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The Anglo-Irish artist George Moore (1852-1933), after spending six years in Parisian art studios in the 1870s (an experience he relates in his autobiography *Confessions of a Young Man*), took up a new career as a writer in the following decade. Yet he never turned his back on painting which constantly seems to resurface in his autobiographies, art criticism and fiction. *Lewis Seymour and Some Women* was published in 1917, after Moore's stylistic revision of the original 1883 version entitled *A Modern Lover*. The novel relates the successful career of a painter who, though his work seems to be mediocre, becomes a member of the Royal Academy, after exhibiting his work in the National Gallery, 'this great place of morals and commercialism' (Moore 1917, 272). The discrepancy between the reality of his artistic achievement and the institutional recognition he gains is in itself an implicit criticism of the official structures organizing painting in England. This critical discourse on the state of artistic creation in Victorian Britain remains in the background,[1] for Moore's essential concern here seems to be the pitfalls of creation, the anxiety of influence and the birth of images. After first showing that Moore builds a world of ready-made images influencing (and even hindering) the creative process, this essay will focus on the birth of images and on their emergence on canvas and in text. A close study of Lewis's artistic practise indeed reveals a particular form of intermediality in which pre-existing texts become notional ekphraseis, that is to say ekphrastic presentations of virtual pictures that are never completed. I will finally argue that this reflection on ekphrasis in *Lewis Seymour and Some Women* interestingly echoes its central function in Moore's art criticism on modern painting.

A 'multifarious and incoherent collection': the burden of ready-made images

Despite a sense that images remain omnipresent in this novel, the reader also feels a form of absence: even if it occupies centre stage, Lewis's painting is recurrently associated with lack of inspiration and imitation. The artist appears as sterile and his ventures seem vain. Hence the paradoxical status of pictures as both omnipresent and absent or, more precisely, erased: omnipresent through references to real or fictitious artists, debates on their practice and descriptions of their works; absent in so far as the protagonist's work is rarely described through ekphraseis. Yet, this essential blank at the heart of the novel, standing for the artist's sterility, nonetheless generates multiple references to images. Interestingly, it also seems linked to the representation of the female body and visage. From the outset of the novel, a sense of emptiness stems from the evocation of the artistic enterprise. This impression is created by the character's feelings of hunger since he is poor and desperately needs to sell his pictures and by his incapacity to draw a female body and to 'coax the figure into rhythm' (Moore 1917, 21) as he attempts to copy other drawings and assemble parts, 'fitting the legs of one drawing on to the body of another' (Moore 1917, 21), in order to produce a Venus rising from the sea. This first failure, illustrated by the painter's gesture as he 'scrape[s] the panel clear' (Moore 1917, 22), leads to the anxious search for a model, another way to overcome an essential obstacle, the absence of the model's body being a blank paralysing creation. Later on, even though the protagonist is at the summit of his career, exhibits his work in the National Gallery and is about to be recognized by his peers, his masterpiece is

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[1] For articles in which Moore deals with institutions and art in Britain, see in *Modern Painting* (1893): 'The Failure of the Nineteenth Century', 'Artistic Education in France and England', 'Our Academicians', 'The Organisation of Art'.

dismissed by other artists called 'The Moderns' as 'a piece of linoleum' (Moore 1917, 272), just as his previous major production raised the ironical question: 'Is his picture in cardboard or linoleum–which surface?' (Moore 1917, 202) Reduced to the state of a decorated surface, to a material existence which can be termed as vile (cardboard and linoleum being coarse materials), his portraits (the first, of his mistress and patron, Lucy Bentham, the second of his wife, Lady Helen) are not described. To some extent, they are erased as works of art, with only a title to suggest what they represent, which echoes Lewis's initial gesture as he angrily rubs out his sketches.

However, previous to its exhibition on the walls of the National Gallery, the birth of the second picture is related, so that the reader has access to the painter's vision, before it is transferred on canvas. As he stages the scene, orchestrating his wife's movements and choosing the props, his directions create the effect of a sketch and make image appear into text:

> 'Now, Helen, drop the right leg and stand on the left: raise your hand to gather fruit in the vine above your head. I think I've got the pose,' he said, 'in which all your beauty appears. Some silken folds about the dropping knee and thigh will add to it. A goblet in your right hand into which you will squeeze the juice of the grapes will explain the idea. My idea of you transpires in that pose.' […] At the end of ten minutes he asked her if she could hold up her hand to gather the grapes that were supposed to be growing on the trellis above her. (Moore 1917, 243)

Since the picture, once completed and exhibited, is not described, it becomes clear that this scene stands for the artwork: words are predominant and are meant to shape reality by organizing the relation between the model's body and space, thereby serving some creative design. The use of the modal auxiliary 'will' indicates the projection into a picture that is both in the making and yet remains, so far, virtual. The emphasis is on the 'idea', which may be a way to insist on the painter's inability to embody his vision. It may be inferred that his paintings are not described because they are worthless and thus function as blanks figuring emptiness and sterility. Instead there is the painter's discourse, with words generating a virtual image that has its basis in a real scene (itself an arrangement of bodily movements ordered through language) and that precedes and eventually replaces any evocation of the final painting.

As already stated, the absence of pictures is paradoxically matched by their omnipresence, a paradox directly related to the complex status of artistic representation in this novel. The emergence of images in the text, in spite of their erasure in the plot, is first made manifest in the list of names of painters and works which function as direct references to art, working as what Liliane Louvel defines as a 'direct quotation effect' ('effet citationnel direct', Louvel 2002, 33). It also appears in the characters' debates on painting and, last but not least, in the presence of pictorial effects in the text. Lewis's career takes the form of a journey, which is both geographic (from London to Paris) and artistic (from landscape painting in the manner of Constable, learnt in the English countryside, to portrait painting, learnt in Paris). In between, he masters the art of the Boucher-like representation of mythological subjects, adorning the panels of a ball-room in a wealthy English mansion with an infinite procession of Venuses, Cupids, nymphs and satyrs. Well-versed in the history of art, Lewis and his peers recurrently refer to their predecessors, in order to compare their own productions with works of the past and to establish or disown any filiation and to claim their modernity and even avant-garde stance. The practice of some of the artists whom Lewis frequently meets and exchanges views with reflects Antoine Compagnon's definition of the process characteristic of avant-garde movements. Established on constant ruptures with and negations of tradition, this process leads to a 'tradition of negation' ('glissement de la négation de la tradition vers

une tradition de la négation') and also entails a total erasure or *tabula rasa* not only of the past but also of the present: 'ce n'est plus seulement avec le passé qu'il s'agit de rompre, mais du présent même qu'il faut faire table rase si l'on ne veut pas être dépassé avant même de se produire' (Compagnon 54).

Yet Lewis himself seems unable to achieve this *tabula rasa*. As a consequence, Moore's narrative is punctuated with the names of painters, as a means to initiate a debate on artistic filiation and inheritance and to emphasise the anxiety of influence the character falls prey to. Itself an echo of the 'multifarious and incoherent collection' (Moore 1917, 12) found in the picture dealer's shop he goes to at the outset of the novel, the labyrinthine quality of the following list testifies to the burden of the history of painting, at least as it weighs on the protagonist who endeavours to become a creator and not a mere imitator:[2] Goya, Millet, Corot, Raphael, Rubens, Boucher, Michaelangelo, Tintoretto, Bouguerau, Lefevre, Ducet, Rouneuf, Leonardo da Vinci, Ingres, Watteau, Lancret, Manet, Fragonard, Mantegna, Boticelli, Rembrandt, Gustave Doré, Rossetti, Titian, Cabanel. All these names compose an imaginary museum revealing the coexistence of major and, to a lesser extent, minor works of art, that all constitute potential models one might imitate but also surpass and perhaps, in the end, discard. The works hung on the walls of the shop (one by Goya, the other by Corot) and of a house owned by an art dealer (a Tintoretto), Ingres's picture of the Holy Family and Da Vinci's stairs in Blois Castle, reveal the extent of Moore's play on the boundaries between reality and fiction, life and art. His protagonist thus seems to live in a world of ready-made images inherited from the past, constantly referred to and both concealing and making up for his own lack of creative force.

From 'cardboard' and 'linoleum' to 'fleeting phantom': building images in the air

This world is thus full of the images that haunt both Lewis's mind and the text, as illustrated by this evocation of pictures by Titian:

> Sexual reveries, Lewis averred these pictures to be; beautiful of course; yet he could not help feeling that the painter had pursued a fleeting phantom, till in a sudden detachment of the sense he saw two women seated, one on the ground clad in great robes, the other naked on the edge of the well, poised in a movement lyrical as a swallow's flight. The picture had been named, he said, 'Sacred and Profane Love', which shows how little the art of painting may be understood, for it is certain that Titian's mind while painting this picture was possessed only of a pure desire to represent life in all its fullness and beauty, the divine essence rather than the actual manifestation. (Moore 1917, 238-239)

The association between dream and picture relates Titian's artistry to visionary powers but also implicitly reveals that Lewis's ideal remains elusive and his art the pursuit of 'a fleeting phantom' (the ideal synthesis of all the already-painted images he has in mind) which he fails to capture. In the same way, Moore's text seems to be haunted by images surfacing in an ephemeral manner and illustrating the elusive presence of painting in writing; or, as Liliane Louvel explains, referring to Descartes, the imaging force running through the text only creates 'images in the air': '[le texte] tend vers son être d'image sans jamais l'atteindre, car l'image textuelle restera toujours une "image en l'air"' (Louvel 2002, 33).

A first instance of the visual emerging in the verbal, itself the vehicle for some imaging force, is to be found when Lewis and another character named Frazer, a painter

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[2] The same held true for Moore in the formative years he spent in Parisian art studios. In *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886), the autobiographer insists on the powerful influence of other artists (mostly French) on his young self in Paris, '[...] striving heart and soul to identify himself with his environment, to shake himself free from race and language and to recreate himself as it were in the womb of a new nationality, assuming its ideals, its morals, and its modes of thought.' (Moore 1886, 123-124)

affiliated with the 'Moderns', are described as gazing at the urban landscape. The conversation comes to a halt and this sudden silence (a rupture of the linearity of the story) puts a stop to the narrative flow and seems to make way for the description of what they see, as if this pause in the dialogue opened up a space in which to insert a pictorial description:

> And Lewis continued to relate his adventure till he noticed that Frazer was absorbed in contemplating the lights and shadows in the streets: then he stopped.
> The day was sloppy, but the sun shone between the showers, and the violet roofs of Waterloo Place glittered, scattering around the reflections of vivid colour. A strip of sky, of a lighter blue than the slates, passed behind the dome of the National Gallery, the top of which came out black against a black cloud that held the approaching downpour.
> 'You say that my sunset effects are too violet in tone. Look yonder!' exclaimed the enthusiast; 'isn't everything violet–walls, pools, and carriages? I can see nothing that isn't violet.' (Moore 1917, 33)

The inner focalization (suggested by a reference to Frazer's contemplation) and the encapsulation of the description in a self-contained paragraph function as frames that arrest the reader's attention and freeze the scene. The pictorial dimension is reinforced by the reference to colours, lights and shadows, and the mention of the National Gallery. Interestingly enough, the characters' conversation, when resumed, turns to the discussion of colour and of the problematic connection between Frazer's landscape painting (his bold use of violet) and reality. One is reminded of Ruskin's defence of Turner's use of colour in *Modern Painters* (1843) and of Wilde's reflections in 'The Decay of Lying' (1889) where Vivian, answering Cyril's question ('Nature follows the landscape painter, then, and takes her effects from him?'), expatiates on the idea that art precedes life and even gives it form and meaning: 'Certainly. Where, if not from the Impressionists, do we get those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down our streets, blurring the gas-lamps and changing the houses into monstrous shadows?' (Wilde 1086)

A second example will show a different and more complex mode of insertion of the visual in the verbal. When, at an early stage of his career, Lewis, failing to sell his pictures and starving, heads for the river where he intends to drown himself, the whole scene seems to freeze and to become a picture in his own mind. Reality (two well-dressed young men outside a fashionable theatre) fades and is transformed. The imaginary scene represents two elegant men talking and a tramp reading a notice which offers a reward:

> […] losing sight of his own personality, suddenly he began to see the scene as a picture to be called 'Suicide.'
> 'In the foreground,' he said, 'just out of the way of a fashionable crowd going into a theatre, two young men discuss whether they shall seek amusement there or elsewhere, whilst a ragged wight stands reading a notice posted on the walls:
>
> 'TWO POUNDS REWARD.
>
> Yesterday, at nine o' clock, a young man drowned himself from the parapet of Waterloo Bridge. The above reward will be paid to anyone giving such information as will lead to the recovery of the body.'
>
> The idea fascinated him and he wondered if it would be possible to make plain in a picture that the poor man reading the notice recognized the fact that dead he was worth two pounds, but alive he was merely an outcast, in whom no one took the least interest. (Moore 1917, 15)

Two time patterns are superimposed, before (the poor man, standing for the hungry and ragged artist himself, reading the notice posted on the wall) and after (the notice announcing his suicide or the suicide of one of his kind, as a way to show this sort of tragedy is quite commonplace). Not only does this passage reveal the narrative quality of visual elements and the possibility of inserting several temporal layers and of juxtaposing different actions in one picture, but it also plays on the various aspects of the relationship between text and image. The passage is constructed like Chinese boxes: the imaginary picture emerging in Moore's text itself contains a text indirectly relating the event that is supposed to take place in the narrative. One gets the impression that the embedded and multi-layered structure, text within picture within text, replaces action, as Lewis himself freezes in a trance-like state. His graphic imagination recurrently functions as a detour in his own trajectory and a digression in the narrative. Here the detour takes the edge off his determination to commit suicide and saves his life but turns into a dead end when he is involved in real artistic pursuits.

More generally, this could also be seen as an instance of the image-making process that, according to Barthes, defined realism in nineteenth-century literature, haunted by its double, namely painting. For Barthes, the nineteenth-century writer first and foremost needed to transform reality into a virtual painting that he eventually copied, thereby putting reality at a safe distance and deferring it.[3] A comment on Lewis's own inability to take action (a feature eventually applying to his artistic practise), the emergence of virtual image in the form of ekphrasis puts a stop to a real event and even replaces it. However, one may wonder whether text is not superior to image and does not take precedence over it, a phenomenon observed in the novel as a whole. The sketchy nature of the image itself, as opposed to the precision of the words of the note inserted in it, could be considered as evidence of this predominance of the verbal in the character's mind. By finally focusing on the poor man's face, wondering whether it 'would be possible' to depict its expressions (themselves conveying some negative epiphany), the would-be painter locates meaning beyond a mere composition and staging of props and background and makes it reside in more complex aspects. However, no details are given, which introduces a gap in representation: the poor man's visage, or *punctum* where the essential meaning of the scene lies, remains a blank at the heart of this imaginary picture.

Image as pretext

The evocations of Lewis's artistic production obviously have their roots in intermediality. These intermedial origins are first noticed when text is used as the source of an image that eventually has the status of illustration. The cursory reference to Rossetti's paintings and poems is a reminder of a central feature of Pre-Raphaelite art defined by its exploration of the multifaceted relation between text and image: 'his poetry and his pictures both interested [Lady Helen], both had been an influence in her life for many years' (Moore 1917, 210). Pre-Raphaelite painting constantly interacts with text (be it in literary sources, sonnets on frames, words on the canvas) which comes first and never totally disappears, so that painting comes second or, in the words of Bertrand Rougé, there is always some textual remainder deferring painting: 'il reste toujours un peu de texte qui diffère la peinture' (Rougé 241). Some of the issues raised by the much discussed intermedial relation in Pre-Raphaelite

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[3] '[…] il faut que l'écrivain, par un rite initial, transforme d'abord le "réel" en objet peint (encadré) […]. Ainsi le réalisme (bien mal nommé, en tout cas souvent mal interprété) consiste non à copier le réel, mais à copier une copie (peinte) du réel : ce fameux réel, comme sous l'effet d'une peur qui interdirait de le toucher directement, est *remis plus loin*, différé, ou du moins saisi à travers la gangue picturale dont on l'enduit avant de le soumettre à la parole : code sur code, dit le réalisme.' (Barthes 61)

art[4] seem to apply to Lewis's art, even though Moore takes them to extremes by foregrounding how texts displace images.

One instance is the artist's reading of *Daphnis and Chloe*. His attention being arrested by a specific passage, he immediately explores the visual potential of the scene: 'I'm beginning to see them: Daphnis bathing in the fountain, and Chloe admiring his back– beginning to see them as a picture' (Moore 1917, 166). The almost incantatory repetition of 'see' is no magical formula: the sketch he then makes 'seem[s] to represent the text–a cave in which there was a fountain and some statues of nymphs' (Moore 1917, 167), yet it is so imprecise that it implicitly signifies his failure to come. If the chapter relating this experience (chapter XXIV) opens on this tentative statement about the correspondence between text and image, it closes three pages later on the fire of inspiration dying out and on the metaphor of the 'cold ashes' to which it is reduced (Moore 1917, 170). The next stage implies working from a model, yet the two beautiful children sitting for Lewis, far from kindling his imagination, are a hindrance to his design. Their bodies stand for a mass of solid flesh resisting and thwarting his vision, so that, instead of drawing, he directly works on them, as if to mould them while attempting to make them take the ideal pose.

After vainly endeavouring to 'show the girl how to fit herself into a pose already designed–the pose in the composition' (Moore 1917, 168), Lewis returns to the text and goes as far as to read aloud the excerpt he wants to paint, in the hope of inspiring his sitters. This long quotation embedded in the narrative is not just an intertextual hint at Moore's own interest in Longus's text:[5]

> If he could not get the models into the poses that he designed, he would have to draw Kitty and her brother in the attitude that they fell into naturally. They were both well-proportioned, and the group would appear of itself just as a beautiful cloud shape appears, if you wait long enough.
> 'I must just read them the passage;' and opening the book, he applied all his mind to the comprehension of the passage that he wished to illustrate: 'He then fared to the founte in thoughte to washe his long blacke hair and his bodie all sun embrouned, yet might men deem his hue caused of the shadowing Treasoures of his haire. Fair he seemed to Chloe in his bathe, wherein she seeing him for the first deemed him therefrom to haue come by his fairness. And whenas she laued his backe and shoulders eke his fleshe yeelded tender to hir touche: therewith him all unwittynge shee felt hire owne skinne ofte, in mynde to proue whether of the two was softer, Phebus now declining, they draue theyr flockes togithers to foldwarde, Chloe onlie wishing beeing to view Daphnis bath again.' (Moore 1917, 168-169)

This passage shows a reversal of the expected relation between image and text in ekphrasis, since here the text comes first, becomes the matrix of a picture that does not exist, and thus works as the description of something that remains in the realm of the virtual. Besides, its pictorial quality is itself displaced, as text also becomes music and finds itself situated in some in-betweenness redefining intermediality. Language displays here its sonorous texture through the richness of the sounds and the archaic spelling takes on an iconic force since it makes the graphic oddity of the words themselves outstanding. It also creates a frame and

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[4] For example, among many other works on the text/image relationship in Rossetti's work, see Lynne Pearce, *Woman, Image, Text: Readings in Pre-Raphaelite Art and Literature* and Laurence Roussillon-Constanty, *Méduse au miroir: Esthétique romantique de Dante Gabriel Rossetti.*

[5] In 1924 Moore published a translation of Longus's text, itself inspired (so the author said), from the contemplation of a painting found in Lesbos and representing Love. For a thorough analysis of Moore's work on this translation, see Konstantin Doulamis, 'Lost in Translation? George Moore's *The Pastoral Loves of Daphnis and Chloe* and rewriting Longus' in *George Moore: Artistic Visions and Literary Worlds*, 86-101.

becomes music, as shown by the structure and the rhythm of the sentences: the circular construction of the second sentence (built on the echo between the first word 'fair' and the last 'fairness') and of the whole paragraph starting with the vision of a body bathing in a fount and coming back to it; the great length of the last sentence with subordinate clauses lingering on body and sensation. The auditory and rhythmical quality is so marked that it substitutes the figural force of language for its literal meaning. The sensual and even erotic quality of the scene (which is what Lewis is enthralled by and fails to capture in his drawing) seems to come from language.

The reading of the excerpt from *Daphnis and Chloe* is eventually to be regarded as further assertion of the predominance of text over image in this novel, so much so that readers become aware that this quotation is the only representation they will be given, for the artist, waiting for the right pose or composition to 'appear of itself' (Moore 1917, 168), does not succeed in painting anything 'in keeping with the text he had proposed to illustrate' (Moore 1917, 170). The bodily fragments, drawn in succession–'drawings of legs, drawings of hands, drawings of heads, of backs, of shoulders' (Moore 1917, 170), never come to be assembled, which is reminiscent of the protagonist's first failure in his drawing of Venus. In this episode, it is clear that words defer painting while functioning as a substitute, screening its absence and filling in a blank. Furthermore, Lewis's mention of a 'Shelley-like cave' (a reference to *Prometheus Unbound*), when he reflects on the light in Mantegna's and Boticelli's fresco-coloured drawings on the one hand and Rembrandt's chiaroscuro on the other hand, adds to the burden of words the anxiety of influence (through a mix of literary and pictorial references). After a reflection on the treatment of effects of light in their works, the artist finds himself in a quandary: '"Now, which is my picture to be? A fresco according to Mantegna, or a mystery of light and shade according to Rembrandt?" His heart misgave him, and he asked himself if it were possible that, after all, he was not a painter' (Moore 1917, 169).

Another illustration is proposed through a discussion on beautiful women in painting, with a particular focus on Boticelli's *Birth of Venus* then on *Spring-Tide*, examined by Lewis and his wife in a book containing the master's pictures. Wishing to make some point clear to Helen, he mixes ekphrasis, story and history to explain Boticelli's masterpieces:

> 'The Birth of Art, it might be called;' and they sat admiring the figure standing timidly on the shell, that kind and beneficent zephyrs are blowing onwards: 'rising,' Lewis said, 'out of the gulf of the Middle Ages. The first blossom of the Renaissance comes to us hiding her sex with a tress of hair. Not knowing how she will be received, she comes timidly. She has heard of the monk Savonarola, the one that good Pope Alexander VI caused to be put to death along with his company, three others of the same kidney. She doesn't know the treatment that may be meted out to her. The monk may even be now knotting the whip, a great thick whip, with which he hopes to lash her in the presence of the community.' (Moore 1917, 235)

The description of the picture is itself quite short and the visual elements mostly serve to introduce a story: the story 'told' by the image and the history surrounding it (what follows is a mix of ideology, religion, of biographical and psychological comments on the artist, combined with personal (mis)interpretation). It seems that, behind each picture, there is always a narrative tending to replace or displace it. This displacement of the visual by the verbal culminates when a woman (the protagonist's first model, disappearing after discovering on canvas her naked body as Venus's) ceases to be baffled by the painting that she is looking at only when she is told the story of the painted subject, Clytaemnestra. More precisely, she can now decipher the expression on the painted face or, in her own words, she can 'see it all' (Moore 1917, 283) and 'read the watch-fires in the painted eyes' (Moore 1917, 287).

Art criticism and 'ominous spaces'

This study of intermediality and of the function of ekphrasis in Moore's work should not be limited to his fiction and would be incomplete without an examination of his art criticism. If image often stands as pretext for story (and even as pre-text) in *Lewis Seymour and some Women*, Moore's art criticism uses ekphrasis to 'open up the eye of the text'.[6] In *Modern Painting*,[7] the art critic aims to give a puzzled, not to say hostile public, an understanding of the work of artists such as Whistler and the Impressionists. The multiple prepositions and imperative forms which punctuate his analyses (for example 'Look', 'Notice' in the article on Whistler) reveal that Moore is desirous to make the reader see and even urges him to do so. At the same time, these descriptions are suffused with Moore's own impressions and opinions, associating the effects of painting with the perceptions of the observer. Though they are quite precise thanks to a sustained attention to detail, it seems that vision and blindness are interwoven: the gaze selects and omits, dissemination in language replaces the unity of the picture, and attention to detail turns to fetishism. The girl's body in *Harmony in Grey and Green* (1872-1874) becomes leg, ankle, foot, and jaw, fragments that are themselves constituted of interacting light and colour. After having evoked panels of colour (clothes set against the curtains, wainscot and wall), the emphasis is put on the girl's leg, then on one part of her face:

> Look at the leg that is advanced, and tell me if you can detect the modelling. There is modelling, I know, but there are no vulgar roundnesses. Apparently, only a flat tint; but there is on the bone a light, hardly discernible; and this light is sufficient. And the leg that is turned away, the thick, chubby ankle of the child, how admirable in drawing: and that touch of darker colour, how it tells the exact form of the bone! To indicate is the final accomplishment of the painter's art, and I know no indication like that ankle bone. And now passing from the feet to the face, notice, I beg of you to notice–it is one of the points in the picture–that jaw bone. The face is seen in three-quarter, and to focus the interest in the face the painter has slightly insisted on the line of the jaw bone, which, taken in conjunction with the line of the hair, brings into prominence the oval of the face. (Moore 1893, 9)

The critic goes from fragment to fragment, focusing on salient elements, the ankle bone, and then the jaw bone. Georges Didi-Huberman's analysis of Balzac's *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* (1831) seems apposite here. In *La Peinture incarnée* Didi-Huberman shows how the work of Frenhofer, Balzac's protagonist, is characterized by the dissolution of the female body represented on the canvas, a body that seems to be reduced to a foot emerging from a mass of colours, which Didi-Huberman analyses using the notions of 'pan' ('panel' or, in Latin, 'pannus') and 'éclat' (which could be translated both as 'flash' and 'fragment'). What is interesting in relation to Moore is Didi-Huberman's interpretation of the effect produced by detail as 'éclat', a form of hyperrealism, almost a hallucination and a fetish.[8] It is obvious that

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[6] See the title of Liliane Louvel's 1998 publication on the text/image relation, *L'Œil du texte. Texte et image dans la littérature de langue anglaise*.

[7] Moore went to see the third Impressionist exhibition in Paris in 1877 and the eighth in 1886. He wrote articles on the works he saw there for *The Bat* and *The Court and Society Review* (see the publication of *Impressions and Opinions* (1890), *Modern Painting* (1893), *Reminiscences of the Impressionist Painters* (1906)). The break with Zola, who criticised Impressionism in *L'Œuvre* (1886), dates from that period.

[8] 'une quasi-hallucination, avec l'effet de "réel" qui lui est propre, et qui porte en avant le figuratif comme une hyper-identité, une identité ou une singularité d'intrusion ; c'est un effet de violence illusionniste ; c'est l'éclat en tant que détail réaliste ; il appelle la surprise d'un c'est-cela ; il est un effet de découverte, de trouvaille ou de retrouvaille dans l'ordre du visible.'; 'L'éclat, on le sait, constitue l'élément par excellence de la définition analytique du fétiche.' (Didi-Huberman 1985, 93, 86)

Moore's ekphrasis reproduces the observer's fragmentary vision of the painting as much as it describes the object itself. It dissolves the picture into fragments of body and face, into panels of colour, with an ankle and the oval of a face emerging out of it.

In Moore's second essay in *Modern Painting*, entitled 'Chavannes, Millet and Manet', dissolution also characterises the critic's comments on Berthe Morisot's portrait by Manet, *Le Repos* (1870-1871), with its disturbing echo between the white dress with black spots, 'une robe a poix' (sic.), and the face, itself dotted in a way, full of gaps and blanks:

> It is a very simple and yet a very beautiful reality. A lady, in white dress with black spots, sitting on a red sofa, a dark chocolate red, in the subdued light of her own quiet, prosaic, French appartment, le deuxieme au desssus de l'entre-sol. The drawing is less angular, less constipated than that of 'Olympe'. How well the woman's body is in the dress! There is the bosom, the waist, the hips, the knees, and the white stockinged foot in the low shoe, coming from out the dress. The drawing about the hips and bosom undulates and floats, vague and yet precise, in a manner that recalls Harlem, and it is not until we turn to the face that we come upon ominous spaces unaccounted for, forms unexplained. [...] The face in this picture is like the face in every picture by Manet. Three or four points are seized, and the spaces between are left unaccounted for. (Moore 1893, 25-26)

The ekphrasis is built on fragments, salient bodily parts (bosom, waist, hips, knees, and finally the tip of a foot) that are added to the face with its 'ominous spaces' that cannot be explained 'like the face in every picture by Manet'. In this Impressionist painting, the spaces 'unaccounted for' which disorientate the art critic could be considered as emblematic of modernity. Disturbingly enough, they are to be found in the visage, the site of identity, which therefore becomes the locus where forms are dissolved and where realism is deconstructed. While still adhering to its tenets, Moore was beginning to embrace new modes of representation: in painting as he strove to make sense of the Impressionist experiments; in literature with a move from realism to symbolism then to modernism and the creation in his fiction of the melodic line inspired from Wagner and from Édouard Dujardin's use of interior monologue in *Les Lauriers sont coupés*.

Moore's article on Manet reads like a response to Lewis's opinion that '[Manet's] illustrations are rubbish' and that 'the man has never learned to draw' (Moore 1917, 130). It replaces Lewis's hasty judgement and lack of undertanding with a disturbing and self-questioning perception of modernity in painting but also in writing. The reference to Mallarmé's poem 'L'après-midi d'un Faune', first described as a beautiful object printed on Japanese paper and illustrated by Manet before appearing as an enigmatic text that puzzles Lewis with its 'ever-escaping meaning' (Moore 1917, 130), brings to the fore the centrality of intermedial interactions and of the perceptual issues they raise in Moore's writing. *Lewis Seymour and some Women* and *Modern Painting* show that envisaging the face of painting, with its 'ominous spaces', is a complex and almost impossible undertaking. 'Quand voir, c'est perdre' (Didi-Huberman 1992, 14): to see is to lose, says Georges Didi-Huberman about the experience of gazing at a picture. Loss and blindness are central to the experience of painting in Moore's work, whether it involves the painter or the spectator. Biographical elements related to Moore's fascination with painting and his failure to become a painter justify the presence of image in text, but more interesting is the modality of this presence, for images remain 'in the air'. If they are perceptible in the text, they are like phantoms or pre-texts which haunt it, while intermedial relations are illustrated through the painter's failures or the art critic's silences. Both *Lewis Seymour and some Women* and *Modern Painting* are underlain by a constant tension, the very movement from the verbal to the visual which, in the

words of Edward Said, is an aspiration or a desire: 'writing cannot represent the visible, but it can desire and, in a manner of speaking, move towards [it]' (qtd. in Louvel 2002, 33-34).

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