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Paul Elmer More as An Interpreter of American Literature

Margaret-Mary O'Neill
Loyola University Chicago

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PAUL ELMER MORE AS AN INTERPRETER OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

By

Margaret-Mary O'Neill

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Loyola University

June

1946


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The purpose of this investigation is to analyze Paul Elmer More's interpretation of American literature in the light of his critical standards and religious philosophy. During the early decades of the present century American criticism developed strikingly, and three distinct types of criticism are distinguishable: sociological, historical, and aesthetic. The American critics derived their standards from European tradition: classical, romantic, and realistic. In respect to tradition, More belongs to the classical line. Following World War I, men sought for liberalism in doctrines and standards of thought, life, and art. Opposed to the liberals in literary criticism were critics who, true to the moral strain embedded in the American character, correlated aesthetic standards with ethical standards. Paul Elmer More and Irving Babbitt during this period were the outstanding New Humanists in the field of criticism. In conformity with the philosophy of Humanism, More conceived man as having a twofold nature: as an animal man belongs to the realm of physical laws, and his actions in this respect are willed and directed by the Author of nature; as a human being he has the faculty of conscious directive purpose and is responsible morally for his actions. Literature, for More, is the reflection of life. It was, therefore, in the perspective of the philosophy of duality that he judged American literature. In the author's study of More's eleven volumes
of Shelburne Essays and the three volumes of the New Shelburne Essays it has been her constant concern to determine Paul Elmer More's literary standards as they are compounded with his ethical criterion, to present his application of them to the works of American writers, and to evaluate his interpretation of American literature.
CHAPTER I

THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ETHICAL IDEAS OF PAUL ELMER MORE

At the turn of the century Paul Elmer More turned from his feeble attempts in the field of poetry and directed his intellectual energy to literary criticism. This step was taken after years of study, extensive reading, and experience as a professor and a lecturer. Intimate with the literature and philosophy of the Greek and Latin writers, with the theosophic systems of India, with the medieval and modern literature of England, and with the literature of America, he devoted the years between 1904 and 1936 to the writing of critical and philosophical essays. Although in later years he was associated with the New Humanists, his work must not be considered merely as a part of a movement but rather as the fruit of the clear thinking and omnivorous reading of a sensitive man who sincerely believed that he could find in the past a scale of values which his present needed. Since the purpose of this thesis is to present him as an interpreter of American literature, it is pertinent that an examination of his social, cultural, and ethical principles be made. Scattered throughout his twelve volumes of Shelburne Essays, his cultural and ethical views are exposed, but in particular it is in the volume Aristocracy and Justice, that his social views are most explicitly presented.

What disturbed More most was the chaotic condition of American
society and its literature which resulted from an acceptance of a false materialistic philosophy. As he examined the life and activities of his countrymen he recognized as evils many things which other people were accepting as blessings. Democracy, relaxed manners, humanitarianism, social justice, feminism, and science in its influence on man's thinking on the eternal truths of life are targets of his pointed criticism.

Paul Elmer More is as suspicious of democracy as was Matthew Arnold in the middle of the nineteenth century. To More, democracy is an invidious mob desire to level life to mediocrity and a mere drift of sentiment. The freedom which democracy assures her citizens, he believes, will ultimately lead to anarchy and despotism. He denounces as a cure for the evils of democracy the cry that is most often heard "more democracy". What is his suggestion for the eradication of the evils of democracy? His remedy is "better democracy". How a "better democracy" can be secured he explains in his "Natural Aristocracy" thus:

A natural aristocracy does not demand the restoration of inherited privilege or a relapse into the crude domain of money; it is not synonymous with oligarchy or plutocracy. It calls rather for some social consciousness which shall insure both the selection from among the community at large of the best and the bestowal on them of power; it is the true consummation of democracy.

2 Ibid., p. 28
3 Ibid., p. 29
4 Ibid., p. 30
To what men of society does Paul Elmer More refer in his use of the term "best" in the quotation above? He means precisely as can be gathered from this essay and others that the leaders of society should be men of culture and of character. He appeals to these "men of light" to bring about a better democracy. They must not withdraw to any ivory tower of seclusion, but rather they must keep at all times alert to their own belief, purge their minds of the current cant of humanitarianism, and remember at all times that the chief purpose of government is to create advantages for the ever-advancing exceptional men rather than to try to elevate the material welfare of the masses. They must cultivate a candid class consciousness and organize resistance to the vulgarizing tendency of democracy.

Let us, in the name of a long suffering God, put some bounds to the flood of talk about the wages of the brick-layer and the trainman, and talk a little more about the income of the artist and teacher and public censor who have taste and strength of character to remain in opposition to the tide. Let us have less cant about the great educative value of the theatre for the people and less humbug about the virtues of the nauseous play, and more consideration for the larger minds. Let us forget for a while our absorbing desire to fit the schools to train boys for the shop and the counting room, and concern ourselves more effectively with the dwindling of those disciplinary studies which lift men out of the crowd. Let us in fine not number ourselves among the traitors to their class who invidiae metu non audent discere.  

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5 Paul Elmer More, op. cit., p. 29
6 Ibid., p. 32 Translated: through fear of unpopularity do not dare to speak out.
Of men's mental faculties the imagination plays an important role in the life of society; it is the instrument which controls public opinion. Since it is the higher institutions of learning in America which are the guardians of the great body of knowledge and tradition inherited from the past, it is their responsibility to dispense this knowledge and to train the higher faculties of man; it is to them that society turns for assistance in restoring to their rightful position in the curriculum those studies which train the imagination not exclusively in its aesthetic function, but which develop it in the power to grasp in a firm vision the long course of human history and to distinguish the essential from the ephemeral in it. Paul Elmer More regrets that the colleges of America are too intent upon training the students to recognize and to study the problems of the day. As a consequence of this over-emphasis on the immediate questions of government, of civic life, and of economics, he believes, the students have been deprived of the rich intellectual nourishment of the inheritance of the past ages, and as graduates they bear the same relation to the men of genuine education as the "nouveau riche bears to the man of inherited manners."7

The destiny of education is intimately bound up with the question of social leadership. The college should aim to develop a "natural aristocracy"8 or, it will, in failing to do so "degenerate for jeunesse

7 Paul Elmer More, "Natural Aristocracy", op. cit., p. 57
8 Paul Elmer More, "Academic Leadership", Aristocracy and Justice, Shelburne Essays, p. 45
The most important condition to bring about such a class is discipline. Without discipline, Paul Elmer More believes, "the mind will remain inefficient just as surely as the muscles of the body without exercise will be left flaccid." To develop this mental discipline the educators must select suitable studies for their basic training of students of college level. He recommends for the core of the curriculum the classics and the mathematical sciences. It is with a feeling of vexation that More surveys the nineteenth century and observes that the growing tendency of the period was to turn the attention of the investigating specialist away from the value of the classics as an imperishable body of literature; the study of which provides for mental discipline. From experience in his capacity as editor, More recognized the difference in the manuscripts presented for publication between those whose authors were trained in the classics and those whose authors had received most of their training in the sciences, particularly, this is so, in the non-mathematical sciences. He found that the classical scholars showed uniformly "signs of a habit of orderly and well governed cerebration", while those trained exclusively in the sciences exhibited an inability to think clearly and consecutively as soon as they are free from the restraint of merely describing the process of an experiment. The study of the classics provides the mind with the proper

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10 Ibid., pp. 45-46
11 Ibid., p. 47
disciplinary exercises for its full development.

The sheer difficulty of Latin and Greek, the highly organized structure of these languages, the need of scrupulous search to find the nearest equivalents for words that differ widely in their scope of meaning, from their derivatives in any modern vocabulary, the effort of lifting oneself out of the familiar rut of idea into so foreign a world, all these things act as a tonic exercise to the brain.12

No one would disagree with More regarding the power of the classics to develop discipline in mental activity. It seems, however, that the workers in the experimental sciences, such men and women as Michael Faraday, Madame Curie, Robert Koch, would challenge More's argument for the classics and mathematical sciences exclusively for disciplining the intellect. Is it not the boast of men in the field of science that its study trains the mind to think clearly and effectively, to be open minded when studying a question, to refrain from jumping at conclusions, to examine new ideas without prejudice even though they may not fit in with our own favorite beliefs, to analyze a problem thoroughly, to weigh all evidence with care, and not to accept a conclusion unless it is in accordance with all the observed facts? It seems that the term "discipline" should fit the description of these exercises of the mind. Rather than making a plea for the classics and the mathematical sciences for the core of the curriculum of the college, it would seem that Paul Elmer More would have won a hearing

12Paul Elmer More, "Academic Leadership", op. cit., p. 48
for his argument if he had emphasized the importance of a balanced curriculum with requirements in the classics, mathematical sciences, and non-mathematical sciences.

More continues his argument for the classics to form a part of the core of the curriculum for the great mass of undergraduates:

It is true in education as in other matters that strength comes from union, and if educated men are to work together for a common end they must have a common range of ideas with a certain solidarity on their way of looking at things.15

He believes that only by means of "common intellectual training"14 which every student must take that professional men will acquire a single "body of ideas and images in which they could always meet as brother initiates."15

It is his opinion that the American people will make quite an advancement in their educational system when it is recognized that in the college not in the university it is better to have the mass of minds receive the training and discipline of a single group of studies and allow freedom of choice in the outlying fields. This is a sound and pertinent argument that could be given consideration by educators today. From observation it seems that the training of our professional people, doctors and lawyers, has in the past been too specialised, and as a result they have very little understanding or sympathy in the problems and interests of persons in other

15Paul Elmer More, "Academic Leadership", op. cit., p. 50
14Ibid., p. 52
15Ibid., p. 52
fields of endeavor. They take for granted that the educated people understand the terminology of their special work, but they are unconcerned in acquiring some knowledge in other fields in order to appreciate the accomplishments of others. More recommends for this disciplinary training for all students in college Latin, Greek, philosophy, and the mathematical sciences, because in these studies he recognizes the power of "correction for the more disintegrating tendencies of the age", and as "instruments of education their value outweighs the service of certain other studies which may seem to be more immediately serviceable."

The end of education is social efficiency; to secure this end, therefore, efficiency of the individual scholar and unity of the scholarly class are the proper means. To make men recognize that this discipline and sacrifice of particular tastes which it involves are worthwhile, More argues, that it is necessary to persuade men that the resulting form of education meets a present and important need of society and serves those who desire the "fairer honours of society."

Education has a twofold purpose: it provides the person with a fund of information and acquaintance with men and their work of other centuries which gives him inexhaustible joy and consolation, and secondly, it has its practical value in developing his character and mind in such

16 Paul Elmer More, "Academic Leadership", op. cit., p. 52
17 Ibid., p. 52
18 Ibid., p. 53
a way that he is able to shoulder his responsibility toward the state in a fitting manner.

The leaders of society must be the educated members of it.

Unless the educated man can somehow by virtue of his education, make of himself a governor of the people in the largest sense, and even to some extent in the narrow political sense, unless the college can produce a hierarchy of character and intelligence which shall in due measure perform the office of the discredited oligarchy of birth, we had better make haste to divert our enormous collegiate endowments into more useful channels.19

Therefore, as this statement implies that the responsibility of government rests upon the educated class, it follows that the educators must keep foremost in their thinking and teaching their responsibility to the state in the preparation of youth for a useful life in society. Man learns through his own experience and through the experience of others with which he has become acquainted. The experience of society, more terms tradition. Therefore, the chief function of education is "to transfer the wealth of a selective tradition from society to an individual."20

The responsibility of the teacher does not end here; his office involves more than just the transmission of a selective tradition to those in his charge. Like the legislator and the moralist, it is the duty of the educator to arouse in those under his guidance the feeling that their own true happiness as individuals depends not on the exhibition of strength,

19 Paul Elmer More, "Academic Leadership", op. cit., p. 53
nor on the envious striving after equality, but it is confined to that social happiness which can exist only when each division of society such as male and female and each member of society has a distinct place and responsibility, and is recognized and rewarded accordingly. There can be no society unless the voice that is within each of its members responds to "the law that men must serve as well as command." 21 The teacher and the legislator must recognize the nature of their work, that it is one of "mediation, as social justice is itself always a shifting compromise." 22

What does More mean when he says that social justice is a "shifting compromise"? His own explanation is: "It is such a distinction of power and privilege, and of property as the symbol and instrument of these, as at once will satisfy the distinction of reason among the superior, and will not outrage the feelings of the inferior." 23 This idea implies the age old Christian teaching to give to each that which is his due. This is the key to the solution of social and economic problems under diverse conditions for More. Responsibility should be apportioned to each division of society according to its ability to accept it; otherwise injustice will be the result of demanding standards and achievements beyond a group's power.

Paul Elmer More was not content that the subjects offered by the university and college be complete in themselves for he says:

21 Paul Elmer More, "Justice", Aristocracy and Justice, p. 122
22 Ibid., p. 122
23 Ibid., p. 122
... If the college as an institution is to retain any value above the shop and the market-place, if the pursuit of scholarship as an end in itself is to offer any satisfaction for the finer spirits of men, then in some way those studies must be restored to authority which give zest and significance to the inner life of the soul and at the centre of that life, binding all its interests into one, lifting them above the grosser forms of utility irradiating them with joy, must be the idea of God. 24

Also in "The Old Education and the New", he expresses this need of the recognition of God and the result of the failure to do so. It appears to him that the conscious effort to create the Christian gentleman imbued with the wisdom of experience and the wisdom of revelation has been pretty generally abandoned, and he feels that education is in a confused state. Scientific efficiency, which has been made the goal of education, seems not to have taken its place entirely. As a result More says that the schools are in a "muddled suspension hovering in their discipline between the vague reminiscence of the older ideal and a no less vague desire of utilitarian success." 25 Apparently More is referring to State universities and non-sectarian colleges and universities in this criticism.

More agrees with Plato that the whole of human conduct is dependent on the right appreciation of pleasure and pain. Plato recommended that the youth be trained to enjoy what is pure, fine, and noble, for only then will

24 Paul Elmer More, "Oxford, Women and God", New England Group and Others,
Shelburne Essays, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921, Ser. xi, p. 28
be well-fitted for a wholesome and helpful life in a community. In this
discipline advocated by Plato, More recognizes standards of taste. He
defines taste as "the faculty of the soul which responds to the higher and
more permanent pleasure of art." Taste is universal in that it exists in
every individual. Each person has the faculty of taste, which may remain
dormant for a time until it is aroused by some external stimulus. To
develop taste requires severe testing on the part of an individual. It
involves a steady choice among his natural tendencies and impulses during
which process self control and self denial must often be exercised. Men
by nature are inclined to take the line of least resistance, and to avoid
that which requires effort even though the latter may in the end afford
them a higher and permanent pleasure. It is only when they recognize the
reality of permanent pleasure through the experience of others that they
will expend the energy and will persevere until they secure such pleasure.
It is at this point that the function of tradition can be clearly under-
stood. Education in its very essence sets before the young ideals the
attainment of which will afford them lasting joy. The youth becomes
acquainted with the lives of these men and women who have found delight
and satisfaction in the higher things of life. They taste of these things
and gradually develop a liking for them; as their knowledge of them in-
creases they acquire the right to judge them. More emphasizes that only
the educated man has the right to pronounce on the standards of taste.

26 Paul Elmer More, The Demon of the Absolute, New Shelburne Essays,
because he alone has had experience with the higher and the lower pleasures. The educated person is not prejudiced or one-sided in his evaluation, but rather through his training he learns to discriminate between the common things of life and the enduring things of life, and in the case of the latter he appreciates them at their time and in due proportion. Contemporary books which are wholesome he will enjoy in their place, and, on the other hand, the books which have been selected and approved by the verdict of tradition to yield the highest pleasure he will also enjoy. In the power of enjoyment of the great works of the centuries according to tradition man will delight in the knowledge that he has risen above his own limitations and has become a humble associate of those who share the heritage of time.

Taste has always played an important role in the life and literature of the world. These standards of taste of which More speaks are not to be considered as absolute, irrevocable, positive. It is rather More's wish to convey the idea that in all ages and in every race certain standards of taste exist which approximate universality. It is an unquestionable fact that every individual has standards of taste. Therefore, Paul Elmer More emphasizes that our main concern should not be whether we have standards of taste, but rather it should be whether those standards should be based on tradition - on the tried and true - or whether they should be decided upon by each generation or by each individual critic. That there is a tradition of taste is proved by history. It is "less changeable
than religious creeds; far less changeable than scientific theories. The advent of Christianity has left it untouched and the waning of faith does not trouble it." \(^{27}\) In this regard he cites the position of Homer as a great poet. The Greeks turned to Homer for guidance in life and in their writings. With the advent of the Dark Ages when the Greek language was almost forgotten in the West and Greek literature was consequently not popular, the tradition became faint yet it never became obscure, and when the revival of learning set in renewed interest in classical works stimulated interest in Homer. Again Homer was thought of as the great poet despite the antagonism he suffered from those who insisted on the authority of reason and on the authority of the age. And now in the twentieth century Paul Elmer More regards Homer's poetry as the nearest approach to pure poetry; what has been produced since is but derivative and secondary.

Art, according to More, is "the attempt, by means of the subjective imagination, to establish the experience of the individual in tradition." \(^{28}\) The poem, drama, or novel to which men return over and over again with ever renewed pleasure possesses qualities of merit and permanence. An epic poem as the *Odyssey*, which has been read by students down through the centuries, has the qualities of great art; it has become established in tradition. The distinguishing quality that gives art its permanency is its appeal to

\(^{27}\) Paul Elmer More, *The Demon of the Absolute*, p. 15
\(^{28}\) Paul Elmer More, "Definitions of Dualism", *The Drift of Romanticism*, p. 265
the higher faculty in man. In the classical tradition, Paul Elmer More recognizes in man a dual nature: there is the element of the beast as well as the faculty of control in him. The true artist aware that what appeals to the bestial in man soon arouses disgust, looks for something else, "and in that something else looks for the meaning of life."29 This does not mean that the artist must restrict his subject matter to a representation of nature in only her purity and innocence; this we know is not true for our great writers have not done so. Rather, it is the task of the true artist through subtle exercise of the imagination, by a true appreciation of the higher emotions as well as the lower, with a sincere recognition of the nature of man in his own soul to aim in his work to convey to the reader "that what makes man resemble man as different from the lower animals is that part of him that is noble in reason the master not the slave of passion."30 Thus true art is humanistic; "its gift of high and permanent pleasure is the response of our own breast to the artist's delicately revealed sense of that divine control, moving like the spirit of God upon the face of the waters."31

Genius means inspiration. The determination of a writer's genius is according to the degree to which the immediate consciousness of dualism in man and in nature enters into expression.32 In speaking of poetical

29 Paul Elmer More, The Demon of the Absolute, p. 25
30 Ibid., p. 23
31 Ibid., p. 24
32 Paul Elmer More, "Definitions of Dualism", The Drift of Romanticism, p. 265
genius, More says that there are two kinds: essential and contingent. This classification does not go hand in hand with that into major and minor poets. For illustration of the point he wishes to make he refers to Keats and Wordsworth, two major poets; the one is essentially poetic whereas the other is contingently poetic. In the case of Keats his poetry is valued for its intrinsic interest; the knowledge of the man himself does not enter specifically into the critic's estimate of the poetry. On the other hand much of Wordsworth's poetry derives its value and significance from what we know of the poet's character and philosophy. 33

For More, literature is a reflection of life. It is "in literature more manifestly than anywhere else life displays its infinitely varied motives and results."34 In the essay on Emerson, he speaks of literature as the "transmutation of life into ideas."35 These definitions carry moral implications. Since morality is inherent in life, literature being the picture of life must have moral implications.

Paradoxically two sets of opposing elements enter into literature. For literature to possess the illusion of reality and vitality it must spring from democratic soil which can be identified with the demand for the use of material of life, for simply uncontrolled emotions, for immediacy

35 Paul Elmer More, "Emerson", A New England Group and Others, p. 69
of effect, and for distinct moral decisions in the meting out of reward for the good and punishment to the evil. More says that these elements give life to literature, but cannot keep it alive. It is in the preservatives of letters that the aristocratic note gets into literature. What makes literature are the following qualities:

. . . the note of distinction which is concerned more with form than with substance, the reflective faculty which broods over the problems of morality, the questioning spirit which curbs spontaneity, the seat of discrimination which refines broad effects to the nuance, the power of fancy which transforms the emotions into ideas. In a word, the aristocratic element denotes self-control, discipline, suppression.

Paul Elmer More recognizes a close relation between art and life. He believes that if there is a question in the mind of the artist of his being true to art which would involve being false to life, that the artist would choose wisely who would be false to art and true to life. For life is above art; without life there could be no art. This idea of the close relation of art and literature with life, More clearly expresses in an essay published in 1910. He is speaking of the Victorian Age as a period of transition marked by its philosophy of change, and he says:

It has passed, and one thing at least is sure: we shall have no great literature again until

37 Ibid., p. 29
38 Paul Elmer More, "My Debt to Trollope", The Demon of the Absolute, p. 101
we have looked once more within our own breasts
and learned that there is something in human nature
besides an indefinite congeries of change.39

He believes that the writing of a true tragedy today (the end of the first
decade of the present century) would be inconceivable for the simple reason
that the mould and genre of the higher emotions have been lost as a result
of scientific progress, the desire for expansion as evidenced in the
imperialistic policy of England and America, the acceptance of an human-
itarian philosophy and the individual's yielding himself to the stream of
change.40 He continues:

... The tragic character whether it be Antigone
breaking herself magnanimously in the name of the
unwritten eternal laws against the edicts of Creon,
or Oedipus bruised and blinded by his ignorance of
the divine purpose but caught up after years of
submission into mystic fellowship with the gods,
or Hamlet musing undecided while he listens to the
fateful voices - everywhere the tragic mood depends
on the unresolved conflict in human motives be-
tween the universal and the particular, the change-
less law and the temporal passion.41

The question that seems to arise at this point is: Is it Paul Elmer
More's intention to imply that literature to be meaningful must be religious
or moral in tone or in substance? More realizing that humanism, which is
the philosophical basis of his criticism, is primarily concerned with the

39Paul Elmer More, "Victorian Literature", Shelburne Essays, Ser. vii,
p. 265
40Ibid., p. 265
41Ibid., pp. 265-266
manifestations of life in literature and in art, expresses his views thus:

"If religion is necessary for a sound basis for the exercise of the imagination it must not be something vague or ornamental, but rather a militant force that will meddle with the whole of life exacting obedience and arousing eminities."42 In this light it must not demand renunciation on the part of man of his mortal ambitions. Rather he says:

It must come into the heart of man not without austerity of command, yet with salutary hope, assuring us that our practical sense of right and wrong, of beauty and of ugliness, is justified by the eternal canons of truth, and that the consequences of one's deeds in this little segment of space may follow the soul in its flight into regions beyond our utmost guessing.43

Religion should inspire man with the conviction that the world is the creation of a foreseeing intelligence, and it must lead man to recognize greater values in visible phenomena. It is significant in the life and literature of a people. This does not mean that More thinks that the art and literature of a creative era must be "exclusively or even predominantly religious in intention, or that every individual artist must be a believer,"44 but the fact cannot be denied he says "wherever great art has flourished noble in theme as well as in technique religion has existed in the background giving a complexion to the thoughts and emotions of society."45

43 Ibid., p. 22
44 Ibid., p. 23
45 Ibid., p. 23
and lending to the natural world a beauty and charm of the supernatural. Unfortunately he who looked upon religion as the peak of culture when he said of Sainte-Beuve, "Like the royal friend of Voltaire, he still lacked the highest degree of culture, which is religion" could not become reconciled completely to any established religion. His leanings were to the Roman Catholic Church, but he could only accept her doctrines with reservations which excluded him from membership.

Paul Elmer More is very much concerned about the morals of his age. Humanitarianism, which has softened us and made us quickly to respond to the sufferings of others, which has largely eliminated the frightful cruelty that runs through the annals of history like a crimson line with a good deal of brutality of human nature, seems to be one of the chief factors of our moral weakness. Humanitarianism means to him that civic virtue can be produced by instinctive sympathy, without requiring the restraint of the inner check or the outer check of civil law. Sympathy being a personal emotion tends to variety. Instinctive self-restraint can over-ride sympathy as a social force, and the result is an unrestrained romantic self-assertion. Therefore, it is an error according to More to believe that sympathy is a power capable of taking the place of the rational self-restraint that is exercised by the higher self of man. Despite the good that humanitarianism spreads among men, there is always the chance for it

to become mixed with social sentimentalism and as a result to degrade into a "social passion." Statistics revealing the prevalence of crime, delinquency in minors, prostitution, divorce, insanity and suicide of the present age offer no comfort. Whatever the cause of this "canker of society, our social passion seems powerless to cure it." He deplores the attitude of Jane Addams in her stand regarding crime and lawlessness among the young transgressors of the law in Chicago. Her insistence that it is the result of a wholesome desire for adventure which the laws repress he interprets as a minimizing of personal responsibility and the transference of responsibility for clean, upright living from the individual to society. Again he points to the confused ways of honesty practised even in the courts of justice. He cites the case in which a Denver judge pardons a youth who stole money from the pocketbook of his Sunday school teacher because "he was not responsible, and because there were bigger thieves in the pews upstairs." Another incident, he mentions, of a lady in New York who asks if it were not a greater wrong for a girl to accept slavery wages than to sell herself in the streets. Such moral decisions were not consistent to More. He termed this morality of the period "an ulcerous evil that is ever working inward." It is not sympathy meaning a desire to

48 Ibid., p. 210
49 Ibid., p. 210
50 Ibid., p. 211
create "even-handed justice" that More condemns, but rather sympathy with
the word "social" qualifying it, as it is used today and which in this
form takes on a dangerous connotation. This social sympathy has been
formulated into a theory which leaves out the responsibility of the indi-
vidual and places the blame of his evil actions on the laws of the state
and on society. More argues that even though this "social sympathy" has
resulted in many fine reforms, it has, on the other hand, undermined the
moral stamina of the individual - it has enfeebled him and made him more
prone to temptations which can never be eliminated from human life. The
result of calling sympathy justice and allowing it to take the place of
judgment is "to relax the fibre of character and to nourish the passions
at the expense of reason and the will."51 The manners and morals of the
people suffer from this relaxation in so many insidious ways. In the early
years of the New Deal, More was a critic of the vague expansive humanitari
anism of its government. It was not because he had no concern for the
underprivileged during the wretched years of the financial depression which
brought sickness and poverty to millions, but rather he was suspicious of a
"democracy of the Heart that repudiated the aristocracy of the Intellect
and while remembering the forgotten man, forgot the memorable man."52
There is a grain of truth in this attitude toward the government's human-
itarian activities during those bitter years, yet it must be remembered

51 Paul Elmer More, "The New Morality", op. cit., p. 212
52 J. Duncan Spaeth, "Conversations with More", Sewanee Review, October, 1943, p. 541
that the government provided several thousand projects for writers, actors, artists, teachers, and musicians exclusively, which seem evidence that it had in mind the plight of the mentally gifted members of its society. In his essay "Victorian Literature" he sums up the influence of humanitarianism as a blight upon civilization:

There is no real hope for the mitigating influence of that humanitarian sympathy which has accompanied the growth of scientific intellectualism; for such sympathy is but another aspect of the same absorption in change, being an attempt of the individual to flow so to speak in the direction of every emotional impact from the world. It contains no resistance or principle of restraint but tends on the contrary to make man a helpless prey of the ever-encroaching food. The only salvation is the recognition of some superior guiding and dividing law of just rule and right subordination in the perception that is, of something within the flux.53

Paul Elmer More was a firm believer in iron legality as evidenced in his ninth volume Aristocracy and Justice. He says of the right to property:

We are bound in any clear-sighted view of the larger exigencies of the relations of man with man, to fortify ourselves against such a perversion of the institutions of government as would adapt themselves to the nature of man as he actually is and would relax the vigour of law, in pity for the degree of injustice inherent in early life. Looking at the larger good of society, we may say that the dollar is more than the man, and that the rights of property are more important than the right to life.54

53Paul Elmer More, Shelburne Essays, Ser. vii, p. 265
54Paul Elmer More, "Property and Law", Aristocracy and Justice, pp. 140-141
In 1914, he, in confirmation of this conviction that the right to property superseded the right to life, defended publicly the breaking up of the Colorado strike by armies of paid bullies and spies, a method which judges of Federal courts to this day are embarrassed to consider. More, in his defense, declared "to civilized man the rights of property are more important than the right to life." In this belief Paul Elmer More is in direct opposition to Christian Ethics which holds the tenet that the right to life takes precedence over that to property. Further in his discussion of property rights, More stresses the fact that private ownership is not only vital to the individual but is of distinct importance to society as a whole.

My desire to confirm in the dictates of their own reason those who believe that the private ownership of property including its production and distribution is, with very limited reservations, essential to the material stability and progress of society.

This statement that the right to private property is essential to the material strength and progress of society is sound, and in agreement with Christian teachings. This being true, it follows that the essential duty of a civilized community is the security of this property. But again in his argument regarding the relation of property to law he, due to over

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55 Paul Elmer More, "Property and Law", op. cit., p. 136
56 Charles Coppens, S. J., Moral Philosophy, revised by Henry S. Spaulding, S. J., Schwartz, Kirwin and Fauss, 1914, p. 81
57 Property and Law", p. 147
emphasis of this right to property, subordinates the right to life. He says:

If our laws . . . are to work for progress rather than for retrogression, they must recognize property as the basis of civilization, and must admit the consequent inequality of conditions among men. They will have little or no regard for labour in itself or for the labourer in himself, but they will provide rigidly that labour shall receive the recompense it has bargained for, and that the labourer, as every other man, shall be secure in the possession of what he has received. We may try to teach him to produce more and to bargain better, but in face of all appeals of sentiment, and all reasonings of abstract justice, society must learn again to-day that it cannot legislate contrary to the decrees of Fate.  

From the quotation stated above, it is evident that More is not interested in the physical conditions in which the labourer is employed. He explicitly states that the only regard government must have in making laws for the labourer is his wages that they are in amount equal to what he has bargained for, and that the money he has earned is protected for his use. He would agree to the distribution of educational material to help the labourer produce more and to bargain better, but there ends the duty of government to labour. "They will have little or no regard for labour in itself or for the labourer in himself," taken verbatim makes no allowance for legislation regarding sanitary conditions of buildings where the

58 Paul Elmer More, "Property and Law", Aristocracy and Justice, p. 141
59 Ibid., p. 140
labourer must work, regarding maximum hours an employer can force a la-
bourer to work in consideration of his health, or regarding protective
measures on machinery to protect the labourer from injury. The life of
the labourer is of no consequence, only his remuneration is of any impor-
tance.

Holding such a firm belief in the importance of the right of pri-
ivate ownership, it is only consistent that More is hostile to Socialism
or the public ownership of property. He does not agree with the Socialists
who say that public ownership eliminates greed and injustice in civilised
life. Furthermore, he cannot agree with them that productivity is only
slightly affected if at all. Socialism suppresses initiative, and man is
deprived of his natural instinct to possess and to manage things. Wealth
and civilisation have always gone hand in hand together; therefore, More
cannot believe that Socialism can in any way help to bring about a better
civilisation, or assist man to find happiness which is the final product
of justice.

Out of More's religious and philosophical conceptions the ethical
system inculcated in the Shelburne Essays developed. His ethical teachings
aim toward the attainment of the golden mean. To arrive at this goal, the
individual must cultivate the habit of restraint or control over his ex-
pansive nature. In proportion to his success in developing this self con-
trol he develops in character. A concise summary of his ethical creed may
be found in his article "The Lust of Empire" published in the Nation.
October 22, 1914. More believes that there exists a Power of right and justice lying beyond man’s impulsive nature which holds in check the wilful expansion of his nature; he identifies self-restraint with moral health; he places value on voluntary moderation, harmony, and proportion; he considers man’s true happiness is the outcome of self conquest, rather than the exultation over achievement of worldly honors; he emphasizes artistic achievement and intellectual growth in preference to the acquisition of wealth and power; and he urges man to seek contentment and peace rather than material success. As to the guiding ethical teaching for society More states it thus:

One knows that the battle for the good and the beautiful, and for justice in the social order, must be fought in the heart of the individual, and that progress toward the ideal cannot be made excepting through mastery of self by every son of the human race.60

George Shuster describes this as the "cardinal principle of More's doctrine."61 It is the simple old story of the chain is as strong as its links.

I shall now summarize the social, cultural, and ethical teachings of Paul Elmer More. His social and political principles stamp him conservative. Man to be true to his nature must recognize the faculty of restraint over his passions. Institutions, therefore, are necessary to

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60 George Shuster, quoted in "The Highlights of Humanism", Commonweal, April 17, 1929, p. 674
61 Ibid., p. 674
help the individual to repress his lower nature. These institutions make up what is called civilization, and its strongest bulwark is property. Order demands that some disciplinary force be established over man's will and appetite. Men must recognize inherent individual differences nature has provided, and therefore, the hierarchy and subordination of the members of society. Justice requires in this respect the proper distribution of power and privilege. The pattern for justice may be found in the moral individual soul in which there is a reconciliation of reason and feelings. The strong must cautiously exercise their will on the inferior. This is social justice, the operation of which requires a natural aristocracy.

A natural aristocracy is supported spiritually by the proper functioning of the moral imagination in every class of society. The moral imagination accepts the existence of power as good and wise. Gentle power and liberal obedience are means of harmony in every phase of life. It is the duty of the Church and the State to stimulate this moral imagination. It is also their duty to oppose innovations which might threaten the rights of property, because the safety and usefulness of institutions depend upon the inviolability of property by which a class destined to be the creators and transmitters of the world's intellectual and spiritual heritage can exercise its natural right to govern the masses.

The most important task of society, it follows, is to train the disciplined mind. Education must not be geared to the training of the masses in social and industrial arts. The function of education is to
prepare the leaders of society, in whose capable hands government should be entrusted. It is the task of the leaders to create a class consciousness, and to lead the members of society to a recognition that each person has a place and responsibility in the state and is recognized accordingly. The true aim of the state is to encourage a close alliance of the men of vision and intellectual supremacy. To attempt to raise the level of the mediocre is to upset the just inequality of nature. From these observations it seems reasonable to conclude that what More was advocating for government is an Intellectual Aristocracy. This is what apparently is the meaning of "Natural Aristocracy".

A new morality has been the outcome of the development of democracy; personal responsibility is renounced in favor of social responsibility. Human nature has been given full liberty to follow its own impulsive desires for expansion. Sympathy has been substituted for justice, and thus provision has been made for the free reign of egotistic impulses. The release of the inhibitions of reason and conscience has plunged society into a state of confusion. To save civilization the intellectual class must assume its responsibility and restore harmony and content to the individual and a contented subordination in society.

In his attitude toward politics, toward social problems, toward literature, toward art, toward life in all its varied activities More has always been the moralist. His argument has always turned on the moral aspect of the situation under consideration. Even though his moral argument
is not always acceptable, yet it is there. His belief that the right to property is superior to the right to life is un-Christian. Despite certain weaknesses which have cropped up in humanitarian programs, they have been instrumental in bringing about a more brotherly feeling among men. These are the things in his works that have aroused enmity.

Paul Elmer More has failed to recognize the world as it is - a world of surplus energy and surplus value economic and spiritual. The problem facing Americans is how to use this surplus energy. The members of society must be given direction for their desires and excess energy so that these may be guided into creative channels. In such a world personality, creative expression, cooperation, and social freedom are vital. Institutions are only valuable when they minister to the needs of the people who live under them. Also they must be flexible enough to adjust themselves to changing circumstances. He would possibly accept Democracy as a form of government if it were limited to fit his idea of a government by the intellectual men. He would require high educational standards for voters, and the choice of candidates on the basis of outstanding intellectual achievements. Liberty, for More, depends on the complete control of the passions and desires on the part of every member of society. "The freest society is that in which custom and law impose the least restraint upon the man who is self-governed and the greatest restraint upon the man who is not self-governed." 62

62 Paul Elmer More, "Definitions of Dualism", The Drift of Romanticism, p. 284
Thus it is evident in his essays concerned with social, political, and economic interests that Paul Elmer More is dissatisfied with the conditions of America of his day. The source of disease in the social, political, and economic life of America as well as in the life of our European cousins is the adoption of a false philosophy of life. This philosophy had its roots in the teachings of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Man has become a victim of his own emotions, and has lost all captaincy of his own soul. As a result he has been tossed mercilessly upon the waves of change for the past century. Man has become a prey of the degrading "isms" that have flourished on every side of him. In humanitarianism, More sees a breeding ground for communism; in sex equalitarianism, he recognizes a break down of the God-made distinctions between man and woman; in socialism, he finds the normal inequality in society disrupted; and in democracy, he distinguishes a form of government which would level all men down to the average and would finally lead to anarchy. As one considers the results of Progressive education, the relaxation of discipline in the home, the large scale employment of mothers and wives, and the dependence of never-do-well members of society upon government for the bare necessities of life, More's identification of the ills in American life seem plausible. His emphasis upon self-control and discipline in life is highly commendable in an age when these have been considered "old fashioned" except by the Catholic Church, and society must suffer failures that could have been prevented. Unfortunately, Paul Elmer More has not been able to formulate an adequate program for the
treatment of the weaknesses in American society. Restraint, discipline, justice, moral standards, and religion have their place in our progressive world of the twentieth century, but they cannot be defined in the narrow sense in which More uses them.
CHAPTER II

THE RELATION OF PAUL ELMER MORE'S

RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY TO HIS

LITERARY PRINCIPLES

The philosophy that Paul Elmer More finally accepted and evolved from his comprehensive studies was that of dualism. It is the central, unifying element of all his writings. This philosophy is More's criterion in the criticism of literature, and through literature and men of letters, in the criticism of life. It is not, however, a rigid formula by application of which More summarily accepted or condemned authors and their books. But it is a major element in his judgment and evaluation of authors and their works.

More's interest in man is the result of his consciousness of the mystery in the heart of man. Unlike many of his contemporaries who view man as an automaton of instincts and impressions from the outer world, More, through the philosophy of dualism, acknowledges man's complex nature. He perceives man as a living paradox, a union of opposed forces neither of which can be denied or ignored in the truthful analysis of man's nature, both working together to produce a unified personality essentially composed of intelligence, character, and a conscious sense of moral responsibility.

It is More's belief that during the nineteenth century man deprived
of faith in dogmatic religious basis of the traditional discipline, which
was lost in the eighteenth century, failed to find a principle of inner
discipline. Man as a result had come to conceive himself as a being tossed
hopelessly about by the flux of phenomena of inner urges and outward im-
pressions. "He has lost all title to his own soul. The attempt to recover
that title has been More's constant concern; his literary criticism never
fails to point how the author he studies has helped to obliterate or to
make it more clear." 1

In a study of Paul Elmer More's ideas on life one meets the term
"dualism", "Platonism", and "humanism". What do these terms mean in
connection with a study of Paul Elmer More? I shall take up each of these
separately and try to elucidate its meaning as used in association with
More.

More tells us that early in manhood he dropped from the allegiance
to the creed of Calvin and for a number of years devoted his time to a
search for a substitute for faith in the increase of knowledge. 2 During
these years he delved into the depths of Greek philosophy and the theosophic
systems of India. Through this period of skepticism, More examined the be-
liefs of the past, Oriental, classical, and primitive Christian. Platonism,
Neo-Platonism, and the teachings of Aristotle influenced a great part of

1 Louis J. A. Mercier, "The Challenge of Paul Elmer More", Harvard Graduate
   Magazine, June, 1936, p. 559
2 Paul Elmer More, "Saint Augustine", Shelburne Essays, G. P. Putnam's Sons,
   New York, 1909, Ser. vi, p. 65
his thinking, while in his writings there also can be detected strains of the Epicurean and Stoic doctrines as they were interpreted by Horace.

Seven volumes of essays passed from the pen of Paul Elmer More before he finally set down in fairly specific and brief definitions the terminology of the philosophy of dualism as he understood this philosophy. From the depth of consciousness the question that seemed to arise with increasing insistence for an answer More states thus:

Is there, or is there not, some element of man's being superior to instinct and reason, some power that acts as stay upon the flowing impulses of nature, without whose authoritative check reason herself must in the end be swept away in the dissolution of the everlasting flux?  

It is the philosophy of dualism that answers this question for Paul Elmer More.

In man, More recognizes two opposing forces; the higher and the lower nature; or the higher will and the flux of impulses. St. Paul, whose dogma of justification by faith, More says, "was the driving force of history and a power that remade the world", explains this dual nature of man as the result of original sin. We are released by Christ from the guilt of sin, but the inclination to it still remains in us. St. Paul teaches that the will guided by reason must voluntarily reject man's inferior appetites. There are two opposing forces, therefore, in man; "I

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5Paul Elmer More, Preface to The Drift of Romanticism, p. xiii  
4Paul Elmer More, "Criticism", Shelburne Essays, Ser. vii, p. 221
myself, with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of
sin."⁵ Man shall be delivered from sin only by cooperation "with the grace
of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord."⁶

More saw that even in the United States, which had been founded
on religious principles, the moral autonomy of the individual had been
compromised by the development of an idealism which denied the dualism of
man's nature, that he determined to find some basis for the assertion of
this dualism. He first directed his investigation to India. In Century
of Indian Epigrams rendered from the Bhartrihari he found its religious
ideas reflected.⁷ The principle of renunciation is the crux of the matter
based on the distinction between the temporary character of the pleasures
of the flesh and the permanent happiness that results from the realization
that the soul alone exists and that the outer world is but an illusion. In
this doctrine, More perceived the testimony of a long experience in the
conception of a dualism in man's nature, corresponding to the dualism at
the basis of Christian tradition. As he studied Hindu literature he came
to the conclusion that every philosophical and religious system should be
based on the perception of this contrast in the nature of man. More had
sought a basis of morality outside of revealed religion and his efforts
had resulted in discovering a critical basis for a distinction between the

⁵The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans", The Holy Bible, New
Testament, Catholic Bible House, published Philadelphia, n.d., Chap. vii,
Verse 25, p. 177
⁶Ibid., p. 177
⁷Louis J. A. Mercier, "Humanistic Dualism and Christianity", The Challenge
of Humanism, Oxford University Press, New York, 1933, p. 203
higher and the lower nature in man.8

To these sources he added others for authority in a dualistic philosophy. He states explicitly that for himself Plato was the most important source of this philosophy.

Plato is at times merely the perplexing metaphysician; oftener he speaks from the depth of unexampled self-knowledge. All that is essential to the dualistic philosophy may be gathered from his dialogue, as hints and fragments of it may be found scattered through innumerable other writers, especially the inspired poets and philosophers of life.9

In this last sentence he apparently refers to those great writers and thinkers Homer, Socrates, Aristotle, Horace, and Athanasius. And in the preface of the same volume, he refers to Plato:

If I have hearkened to this voice, it is because with this key alone I have been able to find any meaning in my own experience of life, and still more because its admonition seems to me to correspond with the inner core of truth which, however, diversified in terms and overlaid with extraneous matter, has been handed down unchanged by that long line of seers and sages from Plato and Aristotle to the present day, who form what may be called the church universal of the spirit.10

According to the philosophy of dualism as Paul Elmer More interprets and supports it, man is composed of a dual nature, the higher will and the flux of desires and impressions from the outer world. Desires are

8Louis J. A. Mercier, "Humanistic Dualism and Christianity", op. cit., p. 203.
9Paul Elmer More, "Definitions of Dualism", Drift of Romanticism, p. 268
10Ibid., p. xiv
not "the intelligent want of a definite object" but More defines them as "the mere out-reaching of vital energy." Impressions and desires cannot exist independently; in every living organism there is the constant interaction of an inner vital energy and an enveloping world. Taken together desires and impressions are called by More impulses. Now an individual's impulses pass into mental and physical activities; the latter may be associated with the animal functions of man and rarely pass to the senses. In the reaction of these activities, the physical ones manifest themselves in the form of impressions; mental ones in the form of new desires. Some of these activities are good for the individual; others are harmful. The flux is used to indicate the sum of these desires and impressions.

There is also in man a power of restraint which More calls the "inner check". The function of this inner check is negative; it is the power man has to inhibit certain impulses. The inner check not only suppresses intermittently impulses, but it also has the power to prevent their prolonged activity. While one impulse may be restrained, another impulse may rise to the surface and pass into activity. The inner check resembles an act of attention; however, it, in so far as can be expressed in rational terms, is a pure inhibition. Attention, on the other hand, is the "immediate effect of the inner check in the positive sphere of activities." As the inner check operates man becomes conscious of two opposing forces:

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11 Paul Elmer More, "Definitions of Dualism", op. cit., p. 247
12 Ibid., p. 247
13 Ibid., p. 248
14 Ibid., p. 251
the stream of impulses and the inner check co-operative and co-existent. That which is the stimulating power behind the inner check cannot be expressed in rational terms. Likewise the individual is ignorant of the ultimate source of desires and impressions or of the relation of the resulting flux of impulses to the inner check in the union called self. The more man turns his thoughts inward he becomes aware of the fact that he is ever changing and yet he is ever the same. Thus there is dualism of consciousness; a fact that cannot be rationally explained. At the center of man's being is the "will", 15 which is a direct and clear energy resulting from the eliminating or refraining of detrimental impulses. Reason is man's instrument of analysis and definition, and a part of the flux. Therefore, in its defining of elements outside of its own sphere it must employ terms which convey differences from the flux and negative in nature.

Speaking of the mental faculties according to this dualistic philosophy, More explains the meaning of the three most important ones: memory "by which we retain the effects of activities"; 16 reason or the "faculty of discretion by which we perceive sameness and difference"; 17 and imagination, "the faculty which sensualizes the data of experience apart from ourselves as separate existence." 18

Lastly, a term which is significant in the understanding of More's philosophy and which has been used in this discussion earlier is "self".

15 Paul Elmer More, "Definitions of Dualism", op. cit., p. 274
16 Ibid., p. 256
17 Ibid., p. 256
18 Ibid., p. 256
More sums up the aspects of self thus:

The soul is the total source of individuality, including, properly speaking, the inner check and the desires, and excluding the impressions derived through the body. Temperament is the part of the soul which belongs to the flux; the soul, unless it is conceived as including the inner check, is indistinguishable from the temperament. Soul and temperament cannot be conceived as actually existing in time yet apart from a body. Disposition is temperament as it works out in conjunction with the body; it is the energy, so to speak, of our organization. Impulsiveness is a weak disposition uncontrolled by the inner check. Character is disposition controlled by the inner check. Personality is the emotional sense of our disposition as an individual fact different from other dispositions.

Such is a brief survey of the dualistic philosophy as Paul Elmer More expressed it in his writings and applied it to men and their activities in his criticism. How his religious beliefs fit into this philosophy will be seen in the following pages.

To ascertain the religious views of Paul Elmer More one may refer to several of his books of essays Platonism, The Religion of Plato, Hellenistic Philosophies, The Christ of the New Testament, Christ the Word, The Catholic Faith, and in particular The Sceptical Approach to Religion. In the last volume mentioned More traces the progress of the sceptic who acknowledges the existence of a moral sense or conscience as an inherent part of man to his acceptance of the truth that God, by a process of genuine evolution toward a clearly foreseen end gradually revealed Himself to mankind and that evolution reached its pre-ordained telos in the

19 Paul Elmer More, op. cit., p. 279
Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

There is inherent in the very nature of man a purpose, a stirring of the will, however faint and intermittent, to shape [his] life and character after a pattern which is associated with a telos or end of self approval. The moral sense comes to man not by reasoning or by inference, but it is a direct perception and as a perception of an inner state it may be called intuition. This intuition is not peculiar to an individual, but it is universal with human beings.

Before proceeding further it is necessary to explain the distinction More draws between "intuition" and observation. There are two domains of experience; man's knowledge of external phenomena and the consciousness of himself, his needs, and his responsibilities. These evade destructive analysis of scepticism; yet, they appear to be mutually destructive of each other. Through intuition men are conscious of freedom, responsibility, and purpose; through observation, men appear to be like mechanisms among which they move stripped of liberty, without responsibility, and with no purpose. More asks in this regard: "Is the human world, then, at once both teleological and non-teleological?" There are several explanations of this paradox. More shows how by accepting the content of intuition as valid, one must reject, if not the data of observation at least

21 Ibid., ff. p. 7
22 Ibid., p. 7
the dogmatic inferences therefrom, as illusory. The opposition can be traced to a primary divergency of interest or emphasis. In either of these the dilemma of outer determination and inner freedom has taken possession of the mind. This contradiction resolves itself in one or two other lines as it responds more vigorously to the beckonings of outward phenomena or to the inward feelings as interest and attention on the one withdraws emphasis from the other and soon it is disregarded as an illusion. Now reason combines isolated data of observation into mechanically operated changes, and the extension of this inference to exclude the field of intuition is called rationalism. On the contrary the force fixing attention on the content of intuition as more important than the data of observation is so obscure in its origin that it has scarcely a name. To its manifestation as a more or less conscious opposition to rationalism the title is given "faith" and its life is called "religion". More defines faith thus:

... The faculty that urges us on to carry over the immediate sense of personal freedom and responsibility and purpose into our interpretation of the world at large in defiance, if need be, of that more self-assertive display of reason which we call rationalism. To faith the whole world thus becomes teleological just as the individual is conscious of being teleological, and religion is an attempt to live in harmony with a world so conceived.

Now faith unlike rationalism does not transfer our consciousness of

freedom, responsibility, and purpose to observed phenomena of the objective world, rather it infers the existence of a free and responsible Agent whose purpose is operative in the world while He Himself is transcendent to the world. Therefore, the content of faith is theistic, not pantheistic or deistic. In other words, the "inference from observation is in the direction of a materialistic or pseudo-spiritual monism, whereas, the proper inference from intuition leads to a dualism of spirit and matter." This is the meaning of cosmic teleology.

That faith is essentially theistic is evident. Belief in a God as conceived by faith must "react upon the immediate intuition of ourselves from which faith draws its content." Being under the authority of a divine Agent it is only reasonable to assume that man directs his will freely to the will of God. His sense of responsibility takes on a more definite aspect of obligation to the Ruler and Judge of life. The sense of purpose becomes a part of a vast teleology, and man puts his trust in the God of purpose to satisfy his desires. The instinctive belief in immortality whether through the immediate consciousness of life or a defensive reaction against the fear of death acquires a "new assurance from faith in an eternal and benevolent Lord of life." To these corollaries of belief which affect the human side of

27 Paul Elmer More, "Rationalism and Faith", The Sceptical Approach to Religion, p. 15
28 Ibid., p. 14
29 Ibid., p. 14
30 Ibid., p. 14
religion the theist adheres. There may be added other implications. According to More's definition of faith, it starts from and receives at least its initial content from man's direct intuition of freedom, purpose, and responsibility. 31 This consciousness of purpose means that man has in his mind an ideal of righteousness, a pattern of life more or less clearly outlined, which he voluntarily purposes to attain on his own effort. This sense of purpose all men possess. The sense of responsibility, which is an inherent factor of self-approval or self-condemnation, implies that this ideal is not the arbitrary creation of man's own imagination, but possesses authority which if neglected may mean the forfeiting of man's happiness. Now freedom implies that there is a power in man which urges him to the fulfillment of his purpose, and that there are at the same time obstacles which he must overcome to achieve this end.

Now if cosmic teleology is an inference from the teleological knowledge of myself, if faith is a transference of this triple form of consciousness to a Being who transcends the world, then we are bound by our faith to a corresponding conception of the nature and operation of such a Being . . . . If we deal with the subject honestly, we shall see that the whole history of religion from the superstition of the most ignorant savage to the creed of the most enlightened man of today does actually follow this law of correspondence. We shall discover the same influence of purpose and freedom and responsibility in the mysterious object of primitive worship as in the God of the most advanced theism. 32

31 Paul Elmer More, "Rationalism and Faith", op. cit., p. 15
32 Ibid., p. 16
Another corollary of faith is that the "growth in religion is in the direction of a deeper and broader anthropomorphism; but not away from anthropomorphism." The sceptic in the name of More argues that since God is a purposeful Being according to faith, He must be imagined as working out a design, as man is doing, through some sort of obstacle over a period of time. Like man, God is subject to the moral law, "though again the nature of the moral law will purify itself and deepen as human experience grows larger." Thus God's freedom will correspond to man's freedom of choice, developed to that perfect determination to choose only good which man but sees as that distant goal of his own endeavor.

But a definition must be made for "teleology" as More uses this term throughout his argument. It means the conception of the cosmos as "guided to a foreseen consummation by some transcendent agent." This principle embraces the idea of causality and of purpose, and is the only one that can be reached by the inference from intuition.

Continuing his argument Paul Elmer More points out that ethical distinctions are derived from the field of intuition. Every man has within his mind this sense of right and wrong, and also that corresponding sense of freedom and responsibility which is made evident in his actions.

33 Paul Elmer More, "Rationalism and Faith", op. cit., p. 17
34 Ibid., p. 17
turns to Plato's doctrine of Ideas for proof.

... The doctrine of Ideas ... is no more than an assertion that with the inner sense of responsibility we are bound, if we reflect honestly to believe in the existence of something to which we are responsible, something external to ourselves in so far as we neither make nor unmake it, neither alter nor escape that there are fixed standards of right and wrong under which we are held to account in our choice of conduct, whether we comprehend them or not, exactly as we are subject to the laws of the physical world whether we comprehend them or not.\(^37\)

This doctrine cannot be considered as a necessary part of consciousness which cannot be denied, nor is it like theism a more or less voluntary inference from conscience; it is a logical, reasonable and certain corollary of conscience to the Platonist. Philosophy is the acceptance of this truth.\(^38\)

To Plato these ideas are derived from two sources: from observation and from intuition. More clarifies this inference thus: if one sees a man, his idea of man is through observation. When that person speaks about the qualities of the man he sees, the idea in his mind is formed by intuition. Such ideas as bravery, justice, and similar qualities are specifically ethical judgments to which correspond our aesthetic judgments though the latter are rather more intimately bound up with actual observation. A person's appreciation of a color as beautiful or ugly is a judgment that wells out of the field of intuition just as do his ethical judgments. Thus

\(^{37}\) Paul Elmer More, "Platonic Idealism", Sceptical Approach to Religion, p. 61
\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 62
there are two fields of experience, "the observation of particular things and the intuitive valuation of particular qualities and in each of these fields there are corresponding Ideas." 39

More discriminates between these two kinds of Ideas of Plato's philosophy. One set of Ideas have opposites; the other has not. 40 The aesthetic idea of beauty has its opposite in the idea of ugliness. But the ideas of visible things although they may concern the intellect they affect not man's other faculties, since they have no opposites. Man's ethical and aesthetic Ideas are complex in their behavior; since their negation leaves man a prey to their opposites, they involve not only activity on the part of the intellect, but also of the emotions and of the will. Man feels and acts practically the same whether he believes in the Idea of some group of visible things as universal ante rem, or regards it as an abstract generalization post rem; but this is not so as a result of his belief or non-belief in the Idea of such a quality as justice or beauty. "The synthesis of feeling and emotion and judgment which we call taste" 41 will be affected by his belief or disbelief in the Idea of justice or of beauty.

Within the soul is a passionate cosmic Idea of Goodness, and though it seems to evade a positive definition, it is essential to the possession of happiness. 42 More finds this idea clearly expressed in the Republic

40 Ibid., p. 63
41 Ibid., pp. 64-65
42 Ibid., p. 67
and also in the Phaedo of Plato. This motive for human acts is the climax of Plato's philosophy. Paul Elmer More points out that a study of the Gorgias and the Republic shows how Plato at first believed that this Good was enthroned above the world, that it was the end of all desiring, and as a creative source of being is left to reign in a universe that needed no God. But there is a complete change of sentiment in evidence in the Timaeus. In the latter Plato rejects this thesis of the deification of a pure Idea, and comes to the recognition that nothing can come into being, or can alter its status, without cause. Therefore, there must have been a first Cause supreme and infinite and is identified with God.

From the excellence of this world we believe that it was fashioned by a benevolent artist in imitation of a fair and wonderful pattern. It was God who fashioned it, and the model before him was the immutably perfect world of Ideas laid up in eternity. God is good, ... and in the good can be no residue of envy ... so being good, and desiring that the product of his will should be good and that so far as possible there should be nothing evil, God, the Creator, took all that was as it came to him lying not in a state of easily malleable quiescence but in a state of turbulent motion without sense or measure and out of this disorder moulded into an ordered likeness of the everlasting harmonious thinking that order is altogether better than disorder.43

This is More's interpretation of the Platonic Teleology. Plato arrives at the theory of cooperation of God and Ideas as together celestial cause of things as they are.44

43 Paul Elmer More, "Platonic Idealism", op. cit., pp. 69-70
44 Ibid., p. 75
These main doctrines of Plato, More accepts as the basis of all true religion and philosophy. It is in the light of these preconceptions that he analyzes the teachings of Christianity. He is convinced that Plato anticipated the theological teachings of the Christian Religion, and that the true and orthodox tradition was Greek, which had its beginning in Plato and proceeded in a straight line until it found its highest expression in Christian dogma. He believes in revelation and that it can be proved to be authentic because it conforms to the facts of man's spiritual life and it is not opposed to reason. The only essential and sufficient dogma of this revelation is that Jesus Christ "an historical personage"\(^45\) embraces in His person the full nature of divinity and the full nature of humanity such as it was defined by the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in the year of 451. Of his belief in the dogma of the Incarnation he says:

> Considering the objective means whereby God makes known His nature and will, I for one simply cannot conceive a further step in the scale of revelation beyond the historic event of the Word made flesh. If our knowledge of God is a developing assurance that the inference from intuition is true, and the world is not wholly as it appears to observation a huge unmeaning fatality but at once conceals and reveals a Power corresponding to our purposive conscience, then I cannot imagine a further step in the hierarchical conjunction of spirit and matter than the condescending act of the Creator in entering personally into His creation and in being born as man among men.\(^46\)


\(^46\) Ibid., pp. 167-168
This same argument More applies to morality. Morality being the outcome of man's endeavor to conform his will to the will of his Creator, and to assimilate in his purpose something of the Divine Purpose, there is no reason to search further for principles of conduct than in those fundamental ones of purity, humility, and love as exemplified in the life of Christ. It being the design of God to unloosen man's soul from the bondage of evil as the redemption of Israel was the manifestation of His plan in history, no greater price than the sacrifice symbolized by the figure of the Cross could be expected. And More, confident in the significance of the Incarnation to man in his inferior state as a result of the sin of his first parent Adam, asks:

Shall we await something more costly than the agony of Gethsemane and on Calvary? . . . Whither shall we look for a form of worship richer in significance than the cult of the Eucharist instituted by Christ Himself as a memorial and mystic representation of the whole drama of the Incarnation?47

Briefly the religious tenets of Paul Elmer More may be summarized as follows. He believed in the existence of a personal and righteous God; that God is the efficient cause, the Creator of the universe; that He governs the universe in accordance with the everlasting canons of goodness, justice, righteousness, and beauty; these doctrines he derived from Plato. From the history of Christianity he accepted the belief in the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ through which man was ransomed from the forces of evil in the

47 Paul Elmer More, "The Telos of Christianity", op. cit., p. 168
God Man's death on the Cross. For principles of conduct man need only to adopt those of Christ - humility, justice, and love. Thus it is that authorities speak of More as the American Platonist; and again as a Christian. The fact that Paul Elmer More has written a volume on The Catholic Faith, as well as the fact that in language he often has the tone of a Catholic may readily confuse a reader to the exact character of his faith. Reverend Francis Burke in discussing the faith of Paul Elmer More in The Commonweal points out the distinctive mark of his belief in Christ thus:

Dr. More is a Platonist, but he is not merely that. Beholden to his studies in the Vedenta as well experienced in a very large stretch of religious and literary texts, stimulated by the intuitionist thought of contemporary Europe, and passingly preoccupied with values and cultures and social questions, Dr. More stands up prophetic in the chaos where we are to profess, in the name of a dualist Platonist his unequivocal faith in Jesus the Logos Incarnate.48

Of his religious affiliations then it may be said that More is a Protestant. Although sympathetic to much in Catholicism, he by no means acknowledged the authority of the Church or agreed to the entire Catholic deposit of faith in matters of dogma and morals.

Protestantism in the last analysis essentially consists in the denial of any authoritative teaching of the Church. Private judgment is the essence of Protestantism. Dr. More's Greek Tradition is the last word in private judgment. Not only does he rely on his private judgment in determining the elements which constitute the true Catholic Faith

48 Francis Burke, S. J., "The Faith of Dr. More", The Commonweal, March 9, 1932, p. 516
from material supplied by documents and history, but one may fairly conclude from his own works that Dr. More in his own opinion is the only man living to-day who understands Christianity. Systematically and critically, Paul Elmer More has traced the elements of spiritual life as they were taught by Plato, through Plotinus, and the other Greek philosophers to St. Chrysostom, and further to the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A. D.; and Louis J. A. Mercier describes his search for God thus:

Paul Elmer More's methodical, cautious and critical progress on the plane of the spiritual brings him face to face with Jesus. He draws near to Him, not as a believer, not as the dutiful member of a Church, but as a sceptic. He will accept nothing but evidence. But on the other hand, he approaches Him without prejudices, as a sceptic who has reasoned his way to the possibility of the supernatural. He does not come to Him as did Renan, to give Him the kiss of Judas before helping to bury Him in the "purple shroud" of a sentimental rhetoric. He has not condemned Him before listening to His words.

From a survey thus far of his philosophy and religious ideas in the latter of which he tries to reconcile Platonism with Christianity, it is evident that More was intensely interested in defining man's humanity. But this is not a new interest exhibited in literature, art, or education. Aristotle, the great Greek scholar who lived from 384 B. C. until 322 B.C., had stimulated interest of scholars of his day and of later centuries in the

50 Louis J. A. Mercier, "Humanistic Dualism and Christianity: the Work of Paul Elmer More", The Challenge of Humanism, p. 228
study of man as a responsible being as distinguished from the lower animals. He taught that the distinctive mark of natural things was an inner purpose or final cause. Thus to him nature was the "realm of ends." The animal and plant are teleological in behavior; they act for the attainment of an end whether for food, reproduction or safety. These ends in nature are unconscious, or merely instinctive. An animal or plant is driven by instincts which are not consciously controlled. Man, on the other hand, is both of nature and above nature; as an animal he belongs to the realm of unconscious ends, while at the same time he is human and possesses the faculty of consciously directive purpose. In this faculty of directive purpose arises the field of conduct, of ethics, of statecraft, and of religion, "wherein a man makes for himself by free choice under certain limitations that which he will; and herein lies the field of art, wherein a man makes for himself that which he will." The recognition of the dualism of the natural and the supernatural in man is "precisely the philosophy of humanism." More believes that the loss of this philosophy has been our undoing. He believes that the recovery of this ancient humanism is necessary to secure true liberty:

There is one door of true liberty, and that is by way of the humanism which Aristotle long ago was spokesman. I do not say that the views of the great Stagirite were without their limitations and omissions; I hold that this conception of the

52 Paul Elmer More, Preface to The Demon of the Absolute, p. x
53 Ibid., p. x
54 Ibid., p. x
supernatural needs very much to be complemented and corrected by a deeper insight into the eternal verities of the spirit; but humanism we must recover if there is to be any rejuvenescence of literature. Only on that rock can a sound edifice be raised for the questing modern mind.55

During the Renaissance an intellectual, literary, and scientific movement, which aimed at basing every branch of learning on the literature and culture of classical antiquity, played a major part in the development of its culture. The Italians, in particular, studied classic literature for its beauty of content and thought rather than for its form. These scholars who became interested in the humanistic literature of the ancients bent their efforts to imitate and to emulate the quality of life represented in this literature which fascinated them. Believing that a classical training alone could form a perfect man, these scholars gave themselves the title Humanists in opposition to the Scholastics and adopted the term Humaniora (the humanities) as signifying the scholarship of the ancients.56 These scholars were opposed to the life and the culture of the Middle Ages just as More and his associates are with their age. On the whole they were not at all opposed to religion, but were in truth men of outstanding rank in the Christian world. Of this period a representative outstanding humanist scholar was Erasmus. Paul Elmer More admires Erasmus for his balanced conception of man. Erasmus thought of humanism as representing man’s efforts to

55 Paul Elmer More, Preface to The Demon of the Absolute, p. xii
define his humanity as distinguished from his animality on the one hand and his spirituality on the other. He perceived in man a middle plane between the natural and the religious. Erasmus admired St. Thomas Aquinas, but he was opposed like most of the humanists of his age to the somewhat degenerated form in which they had experienced scholastic tradition in their time. They aimed to give Christian culture classical form. St. Thomas held the theocentric view of the world, "that all parts of human life and of reality at large were referred by medieval thinkers and by every faithful Christian to God as the absolute norm of perfection and the highest principle of being."57

It is through Dante that the full humanistic meaning of St. Thomas' philosophy and the Aristotelian revival can be understood. In his poetry the philosophy of these connect the earthly and the celestial sphere. Werner Jaeger states that in the following description of Aristotle can be gathered the understanding of the humanism of St. Thomas and Dante.

The educational aim of Aristotle's philosophy in his Ethics is that man should not be contented with human things but try to partake of eternal life as far as possible. Aristotle is thinking of the contemplative life of the philosopher and the vision of God in which his ideal of philosophical life reaches its climax.58

Thus the ideal of human life for these Renaissance scholars includes the presence of the Divine.

Proceeding to the revival of humanism during the late twenties of

57 Werner Jaeger, Humanism and Theology, The Aquinas Lecture, 1943, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, p. 6
58 Ibid., p. 55
the present century in America distinctions must be made. The men who became interested in what More calls "not the new, but the newly advocated humanism" were chiefly on college faculties: Norman Foerster promoted the cause in North Carolina; Robert Shafer of Cincinnati worked industriously for it in Ohio; P. H. Frye did likewise for it in Nebraska; Frank Jewett Mather Jr. carried on at Princeton; and Stuart Sherman in Illinois until he in later years became a renegade from the ranks and became a literary editor in New York. The acknowledged leaders of the group were Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, who "wrote the program and creed by which all of them, with due allowance for personal errors and deviations, swore."

Briefly the creed of the New Humanists may be summarized thus: "It was a creed which defined one central enemy, the Romantic Movement; one source of grievance, Rousseau; one main purpose, the integration of literary criticism with ethical; and one chief means of deciding the quality of a work of literature, its validity in moral qualities." Paul Elmer More turned to humanism as an antidote for naturalism so prevalent in the literature of World War I and the years following it. By the term naturalism is meant the attempt to draw nature as it is. In dealing with man, the naturalist considers him in the light of his physical makeup, and emphasizes in this regard the force of his emotions and instincts upon his personality and

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60 Norman Foerster, Preface to Humanism and America, Farrar and Rinehart, Incorporated, New York, 1930, p. ix
62 Ibid., p. xiv
activities. In his essay "A Revival of Humanism", Paul Elmer More clearly defines the tenets of the humanists of his period. This essay is a review of fifteen essays contributed by fifteen writers, each of whom wrote independently of the other, and edited by Norman Foerster in his book Humanism in America. In this brief analysis of humanism, More makes clear the position of the humanist as opposed to that of the naturalist.

The discussion of the principles of the New Humanists proceeds in a line of comparison with the tenets of naturalism. The writers of fiction, More points out, expose in their books corruption in society and remain nonchalant when the public accepts the bitter truth and feels superior in the knowledge of it. Here the humanists and anti-humanists are at variance. The anti-humanists "flatter men by degrading mankind", 63 while the humanists emphasize man's personal responsibility for depravity in society. The humanists, he continues to point out, considers men as individual personalities endowed with free wills and responsible for their choice of good or evil. There is a sharp dualism between man and nature. Man is distinguished from other animals and rises above them owing to a faculty which may be expressed as "on being human". 64 To those who regard man as a bundle of sensations, More says that the humanist would retort that man has a separate faculty of inhibition or "inner check", 65 which keeps his impulses within bounds. The humanists hold that man has the power of self-direction and

63 Paul Elmer More, "A Revival of Humanism", op. cit., p. 5
64 Ibid., p. 7
65 Ibid., p. 8
that character is dependent on strength of purpose. Also that to those who would be so extravagant in false admiration as to assert the instinctive goodness of unredeemed nature in the appearances of delinquency, the humanist would answer that "complacency is the deadliest foe to human excellence."\textsuperscript{66} This doctrine is based on a keen observation of life, and so the humanists hold it to be sound.

Louis J. A. Mercier very aptly states the theme of the New Humanism "man is the end of man".\textsuperscript{67} The discipline that the humanists advocate consists of an adequate human standard, which demands completeness in the cultivation of human nature; of an insistence on proportion and harmony of parts with the whole; upon life it imposes a scale of values; in the realm of conduct, it demands a universal permanent system of ethics, not a contemporary code of conventional society; reference to tradition for guidance; reliance on reason and the positive treatment of the whole of experience; belief in higher faculties than reason, namely intuition and the ethical imagination; and a principle of restraint in man.\textsuperscript{68} In general the supporters of modern humanism are in agreement.

The item of contention among the New Humanists is the relation of religion to humanism. This is distinctly new in comparison with the humanism of the Renaissance which accepted religion as a necessary source of vitality. In the footsteps of the Puritans, and the scepticism of

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  \item Paul Elmer More, "A Revival of Humanism", op. cit., p. 8
  \item Louis J. A. Mercier, "Humanistic Dualism and Christianity; the Work of Paul Elmer More", The Challenge of Humanism, p. 251
  \item Paul Elmer More, "A Revival of Humanism", pp. 1-22
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Emerson and his generation, these humanists of the present remain non-committal with respect to religious faith and dogma and support a discipline of the human norm. For them salvation depends not on the sacrificing of personal energy in obedience to supernatural authority, but by developing its sense of human identity through self control and restraint. This is their great error - the failure to recognize man's responsibility to God. More is not, as some few in the ranks, hostile to religion, nor does he as some few, believe religion to be contradictory to humanism, yet he always remains doubtful of its importance.69

From the discussion of "dualism", of "Platonism", and of "humanism" as these terms are used by More, there is evidence of considerable overlapping and similarity of tenets. This is due to their common roots. Paul Elmer More emphasizes in his explication of the philosophy of dualism, and in the exposition of his religious considerations that the greatest source of influence upon him was Plato. However, there seems to be no doubt that Aristotle, the disciple of Plato and the father of ancient humanism, played a major formative influence on his ideas regarding the dual nature of man.

The problem that remains to be treated in this chapter is to show how his religious philosophy acts as a framework for his critical standards in the interpretation and evaluation of literature.

In the study of the Shelburne Essays, one finds that Paul Elmer More has not concerned himself exclusively to the criticism of books and writers with an estimate only of the quality of the writing or the writer's success

in the execution of his plan. A statement of policy is found in the Preface to his volume Drift of Romanticism. What criticism should be he states thus:

There is a kind of criticism that limits itself to looking at the thing in itself, or at the parts of a thing as they successively strike the mind. This properly is the way of sympathy, and those who choose this way are right in saying that it is absurd or merely ill-tempered to dwell on what is ugly in a work of art, or false, or incomplete. But there is room also for another kind of criticism, which is not so much directed to the individual thing as to its relation with other things, and to its place as cause or effect in a whole group of tendencies. No criticism, to be sure, can follow one or the other of these methods exclusively, as no product of art can ever be entirely isolated in its genesis or altogether in the current of the day. The highest criticism would contrive to balance these methods in such manner that neither the occasional merits of a work nor its general influence would be unduly subordinated.70

That virtue lies in the mediatorial view seems to be Paul Elmer More's sincere dictum for literary criticism. This idea that virtue resides in the mean is an Aristotleian doctrine and is a carry-over from his ethical system. The goal is attained both in life and in literature by the exercise of self-control.

The critic must always keep in view the "aliquid certi" or definite aim of Matthew Arnold. He is "one whose life is a succession of labours that fill and moralise the days not in the narrow-didactic sense ... but

70 Paul Elmer More, Preface to The Drift of Romanticism, pp. vii-viii
in so far as his task is a continual weighing of values."\(^{71}\) The work of the good critic is not as Anatole France believed it to be the recounting of "the adventures of the soul amid masterpieces"\(^{72}\) nor as Oscar Wilde would have it "the losing of the past in the present to throw off the self-imposed and trammelling burden of moral responsibility"\(^{73}\) nor as Matthew Arnold made it the judgment of the present in the light of a "dead store-house of precepts"\(^{74}\), but it is moral and aesthetic evaluation combined with an awareness in this exercise of the "relation of the faculty of judgment to the indwelling and overacting memory of things."\(^{75}\) The latter element lends to criticism the one touch of insight necessary to raise the exercise of discrimination and judgment "to a more independent and self-respecting genre."\(^{76}\) Criticism is thus raised to a position of honour with the art of creation.

The critical spirit is thus akin to the force of design or final cause in the Aristotleian sense, which we are beginning once more to divine as the guiding principle itself unchanged at work within the evolutionary changes of nature, and in so far as it becomes aware of this high office it introduced into our intellectual life an element outside of alteration and growth and decay a principle to which time is the minister and not the master.\(^{77}\)

\(^{71}\) Paul Elmer More, "Criticism", Selected Essays, pp. 23-24
\(^{72}\) Ibid., p. 23
\(^{73}\) Ibid., p. 23
\(^{74}\) Ibid., p. 23
\(^{75}\) Ibid., p. 23
\(^{76}\) Ibid., p. 24
\(^{77}\) Ibid., p. 24
In his preparation for his work in criticism, More has endeavored to assemble from the doctrines of Arnold and Pater, Taine and Renan, Nietzsche, France, and even Oscar Wilde the working principles of his art. In his defining of art as an attempt through the subjective imagination to establish the experience of the individual in tradition, and in his statement of the work of the critic as the "continual weighing of values" in relation to tradition, More is trying to bring criticism back to solid ground.

Tradition is evidence that certain works of art possess qualities which are worthy of the critic's appreciation, and therefore they have every reason to be used as a criterion. This is but an echo of "It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples; to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest quality and to say the characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed there." The literary works of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton have attained their pre-eminence over ephemeral productions because of their appeal to what is universal in human nature. A principal requisite of excellent art is permanence of pleasure. That art which appeals to the bestial in man is short lived because the reaction to it passes from pleasure of aroused passions to

78 Paul Elmer More, "Definitions of Dualism", The Drift of Romanticism, p. 264
79 Paul Elmer More, "Criticism", Selected Essays, p. 25
81 Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry", The Great Critics, compiled and edited by James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks, p. 682
82 Paul Elmer More, The Demon of the Absolute, p. 21
disgust. Therefore, it is only art that appeals to the intellect which will give man permanent pleasure. This is in keeping with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's criterion for pleasure that it varies according to quality and to the faculty of source.

In the classical tradition, Paul Elmer More recognizes the close alliance of art with nature. To attempt to divorce art from humanity or nature and to abide in a realm of unreality is futile. Like Aristotle, More explains that art brings nature out of its own state into the condition of the human intelligence. The great creators have always taken the substance of life and have penetrated below its surface where they have found meanings and values that change it into something at once the same and different.

Through symbolism they lift mortal life and its theatre to a higher reality, which only to those easily contented in things as they are may seem unreal.

Besides influencing More's thoughts on life, Aristotle and Horace have influenced his literary canons. "Their forms have passed away with their civilization and cannot be revived or imitated; but whoever would seek inspiration in art and poetry at their fountain head must now and always turn back to Athens and laboriously learn her ancient speech." He is not the first American to value these scholars for their critical judgments.

William Cullen Bryant, Edgar Allen Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry D. Thoreau, James Russell Lowell, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Clarenoe Stedman, Henry

83 Paul Elmer More, The Demon of the Absolute, p. 20
84 Ibid., p. 36
85 Robert Shafer, quoted in Paul Elmer More and American Criticism, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1935, p. 94
Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and of more recent years George
Edward Woodberry, William Crary Brownell, Stuart Sherman, and Irving Babbitt
have shown evidence in their writings of familiarity with the critical prin-
ciples of Horace. 86 Only in words indicative of esteem does Paul Elmer More
refer to Horace. He refers to Horace as "the friendly mentor of the cen-
turies"; 87 "that clear-eyed pagan"; 88 and "the gentleman to travel with." 89
Despite Horace's Epicureanism More recognized in his "final adjustment of
language" 90 a lesson in austerity. In Horace and Xenophon he found an in-
timation of life as one of the fine arts. 91 Horace's insight is what the
eighteenth century was trying to hide. 92 In agreement with Horace that there
is a place for light literature he states: "there is an art of desipience
and a place for it, as Horace well knew." 93 And again in defense of Shaftes-
bury's essays he says:

His essays are no more than sermons on two
texts: that of Horace: Ridiculum acri Fortius et
melius magna plerumque secat res - a jest often
decides weighty matters better and more forcibly
than can asperity; and the saying of Gorgias
Leontinus, which he misinterprets and expands for
his own purpose, "That humour was the only test
of gravity; and gravity of humour. For a subject

86 John Paul Pritchard, "Horace's Influence upon American Criticism", Trans-
actions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association,
Vol. LIXIII, 1937, pp. 231-245
87 Quoted, Ibid., p. 254
88 Quoted, Ibid., p. 254
89 Quoted, Ibid., p. 254
90 Quoted, Ibid., p. 254
91 Quoted, Ibid., p. 254
92 Quoted, Ibid., p. 254
93 Quoted, Ibid., p. 258
which would not bear raillery was suspicious; and a jest which would not bear a serious examination was certainly false wit . . . 94

Speaking of Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat he objects to a quatrain because despite the fact that it shows the apt felicity of Horace, it fails to betray his shrewd manliness. Regarding style in writing he says in

English and Englistic:

Our written style must always be a compromise between the new and the old. This is a commonplace ever since Horace proclaimed the law of linguistic safety . . . 95

There are many more references in the essays of Paul Elmer More to Horace which are evidence of the Greek's influence in More's thought and principles of art; I have quoted but a few of the more important ones, to which I now add the one following in which he sets Horace up as an arbiter in poetry.

For later times, and for us of the West, the principle involved was formulated by Horace in his famous saying that the most successful poet was he who knew how to mix the utile and the dulce. What Horace meant by the dulce is clear enough; it is just that in a poem which gives pleasure to a reader. And what he meant by the utile is equally clear; it is that in a poem from which we draw instruction. So in one of the Epistles he tells a friend held in Rome the practice of declaiming, no doubt about the schools of philosophy, that he is in the country reading Homer, who is a better teacher than all the philosophers:

Qui, quid sit pulchrum
quid turpe, quid utile,
quid non,

94 John Paul Pritchard, quoted, op. cit., p. 258
95 Quoted, Ibid., p. 259
Although Paul Elmer More is more Platonist than Aristotelian, yet he has made frequent reference to the Poetics. Like his forerunners in American criticism Bryant, Poe, Emerson, Lowell, Stedman, Howells, and his contemporaries in the field, Brownell, Babbitt, and Sherman, More values Aristotle's conception of character, his principle of catharsis, his defining of the epic qualities of a poem, and his famous definition of tragedy. He praises the Irish folk tales for their epic effect and explains: "It depends on plot, in the Aristotelian sense of the work, or events, that is, so disposed as to bring out heroic traits of character and to lead up to some supreme emotion." He praises the Irish folk tales for their epic effect and explains: "It depends on plot, in the Aristotelian sense of the work, or events, that is, so disposed as to bring out heroic traits of character and to lead up to some supreme emotion." From these few examples of More's references to Horace and to Aristotle the sources of some of his critical principles are distinguishable. John Paul Pritchard characterizes More's literary criticism as "largely a return to the exemplaria Graeca."

Ethics and aesthetics are inseparable in art. Just in proportion as the practice or criticism of art becomes superficial, ethics and aesthetics fall apart, and this rule works in the opposite direction as well.

96Paul Elmer More, On Being Human, p. 193. Translation of Latin: Who (Homer) tells us what is fine, what is shameful, what is useful, what is not, better than Chrysippus and Crantor (philosophers) do.
97Paul Elmer More, "James Joyce", On Being Human, p. 146
98Paul Elmer More, "Epic of Ireland", Shelburne Essays, Ser. 1, pp. 159-161
99John Paul Pritchard, op. cit., p. 259
When the practice or criticism of art "strikes deeper, ethics and aesthetics are more and more implicated one in the other until they lose their distinction in a common root." 100

Of the intimate relation between ethics and any form of art that deals directly with human nature I do not see how there can be a reasonable doubt. Such a relation, in fact means no more than that he who would depict life must be familiar with the springs and consequences of action, and that the large matters of experience the tradition of ages is probably richer in content than his own limited observation. 101

The problem of the artist then is not to what extent will he accept the obligations of this law, but rather how will he manifest in his work its operation. More admits that he is tolerant to sermonizing in a piece of literature, but this does not mean that he would encourage such a practice. In general the artist should screen his ethical theory under the guise of an objective presentation of life. "The problem is how to wear the mask." 102

Some critics believe that due to his absorbing interest in fundamental moral problems, More failed to recognize the element of beauty of form in literary art. But this is a judgment open to questioning for truth. His own work is evidence that he was not blind to the beauties of form and style. Louis J. A. Mercier ranks him with the masters of English prose. 103

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100 Paul Elmer More, "My Debt to Trollope", The Demon of the Absolute, pp. 106-109
101 Ibid., pp. 102-103
102 Ibid., p. 103
103 Louis J. A. Mercier, "Humanistic Dualism and Christianity: the Work of Paul Elmer More", op. cit., p. 204
Stuart Sherman describes a Shelburne Essay thus: "It is criticism, it is history, it is philosophy, it is morality, it is religion, it is above all a singularly moving poetry gushing up from deep intellectual and moral substrata, pure cold, and refreshing as water from the rocks in some high mountain hollow." But it is not only his own work that proves More's recognition of beauty as a requisite of great art. This demand of true art is stressed over and over again in his essays.

Beauty is the essence of all true art. As the shock of beauty is to the human soul so is supreme art. More is sure that every man possesses an ideal of beauty which may remain dormant, but it is potential in essence. He states that the emotion of beauty as all our emotions is "the inherited product of unimagined countless experiences in an immeasurable past. In every aesthetic sensation is the stirring of trillions of trillions of ghostly memories buried in the magical soil of the brain." More believes that the artist spreads over his work a resplendent glamour not only through the charm and grace of language, but also through the morality of its content. It is, however, in his essay "How to Read 'Lycidas'" that More specifically emphasizes the importance of beauty of form combined with beauty of thought and expression. He states that the greatness of the poem is due to the "intimate marriage of form and matter, expression and sub-

104 Stuart Sherman, "An Imaginary Conversation with Mr. Paul Elmer More", Américas, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1924, p. 329
105 Paul Elmer More, "Lafadie Hearn", Selected Shelburne Essays, p. 37
This statement recalls to mind a similar one expressed by Matthew Arnold. In writing of the characteristics of poetry of a high quality Arnold writes, "They are in the matter and substance of the poetry and they are in its manner and style. Both of these the substance and matter on the one hand, the style and manner on the other, have a mark, an accent of high beauty, worth and power." More, as his predecessors in the classical tradition, emphasizes the principle of appropriateness of diction and form in relation to the idea or ideas embodied in the poem. In his appraisal of "Lycidas," More quotes a contemporary T. S. Eliot who states in his book Essays Ancient and Modern that "the greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards." He then applies this law of taste, which, he believes, has been most clearly and truthfully stated, to "Lycidas." More is willing to grant that "Lycidas" may be read for its sheer beauty of expression without any consideration of the serious issues of life the poet experienced in the world of action and ideas, but he feels that such a division between form and content cannot be maintained long. He says that "Lycidas" has the high distinction of being a piece of true poetry depending on images, language, form, and imagination; but it is great literature because these elements

106 Paul Elmer More, "How to Read 'Lycidas'" On Being Human, p. 201
107 Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry", The Great Critics, p. 632
108 "How to Read 'Lycidas'", pp. 194-195
are bound up closely to the nobility of content. This harmonious unity and perfection of "Lycidas" arouse deep critical joy.

A genuinely artistic work of literature is the creation of the imagination. Works of art vary, therefore, in "so far as they are created by the imagination out of the material of the flux and substantially they depend on the richness of the artist's experience."\(^{109}\) The standard of excellence of a piece of literature depends on the extent to which the imagination of the artist is subject to the control of the "unvaried inner check".\(^{110}\)

To these principles of literary criticism so far discussed must be added originality of subject matter or treatment, and moral insight. In discussing the accomplishments of Dickens and Gissing, Paul Elmer More praises Gissing for moral insight, Dickens on the other hand for a freer outlook. But he notes further in the discussion of these novelists that the combination of moral insight and free outlook produces the greatest art.

In the chapters following it will be seen that More varied his literary standards to fit the subject under consideration. However, some general principles may be stated to summarize the discussion of his criticism thus far. The major philosophical principle in judging a work of art is that the literary piece must reflect in some way the solution of the moral conflict between the inner check and the flux which takes place in the mind of the author in its creation. In this regard authors are approved of for

\(^{109}\) Paul Elmer More, "Definitions of Dualism", Drift of Romanticism, p. 264
\(^{110}\) Ibid., p. 265
their sense of self responsibility, the recognition of the importance of the will, for strength of character, for the sense of restraint, for their regard for discipline, and for their esteem of humility in the development of character. These qualities are revealed not only in the content of the work but also in the style, manner of expression, and in the form used. That content of a work of literature rises in excellence in proportion to its reflection of the struggle within man of the vital urge and the power of restraint which orders the flux of sensations and appetites and which is considered to be superior to the intellect, will and feelings.

Studying the work from a purely aesthetic point of view, More applies the following standards. The work must reflect life for literature is the repository of human life. This understanding of literature leads to his belief that it is in literature that the good way of life may be defined for society. The good life is that which is disciplined according to the humanist ethics. Literary art, dealing as it does with human action, must deal with ethical laws, which are the foundation of conduct. As a work of art it must be the creation of the imagination. Although other writers may have used the same theme, the artist must add a touch of originality to his treatment of it, and in this respect he must not be satisfied in inferior treatment, but rather he must aim to bring it to a higher degree of excellence. Art implies beauty in its very essence; therefore, great literature reveals the harmonious unity of beauty of content and mechanical effects. And last but not least the writer should display in his work an understanding
of the inner nature of things. Since literature deals with life, the true artist must possess that moral insight which will bring to light the complex nature of man.
CHAPTER III

PAUL ELMER MORE'S INTERPRETATION

OF SPECIFIC AMERICAN WRITERS

Paul Elmer More was keenly aware that great literature did not develop out of a single country or a particular time; it is not provincial in its appeal. It is true that a poem, a novel, or a drama may have for a setting and for characters a New England village or a busy railroad center as Chicago, but in theme it must have a universal appeal if it is to live for all time. Up until the eve of the twentieth century American literature had made a significant beginning — but it still lacked a tradition. It was necessary that a tradition of moral values of unified and synthesized experiences be built up for this literature to make further progress. More indicates in his epigram to his first volume of Shelburne Essays that he has taken the advice of James Russell Lowell that "before we have an American literature we must have an American criticism." As he read the works of his countrymen, he was firmly convinced that the basis of a tradition of moral values which could be traced from the earliest attempts in the production of literary works in America to the present century could be established through the careful selection and interpretation of the best writers of the past.

At this point in my discussion a definition of interpretation seems pertinent. The definition given for interpretation in Webster's New
International Dictionary (unabridged) is "Representation in performance, delivery or criticism of the thought and mood in a work of art or its producer, especially as penetrated by the personality of the interpreter."

Interpretation means the act of seeing things as they are as fully as possible. Appreciation in a broad sense means the understanding of a thing fully, and knowing its value. Appreciation is the act of knowing fully, but not applying an analysis or exposition to a problem — in the particular subject at hand to a work of literature. Now interpretation includes the whole intelligence of our appreciation; it means definitely the elucidation of the meaning and value of a literary work, thus exposing and explaining the work before us.

For an interpretative critic to achieve success he must be learned; that is, his scope of knowledge must be wide and exact covering early classical literature, the main currents of medieval literature, and of several modern literatures. In his experiences he must have courted more than one muse for every branch of philosophy and science will be an embellishment. He will then be able to interpret literature from the point of view of one or more systems. His writing must bear the grace of perfect ease, that spontaneous confidence which savors of unconcern. And last but not least, he must possess a quick sensibility to the solid not the ephemeral beauties of art.¹ These qualifications Paul Elmer More meets. Prepared, therefore, for his task More examines the work of the American writers whom he believes

most important, and separates that which is valuable from that which is of no value in guiding the writers of later years in a direction at once national and international; contemporary and lasting.\textsuperscript{2}

It was only natural that Paul Elmer More chose for his starting point a study of Henry D. Thoreau, a man after his own heart. In 1845 Thoreau built a hut on the shore of Walden Pond near Concord, and there he lived isolated from society much as did More live at Shelburne for two years. It was during these years of retirement from the world that Thoreau wrote Walden, a journal which he later developed until it consisted of twenty volumes. Of this journal More comments:

\begin{quote}
Despite its provincialism and its tedium, the Journal of Thoreau is a document that New England may cherish proudly. It is the mirror of a life, the record of romanticism striving to work itself out in actual character, and shows thus, as clearly as the far greater writing of Emerson, wherein the originality of the Concord school really lies.\textsuperscript{3}
\end{quote}

He was the most individual thinker of his time. Like the other Transcendentalists, he believed in the inherent goodness of the individual. Satisfied with the bare essentials of life Thoreau saw no good in the institutions and conventions of society. He had no philanthropic or humanitarian sympathies. More quotes Thoreau's statements on philanthropy:

"Philanthropy is almost the only virtue which is sufficiently appreciated \textsuperscript{4}\)

by mankind. Nay, it is greatly overrated; and it is our selfishness which overrates it."⁴ and "The philanthropist too often surrounds mankind with the remembrance of his own cast-off griefs as an atmosphere and calls it sympathy."⁵ How similar to this idea is More's own conviction that humanitarianism is a means of bringing about civic virtue through instinctive sympathy unsupported by the restraint of the inner check in the individual or an outer check which he identifies as government! More believes that philanthropic projects have tended to make man less dependent upon himself, and, therefore, has weakened his character. The fact that man possesses a free will, a faculty of free choice, places upon man the responsibility to work out his own destiny. With this belief in man as a person responsible for his actions, it is only reasonable that Thoreau was not much disturbed by the sufferings and inequalities of men, and his implicit faith in the individual was too firm to lead him into any humanitarian interest for the masses. In support of this judgment More quotes Thoreau: "Alas! this is the crying sin of the age, this want of faith in the prevalence of a man."⁶

More recognizes Henry Thoreau as the greatest American writer on Nature and the creator of a new sentiment in literature. True, Hawthorne and Poe were masters in their own field, yet they failed to use the "highest realm for their genius to work in."⁷ Nature was not a new subject in

⁵ Ibid., p. 15
⁶ Ibid., p. 15
⁷ Ibid., p. 11
literature either in England or in America; but More is convinced that Thoreau's manner of writing about Nature was original.

In its deeper essence his work is imitable, as it is the voice of a unique personality; but in its superficial aspect it has been taken up by a host of living writers who have caught something of his method, even if they lack his genius and singleness of heart.8

Despite the fact that Thoreau was greatly influenced by the German romanticists and the English imitators, his attitude toward nature differed widely from theirs. Like most poets, Thoreau had the tendency to record merely his observations of Nature; it is not the chapters in which he is the minute observer, but rather those in which he is the contemplative philosopher which have permanent interest for the reader of succeeding years. Thoreau found in nature not an "incentive to relaxing pantheistic revery",9 but a means of discipline of the will and a means to character. The knowledge which he acquired from nature was subordinate to "his interest in the moral significance of Nature and the words he read in his obscure scroll were a language of strange mysteries, oftentimes of awe."10 As evidence for his observation of Thoreau's realistic treatment of Nature which never seems to bear the stamp of sentimental softening of the reality More quotes:

We have not seen pure Nature unless we have seen her thus vast, and drear, and inhuman ... Man was not to be associated with it. It was matter vast, terrific, - not his Mother Earth that we had heard of, not for him to tread on, or be buried in,

8Paul Elmer More, "A Hermit's Notes on Thoreau", op. cit., p. 11
9Ibid., p. 16
10Ibid., p. 12
- no, it were being too familiar even to let his
bones lie there, - the home, this, of Necessity
and Fate. 11

From his knowledge of man's struggle with the stern forces of the wilderness
Thoreau looked upon Nature as a great teacher. "To be a philosopher",
Thoreau said, "is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a
school but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life
of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust." 12 In Nature, therefore, More believes Henry D. Thoreau found a teacher from whom he could
learn best how to develop in himself just these manly virtues. The solitude
of Nature was not only a stimulant to the imagination, but above all a
discipline of the will. More perceives the influence of long and deep
rooted tradition in Thoreau's effort to combine the hardiness of the savage
with the intellectualness of the civilized man in working out his philo-
sophical life. For More, Thoreau's mind and his literary accomplishments are
the natural outgrowth and expression of a "feeling deep-rooted in the
historical beginnings of New England", 13 and this foundation in the past
lends vigor and convincing force to his words that cannot be found in the
words of lesser writers.

But the dryness of detailed description in
the New World was from the first modified and
lighted up by the wondering awe of men set down
in the midst of the strange and often threatening

11 Paul Elmer More, "A Hermit's Notes on Thoreau", op. cit., p. 18
12 Paul Elmer More, "Thoreau's Journal", Selected Essays, p. 100
13 Paul Elmer More, "A Hermit's Notes on Thoreau", p. 15
forces of an untried wilderness; and this sense of awful aloofness, which to a certain extent lay dormant in the earlier writers, did nevertheless sink deep into the heart of New England, and when in the lapse of time the country entered into its intellectual renaissance, and the genius came who was destined to give full expression to the thoughts of his people before the face of Nature, it was inevitable that his works should be dominated by just this sense of poetic mystery.14

Thus it may be concluded that in the work of Henry Thoreau two qualities, that distinguish his work from that of his predecessors in England and America and from the work of his imitators, are awe and wonder, which are aroused in him during his communings with Nature. This spirit of humility, which recognized a transcendent spiritual power behind the exterior of natural phenomena, and the sturdy individualism, which Thoreau expressed in his aloofness from the social, political, and religious beliefs of the crowd, are characteristics which Paul Elmer More believes valuable for adoption and development by later writers in America.

After 1900, a spirit of liberalism crept into the New England churches. Soon Calvinism was supplanted by Unitarianism. The Puritans of New England demanded that the manifestations of romanticism be religious and intellectual irrespective of what it might mean to other sections of the country. Under this liberal form of religion a minister preached the gospel according to his intellectual interpretation of it and according to the promptings of his conscience. A strong emphasis was placed upon the indi-

Each individual had a free will, and, therefore, his salvation depended upon himself. Under this new liberalism both society and man enjoyed unlimited progress.

In America, romanticism manifested itself in individualism, idealism, humanitarianism, and democracy. Although industrialism was to strike a death blow at romanticism, the major writers and intellectuals kept it alive despite adversities during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

A doctrine that asserted itself about 1836 and influenced the writers of New England was Transcendentalism. The term is applied to Kantian philosophy, because Kant used it in a new sense, and to denote a fundamental classification of knowledge in his system. Knowledge that comes to man by experience he classed as _a posteriori_, but behind that are necessary and universal terms of thinking not gained by experience. They are elementary, and underlie all experience. Without them there is no philosophy. These Kant classed as _a priori_. They are intuitions, and among them are the ideas of self or soul, of time, of space, and of relation. These, according to Kant, are categories of reason and are transcendental; that is they transcend experience. For him the test of these cognitions are their necessity and universality. The term Transcendentalism came into use in the United States in connection with Emerson's teachings and the Concord philosophy, which was rather a religious sense than a philosophy. It undoubtedly had a connection with German thought and its infiltration through Coleridge into speculative literature.
The Transcendentalists assembled in Concord, Massachusetts. Ralph Waldo Emerson became its prime spokesman, and Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Theodore Parker, and Margaret Fuller were faithful adherents to it. The Dial, a magazine published quarterly for four years from 1840-1844, was the organ of the Transcendentalists.

As it appeared in New England in 1836, there were three elements at the root of Transcendentalism: the first, political or democratic; the second, literary or romantic; and the third ideal or philosophic. Transcendentalism had tenets similar to romanticism. It exalted man above society and institutions, emphasized man's right to freedom, stressed the importance of his spiritual life rather than his physical life, and his inner wealth rather than his outward possessions. Nature was the revelation of God. In contrast to eighteenth century philosophy which recognized man as a creature of the senses, it emphasized the divinity of man's nature, his instinct of God, his innate desire for immortality, and his inborn ideas of right and wrong. This view of the dignity of man aroused increasing opposition to the enslaving of the colored race. The philosophy of the Transcendentalists affirmed the right of the individual to develop free from any shackles. In this respect, Transcendentalism meant the assertion of the brotherhood of man and the potential equality of men. A liberal form of democratic government would be needed to protect the rights of man. In the realm of art and literature, Transcendentalism meant freedom from the rigid pseudo-classic rules of form and expression in favor of a fresh spirit of ease and inde-
pendence, the creation of works of art filled with the new passion for nature and common humanity, and embellishing them with the sense of the wonder and romance of life. Philosophically it meant the conviction, in the face of existing rationalisms and skepticisms, that man's practical and imaginative faculties are instrumental in his apprehension of the truth.  

In the two decades preceding the Civil War there was ceaseless political turmoil. Profound mental unrest showed itself in reform movements; in such societies like the Brook Farm experiment; and in the doctrine of Transcendentalism. The Brook Farm society was founded in Massachusetts by George Ripley in 1841. It included Nathaniel Hawthorne, Richard Dana, and George William Curtis in its large membership, and it had the support of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horace Greeley, Margaret Fuller, William Ellery Channing, and a host of other prominent men and women. It was the goal of the members of this society to provide in their day leisure time to live fully in all the faculties of the soul. To achieve this goal they determined to combine mental and manual labor. All property was held in common, labor was shared equally, and a large percentage of the time was spent in literary and social activities. This communistic group differed from the Communists of today, in that they emphasized the dignity of the individual and aimed to make provisions for the full development of his capacities, in contrast to the Communist theory of today that the individual exists only for the state. This attempt at human brotherhood failed to attain its goal, ample leisure

for the growth of the soul. It is significant, however, as an example of the type of activities in which the Transcendentalists engaged in an effort to live in the spirit of their doctrines.

Like romanticism, Transcendentalism with its optimism and faith in man was in direct opposition to the pessimism of early Puritanism. Its doctrines are expressed clearly in the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson and those of Henry D. Thoreau, in the sermons of Theodore Parker, and in the poetry of Walt Whitman.

Of Emerson the pure minded sensitive lover and philosopher of Nature, More says:

It becomes more and more apparent that Emerson judged by an international or even by a true national standard is the outstanding figure of American letters. As a steady force in the transmutation of life into ideas and as an authority in the direction of life itself he has obtained a recognition such as no other of his countrymen can claim; and he owes this pre-eminence not only to his personal endowment of genius, but to the fact also that, as the most complete exponent of a transient experiment in civilization he stands for something that the world is not likely to let die.16

In 1832, Emerson abandoned his pulpit in order to preach the gospel of sturdy individualism, intellectual honesty and high mindedness - not to New England but to America and to her coming generations. Emerson, like Jonathan Edwards eighty-two years before him, denied the communal efficacy, but he went even further than the latter; he demanded in place of a

16 Paul Elmer More, "Emerson", A New England Group and Others, p. 69
conformity in faith the "entire liberty of each soul to rise on its own spiritual impulse." In this belief can be recognized the doctrine of self-reliance; in the words of Paul Elmer More "self responsibility."

Much has been written about the Transcendentalism of Emerson, in particular, its relation to German metaphysics. In his later words one may note that "speculations of Kant and Schelling and Fichte were known to him and occasionally coloured his language." However, it is More's opinion that Emerson's Journal proves conclusively that the whole stamp of his mind was complete before these sources were encountered. Indirectly some of the German spirit was transferred to him through Carlyle, and a passage having the date December 18, 1829, in the Journal reveals that he had already delved into the ideas of Coleridge. Even during his college days he was yearning "to separate the soul for sublime contemplation till it has lost the sense of circumstances." More finds that Emerson is "the product of a great movement that was sweeping over the world as it listed; his early reading went back mainly to the Greek philosophers and the poets and preachers of the seventeenth century England, but these were interpreted by him under the light of the emancipation of the emotions." In Emerson's idea of the vision of genius as the renunciation of the understanding, and the giving reign to the spontaneous sentiment, More sees only a repetition of an idea.

17Paul Elmer More, "Emerson", op. cit., p. 80
18Ibid., p. 80
19Ibid., p. 81
20Ibid., p. 81
21Ibid., pp. 81-82
22Ibid., p. 82
of any of the English romanticists. But he also recognizes a difference between Emerson's rebellion against reason and that of the European writers. Emerson's romantic spontaneity might lead him to the repudiation of theological doctrine and the denial of Jehovah, but it did not take him so far afield that he no longer was disturbed by the question "What is God?" rising in his inner consciousness.23 At all times Emerson despite his centrifugal wandering in the realm of the spirit remained within the limits of character.

The spontaneity and individualism of the romantic movement on the Continent went with a dissolution of character against which the Puritan mind, so long as it held true to its origin, was impregnable. Emersonianism may be defined as romanticism rooted in Puritan divinity.24

In other words, the English romanticists lost sight of that faculty in man which makes him what he is. The inner check had no meaning for them. Before an interpretation of what More means in defining Emersonianism as "romanticism rooted in Puritan divinity" the term "romanticism" as he accepts it and uses it must be made clear. In the Preface to his volume The Drift of Romanticism he explains that the term "romanticism" has two meanings. First, it is used to refer to those attributes of poetry of every age when it rises from the common level to the climaxes of inspiration - the moments in it when we are thrilled by the indefinable spell of strangeness wedded to beauty, when we are startled by the unexpected vision of mystery beyond the limits of appearances that enfold us in the dull commonplace of daily usage, and

23 Paul Elmer More, "Emerson", op. cit., p. 82
24 Ibid., p. 83
suddenly the "immeasurable heavens break open to their highest." It is in this sense that More gives his approval. On the other hand he attacks romanticism which is associated with a definite historical movement of modern Europe, which appears to be compounded of Rousseauism, the French Revolution, modern philosophy since Locke and the main stream of literature since Pope. The romanticism he abhors may be defined as "the wonder and strangeness that go with the dissolving together of the human soul and nature, the vague revery that takes the place of insight, the pantheism that has forgotten the true surprise of the supernatural." It is "that expansive conceit of the emotions which goes with the illusion of beholding the infinite within the stream of nature itself instead of apart from that stream." It is in the former sense that More uses the term "romanticism" in his definition of "Emersonianism". In other words, Emersonianism is the "union of religious individualism and stability of character." For proof of these qualities More refers to Emerson's poem Brahms in which the idea of the deity reigning in the breast of the individual yet embracing the world is expressed; and also to the quatrains in which the idea of character is strongly expressed.

So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, Thou must
The youth replies, I can.

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25 Paul Elmer More, The Drift of Romanticism, p. ix
26 Ibid., p. xii
27 Ibid., p. xiii
28 Paul Elmer More, "Emerson", op. cit., p. 85
And

Though love repine and reason chafe,
There came a voice without reply,-
"T is man's perdition to be safe,
When for the truth he ought to die."29

It is in *Nature*, which was published in 1836, that the gist of Emerson's transcendental attitude toward the phenomenal world is to be found. For Emerson, More says, the world is "as a kind of beautiful symbol of the inner spiritual life floating dreamlike before the eyes, yet it is to be noted, having discipline as one of its lessons for the attentive soul."30

To Emerson the only reality is spirit, and spirit cannot be harmed by fire or flood; it is imperishable, it is immortal. Emerson is an idealist, looking first within, perceives that self consciousness is the great fact of life, and that consciousness expresses itself in words or deeds; then he looks outward and is aware of another Consciousness that expresses itself in the physical world. Looking inward he finds that he is governed by ideas of truth, beauty, goodness and duty; looking outward he finds everywhere evidence of truth and beauty and the moral law in the world. Emerson recognizes that while his body changes constantly his self remains the same yesterday, today and forever; this discovery is a guide to the outer world which is a symbol of the Divine Self that exists without shadow of change in a constantly changing universe. Thus Emerson reveals his belief in the duality of man and nature. These are the two master ideas which are ever present in his essays. More says, "Like all teachers of spiritual insight

29 Paul Elmer More, "Emerson", op. cit., p. 85
30 Ibid., p. 74
he was profoundly impressed by the ubiquitous dualism of life." And in support of this conviction More quotes Emerson in this regard: "Philosophically the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul."

More finds an incompleteness in Emerson's understanding of dualism in his failure to believe in the reality of sin and suffering. It was in this rejection of the long tradition of the existence of evil that Emerson has shown a lack of understanding of the complex reality of human life. For this reason More recommends him as a "poet of religion and philosophy for the young"; for the mature mind will turn to sages who have "supplemented insight with a firmer grasp of the whole of human nature." This last statement may be questioned. Possibly the young of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century would under the strict demand of a school master have memorized the bits of wisdom in the Journal or in his Essays, but the young high school or college students of to-day will read them and consider them as the heritage of early American scholarship, yet they will not accept his teachings as a substitute for religion, or as a philosophical guide to life. However, remnants of Emersonianism we still have with us in the Christian Science sect popularized by Mrs. Baker-Eddy, and this group still draw thousands to their teachings.

In the work of Emerson, Paul Elmer More found a writer permeated with philosophical bearings much like those of his own. He is most

31Paul Elmer More, "The Influence of Emerson", Shelburne Essays, Ser. 1, p. 74
32Ibid., p. 76
33Paul Elmer More, "Emerson", op. cit., p. 94
34Ibid., p. 94
enthusiastic in his admiration of Emerson's teachings. In spite of Emerson's limitations, More sees in his work a guide to the good life. A defender of the creative will by means of which man can shape the materials of his life into a round and purposeful whole, and the artist can impose form and beauty upon the raw materials of his art. Paul Elmer More shows that Emerson's fundamental conception of human personality is defined in terms of the creative will, and the native energies of life upon which it acts. More arrives at the conclusion that in the work of Emerson there is to be found sound principles which would be worthy of adoption by writers of later years. In Emerson there is the same sturdy individualism as is exhibited in Thoreau, but it is not this element in his life and work that should attract the attention of later writers; it is his emphasis on discipline as a means to the rewards of the spiritual life, and also his conviction that the lesson of Christ or Buddha or Plato is in essence the same. Can this statement be substantiated? More gives no argument to support this conclusion. The only explanation seems to be that More's strong faith in the inner check has led him to see "renunciation" as a necessary means to true happiness, to be a common element in their teachings. Christ commanded man to renounce the world and to follow Him; He commanded man to renounce sin in order to attain life everlasting with God. But Christ's teachings were not all negative. Christ taught that man must keep the Commandments which God gave to Moses on

35 Paul Elmer More, Preface to The Demon of the Absolute, p. x
36 Paul Elmer More, "The Influence of Emerson", Shelburne Essays, Ser. i, p. 76
Mount Sinai in order to gain eternal reward. In addition, he also stressed that man must perform good works; "Charity covers a multitude of sins."

Therefore, it seems an inaccuracy on the part of More to emphasize "renunciation", the fundamental principle of Buddhism and of Platonism, as of equal import to Christianity.

The third of the Concord group, whom More selected to treat because he believed that in his work there were elements that would be of value as a guide to later writers, is Nathaniel Hawthorne. In his essay "Hawthorne Looking Before and After", More very convincingly sets Hawthorne's contributions to American literature in relation to that of his predecessor Cotton Mather and to that of a later writer Mary Wilkins Freeman. It is only as a connecting link between Mather and Mrs. Freeman, that More believes Hawthorne's work can be seen in its true perspective.

Paul Elmer More traces the development of the "half-civilisation" of the eighteenth century which molded New England, from the religious enthusiasm of Cotton Mather through the "tragic art" of Hawthorne, down to the "pathetic paralysis" portrayed in the stories of Mrs. Freeman. More uses the term half civilisation because he feels that it is the most appropriate term to use in describing the civilisation after the moral split in the Mother country which stimulated migration to America. Cotton Mather's

38 Ibid., p. 174
39 Ibid., p. 174
writings reveal the inability of a writer to "surrender to the common emotions of human nature", and one whose thoughts were permeated with the dark "brooding over damnation" due to the narrow environment in which he wrote. It is almost unbelievable that any literature at all sprang from the half-civilisation that came to New England, or that it was possible that any sense of art took root among people who condemned the imagination as evil and limited their writers to the expression of emotion in a zealous but barren worship. It was not until practically the beginning of the nineteenth century with its national enthusiasm that the fierce democracy of the Northern states asserted itself against "priestly control", and at the same time "shook off the bondage of orthodoxy only to move the burden from one shoulder to the other, and the inner tyranny of conscience became as exacting as the authority from within the Church had been". The true significance of this change of the center of authority lies not in itself, but in its effect. It brought about a further transition from the conscience to the imagination, which created a situation for the production of serious literature. It is in this shift from conscience to the imagination that More identifies as the source of Hawthorne's art.

In his stories of New England still echoes the terrible voice of the old faith and gives them their depth of consciousness; the dissolution of the commands of a sectarian conscience into

41 Ibid., p. 177
42 Ibid., p. 177
43 Ibid., p. 177
the forms of a subtle symbolism lifts them from provincial importance to the sphere of universal art. 44

More believes that Nathaniel Hawthorne was fortunate in living during a period of development in the history of the United States which was appropriate to the growth and expansion of his peculiar genius. This time when the moral ideas of New England were passing from the conscience to the imagination furnished materials for the art of Hawthorne. For More, Hawthorne has succeeded as no other artist in presenting in his romances the one undeniable truth "of the penalty of solitude laid upon the human soul." 45

It is only consistent that a critic such as Paul Elmer More who showed much concern in the morality of the society which produced literature, and who believed that the cause of "weakness in the literature of the present years was the loss of a sense of sin and evil," 46 would be intensely interested in Nathaniel Hawthorne. In the work of Hawthorne the theme that recurs over and over again is the horror of sin and its punishment. Out of the bitter fruits of Puritan self-denial he made high tragedy. However, it is not because More considers Nathaniel Hawthorne a Puritan that he assigns value to his work. Rather, More, in his discussion of Hawthorne infers a strong distaste for the consequences of Puritan narrowness, and claims his alliance with Hawthorne on this ground. Like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel

46Ibid., p. 42
Hawthorne is a romanticist. He makes use of the problem of evil to create a mood. Like Poe his interests lie in tone color, except that in Hawthorne this is in addition to his intellectual interests. It is this tone color that reveals his romanticism.

Yet, in spite of his interest in tone color, the moral sense in his tales is always kept intact. In his art, Paul Elmer More notes a sense of restraint. He says, "There is no undue appeal to the sensations or emotions . . . the lack of outward emotion, together with the poignancy of silent appeal, is a distinguishing mark of Hawthorne's writings."47 Hawthorne does not use the old outworn methods of treating moral issues as his predecessors had done in their writings. There is originality in Hawthorne's conception of moral retribution in the disease of inner solitude. More points out that the combination of powerful insight and modest reserve makes his writings "more objective."48

The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables are undoubtedly the greatest of Hawthorne's romances and the most thoroughly permeated with his peculiar ideas - works so nearly perfect, withal in artistic execution that the mind of the reader is overwhelmed by a sense of the power and self-restraint possible to human genius.49

But these qualities originality, deep insight, objectivity and a keen moral sense are not the only ones that have made Hawthorne's work

47 Paul Elmer More, "The Solitude of Nationiel Hawthorne", op. cit., p. 43
48 Ibid., p. 41
49 Ibid., p. 40
attain the excellence which More attributes to it. In his essay "The Solitude of Nathaniel Hawthorne", More presents the characteristic that helps to perfect all the other characteristics of the work of Hawthorne. A most important requisite of a writer is self criticism, and More states that Hawthorne recognized this requirement and exercised it skilfully. More relates that at one time Hawthorne in perusing his work through modesty declared that his works lacked passion. To many critics More thinks that Hawthorne would have struck the keynote of their character; but here More feels one must be discriminating. More says that if Hawthorne meant in his criticism that his works lacked depth he was in error. Passion meaning intense feeling or emotion, More implies may be lacking. From his Twice-Told Tales to his Dolliver Romance, Hawthorne held steadily to the purpose of portraying the moral law against a background of Puritan history and the result of his efforts is described by More thus:

Many authors great and small, display a lack of passion, but perhaps no other in all the hierarchy of poets who deal with moral problems has treated these problems, on the one side at least, so profoundly as our New England romancer; and it is just this peculiarity of Hawthorne, so apparently paradoxical which gives him his unique place among writers.50

In the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Paul Elmer More finds an American author possessive of high intellectual and artistic quality.

50 Paul Elmer More, "The Solitude of Nathaniel Hawthorne", op. cit., p. 42
Turning to the literature of the South, Paul Elmer More selects for criticism the outstanding figure of that section in the first half of the nineteenth century, Edgar Allen Poe. Through his poetry, short stories, and critical essays Poe has proved himself a versatile writer and has won recognition from literary authorities both at home and abroad. Although Edgar Allen Poe is from the South he reflects no locality or interprets no social regime. He belongs to the world and to all generations.

Like the three men, the criticism of whose work has just been presented, Edgar Allen Poe attracted Paul Elmer More's interest and treatment in two essays; one in which More compares the origin of his art with that of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and another in which he presents Poe's critical method through a discussion of his three important essays: The Poetic Principle, The Rationale of Verse, and The Philosophy of Composition.

When a person hears or reads the name of Edgar Allen Poe, his mind soon becomes cluttered up with vague reminiscences of the weird and terrifying tone of such stories as The House of Usher and The Pit and the Pendulum. Since the word "weird" is so pertinent in the description of Poe's stories, More has stated specifically its meaning as he has used it in reference to Poe's work. "It is this precisely that we understand by the term 'weird' — not the veritable vision of unearthly things, but the peculiar half-vision inherited by the soul when faith has waned and the imagination prolongs the old sensations in a shadowy, involuntary life of its own; . . ."51

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It is in this peculiar function of the imagination that the field of true and effective symbolism" lies. More recalls that Hawthorne ascribes the superiority of Nature's work over man's to the fact that the former works from the innermost germ, while the latter works merely superficially. Now More says that this explanation may be used to show wherein the difference lies between the genuineness of Hawthorne's work and that of Poe's in comparison with the unreality of Tieck's or of Mrs. Radcliffe's. The weird unearthly substance moulded by these American geniuses is from the "innermost core of the national consciousness".

Their achievement is not like the Gothic novel introduced into England by Horace Walpole, a mere dilettante; there is in them very little of that recessiveness of medieval superstition and gloom which marked the rise of romanticism in Europe, little or nothing of the knights and ladies, turrets and dungeons and all that tawdry paraphernalia, and fortunately for their reputation, no taint of that peculiar form of sentimentalism which pervades the German Herzensergiessungen like the odour of Schiller's decaying apples. Their work is the last efflorescence of a tradition handed down to them unbroken from the earliest Colonial days, and that tradition was the voice of a stern and indomitable moral character.

More finds it an easy matter to explain by inheritance the mystic brooding over the dark and intricate effects of sin, which Nathaniel Hawthorne has woven his romances out of or to account for the realism that

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52 Paul Elmer More, "The Origins of Hawthorne and Poe", op. cit., p. 70
53 Ibid., p. 55
54 Ibid., p. 53
underlies the wild fantasies of Poe. This intense interest in mystery and horror is deep rooted in American history. Possibly More is referring to *The Wonders of the Invisible World* which deals with the matter of demons and witchcraft, or to the *Magnalia Christi Americana* when he notes that in the work of Cotton Mather one can find a "record of the dealings of Providence in America to see how intensely the mind of the Puritans was occupied with unearthly matters and what a legacy of emotions approaching the weird was left by them to posterity."

Cognizant that literature in the true sense of the term could not flourish among a people who "identified the plastic imagination with a mere seduction of the senses", and whose intellectual life was completely absorbed with theological speculations as was true of our ancestors of Colonial days, yet he is willing to give recognition to those writers whose attempts approach literary standards. He traces this interest in the unearthly from Colonial days from the one poet of the time who attained celebrity among his colleagues, and whose work is still read in survey courses in American literature but I believe practically not at all otherwise, Michael Wigglesworth, to the romances of Nathaniel Hawthorne and the poems and short stories of Edgar Allen Poe. For an illustration of "naked and appalling realism of horror" in the literature of early American writers More quotes

55 Paul Elmer More, "The Origins of Hawthorne and Poe", op. cit., p. 60
56 Ibid., p. 61
57 Ibid., p. 61
two lines from a poem of Michael Wigglesworth in which this striving poet wished to recall sinners from their evil ways by holding before their eyes the terrors of the last judgment; he asks mercy for the poor souls who

From the womb unto the tomb
Were straightway carried;58
to allow them "the easiest room in hell."59 Such was the food which nourished the minds of the young who in manhood were to depend on the sermons of Jonathan Edwards for intellectual nutrition.

During the years of the Revolution the note of pensiveness or gloom and the habitual contemplation of the supernatural significance of life can be detected in the writings of the period only at intermittent intervals. It was during these years of war that More assigns the transition from the old supernaturalism of religion to the shadowy symbolism of literature as is found in the works of Hawthorne and Poe to have taken place. During these momentous years when the national consciousness was directed into new fields, the only writer who could be considered to have revealed a touch of genuine poetic inspiration is Philip Freneau of New Jersey. In several of his poems More notes the subject of decay and dissolution. He says of Freneau's use of the weird and the mysterious: "In him we catch, perhaps, the first note of the weird as it appears in our later literature, of that transition of overwhelming superstition into shadowy haunting symbolism."60 In his poem The House of Death, More felt that Freneau just

59 Ibid., p. 61
60 Ibid., p. 65
failed of achieving a work which might have come "from the brain of Poe." 61

There is the thread of the weird in the weaving of the themes of Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, and William Cullen Bryant. In the novel Wieland written in 1798, Charles Brockden Brown has a theme "as weird and as steeped in thrilling melancholy" 62 using Brown's own words about his work "as anything in the repertoire of Hawthorne or Poe", 63 and "anticipates the very methods and tricks of his greater followers." 64 More, as other critics, admits that Brown's immediate inspiration was from the popular mystery novels of England of the day, and that his style is but crudely provincial, but in his pages he finds a "note of sincerity, the tongue and accent of a man to whom such themes are a native inheritance lending to his work a sustained interest which I for my part fail to find in The Castle of Otranto or The Mysteries of Udolpho". 65 Washington Irving shows his attraction to haunting delight in the dead, graves, and the terror of supernatural things in his brooding on the dead in Westminster Abbey or in the wild legends about the Hudson. Bryant in his youthful musings on death sets his work in the path of this tradition. Paul Elmer More sums up the history of this influence in American literature as follows:

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61 Paul Elmer More, "The Origins of Hawthorne and Poe", op. cit., p. 66
62 Ibid., p. 68
63 Ibid., p. 68
64 Ibid., p. 68
65 Ibid., p. 68
Necessarily this age-long contemplation of things unearthly, this divorcing of the imagination from the fair and blithe harmonies of life to fasten upon the sombre effects of guilt and reprobation, this constant meditation on death and decay - necessarily all these exerted a powerful influence on literature when the renaissance appeared in New England and as a sort of reflection in the rest of the country... it happened that out of that famous group of men who really created American literature the only two to attain perfection of form in the higher field of the imagination were writers whose minds were absorbed by the weirder phenomena of life. But it must not be inferred thence that the spirit of Hawthorne and Poe was identical with that of Michael Wigglesworth and Jonathan Edwards. With the passage of time the unquestioning, inclining faith and vision of those heroic men dissolved away. Already in Freneau, himself born of a Huguenot family a change is noticeable; that which to the earlier Fathers was a matter of infinite concern that which to them was more real and urgent than the breath of life, becomes now chiefly an intoxicant of the imagination, and in another generation the transition is complete.66

In his work Poe is not concerned with ethical abstractions, and he does not work upon ideas after the fashion of his great contemporaries in the North; his mind is analytical, and it is interested in the detection of facts and the dissection of sensations. More shows that a person may take any story written by Poe and compare an analysis of it with an analysis of a story of Hawthorne and the difference between the works is easily noticed. Both men are original in the technique of the story. Poe's power over our imagination depends on the "analysis of sensation connected with crime,"67

66 Paul Elmer More, "The Origins of Hawthorne and Poe", op. cit., p. 69
67 Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", The Demon of the Absolute, p. 79
whereas Hawthorne's interest "is centered upon the search for the idea of evil it itself."\(^6\)

Thus it is evident that Poe differed from the ethical writers in his use of evil. A study of a photograph of Poe reveals much of Poe the man; for his features are indicative of his character. In his study of Poe, Paul Elmer More notes that one of the most distinguishing marks of the literary productions of Poe is the combination of "nervous irritability, running even into the morbid, with rigorous intellectual analysis."\(^6\) This combination of characteristics is marked upon the countenance of the man. These distinctive qualities in his writings alienate him from the ultra-romantic writers as well as from the ethical writers.

Paul Elmer More analyzes in detail Poe's three important critical essays, *The Poetic Principle*, *The Rationale of Verse*, and *The Philosophy of Composition* about which he says "together they form one of the few aesthetic treatises in English of real value";\(^7\) they illustrate Poe's insistent exercise of the intellect and his love for logical argument.

Briefly More sets down Poe's significant convictions about poetry. In *The Poetic Principle*, in defiance to the ethical writers of Boston, where this lecture was read, Poe defines poetry as:

\[\text{The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty. Its sole arbiter is taste. With the intellect or with Conscience it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever} \]

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\(^6\) Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", *op. cit.*, p. 79

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 77

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 79
with Duty and with Truth... It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles - the creation of Supernal Beauty.71

More points out that Poe retains that position in The Rationale of Verse when he says verse "cannot be better designated than as an inferior or less capable Music."72 This theory of poetry is not new; More shows that Poe was only reiterating a commonplace belief of the age, and he mentions the German theorists of the Romantische Schule as popularizers of the idea. Schleiermacher implied this same idea when he declared that the religious feeling should "accompany all the doings of a man as if it were a holy music; he should do all with religion, nothing through religion;"73 and Novalis carried it to its dogmatic extreme when he saw the consummation of art in "poems which sound melodiously and are full of beautiful words but without any sense or connexion."74 Such a theory of poetry when expressed in "bald" terms is according to More simply "absurd".75 For examples of this method of the poet in which he attempts to produce an effect of musical evocation by putting the mind of the reader under a kind of hypnotic spell which leaves the emotional part of him free to drift off in a vague revery, he refers to Coleridge's Kubla Khan and Poe's The Valley of Unrest, The City of the Sea, and The Sleeper. More is not satisfied with poetry that depends entirely on its musical quality; it is meaningless. Referring

71Paul Elmer More, quoted in "A Note on Poe's Method", op. cit., p. 79
72Ibid., p. 80
73Ibid., p. 80
74Ibid., p. 80
75Ibid., p. 80
to the lines of *The Sleeper* which he quotes, he says that they fascinate
the reader by their musical power and carry him into a dreamlike revery. So
far they are in agreement with Poe's definition of poetry as "The Rhythmical
Creation of Beauty", but they do not bear the characteristic touch of Poe.
The quality absent in the lines of *The Sleeper* is the result of mental con-
centration and logical precision which Poe insists upon in his essay *The
Philosophy of Composition*. The combination of pure music and beauty under
the guidance of mental discrimination More points out may be found in Poe's
familiar poem, *The Bells*. 76 In such a literary product there is evidence
of mental discipline.

More completes his interpretation of Poe's work in his essay "A
Note on Poe's Method" by a discussion of his method in the creation of a
poem. In his essay *The Philosophy of Composition*, Poe raised the element of
centration to a principle of art in the creation of a poem. In this
easy, step by step the poem, *The Raven*, is analyzed in its making. Familiar
to the student of American literature is Poe's analysis of his method.
First, he determined the effect he aimed to produce. He chose beauty
since it is the "sole legitimate province of the poem". 77 Then he decided
upon the tone, which is one of sadness because Poe believed that "all ex-
pience has shown this tone to be one of sadness." 78 Since beauty in its
supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears, he

76 Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", *op. cit.*, p. 81
77 *Ibid.*, p. 82
78 *Ibid.*, p. 82
decided that a refrain which would be capable of protracted emphasis and melodious in itself must be chosen. The well known word "Nevermore" was his choice. The next step involved the difficulty that "lay in the reconciliation of this monotony with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word."\(^7^9\) Poe came to the conclusion that to clear up this difficulty the refrain must be put in the mouth of a parrot, and later he changed this to a raven. The selection of a topic was the next step. He decided that beauty associated with death to the universal understanding of mankind is the most melancholy. Therefore, the death of a beautiful woman seemed a suitable subject. His task consisted now in combining his theme and the instrument of his refrain. Such is briefly Poe's method in the composition of this poem. Unlike many critics who look upon this piece of analysis as an example of unparalleled audacity, in truth a grand hoax, and unlike those who believe that it is an ex post facto account, Paul Elmer More praises it as a reflection of Poe's habit of "conscious logical analysis."\(^8^0\)

I am inclined to believe that The Raven was actually composed very much as the author explains, and that his essay is not only essentially true to facts but throws a remarkable light on one phase of his genius. I do not mean to say that in all details the reflection on the method to be adopted would precede by an appreciable moment of time the actual invention; the two processes may have gone on together in his mind. The point is that

\(^7^9\)Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", op. cit., p. 82
\(^8^0\)Ibid., p. 83
the conscious logical analysis was present with him throughout the whole work of composition to an abnormal degree, now preceding, now accompanying, now following the more inscrutable suggestions of the creative faculty. This, I take it, is Poe's original note, a quality which distinguished his art from that of the other masters of unearthly revery. Here, too, lies the principal sphere of his influence on Baudelaire and the whole line of foreign poets who have imitated him without reaching his supremacy - they could borrow his method, they could not steal his brains. 81

More recognizes consistency in Poe's canon of art and his observance of it, and he says that judging him on this basis Poe "must rank high, if not first, among our American poets." 82 Considering Poe in the light of the extent of his influence, More believes "he would take a prominent place among the poets of Europe." 83

But More does not stop here in his evaluation of Poe's accomplishments. He raises a question regarding the validity of Poe's doctrine of truth and beauty. True, there is no discrepancy as to Poe's principles of art either in theory or in practice; but, asks More, "What does Poe mean by the distinction amounting to an opposition, between truth and beauty, and how did he carry it out in execution?" 84 More sees in Poe's insistence in his comparison of the story with poetry that the latter is superior because "the idea of the Beautiful, the artificialities of the rhythm are an insuperable bar to the development of all points of thought and expression

81 Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", op. cit., p. 83
82 Ibid., p. 83
83 Ibid., p. 83
84 Ibid., p. 84
which have their basis in truth merely a repetition of his definition of poetry as the "Rhythmical Creation of Beauty". More observes that Poe was true to the goal he had set for himself - he directed all the intense concentration and logical planning to the attainment of the effect he chose to produce, but the fallacy in his canon of art lies "not in any failure to deal truthfully with his material, but in the restriction of his material to a certain range of emotions and in the exclusion of what he brands as the 'heresy of The Didactic!'" For proof of this More refers to Poe's explicit acknowledgment that "this is the ground for his hostility to the contrary assumption that 'the object of all Poetry is Truth'. It is in a spirit of regret that Paul Elmer More sums up his criticism of Poe's work. "Beautiful as is much of Poe's work", More adds, "he leaves almost untouched the richest source of human feeling." Poe by identifying didacticism with truth has severed himself from a large range of material, the highest human emotions, which need not be didactical at all in form, but are essentially associated with the intuition of moral insight.

More recognizes in the work of Poe a close alliance to Poe the man. He says:

"It is natural, but it is none the less unfortunate, that such a man should have developed

85 Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", op. cit., p. 34
86 Ibid., p. 84
87 Ibid., p. 84
88 Ibid., p. 84
89 Ibid., p. 85
90 Ibid., p. 85
an aesthetic theory which rejected from the province of poetry any claim of truth beyond that of fidelity to a chosen sensation, and which emphasized so strongly the element of melancholy inherent in the perception of physical beauty. Rather than correcting a temperamental weakness, Poe's theory seemed to have emphasized it.91

This observation is true to form in the criticism of More. At all times More emphasizes the connection of art with the morality of society that produced it; and also its connection with the ethical bearing of its producer.

In the field of the abnormal More says that Poe has "wrought miracles, reaching his climax in the appalling song of madness which strikes the keynote of The Fall of the House of Usher."92 He feels that it would be unfair to set Poe in competition with poets who deal with the normal and more universal aspects of nature and create loveliness out of the more wholesome emotions of our common humanity. "In literature as in life health is above disease."93 He draws his criticism of the work of Edgar Allen Poe to an end with this approbation of his art: "There is no place in his poetry that the abnormal sinks to the unclean, or where there is an effort to intensify the effect of what is morbid morally."94 It is in this quality that our American critic sees a difference between Poe's writings and those of his Continental disciples.

In a survey of Paul Elmer More's interpretation of the work of Poe

91Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", op. cit., p. 86
92Ibid., p. 86
93Ibid., p. 86
94Ibid., p. 86
it seems that the following conclusions may be drawn. More, in his acceptance of Poe's analysis of his method in the composition of a poem as true, seems to infer that the poet in his "conscious logical analysis"95 reveals a sense of mental discipline. And in addition to this laudable quality, More emphasizes the fact that Poe's poetry never descends to the level of depravity. This seems to imply that Poe recognized the dual nature of man, and that art which appeals only to the bestial in man is short lived. Therefore, to attain the distinction of excellence his art must appeal to the higher nature of man.

Despite Paul Elmer More's suspicion of democracy, Walt Whitman the standard bearer of American democracy won his interest and approval with reservations. More cannot agree with the critics who raised their voices in praise of Whitman's spirit of democracy, his constant emphasis on the supremacy of the individual self, his promulgation of the idea of the divine average which are regarded as marks of progress. Also in the technical development of verse Whitman has broken away from conventional forms, and thus his poetry has become a model for lesser poets who appeal to him as an authority for their formlessness. All of these qualities More regards as signs of weakness rather than of excellence. What is of more importance to American literature than his sentimental democracy and his individualism, More states, is "his perception of the flux of appearances, the transitory quality of all things besides which at times death seems the only per-

95 Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", op. cit., p. 83
This intuition of change makes Whitman a direct counterpart of Emerson who was so saturated by the intuition of the permanence of the ideas of goodness, truth, and beauty that he sometimes treated the world as a pure illusion. Translated into American terms, this intuition of change which is at once local and universal More seems to imply will win him a distinctive place in American tradition.

And this sense of indiscriminate motion is I think, the impression left finally by Whitman's work as a whole, - not the impression of wind-tossed inanities that is left by Swinburne, but of realities, solid and momentous, and filled with blind portents for the soul. Now the observer seems to be moving through clustered objects beheld vividly for a second of time and then lost in the mass, and again, the observer himself is stationary while the visions throng past him in almost dizzy rapidity, but in either case we come away with the feeling of having been merged in unbroken processions, whose beginning and end are below the distant horizon and whose meaning we but faintly surmise.97

In spots Whitman has produced some fine passages such as in The Singer in the Prison, Out of the Cradle, and When Lilacs First in Dooryard Bloom'd. More believes that, when Whitman really succeeds as in these poems, he stands "with the great and not the minor poets".98 He recognizes in Whitman's art "a magical power to evoke memory of subtle sounds and odors; phrases chuck full of meaning; and paragraphs that contain true poetic

96 Paul Elmer More, "Walt Whitman", Shelburne Essays, Ser. iv, p. 199
97 Ibid., p. 203
98 Ibid., p. 200
emotion. These qualities in addition to Whitman's recognition of the transitory character of life and of all earthly things, More points out, will give his poetry permanence and importance.

On the other hand, More finds many faults in the art of Whitman. It reveals a creator who allowed his unselective sympathies to run wildly, and who sang the whole "welter of changing phenomena passing before his eyes, without troubling to analyze their quality or even to reject the most bizarre or eccentric urges or impressions." This is an indication of the absence of the operation of the "inner check" in Whitman's use of natural phenomena for his purpose.

His breaking away from certain conventions, such as dropping rhythm as a necessary requisite of poetry, More believes, is evidence that Whitman lacked an understanding of human nature. Besides, More says that much of Whitman's poetry is "little more than lusty preaching" about that which other men have treated creatively.

Where his broken prose is of a kind to strain the ear in the search for cadences which are not to be found, he simply, as Ben Jonson said of Donne, deserves hanging for not keeping the accent. To bawl out that things unlike are like, is not to make them so, and a manly egotism, if too noisy, may sink into mere fanfare. For page after page Whitman is rather a preacher of poetry than a poet;

Paul Elmer More, "Walt Whitman", op. cit., p. 199
"Walt Whitman", p. 194
and this perhaps may be his final condemnation that he is persistently telling us how the true poem of today should be written instead of making such a poem. Preaching has its uses and may arouse the loftiest emotions, but its uses and emotions are not those of poetry. The simple truth is that a large number of Whitman's so-called poems are not only sermons, but dull and amorphous sermons.¹⁰²

All through the essay "Walt Whitman", Paul Elmer More through his pronouncements on Whitman seems to be convinced that his poetry reveals the lack of art. He acknowledges the fact that Whitman's materials were more deeply felt and are on the whole broader in scope than those of his contemporaries; but, on the other hand, he sees in Whitman's expansive nature and poetic method an obstacle in his way of giving them beautiful form. For More the highest form is that which establishes order upon the most intricate materials. In More's criticism of Whitman there is that very reserved indication that he believes that Whitman shows great possibilities, and that if he but had the art of a Hawthorne to combine with his broad vision, his accomplishments could reflect the best in the American tradition. Even though "More was no admirer of Whitman, whose expansiveness and naturalistic mysticism ran counter to More's fixed criteria in Art and Religion",¹⁰³ he concludes his criticism of Whitman in a strictly judicious and balanced attitude:

He lacked the rare and unique elevation of Emerson from whom so much of his vision was un-

¹⁰²Paul Elmer More, "Walt Whitman", op. cit., p. 194
¹⁰³Duncan J. Spaeth, "Conversations with Paul Elmer More", Sewanee Review, October 1943, p. 541
wittingly derived, but as a compensation his temperament is richer than the New England poets and his verbal felicity at its best more striking. I do not see why Americans should hesitate to accept him, with all his imperfections and incompleteness, and with all his vaunted pedantry of the pavement, as one of their poets; but to do this they must begin by forgetting his disciples. 104

With the name of Walt Whitman, More completes his estimate of the five most outstanding contributors to the development of an American literature. As varied as they are in their interests, yet Paul Elmer More traces in their writings a tradition of moral values being established.

Henry David Thoreau is similar to Ralph Waldo Emerson in his ideas and ideals, yet quite different in his literary productions. The pioneer spirit governed Thoreau's life and thought. At Walden he lived as a pioneer, experiencing the elemental life of simplicity and frugality within a stone's throw of a region representative of an advanced civilization. The record of this life is of interest to us and fruitful to our thought. For More, Henry D. Thoreau is representative of the strong individualist who determinedly holds fast to ideals of the dignity of man, of the value of Nature as a source of influence in the development of discipline of the will, and the development of humility in the growth of character. Freedom for the romantics lies in the full development of the whole emotional nature; for Thoreau, it was "for the practice of a higher self-restraint." 105

104 Paul Elmer More, "Walt Whitman", Shelburne Essays, Ser. iv, p. 200
acter. In these sentiments expressed throughout his works, Thoreau contributed valuable material for directing the writers of the future.

In Emerson, More found a writer of greater artistic ability than Thoreau. But Paul Elmer More is attracted to Emerson mainly through his teachings of self-reliance, of nature as a source of beauty, and for his spiritual insight into the ubiquitous dualism of life. Emerson's failure to recognize the existence of evil and his unrestrained optimism tend to temper More's praise of his achievements.

Nathaniel Hawthorne in his interpretation of American life in his stories interprets Puritan New England life. His themes dealing with success and failure, sin and righteousness, and happiness that is sound and wholesome as set against that which seems real but is only an illusion, make his stories a mirror not only of past life, but of American motives and ideals of the present day. More recognizes in the works of Hawthorne the product of an artist of originality, deep insight, and a keen moral sense. Crowning his genius is his understanding of the need of and the exercise of self-criticism in the perfecting of his art. In this sense of self-criticism, More recognizes apparently a spirit of humility and a sense of self-restraint. Ethical virtues, the recognition of evil, the need for retribution for one's evil living, self responsibility, discipline of instinct as a means to a happy life, humility as the essence of a beautiful character are abundant in the work of Hawthorne. These are revealed in his subject matter as well as in his style.
At the opposite pole from the New England writers stands the work of Edgar Allen Poe. His stories of mystery, terror, and horror reveal an interest which is deep rooted in American history. Poe makes use of the idea of evil, not for any ethical purpose, but rather to analyze the emotional reaction to it. It is not in his subject matter that ethical principles can be discerned, but rather through his manner of writing about mysterious and horrible happenings and in his style. His stories, More is convinced, are always morally wholesome, and both they and his poetry reveal a disciplined mind in their structure.

Walt Whitman, to whom the moderns turn for an authority in their break from conventional forms and conventional poetic language, Paul Elmer More considers worthy of recognition for his broad vision and understanding of the contradictory forces in nature. Whitman's enthusiasm for originality of form and language which he believed was needed to enrich the art of a progressive America are signs of weakness in More's opinion. Not Whitman the voice of progress is important; but Whitman the voice of the phenomena of change characteristic of all things will hold an important place in American tradition.
CHAPTER IV

PAUL ELMER MORE'S ESTIMATE OF THE LITERATURE OF AMERICA PAST AND PRESENT

Although Paul Elmer More has put most emphasis upon the output of the New England writers, it has been his constant aim in the interpretation of the literature of America from Colonial days up to the thirties of the twentieth century to bring to light a tradition of moral values that has been built up in the writings of our literary men. Scattered as his interpretations are yet he has discussed the work of representative writers spread over five important periods of development in the history of America. True, he is primarily an ethical and aesthetic critic, yet there is a strain of the social critic in his essays. Therefore, I have chosen to discuss his interpretation of the contributions of writers to American literature according to the periods following: 1) Early Colonial Background; 2) The Revolutionary War and the Early Years of the New Republic; 3) The Mid-Nineteenth Century 1830-1864; 4) After the Civil War; and 5) The New Century.

It has become almost a habit among historians and critics to disparage early American literature and to apologize for it on the ground that the forefathers had no artistic sensibilities, their souls being oppressed by the gloom and rigor of Puritanism. But it must be remembered that the Puritans furnished only one of several strong elements in early American
life, and that wherever the Puritan influence was strongest there books and literary culture flourished. These New England colonists, forced from their homes by the Laudian persecution, came from practically one of the national factions. They did not bring with them the full temper of the English people, or even part of its character which gave us the great English poets. Their contributions to poetry, therefore, More says, "must be criticised, not as belonging to the main current of English literature, but as a slender branch, so to speak, running to one side, and deprived of the broader nourishment of tradition."

There are two sides to the effect of Puritanism upon the creation of literature, positive and negative. On the positive side More emphasizes their recognition of the importance of character in man as revealed in their literature.

And in one respect the Puritans brought no diminution to the field of art and literature, but effected rather a return to the main line of tradition from which England for a while had been partially diverted by the seductions of the Renaissance. I mean that sense of something central and formative in man, of character as distinguished from the mere portrayal of unrelated passions, which was so lamentably lacking in most of the dramatists, and which since the advent of Puritanism has been the chief honour of British letters.

On the negative side of Puritanism, More is cognizant of the "devastating effects of its rigid and combative morality on the imagination."

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2Ibid., pp. 7-8
3Ibid., p. 8
Life in early New England exaggerated the seclusions of the "half civilisation" which the people brought with them in their exile. The colonists were not only cut off from the contact with the secular tradition which makes itself so deeply felt in the art of Milton, but the inevitable hardships of their living conditions intensified their belief that life is a perpetual conflict with the powers of evil, to whom man must never yield. Their somber forests were vast, mysterious, forbidding; in them lurked tribes of savage people whose appearances and habits aroused the colonists to the belief that surely Satan inhabited these places and reigned supreme in them. This sentiment, More says, is voiced in the doggerel rhyme of Captain Smith:

But his waking mind in hideous dreams
did oft see wondrous shapes.
Of bodies strange, and huge in growth,
and of stupendous makes. 4

This conviction which seemed to be only a transient one in Virginia was deep rooted in Massachusetts. This view of evil, More shows, was a definite force in contracting the poetry of the colonists within the narrow bounds of religious sentiment. The writers whom More considers important to an understanding of the spirit of early Colonial days in New England are Michael Wigglesworth, Anne Bradstreet, Urian Oakes, Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards.

Of the quality of their efforts in poetry More says that the nasal

verses which were created by these early poets were able "to convey the wrath of God as well as the uprisings of holiness."\(^5\) Speaking of Michael Wigglesworth, whom he refers to as "the doggerel Dante of the New World meeting house",\(^6\) he notes that in this poet's The Day of Doom there is a grim sincerity which lifts its lines out of the commonplace and gives to them the "ring of poetry";\(^7\) and that even though his manner of expression is crude there is in it an "appalling energy and straightforwardness of the imagination."\(^8\)

During this period the most characteristic product of prose and poetry in More's opinion is the "eulogy of good men and women to which the element of religious fervor lent a tone of passionate sincerity."\(^9\) A typical example of this type of poetry is Elegy on the Death of Thomas Shepard by Uriah Oakes, a minister of Charlestown, who died in 1677. Although this elegy could not be compared with the great English elegies, More says that there is expressed in it "the charm of a friendship built upon a sure sympathy in the hopes of the spirit."\(^10\)

Turning from the theological verse makers, More directs attention to Anne Bradstreet, the "first and most ambitious of the professional poets of the age."\(^11\) To describe her poetry More uses one of her own aphorisms

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 15
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 12
\(^8\) Ibid., pp. 13-14
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 15
\(^10\) Ibid., p. 16
\(^11\) Ibid., p. 17
"A ship that bears much sail, and little or no ballast, is easily over-turned."[12] A possible interpretation of this may be that More recognizes in her work a wealth of appropriate subjects for poetry and the revelation of ample poetic feeling, but she seemed to have little or no power to give these artistic form and expression - to raise them to the level of poetry. As a representative of the Puritan spirit, More believes hers to be more "distinctly British than American."[13]

Her importance rests not so much in her accomplishments but in her poetical descendents to show how "New England society was knit together."[14]

Also in the fame of Anne Bradstreet our attention is drawn to the fact that women played an important role in the spirit of early New England literature. More attributes to them the establishment of the sturdy Puritan character in family life; and he considered them the source of conflict in Colonial life. He believed that the women in their modesty, industry, and loving devotion to their husbands and their children made the home a haven of peace and love. The women, in the majority of households, through their

... tenderness to every duty, the sense of due subordination, the competence of training, the repose of a clear conscience, must have evoked an atmosphere of serene and equitable joy. The very discipline of the passions, the renunciation of the wider sweep of human experience, would put a stamp of sacredness on those chaster pleasures which knit a family together in contented unison.[15]

[13] Ibid., p. 20
[14] Ibid., p. 20
[15] Ibid., p. 21
In regard to the second part played by women in the development of life in New England, he refers to Anne Hutchinson and others like her who preached religious doctrines contrary to the Calvinism of the Puritans, and who in doing so gave impetus to the people to rebel against institutions and rites, later against the authority of the Calvinist creed, and finally against its very principle of organization. More points to Anne Hutchinson as the first and typical "come-outer." 

More has merely mentioned incidentally the name of Increase Mather. He refers to and quotes several passages from the *Magnalia Christi Americana* of Cotton Mather. More does not value this work as a piece of literature, but rather he believes that it is "indispensable for an understanding of the ideas which were to blossom into a true and peculiar literature" under the pen of a later creative genius.

In the same line of theological interests is Jonathan Edwards a profound thinker of the Colonial period. It is not as a literary artist that More is interested in him, but rather as a religious thinker and philosopher. He has devoted an entire essay to the discussion of Jonathan Edwards' philosophical ideas, in particular, those bearing on the origin of the religious impulse in humanity and on the freedom of the will. Although More does not agree with Edwards' attack on the arguments for the freedom of the human will, he singles him out of the crowd of theological thinkers as "one

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17 Paul Elmer More, "Hawthorne Looking Before and After", *op. cit.*, p. 175
of the giants of the intellect and one of the enduring masters of religious
emotion."18 In his service to religion Edwards, according to More, "delib-
erately threw away the opportunity of making for himself one of the very
great names in literature."19

It is evident from More's brief survey of this period that he finds
little if any writings that could be considered literary in the true sense
of the term. True there are flares here and there in the writings of the
so-called poets that reveal poetic feeling and bear an imaginative touch,
but, on the whole, More values the work of these early writers for the
spirit that permeates it. He recommends an acquaintance with it for a
fuller appreciation of "that fine and ephemeral thing the flowering of New
England in the first half of the nineteenth century."20

Of the eighteenth century writers, More directs attention to
Benjamin Franklin and Philip Freneau. Benjamin Franklin versatile in so
many fields is not precisely a man of letters. More recognizes this fact,
but he also sees in Franklin a life that almost approaches literature and
out of which might be made one of the great books of our country. "Not
only do the salient events of his career take on the dramatic form which is
already a kind of literary expression, but he goes further than that and
leaves the task of the biographer half done by using language as one of his

18 Paul Elmer More, "Jonathan Edwards", A New England Group and Others, p. 64
19 Ibid., p. 42
England Group and Others, p. 51
chief instruments of activity." To know his writings in politics, religion, ethics, science, agriculture, navigation, hygiene, the mechanical arts, journalism, music, and education which reflect his "clarifying and renovating intellect, one of the greatest of that age" is to be "familiar with half the activities of the eighteenth century." Yet, with all these strong qualities - clarity, force, and flexibility, More notes that he "lacked that final spell which transmutes life into literature." His chief failing then is his lack of depth of background, in other words, imagination described by More as "the indwelling of the past in the present." It is not mere accident that Franklin's "most literary" productions, The Autobiography and Introductions to the Almanacs filled with contemporaneous interests, have attracted the attention of the reading public down through the years.

In agreement with the other critics of the day, Paul Elmer More points out that Philip Freneau is the leading writer of the Revolutionary War period. He abandoned his poetic dream to exercise a ferocious talent in the writing of satiric verse which lashed mercilessly English generals, native Tories, royal proclamations, and anything else pertaining to Great Britain. Of Hamilton's charge against Freneau's connection with Jefferson

21 Paul Elmer More, "Benjamin Franklin", Shelburne Essays, Ser. iv, p. 140
22 Ibid., p. 130
23 Ibid., p. 130
24 Ibid., p. 130
25 Ibid., p. 154
and his resulting disparaging articles on the central government, More says that it is not easy to defend.

Paul Elmer More very aptly describes Freneau as "a frustrated poet, a poet of hints and anticipations".26 At intervals through the noise of his political writings one can catch "the slender tones"27 of his lyrical moods. In them More detects often a "strange presage of the future."28 There is the prophetic hint in The Indian Burying Ground which Campbell "appropriated bodily";29 there are borrowings from him in Hazlitt's Table Talk; a line in Scott shows his familiarity with Freneau as well as his praise of Eutau Springs "as fine a thing as there is of the kind in the language."30 But even more specific anticipations are his attempts to embody in his poetry something of the romanticism that was preparing in England. More finds in his poems, Amanda's Singing Bird, The Power of Fancy, and The Wild Honey Suckle, distinct suggestions of William Blake, John Keats, and William Wordworth respectively.31

There is in the lines following a clear, unearthly loveliness.

Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,
Hid in this silent, dull retreat,
Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,
Unseen thy little branches greet:
    No roving foot shall crush thee here,
    No busy hand provoked a tear.

27Ibid., p. 96
28Ibid., p. 96
29Ibid., p. 96
30Ibid., p. 96
31Ibid., p. 96
By Nature's self in white arrayed,
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
And sent soft waters murmuring by;
Thus quietly thy summer goes,
Thy days declining to repose.

From morning suns and evening dews
At first thy little being come;
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
For when you die you are the same;
The space between is but an hour
The frail duration of a flower.\(^{32}\)

These lines are to More in their many flaws amid bits of delicate beauty, as "the slender brittleness of a costly vase, marred in the burning."\(^{33}\)

But it is not only in the poetry of the English poets that More finds suggestions of the poetry of Freneau. In his use of shadowy forms, ghosts, and dreamy things as in The House of Night, Paul Elmer More recognizes his affiliations with Edgar Allen Poe. However, here More makes a distinction between Philip Freneau's use of gloomy, mysterious elements and Edgar Allen Poe's use of them. Freneau lacks the power in his use of them to arouse a feeling of awe.

More seems a little extravagant in his interpretation of Philip Freneau's "hints and anticipations" of the English romantic poets and of later American poets. It seems very unlike More, who seems in general to be drawn to the solitaries, to be so free in detecting fine bits in the poetry

\(^{32}\)Paul Elmer More, "Philip Freneau", op. cit., pp. 96-97
\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 97
of a man who was so disturbed by the political issues of his day. It must be admitted that his comparisons are highly suggestive. For example, he regrets that Swangum Taurus, Astrologer, and Slender Journey were not supplemented by others of their kind so that Freneau could have left a complete picture of American society in this humorous vein. 34 In More's reason for attributing value to such a work he makes an interesting observation which reveals his human quality that those who cry out against him as an ethical critic frigid to the pulsating emotions of the human heart fail to see. More states "It is not the poet of purest aspiration, nor the harsh denouncer of crime, that hands down his age to us as a breathing human reality. It is by his foibles man lives for posterity; his greater virtues and vices make of him an example, not a companion." 35 Paul Elmer More sums up Freneau as a representative American writer thus:

... Not the least of his anticipations was his prophecy of America's empire, and the conscious assumption within himself of so many of the traits of the practical calculating American mind, side by side with its thin mysticism; as if the temperaments of Poe and Franklin were united in one person. Here you shall read lines in glorification of commerce and science, such as our national poet to-day, if such existed, might write; here you shall see the past disparaged in the classics, and that self-flattering absorption in the present which has sapped the very roots of the New World's imagination. And here too is the fullest expression of that spirit of rebellion and mutual distrust in which the country was unfortunately,

34 Paul Elmer More, "Philip Freneau", op. cit., pp. 99-100
35 Ibid., p. 100
if necessarily, founded, and which has clung to it like an inherited taint in the blood, marring the harmony of its development and suffering a partial expiation in the calamities of the civil war. There is a lesson for us to-day, and in more ways than one, a little humiliation in the career of our first poet.36

Between the Revolutionary War and the New England Renaissance, Paul Elmer More believes there is very little except the work of Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, and William Cullen Bryant which bears the imprint of the American temperament. As mentioned in the previous chapter this American trait is our writer's fondness for melancholic themes relying on the use of gloomy or supernatural elements for their effectiveness. In a single paragraph he disposes of their part in the development of an American literature. He mentions not a word about James Fenimore Cooper whose historical panoramic novels in the tradition of Sir Walter Scott present the heroism and manly virtues of those who faced the hardships and dangers of life on the frontier.

Of the next period covering approximately from 1830 to after the Civil War, Paul Elmer More has treated as representative writers Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allen Poe, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Charles Eliot Norton. He makes but a brief statement of the work of James Russell Lowell in making a comparison of his work with that of Norton.

36 Paul Elmer More, "Philip Freneau", op. cit., pp. 102-103
There is a deep ethical earnestness in the essays of Thoreau and of Emerson, and in the novels of Hawthorne which sets them apart, as of a different spirit from the work of Freneau, Irving, and their contemporary Edgar Allen Poe. Since More's interpretation of the work of Emerson, of Thoreau, of Hawthorne and of Edgar Allen Poe has been discussed in detail in chapter three reference will be made to them only when to do so will give a more complete view of the literature of America as More sees it.

Of the Cambridge scholars, More is most interested in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Although writers such as Lafcadio Hearn, Rudyard Kipling, and J. H. Shorthouse speak in praise of the work of Longfellow, and men and women of the educated and of the ignorant circles of the last century admire him as their beloved poet, yet literary critics including Paul Elmer More approve of his work only with reservation and sometimes their judgments bristle with contempt for it.

More's criticism of the accomplishments of Longfellow is fundamentally balanced and suggestive. He does not mince words in condemning Longfellow's work as a reflection of the embodiment of ideas, which have been treated nobly and individually in the past, and have under his pen been reduced to a kind of smooth commonplace. More considers this criticism applicable also to Longfellow's images. Aware of the fact that even the greater poets have taken their images where they found them, More tactfully explains that it is not on this point that Longfellow's work is to be criticized, but rather on the fact that there is something in the resem-
blances of language and metaphor that detracts the reader's attention to the "lower plane upon which his imagination moves."\(^{37}\) The idea of lower and higher plane of the imagination comes close to the roots of taste and criticism; More says, "it turns on the question of the dualism ... in human nature."\(^{38}\) To clarify his statement here Paul Elmer More uses the comparison of Longfellow's poem *Weariness* with Heine's *Du bist wie eine Blume*, translated *Thou art as a Flower*. Of these poems More says that both have the power to touch the heart, and both have continued to live in the memory of men; yet it would be uncritical to say that both have attained the same reputation and that they have made the same impression. Even though the lines are simpler, they have a clinging quality far greater than those of Longfellow's. This difference in power of impression between the two poems More explains on the principle of dualism. Heine's simple lines possess the greater depth because they convey through their language his greater sense of the dualism in life. In the case of Longfellow's poem there is primarily the contrast between innocent childhood and old age wearied of the world; a contrast which arises out of the effect of the span of time. Longfellow's poem conveys merely the emotion of sentimental pathos of daily life. On the other hand, More finds it difficult to define precisely the touch in Heine's poem, in what it is to be found. The symbolical

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38 Ibid., p. 135
power of the "Du bist wie eine Blume" is felt instinctively to a far greater degree than any personal emotion. The contrast between the loveliness of youth and the satiety of old age in it reflects a conflict inherent in the heart of Heine.

More follows this comparison with a discussion of the relation of Longfellow to the other New England writers. Emerson from his study of Schleiermacher, Fichte, and Schelling transferred Transcendental philosophy to the New England soil; from the same source Thoreau derived his devotion to nature, and Hawthorne's taste for the weird as well as his aggravated sense of solitude in the world were influenced to some degree by the same German authors. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, as his brother New Englanders, brought to American literature something from these German sources. His contributions from foreign sources are a sentimental note and the idea of a world literature that would absorb the best of all lands. He gave to American poetry the "romantic Empfindsamkeit refined and qualified by the purity, sweetness and strength of his own nature."59

Regarding the qualities of interest and a fine rhythm in the poetry of Longfellow, More shows that these are dubitable points of strength. In the first place the element of interest in the poems of Longfellow attracts a large number of readers to them, but there is implied in More's attitude throughout the entire essay that this indicates a lack of resistance on the part of the poet, a weakness common to the New England school.40

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40 "Empfindsamkeit" translated is "sensibility, or sentimentality".
flow from Longfellow smoothly and fluently so much so that they reveal the absence of a sense of selection, "an inner check upon them which would steep them with the more obstinate emotions of the breast." When resistance is exhibited in the work of Longfellow, it is the result of difficulties of form, rather than of his own artistic inhibition.

Paul Elmer More is disappointed with the volume of Professor Charles Eliot Norton which contains a sketch of Longfellow's life and selections from his autobiographical poems. Far better would it have been in the opinion of More if Norton or some other person interested in the accomplishments of Longfellow would have collected his sonnets and given a sketch of Longfellow as a sonnet writer. More says of such a volume.

For ripeness of style and imagery such a volume would stand easily at the head of American poetry, and it would show an aspect of Longfellow's genius which is obscured by the bulk of his more popular work. It would place him as a peer among the great sonnet writers of England.

The sixty-three sonnets are the most valuable accomplishment of Longfellow. They embody all the interests of Longfellow's life; in particular, his long acquaintance with books and authors. More notes that in the sonnet on Chaucer and in the one on Shakespeare's stage which he quotes, that there is revealed the combination of the poet and the critic; and he says, "Wordsworth may have surpassed him, but no other, I think in this use of the sonnet."

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41 Paul Elmer More, "The Centenary of Longfellow", op. cit., p. 145
42 Ibid., p. 147
43 Ibid., p. 148
Despite the fact that the work of Longfellow suffers from a lack of fresh ideas, lack of originality, banality, and sentimentalism, Paul Elmer More believes that there is a ray of hope for his reputation in the future in the history of American literature if only critics and writers of books will concentrate their study and evaluation of his work on the sonnets. In them More finds Longfellow "an artist of rare tact and power".  

James Russell Lowell of the same school as Longfellow, Paul Elmer More briefly mentions in discussing the work of Charles Eliot Norton. This is not strange since the two men worked together as editors on the _North American Review_. Although More recognizes in the writings of Lowell the power to amuse and to entertain, a prerogative of literature, he misses in them an important characteristic, that is what has been repeated over and over in his interpretations and estimates of other writers, the sense of restraint. "He never entirely controlled his own faculties", says More, "we never touch bottom with him, not so much because of the depth of his mind as because of the drift of its currents."  

On the other hand, Paul Elmer More found in Charles Eliot Norton the exact opposite of Lowell. Better than any of the other writers of this section Norton represents "the naked New England conscience and its tenacity

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46 Ibid., p. 99
of character. Unlike Lowell, who at times was digressive and even to a certain extent self-conscious in his essays, Norton never compromises to be original, witty, or profound; he said with unhesitating precision just what he felt and thought. More describes him as "the man of culture, the ripe scholar, to whom the lessons of the past had become a personal experience." He ascribes to Norton the honour of having brought into the literature and activities of New England the note of sound cosmopolitanism.

The nineteenth century started out with great promise in the realm of literature owing to the work of Thoreau, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Poe. As the middle of the century approached the unrest, which was prevalent over the country because of its accelerated growth and the economic, social, and political problems that arise out of such a situation, left its imprint upon the minds of the scholars of those years, and the result was that they produced improvisations and impromptu literature. More points out in this respect the accomplishments in literature of John Greenleaf Whittier were for the most part for the day, but not for time. For More, Charles Eliot Norton stood in his community at large as a "critic and check". The work of Norton is valuable for its note of restraint when this element in life seemed to have been lost in the turmoil of changing activities.

And especially in the hour of expansive liberty that came to New England when it had broken from the bondage of religion, it was de-

48Ibid., p. 100
49Ibid., p. 111
50Ibid., p. 115
51Ibid., p. 111
sirable that the principle of restraint, broadened indeed by contact with the world, but not weakened or clouded, should have had its voice and embodiment.\textsuperscript{52}

Unmoved by the "winds of folly which blew about him, the dust of pedantry",\textsuperscript{53} which smote his eyes and the "cant and sentimentalism"\textsuperscript{54} that made the very air about him foul, he continued always to cherish in his heart what is lovely and of good report. Through all spiritual temptations, Charles Eliot Norton "kept his feet firmly planted on the bedrock of character."\textsuperscript{55}

In his essay "Whittier the Poet", More sets out in a spirit of defense to bring to light from the mass of inartistic poetic attempts what has genuine literary value. He notes that critics usually consider Whittier in an unfavorable light; that is they emphasize his connection with the Abolitionist Movement; they evaluate his antislavery poetry. It is true, More agrees, that Whittier did not possess the genius, and the literary qualifications of Wordsworth or Shelley, who could deal with commonplace things of life and still add to their writings the touch of elevation, but he believes that in evaluating Whittier's work that the critics have taken the line of least resistance and have repeated in each his own fashion, derogative criticism of his poetry of reform and politics, rather than have brought to light the pieces of his poetry of admirable craftsmanship. His

\textsuperscript{52}Paul Elmer More, "Charles Eliot Norton", \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 111-112
\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 113
\textsuperscript{54}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 113
\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 113
faults are numerous; his religious poetry lacks ecstasy; in general his poetry lacks depth and originality of emotion; and above all his poetry reveals the lack of self-criticism. The last weakness is the most detrimental to the creative artist. More says of the latter:

What he needed above everything else, what his surroundings were least of all able to give him was a canon of taste, which would have driven him to stiffen his work, to purge away the flaccid and set the genuinely poetical in strong relief - a purely literary canon which would have offset the moralist and reformer in him.

Out of Whittier's bag of literary attempts, More takes The Pennsylvania Pilgrim, which he describes as an "exquisite idyl", and which, he points out, Whittier himself sanctions as his best poem. Contrary to the common opinion that Whittier is the exponent of New England life, Paul Elmer More says that in many of his prose works and, in particular, in this poem Whittier indicates a lack of sympathy in the austerity of New England traditions. The tone of relief is evident when Whittier turns his imagination to the quiet peace of Penn's land:

Who knows what goodnings in their sterner way
O'er jagged ice, relieved by granite grey,
Blew round the men of Massachusetts Bay?

57 Ibid., p. 42
58 Ibid., p. 35
59 Ibid., pp. 34-35
60 Ibid., p. 48
61 Ibid., p. 48
62 Ibid., p. 49
What hate of heresy the east wind woke?
What hints of pitiless power and terror spoke
In waves that on their iron coast-line broke?63

Although More is fully aware of Whittier's shortcomings as a man of literature, he finds in the poet's work values worthy of recognition. For More, Whittier's poetry smacks of his American surroundings. He summarizes his reaction to the poem *The Pennsylvania Pilgrim* thus:

Here the faults of taste that elsewhere so often offend us are sunk in the harmony of the whole and in the singular unity of impression; and the lack of elevation that so often stints our praise becomes a suave and mellow beauty. All the better elements of his genius are displayed here in opulent freedom. The affections of the heart unfold in unembittered serenity. The sense of home seclusion is heightened by the presence of the enveloping wilderness but not disturbed by any harsher contrast. Within is familiar joy and retirement unassailed not without a touch of humour...64

John Greenleaf Whittier is for Paul Elmer More the poet of the home and the hills. His naturalness, spontaneity, and plain humanity breathed life into his poetry. Whittier, despite these themes so close to the heart of man and fine qualities, failed to become a great poet owing to his lack of culture, the stern conditions of life to which he was subjected, his devotion to duty, and his struggle for liberty.

Another writer of the simple life of the same period who, Paul Elmer More believes, is worthy of recognition is Donald G. Mitchell. He is a minor

63 Paul Elmer More, quoted in "Whittier the Poet", op. cit., p. 49
64 Ibid., p. 49
writer, yet More believes that he represents that "rare figure in American letters, the gentleman amateur whom it is good to honour."65 Neither his six volumes of American and English literature which More considers insufficiently critical for the mature mind, nor his fiction which requires a reader "baptized in the clear cool springs of New England tradition"66 have impressed More, but rather his "more personal works, his chapters on European travel, and his pictures of country life at Edgewood"67 have won him recognition.

It is not Mitchell's art that More admires, but rather it is the life that is revealed in his writings. More points out that Mitchell describes in his Edgewood books "the rare union of the scholar and the farmer, of the love of books and for the soil."68 Their value for More rests on their revelation of observation and reflection on nature by a person who has derived a deep understanding of her through direct contact. Mitchell worked on the soil as a farmer, and his study of nature therefore was not limited to abstract communings with her, but was the result of observation and reflection during his simple labor to bring out her full development.

With the slavery question settled there opens a new era of literary activity. Walt Whitman who had been working before the Civil War and had had his first edition of *Leaves of Grass* published in 1855 continued to write. His expansive tendencies, the touch of pantheism in his treatment of nature, and his apparent lack of discipline or control in dismissing

65Paul Elmer More, "Donald G. Mitchell", Shelburne Essays, Ser. v, p. 159
66Ibid., p. 159
67Ibid., p. 160
68Ibid., pp. 164-165
rhythm as a necessary ingredient of poetry prevented Paul Elmer More to give approval to his work as a whole. What praise More has given has been bestowed very reservedly.

Another writer during the years preceding the turn of the century is Thomas Bailey Aldrich, whom Paul Elmer More treats as a poet rather than as a writer of short stories. More notes that Aldrich, saturated with a love of formal beauty, is an artist in exquisite finish, and in this respect he has few rivals in American poetry of the last years of the nineteenth century. For many years Aldrich spent his creative energy in writing pretty trifles. Then he finally became aware of the meaning of poetry as a noble expression of the truth and beauty of this present life, and his last little book, Songs and Sonnets, says More, contains practically all that is worth remembering. Of this volume More says: "His chief title to genius is the inerrant taste with which he has after many trials beaten out these few lyrics into perfect form, and set them apart from the rest of his work. Their veil of humility is their beauty."\(^6^9\)

More traces very briefly the history of vers de societe which type of poetry Thomas Bailey Aldrich introduced to American literature. Quoting the lines following he says that in "that exquisite and pathetic diminution is . . . the secret of what is called vers de societe or Gentle Verse."\(^7^0\)

My mind lets go a thousand things,
Like dates of wars and deaths of kings,
And yet recalls the very hour -
'T was noon by yonder village tower,

\(^6^9\) Paul Elmer More, "Thomas Bailey Aldrich", Shelburne Essays, Ser. vii, P. 149
\(^7^0\) Ibid., p. 152
And on the last blue noon in May -
The wind came briskly up the way,
Crisping the brook beside the road;
Then pausing here, set down its load
Of pine-scents, and shook listlessly
Two petals from that wild-rose tree.71

It is apparent that More approves wholeheartedly the later poetic accomplishments of Thomas Bailey Aldrich for the very reason that this Gentle Verse, which he wrote, reveals that virtue that More believed men who understood the dualism existing in the nature of man should adopt. Humility is one of the chief virtues in the religious philosophy of More.

Another poet, that Paul Elmer More is charmed by the beauty and originality of his art, is Lafcadio Hearn, the son of an Irish immigrant and a woman of the Greek Islands. Hearn is a strange figure in the American scene because of his Japanese connections in his later years. He became a subject of the Mikado, married a Japanese woman, and adopted the customs and religion of the Orient. More's treatment of Lafcadio Hearn's work is apparently due to their mutual interests in Buddhism. More defines the art of Hearn thus: "It is an art of strange subtlety that we should regard his literary work an art that, like some sympathetic menstruum, has fused into one compound three elements never before brought together."72 Upon the perusal of Hearn's writings More notes that in them there is "that sense of restraint joined with a power of after suggestion".73 This "self-restrained

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71 Paul Elmer More, "Thomas Bailey Aldrich", op. cit., p. 152
72 Paul Elmer More, "Lafcadio Hearn", Selected Shelburne Essays, p. 25
73 Ibid., p. 25
and suggestive style, More identifies as Hearn's instrument of art.

Three distinct and mutually destructive philosophies are combined in the writings of Hearn. More sums up his contribution to American literature thus:

He stands and proclaims his mysteries at the meeting of three ways. To the religious instinct of India - Buddhism in particular which history has grafted on the aesthetic sense of Japan, Mr. Hearn brings the interpreting spirit of Occidental science, and these three traditions (Hindu, Japanese, and European) are fused by the peculiar sympathies of his mind into one rich and novel compound, - a compound so rare as to have introduced into literature a psychological sensation unknown before. More than any other recent author, he has added a new thrill to our intellectual experience.

Except for Amy Lowell, the only other American female writer, whom More did any more than refer to, is Mary E. Wilkins Freeman. In his essay "Hawthorne Looking Before and After", Paul Elmer More compares her art with that of Hawthorne. Like Hawthorne, Mrs. Freeman treated a single phase of the New England character. Mrs. Freeman in her stories presents lives of men and women which have become sterile as the result of years of repressed emotions, strict adherence to conscience, and the practice of austerity in word and action, whereas Hawthorne in his stories creates characters in whose lives there has been a spiritual change. Her works differ from that

74 Paul Elmer More, "Lafcadio Hearn", op. cit., p. 26
75 Ibid., p. 26
76 Ibid., p. 26
of Hawthorne in that they are thoroughly provincial with absolutely no universal appeal, they are not tragic in any sense of the word, and they are devoid of any problem of the struggle between the flux of human desires and the human will, or between the human will and the burden of circumstances. In the words of More, her stories "have passed from the imagination to the nerves."

With the birth of the New Century, Paul Elmer More has done very little in interpreting the writers of his own day. There are only two essays in which he deals with the American writers of the early decades of the twentieth century; these are "Henry Adams" and "Modern Currents in American Literature".

Henry Adams is the son of Charles Francis Adams and grandson of John Quincy Adams. He is the literary representative of a New England family which has exerted remarkable influences in various phases of American life. It is his most famous volume his autobiography, The Education of Henry Adams, in which he reveals his honest search for the meaning of life that is the mainspring of More's interpretation of Adams' place in the American scene. Paul Elmer More, a religious sceptic himself, would naturally be drawn to Henry Adams, another sceptic. More has throughout his work in the New England writers emphasized the various phases of religious thought of that section of our country. New England had first been the bulwark of faith in Calvinism for which the people had left their homeland

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77 Paul Elmer More, "Hawthorne Looking Before and After", op. cit., p. 181
to preserve. It had experienced since those early years of positive faith a change from it to Unitarianism, and from this freer interpretation of the spiritual life to free thinking, until in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century all that could be said of it rested in a complete negation. Adams was not satisfied with this negation of his society, and sought to find a positive faith to take its place. He turned for light to the Virgin Mother of God, whom the Puritans had rejected. In his reasoning he came to the conclusion that "If the Trinity was in its essence Unity, the Mother alone could represent whatever was not Unity; whatever was irregular, exceptional, outlawed; and this was the whole human race." The result of his search for the meaning of life in the words of More is a "sentimental nihilism". For his scholarship, his imagination, his candour, his cynical animation, his reflective power, and his verbal dexterity, More would assign to him a high place in the American literature of the last century. As a representative of New England in its last condition of lost faith he is most honest and typical. But More feels that to hear a manlier voice speak words of deeper insight and face the facts of life, it will be necessary to hear them from the people of Mather, Edwards, Emerson, and Channing.

At the request of the Revue de Paris for a critique of the modern

79 Ibid., p. 139
80 Ibid., p. 140
American writers, Paul Elmer More wrote his essay, "Modern Currents in American Literature", which is in his volume, The Demon of the Absolute, published 1928. His discussion is limited to the output of Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, Joseph Hergesheimer, John Dos Passos, James Branch Cabell, Edgar Lee Masters, Amy Lowell, and Sherwood Anderson because it was his conviction that these writers, in particular, represented more genuinely than any others what is really "modern" and "American" in spirit. Unlike their contemporaries Edith Wharton, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Booth Tarkington, and the mediocre writers, Hamlin Garland and Meredith Nicholson, and the rest of the writers between Edith Wharton and Harold Bell Wright who "are producing books of more or less honest craftsmanship, in better or worse English, with this or that smear of local color", the former writers have in the words of More "signed the new Declaration of Independence in letters." The young rebels are taking a course similar to a movement in England; they are mimicking the actions of their British friends who have taken their cue from France or even from Russia. They are in complete opposition to any artistic principles that bear the imprint of tradition. However, unlike their English models who speak wildly against their Victorian predecessors, these American rebels animated with the spirit of

81 Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", The Demon of the Absolute, p. 53
82 Ibid., p. 53
83 Ibid., p. 53
84 Ibid., p. 53
discovering new paths for literature to take "denounce any suggestion of allegiance or respect to the literary prigs who used to utter their platitudes from Boston." Their wholehearted contempt for New England Puritanism which is so distinctly American far surpasses the disdain which the members of a similar school in England expressed for their predecessors, in particular, the mid-Victorians. They acknowledge not as ancestors Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Lowell, Longfellow, Whittier; they trace their literary lineage to Poe and Whitman, and of the more recent writers they recognize the authority of Stephen Crane.

More explains the causes of the repudiation of the New England writers' primacy thus: local jealousy, patriotism, conviction that religion and morality have no place in literature, and the freeing of art from the responsibilities of life. In the first place, More shows that the literary climbers of the West are desirous to prove their birthplace a centre of light for the world "as was the metropolis of the Puritans" and so they will travel to New York, "which is any man's or no man's city," as soon as they get on their literary legs but will never go to Boston. Secondly, it is the opinion of the young writers that the writers of Boston derived their culture from abroad and slavishly imitated the language of London. The men who consider themselves modern are determined to employ a dialect which can be considered strictly "good United States" and to create a literature

85 Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", op. cit., p. 54
86 Ibid., p. 55
87 Ibid., p. 55
88 Ibid., p. 55
truly new and novel not only in this country but in the world. More points out the inconsistency of this argument. As far as the New England writers adopted the traditional laws of grammar and established forms of art their argument is valid, but they have failed to recognize that in their concern for the deeper things of the spirit the early writers were distinctly national, true to the spirit then existing in the nation. On the other hand, Paul Elmer More sees in the ideas of the advocates of independence not a characteristic peculiar to America but beliefs that are being promulgated the world over, that suddenly "we have been liberated from the old laws and conventions and fears, from the ancient gods and their precepts of morality."89

In regard to their rejection of religion and morality, More discerns in it two marked tendencies. On the one hand there are the writers who seemed to find joy in immorality and irreligion, and, on the other hand, there are those writers who, when questioned, will admit that religion and morality have a function in the life of a people, but they do not see that religion and morality play any part in the formulation of canons of art.

Thus More summarizes the animosities that bind the otherwise centrifugal champions of liberty into a brotherhood.90 They are "a hatred of Puritanism, rejection of 'morality' and 'religionism', and emancipation of art from the responsibilities of life."91

88 Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", op. cit., p. 56
90 Ibid., p. 57
91 Ibid., p. 57
In treating the modern writers he discusses them under two categories: the aesthetes represented by Amy Lowell, James Branch Cabell, and Joseph Hergsheimer; and the realists represented by Edgar Lee Masters, Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, and John Dos Passos.

Of the aesthetes, More considers Amy Lowell the leading spirit of the group and the "most finished artist". In his opinion her reputation in the future will rest more upon her regular verse than on that which identifies her as an imagist poet. It is his candid opinion that people are tiring of free verse.

He sees in the free verse of Amy Lowell both a local and a cosmopolitan character. In adoption of form from Walt Whitman her verse bears the stamp of a local source, while in her fashioning of that form on the Parisian models as well as her emphasis on imagism, her verse takes on a cosmopolitan touch. Being a modern it was necessary that she add something original and unique to her writing and so she affixed to her poetry "polyphonic verse", which she found in the writings of Paul Fort. She made it her own by not using as he did the Alexandrine line but rather the "long flowing cadence of oratorical prose". In so doing she created a new genre which she named polyphonic prose and which she defined as "an orchestral form, its tone is not merely single and melodic as is that of

92 Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", op. cit., p. 57
93 Ibid., pp. 57-58
94 Ibid., p. 57
95 Ibid., p. 57
vers libre, for instance, but contrapuntal and various.\textsuperscript{96} He describes his reaction to this part of her work as the expression of a "genius hag-ridden by theory."\textsuperscript{97}

The work of James Branch Cabell as that of the other aesthetes represented for Paul Elmer More a "divorce between the true in life and the beautiful in art which must spell death to any serious emotion in literature."\textsuperscript{98} More discusses two of Cabell's works, his Jurgen and his Beyond Life, the latter having more interest for him than the former. Of Jurgen More makes the following observation that its wider reputation may "depend chiefly on its elusive and cunningly suggestive lubricity."\textsuperscript{99}

Much as we hesitate to admit it, the fact remains true, that a fairly large percentage of Americans are attracted chiefly by the elements of sensuality in their reading matter, in their plays on the legitimate stage, and in the movies. Paul Elmer More makes here a significant observation and one very applicable to this novel woven around the theme of disillusionment. Also in this novel, More notes a lack of solidity in the art of Cabell. To him in this book, Cabell seems to waver between a sincere and genuine power in style and a superficial and pretentious manner.

\ldots I confess that I was caught by passages here and there, even by whole chapters here and there, which through the affectations of jollity gave hints of a sad and chastened wisdom born from too much brooding on the transience of all earthly

\textsuperscript{96}Paul Elmer More, quoted in "Modern Currents in American Literature", op. cit., p. 57
\textsuperscript{97}Ibid., p. 57
\textsuperscript{98}Ibid., p. 62
\textsuperscript{99}Ibid., p. 59
things; and then a false note, a lapse into provincial English, a flash of cheap smartness, would break the charm, and make me feel that the erudition so lavishly displayed was more superficial than solid, the art more sophisticated than fine, and the superiorities of manner rather snobbish. 100

Of the novels that followed this one, More disposes of them by a mere statement that they are entertaining, but really trivial. It is Cabell's book *Beyond Life* in which he speaks of literature that attracted More's interest. More quotes several of Cabell's observations on literature, and in particular, he directs the reader's attention to Cabell's agreement with the Sophoclean maxim from Aristotle, that an author should aim to portray men not as they are but as they "ought to be". 101 More shows by quotation from Cabell's book that good and evil are aesthetic conventions of romantic origin; virtue in comparison to beauty is given a subordinate value aesthetically. Therefore, that "the characters of a book should be allowed to follow the pretty vagaries of vice without any of the ugly consequences that overtake a sinner in the actual flesh" 102 is More's interpretation of Cabell's "ought to be".

Another writer who may be considered, according to More, to belong with the group of aesthetes is Joseph Hergsheimer, whose cleverness removes him from ordinary realism. In no way can he be compared in style with that of Cabell, whose constant aim was "to write perfectly of beautiful

100 Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", *op. cit.*, p. 59
Turning to the realists, whom More describes as self-made men without formal education and suffering from the lack of a cultural background. They rely on their actual experiences in their portrayal of life. In this regard More states of Dreiser's *American Tragedy*:

If only he knew the finer aspects of life as he knows its shabby underside; if only his imagination had been trained in the larger tradition of literature instead of getting its bent from the police court and the dregs of science; if only religion had appeared to him in other garb than the travesty of superstition and faded fanaticism; if only he had had a chance, he might possibly have produced that fabulous thing, the great American novel.

The originator of this school of realism is Edgar Lee Masters whose only notable achievement is *Spoon River Anthology*. This single expression of talent, More in no uncertain terms dismisses as inconsequent to the history of American literature.

In the work of Sinclair Lewis, More sees the same failure as in that of Edgar Lee Masters. Speaking of *Main Street*, in which Sinclair Lewis criticizes the ugliness of the American town with its cultural poverty, its petty tyranny of mass prejudices, and its narrow provincialism, Paul Elmer More notes the lack of aesthetic or ethical progress on the part of Lewis above the level of the people he mocks revealed through his pages. In this failure he is similar to Edgar Lee Masters.

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103 Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", op. cit., p.62
104 Ibid., pp. 68-69
Paul Elmer More attacks Sherwood Anderson for the sex-obsession revealed in his novels. It cannot be said that More is unduly modest in his comments; if anything, he proves himself a critic of balanced judgments in his explanation of Anderson's lack of ethical restraint. He goes so far as to maintain that Anderson's attitude toward sex was wholesome and clean at the core, "the natural desire of a man to have his own mate to go with him through the lonely adventures of life"; his uncleanness came as a result of lack of an inner check upon the morbid fancies and impure images which rise unsummoned from the depths of his nature. It is a low vitality, a feverishness of the imagination, that conditions it to let loose these prurient fancies which the normal man keeps in abeyance.

More recognizes moments of strength in his work, when Anderson betrays a vein of genuine and idyllic poetry which might have been developed on a large scale; he has wise ideas of living; he has a "hearty distaste for the shiftlessness and disorder and dirt which plagued his own steps." More gives him credit for sound ideas for the solution of the problems of the day. Using Anderson's own words More says: "He knows that 'it is the impotent man who is vile;' he sees that the problem for the worker today is 'to reach down through all the broken surface distractions of modern life to the old love of craft out of which culture springs'. More's final
conclusion based on these observations is that Anderson had the stuff of a
good artist, but unfortunately he lacked the moral restraint to prevent
those degrading elements from seeping into his work. Such art tends in
More's critical judgment to appeal to the lower nature of man. In time
this appeal loses its potency and changes to disgust. And this, More infers,
is what happened to the later stream of consciousness writings of Anderson.

But the most degrading realist in More's opinion is John Dos Passos,
who he believes, was influenced by certain French writers and also by the
Spaniard Ibanez. More does not disapprove of his work on the basis of
intellectual integrity or artistic power for, as he says, "his work is too
knowing to be called crude intellectually, or perhaps even artistically".108
Judging it on the standard that literature should be a reflection of life,
More is convinced that it is the lowest that has been produced. In the
strongest terms he phrases his disgust for one of his stories. "his much-
bruited novel Manhattan Transfer, with its unrelated scenes selected to
portray the more sordid aspect of New York, and with its spattered filth,
might be described in a phrase as an explosion in a cesspool."109

The only hope that More can offer for arighting the literary
situation that has lost its strong foundation owing to the failure on the
part of the writers of the period to recognize that literature is a reflec-
tion of life, and that it cannot therefore be divorced from the moral

108 Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", op. cit., p. 63
109 Ibid., p. 63

From the survey of More's criticism of the authors and their accomplishments from the earliest years of our country, it is evident that he has been scrupulous and balanced in his judgments in spite of his philosophical views of man and the universe. In each interpretative analysis, he has endeavored to give not only the true significance of the writer's work to the main stream of literature in America and how successfully the writer has revealed his understanding of the meaning of life, but he has tried to convey an idea of the value of the writer's artistic powers.

He is fully aware that America at no time has produced an artist or even a great literary success comparable to the great writers of England or to one of their great works. It is More's honest conviction that the primitive writers of America have written very poorly from a literary point of view, and that a study of their works is valuable only for an acquaintance with the spirit that permeates them, since such an acquaintance prepares the reader for a better understanding and appreciation of the works of the Concord and the Cambridge writers of the nineteenth century which have a similar moral earnestness.

110 Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", op. cit., p. 63
The work of the writers of the eighteenth century showed no more than anticipatory elements of the future. Freneau is the only poet, if he can even be called that, to carry on the tradition which the early writers had initiated.

The most characteristic performances of our country are those of the Concord and of the Cambridge writers. Fine as they are in themselves they in no way rank with "the supreme creations of the older centres of civilization."\footnote{Paul Elmer More, "The Spirit and Poetry of Early New England", \textit{op. cit.}, p. 31} To fail to appreciate the more fragile beauty of these writings which after all is the fairest thing this country has produced is to prove that one has become dulled and vulgarized by the strident conceit of modernity.\footnote{Ibid., p. 32}

Whitman in his use of free verse is a progenitor of the moderns in their idea that since they were modern they had to show in their writings their utter disregard for form and technique of the past. Lafcadio Hearn and Thomas Bailey Aldrich contributed to American poetry a sound sense of restraint that resulted in beauty of form and diction. Both of these poets revealed in their writings genuine originality; Aldrich in his introduction to this country of Vers de Societe; Lafcadio Hearn in his combination of three traditions in his writings.

The moderns have, in the opinion of Paul Elmer More, revealed a wealth of genius in their own way. Their works reveal craftsmanship and...
style. What prevents their writings from becoming great is the lack of a philosophy of life which places emphasis upon the moral responsibilities of life. The realists, who in most cases suffering from the lack of cultural training have become calloused in their experiences and have accepted a naturalistic philosophy from their reading of French writers, bring neither beauty of experience or the beauty of morality to their writings.
CHAPTER V

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND AN ESTIMATE
OF MORE'S POSITION AND INFLUENCE
AS A CRITIC OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Paul Elmer More, as many of the great men in criticism had done before him, stressed the close alliance of ethics and aesthetics in the interpretation of the literary productions of his country. The two, aesthetics and ethics, are necessary and complimentary to each other. In other words, More declares that literature is inseparable from the moral intelligence of the men who created it. Therefore, literature which is produced by men whose understanding of the meaning of life agrees with More's philosophy of life becomes for him practically a guide to life. He believes that any work of art has some moral influence upon the reader. Speaking of the writer of fiction in this regard he says:

If there be any conclusion to be drawn from the history of literature "it is that the writer of stories must teach whether he wish to teach or no;" the very denial of the pertinence of the moral law to art becomes in practice inevitably a form of teaching, and as a matter of fact the modern style of fiction is as rampant with didacticism as was the most orthodox fiction of the Victorians, though naturally with a different lesson in mind.¹

It is the duty of the writer to fix the reader's attention upon the high

¹Paul Elmer More, "My Debt to Trollope", The Demon of the Absolute, p. 105
laws that govern man's life and raise it to a level superior to that of the animal.

Unless the poet or novelist oftener by a hint than by open declamation, can centre our judgment of his characters upon those high laws and by them ultimately move and control our emotions, he is at the last, however rich his talent and refined his method otherwise, no true artist but a mountebank of letters. His upheld mirror has caught but the glancing lights not the full face of nature.2

There seems no better way to characterize More's criticism than to use a statement of Henry James which he made in the Preface to The Portrait of a Lady, "There is no more nutritive or suggestive 'moral sense' of a work of art on the amount of felt life concerned in producing it;"3 this is definitely the understated major of all his writings. It is the business of the artist to transmute life into literature, and, since morality is inseparable from life, it is a component part of literature. If this be true, it is only logical that an aesthetic judgment of literature must be at the same time a moral judgment.

It was More's sincere conviction that literary criticism needed a broad philosophical basis and he found this essentially in the philosophy of dualism. With this philosophy of life fixed in mind, he worked out a theory of literature as has been shown which he has used in his interpretation of

2Paul Elmer More, "My Debt to Trollope", op. cit., p. 106
literature, and in particular as the subject under consideration in this thesis, American literature.

Consistent with his philosophical principle with regard to the nature of man and with his religious beliefs Paul Elmer More without exaggerating or minimizing the value of the efforts of the Puritans to create literature draws an estimate of their contribution toward an American culture. In their life and writings he found an unyielding spirit and high-mindedness the origin of which seems to rest in the spirit of Bunyan and Milton. To them, Americans are indebted for the sturdiness and uprightness of character which is exhibited in the actions of our ancestors to struggle valiantly for ideals of religion, home and country. Their writings considered as creations of the imagination would rank as comparatively nil, yet the moral restraint and sense of self-responsibility which they embodied were a source of virile strength for the greater work of the Concord and Cambridge schools.

At least out of the limitations fixed by the origin of New England grew the peculiar attitude of the later writers toward nature, the charm of their portrayal of the less passionate affections of the home and the family, the absence of erotic appeal, the depth and sincerity, but the perilous independence also, of their religious intuition, the invincible rightness of their character. We may laugh as we will at old Wigglesworth and at the asthmatic Muses of the other Puritan divines; they have been justified by their children.4

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Like his contemporary, Van Wyck Brooks, Paul Elmer More was fully convinced that the most representative work of our country was that of the Concord group. He anticipates a time in the future when men will see clearly that this is true and that they will commit the Massachusetts writers to an appendix. For only when critics can discriminate between that which is merely incidental and superficial and that which is the expression of genuine inspiration there can ever be a true evaluation of our literature.

Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Nathaniel Hawthorne won his highest approval. In the pages of Thoreau, More discerns a sound individualism, a spirit of mystery and wonder in the presence of nature which reveals his acknowledgment of a great Creator in its origin, and a distinct note of expectation "rising at times to a cry of ecstasy for which there is no equivalent in the later American." In the latter quality More compares Thoreau with Henry Vaughan, who, More pictures in his mind, travels his "quiet rounds in his Silurian hills, with an eye open to every impression, and a heart like Thoreau's always filled with the waiting wonder of the dawn." The difference between them is in the lesser depth of Thoreau's mood, which More attributes to the fact that his countryman, swept along by the romantic worship of the individual, detached himself from the Church and State and failed to move in the greater currents of tradition.

In his footsteps Emerson reveals the same individualism; and com-

5Paul Elmer More, "Thoreau's Journal", Selected Shelburne Essays, p. 117
6Ibid., p. 117
bined with it, Emerson emphasizes the importance of discipline as a means to reward, and a belief in the dualism of the changeless within the ever-changing in nature and human nature. Judged on either a national or international standard, More says that Emerson is the outstanding figure of American letters. "As a steady force in the transmutation of life into ideas and as an authority in the direction of life itself he has obtained a recognition such as no other of his countrymen can claim." In him there is the rare combination of the spiritual insight of Edwards and the practical sense of Franklin. Paul Elmer More's exposition of Emerson's philosophy loses in integrity when he asserts that Emerson recognized that the lesson of Christ, Buddha, and Plato is essentially the same. In his identification of the doctrine of renunciation as the essence of the teachings of these three religious leaders, More has missed completely the significance of Christ's love in calling men to follow Him. More's conception of Christianity is too narrow. Renunciation for the true Christian springs not out of fear alone, or arbitrarily as a method of rising to a higher degree of human perfection, but rather out of an understanding love of his Creator in order to pattern his life more closely on the life of Christ and in so doing his life becomes more perfect humanly and spiritually. In his interpretations of Christianity it is evident that More has remained untouched by the warm humanity and peaceful quietude of Christianity.

7Paul Elmer More, "Emerson", A New England Group and Others, p. 69
8Paul Elmer More, "The Influence of Emerson", Shelburne Essays, Ser. i, p. 76
In Hawthorne's original conception of moral retribution in the disease of inner solitude and his exposition of the repressed life, More fits his work into a movement which began with Cotton Mather.

The whole progress from Cotton Mather to Mrs. Freeman was determined by the original attempt to stamp out that legitimate hunger of humanity for the sake of an old absorbing pride of the spirit after having been victorious in the long warfare, has itself starved away and left the barrenness of a dreary stagnation, the natural reversal may well be looked for and we may expect the hunger of humanity to grow up out of the waste, untempered by spiritual ideals. 9

This logical development of an idea represented by the names of Cotton Mather, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Mrs. Freeman is rarely found in the history of a country. Also in the work of Hawthorne, More recognizes creative power, keen insight into the character of man, and a clever touch which gives his work silent appeal.

Edgar Allen Poe's accomplishments in the short story fall naturally into the tradition of absorption in details for the purpose of arousing the sense of mystery and horror. This tendency is both national and foreign to American literature. From the German writers and through the English romantics interest in the weird and ghostly was absorbed by American writers. On the other hand, the very environment of our early colonists together with its strange inhabitants stimulated a similar interest. To More, Poe is more foreign than American as a writer. His art is distin-

guished from that of the other masters of unearthly revery in the note of "conscious logical analysis"¹⁰ which it bears. It is the distinctive mark which gives to his art genuine originality, and in addition for More, it is in its very nature a means of control.

With his contemporary, Van Wyck Brooks, Paul Elmer More finds in the art of Poe the expression of true genius, yet in it there is a sense of detachment from the world of men and women with whom he lived. He has built up a world of his own and in it his characters, unlike those of Joseph Conrad who move about because they were what they were, move like checkers detached from time and space, strictly victims of circumstance. For More as for Brooks, Poe has been true to his own literary principles, but his works reveal an utter lack of feeling toward humanity. Both seem to be in perfect agreement that Poe will cause but a spasmodic stir in the world of literature in the future. Van Wyck Brooks states in his essay "America's Coming of Age":

The power he still exerts is an hysterical rather than a literary power, and who can say what it signifies? But one thing seems true with regard alike to witchcraft, alchemy and Poe, that the mind can work healthily only when it is essentially in touch with the society of its own age. No matter into what unknown regions it presses it must have a point of relativity in the common reason of its time and place. Poe, having nothing in common with the world that produced him, constructed a little parallel world of his own, wither-

¹⁰Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", The Demon of the Absolute, p. 83
Paul Elmer More briefly sums up Poe's influence thus: "Health is above disease in art as it is in life. Poe remains chiefly the poet of unripe boys and unsound men." Of the two estimates Brooks' is the most accurate. It is not for the term "disease" that he uses as a synonym for "abnormal" that More is to be criticized. He does not infer by the term "disease" moral degeneracy; rather he praises Poe for his cleanness in handling subjects that can easily veer into the realm of filth. For evidence of this judgment, More points to the work of Baudelaire, his Continental disciple, in comparison to Poe's.

The soul of the man was never tainted. How much that means, how great and near was the danger, can be known by turning to certain of his Continental disciples. The line between them is narrow, but it separates two worlds. Poe does not hesitate to descend for his effects into the very grave where beauty and decay come together; but if you wish to understand the perils he escaped, read after The Sleeper one of the poems in which Baudelaire, Poe's avowed imitator and sponsor to Europe, gropes with filthy hands among the mysteries of death.

It is his statement that "Poe remains chiefly the poet of unripe boys and unsound men" which strikes the reader as uncritical. Any one who is

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12Paul Elmer More, "A Note on Poe's Method", The Demon of the Absolute, p. 86
13Ibid., p. 86
14Ibid., p. 86
acquainted with either the poetry or the short stories of Edgar Allen Poe would not agree that these appeal mainly to immature persons. Such poems as To One in Paradise, The Sleeper, Annabel Lee, The Coliseum, Israfel, and the second To Helen may appeal to the young because of their lyrical quality; but the bulk of his poetry including Ulalume with its vaporous images, hopeless mood, and in agreement with his unique idea of poetry surely demands a mature mind to appreciate its creator's uncanny talent.

More is inconsistent, it seems, in his support of Poe's description of his procedure in the composition of a poem, and then in relegating the appeal of his poetry to immature boys and unsound men. Strange also it is, that More, a critic himself, has not emphasized more the quality of Poe's criticism and its possible influence in the future.

Even though Walt Whitman was the voice of progress and democracy to which More was so unsympathetic; yet he, in the spirit of the sound critic, finds in the work of Walt Whitman what he considers an element in the moral tradition of America: the recognition of the dual existence of the changeless within the changing flux of life.

More shows that these elements have been carried over to a lesser extent into the work of lesser writers of the same period; Longfellow, Whittier, and in the work of the later ones, Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Lafcadio Hearn. And so Paul Elmer More concludes that a tradition of moral restraint, self-responsibility, discipline, humility as the essence of a soundly developed character, and a sense of the existence of good and evil
can be traced in the literature of early America and that of the nineteenth century.

Except for his essays on Charles Eliot Norton and Henry Adams in which he was chiefly concerned with their religious ideas, Paul Elmer More has not isolated the moral values at the cost of other values. As has been seen in the previous chapters More recognized originality, imaginative power, rhythm, tone color, and beauty as essential to a work of genuine literary art. Such works are few comparatively speaking from the production of the early attempts in literary writing by the Puritan divines to the present day. "Our land of multiform activities has produced so little that is really creative in literature or art."15 Except for Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe, and possibly one or two others whom More considers masters in their own field, the only American writers who did anything outstanding were those who treated Nature. In the treatment of Nature, More believes that American writers beginning with Henry D. Thoreau have led the way and are still pre-eminent. Unlike the great English Nature poets, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, our first Nature writer and those who tried to imitate him even to the early decades of the present century observed Nature in a spirit of awe and wonder. Nature for them in her vastness, wildness, beauty, and strength was filled with mystery. Man must conquer her unlimited forces. It is not as the scientific observer but rather as the contemplative philosopher in the presence of Nature that

the American writers have left for posterity a worthy record of their love and appreciation of the natural world.

Turning to the literature of the twentieth century in America he describes the literary output in general as romantic based on impulse, emotionalism, and expansionism. It is his conviction that the writers of the early years of the present century saturated with false philosophies, in particular materialism and humanitarianism, have failed to recognize the essential dignity of man - man whose mind has been disciplined and who possesses a free will and higher intellect, reason. Paul Elmer More blames the universities of America for their failure to train the students in the ancient classics which would have developed in them those moral values:

In the end the distinguishing mark and largely the cause, of the pessimism of modern literature is a false philosophy. It looks upon human nature with the inflamed vision of a monocural Cyclops, or as a mechanism propelled by complexes and reactions, or as a vortex of sensations, with no will to govern himself, no centre of stability within the flux, no direction of purpose to rise above the influences that carry him hither and thither.16

The ruling motive of Paul Elmer More throughout his interpretation of American literature is an anxiety over the spiritual predicament of our nation. In the writings of such representatives as Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and James Branch Cabell, he realizes that they show craftsmanship, but they fail to see man in the proper perspective as a

16Paul Elmer More, "A Revival of Humanism", On Being Human, p. 6
being responsible for his actions, and as a result their books have missed the mark of excellence. Upon reading the following analysis of the art of Joseph Hergesheimer and that of Amy Lowell adverse criticism as for example Felix Morrow's in "The Serpent's Enemy" in which he says of More as a literary critic, "Literature has been for him only a springboard from which to proclaim his theories, and in the dozen or more volumes he has written upon literature, there is scarcely one estimate which could be called literary"\textsuperscript{17} seems most inaccurate and uncritical.

\begin{quote}
\ldots Mr. Hergesheimer possesses a kind of cleverness that removes him from the ranks of ordinary realism, but his style is so uncertain, so riddled with affectations and obscurities and glaring solecisms, that one hesitates to place him on the one side with the artists. Bad English may be the proper badge of the realist, but it disqualifies an aesthete. And certainly it cannot be said that Mr. Hergesheimer even tries to follow the rule so constantly in the mouth of Mr. Cabell to write perfectly of beautiful happenings.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

And his analysis of the art of Amy Lowell is strictly in the literary vein:

Of the aesthetic school, until her recent death, Amy Lowell was perhaps the leading spirit, as she was undoubtedly the most finished artist. For the most part she was content to adopt the instruments forged by more daring hands. In the fashion of the day she threw off the trammels of rhyme and metre for the supposed enlargement of free verse, borrowing her form, as a good American, from Whitman, and then, as a true cosmopolite, shaping it after Parisian models; and her practice of "imagism" was admittedly French. But a modern

\textsuperscript{17}Felix Morrow, "The Serpent's Enemy", Symposium, April, 1930, p. 171
\textsuperscript{18}Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", The Demon of the Absolute, p. 62
aesthete must be original, and so Miss Lowell added to her repertory, what she called "polyphonic prose". The idea of such an invention she found, indeed, in the writing of Paul Fort, she chose "the long flowing cadence of oratorical prose," and so created a new genre or at least a new name. . . .

From the analysis of Paul Elmer More's interpretation of the literary productions of America it is evident that he covered material suitable to his taste. It is not strange, therefore, that his interpretation on the whole is accurate and illuminating as well as thought-provoking on literature which was predominantly moral in character. He traces with a firm hand the spirit of austerity distinctive in the writings of the Puritans and in the later writings of New England. The essays dealing with the early writers and those of the nineteenth century usually follow a common pattern. Each begins as a review of a new edition or publication and proceeds to develop into a lucid critique of the author under consideration. With his specific aim in mind, not necessarily the exposition of an author's understanding of the dual nature of man, but rather whatever aspect or implication of it is directly suggested by the crucial points emerging from the consideration of the particular writer, More works steadily to an elucidation of it. In this regard Richard Stamm says in his essay "Paul Elmer More's suche nach einer lebendigen tradition", Englische Studien, October 1937, page 64:

19Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", op. cit., p. 57
••• Sein Eingehen in die von einem Dichter oder Denker geschaffene Welt war nie so vollständig, dass er das, was er selbst gestalten wollte für seine Generation, darüber vergessen hätte. •••
Die Anschauung, das unter den Seelenkräften des vollkommen Menschen unter seinen Impulsen, seiner Vernunft, Imagination und Intuition - eine gewisse Ordnung herschen müsse, dass jede von ihnen ihre eigenen Aufgaben zu erfüllen habe und nicht die einer anderen anvertrauten Funktionen usurpieren dürfe, und weiter, dass nur der Persönlichkeit, welche diesem Ideal der Vollkommenheit entgegen gewachsen sei, die grosse Schöpfung gelungen könne, der dauernde Bedeutung zukomme.20

Paul Elmer More's interpretation of the modern writers is entirely too brief for a fair estimate to be made of it. The characters in the books of James Branch Cabell, Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, and Sherwood Anderson reveal lives tainted with sensuality and disbelief, elements which More regards as incompatible to great art. These writers wrote during confused years darkened by a cloud of disillusion hanging over them, an aftermath of World War I. New theories of philosophy, psychology, and behaviorism were imported into America, and they permeated the minds of many of our writers. American boys had gone to war midst the blare of drums with the exalted dreams to fight to keep the world safe for democracy. They returned from the Great Conflict bitter, sceptical of all idealism. The spirit of dis-

20 Translated: His research into the world created by a poet or thinker was never so complete that he would thereby forget what he himself wished to create for his generation. ••• the view, that among the spiritual powers of the perfect human being, among his impulses, his reason, imagination and intuition, a certain order must reign, so that each of them has to fulfill its own obligations, and is not permitted to usurp the functions assigned to another; and further, that only the personality which has approached this ideal of perfection is able to succeed in the great creation which would attain everlasting importance.
belief seemed contagious. Authors of the period such as Theodore Dreiser
and Sherwood Anderson, are disillusioned, groping in the dark, with no
explanation for the existence of man. For them God does not exist, nor are
there any moral standards of conduct. It is not strange that such writers
produce novels whose pages are overcast with clouds of pessimism. Spiritually frustrated men and women in these novels of Dreiser and Anderson seek
an outlet for pent-up emotion in sensual pleasures. Bereft of a sound
philosophy of life these characters such as Clyde Griffiths in The American
Tragedy become victims of their own instincts and impulses. The reading of
this novel proves without the slightest doubt that a life such as that of
Clyde Griffith's in a country which boasts of its progress in education, in
science, in art, is truly an American tragedy. The portrayal of pagan
characters has literary value. Did More recognize this?

A biography of any one of these modern writers whom More discusses
gives evidence of a life warped at the core from the lack of any positive
beliefs in a Supreme Being Who has power over life and death, and to Whom
man is responsible for his actions during his brief span of time upon this
earth. They have no sound philosophy of life; in their view of man they have
completely ignored the spiritual part of his nature from which spring his
feelings, ideals, and moral sense. They see man not as the so-called
humanist considers him, nor as the man of religious bearing thinks of him.
Man for Dreiser, Lewis, Anderson, and Cabell is a bundle of instincts and
impulses. The only life of importance to them is man's earthly one, and so
it must be lived to the fullest. No restraint must be put upon man's desire to express himself. This is the life the characters portray in the books of the moderns. The lack of a sound philosophy of life on the part of the authors who created the characters weakens the literary value of the works. Did More adequately recognize this distinction? Unfortunately More, who brings to the criticism of literature sound moral standards, does not completely see how these get into literature. In his criticism of particular books of the moderns, he does not show clearly that it is not the portrayal of pagan characters or of low immoral life that is the basis of his moral judgment, but rather it is the indifferent attitude upon the part of the author toward such characters and such a life that is the basis for judging the book immoral.

Surveying the list of American writers whom Paul Elmer More has included in his interpretation of American literature, it is apparent that he has failed to treat important writers that would have furnished him with material fertile for his moral judgments. To mention only a few, there is Herman Melville, whose exceptional treatment of realistic elements combined with folk thought and experience in his stories fits well in the tradition of America; Henry James, the most scrupulous artist in fiction, who has dealt critically and imaginatively with the spiritual conflict between Europe and America; Emily Dickinson, who presents in her poetry the conflict between personal conscience and nature; Edwin Arlington Robinson, who persistently speaks in his poetry for moral values; and Robert Frost, whose
poetry is full of New England moral earnestness. The final word, therefore, in an evaluation of Paul Elmer More's interpretation of the literature of America is "Incomplete" even if that estimate were limited to his treatment of the New England mind.

Interpretation requires on the part of the critic exposition of the content of the literary work he is treating, giving value and import to it, condensing and truthfully defining its meaning. To interpret means to see things as they are as fully as possible. Interpretation reveals in one sense something of the critic's personality, his likes and dislikes; it represents his appreciation of the subject under consideration and the theories and standards he has taken over from other fields of knowledge. Vital interpretation comes into existence the moment that the critic begins to correlate literature with life. The activities portrayed in the novel or poem must be associated with the activities of life, and in the process these activities must be illuminated with the light of philosophy, history, science and religion. Brother Leo, in his estimate of Paul Elmer More as an interpreter of literature, notes that in his essays there is "essential self-revelation, ordinarily indirect, but sometimes conscious and deliberate; ... and also in common with some of the very greatest literary critics of the world, he habitually regards literature from the viewpoint of the moralist and the philosopher."21 It is also evident in More's critiques that

21 Brother Leo, "Paul Elmer More", The Catholic World, November, 1922, p. 199
like Sainte-Beuve, Carlyle, De Quincey, and Arnold, our American critic has judged literature in the light of men and the conditions in which they lived. In this regard, how true this is in the case of Nathaniel Hawthorne! Although enemy critics denounce his continuous emphasis on tradition as an important element in the judging of a piece of literature, yet, More is justified in his stand for tradition, since it is true that a genuine work of art must stand up under new ages, new intelligences, new prejudices, and new interpretations.

In defining More's position in the history of criticism, it must be understood that Paul Elmer More is not an official critic of literature, but rather he engaged in this activity incidentally, his first interest being essentially religion. Yet, despite this fact, his work as a critic of literature is worthy of praise. Louis J. A. Mercier says:

Paul Elmer More entrusted to literary criticism the added function of helping to transmit and to interpret the experience of individuals and of generations, by carefully discerning in the writer's work the abiding truth which his genius has enabled him to distinguish and to fix in forms the more imperishable that they themselves are adequately ordered; and on the other hand, by pointing out the futile fancies of those who have misconceived the true nature of man distinct from the rest of nature.22

It is unfortunate that his interest in philosophy and religion led him to follow it and to divorce himself from literature properly speaking.

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22 Louis J. A. Mercier, "Humanistic Dualism and Christianity", The Challenge of Humanism, pp. 209-210
In his demand for order, for an exterior authority and discipline, and in his sense of standards, Paul Elmer More approached the criticism of American literature in a most judicial manner. Forcefully he propounded the need for an American literature based on aristocratic dignity and human responsibility; and it is in these demands that his criticism gains its importance. His emphasis upon the dignity of man and human responsibility in his interpretation of American literature makes its reading profitable even if the reader is not interested in the subject matter.

There is no doubt that his broad scholarship, his reverence for tradition, his reasoned conservatism, his slightly austere manner and pure and decorous style were most appropriate to his office as a critic. His essays on American writers reveal his quick sensibility to literature. Not only in his critical evaluations of American writers, but also in his criticism of their brothers across the ocean, More has shown a deep appreciation of literature. With honest sincerity he works perseveringly to uncover in the literary productions of his country that element which he is firmly convinced is distinctly fundamental to great literature. He misses in modern criticism the search for the meaning of life. He offers no apology if his essays are considered old-fashioned because of his insistent search for the meaning of life in them. "I am utterly convinced that literature divorced from life is an empty pursuit, and that an honest search for the meaning of life must lead to the simple faith of theism." 23 He was aware that because

23 Paul Elmer More, Preface to Selected Essays, p. xiii
of his interest in literature, and his emphasis on an ethical criterion in its evaluation, he was not accepted by many. He states: "I was too much addicted to literature to be accepted by the philosophers, and too fond of interpreting art by an ethical criterion to find favour among the literary. And by an odd mischance I whose life has been a passage through storms of emotion, am regarded as a cold and heartless intellectual." 24

In speaking of statements made by Lewis Mumford and Gorham B. Munson in which they are mutual in feeling that the "truth and fineness of art at any time depend largely on the philosophy behind it, and that no relief from the present confusion is possible until society re-establishes for itself some body of ideas in which the artist can live and breathe and expand," 25 More indicates his agreement with them. In addition he also agrees with Mumford's implication that the task of helping to create such a philosophy, or at least bringing out its connection with the practice of art rests upon the critic rather than upon the artist. 26 The philosophy of dualism was More's contribution to the creation of the artistic situation of the present day.

Another of his principles of criticism was that it was the duty of the critic to bring to light not only the outstanding accomplishments of a country or period, but also to evaluate the entertaining productions of the minor writers. 27 In the survey of his own countrymen in directing attention

24 Paul Elmer More, Pages from an Oxford Diary, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1937, Section v, no page number
25 Paul Elmer More, Preface to The Demon of the Absolute, p. viii
26 Ibid., p. viii
to the work of Michael Wigglesworth, Anne Bradstreet, and William Mitchell, he did just this.

The discussion thus far of More's criticism shows that he has been true to his own canons of criticism. It has been voiced by James T. Farrell, Rebecca West, Alfred Kazin, and Bernard Bandler II that Paul Elmer More has not been true to his requirement that a critic must be able to judge with tact the literature of his own day. In their opinion, he has failed miserably in the evaluation of the accomplishments of his contemporaries. There is some truth in the attack. He has only briefly touched a few writers of the period, and although what he has said of their writings at least in part is true, he has not given a rounded estimate of them. This failure can be explained, however, by the fact that he has limited his interpretation to distinguishing that element in the writings of his countrymen that has permanency in his effort to assemble these elements as a basis of a fruitful American tradition. For this reason he has aimed purposely to eliminate those parts of an author's works which have no bearing on his problem.

In his demand for standards he is in the classical tradition of Plato, Aristotle, Sainte-Beuve, and Arnold. In his interpretation of literature as the supreme mode of interpreting human life he is in the tradition of Dryden, Jonson, and Arnold; and in his own period this is the view of literature of Irving Babbitt, T. S. Eliot, Yvor Winters, Allen Tate, and John Crowe Ransome. In his plea for restraint and discipline as the characteristics of the completely developed personality as revealed in literature
he is to be classed with the small group of so-called Humanists.

For thirty years Paul Elmer More and his associate Irving Babbitt tried without much success to train a few disciples and to win the approba-
tion of the reading public. Constantly their influence waned until it be-
came finally confined to the universities where they formed the extreme "right-wing" of a traditionally conservative body of intellectuals. But the pendulum was to swing once more in a favorable direction for them. In 1928, The Forum opened its pages to their attack on the liberals in literature and the impressionists in criticism. Seward Collins joined in the change of sympathy and published in The Bookman a manifesto in which he declared naturalism and its concomitant evils were a past issue and that the new decade belonged to humanism. This provided an opportunity for the journal-
ists to comment on the statement of S. Collins. Essays of More, Babbitt, and Foerster were published on a large scale. For a brief space Paul Elmer More and Irving Babbitt enjoyed popular interest, for their traditional faith in man won favor in opposition to the pessimistic and escapist moods which characterized the literature produced since World War I. But owing to their emphasis on an unpopular item, discipline, they lost their campaign.

Even though More was a leader of this movement, it is not accurate to iden-
tify him exclusively as a member of it.\footnote{Bernard Smith, \textit{Forces in American Criticism}, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1939, pp. 381-382}
Paul Elmer More in his interpretation of American literature and American culture has been ultra-conservative and has endeavored to maintain the Puritan conscience while abandoning the gloomy religious philosophy which Calvinism had associated with it. As he surveyed the culture of his country he felt that America had compromised its idealism for a barren materialistic philosophy. This philosophy had cast a shadow over every phase of American life. Man had lost his sense of dependence upon God. The cause of this moral and social disease was the acceptance of the principles of Rousseau. The immediate cause was the failure of our educators to train their students in the classics from which study they would learn the value of discipline in life. The result of this crisis in civilization would be a similar fatality in art.

Although his religious ideas are too permeated with unsubstantial convictions for any one to accept them, and although his theories of education need some balance to make them acceptable to the society of his day, yet, in his rally for discipline in life he has a worthwhile lesson for his society. It is not strange that this doctrine stirred up enemies in a society which had come to believe that discipline was something old-fashioned.

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Translated: He is usually mentioned as a fighter in the ranks of the American New Humanists, but this does not satisfactorily characterize him, since he has far outgrown this movement.
and only advocated by the Catholic Church. Even though his continuous emphasis upon discipline in art stiffened his sensibilities to the art of his contemporaries, it must be admitted that he had a valuable suggestion in it for American life.

As a critic he has been considered by a few of his contemporaries as the foremost American critic. T. S. Eliot says that the comparison of More with Sainte-Beuve is not trivial. Speaking of the Shelburne Essays, Felix Schelling says that they are one of the "standard exhibits of the solidity and health of American criticism." The prime task of the critic of literature is to set it in its true perspective to the life of reason and the life of the emotions. This is what Paul Elmer More attempted to do.

H. S. Canby in referring to More's influence says:

"... Long after the dust has settled over the little fracas of the twenties, his ripe and penetrating studies of literature, new and old, in the Shelburne Essays will be leafed for wisdom. There have been more vigorous, but no more discriminating and more truly erudite writer upon literature in our time."

Paul Elmer More differs from his contemporaries in the field of criticism in two respects: in his broad interpretation of world literature

30 T. S. Eliot, "Notes on the American Critic", Sacred Wood, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1921, p. 34
32 H. S. Canby, "Appreciation", Saturday Review of Literature, March 27, 1937, p. 8
rather than concentrating upon the American scene; and in his subordination of the criticism of literature to his intense interest in religion. As divergent as such critics as Vernon Louis Farrington and Van Wyck Brooks are in their methods from that of More there are similar aspects in their work. Critics over and over again criticize More's interpretation of American writers for his emphasis upon the ethical character of a literary work or of an author. Cannot a similar criticism be made of Van Wyck Brooks' emphasis upon the social purpose in literature? In this regard Parrington has even gone so far as to state in the Introduction to the first volume to Main Currents in American Thought that his intention is to limit his interpretation of American culture to economic and social purposes.

I have undertaken to give some account of the genesis and development in American letters of certain germinal ideas that have come to be reckoned traditionally American - how they came into being here, how they were opposed and what influence they have exerted in determining the form and scope of our characteristic ideals and institutions. In pursuing the broad path of our political, economic and social development rather than the narrower bellettristic; and the main divisions of the study have been fixed by forces that are anterior to literary schools and movements creating the body of ideas from which literary culture eventually springs.

33Louis J. A. Mercier, "Humanistic Dualism and Christianity", The Challenge of Humanism, p. 205
It is Parrington's opinion that critics of early American literature have given very little space in their books to it because of their over emphasis upon aesthetic values; they have as a result failed to recognize its genuine value. Of this subordination of aesthetic values, Alfred Kazin comments:

... His convictions on aesthetic matters, to judge only from his trilogy were impatient and even a little naive.

It was unfortunate for Parrington (and equally unfortunate for a later generation that was to use him as an introduction to the study of American literature) that the political traditions which were so strong in him absorbed any taste for esthetic values that he may have possessed. The influences that shaped his mind and dominated the purpose of his book were fundamentally social and economic, always in the direction of patterns and a schematization of American thought in which public documents meant everything and artistic sensibility nothing. ... Yet is it any wonder that as a Western radical and sociologist of ideas Parrington instinctively took the view of the intellectual historian to whom art is nothing but a 'reflection' of forces in society? Parrington may have thought that he was following the great nineteenth-century school of historical critics, but his repeated use of the term 'belletristic' (usually 'narrowly belletristic') was a kind of primitivism, and one that was to have a profoundly injurious effect upon his work. 36

More is convinced that the cause of pessimism and the spirit of futility in modern life and literature is the acceptance of a false

36 Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds, Reynal and Hitchcock, New York, 1942, p. 157
materialistic philosophy. Likewise Van Wyck Brooks identifies the enemy to literary progress in America with materialism. After one hundred and fifty years America's aesthetic taste remains immature. The reasons for this immaturity lay in the Puritan and pioneer traditions, the springs of an excessively utilitarian and commercial environment; the artist could not function properly in this environment. He was forced to escape to the ethereal private world of his own making or to conform to the artifices of convention. The utilitarian character of American life strangled literary art.37

Puritanism was a complete philosophy for the pioneer, and by making human nature contemptible and putting to shame the charms of life, it unleashed the acquisitive instincts of men, disembarrassing those instincts by creating the belief that the life of the spirit is altogether a secret life and that the imagination ought never to conflict with the law of the tribe. It was this that determined the character of our old culture, which cleared the decks for practical action by draining away all the irreconcilable elements of the American nature into a transcendental upper sphere.38

Beginning with his book *The Wine of the Puritans* published in 1909 he developed his thesis that the Puritan tradition has crushed American culture and placed an exaggerated emphasis on material values, neglecting the aesthetic life, and he illustrated this theory in *America's Coming of Age*,

38 Van Wyck Brooks, "The Culture of Industrialism", *Three Essays on America*, p. 131
1915; Letters and Leadership, 1918; The Ordeal of Mark Twain, 1920; and The Pilgrimage of Henry James, 1925. 39 Although Paul Elmer More recognized in the life and literature of the Puritans the understanding of the importance of character, yet he censures their rigid morality for its destructive effects on the imagination.

In his first essay on an American writer, Paul Elmer More notes that there has been very little produced that is really creative in American literature or art. Van Wyck Brooks agrees with him that the creative spirit of our literature particularly during the last half century has remained impotent. 40 Both feel that there has been a wealth of talent, but it has not succeeded in effectuating itself. In their interpretation of the modern writers both are of the opinion that these writers have become victims of the existing situation. More says of Sinclair Lewis that he has not risen more than an inch above the aesthetic and ethical level of the people he insults. 41 In other words More implies that the moderns have no constructive suggestions for correcting or purging of the corruptive tendencies in the life that they portray in their books. Van Wyck Brooks says in this regard:

... What constitutes a literature is the

41 Paul Elmer More, "Modern Currents in American Literature", op. cit., p. 70
spiritual force of the individuals who compose it. If our literature is to grow it can only be through development of a sense of "free will" on the part of our writers themselves. To be, to feel oneself, a "victim" is in itself not to be an artist, for it is the nature of the artist to live, not in the world of which he is an effect, but in the world of which he is the cause, the world of his own creation. For this reason, the pessimistic determinism of the present age is, from the point of view of literature, of a piece with the optimistic determinism of the age that is passing. What this pessimistic determinism reveals, however, is a consciousness of the situation; to that extent it represents a gain and one may even say that to be conscious of the situation is half the battle. If we owed nothing else to Mr. Dreiser, we should owe him enough for the tragic sense of the waste of American life which his books communicate. It remains true that if we resent this life it is only a sign of our weakness, of the harm we have permitted this civilization to do us of our imperfectly realized freedom, for to the creative spirit in its free state the external world is merely an impersonal point of departure. Thus it is certain that as long as the American writer shares what James Bryce called the "mass fatalism" of the American people, our literature will remain the sterile, inferior phenomenon which, on the whole, it is.42

The comparison of More's interpretation of American literature with that of either Brooks or Parrington could be developed on a broad scale, but it is not feasible to do so in merely a part of a chapter when such a subject would lend itself to a thesis of four or five chapters in length. The brief comparison on important points of convergence has been made for

the purpose of showing the relation of More's criticism to that of his contemporaries. They have written volumes on American literature compared to his scattered essays on it. It is interesting to note that what is considered a weakness in More's criticism may be found true of that of critics who have concentrated their efforts chiefly on the American scene, and also that even though such a critic as Van Wyck Brooks has interpreted our literature from a different point of view he has arrived at similar conclusions regarding its development.

To American criticism Paul Elmer More brought a model of high seriousness and the demand for a standard of evaluation free of personal values. His criticism is not limited to literature; one whole side of it is sociological. Paul Elmer More has firmly resisted the tendency to mechanize man and the world, and has insisted consistently through his essays treating social topics that the test of a civilization is the validity of its ideas and not the multiplicity of its gadgets. Shortly after the death of Paul Elmer More, his contemporary, T. S. Eliot, stated in a commentary:

He was one of two Americans of his generation, more distinguished and important critics than any who survive them in that country, and than any of their own time in England. That More and Irving Babbitt, of their period, (Babbitt was French, More was English in his sympathies), should be so little known outside of their own country is curious; and their lives have some
bearing on the question of the relation of a critic to his own time.43

Further in the same commentary T. S. Eliot, in estimating his influence in the future, compares More with Walter Pater and with Arthur Symons. "Pater rules from the grave", 44 and "A. Symons was his living representative." 45 In Eliot's opinion More was a better critic than Pater, and he was of much larger size than Arthur Symons. "It was because of being of larger size that he would not have fitted" 46 into his own period.

At the outset of his career More was hampered by a lack of situation in America for the exercise of criticism, and by his own lack of creative power to give reality to his standards. 47 Yet, despite these handicaps, Paul Elmer More has written fourteen volumes of Shelburne Essays, outstanding both in America and in England for their range and variety of material, their sustained quality, their faithfulness to the spirit of sceptical, disinterested inquiry, and in the light they shed upon ancient and modern letters, on thought and on the deep lying perennial problems with which all men are confronted they are unquestionably unique. It seems only reasonable to conjecture that his influence will be felt particularly in America as long as the swift processes of our national growth and progress need to be tempered by an appeal to tradition. As an interpreter of

44Ibid., p. 667
45Ibid., p. 667
46Ibid., p. 667
47Ibid., p. 669
American literature he brings to light interesting facts about the accomplishments of the writers from the earliest attempts in literary creation in this country, through the nineteenth century, and the early decades of the twentieth century. Unfortunately his treatment of American writers has been too scattered, and he has been entirely too brief in his treatment of his contemporaries. The writers about whom More wrote are undoubtedly important, but none have been so influential in the shaping of later American literature as he believed them to be. To the student of Thoreau, Emerson, Hawthorne, Poe or Whitman his interpretations offer fresh and thought-stimulating facts for a complete understanding of and a greater appreciation of the accomplishments of these writers who were the pioneers of American literature.
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The thesis submitted by Margaret Mary O'Neill has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

October 15, 1946

Signature of Adviser