of the difficulties involved in an artist's devotion to art. But the text sheds no light on the title, and the author's written reply to my queries in 1940 omitted this topic completely. The only clue seems to be his use of the phrase in other contexts: "While no one asks for beauty none will be found, but to those who knock with importunity, the gate of her garden never remains fast closed" (1900). "But we must remember that every conscious failure closes doors and avenues, and reduces enterprise and assurance" (1929). "Yeats's antiquated conclusions kept the door open for living thought" (1939). "The door stands open, the way is clear, though our strength fail and the body die. The door is the experimental method, the way ever renewed perseverance" (1939). To these may be added a statement of Sturge Moore frequently made to friends in the 1930's: "I have a horror of closing the door on anything."

These sentences not only elucidate the dialogue but also give us a valid rubric for the last period in his life. By his early sixties he had collected his manifold poems into a definitive edition and published what is in effect a handbook to his esthetic creed. The canon was complete. But there was no publisher who wanted to put his new work on the market. The readers of poetry were seeking after the strange gods of Eliot, and a self-consciously vigorous school of writing and critical revaluation was growing up around W. H. Auden. In a few years F. R. Leavis was to label Sturge Moore a mere "critic and

verse-writer formed in the last century," and later Geoffrey Grigson was to libel him as "one of the spectres attendant on Mr. Yeats." Charles Ricketts, his Socrates, had died, and Charles Shannon, his Apollo, lived only in babbling insanity. His own health was not of the best. It was not pleasant to contemplate the downgrade of a career that had begun with a volume hailed as the most important first book since Keats.

But Sturge Moore had been to school to Gustave Flaubert and Charles Ricketts, whose disciplined awareness and sensibility formed the keystone of their art and life. Although the door now seemed to be closing on him, he knew that only "the experimental method" and "renewed perseverance" could keep it open. He had written many lines on the subject of regeneration, and now he healed himself. He turned to other writers for strength, and he kept on writing and preaching until the strain of war and the physical ailments of age finally closed the door.

In this regenerative process, his old friend Yeats provided both example and practical aid. For one thing, Yeats chose six poems of Sturge Moore—"The Dying Swan," "Kindness," "Response to Rimbaud's Later Manner," "Variation on Ronsard," "The Event," and "The Gazelles"-for The Oxford Book of Modern Verse (1936), devoting ten pages to the selections. Yeats had already introduced him to the sources of modern literary patronage in England, as Sturge Moore later recalled: "He took me to several grand houses, Lady Ancaster's, the Countess of Warwick's, Lady Curzon's, &c., that I might start discussion after his lecture, but this came to an end, when once I asked a question that floored him but interested Balfour, and the debate proceeded on the 'wrong' lines." But one of the grand houses continued to furnish both poets with a stimulating atmosphere. Lady Ottoline and Philip Morrell's Garsington Manor, near Oxford, teemed with artists, writers, undergraduates, nobility and gentry on Sunday afternoons, as D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love (1920) and Aldous Huxley's Those Barren Leaves (1925) disguisedly testify. By 1936 Sturge Moore was so much a familiar figure at Garsington that Yeats advised his own protégée Dorothy Wellesley to send him a copy of her book, since he would "influence Ottoline & perhaps her circle."

Yeats's regeneration, in his early seventies, is abundantly evident in the resilient technique and spirit of his Last Poems and Plays (1940). By his own humble testimony, he had turned to new poets like Dorothy Wellesley and W. J. Turner in an effort to catch their youthful vigor and their predilection for using common speech in their verse. Like Yeats, Sturge Moore now made friends among younger writers, and in the mid-1930's, 40 Well Walk became a kind of minor Garsington Manor. Perhaps in nostalgic emulation of his old master Ricketts, he and his wife instituted the custom of Friday Evenings At Home, to which writers and artists like George Rostrevor Hamilton, John Gawsworth, Christopher Hassall, Owen Lewis, Ruth Pitter, Edward Carrick (Gordon Craig, Ir.), and nearer contemporaries like Mona Wilson and John Copley came to read and discuss traditional and experimental art. His home was also a haven for literary men of other lands, and one might meet the Indian Ranjee Shahani or the Chinese Seyuan Shu appreciatively absorbing the host's discourse and hospitality. It was the type of salon that Sturge Moore must always have wished to maintain.

Wilfrid Gibson's recollection of this period vividly describes the poet

with snowy beard
And dreamy eyes declaiming a new work
To a hushed circle in his house at Hampstead—
A visionary mosaic of coloured words
That, with a craft, half-poet's and half-painter's,

Aural and visual, to the inner eye Revealed in rhythm the old heroic world. . . .

Perhaps it was the energetic young poet and critic "John Gawsworth" (Terence Ian Armstrong Fytton) who most repaid Sturge Moore's stimulus in kind. He encouraged the old poet to refurbish and publish the long poem on Brynhild, begun forty years before, and lost for a long time in a desk at Duckworth's; it was now issued in 1939 as The Unknown Known. A number of the fourteen short poems included in this volume owe their writing or rewriting to Gawsworth; he resurrected "Seen in the Park" from the 1905 Venture and "A Tragic Fate" from The Second Book of the Poets' Club (1911) and reprinted them, after revision, in his own Fifty Years of Modern Verse: an Anthology (1938). To boost Sturge Moore's reputation further, he circulated a half-dozen poems among periodicals like Time and Tide, Life and Letters, and The Listener. Gawsworth's enterprise also lies behind "Four Poems Suggested to an Old Man by a Young Man's Love-Talk," two of which pieces he printed privately in The Garland of Erica (1938).

Not content with getting him back into print, the indefatigable Gawsworth arranged for him to appear more often in public. Sturge Moore gave readings at Goldsmith College in London on October 26, 1938, and (with Louis Macneice and Sylvia Lind) at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom on July 13, 1939; he opened an exhibition of British poets at the Autographs and Graphological Society on May 22, 1939, and he was the final judge for the Casement Poetry Award of the Irish Academy of Letters for the best volumes of verse published in 1938-1939.

His public art activity in the thirties is primarily concerned with loving but critical tributes to his old friends Ricketts and Shannon. An obituary notice of Ricketts in *The Observer*, a lec-

ture at the Manchester Museum, and a selection of Ricketts' best work (65 Illustrations) in 1933 all lead up to the lively Self-Portrait which Sturge Moore and Cecil Lewis took from the master's letters and journals in 1939. For the lesser Shannon, Sturge Moore wrote a note to flavor the Colnaghi Gallery's exhibition of Shannon's lithographs in 1938. Apart from these labors of love, there was a paper on "Reason and Unity" contributed to the periodical Art and Reason (1935), a lecture to the London Emerson Circle on "Are There Any Problems in Art?" on October 16, 1935, and an essay on Altdorfer for the 1938 Barbizon House show. There were also the covers for Yeats's books and a woodcut for John Gawsworth's Poems (1939). In 1928 Sturge Moore had lectured on Rossetti to the Art Workers' Guild, which William Morris had stimulated in the nineties, and which still counted most of the significant painters, sculptors, architects, and artisans of England in its constituency; on October 20, 1933, this group elected Sturge Moore to membership.

A half-dozen pieces of literary criticism in the 1930's represent an effort to keep the door open on that corridor. He wrote a vigorous and appreciative preface for his friend E. L. Grant Watson's *The Common Earth* (1932), a publication of a series of B. B. C. talks. In 1938 he helped Seyuan Shu to translate and edit the poems of Wang Ching-Wei, former prime minister of China, and wrote a preface for the book. He wrote a sketch of Tagore for Rothenstein's *Contemporaries* in 1937, and read the manuscript of *Indian Pilgrimage* for his new friend Ranjee Shahani two years later.

To four chapters of Armour for Aphrodite, Sturge Moore had appended a series of Goethean apophthegms which he descriptively labeled "Pivots." Late in the next decade, as he came to find sustained work more and more difficult, his notions of art and life leaped most readily to expression in this epigram-

matic form. He contrived dozens of what he finally called "provocations," since—like so much of his esthetic pronouncement—they were designed to provoke the thoughts of others. Shahani now turned benefactor and printed selections of these Provocations, which were naturally difficult to place in the publishing market, in *The Sufi, The Asiatic Review*, and *The Aryan Path* in 1939 and 1941.

Sturge Moore wrote a provocative memoir of Yeats for the English Association in 1939; his last critical appraisal came in the same year when he lectured to the same body on Matthew Arnold and published the work in its Essays and Studies. For sixty years, Arnold had been, with Flaubert, the absent mentor of all his activity, and it was appropriate that an appreciation of the great Victorian should conclude this activity. It was further appropriate, and immeasurably gratifying, to have Professor Geoffrey Tillotson of the University of London, himself an Arnold scholar, write to him (October 16, 1942) to praise the essay as "the finest thing ever written on the subject."

In 1939 England went to the war she dreaded. Sturge Moore was sixty-nine and in no condition to subject himself to the imminent bombing of London. Never entirely healthy, he had borne an operation for jaundice in 1924 and had undergone Steinach surgery in 1936. As in World War I, Robert and Elizabeth Trevelyan invited the Sturge Moores to stay at "The Shiffolds" in Dorking during the hostilities, and so began an occasionally interrupted five-year residence in the country. The poet did little or no writing, but passed the grim days being read to, listening to the music he had always eschewed, or taking short walks in the Surrey country where Vaughan Williams and E. M. Forster lived. In February 1941 he wrote me: "I hope

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This periodical, concerned with fostering understanding between East and West, had nothing to do with Nazi racism.

I may live to see you in England but my vitality has been greatly lowered by heart-attacks and I feel I only cumber the earth and can hardly expect to do any real work again."

An operation in 1942 failed to stop the ravages of debility, and from 1943 on, he was very ill and often in great pain. In his last sicknesses he was attended by Dr. K. T. H. Bluth, a general practitioner and psychiatrist of London, who found the poet's mind still vigorous and ranging. In July 1944 an organic crisis necessitated removal to London. The casualties from the German V-1 bombings had filled the hospitals; the best haven that the family could find was a nursing-home in Windsor. It was here that Thomas Sturge Moore died (of a kidney infection resulting from prostatic complication) on Tuesday, July 18, 1944. He was cremated at Woking.

During the last nights, Sturge Moore's devoted wife heard him speak several comprehensible phrases which indicated that his lifelong devotion to art and his reverence for the truth of inner compulsion had never flagged. "I will not regret what is not regretted by the Eternal Spirit which sits within me," he said, and—with no searching after a superfluous context: "The highest and that is poetry."

In India, John Gawsworth heard of his friend's death, and wrote a poem whose conclusion explicates Sturge Moore's muted but confident last words:

Voices linger; but who catches their faint Message, the signature to the phrased mind? Few, on your passing, of aesthetics, Saint.

### VI

# A Character of Sturge Moore

O MAN is an island, yet some men in every generation resemble islands. Below the surface they have solid connections with the rest of humanity, but encountered on the horizon and approached from any direction, they have their own unique identity. Thomas Sturge Moore was this kind of man. He had a wife and children, friends, masters, and followers—all of whom agreed that he was an unusual husband and father, an uncommon companion, an extraordinary disciple and master. He read books and looked at pictures and considered humanity at large, yet he always seemed to receive unconventional data from these experiences. He used the English language and the grammar of the wood-engraver's stylus, yet he used them to limn centaurs and Persian gazelles, Athenian deities, Biblical and North Germanic heroes. Wyndham Lewis described this anomalous activity wittily:

Moore, the sturgeon of the Hampstead Hill, Nations of Greeks and Hebrews drives at will Across a gothic landscape . . . .

Once Sturge Moore had put together a group of words, a series of metrical—or visual—lines to form a gothic landscape, there could be little question as to who had done it.

There is no one quite like him in the spectrum of British literature, not even in the kaleidoscopic generations he lived through. It was not simply a matter of his variegated interests; if he was a poet of Polonian categories, a critic, and a designer, there were still Morris, Ricketts, and Wilde to eclipse him in versatility. It was not a matter (as some critics would have it)

of eccentric poetic diction and syntax; he was conservative beside Hopkins, Hardy, and Doughty. Nor was it really the nominal subject matter; there are centaurs, Persians, Athenians, Hebrews, and Teutons in Matthew Arnold.

Sturge Moore's individuality—in his life and in his work seems to me to lie in a series of psychological bifurcations integrated by moral idealism. He was versatile and yet limited; he was austere and yet luxurious; he was arrogant and gentle, hero-worshiping and self-determining, classic and romantic, Hellenistic and Hebraic. He believed in the autonomous life of art and the absolute nature of beauty, yet without underestimating the parallel worth of human goodness. Perhaps Matthew Arnold was like this. But Sturge Moore actually achieved integration, and he did it without Arnold's worldliness, without Arnold's education, and without Arnold's Christian God—as vague as that deity may at times have appeared to the harassed inspector of Nonconformist schools. For Sturge Moore was the epitome of unworldliness, he was truly self-educated, and his God was a goddess and a comparatively original creation of his own, as we shall see.

In a sense, he himself was his own creation. His appearance was always impressive. At twenty-four, when Trevelyan first met him in Cambridge, "He was tall and slender, with refined features and hands; and he had a thin straggly light brown beard, at a time when beards were more out of fashion with young men than they are now . . . ." At thirty-one, he looked to Edith Cooper "like a primeval forest god—terrible—the source of panic and of the cruel laughter of simplicity." Photographs and portraits of the poet in his youth bear out the impression of a Pan-like face, gentle and yet saturnine, with a strong, un-Pan-like nose. As he grew older, the beard became long, white, and soft, and the "primeval forest god" changed to

a stylized Blakean God or, at least, an ancient prophet.1 Like the painter Watts, whom he greatly admired, he balanced his white length of beard by a black skullcap. There was a further contrast in the fresh complexion and bright blue eyes. From this striking appearance one might expect a deep oracular voice; Sturge Moore's was high and gentle-except when he was aroused, when it was somewhat strident. Like Yeats, with whom he learned the practice, he was given to intoning all verse when reading aloud. (Either one liked the practice or one didn't, as his friend and neighbor, the artist John Copley, said.) At any rate, the poet's personal manifestation to the eye and ear was one to be reckoned with. Trevelyan's obituary recalls that Sturge Moore's "grave and commanding presence, his musical and sonorous voice, and the precision and emphasis which he gave to the phrasing as well as to the actual syllabic values, left an impression of immense dignity and outstanding beauty."

The appearance was almost the man. "He was like his beautiful face; a prophet, a seer, a boy, and a kindly jester," Copley wrote in one of the tributes collected by Sturge Moore's widow. The kindly jester is not apparent in the poet's works, which contain only the mild humor of a few sporadic puns, but men and women who knew him attest to his whimsicality and drollery in everyday life. Edith Cooper set him off in this respect against Yeats, whose wit, she said, was "rhetorical—not the instinctive mischief and drollery, the moment's wild happiness in some contrast, that is so engaging in Tommy." Even an American, Ferris Greenslet, who attended a luncheon which Edmund Gosse gave at the House of Lords for Barrie, Noyes,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See, for example, the following pictures: Charles Shannon, *To-day*, III (March 1918), frontispiece; Powys Evans, *London Mercury*, VI (August 1922), 343; A. Hugh Fisher, *Saturday Review of Literature*, I (April 18, 1925); Charles Shannon (1925), *Coll. Ed.*, I (1931), frontispiece; photograph, *Illustrated London News*, CCV (July 29, 1944), 132.

"and the woolly-bearded poet, Sturge Moore," colorfully substantiates Copley's picture: "As Moore entered late, Gosse, a naughty host, whispered in my ear, 'A sheep in sheep's clothing.' But as the talk rose on the tide of the House's admirable cellar, the sheep proved the life of the party."

The boyishness and the naïveté are perhaps more central and significant. He was fond of children and good with themas the casual but unequivocally telling phrase goes—and he had a Wordsworthian respect for their singular powers and attitudes. He was childlike himself in his trustingness, his intensity, his earnestness. In supreme confidence in the worth of his own poetry, he could never understand the indifference or even the qualified approval on the part of publishers, critics, and public. Yet he was sanguine enough to make a virtue of this very naïveté, and he wrote many words in praise of a prime "temper" which he labeled Simplicity. It is, he said, "a simplicity which supposes itself necessary and thus accepts both its failure and success with innocence . . . . This naïvety, this inevitability, this incapacity for disguise, we perceive in foreigners and in children. . . ." Indeed, he apparently considered Englishmen inferior to all foreigners, Frenchmen and Orientals especially. It is not difficult to understand this xenophilism. He had the greatest respect for the nation of his wife and her family and of such originals as Baudelaire, Flaubert, and Valéry. As an artist and writer of the late Victorian and Georgian generations, he naturally considered that many things were better ordered in France. He once wrote to Trevelyan (June 6, 1900): "I wish I had been brought up in a Latin country. My education or bringing up was no use to me and I think it would have been different there." As an art critic, too, he knew the traditions of European art and the superiority of Italian, French, and German work over English. As a self-educated classicist he loved the art, life, and religion of Attic Greece. His sense of mystery and of symbolism found congenial exercise in exposure to ways of the East,<sup>2</sup> even if it could not accept the vagueness of Indian metaphysics as contrasted with the clarity of Greek. Like his master Arnold he knew the narrowness of nationalism. And so his naïveté and his admiration for the apparent naïveté of foreigners (which surely must be a matter of language difficulties, by the way) led him to a brand of wisdom.

With all this gentleness and simplicity, however—and very likely because of their occasionally unhappy results—there was a core of arrogance, of argumentativeness, of obstinacy. His confidence in his own artistic taste was impregnable, and his disdain for those who disagreed with his verdicts was sometimes bitter. Naturally enough, he estranged a number of readers and even some close friends.3 But his contentiousness was not quite Swinburnian, and it was partially based on an idealistic, almost impersonal passion for a perfection that always eluded his own creative efforts. He could be humbly aware of his own shortcomings. "I wish I could correct my own poems with the same assurance that I approach yours with ...," he explained to Trevelyan during their days of intensive reciprocal criticism around the turn of the century, and he later advised his friend: "Don't let me put you off. I fear I put people off far too much . . . . " And so the testiness and arrogance turn out to be compensation for sensitivity to criticism, as indeed he once revealed to his correspondent (October 21, 1895): "... I am one of those unlucky people who possess a singular mind in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Sturge Moore's grandfather, Dr. George Moore, had once turned to the East and, as an "ethnological diversion," written *The Lost Tribes and the Saxons of the East and of the West, with New Views of Buddhism and Translations of Rock-Records in India* (1861).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Trevelyans, however, always indulged him, even when he shocked them one evening by dismissing music, to which both Robert and Elizabeth Trevelyan were devoted, as "brain massage." He had the grace to apologize the next morning.

full force of the term. Whence I draw the conclusion that the longer and closer I stick to my shell the better for my tender parts, and that like a hermit crab I had better never move without a cumbersome impenetrableness on my back though it be no part of Nature's dower to me." Some seventeen years later he echoed these terms in an envious postcard to Trevelyan, who was in Benares: "Oh that I were a disembodied spirit and could visit such places without my cumbersome body and careful mind."

As time went on and sales went off, he developed a mild, understandable paranoia against the whole literary world. "Human perfection implies reciprocity," he stated in formal, impersonal terms in 1910; "no man can give perfectly unless his gift be as well received." The years 1910-1912 seem to have been the lowest point of his despair. I quote at length from three disheartened letters to Trevelyan in those three years:

I find a steadily increasing difficulty in getting anything published. Duckworth only consents to publish one more of my things, the Sicilian Idyll, and then I must turn elsewhere. I wasted a whole year trying to find a publisher who would take the whole six of my intended "Conflicts." And with the Reviews I have been even more unfortunate lately. The paper about Nietzsche has been rejected by Courtney and Harrison, the only two editors with whom I have had relations. And all my poems come back. A Miss Lyons of Regent Street took photos of me a year or two back. She asked me to sit as a celebrity, but I have never seen proofs. Perhaps your friend Koster could get one from her.

The sending out of advertisement circulars [for A Sicilian Idyll] did not succeed in the least. 400-odd were posted and this led to only three copies. And the sales taken altogether amount exactly to 80 copies, no more than for Marianne. In the future I fear I shall not be able to find a publisher at all.

So far there have not been any reviews though other things published at the same time or since have been reviewed. It is mysterious, for a good many people like it better than anything I have done, or say they do. The three orders were all made by personal friends who would have got it anyhow.

Like Rossetti I am inclined to think that I have enemies. And remember, he had enemies, of whom Quiller-Couch is a fossil specimen. All the moderns like [the] Arnold Bennett-Austin Harrison set regard me rightly or wrongly as the "mandarin," as they call it, of what they react against, that is, moral and classical subject-matter. I do not think they have read me much but they run down my work all the better for that reason, as it is for them a sign, an emblem of certain tendencies.

But Hope is the most familiar word and spiritual progress the most familiar theme in Sturge Moore's poetry; he never let the door close on the corridor leading to Beauty and Goodness. The first part of a late poem, "One Who Gardens to One Who Writes" (Collected Edition, IV, 51), one of the few personal poems in the canon, is an epitome of the reassurance he must have given himself often:

Straighten your back, let not a day escape,
Give life a shape!
Poor critics, who slight work they could not do,
Should not damp you.
What grudged and scanted praise had they alive
Whom dolts contrive
To slabber, once they're dead, with fulsome honour!
A thing's well done or
Ill, that neglect no more than glory alters;
And he who falters
Because his worth is hid from molish eyes
That worth belies
As much as those of whom he doth complain.

Other anomalies of character parallel this combination of gentleness and arrogance, of philanthropy and paranoia. Perhaps the most striking and significant is the conjunction of romantic and classic elements. Again and again Sturge Moore's works reveal his strong love of luxurious color, his inordinate admiration for the male and female human body, his affinity with violence and blood, and his indulgence for the anarchy of centaur, amazon, bacchante, and bassarid. Aphrodite, in all her sensual manifestations, is never long absent from his poetry. But

it is Artemis who is the stronger force; the puritanism which the poet drew from his family heritage and upbringing, together with the austerity he absorbed from Charles Ricketts and the moral fervor from Matthew Arnold—all combined to bolster the victory of integration over the deceptively attractive forces of sense, material beauty, and elemental abandonment. To see the extent and worth of the conflict and the victory, we must now turn to Sturge Moore's values themselves and their embodiment in his work.

# Part Two The Poet as Artist and Moralist

## I

## Introduction

HE literary historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given scant attention to Sturge Moore's work as a whole. When his name does occur in the surveys, it flashes sporadically as that of a latter-day Pre-Raphaelite, a Bridgean traditionalist, a trans-Channel cousin of the Symbolists, or simply an artistic unicorn better known in rumor than on the animal farm. Such labels are legitimately applied, however, and are actually less disparate than merely partial. Sturge Moore has been all these things; and the contented confusion of the critics is a result of the somewhat defiant diffusion of the poet himself.

No writer is secure from genetic classification. It did not take literary scientists long to waft Joyce's reputation as a primitive into a top-heavy family tree in whose branches Zola and Baudelaire, Freud and Frazer—to mention but a few progenitors—perch irresponsibly. Hopkins becomes more of a Victorian with each issue of the advance-guard journals, and Hardy less of one. And for anyone who troubles to read and ponder Sturge Moore, this *rara avis* becomes, if not less rare, at least more recognizable as a member of an established family.

On the most obvious level, he belongs to the company of Victorian poets to whom the themes and techniques of Tennyson seem compromising and even suffocating—Arnold and Browning, Meredith and Hardy, Swinburne, Thomson and Davidson, Gerard Hopkins and Yeats. For him the very word "multitudinous" is Tennysonian rather than Shakespearean. "It stinks of Tennyson," he writes Trevelyan, about 1897; "every piddling

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poet that makes watery verse has at least one sounding line by the aid of this garrulous adjective." In Sturge Moore's opinion Victoria's laureate was a better man than artist, but he was still a "finic, all fingernails industriously clean. . . . " ("Finic" was the same tag he tied to one of Tennyson's official, spiritual, and technical heirs, Robert Bridges.) But the antipathy to the Tennysonian tradition represents a reaction more to substance than technique. Sturge Moore, whose poetic interests are primarily intellectual and psychological, looks back to Browning and to Rossetti; he has no sympathy with the emotional naturalism that, so forcefully launched by Wordsworth, voyaged through Tennyson's calm and Meredith's storm to rest in the sheltered harbors of Bridges and the Georgians. He has nothing but scorn for "Pantheism, the superstition of the cultured classes," and he writes Trevelyan (May 16, 1898) that it was the "proud distinction" of his own idols Rossetti, Arnold, and Flaubert "not to be tainted at all with this weakness, which runs riot in Meredith's poems. . . ," this "mooning in nature which not even Browning and Wordsworth can make worth reading." Nor is he a party to the logical concern to which Tennyson, Meredith, Hardy, and Bridges subjected cosmic nature; he is a humanist, but he has already resolved the dualism between man and nature by the time he sets word on paper. Like his friend Yeats he is concerned with the personality of man, although the cosmic spirits that gave Yeats metaphors to body forth that personality rarely visit him.

Over and above a reaction to Tennyson, there is a less negative alliance between Sturge Moore and the Victorian Romantics. Like Rossetti, who meant much to him, and Morris, who meant little, he was trained as an artist, and much of his verse

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> And Sturge Moore himself has at least one: "This miracle of multitudinous thought," *Daimonassa* (1930), *Coll. Ed.*, IV, 20.

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gives point to the neo-classic doctrine, revived in the nineteenth century, that as the picture is, so is the poem. While he agreed theoretically with Lessing that the patterns of poetry exist in time while those of graphic art are restricted to space, he also knew with all poets<sup>2</sup> that poetry really comprehends both time and space, and that the only test of painting in verse is its success. But like the Pre-Raphaelite poets and the synesthetes of the 1890's who drugged the veins of their poetic corpus with multicolored paint, Sturge Moore was often disposed to surfeit the reader with descriptive color. In 1939 he printed a typical passage whose body, minus the metrical clothing, could have come from *The Earthly Paradise* of seventy years before. Here is Brynhild's castle of Hindfell, in *The Unknown Known*:

Within walls, walls rose higher, And towers thronged up round a central tower; As though the green land's green height bore a flower Of ruddy roofs, and windowed granite walls, Where yellow horn in curved panes caught the play Of varied sunshine. Sometimes gleaming amber, Anon they gilded flash, Or like red embers glow. Behind their beauty she could see the bed; Within its crimson curtains, see herself....

As a *Times* reviewer once described a similar passage in Sturge Moore, the effect is "somewhat as if one were looking at a bank of primroses through a stained-glass window. What was fresh is rich; what was continuous is jointed...." On these occasions the poet-artist seems to have but one string to his bow, and that string is the reader's optic nerve.

Ut pictura poesis is most obvious in Sturge Moore's half-dozen poems on specific pictures by Botticelli, Titian, Moreau, Puvis, Burne-Jones, and Charles Shannon; these poems draw

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See, for example, Hopkins' vehement allegation (*The Correspondence of G. M. Hopkins and R. W. Dixon*, ed. C. C. Abbott, 1935, p. 61): "That is a lie, so to speak, of Lessing's that pictures ought not to be painted in verse, a damned lie . . . ."

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their inspiration from Rossetti and from Michael Field's Sight and Song (1892), a book composed entirely of metrical program-notes. Sturge Moore's picture-poems are all early; and they are indeed the kind of thing that often punctuate a poet's apprenticeship. But throughout his career he drew, like William Morris, scenes, images, and characters from real and imaginary pictures, and the postures of a portrait occasionally freeze the drama and movement of his verse as they do Morris'.

In this quick glance at Sturge Moore's affinities with Victorian Romanticism, it is tempting to classify him as a latter-day Pre-Raphaelite, a poet and artist of diluted nineteenth-century Art for Art's Sake. Did he not mature in the nineties? Was not Charles Ricketts, the Rossetti of the nineties, his avowed mentor? And do we not notice throughout his career an association with the types and effigies of preciosity and decadence—the Vale and *The Dial*, Oscar Wilde, the early Yeats, Maurice de Guérin and Flaubert, Villiers' Axël and Paul Valéry, centaurs, Noh plays—in short, the bizarre and delicate denizens of the inintellectual hothouse?

The answer is yes, but the questions only scratch the surface. Sturge Moore grew up in the nineties, and he exploited the color and release which the period offered, yet most of his life was actually lived in the twentieth century. He idolized and fed on Ricketts, but outgrew the master. And although he dallied in nongeographical Bohemia with the spiritual impulses and diverse manifestations of Dandyism, he could never stifle the strains of puritanism and idealism in his make-up; we can never dismiss him as a decadent. His centaurs are much more than fragments or decorations, and even his exotic Noh plays teach lessons in occidental morals.

Sturge Moore's greatest value as a writer of our times is that he unites and gives original expression to deep concerns for the INTRODUCTION 85

Beautiful and the Good. His life was devoted to the beauty of art and to the goodness of action, and his best poetry and prose involve a reader in either an extraordinary evocation of Beauty, a dramatic moral conflict, or a combination of both.

Sturge Moore's literary and spiritual gods were Gustave Flaubert and Matthew Arnold. His devotion to this anomalous pair of almost exact contemporaries was deep, articulate, and enduring. To him they represented the epitome of nineteenth-century achievement in the two literatures he knew. For him they were Olympians, the very triple thinkers whose value and necessity Flaubert had posited.

It is profitable to consider his work in the light of these men. If we restrict Flaubert's role to that of "Arch-Artsakist," of high priest in the religion of Beauty, and restrict Arnold's part to that of moralist and preceptor-in short, if we call Flaubert Hellenist and Arnold Hebraist for the moment—we can solve a Hegelian equation of which Sturge Moore is the synthesis. For it is his virtue that while late nineteenth-century Hebraism connotes everything from Tennyson's superhuman King Arthur to Mrs. Ward's tormented Robert Elsmere, and while late nineteenth-century Hellenism embraces Swinburne's turgidity and Beardsley's enervation, Sturge Moore's work preserves the purity and sincerity and worth of the respective Flaubertian and Arnoldian visions. I use Hellenism loosely as the "consciousness" overdeveloped by the Art for Art's Sake movement, and Hebraism as the "conscience" which Arnold accused religious nonconformists of overdeveloping, but which he actually sought to sustain and propagate in a more humanistic form. Sturge Moore's Hebraism is best exemplified in his great myth of Nemesis and Ge and its dramatic embodiment in a dozen long poems; the Hellenism is part of this myth, but it is further explicated in a substantial accumulation of prose esthetics.

#### II

### The Poet as Artist

T WOULD be difficult to equate the personal character of Flaubert, the jaded sophisticate and occasionally buffoonish eccentric, with that of Sturge Moore, the earnest visionary. And there is not much literary similarity between the English poet of mythology and the French novelist who, although he considered himself a lyric poet manqué, alternated between the gray case-histories of Emma Bovary and Frederic Moreau and the vivid incubi of Salammbô and St. Anthony. For example, when Sturge Moore at fourteen contributed "The Three Young Naturalists" to The Boomerang, he was living in the realm of schoolboy natural history; when the fourteen-year-old Flaubert wrote Les Baladins and carefully described the decomposed body of a woman, he was living in both the troughs of naturalism and the chambers of the romantic agony. And at the other end, where Flaubert's last work, Bouvard et Pécuchet—a laborious, almost monomaniac indictment of two fools meant to represent a social class-militates against the progress of human understanding, Sturge Moore's last major effort, The Unknown Known, searches for the psychological conditions that foster human concord.

Yet Sturge Moore, who was ten years old when Flaubert died, never ceased to venerate the older writer's work, which was for him "so pure, so bright, so keen, so high above the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The poem, "Adapted from Flaubert's Salammbo: Where Love Drowses" (Coll. Ed., II, 185), is an almost literal translation of a paragraph in Chapter XIV of the novel, and the incantations of Medea to Artemis may owe something to those of Salammbô to Tanith-Astarte in Chapter III. The two writers also share literary indebtedness to the fine arts: Flaubert's evocation of St. Anthony was inspired by the elder Breughel and his St. Julien by a window in Rouen Cathedral.

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world. . . ." Salammbô, a monument of gothic dullness to most readers, was the only book which could hold Sturge Moore's attention during attacks of physical pain, and Flaubert's letters were for him sacred revelations of artistic truth. Over a period of twenty-five years he published reviews, an article, and a book about Flaubert; he always seemed to write more feelingly about Flaubert than about other men of letters; and (with George Moore) he became a kind of British agent for the promulgation of Flaubert's doctrines.

Not the technical doctrines. He had little interest in or aptitude for Flaubert's practices of stylistic preciseness and overwhelming historical detail. But both writers had the temperamental core that created "the passion for a perfect life and indignation at the life which is," as the Englishman phrased it. It was not simply that they did not care for business and politics, nor that they, like Eliot and Pound later, were devoted to pointing up the glories of the past. It was their common belief in the life of art as an ideal life that made Gustave Flaubert a god for Sturge Moore. Their religion was based on the credo that if a man is born with artistic talent, he should make his life artistically pure and he should ever seek to find the absolute ideal of artistic beauty. But he should not confuse this goal with moral goodness or scientific truth.

Flaubert is a strong taste, as Henry James once pointed out, and few of us today care to join him in attempted ascents to that nebulous stratosphere where ideal types must dwell. But his ideal is the apotheosis, the positive element of a tradition too often viewed negatively—the doctrine of Art for Art's Sake. Too often, Art for Art's Sake connotes the exoticism, the posing, the exaggeration of technique at the expense of subject matter that partially characterize such diverse representatives as Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Wilde, Eliot, and Joyce at various stages of their

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careers. These stages merely symbolize the most extreme explosions of society and the arts as they happen to collide, and Art for Art's Sake is bigger and better than the 1850's in Paris, the 1890's in London, and the 1920's in New York.

The early career of the movement was distinguished and dual. It had a solid philosophical core in Kant's herculean division of human idealism into the categorized pursuits of truth, goodness, and beauty in his three critiques. Art for Kant had no scientific, ethical, or social ends; its very nature lay in its purposeless adequacy to its own purpose, which was the satisfaction of taste. This notion of the autonomous integrity of Beauty ran through nineteenth-century English literature in the works and influence of Coleridge and Keats to Rossetti and his school; ironically enough, it received a substantial impetus in Arnold's atempt to cram a religion of poetry down the maw of the middle class; and it came to memorable excrescence in the apocalyptic writings of Walter Pater, who fathered the consecrated but scapegrace 1890's.

The other strain began with the economic exclusion of the artist from French society in the early nineteenth century and the implicit recognition of this fact by Gautier and Baudelaire in 1849. It was Baudelaire who put his own (and Poe's) ideas into the dialectic of Dandyism, which provided the modern artist with a mask to set him apart from society. His academic contemporary Victor Cousin invented the phrase Art for Art's Sake and preached the doctrine in formal, philosophical terms in his lectures, and their literary contemporary Flaubert, despite his lapses into the apparent heresy of naturalism, preached the doctrine in imaginative terms in his vast and influential correspondence. Flaubert also attempted in his own life to follow Beauty to the exclusion of other pursuits, and it was his example which the cosmopolitan George Moore set before Wilde and

Yeats, even as the Yankee painter Whistler brought Baudelaire's to such men as Wilde.

The name of Sturge Moore shines dimly in this galaxy. Yet no one-not even George Moore-was more loyal to the example and doctrines of Flaubert, and no one-not even Yeatswas more consistently devoted to discovering the manifestations of absolute Beauty. And it is his distinction (shared perhaps with Robert Bridges) in the vast realm of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century artists and esthetes, poets and poseurs, critics and cranks, that while he looked on art as an autonomy and on Beauty as the highest of occult influences (in Bridges' phrase) he never underestimated the equally valid claims of scientific truth and moral goodness on man's allegiance. Flaubert had seen the artist's necessity for following a double life in art and living. Sturge Moore went on to preach—and practice his master's perceptive doctrine. Only a glance at the English poet's prose esthetic will adumbrate his unusual and dignified position in the amorphous tradition that began so decorously with Immanuel Kant.

When Wilfrid Gibson came upon Sturge Moore, Yeats, and Binyon in a Holborn tea-shop in 1898, the trio was discussing Tolstoy's recently published polemic, What Is Art? Although the three poets surely could not have stomached Tolstoy's rejection of formal beauty, they were, as Gibson concludes,

Discoursing on the theme that was the breath And being of their earthly pilgrimage.

Where Tolstoy's answer to his own question was the extreme result of a late conversion, Sturge Moore's was made in his youth and sustained through his last years. His answer was simple—art is the organized manifestation of absolute beauty—but it was never stated so egregiously, and his concern (from the

point of view of incidence) was with the pitfalls in the path of those who had already accepted this definition.

With Goethe, he believed that "there is no surer way of evading the world than by Art; and no surer way of uniting with it than by Art." The biographical sketch has partially described how Sturge Moore practiced what Goethe here so vaguely preaches. Furthermore, the English poet did make the overtures of union by joining Ruskin's progeny in deprecating the commercial degradation of artistic standards, and he followed the path of evasion by joining Pater's tribe in asserting the superlative validity of the esthetic experience. But what is important is that Sturge Moore was unique—for an artist and poet trained in the nineties—in insisting that esthetic activity is but one of three allied disciplines necessary to man's salvation. In the course of so insisting, he developed a dialectic, never formalized yet capable of abstraction, that provides a framework for his esthetics.

Armour for Aphrodite (1929) is the best expression of this philosophy, although I must cite and quote from numerous other works to demonstrate the unity of his thought. The book is discursive, however,<sup>2</sup> and one welcomes the author's private statements to Trevelyan (November 24, 1925, and July 7, 1926) concerning the purpose and method of the tract: "My whole purpose is to induce people to regard their own tastes, whatever they may happen to be, as worth attending to and capable of growth, and to distinguish clearly between questions of truth

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Yeats underlined this discursiveness in letters to Sturge Moore soon after the publication of *Armour for Aphrodite*: (March 24, 1929) "I am reading your book in bed in the mornings and finding it full of wisdom . . . . Your book is difficult reading though I don't complain of that, and it will be some time before I have really mastered it." (March 28, 1929) "I am still driving my plough into your rich soil . . . . I begin each day—I must stay in bed till 11.30—with Spengler vol II, & then take up your book. Later on I should write verse or prepare for it. It will be some time therefore before I have mastered you."

and of beauty and of virtue, instead of forever muddling them together."

"Every chapter strictly illustrates the two main ideas, that 'Beauty is an intrinsic value' and that 'taste' has essentially the same process that in science is described as 'the experimental method,' and I deduce extremely novel positive and negative results from both these ideas, which are commonly applied in our talk about art, but have hardly ever been used in modern criticism."

System. For Sturge Moore there are three absolute values towards which we must strive without ever quite reaching. These absolutes are separate, yet "equally akin to our capacity for development," a development which seems to involve the following pattern:

Absolute	alucs Provinces Methodology		Faculties	Tempers Necessary	
Valucs			Used	to Develop Faculty	
Goodness			Conscience	Practical Aid plus	
Truth Beauty	Science Art	mental Method	Reason Taste	Inquiry Admiration	Sim- plic- ity

Such geometrical abstraction is anathema to Sturge Moore (though the terms are his), and his nearest approach to inclusive formula is something like this typical statement: "Science is our best guess at truth about the universe. Goodness as recognized in those who pay the price of devotion to it is our best judgment as to the value of human tempers and actions. Beauty is best recognized by those who live most constantly and most alertly in contemplation of it."

Absolute Values. Though Sturge Moore speaks of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty as absolutes, he also recognizes that "Man is such a fragment that he cannot conceive of completeness," and that he can define these absolutes only in terms of the forces approaching them. Sturge Moore has "no platonic

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ideas, or phantom entities, in view. What we approach is the acme plenitude of the faculties that yield us our present experience. This would permit the most precise use of the three words true, beautiful, good."

Provinces. If the absolute values and their provinces are separate and mutually exclusive, their activities are (or should be) parallel. "The object of science is to determine the conditions that play the part of immediate causes in respect to phenomena. Art discovers those conditions in respect to certain highly pleasureable emotions and sensations." Virtue, Sturge Moore would go on to say, must isolate the conditions that minister to right action and character. In other words—the metaphorical words with which the poet tempers the dialectician—"Ethics are the aesthetics of life, religion the art of living."

Methodology. Sturge Moore actually made these approaches (provinces) parallel by borrowing a methodology from one and applying it to the other two. This was the experimental method of science, which Zola had extracted from Claude Bernard's L'Introduction à la médicine expérimentale (1865) and applied to the novel, as Antoine Barye applied it to sculpture and Taine to literary criticism. Acting on hints in Flaubert's letters, Sturge Moore concluded that science was always experimental, tentative, and "pure"; that its progress eschewed predicated goals in favor of the one goal, Truth; and that one could apply induction and geometrical progress to the practices of Virtue and Art.

Faculties. To approach absolute values, in their respective provinces, by the experimental method, man must exercise specific teleological faculties—Conscience in the realm of Virtue, "Knowledge" in Science, and Taste in Art. The scientist's "reasoned conceptions, counterproved by experiments capable of indefinite repetition," are obviously more apprehensible and

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convincing than nonintellectual conclusions; "Artists and saints can only make a faint approximation to such adequacy of experiment . . . ." Therefore, it behooves man to double his efforts to develop Taste and Conscience, transfiguring them from nebulous and compromising agents to keen, decisive powers.

Tempers. For each specific faculty there must be a corresponding temper, a frame of mind, a kind of matrix for the faculty itself. For Taste, Sturge Moore demands Admiration;<sup>3</sup> for Knowledge, Comprehension; for Conscience, something vaguely designated as "Practical Aid." In other words, although Taste must reject and deny in order to proceed, its motivating temper is positive admiration, while Conscience cannot subsist on introverted self-improvement but must always be energized with practical aid to other people.

As there is a methodology common to the three approaches to absolute values, so there is a superlative temper common to the three tempers. This is a mysterious agent which the poet labels Simplicity, or Docility—a kind of assimilative receptivity which still bewares of orthodoxies, movements, and sects. "For an ideal must be followed, as a man woos a woman; the pursuit may have to be dropped, in order to be more surely recovered; an ideal must be humoured, not seized at once as a man seizes command over a machine. This secret of success was only to be won by the development of a temper, a spirit of docility. To love it in an example was the best, perhaps the only way of gaining possession of it."

So much for the three categories of human activity. Sturge

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> It is likely that Sturge Moore's use of the term derives from Ruskin's definition in *Fors Clavigera*, Letter V (1871): "Admiration—the power of discerning and taking delight in what is beautiful in visible Form, and lovely in human Character; and, necessarily, striving to produce what is beautiful in form, and to become what is lovely in character."

Moore's chief concern is of course with the chain Beauty-Art-Taste-Admiration: Admiration develops Taste, which apprehends the Beauty lying hidden in Art.

Beauty. It is my understanding of Chapter I of Armour for Aphrodite—"The Meaning of Beauty"—that Sturge Moore's Beauty is absolute, intrinsic, and "no more subjective than light." An inquiring student, however, must not be disconcerted to find contradictory definitions in the same pages, and he would be wise to accept the poet's first acceptance of truism: I take then the most widespread meaning of the word beauty, that which applies it to admired sensuous objects." Or: "That we enjoy looking at it remains the all-sufficient reason for asserting an object to be beautiful." The retreat to common sense is always welcome in an artist's discussion of beauty.

Even these simple dicta bear out a concept which Sturge Moore stated often<sup>5</sup>—that the value of a work of art (as well as of a human life) lies in its success alone: Beauty is not present unless the spectator or reader recognizes it. "It can never be too much insisted on that a work of art is something that exerts an influence, and that its whole merit lies in the quality and degree of the influence exerted; for those who are not moved by it, it is no more than a written sentence to one who cannot read."

Art. Because Sturge Moore had a deficient musical sense and

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, "Rodin," Monthly Review, IX (Oct. 1902), 96; Durer, p. 36;

Art and Life, p. vii.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> One feels on firmer ground in Chapter II ("Aesthetic Experience"), especially when one finds Sturge Moore's concepts partially corroborated by his brother's Principia Ethica (1903). Where the poet (Armour for Aphrodite, p. 41) "discovers in every aesthetic experience two organized wholes"—the appearance of the object as apprehended by the senses, and the "thoughts, associations, imaginations, which are provoked in the admirer," the philosopher G. E. Moore discovers (Principia Ethica, p. 114) "not merely a bare cognition of what is beautiful in the object, but also some kind of feeling or . . . appropriate emotion towards the beautiful qualities which he cognizes," emotions that are "parts of organic wholes." For Sturge Moore, the sensuous element is contained in the cognitive; G. E. Moore proceeds to incorporate the cognitive element in the emotional reaction.

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because he was a poet and a designer, in his considerations Art is always literature or the fine arts. But within these realms, he felt, a work of art must always be defined and judged by its effect, never by its nature. Thus it is never beautiful because it is mathematically proportioned or realistic (it "cannot be a mirror, but is more properly compared to the sun") or impressionistic or expressionistic or abstract or utilitarian. For "If appreciation consists in the recognition of some one character or experience, it is an affair of knowledge, it is science . . . ."

Taste. Sturge Moore apparently devoted more time to the cultivation and extension of his own artistic taste than to anything else in his life, and his keenest admirations were reserved for those whom he conceived to have developed taste to ultimate refinement-Flaubert, Baudelaire, Arnold, Rossetti, Charles Ricketts, and Paul Valéry. He recognized taste as an active agent subject to atrophy without constant goading and occasional complete renovation. He recognized that the formation and cultivation of taste was an arduous, demanding process, and that "perhaps not more than half a dozen men in a generation continue to form their taste through many years together." But he believed that anyone could improve his own taste by application and experiment, and he devoted thousands of words (most notably in "The Best Poetry") to an attempt to destroy the forces that militate against this improvement-hasty judgment, adamant judgment, indolence, indiscriminate praise, suffocating scholarship, bigotry, sentimentality, eccentricity, doctrinal adhesions-indeed, most of the human errors which I. A. Richards ascribes to impractical criticism.

Sturge Moore's concrete emphasis weighed heaviest on the necessity for perpetual change in keeping taste alive. To this end he posited a Platonic ladder of taste, whereon one could 96 THE POET AS ARTIST

advance from one esthetic experience to another; plainly, this is what attracted him in the notion of applying the scientific method to esthetics. Such an application is an ineffable process by its very nature, and the expositor can but state its proposed existence, perhaps adding that Sturge Moore tried to exploit the actual taste-experiences of his masters in forming his own taste. Two quotations—nearly thirty years apart—point to his only pragmatic recommendation for utilizing the experimental method, with its attendant difficulties, and demonstrate his lasting consistency and purpose: "Any theory of aesthetics which forgets that the mastering experiences of finely gifted men are for it what facts are to a scientific hypothesis, will lose its way, will hinder, will blind." "Were science to occupy itself with aesthetics, so as to ascertain the direction in which perfect beauty may lie, it must first, I conceive, collect statistics of lifesequences of admirations, recording how one gave place to another from childhood to age, and how in diverse individuals these lines of advance trend toward a focus. A well-nigh hopeless task considering the equivocal nature of the evidence." One must conclude that the recommended application of science to taste, as in Plato, is no more than a bold metaphor to describe the campaign that every artist must wage against materialism and apathy.

While Sturge Moore is enthusiastic about applying scientific methods to the cultivation of taste, he spends a great deal of energy in condemning their use in criticism. For him (as for Arnold) "The aim of criticism is neither to pick holes nor to laud, but to set its object in a good light and discern its proportions in their true relations to those of other objects." He feels that most so-called critics are merely scholars who judge works of art on the bases of origin, use of technical devices, and relation to prevalent dogma. He reasons that a work of art is one

wherein Beauty dwells, that this Beauty is the only reason for criticism, and that a critic should not judge but react. And to this end he recommends "demonstrative criticism."

Many a major and minor artist, nettled by the glibness and self-interest of professional critics, has proposed the extravagant theory that the only true criticism would utilize the medium criticized: the art critic should paint his elucidation, and the drama critic, presumably, should act out his review. This sophistry becomes more reasonable when removed from the level of formal criticism to that of creative utilization, and Brahms's variations on Haydn's theme are obviously worth a multitude of program notes. But Sturge Moore's rule that the success of a work of art determines its value is always applicable here, and we still ask Pope not to call his poem Homer.

Sturge Moore's theory of poetic improvement is a little more subtle, and is bound up specifically with his doctrine of progressive taste. Inspired by the success of balladic accretion in folk-poetry, he recommends private poetical tempering and tampering as a means of expressing one's absorption in some one else's poem, of completing the esthetic transaction.

Yes, genuine poetry regards ancient masterpieces as a child regards its mother, as something to eat as well as something to love and admire. This is only another result of the same law of poetical life, that growth is effected by fusing new with old. To be wholly and only new is the desire of a fool . . . . On the other hand, poetry dies when no new elements accrue to it; and so does each poem when, far from attracting correction and amendment, it no longer meets and weds with fresh thought and sentiment in those who read it.

He was greatly given to rewriting the poems of others, and Volume II of the Collected Edition contains a whole section of thirty "Adaptations and Variations." The fact that these are published might lead the reader to assume that the reviser considers these revisions improvements in themselves. Not so. 98 THE POET AS ARTIST

Sturge Moore's only admitted belief is that the improvement occurs in the reviser's taste: "Such alterations must be solely for your actual present enlargements and joy. Their possible adoption by others or the world is a motive which can only corrupt taste...."

Yet none of the thirty adaptations is a striking improvement over the original, and one wonders why Sturge Moore bothered to publish them if their value was merely personal. In each of two pieces from Fletcher and Jonson, for example, he changed but four of the original eighteen lines; and in a palimpsest of a bad poem by Mary Coleridge on a bad poem by John Clare, he not only depended on an almost completely factitious correlation, but also produced a final bad poem. And despite his overt protestations of innocence, one cannot really believe that in re-working the poems of others he was free from a magisterial impulse. It is a normal impulse—one feels it occasionally in reading Sturge Moore's own verse—but it is not to be indulged in print without imponderable risk.<sup>6</sup>

What we have, then, lying behind Sturge Moore's work as a poet is not only the tangible artistic activity of wood-engraving and fine printing but also the ratiocination of the amateur esthetic philosopher. Inspired by Flaubertian example and promulgation, he believed in and practiced the very life of art. But he further developed a theoretical esthetic with practical aspects, and he aligned it with the parallel human values and pursuits of science and ethics. In this symmetrical arrangement he was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> To his naïve dismay Sturge Moore found this out when he rewrote Hopkins' "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" in 1930 (*Criterion*, IX, 599-600). Although Yvor Winters felt that the poem (which Hopkins considered his most musical) had been "greatly improved," no one else shared the feeling. While the rewriting does not now seem as sacrilegious as it did during the early delirium of the Hopkins boom, its necessity and success are difficult to discover, and one must agree with F. R. Leavis that Sturge Moore's version "discarded, not merely a certain amount of music, but with the emotional crescendo and diminuendo, the plangent rise and fall, all the action and substance of the verse."

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distantly indebted to Kant and to Kant's followers,7 whom he probably never read; the division, of course, had become a nineteenth-century commonplace.

Indeed, it is Matthew Arnold to whom we must turn to find the general and specific genesis of Sturge Moore's antinomian respect for artistic beauty and moral goodness.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See, for example, Schelling's *Philosophie der Kunst* (1802-03) and Victor Cousin's *Le Vrai, le Beau, et le Bien* (1836), which so strongly influenced nineteenth-century esthetics.

# III

# The Poet as Moral Mythologist

N 1906, when Sturge Moore was writing his book about Flaubert and Blake (Art and Life), he told Trevelyan that he was finding the Frenchman's doctrines "more amazingly sound than I thought, owing to Mat Arnold's having in part seduced me." This seduction was more permanent than it sounds; Sturge Moore's admiration for Matthew Arnold actually came to be the dominating spiritual allegiance of his life as he grew older. In 1901 he referred in print to Arnold as "an admirable critic"; in 1905, as "the modern prophet"; in 1906, he called Arnold "our English master," and in 1912, "our greatest literary critic in the last century." In 1939 he published an essay on Arnold as a culminating tribute to the man who has come to seem the most eminent of the Victorians. The essay, which defends Arnold from the strictures of F. H. Bradley and T. S. Eliot, is clear and moving. More judicious than anything Sturge Moore ever wrote about Flaubert, the piece assays Arnold in terms of his principles, his literary power, and his audience. But it concludes on a personal note that testifies to the disciple's devotion; in a partial echo of Arnold's own reminiscence of Emerson (in Discourses in America), Sturge Moore ends: "So his voice remains for me more real than that of any of his contemporaries till it seems I have actually heard, nay, still hear him speaking."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sturge Moore's letters to Trevelyan abound in such enthusiastic remarks as the following (1902?): "I find that Bertie Russell seems to have extraordinarily similar taste in poetry to myself; he adores Matt Arnold almost as much . . . ."

Sturge Moore had an unexceptionable reason for such homage. A sentence in a letter to me (August 5, 1941) is the clue: "I have the most grateful admiration for Matthew Arnold, who supplied so liberally my deficiency in education . . ." The fact is that Sturge Moore, who left school at fourteen, derived much of his literary and moral awareness from the works of the Victorian teacher. Matthew Arnold has had many pupils, but few have been as absorptive and as grateful as Sturge Moore.

It was not primarily an education by facts, according to the comparative information present in the works of both men. In criticism it was first a transmission of literary enthusiasm for Greek drama, for the receptivity of the Greek audience, for individual poems such as Browning's "Artemis Prologizes," for Socrates, Milton, Wordsworth, Goethe, Leopardi, Maurice de Guérin. It was next an occasional borrowing of technique the direct, didactic manner of criticism, or the rhymeless meters of "The Strayed Reveller" and Empedocles. And there was some predilection for subject matter generated by the older poet's unfulfilled plans; it is likely, for example, that Sturge Moore's completed but unpublished Antigone was inspired by Arnold's "Fragment of an 'Antigone,'" and that The Unknown Known was partially a result of reading Arnold's confession that he some day hoped to write a poem on the Ring legends. But most of all it was Arnold's emphasis on the balanced personality and the unified work of art that "supplied so liberally" the heart and connective tissue of the pupil's education.

It is probable that Sturge Moore's immediate source for his three descriptive categories was Arnold's repeated emphasis on "the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty." (Arnold adds a fourth power "of social life and manners," but does not elaborate on it.) We have discussed Sturge Moore's cultivation of the power of beauty, and

implied his comparative temperamental indifference to the power of knowledge. We may now explore his attitude to the first power—conduct—which Arnold, despite his insistent advocacy of culture through literary beauty, held to be the dynamic mandate for three-fourths of life. The disciple would not have established such a fraction. But he was a disciple all the same.

Sturge Moore's theoretical prose, which is conceptual and inductive, integrates his Art for Art's Sake activity but only tentatively equates it with ethical progress. It is in his poetry (and his imaginative prose dialogues) that the two traditions of Hellenism and Hebraism are truly reconciled. And here we encounter a more familiar tradition—the use of Greek legend in English poetry, the lower-case hellenism broadcast through the nineteenth century. For Sturge Moore has embodied an ethico-esthetic creed in mythological terms.

There is a consistent pattern throughout his best work. Some fourteen of his poetic dramas, prose dialogues, and longer narrative poems<sup>2</sup> depend on the motive of moral conflict and its possible resolution. Two of these pieces make use of Germanic mythology, but the rest are Greek, and all of them constitute original reinterpretation of traditional legend. It is this combination of unity and originality that makes Sturge Moore a considerable poet.

He did not plan this unity, and, indeed, claimed to be quite unaware that he had a central myth. He looked on *The Powers of the Air*, which contains the key to the myth, as an objective dialogue, and even denied its intellectual consistency. When a *Times* reviewer abstracted the ideas of Socrates (in *The Powers* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The following pieces are here considered according to subject matter and treatment rather than chronology; Danaë (1893, 1903), Aphrodite against Artemis (1901), Pan's Prophecy (1904), Orpheus and Eurydice (1909, 1932), A Sicilian Idyll (1911), The Sea Is Kind (1914), Aforetime (1919), The Powers of the Air (1920), Medea (1920), Tyrfing (1920), The Closing Door (1929), Psyche in Hades (1930), Daimonassa (1930), and The Unknown Known (1939).

of the Air) and identified them with the author's, Sturge Moore protested: "Is it likely that even Socrates on such an afternoon, in such company, would outline a philosophy—much less my philosophy?"

Recalling Goethe's claim that Faust embodied no philosophy, one can only marvel at the ingenuousness of creative writers. Yet a note appended to Danaë in the 1934 Selected Poems tempers Sturge Moore's disavowal of centrality and gives us warrant for critical synthesis: "I was surprised many years after to find the main principles of my aesthetic expounded in it [Danaë], without my, at the time, having been aware of any such intention. This persuaded me, who was prepersuaded, that poems are forms of life, which grow rather than are directed, so that they are as surprising to the artist as children are to their parents and need as much knowing."

The Powers of the Air (1920) is an expanded Platonic dialogue animated by dramatic narration, firm individualization of character, and occasional verse. Socrates, the "snub-nosed discomforter," thrusts his leisurely "roguish innuendoes" at a sensitive company which includes the poet Aristocles (Plato) and the painter Parrhasios. Then he moves on to an intense discussion of thought, action, and form, and of his goddess Nemesis, whose nature rules and impregnates Sturge Moore's mythological pantheon. The dramatic description of Nemesis and Ge is Sturge Moore's original elaboration of Plato's distinction between the heavenly and earthly Aphrodites in Symposium 180.3 Nemesis is bodiless and intangible, representing the "permanent ecstasy" of "inalterable beauty," but she may be approached through her children by Uranos—"consistency and disinterested intelligence, and later, the ineffable delicacies of intuition, divi-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See also Symposium 211a, Hippias Major 294d, and Phaedrus 250-51 for Platonic suggestions of Sturge Moore's goddess. Plato mentions the traditional Nemesis only once (Laws IV 717d).

nation, perception." Art is the best embodiment of these qualities, and although the artist can never meet Nemesis face to face, he must have "intentions" of seeing her; driven by "shame and ardour," he must ever attempt to climb a Platonic "stairway to immaterial reality."

Ge, the earthly Aphrodite and sister of Nemesis, belongs to temporality; having "definite limbs and precise sensations," she is apprehensible to human vision. Her beautiful offspring by Uranos comprises the whole material world, always subject to the "flame of change," since she is unstintingly fecund and "destroys as fast as she brings forth." She has a "treacherous solidity"; her progeny-nature, love, happiness-give a confusing impression of permanence. Ge is part of the unalterable beauty of Nemesis "present as a supremely vivid memory." But Nemesis is much more than immaterial beauty divined by intuition, and this is where Hellenism enlists Hebraism in Sturge Moore's ideology. For his Socrates, like Plato's, is continually exploiting his own bent for shaping the characters of men. In the realms of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, says the modern Socrates, "Performance precedes vision. Do and then think, for insight is born of practice . . . . "In other words, moral action is the basis for scientific thought and for esthetic perception; in responsibilities begin dreams, to juggle Yeats's epigram. Nemesis is indeed "perfect responsibility,"4 or con-

"My idea about Nemesis=Conscience came from Michel Bréal," Sturge Moore wrote me (Aug. 5, 1941). Bréal (1832-1915) was a brilliant French philologist. whose artist son Auguste was a friend of the Pye family, whom Sturge Moore often visited. Sturge Moore called on the elder Bréal "in his old age," and apparently received the idea in conversation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Sturge Moore's Nemesis is obviously a sophisticated transformation of the powerful ancient goddess of vengeance. The history of the traditional Nemesis is a complicated one, but in her most simple form she personified the gods' resentment at human hybris, and, further, their punishment of this insolence. It was a very real personification, and possibly the most vivid of the many that moulded the minds of the ancients. Part of the traditional severity has carried over into Sturge Moore's goddess, but the central notion of vengeance has given way to that of conscience and responsibility.

science, the exacting moral ideal towards which humanity must strive. "So Nemesis is," says the philosopher of *The Powers of the Air*, "an enlargement of experience on the side of purpose and daring, not on that of logic and abstraction . . . ." She is even "beneficent," he asserts later, "because the catastrophes which bring us face to face with what we should have done and been, nevertheless encourage us and nerve us to greater efforts . . . ." Sturge Moore has gone beyond the Kantian separation of the beautiful and the good and united them in a congenial Platonism.

In the course of these remarks Socrates limns the goddess in terms that show the poet's essentially moral approach to unalterable beauty, terms that further illustrate the very heart of Sturge Moore's poetry:

Her exigence is communicated by some novel posture of events, even when these have not been understood, and commands or else condemns the soul, evoking responsibility, with remembrance of its own contribution to the crisis, either as shame or as encouragement illumining the next step to be taken. So a soldier who has either stumbled into or leaped a trench, glances at his leader and receives a signal as to what he must do to retrieve his blunder or to follow up his success. Is not power to react in this way the very vigour of Nemesis, by which the spirit both tests itself and all other things and dissipates inertia and ignorance to its goal?

Finally, Socrates gives warrant to my conclusion that although Sturge Moore's prose esthetics show him to be a Hellenist, his poetry demonstrates his strong Hebraic bent. Socrates does this, typically, by a query, but he brilliantly provides a raison d'être for Sturge Moore's original myth and its appearance in his plays and poems: "Men require the ambiguity of an image of a divinity to enable them to suggest more than is stated clearly?" Plato's answer to this question is, of course, ours: "Yes, that seems likely."

The Powers of the Air appeared in 1920, but the conflict be-

tween Nemesis and Ge (or between their "ambiguous" images, often represented by Artemis and Aphrodite) sustains Sturge Moore's most substantial mythological poems and plays from 1901 to 1939.

In Aphrodite against Artemis (1901), based primarily on the Hippolytus of Euripides and partially on the Phèdre of Racine, the twin goddesses struggle for the fealty of Hippolytus. Phaedra's amorous casuistry cannot sway the proud idealist from his sophrosyne, and Artemis wins the day, although Aphrodite implies future assaults, and the conflict is never ended. But there is no question as to the author's allegiance, and no doubt as to the identification of Nemesis with Artemis, who prologizes:

To win mankind from bondage to what is, I bid them pause, deliberate and choose, Not ever following impulse, as the wheel Follows the mule; and I have promised each Aid in proportion to his effort, till He rule himself and grow, as I am, free.<sup>5</sup>

In the blank-verse drama Orpheus and Eurydice (1909, 1932) the conflict is less clear and less resolved—at least in the first version, which ends with the sacrifice of Apollonian Orpheus by Dionysian Bassarids.<sup>6</sup> The conclusion is confusing, but apparently Ge has won both Orpheus and Eurydice. The revision (for the Collected Edition) makes the parable clear by separating the lovers according to the woman's devotion to the Nemesisian serenity of Hades and the man's affinity with the Geian joys of earth. (Nemesis and Ge are not mentioned, but are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This brief exordium very likely owes its inspiration to Browning's "Artemis Prologizes," which Sturge Moore once called ("The Best Poetry," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, XXXI, 1912, 42) "perhaps the most splendid 120 lines of blank verse in English."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The conflict between Apollo and Dionysus obviously stems from Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1872), which describes the merging of classic and romantic elements in Greek drama. Sturge Moore borrowed the French translation from Trevelyan and read it admiringly sometime in 1907.

symbolized by Apollo and Artemis, Aphrodite and Dionysus.) Yet the lovers' decision to follow their respective deities seems a mere result of their personal falling out, rather than an integrated devotion to conflicting ideals. "Orpheus and Eurydice has had a great many endings . . . ," Sturge Moore wrote. "None satisfactory, I think."

Aphrodite is the victor of the conflict established in A Sicilian Idyll (1911), a free adaptation of the pastoral form. The plot concerns the despair of Delphis at seeing an attractive boy taken from him—first by the ebullient Hipparchus and later by a normal young wife. Hipparchus is an acknowledged devotee of Aphrodite, whom he cites as the

Eldest and least resigned and most unblushing Of all the turbulent and impulsive gods,

and we are led to assume that the girl is a

gay invulnerable setter-at-nought Of will, of virtue . . . .

Delphis, the misogynist, deprecates Aphrodite as "goddess of ruin," for he is aware of the ravages of affection. He is no puritan, however, and actually he does not follow Aphrodite's twin and opponent. But he honors "Humanity's distilled quintessences," and he seeks a sanguine individualism requisite to a devotee of Sturge Moore's Artemis—the novitiate, as it were.

Aforetime (1919), which begins as an epistolary "stream of pictures," proceeds to narrative, and ends in a Nietzschean victory over pity and weakness. "Love is chaos," and only the boyhero's conscience and imagination prevent him from becoming involved in woman's seductive humanity. No goddesses are named, but it is Nemesis who conquers, all the same.

In Medea (in Tragic Mothers, 1920) Sturge Moore's most successful poetic drama, the goddesses are named and impres-

sively invoked. Medea, who had broken her vows to Artemis by marrying Jason, breaks them once again by indulging her love for the children she had murdered. Her prayer for their reincarnation points up the fact that *The Powers of the Air* was also published in 1920:

O thou fire-white Nemesis
In the heart profound,
Sister of the form that is
Beauty born to touch and sight
With whom the waves are crowned,
I implore thy viewless might!

Medea's children also represent immortal beauty, "viewless, intangible," and they never yield to the transient human joy which Medea offers in the form of maternal love.

Hervor, the heroine of Tyrfing (also in Tragic Mothers), is a spiritual sister of Medea struggling against the power of Ge. No Greek deities confront the reader of Tyrfing, for the play, written in blank verse and hemistichs, is an expansion of a powerful and popular scene known as "The Waking of Angantyr" in the Old Norse Hervarar Saga ok Heithreks Konungs. The saga concerned the catastrophic vagaries of the sword Tyrfing, which caused the death of its successive owners. The modern drama concentrates on the weird family struggle occasioned by Hervor's seeking the sword in the barrow of her father Angantyr. In a complication invented by the modern redactor, Hervor's mother Tofa seeks to keep the lethal blade from her daughter, and she suffers death for her Geian lovingkindness. Hervor finds that neither her father's attempt to hold Tyrfing in his tomb nor her mother's self-sacrifice can mitigate the power of the sword; that her own Amazonian pride and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Sturge Moore came across the poem in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, ed. Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell (1883), I, 165-68. His version often follows the translation literally.

fierceness are useless; and that only an understanding of Tyrfing's nature is valuable. Tyrfing itself may be taken as a symbol of spiritual heritage; one must possess it by killing its present owner. Thus the human spirit, unalterable and demanding like Nemesis, dangerously but inevitably transmits itself through the generations.

Ten years after Tragic Mothers, Sturge Moore published two plays in Mystery and Tragedy. Daimonassa might be called "Tragic Daughters," since it revolves around King Kyrkaeus' political order to his two daughters to kill their cousin-husbands on their wedding night.8 Daimonassa's obedience and Ferusa's disobedience provide Sturge Moore with his ethical conflict, which he balances by a thematic opposition between Thought and Action. Nemesis and Ge are not involved, but the king's daughters make choices that coincide with the essential differentia between the goddesses. To borrow the words of Sturge Moore's Socrates once again, Ferusa can be said to choose the "definite limbs and precise sensations" of love, only to find that its joys constitute but a "treacherous solidity." Daimonassa chooses Thought plus the Deed-"an enlargement of experience on the side of purpose and daring." She has "consistence and disinterestedness" and "single-hearted effort"; she is aware of the idea of Nemesisian responsibility. It is somewhat of an effort to read this into the play, for the poet has done justice neither to his central theme nor to the exemplum at hand. As Douglas Bush says, "We need a story which is more than a series of violent and improbable incidents, characters who are more than silhouettes, and a heroine perhaps more sympathetic than Daimonassa." Yet as in Orpheus and Eurydice, if the technique is obscure, the impulse is clear and commendable.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The apparent source is the myth of Danaus and his fifty daughters.
<sup>9</sup> One finds it difficult to agree with Yvor Winters' statement (*Primitivism and* Decadence, p. 89) that Daimonassa is perhaps Sturge Moore's "greatest single

Daimonassa's companion piece, Psyche in Hades, is more rewarding, and it represents but part of the poet's lifelong concern with the myth of Psyche, "the most beautiful allegory ever composed," as Coleridge called it. But for Sturge Moore, "To account Psyche's story merely an allegory of the soul's attainment of immortality is to petrify it," and his versions —in obvious contrast to those of Morris, Patmore, Pater, and Bridges—implicitly align the principals with either Nemesis or Ge.

Sturge Moore's earliest treatment is Pan's Prophecy (1904).
This poem, in complicated prosody with a decorative prose

This poem, in complicated prosody with a decorative prose gloss, is an expansion of the brief moment in the myth when Psyche, deserted by Eros, meets Pan in the woods and receives encouragement to persist in her love. Pan, rebuking "miserly hearts" in general and Psyche's "little magnanimity of the soul" in particular, suggests that her scientific inquiry into the nature of Love was perverse and evil, that "Illusion itself may be the source of real good and blessed memories to be the heirs thereto," thus subscribing to a Socratic notion in *The Powers of the Air* and briefly summarizing Sturge Moore's last long

achievement"; or (Hound and Horn, VI, 193, 543) that because it "observes the unities rigidly" and "is concerned less with the full perception of character than with the rapid simplification and generalization of a situation"—being therefore "Racinian rather than Shakespearean"—it is "one of the greatest plays of its kind that I know."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Pan's Prophecy (1904), Psyche in Hades (1930), "Stricken Eros" and "A Dialogue of Echoes" (1933)—all gathered under the title "Psyche's Passion" in Coll. Ed., IV.

Sturge Moore is sure to have seen the Vale Press editions of Apuleius' original story in both English (1897: Adlington's translation of 1566) and Latin (1901). He knew G. F. Watts's painting of Psyche (1880) and described it (Durer, pp. 208-09), and he probably knew Burne-Jones's illustrations for Morris' redaction. Charles Ricketts had made a half-dozen wood-engravings for the Vale Apuleius; the subject of another Ricketts cut, "Psyche in the House" (Pageant, I, 1896, 53), is a symbol which Sturge Moore exploited for over thirty years in "To an Early Spring Day" (Coll. Ed., IV, 57); Pan's Prophecy (Coll. Ed., IV, 79); "On a Grecian Amphora" (Coll. Ed., III, 78-79); Correggio, p. 64; "A Platonic Marriage," English Review, VII (Jan. 1911), 313, 319; Armour for Aphrodite, p. 59.

work, The Unknown Known. Pan recommends devotion to Nemesis instead of Ge:

But beauty, when we know, we love, and when We love we hope: the thing revealed, and not The form or face that did reveal, is what The heart serves . . . .

The "Prophecy" outlines further suffering on the part of both Eros and Psyche, and a mutual search for each other's identity; a gloss in the 1904 version states also that Psyche must seek her mother Persephone in the underworld.

If this early poem does little more than elaborate Apuleius' and Pater's condemnation of Psyche's "unholy curiosity," the promised continuation is much more complex and inventive. The Psyche in Hades of twenty-six years later is a wordy Noh play cast in couplets; the action concerns the Apuleian incident of Psyche's descent to Hades. Plagued by the eidolon Anteros (the false image of Eros), Psyche finally succeeds in understanding her mother's Nemesisian dogma. In the spirit of Sturge Moore's prose esthetics, Persephone explains that beauty exists in wholes composed of "unseemly and obscene" parts as well as beautiful parts, and that maturity entails exposure to pain and suffering as well as to joy. Yet one never reaches absolute beauty, and Psyche, though released from "fierce ignorant thought" and "fear's web," must continue the search:

Forever must my feet and hands explore
Distance and darkness wherein Eros hides . . . .

There is some comfort, however, in knowing that Eros must also seek Psyche.

In their first alliance, then, Psyche and Eros had dallied with the "definite limbs and precise sensations" of Ge. The Soul was guilty of an unholy curiosity, and Love was guilty of pride and rashness. Neither had understood the difficulty of mating the mortal Soul and immortal Love. Pan and Persephone have the wisdom born of Nemesis, and they manage to impress a magnanimity on the Soul in order to facilitate her comprehension of the whole. Psyche must ever struggle to find Eros, and must beware of espousing Anteros, whose scientific "unduped perspicacity" represents the "treacherous solidity" of Ge. Set in human terms, the myth says that man must seek an ineffable ideal, must seek it steadily and see it whole.

Psyche was Sturge Moore's most ubiquitous and loveliest vision far of classical heroines, but *Danaë* (1893) would seem to have been his favorite long poem, judging by the revision and reprinting he bestowed on it.<sup>11</sup> Yet one would have to join Bush in dismissing this lyrical narrative as a mere "luminous golden mist . . . , a series of Pre-Raphaelite paintings," were it not for Sturge Moore's illuminating observation in 1934: "I was surprised many years after to find the main principles of my aesthetic expounded in it, without my, at the time, having been aware of any such intention."

In outline the poem is even simpler than the original myth. Danaë grows up in her tower of brass, is impregnated by Zeus's shower of gold, and sails over the sea with her baby Perseus; the growth of her beauty and intuition is the core of the revised myth. Though surrounded by lush and luxurious Pre-Raphaelite appointments, Danaë chants "to Artemis her evening hymn," and grows by pure objective contemplation of her other self in a great mirror. After the golden shower, although she does not recognize its nature and imminent effects, she intuitively

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> He first published it in the 1893 *Dial*; he expanded it to double length for the last publication of the Vale Press in 1903, in response to Ricketts' commission of new passages that were "to drip with golden syrup" (*Selected Poems*, p. 204); and he revised and reprinted it in 1920, in 1931, and in 1934. The 1903 expansion also also aprefatory prose legend and a medievalistic marginal gloss, and makes numerous phrasal changes; the revision claimed for later printings is noticeable mostly in punctuation.

feels the power of love and, symbolically, hears a song to Aphrodite in a shell. Like Sturge Moore's Semele and Leda she bears her child "without affright, without loss of innocence, without violence, shame, or any awkwardness . . . ." Avoiding Psyche's scientific and unholy curiosity, Danaë accepts her destiny and maturely enjoys it. She therefore represents the "ineffable delicacies of intuition" which Nemesis begets. She is the only heroine in Sturge Moore's poetry who escapes an involved struggle. The poet's first creation was his ideal of perfection.

Danaë's spiritual sister would be Amymone, the intuitively wise heroine of the prose idyll *The Closing Door* (1929). Amymone has a sexual attraction (as well as a gift for metaphysics and dialectics) that makes her the most compelling woman in Sturge Moore for the reader sensuel moyen. Like Dione in *The Powers of the Air* she is a hetaira (apparently of fourth-century Athens) and thus has predisposed affinities with Aphrodite.

The Closing Door consists of two dialogues, one between a sculptor Hieron and a poet Apollodorus, the other between Hieron and Amymone. Often appearing to be an appendix to The Powers of the Air, the discussion concerns the dualism of Nemesis and Ge, here set forth in terms of the earthly and heavenly Aphrodites. Amymone, whose order "is dedicated to the ethereal Eros and the ultimate Aphrodite," is nearing the stage of awareness already reached by Apollodorus, who worships Aphrodite "not only in temples, not in statues merely, not even chiefly in the bodies of women, but in idea . . . . Tremendous and unattainable in idea she looms like the summit of a mountain waded far out to sea. Holy, venerable and inalterable!" But Hieron has not come as far. He had, it is true, progressed from a fascination with water and with reflected forms in water, to an attempt to carve "shapely vacuities in

transparency." Under Aristotle's influence, he then moved on to an understanding of *idea*, an awareness that since "numbers and geometric figures cannot be contaminated either by contact or event," immaterial idea is more important than material art. However, he has fallen in love with Amymone, his model for a statue of Aphrodite, and been seduced by the charms of the substantial earthly goddess. In the second dialogue, wise Amymone explains to her lover that she is leaving him to allow him to "do an Apollo or an Athlete or something to tax the tougher side of his nature"; and that their love must endure only in memory, in the idea of the supreme Aphrodite "given and received without convulsed features, or crushed limbs or bodily spasm." In short, the artist must not dally with substantial Ge but keep moving on towards bodiless Nemesis.

For Sturge Moore, the closing door was a personal symbol of the difficulty in maintaining esthetic, intellectual, and moral awareness. This charming dialogue, published when its author was about to turn sixty, is very likely a rebuke and encouragement to that author. The myth of Nemesis and Ge is no academic creation.

Hieron's absorbing concern with the element of water is simplified but extended by Eucritos' Seelust in The Sea Is Kind (1914). This shepherd who mates with a Nereid has no stated business with either Nemesis or Ge, but his activity throws the old tension into obvious relief. Eucritos loves the sea, or Aphrodite, but he has more love for Evarne, the elusive Nereid who more concretely symbolizes the essence of the sea, the Nemesisian idea behind the substantial element. The lovers' union, like that of Eros and Psyche, represents the supreme accomplishment—the union of mortal and immortal, or in more specific terms, man's awareness of the divine essence within and without.

This divine essence received an unwieldy examination in Sturge Moore's last major work, The Unknown Known (1939), which he began before 1900, lost in 1914, recovered and revised over twenty years later. The Unknown Known is a long (2,500 lines) blank-verse redaction of the love and death of Sigurd and Brynhild.<sup>12</sup> The plot concentrates on Sigurd's ignominious wooing while hidden "like a foot within a boot" in Gunnar's form, when he can neither reveal his true identity nor remember Brynhild and the love-troth.

The meaning of the poem—and the title—is slowly unraveled in an italicized running commentary of thirteen passages sporadically concluding and interrupting the six formal sections of narrative and recapitulation. The fourth poetic gloss might serve as epigraph for the whole work and for much of Sturge Moore's poetry:

> Ah! many perchance receive, Mistaking thus their source, visions and dreams And waking reveries, which touch more deeply Than can be well explained; for all about The conscious moment lie vast realms unknown With actions sealed from memory and forethought.

Although the lovers do not recognize each other, they feel an inexplicable bond, a bond now stronger than when their intercourse was overt. Sturge Moore generalizes from this paradox in the familiar vein in which he condemns scientific curiosity:

> Yes, as witchcraft from Sigurd held Brynhild, The unknown holds aloof from minds too clear ....

Sturge Moore made six illustrations for Wagner's Siegfried; see Martin Hardie,

Catalogue of Modern Wood-Engravings (1919), p. 279.

<sup>12</sup> It is based on Sturge Moore's reading of Morris' Sigurd the Volsung (1876), Morris' prose translation (1870) of the Old Norse Volsunga Saga, Wagner's tetralogy, Der Ring der Nibelungen (1869-76), and probably Jessie L. Weston's The Legends of the Wagner Dramas (1896). For details, see my unpublished Harvard thesis, Sturge Moore and His Poetry (1941).

And that the lovers are children of Nemesis is implied in the poet's gloss on the transcendent funeral:

Yes, both their bodies burned; but they were spirit, Though known, unknown, though unknown, known and loved.

In Armour for Aphrodite Sturge Moore had defined spirit as "the power by which one agent influences another without direct action or purpose." So his Sigurd and Brynhild have found what his Socrates seeks—"that world where affections and intentions pass directly, and are independent of our clumsy signalling codes of speech and gesture."

In a dozen-odd long poems and prose dialogues, then, Sturge Moore has created and embodied a substantial moral myth. Although his Socrates first describes Nemesis and Ge in esthetic terms, representing the one as absolute Beauty and the other as a materialized eidolon of Beauty, he enlarges their nature in ethical terms so that Nemesis becomes a multi-faceted symbol of Conscience and Ge of Self-Indulgence. And in the mythopoesy of transmogrified Greek (and two Germanic) legends, Sturge Moore has exploited the conflict between Nemesisian and Geian elements in heroic human temperaments. Hippolytus, Eurydice, Delphis, the boy of Aforetime, Medea's children, Hervor, Daimonassa, Pan and Persephone, Danaë, Amymone, Evarne, and the spirits of Sigurd and Brynhild all shadow forth, in varying degrees, the intuitive sophrosyne, the frein vital of Nemesis. Phaedra, Orpheus, Hipparchus, the slave in Aforetime, Medea, Tofa, Ferusa, Psyche and Eros, Hieron, and Eucritos—all are variously subject to the dynamic but misdirecting élan of Ge. A tabulation of this pageant shows that in all conflicts except those of Orpheus and Eurydice and A Sicilian Idyll Nemesis wins the day.

We have noted the obvious similarity between Sturge Moore's goddesses and the heavenly and earthly Aphrodites of Plato. Readers of Victorian poetry will have seen also a striking resemblance between Sturge Moore's myth and George Meredith's reading of life. There is no evidence that Sturge Moore, who considered Meredith's prose "atrociously acrobatic ... a gritty desert of glittering cleverness," was acquainted with the novelist's poetry. But Meredith's A Reading of Life, published the same year as Aphrodite against Artemis (1901) and previously printed componently in various periodicals, describes "The Vital Choice" which man must make between the "Huntress" Artemis, or self-denial, and the "Persuader" Aphrodite, or self-indulgence. The four poems on the conflict conclude with "The Test of Manhood," which recommends that man equably master and exploit the gifts of both goddesses, since strict obedience to Artemis leads to arid asceticism, and exclusive devotion to Aphrodite ends in purposeless hedonism. But Meredith's antinomy is merely a brief expansion of a traditional Greek religious concept, a didactic oversimplification of the conflict which Sturge Moore re-interprets at length in philosophical, dramatic, and more subtly symbolic terms. The resemblance of the two humanistic readings of life is undeniable, but Sturge Moore's later elaboration shows a much more central concern. Meredith's chief philosophical subject in his poetry is, after all, the process of emergent evolution, a hypothesis that never bothered Sturge Moore.

These remarks have concentrated on the poetry and prose involving the myth of Nemesis and Ge. One should be further aware of the fact that Sturge Moore also utilized Hebrew mythology in seventeen narrative, dramatic, and lyric poems totaling some 11,000 lines. Of these, only "At Bethel," "Two of the Lord's Anointed," and "Micah"—which re-create spiritual struggles from the legends of Jacob, Saul, and Micah—are worthy inventions, and only "At Bethel" has a philosophical

substratum comparable to that of the poet's Greek poems. What Sturge Moore called "the once bright myths of heaven and hell" had little relevancy for him, and his alternate attempt to humanize and dramatize Biblical personae must on the whole be labeled a failure.

The remaining 25,000 lines of Sturge Moore's poetry have merits and demerits that are not germane to our discussion. But many of the poems imply a general process that parallels the pattern set up in the poet's esthetics and mythological work. This is a process of spiritual integration emphasizing Pain, Hope, and a regeneration symbolized by immersion in water or in silence. Pain, in its myriad occurrences in Sturge Moore, is no Swinburnian pulsation delicious or difficult to bear, but a catalytic agent, a synonym for labor-pains. Hope, which becomes the most familiar single word in the poetical corpus, is no mere optimism, but the active force "By which the unknown helps the known." And in a large number of instances, integration or re-birth is achieved by immersion in water, a symbol readily interpreted on Freudian grounds but more readily comprehensible to any poetic or religious awareness. The most original symbol in Sturge Moore's lyric poetry is the use of Silence as a salutary agent in life, as an active masculine force (as in Hopkins' "The Habit of Perfection"), or as a passive feminine pool for immersion and refreshment. Some lines in the poem "To Silence" (Collected Edition, IV, 53) best describe this unusual regenerative experience:

> Languidly drifted with thy tide, Appearing dead to those I passed, I lived in thee, and dreamed and waked Twice what I had been . . . .

Yet I, who for all wisdom pine, Seek thee but as a bather swims To refresh and not dissolve his limbs. The whole process of human integration constantly lurking and sporadically manifesting itself throughout the shorter pieces is part and parcel of Sturge Moore's poetic myth and prose dialectic. The Pain, Hope, and regenerative immersion stressed in the lyrics roughly parallel the "shame and ardour" and saturation in intuition necessary to approach Nemesis, as well as the unrelenting experiment and the cultivated temper of "Simplicity" necessary to approach the three Kantian absolute values. And always there are the deceptive pleasures of Ge to combat. The last stanza of the short poem "Shells" (Collected Edition, IV, 43) completely summarizes the whole stylization of experience embodied in Sturge Moore's lyrics, dramatic pieces, and esthetics, contrasting the gifts of Ge and Nemesis:

In easy air and warm light nursed Bloom wit and love with glamour fraught, And brave but flower-like youth: Like brittle shells, long years immersed, Secreted by toil, conscience, thought, Are formed art, virtue, truth.

And so I am led to assert that Sturge Moore's primary achievement is to merge imaginatively the Hellenism and Hebraism which his contemporaries and nineteenth-century predecessors had preferred to separate. His dual allegiance to Gustave Flaubert and Matthew Arnold—whose respective Hellenism and Hebraism I have chosen to emphasize—thus assumes a profound significance. For on the one hand, Sturge Moore wholeheartedly embraces the Flaubertian dogma of attempting to see Beauty plain, of concentrating on the "spontaneity of consciousness" (to use Arnold's phrase) that distinguishes the artist from other men. But on the other hand, Sturge Moore's puritan temperament keeps him from utter abandonment to Art for Art's Sake and leads him to espouse

the "strictness of conscience" whose value Arnold knew, and sought personally, while condemning its overemphasis in nine-teenth-century English culture. "Between these two points of influence," Arnold had written, "moves our world. At one time it feels more powerfully the attraction of one of them, at another time of the other; and it ought to be, though it never is, evenly and happily balanced between them."

In the poetic symbols of Nemesis and Ge, in his critical prose, and in the prodigal activity of his own life, Sturge Moore has offered to the world an engaging, substantial, and happy balance of beauty and virtue—a true life of art. How many of his contemporaries held so impressively to such an integrating and transcending ideal?

# Chronological Table

- 1870 Born at 3 Wellington Square, Hastings, East Sussex (March 4).
- 1871 Moved to Hastings Lodge, Dulwich Wood Park, Upper Norwood, London.
- 1879-1884 Attended Dulwich College, Dulwich, London.
- 1883-1885 Contributed to The Boomerang (school club magazine).
- 1884 Met Marie Appia, later his wife. First trip abroad.
- 1885 Entered Croydon Art School, Croydon, London. Met Charles Shannon.
- 1887 Entered Lambeth Art School, Lambeth, London. Met Charles Ricketts.
- 1888 Became Ricketts' pupil at The Vale. Moved to Woodthorpe, Sydenham Hill Road, Sydenham, London.
- 1892 Published first work, in The Dial.
- 1893 Two Poems (privately printed). Danaë (Dial).
- 1894 Met Robert Trevelyan.
- 1895 Moved to 39 South Grove, Highgate, London.
- 1896-1903 Edited books for the Vale Press.
- 1898 First exhibition of woodcuts.
- 1899 The Vinedresser and Other Poems. Met W. B. Yeats.
- 1900 Altdorfer.
- 1901 Aphrodite against Artemis: a Tragedy. Met Michael Field (Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper). Helped form Literary Theatre Society. Moved to Hobby-Horse House, 20 Fitzroy Street, London West.
- 1902 Moved to 20 St. James Square, Holland Park, Kensington, London.
- 1903 Absalom: a Chronicle Play in Three Acts. Danaë. The Centaur's Booty. The Rout of the Amazons. Married Marie Appia. Mother died.
- 1904 The Gazelles and Other Poems. Pan's Prophecy. To Leda and Other Odes. Theseus; Medea, and Lyrics. Father died.
- 1905 The Little School: a Posy of Rhymes. Albert Durer. Son born.
- 1906 Poems. Correggio. Aphrodite against Artemis and A Florentine Tragedy performed.
- 1907 Daughter born.
- 1909 Orpheus and Eurydice.
- 1910 Art and Life.
- 1911 Mariamne: a Conflict. A Sicilian Idyll and Judith: a Conflict. Scandal over "A Platonic Marriage." Elected to Royal Society of Literature.

- 1912 Poetry Society founded. Met Rabindranath Tagore. Moved to 40 Well Walk, Hampstead, London.
- 1914 The Sea Is Kind.
- 1915 Hark to These Three Talk about Style.
- 1916 Judith performed. Designed first book cover for Yeats.
- 1919 Some Soldier Poets. Awarded Civil List Pension. Moved to Hillcroft, Steep, Petersfield, Hampshire. Children entered Bedales School.
- 1919-1920 Literary controversies in periodicals.
- 1920 Danaë, Aforetime, Blind Thamyris. Tragic Mothers. The Powers of the Air.
- 1922 Tyrfing performed.
- 1922-1931 Published articles in T. S. Eliot's Criterion.
- 1923 Judas. Edited Michael Field's poems.
- 1924-1925 Taught esthetics at Bedales School.
- 1925 Roderigo of Bivar. Designed decorations for Axël. Met Paul Valéry.
- 1927 Psyche in Hades performed. Returned to 40 Well Walk, Hampstead.
- 1929 The Closing Door. Armour for Aphrodite. Shannon received concussion.
- 1930 Mystery and Tragedy: Two Dramatic Poems. Nine Poems. Niobe and Medea performed. Considered for post of Poet Laureate.
- 1931 Collected Edition, Volume I. Ricketts died.
- 1932 Collected Edition, Volumes II and III. Edited Michael Field's journals.
- 1933 Collected Edition, Volume IV. Elected to Art Workers' Guild.
- 1934 Selected Poems.
- 1936 Yeats's Oxford Book of Modern Verse.
- 1937 Shannon died.
- 1939 The Unknown Known and a Dozen Odd Poems. Edited Ricketts' journals. Article on Arnold. Yeats died. Memoir of Yeats. Moved to Trevelyan's The Shiffolds, Holmbury St. Mary, Dorking, Surrey.
- 1939-1941 Last publications: "Provocations."
- 1944 Died at nursing-home in Windsor, Buckinghamshire (July 18).

# A Bibliography of Sturge Moore

#### 1892

Verse: "To the Memory of Arthur Rimbaud," Dial, II, 10. "On a Picture by Puvis de Chavannes," Dial, II, 15. "Bitten Apples," Dial, II, 15. "Love Lies Bleeding," Dial, II, 16. "The Little Brown Wood-Mouse," Dial, II, 16. "Gust-Disgusted Geese," Dial, II, 16. "Les Chercheuses de Poux: After Arthur Rimbaud," Dial, II, 17, "Pygmalion," Dial, II, 18. "On a Drawing by C. H. S.," Dial, II, 18. Prose: "Maurice de Guérin," Dial, II, 11-14. "King Comfort," Dial, II, 19-22.

#### 1893

Verse: "Danaë," Dial, III, 1-9. "Some Shadows of a Thought," Dial, III, 17. "Sonnet de Ronsard pour Helene," Dial, III, 17. "The Pimpernel," Dial, III, 18. "Suggested by the Prose of Arthur Rimbaud's 'Enfance': Through a Child's Eye," Dial, III, 19. "Chorus of Grecian Girls," Dial, III, 20. Two Poems: "About Hope" and "Mountain Shadows" (privately printed). Prose: "Old Kitty," Dial, III, 27-30.

# 1896

Verse: "A Prayer to Venus," Dial, IV, 12-14. "A Duet," Pageant, I, 94. "Pallas and the Centaur," Pageant, I, 94. Prose: Ed. The Passionate Pilgrim and the Songs in Shakespeare's Plays (Vale Press).

# 1897

Verse: "To an Early Spring Day," Pageant, II, 156-58. "Phantom Sea-Birds," Dial, V, 8-10. Prose: "The Centaur," Dial, V, 16-21: trans. part of De Guérin, Le Centaure; incl. in The Centaur (1899).

#### 1899

Verse: The Vinedresser and Other Poems (Unicorn Press). Reviewed: Anon., "Another New Poet," London Letter, II (July 14), 57; Anon., "Mr. Sturge Moore's Poems," Star (July 15), 1; Anon., "The Vinedresser," Saturday Review, LXXXVIII (July 15), 77; [John Bailey], "A Poet of Promise," Literature, V (Sept. 2), 218-19; Anon., "Other New Books," Academy, LVII (Sept. 9), 253; Laurence Binyon, "Mr T. Sturge Moore's Poems," The Literary Year-Book (London, 1900). Prose: The Centaur. The Bacchant. Translated from the French of Maurice de Guérin by T. S. Moore (Vale Press). Ed. Shakespeare's Sonnets (Vale Press). "Which Is the Tiresome Fellow?" Saturday Review, LXXXVIII (July 22), 106: letter.

# 1900

VERSE: "A Duet," reprinted in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, ed. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Prose: *Altdorfer* (Artist's Library, Unicorn Press). Ed. *The Vale Shakespeare* (Vale Press, 1900-03).

# 1901

Verse: Aphrodite against Artemis: a Tragedy (Unicorn Press). Reviewed: "W. A." [William Archer], "A Rival to Euripides," Tribune (Apr. 2), 4; William Archer, "About the Theatre: A Champion of Mr. Sturge Moore—'Aphrodite against Artemis'—A Moore Anthology," Tribune (Apr. 7), 2; Anon., "Much Achievement and More Promise," Academy, LXI (Aug. 24), 147-48. Prose: Altdorfer (N. Y., Longmans Green and Co.): Am. ed. "In Defense of Reynolds," Monthly Review, III (Apr.), 120-35.

# 1902

Verse: "To Idleness," Saturday Review, XCIII (Mar. 29), 394. Prose: "A Plea for an Endowed Stage," Monthly Review, VI (Jan.), 119-31. Intro. Albrecht Altdorfer: a Book of 71 Woodcuts Photographically Reproduced in Facsimile (Little Engravings Classical and Contemporary; N. Y. and London, Longmans Green and Co. and Unicorn Press). "The Renovation of the Theatre," Monthly Review, VII (Apr.), 102-16. ["Piero di Cosimo"], Saturday Review, XCIV (July 12), 45: letter. "Rodin," Monthly Review, IX (Oct.), 96-107. Ed. Poems from Wordsworth (Vale Press).

# 1903

Verse: Absalom: a Chronicle Play in Three Acts (Unicorn Press). Reviewed: Anon., "A Biblical Drama," Academy, LXIV (Feb. 28), 200. Danaë (Vale Press). The Centaur's Booty (Duckworth and Co.). Reviewed: Anon., "Verses, Bosky and Other," Saturday Review, XCVII (Mar. 12), 335-36; Anon., "Some Notable Poetry," Speaker, NS, IX (Mar. 12), 576-78; Henry Newbolt, "A New Poet and an Old One," Monthly Review, XIV (Feb. 1904), 1-12; R. C. Trevelyan, "Mr. Sturge Moore's Poems," Independent Review, III (June 1904), 135-48; Ferris Greenslet, "Significant Poetry," Atlantic Monthly, XCVI (Sept. 1905), 418-20. The Rout of the Amazons (Duckworth and Co.). Reviewed: same as for The Centaur's Booty. Prose: A Brief Account of the Origin of the Eragny Press and a Note on the Relation of the Printed Book as a Work of Art to Life (Eragny Press). Ed. Marlowe's Doctor Faustus (Vale Press).

# 1904

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