

MARIANNE MOORE AND THE ART OF POETRY: A
STUDY OF HER THEORY AND PRACTICE

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PREFACE

The modern poet faces a peculiar dilemma, that of justifying his existence in a mass-produced society. Not only is poetry largely unread, but the poet himself is often felt to be expendable. Perhaps this is why poets like Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost, Marianne Moore and others devote so many poems to the nature of their art. It is easier for them to make their theories concrete through poetry than to be sidetracked into the somewhat nebulous field of esthetics.

Miss Moore's esthetics have never been collected. This study is an attempt to determine a theory through an examination of her collected prose and poetry, with a special emphasis on major themes, subject matter, and revisions to see if a relationship exists between theory and practice.

One major problem encountered involved semantics. A brilliant poet, Miss Moore tends to write prose that is semi-philosophical in tone and employs poetical compression, economy, and ambiguity, thus requiring explication.

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Samuel H. Woods, Jr. and Dr. Clinton C. Keeler for their valuable guidance, and to Miss Helen Donart, Mrs. Rhoda Caroline Russell, and Mrs. Josephine Monk for assistance in locating and borrowing materials, since Miss Moore's early work is out of print and difficult to obtain.

But most especially, I wish to express my appreciation to my husband and children, for without their cooperation, love, and understanding, this thesis never would have been written.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE "MAGNIFICENT ECCENTRIC"

Marianne Craig Moore has received fourteen major awards and prizes, practically all those available to an American poet: The Dial award, in 1921 and 1924; the Helen Haire Levinson prize, 1933; the Ernest Hartsock Memorial prize, 1935; the Shelley Memorial award, 1940; the Harriet Monroe Poetry award, 1944; a Guggenheim Fellowship in creative writing, 1945; a thousand dollar grant awarded jointly by the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Institute of Arts and Letters, 1946; election to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, 1947; a Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, 1951; the Bollingen prize, 1952; the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, 1952; the National Book award, 1952; the M. Carey Thomas award, 1953; and the Gold Medal for Poetry of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, 1953. In addition, she has received honorary degrees from nine colleges and universities.

In the face of such wide acclaim today, it seems almost incredible that in the twenties reputable critics greeted her first appearances with such derogatory remarks as this of Mark Van Doren:

Marianne Moore . . . wedded wit, but after divorces from beauty and sense. Her manners are those of the absurder coteries, her fastidiousness is that of the insufferable highbrows.¹

The young poets who were in rebellion against nineteenth-century poetic standards, set up by readers instead of by poets, were misunderstood and castigated in the press, as this sarcastic 1925 New York Times editorial, a typical public reaction to Observations, demonstrates:

O Gongora! O Euphues! O Ezra Pound! O Gertrude Stein!
O admirable elbows admirably crooked at the gold bar of heaven.²

The "popular reader," conditioned by the anaemic, complacent debility of late Victorian poetry, insisted that poetry should be understandable at a glance, while the serious poets persisted in the belief that clarity could best be attained by using thought plus a sensitive and complex language. Poetry, as written by Miss Moore, T. S. Eliot, John Crowe Ransom, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, and others, required an act of participation on the part of the reader, which he was unwilling, or perhaps unable, to make. Laura Riding and Robert Graves explained in 1927 that modernist poetry "is an ironic criticism of false literary survivals."³ A generation later, in 1955, M. L. Rosenthal and A. J. M. Smith recognized it as a "returning to a clearer and sharper way of dealing with experience."⁴

It is doubtful if the poetry-reading public has ever been large, but in the twentieth century the problem has become acute. Specialization is the enemy. Our culture has become standardized, mass-produced, and leveled down. F. R. Leavis explains the problem this way:

The ordinary cultivated reader is ceasing to be able to read poetry. In self-defence amid the perpetual avalanche of print he has had to acquire reading habits that incapacitate him when the signals for unaccustomed and subtle responses present themselves. He has, moreover, lost the education that in the past was provided by tradition and social environment. Even the poetry of simple sensibility, if it is not superficially familiar, seems incomprehensible to him. And the more important poetry of the future is unlikely to be simple.⁵

Misunderstood and unread by the public, the poets were forced into criticism, to explain their works, and perhaps to proselytize, as Coleridge and Wordsworth had done a century earlier. When one tradition is upset, the practitioners of the new must explain and justify.

Most of the established critics were suspicious of intellect and, because the emotion of the new poets was camouflaged in wit and satire, they were bewildered. Louis Untermeyer, typical of this reaction, in American Poetry Since 1900 (1923), selected Marianne Moore and T. S. Eliot as examples of the "cerebralists"--technically adroit, fastidious, often sensitive but more often precious and artificial. Here decadence begins, he proclaimed. Their cold victories of intellect would lead to their ultimate failure. Their erudition signaled a return to a lifeless neo-classicism. Eliot's verse he found extraordinarily clever--and eminently uncomfortable. Although he detected moments of imaginative vigor, he believed that the indispensable element of poetry--exultation--was missing.⁶ Admitting frankly that he was prejudiced, Mr. Untermeyer pronounced flatly that Miss Moore was not a poet, but a critic and a wit, unappreciative

of the function of rhyme. He called her work "geometric studies," poetic fragments, alternating between obscurity and condescension. He admired her recondite brilliance:

. . . all of her work displays a surface of flickering irony, a nimble sophistication beneath which glitter,
the depths of a cool and continually critical mind.⁷

Mr. Untermeyer, who may with some justice be considered a weathervane of upper-middle brow opinion of the times, in this 1923 statement, epitomized the reaction which poets like Miss Moore had to try to overcome, rarely successfully. It is doubtful if Mr. Untermeyer was ever convinced that Miss Moore was a true poet; however, his treatment of her in his popular anthologies has mellowed through the years, reflecting the changing attitudes of the poetry critics. His sixth edition (1942) omitted the words "scornful" and "sophisticated," although mention was still made of her "witty and ironic geometry," all part of his introduction of Miss Moore's poetry in earlier editions. By 1955 (with Karl Shapiro and Richard Wilbur as co-editors) he had no comment, but included five additional Marianne Moore poems.

Recognized and appreciated by fellow poets, Marianne Moore is still largely unread by the public. Perhaps T. S. Eliot analyzed the problem correctly:

One of the tests--though it be only a negative test--of anything really new and genuine, seems to be its capacity for exciting aversion among "lovers of poetry."⁸

Certainly, if the reader approaches Marianne Moore with pre-

conceived, rigid ideas of what poetry should be, how imagery should be controlled, what are "proper" subjects for poetry, then Marianne Moore does not write poetry, since her work fits into no known mold. If, on the other hand, one believes that the scope of poetry can be limitless, that imagery can deal with anything that can be imagined, that virtually any subject matter can be brought successfully into poetry, then Marianne Moore is his poet. Here, in her poetry, the world of the imagination and the world of reality are intellectually merged.

Today most critics recognize Miss Moore's genius. Randall Jarrell has said, "For sureness of execution, for originality of technical accomplishment, her poetry is unsurpassed in our time."⁹ Wallace Fowlie, noting that Miss Moore is of no particular "school," that she has something to say and says it, considers her poetry "an extraordinary manifestation, a song of that reality by means of which man attaches himself firmly to the entire universe." He continues,

She reconciles without effort the two great antagonistic views of poetry: the hard specific labor advocated by the classical poets and the exaltation of "dictated" verse believed in by the romantics.¹⁰

On another occasion, Fowlie affirmed his belief that she would be a "bard" in any age.¹¹

Although many critics have searched, more or less in vain, for Miss Moore's poetic models, most have in the end conceded that she is an original. Elizabeth Bishop wrote,

Miss Moore and Poe are our two most original writers . . . and both are virtuosi, Miss Moore, of course, to a much higher degree.¹²

Recognizing that Miss Moore is extraordinary, Mr. Jarrell classified her as a "natural, excessive, and magnificent eccentric."¹³ This eccentricity, he maintained, is a first resort, an easy, but nevertheless inescapable, refuge. Alfred Kreymborg also considered that Miss Moore is an original and an eccentric. Born, as he said, "somewhere out of the average world," she presents a diversity of surprises:

Here is a poet the wildest imagination had not bargained for; and a steady acquaintance with her work over a long period does not reduce its novelty.¹⁴

In an excellent analysis of Marianne Moore's method, R. P. Blackmur suggested that she portrays reality by keeping it remote. Life--both good and evil--is deliberately kept remote, so that, in spite of her minute precision, life assumes a haunting, nostalgic quality which cannot be reached, and could not be borne if it were. Combining as she does a romantic reticence with her fastidious thirst for detail, she stands aside. Her sensibility, like her subject matter, "constitutes the perfection of standing aside." In this way, Blackmur felt that, far from being alone, Miss Moore is actually characteristic of a great tradition in American literature:

Poe, Hawthorne, Melville (in Pierre), Emily Dickinson, and Henry James, all--like Miss Moore--shared an excessive sophistication of surfaces and a passionate

predilection for the genuine--though Poe was perhaps not interested in too much of the genuine, and all contrived to present the conviction of reality best by making it, in most readers' eyes, remote.¹⁵

Miss Moore is often likened to the classicists, the metaphysicals, and the modernists. Actually, she combines many elements of varying classifications. Like the seventeenth century wits, she is sardonic and poignant, flippant and intense, serious and light. Like the neo-classicists, her poetry is polite, urbane, witty, and intellectual. Like the metaphysicals, her technique expresses honestly, but unconventionally, the poet's sense of the complexities and contradictions of life. She has a high regard for form and subtle rhyme, and her language tries to capture the cadence of natural speech, all qualities of the metaphysicals. Like the romantics, she prizes individual freedom. Like the neo-classicists, her values are traditional, and she lavishes great care upon her technique. It avails little to try to classify any poet, but it seems that Miss Moore, like John Crowe Ransom, leans heavily toward the neo-classicists.

Miss Moore uses word play as Hopkins did; pattern and progression of verbal echo, alliteration, rhyme and assonance. She also compresses her words and imagery, making her verse difficult, as Hopkins' is difficult. Oscar Cargill placed Miss Moore among the Decadents, and found a connection between her "A Grave" and Poe's "City in the Sea" and Rimbaud's "Le Bateau Ivre."¹⁶ Perhaps one needs to return to Mr. Eliot's earlier pronouncement:

So far back as my memory extends, which is to the pages of The Egoist during the War, and of The Little Review and The Dial in the years immediately following, Miss Moore has no immediate poetic derivations. I cannot, therefore, fill up my pages with the usual account of influences and development.¹⁷

Mr. Eliot continued by quoting "A Talisman" (not collected by Miss Moore after Observations), which he felt showed a slight influence of H. D.

In reality, one must consult prose stylists, such as Samuel Johnson, Henry James, Ezra Pound (in The Spirit of Romance), and most especially Sir Thomas Browne, to find anything approaching a prototype for her style.

There has been no biography written of Marianne Moore, and the facts of her life are briefly told. She was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1887, the granddaughter of a Presbyterian minister. After the death of Dr. Warner, her grandfather, the family left St. Louis. Miss Moore was graduated from Bryn Mawr in 1909 and taught commercial subjects at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Indian School from 1911 to 1915. Following her employment as a librarian at the New York Public Library from 1921 to 1925, she was editor of The Dial until its demise in 1929. Having taken care of her mother, Mary Warner Moore, until her death in 1947, Miss Moore now lives alone at 260 Cumberland Street, Brooklyn. She has made two trips to Europe and four to the West.

Having a "self-starting imagination,"¹⁸ she can become wildly excited by museum exhibits, a travel folder, a newspaper item, an illustrated lecture, or even a library bulletin.

One will search her poetry in vain for accounts of personal experiences.¹⁹ On the contrary, her poems are the adventures of a most unusual mind. Much of her charm results from her original point of view. In spite of a curious innocence, she is not a primitive, but rather, she is an urbane and cultivated woman.

Having read all of Miss Moore's collected poems, I am convinced that all of them are concerned with esthetics, and that they demonstrate her belief that art is a continuum. At the same time, they recognize that there is only one problem, that of man; therefore, her poems are concerned with morality and ethics. But since she is a disciplined and particular poet, as well as a most oblique one, her esthetic-ethical credo is more often implied than stated. Inasmuch as her poems are almost never assimilated at one reading, they may disclose, perhaps only in a last stanza or after a complete re-reading, that Miss Moore is writing about some human characteristic, not just about a pangolin, an elephant, a skunk, or even a rose. Her animals or plants are not allegorized or sentimentalized, however, but remain right and natural--and so does man. As biting as her satire can be on occasion, she still remains affirmative. I can think of no other modern poet who can leave the reader in such a happy frame of mind. However, she is no Pollyanna. She sees, experiences, and accepts. Embracing, both in personal life and poetry, a rigid code for herself, she does not seek to impose it on others. Her moral, ethical, and esthetic ideas are not extraneous but

are integral parts of her poems. But they are seldom direct. They are implied, and the reader makes the connection.

There is a peculiar oneness about Miss Moore. Seeming to make no distinction between nature and art, between theory and method, or between esthetics and ethics, Miss Moore achieves a great interdependence of them all. This celebration of their interdependence results in her distinctive voice, but makes the task of extracting an esthetic theory--as I propose to do in the next chapter--an especially difficult one. Interesting and pervasive as her ethics are, however, I shall ignore them as much as possible in the next chapter and concentrate on her esthetics.

I will examine a selected group of her poems and her prose works--mostly reviews--for the purpose of distinguishing an esthetic theory. Following this, there will be a more detailed examination of her poems to see if such a theory is demonstrated through subject matter, major themes, and revisions.

Notes for Chapter I

- ¹Mark Van Doren, "Women of Wit," Nation, Oct. 26, 1921, p. 482.
- ²Editorial, New York Times, Feb. 8, 1925, sec. II, p. 6.
- ³Laura Riding and Robert Graves, A Survey of Modernist Poetry, p. 111.
- ⁴M. L. Rosenthal and A. J. M. Smith, Exploring Poetry, p. 251.
- ⁵F. R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry, p. 213.
- ⁶Louis Untermeyer, American Poetry Since 1900, p. 353.
- ⁷Untermeyer, p. 363.
- ⁸T. S. Eliot, Introduction, Selected Poems by Marianne Moore, p. viii.
- ⁹Randall Jarrell, Poetry and the Age, p. 183.
- ¹⁰Wallace Fowlie, "Marianne Moore," Sewanee Review, LX (Summer, 1952), 538.
- ¹¹Fowlie, "Jorge Guillen, Marianne Moore, T. S. Eliot: Some Recollections," Poetry, XC (1957), 105.
- ¹²Elizabeth Bishop, "As We Like It," Quarterly Review, IV, ii (1948), 133.
- ¹³Jarrell, p. 163.
- ¹⁴Alfred Kreymborg, Our Singing Strength, p. 163.
- ¹⁵R. P. Blackmur, The Double Agent, p. 171.
- ¹⁶Oscar Gargill, Intellectual America, p. 300.
- ¹⁷Eliot, Introduction, p. ix.
- ¹⁸Winthrop Sargeant, "Profiles," New Yorker, XXXII, iv (Feb. 16, 1957), 68.
- ¹⁹"Marriage" may be the one exception. Vivienne Koch in "The Peaceable Kingdom of Miss Moore," Quarterly Review, IV, ii (1948), 167-68, n. 11, recognizes passages which she says refer to Ezra Pound's marriage proposal to Hilda Doolittle and her father's outraged refusal.

CHAPTER II

ESTHETICS IN POETRY: "ESSENTIAL PERPENDICULARITY"

Although I consider that all of Marianne Moore's poems concern themselves with esthetics in one way or another, here I will examine a selective group of approximately twelve poems which deal almost exclusively with esthetics: the well-known "Poetry," "In the Days of Prismatic Colour," "To a Snail," "An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle," "The Past Is the Present," "Armour's Undermining Modesty," "No Swan So Fine," "Propriety," "The Labours of Hercules," "When I Buy Pictures," and "Picking and Choosing." There are many more which contain quotable phrases which are important for an understanding of Miss Moore's esthetics. To quote isolated phrases is grossly unjust to Miss Moore because her epigrams are integrally woven into the structures of the poems, but space will necessitate some such isolation, with the hope that the reader will consult the full text. Wherever possible I will quote in full. Unless otherwise noted, all poems are from Collected Poems (1952). I prefer to rely upon my own interpretation of each poem, but unfortunately for my purpose, Miss Moore's poems have always presented challenges to explicationists. I have not slavishly followed these interpretations, but some of the critics have given such detailed analyses to a few poems that I will have little to add.

Poetry, as an intelligible art, is dependent for its structure and significance on the technique of linguistic and auditory control: upon the breadth and accuracy of vocabulary; upon a knowledge of the subtle possibilities in phrasing and sentence structure as the means of achieving lucidity and unity of composition; upon familiarity with specific denotations, emotional connotations, and associated images of words and phrases; and upon familiarity with rhyme, assonance, harmonies, contrasts, and stresses. This is a very delicate matter, since even a slight rearrangement in order to make poetry pleasing to the ear, or slight linguistic deviations in the interests of brevity, accuracy of meanings, or the like, may seem false or offensive. The poet needs to have linguistic skill and a fine ear to control his technical medium, and a genuine, necessary, and significant content to convey. The poet's technique is objectified in the poems themselves; it is this objectification which gives a particular poet's work its individual quality, character, and special kind of beauty. Miss Moore's content is ethical, but her natural reticence and artistic sense force her to use indirection as her method. Technique, esthetics, and ethics are so closely united in Miss Moore's poetry that one has difficulty extricating them. Although her esthetics are generally used to point up an ethical truth, I believe this point is obvious enough not to belabor. In discussing Miss Moore's poetry, I will examine technique since there is a very real and close connection between technique and theory, as I hope to demonstrate.

If one is familiar with only one Marianne Moore poem, that poem is almost certain to be "Poetry." An early (1921) poem, it has delighted and intrigued readers with its "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," as well as remaining a compact understatement of what real poetry is to Miss Moore.

I, too, dislike it; there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise
if it must, these things are important not
because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but
because they are useful. When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible,
the same thing may be said for all of us, that we do not admire what we cannot understand: the bat holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the baseball fan, the statistician--

nor is it valid to discriminate against 'business documents and school-books'; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry, nor till the poets among us can be 'literalists of the imagination'--above insolence and triviality and can present for inspection, 'imaginary gardens with real toads in them', shall we have it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand the raw material of poetry in all its rawness and

that which is on the other hand
genuine, you are interested in poetry.

This is a very irregular poem, but the general pattern is a six-line stanza with a predominating rhyme scheme of abcccd; the predominating syllabic count is 19,22,11,5,8,13.¹ But the very irregularity indicates that Miss Moore refuses to be hampered, even by self-imposed forms. Her rhyme scheme imposes a fairly regular beat on the undulating prose-like sentences. In addition to the light end-rhyme, preponderantly masculine-feminine combinations--in, genuine; of, above--Miss Moore uses heavier internal rhyme: base-/ ball fan, the statistician; if you demand on the one hand. Her use of assonance, always deft, is especially noticeable in "Poetry." The short i sound is pervasive throughout: dislike, things, important (three times), fiddle, it (seven times), discovers, in, genuine, if, interpretation, derivative, unintelligible, immovable, twitching, skin, statistician, valid, discriminate, business, distinction, prominence, till, literalist, imagination, insolence, triviality, inspection, imaginary, interested. One notes also that the key words, "literalist," "imagination," "imaginary," contain this i sound. This repeated sound is a unifying factor and also contributes to the briskness of the movement. Not haphazard, the design maintains a definite pictorial appeal. Generally, the rhyming lines, two-three and four-five, have the same indentations.

As important as sound and design are to the over-all effect of the poem, however, meaning is even more important. I consider the oxymoron, "literalists of the imagination,"

to be the controlling figure. The irony leads to and away from it. "I, too, dislike it." Anything creative can be exasperating: striving for the exactly right phrase, capturing the deft, yet unobtrusive rhyme, can be torture, especially to a conscious artist, such as Miss Moore.² But beyond this, Miss Moore probably means reading "derivative" poetry, those poor imitations composed by second-rate poets. Approaching even this kind of poetry, however, with a "perfect contempt," that is, without illusion, one sees "a place for the genuine," which is the crucial test. The genuine, the raw material of the poet, honest emotion--"hands that can grasp, eyes/ that can dilate, hair that can rise/ if it must"--when not distorted or stereotyped, but restrained and directed by the intellect, can become concrete, can result in a new form, or an old form presented in a fresh way "for inspection" to the very point of seeing. The task of the "literalists of the imagination" is to convert into form and language that which resists verbalization. When this is accomplished, true poets have "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." The fantasy of the dream world is not substituted for the real, but the real will remain, given a new or an expanded meaning. No experience, no "phenomena," can be excluded legitimately from the realms of poetry if they are "useful": if they stimulate the imagination. Stanzas two and three, with their masterful blend of the exotic and the commonplace, have been explored in detail by Mr. Blackmur.³ The imitative poets can make the exotic or the commonplace alike unintelligible, and "we do not

admire what/ we cannot understand."

This somewhat long analysis of a short, relatively uncomplicated poem can only be justified on the ground that this poem presents many insights into an intelligent, sensitive poet's creed. When Miss Moore states that it is not valid to discriminate against any phenomena, she is taking her stand in the old controversy about what is intrinsically poetical. Here she echoes Hegel, who said that any content whatever may be the content of poetry. Whatever the human mind is capable of thinking--that can be the subject of a poem.⁴

A neat little poem which contrasts in form and design with "Poetry," but which also contains a phrase rivalling "literalists of the imagination" is "An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish." If one wanted to scan the phrase, "And art, as in a wave held up for us to see/ in its essential perpendicularity," one would find that it is a perfect Alexandrine. Actually, of course, some of Miss Moore's poetry may be scanned successfully, since it has the general iambic cadence of natural speech, but, being quite irregular, it lends itself better to analysis by syllabic count, as she wrote it. For this reason, syllabic count instead of scansion will be employed throughout this paper.

Here we have thirst
And patience, from the first,
And art, as in a wave held up for us to see
In its essential perpendicularity;

Not brittle but
Intense--the spectrum, that
Spectacular and nimble animal the fish,

Whose scales turn aside the sun's sword with
their polish.

This perfectly polished little poem is absolutely regular: two four-line stanzas in rhyming open couplets, with a syllabic count of 4,6,12,12. Here again, Miss Moore uses the combination of masculine-feminine rhymes: see-perpendicularity, fish-polish.

First, the poet mentions "thirst," the usefulness of the bottle; then patience on the part of the Egyptian glass puller; this is art, being useful, both the ultimate use and the use in character development. "Wave" is somewhat ambiguous: the wave of the sea which catches the sunlight and so exhibits the waves of the spectrum, and also, perhaps, the wave of time, the imperishability of art. One is only able to see a wave when the water is pushed up perpendicular to the mass of the ocean; it is still water, but one sees a new aspect: the spectrum in the wave. And thus it is with art. Light and the spectrum are two--or different aspects of the same--recurring images, usually representing faith, truth, or even life itself within Miss Moore's poems. Here, she has "Not brittle but intense--the spectrum": not false, but with deep feeling or earnest purpose. "Perpendicularity" presents some difficulties. Perhaps the idea is that of direct communication from the ultimate source. However, it can also mean rectitude, which is not too incongruous for Miss Moore. Taking this meaning, one could say that Miss Moore believes that art throughout time has strict adherence to standards.

All of this she sees in the fish-shaped bottle, which is appropriate, for that "spectacular and nimble animal the fish" has scales that reflect the waves of the spectrum.

Miss Moore is fond of the analogy of the spectrum. "In the Days of Prismatic Colour" makes good use of it:

not in the days of Adam and Eve, but when Adam was alone; when there was no smoke and colour was fine, not with the refinement

of early civilization art, but because of its originality; with nothing to modify it but the

mist that went up, obliqueness was a variation of the perpendicular, plain to see and to account for: it is no

longer that; nor did the blue-red-yellow band of incandescence that was colour keep its stripe: it also is one of

those things into which much that is peculiar can be read; complexity is not a crime, but carry it to the point of murkiness and nothing is plain. Complexity,

moreover, that has been committed to darkness, instead of granting it-

self to be the pestilence that it is, moves all about as if to bewilder us with the dismal fallacy that insistence

is the measure of achievement and that all truth must be dark. Principally throat, sophistication is as it al-

ways has been--at the antipodes from the initial great truths. 'Part of it was crawling, part of it was about to crawl, the rest

was torpid in its lair.' In the short-legged, fitful advance, the gurgling and all the minutiae--we have the classic

multitude of feet. To what purpose! Truth is no Apollo Belvedere, no formal thing. The wave may go over it if it likes.

Know that it will be there when it says,
'I shall be there when the wave has gone by.'

This 1921 poem illustrates Miss Moore's early use of the

hyphen at the end of the line, which proved so distracting to her readers that she has virtually discontinued this practice. Often it was her way of calling attention to a light rhyme by forcing the reader unconsciously to pronounce words differently, as in the fifth stanza: init-/ it/ fit. Also, the practice allowed her greater flexibility in syllabic count. Even so, she never hesitated to curtail a poem when she had said what she wished: in this poem there is no fifth line in the sixth stanza. The syllabic pattern is 13,12,7,11, 18--except for that highly irregular last stanza, which is 15, 17,9,10. Lines two and four rhyme, again except for the last stanza.

The extreme irregularity of the sixth stanza focuses one's attention on it. "Truth is no Apollo Belvedere, no formal thing"; in other words, truth submits only partially to formulation. But the epigram is nothing by itself; it must have the whole idea for it to be meaningful. Francis W. Warlow analyzes the poem beautifully, dividing it into three movements.⁵ The first movement, an elegy to lost innocence, has the emblem of the purely original spectrum, a distinct band of blue-red-yellow, before fire, before art. Man was in direct contact with the elemental forces: Adam and the garden were in a perpendicular relationship to God. The second movement begins after the semi-colon in the second line of the third stanza and contrasts complexity--man fallen into knowledge and intellectuality--with the simplicity of the original perceptions in the first movement. The Latinate,

diction in the second movement indicates intellectuality, and epigram replaces pure description. This second movement is a contrast in values: the complexity which the honest observer must acknowledge, "plain to see and account for," contrasts with the deliberate murkiness which some revel in, calling it truth. Sophistication, "principally throat," could mean appetite but is probably an adroit allusion to oral language, spoken words being a good index to sophistication.⁶ "Part of it was crawling, part of it was about to crawl, the rest was torpid in its lair," might be a reference to Nestor's dragon, as Mr. Warlow suggests, or again, it might refer simply to general biological evolution. "Fitful advance" makes me think it is the latter. It is true that Miss Moore's somewhat cryptic note to the poem gives credit to "Nestor: Greek Anthology (Loeb Classical Library) Vol. III, p. 129," but that does not necessarily mean that she is using it in its original way. Her notes often show only an exaggerated notion of honesty and give very few clues to an interpretation of a poem. The especially suggestive word "gurgling" refers to sophistication, principally throat. The third and final movement begins in the last stanza with the emphatic question, "To what purpose!" With this shift in tone to emphatic conviction, the answer is precipitated by three epigrammatic statements, two short and the third imperative, "Know that it will be there when it says,/ I shall be there when the wave has gone by."

The one concrete object--Apollo Belvedere--directs the

reader to the arts, and through this to the realization that Truth is not solely form--plastic or linguistic arrangement--but is the absolute source and outlasts things and forms, the "wave" of time and distractions. Read in this way, the poem has "come around." Mr. Warlow concludes his explication:

From innocence and elements of light that once permitted true seeing, it has swung through subsequent complexity and back to elemental, abiding truth which can still be sensed in spite of all that time and knowledge interpose between it and consciousness.⁷

Here again one is reminded of Hegel's esthetics. He said that art has spiritual meaning, inner significance and embodiment, or form, bound together in a unity. Beauty, according to Hegel, was the mind perceiving the idea shining through an object. Beauty is idea in sensuous form apprehended by the senses. Idea is absolute truth.⁸

A restrained little poem which is the embodiment of Miss Moore's belief that art is a continuum is "No Swan So Fine":

'No water so still as the
dead fountains of Versailles'. No swan,
with swart blind look askance
and gondoliering legs, so fine
as the chintz china one with fawn-
brown eyes and toothed gold
collar on to show whose bird it was.

Lodged in the Louis Fifteenth
candelabrum-tree of cockscomb-
tinted buttons, dahlias,
sea-urchins, and everlastings,
it perches on the branching foam
of polished sculptured
flowers--at ease and tall. The king is dead.

Although art and esthetics are not mentioned in this poem, it is definitely implied in the quiet, understated irony of the ending: "The king is dead." One mentally adds, "Long live art!" There is much of the esthetic affirmation one finds in Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn." The swan, although "chintz china," has outlived his royal master and all the dramatic social changes and is now superior to his king. Technically, the poem is complex: two seven-line stanzas with a regular syllable count of 7,8,6,8,8,5,9; lines two and four rhyme. Miss Moore's vocabulary, always precise, is especially so here: "swart blind look askance," "gondoliering legs," and the simple, but perfect, "at ease and tall."

A very important statement concerning Miss Moore's esthetics is contained in "The Past Is the Present":

If external action is effete
and rhyme is outmoded,
I shall revert to you,
Habakkuk, as on a recent occasion I was goaded
into doing by XY, who was speaking of unrhymed
verse.

This man said--I think that I repeat
his identical words:
'Hebrew poetry is
prose with a sort of heightened consciousness.' Ecstasy
affords
the occasion and expediency determines the form.

This is an exactly regular little poem: two five-line stanzas, with lines two and four rhyming and having like indentations; the syllabic pattern is 9,6,6,15,15. The first three lines are short and choppy, lending an added weight to the last two long lines of each stanza.

R. P. Blackmur, in "The Method of Marianne Moore,"⁹ through five and a half pages, has thoroughly explored all the possibilities of this poem. He considers the aphorism, "Ecstasy affords the occasion and expediency determines the form," is a parallel statement to the one about Hebrew poetry and is also the clue to all the other lines. Without it the poem would be nothing; without the poem, the aphorism would be meaningless. The "occasion" for Habakkuk's ecstasy was the goading of the spiritual insufficiency and moral and religious decay of his times. Prayer and anathema were his most expedient forms. Miss Moore's coupling of external action and rhyme is no accident. The expedient form for her attack on the formless in life and art is a gracefully balanced and compact understatement. Her employment of rhyme in referring to Habakkuk is successful irony, since he used none. Although the moral reference to Habakkuk is clear, Mr. Blackmur points out that the poem may also be taken as a statement to the effect that if society and literature are in such a state of decay that the poet cannot follow the immediate traditions, he will revert to an older tradition. But "ecstasy affords the occasion and expediency determines the form" whether in art or in life.

Mr. Blackmur makes a very strong case for the dichotomy of her statement being the intellectual base for all her work, a maxim for her poetics. Actually, Miss Moore has said much the same thing:

I feel that the form is the outward equivalent of a determining inner conviction, and that the rhyme is the person.¹⁰

The statement is reversed in the poem, but the meaning is substantially the same. It is also quite similar to Hegel's belief that a poem is an organic unity, an infinite organism, wholly free and self-determined, pervaded and controlled by a single idea:

It is the personality of the poet, his peculiar vision of the world, his individual outlook, which fuses the parts of the poem into a unified whole.¹¹

One can, of course, find the same truism in Coleridge, Emerson, or in practically any expression of Romantic esthetics.

Miss Moore, when speaking or writing about her art, is almost certain to mention "concentration"--the process of eliminating nonessential elements and rendering the pure essence of thought. She expresses this idea in "To a Snail":

If 'compression is the first grace of style',
you have it. Contractility is a virtue
as modesty is a virtue.
It is not the acquisition of any one thing
that is able to adorn,
or the incidental quality that occurs
or the concomitant of something well said,
that we value in style,
but the principle that is hid:
in the absence of feet, 'a method of conclusions';
in the curious phenomenon of your occipital horn.

This is an extreme example of her objectification of abstractions. The entire poem is an abstraction, but by writing about a snail, she can make the abstraction concrete. This

ability is one of Marianne Moore's major accomplishments. Many examples might be given demonstrating this rare ability, but perhaps her best known is "The Fish," which is not about fish, but about struggle.

Miss Moore's insights are modest, even commonplace, but the analogies she uses to arrive at those insights are far from commonplace. To look at a snail and arrive at elements of style is not usual. In "To a Snail" the gist of her insight is contained in the last three lines, but what precedes them is important and cannot be ignored. She is stressing here the importance of the head (occipital). Principles and reasoned judgments are more valuable than extraneous ornament, or even the facility of saying things well. Surely the colon in the ninth line invites such an emphasis. In her notes she tells the reader that the first quotation is from Demetrius on Style, but (at least in Collected Poems) nothing is said about the other two quotations, so that one can assume that Miss Moore meant to emphasize "a method of conclusions" and "a knowledge of principles." The use of the somewhat unusual word occipital draws attention to it.

The snail has physical armor, since he is able to withdraw into his shell; but compression or concentration is armor for the poet, as Miss Moore uses the word. Armor is used in the broadest possible sense by Marianne Moore, and an understanding of her somewhat unconventional usage is mandatory for a full comprehension of her poems. Anything which protects (from natural forces, human enemies, or hostile ideas),

anything which sets something apart, anything, tangible or intangible, which individualizes--all these are armor. Ralph Rees explains it, as well as anyone, as a dichotomy between her natural reticence and her need for self-expression. This armor of Miss Moore has always been her enigma--and the reader's problem--but this dichotomy "causes Marianne Moore to write as no other."¹²

Many of her poems deal with armor of one kind or another. About one, "Armour's Undermining Modesty," may I say with Randall Jarrell:

I don't entirely understand it, but what I understand I love, and what I don't understand I love almost better. . . . One doesn't need to say that this is one of Miss Moore's best poems.¹³

Not only is it one of her best poems, but it also, while not all-inclusive, does go far toward defining armor, as used by Miss Moore:

At first I thought a pest
Must have alighted on my wrist.
It was a moth almost an owl.
Its wings were furred so well,
with backgammon-board wedges interlacing
on the wing--

like cloth of gold in a pattern
of scales with a hair-seal Persian
sheen. Once self-determination
made an axe of a stone
and hacked things out with hairy paws. The consequence--
our mis-set
alphabet.

Arise for it is day.
Even gifted scholars lose their way
through faulty etymology.
No wonder we hate poetry,

and stars and harps and the new moon. If tributes cannot be implicit,

give me diatribes and the fragrance of iodine,
the cork oak acorn grown in Spain;
the pale-ale-eyed impersonal look
which the sales-placard gives the bock beer buck.
What is more precise than precision? Illusion.
Knights we've known,

like those familiar
now unfamiliar knights who sought the Grail, were
ducs in old Roman fashion
without the addition
of wreaths and silver rods, and armour gilded
or inlaid.

They did not let self bar
their usefulness to others who were
different. Though Mars is excessive
is being preventive,
heroes need not write an ordinall of attributes to
enumerate
what they hate.

I should, I confess,
like to have a talk with one of them about excess,
and armour's undermining modesty
instead of innocent depravity.
A mirror-of-steel uninsistence should countenance
continence,

objectified and not by chance,
there in its frame of circumstance
of innocence and altitude
in an unhackneyed solitude.
There is the tarnish; and there, the imperishable wish.

"Mirror-of-steel uninsistence" is a fascinating image, showing how Miss Moore uses reciprocal images: the physical element acting on the non-physical element, and the non-physical on the physical, so that the image, which at first seems incongruous, attains a far-reaching meaning in a concentrated form. If one is protected by a lack of arrogance, then one is secure in one's natural individuality. But this unpretentiousness is not a weak quality; on the contrary, one needs

a sterner mirror than the ordinary vanity mirror; therefore, the poet suggests a mirror of steel. Perhaps she means a firm refusal to insist on one's superiority. With the punning assonance of the rest of the sentence, "should countenance continence" (should favor self-restraint. But both words are from the same Latin, continere, meaning to hold together, to repress, to contain.) one can see that it is an oblique suggestion that the greatest armor of all is the acceptance of others unlike oneself as individuals. Uninsistence is a major virtue with Miss Moore, as is humility.

Armor can be defensive or offensive, concrete or abstract, and Miss Moore uses all kinds in this poem: the furred and designed wings of the moth (protection from natural enemies), the self-determination of early man, the scholar's mistakes, the implicit tributes of good poets, the acorn of the cork oak, the impersonal look of the buck in the advertisement, the knights of the Holy Grail, leaders without the trappings of armor who were yet "useful" to those different from themselves, uninsistence, self-restraint, innocence, perspective, and chosen solitude. It is quite a list, but it by no means exhausts things which Miss Moore considers "armour." Through her masterful use of imagery, she has explored an abstract subject--not an easy task, nor is the result easy to understand. Her last sentence expresses the wish to have the courage to be an individual and to respect the individuality of others.

There are two major expressions of her esthetics here.

One, much like "Poetry";

No wonder we hate poetry
and stars and harps and the new moon. If tributes cannot
be implicit,

give me diatribes and the fragrance of iodine.

Willful, immodest imprecision makes her hate stereotyped poetry and "poetical" subjects. Being explicit is being too revealing. Ideas and meanings must be thoroughly entwined with the subject matter, not baldly stated. Another expression, "What is more precise than precision? Illusion" at first glance, might seem to contradict her insistence on precision of technique, but here she is discussing something else. The precision of illusion, things of the imagination, belong peculiarly to the imaginer, thus setting him uniquely apart and imparting an individualizing quality. Miss Moore characteristically blends fact and fancy, history and myths; therefore, she might be suggesting that since today's facts become tomorrow's myths, only illusion is tolerable.

Wallace Stevens' "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" generally argues the same point but at greater length. While Stevens says that the poem must be grounded in concreteness, he writes in abstractions. In attempting to form a guide of an area where reality and imagination are joined together, he arrives at the conclusion that the source of truth is reality, and that the "major man" (the poet) will be imagining, discovering a Supreme Fiction in the flux of reality. Miss Moore presents the same idea, but casually. Perhaps the

big difference is implied in Stevens' word "must" in his subtitles: "It Must Be Abstract," "It Must Change," "It Must Give Pleasure." Wholly in control of herself and unwilling to control anyone or anything else, Miss Moore exhibits a feminine realism which allows her to accept the world of objective reality without being tormented by things as they are. I believe, after reading her reviews of Stevens' work, that she respected his total commitment, but his way was not her way. In "Voracities and Verities Sometimes Are Interacting" (1947) she says, "Poets, don't make a fuss." Although she shares with Stevens a concern about the opposition between the poetic and the anti-poetic, between the self (imagination, mind) and a reality which is not part of that self, but which the poet tries, in a sense, to re-create, still she has said, "Literature is a phase of life"--a phase, not the way of life. This seems to be her consistent position.

The mechanics of "Armour's Undermining Modesty" are quite complex. Irregular by anyone's standards, the poem has a predominating syllabic count of 6,8,8,6,13,3. Just as Miss Moore chooses a different typographical arrangement for each poem, so does she choose a different rhyme scheme. This one is in open couplets, although many readers would protest her imperfect rhyme. But she has insisted more than once

I like light rhymes, inconspicuous rhymes and unpompous conspicuous rhymes. . . .¹⁴ I like the unaccented syllable and accented near-rhyme.

All of these devices are incorporated into "Armour's Under-

mining Modesty." Her rhymes may be maddening, but they are deliberate, not the result of an imperfect ear. She has used a great amount of alliteration: backgammon-board; hacked . . , hairy; bock beer buck; knights we've known; and the probable pun, countenance-continence.

A poem containing an image similar to "mirror-of-steel uninsistence" is "Propriety," of which Randall Jarrell has said, "If ever a poem was perfect "Propriety" is; how could a poem end better?"¹⁵

Is some such word
as the chord
 Brahms had heard
 from a bird,
sung down near the root of the throat;
it's the little downy woodpecker
 spiralling a tree--
 up up up like mercury;

a not long
sparrow-song
of hayseed
magnitude--
a tuned reticence with rigour
from strength at the source. Propriety is
 Bach's Solfegietto--
 harmonica and basso.

The fish-spine
on firs, on
sombre trees
by the sea's
walls of wave-worn rock--have it; and
a moonbow and Bach's cheerful firmness
 in a minor key.
It's an owl-and-a-pussy-

both content
agreement.
Come, come. It's
mixed with wits;
it's not a graceful sadness. It's
resistance with bent head, like foxtail
millet's. Brahms and Bach,
no; Bach and Brahms. To thank Bach

for his song
first, is wrong.
Pardon me;
both are the
unintentional pansy-face
uncursed by self-inspection; blackened
because born that way.

Propriety, of course, is another element of Miss Moore's armor. Not only is it the sense of what is proper and fitting, but it is also one's own, or property--from the Latin proprius. Each image presents a special sort of suitability: the chord, the woodpecker, mercury, the fir trees, the sea walls, the moonbow, Bach's Solfegietto, foxtail millet, Brahms, and finally, the pansy face, "blackened because born that way." She achieves an accuracy through the novelty, appropriateness, and concentration of her images: a not long sparrow-song of hayseed magnitude; the fish-spine on firs; and resistance with bent head, similar to "mirror-of-steel uninsistence." As an expression of esthetics, there is "tuned reticence with rigour from strength at its source." Like Aristotle, Miss Moore can never neglect the source, the origin of things. Reticence with rigour! But

Come, come. It's
mixed with wits:
it's not a graceful sadness,

or, as she says in "Baseball and Writing,"¹⁶

Yes,
it's work; I want you to bear down,
but enjoy it
while you're doing it.

The gaiety of "Propriety," illustrating this enjoyment, is achieved first of all by the typography, which emphasizes the rhyme, irregular, but when it occurs, it is strong and makes itself felt: heard, bird; long, song; trees, sea's; it's, wits; song, wrong; content, agreement. There is the slant rhyme of word, chord; and the distortion (or exaggeration) of sound required for me, the; key, pussy. With only slight variations--one extra syllable in the first line and no eighth line in the last stanza--"Propriety" has a regular syllabic count of 3,3,3,3,8,9,5,7.

Marianne Moore's poetry is much better in its entirety than mere extractions can indicate. However, a few quotations from various poems may be sufficient to illustrate her definition of poetry. First, from "Critics and Connoisseurs":

There is a great amount of poetry in unconscious fastidiousness. Certain Ming products, imperial floor-coverings of coach-wheel yellow, are well enough in their way but I have seen something that I like better--a mere childish attempt to make an imperfectly ballasted animal stand up, similar determination to make a pup eat his meat from the plate.

Her definition is the broadest possible one. Poetry is an attempt to force adverse material into a form, both esthetically and intellectually. A fact is only a beginning: the idea behind the fact gives significance to it. This thought is well brought out in the last lines of "When I Buy Pictures":

Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that detracts from one's enjoyment. It must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph easily be honoured-- that which is great because something else is small. It comes to this: of whatever sort it is, it must be 'lit with piercing glances into the life of things'; it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it.

An excessively intellectual approach will "disarm," that is, will take away that quality which individualizes it. Miss Moore here is admonishing against the use of the obvious. Another apt phrase indicating Miss Moore's concern for inner qualities, not obvious ones, occurs in "The Hero":

. . . the rock
crystal thing to see--the startling El Greco
brimming with inner light . . .

What El Greco accomplished through color, the poet must accomplish through words. Not imagination alone, but imagination, through reticence and precision, is brought into control in poetry. To add to her definition of poetry, there are those lines from "The Labours of Hercules" which show that there are other ways than that of logic to bring organization and direction to poetry:

to teach the bard with too elastic a selectiveness
that one detects creative power by its capacity to
conquer one's detachment,
that while it may have more elasticity than logic,
it knows where it is going;
it flies along in a straight line like electricity,
depopulating areas that boast of their remoteness,
to prove to the high priests of caste
that snobbishness is a stupidity.

There is room for all types of poetry. The "high priests of castes," with their rigid insistence on what constitutes poetry are harmful to all. Then there is the prosaic, off-hand comment in "Picking and Choosing," which reiterates her insistence on honesty:

Literature is a phase of life. If one is afraid of it, the situation is irremediable; if one approaches it familiarly what one says of it is worthless. Words are constructive when they are true.

In "The Octopus" one gets a clear idea of qualities which Miss Moore demands of literature:

like Henry James "damned by the public for decorum"; not decorum, but restraint; it is the love of doing hard things that rebuffed and wore them out--a public out of sympathy with neatness.
Neatness of finish! Neatness of finish!
Relentless accuracy is the nature of this octopus with its capacity for fact.

Literature should have what the mountain does have--a neatness of finish and a capacity for fact. "Restraint" and "love of doing hard things" loom large in Miss Moore's vocabulary. From "Silence," "The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence;/ not in silence, but restraint," and "The Paper Nautilus"¹⁷ was "hindered to succeed." To Miss Moore emotion is not raw, but must be fastidiously controlled, thought about and restrained. But there is a great amount of emotion concealed in matter-of-fact, minimal statements. This fastidiousness can be easily misunderstood, but it is in the aris-

tocratic tradition. Danger, obligation, and struggle are all in the same tradition.

The nature of beauty and the nature of art are the two major concerns of esthetics. In "The Monkey Puzzle" Miss Moore gives a definition of beauty which might be surprising to most people:

This porcupine-quilled, complicated starkness--
this is beauty--'a certain proportion in the skeleton
which gives the best results'.
One is at a loss, however, to know why it should be here
in this morose part of earth--
to account for its origin at all;
but we prove, we do not explain our birth.

She believes strongly that a poet must be a free individual and that intellect is not necessarily detrimental to poetry. She makes both statements in "In the Public Garden":¹⁸ "Art, admired in general/ is always actually personal"; and, she was in Boston she said, "to wish poetry well/ where intellect is habitual." Poets must take esthetic risks, she confides in "Blessed Is the Man":¹⁹ "blessed is the author/ who favors what the supercilious do not favor--/ who will not comply. Blessed, the un-/ accommodating man." Adjustment and compromise are simply not in Miss Moore's vocabulary. Her championship of independence and freedom may seem to clash with her repeated insistence on restraint. But freedom to Miss Moore is not bodily freedom, but is freedom of the mind and of the imagination. Restraint is in her technique, in self-control so that she can formulate the free imaginings of her mind. She demands freedom of subject

matter, but she feels that true art comes from a deliberate harnessing of unlimited subject matter, unlimited language, (always excluding the obscene and the indelicate, of course!) and unlimited imagery. Her emphasis on the imagination gives a cohesive quality to her poems. She refuses to be bound by traditional poetic forms; however, she is very conscious of forms--but they must be her own, as free as she can make them, and her imagery must be as original as she can make it.

An intriguing--and very sane--statement of the mind (the imagination) is her "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing":

is an enchanted thing
 like the glaze on a
katydid-wing
 subdivided by sun
 till the nettings are legion.

Like Giesecking playing Scarlatti;

like the apteryx-awl
 as a beak, or the
kiwi's rain-shawl
 of haired feathers, the mind
 feeling its way as though blind,
walks along with its eyes on the ground.

It has memory's ear
 that can hear without
having to hear.

Like the gyroscope's fall,
 truly unequivocal
because trued by regnant certainty,

it is a power of
 strong enchantment. It
is like the dove-
 neck animated by
sun; it is memory's eye;
it's conscientious inconsistency.

It tears off the veil; tears
 the temptation, the
mist the heart wears,
 from its eyes,--if the heart

has a face; it takes apart
dejection. It's fire in the dove-neck's
iridescence; in the
inconsistencies
of Scarlatti.

Unconfusion submits
its confusion to proof; it's
not a Herod's oath that cannot change.

This vivid and splendid definition of the working of the mind is not physiological nor psychological but imaginative. To Miss Moore the intellect and the imagination are equals. The imagination "tears off the veil," allowing the poet to see clearly, without illusion, the reality of the human condition.

Notes for Chapter II

¹Miss Moore explains her method of writing in "A Note on Poetry," The Oxford Anthology of American Literature, p. 1319: "I tend to write in a patterned arrangement, with rhymes; stanza as it follows stanza being identical in number of syllables and rhyme-plan with the first stanza."

But as Mr. Blackmur has observed (The Double Agent, p. 164), ". . . anyone can arrange syllables, the thing is to arrange syllables at the same time you write a poem, and to arrange them as Miss Moore does, on four or five different planes at once. . . . this mastery, this intricacy, would be worthless did the poem happen to be trash."

²Moore, A Marianne Moore Reader (hereafter cited as MMR), "Interview with Donald Hall," p. 259: "I never knew anyone who had a passion for words who had as much difficulty in saying things as I do and I very seldom say them in a manner I like."

³R. P. Blackmur, The Double Agent, p. 151.

⁴W. T. Stace, The Philosophy of Hegel, p. 477.

⁵Francis Warlow, Unfalsifying Sun and Solid Gilded Star, p. 149.

⁶Cf. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "the women come and go/ Talking of Michelangelo."

⁷Warlow, p. 151.

⁸Stace, pp. 445-46.

⁹Blackmur, pp. 148-54.

¹⁰Moore, "A Note on Poetry," The Oxford Anthology of American Literature, p. 1319.

¹¹Stace, p. 478.

¹²Ralph Rees, The Imagery of Marianne Moore, pp. 1 and 71.

¹³Randall Jarrell, Poetry and the Age, pp. 185-86.

¹⁴MMR, "Interview," p. 259.

¹⁵Jarrell, p. 186.

¹⁶New Yorker, XXXVII (May 20, 1961), 60.

¹⁷MMR

¹⁸MMR

¹⁹MMR

CHAPTER III

ESTHETICS IN PROSE: PREDILECTIONS

Marianne Moore's prose works can be divided into three parts: translation, Rock Crystal, A Christmas Tale (1954), not discussed in this paper; critical reviews, dating from 1918, some of which are collected in Predilections (1955) and A Marianne Moore Reader (1961); and most importantly, her essays on the poetic craft, also collected in Predilections and the Reader.

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Miss Moore's criticisms, for the most part book reviews, are concerned with particular performances and, while delightfully entertaining, are not profound analyses. Sharing a book with her readers, she allows them to read over her shoulder while she points out passages which please her, and politely ignores most of the faults. Had the critics taken the title, Predilections (partialities), into account, perhaps they would have accepted this unassuming book on its own merits, and Irving Howe need not have called her criticism "the greenest land she's almost seen."¹ He considered it too elusive, too "Marianne Mooreish."

Mr. Howe is correct, of course. Predilections is pure

Marianne Moore, and therein lies its charm. Although not a book to consult for a definitive view of some particular poet, it is excellent for gaining an insight into esthetic qualities which Miss Moore values. Just as Marianne Moore's poems need explicating, so do her criticisms. She is saying, "This I like, and this, and this." The most appreciative of critics, she generally ignores faults, or charitably finds excuses for them. I agree with Randall Jarrell that Predilections is a "modest, original, perceptive book. . . . Even its faults seem individual and endearing."²

Although Marianne Moore's poems lend themselves to the form-image-irony theory of the "new criticism," one does not encounter such terms in her criticism nor in her essays about her craft. Quoting generously from poems or books being reviewed, she seems to be looking, like Aristotle, for origins--for the very essence of things--and her language tends to be almost philosophical. In this respect, one can see a similarity to some of Eliot's criticism. Of the same generation and sharing similar backgrounds and education, they both lean toward classicism and exhibit a number of qualities in common. They both began writing criticism before the terminology of the "new criticism" became the vogue, and, while not incapable of changing, they are both individualists and could see no sufficient reason for doing so. This is not to suggest that their writing styles are alike, or even very similar. Marianne Moore's criticism is gay, but it does display good breeding and courtesy toward the reader, as does Eliot's.

Mr. Jarrell has said, ". . . her criticism is not criticism but an inferior kind of poetry."³ Perhaps it is this poetic attitude which makes her criticism perplexing. Although she is extremely candid, her terms are elusive.

Another difficulty which presents itself is that many of the qualities she admires seem to be qualities of the poet, rather than of the poems. Something of this was brought out by Donald Hall in an interview (1961) with Miss Moore:

Q.: You often use moral terms in your criticism. Is the necessary morality specifically literary, a moral use of words, or is it larger? In what way must a man be good if he is to write good poems?

A.: If emotion is strong enough, the words are unambiguous. Someone asked Robert Frost (is this right?) if he was selective. He said, "Call it passionate preference."

Must a man be good to write good poems? The villains in Shakespeare are not illiterate, are they? But rectitude has a ring that is implicative, I would say. And with no integrity, a man is not likely to write the kind of book I read.⁴

Regardless of the reader's difficulty with Miss Moore's terminology, throughout the years, she has remained astonishingly consistent, and sees no conflict in discerning within a book of poems being reviewed "honesty," "a basic morality," "sensitivity," "warmth with restraint," "freedom as a result of discipline," "individuality," and "learning without pedantry,"⁵ as well as more usual terms, unity, understatement, compression, aptitude for the language, and harmonics. From her discussion of Ezra Pound's A Draft of XXX Cantos in 1931 to her review of The New American Poets in 1960, she consistently looked for pleasing harmonics, vivid images, and

honest emotion expressed with restraint.

"Honesty," or genuineness, has remained a first criterion in her criticism. Eliot's terseness, "synonymous with a hatred of sham" in Collected Poems⁶ and Wallace Stevens's antipathy to falsity in Harmonium⁷ measured up to her high standards. As an illustration of Miss Moore's habitual intermingling of the arts, she emphasized honesty in her lyrical tribute to Anna Pavlova: "straightness of spirit . . . matched by an incapacity for subterfuge," "undeceived honesty . . . matched by logic."⁸ She commended Ezra Pound's "honesty--on voicing one's own opinions" in A Draft of XXX Cantos.⁹ Although she found William Carlos Williams at times almost "insultingly specific" in Collected Poems, she still admired his refusal to compromise.¹⁰

Always interested in philology, Miss Moore lavished highest praise on mastery of the language. Quoting approvingly from Eliot's A Talk with Dante about his view that the highest achievement of a poet is to pass on to posterity a more highly developed, refined, and precise language, she made what amounts to a direct statement of her own goal (the italics are my own):

The effect of Mr. Eliot's confidences, elucidations, and precepts, I would say, is to disgust us with affection; to encourage respect for spiritual humility; to encourage us to do our ardent undeviating best with the medium in which we work.¹¹

Discussing Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning" and Eliot's "La Figlia che Piange," she considered that Stevens had "as cun-

ning a rhetoric as we have produced," and that both Stevens and Eliot were engaged in a differently expressed search for "that which will endure."¹² Louise Bogan, in Poems and New Poems, had a kind of forged [~~meaning~~ "wrought"] rhetoric "that nevertheless seems inevitable."¹³ She recognized W. C. Williams' dislike of unnecessary explanations, connectives, and stock speech in Collected Poems.¹⁴ Writing of the "new poets," after referring to Kirby Doyle's "Strange," a two-page sentence with no punctuation:

. . . punctuation aids precision, and precision is the glory of the craftsman; syntax being equivalent to the staff in music, without which interpretation would surely overtax the performer. (Intentional ambiguity and inadvertent ambiguity, need it be said, are not the same.)¹⁵

Although generally praising Ezra Pound's rhetorical certitude in the Cantos, she noted some violence to the language and an over-emphasis on "unprudery" in Cantos XIV and XV. Her objections were based, however, not on the shocking quality of the phrases, but on their triteness: "stock oaths, and the result is ennui, as with the stock adjective."¹⁶

Elsewhere Miss Moore has called rhythm "the clue to it all."¹⁷ Thus, in her criticism, she has expressed an awareness of rhythm, melody, and harmonics. She considered Pound's ear in the Cantos unerring, and she especially praised his musicality and his capturing of the cadence of natural speech.¹⁸ She complimented Wallace Stevens for his percussive harmonics, within the small compass of a poem, which "suggest a linguist creating several languages within a single language."

She noted his ironic use of scale in "Bantams in Pine-Woods."¹⁹

In addition to rhythm and harmony, Miss Moore agreed with Pound's precept: "Make it new. Art is a joyous thing."²⁰ E. E. Cummings succeeded in this. l x l was an "apex of indivisible, undismemberable joy. It is a thing of furious nuclear integrities; it need not argue with hate and fear, because it has annihilated them."²¹ Commenting on Cummings' lack of punctuation and the dislocating of letters, she said that this was the result of "impassioned feeling that hazards its life for the sake of emphasis."²² She objected to his obscenity, but she said, "Obscenity as a protest is better than obscenity as praise."²³

Miss Moore, herself adept in the use of understatement, expressed admiration for other poets, such as W. H. Auden, Stevens, and Eliot, who skillfully employed it. A common quality that she found in Stevens and Eliot was a "reticent candor and emphasis by understatement."²⁴

To Miss Moore freedom always involves restraint or discipline. She expressed gratitude to Sir George Sitwell's On the Making of a Garden, which brought out this valuable lesson.²⁵ She also attributed much of Pavlova's genius to discipline, a controlling by the intellect of deep emotion.²⁶

In conjunction with freedom through restraint, Miss Moore feels strongly that one must still be independent and have the courage of one's convictions. "If . . . one's individuality was not a mistake from the first, it should not be a crime to maintain it."²⁷ Sometimes her convictions run

counter to the established opinion, but that does not deter Miss Moore. She elected to praise two expatriates--Henry James and Ezra Pound--for their love of country. Never naive, Miss Moore evidently thought she had sufficient reasons for her beliefs. James's American heroes were always armed with a good conscience, and his Notes of a Son and Brother revealed a deep affection for his family and his native country. An American, he thought, had a mind "incapable of the shut door in any direction."²⁸ Perhaps both Henry James and Ezra Pound felt too deeply and preferred expatriation when they saw their country's high ideals perverted--as they thought. Miss Moore found much of A Draft of XXX Cantos a protest against America's being "Midas lacking a Pan." Believing that Beauty was a reality, Pound could not understand why money and life should be spent for war and intellectual oppression instead of for beauty.²⁹ Miss Moore's Protestant morality, however, would not allow her to forgive Pound's persistent secularism.

Her most specific observation about poetic content was included in her review of The New American Poets:

With regard to content: Good content as Samuel Butler said, is usually matched by good treatment, and poets specializing in "organs and feeling"--severed from culture and literature, dogged by redundancy and stench--have a stiff task. By comparison with the vocabularies of science, which are creative, in fact entralling, exhibitionist content--invaded by the diction of drug-vendors and victims, sex addicts and civic parasites--becomes poetically inoperative.³⁰

This is the closest she has ever come to limiting poetic content, but even here, the diction and treatment offended the

fastidious craftsman as much as the content itself.

When Marianne Moore discusses her own art, she discusses method more than theory. A poet with a deep sense of humility, she seems almost embarrassed to be called a poet. Such a term, she believes, should be reserved for the masters, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dante. Her favorite poem is the Book of Job "for the verity of its agony and a fidelity that contrives glory for ashes."³¹ In her formal acceptance speech of the National Book award for her Collected Poems, she said there was no reason to call her work poetry except that there was no other category in which to place it.³² The other recipients of the award, James Jones for From Here to Eternity and Rachel Carson for The Sea Around Us, had written best sellers--250,000 copies for Jones and 180,000 for Miss Carson--but Miss Moore was not surprised that Collected Poems had sold only 5,000 copies. "I'm surprised it sold one," she told reporters.³³

But if she does not consider her work great poetry, she is very articulate about her craft. The first two essays in Predilections are simply titled "Feeling and Precision" and "Humility, Concentration, and Gusto." With characteristic condensation, Miss Moore has expressed in five words concepts which have guided her throughout her long career. But one must examine the essays to determine the connotations these words hold for her.

Conceding that the deepest feeling tends to be inarticulate, Miss Moore insists, "We must be as clear as our natural reticence allows us to be." In the poet's effort to be articulate, he must resort to precision--precision in words, in metaphor, in antithesis.

Precision is a thing of the imagination; and it is a matter of diction, of diction that is virile because galvanized against inertia . . . precision is both impact and exactitude, as with surgery; and also in music.³⁴

In Miss Moore's effort to be precise, she exhibits some of the characteristics of the metaphysical poets, since she says that the poet must wrest language to express, as nearly as possible, ineffable emotions. One can approximate feelings by the use of images. Miss Moore's usual practice is to use a multiplicity of images, none of which exactly equals the thought she is trying to convey, but each acts as a spring-board to a point of comparison. Her images often have an additive or an interactive effect, but very seldom does she use the extended or developed single image. The Handel image in "The Frigate Pelican" is perhaps her nearest approach to the epic simile. Her usual practice is to move with lightning rapidity from one image to the next, using as many hyphenated words as she needs to insure accuracy. This is not excess, as she sees it, since each hyphenation adds its part. For example, in "His Shield," her hyphenated words allow her to attain a great compression: "distressed-/ pin-cushion thorn-fur coat." Miss Moore expressly warns against what she considers excess: semi-academic jargon ("knows his Aristotle"),

the too conscious adverbs (stunning, frightfully, and the like), hyperbole, and unnecessary connectives (especially "and" between adjectives--"he is a crude and intolerant thinker"). All of these, she believes, are excess and defeat precision and are a substitute for energy. Admitting, however, that there are always exceptions (Shakespeare's use of and in Sonnet LXVI), Miss Moore, like Longinus, would prefer "grandeur with a few flaws" to impeccable mediocrity.³⁵

The twin fears of insufficiency and incorrectness ruin the poet's work, and concern about the public's reception seems to "mildew effectiveness." One must have a pure motive and become wholly absorbed in his subject, oblivious to anything else. "So art is but an expression of our needs; is feeling, modified by the writer's moral and technical insights."³⁶

Describing her own art, she said, "You don't devise a rhythm, the rhythm is the person, and the sentence but the radiograph of the personality."³⁷ One often needs to break up sentences, as pauses would occur in natural conversation. Expanded explanations are often awkward, but one should be as explicit as possible. She is charmed by appoggiatura, grace notes used to embellish a melody, and considers that the same principle can be used to harmonize words as well as musical notes. Elsewhere she has said, "Rhythm: the clue to it all . . . built in as in music."³⁸

In her plea for a perfection of naturalness--artless art, as she calls it--she explains the method she employs:

I dislike the reversed order of words; don't like to be impeded by an unnecessary capital at the beginning of every line. . . . I like straight writing, end-stopped lines, an effect of flowing continuity, and after 1929 --perhaps earlier--wrote no verse that did not (in my opinion) rhyme.³⁹

Accented rhyme, a deviation from the conversational patterns of speech, she considers artificial and is therefore best employed for a witty effect. She believes that climax, although often considered artificial, is actually the result of strong feeling and might be likened to a pyramid, resting either on its base or on its point--in other words, either a natural climax or a witty, intentional anti-climax.⁴⁰

Miss Moore stresses humility, concentration, and gusto as aids to persuasion. Humility is a form of self-protection (armor to Miss Moore), or, as Mr. Jarrell has suggested, part of her eccentricity, her refuge.⁴¹ This humility implies much the same problem which Hegel described, as a problem for the symbolic artist:

. . . the impossible is attempted, and the straining of the poet to do what is beyond human power results in a characteristic kind of symbolic art. . . . In symbolic art the artist is always searching for a material form that will express his meaning without a remainder. He never finds it.⁴²

To Miss Moore, humility is not merely a judicious, conventional modesty but is a realization that it is impossible to be original, in the sense of doing something never thought of before, and finds expression in style by simplicity and proportion. Nevertheless, she does expect the poet to be as independent and inventive as possible:

Originality is in any case a by-product of sincerity;

that is to say, of feeling that is honest and accordingly rejects anything that might cloud the impression, such as unnecessary commas, modifying clauses, or delayed predicates.⁴³

Concentration includes understatement and compression and avoids adverbial intensives, needlessly over-accented pauses, and unnecessary explicitness. She recognizes that compression may lead to obscurity, but

I myself . . . would rather be told too little than too much. The question then arises, How obscure may one be? And I suppose one should not be obscure at all. In any case, a poem is a concentrate and has, as W. H. Auden says, "an immediate meaning and a possible meaning."⁴⁴

Gusto is a quality of style, and her examples of gusto range from Edward Lear to the Bible, including such diverse materials as the "impassioned explicitness" of a Secret Service description of certain counterfeit bills, and Spencer's coining of words to suit the rhyme. Since major value outweighs minor defects, Miss Moore cautioned the reader to have patience with modifications of form. Adding that naturalness was indispensable, she emphasized the natural wording of "uninhibited urgency." Gusto thrives on freedom,

. . . and freedom in art, as in life, is the result of a discipline imposed on ourselves. . . . To summarize: Humility is an indispensable teacher, enabling concentration to heighten gusto. There are always objectors, but we must not be sensitive about not being liked or being printed. . . . The thing is to see the vision and not deny it; to care and admit that we do.⁴⁵

Although I do not wish to push the correspondences between Miss Moore and Hegel's esthetics too far, it should be

noted that Hegel attempted a reconciliation of classicism, romanticism, and realism in his Philosophy of Fine Art. Reconciliation of contradictions is the essence of his doctrine. He sought (and believed that he had found) ultimate harmony on the level of intellectual consciousness.⁴⁶ To Hegel, the artistic imagination was not an inward fancy, feeding upon its subjective dreams. Instead, it involved observation, memory, and wide experience of the world. It was an imperative impulse to give artistic life to emotional and imaginative life.⁴⁷ In her own way, Miss Moore has attempted a reconciliation between the neo-classical, the romantic, and the metaphysical traditions, with the neo-classical having the edge.

In A Marianne Moore Reader (1961) Miss Moore chose to reprint from Predilections "Humility, Concentration, and Gusto" and her essays on Henry James, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound, indicating that her opinions had not wavered. Among the other prose collected here, only an essay titled "Idiosyncrasy and Technique," originally delivered as a lecture at the University of California, October 3 and 5, 1956, and a Paris Review interview with Donald Hall aid in understanding Miss Moore's esthetic theory.

Miss Moore, shocked by a query posed to a writing class, "Is it for money or fame?" announced emphatically, "One writes because one has a burning desire to objectify what it is indispensable to one's happiness to express."⁴⁸ While not denying that the money received from ~~that~~ writing is important, she deplored professionalism (writing exclusively for a live-

lihood rather than art), admitting that Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller would not agree with her. She praised Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams because they refused to be demolished by professionalism, but remained implausible and intractable. Of Williams she said, ". . . he is willing to be reckless; if you can't be that, what's the point of the whole thing?"⁴⁹

Discussing writing as a "trade," she acknowledged that it is expedient to make oneself understood; what one writes should at least have an air of having meant something to the writer--as was the case with Gertrude Stein and James Joyce. Stressing again clarity and natural reticence, she deplored structural weakness: "Structural infirmity truly has, under surrealism, become a horticultural verbal blight threatening firmness at the core."⁵⁰ Noble firmness is necessary and can be attained by clarity, clarity which depends upon precision. Dullness and implausibility are two errors which the writer cannot afford to make. Clarity, precision, avoidance of dullness and implausibility, all are parts of technique, and ". . . if technique is of no interest to a writer, I doubt that the writer is an artist."⁵¹

Speaking of contemporary writing, Miss Moore deplored the widespread use of sarcasm and denigration; she felt that writing could and should be affirmative. The attributes of genius, she said, include honesty, a sense of the really significant, and the power of concentration. Curiosity is connected with the sense of the significant. If there were any creative

secrets, Miss Moore considered that they were an impassioned interest in life and, perhaps most important of all, steadfastness, by which she means a refusal to be false to one's own individuality. Miss Moore maintained that one of the paradoxes of art is that a work only attains universal stature if it is firmly rooted in whatever makes up the individuality of its creator.⁵² A competent artist knows that he fails in some degree, but he can prevail if his attachment to his art is sufficiently deep--"unpriggish, subtle, perceptive, and consuming."⁵³

Perhaps it is repetitious to attempt to extract Miss Moore's theory in this manner, but one can try to formulate a synthesis leading toward a rationale of her art.

Art is a process of growth from a general feeling through an ordering technique--never technique for its own sake--to a specialized, "original" feeling. Originality demands that one be individual, independent, even eccentric or idiosyncratic, if need be. This independence, freedom to take esthetic risks, is closely associated with technical restraint. Miss Moore is quite concerned with form, but it is a form of her own devising, not the traditional forms of sonnet, ballad, and the like. This reminds one of F. O. Matthiessen's definition of style in his study of Sarah Orne Jewett: "Style means that the author has fused his material and his technique with the distinctive quality of his personality. No art lasts without this fusion."⁵⁴ Imagination, an interpenetration of thought and feeling--equated with invention, free-

dom, gusto, virtuosity, bravura--is implemented by technique, which can be more easily and concretely illustrated. Precision--sometimes called rigor, exactitude, or scrupulosity--is the most important single aspect of style. Precision insures concreteness and objective detachment. It involves a concern for details (the exactly appropriate word), images, accurate relationships, natural rhythms (as near as possible to the cadence of natural speech), and verbal music. Feeling--emotion, ecstasy, passion--is not everything; the mind can and does enhance feeling, allowing her to objectify her emotions with moral principles and physical facts.

Notes for Chapter III

¹Irving Howe, "Greenest Land She's Almost Seen," New Republic, CXXXII (May 23, 1955), 20.

²Randall Jarrell, New York Times Book Review, Sec. 7, May 29, 1955, p. 5.

³Jarrell, Poetry and the Age, p. 162.

⁴MMR, p. 271.

⁵Cf. Marianne Moore, Predilections (hereafter cited as PRE) p. vii; ". . . there is a language of sensibility of which words can be the portrait--a magnetism, an ardor, a refusal to be false."

⁶PRE, "It Is Not Forbidden to Think," p. 51.

⁷PRE, "Conjurries that Endure," p. 32.

⁸PRE, "Anna Pavlova," p. 149.

⁹PRE, "Teach, Stir the Mind, Afford Enjoyment," p. 80.

¹⁰PRE, "Things Others Never Notice," p. 139.

¹¹PRE, "Reticent Candor," p. 61.

¹²PRE, p. 34.

¹³PRE, "Compactness Compacted," p. 130.

¹⁴PRE, p. 136.

¹⁵MMR, "The Ways Our Poets Have Taken Since the War," p. 242.

¹⁶PRE, "The Cantos," p. 69.

¹⁷MMR, p. xv.

¹⁸PRE, p. 67.

¹⁹PRE, pp. 32-33.

²⁰PRE, p. 75.

²¹PRE, "One Times One," p. 143.

²²PRE, p. 141. Cf. Miss Moore's attitude toward Doyle's "Strange," p. 45, above.

- ²³PRE, p. 142.
- ²⁴PRE, p. 52.
- ²⁵PRE, "Every Shadow a Friend," p. 146.
- ²⁶PRE, p. 152.
- ²⁷PRE, p. 142.
- ²⁸PRE, "Henry James as a Characteristic American," p. 31.
- ²⁹PRE, p. 67. Miss Moore never reviewed any of Pound's later work. For a further discussion of Ezra Pound, see the Appendix.
- ³⁰MMR, p. 242.
- ³¹MMR, p. xvii.
- ³²New York Times, Jan. 30, 1952, p. 27.
- ³³N. Y. Times, p. 27.
- ³⁴PRE, "Feeling and Precision," p. 3.
- ³⁵PRE, p. 4.
- ³⁶PRE, p. 10.
- ³⁷PRE, p. 11.
- ³⁸MMR, p. xv.
- ³⁹MMR, pp. xv-xvi.
- ⁴⁰PRE, p. 7.
- ⁴¹See Chapter I, n. 13, p. 6.
- ⁴²Katharine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn, A History of Esthetics, pp. 443-44.
- ⁴³PRE, "Humility, Concentration, and Gusto," p. 13.
- ⁴⁴PRE, p. 15.
- ⁴⁵PRE, p. 20.
- ⁴⁶Gilbert and Kuhn, p. 453.
- ⁴⁷Gilbert and Kuhn, p. 442.

- 48 MMR, "Idiosyncracy and Technique," p. 169.
- 49 MMR, "Interview with Donald Hall," p. 273.
- 50 MMR, p. 171.
- 51 MMR, p. 173.
- 52 MMR, p. 182.
- 53 MMR, p. 185.
- 54 F. O. Matthiessen, Sarah Orne Jewett, p. 145.

CHAPTER IV

SUBJECT MATTER: "EACH WITH AN EXCELLENCE!"

On the surface, it might appear that the subject matter of Marianne Moore's poems is quite simple. Everyone knows that she writes about exotic, fantastic animals--jerboas, pangolins, dragons; or she writes about museum pieces--exquisite, too precious, but quite dead, chintz china swans or delicate Chinese masterpieces; and one must not overlook those flippant, ironic, little character sketches--the woman with looks like a scalpel, the steam roller editor, and whomever she meant when she said, "to be liked by you would be a calamity." All of these diverse materials, and more, have been incorporated into her poems. But if Miss Moore's surface subjects might be divided into animals, botanical subjects and natural descriptions, art objects, and particular human beings, I consider that her primary, pervasive subject matter is man--man with all his imperfections, his weaknesses, his pitiable foibles, but for all that, a fit subject for concern. Man is not sentimentalized by Miss Moore, any more than her animals are sentimentalized.

I agree wholeheartedly with Cleanth Brooks' statement:

The primary function, of Miss Moore's "zoo"⁷ I believe, is that of a device of indirection--that of a frame of

reference which allows the poet to say what she has to say about her world. . . . they provide the perspective¹ through which to see our (and her) finally human world.

Mr. Brooks recognizes that her animals are not "cute," not patronized, not solemn; they are witty and whimsical, but not laughed at. Miss Moore's subjects may be whimsical, but as M. L. Rosenthal comments, her aim and her feeling are not whimsical.² Mr. Rosenthal considers that the poets writing in the first third of the twentieth century had gifts of laughter and of faith in human possibility, and "poetry can be affirmative even when it cuts painfully into the bone so as to affirm the marrow."³

In the last quotation, Mr. Rosenthal was speaking generally, not specifically of Miss Moore, but Wallace Fowlie has said,

Her poetry is an extraordinary manifestation, a song of that reality by means of which man attaches himself firmly to the entire universe.⁴

He believes there is only one problem in the world--the human problem--and only one poetry--that created by man. He finds Marianne Moore's poetry "manifesting the progress of a soul, announcing in its own particular resonance the story of a life."⁵ He considers her choice of subject matter--the ordinary, the trite, and the factual--and the treatment of that subject matter, "her personal way of explaining miracles," "a world perpetually new," revealing something new about the human condition, her poetic form of knowledge.⁶ Although her esthetics reveal no metaphysical anguish, she experiences

what others discern.

It is difficult to generalize about Marianne Moore's subject matter, but since she does write about animals in a highly individual way, perhaps some further explanations would be profitable before getting into examples. Even if one read no deeper than on the surface, he could enjoy her animals, for as Delmore Schwartz says,

. . . using the enormous magnifying glass of her sensibility, she regards the animal kingdom, all the gardens of fauna and flora, including dragons, with curiosity, wonder, and delight.⁷

This curiosity, wonder, and delight is readily communicable to the reader, but I think Bette Richart made a wrong assumption when she said, "her prestige is based upon a technique inadmissible in poetry: the pathetic fallacy."⁸ I do agree with a later statement that Miss Moore's "sense of noblesse oblige is an insight into the human condition--that is to say, into the human tragedy."⁹ I do not believe that Miss Moore shows a sentimental spiritualizing of nature; there is no implicit claim that nature symbolizes self. On the contrary, there is only the power of the sensibility to "use" nature in order to discover self. In her poetry, Miss Moore is not a fabulist nor an allegorist. When she means man, she says so, as in the last three stanzas of "The Pangolin." Her animals are never symbols of man; they exhibit qualities which suggest comparisons with man, but the comparison is made by the reader. The animal is important as an animal and as an idea and is never sentimentalized. The same applies equally

to her botanical and museum subjects. This distinction--that her use of her subject matter does not constitute a pathetic fallacy--is important for a full comprehension of Marianne Moore's poetry. For further clarification, a comparison of any of Miss Moore's animals with D. H. Lawrence's "Kangaroo," for instance, might be made. With great solemnity and with a complete lack of humor, Lawrence presents an intrinsically whimsical animal, stripped of all whimsy, thereby making the reader uncomfortable and hurting his poem in the process. Miss Moore never commits this error.¹⁰

Among the dozens of Marianne Moore poems with animals for their subject are "The Jerboa," "Dock Rats," "The Plumet Basilisk," "The Frigate Pelican," "Bird Witted," "To Victor Hugo of My Crow Pluto," "Melancthon," "Elephants," "Peter," "The Fish," "The Buffalo," "The Arctic Ox," "Rigorists," "Snakes, Mongooses," "The Wood Weasel," "Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns," "See in the Midst of Fair Leaves," "To a Snail," "He 'Digesteth Harde Yron'," "The Pangolin," "The Paper Nautilus," "His Shield," "Apparition of Splendour," "Tom Fool at Jamaica," "Blue Bug," "To a Chameleon," and "A Jellyfish."

"The Pangolin" is an interesting example of Miss Moore's use of an animal as the subject. Randall Jarrell said, ". . . it is certainly one of the most moving, honest, and haunting poems that anyone has written in our century."¹¹ Although it is long, I believe it deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

Another armoured animal--scale
 lapping scale with spruce-cone regularity until they
 form the uninterrupted central
 tail-row! This near artichoke with head and legs and
 grit-equipped giz-
 zard, the night miniature artist engineer is
 Leonardo--da Vinci's replica--
 impressive animal and toiler of whom we sel-
 dom hear.
 Armour seems extra. But for him,
 the closing ear-ridge--
 or bare ear lacking even this small
 eminence and similarly safe

contracting nose and eye apertures
 impenetrably closable, are not. A true ant-eater,
 not cockroach-eater, he endures
 exhausting solitary trips through unfamiliar ground at
 night,
 returning before sunrise; stepping in the moonlight,
 on the moonlight peculiarly, that the outside
 edges of his hands may bear the weight and save
 the claws
 for digging. Serpentined about
 the tree, he draws
 away from danger unpugnaciously,
 with no sound but a harmless hiss. Keeping

the fragile grace of the Thomas-
 of-Leighton Buzzard Westminster Abbey wrought-iron
 vine, he
 rolls himself into a ball that has
 power to defy all effort to unroll it; strongly intail-
 ed, neat
 head for core, on neck not breaking off, with curled-
 in feet.

Nevertheless he has sting-proof scales; and nest
 of rocks closed with earth from inside, which he
 can thus darken.

Sun and moon and day and night and man and beast
 each with a splendour
 which man in all his vileness cannot
 set aside; each with an excellence!

"Fearful yet to be feared," the armoured
 ant-eater met by the driver-ant does not turn back, but
 engulfs what he can, the flattened sword-
 edged leafpoints on the tail and artichoke set leg-and
 body-plates
 quivering violently when it retaliates
 and swarms on him. Compact like the furled fringed
 frill
 on the hat-brim of Gargallo's hollow iron head of a
 matador, he will drop and will

then walk away
 unhurt, although if unintruded on,
 he cautiously works down the tree, helped
 by his tail. The giant-pangolin-
 tail, graceful tool, as prop or hand or broom or
 axe, tipped like
 the elephant's trunk with special skin,
 is not lost on this ant-and stone-swallowing uninjurable
 artichoke which simpletons thought a living fable
 whom the stones had nourished, whereas ants had done
 so. Pangolins are not aggressive animals; between
 dusk and day they have the measured
 tread of the machine--
 the slow frictionless creep of a thing
 made graceful by adversities, con-
 versities. To explain grace requires
 a curious hand. If that which is at all were not
 forever,
 why would those who graced the spires
 with animals and gathered there to rest, on cold
 luxurious
 low stone seats--a monk and monk and monk--between
 the thus
 ingenious roof-supports, have slaved to confuse
 grace with a kindly manner, time in which to pay
 a debt,
 the cure for sins, a graceful use
 of what are yet
 approved stone mullions branching out across
 the perpendiculars? A sailboat
 was the first machine. Pangolins, made
 for moving quietly also, are models of exactness,
 on four legs; or hind feet plantigrade;
 with certain postures of a man. Beneath sun and moon,
 man slaving
 to make his life more sweet, leaves half the flowers
 worth having,
 needing to choose wisely how to use his strength;
 a paper-maker like the wasp; a tractor of food-stuffs,
 like the ant; spidering a length
 of web from bluffs
 above a stream; in fighting, mechanicked
 like the pangolin; capsizing in
 disheartenment. Bedizened or stark
 naked, man, the self, the being we call human, writing-
 master to this world, griffons a dark
 "Like does not like like that is obnoxious"; and writes
 error with four
 r's. Among animals, one has a sense of humour.

Humour saves a few steps, it saves years. Unignorant,
modest and unemotional, and all emotion,
he has everlasting vigour
power to grow,

though there are few creatures who can make one
breathe faster and make one erecter.

Not afraid of anything is he,
and then goes cowering forth, tread paced to meet
an obstacle
at every step. Consistent with the
formula--warm blood, no gills, two pairs of hands and
a few hairs--that
is a mammal; there he sits in his own habitat,
serge-clad, strong shod. The prey of fear, he, always
curtailed, extinguished, thwarted by the dusk,
work partly done,
says to the alternating blaze,
'Again the sun!
anew each day; and new and new and new,
that comes into and steadies my soul.'

The poem begins with a minutely factual account of the giant ant-eater. Miss Moore's metaphor of the artichoke, the description of the spruce-cone regularity of the scales, as well as her matter-of-fact emphasis on the "toiler," brings the unfamiliar animal out of the realm of the exotic into the ordinary workaday world. Her phrasing, "stepping in the moonlight,/ on the moonlight peculiarly," on the outside of his feet to save his claws for digging is particularly vivid. "Armour seems extra," but it is not; the pangolin has no excess: everything about him has a purpose. He is neat; he has natural protection; he is not pugnacious; he is non-aggressive. But he is graceful, made so by "adversities, controversies." Through a little more than six stanzas, Miss Moore extolls his virtues, using calm, dignified, at times almost Biblical language and syntax--"Sun and moon and day and night and man and beast each with a splendour." Only when she

speaks of man in connection with the beast is her rhetoric ironical, especially in the transitional sixth stanza.

Miss Moore recognizes man's vileness, but he is not all vile; he has his excellence, too. Through similes, she compares him to the wasp, the ant, and the pangolin. Miss Moore accepts the basic similitude of all things. Pushing aside boundaries, categories, and classes, she looks for the essence shared by all. Somewhat like Emily Dickinson, Miss Moore recognizes that in the pain of man's fall into existence--Emerson's words--lies the measure of his freedom. In the last stanza of "The Pangolin," the poet accepts the predicament--man's mortality. This poem seems to be her humble and humorous realization that man can find his solace and his power in adjustment of mind to his situation and environment.

She has stated in prose her view of man by characteristically quoting:

Prizing Henry James, I take his worries for the most part with detachment; those of William James to myself when he says, "man's chief difference from the brutes lies in the exuberant excess of his subjective propensities. Prune his extravagance, sober him, and you undo him."¹²

In "The Pangolin" she does not undo him. She laughs at him but recognizes his saving qualities: humor, emotion, power to grow (intellect), and faith. Fearful because of his consciousness of his mortality, he yet faces each day with hope. By indirection (animals as subject matter) Miss Moore can discuss man without intruding an emotional attachment or prejudgete and can express her ideas or opinions without bringing

in personal experiences. Of course, in her typical half-revelatory way, in explaining her choice of subject matter, she makes no mention of this reason:

Why an inordinate interest in animals and athletes? They are subjects for art and exemplars of it, are they not? minding their own business. Pangolins, hornbills, pitchers, catchers, do not pry or prey--or prolong the conversation; do not make us self-conscious; look their best when caring least.¹³

Miss Moore's poems might be called descriptive-meditative, but a distinction should be made. For most descriptive-meditative poets, the object described seems secondary to the meditation: the poet changes nature, puts a meaning into it which is objectively not there. Wordsworth's "Lines Written in Early Spring" illustrates this:

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

In Miss Moore's poems, nature is unchanged: she gives no thoughts nor human emotions to the natural object, but describes the object, and then sees an analogy to some human characteristic or action, but that is all it is, an analogy. In other words, the analogy exists because of the described

object. When Miss Moore is at her best, the descriptive passages lead into the meditations, or editorializations. The animal (nature) is not transformed nor made pathetic.

Not all of Miss Moore's animal poems are serious. Some are fantastic ("To Victor Hugo of My Crow Pluto") and many are frankly playful, as in "The Wood Weasel," an inverted acrostic for her friend Hildegarde Watson:

emerges daintily, the skunk--
don't laugh--in sylvan black and white chipmunk
regalia. The inky thing
adaptively whitened with glistening
goat-fur, is wood-warden. In his
ermined well-cuttlefish-inked wool, he is
determination's totem. Out-
lawed? His sweet face and powerful feet go about
in chieftain's coat of Chilcat cloth.
He is his own protection from the moth,

noble little warrior. That
otter-skin on it, the living pole-cat,
smothers anything that stings. Well,--
this same weasel's playful and his weasel
associates are too. Only
Wood-weasels shall associate with me.

Humor and whimsy are always dominant with Miss Moore, lightening the strong strain of didacticism present in her serious poems. She cannot state a moral so baldly as does Bryant at the close of "To a Waterfowl," nor does she appeal to her audience for sympathy for herself or her subject.

Among Miss Moore's poems dealing with botanical subjects is "Roses Only," which might be construed to mean that not only for roses, but for some people too, thorns are the best part of them. Others are "The Monkey Puzzle," "Camellia Sabina," "Radical," "The Sycamore," "Rosemary," "Nevertheless,"

and "Smooth Gnarled Crape Myrtle," containing the phrase, "Art is unfortunate," which seems really to mean "deceiving," since art proposes so many things not carried out in life:

It was artifice saw
 on a patch-box pigeon-egg, room for
 fervent script, and wrote as with a bird's claw
 under the pair on the hyacinth-blue lid--'joined in
 friendship, crowned by love.'
 An aspect may deceive; as the
 elephant's columbine-tubed trunk
 held waveringly out--
 an at will heavy thing--is
 delicate.
 Art is unfortunate.

The last stanza ends

And what of
 our clasped hands that swear, 'By Peace
 Plenty; as
 by Wisdom Peace.' Alas!

Peace, plenty, wisdom, friendship, love--all conceived by art, but not realized by man.

Man is seldom benign to Miss Moore, nor is nature, as is shown by "Virginia Britannia," which is mostly concerned with the tyranny of man and nature. However, her descriptions are most lovely when she is most particular:

Narrow herring-bone-laid bricks
 a dusty pink beside the dwarf box-
 bordered pansies, share the ivy-arbor shade
 with cemetery lace settees, one at each side,
 and with the bird: box-bordered tide-
 water gigantic jet black pansies--splendour; pride--
 not for a decade
 dressed, but for a day, in over-powering velvet; and
 grey-blue-Andalusian-cock-feather pale ones,
 ink-lined on the edge, fur-
 eyed, with ochre
 on the cheek.

Miss Moore, with her compressed, hyphenated alliteration and assonance, presents a most particular picture, in contrast with a description of flowers by the eighteenth century poet, James Thompson, in The Seasons:

Along the blushing borders, bright with Dew,
 And in yon mingled Wilderness of Flowers,
 Fair-handed Spring unbosoms every Grace:
 Throws out the Snow-drop, and the Crocus first;
 The Daisy, Primrose, Violet darkly blue,
 And Polyanthus of unnumber'd Dyes

and so on through a loose metaphor of Spring and benign nature.

"Nevertheless" furnishes a good example of Miss Moore's method:

you've seen a strawberry
 that's had a struggle; yet
 was, where the fragments met,
 a hedgehog or a star-
 fish for the multitude
 of seeds. What better food
 than apple-seeds--the fruit
 within the fruit--locked in
 like counter-curved twin
 hazel nuts? Frost that kills
 the little rubber-plant-
 leaves of kok-saghyz stalks, can't
 harm the roots; they still grow
 in frozen ground. Once where
 there was a prickly-pear-
 leaf clinging to barbed wire,
 a root shot down to grow
 in earth two feet below;
 as carrots form mandrakes
 or ram's-horn root some-
 times. Victory won't come
 to me unless I go

to it; a grape-tendril
ties a knot in knots till
knotted thirty times,--so
the bound twig that's under-
gone and over-gone can't stir,

The weak overcomes its
menace, the strong over-
comes itself. What is there

like fortitude! What sap
went through that little thread
to make the cherry red!

These are not similes nor metaphors but analogies; moreover, the poet does not transform the objects: they remain as they were, a strawberry, a carrot, a cherry. The only thing controlled is the poem itself. Here Miss Moore is in firm and sure control--in form, metrics, and rhyme.

A third favorite subject--animals being the first and plants the second--is museum objects. She prefers highly sophisticated objects which contain the essence of an intense civilization. Thomas B. Brumbaugh explains it:

. . . these things with their technically superb surfaces, are implosive, inwardly possessed of a "spirit-rhythm" which makes them ethically and aesthetically valid. . . . They have a meaning as precise ideas and objects in space on one level, a density and texture at once visually exciting, and at the same time significantly related to a non-verbal, somehow visceral experience on another.¹⁴

Included among her poems about art objects are "No Swan So Fine," "Nine Nectarines," "When I Buy Pictures," "People's Surroundings," "An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle," "A Carriage from Sweden," "Novices," "Style," "Logic and 'The Magic Flute,'" "Leonardo da Vinci's," "Melchior Vulpius," and "No Better than

'a Withered Daffodil'." She often alludes to artists of different media--makers of Chinese porcelain and scrolls, various musicians, artists, and writers--indicating her appreciation of mastery of whatever sort. Miss Moore mentions Dürer in at least three poems, "The Steeple Jack," "Apparition of Splendour," and "Then the Ermine." It is not too improbable to suppose that she sees in Dürer's meticulous water-colors and engravings qualities that she strives for in her poems: technical perfection, versatility, truthfulness of detail, virtuosity, and an inner vision displayed in an economical form.

"Bowls," while not actually about a museum piece, is close enough to it to allow its discussion under that category. The contemplation of this ancient game allows Miss Moore to express in a light manner a concern over personal and social behavior. The ritual of games results from layers of generous feelings which underlie all fine human activities:

on the green
with lignum vitae balls and ivory markers,
the pins planted in wild duck formation,
and quickly dispersed--
by this survival of ancient punctilio
in the manner of Chinese lacquer-carving,
layer after layer exposed by certainty of touch and un-
hurried incision
so that only so much colour shall be revealed as is
necessary to the picture,
I learn that we are precisionists,
not citizens of Pompeii arrested in action
as a cross-section of one's correspondence would seem
to imply.
Renouncing a policy of boorish indifference
to everything that has been said since the days of
Matilda
I shall purchase an etymological dictionary of modern
English

that I may understand what is written,
and like the ant and the spider
returning from time to time to headquarters,
shall answer the question
'why do I like winter better than I like summer?'
and acknowledge that it does not make me sick
to look playwrights and poets and novelists straight in
the face--
that I feel just the same;
and I shall write to the publisher of the magazine
which will 'appear the first day of the month
and disappear before one has had time to buy it
unless one takes proper precaution',
and make an effort to please--
since he who gives quickly gives twice
in nothing so much as in a letter.

The effect of the poem is achieved by diction, arrangement of syntactical units as lines, the buoyant movement, off-hand logic, and the upsetting of mild paradoxes. There are only two long sentences: the first one establishes that men are precisionists--ceremoniously exact in observing forms; the second offers the speaker's personal commitment to the present, not rejecting the past, but reconciling it to the present. The speaker's non-conformity is established--liking winter better than summer, for instance--and although he (it is not established that the "I" is Miss Moore) appreciates painstaking creative technique--Chinese lacquer carving--he accepts the challenge of modern writers and will try to salute them promptly. Since this poem was written in 1923, it is conceivable that the irony is more bitter than it appears, since at that time most of the critics were vehemently opposing the modern writers. Since irony is an art of concealment, cues are often slight, and much of Miss Moore's irony may be over-looked. Inasmuch as there is always some

element of positive allegiance involved in her irony, often the negative element is ignored. In this poem, I think the first sentence is positive and the last sentence is negative, basing my belief on the diction of the second sentence--the ant and the spider returning to headquarters, needing an etymological dictionary to understand modern English, and the general change in tone from seriousness to flippancy.

Miss Moore's mind works delightfully, but not in a straight line; contradictorily, the men whom she admires most are those whose minds do work in a straight line, although she relishes puncturing pedantic vanity. She often writes about scientists and scientific things, since she, like Thoreau, is a gifted amateur scientist. When asked about the effect of her Bryn Mawr laboratory studies, she replied,

Precision, economy of statement, logic employed to ends that are disinterested, drawing and identifying, liberate--at least have some bearing on--the imagination, it seems to me.¹⁵

Some of her "scientific" poems are "Four Quartz Crystal Clocks," "The Staff of Aesculapius," and "The Icosasphere." When one first reads "The Icosasphere," he might question the logic of the content and framework, since the poem at first glance defies elucidation:

¹⁵In Buckinghamshire hedgerows
the birds nesting in the merged green density,
weave little bits of string and moths and feathers
and thistledown,
in parabolic concentric curves!
and, working for concavity, leave spherical feats of
rare efficiency;
whereas through lack of integration,

avid for someone's fortune,
 three were slain and ten committed perjury,
 six died, two killed themselves, and two paid fines
 for risks they'd run.

But then there is the icosasphere
 in which at last we have steel-cutting at its
 summit of economy,
 since twenty triangles conjoined, can wrap one

ball or double-rounded shell
 with almost no waste, so geometrically
 neat, it's an icosahedron. Would the engineers
 making one,
 or Mr. J. O. Jackson tell us
 how the Egyptians could have set up seventy-eight-
 foot solid granite vertically?
 We should like to know how that was done.

What connection has the series of human crimes with the nest building, the steel icosasphere, or ancient Egyptian engineering marvels? After consulting Miss Moore's notes and learning that the crimes were in connection with the Garrett-snuff-fortune claimants and that the icosasphere information was contained in a New York Times item, "Economy in the Use of Steel," the reader is no better equipped to unravel the poem than before. Knowing that Miss Moore is exact in her diction, the reader consults the poem again, and this time notices Miss Moore's connectives, "whereas," "but then," showing there is a relationship, and the key word, "integration." The nest-building birds have integration; the crimes, motivated by personal avarice, indicate selfish ir-relationship; the ancient world's feats would have been possible only through the cooperation of humans. The juxtaposition of the icosasphere and the crimes within the same stanza points up the inverse relationship between moral and scientific "progress" in our present society. The contrast

between the bird engineers and our civilization's accomplishments achieves an ironic detachment. This poem is a serious commentary on moral values with concrete objects and with no poetical clichés. Miss Moore uses no abstract words such as "upright" or "moral," but the implications are clear. The artistry of the poet relates the seemingly incongruous items through the physical form of the poem: the first and last stanzas have the same rhyme scheme, abcdcb, but the middle stanza has abacba. Often with Miss Moore, increased rhyming means increased irony, as in this poem.

A characteristic of Miss Moore's poetry is evident in this poem: her fondness for the exactness of numbers. In this case, three, ten, six, twenty, seventy-eight, all lend an aura of authenticity to the poem. In "The Steeple Jack" she mentions eight stranded whales, the seagulls one by one, in two's, in three's, a twenty-five pound lobster, four fluted columns; in "Camellia Sabina" the leaf is exactly two inches, nine lines broad, there are sixty-four million red wines, and twenty million white; in "The Plumet Basilisk" the dragon lays ten or nine eggs, the true dragon has nine sons, there are two pairs of dragons, four green tails, eight green bands, five black stripes, four-fold security; in "Nine Nectarines" she describes the nectarines arranged by two's, eight and a single one, nine peaches, four pairs. All of this exactitude may make the reader believe that he is reading a concrete poem, whereas it is usually an abstraction. When she is being most abstract, she loads her poems with a parade of minute details.

Through wit, humor, and art, she cloaks her morality, thus preserving her privacy, her need for self-protectiveness. If her poems seem difficult at first, at least they do not pall on successive readings, as more open poems frequently do, but they attain a richness and interest and give a sense of delight when the complexities are unravelled.

Miss Moore has written many poems about individuals: Molière, "The Peacock of France"; Carlyle, "Nothing Will Cure the Sick Lion but to Eat an Ape"; Dostoevsky, "In this Age of Hard Trying, Nonchalance Is Good"; Browning, "Injudicious Gardening." "Light Is Speech," about Voltaire, illustrates Miss Moore's fairly consistent use of the light metaphor:

One can say more of sunlight
than of speech; but speech
and light, each
aiding each--when French--
have not disgraced that still un-
extirpated adjective.
Yes light is speech. Free frank
impartial sunlight, moonlight,
starlight, lighthouse light,
are language. The Creach'h
d'Ouessant light-
house on its defenceless dot of
rock, is the descendant of Voltaire

whose flaming justice reached a
man already harmed;
of unarmed
Montaigne whose balance,
maintained despite the bandit's
hardness, lit remorse's saving
spark; of Emile Littré,
philology's determined,
ardent eight-volume
Hippocrates-charmed
editor. A
man on fire, a scientist of
freedoms, was firm Maximilien

Paul Emile Littré. England
 guarded by the sea,
 we with re-
 enforced Bartholdi's
 Liberty holding up her
 torch beside the port, hear France
 demand, '"Tell me the truth,
 especially when it is
 unpleasant.'" And we
 cannot but reply,
 'The word France means
 enfranchisement; means one who can
 "animate whoever thinks of her."'

Light suggests intelligence, as well as faith and life itself. Voltaire's free, curious, and lucid mind allows the poet to make an oblique approach to the true subject--truth, and through truth, freedom. The word play on the philological meaning of France contrasts ironically with Marshal Petain's words, and by implication, his deeds. But the poem makes a great deal of sense, even if one does not know that Miss Moore is quoting Petain in the last stanza.

It has already been argued in Chapter II that the most prevalent subject matter in Miss Moore's poetry is esthetics, and since many of the important poems containing her esthetics have been examined in some detail there, it will only be necessary in discussing subject matter to list briefly some additional poems dealing with esthetics: "Style," "Values in Use," "Pedantic Literalist," "To a Steam Roller," "The Sycamore," "Tell Me, Tell Me," "Combat Cultural," "No Better than 'a Withered Daffodil,'" and "Melchior Vulpius."

Love between the sexes is generally the major text for feminine poets, but such is not the case with Miss Moore.

R. P. Blackmur has discussed this matter rather thoroughly:

There is no sex anywhere in her poetry. No poet has been so chaste; but it is not the chastity that rises from an awareness--healthy or morbid--of the flesh, it is a special chastity aside from the flesh--a purity by birth and from the void. There is thus, by parallel, no contact by disgust in her work, but rather the expression of a cultivated distaste; and this is indeed appropriate, for within the context of purity disgust would be out of order.¹⁶

"Marriage" (1923) was her chaste and uncombative contribution to the readjustment of the sexes taking place in the twenties. It is more than an anthology of marriage phrases, as Miss Moore calls it.¹⁷ A long free verse poem with generally a two or four stress line, irregularly rhymed, it is a gnomic, witty, Socratic dialogue in which both sexes convict themselves. Randall Jarrell calls it "the most ironic poem, surely, written by man or woman."¹⁸ Using irony, sarcasm, satire, Miss Moore still manages to convey an underlying concern for marriage and adaptation between the sexes. Social satire, preoccupied with morality, the poem ends satirically with the wedding picture and man, puffed up with his self-importance:

'Liberty and union
now and forever';

the Book on the writing-table;
the hand in the breast-pocket.

In the whimsical "The Arctic Ox (or Goat)" Miss Moore comments on animal "marriage":

While not incapable
of courtship, they may find its
servitude and flutter, too much
like Procrustes' bed;
so some decide to stay unwed.

When Miss Moore writes of love, as she does in "Efforts of Affection" and "Voracities and Verities Sometimes are Interacting," it is not love between the sexes but is instead a love of mankind, and I am sure that

One may be pardoned, yes I know
one may, for love undying.

Sometimes Miss Moore uses places for her subjects, and true to her usual practice, these poems penetrate to essences and inner meaning. If one has read much of Marianne Moore, he could not doubt her love for Brooklyn, yet Miss Moore writes of its "freckled integrity." In "New York" she borrows a Henry James phrase for her meaning, "It is not the plunder,/ but 'accessibility to experience.''" "England," written in 1920 at the height of the "lost" generation's exodus to Europe, suggests that by accepting and building with plain American facts and speech--"which cats and dogs can read!"--one could demonstrate that "superiority has never been confined to one locality."

This brief examination reveals that Marianne Moore's subject matter amply reinforces her esthetic theories, allowing her great freedom to discuss significant content with reticence, with restraint, and with great objectivity. Her indirection--exploring abstractions through concrete objects--permits the use of concentration.

Notes for Chapter IV

¹Cleanth Brooks, "Miss Moore's Zoo," Quarterly Review, IV (1948), 178.

²M. L. Rosenthal, The Modern Poets, p. 141.

³Rosenthal, p. 7.

⁴Wallace Fowlie, "Marianne Moore," Sewanee Review, LX (Summer, 1952), 538.

⁵Fowlie, p. 539.

⁶Fowlie, p. 545.

⁷Delmore Swartz, "The Art of Marianne Moore," New Republic, CXLII (Jan. 4, 1960), 19.

⁸Bette Richart, "In the Grand Tradition," Commonweal, LXV (Dec. 28, 1956), 338.

⁹Richart, p. 339.

¹⁰Cf. Moore's "The Wood Weasel," p. 69.

¹¹Randall Jarrell, Poetry and the Age, p. 164.

¹²MMR, p. xviii.

¹³MMR, p. xvi.

¹⁴Thomas B. Brumbaugh, "Concerning Marianne Moore's Museum," Twentieth Century Literature, I (Jan., 1956), 192.

¹⁵MMR, p. 255. For the relationship between Miss Moore's notebook sketches and her poems, see The Tiger's Eye, I, i (1945-48), 22-35.

¹⁶R. P. Blackmur, The Double Agent, p. 170.

¹⁷MMR, p. xv.

¹⁸Jarrell, p. 182.

CHAPTER V

THEMES: "HE WHO STRONGLY FEELS, BEHAVES"

The truism that all the books of a poet are ultimately one applies to Marianne Moore. Many themes constantly recur in her work: "struggle, a conflict between freedom and confinement (or jeopardy); an appreciation of superior (or divergent) people and animals; a plea for understanding and brotherhood--all overlapping and interweaving with two pervasive themes, responsible individualism and interdependence between life and art. An uncompromising, but unaggressive, exponent of individualism in value and belief, she admires the quiet virtues of a principled existence. Her beliefs, though solid and sound, are not spectacular nor original, so that her esthetic problem is to present them in an original way. A cultural aristocrat, she resists a leveling mass culture, therefore her stress in her poetry of anything which individualizes. It is often difficult to distinguish within her poetry between personal conscience or poetic imagination, that is, whether her judgments are ethical or esthetic. But to distinguish between life and art, the poet must understand the resemblances between the two, and the artist, seeking a harmony under superficial irreconcilabilities, sees more resemblances than differences because she looks deeply and specifically.

Perhaps her work's essential argument is for the life of poetry itself, developing her conception of man as free to know, be, and make himself. This freedom might conflict with her religious background, hence the dichotomy between freedom and restraint.

Miss Moore's animals are always in jeopardy; therefore, they must have armor, tangible or intangible. In "The Steeple Jack" man's intangible armor seems to be faith:

It scarcely could be dangerous to be living
in a town like this, of simple people
who have a steeple-jack placing danger-signs by the church
when he is gilding the solid-
pointed star, which on a steeple
stands for hope.

The orderliness of the town, subject to the fury of the elements ("the whirlwind fife-and-drum of the storm") and the human orderliness ("One/ sees a school-house, a post-office in a/ store, fish-houses, hen-houses, a three-masted schooner on/ the stocks") only guard against danger, do not eliminate it. The church is at once a symbol of confidence and warning. Although the tone of the poem is light, the underlying mood is serious. The entire poem is a play on the theme of safety versus danger: the town versus the sea, spirituality versus life. The poet, reticent and in control of her medium, displays no personal emotion as the poem moves through the complexity of reality to the simplicity of an abstract truth. There is a rich and varied verbal texture; the observer (the poet) is a connoisseur, appreciative of color, shape, and

design of man-made and natural objects.

The theme of struggle in "The Fish" arises from the organization of imagery and rhythm around the wave-borne fish in the paradox of destruction and endurance. The sea has the power to destroy, yet the fish survive. The cliff, though injured, endures. The fish are not the central subject, but are the creators of the action which awakened the imagination. Beginning as an underwater idyll, the poem progresses to great force as a battle between land and sea and the character of each as it reacts to the conflict. A very regular little poem--1,3,9,6,8; aabbx--it is mechanically and typographically interesting, as well as being an intricate metaphor of struggle between the sea and the cliff, between the living and the non-living.

Similar in theme but contrasting in form and structure is "A Grave," written in free verse and containing many of Miss Moore's most vivid images. This poem begins whimsically, then becomes ironic and somewhat grim. The fluidity of the sea, indeed of all living things, contrasts with the rigidity of the dead, which "if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness." Oscar Cargill's assertion that this poem owes something to Rimbaud and French Symbolists' synesthesia may be slightly justified, but Miss Moore has nothing like Rimbaud's "Where giant serpents half devoured by flies/ Fall from the twisted trees with black perfume" nor his "The blue and yellow cries of phosphorous birds." This poem probably represents Miss Moore's greatest use of person-

ification, although neither "personification" nor "pathetic fallacy" exactly corresponds to Miss Moore's practice. She endows objects with a spirit, or again, an essence.

"The Hero" is concerned with inward as well as outward struggle. He is vexing (probably meaning "agitating" as well as "annoying") to most people, as Miss Moore says: "And/ Joseph was vexing to some./ Cincinnatus was; Regulus; and some of our fellow men have been." The hero is "tired but hopeful--/ hope not being hope/ until all ground for hope has vanished." The hero is "lenient, looking/ upon a fellow creature's error with the/ feelings of a mother--a/ woman or a cat." Miss Moore humanizes the hero with phrases like "natural meat," and takes away sentimentality with "or a cat." Understanding what underlies the surface, the poet warmly champions the hero as an agent of ethical and moral values. She extends the concept of the hero rather than deglamorizing or redefining it. The long o rhymes (go, so, grow, hero, fro, yellow, low, fellow, though, slow, Negro, grotto, hobo, shadow, willow, Pharaoh, Greco, know, hero) convey a somewhat sad effect.

"Nevertheless," "In Distrust of Merits," and "The Hero" are examples of struggle and bravery and, at the same time, responsible individualism. "In Distrust of Merits," a fine example of World-War-II-inspired poems, is frankly impassioned but has values beyond war-engendered emotions. It is not voluble but is eloquent from things not said. The oxymoron of the title furnishes the key to the poem. The tension between the formal external pattern of the poem and an internal

passion, the antitheses between blindness and sight, hate and love, death and life, all give strength to the poem. The illness of the world is excessive egocentrism,¹ a distrust of trust; therefore, the real nature of the struggle is not military but moral. One irony is in the high vows made under stress and the realization that such vows cannot be kept: "We/ vow, we make this promise/ to the fighting--it's a promise--'We'll never hate black, white, red, yellow, Jew,/ Gentle, Untouchable.' We are/ not competent to/ make our vows." Miss Moore makes good use of the heart-iron image, working back and forth between opposite qualities. The last stanza relates self to the world--makes self the world, and the guilt of the world, a personal guilt:

Hate-hardened heart, O heart of iron,
 iron is iron till it is rust.
 There never was a war that was
 not inward; I must
 fight till I have conquered in myself what
 causes war, but I would not believe it.
 I inwardly did nothing.
 O Iscariotlike crime!
 Beauty is everlasting
 and dust is for a time.

As we are not competent to make vows, neither are we equipped to judge the actions of others before we have waged the battle for spiritual discovery within ourselves. The final irony is contained in the final two lines. Beauty is the most enduring of armor when used; dust is each man, transitory, in relation to the lasting absolute of moral value. Although this is one of Miss Moore's most popular poems, she has expressed dissatisfaction with it:

. . . it is sincere but I wouldn't call it a poem. It's truthful; it is testimony . . . but it is haphazard⁷ as form, what has it? It is just a protest-- disjointed, exclamatory. Emotion overpowered me.²

On the other hand, "What Are Years?", also concerned with courage, meets with her approval, and is her favorite poem:

"What Are Years?" partly written in 1931 and finished in 1939 is elegiac,

The desperation attendant on moral fallibility is mitigated for me by admitting that the most willed and resolute vigilance may lapse, as with the Apostle Peter's denial that he could be capable of denial; but that failure, disgrace, and even death have now and again been redeemed into inviolateness by a sufficiently transfigured courage.³

The three stanzas of this poem are powerful statements of Miss Moore's belief in struggle and in mankind's strength when "He/ sees deep and is glad, who/ accedes to mortality." Belief is stronger than the need to survive, and one can find joy in perpetual struggle. Her two interacting images, the imprisoned bird and the enchausted sea, both integrally related to the form of the poem, reveal Miss Moore's artistry:

What is our innocence,
what is our guilt? All are
naked, none is safe. And whence
is courage: the unanswered question,
the resolute doubt,--
dumbly calling, deafly listening--that
in misfortune, even death,
encourages others
and in its defeat, stirs

the soul to be strong? He
sees deep and is glad, who
accedes to mortality
and in his imprisonment rises

upon himself as
the sea in a chasm, struggling to be
free and unable to be,
in its surrendering
finds its continuing,

So he who strongly feels,
behaves. The very bird,
grown taller as he sings, steals
his form straight up. Though he is captive
his mighty singing
says, satisfaction is a lowly
thing, how pure a thing is joy.

This is mortality,
this is eternity.

The bird triumphs over captivity, as does man, as does the sea through struggle--"in its surrendering/ finds its continuing." This poem, although frankly didactic, is redeemed because the detail centrally supports the didacticism. The feeling is contained; the poet is fully in control of her medium. Although one may be unable to explain exactly the function of form and design to the total effect of a poem, one knows that they are important to Miss Moore. In a successful poem such as this, one notes that the typography is pleasing and that the stanzaic pattern is regular: 6,6,7,9, 5,9,7,6,6; lines one-three and eight-nine rhyme, with some other incidental repetitions.

Another treatment of the antithesis between freedom and confinement is "The Jerboa," not involving, however, ideas of struggle or bravery. The natural superiority of the little desert rat allows him to triumph. This superiority is demonstrated by humility--his acceptance of limitations. In the first section, "Too Much," art is "contrived" by a "freedman"

for a prison, demonstrating the limited and restricted nature of life and art. This entire section represents material luxury, contrasting with the austerity of the final section, "Abundance." Egyptian art, while useful, was as morally wrong as Roman art because both misused natural things. The poem is a dramatic series of paradoxes; for example, the snake represents both destruction and freedom. "Abundance" reveals the jerboa, least of Pharaoh's subjects, in his freedom and self-sufficiency, superior to the Pharaoh. Although seen for himself, the jerboa represents complete self-sufficiency, the greatest armor of all for Miss Moore. Even though the outward form of the two sections is the same--5,5,6,11,10,7; aabcd (except for the heavily rhyming first stanza, aabbbb)--the general impression is quite different. "Too Much" is weighted down with opulent details, with much consonance and assonance: "or rhinoceros horn,/ the ground horn; and locust oil in stone locusts./ It was picture with a fine distance;/ of drought, and of assistance." The first section abounds in repeated p, o, and some i sounds. Altogether there are thirty-two words beginning with p, plus many more, such as hippopotami, dapple, and serpent, which have internal p's. An excerpt where the p's and o's are overwhelming is "Placed on/ the Prison of St. Angelo, this cone/ of the Pompeys which is known/ now as the Popes' passed," illustrating Miss Moore's assured use of sound for satire. "Abundance" and "Too Much" contain many combinations of masculine-feminine rhyme: fur-danger, toe-burrow, theirs-

onigers, give-native, set-flageolet. "Abundance" has lighter vowel sounds, mostly a as in rat and e as in free. About the only line in "Abundance" which uses alliteration is "the fur on the back/ is buff-brown like the breast of the fawn-breasted bower-bird." The easy, light verse characterizes the animal's freedom.

"Silence," one of Miss Moore's best known poems about superior people, is in unrhymed free verse, with varying number of stresses per line, and with no syllabic count regularity. Its sedate rhythm helps to illustrate the general principle of conduct which the poem emphasizes, the continuity of speech and behavior among superior people: they are interested, resourceful, considerate, and do not need to be fussed over. The poet makes effective use of the epigrammatic anecdote.

My father used to say
 'Superior people never make long visits,
 have to be shown Longfellow's grave
 or the glass flowers at Harvard.
 Self-reliant like the cat--
 that takes its prey to privacy,
 the mouse's limp tail hanging like a shoelace from its
 mouth--
 they sometimes enjoy solitude,
 and can be robbed of speech
 by speech which has delighted them.
 The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence;
 not in silence, but restraint.'
 Nor was he insincere in saying, 'Make my house your inn'.
 Inns are not residences.

This understated 1924 poem always seems fresh and serves to demonstrate how Miss Moore can take two prosaic statements by Miss A. M. Homans and Edmund Burke, use her imagination as a

catalyst, and transform them into poetry. The simile "like a shoelace" gives innocence to the cat's action and takes away offense from the comparison of superior people to a cat with a mouse. The conventional attitudes toward solitude and intimacy are effectively upset.

A fairly late poem, "Tom Fool at Jamaica" (1953), altogether different in form and subject matter from "Silence," contains a similar point: there is a kind of moral excellence underlying superiority of action or performance--in this case, that of a race horse. But the horse, not the race, is important, so that victory or defeat becomes actually irrelevant. A gay little poem, unhindered by moral clichés, the tone and typography determine each other:

Look at Jonah embarking from Joppa, deterred by
the whale; hard going for a statesman whom nothing could
detain,

although one who would not rather die than repent.

Be infallible at your peril, for your system will fail,
and select as a model the schoolboy in Spain
who at the age of six, portrayed a mule and jockey
who had pulled up for a snail.

"There is submerged magnificence, as Victor Hugo
said." Sentir avec ardeur; that's it; magnetized by
feeling.

Tom Fool "makes an effort and makes it oftener
than the rest"--out on April first, a day of some
significance

in the ambiguous sense--the smiling

Master Atkinson's choice, with that mark of a champion,
the extra

spurt when needed. Yes, yes. "Chance

is a regrettable impurity"; like Tom Fool's
left white hind foot--an unconformity; though judging by
results, a kind of cottontail to give him confidence.

Up in the cupola comparing speeds, Signor Capossela
keeps his head.

"It's tough," he said; "but I get 'em; and why shouldn't I?

I'm relaxed, I'm confident, and I don't bet." Sensational. He does not bet on his animated

valentines--his pink and black-striped, sashed or dotted silks.

Tom Fool is "a handy horse," with a chiseled foot. You've the beat
of a dancer to a measure or harmonious rush
of a porpoise at the prow where the racers all win easily--

like centaurs' legs in tune, as when kettledrums compete;
nose rigid and suede nostrils spread, a light left hand on the rein, till
well--this is a rhapsody.

Of course, speaking of champions, there was Fats Waller with the feather touch, giraffe eyes, and that hand alighting in

Ain't Misbehavin'? Ozzie Smith and Eubie Blake ennable the atmosphere; you recall the Lippizan school;

the time Ted Atkinson charged by on Tiger Skin--
no pursuers in sight--cat-loping along. And you may have seen a monkey
on a greyhound. "But Tom Fool. . . ."

In her notes Miss Moore devotes three and a half pages to "Tom Fool," including a reproduction of the Spanish schoolboy's drawing, the French song Sentir Avec Ardeur by Madame Boufflers, credit to a minister for a quotation, various accounts from the New York Times which inspired the poem, a relation of a joke on herself, credit given to I Ching or Book of Changes, and identifications of the Negro musicians. Halfway through the composition of "Tom Fool," Miss Moore became worried. Deplored gambling and never having seen a horse race, she received an award from Youth United for a Better Tomorrow, and feared that her poem might be construed as an endorsement of gambling. She was rescued, however, by a New York Times column by Joseph C. Nichols about Frederic Capossela,

the announcer at Belmont Park, who said that he never bet. The incorporation of this information relieved her dilemma.

Marie Borroff calls "Tom Fool" one of Miss Moore's finest poems. Her explanation of it is quite interesting: The example of Jonah, acting in direct and systematic opposition to God, is to be avoided. Lines two and three indicate a mocking detachment rather than solemn indignation. Line four is the pivotal line, since the horse and jockey in the drawing represent the power of adaptation as against obstinate self-righteousness--an imaginative flexibility. Stanza two praises a kind of rightness of action, a self-effacing response to need, showing an inward ardor of feeling that is magnificent. Stanza four is the peak, with the race down the stretch "a rhapsody," the order of art, ardent and ecstatic spirit, "magnetized by feeling." The true subject is not the horse, but an abstraction, a moral excellence which underlies superiority of action or performance.⁵

This interdependence of life and art, as illustrated in "Tom Fool," is pervasive throughout Miss Moore's poems, although to varying degrees. "The Buffalo," one of her most successful expositions of this theme, stresses the appreciation of nature, assisted by art. The poet assumes that the reader knows that the American buffalo is really a bison, calls for progressively more specific knowledge of the ox, and for an acquaintance with paintings, illustrations, and reproductions of the ox family. Miss Moore's off-hand comparisons screen a quest for values, survival, and dignified adaptive-

ness. The bison is unadaptable and faces extinction; the buffalo is adaptable and thrives. The Indian buffalo--prudent, watchful, pliable, useful, but potentially ferocious--is superior; although common, he is an individualist, capable of survival because of his dignified adaptiveness to man.

"Values in Use," "Enough: Jamestown, 1607-1957," "Leonardo da Vinci's" (all from O To Be a Dragon, 1959) and "The Octopus" show detachment and indicate a strenuous seriousness about this over-all theme.

For the last twenty years Miss Moore has been quite direct in her pleas for brotherhood and understanding. Often abandoning her surface humor, she reveals her latent seriousness. Readers who have been puzzled by her early poems should have no difficulty with her directness, but of course, many of the critics regret her loss of detachment. In "'Keeping Their World Large'" (1944) her sense of personal involvement is very strong:

They fought the enemy, we fight
fat living and self-pity. Shine, O shine
unfalsifying sun, on this sick scene,

Musing about the beauties of Italy, the poet sees "that forest of white crosses; the/ vision makes us faint. My eyes won't close to it." Then the poet recalls Isaac, the sacrifice, but the soldiers have no sacrificial substitute. A serious subject treated lightly is "Rescue with Yul Brynner." Yul Brynner, appointed special consultant to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1959-1960, seemed "Odd--a reporter

with guitar--a puzzle./ Mysterious Yul did not come to dazzle./ Magic bird with multiple tongue--/ five tongues--," "Yul can sing--twin of an enchantress--," "did not smile; came by air;/ did not have to come," and "His deliberate pace/ is a king's however. 'You'll have plenty of space.'/ Yule-- Yul log for Christmas-fire tale-spinner--/ of fairy tales that can come true: Yul Brynner."⁶

Besides "The Pangolin," previously discussed, Miss Moore has written many poems similar to it where she discusses man specifically, although all her poems implicitly, with more or less seriousness, have this major concern. In a very short poem, "See in the Midst of Fair Leaves," man, a "monster," is explicitly present:

and much fruit, the swan--
one line of the mathematician's
sign greater-than drawn
to an apex where the lake is
met by the weight on it; or an angel
standing in the sun; how well
armed, how manly;

and promenading
in sloughs of despond, a monster,
man when human nothing
more, grown to immaturity,
punishing debtors, seeking his due as
an arrow turned inward has
no chance of peace,

This is Miss Moore's most scathing indictment of man, unrelieved by humor; only her art intervenes. Through her source, Daniel IV, one realizes that man is a monster, like Nebuchadnezzar, until understanding returns to him and he praises and honors God. Through imagery and form, Miss Moore makes her

preaching palatable. The two stanzas have a syllabic pattern of 5,8,5,8,10,7,4; and the rhyme scheme is ababccx in the first stanza, but only lines one-three and five-six rhyme in the second. The tree ("leaves" and "fruit") is both the abundance of the natural world and the growth of man's power until he feels so powerful that he challenges or ignores the power of God. The swan, the mathematical symbol "greater than," represents abundance also, and its reflection in the lake symbolizes the interaction of nature and art. The bird partakes of all three orders of creation: beast, man, and angel. The poet attributes the fall of man to selfhood--man "grown to immaturity" wastes the life forces by asserting the powers of self alone: "punishing debtors, seeking his due." The entire poem is one sentence, perhaps indicating the indivisibility of angel, man, and monster in the human spirit.

Marianne Moore has always championed the heart in her poetry, although seldom so obviously as in one of her earliest poems, the uncollected "That Harp You Play So Well":

O David, if I had
Your power, I should be glad--
 In harping, with the sling,
 In patient reasoning!

Blake, Homer, Job, and you,
Have made old wine-skins new
 Your energies have wrought
 Stout continents of thought.

But, David, if the heart
Be brass, what boots the art
 Of exorcising wrong,
 Of harping to a song?

The sceptre and the ring
 And every royal thing
 Will fail. Grief's lustiness
 Must cure the harp's distress.⁸

This is an honest poem, a justified treatment of the subject, with no hysterics, no editorializing, and no digressions, but the technique must have been too transparent for Miss Moore, since she has never chosen to collect it. The demanding Miss Moore, especially during the years when she was making her reputation, required her poems to be impersonal, coolly detached.

"To Military Progress," written in the same year (1915), also champions the heart, but Miss Moore has seen fit to collect it three times, in Observations, Selected Poems, and Collected Poems:

You use your mind
 Like a millstone to grind
 Chaff.

You polish it
 And with your warped wit
 Laugh.

At your torso,
 Prostrate where the crow
 Falls
 On such faint hearts
 As its god imparts
 Calls

And claps its wings
 Till the tumult brings
 More
 Black minute-men
 To revive again,
 War

At little cost.
 They cry for the lost
 Head

And seek their prize
Till the evening sky's
Red.

The direct, mostly monosyllabic diction contrasts with the indirection of the poem, lending an impressionistic effect. The stanzaic pattern is also direct: 4,5,1,4,5,1; aabccb. The head, separated from the heart, causes war. This very stylized treatment, while not nearly so complex, reminds one, in theme not treatment, of John Crowe Ransom's "The Painted Head," since both poems show a concern for the disastrous separation of head and heart.

An early poem which supports individualism is "Peter," which ostensibly recognizes the need for the cat to be a cat, but also makes an effective plea for individualism: "one must do as/ well as one can for himself," "When one is frank, one's very/ presence is a compliment."

"Melanchthon," a more thoughtful poem with more far-reaching implications, is a discussion of the relationship between external and spiritual poise. Although the poem was titled "Black Earth" in Poems, Observations, and Selected Poems, Miss Moore chose to use the Greek translation as a title in Collected Poems, perhaps borrowing from Gertrude Stein, whose short story, "Melanchthon," about a Negro girl, was published in 1922. Or perhaps both women were inspired by Philipp Melanchthon, the German Lutheran reformer, who believed that human effort cooperates with divine grace in the salvation of the soul. At any rate, this poem marks the first and only time that one of Miss Moore's animals is the

"I" of the poem. The elephant's skin implicitly symbolizes the protective power of both personal insights and traditional wisdom. Individuality occurs when past experiences combine with fresh feeling. The "patina of circumstance," not given but deposited, teaches one to cope with future circumstances, protects one in different circumstances, and teaches one how to behave. The comparison of the elephant's skin to the earth, cut into checkers, imparts an earthy quality. The simplification of a human being into the "wandlike body," without roots, "accustomed to shout/ its own thoughts to itself like a shell," "the I of each/ a kind of fretful speech," implies a world of root-less, neurotic, egotists incapable of life relationships.

A late poem, "Blessed Is the Man," written for the Columbia Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa 1956 Class Day exercises, shows Miss Moore as still the rebel:

who does not sit in the seat of the scoffer--
 the man who does not denigrate, deprecate, denunciate;
 who is not "characteristically intemperate,"
 who does not "excuse, retreat, equivocate; and will be
 heard."

(Ah, Giorgione! there are those who mongrelize
 and those who heighten anything they touch; although
 it may well be
 that if Giorgione's self-portrait were not said to
 be he,
 it might not take my fancy, Blessed the geniuses who know
 that egomania is not a duty.)

"Diversity, controversy; tolerance"--in that "citadel
 of learning" we have a fort that ought to armor us
 well.

Blessed is the man who "takes the risk of a decision--
 asks

himself the question: "Would it solve the problem?
 Is it right as I see it? Is it in the best interests
 of all?"

Alas. Ulysses' companions are now political--
living self-indulgently until the moral sense is drowned,

having lost all power of comparison,
thinking license emancipates one, "slaves whom they
themselves have bound."

Brazen authors, downright soiled and downright
spoiled, as if sound
and exceptional, are the old quasi-modish counterfeit,
mitin-proofing conscience against character.

Affronted by "private lies and public shame," blessed
is the author

Who favors what the supercilious do not favor--
who will not comply. Blessed, the unaccommodating man.

Blessed the man whose faith is different
from possessiveness--of a kind not framed by "things
which do appear"--

who will not visualize defeat, too intent to cower:
whose illumined eye has seen the shaft that gilds the
sultan's tower.

Responsible individualism implies abnegation and self-discipline; Miss Moore emphatically rejects the effete. She cannot believe in compromise; the exponent of individualism is always alone, a taker of unpopular stands, a poet at odds with society.

Mr. Warlow thinks that Miss Moore's poetry rests on a stabilizing attitude toward life, that her devoutness is a focus of her life.¹⁰ As one must accept Hopkins' Catholicism, perhaps one needs to accept Miss Moore's American Protestantism. There is not the anguish of Hopkins or of Emily Dickinson in Miss Moore's poetry, however--no denial, no quarrelling, or eventual victory. On the other hand, Marianne Moore's use of light as spirit, illuminating truth, faith, or even life itself, does indicate her belief in an abiding unity and source of all things. "Sun" offers a good example:

"No man may him hyde
 From Deth holow-eyed";
 For us, this inconvenient truth does not suffice.
 You are not male or female, but a plan
 deep-set within the heart of man.
 Splendid with splendor hid you come, from your Arab abode,
 a fiery topaz smothered in the hand of a great prince
 who rode
 before you, Sun--whom you outran,
 piercing his caravan.

O Sun, you shall stay
 with us, Holiday
 and day of wrath shall be one, wound in a device
 of Moorish gorgeousness, round glasses spun
 to flame as hemispheres of one
 great hour-glass dwindling to a stem. Consume hostility;
 employ your weapon in this meeting-place of surging
 enmity!
 Insurgent feet shall not outrun
 multiplied flames, O Sun.¹¹

This poem is remarkable for its sensuous treatment of an abstraction, the ineffable experience of death.

If faith were easy, very likely Miss Moore would reject it. She has stated that it is her belief that science and religion do not contradict, that religion must, first of all, result in self-discipline, that belief in God is not easy, but that this "hardness" of belief makes it more worthwhile to attain.¹²

Miss Moore's themes--responsible individualism, the interdependence of life and art, freedom, jeopardy, struggle, bravery, brotherhood--are really only extensions of her esthetic theories. Her subject matter allows her to observe life, human and non-human, to analyze manners and customs, while her themes allow her not only to give a picture of human life, but also to give an interpretation of human experience.

Notes for Chapter V

¹Solipsism, of course, is a recurrent theme in modern poetry. Cf. Allen Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead" and Ransom's "The Painted Head."

²MMR, p. 261.

³This Is My Best, ed. Whit Burnett, p. 645,

⁴MMR.

⁵Marie Borroff, "'Tom Fool at Jamaica' by Marianne Moore: Meaning and Structure," College English, XVII (May, 1956), 466-69.

⁶MMR.

⁷What Are Years.

⁸Poetry, VI (May, 1915), 70.

⁹MMR.

¹⁰Warlow, p. 3.

¹¹MMR.

¹²"Religion and the Intellectuals," Partisan Review, XVII (Feb., 1950), 137-38.

CHAPTER VI

REVISIONS: CONCENTRATION, PRECISION, AND GUSTO

One of the most convincing arguments that Marianne Moore does not belong to the "spontaneous" school of writing lies in her revisions. As an example of her meticulousness, she spent nine years on her translations of Fables of La Fontaine, making four complete revisions and innumerable partial ones, since she insisted that her translations not only be faithful to the original French meanings but also be acceptable poetry in English.¹ This same painstaking care is lavished on her original poems. Never carelessly written in the first place, through successive publications they reveal Miss Moore's artful manipulations of poetic forms--her own forms of course--to secure the exact shade of meaning, the particular emphasis desired. Much of the minor revision, consisting of slight word or punctuation changes, corrects faulty syntax or logic and might never be noticed by the casual reader. On the other hand, her wholesale deletions seem to demonstrate an adherence to her rules for concentration, precision, and gusto--compression, exactness, and style.

Miss Moore's inordinate listing of the minutiae of scientific fact, while fascinating, does tend to obscure the major form or basic idea of a poem, and her long descriptions

sometimes have misled critics into labeling her a descriptive" poet. Recognizing her own faults, Miss Moore has stated, ". . . for most defects, to delete is the instantaneous cure."² As is to be expected, it is mostly her long poems that are "cured" in such a manner. The cure is nearly always successful, but "An Octopus" (1924) may be regarded as an exception. Containing 228 lines of free verse in Observations, it was cut to 186 lines in Selected Poems and thereafter; nevertheless, the deletion of the thirty-two consecutive lines did not improve the poem measureably. It needs more variety of form, perhaps verse paragraphs and indentations. Such an extension of free verse without division is not inviting to the eye, and one becomes lost in the maze of details, although the poem is not utterly devoid of charms. Repeated readings disclose that the satire is effective: the unegotistic action of the glacier is opposed to man's egocentrism, and man is put into perspective before the grandeur of nature. Miss Moore has a line in "New York," "to go in is to be lost," but the reverse is true in "An Octopus." If one "goes in" deeply enough, he can discover a unity.

Although Miss Moore has not published any free verse since about 1929, she has continued to collect her early free verse. As late as 1961 in A Marianne Moore Reader, she retained three of the Observations free verse, "New York," "A Grave," and "Marriage." Significantly, the first two are short, and the third, although long, has great pictorial interest because of the shortness of the lines and some inden-

tations and divisions.

A poem whose deletions illustrate Miss Moore's independence is "Nine Nectarines," cut almost in half from Selected Poems to Collected Poems. As it appeared in the first collection, it had eight eleven-line stanzas and was titled, as in its first publication in Poetry magazine, "Nine Nectarines and Other Porcelain." R. P. Blackmur noted that the poem had a "maddening" rhyme, which grows on one.³ In the last distich of each stanza, the penultimate syllable of the first line rhymes with the ultimate syllable of the next. As he pointed out, most of the rhymes are so delicate that one would not notice them were it not for the fourth stanza's heavier rhyme: "a bat is winging. It/ is a moonlight scene, bringing." The Selected Poems version illustrates this. The parts which are omitted in Collected Poems are indicated by brackets.

Arranged by two's as peaches are,
at intervals that all may live--
eight and a single one, on twigs that
grew the year before--they look like
a derivative;
although not uncommonly
the opposite is seen--
nine peaches on a nectarine.

Fuzzless through slender crescent leaves
of green or blue--or both,
in the Chinese style--the four

pairs' half-moon leaf-mosaic turns
out to the sun the sprinkled blush
of puce-American-Beauty pink
applied to beeswax gray by the
unenquiring brush
of mercantile bookbinding.

Like the peach Yu, the red-
cheeked peach which cannot aid the dead,
but eaten in time prevents death,
the Italian peach-
nut, persian plum, Ispahan

secluded wall-grown nectarine,
as wild spontaneous fruit was
found in China first. But was it wild?
Prudent de Candolle would not say.

✓ We cannot find flaws⁷⁴
in this emblematic group
of nine, with leaf window
unquilted by curculio--
which someone once depicted on
this much-mended plate; or
in the also accurate

uantlered moose, or Iceland horse,
or ass, asleep against the old
thick, low-leaning nectarine that is the
colour of the shrub-tree's brownish
flower. ✓ From manifold
small boughs, productive as the
magic willow that grew
above the mother's grave and threw
on Cinderella what she wished,
a bat is winging. It
is a moonlight scene, bringing

the animal so near, its eyes
are separate from the face--mere
delicately drawn gray discs, out from
itself in space, Imperial
happiness lives here
on the peaches of long life
that make it permanent.

A fungus could have meant
long life; a crane, a stork, a dove.
China, with flowers and birds
and half-beasts, became the land

of the best china-making first.
Hunts and domestic scenes occur
in France on dinner-plates, signed on the
back with a two-finned fish; England
has an officer
in jack-boots seated in a
bosquet, the cow, the flock
of sheep, the pheasant, the peacock
sweeping near with lifted claw; the
skilled peonian rose
and the rosebud that began

with William Billingsley (once poor,
like a monkey on a dolphin, tossed
by Ocean, mighty monster) until
Josiah Spode adopted him.
Yet with the gold-glossed

serpent handles, are there green
cocks with 'brown beaks and cheeks
and dark blue combs' and mammal freaks
that, like the Chinese Certainties
and sets of Precious Things,
dare to be conspicuous?

[Theirs is a race that]⁵ 'understands
the spirit of the wilderness'
and the nectarine-loving kylin
of pony appearance--the long-
tailed or the tailless
small cinnamon-brown common
camel-haired unicorn
with antelope feet and no horn,
here enamelled on porcelain,
It was a Chinese who
imagined this masterpiece.

Perhaps Miss Moore did not care for the public to discover her method, for in Collected Poems she omitted the bat which Mr. Blackmur admired, and rearranged the rhyming throughout to conventional end rhyme, as shown by one distich:

It was a Chinese
who imagined this masterpiece.

When Miss Moore dismembers a patterned poem, she leaves the scars, a row of dots across the page, showing, in this case, the deletion of three and a half stanzas. The title was shortened, since she had removed the "other porcelain." Seemingly uninfluenced by critics' praise or blame, Miss Moore goes her independent way, apparently intent only on pleasing her own exacting standards.

Often one must pay a price for being an individualist--in uncertainty of direction or in lack of a sense of development. Many of her early poems are as good as anything she has ever written, and she has seen no need to revise them

through successive collections. Of the thirty-four Observations poems included in Collected Poems, fifteen were unchanged, five others received only typographical changes, one had a title change, and two others had only a one word change. The remaining ones were revised extensively. Some few of her poems never seem to satisfy her completely, and she "tinkers" with them through successive publications.

The collective poem, "Part of a Novel, Part of a Poem, Part of a Play," which won the Levinson prize in 1932, is one such poem. In its entirety it included "The Steeple Jack," "The Student," and "The Hero." Retaining the title in the 1935 Selected Poems, Miss Moore dropped "The Student" except for a bare mention in the eleventh stanza, although it reappeared, completely rewritten as a separate poem, in What Are Years (1941) but has not been collected since. "The Hero" remained intact through Selected Poems and Collected Poems but was omitted in A Marianne Moore Reader. The collective title has not been used since Selected Poems.

"The Steeple Jack," originally containing thirteen stanzas, has had extensive revisions. In Selected Poems it lost the sixth stanza, a listing of flowers and plants, and the seventh was reworded to accommodate the elision. In Collected Poems the revision was more extreme: half of the fourth stanza and all of stanzas five, six, seven, eight, and nine were omitted, and the thirteenth was reworded. This change, from a thirteen-stanza poem to a seven-and-a-half one, is perfectly in harmony with her desire for precision and concentration.

However, in A Marianne Moore Reader Miss Moore restored "The Steeple Jack" to its original Poetry form, denoting a puzzling indecision. The following is from the Reader (the same as in Poetry), with the parts omitted in Collected Poems indicated by brackets and by asterisks for omissions in Selected Poems:

Dürer would have seen a reason for living
 in a town like this, with eight stranded whales
 to look at; with the sweet sea air coming into your house
 on a fine day, from water etched
 with waves as formal as the scales
 on a fish.

One by one, in two's, in three's, the seagulls keep
 flying back and forth over the town clock,
 or sailing around the lighthouse without moving the wings--
 rising steadily with a slight
 quiver of the body--or flock
 mewing where

a sea the purple of the peacock's neck is
 paled to greenish azure as Dürer changed
 the pine green of the Tyrol to peacock blue and guinea
 grey. You can see a twenty-five
 pound lobster; and fishnets arranged
 to dry. The

whirlwind fife-and-drum of the storm bends the salt
 marsh grass, disturbs stars in the sky and the
 star on the steeple; it is a privilege to see so
 much confusion, / Disguised by what
 might seem austerity, the sea-
 side flowers and

trees are favored by the fog so that you have
 the tropics at first hand: the trumpet-vine,
 fox-glove, giant snap-dragon, a salpaglossis that has
 spots and stripes; morning-glories, gourds,
 or moon-vines trained on fishing-twine
 at the back

door; *cat-tail, flags, blueberries and spiderwort,
 striped grass, lichens, sunflowers, asters, daisies--
 the yellow and the crab-claw blue ones with green bracts--
 toad-plant,
 petunias, ferns; pink lilies, blue
 ones, tigers; poppies; black sweet-peas.
 The climate

is not right for the *banyan, frangipan, the⁶
 jack-fruit tree; nor for exotic serpent
 life. Ring lizard and snake-skin for the foot if you
 see fit,
 but here they've cats not cobras to
 keep down the rats. The diffident
 little newt

with white pin-dots on black horizontal spaced
 out bands lives here; yet there is nothing that
 ambition can buy or take away. The college student
 named Ambrose sits on the hill-side
 with his not-native books and hat
 and sees boats

at sea progress white and rigid as if in
 a groove. Liking an elegance of which
 the source is not bravado, he knows by heart the antique
 sugar-bowl shaped summer-house of
 interlacing slats, and the pitch
 of the church

spire, not true, from which a man in scarlet lets
 down a rope as a spider spins a thread;⁷
 he might be part of a novel, but on the sidewalk a
 sign says C. J. Poole, Steeple-Jack,
 in black and white; and one in red
 and white says

Danger. The church portico has four fluted
 columns, each a single piece of stone, made
 modester by white-wash. This would be a fit haven for
 waifs, children, animals, prisoner,
 and presidents who have repaid
 sin-driven

senators by not thinking about them. There
 are a school-house, a post-office in a
 store, fish-houses, hen-houses, a three-masted schooner on
 the stocks. The hero, the student,
 the steeple-jack, each in his way,
 is at home.

It could not⁸ be dangerous to be living
 in a town like this, of simple people,
 who have a steeple-jack placing danger signs by the church
 while he is gilding the solid-
 pointed star, which on a steeple
 stands for hope.

Miss Moore probably made a mistake in reviving the Poetry ver-

sion of "The Steeple Jack." No one would question her powers of description, but the steeple jack is lost, or nearly so, in her digressions about the plants and Ambrose, the student, with his "not-native books and hat," intriguing as the phrase is.

"The Student" involves a more intricate method of revision than mere deletion. She shortened it, true enough, from fifteen four-line stanzas to seven seven-line stanzas, but compression of ideas, instead of bodily lifting lines, was employed. Miss Moore also softened her criticism. An idea in the last stanza of the Poetry version,

Boasting provokes jibes, and in this country we've no
cause to boast; we are
as a nation perhaps, undergraduates not students

is incorporated in the third stanza of What Are Years

It may be that we
have not knowledge, just opinions, that we
are undergraduates,
not students

retaining the criticism, but softening it somewhat. In the first version she says, "There is vitality in the world of sport./ If it is not the tree of knowledge, it's the tree of life," She leaves out all reference to athletes in What Are Years. But one idea she stresses in both versions is that the student is reserved, "not because he/ has no feeling but because he has so much." In the second version, it would appear that she was moving away from the long line, of which

she has always been fond. Although she has no more rhyme than in the first version, it is lighter: cf. knowledge-college; word-heard; say-resumé; not-lot; sixteen-lean; taught-caught; Dynamite-white; brown-down; big-pig; might-fright; such-much; advance-France, in the first version, with we-unnecessary; undergraduates-expatriates; Goldsmith-with; variety-by; surliness-less, in What Are Years. Her metaphor of the twin trees underwent a major semantic change. In the Poetry version the twin trees are tree-of-knowledge, tree-of-life, but in What Are Years the school is both a tree of knowledge and of liberty. She has made it "the singing tree of which/ the leaves were mouths singing in concert" which is a more particular image than "a pair of fruit trees."

Another major poem which has undergone radical cutting is "He 'Digesteth Harde Yron'," from What Are Years to Collected Poems, from eleven eight-line stanzas to eight and a half seven-line stanzas:

although the aepyornis
or roc that lived in Madagascar, and
the moa are extinct,
the camel-sparrow, linked
with them in size--the large sparrow
Xenophon saw walking by
a stream--was and is
a symbol of justice.

This bird watches his chicks with
a maternal concentration, / after
he has sat on the eggs
at night six weeks, / his legs
their only weapon of defense.
He is swifter than a horse;
he has a foot hard
as a hoof; the leopard

is not more suspicious. How
 could he, prized for plumes and eggs and young, used
 even as a riding-
 beast, respect men hiding
 actorlike in ostrich-skins, with
 the right hand making the neck move
 as if alive and
 from a bag the left hand

strewing grain, that ostriches
 might be decoyed and killed! Yes this is he
 whose plume was anciently
 the plume of justice; he
 whose comic duckling head on its
 great neck, revolves with compass-
 needle nervousness,
 when he stands guard, the S-

like foragings as he is
 preening the down on his leaden-skinned back.
 The egg piously shown
 as Leda's very own
 from which Castor and Pollux hatched,
 was an ostrich-egg. And what
 could have been more fit
 for the Chinese lawn it

grazed on, as a gift to an
 emperor who admired strange birds, than this
 one who builds his mud-made
 nest in dust yet will wade
 in lake or sea till only the
 head shows. / A nervous restless
 bird that flees at sight
 of danger, he feigns flight

to save his chicks, decoying
 his decoyers; never known to hide his
 head in sand, yet lagging
 when he must, and dragging
 an as-if-wounded wing. The friend
 of hippotigers and wild
 asses, it is as
 though schooled by them he was

the best of the unflying
 pegasi, since the Greeks "caught a few wild
 asses but no ostrich;"
 quadrupedlike bird which
 flies on feet not wings,--his moth-silk
 plumage wilted by his speed;
 mobile wings and tail
 behaving as a sail. /

Six hundred ostrich-brains served
at one banquet, the ostrich-plume-tipped tent
and desert spear, jewel-
gorgeous ugly egg-shell
goblets, eight pairs of ostriches
in harness, dramatize a
meaning always missed
by the externalist.

The power of the visible
is the invisible; as even where
no tree of freedom grows,
so-called brute courage knows.
Heroism is exhausting, yet
it contradicts a greed that
did not wisely spare
the harmless solitaire

or great auk in its grandeur;
unsolicitude having swallowed up
all giant birds but an
alert gargantuan
little-winged, magnificently
speedy running-bird. This one
remaining rebel
is the sparrow-camel.

The two-and-a-third stanzas which were omitted obscured the point she was making--endorsement of responsible individualism. She appreciates divergent animals; and although she approves of the ostrich's family protectiveness, stanza two had already established that fact. The details included in the excised eighth stanza tend to blur the contrast between the misuse of the ostrich in an effete, opulent civilization and the natural strength and rebellious qualities of the bird which contributed to his survival. This poem and "The Jerboa" have like themes but contrasting presentations. The subdivisions of "The Jerboa" give a clue to the theme, and the treatment is light and whimsical, but "He 'Digesteth Harde Yron'" is wholly ironic, with the irony made more apparent

by the deletions. The typography of the poem was also changed, as one stanza will demonstrate, since all the stanzas have like indentations:

Although the aepyornis
or roc that lived in Madagascar, and
the moa are extinct,
the camel-sparrow, linked
with them in size--the large sparrow
Xenophon saw walking by the stream--was and is
a symbol of justice.

There is no more rhyming than before and no word change; only lines six and seven are combined to form the new line six.

Another poem drastically cut from Selected Poems to Collected Poems is "The Frigate Pelican," from twelve to five-and-a-half stanzas. Again championing the individual, Miss Moore probably felt that the description of the jungle as seen by the soaring bird obscured the theme. A definite pattern of eliminating pure description which contributes little to the poem may be observed:

Rapidly cruising or lying on the air there is a bird
that realizes Rasselass's friend's project
of wings uniting levity with strength. This
hell-diver, frigate-bird, hurricane-
bird; unless swift is the proper word
for him, the storm omen when
he flies close to the waves, should be seen
fishing, although oftener
he appears to prefer

to take, on the wing, from industrious cruder-winged
species
a fish they have caught, and is seldom successless.
A marvel of grace, no matter how fast his
victim may fly or how often may
turn, ¹⁰ the dishonest pelican's ease

in pursuit, bear him away
 with the fish that the badgered bird drops.
 A kind of superlative
 swallow, that likes to live

on food caught while flying, he is not a pelican. The toe
 with slight web, air-boned body, and very long wings
 with the spread of a swan's--duplicating a
 bow-string as he floats overhead--feel
 the changing V-shaped scissor swallow-
 tail direct the rigid keel.

And steering beak to windward always,
 the fleetest foremost fairy
 among birds, outflies the

aeroplane which cannot flap its wings nor alter any
 quill-

tip. For him, the feeling in a hand, in fins, is
 in his unbent downbent crafty oar. With him
 other pelicans aimlessly soar
 as he does; separating, until
 not flapping they rise once more,
 closing in without looking and move
 outward again⁷¹¹ to the top
 of the circle and stop

and blow back, allowing the wind to reverse their
 direction.

This is not the⁷¹² stalwart swan that can ferry the
 woodcutter's two children home₇; no₇. Make hay; keep
 the shop; I have one sheep; were a less
 limber animal's mottoes. This one
 finds sticks for the swan's-down dress
 of his child to rest upon and would
 not know Gretel from Hansel.
 As impassioned Handel--

meant for a lawyer and a masculine German domestic
 career--clandestinely studied the harpsichord
 and never was known to have fallen in love,
 the unconfiding frigate-bird hides
 in the height and in the majestic
 display of his art. He glides
 a hundred feet or quivers about
 as charred paper behaves--full
 of feints; and an eagle

of vigilance, 7earns the term aquiline; keeping at a
 height

so great the feathers look black and the beak does not
 show. It is not retreat but exclusion from
 which he looks down and observes what went
 secretly, as it thought, out of sight

among dense jungle plants. Sent
ahead of the rest, there goes the true
knight in his jointed coat that
covers all but his bat

ears; a-trot, with stiff pig gait--our tame armadillo,
loosed by
his master and as pleased as a dog. Beside the
spattered blood--that orchid which the native fears--
the fer-de-lance lies sleeping; centaur-
like, this harmful couple's amity
is apropos. A jaguar
and crocodile are fighting. Sharp-shinned
hawks and peacock-freckled small
cats, like the literal

merry-go-round, come wandering within the circular view
of the high bird for whom from the air they are ants
keeping house all their lives in the crack of a
crag with no view from the top. And here,
unlikely animals learning to
dance, crouch on two steeds that rear
behind a leopard with a frantic
face, tamed by an Artemis
who wears a dress like his,

and hampering haymaker's hat.⁷ Festina lente, Be gay
civilly. How so? 'If I do well I am blessed
whether any bless me or not, and if I do
ill I am cursed'. We watch the moon rise
on the Susquehanna. In his way
this most romantic bird, flies
to a more mundane place, the mangrove
swamp to sleep. He wastes the moon.
But he, and others, soon

rise from the bough, and though flying are able to foil
the tired
moment of danger, that lays on heart and lungs the
weight of the python that crushes to powder.
⁷ The tune's illiterate footsteps fail;
the steam hacks are not to be admired.
These, unturbulent, avail
themselves of turbulence to fly--pleased
with the faint wings varyings,
on which to spread fixed wings.

The reticent lugubrious ragged immense minuet
descending to leeward, ascending to windward
again without flapping, in what seems to be
a way of resting, are now nearer,
but as seemingly bodiless yet

as they were. Theirs are sombre
quills for so wide and lightboned a bird
as the frigate pelican
of the Caribbean.⁷

It may be that the portions deleted placed too much emphasis on the pelican's "dishonesty." Miss Moore's sensitive observations, even though penetrating and in themselves delightful, do have the unfortunate effect in her long poems of creating smaller unities that distract from the whole. Vivienne Koch quotes the line, "The tune's illiterate footsteps fail," as proof that Miss Moore is very much alive to her age.¹³ Another line which Miss Koch considered "Eliotic," "Small dog, going over the lawn, nipping the linen and saying/ that you have a badger--remember Xenophon" ("Picking and Choosing"), was retained, while this one was eliminated. Perhaps in "Picking and Choosing" she wished to remind one of Eliot; here she did not. In any case, she needs no reminiscent lines to demonstrate that she is very much a part of her age. As a general rule, she insists on her poems being her own. If she borrows anything, she scrupulously inserts quotation marks--rather, single barbs, an idiosyncrasy of hers. She was wise to omit the last stanza, which sounds like a parody of herself, heavy and lacking her usual graces.

"When I Buy Pictures" has an interesting history of revisions. In Poems it has five five-line stanzas, with a run-on rhythm and zigzag margins:

or what is closer to the truth, when I look at
that of which I may regard myself as the

imaginary possessor, I fix upon / that which / would give me pleasure in my average moments: the satire upon curiosity,
in which no more is discernible than the intensity of the mood;

or quite the opposite--the old thing, the mediaeval decorated hat box, in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like the waist of the hour-glass and deer, / both white and brown, / and birds and seated people; it may be no more than a square of parquetry; the literal biography perhaps--in letters stand-

ing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse;
/ or that which is better without words, which means just as much or just as little as it is understood to mean by the observer--the grave of Adam, prefigured by himself; a bed of beans or artichokes in six varieties of blue; the snipe-legged hiero-

glyphic in three parts; it may be anything. / Too stern an intellectual emphasis, / ironical or other--/ upon this quality or that, detracts from one's enjoyment; it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph easily be honoured--that which is great because something else is small.

It comes to this: of whatever sort it is, it must / make known the fact that it has been displayed to acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it; and it must admit that it is the work of X, if X produced it; of Y if made by Y. It must be a voluntary gift with the name written on it. /

The brackets indicate portions where Miss Moore quite wisely made changes, not necessarily deletions. The last stanza is especially clumsy--for Miss Moore. In Observations the vertically margined non-stanzaic free verse is more rhythmical, and the entire poem is a more natural statement, revealing Miss Moore's underlying seriousness. All later versions are the same as in Observations except for the fourth line, which

in Observations ends in "than." The following is the Collected Poems version:

or what is closer to the truth,
when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the
imaginary possessor,
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average
moments:

the satire upon curiosity in which no more is discernible
than the intensity of the mood;
or quite the opposite--the old thing, the mediaeval
decorated hat-box,
in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like
the waist of the hour-glass,
and deer and birds and seated people;
it may be no more than a square of parquetry; the
literal biography perhaps,
in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like-
expanse;
an artichoke in six varieties of blue; the snipe-legged
hieroglyphic in three parts;
the silver fence protecting Adam's grave, or Michael
taking Adam by the wrist.
Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or
that detracts from one's enjoyment.
It must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved
triumph easily be honored--
that which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must be 'lit with piercing glances into the life of
things';
it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have
made it.

One must admit that this version is more successful in style,
or Miss Moore's "gusto," than the first one, and that her re-
visions achieve her desired concentration: the image of the
silver fence and the reference to Michael, as well as the
last two lines, reveal a more explicit emphasis on the
spiritual.

"Poetry" has also been changed from insignificant verse
to a truly important statement. Mr. Blackmur has said that

in the earlier version half the ornamentation and all the point are lacking:¹⁴

I, too, dislike it:
there are things that are important beyond all this
fiddle.

The bat, upside down; the elephant pushing,
a tireless wolf under a tree,
the base-ball fan, the statistician--
"business documents and schoolbooks"--
these phenomena are pleasing,
but when they have been fashioned
into that which is unknowable,
we are not entertained.

It may be said of all of us
that we do not admire what we cannot understand;
enigmas are not poetry.

Since the later version appears in Chapter II, it is unnecessary to repeat it. However, the later version exhibits a better visual effect, the rhymes are more noticeable, and the form gives added emphasis to the main thought, which, while neither new nor intense, is expressed through an image which is new and intense--"imaginary gardens with real toads in them."

One of Miss Moore's most somber collective poems is "The Old Dominion": "Virginia Britannia," "Bird Witted," "Half Deity," and "Smooth Gnarled Grape Myrtle," from The Pangolin and Other Poems. Through a minute description of natural phenomena, the true nature of all dominion is inferred. A visually pleasing surface contends with pride and loneliness, which infect the traditional concepts of hospitality, justice, mercy, and even mortality. Francis Warlow believes that

"The Old Dominion," together with Miss Moore's panel

poems, belongs with Eliot's sombre quartets from The Wasteland on, the satiric orchestration of Pound's Mauberly, Williams' earthy nationalistic Paterson, and the longer pieces in Stevens' Harmonium.¹⁵

In What Are Years the collective title is omitted, the order of the poems is changed to "Half Deity," "Smooth Gnarled Crape Myrtle," "Bird Witted," and "Virginia Britannia," and some revisions were made in all of them, especially in "Half Deity." In Collected Poems "Half Deity" was omitted, and further changes were made in the others. Changes in wording were made in "Virginia Britannia" from The Pangolin to What Are Years, and major typographical changes away from a "patterned" poem from What Are Years to Collected Poems. "Virginia Britannia" originally contained twelve seventeen-line stanzas; in What Are Years and subsequently it has twelve twelve-line stanzas. Of the four "Old Dominion" poems, only "Virginia Britannia" and "Bird Witted" are included in A Marianne Moore Reader.

Some of the typographical changes eliminate Miss Moore's early practice of ending a line on a divided word, such as in this last stanza from "Virginia Britannia" from The Pangolin:

they say. The live oak's rounded
mass of undulating boughs, the white
pine, the aged hackberry--the handsomest vis-
itor of all--the
cedar's etched solidity,
the cypress, lose identity
and are one tree, as
sunset flames increasingly
against their leaf-chis-
elled blackening ridge of green;
and the redundantly wind-
widened clouds expanding to

earth size above the
town's bothered with wages
childish sages,
are to the child an intimation of
what glory is.

Her later version in Collected Poems is less consciously "mannered." With more natural expression comes increased sureness of statement and conviction:

The olive oak's darkening filigree
of undulating boughs, the etched
solidity of a cypress indivisible
from the now aged English hackberry,
become with lost identity,
part of the ground, as sunset flames increasingly
against the leaf-chiselled
blackening ridge of green; while clouds expanding
above
the town's assertiveness, dwarf it, dwarf arrogance
that can misunderstand
importance; and
are to the child an intimation of what glory is.

The typographical arrangement serves her statement here, rather than dominating it as it does in the earlier version. Stronger, more condensed words throughout the revision do not necessarily show a change in her own emphasis--a condemnation of all dominion--but the point is made clearer to the reader. Her revised version of this particular stanza disturbs her syllabic count--7,9,10,12,8,12,5,13,12,6,4,14--but statement becomes increasingly more important to Miss Moore than syllabic count. The later version has a rhyme scheme of abcdddcefggc, an unusual amount of rhyme for Miss Moore, but most of it is characteristically light. (The quoted stanza is slightly irregular.)

A purely typographical change was made in "Bird Witted," from a sixty-line non-stanzaic pattern to six ten-line stanzas. The last line of the earlier version employed spaces between the letters of "creeping" to suggest visually the actions of the cat. Perhaps Miss Moore felt that ~~c r e e p-i n g~~ was an immature attempt to secure humor. The only word alteration involved changing a question to a statement: "Why has/ the bird's voice become/ harsh?" to "How harsh/ the bird's voice has become."

One delightful member of this collective poem which Miss Moore greatly revised and then dropped is "Half Deity." Although she retained the same number of lines--seventy-seven--by adroit re-wording and stanzaic division, she changed its appearance and made it more emphatic. The last fourteen lines of the first version show line indentations but no stanzaic divisions:

West Wind speaks. It was he, with mirror eyes
of strong anxiety, who had no net
or flowering shrewd-scented tropical
device, or lignum vitae perch in half-shut
hand; for ours is not a
canely land; nor was it Oberon, but
this quiet young man with piano replies,
named Zephyr, whose hand spread out was enough
to tempt the fiery tiger-horse to stand,
eyes staring skyward and chest arching
bravely out--historic metamorphoser
and saintly animal
in India, in Egypt, anywhere.
His talk was as strange as my grandmother's muff.

Even this short excerpt discloses the intriguing metaphor of the horse-butterfly, the "metamorphoser"--half-deity, half-

worm; and one can see that to Miss Moore one of the greatest charms of the butterfly is his freedom to go where he wills, as he wills. His strength is his instinctive resistance to things which would trap him, since he is in jeopardy, as are all her animals. His freedom and his danger are made more apparent in What Are Years:

west wind spoke; for pleased by the butterfly's inconsequential ease, he held no net,
did not regard the butterfly-bush
as a trap, hid no decoy in half-shut
palm since his is not a
covetous hand. It was not Oberon, but
this quietest wind with piano replies,
the zephyr, whose detachment was enough
to tempt the fiery tiger-horse to stand,
eyes staring skyward and chest arching
bravely out--historic metamorphoser
and saintly animal
in India, in Egypt, anywhere.
Their talk was as strange as my grandmother's muff.

Even with the same line indentations, the stanzaic divisions emphasize the rhymes, of which there are no more than in the first version, but they are made more noticeable. This excerpt only suggests Miss Moore's figurative language, especially acute in this poem: "drunken with triviality," "magnet-nice," "apostrophe-tipped brown antennae, porcupining out," "patent-leather cricket," "equine irascible unwormlike unteachable butterfly-zebra." But perhaps it serves to demonstrate how a poem, fairly successful in one version, becomes more so in a later version through a more attractive, better disciplined form.

Another poem which received a typographical modification

from What Are Years to Collected Poems is "Spenser's Ireland," from a twelve-line stanza to an eleven-line one, with lines eleven and twelve combined. She retained the little swirl of rhyme which reminds one of an Irish jig, but she omitted her emphasized caesura, the exaggerated space between words to mark internal rhyme, a peculiarity of many of Miss Moore's early poems. One might be disconcerted by such a line as, "them'invis'ible; they've dis-''; it is impossible to ignore the unusual spacing. This departure from a typographical idiosyncracy might seem insignificant, but linked with her other typographical changes, as indicated in "Bird Witted," "Half Deity," "When I Buy Pictures," and many more, it marks a stage in the development of Miss Moore from a highly sophisticated craftsman--conscious of her departure from tradition and glorying in it--to a true poet, relegating a show-off technique to its proper, minor place. There is still much internal rhyme adding its important bit, but it is subdued, not ostentatious; one can admire it when one notices. She has not felt it necessary since these poems were first composed to resort to such tactics. Her arch mannerisms are largely eliminated in her later work, disclosing what she has been all along--a poet with high seriousness. Her humor, always a stabilizing factor of her poetry, is still present, and her manners and her subject matter are still mostly whimsical, but her serious themes are not completely buried under her whimsicality.

"The Fish" exhibits interesting typographical changes

which did not affect the wording. In its first appearance (Egoist, August, 1918) it had a four-line stanza:

Wade through black jade.
Of the crow-blue mussel-shells one
Keeps adjusting the ash-heaps
Opening and shutting like

in Poems the typography revealed the rhymes:

wade
through black jade.
Of the crow-blue mussel shells, one
keeps
adjusting the ash heaps;
opening and shutting itself like

Observations kept the same pattern, except for a capital W in the first line. But by Selected Poems, Miss Moore had found the final form:

wade
through black jade
Of the crow-blue mussel-shells, one keeps
adjusting the ash-heaps;
opening and shutting itself like

and so on throughout the eight exactly regular stanzas: 1,3, 9,6,8; aabbx. Only an excessively meticulous reviser would continue making these minute alterations until she found the pattern she could be satisfied with, one which would make her intricate metaphor of struggle between the living and the non-living graphic and exciting.

Miss Moore makes countless minor revisions toward greater accuracy and exactness. One such instance out of many is in "Four Quartz Crystal Clocks." In What Are Years line six

in stanza one has "cool Bell"; in Collected Poems the phrase has been changed to "41° Bell." Not only is this more exact, but it gives the line seven syllables, the same as the other sixth lines.

Some of Miss Moore's revisions show a definite effort to secure rhyme. "Camellia Sabina" had no word change from Selected Poems to Collected Poems, yet the appearance and total effect is different. In Selected Poems each stanza had eight lines, and the stanzas had alternating indentations:

and the Bordeaux plum
from Marmande (France in parentheses) with
A. G. on the base of the jar--Alexis Godillot--
unevenly blown beside a bubble that
is green when held up to the light; they
are a fine duet; the screw-top for this graft-grown
briar-black bloom on black-thorn pigeon's blood
is, like Certosa, sealed with foil. Appropriate
custom.

And they keep under
glass also, camellias catalogued by
lines across the leaf. The French are a cruel race--
willing
to squeeze the diner's cucumber or broil a
meal on vine-shoots. Gloria mundi
with a leaf two inches, nine lines broad, they have; and
the smaller, Camellia Sabina
with amanita-white petals; there are several of her.

The only rhyme is the initial with the last line. Lines six and seven form lines six, seven, and eight in Collected Poems:

and the Bordeaux plum
from Marmande (France) in parenthesis with
A. G. on the base of the jar--Alexis Godillot--
unevenly blown beside a bubble that
is green when held up to the light; they
are a fine duet; the screw-top
for this graft-grown briar-black bloom
on black-thorn pigeon's blood,
is, like Certosa, sealed with foil. Appropriate custom.

Since Miss Moore eliminates the zigzag stanzaic indentations, all the other stanzas are like this one. With the changes in the arrangement of the lines, Miss Moore has secured a strong rhyme throughout the poem of lines one, seven, and nine, and an occasional rhyme of line six with eight. The new appearance on the page lightens the total effect of the poem. To be totally successful, Miss Moore's poems must have comparable eye and ear readings, which explains the lavish care she expends on typography. One consistent trend in her revisions is the elimination of some of her more extreme typographical oddities, such as the line ending in a hyphen, the exaggerated caesura, and excessive zigzag indentations.

Miss Moore has definitely not abandoned the long line, although sometimes she breaks it up, as in "Camellia Sabina," but at other times, as in "Virginia Britannia," she combines short lines to make long ones. She lets the poem determine the form. In this respect, Marianne Moore reminds one of Edith Sitwell. Both are fond of the long line, but both can use the short line effectively, too. A lengthy comparison of these two poets might be made, for both are original personalities, able to be at will elegant or flippant, impish or sedate, light or poignant. Both have excellent vocabularies and are entranced by the musicality of words. Dame Edith can be satirical (Gold Coast Customs), but on the whole, Miss Moore is more ironic, less romantic than is Edith Sitwell.

The major consistent trend shown by Marianne Moore's

revisions is the elimination of superfluous detail, not the removal of all ornamentation, but only those details which clutter or distract. This economy is certainly compatible with her esthetic theories. Her other revisions stress compression and precision by figurative language and style by rhetoric and typography. If sometimes she fails, at least her revisions are more often successes than failures, and even her "failures" may be the fault of the reader, not the revision.

Notes for Chapter VI

¹Lewis Nichols, "A Talk with Marianne Moore," New York Times Book Review, May 16, 1954, p. 30.

²MMR, p. 170.

³Blackmur, p. 163,

⁴In CP--"One perceives no flaws."

⁵In CP--"A Chinese."

⁶In SP this line is "door. There are no banyans, frangipani, nor."

⁷These two lines in CP are--"A steeple-jack in red, has let/ a rope down as a spider spins a thread."

⁸In CP--"It scarcely could."

⁹In CP--"and he's/ been mothering the eggs/ at night six weeks--".

¹⁰In CP--"crude-winged."

¹¹In CP--"The others with similar ease/ slowly rising once more,/ move out."

¹²In CP--"Unlike the more."

¹³Vivienne Koch, "The Peaceable Kingdom of Marianne Moore," Quarterly Review, IV (1948), 156.

¹⁴Blackmur, p. 152. Although I agree with his conclusions, this version is not from Observations, as he states, but from Others, V(July, 1918), 5. In Observations "Poetry" is on pp. 30 and 31 and is the same as in SP and CP. Even in Poems, it is substantially the same, with only one line more in stanza three and with some minor word differences. Certainly the "ornament" and the "point" are there.

¹⁵Warlow, p. 220.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

It is regrettable that Marianne Moore has never seen fit to express a definite esthetic theory. Her most inclusive statement is "So art is but an expression of our needs; is feeling, modified by the writer's moral and technical insights," which explains little except that it is not art for its own sake. It merely indicates a mode of perception, a heightened sensitivity, which is probably enough to expect from a poet. Marianne Moore belongs in the current of introverted American writers which includes Hawthorne, Henry James, and T. S. Eliot, rather than with the extroverted Whitman, Sandburg, or early Mark Twain.

Miss Moore's poetry proves that seriousness need not be dull, that didacticism can be lightly phrased, and that morality need not be zealous. Like Marvell and other seventeenth century wits, Marianne Moore treats her serious themes with ironic urbanity, playing association against association, charmingly and wittily. Although she shifts her imagery constantly and sometimes surprisingly, there is really no confusion, for the images, despite their variety, do have a connection and help the poem to move toward greater concreteness and drama. For instance, the line in "Half Deity,"

"equine irascible unwormlike unteachable butterfly-zebra," has horse, worm, zebra--all concrete words--plus the abstractions irascible and unteachable associated with the butterfly. The butterfly paws the air as a horse paws the ground; it was originally a worm; its wings are zebra-striped; it is vexed at the proximity of the observer; and unteachable because "butterflies do not need home advice." Through the epithets applied to the butterfly, one comprehends rich and multiple associations. Most of her imagery is of this order.

Nothing has been said about Marianne Moore's interacting stanzas, a characteristic of both her long and short poems which contributes to the unified effect. As with any good poet, her periods are placed with skill, as "In Distrust of Merits" illustrates. Only the last two stanzas end with periods. The penultimate stanza's period reinforces and establishes the last stanza, beginning "Hate-hardened heart, O heart of iron," as the focal point of the poem. Because he has been forced to pause, the reader receives a special import from this stanza.

Like Ezra Pound, H. D., Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, E. E. Cummings, and W. C. Williams, Marianne Moore has never modified her art to meet the temporary demands of commercial publication. A sometimes overlooked paradox is that a satirist must have irreverence as well as strong moral convictions. In the early twenties when Marianne Moore was first becoming known as a poet, irreverence was a common quality, but moral convictions were scarce, or well hidden. But "Ap-

pellate Jurisdiction," uncollected, published in Poetry in 1915, indicates that Miss Moore arrived at those convictions early.

Miss Moore's tone toward her readers is similar to that of Samuel Johnson in his delightful Rambler or Idler essays--that of one civilized, reasonable adult to another. She exhibits courtesy and good breeding; she respects intellect and manners and is a consistently good craftsman.

I believe that Miss Moore's esthetic theory--as extracted from her prose and poetry--adequately explains the singular characteristics of her poetry, which is independent and non-imitative. Her diction and vocabulary are integrated components which dramatize her subject matter and serious themes. She uses English of a high order and shows a vitality in her word relationships, or as Elizabeth Bishop puts it in "Invitation to Marianne Moore," "with grammar that suddenly turns and shines." Marianne Moore's positive attitudes, disciplined craftsmanship, and vitality of language all indicate an artistic integrity.

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APPENDIX

One principle of Marianne Moore's criticism is to judge the work of others by the best in it, and to judge her own by the least in it, or at any rate, to take the least into consideration.¹ Such a precept guides her in her personal relationships as well, if one may take her relationship with Ezra Pound as an example. Perhaps one should be cautious about jumping to conclusions since Miss Moore is notoriously reticent about her personal life, but one can be guided by what appears in print and conjecture about the rest.

In her poetry one can never be certain whether her judgments are ethical or esthetic, but there is little doubt that they are divided in the case of Ezra Pound. In the matter of poetics, Miss Moore has always publicly acknowledged her gratitude and debt to Pound; she has always expressed respect and admiration for his scholarship. During the Bollingen prize controversy, she took no overt action. She has never reviewed any of Pound's work after A Draft of XXX Cantos. While it is true that she did not enter the controversy in the newspapers or magazines, her opinions appeared in characteristically subtle and indirect means.

In 1949 the Quarterly Review of Literature published a special Ezra Pound issue. Although Marianne Moore's name

was prominently displayed on the cover, her statement was brief--and honest:

Ezra Pound is that rarity, an artist who is a preceptor by example: a master or "sage," whose inexhaustible virtuosity has made and is making his verse and criticism an archive of poetic wisdom.

In 1952 in a lecture at Bryn Mawr, she expressed the prodigious debt poets owed to Ezra Pound for his sharing of his knowledge of rhythm and melody, and most importantly, for his stress on liveness as opposed to deadness. Recalling his injunction to "Make it new. Art is a joyous thing," she quoted his advice for Imagists:

Direct treatment, economy of words, compose in the sequence of the musical phrase rather than that of the metronome.

The true poet is most easily distinguished from the false when he trusts himself to the simplest expression and writes without adjectives.

No dead words or phrases.

A thought should be expressed in verse at least as well as it could be expressed in prose. Great literature is language charged with meaning to the utmost degree. There is no easy way out.

Nothing was said about politics, possible treason, or the Bollingen prize.

Marianne Moore visited Pound in St. Elizabeth's Hospital, and he assisted her some with her translations of Fables of La Fontaine (1954). Predilections (1955) and A Marianne Moore Reader (1961) both contained her essays on Ezra Pound--her review of A Draft of XXX Cantos and her Bryn Mawr lecture.

Her name and the briefest of statements appeared appended to Robert Frost's statement of April 15, 1958, submitted to court in a motion to dismiss the indictment against Ezra Pound:

Yes indeed. I feel strongly that it is stagnant and unrealistic of us not to secure the release of Ezra Pound from St. Elizabeth's.⁴

The evidence, by implication at least, leads to the conclusion that, as a poet, Miss Moore remained loyal to Pound, the teacher, but could not condone his so-called treason, nor did she wish to claim that he was mentally unbalanced. In many respects, she and T. S. Eliot were alike. Sharing similar backgrounds, including clergymen forbears and classical educations, they did not, and could not, follow his ideas, while at the same time, they never failed to express their gratitude. Miss Moore and Mr. Pound held opposing ethical and political beliefs, but because of her deep sense of loyalty and friendship, she could not attack him on those grounds. Her insistence on his right to be an individual also might have influenced her. To say as much as she did and no more was the only thing possible for one of her temperament and convictions.

Notes for Appendix

¹Marianne Moore, "Interview with Donald Hall," MMR, p. 268.

²Moore, "Ezra Pound," Quarterly Review, V, ii (1949), 146,

³MMR, ep. 77.

⁴Casebook on Ezra Pound, ed. William Van O'Connor and Edward Stone, p. 136.

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