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Abstract

Prismatic Color: Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts
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Within the context of Pound/Eliot modernism Moore necessarily becomes eccentric and even inscrutable, for Symbolism, Imagism and the "mythical method" fail to explain her syllabic verse, her fervent morality and her predilection for exotic animals. Moore's contemporaries in New York, however, especially the avant-garde visual artists, provide a more illuminating context. During the years most crucial to her poetic career—from 1915, when she first visited Alfred Stieglitz's 291 gallery, through the late twenties, when she was editor of the Dial—Moore regularly visited New York galleries and associated with experimental photographers, sculptors and painters.

Moore shares with these artists at least two of their spatial concerns. Her interest in the appearance of the poem on the page parallels modern painters' interest in the surface of the canvas. Thus, her stanzas are not merely "syllabic" but are architectural, spatial structures; and not only her stanzas but also her images and syntax create an "armor" of hard, geometric surfaces like those of analytic Cubism. Also, Moore's verbal assemblages of incongruous facts, quotations and images resemble certain visual assemblages, most notably those of Arthur Dove. Moore's poems are places where she can display all the things that she likes.

Even more useful than recognizing the structural techniques Moore shared with the painters is recognizing the aesthetic, moral and even spiritual values they shared. Kandinsky's principle of "inner necessity," for
instance, resembles Moore's notion of the "genuine." Besides accounting in part for the strong fascination primitive art held for Moore's contemporaries, Kandinsky's ideas help explain why animals, especially exotic ones, are Moore's aesthetic and moral exemplars. And Stieglitz's morality of "straight" photography, to which not only photographers but also painters such as the Precisionists ascribed, explains the important relationship in Moore's aesthetic between feeling and precision: the artist must have a relentless devotion to her subject in order to present it precisely. Placing Moore within the context of visual artists does not prove her poetry to be derivative of other artists' styles but rather proves her to be a strongly individual talent within a group of artists who revere individuality.
To the memory of my grandmothers,

Martha Boone Leavell and Ella Craig McNeal
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Contents

Introduction.........................................................1
1. "Sojourn in the Whale"........................................12
2. A Poetry of Surfaces...........................................44
3. A Place to See Things..........................................73
4. The Forms of Idiosyncrasy.................................102
5. The Morality of Precision.................................135
Conclusion..........................................................163
Works Cited..........................................................167
Introduction

The critic of Marianne Moore's poetry who I believe best conveys the uniqueness of her talent and accords her the highest praise for her "revolutionary discovery" of a twentieth-century American poetic—"the language flattened, the language exhibited, the language staunchly condensing information while frisking in enjoyment of its release from the obligation to do no more than inform"—at the same time undermines that praise by accusing Moore of being unconscious of her discovery. "She resembles Columbus," says Hugh Kenner, "whose mind was on something other than opening new worlds, and died supposing he had shown how to sail to China" ("Disliking It" 106). Kenner mistakes Moore's humility for ignorance and supposes that because she did not write profusely and zealously, as did William Carlos Williams, about the importance of finding a distinctly American idiom, that she did not understand American modernism as well as Williams and other writers did. Kenner should heed the experience of Moore's friends, Alfred Kreymborg (Krimmie) and Williams himself, who inevitably found themselves losers at the game of finding a subject about which Moore was not expertly informed:

Both men held the mind of Marianne Moore in absolute admiration. What they lacked in intellectual stability was freely and unconsciously supplied by her. And her familiarity with books on every conceivable theme astonished them. "How she can spin words!" Krimmie would say and Bill would add, "We're a pair of tongue-tied tyros by comparison."

"Not long ago," Krimmie confessed, "I tried to catch her napping."

Bill rubbed his hands and grinned with expectancy.

"Never having found her at a loss on any topic whatsoever, I wanted to give myself the pleasure at least once of hearing her stumped about something. Certain that only an experience
completely strange to her would be the thing, I invited her to a
ball game at the Polo Grounds. This descent into the world of
the low-brow started beautifully. It was a Saturday afternoon
and the Cubs and Giants were scheduled for one of their ancient
frays. The 'L' was jammed with fans and we had to stand all the
way uptown and hang on to straps. Marianne was totally
oblivious to the discomfiture anyone else would have felt and, in
answer to a question of mine, paraded whole battalions of
perfectly marshalled ideas in long columns of balanced periods
which no lurching on the part of the train or pushing on the part
of the crowd disturbed. Wait till we reach the grounds, I
promised myself, and Matty winds up, tosses a perfect fadeaway,
the batter misses it, and Marianne goes on talking.

"Well, I got her safely to her seat and sat down beside her.
Without so much as a glance toward the players at practice
grabbing grounders and chasing fungos, she went on giving me
her impression of the respective technical achievements of Mr.
Pound and Mr. Aldington without missing a turn in the rhythm of
her speech, until I, a little impatient, touched her arm and,
indicating a man in the pitcher's box winding up with the
movement Matty's so famous for, interrupted: 'But Marianne,
wait a moment, the game's about to begin. Don't you want to
watch the first ball?' 'Yes indeed,' she said, stopped, blushed
and leaned forward. The old blond boy delivered a tantalizing
fadeaway which hovered in the air and then, just as it reached
the batter, Shorty Slagle, shot from his shoulders to his knees
and across the plate. 'Strike!' bawled Umpire Emslie.

'Excellent,' said Marianne.

"Delighted, I quickly turned to her with: 'Do you happen to
know the gentleman who threw that strike?'

"I've never seen him before,' she admitted, 'but I take it it
must be Mr. Mathewson.'

"I could only gasp, 'Why?'

"'I've read his instructive book on the art of pitching—'

"Strike two!' interrupted Bob Emslie.

"And it's a pleasure,' she continued imperturbably, 'to note
how unerringly his execution supports his theories—'

"Strike three, batter's out!' concluded the umpire and, as
Shorty Slagle slunk away, glared toward the Chicago bench for
the next victim. . . ." (Kreymborg 243-45)

(This incident, reported by Kreymborg, took place in the mid to late teens,
long before Moore acquired her reputation as a Brooklyn Dodgers fan in the
fifties.) If Marianne Moore's discovery of a new poetic was unconscious, it
was so only to the degree that her poetic was so uniquely her own; but her
early comprehension (which is not to say theory) of American modernism could hardly have found its equal even among such proselytizers as William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound.

Moore’s awareness of the need for a new aesthetic resulted in part from her inability to get her own poems into print. As soon as she found magazines like the Egoist and Others that were willing to publish her work, she set out for New York, where Others was published, because it was cheaper than going to London, where the Egoist was published. Having already educated herself as much as possible by reading about the new directions the arts were taking, she knew to go immediately upon her arrival in New York to the “American acropolis” of modernism, Alfred Stieglitz’s 291 gallery. And if she had not yet recognized it by the time of that first visit to 291 in December 1915, she had realized by January 1919, when she first wrote to Ezra Pound, that “over here . . . there is more evidence of power among painters and sculptors than among writers” (“Letter to Pound” 18). Since Moore’s technical competency and aesthetic conviction had already surpassed those of most of the poets she met in New York (including Williams), she must have found a stronger sense of direction there among the painters, sculptors and photographers, whose experiments with new forms were by 1915 well under way.

That other poets in New York at the time, notably William Carlos Williams, also followed the leadership of the painters has been well documented. Since 1969 there have been five books published on Williams’s relationship to the visual arts. The first of these, Bram Dijkstra’s The

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1 Moore calls 291 an “American acropolis” in “Alfred Stieglitz.”
Hieroglyphics of a New Speech, was the first to point out that Cubism and Alfred Stieglitz probably had a greater impact upon Williams and the other poets who stayed in New York than did Imagism and Ezra Pound from across the Atlantic. Dijkstra calls attention to three meeting places in and around New York City—Stieglitz's 291 gallery; the artist colony at Grantwood, New Jersey, where Others was published; and the apartment of Walter and Louise Arensberg on 67th Street—but he does not draw distinctions between the attitudes and personalities of the artists who frequented these places.

Dijkstra's important study was followed in 1978 by an exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art and an accompanying catalog by Dickran Tashjian called William Carlos Williams and the American Scene 1920-1940, which documents the other side of the relationship, Williams's influence on the painters. Although William Marling's 1982 study, William Carlos Williams and the Painters 1909-1923, is riddled with errors, it makes an important distinction that Dijkstra had not accounted for: that Williams did not meet Stieglitz until 1919 or later (after 291 had closed) and did not especially like him; instead, Williams participated in that group of painters and writers known as the Arensberg Circle (but Marling mistakenly regards Others as a publication of the Arensberg Circle and dismisses Stieglitz's importance to the literary scene altogether). In The Visual Text of William Carlos Williams (1983) Henry M. Sayre argues that the influence of the painters caused Williams to be more concerned with the appearance of his poetry on the page than its sound, despite Williams's insistence to the contrary that his poetry is based on the rhythms of speech. Christopher J. MacGowen in William Carlos Williams's Early Poetry: The Visual Arts Background (1984) traces the influence of theories such as Pound's, Kandinsky's and the Dadaists' on
specific volumes of Williams's early work. In addition to these five books there are numerous articles and chapters of books devoted to Williams and the painters.

Despite Dijkstra's assertion in 1969 that "A close study of the early writings of these poets [Williams, Wallace Stevens, and Marianne Moore] cannot be possible without a thorough investigation of the sources presented by the visual arts of that time" (45), the impact of the visual arts upon Marianne Moore's poetry has received relatively little critical attention. By far the most ambitious discussion of Moore and the visual arts is a rather lengthy chapter in Bonnie Costello's Marianne Moore: Imaginary Possessions (186-214). This chapter addresses many important visual aspects of Moore's poetry, including both her subject matter—such artists as Dürer and El Greco, such artifacts as "An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish" and the porcelain plate in "Nine Nectarines"—and also the theoretical implications of Cubism and collage. It offers a cursory description of Moore's relationship to her American contemporaries in the visual arts, but ultimately it falls short in failing to convey the delight Moore takes in visual experience. And while it discusses the visual structures of Moore's poems, it does not explain why Moore adopted the structures of painting or how her having done so contributes to her poetry. Costello shows the significance of the visual arts to Moore's poetry without, it seems to me, successfully accounting for that significance. In his article, "Concerning Marianne Moore's Museum," Thomas B. Brumbaugh provides a clear and intelligent examination of the art objects in Moore's poetry. Another article by David Hsin-Fu Wand called "The Dragon and the Kylin: The Use of Chinese Symbols and Myths in Marianne Moore's Poetry" discusses Moore's use of imagery from
Chinese art. And Grace Schulman's recent article, "Marianne Moore and E. McKnight Kauffer: Two Characteristic Americans," points out resemblances between Moore's poetry and the work of a commercial artist Moore knew during the fifties. Also, by occasionally printing pictures found among Moore's papers, the Marianne Moore Newsletter reminds us that photographs and art objects regularly found their way into Moore's poems.

Part of the reason that the impact of visual art and artists upon Moore's poetry has not received thorough attention is that there is no biography of Moore and except for excerpts in a few critical studies, none of her letters has been published (until the Marianne Moore Newsletter recently published the letters Moore sent to her brother from England in the summer of 1911). Also, Moore's collected prose, now being edited by Patricia Willis, has not been available. Despite the lack of published material, the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia, to which Moore donated her library, the furnishings of her apartment and all of her papers (including many notebooks, several unpublished manuscripts and literally thousands of letters) provides a tremendous resource, and scholars who make use of these materials cannot help but observe how important the visual arts were to Moore.

Traditional literary themes and conventions are not easily discovered in Marianne Moore's poetry, making most traditional critical approaches inadequate. Even Moore's repeated images of armor and animals do not lend themselves to metaphorical interpretation, nor do any familiar systems of belief emerge. Feminists find Moore's emotional reticence exasperating, and it appears that deconstructionists find their theories inapplicable to her language. Rather than seeking evidence of a pervasive order and meaning to
the world, Moore's poems seek out idiosyncrasies and the exceptions to our commonly held views.

The various full-length books on Moore's poetry by Bernard Engel (1964), George W. Nitchie (1969), Donald Hall (1970), Pamela White Hadas (1977), Laurence Stapleton (1978), Bonnie Costello (1981) and Elizabeth Phillips (1982) provide interesting and often enlightening commentary on individual poems and on the poet's personality but have not provided the "key" to an understanding of Moore for which readers continue to search. Moore, I think, would approve these critics' method of treating each poem individually. While the best of these critics, Bonnie Costello, treats Moore's poems with the serious attention they deserve and supports her intelligent interpretation with scholarship, her method of categorizing the poems thematically and placing them within a system somehow rubs against the grain of the poems themselves, which revel in diversity and discrimination.

One of Moore's earliest and most enthusiastic critics, William Carlos Williams, once wrote to her in a letter: "All artists are secretive and fly from a style which has been found out. You have never been found out and so you go on making these constructions" (Letters 232). Without finding her out, the best commentaries on Moore come to terms with her eccentricities and difficulties: Costello does so by addressing the complexity of the poems, Randall Jarrell does so by understanding that Moore's armored poems

\[2\] Also, Grace Schulman's Marianne Moore: The Poetry of Engagement is forthcoming this year. Note that none of these books treat limited aspects of the poet's work. Other studies which bear mention here are Jean Garrigue's lengthy essay, "Marianne Moore," which seems to me the best overall introduction to the poet's work, and A. Kingsley Weatherhead's The Edge of the Image, which despite its "spatial" title places Moore and Williams within a literary tradition.
resemble no others, and Kenner does so by recognizing that Moore's concerns are often spatial rather than literary. (Armor, though Jarrell does not point this out, is also a spatial concern.)

Nor do I profess to offer the "key" to Moore's poems; I find myself restricted like Moore's other critics to discussing one poem at a time, and I have found repeatedly that coming to terms with one of her poems provides few clues to the others. And yet I find that placing Moore within a context where she appears less eccentric than she does within the usual family of modern American poets—Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams, primarily—makes some of her difficulties less formidable. For within the company of twentieth-century painters, sculptors and photographers—particularly those who knew and were influenced by Alfred Stieglitz—Moore's spatial concerns no longer seem so odd and the vigorous morality of her aesthetic principles becomes more comprehensible. Such a context will not prove Moore's poems to be simply derivative of other artists' styles (not even to the extent that Williams's poems are sometimes derivative of certain painters' styles) but will prove Moore to be a strongly individual talent within a group of artists that reveres individuality. I do not mean to deprive Moore of verbal concerns, for hers are ample, nor to deny her the company of her fellow poets, who were always very important to her and to her work, but merely to account for some of her apparent eccentricities.

If Moore's experience and use of the visual arts were a duplication of Williams's, this study might not be necessary; but as there is great variety among the painters with whom Moore and Williams associated, so are there major differences between the two poets' spatial and aesthetic concerns,
though there are similarities, too. Indeed, I occasionally find Williams's poems and ideas a convenient foil to Moore's. Tracing direct influences, acknowledged or not, between Moore and specific artists seems too problematic to be useful; instead I pursue "affinities" between her work and theirs regardless of whether or not she actually met every artist I discuss, though I think Moore was at least acquainted with most of the American artists I mention and was almost certainly acquainted with their work.

In preparation for this study, I examined many of the relevant materials at the Rosenbach Museum and Library, including the art books in her library, the newspaper and magazine clippings about art that she saved, her scrapbooks, her conversation and reading notebooks, her unpublished art reviews, the letters she sent to her mother and primarily to her brother from the time she graduated from Bryn Mawr in 1909 until the early twenties, and a few letters she exchanged with friends. Though some of the materials I cite necessarily overlap some of those cited by Stapleton and Costello (the only books so far to make use of these materials), for the most part my quotations from these sources are published here for the first time and with the kind permission of the executor of Moore's estate, Clive Driver.

Since other critics have done so, I have not examined drafts of the poems or compared earlier published versions (Moore was a notorious reviser) with those contained in The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore (1981); I have relied almost exclusively upon this final text both for my quotations and for my interpretations. ³ Nor in coming to an understanding of

³ My only departure from this text is in Chapter 3, where I point out changes in Moore's early portrait poems and where I quote "To William Butler Yeats on Tagore" from the Egoist.
the poems have I been concerned with evaluating their relative strengths and weaknesses. While I agree with Laurence Stapleton that Moore continued to produce some of her finest poems well into the forties (Costello argues that Moore reached her peak with Selected Poems in 1935), I have not attempted to trace changes and developments in Moore's verse beyond 1916.

So far as Moore's interest in the visual arts is concerned, I believe that the aesthetic values Moore formed during the years from 1915 to 1929, when her interaction with artists and writers of the avant-garde was most immediate, prevail to the end of her career, and so I have not investigated the friendships with artists that Moore formed later in life. Because my purpose is to mark affinities between Moore and her contemporaries in the visual arts, I have not dealt with Moore's considerable interest in artists of the past except where her interest parallels that of her contemporaries.

In the first chapter I make use of Moore's letters and notebooks to trace her growing awareness of the visual arts; I also attempt to provide an overall historical view of the pervading forces at work among members of the New York avant-garde during the first two decades of this century. The second and third chapters define the spatial and visual qualities of Moore's poetry through references to Cubism and Gaston Bachelard's The Poetics of Space. Citing her interest in the surface of the page, the second chapter emphasizes the hard surfaces of her stanzas and images. The third chapter describes the poem as a place to put things; it compares Moore's aesthetic of the miscellany with Arthur Dove's assemblages and also discusses the relationship between seeing and making in her poetry. The fourth chapter examines Moore's interest both in the forms and the spiritual origins of primitive art, which parallels that of many visual artists like Kandinsky,
Marsden Hartley and William and Marguerite Zorach. The fifth chapter points out similarities between Moore and the Precisionists, a group of painters including Charles Sheeler and Georgia O'Keeffe, who valued technology and precision in art and who wanted to create a distinctly American tradition. These new directions explored by Moore's contemporaries in the visual arts will provide, I believe, an illuminating context for Moore's unique verbal art.
Chapter 1: 'Sojourn in the Whale'

Although contemporary scholars cannot easily overcome the barriers between poetry and the visual arts that have been erected by academic departments, poets and artists at certain times in history have not been so segregated. Beginning in the nineteenth century with the Pre-Raphaelites, the Aesthetes and the Symbolists, both writers and artists contributed to a number of the avant-garde "ism's" of the twentieth century, including Futurism, Vorticism, Dadaism, and Surrealism. A reason for at least some of this confluence is that painters and photographers who were exhibiting together also began publishing together, and in so doing, they recruited the talents of sympathetic editors and writers as well as becoming writers themselves. One of the most prominent of these early twentieth-century publishing ventures and one especially pertinent to Marianne Moore is Alfred Stieglitz's Camera Work, first issued in New York in January, 1903. In addition to photographs, drawings and paintings, Camera Work included articles by writers such as Maurice Maeterlinck, George Bernard Shaw, Henri Bergson, Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein and by visual artists such as Stieglitz himself, Eduard Steichen, Max Weber, Elie Nadelman, Marius de Zayas, Wassily Kandinsky and Marsden Hartley. Moreover, Stieglitz's gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue in New York not only sponsored many promising American artists and gave Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Rousseau, and Picabia their first one-man shows in America, but also provided an important meeting ground for artists and writers of the American avant-garde.

Indeed, Moore's own debut into the New York literary/art scene in December of 1915 began with a visit to 291. The lengthy, detailed description
of this visit to New York, which Moore wrote in "installments" to her brother and entitled "Sojourn in the Whale," gives a vivid impression of Stieglitz and 291:

Wednesday morning I went to "291" to see, as I thought, some of Alfred Stieglitz's photography. He had an exhibition up of Blümner, a modern architect. Mr. Stieglitz was exceedingly unemotional, and friendly and finally after telling me how he was hated, said I might come back and look at some of the things standing with their faces to the wall in a back room. I enjoyed them. He has a magnificent thing of the sea in dark blue and some paintings of mountains by a man named Hartley, also some Picabias and Picassos and so on. He told me to come back and he would show me some other things. (12 Dec. 1915)¹

Two days later she does return and reports the second visit, too. Though Stieglitz has nothing new to show her, he gives her Camera Work "to cut and look at." Moore compliments him on the photographs by him and by Steichen that Alfred Kreymborg has shown her in the meantime and then says to him:

I had not known there was anything in existence like Steichen's photograph of Gordon Craig—I said at all events I had never seen anything like it. "Well, there is nothing like it," he said. He told me to come in and take my coat off and look at the copies of Camera Work. He opened his knife and handed it to me, a plain wicked one with a ring in the end. . . . Presently he came in with as nearly an approach to a selfconscious manner as it would be possible to attribute to him and said, "Miss Moore, Mr. Kerfoot" without however looking back at Mr. Kerfoot. (19 Dec. 1915)

After providing a lengthy description of J. B. Kerfoot, the literary critic for Life and a contributor to Camera Work, she reports their conversation, which

¹ All of Moore's letters to her brother, John Warner Moore, and her mother, Mary Warner Moore, are at the Rosenbach and, except for a few passages quoted in other studies of Moore, remain unpublished. In quoting from Moore's unpublished letters and notebooks, I have added punctuation that was omitted in haste, and I have silently extended abbreviations for words like "with" and "could." I have not corrected her spelling except where noted. Unless otherwise indicated, all letters from Moore (cited by date) are to her brother.
she eventually directs to Kerfoot's recent review in *Life of Others*, the experimental magazine which was published by Alfred Kreymborg and Walter Arensberg and in which Moore's poetry appeared that month. She says to Kerfoot:

"I thought it very generous of you to speak of Others for it is an experiment. You don't often speak of magazines do you?" "Never" he said "there has never been a notice of a magazine in *Life* before, so far as I know. I haven't taken any interest in poetry. This is the first time I have been able to see anything in it." I said "Of course some of it is trash, but what delights me is that the authors of it are willing to admit that it might be trash." "Oh yes" he said "that must be understood. It's absolutely essential that they should admit it." ... I asked him if he knew the *Egoist*, he said not. ... and we had a discussion of the word "haunting," both Mr. Stieglitz and Mr. Kerfoot downing me saying that a haunting quality was not the earmark of good art—but of bad art. I said I meant the sort of thing that annoyed you till you had to trace it to the source where you had first encountered it and he said "Oh that's a different thing—that's another sort of—"haunt." (19 Dec. 1915)

The detail of these descriptions reveals the depths of Moore's enthusiasm, but none of her encounters provoked as much detail as did her meeting with Alfred Kreymborg, the enthusiastic young editor of *Others* who in his letter accepting some of her poems for the December issue had added that he thought her work "an amazing output and absolutely original if with his 'unadorned consciousness' he might judge" (Moore, 3 Oct. 1915). After suffering many rejections from the more established magazines like *Harper's*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *New Republic*, Moore would certainly have welcomed Kreymborg's enthusiastic response, and it was partly at his urging that she decided to "direct [her] claws to New York" (18 Oct. 1915). Having recognized in the established magazines "a pigheaded and churlish prejudice ... against anything that is new" (26 Mar. 1914), Moore no doubt set out for New York in hopes of finding a professional niche for
herself. In the afternoon following her first visit to 291, she met Alfred Kreymborg by appointment. He gave her some back issues of *Others* and told her about various people in New York including Marcel Duchamp, Alanson Hartpence and Stieglitz, who Kreymborg said had been very good to him and had given him things. He then takes her by the studio of Adolph Wolf, a poet and sculptor, before taking her to his apartment for dinner and to meet his wife. Moore provides every detail of this occasion from the placement of books, typewriter and pictures about the room, to the china, the menu, and every aspect of Gertrude Kreymborg's appearance—not to mention the conversation. They discuss Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, the Aldingtons (Richard and H.D.), and after supper the Kreymborgs show her "some photographs by Mr. Stieglitz and Steichen, of Shaw, Anatole France and others, that Mr. Stieglitz had given them and some of the most superb pictures of snow and engines and boats that I have ever seen." Then Alfred says to her, "Are you fond of Japanese prints? We have a hundred and one things to show you" (12 Dec. 1915). Several days later the Kreymborgs invite her to a concert and to dinner again, at which they begin calling each other by first names and Moore invites them to come see her in Carlisle, Pennsylvania (26 Dec. 1915).

The one postcard that Moore wrote to her mother from New York (in contrast to the pages and pages she wrote later to her brother) is apparently designed to alleviate some of Mrs. Moore's anxieties and perhaps to prepare her for the invitation that Marianne (Rat) would extend to the Kreymborgs:

> Alfred Kreymborg came to see me at 4 and took me to dinner with him and Mrs K stopping at a sculptor's on the way. The K's are the loveliest people I ever have met—gentle and full of fun and peaceful—very poor with some beautiful things, no Bohemian fierceness—Neither of them "smokes"—and they showed me photographs and read a few poems. The photos are the most beautiful things Rat ever saw, by A. Stieglitz most of them. I've
met him and he is everything ideal, sane and modest. Imperturbable and kind. He is a friend of the K's and gave them the photos and he is a friend of Kerfoot's. Kerfoot also likes the Kreymborgs and comes to the meetings. There may be no "meeting" as Mr K has been very sick. . . . (2 Dec. 1915)

In addition to Moore's two visits to 291, she also visited the Modern Gallery "to see some Van Goghs and some of Mr. Stieglitz's magazines" (12 Dec. 1915) and twice visited the Daniel Gallery, where she saw an exhibition of paintings and embroideries by William and Marguerite Zorach (who were later to become her good friends). At the suggestion of Kreymborg, she introduces herself to Alanson Hartpence, an employee of the Daniel Gallery, who Moore says "knows the ground" and is "a positive dogmatist on art theory" (19 Dec. 1915). On her second visit there, Hartpence shows her among other things some "Man Rays, and Marins and things by a man named Manigault, and a Pendergast" (26 Dec. 1915).

Although Kreymborg encouraged Moore to introduce herself to Hartpence and to tell Stieglitz that she knew him, Moore's motivation for visiting these three galleries was quite her own. In fact, after her first visit to 291 when Kreymborg asked her if she had mentioned his name to Stieglitz, Moore said, "no, I didn't know he knew Mr. Kerfoot or you or any of the men who are interested in poetry" (12 Dec. 1915). Moore had recorded in her notebook the address of 291 Fifth Avenue along with the names of Stieglitz and

2 In both her family correspondence and notebooks Moore usually refers to members of her family with the nicknames the family used for each other; the most frequently used names are from Wind in the Willows: Marianne is "Rat," her brother Warner is "Badger," and her mother is "Mole." And since all three characters are male, Moore uses male pronouns and often speaks of "Rat" in the third person.
the co-editor of *Camera Work*, Paul Haviland, in 1909, the year she graduated from Bryn Mawr (1250/1: 11).³

And it was at Bryn Mawr that Moore first learned of *Camera Work* and 291, for in her senior year she took a prose writing course from Georgiana Goddard King,⁴ who was later to become a highly respected art historian. Although King was hired to teach English and did not actually teach courses in art history until several years after Moore had graduated, she was a friend of Gertrude Stein's and through the Steins, Gertrude and her brother Leo, had already become acquainted with the paintings of the European avant-garde. King apparently visited the Steins in Paris in 1906, about the time that Leo Stein was selling his Japanese prints and was beginning his famous collection of modern European masters like Cézanne, Picasso and Matisse. Before the Armory Show brought the innovations in European painting to the attention of the American public in 1913, the Steins' studio in Paris was one of the few places, along with Stieglitz's 291 gallery in New York, where young American artists and writers could view the newest developments in European painting, but few Americans indeed had as early an introduction to the works of Cézanne, Picasso and Matisse as King did. It is quite probable, too, that King visited 291 in New York, and she certainly read *Camera Work*,⁵ for she would

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³ All of Moore's reading and conversation notebooks are in the Rosenbach archive and will be indicated by the notebook number and photocopy page number which have been assigned to them there. Except for a few brief passages, these notebooks remain unpublished.

⁴ Stapleton points out that Moore took a course in prose writing from King, that King knew Gertrude Stein and had seen her collection, and that Moore copied the address of 291 into the notebook she kept for King's class (6). For the bulk of the information about Georgiana Goddard King, I am indebted to Susanna Terrell Saunders, who does not, incidentally, mention that Moore was King's student.
post photographs of contemporary art from it and other periodicals in her
seminar room. And since King admired her friend's writing a great deal and
introduced Stein into her lectures after reading *Three Lives* in 1906, she may
also have pointed out parallels between French painting and Stein's prose at
the time Moore was in her class (a lecture of King's about such parallels was
published in the *Bryn Mawr Alumnae Bulletin* in 1934). Also, just before
coming to Bryn Mawr in 1907, King had written a book about marionette plays
for children as well as a poetic drama, so that it could also have been King
who sparked Moore's interest in Gordon Craig, the radically ininnovative and
controversial set designer, who Moore claimed was one of the artists—along
with Blake, Hardy, Henry James, and the minor prophets—who influenced her
poetry.

But what must have influenced Moore's development as an artist even
more profoundly than anything she could have learned at this time about
French painting is the example set by King, and no doubt by other teachers at
Bryn Mawr, of educating oneself. One of the reasons for Bryn Mawr's
founding in 1885 was to provide women with an opportunity for graduate study
in all departments, since few graduate programs at that time accepted
women. Although King received a master's degree from Bryn Mawr in
philosophy and political science and did some graduate work in English, most
of her education, and all of her training in art history, she earned by
traveling and especially by reading widely. If Moore had attempted
scholarship instead of poetry, one can imagine that her methods would have
been very like King's and would have had the same shortcomings—that her
"numerous interests and her incessant reading in almost every art field were
almost her undoing" and that "she was too eager to find direct stylistic or
thematic influences between things, no matter how implausible and illogical the connections were historically and geographically" (Saunders 231). This is not to say that Moore would have become a scholar if she could have, but that she probably learned at Bryn Mawr that for a woman to hold her own intellectually, she must take wholehearted responsibility for educating herself. In 1915 Moore wrote to her brother, who was then doing graduate work in theology at Princeton, about their mother's response to H.D.'s suggestion that Marianne come live in London, "Your letter writings are as nothing to what ensued. I told her you were to be 'educated' and I might get in a little grown up wigwagging on the side" (8 Sept. 1915). Such "wigwagging," which was to continue for the rest of her life, included voracious reading and note-taking in all the respectable fields of art and science as well as a good many not-so-respectable fields like sports and fashion, and it included visiting New York in 1915 and eventually moving to Greenwich Village in 1918.

While there is no indication that Moore wanted to become a painter at the time she visited 291, she had earlier had such aspirations. Moore told Donald Hall in an interview that even though she began writing poetry at Bryn Mawr and served on the board of its literary magazine for three years, at the time she graduated she wanted to become a painter:

I believe I was more interested in painting then. At least I said so. I remember Mrs. Otis Skinner saying at Commencement time, the year I was graduated, "What would you like to be?"

"A painter," I said.

"Well, I'm not surprised," Mrs. Skinner answered. I had something on that she liked, some kind of summer dress. She commended it and said, "Well, I'm not at all surprised."

("Art of Poetry" 22)

Throughout her life Moore made drawings with pen and ink, especially of small creatures and artifacts; as a tourist in England, for instance, she drew
the things she admired in the museums much as a contemporary tourist might take snapshots. Her animal drawings once earned her $2.50 at the fair, and she occasionally did watercolors, one of which she prized enough to hang in her living room.  

In the years following her graduation from Bryn Mawr, Moore developed a habit of saving newspaper and magazine articles about art as well as pictures of the works themselves. At first she fastidiously pieced these clippings together and pasted them into a scrapbook (along with clippings about theater, the suffrage movement, science and literature), but later on when keeping the scrapbook became too time-consuming, she would save the clippings inside the covers of books or sometimes in manila envelopes. The two scrapbooks she kept from 1909 to 1915 are especially important, however, for they represent the great extent to which Moore was educating herself about modernism even before she experienced it first hand in New York in 1915. The clippings she saved at this time are mostly from the Boston Evening Transcript, Literary Digest, Critical Opinion, and The Spectator and among other topics discuss artists such as Gordon Craig, George Bernard Shaw, Rodin, John Masefield, and Nijinsky and movements such as Cubism, Futurism, Synchromism, Fauvism and Imagism. Especially interesting are the reviews of the Armory Show in 1913, which was the first public exhibition in America to include the likes of Cézanne, Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Duchamp and Picabia. Although far less than half of the works

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5 Many of Moore's drawings have been reproduced in the Marianne Moore Newsletter. In a letter to her brother from England (23 July 1911), she says she has made drawings of certain things in the British Museum. The $2.50 earnings are also reported in a letter to her brother (26 Nov. 1915). The watercolor of a house is in Moore's living room at the Rosenbach.
exhibited at the Armory Show were European, the impact and controversy of these few works is evident in the titles of the articles Moore saved: "The Greatest Exhibition of Insurgent Art Ever Held," "Post-Impressionism Arrived," "The Mob as Art Critic," "Bedlam in Art," and "Mr. Roosevelt on the Cubists."

Although Moore had to go to New York to find artistic acceptance, she was not as isolated intellectually in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, as one might think, though it must have been with some delight and some frustration that she maintained her independent stance. She recorded conversations in her notebook about Gordon Craig's morality and Der Blaue Reiter (the influential collection of essays and pictures edited by Kandinsky and Franz Marc) that seemed to amuse her (1250/23: 19; 1250/24: 7). But the neighborhood's response to her own work must have been considerably less amusing. The fair-haired boy of the neighborhood was William Rose Benét, who was then assistant editor of the Century and already a reputable poet; even his sister Laura, with whom Marianne stayed in New York, had had poems published. In May of 1915 Marianne wrote to her brother:

My poems came out this week to the polite oh's and ah's of the neighborhood—Mole [Mrs. Moore] is very much disgusted with me for owning up to them. . . . Miss Rose just returned from N. York, says she told Billy that "that English paper called me an imagist" and he said he would advise me not to let myself be influenced too much by the Imagists. 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. (9 May 1915)

Perhaps Moore derived a little satisfaction in New York from introducing Laura to Kreymborg, with whom she was quite impressed; when Laura asked him to tell her truthfully what he thought of her brother's verse, he said he had not seen much of it and did not care for what he had seen, and when she
asked him if he felt the same way about Mr. Untermeyer's work, he admitted that he did. But when Moore goes with Laura to visit Benét at the Century office, she says that "armor was laid aside and we had a nice time. Billy was most curious and sensitive in his snuffing the air which blow[s] from the Kreymborg's quarter of the poetic world" (26 Dec. 1915).

Several months after Moore's trip to New York, she and her mother moved from Carlisle to live in a parsonage in Chatham, New Jersey, where Moore's brother Warner had been assigned as a Presbyterian minister. Moore was now only a short train ride from New York, so that she could regularly visit the New York galleries and participate in the "meetings" with Kreymborg and other experimental writers and artists. The fragments of conversation she recorded in the notebooks she kept for this purpose and especially the poetry she wrote indicate that these must have been crucial years for her, although (unfortunately for us) since she was living with her brother, we do not have the almost daily documentation that her letters provide of the years when her brother was away. And while Moore's conversation notebooks from 1916 to 1919 provide an impressive scattering of names—William Carlos Williams, Lola Ridge, Skipwith Cannell, Mark Tobey, Kreymborg, Hartpence, Mary Carolyn Davies, the Zorachs, Wallace Stevens, Mina Loy, Stieglitz and Maxwell Bodenheim—they do not chronicle the nature of the gatherings or even of the discussions, for these entries (many of them unrelated to art or writing and some of them incoherent and all but illegible) were never intended for readers. More readable accounts of the "meetings" of these years are provided in Williams's Autobiography and in

6 See esp. 1250/23; also 1250/24. Some of the names, notably that of Wallace Stevens, appear in comments made about the person.
Kreymborg's *Troubadour*, both of which capture the energy and enthusiasm of these years as well as providing vivid portraits of various personalities.

Although Kreymborg had collaborated with his roommate Man Ray in publishing the *Glebe*, the first issue of which was *Des Imagistes: An Anthology*, the publication which was most successful in bringing the new poets together was *Others*. Once *Glebe* began publishing too many Europeans for Kreymborg's taste, he abandoned it, but in 1915 upon meeting a willing (and wealthy) sponsor, Walter Conrad Arensberg, he eagerly initiated *Others*, the manifesto of which after much cutting read simply, "The old expressions are with us always, and there are always others." To begin they could get poems from two friends of Arensberg's—his Harvard classmate Wallace Stevens and an Englishwoman named Mina Loy who knew the Italian Futurist F. T. Marinetti and whose subject matter was shockingly (for those days) uninhibited—but they soon received manuscripts from such unknowns, or virtual unknowns, as T. S. Eliot ("Portrait of a Lady" via Pound), Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams, and Marianne Moore. These writers not only began to meet in print, but those who lived in or near New York and were so inclined began to meet in person.

One of the most popular meeting spots was the Kreymborgs' cottage in Grantwood, New Jersey, on the slopes of the Palisades, where on Sunday afternoons poets, painters and the like would bring their picnics. Williams writes of these afternoons:

> We'd have arguments over cubism which would fill an afternoon. There was a comparable whipping up of interest in the structure of the poem. It seemed daring to omit capitals at the head of each poetic line. Rhyme went by the board. We were, in short, "rebels," and were so treated. (*Autobiography* 136)
Among the regulars were, besides the Kreymborgs, Orrick and Peggy Johns, Williams, Horace Holley, Skipwith and Kitty Cannell, Arensberg, Man Ray, Mary Carolyn Davies, Robert Alden Sanborn, Alanson Hartpence; and occasionally Marcel Duchamp (brought along by Arensberg), Mina Loy, and Malcolm Cowley. "Now and then," according to Kreymborg, Mary Carolyn Davies would be accompanied by "an astonishing person with Titian hair, a brilliant complexion and a mellifluous flow of polysyllables which held every man in awe" (238-39). This astonishing person was Marianne Moore.

Moore's conversation notebook includes a rather lengthy entry that confirms it was Davies who was sent, sometime around November of 1915, to bring Moore along to the meetings (though not necessarily to Grantwood). Moore quotes Davies's impression of "William Williams": "He is so handsome. He has the most beautiful head, and he's so nice. He has black curly hair. Oh you will like him," and somewhat later on Davies says to Moore: "I'm so glad you're like this. I was so afraid you wouldn't be. Your things are so—they make you afraid. They're so reserved, they're strong like a man's. I didn't expect you to answer my letter. But Margaret Shearer told me to write" (1250/23: 44-45).

Because of Moore's staunchly Presbyterian household it would not have been easy for her to get away on Sunday afternoons to make appearances even "now and then" at Grantwood. Her appearances may have been more frequent in Greenwich Village. Williams recalls that Grantwood spawned evening gatherings along Fourteenth Street, especially at the Kreymborgs' and at Lola Ridge's apartments. And in his autobiography the sculptor William Zorach recalls the poets' meeting at his and Marguerite's place:
In those days we knew lots of young poets, and they spent much of their time with us. They would meet at our place to discuss poetry and what could be done with it. They would plan little magazines and publicity and places to get poetry published. We would all read poems and discuss them; Alfred Kreymborg, whose plays we produced, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, Maxwell Bodenheim, Lola Ridge, Wallace Stevens and Orrick Johns...

Marguerite and I both wrote poetry... and the modern young poets liked what I wrote. They liked the naivete, the simplicity, and the direct expression of a mood. They published some of our poems in Others... When I became more proficient and began editing and shifting words and working over my poems, the poets lost interest. (55)

Lists of names can, however, be misleading, for even though Mina Loy and Stevens, for instance, often appear on the lists of Greenwich Village regulars from these years, Moore did not actually meet Stevens until 1941 and met Loy only once, before a performance of Alfred Kreymborg's Lima Beans, in which Williams, Loy and William Zorach played the leading roles.7 But Moore's conversation notebook indicates fairly certainly that during the winter and spring of 1916-17 Moore was coming into contact with a good many new faces and new ideas. While Moore's conversation, and no doubt her poetry as well, "held every man in awe," she must have been equally awed by what she saw and heard, for she wrote: "Many of these things which I like I don't thoroughly understand & that brings me to a standstill experimentally," (this one she wrote twice slightly reworded); and on another occasion, "I came away so loaded down with ideas I could hardly keep the sidewalk" (1250/23: 50, 57).

7 According to her interview with Donald Hall, Moore met Stevens for the first time in 1941 at Mt. Holyoke College ("Art of Poetry" 41); for the description of Moore's meeting with Mina Loy, see Moore's letter to H.D., 1 Nov. 1921.
Since some of the longest of the conversations she recorded are with Alfred Stieglitz and Alanson Hartpence, it seems likely that she attended exhibitions at 291 and the Daniel Gallery, where Hartpence worked. Particularly notable are the several pages of minute handwriting that she devoted to Stieglitz’s story of the failure of his first marriage (1250/23: 58–59). (It is not at all surprising that a twenty-nine year old unmarried woman from a conservative family would be interested in such matters.) At the same time she also records Stieglitz’s disgruntled remarks about the Independents Show: “It would have been so much better if they had no names. If they were going to be democratic to go all the way—then publish the names the last day. They could have got no end of fun out [of it] but they wouldn’t do it. There is no humor. The American has his funny sheet that is all. There is no wit” (60). This conversation, which Moore dates 12 May [1917], most likely took place at 291 two days before its final exhibit closed; this exhibit was of paintings by Georgia O’Keeffe (who would not move to New York and begin sharing her life with Stieglitz until the following year). After quoting Stieglitz, Moore adds: “Hartley came in and he also dragged in mountains. Said these things were so common (of Miss O’Keefe’s)—he wanted to feel the way he felt when he was on a mountain.” To this Moore adds the remark (probably her own), “I don’t see the commonness” (60).8

Recalling Moore’s role in the Others group, Williams said years later: “Her loyalty to the group and to her mother was unflagging. It irritated us somewhat, the mother thing, but there was nothing to do about it” (I Wanted

8 I have added the bracketed words and letters to complete the sense where Moore’s handwriting is illegible. The parenthesis here indicate Moore’s insert.
20). Except for the four years she was at Bryn Mawr, Marianne lived with her mother continuously until her mother’s death in 1947, when Marianne was sixty. Before Marianne was a year old, her father, whose attempts to invent a smokeless furnace had failed, abandoned his wife and two infant children. For the next six years the family of three lived in St. Louis with Mrs. Moore’s father, a Presbyterian minister, until his death and then moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where Mary Warner Moore saw that her two children were properly reared and educated. During World War I, Marianne’s older brother Warner left his church in Chatham, New Jersey, where he had been a minister for two years, to begin his life’s career as a chaplain in the U. S. Navy; although he maintained an exceptionally close relationship with his mother and sister through frequent letters back and forth, he was not to live near them again for another ten years, and by then he would have a family of his own.

Moore’s “unflagging” devotion to her mother and to the Others group could not have been without conflict, for in the Chatham parsonage to which she returned after her ventures into the Village, even a copy of Botticelli’s Spring could arouse controversy. Marianne records a conversation between Mrs. Moore and a Mr. Parker that her brother overheard and told her:

Parker says it’s indecent. He wouldn’t have it up any more than he’d have up the pictures of ballet dancers in barber shops. Willow [Mrs. Moore] defended it feebly on the grounds that it’s art. Besides, He [Willow] said, there are very pretty flowers in it. Parker—Flowers, yes. Who looks at the flowers? There is a saying—there is no evil but thinking makes it so. But you can think about a rotten egg all day and that won’t make it good. Willow said, Well Rat [Marianne] wouldn’t have it up if it weren’t all right. Parker said, Not before he went to college maybe. I admire your loyalty but there’s need for some missionary work. (1250/24: 17-18).
Despite Mrs. Moore's misgivings about Marianne's artistic associates, she wanted to support her children in whatever way she could, and so when Warner left for the navy, she agreed to move with her daughter to Greenwich Village, where they lived on St. Luke's Place until moving to Brooklyn in 1929.

This living arrangement must have demanded a great deal of tolerance from both parties. In the summer of 1918, perhaps when they were deciding what to do when Warner left, Moore recorded her own feelings:

Well, there are reasons why it is better to live away from home—You want to go somewhere—come in at an unusual hour, or you don't want to eat, you want to be alone—my mother comes in 16 times a day bringing me apples & things to eat, and if you can't eat, she doesn't understand, the whole house is upset. Send for the doctor, insist on an exam. Oh my—Well—I can't have it. (1250/23: 67)

And Moore recorded her mother's remarks after living in the Village for some months:

I had no more idea of an artist or of these people you go among from time to time than I have now of people in an almshouse or an insane asylum gathered together into a group and treated kindly—not half so good an idea— (1250/24: 34)

Not only was tolerance demanded of Marianne and her mother, but over the years those friends who would be closest to Marianne would also have a certain amount of tolerance for her "mother thing." Scofield Thayer, for instance, the editor of the Dial and for several years a regular visitor in the Moore home (it is rumored that he proposed to Marianne), showed deference by suggesting that he bring "his friend Mr. Nichol to call." Moore wrote to her brother, "he thinks Mr. Nichol would be congenial to Mole [Mrs. Moore]—being a curator of the Metropolitan and opposed to Gaston Lachaise's nudes" (4 Apr. 1921).
Almost as pertinent as determining with whom Moore did associate in New York during the teens is determining with whom she did not associate, though the latter task has obviously insurmountable difficulties. There is no evidence that I know of, for instance, that Moore ever set foot in the West 67th Street apartment of Walter and Louise Arensberg, which not only housed a major collection of works by such moderns as Duchamp and Picabia (now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art) but also served as a kind of salon for artists and writers. These gatherings differed in style from their counterparts in the Village, for the Arensbergs served lavish amounts of food and drink and were hosts to several French artists like Duchamp and Picabia (who would often speak in their native tongue) as well as to American artists like Man Ray, Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, Morton Schamberg, Joseph Stella, Stuart Davis, Charles Sheeler and occasionally Stieglitz. In addition to the poets who sometimes came there—Mina Loy, Williams, Stevens, Kreymborg, Amy Lowell—were such celebrities as Isadora Duncan, the boxer Arthur Cravan, and the notorious Baroness Elsa von Freytag Loringhoven. But whereas Stieglitz was the acknowledged high priest of 291 (as one would expect), the dominating personality of the Arensberg Circle was not Arensberg himself but Marcel Duchamp, whose *Nude Descending a Staircase* had in 1913 attracted almost as much controversy as the rest of the Armory Show put together.

...
to Moore as "one of my children" [Moore, 19 Dec. 1915], yet Kreymborg collaborated with Arensberg in publishing *Others*), the groups had rather distinct personalities. In general, the Arensberg Circle was more iconoclastic and cerebral than the Stieglitz group, whose aesthetic principles could assume a fervent moral tone, and those artists like Dove, Hartley and Demuth who included themselves in both groups had correspondingly diverse, but not necessarily conflicting, values. Duchamp's readymades epitomize in some ways what the Arensberg Circle stood for. Having been more or less rejected by the Cubist "establishment" in Paris, Duchamp gave up painting in 1913 and in 1915 moved to America, where his *Nude Descending a Staircase* had earned him an attractive notoriety and where he had an immediate friend and patron in Arensberg. Not disappointing those who expected outrageousness, he submitted for display in the Independents Show of 1917 a urinal, which he entitled *Fountain* and signed "R. Mutt." Although the urinal was banned from the show, the controversy it spurred was to make *Fountain* the most famous of Duchamp's readymades—which were commercially manufactured objects that he selected, displayed and titled. Another well-known readymade is the snow shovel he hung from the ceiling of his studio and entitled *In Advance of the Broken Arm*. Among the Americans who employed the readymade concept were Morton Schamberg, who attached a piece of plumbing to a wooden base and called it *God*, and Man Ray, whose assisted readymades, or "objects," include *Gift*, a flatiron with tacks projecting from its surface. As one can well imagine, Duchamp and certain members of the Arensberg Circle—the precursors by fifty years of Conceptual art—were to form the nucleus of New York Dadaism.
Regardless of whether or not Marianne Moore actually met Duchamp or visited the Arensbergs' apartment at some point, she seems not to have been affected by Duchamp and his iconoclastic notions of art as Williams admittedly was. Certain of Williams's poems like "The Red Wheelbarrow" still raise the question in college classrooms, "Is it poetry?" as Duchamp's readymades still raise the question, "Is it art?" While Moore's poems have difficulties of their own, they do not present "conceptual" difficulties. Moore had friends among the Arensberg Circle and admired certain of their works a great deal—as did Stieglitz who, for instance, photographed Duchamp's urinal—but her aesthetic principles have closer affinities with those generally upheld at 291.

Originally called the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, the tiny two-room gallery that Stieglitz rented at 291 Fifth Avenue showed only photographs for its first two seasons. Having begun his campaign to raise photography to the status of art in the 1890's, Stieglitz broke away from the New York Camera Club, of which he had been the leading member, in 1902 and gave the name "Photo-Secession" to the progressive "pictorial" photographers he fostered—those who recognized photography as more than a process; in 1903 he established Camera Work and in 1905 the "Little Galleries" in order to give these artists the freedom to explore their medium.

As pictorial photographers both in America and abroad began taking into consideration the formal properties of painting, they fell under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites and Symbolists. ¹⁰ Although Stieglitz

¹⁰For more information about Stieglitz and 291, see Davidson 13-73; Greenough 11-32; and Homer. Greenough's is the most convincing and enlightening discussion of the relationship between "pictorial" and "straight" (she prefers "pure") photography that I have seen.
eventually rejected the work of the Photo-Recessionists with their misty landscapes and ethereal maidens (Stieglitz’s own pictorial photographs are of New York City), the Symbolist notion that art should express internal rather than external reality was to remain central to his aesthetic. He published in a 1912 Camera Work portions of Kandinsky’s Über das Geistige in der Kunst [Concerning the Spiritual in Art], in which Kandinsky argues that art must, like music, present formal equivalents to the feelings, or spirit, of the artist. In the twenties Stieglitz called his own series of rather abstract cloud photographs Equivalents. Not only in his own work but also in the work of the American painters he sponsored, he held individual expression to be sacred. He refused to show Charles Demuth’s watercolors because he felt they were not an honest expression of Demuth’s personality but an imitation of John Marin’s; he told Demuth, “the blade of grass does not ask what it is meant to do but continues upon its way: a blade of grass” (qtd. in Davidson 21). And it is because Stieglitz valued individual expression so highly that he distrusted movements and manifestos.

According to Sarah Greenough, it was modern painting, particularly Cubism, that brought Stieglitz to appreciate objective reality and hence to become an advocate of pure, or “straight,” photography. In contrast to the soft focus and manipulated negatives of most of the pictorialists, straight photography as a technique meant sharp focus and little if any manipulation of the negative (a technique Stieglitz himself had practiced even during his pictorialist phase), but as an aesthetic, especially one adopted by America’s leading crusader for modern art, straight photography was to have a lasting impact on American art. Once Stieglitz and other artists associated with 291 recognized that painting could render abstractly the artist’s subjective
response to the world, they determined that the unique challenge of the photographer is to render facts; they wanted to depict what the photographer Edward Weston called "the very essence and quintessence of the thing itself" (qtd. in Greenough 21). One way to reveal an object's essence, to make the viewer really see it, is to move the camera so close to the object that it loses its familiarity and indeed becomes nearly abstract—at which point the distinctions between abstract painting and straight photography and between individual expression and objective truth become questionable. Greenough says: "In objective or pure photography, the photographer expressed his creativity not through manipulation or expressive printing techniques, as in pictorial photography, but through his seeing, his distinctive and decisive vision of the world" (21). Painters as well as photographers who were associated with 291 thus came to understand that individual expression is not at odds with, but is the result of, seeing the external world precisely as it is.

The realization of this aesthetic was not the accomplishment of a few years or of one man like Stieglitz. Rather it was the accomplishment of a variety of talented individuals who were working alone and working together through a variety of forms—talking, writing, painting and photographing. Camera Work and 291 provided an outlet and a context for these efforts. And few of the artists who supported, and were supported by, 291 found only one form to be adequate for their experiments. The Mexican caricaturist Marius de Zayas contributed significantly to the understanding of the aesthetics of photography through the essays he wrote for Camera Work. The painters, Max Weber and Marsden Hartley, each published several volumes of poetry as
well as numerous essays. Arthur G. Dove also wrote poetry as did Charles Demuth. John Marin wrote pages and pages of notes as well as poetical letters to Stieglitz.

That another painter like Georgia O'Keeffe seemed less inclined to express herself in words does not indicate that she contributed less to the understanding of the new aesthetic than those who wrote. O'Keeffe resented most of the things critics said about her and said of her own work, "I found that I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say in any other way—things that I had no words for." Unlike most of the other American painters Stieglitz sponsored, O'Keeffe had not traveled to Paris to experience modernism first-hand by the time Stieglitz gave her her first show at 291, but rather had discovered her own individual form of expression almost independently. Although O'Keeffe studied under some of the best art teachers in America, she did not find her own style until she began, consciously at least, to put most of what she had learned behind her and to paint exactly what she felt. When a fellow student of O'Keeffe's ignored the latter's wishes by showing her work to Stieglitz in 1916, Stieglitz insisted on showing it at 291 without O'Keeffe's permission. It was when she accidentally found out about this exhibit that the irate O'Keeffe met Stieglitz for the first time (though she had visited 291 with other students at least once before), and he

11 Moore's library contains four volumes of Hartley's poetry: Twenty-Five Poems (1923); Androscoggin (1940); Sea Burial (1941)—the latter two inscribed to Moore from Hartley; and Selected Poems (1945). Selected Poems contains a note to Moore from the publisher which indicates Moore had some part in getting this posthumous volume published; with it is the carbon of Moore's reply that compliments the blacks and whites of the book itself which are "strong as Marsden Hartley's work has always seemed." Apparently, many of Hartley's contemporaries considered him as much a poet as a painter.
convinced her that her work had to be shown. (O’Keeffe’s second show in 1917 is the one Moore probably attended, the last exhibit at 291.)

Although Marianne Moore’s commitment to her mother and Georgia O’Keeffe’s passionate and enduring love affair with Stieglitz mark profound differences in their personal lives, the early professional careers of these two Irishwomen (who were, incidentally, both born on November 15, 1887!) bear certain resemblances to each other. For even though Moore was eager to get her early poems into magazines, she was as reluctant to publish a book as O’Keeffe was to have a show. And as O’Keeffe’s first show took place without her permission, so did the publication of Moore’s first book Poems take place without her permission. While both artists were aware of new directions in the arts, neither of their styles underwent dramatic changes once they directly encountered the work of other modernists, as did the styles of many writers and painters. The talent each woman had for expressing her own individuality without adhering to conventions old or new must have appealed immensely to the leaders of modernism—though both artists had their detractors and even their admirers often expressed bewilderment before their work. No one could criticize Moore or O’Keeffe for a lack of individual style, for each worked like Stieglitz’s “blade of grass [that] does not ask what it is meant to do but continues upon its way: a blade of grass.” O’Keeffe and Moore not only exemplified the principles of individualism but also shared the straight photographers’ impersonal devotion to the subjects they chose to paint or write about. Perhaps it is because each woman developed a style that was so lacking in self-consciousness that neither of them wrote treatises, as other writers and painters did, explaining what it was they were trying to accomplish. Moore did, of course, write a
great amount of critical prose, but unlike much of Pound's, Stevens's, Williams's and Eliot's, Moore's prose is nearly always descriptive rather than prescriptive—for Moore shared Stieglitz's antipathy towards labels and manifestos.

In his Autobiography, Williams remembers Moore as "a rafter holding up the superstructure of our uncompleted building, . . . one of the main supports of the new order, . . . our saint—if we had one—in whom we all instinctively felt our purpose come together to form a stream" (146). In later years he recalls, "We all loved and not a little feared her not only because of her keen wit but for her skill as a writer of poems. She had a unique style of her own; none of us wanted to copy it but we admired it" (1 Wanted 20). (One can well imagine a contemporary of O'Keeffe's saying the same of her style.) The admiration Moore received from Kreymborg and Mary Carolyn Davies I have noted already.

Adding distinction to the respect Moore earned from her friends in the Others group is the respect she earned from poets across the Atlantic, particularly H.D., Richard Aldington and T. S. Eliot. Moore and H.D. were classmates at Bryn Mawr but knew each other there only by sight. After Moore's poetry appeared in the Egoist, of which H.D.'s husband Richard Aldington was the editor, H.D. wrote to Moore introducing herself and revealing her husband's admiration: "R[ichard] has spoken often of your work:—We both think you have achieved a remarkable technical ability! R. says it is quite the finest that he has seen from America!" (7 Sept. 1915). And a couple of years later H.D. confesses her own admiration: "I seem to know you so well. Yet, I can not find the words. Yours is that strange concern with the goldsmith, the lapidary—I know it so well. I have never
found nor made such rare jewels as yours... Your work is more rare, more fine than any modern I know. But you puzzle me" (29 Aug. 1917).

Moore received her highest compliment from London when in 1921 H.D. and Bryher (Winifred Ellerman) resisted Moore's humility by publishing Poems without her knowledge.

Although Williams regarded T. S. Eliot as a nemesis to everything that the Others group stood for, Moore's unique talent earned superlatives from both men. Besides the oft quoted praise in the two poets' reviews of her work, Williams wrote to Moore in 1932: "there is no work in verse being done in any language which I can read which I find more to my liking and which I believe to be so thoroughly excellent" (Letters 122); and Robert McAlmon wrote her in 1921:

Some things you ought to know: That T. S. Eliot has asked many questions about you and thinks you the person who has most definitely established an individual, unique, beautiful and musical rhythm, with intellectual content. He rates you more highly than anybody he has spoken of and we have talked of about everybody... Wyndham Lewis likes your things very much too.

Not only did Moore receive praise from the leading American poets of the late teens (Pound also praised her work [see "To Moore"]), but according to Kreymborg's account of a meeting that took place about 1919 or 1920, Moore also became "the first of 'the old guard' to be accepted by the new magazine." The new magazine, the Dial, was to become the leading journal of fine arts and letters during the twenties, and "the mystery man from the Dial" who heard Moore read "England" at that meeting and "induced her to part with it" was Scofield Thayer (333). Because of Thayer's unabating admiration for Moore and her work, her relationship with the Dial was to become increasingly significant during the twenties (see Joost 83-102). From the
1920 publication of "England" and "Picking and Choosing" until 1924, the Dial published fourteen of Moore's poems, and from 1921 to 1926 it published nineteen signed book reviews as well as a great many unsigned "Briefer Mention" reviews by her. In 1924 Scofield Thayer, the editor, decided with Sibley Watson, officially the "president" of the Dial but actually more of a co-editor, to give the prestigious Dial award to Marianne Moore. The announcement of the award appeared in the January 1925 issue and in each of the successive issues for February, March and April appeared a "Comment" devoted to Moore's poetry. These unsigned editorial tributes to Moore's poetry (written by Thayer) were followed in June of the same year by a tribute to Moore's discernment—an announcement that Moore would assume the duties of Acting Editor; in June 1926 came the announcement of Thayer's official resignation and of Moore's assumption of the duties of Editor—a position to which she would devote virtually all of her creative energies until the Dial ceased publication in June 1929. In the absence of any new poems from the years Moore worked for the Dial, readers may console themselves with Moore's forty-three delightful, but largely ignored, "Comments" that appear unsigned at the end of nearly every issue.

Moore's enthusiasm for meeting artists and writers when she first visited New York in 1915 seems to have waned considerably by the beginning of the new decade. In 1920 Moore wrote to her brother about a party she attended at Lola Ridge's where a number of celebrities were present:

Art Young, Max Eastman, Some Russians, Gaston Lachaise, Scofield Thayer, Lola Ridge, Piggy [Robert] McAlmon, and many others whom I didn't meet and hardly saw for the lights were dim and at the same time glaring and smoke clouded the atmosphere. . . . Piggy gave me two copies of his magazine just out and helped me into my wraps very ignorantly however as he squeezed my muff under his arm till it looked like a tam
In the summer of 1921 Moore wrote to her friend Bryher: "I should be happy in seeing you and Hilda [H.D.] but I do not like artists. I like laboratory scientists & tennis players & boys of the kind that go in flocks & say little when isolated." These were years of withdrawal for Moore—a time when she could absorb the experiments in art and poetry that she had witnessed during the teens and reassert the full force of her own individuality. For from 1920 until the 1924 publication of Observations she produced some of her finest poems and sent most of these to the Dial.

Though Moore maintained several close friendships during the early twenties, her letters more often repeat conversations that took place at home than at parties; and the names have changed. Glenway Wescott and Monroe Wheeler (a lifelong friend who would later join the administration of the Museum of Modern Art) are frequent visitors, as is Scofield Thayer. Her occasional ventures into society include having tea or dinner at the Dial, so that she now begins to meet the people who would later become her colleagues and with whom she would form several lasting friendships: Sibley Watson, whose important collection of art Moore surely saw; Gaston Lachaise, the French/American sculptor who was a friend of Watson's and did a bust of Moore; E. E. Cummings, whose drawings were as familiar to readers of the Dial as his poetry; Kenneth Burke, just then coming into his own as a theorist; the art critic and early champion of modernism, Henry McBride;

12 Moore dates this entry 18 Jan. 1935 in her conversation notebook (1250/27: 15), but she notes that it comes from a letter she wrote to Bryher on 4 Aug. 1921.
and Paul Rosenfeld, who wrote regularly about music and sometimes about
art.

Although the energy of the twenties is considerably more restrained
and less rebellious than that of the teens, the Dial maintained a commitment
to new forms of expression at the same time it exercised greater selectivity
than had Others. And as in the teens, verbal and visual forms of expression
remained integrally connected to each other, for Thayer and Watson
continued to print high quality drawings, photographs and paintings even when
it became financially disadvantageous to do so. While Moore's editorial
duties did not include selecting the artwork to be published (Thayer and
Watson continued to do this), she could hardly have avoided some dealings
with artists, and she must surely have appreciated the artwork from an
editorial standpoint as much as she had as a subscriber. In "The Dial: A
Retrospect" she names the works and artists most memorable to her:

Among the pictures, as intensives on the text, were three
verdure-tapestry-like woodcuts by Galanis; Rousseau's lion
among lotuses; "The Philosophers" by Stuart Davis; Adolph Dehn's
"Viennese Coffee House"; and Kuniyoshi's curious "Heifer"—the
forehead with a star on it of separate whorled strokes like
propeller fins; Ernest Fiene, Charles Sheeler, Arthur Dove,
John Marin, Georgia O'Keefe, Max Weber, Carl Sprinchorn, the
Zorachs, and Bertram Hartman; Wyndham Lewis, Brancusi,
Lachaise, Elie Nadelman; Picasso and Chirico, Cocteau line
drawings, and Seurat's "Circus." (Predilections 105)

That Moore associated herself with the Dial rather than with any of the
little magazines of the twenties reveals a preference that distinguishes her
from Williams and Kreymborg. For whereas Contact (edited by Williams and
McAlmon) and Broom (edited by Kreymborg and Harold Loeb) served specific
points of view, the Dial's expression of purpose and standards lay in the
quality of material the editors chose to print and in the carefully conceived
format and arrangement of those materials—qualities which make the Dial resemble, in these respects, a Marianne Moore poem.

Although Moore had published only one piece of art criticism prior to becoming editor of the Dial—an essay published in the Dial called "Is the Real Actual?" about Alfeo Faggi's sculpture—once she acquired the protective shield of anonymity provided by the "Comment" section, she seems to have eagerly taken up the task of writing about art. The second "Comment" she wrote is devoted to the show of Seven Americans at the Anderson Galleries, the seven artists that Stieglitz continued to sponsor at various galleries after 291 closed: John Marin, Arthur G. Dove, Marsden Hartley, Paul Strand, Charles Demuth, Georgia O'Keeffe and himself. The third "Comment" Moore wrote is devoted to an exhibition of children's drawings at the Worcester Art Museum (291, incidentally, had been the first gallery to present children's art seriously). Later "Comments" treat Dürer, Audobon, Blake and such art-related topics as maps, book illustration and advertising.

The art criticism that Moore published in later years is devoted to the work of friends: the commercial artist, E. McKnight Kauffer; the watercolorist, Robert Andrew Parker; and the sculptor, Malvina Hoffman. There is also a short tribute to Stieglitz. (Moore seems not to have written about the work of another good friend, the painter Loren MacIver.) Moore's papers at the Rosenbach reveal that some of her most ambitious art criticism went unpublished. Around 1916 she wrote two paragraphs on the cartoonist F. G. Cooper. An undated, untitled "mystery" review of three and a half typed pages describes an exhibit of drawings and paintings without providing any titles, artists' names, nationalities or dates! In 1937 she sent a four-page review called "Art and Interpretation" about the important exhibition at the
Museum of Modern Art called Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism to the Globe; and then sent a revised version entitled "Concerning the Marvelous" to the Saturday Review. In 1964 she sent, at the editor’s request, a four-page review of art books to the New York Times Book Review. Perhaps the editors who rejected these pieces were seeking something more critical and less descriptive, for Moore writes almost exclusively about art that she likes, and she generally expresses her admiration, as she does in poetry, through a rigorously detailed but concise description of the work itself.

The large number of art books in Moore’s library indicates not only that Moore’s interest in art persisted from her Bryn Mawr years until her death in 1972, but also that throughout her life friends regarded an art book to be an appropriate gift. While Moore’s library reflects considerable appreciation for the work of her contemporaries, it also reveals an interest in such diverse art forms as jewelry-making, illuminated manuscripts, Persian art, Gothic architecture, printmaking, Chinese calligraphy and antique automatons. And her reading diaries as well as her poems show a lifelong interest in the arts; during the thirties, for instance, she regularly took notes from the "Page for Collectors" in the Illustrated London News on such topics as Irish cut glass, unicorns, caricatures, Persian bronzes and mummified cats. Also during the thirties Moore saved a number of announcements from various galleries exhibiting Surrealist works. One of her last poems, "The Magician's Retreat" is based on a Magritte painting.

But whereas Moore’s interest in the arts grew and diversified over the years, the aesthetic values that she formed during her early years in the

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See esp. 1250/6. Moore’s collection of gallery announcements is on file at the Rosenbach.
Village, when she was regularly visiting galleries and contributing her own talents towards a new understanding of the arts, were to stay with her. And the qualities she valued in painting, sculpture and photography were to remain inseparable from those she valued in poetry and prose. In 1949 she wrote: "Instinctiveness, imagination, and 'the sense of artistic difficulty' . . . have interacted till we have an objectified logic of sensibility as inescapable as the colors refracted from a prism" (qtd. in Schulman 175). These words which appear in the introduction to a catalog for an exhibit of commercial art could introduce equally well the *Collected Poems* of their author.
Chapter 2: A Poetry of Surfaces

"Neatness of finish! Neatness of finish!"

Marianne Moore was once asked in an interview, "Is the visual pattern [of a poem] not as important as the spoken?" She replied, "No. Not at all as important, although I do think of it. I like to see symmetry on the page, I will confess." She then removed from the wall a poem which had been framed for her by The New York Review of Books and carefully dusted the glass with a cloth that she kept in a vase on a tall chest. Much later in the interview, after responding to a question on the conversational quality of her poems, her attention returned to the frame she was still holding and to the wood engraving printed directly below her poem. "And Laurence Scott framed it," she said speaking of the page, "leaving more of a margin below than above, and all are carefully mitred. I made a mistake there [indicating a line in the poem] and I put a patch over it. It's just newsprint, so it has to be under glass" ("Conversation" 158, 165). While the aural density of Moore's poetry can sometimes rival Hopkins's and its conversational accuracy aspires to James's, she finds the visual presence of the poem on the page irresistible.

Readers of Moore's poetry have frequently remarked upon its visual quality. Usually skirting the label of Imagism, critics like to note the hard, clean edges of the images, the pattern and texture of the stanzas. The few, however, who have recognized the radical departure of her visual idiom from the Western poetic tradition have arrived at some rather daring conclusions. Jeanne Kammer, for instance, in her study of Emily Dickinson, H.D. and Marianne Moore suggests that the "aesthetic of silence" is a product of the
feminine imagination, the liberation of which coincided with the advent of modernism:

For the woman poet perhaps, the model is oracle, not bard; the activity seeing, not singing. In the end, the aesthetic of silence as it began and as it has persisted and developed in the work of our major women poets—Plath, Bishop, Levertov, Sexton, Rich, to name a few—supports a vision, not a cause. (164)

Equally provocative is Hugh Kenner's conclusion:

Like prophecy since Isaiah, poetry since Homer has imitated a voice crying, and the literary imitation of the visual was involved, when that problem finally arose, in endless compromises because the visual is voiceless. But the printed page itself is as uncompromisingly mute as cats and trees. It became the poet's medium when poets began to use typewriters. ("Disliking It" 98)

While Emily Dickinson and the typewriter may seem an odd, if not unconvincing, set of grandparents to the modern poetic idiom, what is to a certain extent true of much modern poetry is especially true of Marianne Moore's: hers is a poetry of space. It occupies the surface of the page and the garden of the imagination; it is a place to put things, to arrange things and to see things; "one discovers in it," quite literally, "a place for the genuine."

Moore's fondness for the image of her poem in a frame is indicative of her reluctance to acknowledge insurmountable generic differences between poems and pictures. Though she would never quarrel with terms like "painting" or "drawing" or "photograph" which describe the method of the artist more than his presumptions, she can often be found quarreling with "poetry," as she does when she tells Donald Hall:

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1 The aesthetics of space and of silence have frequently been noted in general descriptions of modernism such as Joseph Frank's "Spatial Form in Modern Literature"; Susan Sontag's "The Aesthetics of Silence"; and Monroe K. Spears's Space Against Time in Modern Poetry.
I disliked the term "poetry" for any but Chaucer's or Shakespeare's or Dante's. I no longer feel my original instinctive hostility to the word, since it's a convenient, almost unavoidable term for the thing—although hardly for me:—my observations, experiments in rhythm, or exercises in composition. What I write, as I have said before, could only be called poetry because there is no other category in which to put it. (*Art of Poetry* 27)

The term she preferred in the early years of her writing was "observations," which she chose for the title of her second book (1924) and would have chosen for her first book (1921) had she been asked.2 One advantage of "observations" over "poetry" is the suggestion of a method, like painting or photography, rather than any presumption of intellectual, moral or aesthetic astuteness; scientific observations, similarly, precede astute (or presumptuous) conclusions. Also, "observations" implies something seen—that is, seen with attention, seen the way an artist must see something in order to paint or photograph it, seen not with the eye alone but with the imagination.

In addition to many of Moore's friends' being, like herself, both poets and artists, she especially appreciated writers who could observe like artists and artists who could observe in writing. "The direct influences bearing on my work," which Moore lists in "A Letter to Ezra Pound"—"Gordon Craig, Henry James, Blake, the minor prophets and Hardy" (17)—include two artist/writers, Blake and Craig, and two writers whose visual quality she admired: of Hardy she writes, "There are in his work certain unmistakeably distinctive traits of eye, an awareness of architecture... how insistent are these imagined interiors and exteriors" (*Memory* 418), and of James she says, "I could visualize scenes, and deplored the fact that Henry James

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2 See Moore's letter to Bryher (2 July 1921). Moore's title may, of course, have been inspired by Eliot's *Prufrock and other Observations* (1917).
had to do it unchallenged" ("Art of Poetry" 22). Not only in her favorite writers but in lesser ones, too, she notes visual qualities: "Mr [Melville] Cane had, in his view of the external world, a distinctly formulated, approvedly decorative concept of colour," and "Miss [Mabel] Simpson's fastidious compelling of form appropriate to thought is apparent in the shapes of her poems" ("Land and Sea" 69, 70). Also recognizing the verbal precision of certain painters, Moore says in a Dial "Comment" on literary fastidiousness that among the few American writers with "perfect diction," "Whistler is our perhaps outstanding example of verbal esprit" (80: 444), and in a later Dial "Comment" she praises the writings of Audubon for their "faithfulness to the scene" (82: 267-68). Often, too, she identifies avant-garde writers and artists together as she does in another Dial "Comment" that defends contemporary American writers—an editorial "us"—against attacks such as Theodore Roosevelt's "fearless effacing of futurism and cubism" (83: 360).

A great reward of reading the prose of a poet, especially of as peculiar a poet as Marianne Moore, is learning the poet's preferences and tastes, her "predilections," as Moore entitled her own prose volume. Moore's readers are especially fortunate in having the unsigned "Comments" she wrote as editor of the Dial from 1925 to 1929 which express her predilections on many current publications, exhibitions, events and controversies that seemed worthy of her notice. While, as one might expect, many of these "Comments" treat literary topics and several treat artists and art exhibitions and some, as I have noted, treat artists and writers together, not a few deal with what one might categorize as "the surface of the page"—that is, topics such as book illustrations, maps, handwriting and typography. In one such "Comment" she writes:
The subtleties and atmospheric depth of naturalistic painting and drawing are disturbing in a book, says a writer on Text and Illustration in the Printing Number issued with a London Times Literary Supplement, since "in reading type you look 'at' the page; in looking at a realistic illustration you look 'through' it." (84: 359)

One could argue that in quite another sense one looks "through" a page of text to the meanings beyond the words rather than "at" the type itself. Indeed, most contemporary publishers choose type that is as unobtrusive as possible in order to facilitate looking "through" the page. Moore realizes, as does the Times reviewer she quotes, that this was not always the case and both praise "the wonderful series of books designed and produced by William Blake, in which a method of engraving invented by himself produced a unity comparable to that of early illuminated manuscripts" (84: 359). Thus, Moore's concern is not only with what the mind sees in the pages of Hardy and James but also with what the eye sees on the pages of Blake and illuminated manuscripts.

We find Moore rarely remiss in looking only "through," and not "at," the page. She seems to think it almost her duty in writing book reviews to comment on the type. In a review of Gertrude Stein's The Making of Americans she praises: "One is not able to refrain from saying, moreover, that its chiselled typography and an enticing simplicity of construction are not those of ordinary book-making" ("Spare" 153); in a review of Glenway Wescott's Natives of Rock she politely finds fault: "Although there are typographic errors as ingeniously undetectable as the book is decorative, such errors recede" ("Natives" 163). After complaining in a Dial "Comment," "It seems as if 'printing has virtually ceased to exist and mere publication has taken its place," she praises an exhibition of typography at The Grolier Club and points out analogies between printing and "the Indian pictograph" (81:}
Similarly attentive to handwriting, she observes in a "Comment" on an exhibit of letters at the Anderson Galleries: "In the handwriting of some of these letters the author's individuality as we have conceived it seemed curiously evident" (82: 360). Much later despairing over the appearance of the "carried-over long lines" in her own *Collected Poems* (1951), she insists, "Overruns certainly belong at the right—not left—of the page" (*Tell Me* 48), and saw to it that editors put her overruns to the right in subsequent volumes. She likewise cannot resist applauding (perhaps with some envy) Lincoln Kirstein's *Rhymes of a Private First Class*: "The book is masterly—with not one broken line, the wide page making space as eloquent almost as text" (*Art Books* 2–3).

The sometimes odd-looking poems of William Carlos Williams, Mina Loy, Ezra Pound and especially E. E. Cummings attest to the fact that Moore was not the only writer of her time concerned with the appearance of the page. But this awareness of surface that to some extent characterizes many of the poems of Moore's generation is perhaps the single most pronounced characteristic of modern painting since the time of the Impressionists.

During the nineteenth century, most teachers at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which had dominated the Western art world since the seventeenth century, taught its students to paint finely polished, photograph-like surfaces upon which one could detect neither the texture of the paint nor the activities of the brush. Like readable type, such a surface enhances the viewer's ability to look "through" rather than "at" the canvas and thus maintains the illusion, which had prevailed in Western art since the Italian Renaissance, of a painting's being a "window" through which to view a particular scene. When certain artists began to question the dictates of the
Academy in the mid-nineteenth century, at first only the evidence of brushwork and actual paint blurred the clear view through the window. But as the influence of Japanese prints became evident in paintings such as those of Degas and Whistler and the space behind the surface of the canvas became more and more compressed, observers became conscious of flat planes of color that existed both in the illusion of space behind the canvas and in the compositional space upon the canvas. The first great painter to understand and utilize fully this spatial tension was Cézanne. Particularly evident in Cézanne's landscapes are rectangular areas of color that function both as roof tops or planes of rock in the illusion of distance and as parallel strokes of paint in the "abstract" composition on the canvas. Even more radical than Cézanne's patches of paint were the areas of bare canvas or paper that he left exposed, thus making explicit the fact that a canvas can be at once the foreground behind which valleys sink and mountains rise and the background upon which paint is brushed.

Taking Cézanne's experiments with space a significant step further, Picasso and Braque in 1909 began using geometrical surface planes to describe faces, nudes, guitars and wine glasses, subjects which unlike roof tops and rocks are not readily defined by geometrical planes. The result, Cubism, created an image which for the first time in European art bore little resemblance to the appearance of the subject it was supposed to represent. By exaggerating the surface planes and "hermetically" fixing them together, the Cubists virtually eliminated the illusion of depth behind the picture plane and eventually came very close to eliminating illusion itself. In the "analytic" phase of Cubism, which lasted from 1909 to 1912, the image appeared to be broken up, or analyzed, into geometrically shaped planes
which lay at various angles to each other in a shallow but still three-dimensional space behind the surface of the canvas; in the later and most abstract works of analytic Cubism, called "hermetic" Cubism, there is so little background or negative space behind the Cubist planes that one gets the impression of a hermetically fused and impenetrable surface some few inches behind the picture plane.

This illusive surface was finally brought flush with the canvas in 1912 when Picasso and Braque began to apply to the canvas materials like newspaper, wallpaper, bottle labels and cigarette paper wrappers in a collage technique. Although one might expect to find that "synthetic" Cubism at last papers over the traditional "window" destroying illusion forever, illusion proves itself indomitable and thus all the more intriguing. I have somewhat oversimplified the movement "forward" from Cézanne's roof tops to Picasso's collages in order to illustrate the point that artists were becoming aware of the surface of their medium; actually what artists were becoming increasingly more aware of is the complex spatial relationship between the illusion behind the canvas and the physical fact of the canvas itself. When part of a still life, a newspaper clipping will more readily maintain its two-dimensional identity than will a stroke of paint. But what does one make of a piece of wood-grained wallpaper pasted upon a canvas that in turn has objects pasted or painted on top of it so that it gives the illusion of receding into the picture like a tabletop? Or what does one make of a similarly placed piece of paper that has been painted by the artist to give the illusion of wood-grained wallpaper? Picasso, Braque and Juan Gris delighted in the intrigue and wit of such visual puns.
And as Robert Rosenblum has clearly pointed out in "Picasso and the Typography of Cubism," they delighted in verbal puns, too. Well aware of the problem Moore noted in the Dial of looking "at" a page of type versus looking "through" a naturalistic picture, Cubists frequently incorporated words and fragments of words in their paintings and collages to encourage the viewer to look "at" as well as "through" the surface. And while their concerns were, of course, primarily visual, their choice of words, letters and even of typography often evoked verbal meanings as well. For instance, the title—nearly always fragments of the title—of the French newspaper Le Journal frequently appears pasted, stenciled and painted in the works of Picasso, Braque and Gris. Fragmenting such a familiar word (and image) clearly coincides with other familiar images the Cubists shattered but also creates unexpected new meanings and implications. The isolated letters JOU, for example, could suggest joie (joy), jouer (to play) and jouir (to enjoy or to come, in sexual slang), and as a partially concealed newspaper on the tabletop in Picasso's The Card Player, JOU suggests not only the "multiple realities" of play in many collages "where the true and the false, the handmade and the machine-made are constantly shuffled," but is particularly appropriate to the specific subject matter in this painting of "playing cards, part revealed, part concealed" (Rosenblum 51). In Still Life with Skull suggestions of the O and U appear as the eyes of a skull as elsewhere an O becomes the rim of a wine glass; and in Student with a Newspaper only the URNAL appears, the implication of "urinal" perhaps warranting the student's mischievous grin (Rosenblum 52).

Rosenblum notes, too, the diverse signatures of the synthetic Cubists that appeared after several years of Picasso's and Braque's having left their
Cubist works unsigned. Juan Gris, for instance, found his name in a Le Journal headline and included the clipping in a collage still life. But Picasso was the master of the collage signature, including in one work a letter addressed to himself, but not of course in his handwriting, and in another a mock name plate on a mock frame. Rosenblum describes this one, Still Life with Pipe, as follows:

[Picasso's] signature appears in the unexpected role of a mock printed label, affixed to a frame as mock as the rope frame on the first collage. This, in turn, encloses a matting of speckled paper, upon which is illusionistically affixed a small still-life drawing which casts a mock shadow. Like Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author, this collage keeps juggling layers of artistic illusion, which here reach their most ambiguous point in the trompe l'oeil name plate. Together with the decorative paper border, which parodies the baroque carved frame of a traditional masterpiece, the name plate ennobles, as if in a museum display, the modest little Cubist still-life of pipe and music score. . . . And as a further complication, the printing on the name plate, though nominally impersonal in its block letters, is nevertheless sufficiently irregular to suggest that it, unlike the decorative frame, is handmade, not machine made, so that all facts and fictions are cast into doubt. (66-67)

I have noted Rosenblum's observations on words and signatures in synthetic Cubism and his reference to Pirandello to show that in exploring the surface of their medium, painters found their concerns suddenly very like those of writers. And if one could imagine a mirror image of the artists' movement "forward" from behind the picture plane to the surface domain of words and type, he might see the writers, like Marianne Moore, moving from "behind" the referential meanings of their words to meet the artists on the visual domain of the printed page.

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3 In this article Rosenblum also refers to the writings of Joyce, Apollinaire and Stein.
While there were some artists like Max Weber and some writers like Gertrude Stein who purposefully tried to adapt the principles of Cubism to poetry and prose, Moore did not. Certainly she was aware of Cubism from reading about the Armory Show; she collected numerous articles from 1913 to 1914 on the Armory Show, Cubism, Futurism and Synchromism in her scrapbook. Most likely, however, she did not understand the theoretical basis of Cubism any better than the American critics and painters did at that time—which is to say that she was stimulated by the spirit of innovation and excited about the questions Cubism raised about the nature of art but that she with other Americans perceived the avant-garde European art to be more advanced than their own.

What Moore did appreciate and what may not be so remote from Cubism after all is cartoons. In the same scrapbook where she kept clippings on modern art are a great many cartoons and caricatures, many of which predate the Armory Show. When she met the critic J. B. Kerfoot at the 291 Gallery during her 1915 trip to New York, among the things she inquired about (neither of which, by the way, Kerfoot had heard of) were the new magazine, the *Egoist*, and the cartoonist, F. G. Cooper (19 Dec. 1915). And sometime around 1916 she wrote a short review of F. G. Cooper (unpublished) in which she admires the dialogue of his cartoons both for its conversational qualities and for its decorative qualities, that is, for its part in the visual design. She says that certain colloquial expressions he uses are not so much jokes as they are the legs and angles of a sort of aesthetic geometry which will not brook modification or infraction. They are manifestations of the modern

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4 See Weber's *Cubist Poems* and, for instance, Stein's essays, "Pablo Picasso" and "Portrait of Mabel Dodge at the Villa Curonia" in *Camera Work*. 
spirit, which are ready to stand or fall on their merits as art," and she devotes the second of two paragraphs to his signature:

Clean cut work is often marred by a signature. In F. G. Cooper's work, instead of destroying the unity of the picture, the signature in a sense is the picture. Impersonating an impartial observer, the 'g' strikes an attitude and presents in itself, a complete version of the story. We have in this letter, the Utopian who may see himself as others see him, without needing to wish that he had been cast for a more significant part.

Moore's concern with the integration of words into a visual design and with the animation of the signature, not to mention the verbal wit, are Cubist in spirit if not in form. She may have found more to appreciate formally in the caricatures of Marius de Zayas and the drawings incorporating words that appeared in the magazine 291.

But for all Moore's interest in the appearance of the written word, she never, to my knowledge, experimented with making pictures out of words in the manner of Apollinaire's calligrammes or, later, concrete poetry. When she said in the interview from which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter that the visual pattern of a poem is not as important as the spoken, she was not lying, for she was a poet acutely concerned with the cadence and diction of spoken language and had as keen an interest in dialects as she had in typography. She did not, for instance, insist that her editors use pages that were big enough not to break her lines though she did insist that the overruns be moved to the right of the page. But her concern with the appearance of the page is so readily apparent in the poems themselves that Donald Hall was moved to ask her if she ever plans her stanzas before she writes by drawing lines on a page, to which she replies:

Never, I never "plan" a stanza. Words cluster like chromosomes, determining the procedure. I may influence an arrangement or thin it, then try to have successive stanzas
identical with the first. Spontaneous initial originality—say, impetus—seems difficult to reproduce consciously later. . . . No, I never "draw lines." . . . However, if the phrases recur in too incoherent an architecture—as print—I notice that the words as a tune do not sound right. ("Art of Poetry" 34)

Marianne Moore's stanzas do not conform to a preconceived pattern; rather, each grows according to its own organic geometry, like the clustering of chromosomes, as determined by its own "impetus." And one of the manifestations of their final form is shape—some symmetrical, some assymmetrical, some formed in blocks, some in wedges, some in waves, all balanced—but each as uniquely suited to its language as seashells are to the creatures that make and inhabit them.

Because readers of English poetry are more accustomed to counting feet than to looking "at" the page, they have called Moore's stanzas "syllabic verse," which means that each stanza has exactly as many syllables as every other stanza in the poem. To Western minds, at least, such a form seems a rather arbitrary alternative to iambic pentameter or to free verse. Williams's variable foot, for instance, because it is based on the breath of speech, somehow seems less arbitrary. But the term "syllabic verse" ignores the visual pattern of the stanza, which is more immediately apparent than, and probably just as important as, the number of syllables. If Moore's stanzas can be seen as integral spatial formations, the count of the syllables becomes part of the geometrical whole. When asked about her syllabic method, Moore said, "Oh, I just hate that! I suppose I do, after the thing is done, count the syllables to know how nearly I have followed a set example in the second stanza from the first, but I never possibly could think of it until after I had written it" ("Conversation" 155). As in Japanese haiku, the number of syllables registers upon the ear as cadence, but the visual
design—in haiku the amount of ink on the brush, the placement of characters
upon the page; in Moore the intrusion of white space into and around the text,
the length of the lines balanced against each other—registers upon the eye as
symmetry, a symmetry as hard and perfect as the architecture of a shell.

My comparison of Moore's stanzas to shells comes in part from her
own admiration for the aesthetic of shells, especially evident in "To a Snail,"
"The Paper Nautilus" and her various "armor" poems and in part from the
philosopher Gaston Bachelard, who although he may never have read any of
Moore's poetry, describes her method with perception and empathy. In
equating the formations of shell and poetic image according to natural
geometric laws, he seems to concur with Moore's description of words
clustering like chromosomes; he says of shells, "Here it is nature that
imagines, and nature is very clever. One has only to look at pictures of
ammonites to realize that, as early as the Mesozoic Age, mollusks
constructed their shells according to the teachings of a transcendental
geometry" (105). But all we can know of the ammonites' complex creative
process is the shell, the final form. What Bachelard says of "the precision
of a life that endows itself with form" applies to artists and art as well as to
shells: "The being that possesses form dominates thousands of years. For
every form retains life, and a fossil is not merely a being that once lived,
but one that is still alive, asleep in its form" (113). Although the creative
process still sleeps in the shell, it remains mysterious, as Bachelard points
out by quoting from Paul Valéry's essay, Les coquillages [Shells]: "A
crystal, a flower or a shell stands out from the usual disorder that
characterizes most perceptible things. They are privileged forms that are
more intelligible for the eye, even though more mysterious for the mind, than all the others we see indistinctly" (105-06).

Moore would agree; the "privileged forms" in nature and in art often become subjects for her poems. In "To a Snail," for instance, through her admiration for the "privileged form" of the snail, she reveals her own aesthetic principles:

> 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. (CP 85)

Like Bachelard and Valéry, she values the mystery of the shell, the "principle that is hid," the principle hid not in murkiness and imprecision but in a form that is hard, compressed and "more intelligible for the eye, even though more mysterious for the mind, than all the others we see indistinctly." Stylistically, this hidden principle has no feet, neither snail nor metrical feet, but has instead "a method of conclusions." Though apparently oxymoronic, "a method of conclusions," like a fossil, holds its creative process within the final form of shell or stanza; "a method of conclusions" is, in Bachelard's words, "the precision of a life that endows itself with form." Although both poet and snail possess "a knowledge of principles," principles such as "compression" and the "teachings of a transcendental geometry," such principles can be recognized but not
explained. Hidden in their "conclusions," they are as mysterious, as shy, as seductive as the "curious phenomenon of your occipital horn."

But what is shy and mysterious requires protection. Both Moore and Bachelard know that the shell is not merely an aesthetic construction for its own sake but is also a protective device and shelter. While the analogy between the creation of shell and of stanza according to "principles" may so far be plausible, how can stanzas possibly protect the poet as the shell does the snail? Whether one can determine how they protect or not, one must admit that in Moore's case they do protect her "method of conclusions" from even her most sympathetic admirers. At least part of the protection comes from what may be called the hardness of the stanzas, a hardness which is achieved by "breaking" the syntax and natural speech rhythms according to the unexpected, but nevertheless geometrically controlled, principles that govern the stanzas. One of the clearest examples of this "breaking" is in "The Fish." The single-syllable first line of each stanza is occupied in some cases by seemingly significant words like "wade" and "dead" but more often by syllables as unimportant as "an," "the," and "ac-" (followed by "cident-lack" in the next line). Though the line and stanza divisions are not arbitrary, for the single-syllable first line rhymes with the second line, they do not indicate the way the poem should be read, as other free verse lines do. When, for instance, Cummings puts a line break, or two, in the middle of a word, it is to give phonetic emphasis to the syllables; Williams's single-word lines likewise accent the isolated word. The accent of Moore's poems, on the other hand, is controlled by punctuation and syntax, not line division. She says she even revised certain poems to keep readers from trying to break the sound of a word in the middle ("Conversation" 162). Instead of rhythm, Moore's
stanzas provide structure. But although we may see the structure as visual symmetry on the page and may discover structural elements such as rhyme or syllabic patterns, the method itself "in the absence of feet" remains mysterious, as curious a phenomenon as the snail's occipital horn. And like the occipital horn, Moore's shy "knowledge of principles" contracts upon close scrutiny into the hard, protective surface of the stanza.

The hardness Moore achieves by breaking syntax and speech rhythms into stanzas is not unlike the hard surfaces the analytic Cubists achieve by breaking the fluid images of faces and nudes into geometric planes. By shattering our expectations, both Moore and the Cubists force us to look at the hard structure of language and of visual images in new and startling ways. And though both call attention to the structure of their work by bringing it to the surface of the page or canvas, in neither case is the structure merely abstract or incidental: "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." For the structures are as uniquely, if sometimes oddly, suited to the language or images from which they arise as are the infinite variety of protective devices—shell shapes, armor, camouflaging colors—to their respective members of the animal kingdom. While it may be pushing my analogy to call the geometric planes of Cubism a protective device, I think it not implausible to call the surface they create a "shield," for especially in hermetic Cubism the "plates" do seem welded into an impenetrable, monochromatic barrier just behind the picture plane. Marianne Moore's stanzas may similarly be compared to finely wrought plates of armor linked by the flow of sense and
syntax, "scale / lapping scale with spruce-cone regularity"; thus are the last three stanzas of "The Fish" linked by one sentence:

All external marks of abuse are present on this defiant edifice— all the physical features of ac-dident—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. (CP 32-33)

And for Moore, if not for the Cubists, the hard surface is a protective device. In "Armor's Undermining Modesty" the pattern of the moth wing, like the pattern of repeated stanza forms, is a type of armor, and even the alphabet itself is armor:

It was a moth almost an owl, its wings were furred so well, with backgammon-board wedges interlacing on the wing—

like cloth of gold in a pattern of scales with a hair-seal Persian sheen. Once, self-determination made an ax of stone and hacked things out with hairy paws. The consequence—our mis-set alphabet. (CP 151)

But it is the "undermining modesty" of the armor that protects. In "His Shield" Moore says, "His shield / was his humility," and in "To a Snail," "Contractility is a virtue / as modesty is a virtue." For Moore "humility" and "modesty"
mean hiding the principles behind the shield, contracting into the symmetry. By not presuming to write poems with feet and by making, instead, visual stanzas that can only be described by counting the syllables, Moore resists analysis. In her "method of conclusions" the conclusions are clearly visible; the method is protected.

I have mentioned already what Bachelard says of shells in order to describe Moore's stanzas; however, Bachelard is far more concerned with poetic images than with poetic forms. The shell is but one image of inhabited space that Bachelard describes; he begins more generally with the house: "All really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home . . . we shall see the imagination build 'walls' of impalpable shadows, comfort itself with the illusion of protection" (5). These "impalpable shadows," these "walls," are images: "A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (17). It is poetry that provides such images, and "it is the imagination that engraves them on our memories" (32). The poetic appeal of these images, these "engravings," he describes as follows:

Primal images, simple engravings are but so many invitations to start imagining again. They give us back areas of being, houses in which the human being's certainty of being is concentrated, and we have the impression that, by living in such images as these, in images that are as stabilizing as these are, we could start a new life, a life that would be our own, that would belong to us in our very depths. (33)

While Bachelard maintains that poetic images in general are "stabilizing" and provide "the illusion of protection," he is especially interested in "primal images" of refuge like houses, nests, shells and even color; such images, he claims, are primal and universal because "whenever life seeks to shelter, protect, cover or hide itself, the imagination sympathizes with the being that inhabits the protected shape" (132). And he quotes the painter Vlaminck:
"The well-being I feel, seated in front of my fire, while bad weather rages out-of-doors, is entirely animal. A rat in its hole, a rabbit in its burrow, cows in the stable, must all feel the same contentment that I feel" (91).

If one accepts the universality of Bachelard's primal images, Moore becomes the archetype, not the oddity among poets, for her writing overflows with images of animal well-being. Indeed, her favorite animals tend to be the burrowers, the nest and shell builders and the armor bearers. Vlaminck's quote recalls, for instance, the nicknames that the Moore family chose for each other from Wind in the Willows: all burrowers, Marianne is "Rat," her brother Warner is "Badger," and Mrs. Moore is "Mole." Among the animals of the poems, the jerboa "honors the sand by assuming its color" and "leaps to its burrow"; the plumet basilisk runs, flies and swims "to get to / his basilica," "lays ten eggs / or nine" in its den, and "thinking himself hid . . . is alive there / in his basilisk cocoon beneath / the one of living green"; the frigate pelican "finds sticks for the swan's-down-dress / of his child to rest upon" and "hides / in the height and in the majestic / display of his art"; the ostrich in "He 'Digesteth Harde Yron'" "builds his mud-made / nest in dust"; the "strongly intailed" pangolin has not only the famous armor but also a "nest / of rocks closed with earth from inside, which he can thus darken"; the dragon and jelly-fish both have invisibility; and the paper nautilus is shell, nest and armor all at once. "Protected shapes" find their place in Moore's prose as well as in her poetry and in art forms as well as in animal life; this particularly notable description of Dürer's signature from a Dial "Comment" epitomizes several of Moore's predilections:

The secrets of Dürer, however, are not easily invaded, the clearness and simplicity of his signature in the adjusted yet natural housing of the D beneath the mediaevally prominent A,
being a subtlety compared with the juxtaposed curves of the modern monogram, the printing of letters backward, or the variously arranged inverting of duplicates. (85: 90)

Aside from Moore's specific images of shelter and protected shapes, the images themselves have a certain "hardness" that, like the hard shapes of her stanzas (and Dürer's signature), is protective. In the same sense that Pound used "hardness" to describe H.D.'s poems when he was first promoting Imagism, one can also call Moore's images "hard"; however, neither her images nor their "hardness" is Imagist, even in the broadest sense of the term. Although we think of Moore as both descriptive and visual, she is never "painterly" as H.D. and Williams often are and as Stevens can be in poems such as "A Study of Two Pears." Consider the difference between Williams's description of a sycamore and Moore's. First, Williams's "Young Sycamore":

I must tell you
this young tree
whose round and firm trunk
between the wet
pavement and the gutter
(where water
is trickling) rises
bodily
into the air with
one undulant
thrust half its height—
and then
dividing and waning
sending out
young branches on
all sides—
hung with cocoons
it thins
till nothing is left of it
but two
eccentric knotted
twigs
bending forward
hornlike at the top.

Now, Moore's "The Sycamore":

Against a gun-metal sky
I saw an albino giraffe. Without
leaves to modify,
chamois-white as
said, although partly pied near the base,
it towered where a chain of
stepping-stones lay in a stream nearby;
glamor to stir the envy

of anything in motley—
Hampshire pig, the living lucky-stone; or
all-white butterfly.
A commonplace:
there's more than just one kind of grace.
We don't like flowers that do
not wilt; they must die, and nine
she-camel-hairs aid memory.

Worthy of lmami,
the Persian—clinging to a stiffer stalk
was a little dry
thing from the grass,
in the shape of a Maltese cross,
retiringly formal
as if to say: "And there was I
like a field-mouse at Versailles." (CP 167)

Both poets describe something they have seen, both use imagery, but
whereas Williams presents a single picture, Moore presents visual facts.
Both trees are leafless sycamores, and both, we feel, are specific trees;
that one is young and next to the gutter of a city street while the other is old
and next to a stream with stepping-stones is not as significant as the fact that
Williams's tree seems to be part of everyday experience while Moore's,
through association with an "albino giraffe," "nine she-camel-hairs" from
Persia, a Maltese cross and Versailles, becomes exotic. Williams's poem is
self-sufficient and objective, making neither comment nor comparison (except for "hornlike," which makes one wonder if Moore may have had Williams's poem in mind when she perceived her tree as a giraffe). Moore's poem makes many comparisons as well as comments: the "albino giraffe" we may not recognize until the second reading is a comparison, or more properly an "optical pun" as Kenner would call it ("Disliking It" 101); the comments are both explicit, "there's more than just one kind of grace," and implicit in words like "glamor" and "worthy." And whereas Williams's simple diction and syntax never interrupt the flow of the poem, Moore constantly makes us look back—as we must to find that "chamois-white as / said" was "said" in "albino"—and startling us with the unfamiliar—what is a "living lucky-stone"? "nine / she-camel-hairs aid memory!"

Indeed, it is the interruptions that ultimately distinguish Moore's poem from Williams's, just as her stream has "a chain of stepping-stones" while in Williams's gutter "water / is trickling." Though one could hardly call Williams's poem narrative, it does take place in time, in the time it takes for the eye to follow the tree from the "wet // pavement and the gutter" upward to "the top" and conversely to read the poem from the top of the page to the bottom. The two main verbs of the poem's one sentence, "rises" and "thins," make the tree seem to grow with the poet's description of it, and the participles, "dividing and waning / sending out" and "bending," complement that growth. Moore's tree, in contrast, "towers." Though technically an action verb, "tower" expresses size, not movement, and a rather immobile size at that. Nor do the other main verbs of the poem express movement: "saw," "lay," "[i]s," "like," "die," "aid," "was" and "was." Instead of a fluid movement in time, Moore's poem gives us a juxtaposition in space and, for
once, a rather symmetrical juxtaposition. At the center of the central stanza is a couplet, almost an epigram: "A commonplace: / there's more than just one kind of grace." On either side of the couplet are the two major images illustrating its principle, the tree itself and the unnamed "little dry / thing from the grass," each with various subordinate images attached by means of comparison or other syntactic device.

What we see in Moore's poem is not so much the tree itself as its abstract spatial qualities, especially size, shape and pattern. We see the towering immensity of the sycamore juxtaposed with the "retiringly formal" "little dry thing" and the giraffe juxtaposed with a pig, a lucky-stone, an all-white butterfly and a field mouse. To emphasize the size and shape of the sycamore's trunk are images of gun-metal, a giraffe's neck, a tower. The "stiffer stalk" to which "the little dry thing" clings is also that to which Imami clings, his paintbrush; Moore explains in a footnote: "Imami, the Iranian miniaturist, draws 'with a brush made of nine hairs from a newborn she camel.'" Even more intriguing than sizes and shapes is the interplay of patterns. To imagine an albino giraffe, we must see at once the patterned markings of a normal giraffe, like the pied base of the tree, and the pure "chamois-white" of the albino, like the rest of the tree. We see, too, the "chain of stepping-stones," "anything in motley," and the "all-white butterfly." The juxtaposition of the Hampshire pig (black except for a white saddle) with its appositive, the lucky-stone (a pebble with a natural hole through it), emphasizes the similar patterns of both pig and stone while contrasting their sizes. We imagine (with the aid of the footnote) Imami's Persian miniatures painted with nine she-camel-hairs; the hard, simple "shape of a Maltese cross"; the vast rococo patterns of Versailles. But it
becomes evident, especially with this last group, which suggests not only spatial design but world geography and history as well, that although there is no action or movement within the poem itself, time is contained in the spatial patterns. A sycamore holds chronology in its immensity; flowers contain wilting and death in their beauty; and "nine / she-camel-hairs," clearly, "aid memory."

Because it occurs over a period of time, Williams's "Young Sycamore" does not fit Pound's definition of the image as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." In the strictly Imagist poem, Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," there are no verbs:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

But there is time. The flux out of which the image is siezed is as important to that image as are the unseen bodies to the apparition of faces. This is a poem as much about the flux of time as it is about the flux of the city, the flux of the crowd and flux of the subway train. The isolated, snapshot image gives meaning to that flux just as Eliot's still-point gives meaning to a turning world. Pound's poem resembles Moore's "The Sycamore" in its spatial juxtaposition and in its visual rhyme, but not in its sense of time. Whereas Pound's image exists in the moment of the glimpse, a moment that, in a sense, is between verbs, and Williams's "Young Sycamore" exists in the active present where things happen as we read about them, Moore's images exist in the simple present tense of facts. The present tense in the middle stanza of "The Sycamore," for instance, is typical: "there's more than just one kind of grace. / We don't like flowers that do / not wilt; they must die, and nine / she-camel-hairs aid memory." But even the past tense of the first
and third stanzas is not a narrative past expressing a sequence of actions or even a single event located in time; rather, it expresses a recollected image, probably a photograph.

In one of the most useful analyses yet made of Moore's style, Marie Borroff systematically compares Moore's syntax and diction with Frost's and Stevens's and reaches the conclusion that Moore's imagination "sees more in fixity than in flux." In Moore's "An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle is in the Shape of a Fish," for instance, one finds "a wave held up for us to see / in in its essential perpendicularity," whereas in Stevens's "Peter Quince at the Clavier" one finds a "wave, interminably flowing" (101). By comparing the ratios of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs in the three poets, Borroff discovers that Moore has proportionally fewer finite verbs (excluding gerunds, participles and infinitives, which are not true verbs) than either Frost, who has the most, or Stevens, and that Moore's finite verb count resembles that of feature articles and scientific articles (92-96), or, in Moore's (actually Tolstoy's) words, "business documents and school-books." Not only are finite verbs infrequent, but when they do appear, they are usually "stative" rather than "dynamic." Dynamic verbs express action and process (as "rises" and "thins" do in "Young Sycamore"); stative verbs express states of being, or facts. Borroff says:

> When language attempts to hold its subject matter constant, its grammar inevitably takes on stative characteristics. We can expect such language to contain few finite verbs; of the verbs it does contain, many, if not most, will be stative, and among these, the forms of to be, which can link any subject with any attribute in logical definition or factual statement, it, will tend to appear with obtrusive frequency. So will the passive voice, which in English usually takes the form of to be as "linking verb" followed by a past participle (i.e., a verbal adjective). ...

All of the above statements hold true for the language of Marianne Moore. (97)
If we return for a moment to "To a Snail," for example, we discover "is" five times, plus the passive "is hid"; even the other finite verbs, "have," "occurs" and "values," link their subjects with attributes, not actions.

In her analysis of the diction of the three poets Borroff finds that although both Moore and Stevens have a high density of Romance-Latinate derivatives in contrast to Frost, Stevens's "high formal language" comes from philosophy, Christianity and traditional English poetry while Moore's "technical" idiom comes from journalistic and scientific prose. And this difference in diction reveals an important difference in attitude: Stevens's archaiisms express solemnity and reverence for the past; Moore's diction, on the other hand, "originates in an investigation of present reality unhindered by reverence and subject to continuing revision" (85-88). Although she does not use the term, Borroff's analysis thus accounts for some of the "hardness" of Moore's images, which, as we have seen, are not "images" in the Imagist sense but have the hardness of facts both in their reliance on technically and visually precise diction—"Without / leaves to modify," "chamois-white," "Hampshire pig"—and in their attitude of clinical detachment.

The syntax is also factual and likewise "hard." What Moore lacks in verbs she makes up for with nouns, producing what Kenner calls a "rain of nouns," and Borroff rephrases as a "hail" of nouns (99), which is epitomized in catalogs such as this one from "People's Surroundings":

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camps, forges and battlefields,  
conventions, oratories and wardrobes,  
dens, deserts, railway stations, asylums and places where engines are made,  
shops, prisons, brickyards and altars of churches—  
in magnificent places clean and decent,  
castles, palaces, dining-halls, theaters and imperial audience-chambers.
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(CP 57)
But even when she has no concrete images, Moore has a way of making her "images" seem hard, for she can manufacture "images" with syntax. "To a Snail," for instance, gives the impression of being as hard as any Imagist poem because of its compactness and clarity; however, one is surprised to discover upon rereading it only two concrete images in the entire poem—the snail in the title and the occipital horn at the end. By using present tense stative verbs, Moore gives abstractions the authority of facts; who can question "Contractility is a virtue / as modesty is a virtue"? In "The Sycamore" even "nine / she-camel hairs aid memory" assumes the authority of the fact which precedes it, that flowers must die. Moore also manufactures nouns. Whereas another poet might use "contract" in its verb form to describe the action of a snail, Moore turns it not only into a noun but into an abstract quality, "contractility"; within this noun, however, dwells the energy of a verb, an energy not to be underestimated. With quotation marks, too, she compresses groups of words into noun-like units. The quotation marks around "compression is the first grace of style," for instance, not only give the statement authority but also allow the quoted words to maintain a grammatical integrity of their own while functioning within the syntax of another sentence. Moore's liberal use of hyphens creates similarly hard syntactic units, such as "all-white butterfly" and "she-camel-hairs."

But perhaps the most pervasive "information-compacting device" in Moore's poetry, which is also characteristic of technical writing, is the complex noun phrase (see Borroff 103). Consider the information "compacted" into this noun phrase from "An Octopus": "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." It is from such "compacting" that Moore's poetry achieves its "flies in amber" effect. For by linking noun phrases together with few or no verbs, Moore creates entire poems that have the hardness of a chain of nouns. This chain of abstractions from "To a Snail," for instance, "the principle that is hid: / in the absence of feet, 'a method of conclusions'; / 'a knowledge of principles'" has the syntactic hardness of this chain of concrete images from "The Sycamore": "Hampshire pig, the living lucky-stone; or / all-white butterfly." Thus, by compacting "images" into nouns, quotations, hyphenated sequences and noun phrases and by linking them together with a grammar that is always correct, if not fluid, Moore creates a surface of "images" as hard and protective as the armor of her linked stanzas, and likewise as impenetrable as the planes of hermetic Cubism.
Chapter 3: A Place to See Things

"One discovers in it after all, a place for the genuine."

The two "primal images" from the animal kingdom to which in The Poetics of Space Bachelard devotes a chapter each—nests and shells—are "primal" because they are both "houses." Both are images of protection and refuge, both are enclosed spaces, and both conform uniquely to the creatures that make and inhabit them. But whereas a shell's mystery is its geometric construction and its protection its hardness, a nest's mystery is its intimacy and its protection its hiddenness within the environment to which it conforms. One cannot easily discover a nest in a tree during summer because the nest is the colors of the tree and is, in fact, made of the twigs and leaves of the tree. But emphasizing the similarities between nests and shells more than their differences, Bachelard does not make the distinction that whereas a shell grows from the organism itself, indeed, is the organism itself, a bird chooses for his nest bits of his environment—leaves, blades of grass, sticks, debris, dirt—which are serving or have served a purpose quite independent from the one to which he now puts them to use. Like the bird and like other nest-building creatures, the poet Marianne Moore (nicknamed "Rat") is constantly bringing to her nest bits of the environment—newspaper clippings, magazine photos, snatches of conversation, postcards and artifacts—which, weaving them together, she suits to her own purposes, the construction of poems.

Bachelard does, however, make the appropriate point that "values alter facts," meaning, "The moment we love an image, it cannot remain the copy of a fact" (100). He cites Michelet's description of nests as illustration:
In reality, a bird’s tool is its own body, that is, its breast, with which it presses and tightens its materials until they have become absolutely pliant, well-blended and adapted to the general plan (100). Such nest-building, “a marriage,” Bachelard calls it, “in the dry air and summer sunlight, of moss and down” (102), is analogous to Moore’s own alteration of facts, to her subjection of objects to her general plan and to her famous definition of poems as “imaginary gardens with real toads in them.”

To pursue the analogies drawn in the previous chapter between Moore’s hard surfaces, Bachelard’s shells, and analytic Cubism, one might observe that Moore’s “nests” are analogous to synthetic Cubism. And indeed critics have often suggested that Moore’s poems are collages. But attention to real things in art neither begins nor ends with synthetic Cubism. As Ellen Johnson has provocatively demonstrated, the relationship between modern art and the object is a long and complex one. Central to her discussion is the relationship between what she calls “the painted object (oil, watercolour)” and “the object painted (mountain, tree)” (12). She says, for instance, of Cézanne: “The represented reality gives way to the created reality; but Cézanne never conceals the tension between the two in his insistence on the truth of both” (67). Whereas Cubism may appear to offset this balance, Johnson insists that “a deliberate ambiguity between ‘real’ and ‘invented’ is one of the basic and most captivating qualities” of Cubism:

The real is interwoven with and concealed in the invented because the cubist creator insists that a painting be regarded as an object in itself, which has its own ‘reality.’ However, the picture’s reality is composed of multiple associations with other realities, objects and ideas which have been amalgamated into it. This is the firm lesson of cubism, and the basis of its interpretation as both traditional and revolutionary. (109)
Although, oddly, Johnson barely mentions synthetic Cubism in her study, Cubism’s movement towards collage supports her thesis, for here the tension between the real and the invented becomes even more pronounced. And in addition to having the two emphases of analytic Cubism—reference to objects outside the painting, and the aesthetic object itself composed of shape, line and color—synthetic Cubism has a third—the literal presence of objects upon the canvas. Thus, a piece of newspaper within a collage may all at the same time take its place within a still life, function within the abstract composition of the work in terms of shape and color and still maintain its identity as newspaper. And likewise in Moore’s poetry we find this threefold regard for the object in the “relentless accuracy” with which she treats her subject, in the care with which she arranges her images into a unified composition and in the footnotes, with which, as Hugh Kenner has observed, she verifies her “found objects” (“Disliking It” 102).

The concern with the object in modern art cannot be overestimated—from the Impressionists, who tried to render “objectively,” that is without preconception, the visual reality before them, to Duchamp, some of whose readymades exhibit no more artistic invention than his having chosen and titled them. And within this range of options artists must determine how much autonomy to grant their objects. For Cézanne the artist must exert rational control; he says, “There are two things in the painter: the eye and the brain. The two must co-operate; one must work for the development of both, but as a painter: of the eye through the outlook on nature, of the brain through the logic of organized sensations which provide the means of expression” (qtd. in Ellen Johnson 11). Dadaists, at the other extreme, found meaning in the irrational juxtapositions of objects and adopted as their
archetype Isidore Ducasse’s image of the “chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table” (qtd. in Haskell 54). Perhaps more representative of the general dilemma of twentieth-century artists is Picasso’s attitude: “I put all the things I like into my pictures. The things—so much the worse for them; they just have to put up with it” (qtd. in Ellen Johnson 97).

This genuine enthusiasm for objects combined with a willingness to subjugate them to the artistic imagination is an attitude of great importance to Marianne Moore. She writes to Bryher, “but I think in a work of art, one must get at the individuality of a thing one is describing literally... I do not mean of course, that things cannot be distorted for the sake of art for they can so long as you don’t do violence to the essence of a thing” (27 July 1921). And it is an attitude that Moore perceived as unifying the artists of her generation. When Donald Hall asked her if there were any deliberate policy of the Dial, she quoted the painter George Grosz:

As George Grosz said, at that last meeting he attended at the National Institute, “How did I come to be an artist? Endless curiosity, observation, research—and a great amount of joy in the thing.” It was a matter of taking a liking to things. Things that were in accordance with your taste. I think that was it. And we didn’t care how unhomogeneous they might seem. And didn’t Aristotle say that it is the mark of a poet to see resemblances between apparently incongruous things! (“Art of Poetry” 37)

In America during the twenties, the Dial years, this modern emphasis on the object was intensified by a post-war materialism, by what Barbara Haskell calls in her discussion of Arthur Dove’s assemblages “the national mania for the literal” (49).

In certain ways Arthur Dove’s assemblages, which he composed during the twenties, epitomize not only modernism’s regard for the object but
specifically the American attitude of the twenties, which Moore felt and no doubt influenced at this period of her career when her interaction with the artistic avant-garde was most immediate. But whereas Moore seems somewhat wary of Dove’s assemblages when reviewing a show at the Anderson Galleries for the Dial in 1925, "We are consciously indulgent, perhaps, towards certain of Arthur Dove’s idiosyncrasies" ("Comment" 79: 177)—the pot calling the kettle black!—by 1937 she seems to offer him high praise, that is if praise means finding consistency with one’s own aesthetic priorities:

Arthur Dove, always the unexpected proof that something no one ever saw before is the only right thing, affects homeliness and literalness as disguises for the exact opposite. In the Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry for example—a wedge-shaped head with the speed of a comet, a fragment of “Shall We Gather at the River?” taken from a hymn-book, a piece of American flag, etc., framed by sections of mustard yellow folding pocket-rule—he is as accurate as the chameleon or cuttlefish in its adaption of pigment to background. (“Concerning the Marvelous” 2)

Dove’s assemblages, as Haskell points out, differ from those of his European contemporaries because of the thematic relationship of their parts (54-55). Although sometimes in synthetic Cubism a piece of newspaper may be cut into the shape of a wine bottle or lamp, most often it functions as itself within the visual, abstract composition; and although, as Robert Rosenblum has shown, the content of the newspaper may be relevant to the composition in an ironic way, such relevance is subtle and secondary to the object’s abstract function within the collage. In Dove’s assemblages, on the other hand, most of the found objects have recognizable metaphoric significance. His Grandmother, for instance, contains the title page of a Bible concordance, some needlepoint flowers, a weathered wood panel and some pressed leaves. Not only are these objects something one might find in a grandmother’s house, they suggest the grandmother’s age with their texture—
the fragility of the pressed leaves, the grain of the weathered wood. Of course, the objects function in an abstract way, too, but the abstraction does not necessarily prevail over the metaphorical quality as it does in the collages of Braque and Picasso and in the Cubist-derived collages of such artists as Kurt Schwitters. And even in the more clearly representational Dadaist and Surrealist collages and works such as the frotages (rubbings) of Max Ernst, the metaphorical significance consists in the irrational juxtaposition of objects, not in conscious, thematic relationships. We have the feeling with Dove's assemblages, however, that the presence of each found object can be thematically justified, at least to the artist's own mind. He says, for instance, of his Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry (which Moore describes above):

Apropos the hymn in the 'Ralph Dusenberry' the Dusenberrys lived on a boat near us in Lloyd's Harbor. He could drive like a Kingfisher and swim like a fish. Was a sort of foreman on the Marshall Field place. His father was a minister. He and his brother were architects in Port Washington. He drove to Huntington in a sleigh one winter and stayed so long in a cafe there they had to bring a wagon to take him home. He came home to his boat one day with two bottles making his wife so mad that she threw them overboard. He dived right in after them and came up with one in each hand. When tight he always sang 'Shall We Gather At The River.' (qtd. in Deborah Johnson 14)

Suzanne M. Smith adds to Dove's remarks:

A printed piece of the song in the picture, the carpenter's rule as a symbol of architecture makes a frame; the flag, the patriotic nature of Dusenberry, and the arrow forms his diving and swimming ability; while the weather-worn wood shingles suggest water and sunsoaked piers. (qtd. in Deborah Johnson 14)

In claiming that Dove's assemblages were not derived from the Europeans, Haskell points out that his "object portraits" like Grandmother and Ralph Dusenberry have precedents in the object portraits of Picabia, Marius
de Zayas, Charles Demuth and Marsden Hartley, all of whom were, like Dove, members of the Steiglitz circle. Picabia characterized his friends' personalities with drawings of machine objects; perhaps the most famous example is his portrait of Steiglitz as a folding camera. Marius de Zayas used typographic elements to make caricatures of public personalities. Demuth painted seven "portraits" of carefully chosen and arranged objects to represent his friends, the most famous of which is of William Carlos Williams called I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold after Williams's poem, "The Great Figure." Marsden Hartley used numbers and military insignia in his non-representational portraits such as Portrait of a German Officer. All of these painters, Haskell acknowledges, could have been influenced by Gertrude Stein's written portraits (54).

Moore also wrote "portraits." In fact, many of her first publications in 1915 were portraits that addressed their subjects—"To William Butler Yeats on Tagore," "To a Prize Bird [Bernard Shaw]," "To a Strategist [Disraeli]," "To a Man Making His Way Through the Crowd [Gordon Craig]," "Blake," and "George Moore." To read these early poems in the order in which they were published, one can see a significant development in Moore's verse even over a period of months. Compare, for instance, two of these poems. In May 1915 the Egoist published "To William Butler Yeats on Tagore":

It is made clear by the phrase,
Even the mood—by virtue of which he says

The thing he thinks—that it pays,
To cut gems even in these conscience-less days,

But the jewel that always
Outshines ordinary jewels, is your praise.
Exactly a year later the *Egoist* published "You are Like the Realistic Product of an Idealistic Search for Gold at the Foot of the Rainbow" ("To a Chameleon" in *CP* 179):

Hid by the august foliage and fruit of the grape vine,
Twine
Your anatomy
Round the pruned and polished stem,
Chameleon.
Fire laid upon
An emerald as long as
The Dark King's massy
One,
Could not snap the spectrum up for food as you have done.

Although the latter maintains the critical conviction of the former, the focus in the poems of this period moves more and more away from the tenor of the metaphor towards the vehicle. That in subsequent publications of her early poems she removed from the titles the names of her subjects further confirms this tendency; "To Bernard Shaw: A Prize Bird" becomes "To a Prize Bird" and "To Browning" becomes "Injudicious Gardening." In other portraits like "To a Chameleon" and "To a Steam Roller" the subject, if it is a specific person, is never named. And as "To a Chameleon" indicates, the movement from subject to "object" culminates in the famous animal poems of the thirties—"The Jerboa," "The Plumet Basilisk," "The Frigate Pelican," "The Buffalo," and "The Pangolin"—where in extolling animal virtues instead of human ones, the rigorous moral critic may go disguised as animal lover.

Dove likewise uses portraits to express, on the one hand, admiration for such persons as Stieglitz, Gershwin and Ralph Dusenberry and, on the other hand, to satirize the likes of *The Intellectual* and *The Critic* as Moore satirizes those unnamed in "Pedantic Literalist" and "To a Steam Roller." With both artists, too, one senses not only a vigorous moral judgment but also a
delight in the enigma of their inside jokes. We may guess but never know for sure why Dove's critic wears roller skates and carries a vacuum cleaner as we may speculate over the identity of the monkeys, the zebras, the parakeet and particularly the "Gilgamesh among the hairy carnivora" in Moore's "The Monkeys" (CP 40), the group portrait of her "minor acquaintances twenty years back" (the "minor acquaintances" were most likely members of the avant-garde with whom Moore was socializing at the time she wrote the poem). And Dove seems to delight in the multiple "literary" associations of "Shall We Gather at the River?"—that Dusenberry's father was a minister, that he lived on a boat and was a good swimmer and that he always sang this song when "tight"—as much as Moore delights in the "visual" appearance of her "Gilgamesh"—"that cat with the / wedge-shaped, slate-gray marks on its forelegs and the resolute tail."

One could object that an inside joke has no place in art since the vehicle is rendered meaningless without knowledge of the tenor. But as Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry and "The Monkeys" both demonstrate, one can find pleasure in the objects themselves even without reference to something outside the work; indeed, "the cat with the / wedge-shaped, slate-gray marks on its forelegs and the resolute tail" provides perhaps purer delight than if one were immediately to impose upon the "Gilgamesh" an image of Ezra Pound. By freeing their portraits from associations with the external appearance of their subjects, both Moore and Dove strive to achieve the subject's essence.

This loyalty to the essence of a thing over its external qualities not only characterizes their portraiture but governs both Moore's and Dove's aesthetics. Describing his own artistic development, Dove writes:
Then there was the search for a means of expression which did not depend upon representation. It should have order, size, intensity, spirit, nearer to the music of the eye. If one could paint the part that goes to make the spirit of painting and leave out all that just makes tons and tons of art. (qtd. in Haskell 134)

With equal fervor and with somewhat more elegance, Moore reiterates Dove's conviction in "When I Buy Pictures" (CP 48): "It comes to this: of whatever sort it is, / it must be 'lit with piercing glances into the life of things.'" To this conviction Moore adds another of equal weight, "it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it"; not only must a painting (or any art work) reveal the essence of its subject, it must also reveal the essence, "the spiritual forces," of the artist who made it.

Thus do we meet the dilemma again between objects and the artistic imagination, between real and invented, between facts and values, between moss and down. Dove seems to agree with the balance Moore proposes when he writes:

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Actuality! At that point where mind and matter meet. That is at present where I should like to paint. The spirit is always there. And it will take care of itself. We can tear our imaginations apart, but there is always the same old truth waiting. (qtd. in Haskell 136)
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This meeting of mind and matter forms the subject of Moore's most famous poetic treatise, "Poetry" (CP 266-67n), which begins, "I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle." "Fiddle," we may presume, is that which "just makes tons and tons of art" according to Dove. Moore continues, "Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in / it after all, a place for the genuine." By "genuine" Moore means the genuine response of the imagination, as "Hands that can grasp, eyes / that can dilate, hair that can rise / if it must" are genuine physical
responses. And genuine poets are "literalists of the imagination," who "can present / for our inspection 'imaginary gardens with real toads in them.'"

Thus, real poetry, not "fiddle," takes place "where mind and matter meet"; it consists, in Moore's words, of "on the one hand, / the raw material of poetry in / all its rawness and / that which is on the other hand / genuine." ¹

While I have implied that Moore's "portraits" resemble Dove's and they do insofar as they both are witty, critical, enigmatic and committed to the spiritual essence of the subject, Moore's earliest published poems are not yet the assemblages that Dove's 1920's portraits are. As Moore's poems of 1915 move more and more towards the vehicle, the object, and away from the tenor, the subject, Moore's treatment of the object becomes more and more complex, so that instead of marking a single image or emblem, her poems after 1915 become somewhat longer and begin to assimilate more and more diversity. Although, for instance, she uses quotations in some of her 1915 poems, she does not yet remove the quote from its original context; in "The Past is the Present" (1915) the words of her Bible teacher, "Hebrew poetry is prose / with a sort of heightened consciousness," are appropriate to a poem addressed to Habakkuk. (In this poem she even gives the source within the poem itself, not only in the footnote.) In "Pedantic Literalist" (1916), however, Moore takes the quotes from The Saints' Everlasting Rest out of context as she weaves them into a witty but rather harsh attack on perfunctoriness. Also in this poem we find the enigmatic juxtaposition of noun phrases so characteristic of her subsequent work but not found in the poems before 1916: "Prince Rupert's drop, paper muslin ghost, / white

¹ For a full and enlightening discussion of Moore's notion of "the genuine," see Costello 15-37.
Thus does Moore achieve her assemblage technique of taking images and quotations out of their original context and arranging them, often with hermetic juxtapositions, into her own designs.

Although Moore uses this assemblage method for the remainder of her poetic career, she seems particularly intent on exploring its possibilities during the years which follow her visit to New York in late 1915 and which culminate in the 1923-24 publication of her great triptych, "Marriage," "An Octopus," and "Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns." One may assume, for instance, that her description of "Marriage" might apply to many of the poems of this period: "just an anthology of words that I didn't want to lose, that I liked very much, and I put them together as plausibly as I could" ("Conversation" 159).

It is also from this period that one finds Moore's most impenetrable and inscrutable poems like "The Fish" and "Those Various Scalpels" (CP 51), the latter of which turns out to be something of a self parody. Images like "flowers of ice and snow / sown by tearing winds on the cordage of disabled ships" and "those rosettes / of blood on the stone floors of French châteaux," though "Whetted to brilliance" and arranged almost "plausibly" in an assemblage portrait consisting of a woman's hair, ears, eyes, two hands, cheeks, and dress finally seem to the poet too "majestic"; such "scalpels" are too sharp and too sophisticated for genuine, humble "opportunity" though admittedly they are "rich instruments with which to experiment." T. S. Eliot's remark about the imagery of this poem, that "the second image is superimposed before the first has quite faded" (159), applies to the structure as well. For in the first four somewhat regularly patterned stanzas the reader is convinced of the poet's sincerity in presenting an
enigmatic display of brilliantly whetted images, but the fifth stanza,
superimposed syntactically on the fourth, not only breaks the established
stanzaic pattern but calls into question the aesthetic validity of everything in
the poem that has preceded it:

... Are they weapons or scalpels?
  Whetted to brilliance

by the hard majesty of that sophistication which is superior to

opportunity,
these things are rich instruments with which to experiment.
But why dissect destiny with instruments

more highly specialized than components of destiny itself?

Moore seems thus to be rather self-consciously experimenting with the

"instruments," or techniques, of her avant-garde associates but at the same
time asking herself how suited they are to her own purposes, "Are they

weapons or scalpels?" A few years later in "Bowls" she again reminds

herself not to lose her own standards to those of the "precisionists," among

whom she numbers herself:

I learn that we are precisionists, ...
I shall purchase an etymological dictionary of modern English
that I may understand what is written,
and like the ant and the spider
returning from time to time to headquarters,
shall answer the question
"why do I like winter better than I like summer?"
and acknowledge that it does not make me sick
to look playwrights and poets and novelists straight in the face—
that I feel just the same. (CP 59)

Although Moore remains a portrait artist throughout her career,
especially if one considers her animal poems to be portraits, she is much
more of a landscape artist than has generally been recognized. Her tour de
force landscape poem, "An Octopus," ironically bears an animal title as does
her seascape, "The Fish"; but many of her titles do name places: "New York,"
"England" (though it is about America), "Spenser's Ireland," "Virginia
Britannia," "A Carriage from Sweden," "The Web One Weaves off Italy." Even a poem such as "Those Various Scalpels," which seems to describe a woman, actually consists of spatially juxtaposed images arranged in a place as hair, ears, eyes, hands can be arranged (or disarranged) spatially on a canvas.

In July of 1921 Marianne Moore wrote to H.D. about a gallery exhibition she had seen which included "a wool map of New York in minute stitches by Marguerite Zorach; the color is lovely; blue, lavender and champagne color, green and much orange" (26 July 1921). In December of 1921 her own "New York" appeared in the Dial, made not of wool but of various furs, pictures and facts:

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." (CP 54)

Her depicting the city of steel and skyscrapers with an assemblage of ermine, fox, deer, beaver, otter and puma skins might remind us of Meret
Oppenheim's fur-covered teacup of 1936. But whereas humorous illogic is quite the point of Oppenheim's fur, Moore's fur, also humorous, is totally logical, for it is based on the fact fully explained in the footnote that "In 1921 New York succeeded St. Louis as the center of the wholesale fur trade."

When we read "center of the wholesale fur trade" in the third line, we see the city of New York rather as a reporter for the Wall Street Journal might see it in 1921, but then in the fourth line, "starred with tepees of ermine and peopled with foxes," Moore shoves into the picture tepees, the domain of storybook Indians not New York Indians; ermine, the expensive fur not the animal; people, as a past participle; and foxes, who may inhabit the state of New York but certainly not the city except in fur form. "Starred" not only suggests an overall pattern with no particular focus but also shrinks the size of the ermine tepees, people and foxes so that we see them as if on a map not from a street corner. The next line, "the long guard-hairs waving two inches beyond the body of the pelt," seems to refer to the fox furs worn by the city people although "pelt" oddly seems to refer to New York too, as if the state were a map on a pelt; either way, this is no Indian pelt but one which has been for the purpose of commerce or science measured to the inch. Again in line 6 Moore shifts our point of view; in the first half of the line, "the ground dotted with deer-skins," the large skins become dots as if we were looking at them from the air, but in the next half, "—white with white spots," we move in close enough to discern white spots on white skin. A similar shift occurs in the entire poem as we begin reading about New York the city, the "center of the wholesale fur trade" and eventually find ourselves reading about the state whose raw meat and berries "could feed the universe." Moore takes great delight in proving to us in the footnote that the seventh line, "as satin needle-
work in a single color may carry a varied pattern," actually comes from a
sportsman's description of an albino fawn (she quotes the whole paragraph),
and it also fits into her design yet another textured surface.

The series of image/objects which occurs in the poem's second
sentence probably have more logical references for the poet than they do for
the reader. The "queen full of jewels" may be a nickname Moore has run
across in her reading, "the beau with the muff" seems like a storybook
illustration, and the "gilt coach" is probably no real coach but an object or
picture that shrinks the size of a coach to that of a perfume bottle. These
romantic, and rather European, images are "a far cry" from the "romance" of
the American wilderness, where rivers with lilting Indian names converge at
a place famous for industry and technology, Pittsburgh; western New York has
similar Indian names and industry. Whereas we probably cannot know
whether the "scholastic philosophy of the wilderness" is that view of the
wilderness which is taught in schools or the rigid codes of those who survive
in the wilderness, it brings together, as the entire poem does, disparate
worlds. At the beginning of the poem Moore uses the botanical term
"accreted," which means grown together, for what New York and the poem
bring together, and the rest of the poem fuses romantic images of the
American "savage"—furs, tepees, deer-skins, Monongahela and Allegheny,
horses, war-canoe—and other images of the wilderness with equally romantic
images of refinement and civilization.

Moore often takes advantage of an option unavailable to the visual
assemblage artist, which is to include not only what the subject is but also
what it is not. This option consumes most of the third sentence of "New York"
beginning, "It is not the dime-novel exterior." The ambiguous "it" we may
take to mean "the essence of a thing," in this case, of New York. And although the essence of New York is not the dime-novel exterior and so forth, naming what is New York but is not its essence gives the poet greater opportunity to explore that essence. Here we have not only disparate travel-brochure images and the fact that statistically the state of New York could feed the world with its resources, we also have attitudes, for instance, that of Isabella, Duchess of Gonzaga, which Moore slightly misquotes from The Psychology of Dress. The "atmosphere of ingenuity" is represented by certain ingenuous animals native to New York, the otter and the beaver, though in the following line these animals become furs, along with the not native but also ingenuous puma, all of which, due to man's ingenuity, are unmarred by bullets or dogs. But the essence of New York is none of these surfaces, attitudes or facts; it is, in the words of Henry James, "accessibility to experience." And, as it turns out, "accessibility to experience" is likewise the essence of the poem and of Moore's assemblage technique.

Arthur Dove also created assemblage landscapes, including several of Huntington Harbor and other seasides. And for Dove, too, "accessibility to experience" is the essence of assemblage. Dove's assemblages have sometimes been compared to American folk art where part of a dried plant, for instance, may be pasted into a landscape to represent a tree. Whether any direct connection between such folk art and Dove's or Moore's assemblages exists or not, there is, as one critic has noted, something democratic and hence American about their recognizing the aesthetic possibilities of the commonplace (Deborah Johnson 9-10); as Moore says in "Poetry," "nor is it valid to discriminate against 'business documents and school-books,'" for such discrimination limits "accessibility to experience."
What is probably for both Moore and Dove more important than celebrating American democracy is their reacting to the mainstream art of their day, to what Moore calls "fiddle" and to what Dove calls "all that just makes tons and tons of art." At a time when art had become too conventionalized and thus too detached from experience, from "actuality" and the "genuine," artists like Dove and Moore had to ask themselves what real art is. One of the many responses to this question during the early decades of the twentieth century was to turn away from the conventional materials of art toward those materials, like "business documents and school-books," hymns and folding pocket rulers, which can be found in the familiar world of experience but generally not in the remote world of art. By not discriminating against such things or such language, artists like Moore and Dove hoped to reinstate art into the everyday world, to make it once again accessible to experience.

One conventional aspect of art that assemblage calls into question is the artist's role as maker. Of course, the artist must still make her own design from found objects, but a great part of the process is selecting the objects from the environment. To a great extent, then, the canvas or poem becomes a place to put all the things that the artist likes. In a sense, this is the case in conventional art as well, for the artist must choose his subject and with a still life, for instance, he must select the objects and arrange them before he paints; traditionally, however, it has always been the rendition that is the work of art, not the arrangement itself upon the table. Perhaps it was the acceptance of photography as an art form that gave selecting as much aesthetic validity as making, for although the the rendition is
still variable to some extent in photography, it clearly is not the only aesthetic variable as it had been considered to be in painting. And a photographer must not only select his subject matter from his environment, but in most cases he selects one negative from perhaps hundreds of shots he has taken of the same subject. What is probably more important than the selective processes photography introduced is its calling to attention the process of selection that goes on even in traditional artistic endeavors. In an article about Stieglitz that Moore saved, she marked the following passage in the margin and underlined two of the sentences in red:

The esthetic basis of all art is selection. Selection implies a standard for which selection is made and the sensibility to distinguish according to this standard. The exercise of sensibility in keeping with a standard is an elementary definition of art. (Sweeney 21)

And selection calls attention again to that important relationship between the imagination and the world of things or facts.

One artist, a generation younger than Moore, with a profound sense of this relationship is Joseph Cornell, for he conceived of a work of art not as a place to put things onto but as a place to put things into. Instead of canvas, he used glass-covered boxes in which he would arrange a carefully selected set of objects. The mysterious mood evoked by these collections of objects—shells, paper cut-outs, dolls, blocks, marbles, postcards, and often fragments of prose or verse—is in some ways more "poetic" than the matter-of-fact collections of words one finds in Moore's poetry; in Cornell's imaginary gardens one is more likely to find real butterflies than real toads. But as in Moore's poetry, not only are Cornell's collection of objects and their arrangement suggestive, the individual objects themselves are potent with meaning and energy.
One of the most important works of Moore's own generation, Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*, also demonstrates something of an assemblage process. Over a period of years whenever Duchamp had an idea for this complexly theoretical work, he would write it down and put it in the *Green Box* he kept for this purpose. Once he was ready to work, he arranged his ideas as plausibly as he could upon a large glass surface—which sounds rather like Moore's own account of how she composed "Marriage." In other respects, however, Moore's aesthetic differs from Duchamp's Dadaist, more conceptual one.

Whether stimulated by photography, the desire to escape convention or whatever, the aesthetic of assemblage pervades twentieth-century art; nor was Marianne Moore blind to this aesthetic although, typically, she recognized it in some of its less obvious manifestations. In a 1927 *Dial* "Comment" on miscellanies she writes:

> Academic feeling, or prejudice possibly, in favour of continuity and completeness is opposed to miscellany—to music programs, composite picture exhibitions, newspapers, magazines, and anthologies. Any zoo, aquarium, library, garden, or volume of letters, however, is an anthology and certain of these selected findings are highly satisfactory. The science of assorting and the art of investing an assortment with dignity are obviously not being neglected, as is manifest in "exhibitions and sales of artistic property," and in that sometimes disparaged, most powerful phase of anthology, the museum. (82: 449)

One can well imagine that Moore was a great connoisseur of museums as well as of zoos, libraries and the like. In an unpublished review of the important exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art called *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, she writes, "the exhibition of the marvelous . . . is educational as a kind of psychic map of the creative mind; also as a portrait of the mind of an organizer . . . Alfred H. Barr, jr." ("Art and Interpretation" 1). And
after describing the contents of that exhibition for several pages, she describes yet another museum:

A corresponding study in imaginative organizing is The Mariner's Museum at Newport News, Virginia, founded by Mr. Archer M. Huntingdon; a permanent exhibition, admission free. The oblong laboratory-like rooms of this museum shelter the marvelous also: the bleaching filigree wooden garlands, acorns, eagle, and fish-tailed monarchs of sea and land, from the counter of the ship, Fame; a tattooer's apparatus and pictorial manikin; figure-heads, among which are The Merry Monarch in gray frock coat, Coriolanus, Lizzie, and The Bear; walking-sticks with piebald hard-wood deer-foot grip and ivory-hand grip—in idea like Egyptian ivory hand-headed walking-sticks; "polychrome" Portuguese boats painted with fish, flaming hearts, and other symbols; the 18-foot skeleton of an infant whale, whale-boat, harpoons, and blubber-kettle; the skin boat, the outrigger, the Indian canoe; 18th century liquor sets, iridescent glass objects recovered from the sea, rivalling anything from Egypt or the Mediterranean; the Spanish binnacle gleaming like an icon; varieties of the log-glass, hour-glass, and compass; the ship prints at its finest; the library, the three-sided court at the rear peopled with craft, anchors, chains, and portions of ship interiors. This museum is a Shakespeare's or Sidney's or Durer's or Hogarth's paradise,—its groupings no more accidental than a work of art is accidental. (3)

Her "Comment" on miscellanies shows a similar regard for editors of anthologies: "However expressive the content of an anthology, one notes that a yet more distinct unity is afforded in the unintentional portrait given, of the mind which brought the assembled integers together" (82: 450). Perhaps only her characteristic modesty prevents her from acknowledging a similar regard for editors of magazines, like the Dial.

This notion of the "unintentional portrait given" by a miscellany forms the subject of Moore's poem that begins (with title as first line), "People's Surroundings / They answer one's questions" (CP 55-57). Though most of this relatively lengthy poem lists things that may answer only the most perceptive

2 The second version of this review, "Concerning the Marvelous," omits the description of the Mariner's Museum.
and imaginative observer's questions, she pauses about two-thirds of the way through her cataloging to comment: "In these non-committal, personal-impersonal expressions of appearance, the eye knows what to skip . . . 'a setting must not have the air of being one,' yet with X-ray-like inquisitive intensity upon it, the surfaces go back." And thus do one's surroundings, or miscellaneous, fulfill especially well her criteria for art, that "...of whatever sort it is, it must be 'lit with piercing glances into the life of things'; it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it." Arthur Dove, incidentally, has a similar notion of the "unintentional portrait." In a letter to Stieglitz he writes, "[I] have 5 or 6 drawings for paintings that are almost self portraits in spite of their having been done from outside things . . . they seem more real than anything yet" (qtd. in Deborah Johnson 4).

Perhaps it is not insignificant that Marianne Moore donated to the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia not only her manuscripts, letters, diaries and library, but also the contents of her apartment, her "surroundings." The visitor to the Rosenbach may now observe the furnishings of her living room arranged exactly as she had it—the wall space nearly covered with pictures by favorite artists, by friends and by herself; the tops of her desk, coffee table and mantle exhibiting carefully placed animal figurines and other curios.

In writing on the poetics of houses, Bachelard says that it is possible to "write a room," "read a room," or "read a house" and adds in a later chapter, "We might also say that writers let us read their treasure boxes" (14, 83). What he means by "reading" here is very much like what Moore means when she says, "People's Surroundings / They answer one's questions." If an observer, or reader, has "X-ray-like inquisitive intensity," that is, if
he can see, "the surfaces go back" and the surroundings reveal an unintentional portrait of their inhabitant. By the same token, if a writer "writes" a house, fills a treasure box or chooses her surroundings, she must likewise see with "X-ray-like inquisitive intensity" into the "life of things." Ideally, then, the perceptive reader will see both into the life of things and into the life of the artist who collected them.

Ruskin says and Moore quotes him, "Thousands 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" (*Comment* 82: 540). Elsewhere she quotes Conrad: "'It is above all, in the first place, to make you see,' said Joseph Conrad of the object of art; and he said again, more formally, that the writer's object is 'to render the highest kind of justice to the visible world" (*Some Answers* 11). Although this notion of seeing, which became so critical to early twentieth-century artists, does demand "justice to the visible world," it demands more than that too; to see one must look beyond what is merely visible. John Marin says, "abstraction is seeing, realism is cerebral" (qtd. in Haskell 34). And Stieglitz says similarly, "I refuse to identify seeing with knowing. Seeing signifies awareness resulting from inner experience" (235). Indeed, as a photographer and as a crusader for the recognition of photography as an art form, Stieglitz understood seeing particularly well, for while a photograph more than anything else can render justice to the visible world, photographers soon learned that it renders far more (or less) than the merely visible. Susan Sontag says that the camera taught people a new way to see, what she calls "photographic seeing":

Photographic seeing meant an aptitude for discovering beauty in what everybody sees but neglects as too ordinary. Photographers were supposed to do more than just see the world
as it is, including its already acclaimed marvels; they were to create interest, by new visual decisions. (On Photography 89)

These are decisions that a photographer makes that the casual observer does not; by cropping the visual panorama to which the eye is accustomed, the camera calls attention to aspects of the visible world that the eye overlooks. These visual decisions, these selections, constitute seeing. For a true artist of photography, seeing is required at every stage; not only must he select his subject and then select one negative from dozens or hundreds, he must, as Stieglitz insists in a letter, be able to see and hence select the final print as well:

You seem to assume that a photograph is one of a dozen or a hundred or maybe a million,—all prints from one negative necessarily being alike and so replaceable. But then along comes one print that really embodies something you have to say that is subtle and elusive, something that is still a straight print, but when shown with a thousand mechanically made prints has something that the others don’t have. What is it that this print has? It is certainly something not based on a trick. It is something born out of spirit,—and spirit is an intangible while the mechanical is tangible. (216)

This is what Moore means when she says that pictures "must be 'lit with piercing glances into the life of things.'" But such seeing, of course, is not exclusive to pictures; one sees with language too. Moore says, "Seeing and saying—language is a special extension of the power of seeing, inasmuch as it can make visible not only the already visible world, but through it the invisible world of relations and affinities" ("Some Answers" 11).

Because seeing requires selection and hence the creative imagination of the artist, it also "acknowledges the spiritual forces which have made it." Even though a photograph, for instance, depicts something external and impersonal, it belongs uniquely to the photographer who chose it; all photographs are portraits of the photographer. One can say likewise that
anything a person really sees becomes her own. Seeing is possessing. Leo Steinberg uses Picasso’s own phrase when he writes that Picasso draws "as if to possess." He means that Picasso, in drawing the female nude, wants to possess all aspects of her and shows that both before and after his Cubist phase, Picasso tried various methods of containing the three-dimensional nude within the two dimensions of the canvas or paper (174–92). Marianne Moore also observes her subject "as if to possess"; she says, "I want to look at the thing from all sides: the person who has seen the animal, how the animal behaves, and so on" ("Conversation" 155). The poem which ends with her twofold criteria, "it must be 'lit with piercing glances into the life of things'; / it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it," begins, "When I Buy Pictures / or what is closer to the truth, / when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor." To look at a picture or at a poem, or at a nude or an object or an animal, and really to see it is to "buy" it, to hang it on the wall or otherwise display it in the house that is the imagination. Thus is each of Moore’s poems a house or a room that contains the things she sees, the things of which she is "the imaginary possessor."

Bachelard compares the poet to the housewife when he writes:

And so, when a poet rubs a piece of furniture—even vicariously—when he puts a little fragrant wax on his table with the woolen cloth that lends warmth to everything it touches, he creates a new object; he increases the object’s human dignity; he registers this object officially as a member of the human household. (67)

He says further:

From one object in a room to another, housewifely care weaves the ties that unite a very ancient past to the new epoch. The housewife awakens furniture that was asleep.
In the intimate harmony of walls and furniture, it may be said that we become conscious of a house that is built by women, since men only know how to build a house from the outside, and they know little or nothing of the "wax" civilization. (68)

The "wax civilization" is not, however, the exclusive domain of housewives, or even of women poets. Photographers also know this world. In a book review ("Man with the Golden Eye") that Moore saved of Berenice Abbott's book on Atget, Moore put brackets in the following passage: "An Atget doorknocker—[a rusted but still elegant angel supporting an iron ring—is more than a doorknocker: it is a domestic worn out in man's service]."

(Brackets, one might note, are to the astute reader what the viewfinder is to the photographer, and Moore is especially adept at the "close-up.") Atget thus registers this doorknocker "officially as a member of the human household."

Bachelard says that when the poet/housewife waxes a piece of furniture, "he creates a new object." If seeing is possessing, seeing is also making. Earlier I said that assemblage calls into question the artist's role as maker. Once an artist has seen an object with "X-ray-like inquisitive intensity," that object becomes part of the artist's imaginary furnishings. When, however, the artist displays that object, or presents it "for our inspection," the object is transformed into an "unintentional portrait"; it becomes a new object. When we look at Atget's photograph of a doorknocker, we see the doorknocker that Atget has both possessed and created. And if a viewer like Berenice Abbott really sees the photograph, the doorknocker becomes one of her imaginary possessions too.

One of the things that most fascinates Moore in her poem, "A Carriage from Sweden" (CP 131-33), is the evidence of the cart's being made. She
writes in the opening lines, "They say there is a sweeter air / where it was made, than we have here"; in the second stanza, "this country cart / that inner happiness made art"; and in the concluding lines, "a surface that says / Made in Sweden: carts are my trade." What the reader finds in the poem is not only the cart made in Sweden but also the cart made in Brooklyn by Marianne Moore. And Moore makes the reader quite aware of the cart's two homes. She makes it clear in the first three stanzas that although the cart carries much of Scandinavia with it, its new home is Brooklyn.

They say there is a sweeter air
where it was made, than we have here;
a Hamlet's castle atmosphere.
At all events there is in Brooklyn
something that makes me feel at home.

No one may see this put-away
museum-piece, this country cart
that inner happiness made art;
and yet, in this city of freckled
integrity it is a vein

of resined straightness from north-wind
hardened Sweden's once-opposed-to-
compromise archipelago
of rocks. Washington and Gustavus
Adolphus, forgive our decay.

And in the fourth stanza, although we see through her description that the cart is quaint and quite removed from those efficient forms of transportation familiar to New Yorkers in the 1940's, we see through her choice of words like "dashboard," "brake" and "axle-tree" that the poet is more accustomed to cars than to carts. Her familiarity with cars does not, however, prevent her from delighting in the cart's "unannoying romance" (in the fifth stanza) and in particularly choice phrases like "swan-dart brake":

Seats, dashboard and sides of smooth gourd-rind texture, a flowered step, swan-dart brake, and swirling crustacean-
tailed equine amphibious creatures
that garnish the axle-tree! ...

This carriage from Sweden well illustrates what I have called Moore's assemblage technique, which is her removing quotations or thinings or facts, the "real toads," from their original context and putting them into a new context of her own creation, the "imaginary garden." It is important to realize, however, that although she makes the "toads" her own, they always remain "real." They do so because even while displaced they carry their original context with them.

Much of the rest of "A Carriage from Sweden" describes the context that the cart brings with it: the woman "for whom it should come to the door"—"she / with the natural stoop of the / snowy egret, gray-eyed and straight-haired"; the spruce tree; the "deft white stockinged dance in thick-soled / shoes!"; the "puzzle-jugs" and "hand-spun rugs"; "the hanging buttons and the frogs / that edge the Sunday jackets!"; and the "runner called the Deer." The cart is like the spruce tree seedling which contains within itself—"from a green trunk, green shelf / on shelf fanning out by itself"—much, much more than it is. The mysteriousness of the seedling and of the cart is not unlike the mysteriousness of the shell, and it has an appeal comparable to that of the snail's occipital horn; for after describing those Swedish behaviors, like "the put- / in twin vest-pleats with a fish-fin / effect when you need none," that are nearly incomprehensible to a resident of Brooklyn, Moore asks, "Sweden, / what makes the people dress that way / and those who see you wish to stay?"

In the concluding stanza Moore takes all the suggestiveness of the cart, all the "pine-needle-paths" that one could pursue, and turns it back
inward, into "moated white castles," into densely grown flowerbeds, into the
cart itself, into the letter $S$.

... I understand;
it's not the pine-needle-paths that give spring
when they're run on, it's a Sweden

of moated white castles—the bed
of white flowers densely grown in an $S$
meaning Sweden and stalwartness,
skill, and a surface that says
Made in Sweden: carts are my trade.

As the surface of a shell contains "a knowledge of principles" and a seedling
contains a spruce tree, so does the surface of the cart, even the letter $S$,
contain Sweden and all that "inner happiness made art." Poetry, for Moore,
is a place like a museum or a nest or a treasure box to put all the things that
she possesses. Like the carriage from Sweden, each of these things is "lit
with piercing glances into the life of things"; each one "acknowledge[s] the
spiritual forces which have made it."
Chapter 4: The Forms of Idiosyncrasy

"It must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it"

In her regard for the "spiritual forces" which make art, Marianne Moore is by no means alone among her contemporaries, writers and artists both. Indeed, one of the major links between the great leaders of literary modernism is what Eliot termed the "mythical method": Joyce turned to Homer and Greek myths; Yeats, to Celtic lore and his own myth in A Vision; Eliot, to the patterns of myth common to many societies as documented by contemporary anthropologists. Yeats and Eliot, particularly, inherited from the French Symbolists the notion that language can possess immediate spiritual powers, and one of the major goals of early modernism was to find ways to recover the spiritual potency of language that had been lost along with myth, ritual and belief in a spiritually charged universe. But whereas the "spiritual forces" the writers sought were generally contained in the conventions of civilization, in language, myth and ritual, the "spiritual forces" the artists sought were often opposed to convention and especially to the conventions of realistic representation which had governed Western art since the Renaissance. Instead of working their way backwards through the past and into myth and the origins of language, the artists wanted to discover the naïve, primal response to nature that preceded myth, language and the other conventions of civilization. In this regard, Moore's sympathies lay with the artists more than with her fellow poets, although her unconventional vision is hardly inarticulate.

The tendency of artists in the early twentieth century to look beyond the borders of Western convention can perhaps most easily, if imprecisely,
be described as "primitivism," though the term must include an interest in all art outside the "Greco-Roman line of Western realism that had been reaffirmed and systematized by the Renaissance" (Rubin 2). Although the importance of non-Western art to modernism can hardly be overestimated, it has until recently been rather neglected. William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe have taken significant strides towards remedying this situation by putting together a remarkable exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art and an accompanying two-volume catalog, "Primitivism in 20th Century Art." Rubin points out that "primitivism" in the largest sense constitutes a belief in the superiority of primitive life and a return to nature, but applied to twentieth-century artists, "primitivism" (in quotation marks) concerns not only what he distinguishes as "tribal art"—that of Africa, the Pacific islands and North American Indians (the subject exclusively of this exhibit)—but also "archaic art"—the court art of Japan, the Aztecs and the ancient Egyptians, for instance—not to mention folk and naive art. However cumbersome "primitivism" may be to a study of the arts from any of these civilizations, it can be useful towards describing the tastes and interests of early modern artists, which were often indiscriminate and even ill-informed. At any rate, the modern era is one of the few in history that has developed an appreciation for art forms from far outside its own culture and traditions.¹ Indeed, the MoMA exhibit and catalog themselves demonstrate, according to one reviewer, "the restless desire and power of the modern West to collect the world" (Clifford 167).

¹ For a thorough discussion of other societies who appreciated art from other cultures to varying degrees, see Newton 32-36.
Protesting Teddy Roosevelt’s remark that the modern imitation of primitive art is “only a smirking pose of retrogression and is not praiseworthy,” Moore comes to the defense of the artists and writers the *Dial* supported when she responds, “Our attachment is to the art of Egypt and the Primitives rather than to the later Renaissance and to Impressionism. . . . One has . . . a feeling for being one’s self” (“Comment” 83: 360). And perhaps this last statement will prevent us from too hastily labeling Marianne Moore a “primitivist,” for her taste in art is eclectic but highly discriminating. If she seems not to care much for Greek sculpture, she can be found admiring the manes of the Parthenon horses; if she generally has little use for the Italian Renaissance, she has great admiration for Botticelli and for Leonardo’s caricatures; and if one finds that she has a great taste for non-Western art, one finds that she has a perhaps greater love for Western artists like Dürer, El Greco, Blake, Gordon Craig, and Rousseau. Actually what Moore admires in art can arise in any era and from any culture. She would agree with one of the major assertions of *Der Blaue Reiter* [The Blue Rider], the influential collection of artwork and essays edited by Kandinsky and Franz Marc: “In all the arts . . . every method that arises from an inner necessity is right. . . . [T]he correspondence of the means of expression with inner necessity is the essence of beauty in a work” (van Hartmann 113). What Rubin reluctantly calls “primitive” might more precisely, if less concisely, be called art which comes from “inner necessity” or “spiritual necessity” (both terms are Kandinsky’s). It was, after all, in an effort to find that which had been lost in the overly conventionalized, academic paintings of the nineteenth century that twentieth-
century artists turned to art from other cultures, and thus to "primitive" art.

Although Moore's taste for pre-Renaissance art was cultivated at least to some extent by her contemporaries, she revealed an early predilection for "antiquities" in the letters she wrote about her 1911 trip to England and Paris with her mother. In the British Museum she reports drawing an "Assyrian leopard with pig eyes (the eyes, understand, belonged to the leopard) and a very amusing smile"; she also drew a battle scene from an Etruscan vase and the head of an Assyrian lion (23 July 1911). She wrote from Paris that she wanted "to buy a 'oiseau' before we go—a Japanese print" (18 [Aug.] 1911). But especially revealing is her account of the Louvre:

The Louvre is full of "rotten Rubens." I have never seen such atrocities. Mary de Medicis and Henry IV's floating in Elysian "deshabille" amidst cherubs and fat Homeric portars. But if you could see the "antiquities," the Victory Samothrace and some Assyrian things they have. The Assyrian Gallery could put the British Museum in its pocket. We also trained our pig eyes on some Dürers and some drawings in colored chalks. (13 Aug. 1911)

Whether she learned her appreciation for Assyrian and Oriental art at Bryn Mawr (her writing teacher there, Georgiana Goddard King, later became one of the first art historians in America to teach a course in Oriental art) or whether she merely discovered an innate predilection for it, she at any rate would not have been surprised by the enthusiasm she discovered in 1915 among the New York avant-garde for Japanese prints and "primitive" art. When she had dinner with Alfred Kreymborg and his wife and they were showing her their collection of photographs by Stieglitz, Steichen and others, Kreymborg asked Moore, "Are you fond of Japanese prints? We have a hundred and one things to show you," and told her to ask Stieglitz to see "his
Congo things" (12 Dec. 1915; 19 Dec. 1915). In the issue of *Camera Work* that Stieglitz gave to Moore to cut and look at upon her second visit there (he did not have any "Congo things" there at the time to show her), she noted that one of the articles in the special number, "What is 291?," had been written by "Hodge Kirnon the elevator man (colored)" and was "considered one of the best in the book" (19 Dec. 1915). The connection between Japanese prints, African sculpture and an elevator man's prose is not so much that they are alike in form or even intent but that they offered alternatives to artists who were trying to escape the values and assumptions of their predecessors.

Moore seems to have appreciated her contemporaries' attraction to "primitive" art more readily than their other experimentations. She wrote Robert McAlmon regarding Hartley's work: "A painting of Marsden Hartley's—the Virgin of Guadalupe—is reproduced in The Spectator this month, a kind of modern primitive, very definite and impressive" (18 June 1921). Even when the "primitive" quality was less apparent, she would often praise the work of contemporary artists by comparing it to art from other cultures. For instance, in the "Comment" she wrote for the *Dial* regarding the Seven Artists exhibit at the Anderson Galleries, she compared Paul Strand to Canaletto and seventeenth-century botanists, calling him "orientally perfect"; she wrote of Charles Demuth that his "jewelry of apples . . . pleases us as well as their Chinese counterparts"; and of Georgia O'Keeffe: "Her calla lilies, gladiolas, and alligator pears, have upon them, the lustre of mosques, of lotus flowers, of cypress-bordered pools. They have the involute security of Central African, of Singhalese and Javanese experienced adornment" (79: 177-78).
The imprecise inclusiveness of "primitivism" as a movement in early modern art does not result entirely from ignorance, for there seems to have been a prevailing attitude that art from all cultures and eras comes from the same motive and is thus ultimately similar. Arthur Wesley Dow, for instance, the influential teacher of such artists as Max Weber and Georgia O'Keeffe, taught his students the Japanese-inspired aesthetics of his mentor, Ernest Fenollosa (the same Fenollosa whom Ezra Pound is credited with "discovering" in the literary world). Fenollosa wrote in the Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art:

We are approaching the time when the art work of all the world of man may be looked upon as one, as infinite variations in a single kind of mental and social effort. . . . A universal scheme or logic of art unfolds, which as easily subsumes all forms of Asiatic and of savage art and the efforts of children as it does accepted European schools. We find that all art is harmonious spacing, under special technical conditions that vary. (qtd. in Werner 31)

Gail Levin writes that Dow "suggested to students that they 'bring into play the primitive springs of thought, impulse and action that exist in every human being' and thus put themselves 'en rapport with the primitive state of mind.'" Dow's "natural method," Levin tells us, was also inspired by the findings of Frank Hamilton Cushing, an ethnologist who had lived for five years among the Zuni Indians of New Mexico and who believed "there was a vast consistency of artistic expression linking Oriental, Occidental, and Primitive cultures" (453). 2 And without so much as saying so, Kandinsky and Marc boldly assented with this wholistic aesthetic by juxtaposing in their influential Der Blaue Reiter the work of modern artists—Picasso, Matisse, Delauney,

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Cézanne, Rousseau, Gauguin, Arp, Klee, Van Gogh, Kandinsky, Marc—with glass paintings of Bavarian folk artists; masks from Brazil, New Caledonia, Ceylon and Gabon; Russian folk art; an Indian cape from Alaska; children's drawings; work by Delacroix and El Greco; an Italian mosaic; sculpture from Borneo, the Easter Islands, the Cameroons, Mexico and Malay; medieval woodcuts and sculpture; and various drawings and paintings from Egypt, China, Arabia and Japan. Whether Marianne Moore could have read the German text of *Der Blaue Reiter* or not, its eclectic collection of illustrations must have impressed her, for the front and back covers of her own copy are bowed with the same hundred and fifty drawings and newspaper clippings, mostly of artworks, that she collected and preserved over a period of about fifty years.

Although it is doubtful that Moore could have read the German text of *Der Blaue Reiter* herself and it was not translated into English until after her death, the theories expressed there and in Kandinsky’s *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* [Concerning the Spiritual in Art] would have been popular topics for

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3 The newspaper clippings that Moore saved in the covers of this book mostly date from the thirties, forties and fifties though two are from 1916 and 1917 and several are from the early twenties and the sixties. Moore signed the inside front cover but did not date it, and so we do not know when she acquired the book; although since she had little money for books during the years of its popularity, it was probably a gift, possibly even from Stieglitz, who often gave books to indigent artists and did give a copy of *Der Blaue Reiter* to Arthur Dove. Inserted near the title page is a small drawing which bears the inscription, “The great turtle / Zoomorph / N. C. G. M. March 1913,” which may indicate that she had the book shortly after it: its publication and even before her New York “debut” in 1915.

4 Several years later she reports in a letter to her brother that when Glenway Wescott brought her a German book on Hindu sculpture, she told him, “I didn’t know that I could read it. He said, ‘Well the Germans themselves have trouble with it’” (14 Jan. 1923).
discussion among the artists she knew. And apparently Der Blaue Reiter became a topic for conversation in the Moore household even in Carlisle, for shortly after her 1915 trip to New York Moore records in her conversation notebook that a Mr. Wilkins persisted in saying (to her amusement) "Der Reite Blauer" and that her pastor, Mr. Kellogg, said of Schönberg in Der Blaue Reiter, "the idea! why they out Wagner Wagner" (1250/24: 7). Although Moore would have found much of Kandinsky's mysticism to be extreme, especially in Concerning the Spiritual in Art where he advocates theosophy and the total renunciation of the "nightmare of materialism," she would also have found much that appealed to her. Kandinsky's notion of "inner necessity," for instance, which he introduces in Concerning the Spiritual in Art but develops more cogently in Der Blaue Reiter in the essay, "On the Question of Form," is very much like Moore's notion of "the genuine." Art that arises from "inner necessity," or "a feeling for being one's self," is good, morally and aesthetically; art that conforms to external pressures and conventions is false.

As might be expected, Stieglitz's 291 gallery was pivotal in educating American artists about "primitive" art. Stieglitz exhibited Henri Rousseau for the first time in America in 1910; in 1912, 1914 and 1915 he exhibited children's work; in 1914 he exhibited African sculpture and then Mexican pottery and carvings. Camera Work, too, regularly contained articles, notably those by Marius de Zayas, that called attention to primitive art. De Zayas, who assisted Stieglitz with the African show, also wrote African Negro Art: Its Influence on Modern Art in 1915 and in 1919 wrote the

5 Moore dated the Mr. Wilkins entry 21 Jan. 1916.
Introduction to a folio book of photographs by Charles Sheeler of African sculpture.

Perhaps Max Weber can claim credit for introducing "primitivism," as he had encountered it in Paris, to Steiglitz. Having studied under Dow at the Pratt Institute, Weber went to Paris in 1905 where he met Gertrude and Leo Stein, who were collecting Japanese prints; he studied for a while under Matisse, who was then collecting African sculpture; he met Picasso, also a collector of African sculpture, and Henri Rousseau, with whom he became and remained close friends. When Weber returned to New York in 1909, he met Steiglitz and encouraged him to exhibit Rousseau (see Levin). In certain ways, too, Weber’s experience anticipated Marianne Moore’s, for he claims that a visit to New York’s Museum of Natural History inspired him to begin writing poetry! In the foreword to Weber’s Cubist Poems, Alvin Langdon Coburn wrote of Weber: "best of all he likes to study the art of primitive peoples, the sculptures of Egypt and Assyria, the great simple things that have come down to us in stone from the past" (qtd. in Levin 455). Also a collector, Weber owned, in addition to several Rousseaus, figurines and pottery from Egypt, Persia and China (see Werner 25).

Another artist who affected, and was affected by, 291’s support of "primitive" art is Marsden Hartley, a friend of Weber’s, who also spent some time in Paris. But Hartley felt less at home there than Weber did and in 1913 left for Munich and Berlin, where he met Kandinsky and Marc and happily established himself among the Blaue Reiter group. Even before his arrival in Germany, his reading of Der Blaue Reiter and Concerning the Spiritual in Art had stimulated frequent visits to the Trocadero, Paris’s primitive art museum; he wrote to Steiglitz in 1912: “Yes, we can find the real thing at
[the] Trocadero. These people had no mean ambition. They created out of spiritual necessity" (qtd. in Levin 456). As Weber incorporated African sculpture first directly and then more indirectly into his paintings, Hartley incorporated American Indian pottery into some 1912 still lifes, and in 1914, after returning to Berlin from America, began his "Amerika" series, which more abstractly rendered American Indian motifs.

In his appreciation for the American Indians, Hartley is closely allied with Marianne Moore, for she taught at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania for four years and thereafter maintained an interest in the Indians' work and welfare which was more than theoretical. Hartley published a number of essays praising Indian life and calling for its recognition as a vital aesthetic and cultural resource.6 He writes, for instance, in "The Red Man":

> Other nations of the world have long since accepted Congo originality. The world has yet to learn of the originality of the redman and we who have him as our guest, knowing little or nothing of his powers and the beauty he confers on us by his remarkable esthetic propensities, should be the first to welcome and to foster him. (Adventures 27)

And Moore chastises Americans for their treatment of the Indians:

> It is impossible not to be ashamed of our civilized ignorance in moving-picture and other representations of the Indian, for Chief Standing Bear finds that we prefer a pseudo-Indian life to the actual one and are indifferent when reasoned with.

> In view of the fact that about twenty-four dollars was paid for Manhattan and that we should like occupancy to be guardianship, one hopes that civilization may yet be a right substitute for pramaeval ecstatica. ("Comment" 85: 180)

6 Also, see Hartley's "Tribal Aesthetics" and "Red Man Ceremonials: An American Plea for American Aesthetics."
Earlier she had been responsible for having several Indian drawings included in the Dial.⁷ Nor were Hartley and Moore alone in their support of the Indians. Arthur Dove painted Indian Spring in 1923; John Marin also did some watercolors of Indians. Even the first issue of Camera Work in 1903 contained a photograph, The Red Man, by Gertrude Käsebier.⁸

Although Hartley and Moore certainly knew each other, Moore may have been more directly influenced by the close friends they had in common than by Hartley himself, for Hartley spent the summer of 1925 with several American expatriates in southern France, among them Glenway Wescott and Monroe Wheeler, who were already close friends of Moore's. When Wheeler later became Director of Publications for the Museum of Modern Art, he would often send Moore copies of the museum publications, including catalogs for exhibits of Mexican art, art of the South Seas, American Indian art and for exhibits of such modern "primitives" as Rousseau, Klee and Rouault.⁹

In the summer of 1928 Hartley lived for two weeks with the French/American sculptor, Gaston Lachaise and his wife Isabel, who were also friends of Moore's (he did a bronze bust of her) and members of the Dial group. Lincoln Kirstein writes of Lachaise: "The past he loves is best is remotest, the very earliest dawn of European culture when men inscribed tusks mammoths and bisons on the walls of their stone caverns, beasts with

⁷ Moore wrote to her brother regarding a visit from Scofiofield Thayer: "He also took one of my Indian chief tracings to reproduce in the he Dial" (4 April 1921).

⁸ See Levin for more information about artists who took an interest in American Indians.

⁹ These catalogs, mostly from the forties, with inscriptions from Monroe Wheeler, are in Moore's library at the Rosenbach.
shaggy mountainous bodies delicately balanced on small careful hoofs" (31).

The aesthetic views that Kirstein attributes to Lachaise seem to have been prevalent ones of the time:

He thinks ... that Negro sculpture, considering its conditioning in fear, magic and ceremonial aims, is far more relevant to Africa and to ourselves than is Greek sculpture of the middle or late periods and the decadence of classic traditionalism in the West. A simple, unbiased vision has been difficult for the paler European. He believes that Renaissance imitation of Greek ideals and its various mutations down to our own time are without much inherent energy and in the last analysis only well-executed imitations of a reality far more moving in the flesh. (32)

Other artist friends of Moore's who almost certainly affected her "primitive" leanings were William and Marguerite Zorach, who lived near her in Greenwich Village. William Zorach was also close to his fellow Russian, Max Weber; Marguerite was close to Isabel Lachaise; and one of their best friends during the summer of 1916, which they spent in Provincetown, was Marsden Hartley. But even before Moore knew the Zorachs personally, their work had impressed her, for she wrote from her 1915 visit to New York:

I repaired to the Daniel Gallery and saw an exhibition of things by William and Marguerite Zorach, paintings and embroideries—As "the Times" says, 'the embroideries recall the great periods of embroidery' and the pictures gave me a chill they were so good. They have one waterfall and arrangement in stripes, that is as rhythmical as a zebra and as realistic as De Maupassant. (19 Dec. 1915)

In his autobiography, Art Is My Life, William Zorach tells of his early fascination, as an art student in Paris, with "the design quality of Japanese prints" and with Gauguin, who he says "saw with an inner vision of reality and not with an optic vision or a camera eye. ... Gauguin took me into the mysterious inner world of the spirit" (65). And he says that after he returned to New York, in order to free himself from "the academic way of seeing the world about me," that he tried drawing with his left hand instead of
his trained right hand: "The left had no habits to overcome; it was clumsy but free" (33). Like Weber, Zorach frequented the Museum of Natural History, where he studied Eskimo, Aztec and Mayan sculpture; these "fundamentals" he felt were "an expression of life directly spiritual in the sense of being a spirituality unhampered by external values" (34). And Zorach's own sculptures show affinities with African and ancient Egyptian sculpture.

Moore's acquaintance with the Zorachs and their work may have directly inspired her poem, "In the Days of Prismatic Color" (CP 41-42), which apparently began as an observation, her own or someone else's, that she recorded in her conversation notebook:

The Zorachs. Their fineness of early civilization art I have never seen such primeval color. It is color of the sort that existed when Adam was there alone and there was no smoke when there was nothing to modify it but mist that went up. May there be a veil before our eyes that we may not see but which would harrow up our souls and may that veil be love not insensitivity. (1250/24: 32-33)

The appearance of Adam and Eve is appropriate to a poem for the Zorachs, for this mythic couple and their idyllic garden were favorite subjects of the Zorachs'. According to Zorach's autobiography, they would often hold exhibitions of their work in their own studio and decorate it appropriately:

Our floors were red lead, our walls lemon yellow. We made our little hall into a garden of Eden with a life-sized Adam and Eve and a red and white snake draped around the trunk of a decorative tree, with tropical foliage surrounding it all. (37)

In the vestibule of their apartment hung Marguerite's painting, Adam and Eve (she also designed a rug after this painting [see Marguerite Zorach 47]), and William executed several primitive-looking sculptures of Adam and Eve over the course of his career. But Moore's Adam seems to be more than a
personal allusion to her friends though perhaps they all liked Adam and Eve for similar reasons.

The "Days of Prismatic Color / not ... the days of Adam and Eve, but when Adam / was alone" are for Moore the days of spiritual oneness, the days before society, even a society of two, could create civilization, language, art and the other "refinements" that make truth murky. The distinction between mist and smoke is significant. There was no smoke in the days of prismatic color (partly because Adam did not yet have the fire necessary for civilized life), and there was nothing to modify the "fine" color, the color not yet "refined" by early civilization art except "the / mist that went up."

Although in the poem Moore does not call the veil of mist "love" and the smoke "insensibility," as she implies in her notebook, she makes it clear that the mist is necessary to reveal the "prismatic color"; mist forms the prism that lets us see whereas smoke blurs that vision. And with the subject of the first sentence, "obliqueness," which we do not discover until the second stanza, she emphasizes this distinction: "obliqueness was a variation / of the perpendicular, plain to see and / to account for: it is no / longer that."

"Obliqueness" is both mist-like and smoke-like, for in its original sense it describes the light rays refracted by the prism, but in its present sense it means not "plain to see." And like "complexity," "obliqueness" can be misconstrued: "it also is one of / those things into which much that is peculiar can be / read." Although "not a crime" unless it is carried "to the point of murkiness," complexity "that has been committed to darkness" instead of to incandescent truth becomes a "pestilence," a disease of civilization. When insistence becomes "the measure of achievement," society assumes that "all / truth must be dark."
Of the two prevailing images of "In the Days of Prismatic Color" the first, which governs the first four stanzas, is light—the incandescent white light that the mist, perhaps Adam's God, may reveal to us as "prismatic color." But Moore actually seems to be less interested in religious truth than in aesthetic truth, though these are not unrelated to each other. Her "incandescence" recalls Kandinsky, who distinguishes in "On the Question of Form" between "The white, fertilizing ray" that is positive, creative and good and "The black, fatal hand" of convention, that is negative, destructive and evil. He writes:

Behind matter, within matter, the creative spirit is hidden. The veiling of the spirit in matter is often so thick that, generally, only few people can see through it to the spirit. There are many people who cannot even recognize the spirit in spiritual form. Today many do not see the spirit in religion, in art. There are whole epochs that deny the spirit, because the eyes of man cannot see the spirit at those times. So it was during the nineteenth century and so it is for the most part today. (147-48)

This passage may remind us of another of Moore's poems, also about seeing and light. The pictures which must be "lit with piercing glances into the life of things" in "When I Buy Pictures" also enable us to see through the "veil" to the spirit that is hidden in matter.

The second prevailing image of "In the Days of Prismatic Color" is a many-footed primeval creature, perhaps the evolutionary counterpart to Adam. First hinted at with the word "pestilence" in the fourth stanza, the beast becomes vivid in the quote from Nestor, "Part of it was crawling, part of it / was about to crawl, the rest / was torpid in its lair." Moore seems to

10 An article by Benjamin de Casseres entitled "Art: Life's Prismatic Glass" appeared in a 1910 Camera Work, which indicates that the concept of a prism was one Moore might have encountered among the Stieglitz group.
enjoy this creature's feet a great deal, for in the marvelous sentence, "Principally throat, sophistication is as it al-/ways has beenen—at the antipodes from the init-ial great truths," antipodes literally means "opposing feet"; and in the equally marvelous "classic/multitude of feet," though we think first of the creature's "short-legged, fit-ful advance," the word "classic" and then "Apollo Belvedere" bring to mind the "n"multitude of feet" in Greek friezes such as those of the Parthenon. Thus, the "short-legged, fit-ful advance" is the advance of civilization and its art, and with this advance away from "the init-ial great truths" comes "sophistication" and the "formal" conventions of art such as those evident in the Apollo Belvedere.

Of this advance, Moore says in the poem's final stanza:

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."

The Apollo Belvedere at the Vatican is a Roman copy of a now lost Greek bronze; during the Renaissance, and especially during the eighteenth century, it came to epitomize the perfection of Greek sculpture, but when artists in the nineteenth century began to question the conventions which had so dominated Western art since the Renaissance, the Apollo Belvedere came to epitomize the sterility of academic art. Thus, for Moore the Apollo Belvedere epitomizes "sophistication" and the smoky conventions that hide truth. But by saying "Truth is no Apollo / Belvedere," Moore gives truth a marble-like hardness that will endure when the "wave" of civilization's "advance" has gone by.
Nor is it only "early civilization art" and the conventions of the Renaissance that Moore is protesting in this poem. Her present tense is emphatic when she says in the second stanza, "it is no / longer that" and in the fourth and fifth stanzas, "sophistication is as it al- // ways has been." When she complains of the "dismal / fallacy that insistence / is the measure of achievement and that all / truth must be dark," she speaks of the modern predicament and of the bleak struggle for meaning that Eliot would describe a few years later in *The Waste Land*. Although, admittedly, Moore's unabashed truth that will be there "when the wave has gone by" may raise a few modernist eyebrows, it is not hard to see that a poet who celebrates truth in vivid "prismatic colors" would have little use for a "mythical method."

Elsewhere Moore writes: "The thing is to see the vision and not deny it; to care and admit that we do" (*Predilections* 20).

It is perhaps too great a generalization to say that poets in the twentieth century turned to classical subjects in reaction to nineteenth-century nature poetry and that late nineteenth and twentieth-century painters turned to nature in reaction to the idyllic, classical subjects of the French Academy. But for whatever reason, most of the modernist writers found their instruction in books rather than in nature (Moore is no exception); if a poet such as Robert Frost, for instance, did write regularly about nature, he would be accused of being "not modern." With the modern painters, however, the case is quite different, at least in America. Most of the painters in the Stieglitz circle would regularly spend time away from New York in order to observe nature directly. Georgia O'Keeffe spent summers at Lake George and later a great part of each year in New Mexico; Hartley spent
summers in his native Maine and also in New Mexico; John Marin spent summers in Maine; Arthur Dove lived for several years on a boat and ran a farm in Connecticut; and also the Zorachs spent a great deal of their time in the country and spent a year painting the Sierra Nevadas. Though Moore's experience of nature, unlike these artists', was hardly ever unmitigated by a photographer, zookeeper or natural historian, the creatures of nature were her favorite subjects.

In her admiration for animals she is not unlike the "primitive" artists of, say, Africa and the Americas, nor is she unaware of this affinity, for she often includes in her animal poems how the animal was regarded by various civilizations; she writes in "The Plumet Basilisk," "the basilisk portrays mythology's wish / to be interchangeably man and fish." And she apparently feels a certain "primitive" awe for the animal herself, which she reveals in a Dial "Comment" on serpents:

A certain ritual of awe—animistic and animalistic—need not, however, be effaced from our literary consciousness. The serpent as a motive in art, as an idea, as beauty, is surely not beneath us, as we see it in the stone and the gold hamadryads of Egypt; in the turtle zoomorphs, feathered serpent columns, and coiled rattlesnakes of Yucatan; in the silver-white snakes, 'chameleon lizards,' and stone dragons of Northern Siam. . . . Nor does the mythologic war between serpent and elephant seem disproportionate when one examines a stone dragon which guards rice fields in Northern Siam from raiding herds of elephants. (83: 178)

According to at least one art historian, primitive existence forces upon mankind the recognition that animals are "stronger, fiercer, cleverer than themselves, and certainly more beautiful." Often animals are regarded as mankind's ancestors, and dancers may wear animal masks to reenact the ancestors' deeds or to impersonate "animals, or animal-like heroes, who taught humanity essential skills" (Newton 198). Although Moore's scientific
detachment from the creatures she describes may strike readers as un-primitive, she too regards animals as superior to human beings in their beauty and moral perfection and hence finds them instructive. And while she can not literally believe that animals are our immediate ancestors, she does find resemblances between man and beast, as when she writes in her conversation notebook: "it is disconcerting to think how strangely like we are to the lower animals (so called) many of them very grand and patternworthy, (cats & dogs snakes & lions & tigers and toucans)" (1250/24: 47). Most of the animals she writes about she regards as heroic in some way, and generally it is a mark of high praise for a human to be compared to an animal. She compares Molière, for instance, to a peacock in "To the Peacock of France":

You hated sham; you ranted up 
and down through the conventions of excess; 
nor did the King love you the less 
nor did the world, 
in whose chief interest and for whose spontaneous 
delight, your broad tail was unfurled.

(CP 87)

In other poems, such as "To a Snail" and "To a Chameleon," which quite obviously describe people, she so well disguises the recipient of her praise in an animal "mask," that he or she cannot be identified.

What can be said of African animal masks is also true, to a certain extent, of Moore's animal poems (excepting the word "god"):

Very often in Africa the mask represents not so much the animal itself as qualities associated with it: the wildness of the gorilla, the power of the buffalo. Emblematic features are combined to make from a number of characteristics a synthesis that represents the totality of a god's attributes. (Newton 198)

This is not to say that Moore's animals are metaphors for abstract qualities in the way, for instance, Shelley's skylark is, for she is certainly interested in observing the animal for its own sake, but she chooses the animals she
describes according to the virtues which warrant her praise. Though a word or two will hardly suffice to describe the virtues which Moore’s animals embody, roughly speaking, the buffalo stands for service and humble strength, the frigate pelican for grace, the ostrich for justice and courage, the paper nautilus for the power of love, the elephant for wise obedience, to name but a few.

While Moore’s predilection for exotic animals must be to a large extent uncalculated, these animals do demonstrate, perhaps more clearly than anything else could, her aesthetic and moral principles. Animals cannot be hypocritical or false; they cannot act other than out of “inner necessity.” Even when they serve man, as the buffalo and elephant do, they do not do so for personal gain or recognition but because they are humble and cannot do otherwise. Nor is it only the animals’ behavior that expresses their “inner necessity” or that interests Moore; equally important to her is the animal’s appearance and peculiar physical attributes. Here again we find her in agreement with Kandinsky; he says:

*Form is the outer expression of the inner content.*

*... Since form is only an expression of content, and content is different with different artists, it is clear that there may be many different forms at the same time that are equally good. Necessity creates form. Fish that live at great depths have no eyes. The elephant has a trunk. The chameleon changes its color, etc., etc. Form reflects the spirit of the individual artist. Form bears the stamp of the personality.* (*Question* 150)

And this may be why animals interest Moore as subjects more so than people and why the exotic animals interest her more so than the everyday ones, for animals are more apparently various than people, even artists, are and therefore illustrate most clearly the aesthetic principle that “Necessity
creates form* and the almost moral principle that "there may be many different forms at the same time that are equally good."

For both Moore and Kandinsky aesthetic principles are also moral ones. In Kandinsky the moral aspect of form becomes clear in a footnote to his statement, "The most important thing in the question of form is whether or not the form has grown out of inner necessity," in which he says:

This means that one should not make a uniform out of the form. Works of art are not soldiers. One and the same form can therefore, even with the same artist, be at one time the best, at another the worst. In the first case it grew in the soil of inner necessity, in the second in the soil of outer necessity: out of ambition and greed. ("Question" 153)

Marsden Hartley finds moral purity in the art of the American Indians; he says of their dances: "[The redman's] production is not a show for the amusement of the onlooker; it is a pageant for the edification of his own soul" (Adventures 17-18). The moral aspects of Moore's aesthetic are evident throughout her work in statements like "Contractility is a virtue as modesty is a virtue" from "To a Snail," but are especially evident in those poems, such as "The Jerboa," "Peter," and "He Digesteth Harde Yron," in which she contrasts the moral purity of the animal with the often impure motives of human beings.

In "Peter" the human beings with which the domestic cat (a pet of Moore's neighbors) must put up are not immoral, only "unprofitable" as compared to the cat. Watching Peter's indifference to human society, Moore observes:

to sit caged by the rungs of a domestic chair would be unprofitable—human. What is the good of hypocrisy? It is permissible to choose one's employment, to abandon the nail, or roly-poly, when it shows signs of being no longer a pleasure, to score the nearby magazine with a double line of strokes.
As for the disposition invariably to affront, 
an animal with claws should have an opportunity to use them. 
The eel-like extension of trunk into tail is not an accident. 
To leap, to lengthen out, divide the air, to pursue. 
To tell the hen: fly over the fence, go in the wrong way 
in your perturbation—this is life; to do less would be nothing but dishonesty. (CP 4:43-44)

But in "He 'Digesteth Harde Yron" the heroic ostrich must put up with not only hypocrisy but also something much worse—the near extinction of his species:

He is swifter than a horse; he has a foot hard as a hoof; the leopard is not more suspicious. How could he, prized for plumes and eggs and young, used even as a riding-beast, respect men hiding actor-like in ostrich skins, with the right hand making the neck move as if alive and from a bag the left hand strewing grain, that the ostriches might be decoyed and killed!

Six hundred ostrich-brains served at one banquet, the ostrich-plume-tipped tent and desert spear, jewel-gorgeous ugly egg-shell goblets, eight pairs of ostriches in harness, dramatize a meaning always missed by the externalist. (CP 99-100)

In "The Jerboa" (CP 10-15) the two parts of the poem called "Too Much" and "Abundance" demonstrate vividly the immorality of false art versus the positive beauty of the humble jerboa. "Too Much" begins with a description of a work of art created according to "outer necessity" rather than "inner necessity."

A Roman had an artist, a freedman, contrive a cone—pine-cone or fir-cone—with holes for a fountain. Placed on the Prison of St. Angelo, this cone of the Pompeys which is known
now as the Popes', passed
for art. A huge cast
bronze, dwarfing the peacock
statue in the garden of the Vatican,
it looks like a work of art made to give
to a Pompey, or native
of Thebes.

This horrendous pine-cone was "contrived" for some Roman; "it looks like a work of art made to give," not like one which arose from the artist's genuine response to nature. Most of the rest of the first section of the poem describes the morally decadent and exploitative Egyptians, whose art (after its early period of inventiveness) became as academic as Roman art. But it is not the academic aspect of their art that Moore emphasizes; rather it is their exploitation of animals and people. "They looked on as theirs, / impalas and onigers, / the wild ostrich herd / . . . cranes, / mongooses, storks, anoas, Nile geese"; their selfish exploitation of animals is evidenced in the "small things" that these people liked: they "put goose-grease / paint in round bone boxes," "kept in a buck or rhinoceros horn, / the ground horn; and locust oil in stone locusts." Not only animals but people, too, were their possessions. The dwarfs they kept provided "a fantasy / and a verisimilitude that were / right to those with, everywhere, // power over the poor," and "Those who tended flower- / beds and stables were like the king's cane in the / form of a hand."

In contrast to the "tamed // Pharoah's rat," which was honored by the Pharoah and "praised for its wit," is the jerboa, "a small desert rat, / and not famous, that / lives without water," and "has a shining silver house / of sand." Though he has no things, no water even, he has "happiness":
O rest and
joy, the boundless sand,
the stupendous sand-spout,
no water, no palm-trees, no ivory bed,
tiny cactus; but one would not be he
who has nothing but plenty.

In contrast to the decadent Romans and Egyptians are the morally pure blacks of Africa, described at the beginning of the second section of the poem, "Abundance":

Africanus meant
the conqueror sent
from Rome. It should mean the
untouched: the sand-brown jumping-rat-free-born; and
the blacks, that choice race with an elegance
ignored by one's ignorance.

In its freedom both from possessions and possessors, the jerboa exhibits moral and aesthetic wholeness, conforming to nature both in its behavior and in its physical appearance:

... The fine hairs on the tail,
repeating the other pale
markings, lengthen until
at the tip they fill
out in a tuft—black and
white; strange detail of the simplified creature,
fish-shaped and silvered to steel by the force
of the large desert moon.

And the jerboa's beauty is like the music of the Bedouin flute, the Bedouins being like the jerboa, self-sufficient desert wanderers and morally pure:

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.

Not only animals but objects as well can be moral though often it is difficult to tell whether Moore approves or disapproves of the objects she
describes; which is to say, her moral judgments are not always as clear as I have made them seem. Like the toys the Egyptians made for themselves in "The Jerboa," which seem to be at once fascinating and morally repugnant to Moore, the "chintz china" swan in the "Louis Fifteenth / candelabrum-tree" of "No Swan So Fine" is both beautiful, "at ease and tall," and a reminder of a decadent king, now dead. But the "much-mended plate" in "Nine Nectarines" earns unqualified admiration as does "An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish" in the poem of that title.

In "Poetry" (CP 266-67n) Moore says of things which are "genuine" and "useful": "When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible, / the same thing may be said for all of us, that we / do not admire what / we cannot understand." In this context we must assume that "what we cannot understand" is murky as academic art is derivative and murky, and so that the statement is true. But the list which follows the colon after "understand" changes the meaning of the statement to its opposite:

the same thing may be said for all of us, that we do not admire what we cannot understand: the bat holding on upside down or in quest of something to eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the base-ball fan, the statistician—nor is it valid to discriminate against "business documents and school-books"; all these phenomena are important.

For often Moore seems to admire very much what she cannot understand and here calls for the recognition of such perplexing phenomena as important. "Complexity is not a crime," Moore says in "In the Days of Prismatic Color" unless it has been carried "to the point of murkiness." Although some
complexities are derivative and unintelligible, some, like "a wild horse taking a roll" and "the statistician," are simply curious.

In "Snakes, Mongooses, Snake-Charmers and the Like" (CP 58), Moore observes things similarly curious. Without naming India, she calls it "the country in which everything is hard work, the country of the grass-getter, / the torch-bearer, the dog-servant, the messenger-bearer, the holy-man." After describing the snake-charmer and then the snake, she concludes:

This animal to which from the earliest times, importance has attached,
fine as its worshipers have said—for what was it invented?
To show that when intelligence in its pure form
has embarked on a train of thought which is unproductive, it will come back?
We do not know; the only positive thing about it is its shape; but why protest?
The passion for setting people right is in itself an afflicting disease.

Distaste which takes no credit to itself is best.

In this case Moore's moral propriety instructs her to refrain from judgment, perhaps because at the same time that she finds snake-charming to be somewhat distasteful she also finds it fascinating, just as she finds the dog-servant, holy-man, and pure intelligence's "train of thought" in the form of a snake to be fascinating. Moore's favorite word for such incomprehensible acts of labor and unproductive trains of thought is "fastidiousness," a variation perhaps of "gusto." She begins "Critics and Connoisseurs," "There is a great amount of poetry in unconscious / fastidiousness," and concludes a Dial "Comment" on literary fastidiousness, "our desire to know what topics may occupy the attention of the fastidious, is genuine" (80: 446).

Hard work, of course, is not a virtue that is peculiar to Moore's aesthetic. William Carlos Williams once wrote to Moore about "a sort of nameless religious experience" he had in his early twenties when he "decided
there was nothing else in life for me but to work" (Letters 147). Arthur Dove wrote to Stieglitz, "Hope you [Stieglitz and O'Keeffe] are both working hard. That seems to be one of the few roads to gladness" (qtd. in Deborah Johnson 6), and wrote in his own notes, "To search and find, that is God as we call it. In other words work. It is the only thing that gives happiness" (qtd. in Haskell 136). Moore acknowledges with some reverence the hard work of the artists she most respects. In praising Dürer she quotes St. Jerome, "And good perseverance nouryssheth theym. His mere journeyings are fervent ..." ("Comment" 85: 89); in praising Ellen Terry she quotes the actress herself: "The artist, she said, 'must spend his life in incessant labor' and notes in Henry Irving 'a kind of fine temper, like the purest steel, produced by the perpetual fight against difficulties'" ("Comment" 85: 361). But what intrigues Moore even more than the incessant, but mostly deliberate, labor of the artist is "unconscious fastidiousness."

For as restrained a writer as Moore is, the opening statement of "Critics and Connoisseurs" (CP 38-39) is strong indeed: "There is a great amount of poetry in unconscious / fastidiousness." Most commentators, however, do themselves an injustice when they give it the negative interpretation, "There is no poetry in the conscious fastidiousness of critics and connoisseurs." If we assume that Moore fits the cliché that poets hate and distrust critics, we will miss her point, for in "Poetry" she ranks the "critic twitching his skin" with the "bat holding on upside down" and the "baseball fan," not with the lowly "half poets." And she speaks with great admiration in "Picking and Choosing" when she says, "Gordon Craig so inclinational and unashamed—a critic." So when she describes the conscious fastidiousness of the swan and ant in "Critics and Connoisseurs," she again
speaks with admiration, qualified only by the fact that she likes unconscious fastidiousness better. In "Profit is a Dead Weight" she says similarly, "Overinitiative has something to be said for it. . . . Humility is yet mightier" (Tell Me 20).

The first stanza of "Critics and Connoisseurs" presents two extremes of fastidiousness: "Certain Ming products" at one extreme and "a mere childish attempt to make an imperfectly ballasted animal stand up" at the other—in other words, fastidiousness in its most sophisticated form versus fastidiousness in its most primitive impulse. Conscious fastidiousness, the necessary choice of poets as well as critics, differs only in degree from the unconscious fastidiousness of the child. Rather than ridicule the critic and connoisseur, Moore watches them with awe and curiosity just as she watches a swan refuse to follow a bit of food in the stream and an ant carry a stick "north, south, / east, west, till it turned on / itself, struck out from the flower-bed into the lawn, and returned to the point / from which it had started." "I have seen," she says, "ambition without understanding in a variety of forms." It is the variety of forms that interests her because it reveals a creature's true personality and defies our expectations. We would never expect a swan to refuse food or the industrious little ant to waste its energy carrying a particle of whitewash; nor do we expect to find poetry in the fastidiousness of the critic and connoisseur.

In this poem Moore directly addresses the reader, connoisseur if not critic, as "you": "I have seen this swan and / I have seen you; I have seen ambition without / understanding in a variety of forms." The reader may be like the swan, a critic, eager to defend his own standards but finally pursuing those bits of food that the poet proffers. Or the reader may be like the ant, a
connoisseur, carrying a poem or an interpretation that strikes his fancy
north, south, east, west, finally returning to the point from which he started
and then carrying another poem through the same procedure. Nor as readers
are we unlike the child attempting to make an imperfectly baalasted animal
stand up, similarly determined to make a pup eat his meat from the plate;
when faced with a poem, however imperfect or willfully complex, we try to
make it conform to our own sense of rightness. In “An Octopus” Moore also
speaks of reading along with the correlative work of writing when she
compares Mount Tacoma to Henry James:

- like Henry James “damned by the public for deccorum”; not decorum, but restraint;
- it is the love of doing hard things that rebuffed and wore them out. (CP 76)

James’s “love of doing hard things” rebuffed his readers; his readers’ “love of
doing hard things” wore them out. (“Distaste,” one might add, “which takes
no credit to itself is best,” for what appears to be unintelligible or decorous
may not be so.) At the end of “Critics and Connoisseurs” Moore’s question is
not merely rhetorical:

What is there in being able
to say that one has dominated the stream in an attitude
of self defense;
in proving that one has had the experience
of carrying a stick?

“What is there,” she could ask, “in being able to say that one he has written four
perfectly duplicated stanzas; in proving that one has read a poem with
understanding?”

Although the fastidiousness of writing poetry must be conscious to a
great extent, Moore would insist that her best work is spontaneous, if not
unconscious. She tells Donald Hall, “Oh, I never knew anyone who had a
passion for words who had as much difficulty in saying things as I do. I very seldom say them in a manner I like. If I do it's because I don't know I'm trying" ('Art of Poetry' 28). When in the same interview she responds to a question about how she plans her stanzas, she says, "Words cluster like chromosomes," and adds:

Spontaneous initial originality—say, impetus—seems difficult to reproduce consciously later. As Stravinsky said about pitch: "If I transpose it for some reason, I am in danger of losing the freshness of first contact and will have difficulty in recapturing its attractiveness." (34)

She might have quoted Dove (or Dove might have quoted Stravinsky):

Feeling that the "first flash" of an idea gives its most vivid sensation, I am at present in some of the paintings trying to put down the spirit of the idea as it comes out. To sense the "pitch" of an idea as one would a bell. (qtd. in Haskell 134)

However much Moore may value spontaneity and distrust convention, she also values instruction and technical expertise, for in a review of an exhibit of children's drawings she insists, "imagination gains rather than loses by guidance" ('Comment' 79: 266), and elsewhere proclaims, "So art is but an expression of our needs; is feeling, modified by the writer's moral and technical insights" (Predilections 11).

But the realization that "art is but an expression of our needs" is a moral insight that Moore's animals teach us to recognize, as well as an aesthetic principle to which her stanzas conform. For Moore would agree with Kandinsky that "One and the same form can ... even with the same artist, be at one time the best, at another the worst," and thus each of her stanzas must express the "inner necessity" of a particular poetic impulse, for if a stanzaic form were used in a second poem, it would already be derivative. Kandinsky says: "Each form that is the external expression of the
internal content should be considered genuine (= artistic). If one acts differently, one no longer serves the free spirit (white ray) but the fossilized obstacle (black hand)* ("Question" 152-53). According to Moore's own account of how she composes her stanzas, the first stanza (not necessarily the first in the poem but the first that she writes) arrives with a certain amount of "impetus" and dictates its own form; the other stanzas in the poem she duplicates more or less according to the pattern established by the first. She describes the process in "A Letter to Ezra Pound":

Any verse that I have written, has been an arrangement of stanzas, each stanza being an exact duplicate of every other stanza. I have occasionally been at pains to make an arrangement of lines and rhymes that I liked, repeat itself, but the form of the original stanza of anything I have written has been a matter of expediency, hit upon as being approximately suitable to the subject. (17)

At a time when other poets were experimenting with totally "free" verse as an antidote to conventional verse forms, one may wonder why Moore would be at pains to duplicate stanzas at all, even within the same poem. Here again her animals may prove instructive, for while "inner necessity" may produce peculiar forms in the animal kingdom, nature's forms are never without restraint. And part of what Moore seems to find most pleasing in nature is its rhythms and patterns. For instance, she tells us that the nap on the jerboa's head "reiterates the slimness / of the body," and that the "fine hairs on the tail" repeat "the other pale / markings"; she says of the plumet basilisk, "As by a Chinese brush, eight green / bands are painted on / the tail—as piano keys are barred / by five black stripes across the white"; she notes the pangolin's "scale / lapping scale with spruce-cone regularity"; and she describes the paper nautilus's "close- / laid ionic chiton-folds / like the lines in the mane of a Parthenon horse." "As rhythmical as a zebra" is how
she describes the Zorachs' painting that she admired. Nor would she have been unaware of the prevalence of pattern in "primitive" art; indeed, it is one of the most obvious affinities of "primitive" and modern art that both use patterns to varying degrees of abstraction.

The repeated patterns of Moore's stanzas express her sense of rhythm—a rhythm that is visual as well as aural, a rhythm that arises from the spontaneous impulse of "inner necessity." Speaking of a poet's sentence structure, she says: "you don't devise a rhythm, the rhythm is the person, and the sentence but a radiograph of personality" (Predilections 3). The rhythm must be unique not only to each poet, but also to each poem. One of her own terms for "inner necessity" is "expediency," and as an alternative to conventional verse forms, she found instruction in the spiritually inspired poetry of the minor prophets. In one of her first published poems, "The Past is the Present," she pays them tribute:

If external action is effete
and rhyme outmoded,
I shall revert to you,
Habbakkuk, as when in a Bible class
the teacher was speaking of unrhymed verse.
He said—and I think I repeat his exact words,
"Hebrew poetry is prose
with a sort of heightened consciousness." Ecstasy affords
the occasion and expediency determines the form.

(CP 88)

In elaborating upon the "expediency" of Moore's verse forms I have not meant to neglect the "ecstasy," which is itself somewhat "primitive" and certainly spiritual and which informs all of her poetry. Her poems are "primitive" in the sense that Marsden Hartley describes the paintings of the American primitives:

Allowing for certain minor differences in racial impulse and racial temper, primitive pictures seem to be more or less alike
the world over, in the special sense that these happy unknowns are never concerned with anything but to make a picture that will represent as concretely and as simply as possible a pleasure that has come to them out of the great source from which all experience is drawn. (On Art 186)

Even Picasso, the paramount modern primitivist, seems to have been less interested in the study of primitive art than in its pleasures, according to William Rubin:

Picasso's mass of Primitive sculptures, far from constituting a private museum of tribal art, was distributed around the studio more or less on a par with other objects he found visually interesting, ranging from paintings, sculptures, and textiles to musical instruments (both tribal and modern), bibelots, souvenirs, and toys. Picasso held on to this material with fetishistic devotion throughout his life. (147)

Like Picasso, Marianne Moore is known for putting all the things she likes into her pictures, which creates an effect not unlike that of the "Egyptian herbalist's formula against baldness" that she describes: "to mix together fat of the lion, fat of the hippopotamus, fat of the crocodile, fat of the cat, fat of the serpent, and fat of the Nubian ibex. Early magic has many counterparts" ("Comment" 85: 176). So does Moore's poetry.

In Moore's letters, notebooks and poems what one finds over and over again is not so much an interest in the theories of art or in the art of specific times or places, but "a great amount of joy in the thing" and the desire to write down "a pleasure which has come to [her]." Moore's fascination with the material world turns out to be spiritual after all in the sense that Kandinsky says, "Matter is a kind of larder from which the spirit chooses what is necessary to itself, much as a cook would" ("Question" 147).
Chapter 5: The Morality of Precision

"We are precisionists"

Although a work of art that is "lit with piercing glances into the life of things" and "acknowledge[s] the spiritual forces which have made it" will distinguish itself from art that is not "genuine," an artist must have more than a primitive impulse and vision to meet the standards of Marianne Moore. Remiss, for instance, is the poetry of Vachel Lindsay:

As a visionary, as an interpreter of America, and as a modern primitive—in what are regarded as the three provinces of his power, Mr Lindsay is hampered to the point of self-destruction by his imperviousness to the need for aesthetic self-discipline. ("Eagle" 500)

And that of Babette Deutsch:

The intensity of her lyrics, however, cannot be said to equal the intensity of her emotions, whose lines are often blurred in the merely satisfactory fleshing of her forms. The index to the discrepancy lies, perhaps, in the failure to prevent the primitive emotion from evaporating into mood, a translation in which purity of vision loses its edge. ("Briefer Mention")

Also required is precision. "At all events," says Moore, "precision is a thing of the imagination; and it is a matter of diction, of diction that is virile because galvanized against inertia" (Predilections 4).

The "matter of diction" Moore describes as follows:

It is true that "peculiar style must precede peculiar expression" and that literary fastidiousness is for the most part, implicit in precise, brilliant thinking. Nevertheless, there is a kind of virtuosity or prodigiousness of diction which is distinctly associated in one's mind with some rather than all, good writers. We attribute to let us say Machiavelli, Sir Francis Bacon, John Donne, Sir Thomas Browne, Doctor Samuel Johnson, a particular kind of verbal effectiveness—a nicety and point, a pride and pith of utterance, which is in a special way different from the admirableness of Wordsworth or of Hawthorne. Suggesting conversation and strengthened by etymology there is
a kind of effortless compactness which precludes ornateness.
(“Comment” 80: 444)

Precision need not, however, be the exclusive domain of the writer, for
sometimes precision not only suggests but indeed is conversation: “The
accuracy of the vernacular!” Moore exclaimed to Donald Hall, “It’s enviable.
That’s the kind of thing I am interested in” (“Art of Poetry” 23). The
vernacular of the British, for instance, fascinated her when she visited
England, and she wrote to her brother that she “nearly clapped” at a remark
she overheard in Liverpool: “What a rotten country this is getting!” (8 June
1911).

Although one thinks of precision along with science and along with
realism as bearing some exact relationship to the external world so that
“fritillary,” for instance, is preferable to “butterfly,” precision may also be
applied to the imaginary. Whereas Moore admired Dürer’s visual accuracy,
she especially admired his armor-plated Rhinoceros, which he based not on
any creature he had ever seen but probably on a traveler’s verbal
description. “The conjunction of fantasy and calculation is unusual,” she
remarked, “but many sagacities seem in Dürer not to starve one another”
(“Comment” 85: 89). And she admired the “precision of unlogic” in Lewis
Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland, the “hypothetically accurate illogical law of
cause and effect” ("Comment" 81: 177). Although her own descriptions
characteristically have a textbook-like devotion to fact, Moore would not
hesitate to depart from the actual wherever it suited her. Regarding her
line, “What is there to look at? And of the leopard spotted underneath and on
its toes,” she wrote to Ezra Pound: “Leopards are not spotted underneath,
but in old illuminations they are, and on Indian printed muslins, and I like the
idea that they are" ("Letter to Pound" 18). Nor was Moore alone in recognizing precision as "a thing of the imagination." The American Realists and Magic Realists exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art represented "a widespread but not generally recognized trend in contemporary American art," the exhibit being "limited, in the main, to pictures of sharp focus and precise representation, whether the subject has been observed in the outer world—realism, or contrived by the imagination—magic realism" (Miller 5).

T. E. Hulme calls this trend towards realism "classicism," as opposed to romanticism which "drags in the infinite." "It is essential," he says, "to prove that beauty may be in small, dry things." "The great aim," he says further, "is accurate, precise and definite description" (131-32). But what is essential about this trend towards realism, or classicism, is that precision, rather than controlling emotion from the outside as it does in romanticism, is the product of emotion. Though romanticists may recognize that reason, technology, science and artistic form necessarily hold passion in check, these remain diametrically opposed to feeling's pure expression. In classicism, on the other hand, precision arises from emotion; indeed, it is emotion's strongest manifestation. Describing how to recognize classical verse, Hulme says: "It isn't the scale or kind of emotion produced that decides, but this one fact: Is there any real zest in it? Did the poet have an actually realized visual object before him in which he delighted? It doesn't matter if it were a lady's shoe or the starry heavens" (137). In her book on Charles Sheeler, Constance Rourke says similarly, "What we have failed to realize is that the classic has nothing to do with grandeur, that it cannot be copied or imported, but is the outgrowth of a special mode of life and feeling" (77).
Such is the relationship of "Feeling and Precision" in Moore's important essay of that title. With feeling providing the impact, "precision is both impact and exactitude, as with surgery" (Predilections 4). She quotes her fellow Precisionist, William Carlos Williams, regarding his poem, "The Red Wheelbarrow": "The rhythm though no more than a fragment, denotes a certain unquenchable exaltation" (3). Such fragments of precision may not appear to be emotional, but if emotion is there, careful reading will discover its presence. Rourke finds this to be true of painting: "Emotion or the lack of it cannot be concealed in painting if this has existed or been absent at the source, though its character may not always be apparent at once in an original or subtly developed work" (93). "Henry James," says Moore, "was probably so susceptible to emotion as to be obliged to seem unemotional" (Predilections 10-11).

Precision for an artist like Moore is not mere accuracy but "relentless accuracy"—the product of energetic fastidiousness. In her essay on Henry James, Moore quotes him: "It is in 'the waste of time, of passion, of curiosity, of contact—that true initiation resides'" (Predilections 27). James appears again in "An Octopus" (CP 71-76) with his "love of doing hard things" compared to the glacier's. "Relentless accuracy," she says, "is the nature of this octopus / with its capacity for fact." Such accuracy is delicate enough to pick "periwinkles from the cracks" and powerful enough to kill "prey with the concentric crushing rigor of the python"; such accuracy throws into question simple words like "tree": "Is 'tree' the word for these things / 'flat on the ground like vines'?" Precision has delicacy with the impact of an avalanche: "with a sound like the crack of a rifle, / in a curtain of powdered snow."
launched like a waterfall." Comparing poetry to a lion, Wallace Stevens says, and Moore quotes him, "it can kill a man" (*Predilections* 3).

The "impact and exactitude" of precision are well demonstrated in another of Moore's poems. With title as first line (CP 59), the poem begins:

Bowls

on the green
with lignum vitae balls and ivory markers,
the pins planted in wild duck formation,
and quickly dispersed.

In the color of the green and in the lignum vitae and ivory, Moore shows us the hard, dry beauty of the sport. With "wild duck formation" and "quickly dispersed" she shows us the energy and sudden lightness with which precision can endow things otherwise heavy and static. To have such impact, precision must start from a long way back, as Moore reiterates in "Feeling and Precision":

Also in music, the conductor's signal, as I am reminded by a friend, . . . "begins far back of the beat, so that you don't see when the down beat comes. To have started such a long distance ahead makes it possible to be exact. Whereas you can't be exact by being restrained." (*Predilections* 4)

But restraint can result from precision. If it is difficult to see restraint in the game of bowls, it is not difficult to see it in Moore's second example of "ancient punctilio":

by this survival of ancient punctilio
in the manner of Chinese lacquer-carving,
layer after layer exposed by certainty of touch and unhurried incision
so that only so much color shall be revealed as is necessary to the picture.

In bowls the wild duck formation is quickly dispersed; in Chinese lacquer-carving the reverse V-shape is unhurriedly incised; but this is a minor difference. In neither case can the "certainty of touch" be immediately
acquired though its impact is immediate and irreversible. From bowls, Moore says,

I learn that we are precisionists,
not citizens of Pompeii arrested in action
as a cross-section of one's correspondence would seem to imply.

Though it has an apparently similar immediacy and even impact, precision differs from the volcanic eruption and the cross-section, neither of which has aim or exactitude. Precisionists do not merely seize an arbitrary moment or image from the flux; rather they skilfully select each image and then pounce upon it with feeling.¹

The rest of the poem explains what it means to be a precisionist. In the largest sense it means a user of English, for as the “etymological dictionary” would prove, modern English itself contains precision with an impact that has been building “since the days of Matilda,” a latent energy like that of the lignum vitae balls and ivory markers. In the narrowest sense a precisionist is the individual, like “the ant and the spider / returning from time to time to headquarters,” one who understands her own predilections well enough to answer the question, “Why do I like winter better than I like summer?” and well enough “to look playwrights and poets and novelists straight in the face” and “feel just the same.” Nor will she be intimidated by the advertising rhetoric of a prestigious magazine, which will “appear the first day of the month / and disappear before one has had time to buy it /

¹ In The Pound Era Hugh Kenner quotes Ernest Fenollosa as saying, “‘Things’ are . . . ‘cross-sections cut through actions, snapshots’” (146). Though Moore is probably not responding to Fenollosa directly, she is reacting against any assumption that “cross-sections” or “snapshots” are in themselves art. Not any “thing” or image, no matter how clear-cut, will pass for art; it must be selected with the finest aesthetic sensibility.
unless one takes proper precaution," but she will "make an effort to please" by responding quickly to the publisher. In the concluding lines of the poem, "since he who gives quickly gives twice / in nothing so much as in a letter," the "letter" is both her correspondence with the publisher and also her poetry. As in the game of bowls, when writing is both quick and precise it is at its best—it gives twice. And in correspondence, promptness is also a courtesy.

Moore does not tell us who (besides herself) the precisionists are when she learns "that we are precisionists," though "we" must be more specific than all users of modern English and certainly more inclusive than "I." "We" may be the "playwrights and poets and novelists" and even the "publisher of the magazine." Most likely "we" is that group of contemporary writers and artists whom Moore admired and with whom she shared certain aesthetic values, but among whom she had consciously to preserve her own identity. She uses the term in at least one other instance, in a book review: "Yet why, in prose that is the work of a precisian, should one encounter unintentional rhymes" ("Thistles" 255). (Moore used "precisians" instead of "precisionists" in the original version of "Bowls" as well.)

Although art historians disagree over the origin and definition of the term,2 "Precisionism" has come to refer to an unofficial movement in American painting during the twenties, a movement of artists who never organized but who often exhibited together, first at the Daniel Gallery and then at the Downtown Gallery. Including most notably Charles Sheeler,

Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Demuth and Louis Lozowick, these artists shared the Cubists' awareness of the surface of the canvas and their fascination with geometric forms but not their willingness to distort the subject beyond immediate recognition—hence they are sometimes called Cubist-Realists. But perhaps their most unifying principle is the desire to define and create a distinctly American tradition, a tradition they discovered to be, more than anything else, an unsentimental, clear and simplified realism—hence their other label, the Immaculates.

Ellen Johnson's description of the American tradition in art, which she finds to be consistent from the unknown seventeenth-century portraitists through the painters of the 1970's, is especially apt:

A quality of concentration, clarity and oneness, giving no harbour to the irrelevant, distinguishes the American tradition in art. It is a tradition not in the sense of an inherited method but of a shared attitude towards art and reality: an emotive factualism which uncovers the unknown in the familiar and a stubborn need on the part of the artist to wrest the image from his own personal experience. (125)

Not only do the Precisionists represent this tradition of "emotive factualism" rather well, but they were the first group of painters self-consciously to place themselves within such a tradition. Until World War I the American avant-garde had been to a very great extent followers of the European avant-garde, but for a number of reasons including a surge of post-war American nationalism and a burgeoning interest in America among European artists like Picabia and Duchamp, after the war American artists sought to claim their cultural independence from Europe. An article called "America Invades Europe" that appeared in the first issue of Broom indicates such an attitude:

America—made of the Puritan, by the Puritan, for the Puritan, remade of the machine, by the machine, for the machine—is only passing through what is practically her first decade of a
generation that deliberately, consciously, by means of concerted action and creation, strikes out upon paths of cultural life.  

And so the American tradition came to be defined during the twenties by the metamorphosis of the pioneer into the technocrat, and by their respective art forms, folk painting and straight photography.

Although Precisionism has no manifestos or leaders, the artist who most consistently employed its means and probably contributed the most to its understanding is Charles Sheeler. It is not incidental to Precisionism that Sheeler earned his livelihood as a photographer and during the twenties was among the most respected photographers in America. In her retrospective essay on the Dial Moore recalls, for instance, Sheeler's photographing a Lachaise bust of Scofield Thayer: "I . . . have never seen anything effected with less ado or greater care; these scientifically businesslike proceedings reminding one of the wonderfully mastered Bucks County barn and winding stair turn" (Predilections 112). The photographs which originally established Sheeler's reputation were two series, one of African sculpture and one of Chinese jades, porcelains and paintings, both of which he executed for Marius de Zayas's Modern Gallery. Rourke says of these series: "All of these photographs have something more than precision of rendering; they reveal a passionate concentration which has been considered the property of art alone—something that may without too much exaggeration be called dedication to the object" (85). Although Sheeler was clearly influenced by the interest in African and Chinese art that he was exposed to at the de Zayas gallery, the

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3 Emmy Veronica Sanders, "America Invades Europe," Broom 1; qtd. in "A New Literary Broom." Moore saved this newspaper clipping in the covers of her copy of Der Blaue Reiter.
"primitive" art that caught his own imagination and contributed most to his uncommissioned work is American. He was fascinated especially by the simplicity of form that he observed in the architecture and crafts of the Pennsylvania Germans and Shakers, and he executed a number of drawings and paintings of Bucks County barns as well as many studies of Shaker buildings and interiors.

Rick Stewart argues persuasively that Sheeler's good friend, William Carlos Williams, may have affected Sheeler's aesthetic interest in American themes and subjects by his insistence on an "aesthetic of place" and on "the forging of a particularly American art" (102), though the influence must have flowed in both directions. As a possible influence on Williams's sense of place, Stewart cites a 1920 essay in the Dial called "Americanism and Localism" by John Dewey, but he only hints at another possible influence on Williams's Precisionist sensibility when he says:

Williams, writing in 1925, seemed to be describing Sheeler's still lifes when he stated that a perfect drawing would attain "a separate existence" by rendering objects, through the purity of their forms, as a "porcelain garden" which would convey a "white clarity beyond the facts." This was to be the essence of Sheeler's Precisionist work. (107)

Stewart is quoting here an essay by Williams about the poetry of Marianne Moore (Essays 124), and he also quotes, without comment, Moore's lines from "Bowls" about learning that "we are precisians." Precisionism is something Moore seems to have come by quite on her own and quite without pretense, for already in 1918 Ezra Pound was writing of Marianne Moore and Mina Loy: "The arid clarity, not without its own beauty, of le tempérament de l'Americaine, is in the poems of these two writers... . [T]hese girls have written a distinctly national product" ("Moore and Loy" 46-47).
Precision for the painters meant smoothly polished surfaces revealing little or no brushwork and images stripped of superfluous detail and reduced to their essential geometric forms. Such images sometimes appear in Moore's poetry, for instance in her description of a bird in a crape myrtle tree:

A brass-green bird with grass-green throat smooth as a nut springs from twig to twig askew, copying the Chinese flower piece—businesslike atom in the stiff-leafed tree's blue-pink dregs—of—wine pyramids of mathematic circularity; one of a pair. (CP 103)

But generally precision for Moore and for other poets was more a quality of language than of texture or shape, a quality that was perhaps first prescribed by Imagism. The 1915 Imagist anthology listed among its six rules (amplified from Flint's original three), the following two:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly—exact, nor the merely decorative word.

5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite. (qtd. in Pratt 23)

And Ezra Pound said, "poetry must be as well written as prose" (qtd. in Kenner, Pound Era 127), it being understood that prose generally is more precise than poetry.  

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4 Moore saved in her scrapbook an article from the Boston Evening Transcript (April 25, 1914) signed "G. S." and entitled "Des Imagistes: The Latest School of Modern English Poetry," which ultimately criticizes the Imagists for their scientific approach to poetry but which states: "In Poetry of January, 1913, Mr. Pound announced that one of their watchwords was precision, and more recently he has shown that this is the basic idea in the poetry of Hueffer, who 'believes in an exact rendering of things. He would strip words of all "association" for the sake of getting a precise meaning.'"
But "common speech" and "prose" were not precise enough standards for Williams and Moore, who wanted to declare their independence not only from European artists but also from American expatriates like the Imagists. They demanded an idiom as specifically American as what Williams calls "the speech of Polish mothers" and what Moore calls "plain American which cats and dogs can read!" Moore praises Williams for his "staying at home principle" and says, "it is apparent to him that 'American plumbing, American bridges, indexing systems, locomotives, printing presses, city buildings, farm implements and a thousand other things' are liked and used" ("Poet of the Quattrocento" 213). Elsewhere she says, "One is pleased when poets who live in America are sufficiently pleased with America to seem so" ("Land and Sea" 72). Williams himself is more adamant: "Where else can what we are seeking arise from but from speech? From speech, from American speech as distinct from English speech" (Essays 289-90). But while Williams was writing a great deal about the importance of finding a new poetry based on American speech, Moore found poetry not only in the American vernacular but also in the necessarily precise idiom of "business documents and school-books," perhaps America's most characteristic prose, which permits her to use expressions, such as "business-like atom" and "Chinese flower piece," that Williams would never think of using.

Although Moore is considerably more tolerant than Williams of poets, American and otherwise, who write in non-American idioms, she believes that American language, because it is the language of the wilderness and the new world, has a freshness and precision that "older" languages have lost. This belief is most clearly expressed in a poem she published in the Dial in 1920 called, ironically, "England" (CP 46-47) because it begins:
England

with its baby rivers and little towns, each with its abbey or its cathedral,
with voices—one voice perhaps, echoing through the transept—the criterion of suitability and convenience.

This voice that echoes through the transepts of English cathedrals carries with it a criterion, a criterion of which, as we shall find out later in the poem, America is free. Moore proceeds after England to name Italy, Greece, France and the East, making a comment about each, before she gets to America. Though it is difficult to generalize about these comments, each country has an original quality that has lost its purity; even the East's "rock crystal" and "imperturbability" are "of museum quality," which is to say, however beautiful, that they have become disassociated from the immediacy of life. America, however, has neither pretense nor shame:

... and America where there is the little old ramshackle victoria in the south, where cigars are smoked on the street in the north; where there are no proof-readers, no silkworms, no digressions;

the wild man's land; grassless, linksless, languageless country in which letters are written not in Spanish, not in Greek, not in Latin, not in shorthand, but in plain American which cats and dogs can read!

America is a country too uncivilized and too impatient for proof-readers or silkworms; it is a country without detail, "grassless," and without grooming, "linksless." And it has no language yet to distort the immediacy of experience. Prefacing a comment of Williams's about the American Primitives, Mike Weaver says aptly, "The Primitives held back a wilderness by the sheer demarcation of one object from another" (61). 5 "Plain

5 See Weaver's insightful discussion of Williams's Precisionist aesthetic in chapters 3 and 4 of William Carlos Williams: The American Background.
American" is not a language of syntactic connections nor a language intricate enough for "proof-readers" and "digressions," but rather a language of distinctions, a precise language capable of defying clichés and imprecise thinking, of demarcating mushrooms, say, from toadstools:

Does it follow that because there are poisonous toadstools which resemble mushrooms, both are dangerous? Of mettlesomeness which may be mistaken for appetite, of heat which may appear to be haste, no conclusions may be drawn.

To have misapprehended the matter is to have confessed that one has not looked far enough.

Looking far enough is the essence of America. Without the distractions of detail, digression or echoing criterion, the explorer who looks far enough might discover in this wilderness potentially any of the world's virtues:

The sublimated wisdom of China, Egyptian discernment, the cataclysmic torrent of emotion compressed in the verbs of the Hebrew language, the books of the man who is able to say, "I envy nobody but him, and him only, who catches more fish than I do"—the flower and fruit of all that noted superiority—if not stumbled upon in America, must one imagine that it is not there? It has never been confined to one locality.

These superior virtues are all, we might note, virtues of precision, for what could be more precise than "the cataclysmic torrent of emotion compressed" in Hebrew verbs, or a statement such as "I envy nobody but him, and him only, who catches more fish than I do"? And none of this remarkable precision, we might note further, comes from America's European ancestry (which is not to say that it could not be stumbled upon in Europe, too).

In order to find the idiom that was unique to America, both artists and writers looked towards the art forms that were indigenous to America, and in the twenties certain artists began both to collect and exhibit American folk
art. The first of these exhibitions, held privately in 1924 at The Whitney Studio Club (later to become the Whitney Museum of American Art), included works from the collections of Charles Sheeler, Charles Demuth and Yasuo Kuniyoshi among other artists; the first public exhibition was held at the home of Elie Nadelman, the American sculptor, and his wife. Moore's friends, William and Marguerite Zorach, also collected American folk art. Although the interest in American folk art may have stemmed from a general interest in primitive art forms, the American Primitives had an appeal for modern artists that was different from, say, that of American Indian art. A work of tribal art, however pleasing, necessarily conceals its true cultural origins, aesthetic or religious, from the alien viewer, but the origins of American folk art seemed to the Precisionists to be straightforward indeed. In 1951, Williams wrote of the American primitives:

Henry James said it is a complex thing to be an American. Unconscious of such an analysis of their situation, these artists as well as their sitters reacted to it nevertheless directly. They scarcely knew why they yearned for the things they desired, but to get them they strained every nerve. (Essays 332)

This simplicity of purpose is apparent, to Williams, in the simplicity of their style:

It was the intensity of their vision coupled with their isolation in the wilderness, that caused them one and all to place and have placed on the canvas veritable capsules, surrounded by a line of color, to hold them off from a world which was most about them. They were eminently objective, their paintings remained

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6 Moore's library at the Rosenbach contains a copy of the catalog for the Whitney Studio Club exhibition called Early American Art, which indicates that she probably attended this exhibition. Also in her library is American Folk Art (1932), with a very good introduction by Holger Cahill. See also Jean Lipman and Alice Winchester, The Flowering of American Folk Art in America (1776-1876).
always things. They drew a line and the more clearly that line was drawn, the more vividly, the better. (Essays 333)

Another aspect of American folk art which must have appealed to the Precisionists is its surface. Since many folk painters were also furniture decorators, the floral and geometric designs that they painted on their subjects' clothing and on their furnishings such as chairs and carpets have a flat quality, which may come from an untrained sense of perspective but which creates a tension with the surface of the painting like that which the Cubists and their successors tried to achieve. In his interiors Charles Sheeler often intentionally flattens the perspective of variously patterned American rugs and textiles in order to achieve a Cubist-like composition that is nevertheless reminiscent of American folk paintings. An unpublished (and indeed untitled and undated) review that Moore wrote of an exhibition of American folk art notes the feeling for surface in a marine watercolor, "in the watercolour of the sea with one heave in it or in the pastel-like watercolour of horizontal undulating lines—rounded hills below a yellow sun, very sure in its interacting rhythms and feeling for surface" (1). One is reminded perhaps of Moore's own seascape in "The Steeple-Jack," the "water etched / with waves as formal as the scales / on a fish."

7 Though this unpublished, untitled, undated review names no paintings or painters, I have surmised from the detailed description of the works that Moore is describing an exhibition of American folk art (which would have had few if any titles or artists' names). She describes some marines, a cityscape, portraits, and flowers, which were all popular subjects for folk artists, but it is especially her description of the eyes "with their air of static aloofness" that convinces me she is describing American folk art. Since only three of the paintings in the Whitney Studio Club exhibit are reproduced in the catalog (in black and white) and all of them were later sold at auction, it is difficult to determine whether or not Moore might have been reviewing this exhibit, though the exhibit does contain marines, portraits, flowers and landscapes that could have "downtown roofs" in them.
While it may seem ironical to us that the same artists who looked to naive painting for inspiration also looked to science and technology, for Moore, at least, this presented no conflict, as her comments regarding certain drawings in the folk art exhibit indicate:

In the resilience and effect of regulated motion, one has something akin to the effects of the moving picture speedograph—"geometric correctness not produced by geometry"—the lines of this hypothetical physics functioning scientifically and pleasing one quite as does the analysis of the physics of locomotion in according with the laws of actual physics. (1)

Nor, of course, was it only folk painting that exhibited scientific exactness, for artists since the time of the Impressionists had become quite conscious of scientific theory, and especially color theory. A number of the Post-Impressionists like Cézanne and Seurat had studied color scientifically, but it was two Americans living in Paris, Morgan Russell and Stanton Macdonald-Wright, who carried this theorizing to its extreme with their own short-lived movement, Synchromism. Moore seems to have been quite fascinated with color theory herself, for in addition to the several books on Seurat in her library, she saved in her scrapbook articles from 1913-14 entitled "Color Psychology in Business" and "Color Music," about a color organ, and in her reading notebook she took extensive notes from a newspaper article, "Are You a Pseudochromesthesiast? Colors are Heard" to which she added her own remark, "... the aim of the new century seems to be to make the art of olfactory harmony, phonetic harmony and chromatic harmony, one" (1250/1: 87). Indeed, she takes interest in any artist whose harmony seems to her mathematically correct, as she writes to Bryher in 1923: "All of Brancusi's work that I have seen interests me prodigiously. I feel as Ezra says somewhere in The Little Review, that without mathematics,
he arrives at a result which is mathematically exact" (5 July 1923). (In this same letter she mentions also having seen and admired Sheeler's *Yachts and Yachting*.

That Moore majored in biology at Bryn Mawr is, of course, not incidental to her scientific approach to art, for she continued throughout her career to view science and poetry analogously. Defending the *Dial*'s editorial standards, she writes, "may we not assert confidently that α oppositions of science are not oppositions to poetry but oppositions to falseness" (*Announcement* 89). And in her interview with Donald Hall, she comments on her own scientific training:

> Did laboratory studies affect my poetry? I am sure they did. 
> . . . I thought in fact, of studying medicine. P Precision, economy of statement, logic employed to ends that are disinterested, drawing and identifying, liberate—and at least have some bearing on—the imagination, it seems to me. (*Art of Poetry* 23)

In the same interview she compares the poet's and scientist's methods in terms that recall her praise for the "relentless accuracy" of Henry James:

> Do the poet and the scientist not work analogously? They are willing to waste effort. To be hard on himself is one of the greatest strengths of each. Each is attentive to clues, each must narrow the choice, must strive for precision. (44)

One of the most immediately noticeable features of Prerectstontist painting is its subject matter: machines (especially in the work of Sheeler's friend, Morton Schamberg) and industrial landscapes (in the work of, at one time or another, nearly all of the Precisionists, even O'Keeffe). Part of this fascination for technology comes from the Precisionists' high regard for America's industrial "momentum," a quality that Moore observes in the writing of her American contemporaries: "The striving for 'a reasoned form,' the maintaining of a toehold upon progress, our manifold fererocities and
ungainly graces, are after all a corollary to momentum" ("Comment" 83: 359). Part of it must come from the Precisionists' attention to the geometric, inherently "cubist" forms of the American landscape, which inspired them to paint barns in the countryside and skyscrapers in the city as well as smokestacks and shipdecks. And certainly part of it, as has been frequently noted in descriptions of Precisionism, comes from the "machine aesthetic," which had come to America first via the Italian Futurists but which then pervaded the work of the Dadaists in America like Duchamp, Man Ray and Picabia.

The "machine aesthetic" has some place in the poetry of Marianne Moore, particularly in the poems, "Four Quartz Crystal Clocks" (CP 115) and "Granite and Steel" (CP 205). The first of these celebrates precision in a variety of aspects: "the world's exactest clocks / . . . that tell / time intervals to other clocks"; "the 'radio, / cinéma,' and 'presse'"—Giraudoux's "instruments of truth,"; the quartz prism's sensitivity to temperature changes; repetition that "with / the scientist, should be / synonymous with accuracy"; certain acrobatics of verbal precision such as "the bell-boy with the buoy-ball / endeavoring to pass / hotel patronesses"; the phone number, "MERidian-7 one-two / one-two" that "gives, each fifteenth second / in the same voice, the new / data—'The time will be' so and so"; and finally "Jupiter or jour pater, the day god— / the salvaged son of Father Time— / telling the cannibal Chronos / . . . that punctuality / is not a crime." "Granite and Steel," a much later poem, celebrates the "catenary curve" of the Brooklyn Bridge that defies "the mind's deformity" (war, one supposes) by linking

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8 Elizabeth Bishop claims that Moore took "the bell-boy with the buoy-ball" from her (54).
Germany with America in "inter-acting harmony," and that realizes in steel and stone the "untried expedient," "the romantic passageway / first seen by the eye of the mind, / then by the eye."

It is perhaps not altogether coincidental that the Henry Ford Motor Company commissioned Charles Sheeler to photograph its River Rouge plant for advertising purposes (these photographs, which Sheeler took over a period of a year, inspired some of his major Precisionist paintings as well as being important photographs in themselves) and also commissioned the poet Marianne Moore to name one of its automobiles. (Nor may it be coincidental that Henry Ford was a significant early collector of American folk art.) Though the name eventually chosen for the vehicle, Edsel, was not Moore's brainchild, the assignment inspired a rather amusing series of letters, which were published together in The New Yorker. Moore's comments to Donald Hall regarding this assignment reveal a sincere fascination with machines: "I got deep in motors and turbines and recessed wheels... I am very interested in mechanical things, in mechanics in general" ("Art of Poetry" 44).

But it is important to realize that Moore's fascination with "mechanics" is not limited to machines, just as "Four Quartz Crystal Clocks" and "Granite and Steel" are hardly limited to the subject of technology. Between a story telling how Moore learned to drive (in her seventies) and how she learned to tango, Elizabeth Bishop expresses succinctly in a memoir of her friend the breadth of Moore's interest:

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9 These well-publicized letters are reprinted in A Marianne Moore Reader 215-224.
Marianne was intensely interested in the techniques of things—how camellias are grown; how the quartz prisms work in crystal clocks; how the pangolin can close up his ear, nose and eye apertures and walk on the outside edges of his hands "and save the claws / for digging"; how to drive a car; how the best pitchers throw a baseball; how to make a figurehead for her nephew's sailboat. The exact way in which anything was done, or made, or functioned, was poetry to her. (58)

And in asserting that Sheeler's studies of Bucks County barns and Shaker furniture are Precisionist works, Rick Stewart shows that the machine is likewise a limited aspect of the Precisionist aesthetic. He disagrees with Karen Tsujimoto's selection of works for the exhibit, Images of America: Precisionist Painting and Modern Photography, which includes under the label of Precisionism few paintings or photographs which do not have for their subject skyscrapers, industry or other examples of technology (104-05). Stewart maintains, correctly I think, "that the underlying aesthetic of Precisionism was not industrialism but functionalism" (110), an architectural principle whereby function determines form, a principle Sheeler would have admired in Shaker design.

In his introduction to The Wedge Williams makes "two bald statements: There's nothing sentimental about a machine, and: A poem is a small (or large) machine made of words." Although Moore would certainly agree with the Imagist principle that follows these two statements, "When I say there's nothing sentimental about a poem I mean that there can be no part, as in any other machine, that is redundant" (Essays 256), she probably would not call a poem a machine. Her metaphors for poetry, like her subjects for poetry, are more likely to be natural forms: a snail, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," "An Octopus / of ice." She writes, "A sailboat / was the first machine. Pangolins, made / for moving quietly also, are models of
Her preference for the biological "machine" over the engineered one points to a major stylistic difference between the two Precisionist poets: nearly everything in a Williams poem can be logically justified, just as machine parts can, while the pieces of Moore's poems are more intuitively than logically related to each other, allowing her mind to flow within a single poem from vault temperatures to Giraudoux to Napoleon to taxidermists to phone numbers to mythology. We are more aware in Moore's poetry (and in her prose too, for that matter) of the eccentricities of her imagination, while the logic of Williams's poetry and prose is more accessible to the first-time reader—who may sympathize all too readily with the Bryn Mawr English teacher who wrote in the margin of Moore's carefully composed theme, "I presume you had an idea if one could find out what it is" (Tell Me 5).

Nor is Moore alone among Precisionists in her preference for natural forms. Although Georgia O'Keeffe painted the industrialized landscape of New York's East River as well as a number of barns and skyscrapers and it is these paintings primarily which have earned her a place in discussions of Precisionism, the works for which she is best known otherwise are of natural forms—flowers, bones, shells, hills, and skies. And if Stewart insists that Sheeler's still lifes be included among his Precisionist works because many were executed during the twenties and because they exhibit functionalism, should not O'Keeffe's shells and flowers, many of which she painted during the twenties and which exhibit a biological "functionalism," be included also? For in these shells and flowers one sees the same yearning for simplicity and for the architectural essence of the thing that one sees in her paintings of skyscrapers and barns.
While O'Keeffe renders her subjects with a sensuality one will not find in Moore's poems, both artists see their subjects without sentimentality, as a scientist would see—with "Precision, economy of statement, logic employed to ends that are disinterested"—but with a scientist's passion for knowing and seeing the thing, flower or animal, as one has never known or seen the thing before. This is the passion and precision not only of the scientist but also of the "straight" photographer, for although O'Keeffe was not a photographer herself (nor was Moore), she was married to Stieglitz; and yet it is not Stieglitz's photographs that her own work resembles as much as it does Paul Strand's, particularly the close-ups of natural objects that he took in the early twenties. John Szarkowski quotes Strand's assertion in 1917 that an honest photographer must have "a real respect for the thing in front of him," as an example of "photographic morality." "This stern creed," Szarkowski says, "(rather than technical and aesthetic positions) was perhaps the real cornerstone of belief in straight photography. It was a proposition more or less accepted by most advanced photographers, especially in the United States between the two World Wars" (96). It was a proposition more or less accepted by Precisionists like O'Keeffe and Moore as well. But O'Keeffe's close-up flowers crowd our vision in a way that close-up photographs cannot, not just allowing us to see, but forcing us uncomfortably to see, achieving what Moore calls "an unbearable accuracy" (Predilections 444). Moore's poems can likewise crowd our vision, making it difficult sometimes to recognize the familiar or the whole, but forcing us nevertheless to look closely at each crystal clear near-abstraction she chooses for us to see, as as she chooses here for us to see two elephants:
Uplifted and waved till immobilized
wistaria-like, the opposing opposed
mouse-gray twined proboscises' trunk formed by two
trunks, fights itself to a spiraled inter-nosed
deadlock of dyke-enforced massiveness. (CP 128)

The "stern creed" of straight photography is, of course, limited
neither to photographers nor to Precisionists but prevailed among many
artists of the time, including even abstract painters like Arthur Dove who
wanted to paint the essences of things. But perhaps no artist articulated this
morality of "a real respect for the thing in front of him" as well as Marianne
Moore, whose highest moral good is impersonal love: "the feelings of a
mother—a woman or a cat." This heroic love, described in "The Hero" (CP
8-9), "covets nothing that it has let go"; for the love of the artist, like the
protective but unpossessive love of a mother, respects the autonomy of its
subject. And such love contradicts bigotry; it can even prevent war. Moore
told Grace Schulman:

If we can forgive people for injuries they do us, then there
wouldn't be any war. Resentment is at the core. Confucius
says, "If there be a knife of resentment in the heart, the mind
fails to attain precision." I think that's one of the most
important things I've ever heard. Get rid of that, and you can
work in peace.

Now in "Nautilus"—it's the same idea. ("Conversation" 170)

There may be no finer image of a moral precisionist, and there can be
no finer image of the woman writer, than Moore's "The Paper Nautilus" (CP
121-22). For unlike the typical molluscan shells of the chambered and
pearly nautiluses (a different species), the fragile shell of the paper
nautilus belongs only to the female, and this shell she must make herself.
She secretes the shell, which is never attached to her body as molluscan
shells are, out of four of her eight arms (she is a close relative of the
octopus, or "devil-fish") for the purpose of protecting her eggs; these arms remain wrapped around the outside of the shell, the other four arms being tucked inside with the eggs, until she lets the eggs and shell go.

Although it would deny Moore's dedication to the object, to the nautilus itself, to call the nautilus a "metaphor" for artistic or maternal creation, Moore clearly has writers at least, as well as "authorities," in mind when she begins the poem:

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.

Like Moore's other creatures, the paper nautilus acts out of inner necessity, oblivious to the external pressures of money, fame and commuters' comforts that can so easily entrap human artists. But the inner necessity of the paper nautilus is so strong that one had better call it passion or compulsion or love, if one can name it at all, for it overpowers other animal needs like food and sleep in its relentless creativity:

Giving her perishable souvenir of hope, a dull white outside and smooth-edged inner surface glossy as the sea, the watchful maker of it guards it day and night; she scarcely eats until the eggs are hatched.

Unlike the hopes of the authorities that are shaped by mercenaries, the hope of the nautilus is shaped by the creative energy of the mother/artist, and yet her hope is full of loss, for a souvenir, especially a "perishable souvenir," is a flimsy remembrance of something irrecoverable; the nautilus must lose
her shell and progeny—as the artist must let go of her poem and the mother, her children. The mother nautilus makes a microcosm of her world in the shell, which at the same time shields the eggs from the wilderness sea and yet describes the sea in the gloss of its inner surface.

Although the nautilus and her shell are strictly feminine, they are as strong and heroic as things traditionally thought of as male: the devil, a ram's horn and Hercules. And before her unnamed, relentless creativity finds expression, it can be monstrous enough to earn her the name "devil-fish," as well as association with the devil's feminine counterpart, "hydra" (literally, a female water snake).

Buried eight-fold in her eight arms, for she is in a sense a devil-fish, her glass ram's horn-cradled freight is hid but is not crushed; as Hercules, bitten by a crab loyal to the hydra, was hindered to succeed, the intensively watched eggs coming from the shell free it when they are freed.

Particularly well does "glass ram's horn-cradled freight" express the nautilus's burden of creativity, for "glass ram's horn" expresses its fragility together with its precisely coiled strength, and "cradled-freight" expresses the impersonal affection of a mother, the mother that must hide her burden without crushing it. Although the comparison to Hercules may be suggestive in several ways, syntactically Hercules is analogous to the eggs, making the crab analogous to the hard shell, and the nine-headed female monster analogous to the eight-armed, devil-fish mother. For the creation must assume a life of its own, and in their effort to escape their creator, the eggs
are "hindered," by the shell's resistance, "to succeed." When at last mother and shell and eggs are free of one another, the shell becomes a flimsy "souvenir of hope," mere "paper" with "wasp-nest flaws"—a hard, dry poem freed from the intense energy that made it.

Illustrating Ezra Pound's principle that "Intense emotion causes pattern to arise in the mind—if the mind is strong enough" (Prose 374) and Moore's own principle that "When writing with maximum impact, the writer seems under compulsion to set down an unbearable accuracy" (Predilections 4) are the geometrically precise, marble rhythms of the shell, which Moore compares densely to a wasp-nest, the folds of an Ionic chiton (the loose linen tunic worn in ancient Greece), and the mane of a Parthenon horse:

leaving its wasp-nest flaws
of white on white, and close—

laid Ionic chiton-folds
like the lines in the mane of
a Parthenon horse,
round which the arms had
wound themselves as if they knew love
is the only fortress
strong enough to trust to.

The "fortress" recalls the images of masculine strength suggested earlier in the poem by "authorities" and their "mercenaries," Hercules and the ram's horn. But this "fortress" of love is not the aggressive, masculine strength of war; rather it is the impersonal power of maternal and artistic devotion, the strongest power in the world.

Though I have more or less identified Moore and Williams together as Precisionists, Moore's poetry more consistently resembles Sheeler's precise

10 Also, "Chiton" is a genus of mollusk, and "chitin" is part of the exoskeleton of certain insects.
classicism than does Williams's. Although some of Williams's poems such as "The Red Wheelbarrow" and "Nantucket" present static pictures, his poems often display vigor and artistic process as openly as do John Marin's New York watercolors and the action paintings of the forties and fifties. Charles Demuth captures this energy appropriately in his portrait of of Williams, I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold. In Moore's and Sheeler's work, however, this energy is hidden in their static but emotionally charged surfaces. Sheeler observes a distinction similar to the one between Moore and Williams even among the old masters:

In Velasquez and Hals the intensity of characterization is so vivid that though they are among the most brilliant of technicians their skill is never a barrier which prevents our entrance into their pictures. After the first impact it is interesting to the student to retrace his steps, enjoying an analysis of the means by which they arrived at these results. With these artists the manner of application of paint on the canvas has a beauty of its own, and one may discern step by step the eventual consummation. But artists like Holbein and the Van Eycks conceal the means by which they set forth their statement. With them as with the others one receives a direct impact from the emotional content, but when one seeks to disintegrate their means of arrival the evidence just isn't there. Means and ends are fused together. (qtd. in Rourke 180)

(It was the latter group that Sheeler himself wanted to emulate.) Thus are the "close-laid Ionic chiton-folds" of the paper nautilus a peerfect analogy for a Marianne Moore poem, for her powerfully emotional, perhaps even monstrous, means produce coolly geometrical, "business-like" ends. "Something beneath the surface," writes Moore, "a sense of life and of roots, is attested by work which is aesthetically serious—a scientitically potent energy which seems to involve us in a centripetal force of its own" ("Comment" 81: 268).
Conclusion

In showing that Marianne Moore's art resembles that of painters and photographers, I have not meant to minimize her obvious obsession with language. Indeed, there would not be much use in comparing poetry to painting if doing so did not instruct the reading of poems. Nor have I, in dividing my chapters according to the visual artists' concerns, meant to segregate Moore's poetic concerns, for Moore's multifarious interests find a singleness of purpose in her poems and in her pangolin-like mind, which "Unignorant, / modest and unemotional, and all emotion / . . . . goes cowering forth" into a wilderness of words.

When Moore does not simply divide her poems into lines of free verse, a structure which should not trouble her readers, she divides them into stanzas, the structure of which is uniquely her own. Unlike the lines of free verse which typically indicate the rhythms of speech, Moore's stanzas cohere to an internal architecture that Moore insists forms as spontaneously as the clustering of chromosomes. Having studied seventeenth-century prose at Bryn Mawr and the minor prophets from a minister in Carlisle who said, "Hebrew poetry is prose with a sort of heightened consciousness," Moore composed "observations" with the syntax and diction of well-wrought prose. But the spatial designs into which she arranged those "observations" could have been inspired by the Cubist paintings she saw in New York, in which she observed visual images broken, as sentences might be broken, into geometric planes. The architecture of Moore's stanzas, however, is not simply spatial, though it is that too, but consists of a harmonious arrangement of syllables and an aural cohesion of internal rhyme. Visual
rhymes also—the rhyme of size, shape, color and pattern, for instance, between a sycamore and an albino giraffe—reinforce the poem's geometry, as does the arrangement of clearly defined syntactic units of nouns, noun phrases, and quotations. And reinforcing these aural and visual rhythms is the pattern of repeated stanzas upon the page.

Another of Moore's distinctive techniques is her method of assemblage. Her quotations differ from Eliot's allusive ones in having been neatly removed from their original context, a difference their respective footnotes boldly illustrate. Whereas the elements of The Waste Land contribute to a mythic unity, the elements of "An Octopus" resist unity. Each element—ice, an octopus, the fact that someone thought glass that will bend is a much needed invention—draws attention to itself, causing the reader to see it in a new way because of its apparent unrelatedness to its new context. Nor are these elements assembled thematically as is the setting of a novel or a play; rather, they are assembled miscellaneously as a real person might choose things that she likes over a lifetime to put in her living room. And since that person has chosen each thing because she has some special appreciation for it apart from the appreciation she may have for any other thing in the room, so may the visitor to that living room, if the visitor be perceptive enough, witness an "unintentional portrait" of the person who lives there. Thus the mysteriousness of a miscellany—a museum, a living room, a Joseph Cornell box—draws the observer into itself, stimulating him to look at individual things with new interest as well as to look, if he will, at the unique portrait of a mind—a mind hidden to the casual observer by the protective shield of things. Of course things, such as the octopus and the glacier, can be thematically rhymed just as they can be visually rhymed, but the thematic
unity of a Marianne Moore poem is in constant tension with the disparateness of the miscellany.

Even more surprising in some ways than the structural techniques Moore shared with the modern painters are the aesthetic, moral and even spiritual values they shared—the unifying principles (to the extent that there are any) of her poems. Although the regular appearance of words like "hero," "truth," "love," and "humility" in Moore's poems have made it impossible for critics to deny her moral conviction, I have seen no clue to her morality as satisfactory as the writings of Kandinsky, Stieglitz and their followers. This morality, which for Moore at least extends to nature and society, originates in the modern realization that artistic conventions are false. Instead of writing in iambic pentameter, for instance, a poet should find a form that is the unique expression of her own "inner necessity," as primitive artists find such forms. Animals are Moore's exemplars, for animals embody the aesthetic and moral principles expressed by Kandinsky that "Necessity creates form," and that "there may be many different forms at the same time that are equally good." Although all animals must, for example, protect themselves, each animal does so in a different way according to its own inner necessity—some with color, some with armor, some with humility (few of Moore's animals fight); even the physical appearance of the animal expresses its inner necessity—the elephant's trunk, the basilisk's "wings." Observing such idiosyncratic forms of expression not only reveals the limitations of artistic conventions which prescribe only a few good forms, but also warns against bigotry, for in human behavior also there is more than one good, though hypocrisy, power—all ends other than "genuine" ones—are evil.
Observing the world without bigotry is the morality of the straight photographer, who is devoted to photographing the individual essence, the uniqueness, of his subject; and both Moore and Stieglitz recognize the artistic difficulty, the work, the unconscious and conscious fastidiousness that is required of the artist who will see with "relentless accuracy." Although the absence of subjective criteria makes such a vision impersonal and objective, it demands such strong feeling from the artist for the object in front of her that one can only call it love. Precision is an act of love—the act of the hero who can look "upon a fellow creature's error with the / feelings of a mother—a / woman or a cat." And for Marianne Moore language is the tool of precision and its emotion. Words are the "scalpels" with which one makes distinctions, cutting away clichés and prejudices to see the world precisely as it is.

If we should be surprised to discover powerful emotion in Moore's poetry, perhaps the discovery of a little mysticism will surprise us no more. Both Kandinsky and Stieglitz praise the artist who can see the spirit in things. And for Moore too the genuine artist, the hero, is "not out / seeing a sight but the rock / crystal thing to see—the startling El Greco / brimming with inner light." The spirit in Moore's poetry, however, reveals itself not in the single white ray of mythic or transcendental unity, but in "the blue-red-yellow band of incandescence"—the stripes of idiosyncrasy.
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