



SOULMAN

[THERE ARE NO QUICK FIXES, SAYS PSYCHOTHERAPIST **THOMAS MOORE**. MAKE TIME TO SMELL THE **ROSES**, BUT REMEMBER, **THORNS** ARE A NATURAL PART OF **LIFE**.]

BY ALEXANDRA MITCHELL EYLE

Thomas Moore is standing in the doorway of his home in the woods outside of Amherst, Massachusetts, solemnly regarding a reporter and photographer who have arrived a few minutes early. For a long moment it seems he wants nothing more than to go back into his house—alone. This is the introspective Moore. The one who guards privacy jealously. But the other Moore, the one who thrives on the ongoing conversation he

unwittingly opened through his two best-selling books, *Care of the Soul* and *Soul Mates*, takes over. “Hello,” he says quietly, “I’m Tom,” and he invites his guests in.

Moore’s living room is bright, with daylight pouring in through the many windows. The walls are a rich yellow and hung with paintings by Moore’s wife, painter Joan Hanley, and a stunning drawing of a bicycle by her six-year-old son, Abraham.

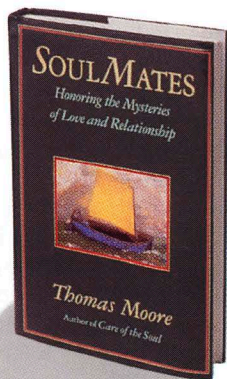
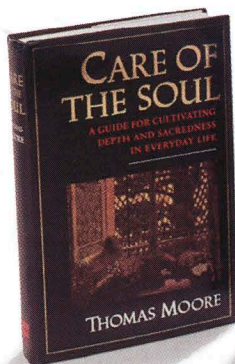
But the focal point of Moore’s attention is his red-haired two-year-old daughter, Siobhan (*Shiv-rawn*), whose name is Gaelic for Joan. Moore holds her on his left hip and stares at her adoringly. It is obvious why he wants his guests to disappear. They are stealing time away from his daughter, who will soon be going out with her mother.

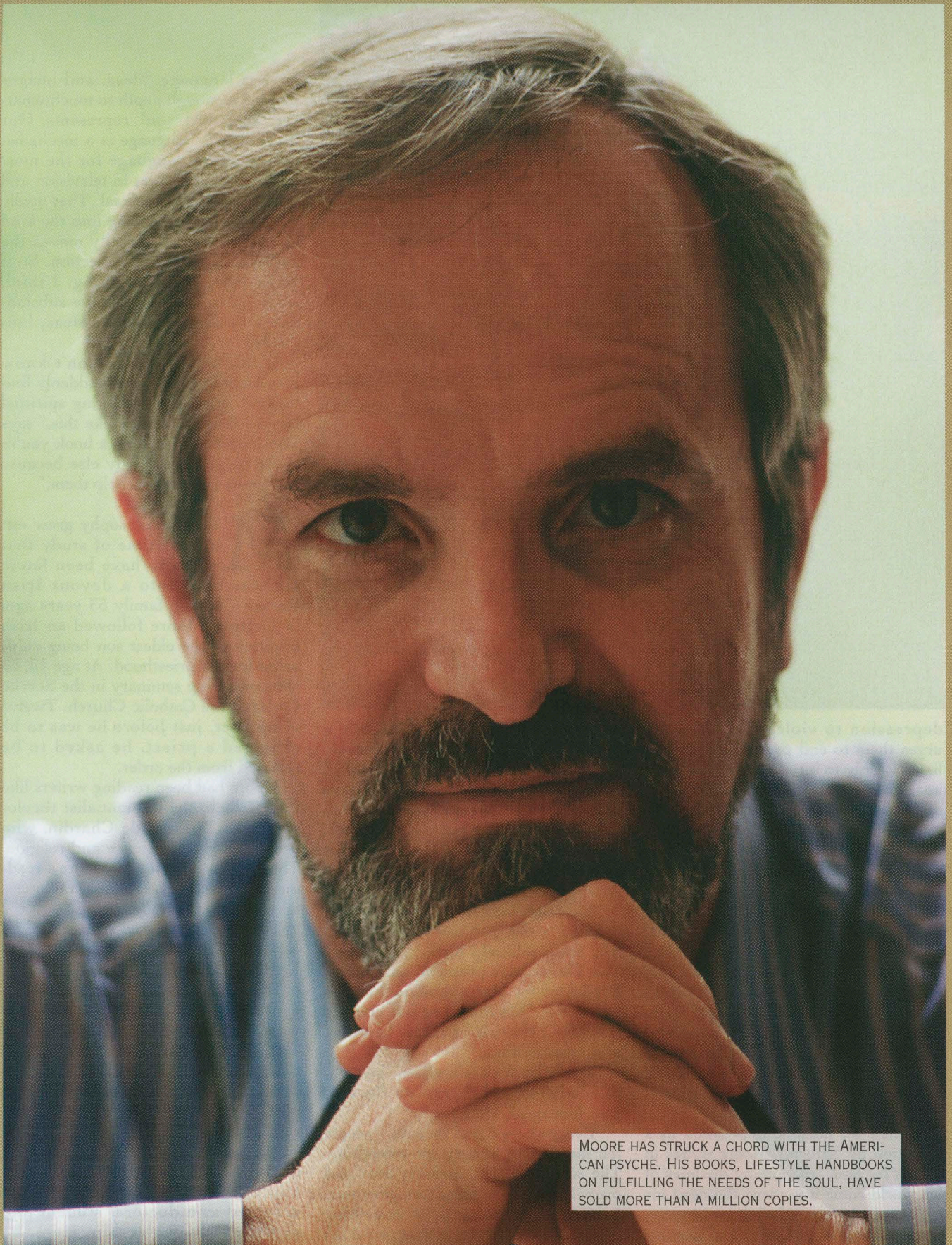
The problem is, since publishing *Care of the Soul* in 1992 and *Soul Mates* in 1994, Moore has had precious little time for his family. *Care of the Soul* has been on *The New York Times* nonfiction best-seller list for more than a year. *Soul Mates* hit number three

on the list three weeks after its release. As a result, Moore has lectured in more cities than he can count, to audiences of up to 1,000 people. After dawdling over his goodbye to Siobhan, he warms to the subject at hand—the success of his books and how they came into being.

Moore is an unlikely celebrity author. Although he no longer practices, he is a psychotherapist with formal training in theology and music. His books weave together a wealth of knowledge gleaned from philosophers, theologians, alchemists, astronomers, archetypal-depth psychologists, and poets and writers—from the Renaissance theologian Nicholas of Cusa to the iconoclastic Edwardian author Oscar Wilde. Drawing on these sources and his own insights, Moore presents a philosophy of life that connects deeply with his readers. Yet his message is far from simple.

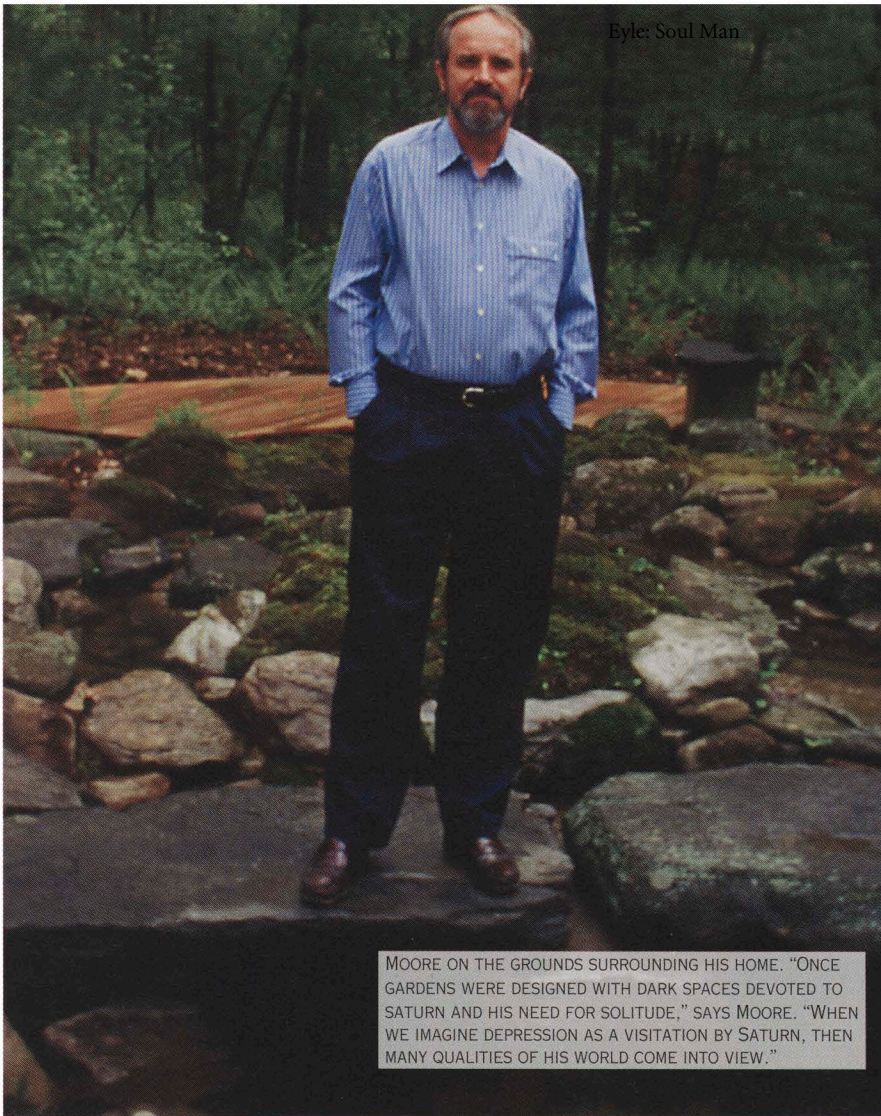
He tells readers eager for a quick fix there is no such thing. He tells readers looking for happiness to embrace the “shadow” sides of their natures, from





PHOTOGRAPHS © 1994 NICOLAS EYLE

MOORE HAS STRUCK A CHORD WITH THE AMERICAN PSYCHE. HIS BOOKS, LIFESTYLE HANDBOOKS ON FULFILLING THE NEEDS OF THE SOUL, HAVE SOLD MORE THAN A MILLION COPIES.



MOORE ON THE GROUNDS SURROUNDING HIS HOME. "ONCE GARDENS WERE DESIGNED WITH DARK SPACES DEVOTED TO SATURN AND HIS NEED FOR SOLITUDE," SAYS MOORE. "WHEN WE IMAGINE DEPRESSION AS A VISITATION BY SATURN, THEN MANY QUALITIES OF HIS WORLD COME INTO VIEW."

depression to violent feelings. He urges them to end psychic repression, listen keenly to intuition, and cultivate imagination. Drawing on simple ways of living as well as the teachings of astrology and Greek mythology, Moore offers an old-fashioned but complex vision of how we can live truly and fully.

Cultivate meaningful ritual in your daily life. Tend to your families. Choose your homes well, so they reflect your inner life. Do the same with your work. When depressed, embrace this as a message from Saturn, which embodies isolation and introspection. Remember that once gardens were designed with dark spaces devoted to Saturn and his need for solitude.

"When we imagine depression as a visitation by Saturn," Moore writes in *Care of the Soul*, "then many qualities of his world come into view: the need for isolation, the coagulation of fantasy, the distilling of memory, and accom-

modation with death, to name only a few. . . . If we pathologize depression, treating it as a syndrome in need of cure, then the emotions of Saturn have no place to go except into abnormal behavior and acting out. An alternative would be to invite Saturn in when he comes knocking and give him an appropriate place to stay."

"Although *Care of the Soul* is a book through which you can help yourself, it is not a self-help book," says Hugh Van Dusen, vice president and executive editor for HarperCollins, Moore's publisher. "He does not tell you 'do this, don't do that.' Rather, he offers new ways to think."

Struck by Moore's vision, laymen, theologians, and therapists flock to hear him speak.

"Everywhere I go," he says, "people tell me they're hungry for something. The word 'hungry' appears over and over. If they're hungry for something, I think they're hungry for something we don't have. And one thing we don't

have is language, ideas, and images that have enough depth to touch whatever the word 'soul' represents. Our psychological language is a mechanistic, structural language for the most part. And our images in television and the movies are superficial. They really don't give us an opening into the kind of imagination that really moves the heart and offers deep reflection. So if we're hungry for anything, I think we're hungry for much more substantive and deeper images, ideas, language."

"I think people who don't know they want to be spiritual suddenly find they're comfortable thinking spiritual themes through a book like this," says Van Dusen. "I think it's a book you're dying to give somebody else because you know it's going to help them."

Moore's philosophy grew out of a lifetime of study that seems to have been fated. He was born into a devout Irish Roman Catholic family 53 years ago, in Detroit. Moore followed an Irish tradition of the eldest son being cultivated for the priesthood. At age 13, he entered a prep seminary in the Servite Order of the Catholic Church. Twelve years later, just before he was to be ordained a priest, he asked to be released from the order.

Moore had been reading writers like Paul Tillich, the existentialist theologian, and Teilhard de Chardin, who brought together science and religion. They radically changed Moore's reading of Christianity. He could no longer take scripture literally.

The church released Moore and he earned bachelor's degrees in music at DePaul University and the University of Michigan, and a master's in theology from the University of Windsor. He wanted to continue studying theology, but believed no department existed that could meet his needs. "I wanted to be free to study the arts and religion and psychology all together," he explains. Then he heard about Syracuse University's religion department, which encouraged a diverse approach to theology. Moore was accepted as a doctoral student and given a full scholarship. Here, he

would learn to read scripture and other religious writings poetically and imaginatively, as mirrors of the soul.

"He was incredibly bright," recalls David Miller, an SU professor renowned for his work in psychology and religion and one of Moore's advisors. "He was always open to new ideas and he was a very quick study."

When Miller introduced Moore to James Hillman's imaginative and combative writings on religion and psychology, Moore's intellectual fire burst into even brighter flame. He began a longtime correspondence and friendship with Hillman.

Then he discovered the astrological psychology of Marsilio Ficino, a Renaissance philosopher, who had written *Three Books on Life*. It was as though Moore were being sucked back into the Renaissance. He built a beautiful harpsichord in his Skytop apartment, and translated the complex Latin text of one of the Ficino books, *How to Arrange Your Life According to the Sky*. This became the basis for his dissertation, which he later reworked as the book *The Planets Within*. He developed a reverence for the ancient astrological belief that we are as psychologically complex as the vast cosmos.

Moore graduated in 1975 and spent seven years teaching religion and psychology at Southern Methodist University. In 1983, he moved to West Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he founded the Institute for the Study of Imagination, which held monthly seminars on imagination. He led groups in archetypal psychology and taught in the art and expressive therapies department at Lesley College. Having done clinical psychology work at Syracuse, and been licensed in Texas as a professional counselor, he worked part-time as a psychotherapist, leaving time to write.

First came a book of lectures, *Rituals of the Imagination*, then *Dark Eros: The Imagination of Sadism*. His books sold fewer than 2,000 copies. Then he wrote an introduction to *A Blue Fire*, an anthology of James Hillman's writings, which captured the attention of Van Dusen, the book's editor. When Moore's agent put *Care of the Soul* up for bid on the basis of a 24-page pro-

posal, Van Dusen won out with an offer exceeding \$100,000.

"I was taken with the whole idea of reviving the idea of soul, which back then was not much thought about, with how the very ordinary everyday things we do can be made part of our soul-life," says Van Dusen.

Moore says *Care of the Soul* and *Soul Mates*, which deals with nurturing personal and community relationships, arose largely out of his work as a therapist. Instead of offering patients single solutions to problems, he urged them to claim the soul's power by discovering what need their symptoms were crying to have fulfilled.

"WE LIVE
IN A
SOCIETY THAT
PRIMARYLY
STARVES OUR
SOUL," HE
EXPLAINS. "WE
HAVE TO
REALLY RESIST
THE CULTURE
TO CARE FOR
THE SOUL."

"If we do not claim the soul's power on our behalf," he writes, "we become its victims. We suffer our emotions rather than feel them working for us. We hold our thoughts and passions inward, disconnecting them from life, and they stir up trouble within, making us feel profoundly unsettled."

Sitting in his study, surrounded by



woods and a stream, Moore expands on this theme.

"We live in a society that primarily starves our soul," he explains. "We have to really resist the culture to care for the soul. If we choose with care our professions and ways we spend our time, and our homes in which we live, if we take care of our families and don't see them as problems, and if we nurture our relationships and friendships and marriages, then the soul probably will not show its complaints so badly.

"But I can't even promise that, because from another point of view, the soul is also a reservoir. It's always presenting new material."

In Moore's case, it presented him with the end of a 10-year marriage, then the end of a 3-year relationship, before his marriage to Joan. It also creates a conflict between the urge to withdraw into the solitude of work and the need to be in the world. Now he is finding a balance.

"I'm kind of retiring and private," says Moore, whose next book, based on his experiences living the monastic life, is due out in December. "Writing for me is an opportunity to put my two cents in and be part of the community. It's like a ticket to be in the world more. It's wonderful." ■

Alexandra Mitchell Eyle, who earned a dual bachelor's degree in French and magazine journalism from SU in 1979, is a Syracuse-based free-lance writer specializing in profiles and biography. She is a former associate editor of this magazine.