# Henry Moore: Mother and Child

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'The Mother and Child Theme in the Work of Henry Moore', catalogue essay for the touring exhibition *Henry Moore. Mutter und Kind/ Mother and Child* (shown at the Käthe Kollwitz Museum, Cologne; Schloss Cappenberg, Kreis Unna; Kunstkreis, Norden; the Ernst Barlach Museum, Ratzeburg and Huddersfield Art Gallery) Henry Moore Foundation, Much Hadham 1992, pp. 13-39.

The subject of the Mother and Child was not merely a recurrent motif in the work of Henry Moore but rather a fundamental theme which ran through his entire development as an artist, being expressed in a complex variety of ways, establishing links with and affecting other themes. It is a difficult subject to extricate from his oeuvre, and the wide range of works present in this exhibition is a reflection of that difficulty. The mother and child motif is implicit both in the internal/external forms idea and in the female reclining figure who is, if not with a child, pregnant; and if not pregnant largely defined by her potential to become so. The child is in any case often a supplementary part of the mother figure, a lump, prop or hollow. Sometimes these adjuncts, which might be read as simply one of Moore's typical anatomical distortions, can be distinguished as children only through the title of the piece. The Mother and Child theme however does bear separate examination,[1] not least because it has been seen as a discrete concern by others, and also because it raises specific questions about Moore's work as a whole. This essay will examine the role of the Mother and Child motif in the conditions for Moore's commercial and critical success after the war, and in relation to the state of the family at the time. Psychoanalysis has been a central concern in British criticism, especially for writers on Moore, from Herbert Read through Erich Neumann and David Sylvester to Peter Fuller, and the Mother and Child theme has been a fertile ground for these critics. In its Lacanian incarnation (where psychoanalytic notions are leavened with structuralist theories of language) the discipline still holds considerable sway

[1] Previous treatments include Herbert Read, *Henry Moore: Mère et Enfant* (Paris 1968), the catalogue for Marl, Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten, *Mutter und Kind* (1984) and Gail Gelburd (ed.), *Mother and Child: the Art of Henry Moore* (Hempstead, New York/Hofstra University 1987).

over art history and criticism and is still seriously employed in dealing with depictions of the Mother and Child.[2] Despite the context of post-war consensus, ambiguity in Moore's individualist work and in its interpretation opened the way for these universalist readings: here the treatment of the Mother and Child theme does mirror Moore's art as a whole.

The marked change in Moore's artistic status in the post-war period is generally linked to success of the widely popular Shelter drawings which depicted people taking refuge from the Blitz in the London Underground. Despite some controversy about the sepulchral, ceremental aspect of these drawings, their avant-garde distortions of the human body found acceptance as an expression of the common tragedy of war.[3] Following the end of the war, Moore was adopted and promoted by the new agencies of state culture, the Arts Council of Great Britain and the British Council, which exhibited his work at home and abroad. His pre-eminent status in Britain was well indicated by the solo exhibition devoted to his work held at the Tate Gallery in 1951, timed to coincide with the Festival of Britain. It was considered fitting that a celebration of the nation's achievements should be accompanied, not by a survey of modern British art, but simply by an exhibition of the country's greatest living artist. Why Moore's art was thought so appropriate to the context of post-war culture and to what degree his promotion was successful among the wide audience for which it was intended are fundamental questions.[4] They can only be answered in terms of the social and political changes wrought by the war.

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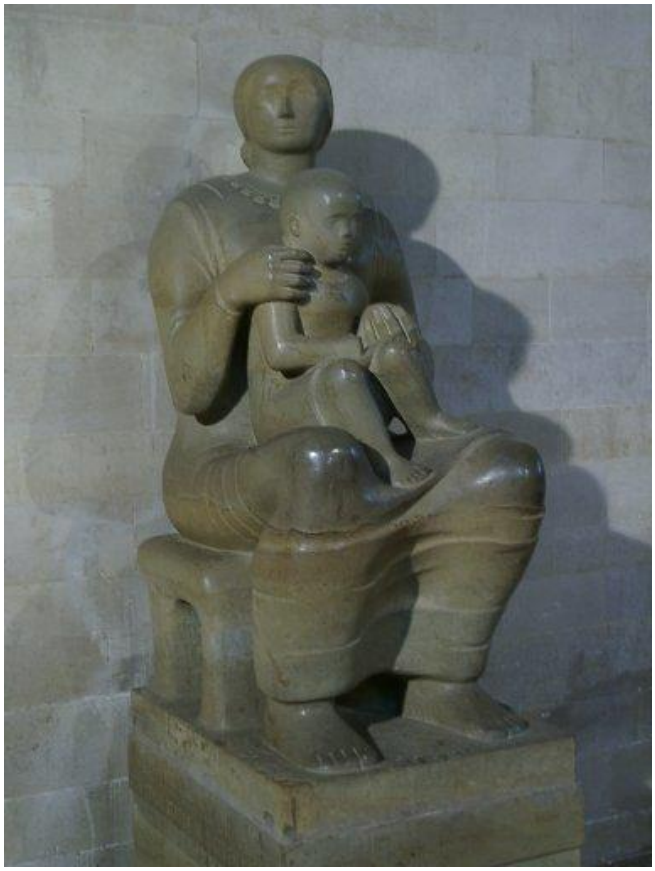
[2] See for instance Julia Kristeva's essay 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini', *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Oxford 1981).

[3] Herbert Read, for instance, claimed that the Shelter drawings proved the 'inherent humanism' of Moore's earlier work. Introduction to David Sylvester (ed.), *Henry Moore. Sculpture and Drawings, vol. 1, 1921-1948*, (London 1944) p. xxvii.

[4] They were indeed raised at the time: in the regular polemical column of the conservative art magazine *Apollo*, the extent of the Arts Council and British Council support for Henry Moore was questioned, and the implication drawn that public money was being disposed of in an arbitrary and unaccountable fashion. Shafts from Apollo's Bow, 'A Little Moore, and How Much It Is!', *Apollo*, November 1949.



**Madonna and Child** (1943-44, LH 226)

The issue of Moore's position in post-war culture is very much connected with the Mother and Child motif. Not only were the Shelter Drawings often of Mother and Child figures, but the major commission which Moore received from Canon Hussey in Northampton for a sculpture in St Matthew's Church was for a **Madonna and Child** (1943-44, LH 226). This was the piece in which it was widely accepted that Moore had broken with his narrow and elitist avant-garde concerns in order to embrace a wider 'humanism'.[5] Moore did not address the issue of the Virgin birth, so this work may be counted simply as an idealised mother and child subject. Further public commissions related to the theme of the family as a whole. Given that Moore's new status related to the Mother and Child and Family Group pieces, and given that these pieces marked the beginning of Moore's commissioned public work, we

[5] Pevsner for instance argued that only in the Northampton **Madonna** was the formal beauty of Moore's work matched by human values. Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Thoughts on Henry Moore', *Burlington Magazine*, vol. lxxxvi, no. 503 (February 1945) p. 48.

should, before looking at his actual treatment of these subjects, examine general concerns about motherhood and the family in the period.

The war had of course greatly disrupted family ties not only through wounding and death but through conscription and mass evacuation. The exodus of families from the city to the countryside often separated mothers from children and placed family members in strange and sometimes hostile environments. From the middle-class volunteers who helped to administrate evacuation there emerged a disturbing stereotype of the evacuee family; of the child as 'a dirty, lice-ridden and foul mouthed urchin' who lacked domestication and indeed house training; of the mother as 'a negligent slut, impossible to live with and having the vocabulary of a Billingsgate fish porter.[6] While the facts were undoubtedly exaggerated, the stereotype was a powerful one. The lesson drawn from this experience was that the British nation was failing to educate its working-class women as home-makers and, to a lesser extent, failing to provide them with the material resources needed to make a decent home.[7]

Replacing the men at war, many women volunteered or were conscripted to work in industry. The actual impact of this experience on social life after the war was not perhaps very significant; it is probable that only a minority of these women were engaged in factory work for the first time, and that class and sexual differentiation in such work was almost unchanged. Nevertheless the stereotype of women successfully taking on roles formerly thought suitable only for men was a powerful one, and one much exploited in wartime propaganda.

Wartime disturbances to family life were followed not so much by dissatisfaction with conventional roles, but rather by a reaction in which women were anxious to re-establish traditional home life.[8] From 1945 to 1948 there occurred a significant increase in both marriages and births. There was also a marked and lasting change in the proportion of women marrying: from 1940 onwards women tended to marry earlier and fewer remained

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[6] As characterised by John Macnicol, 'The Evacuation of Schoolchildren'; in Harold L. Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change. British Society and the Second World War* (Manchester 1986) 15.
[7] This was the opinion expressed in the journal *Social Work* (8 April 1943); quoted by Macnicol, in Smith, *War and Social Change*, p. 25.
[8] See J.M. Winter, 'The Demographic Consequences of the War'; Smith, *War and Social Change*, pp. 151-78.

unmarried. The condition of the family in post-war society did however give cause for concern. The post-war baby boom proved short-lived and anxiety about the nation's birth rate led to the setting up of the Royal Commission on Population at the end of the decade.[9] Family size, especially among the working class, was being deliberately restricted by the parents, probably to ensure a higher standard of living. It may be that this limitation of family size led to the emergence of a different attitude towards children, who were seen less in terms of their eventual economic value and more as individuals whose development was to be enjoyed. The better living standards and security of the post-war years and a reaction to the enforced separation of family members in wartime may have reinforced the change.[10]

Such worries led the government to take steps to encourage women back to the hearth. Concern had been expressed in Parliament that the conscription of women into industry would have a damaging effect on the nation's family life. It was William Beveridge's avowed aim, in his Report of December 1942 which laid down the basis for the establishment of the welfare state, to make the position of the housewife and mother more attractive to women. The National Insurance Act of 1946, an essential part of welfare legislation, reflected this thinking by, for instance, making it difficult for women to regain insurance rights if they re-entered employment after a break.[11] In addition, the continuation of wartime family allowances after 1945 was supported partly on the grounds of the positive effect it might have on the birth rate. The rapid reduction in the provision of day nurseries after the war formed another inducement for women to return to the home.[12]

[9] Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, (London 1982) p. 32.
[10] This is argued by Marwick, *British Society*, p. 68.
[11] Harold L. Smith, 'The Effect of the War on the Status of Women', in Smith, *War and Social Change*, pp. 222-3.
[12] Smith in Smith, *War and Social Change*, p. 222.

**Mother and Child** (1924-25, LH 26)

The post-war period was thus a time of concern about the status of the family and the well-being of the infant, a time of retrenchment of traditional familial values, and perhaps of an alteration of attitudes towards children.[13] An ideal model of the family was then required as an educative complement to the government's material measures, and Moore's work was well suited to act as such a model. This was partly because of the general orientation of his style and subject matter: with his apparent humanism, his expression of tragedy, his manifest individuality and his avant-garde credentials (essential to separate his work from the humanism of the socialist-realists) Moore was a convenient figurehead. His unusual mix of human content and avant-garde style could serve as a suitable expression of the caring technocracy of modern democratic socialism. Moreover, his work on the Mother and Child theme could be presented as a profound personal interest rather than a response to the requirements of consensus propaganda. It could be shown that Moore had pursued the subject throughout his artistic development, that in the primitivist works of the twenties he had made cool and distant versions of the motif (such as **Mother and Child**, 1924-25, LH

[13] Contemporary studies and publicity are cited in Smith, in Smith, *War and Social Change*, pp. 208-9, 216-17. He notes that by the early fifties a different and more sceptical judgment was already being made.

26) and in the thirties ones which bordered on biomorphic abstraction (such as **Mother and Child**, 1936, LH 171). His more recent works could even be seen as a reaction against sentimental treatments of the subject.[14] The context of the Cold War and of ubiquitous anti-Communist propaganda should also be remembered:[15] as one reviewer ingenuously put it, 'the school of painting in which every picture tells a story has long been out of fashion, except, of course, among the Communists.[16] It was essential that the chosen figurehead of British art should be not only involved with human, rather than merely formal,[17] interests but should be an avant-garde individualist, freely expressing his or her originality.

Moore was seen to have a double aspect, a manner for small private works, and a grander, public voice. His statements on the public stage were validated by his depiction of the incidents and emotions of his private family life. The distinction was well recognised:[18] it was one of scale, obviously, but more pertinently of material, technique and feeling. The private pieces are more often made of bronze and (obviously) modelled, the public pieces of stone and carved; the private works are concerned with gesture, incident and personal contact; the public works are more self-contained and monumental. Their ideality is a matter not of affection expressed in gestures but of a calm and peaceful image of stability. Moore claimed that the **Madonna** had an austerity, a grandeur and even a hieratic aloofness which was linked to a sense of complete repose missing in the everyday Mother and Child.[19] The autonomous nature of these public depictions of family members, in itself a sign of their avant-garde status, can ironically be read also as a symbol of the self-containment of the nuclear family, characterised as an aesthetic unity.

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[14] Con Gordon thought that Moore's sculpture was an extreme reaction against the sentimental treatment of the subject of maternity. 'This is Art—Or is it?', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 26 October 1946. Also, when Moore's compositions retain a marked representational quality his purpose is often satirical, claimed an anonymous reviewer in 'The Elemental in Sculpture', *The Times*, 16 August 1947.

[15] In an example of the opposing view, Moore's sculpture is compared unfavourably to the realist work of Peri in the *Daily Worker*, where it was claimed that Moore's work lacked human feeling and left the viewer feeling empty. Millicent Rose, 'This Sculpture's Human', *Daily Worker*, 10 November 1948.

[16] Anne Symonds, 'How to Understand the Moderns', *Oxford Mail*, 14 April 1955. This was a review of G.W. Digby's book *Meaning and Symbol in Three Modern Artists* (London 1955).

[17] This was one reason why Hepworth's work lay in the shadow of Moore's during this period. Wyndham Lewis was not alone in admiring her work as one would admire a finely crafted musical instrument—but no more. Lewis, 'Moore and Hepworth', *The Listener*, 17 October 1948.

[18] Lawrence Alloway criticised Moore's calculatedly 'simplified' public style in 'The Siting of Sculpture', *The Listener*, 17 June 1954.

[19] 'Henry Moore's Madonna and Child', *The Architectural Review*, (May 1944), in (ed.) Philip James, *Henry Moore on Sculpture* (London 1966) p. 220.

**Family Group** of 1948-49 (LH 269)

Moore's work appeared on various public sites. The **Family Group** of 1948-49 (LH 269) at Barclay School in Stevenage was linked by its situation to the innovative programme of utilitarian school building proceeding in Hertfordshire. There is in this sculpture and in the much praised Hertfordshire programme an ironic intimation of the later fate of the British avant-garde and even of modernism as a whole. For it was later in the building of Hertfordshire schools that the Brutalist aesthetic was developed as a continuation of the sparse style of Hunstanton School (1950-53), a budget version of Mies van der Rohe's

luxurious austerity, built by Peter and Alison Smithson.[20] The **Family Group**, a sleek over life-size bronze of mother, father and child, expresses the unity of the group through the balance of forms and apparent gestures, both figures holding the child, the hand of the man touching the shoulder of the woman. Yet the **Family Group** remains a cold work despite this static incident. The bare surfaces of the piece, particularly of the faces where features barely break to the surface as inscribed lines or the merest of modulations, and the very perfection of its balance, give it an inhuman air. The slick formalism of Moore's public commissions could even be seen as a preview of Brutalism, for both share a truth to materials aesthetic, a smoothness and bareness of handling, and a revelation of (often skeletal) structure.

**Family Group** (1954-55, LH 364)

[20] Harlow New Town was designed by Frederick Gibberd, and the modernist terraces were built by Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew. Philip Johnson made the link with Mies in his essay 'School at Hunstanton, Norfolk', *Architectural Review*, vol. 116, no. 693 (October 1954) pp. 148-52. The Smithsons laid down the foundations of the Brutalist aesthetic in the same issue.

Moore's work found a place in the solution of the problems of the family, both in education and housing, in its placement first in a new school and then in a new town. Urban blight was to be tackled by the redistribution of part of the population to modern satellite towns. The second large **Family Group** (1954-55, LH 364) was placed in Harlow New Town, where the bare, grey stone surfaces rendering the ideal nuclear family matched the modernist terraces of the new suburban utopia. The figure was unveiled by Sir Kenneth Clark, a supporter of Moore and Chairman of the Arts Council. The *Times* reported his speech (in the past tense) as follows: 'The architecture of our time was not manifested in fortresses, palaces, or even town halls, but in schools, welfare centres, and good habitations for families. This was a humanitarian age, and the symbol he had the honour to unveil was a symbol of the new humanitarian civilisation of which this town itself was the complete expression.[21] This is a clear statement of the congruence of Moore's work with social policy. The figures did seem more human than those of the earlier **Family Group**: the heads are more naturalistically shaped and their features better defined, their anatomy (while monumental) is more recognisable and includes passages of naturalistic observation, as in the depiction of the figures' spines. The figures appear to be looking towards something—perhaps, from their elevated position, to a vision of the future.

This positive vision should be examined, for the context of a state culture affected the tenor of Moore's work itself. Moore's depictions of the family can be seen in the light of government policy towards education and the arts as a whole. In attempting to rectify the manifest deficiencies in family life through centrally planned government action, Beveridge, and the Labour government which implemented most of his recommendations, identified 'five great evils' to be tackled: physical want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. At least three of these had moral as well as economic dimensions: ignorance, it was thought, was something which 'no democracy can afford among its citizens.[22] It was necessary to propagate familial values, the typical problem family needing education more than material support. A limited degree of material assistance was available through the welfare agencies and the National Health Service, but education was the key to the policy. It was the nuclear

[21] Anon, 'Mr. Moore's "Family Group". Work Commissioned for New Town', *The Times*, 18 May 1956.
[22] Sir William Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (1942) p. 170; quoted in John Stevenson, 'Planner's Moon? The Second World War and the Planning Movement'; in Smith, *War and Social Change*, pp. 71-2.

family which was the focus and the recipient of these attentions, and the apparatus of the welfare state was specifically geared to benefiting the family to the disadvantage of other forms of social solidarity.[23]

The relationship between social policy and art was a reciprocal arrangement, not simply a matter of Moore producing work which suited the political wisdom of the time. Consensus politics placed great importance on funding the arts through a state-run infrastructure, instructing the population at home and presenting a positive image of the British abroad. The war had apparently stimulated people's desire for culture, for there was a boom in book buying and in theatre, concert and gallery attendances. The Arts Council and the British Council directed their efforts towards improving access to the arts for different audiences and in different regions. According to its director John Rothenstein, the war had given the Tate Gallery the opportunity to open to a new public. 'If painting and sculpture are indeed among the supreme manifestations of the human spirit, then surely there is an imperative obligation ... to see to it that they exert to the utmost their benign and elevating influence.' The aim of the Tate would be 'to quicken the responsiveness of those innumerable people who possess, often almost unconsciously, the capacity to enjoy the arts.[24] A sculpture by Moore was significant not merely because of its subject matter and handling, but because it was recognisably avant-garde, and as such could be seen as a manifestation of a particular social and educational policy.

[23] This is discussed in Marwick, *British Society*, pp. 60f.
[24] John Rothenstein, 'What's New at the Tate?', *The Evening Standard*, 15 April 1946.

**Three Standing Figures** (1947-48, LH 268)

Attempts to make the arts more accessible to a wider public appeared to succeed in the years immediately following the war. In 1948 as many as 150,000 people paid to see the controversial exhibition of modern sculpture held in Battersea Park which included Moore's much discussed piece, **Three Standing Figures** (1947-48, LH 268). The emphasis on open access to the arts went further than parks. Some exhibitions were even organised in pubs, notably an Arts Council exhibition of 1948 which included works by Epstein, Moore, Spencer and Tunnard.[25] This was not merely an attempt to reach greater numbers but to alter the very aspect and status of art itself. Accessibility and the foundation of consensus in family life found a natural alliance in the attempt to bring high art down to the level of the living room. In 1946 the Arts Council held the first of a series of touring exhibitions entitled 'Sculpture in the Home', which of course included work by Moore. The preface to the catalogue claimed that the intention was to correct the impression of sculpture as an exclusively monumental art in favour of a view which valued small-scale work which could,

[25] This was seen at the Mermaid Hotel, Sparkhill, and reported in an anonymous article 'Pictures with their Pints. Art Goes to the Public House', *Birmingham Mail*, 6 December 1948.

like painting, be enjoyed in the home.[26] One reporter described a scene in the second exhibition in which a Henry Moore Reclining Figure was juxtaposed with a reading lamp, blotting paper and envelopes on a desk.[27] This was more than simply an attempt to appeal to a new audience and a new market. The intimacy of the works shown made them suited to speak to each family member while expressing the individual taste of the head of the household.[28] In 1953 the third of these exhibitions included Moore's **Rocking Chair No. 1** (1950, LH 274) which was additionally appropriate because of its portrayal of the Mother and Child theme.[29]

The crucial question here is if, in relation to Moore's sculpture, the attempt to create a consensus culture succeeded. The relation between the state and the arts was not left unchallenged. In the forties the unprecedented subsidy of the arts in peacetime ran into much opposition, particularly when the results did not meet the approval of the mass of the populace. The popularity of the Labour Party and the widespread support for social welfare were associated by right-wing writers with wartime efforts to widen access to culture: Malcolm Muggeridge wrote that this support had been prepared in discussion groups, summer schools and book clubs, and snobbily noted that their earnest atmosphere was now apparent in the House of Commons.[30] One cartoon published in *The Recorder* (7 August 1948) depicted various sculptures from the Battersea Park exhibition, making the association between avant-garde art and Labour Party policy, having Atlee refashion the country in a distorted, fragmentary shape, and in which Moore's **Recumbent Figure**, a cup of tea resting on its knee, was dubbed 'Bureaucracy'. Here modernist art was not linked with humanist or consensus ideals, but rather with the unaccountable bureaucratic structures of government.

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[26] Arts Council, *Sculpture in the Home*, (1946) anonymous preface, n.p. A second exhibition with the same title took place in 1951 and a third in 1953, both with the same purpose. In the first exhibition, sculptures and drawings by Moore were featured along with the work of Hepworth, Meadows, Paolozzi, Turnbull and others.
[27] Robert MacMahon, 'Sculpture ... and Old Slippers', *Evening News Saturday Supplement*, 4 August 1951. This was a review of the exhibition as it appeared in Glasgow.
[28] The Festival of Britain included a 'Homes and Gardens' Pavilion where members of the public were urged to express their individual tastes and interests in the decor of their homes. See, Ian Cox, 'The South Bank Exhibition. A Guide to the Story it Tells', *1951 Festival of Britain* catalogue, p. 69.
[29] Arts Council, *Sculpture in the Home III* (1953) cat. no. 29.
[30] Malcolm Muggeridge, *New English Review*, May 1946; quoted Robert Hewison, *In Anger. Culture in the Cold War, 1945-1960* (London 1988) pp. 13-14.

For some in the new society, ignorance amounted to dereliction of a public duty. Those who could not understand the works of the avant-garde often felt a degree of discomfort or even guilt. The term most commonly used to describe the response of the general public to Moore's work was 'bewilderment'. This was well expressed in a letter to the *News Chronicle* which had illustrated a picture of the elmwood **Reclining Figure** (1945-46, LH 263): 'Can you explain Henry Moore's "Reclining Figure" to ignorant readers? Is the "figure" human or animal? If human, which part is which?[31] Unfortunately the paper did not attempt an answer. Critics usually only advised the public that it should approach the works with an open mind. As the critic of *The Times* argued, if a person looking at Moore's most abstract pieces is not moved in the intended way, then explanations by the artist or another viewer are unlikely to help, for 'the seeing and the feeling are all, or nearly all.[32] Or as another writer put it, convinced of the un-Christian and anti-human nature of his work, 'almost any nonsense can be talked about Moore'.[33]

Bewilderment was often matched by distaste and anger. It is important to note that not even the relatively conventional **Madonna and Child** was free from dispute and that there was much angry local protest at the presence of such a 'monstrosity' in the church.[34] The controversy and the gradual acceptance of the piece became an integral part of the work itself, being a sign of both its avant-garde nature and its intrinsic worth. This process was not completed, however, for many of Moore's public pieces. In writing of public sculpture, Lawrence Alloway noted that once the community of interest stimulated by the war had vanished, public patronage no longer had a common ground over which to work. The result was 'the paradox of public works which the public finds private.' Alloway, in discussing works installed in Hertfordshire schools, praised Moore's **Family Group**, Hepworth's **Turning Form** and Butler's **Oracle** for their formal qualities but noted that they were not popular with their recipients.[35]

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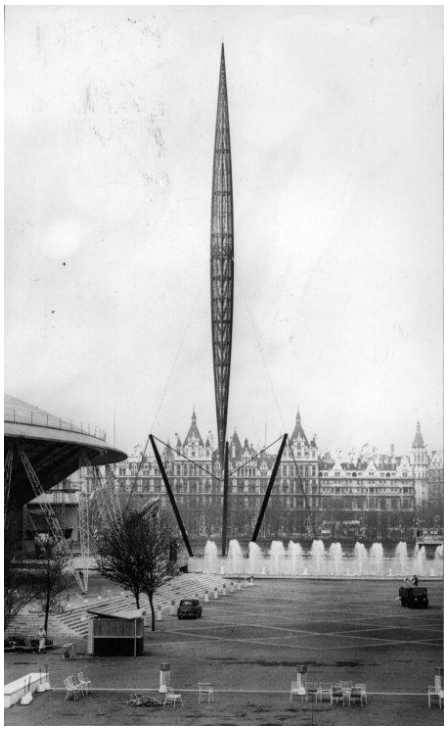
[31] Doris Stephens, letter, *News Chronicle* (Manchester edition), 5 May 1949. This was included in a section of letters under the heading 'Henry Moore's Art' containing a mix of positive and negative views.
[32] Anon., 'The Elemental in Sculpture', *The Times*, 16 August 1948.
[33] 'Perspex', 'Current Shows and Comments: "Look Upon this Picture and That"', *Apollo*, June 1951.
[34] As reported in an anonymous article, 'Modern Art in a Church', *Manchester Guardian*, 3 April 1946.
[35] Lawrence Alloway, 'The Siting of Sculpture', *The Listener*, 17 June 1946. In the school building programme in Hertfordshire between 1949 and 1953 a third of one per cent of the construction costs was set aside for the purchase of fine art.


Alfred Munnings, **The Friesian Bull** (1947)

Furthermore, the art 'boom' linked with the atmosphere of consensus was short lived. Robert Hewison has discussed the general sense of cultural decline prevalent in post-war Britain, the result of the unfulfilled expectations of the new era, of crass exploitation of new audiences, of financial stringencies and of restricted opportunities for new talent.[36] Avant-garde art in Britain had always had to face attacks from a dominant and vociferous opposition. In the face of government support for the arts, they adopted an extreme and defensive exposition of their views which still commanded considerable support. The President of the Royal Academy, Alfred Munnings, made one of the most widely publicised attacks on modernism at a dinner at Burlington House. His views attracted attention largely because of incidental circumstances; the broadcast of the dinner speeches on the radio, the presence of Churchill and other luminaries, and (not least) Munnings's use of colourful language. In his speech Picasso, Matisse and Moore were attacked. Public funding of avant-garde art and art education were also targets. While much of the art establishment considered his views old-fashioned, Munnings received very sympathetic coverage in many

[36] Hewison, *In Anger*, pp. 4ff.

newspapers and his claims to be speaking for the 'plain man' were taken seriously. In an anecdote concerning the former Prime Minister and amateur painter, Winston Churchill, he invoked the spirit of the old order against that of the new: 'It's not so long ago that Mr. Churchill and myself were walking together. Mr. Churchill said to me, "Alfred, if we saw Picasso coming down this street towards us, would you join me in kicking hard a certain part of him?" I said: "By God, Winston, I would".[37] Moore in this period became a cipher for avant-garde modernism as a whole and in almost any discussion of its merits his name was usually mentioned. What the reception of Munnings's speech showed, however, was that the consensus of opinion which covered the Welfare State did not extend to the arts, where fundamental questions about abstraction, deformation and (above all) state subsidy were still under review.



These issues were sharply raised in 1951 by the opening of the Festival of Britain, a celebration of British technical and cultural achievements, a reward to the people for their suffering and, as such, a brief break from post-war economising. It was a narrative, didatic exhibition, which betrayed its origins in the activities of the wartime propaganda

[37] Anon., 'Modern Art, by Heavens! Munnings Hits at Academy Diners', *Daily Mail*, 29 April 1949.

organisations.[38] Its educative aims were attacked by the conservative press but the Festival was a popular success, drawing eighteen million people to its official events throughout the country. The look of the Festival architecture in London, with its dramatic light-weight structures and web of stairs, galleries, walkways and restaurants, made a great impression on its audience. Perhaps most striking was the dramatic but non-functional **Vertical Feature**, built by Powell and Moya, 250 feet high, a tapered aluminium tube resting in a cradle of steel cables. The displays and the modernist buildings which housed them embodied an optimistic vision of a bountiful future and of benign technology. Moore's **Reclining Figure: Festival** (1951, LH 293) was one of the most prominently displayed pieces of sculpture and one of the most disturbing, a work which 'both fascinated and repelled' visitors.[39] Public distaste for such work was often the subject of satirists and cartoonists. One writer described the reactions of working-class people at the Festival of Britain, their close and informed engagement with the technical displays contrasting with their dismissive hilarity at the **Reclining Figure**. This is an area in which class difference was clearly expressed, for, we are told, 'Moore and Hepworth have their devotees. Young women in horn-rimmed spectacles, green corduroys, and exotic neckwear from the foreign parts of Bloomsbury, and pale young men, all talking like undergraduates from Oxford or Cambridge, peek with casual but (it is to be presumed) understanding arrogance at these ultra-modern intricacies'.[40]

[38] See Hewison, *In Anger*, p. 57. The catalogue to the Festival states that the pavilions are arranged to tell the story 'of British contributions to world civilisation in the arts of peace' and should be visited in order. Ian Cox, 'The South Bank Exhibition. A Guide to the Story it Tells', *1951 Festival of Britain* (London 1951) p. 8.
[39] Anon., 'Park Piece', *Daily Herald*, 15 October 1951.
[40] Anon., 'These Things Happen at the South Bank', *Liverpool Echo*, 11 July 1951.

**Reclining Figure**, 1951

The readings that were evident seemed to make little sense. If the sculptures were read literally, how could their sexual connotations be ignored? It was just these aspects which were most striking to many viewers. In an exhibition of avant-garde sculpture shown at the Canterbury School of Art in 1947, one reporter commented on the 'ribald' responses some pieces encouraged. Among those exhibiting were Epstein, Dobson, Hepworth and Skeaping as well as Moore, and, while the culprits are unidentified, the target of the following description is not hard to guess: 'Nude ladies with bulging limbs and microscopic heads perched on gargantuan shoulders ... strangely shaped and beknobbed fragments of marble, alabaster and other materials which suggest nothing to the ordinary mind unless it be a chunk of protoplasm emergent from the primeval slime'.[41] Indeed the association with the primitive, or with even the prehistoric, was a commonplace in most discussions of Moore's work, whether sympathetic or damning, highbrow or lowbrow. Here was an indiscriminate merging of objects, an arbitrary yet licentious coupling of bodies. Such pieces could only seem at best incoherent and at worst scandalous. One critic, in pointing to what was seen as

[41] Anon., 'Remarkable Exhibition. Modern Art at Canterbury', *Kentish Gazette*, 18 January 1947.

the evident disjunction between the commercial and critical success of Moore's work and disdain in which it was held by the public, wrote of the 'ghastly solitude' of the artist isolated from society.[42] What separated the working-class viewers from those in green corduroy was not so much a knowledge of the work itself as the attitude that precise readings of such a piece were uncalled for. As one critic sarcastically claimed, 'Non-representational art isn't supposed to mean anything. It impinges upon the well springs of your immortal soul by direct impact.[43] The failure of the consensus to cover cultural issues was linked to the failure of avant-garde art to refer. This opened up the way for readings of Moore's work which were not grounded in a social context but were instead based on an essentialist view of the human psyche.

Related to the consensus emphasis on the bourgeois individual, the place of the individual in the family and indeed to the very failure of avant-garde work to signify, was the dominant concern in British criticism for psychoanalytical interpretation. These readings purported to investigate the claim that avant-garde work was more to be experienced than explained. It provided an account of the avant-garde which allowed for the right mix of universality and individual expression, and for the right degree of non-specific reference without a descent into utter incoherence. Where a narrative meaning might not be permitted, an unconscious one might be. Moore's work has often been the subject of psychoanalytical readings, particularly his treatment of the Mother and Child theme, where subject matter matches form. The very factors that led Moore's work to be taken as the paradigm of consensus culture also suited it to psychoanalytical interpretation: the emphasis placed on the rendering of the generalised human form, the non-realist distortions which may now be read not as expressions of collective tragedy but of individualised neurosis or mental disorder, the timeless quality of the pieces which made it easier to relate them plausibly to 'universal' factors in the human psyche.

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[42] Anon., 'Profile—Henry Moore', *The Observer*, 24 June 1951.
[43] Con Gordon, 'This is Art—Or is it?, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 26 October 1946. This was a review of a group exhibition at Temple Newsam in Leeds which included Wadsworth, Tunnard, Nash and Moore.

Jungian readings were particularly prevalent, introduced into art criticism largely by Herbert Read. The most extreme example of such criticism in relation to Moore was the interpretation of Erich Neumann, who saw the sculptor's whole oeuvre as a celebration of the 'Primordial Feminine' or the 'Great Mother'. For Neumann, Moore's anti-naturalistic distortions have nothing to do with modernism but are solely a means through which this archetype can be more forcefully expressed.[44] The archetype explains the association of earth with woman found in Moore's work, for 'implicit in the mother-child motif is the whole of man's relation to the world, to nature, and to life itself.' The sculptures are a direct incarnation of the earth archetype.[45] Jungian theory appeared to explain Moore's association of the mother and the earth, and to give it a psychological meaning: 'the dream in which the subject descends into a quarry, or cavern, where the rock or marble seems either strangely alive or to possess some great potential value, is not uncommon. It is usually symbolic of the regressive search for life-value in the depth of the unconscious.' Dreams of quarrying, building or sculpting refer to the realisation of a potential part of the personality.[46] As though to prove the association, patients brought forth Moore's images in their own analyses where the descent into the underworld was a descent to the maternal, to a place where rebirth becomes possible.[47]

Such interpretations were particularly attractive because they allowed a reconciliation of the disturbing deformities in Moore's work with his manifest humanism. Dismemberment in Jungian theory is a necessary prelude to rebirth, so Moore's dislocations of the body could be subsumed to an unconscious desire for rebirth and 'individuation', the proper integration of the elements of the personality. Another Jungian critic, G.W. Digby, wrote that disintegration had to occur before regrouping and that 'dismemberment is the necessary concomitant, or forerunner of conception.[48] As a consequence, pregnancy is connected to the withering and the death of that which has conceived.[49] Moore's blasted female figures were no longer to be seen in relation to the Holocaust or Hiroshima but rather as timeless

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[44] Erich Neumann, *The Archetypal World of Henry Moore*, [1959] (Princeton, 1985) p. 14.
[45] Neumann, pp. 21-2.
[46] Digby, pp. 73-4.
[47] See the account given in Gerhard Adler, *The Living Symbol. A Case Study in the Process of Individuation* (New York 1961) p. 293.
[48] G.W. Digby, *Meaning and Symbolism in Three Modern Artists. Edvard Munch, Henry Moore, Paul Nash* (London 1955) p. 78.
[49] Digby, p. 84.

symbols of universal categories, and a tragic expression of the eternal waxing and waning of generations.

Both Digby and Neumann saw Moore's work as a flight from civilisation and its products, from intellect, material progress and individualism. Civilisation over-privileges the patriarchal values of technology and mechanism, and Moore's obsession with the mother-archetype is a natural reaction against this.[50] When Moore sculpts, his is a 'matriarchal' mode of creation in which force is never used to impose form on the material: 'rather, through Moore's yielding to the intention of the material, of the wood, rock, or bone, the world changes shape under his hand; he leaves the sphere of cerebral consciousness and penetrates to a deeper dimension, closer to the unitary reality, where inside and outside are one.[51] This indeterminate region has often been described in terms of emptiness. The empty spaces which might be thought to lie at the heart of Moore's figures were subject to Jungian interpretation. Jung himself wrote that '*emptiness* is a great feminine secret. It is something absolutely alien to man; the chasm, the unplumbed depths, the *yin* ... This constitutes the whole 'mystery' of woman. Man happily falls into this pit.[52] Both woman and work are empty.

Such interpretations influenced a great many critics who did not necessarily align themselves with Jungian ideas. For David Sylvester, one of the best known writers on Moore, the pieces which contain enclosed spaces work better on a large scale: they 'form a womb-like cavity' which, when it is large enough to actually contain us, when 'we are able to fit ourselves in imagination into these cavities', then empathy with the sculpture can flow.[53] Further related to these interpretations are the tactile qualities of Moore's work, his stress on feeling the piece in the round in the palm of his hand, which implies a degree of intimate contact. There can, said Moore, be distortions in the figures which are tactile rather than visual, and these

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[50] Digby, p. 70. Neumann, pp. 61-2.
[51] Neumann, pp. 67-9.
[52] C.G. Jung, 'Psychological Aspects of the Mother-Archetype' (1954); *Four Archetypes. Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster* (London 1972) p. 32.
[53] David Sylvester, 'Henry Moore's Recent Sculptures', *The Listener*, 3 November 1955. A good example of an impressionistic Jungian interpretation of Moore's work is Mary Sorrell's essay 'Henry Moore', *Apollo*, November 1946, where the association between the womb and the mine is described.

may seem awkward and disjointed to those unused to them.[54] Sculpture based on tactile qualities, claimed Sylvester, gives us a sense not only of touching a body but also of the subjective feelings involved in movement. The result is a violent and convulsive empathy with the action of the figure.[55] Neumann wrote of the 'embracing' quality of one kind of the creative mental process. Such creation is informed by the 'Maternal Feminine' principle: 'It is a process of pregnancy and inner maturation in which the ego consciousness participates only in the auxiliary role of midwife.[56] Moore is constructed as the yielding and fertile female. Neumann further argued that Moore takes us 'beyond or underneath the surface image into an ontogenetically and phylogenetically earlier stratum where haptic or tactile experience of the body plays a dominant role ... The movement of the eye becomes a sort of stroking movement, a caress'. The eye is the symbol of consciousness which presupposes a separation of subject and object, but tactile experience takes us beyond that to awake the infantile and archaic experience of man 'who now lets his touch play lingeringly round the immensity of woman.[57] Here, and in Sylvester's description of empathy, the figure becomes an immense and sublime landscape while the viewer is constructed as a child beside it: 'The combination of visual experience with guidance by the lines of touch produces a strange alteration in the experiencing subject. As in *Gulliver* or in a fairy tale, he is changed into a tiny creature moving about on the surface of this body like an animal on the surface of the earth'.[58] The viewer becomes lost inside the body of the work.

The sculpture is not contained merely in the hand but in the head. Moore wrote of the sculptor that 'He gets the solid shape, as it were, inside his head—he thinks of it, whatever its size, as if he were holding it enclosed in the hollow of his hand. He mentally visualises a complex form *from all around itself*; he knows while he looks at one side what the other is like; he identifies himself with its centre of gravity, its mass, its weight; he realises its volume, as the space that the shape displaces in the air.'[59] The sculptor is the mother of the work as the work is the mother of the viewer. Following its mental gestation, the piece springs fully

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[54] James, *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, p. 131.
[55] David Sylvester, 'A New Bronze by Henry Moore', *The Listener*, 10 July 1958.
[56] Neumann, pp. 22-9.
[57] Neumann, pp. 70-1.
[58] Neumann, p. 72.
[59] . 'Notes by Henry Moore', reprinted many times, notably (for our purposes) in the catalogue for the Arts Council exhibition *Sculpture and Drawings by Henry Moore* shown at the Tate Gallery in 1951, p. 3.

armed, like Athena, from the head of the artist; and this gestation is effected by a knowledge of the work gained through the handling of it. For Neumann, Moore too is identified as the child: 'The basic phenomenon that all life is dependent on the Primordial Feminine, the giver and nourisher, is to be seen most clearly in the eternal dependence of the child on the mother. And it is precisely because the creative individual, being dependent on the nourishing power of the maternal creative principle, always experiences himself as the "child" that the mother-child relationship occupies such a central place in Moore's work.'[60]

**Mother and Child with Tree Trunk** (cat. 27)

Jungian interpretation was convenient for the critic in allying all-inclusive categories to a quasi-scientific terminology. Aware of the acute problem of counter-examples to his descriptions, Jung wrote that archetypes are frequently mistaken for unconscious ideas whereas they are in fact not determined in content but only in form, and then only to a very limited degree. Content is determined only when the 'primordial image' becomes conscious, for the archetype itself is an empty formal structure. He claims that the mother archetype can take on an 'almost infinite' variety of aspects, including the rock, the tree, the deep well, the cave spring, as well as vessels and hollow objects of all sorts.[61] Given this extension of the archetype, it is not surprising that there are elements in the work of Moore which

[60] Neumann, p. 29.
[61] Jung, pp. 14-15.

correspond to it. **Mother and Child with Tree Trunk** (cat. 27) could for instance be seen as an example of the unconscious emergence of the archetype. Such an 'almost infinite' variety defends the theory from counter-examples only by making it useless as a tool of interpretation.

In Peter Fuller's case it was a matter of taking a particular strand of the British psychoanalytical tradition as an accurate description of unmediated nature, and using this to explicate the works of the artist, or, in relation to the work of a genius such as Moore, not so much to explain (which would be presumptive) but merely to indicate some of the parallels between the eternals of art and nature. The writing which Fuller chose was centred on the work of D.W. Winnicott, who viewed the baby not as a separate entity but as enveloped in an environmental unit where subject and object are merged. The continuing need of the human being even after subject and object have become distinct for such a feeling of envelopment leads to the creation of 'subjective objects', first security blankets, teddy bears and the like and later, it is implied, some of the forms of art.[62]

Nothing is easier than to apply Winnicott's view of the mother and child relationship to Moore. For this psychoanalyst it is the mother's task to build the child's ego through a process in which the child experiences the mother's 'continuity of being'. She makes whole the infant's unintegrated body through having the child 'in her mind as a whole person', by holding the child in a 'natural' way so that all the parts of its body are gathered together, making one.[63] Obviously, besides the features that Fuller mentions, the mother is very much the artist of this relationship. As Moore holds the shape of his new creation in his head and hand as an entity, coming to know it from all aspects, so the mother does with the child. What is more the child, like the sculpture, is created by handling and holding. The questions raised by such an interpretation, however neat, are fundamental: the first is that they stand or fall with Winnicott's theories; today they may seem to place too much responsibility on the

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[62] Fuller discusses the general issues at length in *Art and Psychoanalysis* (London 1980). Fuller specifically examined Moore's work in relation to the ideas of Winnicott in 'Mother-Spaces. Psychology and Henry Moore', *The Age. Monthly Review*, vol. 5, no. 4 (August 1985) pp. 11-15.

[63] There is a clear explanation of Winnicott's theories in Parveen Adams's essay, 'Mothering' in (ed.), Parveen Adams and Elizabeth Cowie, *The Woman in Question. m/f* (London 1990) p. 320. The discussion is based on D.W. Winnicott, *Collected Papers: Through Pediatrics to Psychoanalysis* (Tavistock 1958) and *The Child, the Family and the Outside World* (Harmondsworth 1964) and contains a critique of Winnicott's views.

mother and to constitute her very much as an empty vessel, filled and fulfilled in her relation with the child. Psychoanalytic accounts tend to reduce art to content and to reduce this content to symptoms indicative of psychological states.[64] They usually ignore the conscious involvement of the artist with the subject; Moore after all dealt with the Mother and Child as an explicit subject, as a conscious theme. There is no sense of disjunction between the conscious handling of the subject and the unconscious drives behind it, which on the terms of these analyses, at least, there ought to be. It is as if Moore is taken at his conscious word, as if he were a simple or primitive type who, like Lévy-Bruhl's 'savages', consciously lives a dream. Whether this is due to the primitivist aspect of the works, the social origins of the artist, or both, is an open question. The individual aspect of Moore's work, of how it is that most of his works are instantly recognisable, is entirely missed: Moore is considered to be rebelling against individualism and his work is accounted for only in terms of universals. Finally, by relating the pieces to a universal archetype the social and historical specificity of the pieces is obviously drained out. The importance of these views is rather in showing the conservative social uses to which Moore's works could be put.

Moore's own complicity in these readings should be recognised. His long friendship with Read lent credence to the critic's views. In a statement that shows that he was clearly aware of the psychoanalytical implications of his obsession with the theme, Moore wrote of the way in which he could turn 'every little scribble, blot or smudge' into a mother and child.[65] His well-known refusal to read past the first chapter of Erich Neumann's book lest he lose the impulse which made him sculpt implies a belief in the Jungian view.[66]

Despite all efforts to the contrary, Moore's works were read as representations and it makes sense to ask questions about Moore's 'type', for the woman he portrayed is quite distinct. As Wyndham Lewis characterised it, 'a female figure as always: for what might be described as this artist's type is a small-headed, weighty, female figure—accompanied sometimes ... by a

[64] See Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London 1984) pp. 11-14.
[65] John Hedgecoe (ed.), *Henry Moore* (London 1968); quoted in Henry Moore, *Mother and Child Etchings* (Much Hadham 1988) p. 42.
[66] Huw Wheldon, *Monitor. An Anthology* (London 1962), quoted in James, *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, p. 50.

stone—or a wooden—baby. This woman of his lives in a primitive world ... a kind of druidic wilderness. With a puritanic energy—which is not affection—she will clutch this satellite body, or stone baby, to her body. In the company of other women she is bleak and aloof. Such is the subject matter of Henry Moore."[67] Moore's type, a register of his own individuality, was distinct and discrete, an empty subject constituted by her fertility. **Reclining Figure No. 7** (cat. 16), for instance, seems pregnant and the parts of the figure that are emphasised and enlarged—almost to the point of parody and certainly to the point of pastiche—are the stomach, breasts and buttocks. The head is tiny. In 1962 when interviewed by Huw Wheldon, Moore discussed the possibility of turning the figures of a Cézanne **Bathers** which he owned into sculpture.[68] Wheldon commented that these figures were not 'slips of girls'. Moore responded: 'Not young girls but that wide, broad, mature woman. Matronly. Look at the back view of the figure on the left. What a strength ... almost like the back of a gorilla, that kind of flatness. But it has also this, this romantic idea of women'. Wheldon then suggested that the epithet 'romantic' could not be applied to Moore's work. Moore replied, 'oh no, not at all—I think I have a very romantic idea of women.[69]

If woman can be read as an empty vessel constituted only by her potential to be filled, to be completed by the child, then in this relation, subject and object are no longer entirely distinct, as was supposedly the case in primitive thought, and in magic. For Neumann, 'the *participation mystique* between mother and child ... is here the absolute law. Everything is connected with everything and acts on everything; there is no inside that does not appear as outside and as acting on the world, no aspect of the world that is not charged with psyche and psychically connected. This world, which the child experiences, is a mythological world, because in it the great transpersonal figures are at home, appearing now as a tree, now as a pebble, now as a man, each containing within itself the whole number of unitary reality, which is bodied forth through the emotionality of the child psyche.' What seems unnatural or distorted in Moore is actually a pointer to this world.[70] In some sculptures this merging of beings clearly takes place, not only in many pieces where the mother and the baby are no

[67] Wyndham Lewis, 'Moore and Hepworth', *The Listener*, 17 October 1946.
[68] This idea was realised in 1978 with **Three Bathers—After Cézanne** (LH 741).
[69] Interview with Huw Wheldon, *Monitor. An Anthology*; James, *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, p. 193.
[70] Neumann, pp. 66-7.

longer distinct, where the child emerges without break from the shoulder of the mother, as in (among many examples) **Mother and Child** (cat. 4), but also in curious pieces where they appear to share limbs. In **Reclining Mother and Child: Shell Skirt** (cat. 11), as well as the thorough integration of the child with the torso of the mother, the figures share a right arm. Here the mother and child are barely articulated so that they seem to form a unit, a slightly disjointed two-headed figure. The autonomy and aura of the modern work of art is also linked to the mother in Jungian theory where the qualities associated with the archetype include 'the magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcends reason.[71]

In 1960 Will Grohmann commented on the disturbing aspect of some of the Mother and Child pieces. He saw **Mother and Child** (1953, LH 315) as a 'reversal' of earlier pieces. Here 'two concavely modelled beings sit facing one another on a Delphic tripod like birds of prey, forced into a semicircular unity ... The child is seeking with its bird's beak for its mother's breast, although it cannot drink but only wound; the jagged comb of the mother's face is deadly, not even human, let alone motherly; the theme turns into its opposite, the human or divine into the diabolical.[72] It is important here that the emotional reversal is reflected in a formal one, of convex to concave forms. Jungian theory could of course account for this: the negative aspects of the mother type include devouring and entwining animals.[73] Neumann saw this piece as a reversal of Moore's former concerns, for the child is held at bay and the subject and object are not merely separated but held forcibly apart. 'It is a picture of the Terrible Mother, of the primal relationship fixed forever in its negative aspect. Once again the artist's intention has given shape to an archetypal situation: the eternal and insatiable longing of those who are bound to a negative mother.[74] For Grohmann, Moore's work is constructed around a series of oppositions evident in the reversals of feeling between different pieces; for instance **Girl Seated Against Square Wall** (1957-58, LH 425) 'leads into the darkest zones of human existence' where 'the organic and the inert, the mobile and the rigid, the spiritual and its enemy' are on equal terms.[75] In Moore there is no

[71] Jung, p. 16.
[72] Will Grohmann, *The Art of Henry Moore* (London 1960) p. 143.
[73] Jung, p. 16.
[74] Neumann, pp. 174-6.
[75] Grohmann, pp. 230-2.

dialectical synthesis of the opposites, nor any solution of the conflict. Rather the oeuvre, taken as a whole, holds these oppositions in an unresolvable tension. The most striking example of this in relation to the Mother and Child theme is Moore's decision to cast the mould of one figure to create a literal negative image in **Mother and Child: Mould** (1976-77, LH 699).

**Draped Reclining Figure** (1952-53, LH 336)

It was the simultaneous expression of opposing qualities in the work of Moore which was often praised by commentators. David Sylvester in writing of the **Draped Reclining Figure** (1952-53, LH 336) claimed that its articulation of drapery brought 'to the surface the vibrations of those thrusts and stresses of the figure underneath which make the sculpture as firm and virile in construction as it is gentle and contemplative in mood.[76] Feminine and masculine qualities co-exist. For Neumann this figure had from some angles a slight, girlish aspect, yet from others became 'a formidable earth woman whose massive bulk is full of compressed energy ... the sturdy legs, flexed up and lightly splayed, with the heavy loop of

[76] David Sylvester, 'Round the London Galleries', *The Listener*, 25 May 1953.

skirt hanging between them, suggest a mature woman, fecund, maternal, earthy—a fine breeder with nothing in the least girlish about her.' The simultaneous expression of both of these aspects makes the work a masterpiece in Neumann's view.[77]

**Mother and Child XXX** (cat. 86)

Such ambiguities could be expressed more powerfully and directly when the works were seen in series. Moore's decision in 1982 to make a sequence of Mother and Child etchings marked a new treatment of the theme, for each piece relates to the overall project. In these works Moore was plotting a course between, on the one hand, sentimentality and anecdote, and, on the other, modernist inhumanity. The odd use of naturalistic passages that sometimes appear in an otherwise abstracted form might be seen as a result of this balancing act. Some pieces appear to combine tender feeling with naturalistic rendering. In **Mother and Child XXX** (cat. 86) both the embrace and the soft flesh (unusual in Moore) are depicted with an extreme naturalism. Many of these images, however, are highly ambiguous. As ususal, femininity, monumentalism and the body as landscape are all linked. **Mother and Child VI** (cat. 62) shows the mother from a low viewpoint (the child's) which emphasises the bulk of her body; her head is undersized, contributing to the effect. In all of the etchings feminine characteristics are established by the positing of an absent male viewer. The ambiguity of deforming aggression and humanist sentiment in these works could be seen as a reflection of this ambivalent male gaze.

[77] Neumann, p. 187.

There are other sources of ambiguity in these prints. For example the 'natural' monumentalism of the female figure is sometimes undermined. The mother's body is upturned and the child appears above her, as in **Mother and Child VIII** (cat. 64). In other prints her head appears lower than other parts of her body so that the traditional hierarchies in representing the body in monumental sculpture are overturned. The female bodies shown here may be large, but they are neither dignified nor monumental. The theme of the internal/external form recurs in the etchings. Again, though, sometimes the relationship is subverted. In **Mother and Child IV** (cat. 60) the child becomes a little external form into which the mother thrusts her arm. This piece seems to form a pendant to **Mother and Child XIV** (cat. 70) where the relation is reversed. In **Mother and Child XVII** (cat. 73) the forms interlock with each other rather than establish a relation of protected and protecting. The figures here are conceived less as living things than as a unified sculptural unit. The expected relationship is sometimes undermined in sculpture too, for instance in **Maquette for Mother and Child** (cat. 25) where the child is a hollow (a shelter form) carved into the open body of the mother.

Any reading of these prints as images of the eternal conditions of procreation or artistic endeavour founders on the particularised settings of pieces like **Mother and Child IX** (cat. 65) with its window, pet cat, and mother dressed in a particular fashion. It is not just that some prints may be read as generalised archetypal figures, and others as more particular genre scenes, for there are mixtures of the two, for instance in **Mother and Child XV** (cat. 71) in which nude figures play in a domestic interior, and many others where we are not quite sure where the figures are situated, whether they are modern or 'classical', types or individuals.

The stoniness of some of the figures, and the placing of others on a dais, lead these prints to be seen as projects for sculpture or depictions of sculpture. It is not always clear whether we are looking at living beings or at monuments. The different physical levels of the etchings can also contribute to this uncertainty. There are sometimes oppositions between the underlying colours and the lines drawn on top. This matches the striations that appear on the surface of the bronzes, some of which bear little relation to the forms on which they are

scratched. In the etchings there is often a redundant profusion of lines which leads the viewer away from the ostensible subject to the surface of the print. The viewer oscillates between viewing the print as a network of lines or a representation.

As we have seen, the mother and child, the artist and work of art can be related and the causal relationship between them can even be reversed, for the artist may be thought to be as much constituted by the work as vice versa. Moore's varied techniques in these etchings are united by a certain clumsiness of handling, by the gauche nature of much of the drawing. 'Primitivism' is here extended from being an appropriated style and to some extent a subject (as in Moore's earlier work) to become a manner of handling. Moore presents the artist as an innocent primitive. Working against those interpretations that see the artist as the mother of the work, the awkwardness of the style becomes the sign of the artist as child. Taken as a whole, the etchings form an ambiguous body of work which leaves the viewer guessing at many points. It is often unclear whether we are looking at the representation of an individual, a type, a project for sculpture or simply a sequence of lines. While with any single print or sculpture we may feel able to make a judgement about this, such an interpretation cannot be extended to the whole project. For in a static and abstracted sculpture, drawing or etching how do we distinguish holding to from holding apart, clutching from clawing, grasping from throttling? The ambiguity of these works is not only an analogy for the ambivalent attitudes of children to parents, men to women, and artists to their creations, but also of the viewer to the work of art itself.

In post-war society the forms of creation and interpretation combined to ensure an indeterminate and even an empty work in which the name of the artist formed the only constant. It was necessary that artistic creation was individualised but also paradoxically that it bore on the universal. On the part of artist and critic a compulsion to repeat was established, for the relation can never be satisfied and the work never explained. The very profusion and diversity of Moore's work on the Mother and Child theme block a definitive reading of any one piece. Like equal and opposite forces, or like the cathetic flows of the psychoanalytical apparatus, any movement in one direction is countered by its opposite. For every piece in which there is contact, there are others where forms just fail to touch and others which are radically fractured. A work that is individual and universal can only be

described in terms of its distinctness from everything else. The artist (like the mother) is placed in an *enceinte* beyond society, being neither quite subject nor object.[78] Moore's empty child, failing to signify in social terms, yielding to any idealist interpretation, can finally be described only in terms of itself.

[78] The pun is Kristeva's, *Desire in Language*, p. 240. For her the mother loses contact with communal meaning within an *enceinte*, constituted again in part by nothingness.