Darkness in the Shelter

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['Iluna gordelekuan/ Oscuridad en el refugio', catalogue essay published in Spanish and Basque for the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, *Henry Moore*, 1990, pp. 19-43, 161-78.]

Much of the work of Henry Moore now seems so familiar to us that it is difficult to understand the anger that it once aroused or the disturbance that many people felt when looking at it. One reason for this disquieting effect was the way in which Moore's work departed from traditional forms only in specific and limited areas. Traditional subjects in traditional materials were rendered in a radical style. Moore's figures encourage universal and even allegorical readings, they present themselves as a kind of ideal. This closeness to conventional forms of representation made the pieces far more disturbing than any abstract piece might have been. The forms were read not as abstract but as deformed pieces of anatomy. The holes were rends in real flesh, the bones poked out from the flesh.

Large Figure in a Shelter, 1985-6 (LH 652c)

The sequence of works that bear a relation to **Large Figure in a Shelter**, 1985-6 (LH 652c), and which make up this exhibition were mostly produced during the war and in the years soon after. Many of the Helmet Heads were produced in 1950. This group of works -- heads, shelterers and the associated prints -- in itself forms an undercurrent to Moore's work in general: there is a deeply disquieting aspect to them which can be related to the events of the war, and which runs counter to the comfortable and cosy 'humanist' view of his work often prevails. It is significant that for Moore the origin of the Helmet Heads was his abortive benefit project, the lithograph **Spanish Prisoner**, c. 1939 (CGM 3), just as the atrocities of the war had their preview on Spanish soil.

The Helmet Heads and many of the associated pieces do not fit in comfortably with the rest of Moore's work. They retain a masculine character despite the foetal and mother and child associations that are often made.[1] They make specific references to some of the concerns of French thought, if not directly to Surrealism. They have a very definite relation to the war. This

has made their assimilation into the Moore canon difficult, for so much of his work seems to be concerned with the feminine, with eternal human values, and to evade any specific categorization or debate.

Our comfortable view of the works of Moore is a comparatively recent phenomenon. In the post-war period his work was seen at least with a large measure of unease and at the extreme with disgust and repugnance. This essay will look at the response to Moore's sculpture in the years following the war and before it was buried in official approbation for the artist. This resistance to the work has often been presented as simply a conservative reluctance to accept formal innovation. Many of those who admired Moore's skill and formal inventiveness, nevertheless found the works in some way repellent. They saw this as a quite separate issue from that of form. Even Moore's greatest advocates felt the need to account for the disturbing nature of his work. The problem was often felt to be the presence of something inhuman within it. Kenneth Clark wrote of one of Moore's earliest metal (lead) figures, a **Reclining Figure**, 1931 (LH 101), that although it made many descriptive references to the human body, it was inhuman and 'more like some terrifying insect', a 'monstrous insect woman'.[2] Philip Hendy described some of Moore's creations in similar terms as having a 'monstrous anatomy'.[3] There was a widespread assumption that these works in some way reduced humanity to a lower form of life, immobilized it and even brought it to a death-like state.[4]

George Digby set up a basic opposition between the ideals of the modern world, which prize individuality and intellect, and the 'massive and summary' rendering of figures by Moore with their limbs 'stiffened and distorted', their heads like stumps. Articulation and movement in these figures seemed impossible, he claimed. The work appeared primitive, and the reading of these heads was clearly seen as a belittling of the intellect. The distortions of the body were so extreme that Moore had created 'atavistic sub-human' beings which are like 'great petrified fossils': 'The emphasis is not only on the static, but even, in these reclining figures, on the moribund. Limbs disappear into ridges of stone or metal, holes appear where vital parts once throbbed, often only a suggestion of anatomy remains amid the haphazard lineaments of

inorganic matter, around which remote but subtle human suggestions still hover.'[5] Digby, however, was a supporter of Moore's work. He went on to write that art was fundamentally concerned with unconscious and non-personal manifestations of the mind. In common with many critics, he made reference to the supposedly Jungian action of these pieces on the viewer. In the stunted heads there was 'the motion and the life of the Zombi; will and consciousness is not theirs, but the driving force of unlimited, untransformed energy passes through them.' Moore's work expressed a strongly atavistic attitude, for the chief characteristic of his art was a strongly regressive urge which acted against the rational ends of society. It is possible that this attitude reflected an unconscious attitude in our culture 'the shadow of a new point of view which is rising into consciousness.'[6]

Similarly Nikolaus Pevsner thought that Moore nearly always reduced natural appearances to conveying a vitality 'lower' than that of the animal or human body: his work was suggestive of 'lower life, of the blind growth of roots, of vertebrae or even cartilage, or of the passive suffering of the pebble gradually eroded by the slow motion of water and sand.' Man was never fit to act, limbs were tapered like stumps, heads excessively small, there was a groping towards the elementary and the pre-conscious.[7]

This view of Moore's work was far from uncommon and it was used particularly to explain the effect of the works related to the Helmet Heads, most notably the wartime drawings that Moore made of Londoners sheltering from the Blitz in underground railway stations. Digby related these pieces to dreams in which the subject descended into a quarry or cavern where the rock seemed strangely alive and which, he said, was related to the regressive search for life value in the depths of the unconscious. Likewise the motif of encoiling and entwining in the blankets of the shelter figures was a symbol of the unconscious attracting elements of the personality to itself and was 'part of the general attitude of facing back to the racial depths. It is an invitation to sleep the sleep of ages in the undifferentiated unconscious.'[8]

Helmet Head, 1940 (LH 212)

In much of the writing about Moore there is an association between the unconscious and the primeval, and between the development of the race and the development of the individual:[9] the sleeping figures regress not only into the depths of their own psyches but into the depths of the history of the species. David Sylvester, one of the major writers on Moore in this period, wrote of the mystery of these protean forms which lead us back to a primeval world where the differences between classes of objects no longer apply, a world of forms which might have existed 'on some vast seashore before the coming of man'.[10] Pevsner thought that although Moore was in sympathy with his subject in the shelter drawings, they were still 'sub-human' and 'newt-like' figures which were afforded no beauty or pride.[11] The forms of the Helmet Heads were also read as sub-human: Digby wrote of the 1940 **Helmet Head** (LH 212) as being 'a curious structure which contains inside itself an independent elf-like figure, a sort of animacule'.[12] The primitivism of the twenties and thirties had been taken (perhaps under the great pressure of events in the forties) to a stage where categories no longer existed, where minds no longer functioned and where species had barely emerged from the primal soup.

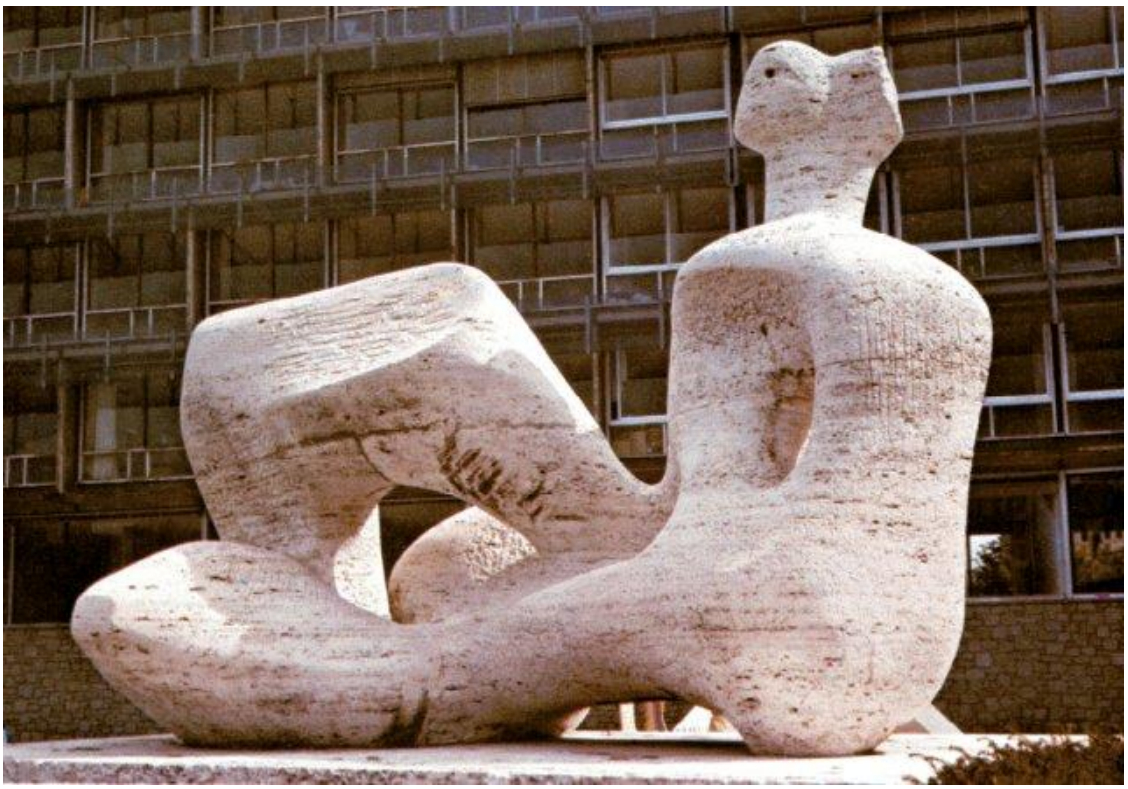
Beyond the idea that the Shelter figures are sub-human and incapable of action, there is a further reading of them as in some sense already dead. Sylvester wrote that in the drawing **Shadowy Shelter**, 1940 (HMF 1735) we can 'see bones glimmering through flesh become transparent', and he relates this to a movement in Moore from animate to inanimate and back, reflecting natural cycles.[13]

In the light of the war these figures were seen to have a more specific reference than being merely an abstract comment about mortality. Frederick Wight described them as having 'a curious air of being aroused to a different sort of life than ours, that is devoid of incident. Their clothes . . . are cerements. They have the Lazarus look; they are brought like Alcestis from the grave. Moore is dealing here with mortality and immortality'[14]. But he continued: 'Now there is a stage in the wastage beyond death of which we carefully avoid the sight. The harder tissues, tendons and bones are all that is left; the soft tissues are gone. The body fights a slow rearguard action, such as it did alive in the Büchenwald photographs. This charnel house effect haunts the Shelter Perspective drawing, is striking in the drawings for sculpture, parched away as the figures are to mere tendon and bone . . . Here is a steady progression toward the boneyard in the most literal sense.'[15] Again, the association is not uncommon. Sylvester wrote of the drawings of 1942-6 as containing 'beings thin and emaciated, like the inhabitants of Belsen, with skin drawn tight over protesting bones.'[16] That Moore's feeling for the horrors of the war did not diminish with time and that he continued to develop this dark side of his work, may in part be attributed to his visit to Auschwitz. Moore served as the chairman of an international jury for a monument for Auschwitz in 1958;[17] the Henry Moore Foundation holds a number of photographs of the buildings and ovens taken by him during this visit. [illustrate]

Of course these disturbing images of the shelterers were, for many people, difficult to accept as appropriate war images. Dennis Rudder comparing them more conventional images like the individualized and comforting figures of Edward Ardizzone, found them 'doomed and haunted', restless, uneasy and disturbing. They protest against the fate that buries them alive and are conscious only of their own pitifulness. Moore's delicate colouring here accentuates 'the cerementa atmosphere surrounding bewildered, lost, souls.' Eric Newton, who quoted this

passage, went on to say that Moore's work was so extreme that many people found it difficult to deal with.[18]

Another of Moore's staunchest supporters, Patrick Heron, accepted the characterization of much of the sculptor's work as sub-human and related this to the disturbances he thought typical of the age. There was in Moore's work, he said, an '. . . identification of animate with inanimate realities, of the human figure with eroded rock-strata, of Man with primeval creatures whose facial features and limbs are less articulated, definite, or expressive of personality than our own. Everyone responds with an unquiet thrill to the typical streamlined, seal-like almost featureless heads of a Henry Moore reclining figure or torso. A hundred disturbing ideas interpose themselves: Is this seal-head an atom-blasted friend of ours? What schizophrenia emanates from the two blind, equal knob-heads of this metal **Standing Figure** of 1950 [LH 290]? What universal dilemmas or fears are symbolized in these nevertheless immensely noble forms? . . . His sculpture assails us with the grandeur and magnitude of vast impersonal forces; it possesses, so often, the blindness of the inanimate or the generalized.'[19] For Heron the feelings aroused by these pieces were far from comfortable, and he thought that such a response was widely felt: they referred not just to universal dilemmas but to specific contemporary concerns. Edward Sackville-West took up a similar point in writing of the Reclining Figures as relevant to the crisis of our times, 'for these mindless giants suggest a world which has suffered some kind of cataclysm. Their presence invokes the dead planets and the livid, damaged moons which endanger the sky behind a Christ by Tura.'[20] The primeval aspect of these works seemed to be connected with a cataclysm that had either just passed or was considered imminent.



Unesco Reclining Figure, 1957-8 (LH 416)

John Berger, from a viewpoint highly critical of Moore, asked of the distorted forms of the **Unesco Reclining Figure**, 1957-8 (LH 416): 'They are dead? Not quite. More dead than alive? Inorganic matter . . . Moore's subject here is not a woman: it is the inert material he has in his hands. . . . It is an object striving to become an image: a prophecy of life not yet manifest.'[21] For Berger the deathly aspect of Moore's sculpture was not intentional, but was rather a result of the artist's obsession with the nature of his material and his neglect of meaning.

It is clear that at least in the case of the Helmet Heads, Moore intended the effect to be disturbing and in relation to **Helmet Head No. 1**, 1950 (LH 279) he said as much. He also spoke of the way that the idea of the interior/exterior form was related to his interest in early armour, a 'shell' for a 'soft form'. Armour, said Moore, has a 'weird expression' and the Helmet Heads are meant to emulate this 'disturbing and strange expression'.[22] For Erich Neumann **Helmet Head No. 1** is strange, sinister and inhuman, it does what the skull did for our ancestors being the contemporary symbol of 'a purely technological death' closely connected to modern anxieties. Neumann wrote of modern man: 'It is almost a wishful fantasy if he wants

to be allowed to die peacefully in bed instead of being cut to pieces by shell splinters, buried under collapsing houses, roasted alive by atom bombs, or reduced to a mass of suppuration by radioactive fallout.' This technological head is utterly alien to us and inspires horror.[23] The forms of the Helmet are irregular but sharp, as if manufactured, as is the being inside, whose offensive shape is reminiscent of a push-dagger. The vents at the back of the helmet contribute to the mechanical air of the piece. While the nodules on top of the Helmet (and the holes through it) can be read as eyes, they remind one of the similar features found on German helmets from the war. Will Grohmann thought that in the 1950 Helmets the inner figure changes into 'something more repellent, technological and warlike' rather like a stereo-telescope. It is a 'mythological abstract conception' in which primeval and technological aspects are connected.[24]

Since Moore's figures have so much contact with naturalism it was difficult not to read the deformations in them as acts of violence or mutilation. Gordon Onslow-Ford commented on the 'wound' across the face and the hole running through the length of the body of the **Reclining Figure**, 1939 (LH 210), which 'possesses the sadistic and erotic values expressed from the unconscious that are to be found in great creations of the past.'[25] Wight observed the way Moore opened up of the cavities of the head: 'he drills into the pupils of the eyes, makes a gash for the mouth, and finally opens or slots the skull'.[26]

Digby wrote that in many of the reclining figures there was a dismemberment of limbs, and pointed out that it was almost always the most highly developed human parts which suffered most. 'Hands, feet, the vital organs are atrophied, amputated, or pierced, and there is a characteristic tendency to reduce the head to a mere cypher.'[27] For Digby this represented an archetypal theme in Moore's art. Dismemberment is in Jungian psychology a symbol of rebirth and psychological reorientation, and this neatly ties together the aspects of dismemberment and nurture. However, Digby felt that the dismembering of the body in Moore's art was so extreme that it was possible that it could function as a denial rather than a symbol of rebirth. Moore might be exhibiting 'schizoid' traits, in the sense of a dissociation of the emotional and intellectual life. These dissociated elements show signs of 'savagery as well as much which is

ugly, malformed and vicious. . . . It is a mirror for contemporary man to gaze into [...].'[28] Mutilation might be a positive feature, but if it is not the mutilated soul of Moore is no more than a reflection of our own.

The argument about mutilation turns around whether we see the pieces as metal, stone and wood, or as flesh itself. The hardness of Moore's material, the way that it renders flesh, is often taken to reflect the hardness of Moore's sensibility. One critic wrote of the figures in Moore's drawings playing at being turned into stone, at being statues, for their surface is harder than the substance of flesh.[29] The 1951 Tate Gallery exhibition catalogue associated Moore's metaphorical substitution of bones, pebbles and shells for parts of the body with his imagination 'obsessed with what is hard, strong and stony.'[30]

Bryan Robertson dealt with the issue of the fleshiness of Moore's work in 1961. Only recently, he claimed, had the artist come to terms with rendering flesh, previously there had been just bone, rock and fossil, and this somehow fitted in with the reticent, almost cerebral, 'dispassionate coldness' of the artist's nature. Such work is tough, compressed and vital but lacks warmth, and even the Shelter drawings which are the result of strong emotion are 'fierce, grim studies' which make no concession to sentimentality or pathos.[31] If we read the material as stone it is a sign of Moore's coldness, if we read it as flesh it is a sign of mutilation.

Wight says that Moore eviscerates the figure carving away all the soft parts and leaving only hard forms. The chest or breast is the feeding ground of the child and from the child's point of view it is natural that it should be eaten away.[32] While many of the interiors of the Helmet Heads appear mechanical or skeletal, **Head: Cyclops**, 1963 (LH 507), contains a slug-like form that could hardly be more fleshy. Here is an almost programmatic combination of hard and soft.

The current of negative feeling about Moore's subjects did not go unopposed. There was certainly a strong trend in contemporary criticism towards defusing the frightening nature of Moore's work, and this applied as much to those who attacked it as to those who praised it. The most common avenue of attack, even from his admirers, was the charge of being too suave, too good to be true. The pristine quality of his surfaces was associated with the supposedly

uncomplicated nature of the work. Patrick Heron commented on the extreme smoothness of Moore's surfaces which led to a certain 'vacancy'.[33] Basil Taylor, Heron's opponent in a debate on Moore staged in the magazine *Encounter*, also highlighted this aspect, describing Moore's 'suave' surfaces as being as inexpressive as a finely turned chair leg. It is this that makes Moore's work much favoured by the camera, especially in the detail which shows the 'comforting, intriguing caverns' and beautiful textures without their full context.[34] Douglas Cooper and Clement Greenberg had similar complaints, Cooper saying that Moore's real trouble was that he was frightened of being vulgar, Greenberg that his sculpture was so tasteful that there was no difficulty or surprise about his art, that it was the work of a 'sincere academic modern'.[35]

Other tactics were used to defuse the force of these works. One solution was signalled by Philip Hendy and was related to formalism. Hendy called the **Reclining Figure** in elmwood (1939) 'a rather frightening object', but only if we have not followed the developments leading up to it, if we do not see it in terms of the logic of a formal development. Similarly the reinforced concrete **Reclining Figure**, 1933 (LH 134) is 'a repellent figure if one does not succeed in dissociating it from the human form, which has fallen apart to be connected again by entrails in stone'. If we do succeed in this, claimed Hendy, it becomes a fascinating formal experiment.[36] We must learn not to be disturbed by these objects. The distortions have no meaning except as the result of a formal development which has its own logic independent of any iconographic reference.

Another solution is the impulse to universalize the art of Moore and so remove or diminish its more specific references. This process was important for the acceptance of Moore's work as an official and monumental medium. It was, inadvertently, backed by Herbert Read in the exhibition *40 000 Years of Modern Art*: the argument of the show (in which Moore featured) was that there existed an eternal and universal recurrence of certain phenomena in art that might be called 'modern'. Conditions in modern life were held to have produced effects seen only in primitive epochs; while Read warned that a strict definition of these 'archetypal' conditions was impossible since they were buried in the unconscious, he described them as 'a vague sense of insecurity, a cosmic anguish (*Angst*, as the Existentialists call it), feelings and

intuitions that demand expression in abstract or unnaturalistic forms.' There is nothing inhuman about these forms, rather they are 'inevitable modes' in which certain phases of human experience are expressed.[37] To apply this to Moore then, his pieces might seem inhuman, but this is an illusion caused by the changing historical moment: they are in fact as universal as any other kind of true art.

Critics often wrote of Moore's work in these universal terms, as a substantiation of the age, the struggles and suffering of mankind.[38] This was just the kind of reading that was criticized by John Berger for being too general: 'Moore's great popularity, can, I think, like Sutherland's, be largely explained by the present sentimental, highbrow fashion for projecting crises of conscience and introspection on to the timeless processes of nature. In some ways it is a comfort to lose oneself in the aeons, to hide in the rock of ages'.[39] There is a sense here in which the very exigencies of the post-war period are used to give Moore's work a more universal than specific reference, and thus defuse them as political or social statements.

This highly generalized reading of Moore's work in relation to the eternal human condition and specifically in relation to the Heads was exemplified in the essay by Geoffrey Grigson for the album, *Heads, Figures and Ideas* (1958). Many states and gestures of 'man' are described: in addition, 'Heads hollowed and filled with space. . . . IDEAS -- the realized play of the absent and the present'.[40] It is significant that here even the Heads have taken on a universalized meaning.

Critics were particularly anxious to deny the Helmets any specific reading and to stress that Moore had arrived at formal solutions that anticipated their creation before the outbreak of war. For Grohmann the idea that steel helmets and gas masks played a part in Moore's development of the Helmets 'cannot be dismissed out of hand' but must nevertheless have been a 'confirmation of his inner ideas'.[41] Read pointed out that **Figures in a Cave**, 1936 (HMF 1260), anticipated forms seen in the shelter drawings[42].

Of course the disturbing aspect of these works could simply be denied, but in the case of the Heads this happened very rarely. Despite their association with the foetus in the womb and the child in its mother's arms, positive readings of the Helmet Heads in emotional terms are very uncommon.[43]

Despite attempts to explain away the disturbing effect of these works, it was still thought necessary by many writers to try to explain their meaning. Many of Moore's critics struggled with this problem, and some of the more formalist writers saw it as being quite independent of the aesthetic issues as such. So Heron found it much easier to defend the formal qualities of Moore's pieces than to explain their poetic and symbolic content which he found hard to define and even disquieting. He did not think that identifying the forms with embryos and thus seeing the works as a retreat from the full consciousness of modern life was a useful approach.[44]

It was generally considered to be the war that led Moore from the position of being a marginal artist of the avant-garde to being a famous and in some sense official artist. This development was often attributed to an increase in the human content, or the 'humanism', of Moore's work, as well as to a more sympathetic response on the part of a public with whom Moore had shared the experiences of war. Read wrote that the Shelter drawings proved the 'inherent humanism' of his earlier work.[45] Trewin Copplestone claimed that Moore, like so many of his contemporaries, was concerned with 'the humanizing of the elements of his material.' The warrior figures, for instance, he saw as a visual protest against the indignity of force and the blind sacrifice of individual humanity.[46]

For some though, notably Pevsner, this move towards humanism was the consequence of a retreat from modernist forms: the Shelter Sketchbooks and the **Madonna and Child**, 1943-4 (LH 226) in Northampton were usually cited in evidence. Pevsner wrote of Moore's solitary art which bewildered the public, who could hardly be expected to communicate with an artist so concerned with 'demented existence' and so apparently out of sympathy with the individual man, woman and child. Moore's work was formally beautiful, but except in the Northampton Madonna this was not complemented by human values.[47] This common argument led avant-garde critics to try to show that Moore had abandoned humanism since the war as part of a repudiation of naturalism. Herbert Read thought that Moore's King and Queen and Family Group figures were a break with wartime 'humanism' and an advance into 'the superhuman realm of myth. . . . They are figures of mystery and fate: they look calmly into futurity.'[48]

Some of the most stringent criticism of Moore in this period was made precisely on this issue of meaning and reference. John Berger argued that the work needing a clearer reference: dignity, strength and power are just 'words offered to mysterious gods'. For Berger Moore's work is beautiful, but because of its lack of reference, it is closer to the object than the image.[49]

In Berger as in Heron and others there was always thought to be a split between form and meaning in the work of Moore. For Read at least, the forms and their meaning were interdependent, the forms being physical embodiments of archetypes, operating by association in the collective unconscious.[50] Natural forms were clumsy and contingent realizations of the spiritual essence that lay behind all appearances. Art should strip nature of its 'casual excresences' to reveal the forms that spirit would evolve if not governed by function.[51] Moore's process of transformation was always governed by a 'transcendental purpose' for what was transformed was an 'immanent spirit': he combined human feeling (animism) with dynamism.[52] For Read it was not Moore's sculpture that is deformed, it was ourselves.

Moore himself gives us clues as to the specific meaning of some pieces associated with the Helmet Heads: he wrote that the one eyed figures, such as **Contemplative Eye**, 1974 (CGM 356), came out of the Helmet Head idea by chance when he tore up some drawings: 'I surrounded the head fragments with frames or window openings to give them the suggestion of soldiers observing the enemy from concealed positions behind battlements.'[53]

A common theme in Moore criticism and one to which the Helmet Heads bear an odd relation is the stress on the idea of the sculpture growing, being a product of forces pressing on it from within. There is a feeling of something stirring under the skin of the sculpture. Moore himself encouraged this interpretation, writing about the force and power that strained from the inside of a piece: 'Hardness, projection outwards, gives tension, force, and vitality.'[54] He also thought that the sculpture should make the viewer feel that what he was seeing 'contains within itself its own organic energy thrusting outwards . . . It should always give the impression, whether carved or modelled, of having grown organically, created by pressure from within.'[55]

This aspect was often stressed by writers on Moore. His Reclining Figures always contained 'numerous and complex movements and combinations of form under the skin of the

carving, as it were.'[56] Heron it thus: 'in one's eye the image swells and changes, contracts and changes, as one steps around the sculpture standing there, before one, in space.[57] In making a sculpture ever more complex, Moore stretches and distorts but never ruptures the membrane (the skin of a balloon or 'envelope') that surrounds it. Carving determines that this envelope is smooth and subtle: 'The whole weave and thrust and twisting roll of his forms is conceived as hard, finite, smooth surface'[58]

With the Shelter figures, drapery forms a surface that can manifest interior forces. Referring to later works, Read thought that drapery had been transformed by Moore's new understanding of Greek genius, for it was 'no longer a secondary rhythm but 'a nervous integument, a veil made tense and contrapuntal by the hard outward thrust of the underlying volumes.'[59]

The issue is important, for if the force is to come from within there is surely a sense in which the metaphorical as well as physical depths are expressed on the skin of the object. Heron wrote: '. . . the plastic form of Henry Moore's sculpture is poetry, personality, spirit solidified. It is the visible shape whereby we are informed certain profound intimations -- intimations of mortality . . . they concern the relationship of our bodies to the earth, stressing analogies of structure in body and mountain. [these forms represent] intuitive penetration to the depths of the psyche . . . the vast significance attaching to the blind smooth heads, the pot-holed torsos, the figures at once embryo-like and impersonal as the very structure of the Earth's timeless surface . . .[60] The forces in nature fashion an object that reflect those very forces. Moore's work may be seen as a kind of inscription of the mind on the material.

The Helmet Head, though, is very different. It is a hard and unyielding surface that protects an interior figure, but it is distorted by neither interior nor exterior forces. It is a smooth and unmodulated surface that confines an animal force. The encased, imprisoned form might press outwards but no effect will be seen on the surface. Moore found ways of enlivening this surface, by cutting through it at points, more radically by turning it into an openwork structure and finally, in making the **Figure in the Shelter** large enough to walk into, by allowing the viewer to see the inside, the living cave walls of the helmet itself.

Moore's use of forms that could have multiple readings was much commented on and the relationship to the operation of the metaphor in Surrealism was sometimes made. Most agreed that his distortion of the subject was a matter of the substitution of natural forms for others, so that a human leg might be replaced by a bone or a lobster claw: these are conscious metaphors and this obsession reveals an affinity with the Surrealists. However, while their substitutions are outlandish, his are 'perfectly natural and inevitable'.[61] Sylvester wrote of the way that forms in Moore's drawings resemble at once parts of the human body, bones, pebbles and shells, so that they 'telescope' a number of objects into a single image and evoke them in quick succession or even concurrently: 'thus an orifice suggests a mouth, a navel, a hollow or hole in a pebble; a pair of rings suggests eyes and nipples; a bulge suggests a breast, a bent elbow and a mountain. The figure as a whole is *personnage*, monster of the moon and lone boulder or bone.' When space was added these figures became skeletons 'which might be some posturing insect or spider, or a highly elaborate shell.'[62]

Multiple readings of the Helmet Heads are certainly possible: they can be seen as the soul in the body, the foetus in the womb, the child hugged to the mother, the endangered being which seeks protection and which seeks to endanger, death itself. In an interview Moore restated the connection of the Heads with armour and said that in addition they were connected to the mother and child idea and to the embryo in the womb, an idea which had what he called 'fundamental human depth'.[63] He certainly contributed to the universalist reading of his works.[64]

The concave spaces in a Moore figure could be seen to hold the air as in a container giving a strong sense of the presence of space in the sculpture. Arnheim wrote of the Family Group in which the hollow abdomens of the parents make a cavity 'tangible, stagnant, warmed by body heat. In its centre, the suspended infant lies safely as though contained in a womb padded with half-solid air.'[65] A connection can be made between the protective nature of the cavern, the bowels of the earth, the cloak, rug or blanket, the mine and the mother.[66] Read stressed the organic and womb-like aspect of the **Helmet** (1940), seeing the inner figure as a stylization of the human body and the frontal elements of the helmet as 'lobes', rather than as mechanical forms.[67] For Geoffrey Grigson too there were bodily analogies. Pebbles were 'caves

in the round' (a conception that links Moore's work to the negative space of Gabo), but he added to the obvious analogies: 'the darkness of the womb, and shapes swelling and thrusting from it; the bony structure of ribs, the round socket of eyes. Eyes in bone, the heart in bone, the embryo in a nook among bones.'[68] The inner can thus be seen as both the eye and the heart. The mind has often been thought of as a mirror of the outside world, a kind of optical device. Moore was apparently aware of this when he said of the forms that he used from nature: '. . . of course the idea must be in your mind to begin with. Whatever you see in nature is already in your head'.[69]

Spirit could be seen in the space of any of the sculptures. Heron described the metal **Standing Figure** (fig 00) with its two spines connecting pelvis and shoulders: 'Each of these limbs, so simple at first sight (a couple of bow like verticals, very roughly, enclosing a space into which the imagination cannot help projecting the ghost of a human thorax), is in fact immensely subtle in its twisting, swelling, contracting, flesh-and-bone suggesting contours.'[70] Here Heron linked the space to the idea of a ghost in the machine.

There might therefore be something that attracts us beneath the disturbance that these works produce. Sylvester wrote that Moore's Helmets and other related works are powerful and dramatic, 'disturbing to contemplate because of the insistence with which they invite us to project ourselves in imagination into their uterine cavities.'[71] When interviewing Moore, Marie Louise Pinckney said that she felt the urge to crawl inside one of the External Forms.[72]

Moore himself also made a statement in 1937 to the effect that the sculptor must try to think of form in its full spatial completeness: 'He gets the solid shape, as it were, inside his head . . . he identifies himself with its centre of gravity, its mass, its weight; he realizes its volume . . .'[73] The work of art is also in the head.

Just as the shelter can also be a prison, so the soul is often seen as a prisoner in the shell of the body. One critic noted the cage like conception of the openwork bronze head of 1950.[74] **Helmet Head No. 2**, 1950 (LH 281), is an inner being looking out of the eyes of the body: '. . . the living but invisible dweller within is made visible as the interior life of the shell, its animating principle. What gives this head its frightening and spectral appearance, however, is not its novel

form but the stark, staring terror of the soul as it looks out of its rigid encasement. [...] The figure in the helmet seems to be gazing not so much out of a window as out of the window of a prison.'[75] The shared sense of restriction and imprisonment can be related to Moore's statement cited earlier about the Helmet Head lithographs peering out from behind battlements. This also relates the Heads clearly to the **Spanish Prisoner** with the bars in front of its head.

The Heads encouraged metaphorical readings. Neumann saw the openwork Heads of 1950, the head as a mask or hollow shell, as a formal experiment that had resulted in a representation of the nihilistic man of today, 'obsessed with the Void, *le néant*, nothingness'.[76] He read the void in the heads literally.

The whole issue of the divided self was current in Europe and before the war had been expressed in sculptural terms, notably by Lipchitz, whom Moore visited. In Apollinaire's story **Le Poète Assassiné** the monument made to the dead poet is a hole dug in the ground in his shape and filled as it were with his spirit. Moore's **Divided Head**, 1963 (LH 506) is an obvious comment on this theme, as are the double heads that appear in some of the drawings which seem to derive from Picasso.

Atom Piece (1964-5)

In 1966 one critic expressed the positive and comfortable view of Moore in describing him as the antithesis of Bacon: while the **Atom Piece** is in some sense a damaged human head, its exaggeration takes it out of the field of comparison with reality and it becomes 'a paraphrase, a metaphor of the mortal condition'. In twentieth century art, Moore is seen as the only one to express the strength and dignity of civilisation.[77] Both **Atom Piece** and **Figure in a Shelter**, though, are closely related to the Helmet Heads and are open to interpretations that stress their anatomical deformation over any general sense of humanism or dignity. The skull or helmet shape of **Figure in a Shelter** presents us with the strong contrast of an exterior surface of

glacial armour and modulated organic forms on the inside. It has a double character. The inhabitant of this shell is a primitive form of life, like a soft sea creature, which is not in the least protected by the helmet form. While the Helmet Heads were at once offensive and cowering, protected and threatening, **Figure in a Shelter** is equipped only with manifestly illusory accoutrements of war.

The extraordinary development of Moore's reputation and the transformation of his works into monuments has led to their losing much of their specific reference. This process has, as it were, retrospectively justified Berger's criticism. While **Figure in a Shelter** is of course a monument, it has been derived from and bears the marks of works that referred to the fundamental issues of the divided self, the 'primitive' unconscious, the ghost in the machine, and the mutilation of the psyche in modern society and of the body in war. While some of the critics of the post-war period hoped to lose their repulsion for Moore's deformed bodies through an understanding of their formal development, we might hope to regain something of these writers' unease through an understanding of the iconographic development of **Figure in a Shelter**.

NOTES

[1]. The association has been made by Erich Neumann in *The Archetypal work of Henry Moore*, 1959; repr. Princeton, N.J. 1985, and by many others. Neumann is also reflecting a common view when he says that Moore's work is an expression of the 'Primordial Feminine', and is thus in fundamental opposition to the masculine, technological culture of the day (p. 12). However, Neumann too was deeply uncomfortable about the work made just before and during the war which revealed the negative and 'devouring' aspect of the archetype (pp. 113 ff.).

[2]. Kenneth Clark, 'Henry Moore's metal sculpture', *Magazine of Art*, vol. 44, no. 5, May 1951, p. 171.

[3]. Philip Hendy, 'Henry Moore. His new exhibition', *Britain Today*, no. 158, June 1949, p. 36.

[4]. For instance Robin Ironside on drawings which show figures in hieratic attitudes 'secreting within themselves the clue to their apparently preordained immobility . . . the impassive resignation of these occasionally mutilated beings'. 'Painting since 1939', in Arnold L. Haskell, Dilys Powell, Rollo Myers and Robin Ironside, *Since 1939. Ballet. Films. Music. Painting*, London 1948, pp. 173-174.

[5]. George Wingfield Digby: *Meaning and Symbol in Three Modern Artists*, London 1955, pp. 61, 63. Digby does not say so, but the reduction or removal of the head in a representation was a Surrealist device used to indicate the loss of reason.

[6]. Ibid., pp. 67-72. This view was shared by Neumann, op. cit., p. 3.

[7]. Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Thoughts on Henry Moore', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. LXXXVI, no. 503, February 1945, p. 49.

[8]. Digby, op. cit., pp. 73-76.

[9]. This association is made specifically by Neumann, op. cit., p. 67.

[10]. A.B.D. Sylvester, 'The evolution of Moore's sculpture: I', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. XC, no. 542, May 1948, p. 163.

[11]. Pevsner, op. cit., p. 49.

[12]. Digby, op. cit., p. 84. The same applies to the related internal/external forms which Sylvester called 'Blind reptiles, haunted by the memory of a former human incarnation.' 'Henry Moore's drawings', *Britain Today*, no. 151, November 1948, p. 34.

[13]. Essay by A.B.D. Sylvester in exhibition catalogue, City Art Gallery, Wakefield/Manchester City Art Gallery: *Henry Moore. Sculpture and drawings, 1923-1948*, (1949) p. 2. Sylvester also thought that Moore used the 'mechanistic sleekness' of lead to make figures that are like skeletons or scaffolding. 'The evolution of Moore's sculpture: I', loc. cit., p. 164.

[14]. Frederick S. Wight, 'Henry Moore: the reclining figure', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. VI, no. 2, December 1947, p. 103.

[15]. Ibid., p. 103. Wight also thought that these comments applied to the mine pictures, the mine being another kind of grave and that in general they applied to many of Moore's Reclining Figures.

[16]. A.B.D. Sylvester: 'Henry Moore's drawings', loc. cit., p. 34.

[17]. An account of this visit can be found in Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore*, London 1987, pp. 271f.

[18]. Dennis Rudder quoted in Eric Newton, *War through artists' eyes. Paintings and Drawings by British War Artists*, London 1945, p. 9.

[19]. Patrick Heron and Basil Taylor, 'Henry Moore -- pro and con', *Encounter*, vol. VI, no. 2, February 1956, p. 54. A similar passage appears in Heron's *The Changing Forms of Art* (London 1955) where he also asks 'What cosmic catastrophe compels the attention, even of these terrified vertebrates?' (p. 215).

[20]. Edward Sackville-West, 'A Sculptor's workshop. Notes on a new figure by Henry Moore', *The Arts*, no. 1, 1946, p. 35. There are other examples, notably the 'element of terror' that John Russell saw in some pieces by Moore form the early sixties which he related to irrational and mindless forces abroad in the world. Introduction by John Russell to *Henry Moore*, exhibition catalogue, La Jolla Art Center/Santa Barbara Museum of Art/Los Angeles Municipal Art Galleries, 1963, n.p.

[21]. John Berger, 'Pre-Naturalism', *New Statesman*, 30 May 1959.

[22]. Moore interviewed by Marie Louise Pinckney for the Virginia Museum of Art, July 1965.

[23]. Erich Neumann, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

[24]. Will Grohmann, *The Art of Henry Moore*, London 1960, p. 106. This applies particularly to **Helmet Head no. 2** (1950). Stereo telescopes of course had a military use as rangefinders.

[25]. Gordon Onslow-Ford, 'The Wooden giantess of Henry Moore', *The London Bulletin*, nos. 18-20, June 1940, p. 10.

[26]. Frederick S. Wight, 'Henry Moore: the reclining figure', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. VI, no. 2, December 1947, p. 100.

[27]. Digby, op. cit., p. 63.

[28]. Ibid., pp. 77, 78 f., 100-101.

[29]. R.A., 'Communities of Statuary' in *Henry Moore. Figures in space: drawings*, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1953, n.p.

[30]. Tate Gallery, London, *Sculpture and drawings by Henry Moore*, exhibition catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1951, p. 8.

[31]. Bryan Robertson, 'Notes on Henry Moore', *The Museums Journal*, vol. 60, no. 11, February 1961, pp. 272-3.

[32]. Wight, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

[33]. Heron and Taylor, op. cit., pp. 53-4.

[34]. Ibid., pp. 55, 57.

[35]. Douglas Cooper, 'Selected Notices', *Horizon*, vol. X, no. 60, December 1944, p. 428; Clement Greenberg, 'Art', *The Nation*, 8 February 1947. Wight makes much the same charge. op. cit., p. 104.

[36]. Philip Hendy, 'Henry Moore', *Horizon*, vol. IV, no. 21, September 1941, p. 204.

[37]. Preface by Herbert Read to exhibition catalogue, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, *40, 000 Years of Modern Art* (1949-50). Susan Compton sees an association between **Helmet Head No. 2** and the vogue for Existentialism in England in the forties. Exhibition catalogue, Royal Academy, London, *Henry Moore*, 1988, p. 227.

[38]. An example is Mary Sorrell, 'Henry Moore', *Apollo*, vol. XLIV, November 1946, p. 116.

[39]. John Berger, 'Piltdown sculpture', *New Statesman and Nation*, 27 February 1954.

[40]. Henry Moore, *Heads, Figures and Ideas*, text by Geoffrey Grigson, London, New York 1958, n.p.

[41]. Grohmann, op. cit., p. 106.

[42]. Herbert Read, *Henry Moore. A Study of his Life and Work*, London 1965, p. 139.

[43] .. One appeared in an ICA catalogue where it is written that the Helmet 'shelters a figurine and provides it with a situation so beautifully adjusted to its needs and with a light so exquisitely modulated that some of his later, uncovered figurines seem cruelly exposed, like crustacae without their shells.' W.G. Archer and Robert Melville: 'Primitive influences on modern art', *40, 000 Years of modern art*, loc. cit., p. 37.

[44]. Patrick Heron, *The Changing Forms of Art*, London 1955, p. 209.

[45]. Introduction by Herbert Read in David Sylvester (ed.), *Henry Moore. Sculpture and drawings, vol. 1, 1921-1948*, London 1944, p. xxvii.

[46]. Trewin Copplestone, 'Henry Moore', *Art News and Review*, 3 December 1960.

[47]. Pevsner, 'Thoughts on Henry Moore', loc. cit., p. 48.

[48]. Herbert Read, introduction to Alan Bowness (ed.), *Henry Moore. Complete sculpture vol. 2, 1949-1954*, London 1955, p. 8.

[49]. Berger, 'Pre-Naturalism', loc cit., and 'Piltdown sculpture', loc. cit.

[50]. Introduction by Herbert Read in David Sylvester (ed.), *Henry Moore. Sculpture and drawings, vol. 1*, London 1944, p. xxvi.

[51]. Ibid., p. xvii.

[52]. Herbert Read in exhibition catalogue, *Sculpture and Drawings by Henry Moore*, Venice Biennale, 1948 p. 3. Sylvester gave a similar account, saying that Moore used inanimate shapes that serve to express human emotions by means of 'plastic analogies' with psychological processes. 'The evolution of Moore's sculpture: I', loc. cit., 160.

[53]. Henry Moore, *Helmet Head Lithographs*, Geneva 1975, n.p.

[54]. Moore, 'Some Notes on space and form in sculpture', in Felix H. Man, *Eight European Artists*, London, Melbourne, Toronto, 1954, n.p.

[55]. Moore interviewed by Edward Roditi, *Observer*, 10 April 1960; Philip James: *Henry Moore on sculpture*, London 1966, 58.

[56]. Heron, op. cit., p. 208.

[57]. Heron and Taylor: op. cit., p. 53.

[58]. Ibid., pp. 53-4.

[59]. Herbert Read, introduction to Alan Bowness (ed.), *Henry Moore. Complete sculpture vol. 2*, London 1955, p. 8.

[60]. Heron: op. cit., p. 211-12.

[61]. *Sculpture and drawings by Henry Moore*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, loc. cit., p. 8.

[62]. A.B.D. Sylvester, 'Henry Moore's drawings', loc. cit., p. 32. He claims elsewhere that this ambiguity in Moore is a means of communication because it establishes relations between different natural forms. Essay in *Henry Moore. Sculpture and Drawings, 1923-1948*, exhibition catalogue, Wakefield and Manchester, loc. cit., p. 1.

[63]. Paul Waldo Schwarz, *The Hand and Eye of the Sculptor*, New York, Washington, London, 1969, p. 201.

[64]. Taylor's protest at Moore's combination of natural forms and the figure as 'metaphysical' should be noted. Sculpture has a strong material presence and is unsuitable as a vehicle for the metaphorical except 'when the idea can be presented through a body of palpable symbolism, when the idea presents itself to the artist in terms of some visible object.' Heron and Taylor, 'Henry Moore -- pro and con', loc. cit., p. 55.

[65]. Rudolf Arnheim, 'The Holes of Henry Moore. On the function of space in sculpture', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. VII, no. 1, September 1948, p. 33.

66. Grohmann, op. cit., pp. 137, 139.

67. Read, op. cit., 127.

68. Geoffrey Grigson, *Henry Moore*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1943, p. 10.

69. Interview with David Sylvester, BBC Radio, broadcast 14 July 1963.

70. Heron and Taylor, op. cit., 53.

71. Sylvester, 'Henry Moore's sculpture', *Britain Today*, no. 215, March 1954, p. 34.

72. Moore interviewed by Marie Louise Pinckney for the Virginia Museum of Art, July 1965.

73. 'Notes by Henry Moore', in exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London, *Sculpture and drawings by Henry Moore*, loc. cit., p. 3.

74. Ibid., p. 16.

75. Neumann, op. cit., pp. 152-4. Not all the Heads can be seen in this way: Moore contrasted the gentleness, strength and intelligence which he saw manifested in the elephant skull (of which he made a series of etchings) with the rhinoceros skull which is entirely different in form and emotional impact, having 'a rather repellent, powerful tank-like ferocity.' Moore quoted in the essay by Henry J. Seldis for *Elephant Skull. Original etchings by Henry Moore*, Geneva 1970, n.p.

76. Neumann, op. cit., pp. 146-8.

77. G.S. Whittet, 'Farewell to flat, goodbye to square: London commentary', *The Studio*, vol. 170, no. 870, October 1966, p. 169.