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Insufferable Agony: Henry Moore and the First World War by Alice Correia

Thank you to Nigel, and thank you to the gallery, and to the University of Leeds for the invitation to come and talk tonight, it's a great privilege to be here in the Henry Moore room talking about Moore and his experiences in the First World War. So to talk about Henry Moore and the First World War is actually quite a difficult thing, as Nigel has suggested. Unlike the artists Paul Nash, Windham Lewis, and Stanley Spencer, Moore was not a war artist. In fact he was a 15 year old boy when war broke out, and was still at school. The possibility that he might pursue an artistic career was a longed for, but distant aspiration. Moore spent two years in the army, serving in the civil service rifles between February 1917 and February 1919. And during this period he was sketching and making drawings, but only 6 of these drawing survive, and are listed in his catalogue resume. Throughout his artistic career, public statements about his war-time experiences were exceptionally rare, and during a career that spanned 7 decades, his accounts of the war survive in only a few personal letters, sent whilst in the army, a few references made in letters written during the second world war, and the handful of interviews he gave in his career, mainly in the 1970s and 80s. Reading these public statements and private reflections together reveals lots of ambiguities and contradictions. What's clear throughout is that Moore constructed a narrative that separated his war experiences from his artwork. And so to make a retrospective reading of Moore's work through the lens of the First World War is necessarily speculative. So I'm going to try and unpick and point to some art-works that we can think about in terms of the First World War tonight. But as, I'm sure an audience in Leeds knows, throughout his lifetime Moore was arguably the most celebrated artist of his generation.

Born in Castleford, he went on to become an establishment figure, and his sculptures and drawings are held in museums and galleries around the world, not least here in Leeds, and of course at the Institute across the way. During the 1930s his work was associated with English Surrealists, and as Nigel's pinpointed, it was really during the 1940s that his public reputation was established, with the creation of an exhibition of his 'Shelter Drawings', which were made in his capacity as an official war artist, and which were regarded as representations of everyday heroism, enacted by ordinary people in extreme circumstances. In the 1950s Moore was championed as someone who stood for Western social humanist ideals, and his work was aligned with the construction of the welfare state. His public commissions and his work for UNESCO positioned him on a global stage, and likewise the British Council sent numerous exhibitions of his work around the world. Later in his life, Moore suggested that every experience in someone's lifetime goes in to inform later choices, and really this is



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at the heart of the talk tonight, this idea that every experience somehow informs what we do later, and so it's possible to argue his experiences of the First World War directly informed his support in the 1930s of the Republican cause during the Spanish Civil War. And during the 1930s he joined the Artists International Association, which was an exhibiting society aimed to mobilise international unity of artists against fascism and colonial oppression. During the Second World War in letters to Arthur Sale, held in the Imperial War Museum archive, he expressed his admiration for his friend's stance as a conscientious objector, and after the war he sat on numerous panels for sculpture commissions. In 1952 he sat on the panel for the competition of the memorial to the unknown political prisoner, and later in that decade he was invited by the International Auschwitz Committee to sit on a selection panel for a memorial to be placed at either Auschwitz or Birkenau to commemorate victims of fascism. And yet despite these anti-war sentiments, he also served in the Home Guard, and he was an official war artist, and in that capacity it's possible, perhaps, to argue that he was a participant in the creation of a governmental form of propaganda. So we have perhaps a contradictory, conflicting picture of a man who felt deeply about the sanctity of life, the futility of war, but who was also a patriot with a profound sense of duty. And it was not until after his death in 1986 that scholars, including Anthony Barnett, Jeremy Lewinson, and Chris Stevens, began to re-think his work through narratives of the First World War. The reticence or outright resistance to consider Moore's work through the First World War is exemplified in Herbert Read's book 'Of 1965'. Read in the opening chapters gives a biographical overview of his life, and he wrote:

"War was a brief adventure for Henry Moore. He did not experience trench warfare long enough to suffer the attrition of nerves and spirit that was the fate of less lucky men. He felt that it had widened his experience of human nature, and he had had time in the long hours of waiting and watching to consider what he would do if he survived."

After this sort of overview of Moore's war experiences the war isn't mentioned again in the book, and there's absolutely no suggestion that the First World War could have influenced or informed some of Moore's visual art-forms. And during his lifetime Moore's art critics and biographers would follow Read's example, and remain silent on the possible impact on the war on Moore's artistic creations. But I don't want to suggest that there was some form of conspiracy not to discuss Moore's work in relation to the First World War, but rather, I think, that this silence was part of a wider cultural consensus of the 1920s and 30s not to dwell on the war, not to discuss it openly. As David Peters-Corbett has identified, throughout British Culture that was an inability to fully mourn the war, despite its very public visibility through the erection of war monuments and indeed, the



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disabled soldiers coming home. Moore's early work is usually discussed in terms of the impact of Gaudier-Brzesca, Jacob Epstein, his engagement with ancient Mexican sculpture, the impact of Picasso, and his later draped women, discussed in terms of Greek and Roman Classical sculpture. So as such, Moore's work is firmly positioned within a narrative of modernist avant-garde art. So it's very difficult to sort of break down those barriers, and to think about why Moore didn't engage more openly with the First World War. But what I want to suggest tonight is that after demobilisation at the age of 20, Moore set himself on a particular path to become an artist, and the First World War shaped his world view, his sensitivity to human suffering, and his belief in the sanctity of human life. I think it's precisely because of these beliefs that war did not become an expressly evident subject matter for his work. To my mind Moore left the army as a young man ready to live life. I think the experience of war made him exceptionally focused about what he wanted to do, and single-minded in his ambition to become a sculptor. What I want to argue, however, is that it is possible to see 'flash-points', where these reverberations of the First World War sort of seep to the surface, if you like, possibly, probably, unintentionally, but in quite a stark way.

But before I go on to identify and discuss individual works of art, I think it might be useful just to give some background to Moore's army career and his war experiences. The historian Graham Dawson has suggested that at the turn of the century, when Moore was a child, the turn of the 20th century, the idea of the soldier-hero was incredibly potent. The soldier as a protector of a family, home, and nation was pervasive, and the production of war stories, toys, and books, constructed to very particular definitions of masculinity, wrapped up around ideas of bravery, valour, and heroism. When war was announced in July 1914 Moore was still at Castleford Grammar School, aged 15, and was about to sit his exams to start a teacher-training course. He recalled later in life that in 1914 quote: "There was a kind of excitement. Being only a student, it seemed some way off. But I remember a zeppelin raid in the night-time, standing out in the back yard, and in the fields, and so on. Those kinds of things that were different things from normal, everyday life."

However, even at this young age with the war just being a distant exciting thing that's going on elsewhere, Moore knew that he wanted to be a sculptor, and at school these ambitions were encouraged by his headmaster, T.R. Dawes, and his art teacher Alice Gostick. So it's within this context of war that Moore made his first carving, 'The School's Roll of Honour', listing ex-pupils who were serving in the war. And Moore's name would later be added to the list. This is a photo of Moore with his platoon, taken in Winchester in 1917. And within the context of the



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soldier hero, it should perhaps come as a surprise that when Moore reflected on his youthful experiences, he states in 1961:

"For me, the war passed in a romantic haze of hoping to be a hero. Sometimes in France there were 3 or 4 days of great danger, when you thought there wasn't any chance of getting through. Then all one felt was sadness, at having taken so much trouble for no purpose. But on the whole I enjoyed the army."

And again in 1986, shortly before his death, he said: "I was not horrified by war, I wanted to win a medal." These statements are difficult to tally with what we now know of the horrific circumstances of trench warfare, and yet the echoed experiences of many young men involved in the conflict raised in stories of military heroism, and in the poem 'The Disabled' Wilfred Owen tries to grapple with exactly these types of conflicts of wanting to be celebrated, the disabled soldier remembering the promise of daggers and plaid socks, whilst sat in a wheelchair waiting for the dark.

So Moore was 18 and a half when he volunteered to join the army. He recalled: "My father, who was a sensible and intelligent person said 'It's much better if you decide to volunteer and choose your own regiment, instead of being called up' and he didn't want me to go into the Yorkshire Light Infantry, which was the local regiment. He thought it wouldn't be any different experience, I would only be meeting the same kind of people that one met all of the time. And he sent me to London."

So here we have the young Moore, with the encouragement of his father venturing out into the world, strategically leaving his home in Yorkshire, in order to meet different types of people, to widen his world view. And when he went down to London in February 1917 to enlist, he met another young man called Douglas Houghton, who later became a prominent MP. Houghton and Moore hit it off, and together they enlisted in the Civil Service Rifles. Moore's army training started in London, and later in Winchester, and photographs held amongst Houghton's papers in the People's History Museum in Manchester give an insight into this training. Trenches dug into the English countryside, and the young men enacting battle tactics in the sunshine. By all accounts, Moore's experiences of training were not unhappy. In 1980 he recalled that since he was the youngest in his battalion, quote: "The older people gave me their rum rations, just to see me drunk." And in letters home to Alice Gostick, he recounted going to the pictures, taking long walks, and sketching in his spare time. In early 1917 he wrote:

"I don't know how to thank you for the letters, cigarettes and chocs. You really are the best friend I have away from home. I have something horrible to tell you. I haven't done any sketches of any account. The time slips by wonderfully down here."



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But Moore was indeed sent to France, and he arrived in mid-August 1917. And his letters are similar to those sent by many men from the trenches, expressing astonishment at his ability to get by on 2 hours sleep, descriptions of the weather, expressing nostalgia for his home, describing the whizz-bang of big German guns. Significantly the historian Jessica May has identified that in many soldiers' letters home, soldiers often softened their accounts of their experiences by giving them dreamlike qualities, so instead of describing the reality of events, describing them as though it was a dream. And Moore does exactly the same thing. In October 1917 he writes to Alice Gostick:

"We're not sleeping at night, we're doing fire step sentry, two at a time. One looks over the top, whilst the other sits near him, on the fire step, ready for an emergency. If one likes to let one's imagination run ahead, one can be quite convinced that the barbed wire posts are forming fours, or advancing in lines towards your trench. The only thing to do in that case is to divert one's gaze to some other object, and its 10-1 that that will also become animated. However, you've got to put up with it until the hour's duty is up."

And so here we have Moore, instead of describing the actual job of sentry duty, he's describing these dreamlike qualities, and it's a strategy of avoidance, to discuss the events that he would use later on in life. On November the 28th 1917 Moore's battalion moved to Borlin Wood and engaged in the army's assault on Cambrie. Although the assault had initially been successful, the German counter-attack was fierce, with heavy aerial bombardments of gas and shells. Moore was posted with the Lewis gun team, and he attempted to shoot down the German planes. He recalled the corporal was drunk, and that he had had to take control. The battle of Cambrie was brutal, and Moore was lucky to have survived, but he said "I was young, and it was all romantic, heroic, excitement." Moore was not unscathed, and showed symptoms of gas poisoning. He made it back to a field hospital, where he was identified as a stretcher case, and sent back to England, where he recuperated in a hospital in Cardiff, Swansea, and later Schrum by Sea, near Brighton. Coincidentally, Douglas Houghton was also convalescing in Schrum, and the two met up again and renewed their friendship. In a letter, dated the 25th of March 1918, Houghton described what he was getting up to, and although he doesn't mention Moore by name, he mentions a pal, and I like to think that the pal he's talking about is Moore. And Houghton says:

"To stay in camp is to get fed up. Saturday went to Brighton, my pal and I, and we had a bath, a walk, a tea, pictures, a snack, before returning to camp, and a bus ride home. Sunday we went to Worthing, we had an afternoon's rest on the beach, tea, an orchestral recital on the pier, and a bus ride home."

So while I don't think Moore enjoyed his experience of the war, when he says that he enjoyed his time in the army, I think it's possible that what he's talking about



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are these kinds of excursions, the moments outside of the army environment, the recitals and the cinema, and so on. Once well again enough, Houghton and Moore moved to Mill Hill, and then Aldershot to take a course to become army physical training instructors. And on the 3rd of June 1918 Houghton writes: "Our orderly wakes us up at 7:30 am. Breakfast is at 7:50. We attend the gymnasium at 9 am and work, work with a vengeance, 'til 12:30. Dinner is at 1, we then attend the gymnasium from 2 'til 4. There are two breaks of 15 minutes, one in the morning, and one in the afternoon."

So given this regime, it's perhaps unsurprising that the pale and frail Moore should have been transformed into a fit healthy vigorous man in just the space, seemingly, or a few months. Houghton's physical training book, again held in the People's History Museum in Manchester gives an idea of the typical types of activities that Moore and his colleagues undertook at Aldershot. Houghton's book contains notes on lectures on anatomy and physiology. They learnt about muscles, ligaments, cartilage, with a view of training young soldiers in the art of arm to arm combat, and they were also training bayonet techniques. And it's tempting to suggest that Moore's knowledge of the body and its physical workings comes from this education. The passing out photograph of the training course shows Moore smiling in the top left hand corner, standing next to Houghton. And after passing the course in the summer of 1918, they re-joined the Civil Service Battalion in Wimbledon in early November 1918. Despite the armistice of November the 11th, Moore and his battalion were nonetheless sent back to France. By the time he arrived peace had been established, and during November, December, and January 1919 he undertook what he described as "Ephemeral duties." Because he'd been a student, and a student teacher before the war, he was entitled to early demobilisation, and he returned to Castleford in spring 1919, where he again returned to his teacher training course. But back at home Moore announced his determination to become an artist, and refused to follow his father's advice to continue his teacher training career. War had given him the self-confidence to pursue his own career path, despite his father's wishes. And Alice Gostick helped Moore apply for an exserviceman's grant, and he secured a place at Leeds School of Art for the forthcoming year, to start in September 1919. In 1980 Moore explained that after the war, quote: "I wasn't going to be thwarted in what I wanted, and so in that sense the war in my career has been a great help, and I wouldn't be without that experience. It isn't a period that I disliked, no, I enjoyed it enormously."

However, in his book 'The Great War in Modern Memory', Paul Fussel warns of the dangers of looking at letters written by soldiers from the front for an accurate account of their war experiences. Similarly, I think we should look at later recollections with similar caution, and recognise that some of these statements



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are perhaps a little bit misleading, because Moore's insistence in discussing his wartime experience in terms of romantic heroism and excitement suggest, as his biographer notes, that he appeared to walk away from war entirely unscathed emotionally. So beneath the bravado I simply don't believe that Moore wasn't emotionally scarred in some way. And despite embracing his life as a student here at Leeds, we know that Moore did think about his war experiences, and was deeply troubled by the deep devastation that he'd witnessed. In a remarkable letter to Lucy Margarita Duffy, known as Shoes, also known as Gretta, Moore gives a unique insight into his true experiences of war, or rather his true feelings of war. But again he does so in kind of an elliptical manner. He writes about the war within the context of a conversation about poetry and God, and he says: "Death, since the war is not, I think, a stranger to many of our modern poets. Many people however make death a stranger from their fear of it, their fear of even its contemplation. My experience in France made me think much about God, and death, and duty. Some of my thoughts were very vague, too vague, some of them, to be expressed. The one great mistake in religion, as I have known it, is the belief it creates in one, that god is on my team. He is strong, and powerful, and good. But were He almighty, the things I saw and experienced, the great bloodshed, the great pain, the insufferable agony, and the depravity, the tears, and inhuman devilishness of the war would, could, never have been." This is an exceptional letter, there's nothing else in the archive similar to it, and when Moore later talks about the First World War he doesn't talk about emotional reaction or response to it. He talks about trying to be brave and winning medals. So this, I think, just opens the doors into Moore's mind-set about war, and goes on to inform his later career. And it's quite astonishing to think that those words are coming from a guy who's larking about with his friends, and embracing student life. There's a tension there, which I think, is one of the reasons why he doesn't talk about it. So having given an overview of Moore's army career and his emotional response to war, I'm going to now move on to think about how the war impacted on his artistic career, and then look at some sculptures in a bit more detail. After Leeds he went to the Royal College of Art in London in 1921, and the First World War had an impact on his career in quite an unusual way. Under the leadership of Professor Francis Derwent-Wood the RCA teaching of sculpture focused almost entirely on Figuration, and was concerned with the styles and techniques of ancient Greek and Roman statuary, and the Italian Renaissance, and Derwent-Wood's very anatomically correct sculpture is a good example of the Ypres of things that students were taught to make at the RCA. But when Moore arrived in 1921 Derwent-Wood was often away, he was often busy working on his public sculpture commissions, many of which were First World War memorials, so he



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left the sculpture studios in the hands of the more liberal Teacher Barry Heart. Unbeknownst to Derwent-Wood, Heart allowed Moore to experiment with direct carving, and stone carving. And so instead of working in the Classical tradition, Moore aspired to the work of the Modernist Mauri Gaudier-Brzeska and Jacob Epstein, and work produced work that emulated their physically strong, geometric style, seen in this work 'Dark of 1922'. So in a strange way Moore had an enormous amount of freedom because of the legacies of the First World War and the types of art-work that were being commissioned in the post-war period. And building on those student, modernist experiments, in the later 1920s Moore embarked on a series of [masks](#), made in a variety of different stones, and cast in concrete. These have been interpreted through Moore's interest in ancient sculpture, Picasso's Cubism, and this fits neatly within narratives of modern art. However, in 2007 Jeremy Lewison suggested that we should think again as to why Moore was interested in ancient Mexican sculpture. He suggests that the violence surrounding Aztec culture, and its brutality, may have been part of the attraction. So the idea here is that we have a flashpoint, we have Moore being able to address the theme of violence and bodily mutilation through the narrative of ancient Aztec sculpture, I would suggest elliptically thinking about violence of war, but disguising it. As part of the series of masks in 1929 Moore made a mask sculpture in lead, and I think this particular mask is almost impossible to discuss in terms of this primitive ancient Mexican narrative, and at this point I've really got to apologise for the quality of the slides, because this work exists in a private collection, there are almost no photographs of it. However, it was exhibited in the Tate Britain's recent exhibition of Kenneth Clark exhibition at Tate Britain, and the Tate photographic department did their hardest to find me an image, but somehow this was the one sculpture that wasn't photographed, incredibly. Anyway, when I saw this sculpture I was absolutely gob smacked, because it was so unlike any of Moore's other masks. Whereas the masks that you might be familiar are sort of flat, and they have this found face, this work has a kind of triangulated shape, and it's sunken, and fleshy, and sallow cheeked, and the use of the lead as a material gave the appearance of being soft and malleable, like a piece of meat. And the metallic sheen of it gave it a very strange, uncanny feeling, and it's just really strange. And I think in this particular work we can see the reverberations of the First World War. Susanna Binhoff has noted that advances in military tactics and weaponry resulted in entirely new kinds of injuries, and unforeseen carnage during the First World War. An estimated 60,500 British soldiers suffered head or eye injuries. But while facial mutilation was the subject of vivid journalistic writing, and extensive medical documentation, it was almost never illustrated in the war-time press. Binhoff suggested that in the post-war years, and indeed up until recently, there was in Britain a collective



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looking away from veterans with facial disfigurements. Aside from the work of Henry Tonks which you can see here, she points out that the disfigured face is almost entirely absent from British Art. But what I'd like to suggest is that actually here in Moore's work, unintentionally, is one of these art-works that actually does address facial disfigurement. And while this is all clearly very speculative, Moore never made another work in lead, another mask in lead, and I get the sense that, having made this sculpture in lead, he almost shocked himself, and he didn't want to return to that presentation of the deformed human face in that material. There's something about lead and the deformed face which unsettled him. And he was acutely aware of the physical trauma of warfare, and in 1939, at the outbreak of the Second World War, he wrote "When the time comes that I'm asked, or have got to do something in this war, I hope it will be something less destructive than taking part in the actual fighting and killing. There ought to be ways of being used, even as a sculpture, in making splints etc., or jobs connected to plastic surgery." And so I think it's really interesting that Moore identifies plastic surgery as a potential job that he could do during the Second World War. He is conscious of the bodily devastation that a mechanised warfare will bring, and he wants to help. The First World War period saw considerable advancements in plastic surgery, and the development of prosthetic plates. And in 1961 he held an exhibition in aid of the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund, where he paid particular attention, or was particularly concerned about the welfare of soldiers from the Second World War, who had suffered facial disfigurement. So I think we can definitely see that there is something about facial disfigurement that Moore was acutely aware of. The other works in lead from the early 30s that Moore made included two reclining figures and a head, and in this reclining figure of 1931 in lead Moore engaged in a technique of thinning out metal to create hollowed torsos traversed by a rib-cage. The consequent creation of an internal space within the body was something that Moore would explore throughout the 1930s. But although, to my mind, this sculpture can certainly be discussed in terms of the representation of the skeletal body, the fallen warrior on the ground, the special forms are what critics at the time highlighted. And so I think it's interesting that scholars attempted to discuss this early metallic reclining figure in a language that was more perhaps more relevant to Moore's later figures that recall rhythmically rolling hillsides and the whole and the internal-external force. But there's something about lead, as I've said, as a material that makes Moore, I think, think about conflict. And my belief that the early lead works could, and should, be regarded within a narrative of Moore's thinking about the First World War, and war in general, is supported by the fact that in the face of the Second World War, Moore returned to this material. Between 1931 and 1938 he didn't make any lead sculptures, and then suddenly



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he makes a whole group of them in 1938, 1939, 1940, which all seemingly engage with militaristic themes. It seems to me that with war on the horizon, Moore recognised that lead, with what he described as "its poisonous qualities" was an appropriate material for sculpture at this particular moment in time. In 'The Helmet', Moore presents a standing abstracted figure enclosed within a domed shelter, and in 1962 he explained the form and the subject, saying "It may have some psychological thing behind it; the mother and child idea perhaps." Again, I think, Moore here is avoiding reference to war, which with our hindsight perhaps seems obvious. Given that in the same interview he went on to say "I meant the sculpture to have a kind of mechanical vitality." I can't really believe that the theme of the mother and child was the thing that was uppermost in his thoughts, or at the very least the thing that was driving the creation of this work. The sculpture itself, 'The Helmet' was developed from a series of drawings, and in the 1950s Moore would return to 'The Helmet Heads' series, again in lead. In 1960 Will Groman asserted that the interior shape of ['Helmet Head Number 1'](#), quote "Has something repellent, technological, and war-like about it, that is not unlike a stereo telescope. During the air-attacks of London, during the Second World War, Moore's thoughts must have circled around life and death that subsequently lead to the compositions such as these. The helmet and the internal shapes of the 1950s are in any case frightening, combative, and compositions not far removed from the representations of death." So although Groman acknowledges the context that the Second World War may have informed this work. I also see the legacies and reverberations of the Great War. Although steel helmets had been introduced into the British Army in 1915, and increased chances of survival, they did little to protect faces from shrapnel and flying shell fragments. Innovations in weapons technology were responsible, as I've said, for new kinds of facial wounds, and as we've seen, Moore was acutely aware of the need for facial protection. In 2006, Julian Andrews suggested that rather than look at the gas masks or apparatus of the Second World War, Moore's helmets were directly related to experience of the German counterattack at the battle of Cambrai. Andrews suggests that 'Helmet Head Number 1' bears a strong resemblance to the German Coalscuttle helmet, the Stalheim M16, and he pays particular attention to the two nodules that are located on the top of the visor of the helmet, which seemed to echo the nodules on the German helmet. Andrews' interpretation of 'Helmet Head Number 1' may have been informed by Moore's series of helmet head lithographs made in 1974-75. In terms of the First World War this is a really significant body of work for Moore, because as far as I've been able to find out, this is the only instance in which he makes a direct correlation between his artwork and his experiences of the war. And he says, well, in the preface to the portfolio he described his



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dissatisfaction with some of his helmet head drawings, and having torn them up he realised the power of the fragments, and he said "Whilst working on these new prints, I surrounded the head fragments with frames or window openings to give them the suggestion of soldiers observing the enemy from concealed positions behind battlements." I've claimed he's making a direct link between his own experience of the First World War, and reading that quote now I've just realised he doesn't actually say "My experience but hopefully, I think, you get the point, and are going with me. As with Moore's letter to Alice Gostick written from the trenches, trench warfare involved many hours of watching and waiting, but despite this need to be attentive, at the time an American surgeon, Fred Alby stated: "Soldiers seem to think they could pop their heads up over a trench, and move quickly enough to dodge the hail of machine gun bullets." And I think in the work ['Wild Eye'](#) Moore expresses the wide-eyed panic a soldier realises that dodging the bullets simply isn't possible. And no discussion of Moore's war experiences can be complete without a consideration of his 'Warriors', made in the 1950s. In 1955 Moore explained "The idea of the warrior came to me at the end of 1952, or very early 1953. It was evolved from a pebble I found on the sea-shore in the summer of 1952, which reminded me of the stump of a leg, amputated at the hip." Interestingly, interpretations of this work have prioritized the pebble in that quote. Art critics and historians have sought to position this work alongside Moore's sculptures developed from rocks and other organic materials, demonstrating how Moore found inspiration in the natural world. But we might also want to think about where Moore had first seen an amputated leg, amputated at the hip. Why was this memory triggered by a pebble on the beach? And I would suggest it's his memories coming to the fore. Moore amended the orientation of 'Reclining Warrior', changed and enlarged it to create ['Warrior with Shield'](#). In Moore's opinion, the amendment to make it a seated figure, and the addition of a shield, changed the sculpture from an inactive pose, into a figure which, though wounded, was still defiant. However, despite this seemingly being, in Moore's eyes, a defiant position, it's notable that again the head has suffered a terrible wound. There's a slash right through the front of the face, as though recalling some of the gaping wounds that Moore may have seen, and indeed certainly recalling, in my mind, some of Henry Tonks's pastel drawings. But instead of positioning Moore's Warriors within the narrative of war, critics and art historians have positioned these sculptures in terms of the work of sculpture from Ancient Greece, and Moore had visited Greece in 1951. And Herbert Read stated of 'Warrior with Shield' "There is a distinct Hellenic note." He doesn't engage with the possibility that these works come from Moore's own memories, that the Warriors of the 1950s are armed with a curved shield seems to place them beyond or outside of the contemporary moment, or at least the Twentieth Century



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moment. The shield with the use of the term 'warrior', rather than soldier, suggests that the figures belong to the past, and such was Will Groman's conviction that Moore's ['Fallen Warrior'](#), and the Warrior series was based in Greek sculpture. In 1960 he refuted that they could have stemmed from Moore's experiences of war. Groman stated that the Warriors, quote: "Cannot be explained by his war experience in London, or the re-awakening of dreamlike memories of the First World War. It is certainly not the remoteness of time that makes this unlikely, but the figure of the Warrior itself, which has nothing to do with the anonymous, technological mass slaughter." So we have this art historian saying 'well it's a warrior and that's got nothing to do with the war,' without perhaps turning that on its head and thinking 'well, there's a soldier, and Moore has worked as an official war artist, and he was a soldier himself, so maybe there is something to that.' And this idea perhaps is backed up by Moore himself. In 1980, so the idea that these works stem from his own memories, in 1980 Moore recalled, quote "I remember seeing my first dead body, which was the first I had seen. It was a shock, I didn't know the person was dead until I went up and shook him, and he fell over." Immediately after recalling this instance, however, Moore went on to say that he wasn't super sensitive to the experience, and again, reiterated "I was a boy of 18, and I meant to win a medal." So he gives this glimpse of something that he's remembered, this is 1980, and he's remembering this moment. But he then kind of refutes it, and I can't help but look at 'Fallen Warrior', and wonder whether Moore was seeking to express his war-time experiences, but found he was only able to do so under the guise of antiquity. And as we know, from his earlier letters, Moore was deeply affected by the First World War, and during the Second World War in his letters to Arthur Sale he expressed very conflicted feelings of hating the war and this destruction that it brings, but at the same time acknowledging that his position as a war artist puts him in a sort of strange position within a sort of institutional face of Britain's war-time aspirations. But he wrote to Arthur Sale in 1940 "It was only a year or two after being demobilised that the sight of a khaki uniform began to mean everything in life that was wrong, and wasteful, and anti-life, and I still have the same feeling. But in this conflicted state of mind I have so far been able to keep on working, because along with human relationships, with Irina [his wife] and my own family, and some others, it's what matters most to me. And about the importance of painting, sculpture, poetry, and all the arts, I have clear convictions, and think that the artists, like the poet, makes through his work a basic attack on what is wrong with the running of the world." And so to finish, I just want to propose that many of Moore's works hold within them the deep disturbing traumas of the First World War, even when they don't have militaristic subjects. Again, possibly recalling or echoing what he said to



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Arthur Sale in 1940, in 1957 he wrote "I personally believe that all life is conflict, that's something to be accepted. One must try and find synthesis, to come to terms with opposite qualities. All that is bursting with energy is disturbing, not perfect. This disturbing quality of life goes hand in hand with the disturbing quality of our time." So in the early 1930s Moore carved a series of [female torsos](#) in a variety of stones and cast concrete. Each apparently staring anxiously into the middle distance. And I believe that it's in these works the disturbing quality of life, all that's wrong with the world, is expressed. These sculptures are usually indicted through Moore's interest in ancient Mexican or Sumerian sculpture, and he certainly knew of the work [on the right] from the British Museum. In an article published in *The Listener* he admired the way that the sculpture, Sumerian sculptures, seemed to have a contained power. They were still, they were calm, and the way that they held their hands in front of their body seemed to express a kind of content power that Moore greatly admired. But in comparing the Sumerian sculpture with Moore's works I don't see calm, I don't see a sense of internal satisfaction, or internal reflection. In Moore's women I see wide-eyed, scared, and anxious women, in this work in particular, it seems to be a precursor of Moore's lithographs from the 70s of eyes peeking up over window frames. So I'd like to suggest that this type of presentation of the female form, wrapping her arms around her torso, of holding her hands in front of herself, can be linked to [Jacob Epstein's Rock Drill](#) of 1913-14. Made before the First World War, Epstein's sculpture was originally mounted on a mechanical drill, and was an expression of the vortist's fascination with mechanical power. By 1916, however, Epstein had removed the drill, and presented the bronze torso as an amputated robot, incubating its offspring in its belly. Epstein later declared that the *Rock Drill* was, quote: "A thing prophetic of much of the Great War." And it seems to me that in his series of half women, both the felt tensions, the disturbing quality of the time, and the artistic legacy of Epstein is addressed. In 'Half Figure Number 1' of 1929, the female figure wrings her hands in front of her. In contrast to *Rock Drill*, however, the carved niche in her belly is empty. Perhaps she has lost her child to the war, and the emotion that we see her on her face is grief. For me, the reverberations can be found throughout Moore's work, and I suggest his first-hand experiences of war had a formative impact on his life. From the archival material, and interviews that have been left to us, it's evident that Moore rarely spoke or wrote about the emotional turmoil that he deeply felt. The narrative of youthful heroism he constructed in public protected him, I think. But as he suggested, art was a way of communicating all that he felt that was wrong with the world. The First World War informed Moore's personal politics, and his artistic vision. He sought to ensure that only those closest to him knew the full extent of the trauma that he'd suffered. And so, to conclude, I'll just leave you



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with a quote from Kenneth Clarke made in 1974. So successful was Moore in his ability to shield his true emotions, and true experiences of the First World War that Clarke was able to write, quote: "The deep disturbing well from which emerged his finest drawings and sculpture was never referred to, and no-one meeting him could have guessed at its existence." Thank you.

