

Marianne Moore's Wild Decorum

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BONNIE COSTELLO: Marianne Moore's Wild Decorum

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The occasion for the following essay is the celebration this year of the Marianne Moore Centenary (1887-1987).

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Marianne Moore, 1938

Marianne Moore at her best is a poet of wild decorum, combining high civility with energy and inclusiveness, propriety with sincerity. This inevitably tense combination suggests that Moore, like other American poets, felt a continuing ambivalence about our European heritage and our native vitality. The old-world values of tradition and culture grow static and superficial in excess; the new, frontier values of freedom and originality are precarious and tend to become crude and rapacious. Moore's poetry situates itself in the center of this tension, presenting no compromise but a lively struggle toward an ideal fusion. Her ideal "literalists of the imagination" would write a poetry in which art and nature become one, in which refinement and invention, stability and freedom are not at odds. "In the meantime," she writes, "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" (CP, 267).¹

Moore is a difficult poet to place in literary history. She joined other modernists in the revolution of the word, by challenging the conventions of poetic discourse with her inclusive lexicon, her singular choice of subject matter, her imagery, her heightened particularity, her appropriation of fragments from an open range of sources, her conspicuous spatial designing of the page. In no other poet do we find words like "contractility," "apteryx," or "icososphere" in excruciatingly detailed poems about anteaters, musk oxen, race horses, poems which quote extensively from Baxter's *Saints Everlasting Rest*, Hunt's *Autobiography*, and a conversation overheard in a circus. All this appears in bizarre visual patterns across the page. Moore's work, then, seems to reach toward aesthetic frontiers. Certainly she had heard the clamor of modernism to "make it new"; surprise, even shock, are appropriate responses to her work ("eyes/that can dilate," "hair that can rise/if it must" she tells us in "Poetry" are "important" and "useful" responses). Yet her art also

preserves classical values of restraint, propriety, formal precision, and decorum. Moore respects the command to please and to teach, respects the public responsibilities of poetry as well as the private pleasures. Her moral epigrams and her rhetoric of wisdom and instruction may seem out of place in a poetic world emphasizing the direct treatment of the thing or the aesthetic autonomy of the poem. Yet these too are part of her art. Moore admired many of George Herbert's poems, and his use of objects as moral exempla clearly influenced her emblematic style, as did the fable literature of La Fontaine and others, and the allegorical literature of Bunyan and Blake. She is clearly against the grain of modernism's quest for pure poetry (as were most American poets). Yet while she would not permit her poetry to be subsumed in the new formalism of the avant-garde, or permit her form to be overtaken by the crisis and fragmentation of the new, both the shape and content of her ethical vision are deeply affected by these pressures. Her modernism and classicism together breed a poetry both containing and enlarging the movements of her mind.

Moore's wild decorum—her interplay of freedom and restraint—can be felt in all aspects of her work: its syntax, its prosody, its rhetoric, its themes. It appears as well in the diversity of materials she controls within the seamless unit of the poems. "New York" (CP, 54), about the city in all its urbanity, but also about the wilderness of the state in all its primitive vigor, provides a good example of Moore's framed inclusiveness. New York becomes a paradigm for the world (especially America) and for the imagination:

NEW YORK

*the savage's romance,
accreted where we need the space for commerce—
the center of the wholesale fur trade,
starred with tepees of ermine and peopled with foxes,
the long guard-hairs waving two inches beyond the body of the pelt;
the ground dotted with deer-skins—white with white spots,
"as satin needlework in a single color may carry a varied pattern,"
and wilting eagle's-down compacted by the wind;
and picardels of beaver-skin; white ones alert with snow.
It is a far cry from the "queen full of jewels"
and the beau with the muff,
from the gilt coach shaped like a perfume-bottle,
to the conjunction of the Monongahela and the Allegheny,
and the scholastic philosophy of the wilderness.
It is not the dime-novel exterior,
Niagara Falls, the calico horses and the war-canoe;
it is not that "if the fur is not finer than such as one sees others wear,
one would rather be without it"—
that estimated in raw meat and berries, we could feed the universe;
it is not the atmosphere of ingenuity,
the otter, the beaver, the puma skins
without shooting-irons or dogs;
it is not the plunder,
but "accessibility to experience."*

Our initial reaction to this poem may well resemble the poet's reaction to New York in an earlier version of the poem: "One must stand outside and laugh since to go in is to be lost." Standing outside, we observe a dizzying display of images swept along in rapid succession by clause after dense clause and suspended climax. The beginning and ending of the poem appear simple enough, but there are few closures between. As the poem increases its momentum the more arresting phrases tend to pull away from the very long sentences. What can Moore mean by "the scholastic philosophy of the wilderness" and other rich phrases that stretch across wide territories of reference to make their points? The quotation marks around many of these phrases demand further efforts of attention. Yet the poem proceeds without grammatical pause on its path toward the epigrammatic and enigmatic conclusion, emphasizing "not the plunder, but 'accessibility to experience.'" Armed with a few key oppositions (plunder/accessibility; nature/culture) we trace the path of our attention back through the poem's descriptive banter to find a place that reaches across city and wilderness (though with a "far cry"), where hard pastoral and high urbanity are oddly complicitous. Trapper, tourist and fop—all plunderers and appropriators—face a wilderness that, strangely, surpasses human elegance. Country and city do not divide

into wildness and decorum, as we would expect, for the wilderness is refined "as satin needlework," hunters and hucksters are savage. But neither does Moore settle for a simple ironic inversion. Her valued "accessibility to experience" requires, finally, an embrace of all that New York paradoxically encompasses. As always, Moore's poetic strategies interact with her themes. As if to avoid a "plunder" of particulars, she suspends generalizations and avoids semantic as well as syntactic closure. She avoids definitive openings as well. In a sense the poem has no grammatical subject, but is instead one long predicate to an elusive subject. Yet the value of refinement and the shaping of experience is satisfied in the ordering of assertion and denial ("It is not . . . , but . . .").

"New York" includes the classic images of the American sublime—the Appalachian range, Niagara Falls—only finally to invoke a subject less containable, less material, and less sensational than these clichés, a truer sublime of the imagination. America has long been identified with the sublime; the vastness and variety of its landscape, the austere beauty and challenge of its mountains and deserts, have drawn the praise of artists and writers since the eighteenth century. But the experience of this power requires tremendous restraint as well as imaginative strength; in order to know the infinite, one must put aside the urge to possess or conquer what one sees. Keats's concept of "negative capability," but more locally Emerson's "transparent eyeball" in which "all mean egotism" vanishes, served as a central legacy not only for this poem but for this entire American tradition.

This theme of imaginative restraint as a prerequisite to sublimity appears most extensively in "An Octopus" (CP, 71-76), Moore's lengthy poem about Mt. Rainier, that multiplies the pleasures and problems of "New York." Daring the boundaries of subject matter, the poem compares a glacier to an octopus, then to Greek sensibility and to the prose of Henry James. The opening passage suggests the reach of the poem, crossing orders of scale, realm, texture, kingdom, to imply a paradoxical and unconfined yet precise and delicate totality:

AN OCTOPUS

*of ice. Deceptively reserved and flat,
it lies "in grandeur and in mass"
beneath a sea of shifting snow-dunes;
dots of cyclamen-red and maroon on its clearly defined pseudo-podia
made of glass that will bend—a much needed invention—
comprising twenty-eight ice-fields from fifty to five hundred feet thick,
of unimagined delicacy.*

*"Picking periwinkles from the cracks"
or killing prey with the concentric crushing rigor of the python,
it hovers forward "spider fashion
on its arms" misleadingly like lace;
its "ghostly pallor changing
to the green metallic tinge of an anemone-starred pool."*

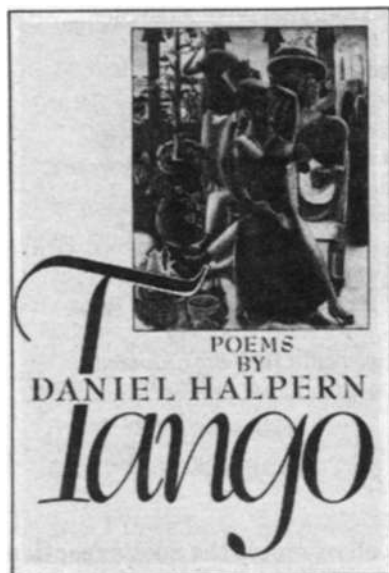
(ll 1-13)

Moore's strategy, as in "New York," is to disarm us, to shake our expectations and orientations in order to immerse us in a new reality. The representational subject, the glacier, remains unnamed, so that the initial comparison obstructs rather than enhances the illusion of the scene. No explicit thematic or narrative orientation helps us resist the flux of image and perspective. Our only source of identification is an abrupt, unidentified "you" as hypothetical witness. The poem continues to hurl us through its weltering depths and surfaces, and though we discover where we are (the glacial Mt. Rainier, which Moore calls Mt. Tacoma), Moore never permits us to settle into the scene or to construct the comfortable dwelling of an idea or a perspective.

But what, if anything, makes this descriptive poem, which does not plainly objectify landscape or relay an idea, more than labyrinthine nonsense? What in the poem demands our attention and makes us continually willing to adjust it? Looking closely at the first few sentences, we are unnerved primarily by the drastic eerie shifts the poem makes. We read "an octopus of ice" and look for the resolution of terms, since an octopus is usually associated with fluid movement, ice with rigidity. Instead we are faced with another contrast in the opposite direction: the octopus seems "reserved and flat," stable, but lies "beneath a sea of shifting snow-dunes." The disorientation is not overcome when the images cross purposes, as they do with "dots of cyclamen-red and maroon on its clearly defined pseudo-podia." It is easy enough to cope with the idea that red flowers on a glacial mountain look, from a distance, like red dots on the legs of an octopus, but the ease of that distinction is lost in incongruity: we have red flowers on the feet of an octopus. The fact that the feet are "pseudo-podia" and that this term has a secondary reference to psychic illusion as well as a primary one to a zoological phenomenon heightens the uncertainty.

A certain quantum of Moore's power here comes simply from the verbal disorientation identified with visual disorientation. Our experience as readers is further complicated by the fact that not only our perspective but the glacier shifts. At this point we are provided with a unified image to describe a fluid glass, a "much needed invention." But "glass that will bend" contradicts our ordinary experience of glass. The

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focus of the poem splits again: "comprising twenty-eight ice fields from fifty to five hundred feet thick, / of unimagined delicacy." The ice-octopus moves on, challenging our comprehension, "picking periwinkles from the cracks" or "killing prey with the concentric crushing rigor of the python." Now the analogy has spread to include not only "an octopus of ice," but pythons, spiders, ghosts, and glitter, and its visual ambiguity has become animate. The experience of reading the poem becomes analogous to the experience of sublime disorientation in beholding the landscape. The totality cannot be taken in at a glance or from a single point of view, but depends instead on a continually suspended and shifting order, forming and reforming an experience of reality larger than the mind's constructions. As in "New York," Moore contrasts the "unegoistic action of the glacier" and its remarkable "capacity for fact" (for widely various and remarkable particularity) with the complacent generalizations of touristic and mercantile sensibilities that visit it.

It might seem odd to ascribe capacity to a phenomenon of inanimate nature, but Moore goes on to make bold comparisons between this landscape and certain mental attitudes: aligning it with those of the Greeks, who "liked smoothness," and contrasting it with that of Henry James, "damned by the public for decorum; / not decorum, but restraint." Such historical or literary digressions in a poem of landscape description find precedent in some eighteenth-century poems—Thomson's "The Seasons," Cowper's "The Task"—that may now seem unfamiliar and strange. But Moore's "digressions" also have affinities with the bold modernist juxtapositions of past and present, concrete and abstract, high and low diction, that one finds in Pound and Eliot. The logic behind the digressions in these poems is that the mountain objectifies the aesthetic ideals Moore herself most admires. Individual lines, while describing the glacier's effects, seem to have peculiarly self-reflective force: "Neatness of finish! Neatness of finish! / Relentless accuracy is the nature of this octopus / with its capacity for fact." Does nature direct art or imitate it in such lines? Moore's poetry does not attempt to copy nature or to shape it to her mind, but rather to find parallels for mutual expressiveness.

Such bold analogies suggest that Moore does not differentiate between the natural and the rhetorical sublime, between the excitement stirred by a powerful visual phenomenon and that stirred by the power of words. Instead of a conventional, hackneyed opposition between art and nature Moore offers an opposition between different kinds of art, one of complacent symmetries, another of wild decorum. When she writes in "New York" of the "scholastic philosophy of the wilderness" she draws an analogy between the tortuous passage through mountains and forests and the experience of reading arguments by theologians. Their

method—a *via negativa*—of defining God by what he is not, is also the structure of this poem, which, after telling us for many lines what New York "is not," arrives at a positive but enigmatic statement only in the last line.

Ideally, language in poetry should match nature in its power to excite the imagination. Like many modern poets, Moore draws attention to her poetic process, and uses subject matter more as a means than an end. Thus Moore's poems tend to behave like the animals they describe. Indeed, the plummet basilisk, the jerboa, the frigate pelican, are all compared to works of art or artists, as Moore again dissolves the distinction between art and nature. Not surprisingly, Moore writes as often about art as about nature, and uses each to describe the other. Technology, too, is worthy of celebration, when it is an example of precision rather than rapacity, as in the design of the clocks in Greenwich or the Brooklyn Bridge. In art or nature, it is the compact, the modest, the elusive, the precise that Moore admires. Her conjunction of the natural and the rhetorical sublime can be seen again in "Novices" (CP, 60-61), which contrasts the narcissistic symmetries of literary fops to "the spontaneous unforced passion of the Hebrew language." Moore compares the rhetoric of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, to the power of the sea.

*"... the spontaneous unforced passion of the Hebrew language—
an abyss of verbs full of reverberations and tempestuous energy"
in which action perpetuates action and angle is at variance with angle
till submerged by the general action;
obscured by "fathomless suggestions of color,"
by incessantly panting lines of green, white with concussion,
in this drama of water against rocks—this "ocean of hurrying consonants"
with its "great livid stains like long slabs of green marble,"
its "flashing lances of perpendicular lightning" and "molten fires
swallowed up,"
"with foam on its barriers,"
"crashing itself out in one long hiss of spray."*

Moore's poetry is by no means all mountain gloom and mountain glory. Indeed, she often mocks the high rhapsody of the postcard mentality that pauses only at the scenic points, that gasps on cue, and misses the genuine. The intricacies of the small interest her even more than the grandeur of the vast. Indeed, in "An Octopus," "New York," "People's Surroundings" and so many other poems, the imagination's eye shifts boldly from close to far prospect, from vista to detail. Moore delights in the deviant detail, the particular that belies the generalization. She challenges us, in turn, to suspend our aesthetic and conceptual biases, to embrace the genuine as necessarily peculiar. But the unfamiliar



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iar, the unexpected, often repel the timid beholder. We do not customarily revel in the presence of toads, anteaters, snakes, snake charmers, mongooses and the like, especially in imaginary gardens. Moore challenges our ideas of beauty and harmony. She enlists, in this respect, another major American tradition, the grotesque, often viewed as a prelude to the sublime by its challenge to conventional classifications. A good deal of the work of Poe, Twain, Anderson, Faulkner, and O'Connor belongs to this tradition. But while other modern writers (Eliot, Crane) used the grotesque as a way of commenting on the disintegration and degradation of civilized consciousness, Moore uses it to extend and revise our aesthetic and moral values. Moore's jubilant grotesque sets itself against confining categories, praising instead the fluidity of form and infinite ingenuity of nature. To Moore, only the excessively symmetrical appears grotesque in the negative sense. But while Moore admires recalcitrant realities, the grotesque mode is not a feature of formlessness or merely the incursion of chaos into a principle of order. Rather, it is a wild decorum, the emergence of new order out of old, or the merging of orders to create new ones.

Against the measured, the balanced, the conscious, Moore poses an uncontainable life at the boundary of the natural and the supernatural, of literal and mythic truth. The basilisk, the unicorn, the sea monster form a menagerie of magical realism. The imaginary garden with real toads in it is a prototypical grotesque image, crossing boundaries of beauty and ugliness, truth and fiction, pleasure and fear, to force the mind into a new unity. Like Moore's subjects, her poems inhabit that ambiguous zone in which the real and the imaginary intersect and order meets contrary order. Her "capacity for fact" and representational accuracy become surprisingly compatible with conspicuous artifice and imaginative invention. Especially here, in the treatment of nature, Moore is distinguishable from Romantic poets and their modern American descendants, the Imagists. For the Romantics, the image became a locus of synthesis between the mind and the outer world; a spiritual and transcendent nature was awakened by and also awakened the imaginative beholder. Imagists pushed the apotheosis of self in objects even further toward an "intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." This poetic stance faltered, however, in its confusion of poetic and representational space, and engendered a crisis in the poetry of objectivism. Moore and others emphasized the importance of clear seeing, of accuracy and economy in presenting things in themselves. They tried to cleanse objects of hackneyed or vague associations. But at the same time they eschewed old ideas of mirroring nature and declared the autonomy of the imagination. Thus the work of this period often seems propelled by opposite forces, one moving toward the observed object, the other toward imaginative construction. Moore integrated these forces inventively, in ways that suggested how one might become a literalist of the imagination. She reinstated rhetoric and artifice (targets of romanticism) not only in form, but in association, so that her images take on, at times, an allegorical character. Yet she preserved the naturalism of speech and image launched by the Romantics, allowing it to work more independently of ideas, rather than trying to integrate or fuse these elements.

Among Moore's poems, "The Fish" (CP, 32-33) comes closest to imagism, that is, to meeting the criteria Pound laid out in 1913 of visual concentration, unadorned presentational language, nonmetrical rhythms. Moore's conceptual pattern does not compromise or compete with, but rather coincides with the objective presentation of an aquatic scene. All the metaphors reinforce the visual description and the reader is easily captivated by the graceful movements and fragile textures of the poem.

THE FISH

wade

through black jade.

Of the crow-blue mussel-shells, one keeps

adjusting the ash-heaps;

opening and shutting itself like

an

injured fan.

The barnacles which encrust the side

of the wave, cannot hide

there for the submerged shafts of the

sun,

split like spun

glass, move themselves with spotlight swiftness

into the crevices—

in and out, illuminating

the

turquoise sea

of bodies.

(ll 1-17)

While the concepts do not intrude upon the imagined beholding, many of the metaphors introduce qualities extraneous to the objects themselves. The mussel shell is not injured, though it may look like an injured fan. Black jade, ash heaps, and similar images suggest an idea of archeologi-

cal depth, of a lost world, a sort of burial ground, so that we are not entirely surprised at the end of the poem when we learn that

All
external
marks of abuse are present on this
defiant edifice—
all the physical features of

ac-
cident—lack
of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns, and
hatchet strokes, these things stand
out on it; the chasm-side is

dead.
Repeated
evidence has proved that it can live
on what can not revive
its youth. The sea grows old in it.

(ll 26-40)

Moore's insistent themes—of fortitude in the face of mortality, of defiance in the face of abuse and adversity—emerge as the concerns that have directed the eye across the object. But they do not overwhelm or subvert the object. Particularity of observation itself is thematized in Moore as a defense against moral complacency, and here objective detail provides a counterweight to precept and a means of discovery. In conceptually based poems, Moore will often detail the images beyond the demands of the idea illustrated, giving them autonomy from the poem's conceptual orders. Describing the ostrich as a symbol of justice in "He 'Digesteth Harde Yron'," Moore attends in great detail to the bird's nurturing habits, its markings, its movements, its dwelling, only to conclude "the power of the visible/is the invisible." Such equality between image and idea may prove confusing to the reader in search of the "message," but delightful to the reader willing to trace the drama of observation and reflection.

Moore was inspired by the writings of the English critic John Ruskin, who elevated seeing to a moral value. In her notebooks she recorded this passage from *Modern Painters*: "The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion, all in one."² Ruskin stressed as well the moral lessons to be learned from observation. Representation of nature is not an end but a means in poetry, the end being pleasure and instruction. The descriptive method, by its very particularity, allows for greater openness of association than the depiction of a central moral or historical moment, which we are more likely to prejudge. But as we've seen in "An Octopus," even Moore's most descriptive, imagistic poems are only *about* their subjects in a limited sense. Their subjects are always instances of Moore's aesthetic and moral predilections.

What distinguishes Moore from several other modernists of her period is the balance she achieves between representational and allegorical objectives. William Carlos Williams waged a war on symbols and clung to the particular. Wallace Stevens, on the other hand, took the symbol further into abstraction than any previous American artist. His images seem to belong almost completely to the imagination. Moore's poetry shares features of both, and retains a didactic element sometimes avoided in the early formalist phase of modernism. But hers is a modern didacticism, that will not divide message from medium.

Moore's "To a Snail" (CP, 85) demonstrates her treatment of the image as emblem, that is, as object and attitude at once. She cleaves to the contours of the image while developing her symbolic argument.

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
as a 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";
"a knowledge of principles,"
in the curious phenomenon of your occipital horn.

Clearly the purpose of this poem is not to describe a snail, but rather to define the moral and aesthetic virtue of "contractility," of which the poem is an example. Yet the snail remains an integral part of the definition. The "absence of feet" puns on the image and the prosody, but the image has the last word here. The *je ne sais quoi* of poetry is the "occipital horn" of the snail—a suggestive detail, connecting flesh and shell, form and content perhaps, just as the occipital bone in the human body connects head and torso, mind and body. In searching for the meaning behind the values so enigmatically presented, we must return to the vehicle by which they are presented. We observe that the poem does not identify compression with generalizing reduction; the concept finds its simplicity in an image, not in a slogan. Nuance is of the essence,

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as the image of the occipital horn suggests. Nor is compression connected with conformity or uniformity. The singular snail, intricate yet of a piece, cannot be reproduced.

The language of "To a Snail" is as emblematic as its image: the sentences are long and winding, there are many polysyllabic words, yet the image on the page is a neat block. In revising the poem, Moore listened to the lessons she was telling, weeding out redundancy and seeking increasing compactness. Moore derived her conceptual forms, as in her poem on the snail, from Renaissance emblems, in which a picture was appended to a moral epigram. The assumption behind this classical form was that the world is a book in which divine instructions could be read. The emblem gave sensuous immediacy to intellectual concepts and values and provided a meditative center, but it was essentially an allegorical rather than a descriptive mode. Moore does not, however, simply revert to classical means in her attempt to make a connection between ideas and things. Responding to the call of modernism for new rigor in the nexus of image and idea, Moore stretches the emblem convention far beyond its original uses. She expands the detail within the illustration, and draws conclusions which surprise and alter our expectations. The snail, usually a symbol of withdrawal, is now a symbol of intuitive power and compression, and "hiding in a shell" takes on new potency.

In writing "The Paper Nautilus" (CP, 121-122) Moore was probably aware of a famous earlier American poem, Oliver Wendell Holmes's "The Chambered Nautilus." Both poems employ the image in order to recommend an analogous human stance—the idea of progress in Holmes, the idea of nurturing creativity in Moore. Yet Moore's conceptualization clings far more than Holmes's to the contours of the object. Where Holmes sees "the ship of pearl" in which "dim dreaming life was wont to dwell," Moore works with a cleaner lens, juxtaposing what she sees to a human situation rather than blurring the two terms. The poem goes on to develop a brilliant convergence of Classical allusion and biological detail.

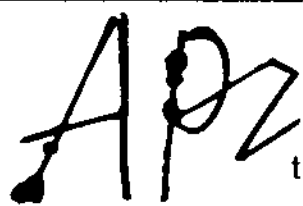
*For authorities whose hopes
are shaped by mercenaries?
Writers entrapped by
teatime fame and by
commuters' comforts? Not for these
the paper nautilus
constructs her thin glass shell.*

(ll 1-7)

With her touchstone of the genuine, Moore inspects household truths

and revises their meanings by renewing their connection to images. Choosing the delicate Paper Nautilus, which grows temporary arms to protect its eggs, over the more spectacular Chambered Nautilus, which leaves a series of empty chambers in its pursuit of "statelier mansions," Moore comments upon Holmes's wasteful vision of mankind's destiny. In her poetry, the spineless jellyfish embodies all elusive charms, and the mighty and massive elephant is a pattern of reverie and restraint. The objective of an image-centered aesthetic is not simply to bring ideas into connection with reality, but in the process to reexamine and renew those ideas. Moore is particularly fond of reversing clichés. Her hero, for instance, is not a great warrior or conqueror, but a paragon of humility and reverence for mystery. Freedom is not the opportunity to possess, but the ability to relinquish what one would keep. The Paper Nautilus, like Hercules, is paradoxically "hindered to succeed." Precision in ideas is as important as accuracy in visual description.

For Moore, originality was not an aim but the inevitable byproduct of sincerity and individuality of vision. Moore's revisions of cliché are local and reactive—she is no system builder or dogmatist. Yet seen together, her poems express coherent values, based on principles of restraint, economy, humility, privacy, values that oppose what she may have seen as a tide of American rapacity, waste and audacity. But within her values she preserves a paradoxical place for particularity, energy, individuality, and passion, traits she identified as characteristically American. Indeed, in her very insistence on going against the tide, in her repeated "nevertheless," she is most American. Moore's imagination seeks the occasion when a lapse has occurred, where some coarse or incomplete thinking requires her correction. She is fond of retort, of contrary vision, of refinements of interpretation that alter old sayings. Her goal is not one-upmanship (she often takes herself to task) but imaginative vitality. Among modernists she is perhaps the most vigorous exponent of the classical value of wit in all its connotations: ingenuity, inventiveness, irony, linguistic virtuosity. In "Silence" (CP, 91), for instance, she examines the cliché of American hospitality, "make my house your home," revising home to "inn" with the reminder that "inns are not residences." The values of reserve and restraint need defending in a culture dominated by a superficial openness and demonstrativeness. In the midst of talkative America the virtue of silence is little understood, but "the deepest feeling always shows itself in silence, /not in silence, but restraint." To an audience so recently embracing Whitmanian self-expansion, Moore may seem archaic, a Ben Franklin of American poetry. But she is unique in offering traditional Protestant



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values in a radical style. The values are affected by the style as much as the style by the values, and we should not glance too quickly over what may seem like an archaic sense of propriety. Moore's poetry is radical as well in the sense of getting to the roots of ideas, to uncover their essential and original meanings. As she expresses and exercises them, these values are strained and invigorated. Thus she is a paradox of radical modernism and Puritan conservatism, of wildness and decorum.

Moore arrives at her beliefs by very surprising routes. She stresses the challenge to popular sensibility in "Silence" (CP, 91), for instance, by comparing genuine awe with a cat's relish of its prey: people are

*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.*

(ll 5-10)

The visceral impact of this example is not lost to Moore, and the strangeness of the example does not disappear through interpretation. By introducing obstacles to an easy acceptance of her judgment she persuades us of its daring and protects it from false assimilation. (She also indicates her own ambivalence.) As one who is so often quoting others, she may be "robbed of speech," but she has also preyed upon the speech of others. Other poets, especially American poets, were beginning to incorporate into art the qualities of violence and vulgarity they found in themselves and others, and in the American scene. Moore stood out as a defender of propriety—which is not a return to dull Victorian hypocrisies, but a strategy of vigorous survival. She gives vitality to the concept of the gentleman, to the qualities of restraint, deference, humility. Moore's modernism is thus the opposite of nihilism.

Though the articulation of values is, for Moore, one of the essential tasks of poetry, she is by no means a dogmatic poet. She sets the compressed, directive rhetoric of wisdom (aphorism, epigram, maxim) against the comprehensive, digressive rhetoric of observation; extended metaphor becomes a vehicle to extended understanding. The true vitality of Moore's work is best experienced in whole poems, where the dramatic interplay of image and concept can be seen. The theme of mortality, in particular, cannot be treated in easy generalities and vague symbols. In "A Grave" Moore enters a tradition of poets associating the

sea with death—Milton, Tennyson, Whitman, Poe and others. But she reacquaints herself with this association rather than simply inheriting it. The sea she depicts is not anthropomorphized. Rather, its very indifference to and difference from human concerns makes it a grave.

Pat phrases, conventional symbolisms, all forms of mental complacency are grist for Moore's mill. But that keen resistance to cliché and unexamined statement makes her a hard poet to understand; the problem at times of Moore's tone and statement is exacerbated by her keen interest in how people talk and write. Quotation was one of her trademarks, but behind that conspicuous stylistic trait lies aesthetic conviction. No poet listened more carefully to the variables of speech and the forms of humility or pride. Her ear was as remarkable as her eye. The self of these poems is not explicit but known in acts of attention, selection and arrangement. The Moore archives represent a testament to her voracious imagination, which drew from such sources as cocktail party talk, reviews, fashion columns, moral essays, and zoological features. But these texts undergo considerable alteration in meaning and even in phrasing as they are integrated into Moore's imaginative constructions. In "Poetry," for instance, Moore's paradoxical remark that the ideal poets will be "literalists of the imagination" has a significantly different meaning from Yeats's antithetical remark that Blake was too literal a realist of the imagination.³ In "An Octopus," Moore draws on the bureaucratic language of a *National Park Rules and Regulations* manual and the flaccid language of a feature article on octopi in the *Illustrated London News*, but she fuses them into one dazzling image of the mountain, of art, of sublimity. The poem offers natural description, aesthetic reflection, and witty parody, in winding, Jamesian sentences. Over two-thirds of it is acknowledged quotation. Moore's approach to her materials is inclusive but not permissive. This passionately evaluative poet continually challenges us to weigh for ourselves the authority of each remark, though her arrangement may guide us. Her method is very different from Eliot's mythical centering of esoteric allusion, and from Williams' alternation in *Paterson* of the poet's lyric voice and the prosaic materials around him. Moore's quotations are an integral part of her lyric stance; mundane materials are processed to become part of the fabric of art.

Moore's distinct being reveals itself in choosiness and in what it chooses rather than in self-dramatization. While she will not discriminate against "business documents or schoolbooks," she will decide what excerpts from these might be suitable material for poetry.

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While she rebels against conventional hierarchies of class, she remains, as she proudly admits, fastidious on moral and aesthetic grounds together. In an era when avant-garde poetry prided itself on linguistic license as a new sort of realism, she knew hers was a lonely endeavor.

Moore's opinion of the remarks that she quotes varies considerably and is not always obvious. The alternative to cliché and narrow-mindedness is an open, ironic discourse that resists paraphrase, and lives in twists and turns of response to the discourse around it. The speaking self may be present as manner but is seldom present as content or referent. But Moore's reticence should not be mistaken for impersonality. Though she might agree with Eliot that there is a difference between the man who suffers and the poet who creates, a distinct "personality" does emerge in this poetry, and even, more specifically, a "life." We do not require the first person to know that Moore's life was full of struggle, that she developed a means of vigorous survival, that she was driven by a relentless search for the genuine, a commitment to propriety and humility maintained under much strain and ambivalence, a pervasive curiosity displaced from the realm of experience into the realm of observation. By clinging to the particular, and standing more as observer than as narcissistic agent in the world, she may not let us in on the secrets of the private life, but she does make clear for us the shape, form and rhythm of the inner life.

In Moore's moral world, the self that declares itself too readily is not only vulnerable but also false and shallow, a "tree trunk without/roots accustomed to shout/its own thoughts to itself like a shell," as she says in "Black Earth." While Moore's poetry is constantly celebrating, as means of self-protection, the value of indirection and its related values of modesty and restraint, she asks us to understand these in a special way. Moore's armor protects the self from its own rapaciousness as much as from the aggressions of the outer world. Her poem "His Shield" (CP, 144)—about Presbyterian John who reigned over an abundant kingdom without fear of siege—celebrates humility, not repression or abdication. Pride, possessiveness and self-display make one vulnerable and captive. "His shield was his humility," she says of Presbyterian John, because it did not dare others to challenge it. He was able to preserve his great wealth because he did not fear the loss of it. The warning "be dull, don't be envied or armed with a measuring rod," is not directed at the powerless or undistinguished, but precisely at those who would maintain boundless power, excellence and freedom. Here is an "unconquerable country of unassuming gusto." This is so often the theme of Moore's poetry as to become its major value, but it is a highly ambiguous one. At its limit, such an ethos denies selfhood. It is a value associated with Protestantism, and also traditionally with the feminine. Moore elevates this virtue above the traditionally masculine secular virtues of originality, authority, dominance. Whether Moore has changed the nature of humility with her change of its status is uncertain, except in the important respect that she makes the virtue active rather than passive. Humility no longer signifies inferiority, nor does reticence signify the absence of thought or intention. Moore sets up a dramatic tension between inner and outer expression, the "dullness" of an exterior almost requisite to a sublime interior. Power and freedom within this ratio are defined as private attributes first, but as public ones in consequence.

Moore's reticence about her personal experience, her emphasis on discretion, restraint and humility, and her elusive stance, make her a difficult poet for feminist analysis. Some critics have read the suppression of personal material in her work as a sign of submission to male literary standards. But this view in turn privileges a confessional standard inappropriate to Moore's work. If we look at the poems within their own aesthetic standard, based on response to the assertions of others rather than on self-assertion, we find a feminism that is the natural extension of a larger search for the genuine.

Moore's commitment to women's rights was fervent from the beginning. In Carlisle she belonged to the Woman's Suffrage Party of Pennsylvania, and her scrapbooks include numerous flyers and pamphlets obtained at suffrage rallies. She was by no means a dogmatic advocate of women and critic of men, however. Her poetry contains numerous satires and critiques of female as well as male vanity. "To Roses Only," "These Various Scalpels," and other early poems call upon women to understand the self-defeating nature of their vanity and obsession with glamorous surfaces. But if she exhorts women to draw upon their inner resources, and to beware the trap of beauty, she also corrects false public assumptions about women's nature. Typically, Moore begins with certain popular biases or assumptions and turns them upside-down. "Sojourn in the Whale" (CP, 90), ostensibly about Ireland, challenges dismissive concepts of feminine temperament:

*"There is a feminine temperament in direct contrast to ours,
which makes her do these things. Circumscribed by a
heritage of blindness and native
incompetence, she will become wise and will be forced to give in.
Compelled by experience, she will turn back;
water seeks its own level":
and you have smiled. "Water in motion is far
from level." You have seen it, when obstacles happen to bar
the path, rise automatically.*

(ll 8-16)



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"The Paper Nautilus," about the feminine activity of hatching eggs but also about the creative process, contrasts the nurturing with the mercantile sensibility. Here, Moore breaks down the easy conventional distinction between power and love: the nurturing instinct is not the recourse of the powerless, but an enabling restraint of power; the nautilus is compared positively to the major symbol of masculine strength, Hercules, who was "hindered to succeed." In this poem Moore conjoins images of might and delicacy, energy and restraint, as she does in "An Octopus," to celebrate the altruistic nature of creative power, which knows when to release what it has made: "the intensively/watched eggs coming from/the shell free it when they are freed," in contrast to "writers entrapped by/teatime fame and by/commuters' comforts." By endowing love with grace and strength and depicting conquest as petty and narcissistic, Moore adopts a feminist moral vocabulary. But it would be wrong to present Moore as a partisan writer. She attends always to the most singular and the most inclusive. Her scope is human, her plea is for independent thinking and the right to idiosyncrasy.

"Marriage" (CP, 62-70) exemplifies Moore's stance as a bedazzled and amused observer of the battle of the sexes. Whatever personal events may have occasioned these reflections (her friend H.D.'s marriage to Richard Aldington, Scofield Thayer's proposal of marriage to Moore herself) are conspicuously omitted. The poem appears to be a commonplace book organized around the topic of marriage, but it is both more universal and more particular than this. Many of the quotations have originally little or nothing to do with marriage (so that we are given the sense of a larger world brought to bear on this topic). A review of Santayana's poems becomes the source of a description of Adam as "something feline, something colubrine." An article in *Scientific American* on "Multiple Consciousness or Reflex Action of Unaccustomed Range," becomes the source of a portrait of Eve as "able to write simultaneously in three languages." As Moore herself remarks in her notes to the poem, these are "statements that took my fancy which I tried to arrange plausibly." But within that apparent casualness a deliberate argument, parodying the conventional mystique of each sex, but finally celebrating the mystery of their attachment, emerges. Moore never deserts the particular in this generic study of marriage between our archetypal parents. Types assert themselves through instances, the apple has taste and color, the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve retain their individual lusters, their heroic and comic postures. Adam and Eve in turn appear front stage to express their awe, their ambivalence, their resentment toward each other. As the parents of humanity, they are the originators of all human statement. In this poem of far-ranging quotation, the world of discourse begins to look like an extension of their great dispute. Eve is humorously depicted as dazzling both by her beauty and by her contradictions, "equally positive in demanding a commotion and in stipulating quiet." But Adam in his proud stature and pomposity is more fully satirized in the poem, which here takes on a feminist tone. Criticizing the mythology of the fall as "that invaluable accident exonerating Adam" Moore pokes fun at patriarchal pretensions: "he experiences joy/in seeing that he has become an idol"; "The ease of the philosopher/unfathered by a woman." Adam's famous higher yearnings falter in marriage, "a very trivial object indeed." Moore arranges the quotations contrastively to show the irony of the married state, commencing in romance and persisting in warfare. Much of the

poem is taken up with exposing myths of courtship through an emphasis on these paradoxes. The myth of the Fall is neatly evaded in the phase of courtship, emphasized in the married state. The pomp of the wedding ceremony is contrasted to the triviality and friction of the life together. In the harangue of battlecries back and forth the weight of the poem seems to press against marriage, which requires "all one's criminal ingenuity to avoid." Yet in the closing passages of the poem and intermittently along the way Moore seems awed as much as amused, and describes a structure in the institution of marriage not unlike the structures that in other poems are a source of paradoxical strength.

*One sees that it is rare—
that striking grasp of opposites
opposed each to the other, not to unity,
which in cycloid inclusiveness
has dwarfed the demonstration
of Columbus with the egg—
a triumph of simplicity—*

(ll 259-265)

The heroic here may be mocking, but it is also inspired. The final slogan from Daniel Webster, "liberty and union now and forever" may be ironic, but is also a stance to be taken seriously, like the "garlands of agreeing difference" in "Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns," like the chasm in "What Are Years" that "in its surrendering finds its continuing." Not only is the "strange experience of beauty" something that Moore, like Adam and Eve, has known, but the captivity that results from it may have its own transcendent claims, despite its absurdity. Marriage is a paradoxical state indeed, but Moore's imagination thrives on paradox.

Marriage, like every other subject in Moore's work, is but an instance of a larger idea of order, which embraces diversity and tension in a wide concept of dynamic unity. Nowhere is this idea of dynamic unity more apparent than in the formal design of Moore's poems and its relation to the rhetorical design. The short lines of "Marriage," running without break down nine pages, streamline the poem, in contrast to its expansive language, its lexical and contextual density, its syntactic spirals. The reader rides this "rapid transit" (as Williams called it), through the mind's changing terrain, taking in the poem's thoughts and images at a pace faster than he can take in sentences. Thus the form of the poem not only offers an area of clarity and continuity, but also opens the mind to new units of thought, the line, the clause, the phrase, which invigorate meaning and redistribute emphasis in the sentence.

While Moore joined other modernists in breaking with traditional English forms, she by no means moved toward formlessness. Rather, she designed poems in which visual, aural, and linguistic designs operate independently, even contrapuntally. Finding the iambic, endstopped line too insistent, too predictable, she preferred an aurally unobtrusive syllabic or naturalistic free verse. Within these forms she maintained a high degree of order without monotonous symmetries. Moore's strong sense of visual patterning affects not only her images and metaphors, but the appearance of her poems on the page. But while these designs work in apparent autonomy from the poem's statements, they spring

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from them. Moore would often write down a first stanza in free verse, as naturally as "drapery might fall," (that is, already with the sense of staging a portrait). She would then look for rhymes within the stanza, and reshape it to draw out these rhymes. The syllabic pattern of this first stanza would then serve as a kind of "chromosome" for subsequent stanzas.

The rhymes in such poems tend to accent minor words, even syllables, and follow no rigid scheme, providing writer and reader with more discovery than confirmation. We saw in "The Fish" how Moore's descriptive language pulls free of the poem's moral reflections. Similarly, the sharp visual design and the rhyme patterns of this poem counteract the movement of the sentences and paragraphs. Moore breaks whole stanzas in the middle of words and rhymes where the emphasis of the spoken word least falls. The patterns working asymmetrically in the poem sustain its energy and keep the reader's responses open. "In the Days of Prismatic Color" (CP, 41-2), for instance, uses a five line syllabic stanza that rhymes on such minor words as "was" and "because," or "it" and "fit"; it breaks lines and even whole stanzas on small or hyphenated words, never at the end of a sentence or even of a clause. Thus the formal patterning of the poem yields to forces other than the statement. This makes the poem impress us as more than statement, and causes us to redivide the images into new semantic units. This is of course the perfect poem for such innovations in form, as it tells us that truth cannot be shaped into baroque symmetries. The poem explicitly attacks conventional metrics:

*In the short-legged, fit-
ful 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."*

(ll 24-29)

Moore will not enslave herself to her own inventions any more than to adopted ones. As though to demonstrate truth's recalcitrance, she breaks with the stanza pattern of five lines she has employed throughout the poem, and concludes with only four.

While Moore rejected metrical verse form, her poems are, especially in later books, highly musical. Her timing was as inventive as her spacing. She was attracted in music, as in all things, to contrapuntal effects. Indeed, the music of "The Jerboa" (CP, 10-15) seems designed to accompany the subject's uneven yet rhythmic movement:

*By fifths and sevenths,
in leaps of two lengths,
like the uneven notes
of the Bedouin flute, it stops its gleaning
on little wheel castors, and makes fern-seed
foot-prints with kangaroo speed.*

(ll 147-152)

"Bird-Witted" (CP, 105-111) uses a sprightly but tugging beat that resists the more obvious musical shape of iambs but nonetheless uses long and short stresses to move it forward:

*With innocent wide penguin eyes, three
large fledgling mocking-birds below
the pussy-willow tree,
stand in a row,
wings touching, feebly solemn,
till they see
their no longer larger
mother bringing
something which will partially
feed one of them.*

(ll 1-10)

Laurance Stapleton has observed the contrast between the squeak of baby birds and the more melodious sounds of the grown bird, a contrast which becomes "an expert dissonance" at the end in response to the "intellectual cautiously creeping cat" whose pace is itself paralleled in sound. Moore's music is by no means mimetic. Sound parallels theme, but does not strictly accompany it. The music, whatever resonance it may have with images or concepts, is not enslaved to or enslaving of any other structural system in the poem. The poet prefers a pattern of dissonance and coincidence to a redundant harmony.

Moore shaped syntax and rhetoric just as consciously as she worked the more external materials of sound and visual pattern. Her language is impeccable, but uncooperative; it stretches to the breaking point without violating its rules, so that we become diverted from the referential world of the poem and drawn into the formal shapes the language is constructing. Main clauses lose their authority in the counterweight of subordinate clauses, so that the false security of immediate comprehension gives way to the greater pleasure of adventure in meaning. Moore ensures that the tools of language are no longer transparent vehicles of meaning, but become part of the surface, just as modern visual artists made the two dimensional canvas, the paint, and the shaping of pictorial space part of their activity. Again Moore heightens the tension between unifying and diversifying elements in the poem,

setting lexical variety, lists, variations on a theme, and most often, classifications against the rhetorical repetitions.

Moore's intention in designing these poems of classification is to break down the boundaries of each group. Moore's most attractive animals, like the plumed basilisk or the pangolin, seem to surpass nomenclature, borrowing qualities from each of the subgroups that surround them. "England" (CP, 46-47) sees nations as surpassing classification. The poem is organized by national identity, but the range of material within each identity, abstract and concrete, subjective and objective, physical and spiritual, places tension at the boundaries of the description. The characterization of "The East with its snails, its emotional/shorthand and jade cockroaches, its rock crystal and its imperturbability, all of museum quality" requires considerable pause, though the confident syntax pulls us on and forces us to accept the grouping. The last named nation is America, which seems to have so composite an identity that anything can be found there. America has a right to excellence, Moore argues, since superiority "has never been confined to one locality." Not even titles rule too heavily over the poems—England is simply the first word of a poem that turns out to be about the delights of diversity and the right of America to be considered the equal of any other nation.

Throughout her career, Moore experimented with long and short forms, and this alternation is itself an example of a general vacillation between compressed insight and expansion. Her tendency to minute observation and dense particularity plays against her tendency to pithy epigram and witty retort. The distinction became a contest in "Poetry" when she reduced the sixty-line poem to its four opening lines, but published the original version, at her editor's request, in her notes. In most poems, however, the two tendencies create dynamic energy in the structure, the closed force of certain lines resisted by the momentum of description. In Moore, the relationship between data and conclusion, between enumeration and summary, finish and neatness, is a matter of internal rhythm, a continuing alternation rather than pattern of governance. In this alternation her art of wild decorum emerges. It is a decorum that manages to articulate order without stifling change, that directs the mind without disenchanting it. For the mind is, she tells us, "conscientious inconsistency." All Moore's models of order are dynamic and intuitive, not authoritarian or programmatic ones, and her own work proves true to her aesthetic project, as every "unconfusion submits its confusion to proof."

Marianne Moore introduced a new way of thinking about language and its responsibilities and possibilities. Her identification of moral and aesthetic values is not merely a return to neo-classical notions of correctness, but a new consciousness of the weight of style in culture and the importance of art to the perception of values. Moore's willingness to make every matter of form a matter of ethics wrenched poetry back into the world of consequences. This return to premodernist assumptions about the nature and function of poetry, informed by a modernist self-consciousness about language and decorum, is typical of Moore's bidirectional stance in literary history. While her technique identifies her with the most avant-garde writers, her disposition and voice reinvoke classical habits of mind. Paradoxical in her stance as in the particulars of her vision, she is unique as a radically conservative imagination. When other poets rejected emblematic and symbolic techniques as hackneyed, she rejuvenated them for her time. She appropriated public language not with the cynicism of many post-modern poets, but in an admonishing and redemptive spirit. She brought art back into an intimate connection with nature, but through a very modern version of allegory. Her sense of realism is modern in its attention to surface, but it preserves the representational function of art.

Moore is not always successful, of course, as she tries to reconcile the traditions of her art with the challenges of modernism, and it is never simply a matter of compromise, rather of fresh invention. That her work was dramatically original any literary historian would agree. She cleared space for new words in poetry, for new approaches to its spatial arrangement, and for a new understanding of its whole enterprise. Yet for all the acclaim she received during her career, and the general acknowledgement that she is a major figure in the modernist generation, she is not viewed as a major precursor of contemporary poetry, as are Williams, Pound, Stevens, Auden, and Frost, her male counterparts. The reasons for this are complex, involving the dynamics of literary influence, both personal and aesthetic. In what is still a patriarchal tradition, female voices are seldom prominent. But perhaps more significantly, the idiosyncrasy of her voice (like the idiosyncrasy of Emily Dickinson's voice) may make direct influence problematic. The evidence of indirect or partial influence, on the other hand, is great. One thinks of Ashbery, Ammons, Clappitt and Leithauser, especially, among recent poets who incorporate elements of Moore's practice. Moore herself stands out of the mainstream, responding to a wealth of different sources rather than to one major precursor; it is as hard to say from what traditions she emerges as to say how her art has sponsored more recent writing. Seventeenth-century prose, emblem literature, classical epigram, Blake's poetry, James's fiction, all had their impact on this singular imagination. In this she is typical of Americans, who have so often employed the voices of the past with remarkable freedom of selection.

What is at stake in a poetry like this, that refuses to disclose the secrets of the inner or private life, that resists as much as it courts the

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comprehension of the reader, that teaches in paradoxes and reacts to other stances rather than confining its own? Perhaps it is best described as a poetry of imagination in a dance with fact, imagination both aesthetic and moral, aware of its difference from the world, but also its harmonies with it. It is a poetry of enchantment and vigorous evaluation, oddly both formalist and didactic, making these interchangeable. The poem "Poetry" tells us something about what is at stake: judgment and discrimination, but also a feeling for diversity, for value, for the genuine. ■

Notes

1. Marianne Moore, *Complete Poems* (New York: Viking, 1981), 267. Subsequent citations are given in the text, abbreviated CP.
2. John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (39 volumes, George Aiken, 1903-1912), Vol. III Part IV Ch. xvi, 28.
3. Cited in Moore (CP, 267): " 'Literalists of the imagination.' Yeats, *Ideas of Good and Evil* (A.H. Bullen, 1903), p. 182. 'The limitation of his view was from the very intensity of his vision; he was a too literal realist of imagination, as

others are of nature; and because he believed that the figures seen by the mind's eye, when exalted by inspiration, were "eternal existences," symbols of divine essences, he hated every grace of style that might obscure their lineaments.' "

MARIANNE MOORE—*Vision into verse*

The Rosenbach Museum & Library in Philadelphia is celebrating the centennial of Marianne Moore's birth with a traveling exhibition, *Vision into verse*, drawn from their Moore Collection. The exhibition will be at the Museum at 2010 Delancey Street until April 24. From May 7 to August 2 it can be seen at the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago. It then moves to the Grolier Club in New York from September 15 to December 1, followed by the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. from December 15 to February 15, 1988.


C.K. Williams's essay "Poetry and Consciousness," which appeared in the January/February 1987 issue of APR (Vol. 16 / No. 1), was first given as a talk at "Creativity and Adolescence," the Eastern Seaboard Conference of the American Society for Adolescent Psychiatry, September 27, 1986.

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