

RELIGION, GENDER, AND THE  
WRITING OF WOMEN

Historicist Essays in Honor of  
Janel Mueller



Edited by  
Joshua Scodel and Katie Trumpener

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In his image of Staël gyrating around Paris in "this age, by some called the Locomotive," Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) captures admirably this necessity for mobility which affects her thought.<sup>49</sup> Her aim is never Truth nor the isolated observation but comparison, exhortation, and having something to say. Her method keeps discourse flowing by presenting things not in themselves but in their relation to other things. Her criteria for evidence is more often "emotional necessity" than "demonstrable" proof, a contention not that things "are" but that they need to be a certain way.<sup>50</sup> Such a practice bothered scholars then and still bothers them now, as evidenced in characterizations of its current incarnation, cultural studies, as superficial, opportunist, too on-the-fly. Audible in such laments is preference for the solitude of study, the clear discernment of, and credit for, one's ideas. Staël is uninvested in originality, though desperately preoccupied with how she is received. She seeks, indeed demands, collaboration from her lovers, writing with them and ordering them to write for her.<sup>51</sup> For her, failure is being brilliant by herself.

Staël and Wollstonecraft coincide in this passion for writing as loving. They approach it from opposite sides: Wollstonecraft seeking greater autonomy for women, Staël demanding renewed opportunities for intellectual women's sociability. They also reform female character toward different ends—a future in which women define their own terms or are more free to live in terms of their others. But both view female character as addressing the future and their characteristic melancholy as a challenge to that future. Will "philosophical legislators" indeed "give serious attention to women," or perceive them as equal partners in the future's construction or destruction?<sup>52</sup> More than providing answers to the challenge, Wollstonecraft and Staël offer open-endedness as a method. It is central to their character and what it does for our future. Probably use of the word 'character' has now reached its term; newer ones—'agent', 'subject', 'desire'—speak the dissemination of their character more clearly. In preparing for the supersession of this term, Staël and Wollstonecraft live up to the future that their writings and characters were instrumental in making. Professors like Janel Mueller ensure that we enjoy reading in this spirit.

49. Thomas Carlyle, "Schiller, Goethe, and Madame de Staël," in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, in Five Volumes* (New York, 1900), 1:502–12.

50. See Hogsett (n. 39 above), p. 77.

51. On Staël's collaborative aesthetic, see Joel Haefner, "The Romantic Scene(s) of Writing," in *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776–1837* (Philadelphia, 1994), pp. 256–73.

52. "On Literature," in *Major Writings of Germaine de Staël*, trans. and ed. Vivian Folkenflik (New York, 1987), p. 201.

## Marianne Moore and the Women Modernizing New York

CRISTANNE MILLER

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In a poem called "New York," first published in 1921, Marianne Moore concludes that what draws one to the city is not its commerce, its flashy "dime-novel exterior," its "scholastic philosophy of the wilderness," or its particular natural or cultural features but its "accessibility to experience."<sup>1</sup> This phrase comes from Henry James, but "experience" may have been a category of particular interest to women in the early twentieth century, since unrestricted, public experience had been off-limits to previous generations of middle-class women—even in New York, which from the late nineteenth century on was considered unique in the United States for the fast tempo of its changes and its bohemianism.<sup>2</sup> For example, according to Lloyd Morris, it was not until the 1910s that women could appear unescorted in restaurants and hotels in Manhattan without courting suspicion or disapproval, and there were relatively few women in any branch of professional or public cultural employment.<sup>3</sup> By the midteens, Moore saw the conditions restricting women's experience in New York as changing, if not changed.

As a poet, a reviewer of books on widely varied topics, and an editor of a major literary and arts journal with an international circulation, Marianne Moore participated in two kinds of revolution in early twentieth-century life, one aesthetic and the other social. The first is the much-heralded international drive among artists and writers to

I wish to thank Janel Mueller here for all that she taught me about attention to the language of poetry. Unpublished material from the Moore archives is quoted with the permission of Marianne Craig Moore, literary executor for the Estate of Marianne Moore.

1. "New York" was first published in *The Dial* in 1921 and first published in book form in *Observations* (New York, 1924), p. 65.

2. Moore acknowledges that she quotes from Henry James in her "Notes." For an explanation of Moore's finding this phrase, see Patricia C. Willis, "New York: 'Accessibility to Experience,'" *Marianne Moore Newsletter* 4 (1980): 13–14.

3. Lloyd Morris, *Incredible New York, 1850–1950: High Life and Low Life of the Last One Hundred Years* (New York, 1951), pp. 3, 74, 290.

"make it new." Several books have been written about Moore's role in the development of modernist poetics.<sup>4</sup> The second revolution has been far less publicized but is hardly less striking and will be my topic—namely, the drive among women to construct or provide substantive support for the institutional infrastructure enabling the success of this "new" art. While women played active roles in other cities, New York is exceptional for the number of women from widely diverse backgrounds assuming such roles and for the variety of fields in which they were influential.<sup>5</sup> In the context of this second revolution, Moore's influence as a reviewer and editor figures more significantly than her production as poet, although she typically voices her responses to her age and positioning most directly in her poetry. Moore was one of the few women in New York to have played equally important roles in the development of a modernist art form and as a facilitator of others' productions. Consequently, her perception of the city may be particularly illuminating in understanding the social phenomenon of women's modernizing activities from the inside. In this article, I will use Moore's reviews, her letters as editor of *The Dial*, and her poems about New York to trace the trajectory of her response to the city's challenges and to provide a suggestive commentary on this striking cultural moment.

As I see it, Moore's decision to move to New York in 1918 was much of a piece with her choice to be an active and public player in the shaping of a modernist aesthetic and art. Although in different forms, both choices entailed earning one's way in an extremely mobile, rapidly changing, and masculine sphere. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's three-volume *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* provides ample evidence of the general sexism of the period, and several accounts of New York—preeminently Ann Douglas's *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s*—emphasize the city's masculinity and misogyny.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, before the turn of the century

4. See Bonnie Costello, *Marianne Moore: Imaginary Possessions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981); Linda Leavell, *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts: Prismatic Color* (Baton Rouge, La., 1995); and Cristanne Miller, *Marianne Moore: Questions of Authority* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995) for overviews of this subject.

5. In a project titled "Women Shaping Modernism," I am exploring the different roles taken by women in influencing the shapes of their local and national experimental interarts communities. I have found little evidence of institutional leadership, let alone the founding of major museums and journals, among women in Europe, except among the British and American women in London and Paris.

6. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn., 1988–94); and Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York, 1995). On the period generally, see Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); on New York, see Nina Miller, *Making Love Modern: The Intimate Public Worlds of New York's Literary Women* (New York, 1998), esp. pp. 8–11, 21, 98–103.

very few women in the United States had acted as public arbiters of taste, founded museums or major galleries, or edited important literary journals.

Yet by the mid 1920s, many of the institutions enabling contemporary experimental arts and literature in New York were dominated by women. In reference to the visual arts during this period, Kathleen McCarthy asserts that women "took the greatest gambles on the art of the future, the untested, the untried" and argues that they were willing to take these risks because they were not allowed access to already-established institutional structures.<sup>7</sup> Contemporary art afforded no cachet to the collector and no access to powerful institutions for the artist; consequently, it seemed equally open to men and women, and especially attractive to women.<sup>8</sup> According to Jayne Marek, many women involved in editing and publishing during these decades were influential pioneers: as she writes, the more one looks, the more evidence one finds that, but for women's foresight, resourcefulness, and successful institutional establishment, much important modernist literature and criticism might never have been printed.<sup>9</sup> Noel Riley Fitch comments that "perhaps at no other time in history have women so actively participated in the business of art."<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that women were the only important collectors or editors but, rather, that from 1910 to 1930 women participated fully in the genesis of the institutions that made New York a major center for contemporary art, and they were especially prominent in the avant-garde, in part because this field was of less interest to powerful and ambitious men.

For example, in the visual arts, Abby Rockefeller, Lillie Bliss, and Mary Quinn Sullivan together founded the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1929; sculptor Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney opened two galleries in 1908, founded Friends of Young Artists in 1909 (which in 1918 became the Whitney Studio Club), and then in 1931—after the Metropolitan Museum refused to accept the gift of her vast collection of contemporary art—founded the Whitney Museum.<sup>11</sup> Edith Halpert, one of Abby

7. Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830–1930* (Chicago, 1991), pp. xi, xiii. McCarthy argues against the assumption of writers like Douglas that women in the United States had long been the nation's "cultural custodians," pointing out that until after the turn of the century they had very little power in cultural institutions.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

9. Jayne E. Marek, *Women Editing Modernism: "Little" Magazines and Literary History* (Lexington, Ky., 1995), p. 12.

10. Noel Riley Fitch, "Sylvia Beach: Commerce, Sanctification, and Art on the Left Bank," in *A Living of Words: American Women in Print Culture*, ed. Susan Albertine (Knoxville, Tenn., 1995), p. 191.

11. See McCarthy, pp. 196–229.

Rockefeller's advisers on collecting the contemporary work which was to become the core collection of MoMA, founded the Downtown Gallery in 1926. According to Halpert, "Practically all the adventurous collectors of modern art and the majority of the gallery visitors were women."<sup>12</sup> Naomi Sawelson-Gorse supports Halpert's claim in her report that women made up a majority of the audiences at Galka Scheyer's lectures on art and made a majority of all purchases—including several women who bought on meager salaries.<sup>13</sup> Modernist art, in other words, was not only of interest to a few wealthy women. Katherine Dreier founded the Cooperative Mural Workshops in 1914; in 1917 she was one of the primary organizers of the Society of Independent Artists, and in 1920 she cofounded, with Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, the Société Anonyme, the first museum of modern art in the United States. Dreier later became president of the Société and ran it for over twenty years, organizing the first shows in the United States for several European artists, including Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Joan Miró.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Dreier's own paintings were exhibited in the 1913 Armory Show—as were those of more than a dozen other women in the New York art scene.<sup>15</sup> Agnes Meyer was an important financial backer of Stieglitz's 291 gallery and of the journal *291*; she also cofounded and financially backed the Modern Gallery with Maurice de Zayas in 1915.<sup>16</sup> Tapestry artist and painter Marguerite Zorach founded the New York Society of Women Artists in 1920, a center for avant-garde painters and sculptors. Zorach was a friend of Moore's and was involved with some of the same publications—for example, she and her husband designed the cover of *Others*, one of the first little magazines to publish Moore's verse, and she published poems in the journal. Zorach also made at least three portraits of Moore, including an oil painting of the poet and her mother.<sup>17</sup>

12. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 196. McCarthy notes that it is only after the Armory Show that women began taking over leadership in exhibiting and collecting contemporary art; before this time men were the most important promoters of the avant-garde in New York.

13. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, "Narrow Circles and Uneasy Alliances: Galka Scheyer and American Collectors of the Blue Four," in *The Blue Four in the New World*, ed. Vivian E. Barnett and Josef Helfenstein (New Haven, Conn., 1997), p. 52.

14. Dorothy Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s* (Boston, 1987), p. 204.

15. On the Armory Show, see Milton W. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show*, rev. ed. (New York, 1988). Other New Yorkers include Nessa Cohen, Aileen Dresser, Florence Dreyfous, Edith Haworth, Margaret Huntington, Grace Johnson, Amy Londoner, Ethel Myers (who established the Jerome Myers Memorial Gallery), Marjorie Organ, Josephine Paddock, Louise Pope, May Wilson Preston (founder, with her husband Thomas Watkins, of the Society of Illustrators and the Association of American Painters and Sculptors), Katharine Nash Rhoades, Francis Simpson Stevens, Hilda Ward, and Marguerite Zorach.

16. McCarthy (n. 7 above), p. 183.

17. Leavell (n. 4 above), pp. 37–38.

In dance, New York witnessed myriad performances by Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, particularly during the midteens. More important, the city became the home of Martha Graham, the most influential pioneer of dance as an art responsive to the "nervous energy" of a modern urban environment as well as to the free-form possibilities for movement of the female body.<sup>18</sup> The 1920s was also the golden period of the blues, when women performers dominated the field and the finest performers made their names and performed in Harlem. Led by Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, who began touring in 1904 and made her first recordings in 1923, and followed by other great musicians such as Bessie Smith, Ida Cox, and Bertha Hill, these women changed the face of American music with their extraordinary performances and recordings.

Theater may have been the liveliest of the arts in New York, and women participated vitally in establishing theater companies and organizations. Theresa Helbrun was the driving force behind the organization of the Theater Guild in 1919, building the subscription list to twenty-five thousand members and herself producing several plays.<sup>19</sup> During this period, the guild was highly experimental in its productions and was known for introducing contemporary European playwrights to the United States, as well as producing new American writers. Edith Isaacs was associate editor of *Theater Arts* beginning in 1918 and then editor from 1922 until 1946. During this period she transformed the magazine into a forum for the work of new U.S. artists, including music, dance, visual arts, mime, and theater, giving concentrated attention to African American theater productions. Isaacs also helped create the National Theater Conference in 1925 and served as its president for four years.<sup>20</sup> Susan Glaspell, with her husband George Cram and Eugene O'Neill, formed the Greenwich Village Playwrights Theater, which produced, among others, Glaspell's and O'Neill's plays. In Harlem, Regina Andrews—playwright and, like Moore, an employee of the New York Public Library system—hosted an important salon in her apartment and made the 135th Street branch of the library an important gathering place for Harlem intellectuals by hosting speakers

18. Dorothy Brown calls attention to women's leadership in dance (pp. 210–11). On Graham, see Dee A. Reynolds, "Dancing Free: Women's Movements in Early Modern Dance," in *Modernism, Gender, and Culture: A Cultural Studies Approach*, ed. Lisa Rado (New York, 1997), pp. 247–79.

19. Dorothy Brown, p. 211. Roy Waldau presents the history somewhat differently: the guild was founded by Helen Westley, Lawrence Langner, and Philip Moeller, and Helbrun was the first "play representative" (*Vintage Years of the Theatre Guild, 1928–1938* [Cleveland, 1972], p. 8). He describes Helbrun, though, as choosing the scripts to produce and influencing enormously the directions and success of the guild in its early years (pp. 337–43).

20. *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, s.v., "Isaacs, Edith."

such as Langston Hughes, Eleanor Roosevelt, A. Philip Randolph, and Marcus Garvey.<sup>21</sup> Anderson was also one of the four organizers and became the second executive director of the Harlem Experimental Theater, founded in 1927, and encouraged the genesis of the Krigwa Theater and the Harlem Suitcase Theater. Equally striking, during this period women made up somewhere between 50 and 80 percent of New York theater audiences.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, during the teens and twenties women became increasingly involved in editing experimentalist literary journals and intellectually significant national-circulation magazines. In 1916, Margaret Anderson and Jean Heap moved *The Little Review* from Chicago to New York, where it flourished as an important organ of the avant-garde. In conjunction with the magazine, Heap also opened the Little Review Gallery in 1924 and organized two expositions—one of international theater (1926) and one of the machine age (1927).<sup>23</sup> From 1919 to 1926, Jessie Fauset was literary editor of *The Crisis*—a journal whose name was suggested by Mary White Ovington, a founding organizer of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, an early developer of model housing projects for African Americans in New York, and an author of novels, short stories, plays, and sociological studies.<sup>24</sup> During this same period, Gwendolyn Bennett edited *Opportunity*, and in 1926, Bennett, Zora Neale Hurston, Hughes, and others founded and edited the single issue of the avant-garde magazine *Fire*. From 1923 to 1926, Irita van Doren was editor of the *Nation* and book review editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*; also in 1923, Freda Kirchwey became managing editor of the *Nation*, a role she maintained until 1938, when she bought the magazine, continuing to edit it until 1955.<sup>25</sup>

In 1923, Moore was invited to edit *Broom* and for a few months helped Lola Ridge with editorial duties there.<sup>26</sup> She began significant writing and editorial assistance at *The Dial* in 1924, working with Alyse Gregory, who was then managing editor. Moore then served as chief

21. Dorothy Brown, p. 204. See also Lorraine Roses and Ruth Randolph, *Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (Boston, 1990), pp. 4–7.

22. Douglas (n. 6 above), pp. 379–80. Douglas quotes several drama critics bemoaning the lack of “virility” on the stage and attributing the low quality of American theater to women’s tastes.

23. Dickran Tashjian, “From Anarchy to Group Force: The Social Text of *The Little Review*,” in *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity*, ed. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), pp. 281–82.

24. The information on Ovington is taken from Bruce Kellner, ed., *The Harlem Renaissance: A Historical Dictionary for the Era* (New York, 1984), pp. 258, 275.

25. Dorothy Brown, p. 198. See also Elaine Showalter, ed., *These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays from the Twenties* (Old Westbury, N.Y., 1979), pp. 5–6.

26. Leavell, p. 46.

editor from 1925 until the journal ceased publication in 1929. Leaving the aesthetic for the popular sphere, one might also mention Helen Lansdowne Resor, the feminist leader of a twenty-three-woman advertising writing team, who was said to have made the fortune of the J. Walter Thompson Advertising agency.<sup>27</sup> Moore’s own enthusiasm for the linguistic spunk of much advertising—an enthusiasm she mentions in more than one poem—indicates the possibilities for crossover between such apparently disparate fields. Together with Chicago’s *Poetry* magazine, edited by Harriet Monroe, these women were responsible for publishing much of what is considered canonical modernist literature today—including major work by Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, H. D., T. S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Mina Loy, Alain Locke, Hughes, and D. H. Lawrence.<sup>28</sup> In collecting and establishing venues for visual arts; in dance, blues recordings, and theater; and in the editing of “new” literature, women were at the forefront of the modern in New York.

Such prominence came at a cost. In a chapter titled “Ezra Pound and Literary Editors,” Marek focuses on Pound’s misogyny as an example of “the prevailing ethos in which women editors had to work.”<sup>29</sup> As Marek notes, Pound was not alone among his male peers in wanting the intellectual authority and recognition attached to editorship without having to deal with the mundane responsibilities of production, correspondence, and running magazine offices—that is, in wanting women to produce journals for experimental literature but men to have intellectual control. Some men represented themselves as having more influence than the evidence suggests they did. These men were also in some cases dismissive of the women on whom they relied. Pound refers to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap—the first to print any part of Joyce’s *Ulysses* beginning in 1918—as “editrices” that “have merely messed and muddled,” and Holly Baggett argues that the obscenity trial of Anderson and Heap for this publication was “very much about the attempt to silence the ‘New Women’ of the twenties.”<sup>30</sup> Nina Miller sees the Village, despite its powerful individual feminists, as “a masculine bulwark of art and individualism” in which many male artists “took up an identity

27. Kakie Urch, “The [Em] Space of Modernism and the Possibility of Flâneuserie: The Case of Vina Delmar and her ‘Bad Girls,’” in Rado, ed. (n. 18 above), p. 21.

28. Marek (n. 9 above) has done the most extensive work on the British and American women who were influential in modernist publishing. See also Albertine, ed. (n. 10 above), for essays on individual nineteenth- and twentieth-century U.S. female editors—including those like Ida B. Wells who worked in nonliterary fields; Wells edited and published four newspapers between 1891 and 1913.

29. Marek, pp. 7, 167–92. See also Tashjian, pp. 266–69.

30. *Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. D. D. Paige (New York, 1950), p. 238; and Holly Baggett, “The Trials of Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap,” in Albertine, ed., p. 169.

of hypernormative masculinity" and women in response felt constrained to assert a public heterosexuality.<sup>31</sup> In the preface to her *Women in Dada*, Sawelson-Gorse points out ways in which male Dadaists trivialized and appropriated conceptions of the female and marginalized their female colleagues—prominently, for example, in the sole issue of *New York Dada* (1921).<sup>32</sup>

More generally, following World War I women became the targets of an advertising campaign to reinforce an ideology of sexual difference encouraging women's household consumption and notions of biological destiny. Advertising also took advantage of the flapper vogue, promoting liberated women as more able consumers and commodifying "modernity" as a "look" that could be purchased.<sup>33</sup> These women had to face constant comparison with their more illustrious male peers or with the (often male) artists and writers whom they promoted and with whom they worked. Indeed, many of these women may have turned to the production or exhibition of others' work because of their inability to sell or market their own—an inability that was all too easy to interpret as evidence of lesser ability, whether or not such interpretation was in individual cases justified. Production and editing gave them centrality in a world from which they (like many male editors and collectors) might have been excluded on the basis of artistic merit alone. Yet production, promotion, and visibility are crucial to the development of any artistic or literary movement; consequently, I find it relatively unimportant to speculate about which of these women might be seen as minor artists or writers on various aesthetic or ideological grounds and more important to acknowledge what were in fact their extraordinary accomplishments—especially given the opposition to their success and the fact that no other city during the modernist period produced a group of women so influential in precisely these instrumental roles.

Moore never comments on women's cumulative influence in the arts. Yet from her first trip to New York in 1909 at the age of twenty-two, Moore saw the city as supporting women's involvement in social activism and in the arts, and she relished every aspect of what she saw there; she wrote over 150 pages to her mother and brother describing

31. N. Miller (n. 6 above), pp. 11, 21.

32. Sawelson-Gorse, ed., pp. x–xiii.

33. Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society* (New York, 1990), pp. 278–79, 306. Chadwick also provides multiple examples of misogynistic or ideologically limiting reviews, commentary, or personal correspondence directed against the professionalism and success of individual female visual artists. See also June Sochen, *The New Woman: Feminism in Greenwich Village, 1910–1920* (New York, 1972), pp. 39–40.

her weekend visit.<sup>34</sup> During this trip, Moore attended a feminist play by J. M. Barrie, a piano concert by Igor Paderewski, and a women's suffrage meeting at the People's Institute; visited Tiffany's and a few art galleries; and stayed with the highly cultured and influential parents of one of her college friends. In writing home, Moore describes an exchange between the Sprague-Smith parents, in which the husband asks the wife her opinion of a painting he has brought home on trial and then, on her advice, decides to return. Moore comments that she would "be satisfied with a man if he picked a picture as harmonious as that" but presents in detail the articulate clarity of Belle Sprague-Smith's judgment and notes her husband's "cheerful" acquiescence to it.<sup>35</sup>

Six years later, in 1915, Moore returned to New York with family friends from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and this time her own discriminating taste took center stage. No longer awestruck, at the age of twenty-eight she held her own in intellectual and literary debate—exchanging assured opinions with editors, art critics, artists, and writers. Moore refers to her 1915 trip as her "sojourn in the whale," without specifying what kind of prophet, or sinner, this makes her (*SL*, p. 107). In late 1916, Moore's family moved to New Jersey, and she commuted so regularly into the city that she called this her "Middle Pullman period" (*RML* VII:10:06, p. 47). In 1918, Moore and her mother moved into an apartment in the Village, and Moore became a permanent part of the scene that she had gaped at nine years earlier.

It was probably between her first trip of admiring enthusiasm focused on the taste and connections of the Sprague-Smiths and her second trip of self-positioning that Moore wrote a suggestive poem, "To Be Liked by You Would Be a Calamity":

34. In my view, Moore maintained this enthusiasm about New York throughout her life. This position counters John Slatin's argument that Moore was unable "to come to terms . . . with the city as a social phenomenon" and fled to Brooklyn as to a comfortably village-like refuge in 1930—although Moore's residence in Brooklyn was only a short subway ride from Manhattan and Brooklyn had well over a million more inhabitants than Manhattan by that time. See John M. Slatin, "The Town's Assertiveness: Marianne Moore and New York City," in *Marianne Moore: Woman and Poet*, ed. Patricia C. Willis (Orono, Maine, 1990), p. 61.

35. "Marianne Moore Papers," February 4, 1909; Rosenbach Museum and Library, category VI : box 15a : folder 02. References to the Rosenbach archive hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *RML*. Charles Sprague-Smith ran the People's Institute, which Moore describes as "a marvellous affair, a kind of free league for the working classes"; February 1, 1909, *The Selected Letters of Marianne Moore*, ed. Bonnie Costello, Celeste Goodridge, and Cristanne Miller (New York, 1997), p. 54, hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *SL*.

"Attack is more piquant than concord," but when  
 You tell me frankly that you would like to feel  
 My flesh beneath your feet,  
 I'm all abroad—I can but put my weapon up and  
   Bow you out.  
 Gesticulation—it is half the language.  
 Let unsheathed gesticulation be the steel  
 Your courtesies must meet,  
 Since in your hearing words are mute, which to my senses  
   Are a shout.<sup>36</sup>

While the poem's quotation points to a scene of dispute in a Hardy novel between a young female writer and a male critic, I want to consider the poem as more broadly representative of Moore's stance as a woman toward an attractive but potentially condemnatory masculine world.<sup>37</sup> Still living in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, with her mother and probably still struggling to publish her first poems, Moore must have felt that the publishing world was a powerful antagonist. As her response to repeated letters of rejection shows, however, Moore took rejection as a challenge. In 1914, she wrote her brother,

I got a slip from *The Atlantic* yesterday with a poem of some distinction that I sent them and since then I have been machinating their overthrow and their disappointment at a pigheaded and churlish prejudice they have against anything that is new, for their ways should end in their destruction. I got a letter from Mr. Dell [of *The Masses*] couched in conciliatory phosphorescence (and all my stuff). He says it fascinates him and bewilders him and he asks if I will let him know when I publish a book. . . . Bah! He makes me think of turnip tops. (March 26, 1914; RML VI:20:04)

The next day she wrote, "I am writing a poem as an indirect choke pear for all my detractors and sluggard critics—drat them. It is on a couple of fighters" (March 27, 1914; RML VI:20:04).

From 1911 to 1915, Moore responded to rejection pragmatically by resubmitting rejected poems and writing new ones. In this poem about fighting, her speaker also responds pragmatically, here by redefining the mode of battle. The speaker's antagonist brandishes a dueling sword, whereas the speaker announces that she will fight only with the "steel"

36. First published in *The Chimaera* in July 1916; first published in book form in *Observations* (n. 1 above), p. 37.

37. In "Marianne Moore, Hardy, and Critics" (*Marianne Moore Newsletter* 2 [1978]: 7–10), Patricia C. Willis first identifies Moore's reference as being to Hardy's 1905 novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. Jeanne Heuvig writes about this poem in *Omissions Are Not Accidents: Gender in the Art of Marianne Moore* (Detroit, 1992), pp. 74–78; as do I in *Questions of Authority* (n. 4 above), pp. 108–9, 113–14.

of "unsheathed gesticulation" and a bow dismissing her antagonist. Since those things mattering to her most cannot even be heard by this aggressor ("in your hearing words are mute, which to my senses / Are a shout"), she bows him out, perhaps still hoping to find a partner, reader, or publisher who is attuned to similar "words" or values, someone who does not reject "anything that is new." The heterosexual aspect of this exchange is implied by the odd conjunction of terms in the title and first line as well as by the source in Hardy. In response to his approach—perceived as a potential calamity if not a direct attack—the speaker rejects what one might identify as a masculine and traditional mode of battle for a less brutal but equally pointed exchange of wit. That Moore may have been seen by others as engaging in such gendered battle is suggested by a comment she quotes without explanation in the margins of a conversation notebook: "Miss Moore, you insult my manhood" (1924; RML VII:11:01, p. 81). Similarly, that she herself saw such battle as gendered is implied by a limerick she wrote in college:

There was a young lady named Liz  
 Who made writing poems her biz  
   But when she met Bob  
   She gave up the job  
 It took all her time to read his.<sup>38</sup>

In "To Be Liked by You," the speaker's anger may also be directed at the assurance of her antagonist in his deafness, hence her response might also be understood as opposing the complacent arrogance of the empowered.

Read as "indirect choke pear" to her critics, whether or not it is indeed the poem to which Moore refers in her letter, "To Be Liked by You" might express the optimistic hope that opposition will goad her into independent, self-defined channels of action. As she comments in 1913 in a reading diary, "People write much better when they are stung into sarcasm or rapture" (RML VII:08:03, p. 1). At the same time, the refusal to duel physically takes the form of verbal parry and thrust, allowing her to get the last word in while remaining gracious. Read with the advantage of retrospect, the poem may also serve as a model for the kind of battle being waged by individual women all over the city of New York who, when excluded from traditional centers of power, constructed alternative strategies for participating in the shaping of New York's cultural world, notably by entering into the production and encouragement of the avant-garde. Leaving traditional

38. Quoted in Eileen Moran, "Portrait of the Artist: Marianne Moore's Letter to Hildegard Watson," *Poesis: A Celebration of H. D. and Marianne Moore* 6, nos. 3/4 (Bryn Mawr, Pa., 1985), p. 127.



weapons aside, they turned to “unsheathed” activity, dismissing the deafness of those hostile to them and making their own way.

Moore’s first residence in New York was in the Village, and her 1916 accounts of the city suggest that even while living in New Jersey she spent much of her time there. The center of New York’s artistic and social experimentalism during the teens, the Village was dominated by a powerful group of anarchist and feminist women and men, including Crystal and Max Eastman, Margaret Sanger (who founded the journal *Woman Rebel* in 1913), Emma Goldman, Henrietta Rodman, Ida Rauh, Glaspell, and Floyd Dell—the editor of *The Masses* who rejected Moore’s early poems.<sup>39</sup> Geographically and demographically, the Village was unique in the New York of the teens: it was one of the few neighborhoods that had not yet undergone the urban renewal of grid construction (straightening and expanding the major avenues) and new subway lines. Consequently, its area seemed physically inaccessible and confined. This isolation, combined with the age of its housing, made the neighborhood ideal for artists and others seeking low rent and escape from the commercial aspects of New York’s modernity.<sup>40</sup> In this physical and political enclave, Goldman provided the primary energy and fund-raising efforts behind the founding of the Ferrer Modern School in 1911, a children’s and adult school that quickly became a meeting point for New York intellectuals and artists. Poet Lola Ridge conceived, founded, and edited the first two issues of *The Modern School* magazine, beginning in 1912.<sup>41</sup> Later, Ridge worked with Alfred Kreymborg on *Others* (1915–19), taking on assistant editorial responsibilities, especially after 1917. She was also the American editor of *Broom* between 1921 and 1923. Even before moving to the Village herself in 1918, Moore had regular contact with Ferrer Modern School associates like Ridge and wrote of them in her letters.

What did it feel like to be one of the women in New York creating the structures to support avant-garde arts and literature? Socially, Moore

39. Sochen sees men as the primary literary theorists and women as the stronger social activists in the Village of this period (pp. 4, 133). See also William R. Taylor, *In Pursuit of Gotham: Culture and Commerce in New York* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 121–28. The information on Sanger comes from Martin Green, *The Armory Show and the Paterson Strike Pageant* (New York, 1988), p. 25. See N. Miller for a bleaker view of the Village’s feminism.

40. Sochen, p. 8. Because of both widespread reports of this group’s bohemianism and the eventual extension of Seventh Avenue and the west-side subway line, by the early 1920s the Village had become trendy. As Sochen also notes, none of the Village feminists continued their feminist debate into the 1920s, as they were discouraged by their failure to radicalize the larger, national women’s community and movement and by the war (p. 125).

41. Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton, N.J., 1980), pp. 111–64; on the journal, pp. 80, 91, 161–64. The journal continued until 1922.

is not representative for thinking about this question: she lived with her mother, never married, and participated minimally in the surrounding bohemianism. Moore’s feelings as an ambitious poet, critic, and editor, however, may indeed be representative of what these women felt. Moore’s letters suggest that her primary responses to the city were of challenge and excitement, although she also expressed feelings of isolation, trepidation, and dislike. As noted above, such challenges called forth Moore’s defiance. For example, before her second trip to the city in December 1915, the young poet writes her brother that, in response to her first publication of poems, William Rose Benet advised her “not to let [herself] be influenced too much by the Imagists.” Moore remarks: “I’ll have to tell Billy or rather show him that it’s like getting married; I am sorry to disappoint him, but it is not possible to meet his views on the subject and please myself” (May 9, 1915, *SL*, p. 98). By representing her aesthetic convictions as constituting marriage, Moore suggests that she sees herself on the verge of potential partnership with more established movements or writers and feels fully able to choose such a mate for herself.

In a poem published the following year, Moore expresses somewhat less confidence in her self-positioning. In “Is Your Town Nineveh?” the speaker is a “Jonah” addressing other potential Jonahs with her question: Do you live in that wicked town the prophet is supposed to warn of its coming destruction?

Why so desolate?  
And why multiply  
in phantasmagoria about fishes,  
what disgusts you? Could  
not all personal upheaval in  
the name of freedom be tabooed [*sic*]?  
Is it Nineveh  
and are you Jonah  
in the sweltering east wind of your wishes?  
I, myself have stood  
there by the aquarium, looking  
at the Statue of Liberty.<sup>42</sup>

The concluding lines reveal that Moore’s Nineveh is New York. The opening stanza reveals her feelings of depression, isolation, and disgust in thinking of the city—perhaps even referring to its bohemianism as “personal upheaval in / the name of freedom.” And yet the poet implies

42. First published in *The Lantern*, in spring 1916. First published in book form in Marianne Moore, *Poems* (London, 1921), p. 24; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *Poems*.

that the city is “[her] town” and identifies herself at the end with both its institutions and its freedom: as the speaker says, “I, myself have stood” between the aquarium and the Statue of Liberty—metonyms for restraint and freedom, but only partial restraint. An aquarium confines whales and fish but offers the possibility of safe inspection to the human visitor and, although the building temporarily confines the visitor as well, she may choose when to emerge from it and see “Liberty” again.

New York, this poem implies, provides Moore both a sense of duty or purpose and opportunity; it gives the poet a social and ethical as well as an aesthetic function. This function may be understood multiply. Throughout her life, Moore protested against what she saw as the nation’s increasing self-centeredness and commercial materialism, advocating instead the pursuit of a greater good beyond one’s immediate pleasure. Moore articulates her sense that poets should take the lead in such broadly moral education in her advice to Elizabeth Bishop: “I can’t help wishing you would sometime in some way, risk some unprotected profundity of experience; or since no one admits profundity of experience, some characteristic private defiance of the significantly detestable” (May 1, 1938, *SL*, p. 391). Moore’s language in this letter and in “Is Your Town Nineveh?” is itself “characteristic” in stressing “what disgusts you” or what one “significantly detest[s]”—in short, in articulating combative grounds for speaking out. Read in the light of this advice to Bishop, “Is Your Town Nineveh?” may suggest that the “personal upheaval” of desire or “wishes” is inevitable and powerful, but experience in the world should point the individual toward “profundity of experience,” something beyond both religious “phantasmagoria about fishes” and the self—just as the whale directs Jonah, and together the aquarium and Statue of Liberty may guide those in New York. This is perhaps one role of the prophet, poet, or artist: to point the reader beyond the “significantly detestable,” which may lie in one’s environment, in one’s self, or in both.

A second reading of the conflict implied by this poem’s questions leads closer to Moore’s particular experience in New York, recalling her earlier description of a visit to the city as her “sojourn in the whale.” Although no aspect of the poem denotes a concern with gender, the poet’s “I myself” suggests a personal placement in the poem, making her (or at least her speaker) a female Jonah. In this context, New York’s potential whale-like entrapment and proffered liberty acquire a gendered resonance. Ambitious and talented women become analogous to other immigrants to New York offered freedom and opportunity by the symbolic Statue of Liberty; a woman especially, however, must remain focused on her own goals to keep from being swallowed up by the powerful institutions already established there, from losing her own identity in assisting or admiring the work of others. Here it is not the

whale that is dangerous but the aquarium, which offers natural and technological wonders so extensive as to engulf one’s imagination and curiosity—as Moore well knew, given her fascination with zoos, museums of natural history, and aquariums. To refuse the offerings of such institutions would be to court ignorance—an option unthinkable for a woman who could index “Evil” in a reading diary with the cryptic comment, “See ignorance” (diary for 1916–21; RML VII:01:02). To succeed on one’s own terms, one must learn all one can from established institutions while metaphorically keeping “Liberty” in sight; one must know when to study and when to emerge, or—as Moore herself later puts it—how to place “real toads” in an “imaginary garden” (“Poetry,” in *Poems*, p. 22). In a conversation notebook, in 1917, Moore suggests that the instability of such positioning is necessary to innovation: “People see things partially. It is as if there were a circle & they saw 2/3 of it but not the rest and that missing link supplies the nec. incentive to work. . . . It is a good thing otherwise art would be at a standstill[;] there would be no experiments” (RML VII:10:06, p. 60). A woman’s duty might consist not of speaking for someone else (warning a decadent Nineveh of God’s wrath) but of moving in new directions for ethical or aesthetic leadership that transform Nineveh without threatening its destruction. Perhaps the women active in New York’s innovative arts scene needed some element of the adventurer and prophet to forge new directions from their initial positions of isolation and instability.

In a second poem published in 1917, “Sojourn in the Whale,” Moore continues the Jonah theme, this time depicting Jonah both as Ireland at the time of the Easter Rebellion (1916) and as a woman, rejecting male as well as British imperialist condescension.<sup>43</sup> Beginning as the abused daughter of fairy tales, forced to perform impossible tasks like spinning straw into gold or opening “locked doors with a sword,” this Jonah has “heard men say”:

“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 happened to bar  
the path, rise automatically.

In this poem, Ireland’s captivity within England, like Jonah’s in the whale, will “automatically” come to a natural end: water in motion

43. First published in *Others* in 1917, then not again until *Observations*, p. 39.

rises when blocked. And here it is not God's will but one's own (or perhaps any subjugated people's) "motion" that precipitates this "rise." Yet while the end of the poem suggests an "automatic" rather than planned or willed revolution, the beginning of the poem indicates the importance of individual will. Like the fairy-tale child, each must doggedly persevere in the face of apparently impossible obstacles. As Moore concludes another early poem, "The pulse of intention does not move so that one / can see it, and moral machinery is not labelled, but / the future of time is determined by the power of volition."<sup>44</sup> On the one hand, this poem suggests that one requires the steadfastness and magical powers of a fairy-tale heroine or the power of the ocean to overcome the cultural barriers that have naturalized a belief in women's (or Ireland's) "incompetence." On the other, the poem assumes that women and the colonized do have such powers and need only maintain an active will to "rise" to independence.

In 1919, Moore published her first poem explicitly about living in the city: "Dock Rats."<sup>45</sup> As in the later poem "New York," here the speaker questions why one would "live in such a place" but concludes more narrowly: "because to one who has been ac- / customed to it, shipping is the most congenial / thing in the world"—a phrase she changes to "most interesting" in 1924. Shipping seems mundane as the key attraction of New York City, but in the poem shipping signifies "experience": together the sea and shipping represent change, activity, commerce, natural beauties, exoticism, and a rich diversity of sights, smells, and sounds. In Whitmanesque detail, Moore celebrates "the tug—strong-moving thing, dip- / ping and pushing, the bell striking as it comes; the / steam yacht, lying like a new made arrow on the / stream." The wind may bring the smell of apples, hay, rope, or mountain flowers; it is "an elixir"—"the aroma increased and / decreased suddenly as the wind changes." And those lucky enough to call New York "home" hear the ships' "signals, shrill, questioning, per- / emptory, diverse." The poem's rat speakers acknowledge that "there are human beings who seem to regard the place as craftily / as we do—who seem to feel that it is a good place to come / home to" and then drop the comparison for the pure sensual pleasure of watching, hearing, and smelling the wharf and sea as the desired occupation of a lifetime: possibilities for intensely engaged observation, rather than a particular domicile, constitute "home." That Moore associates herself with her dock rat speakers is made particularly clear by the fact that

44. "Reinforcements" was first published in the *Egoist* in 1918, then in *Poems*, p. 13. I write on both "Sojourn in the Whale" and "Is Your Town Nineveh?" in *Questions of Authority*, pp. 53–56, 112–13, 158–59.

45. First published in *Others* in 1919, reprinted in *Poems*, p. 20.

her primary nickname since 1914 was "Rat"—an animal known in the family menagerie of names for its heterodox adventurousness and for writing poems. "Rat" in the Moore family is also simultaneously male and female, allowing a wide range of behaviors characteristic of both genders.

While Moore's poems express her sense of the city's challenges and richly diverse offerings, her reviews present her in the struggle to articulate her judgments clearly without aggression or defensiveness, or to balance "unsheathed" criticism with more indirect dry wit. Moore never reviewed work she did not like, but she did not hesitate to object in her reviews to assumptions she found intolerable—for example, assumptions regarding women's "native / incompetence." In a 1924 review of two novels by Maxwell Bodenheim, for example, Moore remarks, "This author's concept of woman puzzles one. Surely there is false perspicacity in an analysis of which results always in the exhibiting of woman's 'enticing inferiority'; which finds her an embarrassing adjunct . . . never other than a receiver of 'men's ornaments and poverties.' . . . The writer's attitude of pronouncement reaches its apex in the statement made by one of his *dramatis personae*, that there is zest in bagging a woman who is one's equal in wits; the possibility of bagging a superior in wits not being allowed to confuse the issue."<sup>46</sup> Moore then continues the review with mixed praise and criticism of other aspects of the novels.

With greater indirection, Moore raises similar questions about Pound's work in 1931. After praising *A Draft of XXX Cantos* at length, she acknowledges that not every passage "invariably" "relieve[s], refresh[es], revive[s], the reader." Quoting William Carlos Williams's and T. S. Eliot's claims that Pound is in some ways "antiquated" (a claim she does not now have to express herself), she then poses the more pointed question: "Apropos of 'feminolatry,' is not the view of woman expressed by the *Cantos* older-fashioned than that of Siam and Abyssinia?" (*CPR*, p. 272). Here Moore employs syntax to imply that the reader will agree with her ("Is not the view of woman"), as she has already employed quotation to imply that Williams and Eliot agree, while voicing her own distinct opinion. Privately as well as in published reviews, Moore was formidable. For example, after years of gently protesting Pound's fascism and racism in letters to him, she writes him more aggressively in 1952: "B is for boorishness. . . . I ought not to answer you . . . concerning the models of effectiveness with whom I have been associated, but am too pugnacious to just doze deadfly when J. S. Watson is mentioned. . . . I shudder at false witness against my neighbor and if I

46. *The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore*, ed. Patricia C. Willis (New York, 1986), p. 104. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *CPR*.

do not attack you, then I concur in it" (*SL*, p. 502). In 1957 she loses patience with him altogether, scolding: "Ezra, you are intolerable, to defy me, about the Jews who are not mine alone but everybody's benefactor" (*SL*, p. 539). Often using the language of battle, Moore upheld her views with firm indirection until convinced by experience with a particular interlocutor that only the plainest language would suffice.

In editing as in reviewing, Moore seems from the start to have held remarkable confidence in her judgments without falling into attitudes of aggression or arrogance. A 1929 letter from her mother describing Moore's early years at *The Dial* suggests, however, that she was fully conscious of the relative anomaly of her position and its difficulties. As Mary Warner Moore saw it, previous to Alyse Gregory's management of *The Dial* offices and Moore's editing responsibility, there were "no wimmen about—except in the office below (Sophie Wittenberg was upstairs, but Gilbert [Seldes] & Kenneth [Burke] attended to her assignments). It was a Man Paradise. From the time Alyse came the serken [serpent] waggled about. When Rat [Moore] entered, there was no more ease anywhere; only responsibility." In this account of paradise, a female serpent introduces a business-like manner and "responsibility" rather than sexuality or knowledge. This makes good sense. Where a sexually enticing woman would intensify the pleasure of a "Man Paradise," the professional woman transforms it into something else—whether a "Paradise" of cooperation or the pain of a fallen world is not specified. Because this letter was written at the time the (male) owners were debating whether to close *The Dial*, Mary Warner Moore seems to suggest not only that the journal's staff found it difficult to adjust to female leadership but that the adjustment was never successful. Moore may have had her own early experience with male editors in mind in "Marriage" when she wrote that "men have power / and sometimes one is made to feel it."<sup>47</sup> At the same time, Mary Warner Moore's metaphor also suggests a mischievous if not sinful pleasure in the "waggl[ing] about" of Moore and Gregory, as though they may have flaunted their intrusive foreignness in this atmosphere of pervasive male "ease."

As editor, Moore was famous both for requesting revisions or omissions in submitted work and for her refusals that expressed only praise.<sup>48</sup> She successfully suggested radical changes in the work of Robert Hillyer, Archibald MacLeish, and Hart Crane, for example, although some writ-

47. Mary Warner Moore to John Warner Moore, February 29, 1929, RML VI.30.03; and *Observations* (n. 1 above), p. 78.

48. There is some debate about the extent to which Moore was responsible for editorial decisions. See *SL*, p. 212; Celeste Goodridge, *Hints and Disguises: Marianne Moore and Her Contemporaries* (Iowa City, Iowa, 1989), pp. 4–5; and Marek's chapter, "The Ironic 'Editorial We': Marianne Moore at the *Dial*" (n. 9 above), pp. 138–66. Because Moore

ers—including Crane in other cases—objected to her suggestions, preferring to withdraw their work from *The Dial*. To Gertrude Stein, she suggested dramatic revision in the guise of praise: "It is a happiness to us indeed at *The Dial* that you should grant us these pages of *A Long Gay Book*. Have you sufficient patience with magazines to know that this delight is genuine, and yet that we can wish to omit a portion? Is it out of the question to suggest that you allow us to [omit pages 2–6]?"<sup>49</sup> To Maxwell Bodenheim, she is so succinct that surely her praise could only be heard as ironic: Moore returned his "Poetic Essay" with the dry comment "*The Dial* congratulates you upon lines nine to fourteen inclusive" (*SL*, p. 218). Moore wrote privately to Pound, "I am not firm with anyone" (*SL*, p. 340), but this was far from the case. Gentle but unyielding, Moore trusted her judgments and trusted her "victims" (as she later referred to them) to understand that her interest in their work was principled and impersonal. As she wrote in "*The Dial: A Retrospective*": "today, previous victims of mine have to dread from me, as pre-empting the privilege of the last word, nothing more than solicitude that all of us may write better" (*CPR*, pp. 361–62). Here Moore writes with confidence in her past judgments and in having made a permanent mark on the literature of her time as editor of *The Dial* but also with humility as a writer whose own work can also always be made "better." No longer the snake in a "Man's" garden, she sees herself rightly as having been in a position of substantial power and as having used that authority in the service of literature, not her own name or career.

In May and July of 1929, respectively, *The Little Review* and *The Dial* published their final issues; Moore returned to writing poems. Not surprisingly, given the worldwide depression and the European rise of fascism and Stalinism, leading to war, the 1930s brought to a general end the flowering of women's institutional influence in the "new" arts. Individual women in New York and elsewhere continued their activities, and some avant-garde movements, like surrealism, enjoyed increased involvement from women after 1929.<sup>50</sup> There were, however, no longer large numbers of women initiating new journals, museums, galleries,

always claimed to speak for a decision-making community ("we") rather than for herself, it is difficult to know what she alone decided. There is no doubt, however, that she handled the correspondence and that suggestions for revision and omission were her own.

49. Quoted in Marek, p. 160.

50. Penelope Rosemont, ed., *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology* (Austin, Tex., 1998), p. 41. Rosemont describes the earliest surrealists as men who, without themselves being feminist, "were the irreconcilable enemies of feminism's enemies" and hence provided support for female artists, spokespersons, and initiators of collective exhibition and activity (pp. xlv, 42). Surrealists first moved to New York in numbers in 1941.

associations, and societies.<sup>51</sup> Moore, after 1929, was never again employed in a position of institutional authority as she had been at *The Dial*. On the other hand, the apparent privacy of her return to writing was belied by her increasing correspondence with editors of other journals and with young authors appealing for advice, and by the number of national prizes she won, including the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the Bollingen Prize in the early 1950s.<sup>52</sup> Her case, in other words, suggests that at least some women faced economic hardship and international political turmoil by redefining the mode of their involvement in the arts.

Moreover, Moore's public association with the city of New York began only after the closing of *The Dial*. In the 1930s and 1940s, Moore wrote no poems specifically located in or centered on New York. These were, for her, years dominated by concern with the growth of fascism and eventual war in Europe, and with her mother's worsening health and eventual death in 1947. By 1950 and through the 1960s, however, Moore turned her attention full-scale back to the city and to the activities and community of her daily life. During these years, Moore became a public figure of the city and even of the nation, throwing out the first baseball of the season in Yankee Stadium in 1968, attracting a crowd of five thousand people to a poetry reading in Boston, getting her picture on the covers of *Sports Illustrated*, *Life*, and *Esquire*—the latter as one of the nation's "Unknockables"—and even having her breakfast menu published in *Glamour* magazine (*CPR*, pp. 660–61). She wrote poems about many hometown subjects—the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Yankees, the Brooklyn Bridge, the Jamaica Racetrack, the New York City Ballet's first African American dancer (Arthur Mitchell), the old amusement park torn down to build La Guardia Airport, and Carnegie Hall.<sup>53</sup>

In these late poems, Moore's attitude toward the city is one of familiarity and affection, and her voice expresses the confidence of ample experience rather than the tension of personal uncertainties and instability. These poems also show Moore moving away from her own modernist achievements in the development of the poetic stanza and line to a more phrasally based, more publicly focused line, tone, and subject. Similarly, Moore's relation to the city in these poems is medi-

51. Lynn Keller and I explore the limits of the comparison between women's avant-garde editorial influence at the beginning and the end of the twentieth century in "Gender and Avant-Garde Editing: Comparing the 1920s with the 1990s," "Misfittings of the Text," ed. Ann Vickery in *How2* 1, no. 2 (1999) ([www.departments.bucknell.edu/stadler\\_center/how2](http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/stadler_center/how2)).

52. Such correspondence is amply represented in *SL*.

53. Moore lived in Brooklyn from 1930 until 1965, when she moved back to Manhattan.

ated by the decades of her own (and perhaps also her peers') trials and successes. The vicissitudes of aging caused Moore to attempt to define a public voice for an elderly female literary and cultural authority. Like her earlier position of "serpent" in a "male Paradise," this relatively anomalous position brought certain challenges, but these challenges presented fewer risks than those she faced as a young woman.<sup>54</sup> Moore's relation to the city is also mediated through journalism; while she still attended exhibits, performances, museums, and lectures, from the 1940s onward the notes to her poems increasingly refer to the *New York Times* as a primary source of information—citing the *Times* twenty-nine times in notes to forty-three poems.

Moore's withdrawal to what might be thought of as the sidelines of New York cultural life, however, does not diminish her productivity as a poet or her excitement at being at least a marginal "player"—as she suggests in the poem "Baseball and Writing." The poem's first stanza begins with a pun on "fan"-dom, cryptically posing the double question of whether there is some pathology in loving baseball or in having devoted one's professional life to either baseball or writing:

Fanaticism? No. Writing is exciting  
and baseball is like writing.  
You can never tell with either  
how it will go  
or what you will do;  
generating excitement—  
a fever in the victim—  
pitcher, catcher, fielder, batter.  
Victim in what category?  
*Owl*man watching from the press box?  
To whom does it apply?  
Who is excited? Might it be I?<sup>55</sup>

An activity worth one's time, Moore suggests, collapses boundaries between the activity itself (which is "exciting"), its effects ("generating excitement"), its actors (the fevered pitcher, catcher, etc.), and its observer ("Who is excited? Might it be I?"). These last questions further suggest that the observer and poet is as excited a "victim" as the pitcher or catcher—of her writing, of baseball, and of the conjunction of the two. In this poem, unlike "Dock Rats," interest lies not in the world itself

54. See Elizabeth Gregory, "Stamps, Money, Pop Culture, and Marianne Moore," *Discourse* 17 (1994): 123–46; and John Slatin, "'Something Inescapably Typical': Questions about Gender in the Late Work of Williams and Moore," *William Carlos Williams Review* 14 (1988): 86–103.

55. First published in the *New Yorker* in 1961. Quoted from Marianne Moore, *Complete Poems* (New York, 1981), p. 221, hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as *CP*.

but in the perception or construction of events. In part, this change of emphasis may proceed from the fact that this poem's force lies in the poet's recollection of events and players rather than in the immediacy of the spectacle. As the poem's epigraph indicates, the poem is "Suggested by post-game broadcasts" and does not even restrict itself to the account of a single game. Instead, later in the poem, Moore reflects broadly on the individual character of players: African American star Elston Howard is "unenviably" generous in including teammates when speaking of victory, even after he himself was denied "the batting crown," apparently for racist reasons.<sup>56</sup> And the others are similarly inclusive: "All business, each, and modesty," Moore praises. Her reference to "Magnificent saves" even suggests a spiritual as well as practical effect of their combined individual skill and teamwork (*CP*, pp. 221–23). Moore loves baseball because it demonstrates values she cares about—cooperative action, learned skills, a combination of vigor and strategy, and open-endedness, an art (like poetry) in which the game may always be "replayed"—as the epigraph's mention of "post-game broadcasts" and the descriptions of her poem attest. That Moore's work remains open-ended is perhaps attested to by this essay, another form of "postgame broadcast."

In her late role as public figure and poet, Moore continues to speak out against the "significantly detestable" but now more often in the quieter guise of praise than in the gleefully antagonistic discourse of "To Be Liked by You." For example, she criticizes contemporary racism by celebrating not just a hometown team (the Dodgers) but specifically the African American players of America's first integrated baseball team. She acknowledges the Jamestown settlers' displacement of Native Americans as well as celebrates their survival ("Enough," *CP*, p. 245). Or she criticizes late twentieth-century egocentrism and materialism by admiring medieval heroes who "did not let self bar / their usefulness to others who were / different" ("Armor's Undermining Modesty," *CP*, p. 151). Or, as she begins another late poem, starting with its title, "Tell Me, Tell Me / where might there be a refuge for me / from egocentricity / and its propensity to bisect, / mis-state, misunderstand / and obliterate continuity?" (*CP*, p. 233). In a late survey published one year before her debilitating stroke in 1969, when asked what she would do were she president, Moore responded that she would do away with forced retirement and instigate "vigorous efforts" toward air and water pollution control; then, with characteristic understatement, she mused:

56. For an analysis of the politics of Moore's baseball poems, see Cristanne Miller, "Marianne Moore's Black Maternal Hero: A Study in Categorization," *American Literary History* 1 (1989): 786–815.

"Some women are overlooked who have capacity for service—as mathematicians, as scientists. I wish this could be given intensive thought" (*CPR*, p. 691). In a 1957 survey, she writes of the importance of women's "coming out of the kitchen," as *McCall's* put it, in a positive but cautionary tone: "We dare not regress [from women's employment gains] by suppressing intelligence or forbidding women to be useful. But steadfastness, conscience and the capacity for sacrifice, on the part of both parents, are basic to good family relations which, in turn, are basic to the well-being of society in general" (*CPR*, p. 678).<sup>57</sup> Even when she begins with reference to something she "significantly detest[s]," she turns quickly to passions above irritation. "Mercifully," she begins a poem using its title as her first line, "I am hard to disgust, / but a pretentious poet can do it; / a person without a tap root; and / impercipience can do it; did it. // But why talk about it—" she then queries, turning instead to the description of a New York Pro Musica Antiqua recording she has heard (*CP*, p. 243). This performance reveals "impassioned exactitude"—a quality she admires in baseball, poetry, and music. "Stand for truth. It's enough," she concludes in "Love in America" (*CP*, p. 240). While at the end of her life she relied more on recordings, magazines, radio or television broadcasts, and postcards than on firsthand perception of the objects and events that inspired her poems, Moore seemed still to value living in the city where so many of these performances occur and to relish the skill and integrity of others' passions as she has her own.

In a 1910 letter to her brother, Moore wrote, "I don't know that I should care to live in New York even with you. I don't know *where* I should like to live unless in a nautilus shell" (November 13, 1910; *SL*, p. 86). Forty-two years later in a letter to the sculptor Malvina Hoffman, a close friend who had also lived in the city for many years, Moore wrote, "Even death in New York would seem to me, preferable to 'exile.' I would clamber aboard a child's yacht drawn by a string if it could bring me into close proximity to 'art'" (January 12, 1952; *SL*, p. 497). On February 5, 1972, having won every major poetry prize the United States had to bestow, Marianne Moore died in her sleep in New York, not only near the city's "art" and "experience" but herself one of its most original and compelling creators and enablers.

In 1914, anthropologist Gasquoine Hartley prophesied optimistically that "the twentieth century is the age of Woman; some day it may be

57. Slatin ("Something Inescapably Typical") and Gregory have also written of the feminist implications of the public nature of Moore's late poetry and of her decision to publish poems and essays in "women's" magazines and newspaper pages. See also my *Questions of Authority* (n. 4 above).

that it will be looked back upon as the golden age."<sup>58</sup> In 1929, psychologist Beatrice Hinkle concluded a series of essays in the *Nation* titled "These Modern Women" with the far less optimistic observation that women's "stridency and revolt" mark their "struggle with the forces of convention and inertia": "This is nothing less than the psychological development of themselves as individuals, in contradistinction to the collective destiny that has exclusively dominated their lives. . . . If they have individually failed to achieve their full destiny, their attitude is part of a great rolling tide which is bringing to birth a new woman."<sup>59</sup> Whether one regards the twentieth century as "the golden age" of women, there can be no argument that the period from 1910 to 1930 was a golden age for women's influence in institutions enabling the new arts, and that women like Moore played a significant role in establishing New York's preeminence in those arts.

58. Gasquoine Hartley, *The Position of Women in Primitive Society: A Study of the Matriarchy* (London, 1914), p. 11, quoted in Rado, ed. (n. 18 above), p. 11.

59. Showalter, ed. (n. 25 above), p. 141.

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