

**The Burden of Return:
The gift in the poetry of Marianne Moore**

Síofra McSherry

Studie basierend auf der 2017 am John-F.-Kennedy-Institut für
Nordamerikastudien der Freien Universität Berlin angenommenen
Dissertation gleichen Titels

Erstgutachterin: Prof. Dr. Ulla Haselstein

Zweitgutachterin: Prof. Dr. Mary Ann Snyder-Körper

Tag der Disputation: 21 July 2017

Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Hiermit versichere ich an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt und keine andern als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Alle Teile, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß einer Veröffentlichung entstammen, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Die Arbeit wurde noch nicht veröffentlicht oder einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt.

Berlin, den 3. April 2017

Acknowledgements

This dissertation could not have been completed without the guidance of my supervisor Prof. Ulla Haselstein, my second reader Prof. Mary Ann Snyder-Körber, and my second and third supervisors Prof. em. Heinz Ickstadt and Dr. Libby Bischof. I am greatly obliged likewise to Birte Wege, James Dorson, Sean Bonney, and my colleagues at the John F. Kennedy Institute for their help and support. Many thanks to Annelise Riles, Veerle Thielemans, Michael Hatt, Jennifer Roberts, Miranda Fontaine, Shamoon Zamir, Susan Castillo, Sarah Archino, Isabella Streffen, Paul Muldoon, Michael Collins, Anna Woodhouse, Linda Toocaram, and David McSherry for advice, suggestions, and assistance.

I am grateful to the Graduate School of North American Studies, the Terra Foundation for American Art, the Huntington Library, the British Association for American Studies, the Getty Research Institute, the US-UK Fulbright Commission, and the PROMOS programme for their financial support of this research. I would also like to express my appreciation for the Special Collections staff at the Rosenbach Museum and Library, Bryn Mawr College Library, Vassar College Library, the Huntington Library, the Getty Research Institute, and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection for their wonderful work.

Special thanks to David Bosold and Gabi Bodmeier at the Graduate School for North American Studies for all your help and kindness.

Table of Contents

Eidesstattliche Erklärung.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures.....	viii
Dissertation Abstract.....	x
Deutsche Zusammenfassung.....	xi
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
Criticism on Moore.....	2
Gift exchange: an overview	3
The poison in the gift	6
An unlikely coupling: Marcel Mauss and Marianne Moore	7
Three obligations: To give, to receive, and to reciprocate.....	10
The application of gift theory within literary studies.....	13
Marianne Moore’s poetics of exchange.....	18
A rehabilitated modernist.....	19
The social gift: “Communities of the otherwise”	25
Moore’s social networks.....	25
Moore and the avant-garde	26
Publication and patronage networks.....	30
At the limit of community	31
Publications and prizes	32
“Omissions are not accidents”	34
Mentorship	36
The formal properties of the gift.....	36
Formal properties and quotation	40
Collage practice	41
The gift as a material characteristic	47
Motivation and the law of reciprocation	49

The spirit of the gift	49
Gawa, conditioning, and the nexus of exchange	54
Gift exchange between media	56
The formal properties of the gift.....	58
Research questions.....	62
Literature Review: The Gift.....	64
Criteria for inclusion	64
The Ethnography of the Gift.....	64
Early iterations	64
Post-structuralist and deconstructionist interventions	68
Later interventions	73
Theoretical Interventions	75
Bourdieu, Derrida, and later responses	76
Applications within contemporary society	79
Interventions in art history.....	81
The gift in literature	83
Art and agency	88
The contribution made by this dissertation	90
Chapter 2. “Collecting rare specimens”: The gift as object, text, and artwork.....	92
Introduction.....	92
The gift object.....	93
The domestic gift	93
Artisanal objects.....	108
The gift economy	115
The gift as text.....	121
Diligence	121
Collage	124
The gift as art.....	129

The etymology of the image.....	129
Form and sincerity.....	134
Conclusion.....	140
Chapter 3. “To fulfil a private obligation”: Moore and her patrons.....	143
Introduction.....	143
Overview.....	145
Patronage of the 1920s avant-garde.....	145
The social space of modernism.....	148
Patronage as a gift economy.....	151
“Critics and connoisseurs”.....	151
Moore’s patrons: Thayer, Bryher, and Watson.....	154
The literary sponsors: James Sibley Watson and Scofield Thayer.....	155
The Dial Award.....	155
Moore as editor.....	156
Marriage.....	161
The millionaire benefactor.....	168
The \$5000 elephant.....	170
“Aesthetic-erotic collaboration”.....	172
Poems.....	174
The confidante.....	177
A paper bouquet.....	179
Diamonds and dresses.....	186
Conclusion.....	188
Chapter 4. “Mother; manners; morals”: Moore and Elizabeth Bishop.....	191
Introduction.....	191
Overview.....	192
A literary friendship.....	195
Initial meeting.....	195
Family Romances.....	198

Methods of control	208
Time, tide and formaldehyde: A brief comparative poetics.....	213
The breakdown of the cycle	219
“Roosters”	219
“The bell-boy with the buoy-ball”	225
Conclusion	231
Chapter 5. “Ever-grateful wonder”: Moore and Joseph Cornell	234
Introduction.....	234
Overview	236
The gift in Moore and Cornell.....	241
The form of the gift	241
The gift as intimacy.....	251
Public and private exchanges.....	251
The gift as a site of exchange	260
Increase and return	266
Conditioning the exchange environment.....	267
Procedural similarity as basis for exchange	269
Collage Practices: The Romantic Ballet.....	273
“Anna Pavlova” and the Homages to Romantic Ballet.....	273
The impossibility of the gift	277
Conclusion	280
Conclusion: The burden of return.....	283
Works Cited.....	290
Works of Art.....	305

List of Figures

Figure i: Marianne Moore throwing out the first pitch for 1968's Opening Day at Yankee Stadium.....	34
Figure ii: Marianne Moore's Living Room, The Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia.....	95
Figure iii: Mechanical Crow, Rosenbach Museum, n.d. Image © Chester Page. 2 Sep. 2016, chesterpage1.wix.com/memoir-of-charmed-life-in-ny#!m--moore	97
Figure iv: Manuscript, "To Victor Hugo, of My Crow Pluto", The Marianne Moore Collection, Rosenbach Museum, I:04:67. Image © The estate of Marianne Moore.....	101
Figure v: Polychrome Vase in Form of a Fish, El-Amarna, XVIIIth Dynasty, about 1365, B.C. Glass (Height, 2 3/4 in.) No. 55193, The British Museum B 379.	114
Figure vi: British Museum Postcard; Tracing from Illustrated London News, August 6, 1921, annotated in Marianne Moore's handwriting. Script reads "From El Amarna Fish-shaped glass bottle London Ill News - May 6 - 1921".	115
Figure vii: Pterodactyl, drawn by Marianne Moore, c. 1920 (Rosenbach Museum and Library).....	170
Figure viii: <i>Poems</i> , The Egoist Press, London: 1921. The British Library. Image by the author.	175
Figure ix: Letter from Moore to Hildegard Watson, recto, September 3, 1933. Bryn Mawr College Library Special Collection.....	180
Figure x: Chen Rong, a section from <i>Nine Dragons</i> , 1244. Ink and colour on Xuan paper. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.	185
Figure xi: Shell of the paper nautilus (<i>Argonauta argo</i>) (Lee).....	207
Figure xii: Photograph sent by Elizabeth Bishop to Marianne Moore from Key West, Florida, 19 January 1937 (Rosenbach V:04:31).	222
Figure xiii: "The Cock (Rosenbach V:05:02 (1)).	226
Figure xiv: Joseph Cornell. <i>Americana Fantastica</i> (detail) 1942-3.....	238

Figure xv: <i>Untitled (Pharmacy)</i> , 1943. Art © the Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation / Licensed by VAGA, NY.....	245
Figure xvi: Joseph Cornell. <i>Object (Ogives E. Satie)</i> 1939–40.....	250
Figure xvii: Joseph Cornell. <i>Untitled (Penny Arcade Portrait of Lauren Bacall)</i> . 1945–46.....	252
Figure xviii: Joseph Cornell. <i>Untitled (The Crystal Cage: Portrait of Berenice)</i> (detail) c. 1934–67.....	256
Figure xix: Joseph Cornell. Letter to Marianne Moore. (Rosenbach 23 March 1943).....	257
Figure xx: Joseph Cornell. Letter to Marianne Moore. (Rosenbach 23 March 1943).....	258
Figure xxi: Joseph Cornell. Letter to Marianne Moore. (Rosenbach 17 October 1944).....	264
Figure xxii: Joseph Cornell. <i>Untitled (Ship with Nude)</i> c. 1964–6.....	272
Figure xxiii: Joseph Cornell. <i>Portrait of Ondine</i> c. 1940–late 1960s.....	276

Dissertation Abstract

This dissertation explores the role of gift exchange in the modernist poetics of Marianne Moore (1887–1972). The direction of the investigation is twofold: first, it explores the formal implications of the work's involvement within a gift economy, in which the poems themselves may be regarded as gifts demanding reciprocation; second, it examines how Moore's exchanges helped her position herself within her avant-garde social network. Based on close readings of poems alongside archive materials, the dissertation demonstrates how gift exchange contributed to every aspect of Moore's poetics, from her formal assemblage technique to the generation of affective significance within her work. Within the context of her social network, text, poet, patron, and public are repositioned within a continuous system of exchange driven by the obligations to give, accept, and reciprocate gifts. The dissertation argues that Moore used, subverted, and refused these obligations in order to manage her relationships with her patrons and peers, and negotiate control over her literary autonomy.

Organized chronologically, each chapter highlights an aspect of the poet's work that may be elucidated by the gift. Chapter 1 presents the methodology and theoretical framework of the project. Chapter 2 explores the role of the gift object in Moore's poetics, based on close readings of poetry and descriptive prose she produced in response to presents, found texts, and museum artefacts. Chapter 3, focusing on Moore's patrons Bryher, Scofield Thayer, and James and Hildegard Watson, investigates Moore's subversive relationship with patronage institutions between 1921 – 1929. Moore's troubled mentorship of Elizabeth Bishop in the 1930s is the topic of Chapter 4, which demonstrates how the gift can model the tensions and antagonisms of influence. The final chapter explores what insights the gift can bring to the analysis of exchange between visual art and text, focusing on Moore's lively correspondence with Joseph Cornell in the 1940s.

This dissertation argues that Marianne Moore's work was produced and distributed within a gift economy, which, while she capably manipulated its attendant obligations to maintain her literary autonomy, inextricably connected form with the action of exchange in her poetics.

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Diese Dissertation analysiert die Bedeutung des Austausches von Geschenken in den modernistischen Gedichten von Marianne Moore (1887–1972). Die zugrundeliegende Forschung ist auf zwei unterschiedliche Aspekte ausgerichtet. Zum einen werden die formellen Auswirkungen der thematischen Ausrichtung des Werks im Kontext der Schenkökonomie analysiert. In diesem Zusammenhang können die Gedichte selbst als Geschenke interpretiert werden, die nach einer Erwidern verlangen. Zum anderen wird untersucht, wie Moores Austauschleistungen ihr dabei halfen, sich in ihrem sozialen Netzwerk der Avantgarde zu positionieren. Auf der Grundlage einer gründlichen Textanalyse ihrer Gedichte und Archivmaterial erläutert diese Dissertation, wie der Austausch von Geschenken einen Beitrag zu jeglichen Aspekten von Moores Poesie leistete, angefangen bei der formellen Methode der Gedichtkonstruktion bis hin zu jener generationellen Einbettung, welche in ihrem Werk eine affektive Bedeutung eingenommen hat. Im Kontext ihres sozialen Netzwerkes stehen Text, Dichter, Gönner und Öffentlichkeit in einem kontinuierlichen Austauschgefüge, welches von der Verpflichtung des Schenkens, Akzeptierens und Erwiderns von Geschenken geprägt ist. Die Dissertation stellt die These auf, dass Moore diese Verpflichtungen genutzt, untergraben und abgelehnt hat, um ihre Beziehungen zu ihren Gönnern und Kollegen zu ordnen und Kontrolle über ihre eigene literarische Unabhängigkeit zu verhandeln.

Die Kapitel sind chronologisch geordnet und betonen jeweils einen spezifischen Aspekt des Werkes der Dichterin, welcher über das Konzept des Geschenks erklärt werden kann. Kapitel 1 präsentiert die Methodologie und das theoretische Konzept des Projekts. Kapitel 2 untersucht die Bedeutung des Geschenkobjekts in Moores Dichtung anhand sorgfältiger Textanalysen von Gedichten sowie deskriptiver Prosa, die sie als Erwidern auf Geschenke verfasste, weiteren Textquellen und Museumsartefakten. Kapitel 3 richtet den Fokus auf Moores Gönner Bryher, Scofield Thayer sowie James und Hildegard Watson und untersucht Moores subversive Beziehung zu Institutionen des Mäzenatentums zwischen 1921 und 1929. Moores problembehaftetes Mentorat gegenüber Elizabeth Bishop in den 1930er Jahren ist Gegenstand von Kapitel 4,

in welchem dargelegt wird, wie das Konzept des Geschenks Spannungen und Antagonismen modellieren kann. Das abschließende Kapitel beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, welche Einblicke das Konzept des Geschenks im Hinblick auf die Analyse von Austauschprozessen zwischen visueller Kunst und Text bereitstellen kann, und konzentriert sich dabei auf Moores lebendige Korrespondenz mit Joseph Cornell in den früheren 1940er Jahren.

Die Dissertation stellt die These auf, dass Marianne Moores Werk im Kontext einer Schenkökonomie entstanden und verbreitet wurde, welche die Form in ihrer Poesie untrennbar mit den darin beschriebenen Austauschhandlungen verband. Des Weiteren stellt die Dissertation die These auf, dass Moore die der Schenkökonomie zugehörigen Verpflichtungen geschickt manipulierte, um ihre eigene literarische Unabhängigkeit zu bewahren.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This dissertation brings a concept and theoretical frame—the gift—developed within anthropological literature to bear on a literary subject, Marianne Moore’s poetry. The formal elements of Moore’s poems and the material conditions of their composition are examined as aspects of a gift economy that encompasses the poet’s techniques, sources, and wider literary community. Poetry has rarely been the subject of ethnographic investigation, and gift theory has not very often touched on literary criticism (see Literature Review). This research demonstrates that the gift is nonetheless a remarkably valuable approach to Marianne Moore’s idiosyncratic and complex works, resonating with her poetics at multiple levels. The literature of exchange helps illuminate the important role played by the poet’s avant-garde literary community of correspondents throughout her writing life, and her idiosyncratic management of those relationships. It provides a critical vocabulary to explore the close alliance between Moore’s voluminous correspondence and the themes of her poetry—between writing and exchange, gifts, and description. Not only are the social aspects of Moore’s work illuminated by the theory of exchange; I argue that formal elements of her poetry itself display features of the gift.

This dissertation aims to conduct an ethnography of Moore’s poetics. I hope to show through this research that what Annelise Riles has described as the “anthropological means of conceptualizing the social” (Riles 35) allows insights into the nature of literature as it relates to the poet’s position within her social, artistic, and literary networks. Other poets, patrons, and artists are placed into exchange relation with Moore in order to illuminate the status hierarchies, conflicts, and obligations that characterise their interaction. This approach builds on the biographical work of Leavell and others, but does not attempt to establish new biographical information. Rather, the manifestations of the gift within Moore’s biography—how she related to and dealt with exchange relations in her life—are examined for insights into how gift exchange manifests in her poetry. The research is intrinsically interdisciplinary, since the exchanges analysed include both objects and texts, whether letters and gifts, or poems and visual

artworks. The theoretical framework of the gift places poetry and visual artwork within the same exchange economy and analyses the relations that connect them.

Criticism on Moore

With regard to Marianne Moore criticism, my research builds on the insightful analyses of Bonnie Costello in *Marianne Moore: Imaginary Possessions* (1981), on the poet's sympathy with the visual arts and reliance on sources within fine art, particularly the old masters. Linda Leavell's *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts: Prismatic Color* (1995) emphasised the context of the poet's literary and artistic networks in her home city, from her early encounters at Alfred Stieglitz's galley 291 to her tenure selecting pictures for *The Dial*. Leavell makes an interdisciplinary argument, drawing comparisons between Moore's formal strategies and their parallels within the visual arts such as collage (or assemblage, as she prefers), Cubism, and the Precisionism of Georgia O'Keeffe. Leavell's recent biography on Moore, *Holding on Upside Down* (2013), has likewise been an invaluable resource in reconstructing the context of archival materials, particularly relating to Moore's patronage relationships.

Much helpful scholarship has been done on Moore's idiosyncratic relationships with others in her circle. David Kalstone's *Becoming a Poet: Elizabeth Bishop with Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell* (1989) dedicates half its pages to their mentorship relationship. Robin G. Schulze's *The Web of Friendship: Marianne Moore and Wallace Stevens* charts the forty-year friendship between the two poets as a web comprised "of many intricately interlocking threads, numerous personal and artistic intersections between one poet's creative warp and the other's woof" (Schulze 1), an image that informs the book's driving sense that Moore experienced friendship and influence as a multi-stranded network or web. Dickran Tashjian's *Joseph Cornell: Gifts of Desire* (1992) is partly given over to the artist's exchanges with Marianne Moore, as well as his posthumous interaction with the work of Emily Dickinson. This key text introduces the idea, key to my own work, that Cornell's artworks may be considered as gifts, made with the intention of being offered as presents to named recipients. He also

introduces the concept that artworks offered in the public domain may have an additional exchange function as a gift or offering.

Gift exchange: an overview

Marcel Mauss first presented a theory of gift exchange in 1923's *Essai sur le don*, in English *The Gift* (I have used the French title throughout to distinguish this text from Lewis Hyde's). Its publication marked a shift in understanding of the relationships between people within a small community and provided a means of representing their social transactional links, moving away from a capitalist-influenced understanding of economic or proprietorial relations over objects and people, towards a self-sustaining *total system* that incorporates all aspects of the life of a community including politics, economics, religion, law, morality, and aesthetics:

The system is quite simple; just the rule that every gift has to be returned in some specified way sets up a perpetual cycle of exchanges within and between generations. In some cases the specified return is of equal value, producing a stable system of statuses; in others it must exceed the value of the earlier gift, producing an escalating contest for honour. The whole society can be described by the catalogue of transfers that map all the obligations between its members. The cycling gift system is the society. (Mary Douglas, "Foreword", Mauss xi)

Claude Lévi-Strauss considered that the value of Mauss's essay lay in its "attempt to explain empirically observed behaviour and communication in terms of a society's unconscious rules of exchange". The mechanics of gift exchange can provide a means to understand the impetus behind social cycles; the obligation to give and to reciprocate that keeps the entire system in motion. Intrinsic within the act of giving a gift is the obligation to return it, in kind, and that obligation is

generative of the bonds of social relationship, which are the implicit goal of the exchange process. This is achieved through the engagement of personal honour and social morality; participation in the system implies a lifelong commitment to the social institutions it supports, including marriage, family, property, and religion.

Mauss's research was drawn from ethnology, history, and sociology: the ethnography of native North American cultures provided him with a template of the system in its complete form. The work was based on library research rather than fieldwork, and represented a comparative overview of many years' of published secondary scholarship by others, attempting to draw out common features across societies and cultures. Mauss's text is at some level a refutation, after Durkheim, of an English Utilitarian concept of individualism, which he considered an impoverished view of personhood. *Essai sur le don* places the individual squarely within a total social system of which he is an intrinsic part, and strives to show the interconnectedness of people by obligation and exchange processes external to capitalist market forces, in an alternative ethic of generosity.

The idea was developed and complicated over the course of the twentieth century. In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949), Lévi-Strauss outlined a structuralist method of studying kinship relations in an exchange-based society based on system logic. The study took a structuralist view of society as a whole, revealing the entire system as a pattern of balanced transactions. Giving and receiving are two sides of the same exchange, with the entire society constantly constituted and reconstituted within a fixed structure. This approach treats the individual as a node within a network, thereby erasing the actor's subjective point of view, which was central to Mauss's reconstruction of the exchange process, and prioritizes a systemic view of kinship relations. Mauss saw exchange as a strategically undertaken enterprise that could be manipulated to establish bonds and maintain status hierarchies, with individual agency allowing for refusals, failures, and challenges to the status quo. His vision of society is built from the subjective position of individual actors facing off at opposite ends of each transaction.

Later readings by Jacques Derrida and Pierre Bourdieu subjected the theory to deconstruction. Derrida's intervention explored whether generosity is possible, since the etymology of the gift or *don* implies that it must be free, and that any reciprocation would render it null, subject it to the base logic of transaction: the gift "is annulled each time there is restitution or counter-gift" (Derrida 12). The construction of the gift would therefore, in his view, render it impossible; exchange is possible, or the gift, but not both. Bourdieu's pragmatic riposte returns the gift to its *habitus*, suggesting that people choose to participate in gift exchange systems for strategic reasons. His reading returns perspective to the individual, and the conditions of disinterestedness and generosity to their social context. The conditions of generosity may be generated within a universe in which people have an interest in its establishment. Exchange practices, in his view, emerge from the *habitus* of a society, rather than conscious intention (Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice* 236).

The object is conspicuously absent from these later streams of thought. While abstraction certainly helps the literary studies scholar attempting to detach the implications of the theory from ethnographic descriptions of canoes and Kula armshells, the invisibility of the exchanged object is a hindrance when constructing an ethnography of Marianne Moore's exchange networks, with their heavy emphasis on materiality. Thinkers within material culture and anthropology have approached this gap in the literature from their own perspectives, with works by Arjun Appadurai on the commodity and by Janet Hoskins on the biography of the object standing out as key interventions. The contribution of this dissertation is to address the absent life of the object within the theory by exploring the formal implications of the gift, in an attempt to resituate the material at the centre of the act of exchange.

By the end of the 20th century the theory of the gift had been adapted by art historians including Miwon Kwon and Marcia Pointon to situations as diverse as the relationship between contemporary artists and their audiences, and the exchange of miniature portraits in the 18th century. It has been applied by anthropologists to the culture of Tokyo's financial executives (Riles), Christmas gift giving (Caplow), marketing theory (Sherry), and the relation of the individual to God (Marion). What the theory offers is a means of representing a community

according to the movement of the things that it values, whether objects, ideas, and in some cases people. The cyclical, reciprocal nature of a gift economy, its potential to remain distinct from market forces, and its interest in the spiritual and creative life of a social group makes it a well-suited framework for this analysis of a small subsection of the avant-garde in New York from the 1920s to the 1940s—Marianne Moore’s personal circle, which was drawn from a community built around shared aesthetic concerns. Furthermore, the gift is helpful in modelling the social and relational influences involved in the construction and distribution of a work of art or literary text.

The poison in the gift

In German, *gift* means *poison*. *Essai sur le don* emphasised the violent side of gift exchange. Its negative potential should be emphasised as a counterbalance to the tendency of commentators to view the gift economy as a utopian ideal, a space operating parallel to the market that is somehow “more hospitable to the creative spirit” (Hyde 283). On the contrary, the meaning of the gift is almost always ambivalent, and it may be positively or negatively intended and received depending on context. The violence of the Kwakiutl potlatch, in which status is derived through the mass destruction of property, represents the extreme end of scale. Yet this too is ambivalent: as Mauss described it, “these acts of destruction are very often sacrificial, and beneficial to the spirits” (53). Gloria Goodwin Raheja’s ethnography of North India, *The Poison in the Gift*, recounts the deliberate use of particular categories of gifts to pass negative attributes from the giver to the receiver, following which the receiver may become ill or experience bad fortune. At a more familiar level, Caplow’s research into Christmas gift giving in Middletown, Indiana in the 1970s found that the economic value of a gift was predicated on the depth of the emotional ties between the giver and recipient—with the effect that a disappointing or inexpensive gift between spouses signalled their immanent separation (Caplow 1314). Psychology, too, has considered the negative potential of the gift. Psychotherapists in contemporary Britain noted that “when a gift was given, as well as what it was, informed the meanings

conferred upon it by therapists. These meanings included aggression as well as gratitude or (negotiation of) dependency” (Spandler, Burman and Goldberg 77). The negative potential of the gift is not limited to individual acts of giving, but extends throughout the cycle of exchange. Mauss noted that the gift exchange was motivated in many societies by the threat of the loss of prestige or even violence against those who did not participate: “in the final analysis [these exchanges] are strictly compulsory, on pain of private or public warfare” (Mauss 7). Bourdieu has outlined the role of the gift in establishing and maintaining dominance through the construction of “asymmetrical relations of dependence of recognition/gratitude based on credit granted to beneficence” (Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice* 239). He also warns the reader against being distracted by exoticism of the subject matter, whether potlatch or Kula ring, and failing to see the matrix of symbolic power relations these exchanges represent (238). Within the context of a prestige-based gift system one can destroy an enemy without the use of physical force, simply by giving him a gift he can never repay and placing him eternally in debt.

An unlikely coupling: Marcel Mauss and Marianne Moore

Though he never undertook fieldwork himself (Clifford 123) Marcel Mauss’s works incorporated ethnographic findings from all over the world, from Papua New Guinea to ancient Scandinavia to the Pacific Northwest, to his own contemporary France of the 1920s. On the face of it there was no basis on which to compare these facts, or indeed these societies, as their symbolic structures, material cultures, and representational intentions were vastly different. Mauss himself stated that the materials from which his essay on the gift was built were profoundly complex and impossible to reduce to a simple argument. Instead he aimed to isolate a thread from the densely woven network of facts he had accumulated:

Among all these very complex themes and this multiplicity of social

“things” that are in a state of flux, we seek here to study only one characteristic—one that goes deep but is isolated: the so to speak voluntary character of these total services, apparently free and disinterested but nevertheless constrained and self-interested. Almost always such services have taken the form of the gift, the present generously given even when, in the gesture accompanying the transaction, there is only a polite fiction, formalism, and social deceit, and when really there is obligation and economic self-interest. (Mauss 4)

His goal in the monograph was to find the overarching principle of the gift that united the different cultures, to expose a global truth about human interaction from the patching together of opposites. Mauss’s collation procedure has led James Clifford to characterize him as a proto-surrealist. Clifford has argued in *The Predicament of Culture* that his series of lectures at the Institut d’Ethnologie, which he co-founded with Paul Rivet and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, had a profound influence on the generation of post-war Parisian artists in the process of forming the surrealist movement. Figures such as Georges Bataille, who started the ethnographic/surrealist journal *Documents* and Michel Leiris, who left the arts to himself become an ethnographer of Africa, created work which crossed the disciplinary boundary between art and ethnography. Mauss, too, seems to have been influenced in his turn by the cultural milieu of the time. Clifford directly relates Mauss’s technique of quotation from dozens of sources in the pursuit of a single narrative with surrealist collage. He summarizes his process thus: “Ethnographic truth for Mauss was restlessly subversive of surface realities. Its principal task was to discover, in his famous phrase, the many “lunes mortes,” pale moons in the “firmament of reason”. There is no better summary of the task of ethnographic surrealism, for the “reason” referred to is not a parochial Western rationality but the full human potential for cultural expression” (128–9). Mauss sought to discover the operative principle that united the multiplicity of facts from dozens of human cultures. He wished to find a straight line through the varied terrain (a phrase John Ashbery used to describe the poetry of Marianne Moore (Ashbery 110, see below)). Like Walter Benjamin’s, many of his works did

not reach completion, but “remained a collection of drafts, essays, scraps, and notes”, and the *Essai sur le don* itself is a long essay rather than a book. There are many similarities in his approach to putting together a text and Moore’s. His collages, like hers, were put together from diverse texts from a plurality of sources. Moore and Mauss relied on second-hand sources, preferring to quote from the works of others rather than write directly from life. He, like she, carefully annotated and referenced the texts he quoted, and both writers saw connections between things that appeared at a surface level to be very different, describing things with “a sharp eye for the significant detail (Clifford 123). They form an unexpectedly sympathetic match, and a reading of Moore through Mauss makes for a particularly happy combination. I have in fact followed Mauss’s lead in bringing together disparate facts from sources that on the surface have little in common. How can Kwakiutl coppers be compared with the poetry of a high modernist in 1920s New York? Mauss provides the precedent, both in procedure and outcome—splicing research on Scandinavian eddas with Maori ritual, he drew conclusions about the political state of his contemporary France. As he put it:

The historians feel and rightly object to the fact that the sociologists are too ready with abstractions and unduly separate the various elements of societies from one another. We must do as they do: observe what is given. Now, the given is Rome or Athens, the average Frenchman, the Melanesian from this island or another, and not prayer or law by itself. After having of necessity divided things up too much, and abstracted from them, the sociologists must strive to reconstitute the whole. (Mauss 103)

By this stage, the theory of the gift has been applied to many subjects and disciplines by diverse theorists, from philosophers and theologians to market researchers and curators of contemporary art. The literature review below includes examples of its application within a broad range of fields, demonstrating the flexibility of the theory, as well as its liberty from its “exotic” anthropological

roots. However, this dissertation has applied a methodology based heavily on Mauss's approach, perhaps surprising given the long history of the literature and its emergence in the work of literary theorists whose goals appear more in line with my own. Mauss's technique of juxtaposition and the comparison of apparently dissimilar texts has been preserved as I have felt it adds value to the implementation of gift theory, particularly in the work of Marianne Moore, in its engagement with similar practices. Even without subscribing to Mauss's somewhat utopian vision of *l'homme total*, there are advantages to placing poetry into this ocean of ethnographic facts to see what parallels, echoes, and defamiliarisations may occur. In addition, the underlying principle—the action of the gift—may be more easily isolated if its action is observed within very different situations, texts, and materials, for example a Marianne Moore poem and a Kwakiutl ritual copper.

It may be noted that my own procedure in this dissertation also mirrors that of Mauss. Like him I have interviewed no local informants. My fieldwork was conducted in the archives at Vassar, Bryn Mawr, and the Rosenbach Museum and Library. If my methodology may be characterized as ethnographic, then I have written an ethnography of the dead. In the absence of living witnesses to interview and observe, the texts produced by Moore and her circle (and to an extent her critics) are my informants; poems, drafts, and letters are my folk histories and source material. It is this reliance on the critical interrogation of literary text that locates the work squarely within literary studies.

Three obligations: To give, to receive, and to reciprocate

The main principle Mauss isolated—the social fact of the gift as a total system of apparently voluntary services—needed an explanation. What was the reason that the gift was given, and continued to be given, in such a dynamic fashion, maintaining the interpersonal fabric of entire societies? Mauss identified triple rules of exchange: the obligation to give, the obligation to receive, and the obligation to reciprocate (50). The latter is the most powerful obligation. These three rules keep the system of exchanges in motion potentially indefinitely, or

until one party defaults on their obligation, an act that invariably entails a social cost in the form of a loss of prestige or status: “to refrain from giving, just as to refrain from accepting, is to lose rank—as is refraining from reciprocating”. While Mauss used a reading of the Maori concept of *hau* or the spirit of the gift to locate the power behind the obligation within the gift itself, later structuralist readings placed the source of the obligation external to the object, in the social structures of status and prestige that require constant rebalancing. Despite these disparities in how the motivation behind the obligation is theorized, the majority of analyses concur that reciprocation is necessary for a gift to be classified as a gift.

To revisit some previous examples, in the Kula Ring of Papua New Guinea, tradition dictates the ceremonial objects that must be offered in reciprocation for each other. Armshells circulate anticlockwise around the community, and necklaces clockwise (Ziegler). In American Midwestern Christmas present exchanges, the value and level of intimacy of each gift has a precise symbolic emotional meaning with regard to the relationship between the giver and recipient (Caplow). Each gift exchange has its own defined form of acceptable reciprocation, along with a system or scale of value by which the appropriateness of the return gift may be assessed. If a poem is to be regarded as a gift, the following questions arise: what is the nature of such a gift, and how is this gift reciprocated? Into what is the gift of poetry converted?

Lewis Hyde has argued that the “gift” in art or poetry is located within the artist himself and is an aspect of his “giftedness” or special genius for creativity. The category of “artist” is in fact conflated with that of “gifted” (Hyde 282). This is an unhelpful throwback to “romantic notions of artistic genius or inspiration” (Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* 134).¹ Inspiration must come from

¹ Hyde’s concept of a “gift” as a quality of genius somehow innate to an artist is reminiscent of popular discourses surrounding celebrity in twentieth century American culture. Joshua Gameson defined the “gift” within his historical sources as “‘star quality,’ ‘charisma,’ ‘appeal,’ ‘personality,’ or simply ‘It’—[it] was never defined beyond a label, even ‘ineffable’. Whatever it was though, the texts made it clear that stars always had it. Fame, based on an indefinable internal quality of self, was natural, almost predestined” (Gameson 32). As with Hyde, “giftedness” functions as a retroactive category—here it provides a rationale for the extraordinary career of a star, an indefinable quality identified in retrospect as the reason for their rise to fame. In *The Gift*, similarly,

somewhere, however. This dissertation has posited the poem as itself a gift offered in reciprocation for the subject matter that interested and inspired the poet. She offers time, careful attention, and creative labour, generating new text, which is then offered in response to the texts, objects, ideas, or people that have caught her attention. In Moore's work the subject matter she is attracted to frequently contains an affective aspect, or at least an interpersonal one. As outlined in Chapter 2, the most common categories of objects Moore responds to are firstly gifts from friends, family, readers, and acquaintances, and secondly the work of other artists and artisans. The involvement of a human hand in the production of Moore's source material provides a framework for the exchange and an individual towards whom the reciprocal gift may be directed. As argued in Chapters 1 and 5, the form of the poem is in turn affected and modulated by the formal aspects of the original gift.

However even if, as in this dissertation, the poem is theorized as a direct response to particular affective and material stimuli in the context of a gift exchange, general readers also receive the poem as a gift. The vast majority of these are not the "intended" recipient or original giver in terms of the exchange. This dissertation focuses on a particular type of reader, who responds to Moore's poems by reciprocating in a direct and personal manner. Chapter 2 outlines gifts that were sent to Moore by readers and friends: as the gift economy tends to function as a cycle or ring, these gifts functioned both as responses to Moore's poetry and generative of new writing. Chapter 3 explores her relation to her patrons, who offered money and material provisions in response to and in support of Moore's literary output. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the responses made to her work by a poet and visual artist in their respective media—actual poems and artworks are among the reciprocal gifts offered to Moore by Elizabeth Bishop and Joseph Cornell.

There are more general implications for this approach, which there is no space to explore within this dissertation. The concentric circles of reciprocation and response may be drawn ever wider—an obvious proximate layer being the

"giftedness" is viewed as a characteristic that *must have* existed within the artist in order to have given rise to their extraordinary work. Hyde, however, did not interrogate this usage.

many little magazines in which Moore published, from *Poetry* to *The Egoist*. The pages of these journals often functioned as conversations, with poets replying directly to a printed poem with one of their own. This responsive matrix recalls the work done by Craig Saper on receivable art and poetry, which builds on Roland Barthes' concept of "receivable" texts (Barthes 3) to establish his theory of a "network of participants" (Saper 3), i.e. a readership that has effectively been selected by the writer. The impact of the work in this case is confined to a limited circle. Beyond this level of interpoetic dialogue stands the ordinary reader, who does not have the opportunity reciprocate personally to Moore herself nor write a response poem. These readers receive the poem nonetheless. What is the ordinary reader's relationship to the poem-as-gift, and how do they reciprocate?

Elizabeth-Jane Burnett, a poet and academic, has used Hyde's work to explore the implications of viewing the contemporary British poetry market as a gift economy. Since poetry books do not sell in sufficient numbers to make a living for their authors, Burnett looks elsewhere for the forms in which readers reciprocate. Observing the behaviour of her own audiences at performance poetry events, and the audience-run venues and events, she concludes that readers respond to the gift of poetry through active engagement. Her definition exceeds the kind of engagement I have defined as time and attention offered in the normal process of reading. What Burnett describes is reader *activism* in the establishment and maintenance of new audiences and venues, and the creation of reader-generated ways to publish and distribute work (Burnett). Although the processes of reciprocation that affect the "ordinary" reader are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but Burnett's has provided a fertile inroad into the subject. As Mauss has shown, the gift can be converted into prestige, admiration, and influence, and as I have outlined in Chapter 3, it can even be transformed into money. In response to Burnett's work we must add to this list the reader's willingness to be moved and to actively engage with the poems before them, to the extent of bearing shared responsibility for their cultural reach and impact.

The application of gift theory within literary studies

At a broad level, the gift represents a useful tool for the literary critic when dealing with the questions of value in art and the relationship between form, idea, and material. According to Lewis Hyde's *The Gift*, a meditation on "the commerce of the creative spirit", the gift complicates itself in its giving by generating narrative in the form of new oral history (Hyde 36). Any object given creates the story of its exchange, and by crossing between contexts gathers and generates a history that increases its value. Its materiality intensifies as it is transformed, possessed and repossessed by each new recipient. As analogy alone, such a description is powerfully evocative of the function of literature within a culture, with stories and texts accruing meaning and significance as they are replicated, retold, and written about. Hyde overviews the anthropological literature, and applies his conclusions to a reading of art as a "gift" of inspiration received by an artist. Hyde, while one of the first to write about poetry in the context of the gift, was ambivalent as to whether or not the work of art itself is a gift: "any object, any item of commerce, becomes one kind of property or another depending on how we use it. Even if a work of art contains the spirit of the artist's gift, it does not follow that the work itself is a gift. It is what we make of it" (xv). Hyde's implication that the poem or work of art fulfils the categories of the gift in particular instances and at certain moments is helpful, although it is somewhat vague. The more profound implication of his statement is that gifts are only partial; that their status as gifts depends on external or formal conditions that are not necessarily permanent. Hyde comes close to such an assertion himself when he points out that "the way we treat a thing can sometimes change its nature" (xv). When he states that "the work is received by us as a gift is received", he locates the site at which the conditions of the gift become possible at the moment of reception. Literature, too, may be regarded to exist only within particular ontological categories. Referencing the work of Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, and Terry Eagleton, James Clifford has argued that "'literature' itself is a transient category" (and a category into which he adds ethnography) (Clifford, *Writing Culture* 5). This instability emerged from the post-seventeenth century division between writing in service of the "objective" sciences and writing that demonstrates the "subjective" skills of rhetoric, metaphor, or allegory. By the

nineteenth century literature was associated with bourgeois values regarding culture and art (ibid.):

Literature and art were, in effect, circumscribed zones in which nonutilitarian, "higher" values were maintained. At the same time they were domains for the playing out of experimental, avant-garde transgressions. Seen in this light, the ideological formations of art and culture have no essential or eternal status. They are changing and contestable, like the special rhetoric of "literature". (6)

Hyde has outlined the conditions he considered necessary for the existence of "literature"—or "art"—in his chapter on Ezra Pound. The reading identifies a division between "eros" and the "will". Hyde defined the "erotic" as inspiration, the giftedness of the artist that allows him to create new works of the imagination. The "erotic" spark of inspiration is the "gift" given to the artist, to which he responds by creating a poem or a work of art. The will, on the other hand, represents the forces of intellect, form, knowledge, and technical mastery brought to bear on the imagination in order to create art. Both are required in order to achieve the conditions of poetry/art:

When the material finally appears [from the imagination] it is usually in a jumble, personally moving, perhaps, but not much use to someone else—not, at any rate, a work of art ... the will has the power to carry the material back to the imagination and contain it there while it is re-formed. The will does not create the "germinating image" of a work, nor does it give the work its form, but it does provide the energy and the directed attention called for by a dialogue with the imagination. (Hyde 225)

In this construction, will and the erotic imagination are seen to be in "dialogue". While imagination without form is not yet a work of art, form without

imagination does not satisfy the conditions either. According to Hyde, Pound's work often fails due to his lack of patience or trust in the unpredictable, mysterious, "gifted" quality of the imagination. His approach is characterized as over-reliant on the action of will, despite the fact that as Hyde asserted the will "cannot create" by itself. In Yeats's words, poetry created in such circumstances is nothing but "rhetoric" (232). Hyde used a domestic, interpersonal image to highlight the futility of Pound's undertaking: "He is like a man who, unable to grieve upon discovering that his wife no longer loves him, becomes more and more aggressive in the dumb belief that love could be forced back into existence" (231). Hyde quoted from Pound's history cantos of 1935-45 as an example of poetry written under the influence of will alone, without the erotic spark of imagination. The results, according to Hyde, are very boring, lacking vivacity, unexpectedness, and depth. Since it emerges from the will alone, without the counterbalance and generative output of the imagination, "the poem becomes mired in time, argument, and explanation, forgetting the atemporal mystery it sets out to protect" (233).²

Moore employed a similar division when outlining her perception of the transience of the category of literature in "Poetry" (Moore, *The Poems of Marianne Moore* (hereafter *Poems*) 135). However, rather than dividing the forces of the imagination and the will, she divided those who were "poets" from those who were not. Moore challenged prescribed categories of "high" art by incorporating texts from "low" cultural sources, such as textbooks or informative pamphlets. In order to enter the category of literature they required the agency of a qualified or "genuine" poet. The speaker of "Poetry" advocates that literary attention be paid to a wide range of texts and phenomena, but makes an exception: "when [they are] dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry". In Moore's view, it is the action of the poet that elevates the text to literature, rather than its intrinsic qualities. It is possible that for her poetry may have ceased to be poetry

² Hyde saw the "Pisan Cantos" as a return to form for Pound, with the formal "will" once more placed into balance with "erotic" imaginative material. He ascribed this return to form to the fact that the poet suffered a mental breakdown, which wore down his capacity to resist the forces of the imagination.

under certain conditions, and vice versa, that non-poetic text could have functioned as poetry in an appropriate context.

Poetry requires a poet and a reader, as the gift requires a giver and recipient. While *The Gift* argues that art is the result of an artistic “gift” or inspiration, and therefore impossible to entirely subject to the market, my reading analyses Moore’s poetry in the context of her transactional exchanges with her broader community. This dissertation also goes beyond Hyde in allowing poems to occupy the category of gifts, in order to explore how far the characteristics of the poem align with those of the gift. The following chapters develop these theoretical opportunities into a practical criticism; the transformations, interactions, and formal properties of the gift are expanded to form an ethnography of Moore’s poetics of exchange. In adapting analytical vocabularies from anthropology, the literary scholar gains an adaptable form of analysis, which rather than focusing on the end point of a finished, published text, encourages every point in its construction and each exchange mapped within the archive to reveal its material circumstances and idiosyncrasies. As an important side note, this socially- and materially-oriented approach creates a model that incorporates the gender of the subject within a range of relational categories such as status within their community, social class, personal intimacy over time, and the nature of the objects and ideas exchanged.

While there is not space here for an extended feminist reading of the gift in Moore’s poetics, it is important to note that its relational matrix characterizes the approach as a feminist one. Firstly, in deconstructionist approaches to the gift, gender is not regarded as an independent category but as a value, the meaning of which is subject to transformation within different contexts, together comprising a partible identity (Strathern). Secondly, the emphasis on exchange and the social conditions surrounding the composition of texts promotes a view of literature as a collaborative enterprise, the composing factors of which are distributed over a network of peers, publishers, patrons, and the public, rather than the spontaneous production of a lone genius (Purves 12) promoted by “romantic notions of artistic genius or inspiration” (Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*

134).³ Whether the gift economy is seen from a structuralist viewpoint, with a balance of transactions maintaining equilibrium within the system as a whole, or, as in the view of Mauss and Bourdieu, as a strategy employed by individual actors to manage influence and status, it can never be read as static, nor as supporting a still centre in which an individual genius acts alone. No single work or act within a public literary sphere regarded as a gift economy can be considered an isolated action or *sui generis*. Form, theme, and content within this context are all responsive and subject to response.

Marianne Moore's poetics of exchange

The following chapters explore the action of the gift at several analytical levels. Many of the texts and artworks examined were exchanged between friends or given as gifts, and therefore packaged, embellished, addressed and presented to the recipient with explicit intent. Moore's poetics mirror these actions, as her formal procedures and practices resemble the acts of package, embellishment, and personal address. The logic according to which she composed her poems obeyed the laws of gratitude and obligation laid out by Mauss and Hyde, with the urge to reciprocate underlying much of her descriptive work.

Two main aspects of the gift stand out in relation to Moore's poetics: the properties of the gift as expressed in poetic form, and the social transactional bonds the gift establishes within the poet's social and professional networks. This dual focus reveals a central facet of my reading of the gift—the fact that the material and social elements of the exchange are profoundly interconnected and interdependent. The formal characteristics of the gift (in this case, poetry) are affected by the community within which it is exchanged, and, vice versa, the community is shaped by the formal and material elements of the gifts (in this case, poems) exchanged within it.

³ This reading differs from that of Hyde, who does in fact view the artist as specially "gifted". Despite the relative popularity of his book, however, his view is not representative. Hyde deviated from the majority of theorists in regarding the "gift" as a quality that is somehow innate within an individual, rather than an exchangeable item or service.

A rehabilitated modernist

Grace Schulman has declared it “an oddity of American letters that no major poet is cherished more and known less than Marianne Moore” (Moore, *The Poems of Marianne Moore* 1). Recent years, however, have seen an upsurge in interest in her life and work. In 2016 an article appeared in the *New Yorker* on “The Marianne Moore Revival” (Raphel), her original volume of poetry, *Observations*, has been recently reissued by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (ibid.), which will also release her correspondence with Elizabeth Bishop in 2018. From the same house comes a new biography by Linda Leavell, providing new insights into the poet’s relationships with her avant-garde circle in New York and beyond. Moore’s legacy as a poet has been likewise re-evaluated, and she is now considered to have influenced distinct streams within contemporary poetry.⁴

Moore was recognised in her day as one of the most important American modernists. Gaston Lachaise sculpted a bust of her, and Cecil Beaton photographed her for *Vogue*. Peers including T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound considered her one of the greatest living poets. John Ashbery, himself a protégé of Moore’s who sent her early manuscripts for comment (*Letters* 490), believed her to be one of the most important poets of the 20th century, and repaid her early generosity by becoming a lifelong champion of her work. At the same time, he commented on the difficulty apparent in her poetry:

I am tempted simply to call her our greatest modern poet...

There are ... cases I which I become aware before the end of a poem that
Miss Moore and I have parted company somewhat further back ... We

⁴ Stephen Burt credits Moore with inspiring what he describes as the “Nearly Baroque” tradition in contemporary American poetry, made up of mostly female poets using Moore-like “elaborate syntax and sonic patterning, without adopting pre-modernist forms...if they derive technique from a modernist poet, it is always Marianne Moore”. Poets working in this tradition include Angie Estes, Robyn Schiff, and Hailey Leithauser (Burt).

are brought up against a mastery which defies attempts to analyse it, an intelligence that plays just beyond our reach. (Ashbery 108–10)

This defiant quality has perhaps led to her work being overlooked or dismissed by readers who do not understand it. In his *New York Times* review of Moore, Ashbery attempted to summarize Moore's paradoxes—for example her oblique shifts between subject matter and her strong conceptual voice—in a single image, stating that her poetry proceeded “in a straight line” but “over a terrain that is far from level” (ibid.). As he implies, her style was idiosyncratic and occasionally obscure, with heavy use of quotation, esoteric subject matter, and a complex and innovative use of form, with particular innovations in the syllabic stanza. Her work sounded unlike her peers' in many respects. Moore herself admitted that she tended to avoid the obvious route in her work, stating “I like the unaccented syllable and the accented near-rhyme” (Hall and Moore). Dan Chiasson recently stated her poems were particularly hard “because they were not “difficult”—fragmented, allusive—in the prescribed modernist way” but in their own (Chiasson). Her lines were often literally odd, numbering 1, 3, 9, 7, or 5 syllables.

Granddaughter of a Presbyterian minister, Moore was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on November 15, 1887. Her father, an unemployed engineer, was institutionalized after he began to experience psychotic episodes (Molesworth 1). Mary Moore returned to the home of her widowed father with her family. Marianne attended Bryn Mawr, where she showed an interest and aptitude for biology in addition to publishing many early poems and prose pieces in the college literary magazine, *Tipyn o'bob* (Molesworth 27–75). During this period, her separation from her family initiated the development of the lifelong correspondence between Marianne, her brother, and her mother, which continued at an intense pace whenever they were apart, with multiple letters a week ranging in length from a couple of pages to over fifty.

A significant portion of my research is based on Moore's personal correspondence. This correspondence primarily establishes that there was, in fact, a gift exchange between Moore and her peers: not only do the archived

papers represent an exchange in themselves, but they provide a trace of the transfer of objects and gifts that accompanied that of letters and postcards. Themes, forms, and vocabulary developed in the correspondence also had clear parallels in the poetry. The correspondence contains drafts of poems and commentary on completed works; in addition, Moore's relation to the material world is often evidenced in her thank you notes for gifts or items received. However, the quality of Moore's descriptive prose in her letters renders them worthy of study in themselves. In fact, while discussing the correspondence of Elizabeth Bishop with Moore and others, Paul Muldoon has argued that the letters of between the poets of this circle may have been written with this intent: "I believe that even the most careless of these letters are written not only with care but with a career-sense that includes the distinct possibility—no, the absolute certainty—that they would one day be published and pored over with the kind of scrutiny we're bringing to them even today" (Muldoon). Muldoon has used the correspondence of Bishop and Robert Lowell in a similar fashion to unearth the channels of obligation, influence, and debt in the poems they dedicated to one another (ibid.).

The editors of Moore's letters, Bonnie Costello, Celeste Goodridge, and Cristanne Miller, emphasised the imperative they felt to represent the intimate ties "between Moore's family life and her career as a poet" (*Letters* x). Riddles, nicknames, and in-jokes marked these letters, to the extent that the editors have included lists of the family's nicknames for the sake of clarity. Some letters used multiple nicknames for the same family member:

Bryn Mawr, February 19, 1907

Dearest Family,

The Fawn's and the Fish's letter came this morning...it will be great to have the Beaver visit me [...]

With dearest love,

Fangs

I'm eager to know about my dress but I know you haven't forgot it
Bunny.

(*Letters 24*)

It would be difficult for the casual reader to make out that Moore, signing herself Fangs, is addressing her mother (Fawn, Bunny), her brother (Fish), and her mother's partner Mary Norcross (Beaver). The family often used animal nicknames for one another, sometimes drawing from children's literature; other examples such "Fangs", "Fawn", and "Turtle" drew more broadly on the zoological theme. The family's characteristics were drawn into their nicknaming: while they lived together, Moore and her mother signed themselves "Rat" and "Mole" after the old cohabiting friends in *Wind in the Willows*, and the family enjoyed the playfulness of inhabiting these characters. Writing in the character of a toad, Marianne claims a new coat "matches the lily pad" and jokes about her poisonous hide (*Letters 84, 86*).

Moore's predilection for animal avatars in poems such as "The Jerboa", "The Pangolin", or "The Plumet Basilisk" shows a direct continuation of her family's habit of intimate renaming, and roleplaying in character as animals. In these poems, animal characteristics are adapted to self-portraiture, but they always remain attentive to the features of the animal itself. While the reader is encouraged to draw analogies from the habits of a pangolin, for example, it is always distinctly a pangolin. The creature's scales, tail, and movements are captured with precise imagery:

"Fearful yet to be feared," the armored
ant-eater met by the driver-ant does not turn back, but
engulfs what he can, the flattened sword-
edged leafpoints on the tail and artichoke set leg- and body-plates
quivering violently when it retaliates

and swarms on him. Compact like the furled fringed frill
on the hat-brim of Gargallo's hollow iron head of a
matador, he will drop and will
then walk away
unhurt, although if unintruded on,
he cautiously works down the tree, helped

by his tail.

[...]

...Pangolins are not aggressive animals; between
dusk and day they have the not unchain-like machine-like
form and frictionless creep of a thing
made graceful by adversities, con-

versities. To explain grace requires
a curious hand...

Moral conclusions are extrapolated from the behaviour of the pangolin. The precise description of the creature leads into a meditation on grace. The pangolin is a comfortable vehicle for Moore, accustomed as she was to speaking in the voice of a Rat or Toad. The Moore family's lifelong adoption of animal personae seems to have enabled the poet to root the most abstract of moral speculations in portraits of exotic creatures, and given her the "curious hand" required to gracefully shift perspective from the anatomical to the theoretical, from the zoologist's microscope to a broad moral lens.

In volume alone, Moore's correspondence forms a major part of her written production, and her engagement with letter writing reveals aspects of her attitude towards the composition of text and its function. According to Costello,

during periods when the family were separated they sent their letters “round-robin, each adding to the letters they received, with Mary Warner Moore collecting all letters ... once they had gone full circle” (*Letters* 3–4). Thus Moore received a powerful early impression that texts are cycling exchange objects, a main function of which is to generate and maintain intimate social bonds. Furthermore, the content of such texts is collaborative, with the semantic, formal, and thematic innovations of others incorporated into and responded to by each composition. This capacity to play with other people’s words and incorporate them within her own texts is often replicated in Moore’s poems.

Following her early experiences at college and as a teacher, Moore’s literary career was shaped by her interactions with the modernist figures she met in New York City. She moved there permanently in 1918 with her mother, and quickly became central to the avant-garde community of Greenwich Village. In his *Autobiography*, William Carlos Williams somewhat hyperbolically described her as a “saint ... in whom we all instinctively felt our purpose come together to form a stream” and “a rafter holding up the superstructure of our uncompleted building” (Williams 146), a retrospective analysis based on their decades of mutual support and friendship. Moore contested this, complaining to Donald Hall “I never was a rafter holding up anyone!” (Hall and Moore). Despite her reluctance to lay claim to her role, the avant-garde considered her an integral and important member of their ranks, and she was intimately involved with several of the modernist little magazines of the period. During her early years in New York, Moore quickly became part of the social circle surrounding *Broom*, Alfred Kreymborg’s magazine *Others*, in which she published several of her early works, and assumed editorship of *The Dial* between 1925–29 (*Letters* 117).

Little magazines were a lynchpin of the New York avant-garde, providing opportunities for publication and payment, but also interaction with and confrontation with the work of others. They played a key role in community formation and exchange. From her earliest publications in *Others* and *Broom*, Moore’s work was constantly juxtaposed with other people’s. Her tenure as editor of *The Dial* and her professional interactions with the magazine are explored in Chapter 3, but it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully engage with the implications of these exchanges across the pages of little

magazines. Georgina Taylor has discussed the “intersubjective” semi-private circle of female modernists surrounding H.D., who between 1913 and 1946 used the little magazines to promote and share ideas “through a process of interaction” (Taylor 5). The potential richness of such work emphasises the importance of the dual issues of writers’ personal interactions through community, and the formal interactions of their works in relation to one another.

The social gift: “Communities of the otherwise”

Moore’s social networks

Gift exchange has provided anthropologists with the means to map wider networks and communities by recording the transfers between them. In Mauss, the gift system is seen as the means by which a society is established through the constant cycling of goods and services in a series of non-economic transactions, and therefore the means of mapping such a society is to painstakingly record such exchanges: “The process is marked by a continuous flow in all directions of presents given, accepted, and reciprocated, obligatorily and out of self-interest, by reason of greatness and for services rendered, through challenges and pledges” (Mauss 37). Gift theory can provide a means to map the community of poets, editors, critics and readers surrounding Moore and her correspondents, and provide insights into the nature of their exchanges. Tracing the transfers within a network of artists or poets demonstrates how such networks of overlapping friendships and professional interactions develop, define, and maintain themselves. Moore’s lively correspondence with other poets and members of New York literary society inhabits an interstitial space. Although not entirely professional, they often refer to literary business, or contain drafts and ideas for poems and reviews. On the other hand, while they are sometimes deeply personal, as in the Bishop or Hildegard Watson letters, they are also very much composed, and serve as testing grounds for Moore’s extraordinary application of description, syntax, and juxtaposition of subject and form, all of which make their mark on her poetry.

Moore and the avant-garde

The New York avant-garde is the type of alternative community described by Elizabeth A. Povinelli's "anthropology of the otherwise", which defines communities and social spaces at odds with the dominant culture within which they are enmeshed. Such communities can be recognised by the fact that they engender an immunological response in the "host" society (Povinelli). These spaces are noteworthy because they represent "emergent forms of social being", and Povinelli outlines the mechanics of their interactions with their wider cultural context:

How might one consider the anthropology of the otherwise through gift economies and alternative currencies and communities, and in turn consider emergent forms of social being in relation to what I am calling the *embagination* of space by the circulation of things? As I hope will become clear, conceptualizing social space as a kind of *embagination* foregrounds the fact that gift economies can close a world but never seal it. Every gift economy creates simultaneous surplus, excess, deficits, and abscesses in material and memory, and thus the most profound gift is given at the limit of community. (Povinelli)

The model of a community of the "otherwise" reflects the isolation experienced by its members and their need to generate intimacy with each other across urban, social and class differences that were sometimes vast. The poets and writers living and working in New York during the period covered by this dissertation came from all over the United States and Europe, either driven to the city as an exile or drawn there in search of community or opportunity. That diversity was matched by disparities of class and income between individuals such as Bryher, the enormously wealthy English heiress, and Wallace Stevens, who supported his

family through his work as an insurance broker; the result was an uneasy, emergent bohemia *embaginated* within a metropolitan economy driven by rapidly expanding industrial and financial sectors. Within the setting of urban modernity, individuals with greatly differing values and expectations faced the challenge of weaving together a social fabric in order to reap the benefits of community.

Moore's own journey to membership in the New York avant-garde includes elements common to many writers and artists who found their way to the city. She was drawn to the city from the less populous Pennsylvania (Molesworth 1-76). Her growing sense of which writers, journals, and artists most resonated with her own work led to her first forming connections long-distance, by post and through friends of friends. Her initial visits to New York provided the occasion for an overwhelming sense of recognition and hope that the new people she was meeting could provide an entry into, or an exemplar of, the life that she wished to lead as well as the kind of work she wished to make (*Letters* 103-112).

In 1909, Moore wrote a hundred and fifty pages to her mother and brother in response to her first impressions of the city, when she went to see a play by J. M. Barrie, *What Every Woman Knows*, meetings on women's suffrage, and, significantly, the pianist Ignacy Paderewski, who left a deep impression on her and became her "first aesthetic exemplar, anticipating the athletes, performers, and animals of her later poetry" (Leavell 93). This outpouring of writing came in response to her first encounters with her potential aesthetic community, and the attempt to precisely define in prose what struck her particularly about Paderewski's style, or Barrie's playwriting. The young poet attempted to pinpoint what she perceived to be valuable in the cultural material she was encountering for the first time, and isolate what it had in common with her own sensibilities. As Leavell put it, "she ... attempts several sentences before she gets the distinctions just right" (*ibid.*).

Later, after Moore's early publications in *The Egoist* and *Others*, the poet H.D. wrote to reveal that she was now married to Richard Aldington, her real name was Hilda Doolittle and that she had been a classmate of Moore's at Bryn

Mawr (Leavell 6). Her re-established acquaintance with H.D. gave her a fresh point of entry into New York's bohemian community: through H.D., who shared her social class and educational background, the two communities overlapped for Moore, and she could much more easily habituate the idea of herself forming alliances with such "bohemian" people. She wrote her brother to gush about the respectable habits of the Aldingtons, informing him that "Mrs. Aldington kept her house spotless and that Mr. Aldington has dispensed with a hat" (*Letters* 101). *Others* was published out of Kreymborg's Greenwich Village apartment, and he invited her to visit it for supper. After dining with him and his wife, she wrote her family at length detailing her enthusiasm for their company: "In her long account of the evening afterward, Marianne clearly wished to persuade her family of her new friends' respectability... her wall-to-wall description of the Kreymborgs' apartment indicates that she was also beginning to envision an artist's life for herself. It was possible, she saw, to live among artists and writers without adopting a bohemian lifestyle" (Leavell 8). As ever, Moore paid great attention to the objects and decoration surrounding the people she encountered, and filtered her assessment of their character and value through a description of them. At this early stage, one of her first visits to New York, she was concerned with establishing a sense of familiarity.

One of Moore's early letters from New York, entitled "Sojourn in the Whale", framed her visit to the city in terms of Jonah's messy spiritual rebirth after being swallowed by a great fish: "I was telling you about my passage of the Red Sea, or rather my experience in the whale" (*Letters* 107). New York is conceived of as both the whale itself and the rite of passage Jonah's swallowing and regurgitation represents. The massive metropolis appears to the poet like the enormous fish come to swallow her up, in a deeply ambivalent image that reveals the fear that the poet might lose her identity altogether. On the other hand, in the biblical tale Jonah's time in the whale represents a rite of passage during which the young man learns to accept his vocation as a prophet. This reading is echoed by the other biblical reference in the quotation, to Moses's parting of the Red Sea. The passage of the Israelites across the sea marks their escape from slavery in Egypt, and is a miraculous and monumental event. The young poet is making a point about how overwhelming and magical her experience of the city had been.

This letter, which describes her meeting with future friends such as the Kreymborgs, emphasises the importance of the city and contact with other artists for the development of her future work, and highlights her use of descriptive writing to respond to these meetings and events. The poem “Is Your Town Nineveh?”, continues the biblical motif of Jonah and the whale in relation to the metropolis. The theme, subject, and imagery of this poem grew directly from Moore’s exchange of letters with her family while in New York:

Why so desolate?
in phantasmagoria about fishes,
what disgusts you? Could
not all personal upheaval in
the name of freedom, be tabooed?

Is it Nineveh
and are you Jonah
in the sweltering east wind of your wishes?
I, myself, have stood
there by the aquarium, looking
at the Statue of Liberty. (Moore, *Poems* 103)

Here the sights of the city are arranged in counterpoint to the symbolic attributes of the Old Testament Book of Jonah, in which Jonah flees from God’s call to become a prophet to the city of Nineveh and is punished. Jonah takes passage in a ship to Tarshish, but a great storm is sent to overtake him, and the sailors toss him into the sea where he is swallowed by a great fish. Jonah spends three days and three nights in the belly of the fish before being vomited out onto dry land. When Jonah later attempts to hide in the mountains above the city, he is

overwhelmed by the heat of the east wind, again sent by God to cause him discomfort. It is perhaps worth noting that when he eventually carries it out, Jonah's mission to Nineveh is successful.

Thus, in this poem, Moore interrogates the nature of freedom, and questions whether she is running from her moral responsibility while taking refuge in this new city with its welcoming community of poets and artists. Nineveh, after all, was facing God's wrath for its corruption and decadence. Moore draws an obvious parallel between the biblical town—"an exceeding great city of three days' journey"—and New York. The speaker records her ambivalent reaction to the personal freedom the city represents. Jonah's "phantasmagoria about fishes", is paralleled in the second stanza by an actual aquarium, and the troubling abstract "personal upheaval in/the name of freedom" pinned more concretely down in the last line by the "Statue of Liberty". The monuments provide a physical counterpoint to the moral uncertainties posed by the rest of the poem. The disgust and discomfort experienced by Jonah are characterized in Moore's reading of the biblical text as the result of his desire to be liberated from the will of God. In this way, Moore's own anxieties about this new, attractive, morally questionable milieu are vividly expressed. The biblical concept of freedom as disobedience to God is contrasted with the very American, iconic patriotic symbol of liberty, which frames freedom within an acceptable, even aspirational moral framework.

Publication and patronage networks

The avant-garde movement used multiple actions and exchanges designed to establish connection and mutual support between very disparate individuals: friendship networks, individual patronage, dedicated journals, readings, galleries, and presses. These systems provided financial and personal support and enabled the distribution and publication of work. The economic aspects of Moore's network appear early on in her correspondence. Alongside her bubbly description of dinner with the Kreymborgs appears a conversation with the publisher, in which Moore offered to write to Richard Aldington encouraging him

to ask his circle of writer friends to contribute to *Others* (*Letters* 107). Social occasions generated professional opportunities to publish, read, or receive prizes and references. Professional opportunities likewise generated social interactions. This twofold movement—professional into personal, personal into professional—characterizes the avant-garde gift economy of which Moore worked hard to make herself part.

At the limit of community

As Povinelli put it, “the most profound gift is given at the limit of community” (Povinelli). Moore's reluctance to be seen as a “rafter” supporting her New York community of writers (Hall and Moore) stemmed perhaps from this sense that a liminal position within a community may be the most fruitful, in terms of what may be given and received beyond the range of the local, intra-communal norm. Moore inhabited such a marginal position. Her Presbyterian sense of “propriety” stood in marked contrast to the avant-garde mores of her bohemian circle (Zona 43). Standing between the modernist iconoclasts of New York and the Victorian bourgeois values of her mother (Chiasson), Moore belonged fully to neither world, and though she may have accepted gifts from both sides she could never be fully habilitated into either. An experimental poet who wishes to go beyond what her peers have achieved must occupy a position at the edge; she must stand at the margin of her community and look out beyond its current limits. Social and professional interactions were entangled with the shared aesthetic preferences that defined the avant-garde as a group, indivisible from the prestige and other social benefits arising from participation. Moore's reluctance to be seen as too close to the centre of gravity or as an indispensable part of the edifice itself, presumably flowed from a similar conflation of the structural social elements of community and its aesthetic characteristics.

Moore's liminality was also geographical. After several years in Manhattan, Moore and her mother Mary moved to a single room in Brooklyn at 260 Cumberland Street, establishing a domestic arrangement that endured for decades (Chiasson). Moore's choice to live in the cheaper suburban

neighbourhood isolated and decentralized her geographically and socially from her Greenwich Village circle. Those who wished to see her were required to take the L train across from the city centre. Moore kept a dish of change by her door to pay for her visitors' subway fare, perhaps a sign that she recognised how inconvenient it was for the avant-garde elite to venture out so far from the city centre (Chiasson). The gift that was being offered here was the time it took for people to come out so far, and it was a gift that Moore was clearly aware of. Her suburban life mirrored her eventual position within literary history, viewed as marginalized while indelibly linked to her contemporaries, and encouraged the writing of letters and the exchange of gifts, since Moore was often not physically present to call on acquaintances or attend salons. Distance fortified the material trace of exchange.

Marianne Moore's unusual domestic circumstances have been well documented by her biographers, and are often relevant to this research. Moore lived chastely, never married, and dedicated herself to her mother's company and care. Both her sexual orientation and presentation were ambiguous. She does not appear to have formed romantic attachments (Leavell xi) and was androgynous in her dress. Her family routinely referred to Moore with male pronouns (*Letters* 4). These ambiguities have led to the poet being posthumously characterized as queer (Levy 107), bringing the potential for new critical insights into her engagements with the heteronormative institutions of her time, particularly marriage, which as she put it "requires all one's criminal ingenuity to avoid" (Moore, *Poems* 155).

Publications and prizes

Moore's first book, *Poems*, was published by The Egoist Press in 1921 by Bryher, H.D., and Robert McAlmon. *Observations*, which appeared in 1924 from The Dial Press, reprinted poems from the earlier book but contained more than twice as many. This book was the first in which Moore included citations noting the source of her quotations, although she was unable to be exhaustive. Having kept incomplete records of her sources, "she could not find them all" (Leavell 219).

Her later major collections included *What Are Years?* (1941), *O to Be a Dragon* (1959), and *The Arctic Ox* (1964). Moore won a majority of the major US poetry prizes over the course of her lifetime, including the Pulitzer Prize, the Bollingen Prize and the National Book Award in 1952, a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1945, and the Robert Frost Medal in 1967 (“Marianne Moore”, *Poetry Foundation*). By the time of her death in 1972 she cut a legendary figure as a celebrity poet in New York,⁵ known as much for her eccentric style of dress and conversation as her published work. She appeared on the Today Show and threw out the first ball of the season for the New York Yankees (Chiasson).⁶

⁵ See Jonathan Goldman’s discussion of celebrity in modernism, which explores how “modernism generates a figure of the author as a unique, larger-than-life personality, a choreographer or disparate discourses and repository of encoded meaning” (Goldman 2).

⁶ Moore’s association with baseball was secured in 1956, when her poem dedicated to the Brooklyn Dodgers, “Hometown Piece for Messrs. Alston and Reese” was printed on the front page of the Herald Tribune to mark the opening of the World Series. After the Brooklyn team relocated to Los Angeles, her loyalty was transferred to the New York Yankees. “Baseball and Writing”, written in 1961 about a game in Yankee Stadium, secured her position as baseball’s unofficial poet laureate (Kuhl).



Figure i: Marianne Moore throwing out the first pitch for 1968's Opening Day at Yankee Stadium.

"Omissions are not accidents"

Poems by Moore tended to accrue complex publication histories. *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore* (1967), which included an epitaph for which the poet famously noted that "omissions are not accidents" and not only left out previously published works but mercilessly cut such staples as "Poetry" to only a few lines. Her penchant for editing and reediting poems was both infamous and "bewildering" (Logan), with poems taking multiple and sometimes irreconcilable forms throughout the years. Many of Moore's critics have grappled with the import of her revisions. Grace Schulman has argued that while the revisions "startled" many of Moore's readers (100) they in fact represented the "lifeblood"

of the poems and are “fundamental to an understanding of what the body of work consists of” (Schulman 5). As Miller summarized:

Moore, in effect, creates a poetic in which no version of a text takes obvious authority over any other, since apparently only death prevented further revision to her texts, and one might just as well argue for the authority of the first as of the last (or “best”) printed version. Authorial intent, in this case, seems both to claim the necessity of radical editorial decisions (leading to omissions) and to acknowledge the fact of ongoing change. (Miller, “Inclusion and Omission”)

From the perspective of the gift, the constant revisions in Moore’s printed record represent a deep instability in the gift she is offering to the reader. The full text may be retracted without warning with each new publication, as in the *Complete Poems* version of “Poetry”.⁷ On the one hand, Moore’s revisions ensure that the poem is never truly “possessed” by the reader, since any published version of a poem is only the tip of the iceberg of the work in its multiple shifting forms. On the other, it could be argued that the gift is constantly renewed, demanding further responses from the reader: more time, attention, and mental engagement in reciprocation for the poet’s renewed offering.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation, however, to mount a full reading of Moore’s revisions, and these have been widely discussed by scholars elsewhere. For consistency therefore I have referred throughout to Grace Schulman’s 2004 scholarly edition unless otherwise noted. *The Poems of Marianne Moore* follows the 1967 collection while reinstating earlier, longer versions of poems when necessary. There are obvious issues with settling on a single version of the poems, a process Schulman herself described as “conscientious inconsistency”, and which a reviewer dismissed as editorial

⁷ See Bonnie Costello, *Imaginary Possessions*.

“whim” (Logan). The text is, however, the current standard edition, and lends a partial stability to the discussion.

Mentorship

Moore mentored younger poets throughout her life, many of whom, such as Elizabeth Bishop and John Ashbery, went on themselves to achieve great recognition. Bishop, probably her best-known protégée, commented that Moore’s poems, which she described as “miracles of language and construction”, expanded her own conception of what subjects one could write poetry about (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 123). Their relationship was intense and involved decades of correspondence and exchanges, as examined in Chapter 4. The influence of one poet over another, particularly a younger or less developed writer, has often been described in theory as unconscious and aggressive (Bloom), and certainly the relationship between the two women was often ambivalent, characterised as it was by frequent misunderstandings and arguments.

Chapter 4 analyses their correspondence as a gift exchange, positing that the heavy burden of influence may be read as a gift that must be reciprocated or refused. This case study highlights the fact that, as Bourdieu has pointed out, gift exchange usually takes place within a status hierarchy and is often in fact used to implement and maintain dominance relations. The gift is never innocent and far from utopian, and is in fact “at the heart of the alchemical transmutation that is the basis of symbolic power; a power that is created, accumulated, and perpetuated through communication, symbolic exchange” (Bourdieu, “Logic of Practice” 237).

The formal properties of the gift

Each of the following chapter traces how exchange materials contribute to the composition of Moore’s poetry and that of her correspondents, both as a

motivating factor and as a formal influence. Central to the argument is the conceit that a poem may be considered a gift, and that the form of Moore's poems makes visible the exchange structures that produced the circumstances of their composition. Again this proposition is two-fold: firstly, it implies that their construction is based at least partly on exchange, ample evidence for which may be found by examining Moore's sources, which Chaisson has described as a "whole world of private reference culled both from Moore's conversation and letters, and from her idiosyncratic reading and collecting" (Chaisson). Secondly, it implies that Moore's poems bear the characteristics of exchange objects. These may be defined as exchangeability, ornamentation, formal responsiveness, and enclosure.

In some ways the gift can be seen as an analogy for what might better be described as collaboration, or the indebtedness that is expressed when one concedes that one's work is not entirely original. Moore's extensive acknowledgements and footnotes make clear that she considered herself thus indebted. Intertextual exchanges generate debts through acts of borrowing and quotation, and provide reciprocation through new writing in response, footnotes and acknowledgements, and the return gift of a new poem containing the original text as a quotation. Chapter 4, which examines Moore's relationship with Elizabeth Bishop, examines such intertextual interactions as enacted forms of gifting and reciprocation. Borrowed phrases and extracts are usually clearly marked in Moore's poems.⁸ "Poetry" emphasises her desire to incorporate material from a diverse range of source texts, with direct quotations from Tolstoy's diary and Yeats, as credited in her notes (Moore, *Complete Poems* 267).

Poetry

⁸ Occasionally in the case of particularly famous texts, the reader is expected to recognise hidden references without quotation marks, as to Milton in "Marriage", for example. These hidden texts could be viewed as concealed gifts to be uncovered, intended to delight. They could, however, equally be regarded as tests of the reader's knowledge and ability to read the poems at a deeper level.

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in
it, after all, a place for the genuine.

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

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

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under
a tree, the immovable critic twinkling 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. One must make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry,
nor till the poets among us can be
“literalists of
the imagination”—above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, “imaginary gardens with real toads in them,” shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness, and
that which is on the other hand
genuine, then you are interested in poetry. (Moore, *Poems* 135)

Moore also implies that the transactional nature of her poetry goes beyond direct
quotation. The dedication of her 1935 *Selected Poems* describes the collection as
a gift to her mother, who influenced it so heavily: “Dedications imply giving, and
we do not care to make a gift of what is insufficient; but in my immediate family
there is one “who thinks in a particular way”; and I should like to add that where

there is an effect of thought or pith in these pages, the thinking and often the actual phrases are hers" (Moore, *Selected Poems* Epigraph). An example of the "effect of thought or pith" appears in the opening lines of "Poetry", which seems to open in the middle of a discussion. The poem's speaker is responding to a previous comment, with "too", used here to indicate an agreeing thought. The construction implies the involvement of someone else, and a preceding sentence that has been omitted. Space has been opened up by the grammar for a second voice, and by extension their dissenting opinion, which shadows the argument of the poem throughout. The characterization of poetry as "all this fiddle", for example, appears to be a borrowed inflection, echoing the voice of a dismissive interlocutor. "Poetry" is structured as a response to a thought that is not the poet's own; it may therefore be described as an act of reciprocation. There is a double addressee in the poem, of course: the "you" of the poem, and the reader, who moves through the argument of the poem as it unfolds. Time and attention are the return gift made by the reader as he or she follows both sides of the discussion. Imaginative space must also be offered to fill out the "silent" half of the dialogue, and this is a form of reciprocation in itself.

Moore's invocation of Tolstoy also enters into dialogue alongside its source. A fuller quotation from Tolstoy's diary appears in her notes and makes clear that the novelist took an opposing position to the one his words have been pressed into service to defend:

Where the boundary between prose and poetry lies, I shall never be able to understand. The question is raised in manuals of style, yet the answer to it lies beyond me. Poetry is verse: prose is not verse. Or else poetry is everything with the exception of business documents and school books. (Moore, *Complete Poems* 267)

Again, the poem creates a space for the opposing argument by formulating the sentence as a rebuttal: "nor is it valid / to discriminate against 'business documents and / school-books'"; Tolstoy's own words are excerpted, but the reader must extrapolate that a third party had argued that such texts should be

excluded. The argument of “Poetry” is thus an exchange in which side of dialogue is omitted, but its formal traces remain in the formal properties of the grammar.

Formal properties and quotation

Moore recorded snippets of conversation in her notebooks, quotations from textbooks, letters, magazines, or advertisements. These diverse sources were painstakingly referenced when they appeared in her poems, and the vast array of her borrowings and influences was always explicitly on view. Her work was characterised by her extensive use of quotation marks, through which she acknowledged the words she had taken from other writers and repurposed. She often gave reference notes at the end of books listing the provenance of the items, beginning the practice in *Observations*: “No one but a truly original poet would be so scrupulous with footnoted acknowledgements ... she has many affinities. These are hers by choice, as Henry James’s were—by a series of choices no less fastidiously eclectic than his, albeit she has managed to cultivate her mandarinism without traveling far beyond Brooklyn” (Levin 40). Moore was as ever evasive about her innovation, passing it off as stylistic quirk that she used for practical reasons:

I was just trying to be honorable and not to steal things. I’ve always felt that if a thing had been said in the *best* way, how can you say it better? If I wanted to say something and somebody had said it ideally, then I’d take it but give the person credit for it. That’s all there is to it. (Hall and Moore 260)

However, the additional punctuation, an idiosyncrasy that renders her poems instantly recognisable, transforms a predilection that could be read as merely a “taste for unhomogeneity” (Wasserstrom 35) into an experimental technique that transcends the merely stylistic. In light of Moore’s statement, her use of quotation rather appears to represent her commitment to the material

uniqueness of the original text, what she refers to as “best” way of saying something. The poet believed so thoroughly in the formal inalienability of the original text that she chopped and pasted it with the surgical confidence of a visual artist creating a collage with paper and glue. Instead of the torn or cut edges of paper, the boundary between one source and another is marked by punctuation.

Collage practice

Moore’s step toward full quotation in her poems builds on her technique of defining overlapping images precisely enough that each retained its distinctiveness, despite arising concurrently in the mind, like two notes on the piano played at the same time. This technique was noted by some of her earliest critics, with T. S. Eliot, reviewing “Those Various Scalpels” in *The Dial* in 1923 describing how “the second image is superposed before the first has quite faded, and upon the dexterity of change of vocabulary from one image to another” (Eliot, “Marianne Moore” 595). Wallace Stevens likewise noticed Moore’s interest in what he described as the “intermingling” of closely juxtaposed sounds and images, illustrating his point with an example from “The Steeple-Jack” (Kalstone 52):

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

Plain “moon-vines”, Stevens argues, are “tedious” but the “intermingling” of the sounds of that phrase with the half rhyme of “fishing-twine” creates something

that “interests” the reader much more (ibid.). The dextrousness that Eliot praises requires the ear to make a precise distinction between “vine” and “twine”, and all the while the line works to create the image of vines and string that are entwined but distinct. Moore’s virtuosity emphasises the distinctiveness of each textual and aural artefact, even as their similarities are brought to the fore.

Collage builds on the layering potential of this technique by inserting text artefacts from entirely different sources into the body of the poem. The layers of aural and visual interlacing are expanded to include the juxtaposition of direct source materials, which combine to create a new text while preserving their own textual integrity. “Poetry” makes its point about the potential of many sorts of texts to be pleasurable and interesting to the reader in their own right by incorporating quotations from just such diverse sources, conceiving of the poem as “imaginary gardens with real toads in them”. The origin of the “imaginary gardens...” quotation has so far not been found, despite Patricia Willis at the Rosenbach running a competition to uncover it (Moore, *Selected Poems* 408). Moore was often unable to remember the exact sources for her quotations, and kept inexact notes (Leavell 219). She may have heard or used the phrase in conversation, or found it in a journal: nonetheless, it was important to her to acknowledge the ambiguity. Acknowledgment, here, is the recognition that the text came from elsewhere and had a context and meaning that preceded this one, and a form of gratitude for its reception and use.

Moore took the acknowledgement of her literary debts seriously, and praised the poet Elizabeth Bishop’s efforts to credit her sources and influences—her “avowed humility” in face of that which she owes in an early introduction to her work. The language Moore uses resonates with the vocabulary of the gift:

One would rather disguise than travesty emotion; give away a nice thing than sell it; dismember a garment of rich aesthetic construction than degrade it to the utilitarian offices of the boneyard ... We look at imitation askance; but like the shell which the hermit-crab selects for itself, it has value—the avowed

humility, and the protection. (McCabe, "Elizabeth Bishop: Her Poetics of Loss" 46)

The ambiguous nature of the gift and its attendant obligations emerges in Moore's discussion of Bishop's form and procedure, with the act of "giving" explicitly aligned with that of "dismembering" into component parts, to be reused. This description seems more relevant to her own poetics than the younger poet's, who rarely used direct quotation. Collaged quotation as Moore practiced it was a step further than Bishop's subtle references, and is a much more literal inclusion of another's work within her own. The act of dismembering other writer's work and enclosing it, directly and formally intact, within the new text in fact includes the use of quotation marks, which doubly functions as mechanism for acknowledgment that another text lies behind the current one. Dismemberment and acknowledgement are facets of the same act for Moore; taking apart and saving the best of another's work is an act of preservation, economy, and honour. Moore's deployment of quotation recalls the breaking of ceremonial coppers in order to increase their value, as recorded by Franz Boas among the Kwakiutl (an observation later recounted by Hyde):

In by far the greater number of cases where coppers are broken the copper is preserved ... a copper may be broken up in contests with different rivals. Finally, somebody succeeds in buying up all the broken fragments, which are riveted together, and the copper attained an increased value. Since the broken copper indicates the fact that the owner has destroyed property, the Indians pride themselves upon their possession. (Boas 94)

Quotation marks, like the riveted seams on a repaired copper, preserve the marks of dismemberment and reconstitution, the edges of the broken old and reformed new. It is these formal traces of destruction that add value to the copper and prestige to its owner. The dismemberment and reuse of Moore's source texts in

her poems is likewise both a mark of respect to the source text, and a means to embellish and layer meaning within the new. The poet's use of quotation marks also implies the passing on of the gift to the reader, with the new context adding history and context to the original artefact, much in the manner described by Hyde, a semantic and symbolic increase that "is the core of the gift, the kernel" (Hyde 37).

Moore's deployment of quotations is not only an act of preservation, however, nor is she simply "dismembering a garment of rich aesthetic construction" in order to create a patchwork quilt. Her act is also an appropriation, as with her use in "Poetry" of a passage from Tolstoy's diary to make a point contradicting the one its author intended. Moore describes a process of dismemberment that preserves material from the degradation of "the utilitarian offices of the boneyard", which she conflates with giving it away. Likewise, in Boas's example, the underlying violence of the action of giving is explicitly aligned with the process of dismemberment, by which the violent traces of exchange are made visible upon the copper.

As a quotation moves from its original context into Moore's to be offered to the reader as a new text, its meaning and form are transformed, leaving traces of the usurped original visible. Such a conception echoes the menace of Walter Benjamin's assertion that in his work quotations are "armed" "wayside robbers" lying in wait to attack "the idle stroller" (Benjamin 481). In this case violence is directed forwards, towards the reader, and away from the original text. However, quotations undergo a transformative process in Benjamin's work, too, and are not spared the marks of their forcible translocation. Hannah Arendt used the image of a pearl fisher to elucidate Benjamin's use of "thought fragments" and quotations in his work, in terms that emphasise the transmutation that take place, stating that his thinking

... works with the "thought fragments" it can wrest from the past and gather about itself. Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange ... and carry them to the

surface. What guides this thinking is the conviction that although the living is subject to the ruin of time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things “suffer a sea-change” and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living—as “thought fragments,” as something “rich and strange”. (Arendt 55)

Violence is underway in this image, even if it is undertaken by the slow processes of salt water and time, and not with chisels. The formal integrity of the past is lost and degraded, and finally abandoned by the fisher who takes only the “rich and strange” and leaves the rest. The pearl fisher’s intent is not to preserve the past and “bring it to light”, but to violate its integrity in order to appropriate what is valuable. Composing a new text from such fragments, as the copper is riveted back together, is an intrinsically violent process. It is worth noting that the exchange in Boas’s example takes place between rivals, and the greatest honour comes from possessing a copper that has passed through the hands of rivals, been destroyed, and been reconstituted thereafter. A battle is fought over the formal integrity of the original object versus its renewed form, and the status of the new owner derives from the act of destruction itself.

Benjamin’s and Moore’s uses of quotation have different intentions—the German wishes to jolt the reader out of “idle conviction” with jarring, “armed” appropriations. Moore, on the other hand, aims to construct a patterned and collaged surface whose attributes are ornamental and monumental—a reconstituted gift object. “An Octopus” uses dozens of quotations culled from natural history textbooks and travel guides to describe a glacier:

An Octopus

of ice. Deceptively reserved and flat,
it lies “in grandeur and in mass”
beneath a sea of shifting snow-dunes;
dots of cyclamen-red and maroon on its clearly defined
pseudo-podia
made of glass that will bend—a much needed invention—
comprising twenty-eight ice-fields from fifty to five hundred
feet thick,
of unimagined delicacy.
“Picking periwinkles from the cracks”
or killing prey with the concentric crushing rigor of the python,
it hovers forward “spider fashion
on its arms” misleading like lace;
its “ghostly pallor changing
to the green metallic tinge of an anemone-starred pool.”
The fir-trees, in “the magnitude of their root systems,”
rise aloof from these maneuvers “creepy to behold,”
austere specimens of our American royal families,
“each like the shadow of the one beside it...” (Moore, *Poems* 167)

An image of the mountain is being constructed here and in the following pages of the poem line-by-line, image-by-image, and quotation-by-quotation. The juxtaposition of diverse material destabilizes the surface textures of the poem, creating disorienting effects as the mind shifts from the mottled greens of the octopus’s pool to the darker verdure of the fir trees on top of the glacier: yet these effects remain local. Every quotation is pulled into service, cut and trimmed to

fulfil the poet's purpose, and all are subject to her "relentless accuracy" and "Neatness of finish!" (171). The poem runs to six pages in the Schulman edition, and is itself something of a monument. Moore's juxtapositions and collages have a less urgently disruptive effect than those of the European avant-garde, whose aesthetic preoccupations were informed by "the formative impact of wartime experiences".⁹

The gift as a material characteristic

Anthropological literature on the gift is filled with accounts of exchanges of exotic items such as bracelets, canoes, and shell necklaces. It can seem far removed from the concerns of the literary critic, a fact that contributed to the "scorching" reviews that greeted the initial publication of Hyde's *The Gift* (Timberg), criticizing him for focusing on "fairy tales and the behaviour of tribes in the South Pacific" (Fischer). However, these narratives of the life of exotic objects fits remarkably well with the oeuvre of Marianne Moore, whose poems sometimes resemble curiosity cabinets filled with diverse and curious items, from "A Carriage from Sweden" to a Chinese plate in "Nine Nectarines". This dense materiality is reflected in Moore's external life, and the traces of her exchanges demonstrate an intense materiality that rewards an anthropological reading.

Marianne and Mary Moore were often ill, and usually too much so to achieve much travel, especially in later years. Apart from early trips to Europe and the west coast, Moore travelled less than her peers spent most of her life at home with her family. Her more adventurous friends, like Elizabeth Bishop and

⁹ As James Clifford put it "after Europe's collapse into barbarism and the manifest bankruptcy of the ideology of progress, after a deep fissure had opened between the experience of the trenches and the official language of heroism and victory, after the romantic rhetorical conventions of the nineteenth century had proved themselves incapable of representing the reality of war, the world was permanently surrealist" (Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* 119). The United States was insulated from the direct consequences of a land war and occupation on home territory, and perhaps for this reason the New York-based surrealist and dadaist movements lacked the aggressively destabilizing political characteristics of their European cousins.

Louise Crane, sent regular letters and gifts that obviously meant a great deal to the two Moores (Kalstone 8). Moore bequeathed the contents of her apartment to the Rosenbach Museum and Library, and it is preserved in the state she left it, filled with trinkets from a clockwork crow to a bust of the poet by Gaston Lachaise (Rosenbach, "Guide to the Marianne Moore Collection"). Moore's was "a life of ingestion, collecting rare specimens" (Kalstone 8). Bishop sent her countless shells, duck feathers, decorated eggs, and small carved animals; Hildegard Watson added clothes, emerald brooches, bouquets, and hampers (see Chapter 3). Moore responded with letters of thanks expressing how much these gifts meant to her and her mother: "... the exquisite lavender and yellow scarf with its serpentine lines is a delight to us both. It transports one out of the dullness of humdrum occupations as long as one looks at it" (Moore, *Letters* 209). These letters go on to describe the gift objects in Moore's inimitable style, at length and in intense detail.

The formal sympathy between the gift objects in Moore's life and her poetry is unsurprising when it is considered that her most powerful texts, poetry and prose, were often written in response to a gift that she had received from a friend, forming the first transfer in a mutual exchange that implicates both object and text. The literary descriptions were in turn presented to the addressee as a return gift. Beyond the direct exchange of a personal present, the poetry that emerged when Moore came across a felicitous phrase in conversation or an out-of-the-ordinary object at the museum or circus was offered in reciprocation for a "gift" the poet felt she had received and must repay. The obligation to reciprocate outlined by Mauss may thus be aligned with the moment in the creative process at which a received stimulus is translated into an original work of art. In "Nine Nectarines", the craftsman who made the plate is not personally known to Moore, but she considered herself obliged to respond nonetheless for to gift of craftsmanship that she received in the object itself, through which the poem's speaker is able to establish an imaginative connection with the "Chinese / who imagined this masterpiece" (Moore, *The Poems of Marianne Moore* 209).

Motivation and the law of reciprocity

The obligation to reciprocate lies at the heart of Mauss's theory of exchange, and the mechanisms of obligation within a community promote and maintain the dynamic system of transfers throughout the system (Mauss 29). Since the obligation to reciprocate is the key to the system (*ibid.*), exchange ensures movement and response. As Mary Douglas points out (Mauss xi), in many forms of exchange it is imperative that the return on a gift must exceed the original. Within the context of a literary sphere that incorporates both the public and private, these felt mechanisms of obligation may be considered to have inspired Moore's frequent outpourings of descriptive poetry and prose in response to gifts and objects she received. The law of reciprocity thus provides a motivation for literary expression. The receipt of a gift, be it a phrase, an object, or the draft of a poem, incites a creative reaction, forming the occasion for the application of creative labour, just as it often provides the inspiration or material for it.

As explored in detail in Chapter 2, if a gift exchange process involving the transfer of objects, services, and texts is underway within Moore's friendship networks, she often chooses to fulfil the obligation to reciprocate by means of a literary act. In Moore's case we can follow the development of this process without difficulty. She made a habit of responding directly to gifts of objects and books from friends with a written description which she sent back to the giver in a letter, which often seem to construct a fictional world around the object, finding a place for it within her poetics or perhaps extending her inner world to include it. Objects are naturalised through the process of description. It can be shown to promote her poetry, as many poems feature objects that she had been given which have entered into her imaginative resources in this manner. Moore tended to respond to objects that attracted her in much the same way as she replied to objects that were given to her in letters, and thus we may see her ekphrastic and descriptive poems as a facet of her wider exchange system.

The spirit of the gift

Mauss explains the laws of reciprocity inherent within the gift system by means of the Maori concept of *hau*, a dynamic spirit resident within the gift demands recompense and increase. *Hau* is a slippery term to define, but as the Maori informant Tamati Ranaipiri summarized: “all goods termed strictly personal possess a hau, a spiritual power. You give me one of them, and I pass it on to a third party; he gives another to me in turn, because he is impelled to do so by the hau my present possesses. I, for my part, am obliged to give you that thing because I must return to you what is in reality the effect of the hau of your taonga” (Mauss 15). The spirit of the gift is contained within the object or text and derives purpose and direction from its formal rigours. Its containment allows it to become dynamic. Fecundity is linked to a spiritual quality of the object that transcends its material properties—dynamism within stasis and life within the thing. In adopting this idea, Mauss avoids viewing the gift economy as a structuralist would, with the mechanisms of obligation emerging from the equilibrium of the system as a whole, with an imbalance in one area demanding realignment in another. This failure to step beyond the object-spirit into a structuralist analysis forms the basis of Lévi-Strauss’s critique of *Essai sur le don* as naïvely attempting to use the concept of *hau* to glue together “a whole out of parts” (Lévi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship* 47).

On the other hand, as Olli Pyyhtinen has pointed out, the structuralist’s assessment “also expresses an ignorance of the crucial role of objects in and for social relations that is typical of modern thought” (Pyyhtinen 43). Locating the site of motivation, as the Maori do, within the gift itself has helpful implications for analysis. The exchange object is prioritized, demanding that its formal properties and transactional life are taken into consideration; also, rather than positing a totalized economy that contains and eventually balances all exchanges that take place within it, locating the spirit of exchange within the gift itself creates the view of a system made up of competing, strategically deployed “parts” that do not necessarily meld to form an ultimate “whole”, but instead create the opportunity for “surplus, excess, deficits, and abscesses in material and memory” (Povinelli). There are residual difficulties with the concept, however, even when employed as an analogy; as John Frow comments, the idea is “spiritual” and therefore somewhat resistant to analysis: “... the concept of *hau* cannot be

interpreted in purely secular terms, since it applies to men or to the forest in ways which seem to designate a spiritual quality; further, its use in other contexts suggests that it is not possible to separate this spiritual quality from its sense of material return or yield" (Frow 112). Despite these difficulties, *hau* forms interesting analogies with Moore's poems considered as gifts. At first sight, the idea of a dynamic spirit of the gift endlessly insisting upon the potential for return may seem to run counter to the rigid qualities of Moore's verse, particularly her syllabic forms. However, within its original Maori culture, the dynamic spirit of the gift is contained within the restrictive forms of highly ritualized objects. In his discussion of the poem "Critics and Connoisseurs", Harry Levin argued that movement, which he called "life", ultimately triumphs over stasis in Moore's work: "if her menagerie tends to become a museum, wherein the animal world is momentarily crystallized into semi-precious stones, she ultimately comes out on the side of life in "Critics and Connoisseurs" (Levin 42). "Crystallization" is curiously defined as "momentary", with the temporary stasis somehow transmuting the material into "semi-precious stones", i.e. increasing its value by transforming it into an exchangeable object.

Like the *hau* contained within the ritualized form of the gift, Moore's poems often set up strict formal constraints as a prerequisite for a fulfilling internal spiritual life. Restraint in various forms in fact establishes the conditions for spiritual insight and the lively life of the mind. At one extreme, complete formlessness is aligned with death, as represented by the open unknowable ocean in "A Grave", in which "the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave" (Moore, *Poems* 145). "Life", at the other extreme, is movement with purpose, "as / the sea in a chasm" rises upon itself in "What are Years", "struggling to be / free and unable to be". The ritual strictness of the form is what allows the movement to "rise"; the sea "in its surrendering / finds its continuing":

What Are Years

What is our innocence,

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

the soul to be strong? He
sees deep and is glad, who
accedes to mortality
and in his imprisonment rises
upon himself as
the sea in a chasm, struggling to be
free and unable to be,
in its surrendering
finds its continuing.

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

This is mortality,
this is eternity. (*Poems* 237)

The last two stanzas of the poem are a meditation on joyful dynamism within constraint, responding to the spiritual questions asked in the first: by what criteria can or moral lives be judged, and what constitutes moral courage? Mortality itself is the ultimate constraint here, which the images of the sea in a chasm and the bird in a cage echo at both a massive and miniature scale. The embrace of huge differences in perspective allows the poet to create layered impressions of containment that appear universal; even the sea's massive power is captured within the form, while the tiny figure of the bird brings the sense of constraint to a size that can be handled and comprehended at a personal scale. The intangible spiritual "life" contained within the form is represented by the sea's "rise" above its previous level, and the bird's "mighty singing"—mightier, presumably, than he could have achieved outside in freedom. The formulation within "What Are Years", which draws on dynamic images to represent inner moral experience, represents a shift forward from the poet's previous reliance on images of light and translucence to transmit the concept in "The Hero":

He's not out
seeing a sight but the rock
crystal thing to see—the startling El Greco
brimming with inner light (*Poems* 188)

Images of light and the song of a caged bird reveal the consistent underlying concept of an inner, spiritual property contained within an object or formal structure. "What Are Years" emphasises that the external constraints affect the form in which the inner value manifests:

as in the “startling El Greco”, it is the only through a superficial layer of paint that “inner light” is revealed to the viewer: “eternity”, the internal, spiritual, intangible value of an object, is only made visible through the trappings of “mortality”: superficial surface, physical restriction, and form.

Gawa, conditioning, and the nexus of exchange

The relation between form and exchange—particularly aesthetic form—has been much extrapolated upon since Mauss. In many gift economies, what makes an appropriate gift and counter-gift is often predefined by ritual, to the extent that certain objects are required to be given in return for others. For example, the intertribal Kula exchange of the Trobriand Islands as described in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski’s classic text of 1922, required that a ritual bracelet or *mwali* be exchanged for a ritual necklace or *soulava*. This formed the most basic unit of transaction. Together, these items constitute *vayg’ua*, described by Malinowski as an alternative currency reserved for the performance of Kula (Malinowski 90). The material form and design of these items had been predefined by tradition, as the exchange economy was conditioned by its ritual requirements.

Since the 1980s, the anthropology of the gift has supported the idea of such localized environments of exchange, placing the individual gift object inside an active and responsive matrix that conditions both its form and the admissible or appropriate responses that may be made to it. In *The Fame of Gawa*, Nancy D. Munn describes the gift economy of Gawa, an island in the north-east Massim region of Papua New Guinea, as an intermediary space defined within particular ritual limits and subject to normalized causal and symbolic conditions. Gawans participate in the ritualized exchange of decorative canoes as part of marriage and kinship exchange, creating a “nexus” within which all associated exchanges take place:

I have described this nexus roughly as involving “logico-causal” relations. The whole relational nexus can be seen as entailing “ordering functions” of causality, sequence, and likeness, as well as a dialectic of binary opposition (positive vs. negative value) ... a *template* or a *generative schema* to carry the sense of a guiding, generative formula that underlies and organizes significance in different overt symbolic formations and processes, and that is available as an implicit constructive form for the handling of experience. (Munn 121)

In other words, as Munn has written elsewhere (Munn, “The Spatiotemporal Transformations of Gawa Canoes”), in order to understand what the Gawans are creating when they make a canoe, it is necessary to understand the canoe’s entire life within the system, from the conditions of its initial fabrication to its exchange or “conversion into other objects”. As an exchange object, a canoe’s meaning is derived from its relationship to the entire system, as the system’s layers of social meanings—its *generative schema*—are an aspect of the nature of the canoes. In Munn’s concept of nexus, the gift enters into a total system that simultaneously defines its role and is defined by it, down to the raw materials from which the gift object is made.

The establishment of such a conditioned exchange environment explains the formal consistency between a gift and its returns. In order to function within the exchange economy, gifts must conform to the terms—formal, material, linguistic, or ritual—that predefine it. Functionality may be defined in social terms, i.e. that the offered gift will be understood as such, and generate the responses of gratitude and obligation necessary to maintain the exchange cycle. It may also be defined in formal terms, as in Alfred Gell’s ethnographic theory of aesthetics, which he applied to non-western traditions of decorative arts. *Art and Agency* (1998) outlines a theory contrary to the “common-sense” assumptions of Western art theory, suggesting, broadly, that art objects *act* rather than *communicate*: that aesthetic objects are in fact technologies strategically designed to elicit particular responses:

The theory is premised on the idea that the nature of the art object is a function of the social-relational matrix in which it is embedded. It has no 'intrinsic' nature, independent of the relational context ... in fact anything whatsoever could, conceivably, be an art object from the anthropological point of view, including living persons, because the anthropological theory of art (which we can roughly define as the "social relations in the vicinity of objects mediating social agency") merges seamlessly with the social anthropology of persons and their bodies. (Gell 7)

This theory, like Munn's, builds on Marilyn Strathern's deconstructed view of the gift economy as made up of partible or distributed persons, and describes resultant distribution of agency between subject and object, so that "actions and their effects are similarly not discrete expressions of individual will, but rather the outcomes of mediated practices in which agents and patients are implicated in complex ways" (Gell 9).

In this concept lies the root of the sense of indebtedness and obligation felt by writers and artists to one another, particularly the attribution of gift-like characteristics in the work of art and its reception. Here lies the understanding that the work of art is not the "discrete expression of individual will", but subject to the organizing and generative schema of the exchange economy of which it is part: theme, form, subject, opportunity, and raw material, as well as reception, are parts distributed within the nexus of exchange, and the meaning of the work of art is derived not from the individual agency of its creator but from an understanding of the "symbolic formations and processes" that govern the entire system.

Gift exchange between media

Chapter 2 examines how Moore's poetic responses interact with the materiality of the object in light of these principles of aesthetic transference via exchange. Munn's ideas are particularly interesting when considering the exchanges that occur between the Moore's poetry and the visual arts, as following the movement of the gift allows the formal traces of ideas and exchanges to be discerned as they move between media. Gift theory has been successfully applied to the visual arts as a motivation for making certain art objects (Pointon) and has been used to model both an audience's engagement with a work of art (Kwon) and the function of creative agency (Hyde). With a methodological focus on the material, visual art, and poetry, or draft manuscript and published text, may be compared without either obscuring the nature of the other.

The logic of exchange incorporates the logic of transformation of one item into another (see Munn, *The Fame of Gawa*), reflecting the modernist community's interest in translating one medium into another. The fluidity of the boundaries of media among the writers and artists beginning in the 1910s saw many experimenting with the expression of ideas across poetry, prose, and image, with many poets producing visual art, and vice versa (Levy). Collage and assemblage nudged at the boundary between visual art and text within a single piece, with words incorporated into sculptures and collages. Poetry on the one hand took an imagist turn in the experiments of H.D. and Pound, and on the other began to pay more attention to the look and pattern of the text on the page (Eliot, "Review").

Chapter 5, which compares the work of Moore and Cornell, includes an analysis of the gift's transformation between texts and visual artworks. The reading illuminates particular formal aspects of both practitioners' work that are gift-like, seeking to define how Moore's syllabic verse and Cornell's box assemblages perform the role of gifts in a formal as well as literal sense. The gift resonates through the works of artist and poet both formally, in their compactness and decorative surfaces, and in the idiosyncratic manner in which they incorporate and respond to sources of inspiration, indebtedness, and distribution.

The formal properties of the gift

It is worth considering at this juncture what the formal attributes of the gift might be within the modernist avant-garde, Western, urban society of which Moore was part. Insights may be drawn from several theorists as to how an item's suitability for exchange influences its formal properties within Western culture. Susan Stewart's *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* explores the importance of scale and affective association in the generation of longing in objecthood. In Stewart's analysis it is longing, or "desire" rather than the spirit of the gift that is posited as the motivation for affect and movement (Stewart ix), but "the gap between signifier and signified" is similarly located as the site of transformation and increase, in her terms the location of "generation for the symbolic" (ibid.). Stewart expands on Bachelard's account of the miniature as description composed of the dense build-up of tiny details:

We might add that this verboseness is also a matter of multiplying significance. The procedure by which description multiplies in detail is analogous to and mimetic of the process whereby space becomes significance, whereby everything is made to "count" ... The minute depiction of the object in painting...reduces the tactile and olfactory dimensions of the object and at the same time increases the significance of the object within the system of signs. When verbal description attempts to approximate visual depiction, we find a further reduction of sensory dimensions and, because of the history of the word as utterance in lived social practices, and even greater ideological significance. (Stewart 48-9)

Stewart's insights illuminate Levin's somewhat oblique assertion that Moore's poems are like "museums" that somehow cause their subjects to be "momentarily crystallized into semi-precious stones" (42); what he is describing is the process of miniaturization via dense description that "increases the significance of the object within the system of signs". Her animal portraits emerge as densely

decorative and “valuable” as jewels. “The Jerboa” dances across this value/signification analogy by juxtaposing its thick descriptive detail about the desert rodent in the second section with descriptions of the jewelled luxury of the Ancient Egyptian and Roman courts in the first. The poem draws a moral distinction between “Too Much”, represented by the glorious ancient treasures, and “Abundance”, embodied by the jerboa and its total adaptation to a simple desert life:

Too Much

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.

.....

Lords and ladies put goose-grease
paint in round bone boxes—the pivoting
lid incised with a duck-wing

or reverted duck-
head; kept in a buck
or rhinoceros horn,
the ground horn; and locust oil in stone locusts.

Abundance

.....

Looked at by daylight,
the underside's white,
through the fur on the back
is buff-brown like the breast of the fawn-breasted
bower bird. It hops like the fawn-breast, but has
chipmunk contours—perceived as

it turns its bird head—
the nap directed
neatly back and blending
with the ear which reiterates the slimness
of the body [...] (190-194)

While the poem is several pages long, each stanza is constructed in tight syllabic verse form, with a repeated, sculpted shape, and is filled with minute detail. In this way they resemble the miniature boxes described in the poem. The association of like with like intensifies symbolic significance; the subtle but precise differences between items such as “locust oil” and “stone locusts”, which share provenance or characteristics, are highlighted by their juxtaposition. Detail and ornamentation are aligned in the first section, in which the majority of the description deals with the decorative elements of the luxurious items.

The second section shifts from detailing explicit ornamentation, and focuses on the physical characteristics of the desert rat with equal if not greater attention. While the moral imperative of each section differs, the technique of building up dense, “verbose” detail does not change whether Moore is discussing the animal or ancient treasures. The jerboa is briefly “crystallized” and placed into the same miniature stanzaic boxes as the other precious items. Description is used as a form of transmutation between object, image, and text; Moore worked up her descriptions from illustrations of the artefacts in books, as demonstrated by the 1987 exhibition *Marianne Moore in Poem and Object* at the Rosenbach Museum and Library, which laid items from Moore’s personal archive alongside the poems they inspired: “The Jerboa” is illustrated by Ms. Moore’s own drawings of the Saharan jumping rat and pictures of such Egyptian artefacts as toiletry boxes, children’s toys and a folding gold bedchamber that belonged to King Cheops” (Bennetts). Density of detail requires time, profound attention, and labour on the part of the poet, echoing the processes of ornamentation that add value to the physical gift objects, as described by art historian Marcia Pointon: “As with a reliquary, it invites contemplation of the aesthetic and material value of a rich exterior while concealing the representation of something that is beyond price (the relationship between two people)” (Pointon 61). Pointon’s work on the miniature further illuminates the formal properties of exchange. Her article on the 18th century miniature portrait aims to “theorize the miniature as a sentimentally invested artefact” with reference to the gift. She notes, however, that the theory of exchange has had to borrow from the work of cultural historians, such as Igor Kopytoff’s on the biography of the object (Kopytoff), to reinstate the material into the analysis. In addition to the use of richly decorative

surfaces, Pointon names the exchangeable characteristics of portrait miniatures as, firstly, a “portrait element” which is culturally recognised as affective, and secondly, the tactile quality of the objects derived from their capacity to be worn or held (Pointon 68). Moore’s poems, of course, have a heavy element of self-portraiture and contain many portraits of others, from the laudatory (“Those Various Scalpels”) to the critical (“To a Steamroller”). “The Jerboa” particularly can be read as a self-portrait, given that Moore often went by the nickname “Rat” among her family (see above).

The applicability of Pointon’s thinking on the exchange object’s capacity to be worn or held requires further extrapolation in regard to poetics. Chapter 3 explores Moore’s interactions with her patrons, the most successful of which was her relationship with Hildegard Watson, whose support mostly took the form of clothing, jewellery (including emeralds and diamonds), and flowers to wear at readings. These “wearables” inspired warm reciprocal descriptions in Moore’s letters. The analysis seeks to place the wearable, decorative gift object in the context of an exchange in which Moore’s poems are also entangled: materiality, compactness, detail, ornamentation, and formal responsiveness.

Research questions

Each of the following chapters investigates a facet of the action of the gift in Moore’s poetics by examining an exchange between Moore and a fellow writer or artist, and placing their work in context of that correspondence. Alongside Moore, the main actors are Elizabeth Bishop, Joseph Cornell, Scofield Thayer, James Sibley Watson, Hildegard Watson, and Bryher. One of the earliest research tasks was to select a limited number of exchange partners from Moore’s dozens of correspondents. The subjects selected were mostly major writers, artists, or patrons in their own right. Each had a sustained and productive correspondence with Moore, and exchanged not only letters but physical or monetary gifts. Her correspondence with the selected individuals highlighted an aspect of her work that may be explicated through the gift, and revealed an aspect of the gift as it functioned within her poetics. Each chapter is arranged according to those

themes or concerns, and contains the relevant case studies. With the exception of Chapter 2, which considers poems from several periods of Moore's life, the dissertation has been organized chronologically, each chapter focused on friendships and connections that were important to Moore in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s respectively.

Overall this research is dedicated to exploring how Moore's work functions as a gift, and how exchange modulated the composition of works and their distribution. This direction of inquiry led to further questions related to building up an ethnography of Moore's poetics. Over the course of the following chapters I aim to explore two questions: 1) how Marianne Moore established and maintained relationships with key members of the avant-garde community; and 2) how her poems interacted with objects, ideas, and other texts circulating within that community.

Chapter 1 (Introduction) presents the methodology and overall structure of the project, including a literature review overviewing major interventions and shifts in thought within gift theory. Chapter 2 explores the role of the gift object in the form of Moore's poetry, examining items she received as presents, found texts, and museum artefacts, in response to which she produced poems and descriptive prose. Chapter 3, focusing on Moore's interactions with her patrons including gifts of money and offers of marriage, investigates how patronage affected the form and production of her poetry over the course of the 1920s. Moore's troubled mentorship of Elizabeth Bishop in the 1930s is the topic of Chapter 4, which seeks to demonstrate how the gift can model the tensions and antagonisms of influence. Poem drafts and letters exchanged between the two women form the basis of this analysis. The final chapter explores what insights the gift can bring to the analysis of ideas, collaboration, and correspondence conducted between visual and textual media, focusing on Moore's lively exchange with Joseph Cornell in the 1940s.

Literature Review: The Gift

Criteria for inclusion

This review overviews the trajectory of gift theory from its introduction in the work of Bronisław Malinowski to the present, outlining the main theoretical interventions that have been made throughout the twentieth century. I have not attempted to be exhaustive, as the related literature is very extensive; rather I have addressed the major theoretical movements over the twentieth century relevant to this research and have selected representative works to summarize in some detail. The movements covered are the initial ethnographic work of Malinowski and Mauss; the structuralist revision of Levi-Strauss; post-structuralist and deconstructionist reinterpretations; Derrida's deconstructionist and the responses to it; and Bourdieu's ripostes to both Derrida and Levi-Strauss and his insistence on reinserting time and *habitus* into readings of gift economies. Theodore Caplow's work on modern American Christmastime exchanges, Webb Keane's work on representation, and recent essays by Elizabeth A. Povinelli and Lee Konstantinou are also included.

A brief section is included on the use of the gift in other disciplines with examples from marketing and the financial sector, in order to demonstrate the breadth of applicability of the idea and its capacity to transform across relational systems. I have selected works for this section that contain information pertinent to the thesis or add valuable theoretical distinctions, rather than attempt to be exhaustive. Finally I have reviewed the relevant appearances of the gift in art history and literary studies.

The Ethnography of the Gift

Early iterations

Bronisław Malinowski, Argonauts of the Western Pacific, 1922

In this work the Polish ethnographer Malinowski first described the Kula Ring of the Trobriand Islands as a community-wide exchange of gifts that was highly ritualized, involving expeditions between neighbouring islands in specially made canoes, constructed according to guidelines set out in local myth alongside particular magical spells, in order to exchange specific ritual objects. One of the most active elements of Trobriand culture, Kula directly affected many elements of life, particularly social status. This first description of a gift economy involved a literal exchange of ritualized objects—armshells and necklaces that never ceases from generation to generation, building and maintaining kinship relationships and status hierarchies within and between the tribes involved. The shell necklaces and bracelets that comprised the Kula Ring cycled around the islands continuously in an endless, constantly moving system of ritual prestations. Malinowski viewed a social system as being under continuous construction via a progression of events and activities, rather than a static abstraction.

Marcel Mauss, Essai sur le don, 1923

French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, a former student of Émile Durkheim, made the first major intervention in gift theory. While he conducted no fieldwork of his own, *Essai sur le don* summarized and critiqued the extant ethnographic literature on the subject, which covered a very diverse range of locations and societies, comparing material from indigenous communities in New Zealand, the Pacific North West, and Papua New Guinea, to name a few. He conceptualized the gift economy as a *total system* of social obligation and reciprocation in a community, expressed through the exchange of objects running alongside and interacting with both market forces and individual biographical events. In his view the function of a gift economy is to generate and maintain social bonds.

In broad terms, the publication of *Essai sur le don* provided

anthropologists a means of representing people's social transactional links in a move away from a capitalist-inflected understanding of economic or proprietorial relations over objects and people, towards a self-sustaining system that incorporates all aspects of the life of a community, including metaphysical agents such as gods and spirits. A *total system* made up of an unceasing cycle of exchange transactions is driven by the requirement that each gift must be returned in a particular manner. Mapping the exchanges allows the society to be mapped in turn, with all its attendant obligations, status changes, bonds, and transfers. Three basic rules—the obligations to give, to receive, and to reciprocate ensure that gifts continue to circulate throughout the economy. These gifts are not, in Mauss's view, merely tokens of an underlying system but the material of society itself. Mauss underlines the negative potential of the gift: the obligations of the system are, he asserts, enforced by either the explicit or implicit threat of warfare. Mauss situated the dynamic force of the gift within the gift object itself through a reading of the Maori concept of *hau*, or intrinsic spirit of the gift, which engendered increase and return. The insights he drew from his diverse sources are applied in the conclusion to his contemporary France, where the author argues for an alternative approach to social cooperation and obligation informed by the gift that transcends capitalist market considerations.

Responses to Mauss

Responses to Mauss's essay tend to focus on his reading of the text by Tamati Ranaipiri describing the Maori concept of *hau*, and his conclusion that *hau* is a spirit intrinsic to the gift, which demands that the gift returns to its original owner, and thus drives the processes of exchange. Marshall Sahlins has summarized the main arguments to the contrary (Sahlins). Claude Lévi-Strauss believed Mauss had been taken in by the Maori's "native" explanation for exchange, when he should more properly have regarded such reports as mythology substituted for submerged cultural facts unknowable to the culture's participants. This delusion on Mauss's part, in Lévi-Strauss's opinion, prevented him from reaching the broader structuralist conclusions of his own work in *The*

Elementary Structures of Kinship (see below). Despite having perceived a total system of relations, Mauss was limited by his fragmented view of exchange as separate obligations to give, receive, and reciprocate, and was unable to see it as “a unified and integral principle” (74).

Maori expert Raymond Firth critiqued Mauss on the basis that he had misunderstood Ranapiri’s commentary, and falsely conflated the *hau* of persons and things. The Maori, he clarified, regarded *hau* as a much more passive spirit than the one that emerges from Mauss’s description, and it was not considered in their view to be the fuel for the whole engine of exchange. Rather than be taken in by “native” mystique, then, Mauss simply misread Ranaipiri’s text and appropriated it for his own uses. Firth suggested that social sanctions were the actual basis and motivation for exchange (75). Sahlins himself promoted a dual reading of “*hau-as-spirit*” and “*hau-as-material-returns*” (81). *Hau*—whether in Mauss’s reading or the more expert interpretations of Maori ethnographers—has only minor relevance to this dissertation. It is mostly important to note that later thinkers sought alternative explanations for the gift’s constant movement within communities rather than viewing it as the result of an intrinsic “spirit of the gift”.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, 1949

Claude Lévi-Strauss reimagined gift relations as a system of imbalances in a constant state of recalibration effected through exchange. His text is a structuralist overview of the systems of kinship, i.e. how the family relationships within a community are described, and between which relatives marriage is allowed or forbidden. Mostly focused on three case studies, the marriage systems of Southern Asia, China, and India, the book is intended to demonstrate Lévi-Strauss’s view that marriage rules, descriptors, prohibitions and rights all form part of the same “reality” or “structure”. In Chapter 5, the author summarizes the findings of Mauss, emphasising the “total social fact” of the gift exchange in pre-modern societies; the underlying assumption that a gift will be reciprocated by a gift of higher value, and that return likewise reciprocated; and its role in transferring valuables without the expectation of economic advantage, a double

assumption that permeates every level of the cycle, both explicitly and implicitly. Property gained by means of gifts is considered more desirable than that gained by economic means or trade: the author gives the examples of flowers and sweets within familiar western cultures. While no real material advantage is gained from these exchanges, something additional to the basic commodity is gained by their participants—“goods are ... vehicles and instruments for... power, influence, sympathy, status, and emotion”. The exchange cycle is likened to a game of chess in which strategies are employed to gain security and avoid risk.

The Elementary Structures of Kinship has been thoroughly critiqued, not least by Bourdieu (see below), and many statements appear dated: women, for example, are seen as units within the structuralist system, and “nothing other than one of these gifts, the supreme gift”. The failure to attribute agency to female actors is only however a more extreme manifestation of the lack of agency ascribed all actors within a structuralist vision of exchange that emphasises the inevitability of obligation, and attributes all action to the working of the system itself. The author’s view of marriage within the system, as a final step in a series of reciprocal prestations, a total action at once “sexual, economic, legal and social”, remains helpful, as does his remark that marriage is in fact the result of certain series of prestations. It is important to note that Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist approach located the impetus for the exchange economy within the structure of society, rather than within the gift itself as Mauss had suggested.

Post-structuralist and deconstructionist interventions

In the decades following the publication of *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* the agency of the subject and the role of the ethnographer were interrogated and problematized, a development in anthropological thought reflected in texts on the gift from this period. The following publications include representative post-structuralist and deconstructionist approaches, and interrogate various ways in which the gift functions within communities, including formal and psychological considerations.

Nancy Munn, The Fame Of Gawa, 1976

Munn's text is a post-structuralist analysis with important implications for aesthetics and the transmission of formal properties between exchanged objects. This ethnography of the island society of Gawa in the north-east Massim region of Papua New Guinea examines spatio-temporal transformations conducted by the community in order to create value that is key to its viability. Munn views the island's social arena as an intermediary space defined within particular ritual limits and subject to normalized causal and symbolic conditions. Gawans participate in the ritualized exchange of decorative canoes as part of marriage and kinship exchange, creating a "nexus" within which all associated exchanges take place: "a *template* or a *generative schema* to carry the sense of a guiding, generative formula that underlies and organizes significance in different overt symbolic formations and processes, and that is available as an implicit constructive form for the handling of experience" (Munn 121). The author explicitly attempts to develop a conceptual framework relevant to wider anthropological thought. Actors establish meaning by means of symbolic action while themselves being constructed by the same means. The underlying assumption of the work posits that social reality is not only the venue for action but is itself constructed by actions, and the cultural contexts within which they are based; "the community creates itself as the *agent of its own value creation*" (20). Certain acts lead to certain predictable outcomes within this context. Gifts, for example, are given with the intention of moving the mind of the other or making him remember the giver. Certain specified actions establish what Munn has termed intersubjective *spacetime* between participants, defined as a nexus of self-other relationships formed in and through the dynamics of particular acts and practices that connect persons and places. Munn's paper "The Spatiotemporal Transformations of Gawa Canoes" (1997) adds a useful reading of the function of ritual canoes within the Gawan gift economy system as they are fabricated, decorated, and exchanged or "converted" into other objects. A canoe holds multivalent meanings derived from its relationship to the entire system's *generative schema*. Munn's work is of particular interest in Chapter 5, which looks at a gift exchange that takes place across textual and visual media.

Edward L. Schieffelin, "Reciprocity and the Construction of Reality", 1980

In this text Schieffelin notes that exchange transactions had often been viewed as rhetorical acts within a series of gestures intended to communicate influence. He instead examines the underlying structures of the exchange system itself, which he views as a series of norms deeply embedded within the "underlying patterns of cultural thought". He reviews previous ethnographic work on the Kaluli, natives of Papua New Guinea, and concludes "all these studies contain the idea that exchange, as a system of meanings, is involved in the shaping or construction of particular cultural realities. They do this by focusing on the act of prestation as a rhetorical gesture of social communication, stressing the symbolism of the objects exchanged, and viewing transactions as expressive statements or movements in the management of meaning" (503). Schieffelin's work underlines the fact that gift items and exchange objects derive their meaning from the surrounding culture. This fact explains the plurality of different practices across various societies. It implies that the ethnographer must examine local practices in order to understand the logic of particular exchanges, to establish for example what items should be exchanged for one another and what makes a suitable gift within a particular gift economy. In other words, what might make an appropriate gift for Marianne Moore or a native of Papua New Guinea may be extrapolated from their local cultural contexts.

Theodore Caplow, Rule Enforcement Without Visible Means: Christmas Gift Giving in Middletown, 1984

Caplow divides readings of the gift into "collectivistic orientations" which emphasise exchange systems that enable social cohesion, and "individualistic orientations," which consider self-interest to be an adequate explanation for participants' actions. He views the two positions as mutually compatible, since neither position can disprove the other, and benefit to the self does not rule out benefit to society and vice versa. In his ethnography of Christmas gift-giving in

Middletown, 1979, gifts are seen to represent the value of the emotional bond between the exchange partners, and effort is taken on behalf of the giver to ensure this is so. Social structures are reiterated and maintained by gifts, which demonstrate that each party has the same understanding of the level of intimacy within their relationship. Since this arrangement emphasizes hierarchical differences between dyadic relationships, “imbalance is central to the entire ritual” (1316). The rules of engagement were unfamiliar to the participants, and they often became resentful when rules of exchange were pointed out to them (1317). He accounts for this by considering gift exchange as a language of prestation, acquired in childhood and governed like the rules of a native language without explicit recognition. Caplow’s work is a useful application of gift theory to a context within the United States that would have been familiar to Marianne Moore, and customs developed out of those she would have known.

Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift*, 1988

Strathern’s major book is a “gentle deconstruction” (Douglas) of the anthropology of Melanesia. It establishes the positions of three popular discourses and allows them to undermine one another: a critique of the fallacy of universalism that applied Western assumptions to the actions of Melanesian subjects, interpreting local events and concepts as though they were analogous to those of the West; the feminist anthropological view that Melanesian women are exploited by men in their society; and the status of the gift economy in relation to the market. Strathern argues that anthropologists err in their application of “commodity thinking” in describing the relations they have recorded. As Mary Douglas put it “the relations between persons in the gift economy are not assimilable to a contract of work” (Douglas). Marxist concepts of alienation and labour do not exist within the gift economy since proprietorship and commodities only exist within the context of Western institutional systems.

Thus it is impossible to state that Melanesian women are being exploited when they produce value within an exchange system in which each action has a particular role. Melanesian personhood, particularly gender, is partible or

divisible. Certain actions and positions within ritual contexts are considered to be male or female—donors or recipients—and either men or women may occupy these roles at different times. The body itself is made up of variously gendered parts that work together as male or female elements in order to establish and maintain the movement of elements within it. These can align when necessary to form a single-sexed being capable of enacting its function within the exchange as a particular gender. Gifts are subject to standardization within the society according to the role and value they are expected to fulfil. Strathern's conception of the gift extends to a theory of objects as continuous with people in a form of "mediated exchange": as she puts it, "objects are created not in contradistinction to persons but out of persons" (169).

In viewing theory itself as a subtle form of domination, Strathern presents instead a narrative; a "convenient fiction" or "plot" invested with the literary form that is one of "the peculiar constraints of scholarly practice itself" (7). Her redrafting of the concept of the gift economy beyond "commodity thinking", her concept of personhood as partible, and her positioning of analysis as a convenient fiction, reliant on linguistic invention to convey the multivalent nature of perceived phenomena, are valuable innovations. The latter point is particularly resonant with the goals of this thesis, with its reading of literary texts themselves as gifts.

Gloria Goodwin Raheja, *The Poison in the Gift: Ritual, prestation, and the dominant caste in a North Indian village*, 1988

Raheja's ethnography of the Hindi-speaking region of northern India recounts the use of particular categories of gifts that are employed at times of crisis or bad luck to disperse "inauspiciousness". These gifts are explicitly used to pass negative attributes from one individual to another, diffusing inauspiciousness throughout the community: "*dan*, villagers say, is always given to remove some form of inauspiciousness and transfer it to the recipient. Through the giving of the *dan*, the negative qualities "come out" of the donor, and then have their effect on the recipient in the form of illness, death, or other misfortune, in the form of a diminishing of one's internal 'power'" (70). Since bad luck and the possible

sources of human distress are endless, random, and complex, the giving of such gifts never ceases, and Raheja records a continuous “giving outward” through which negative energies may be safely removed from the individual and passed on. Removal through giving is the only option for afflicted individuals; they have no recourse to other forms of healing or dispersal. She describes the resultant flow of gifts as “a current that will not cease”. The acceptance of such poisonous gifts on particular occasions, such as festivals and celebrations, was found to be obligatory, and the right to give them was likewise enforced, as the movement of such gifts throughout the community was necessary for its general health. These dual rights and obligations and their proper fulfilment were found to have a powerful effect in structuring the caste system within these communities. Raheja’s work is useful as it foregrounds a case in which the gift is used for the explicit purpose of transferring negativity from one person to another, and at a more general level demonstrates how intangible concepts or affective qualities may be represented by the gift in addition to more concrete social relations and interactions.

Later interventions

Webb Keane, Signs of Recognition, Powers and Hazards of Representation in an Indonesian Society, 1997

Keane’s ethnography of the Anakalangese adds a case study of ritual speech to the literature on exchange economies. Ritual speech is defined as a “highly formal register” that is notably different to quotidian ways of talking, and which is used by the Anakalangese in the ongoing collaborative construction of recognizable social identities. Such speech is “entangled” in dialectical relation with objects that are exchanged during rituals; Keane emphasises the *conjunction* of the material with the verbal dimension of rituals, and the futility of any attempt to divide them, insisting on the importance of material things in social existence. This has several consequences. Words and things manifest a materiality that renders actors and actions accessible to the external gaze, the social world of the

public. Furthermore, representational practices involving texts and other forms of objectification cannot be seen through or discarded in order to arrive at a more authentic human subject or act. The social construction of speech and exchange is emphasised in Keane's dialectical reading of the construction of meaning, whether speech acts or the construction of objects, which diffuses the attribution of agency throughout the group.

Building on George Herbert Mead's 1934 text *Mind, Self, and Society*, to speak is to implicitly engender a response from another actor, and the response "completes the act initiated by the speaker". Exchange is likewise seen to be built over the course of several acts of giving, building on Strathern's view that responsibility for the composition of an object may be assumed by several people or several inner aspects of "partible" individuals. Keane also provides a useful reading of the potential of failure within these rituals as an underlying hazard of undertaking a ritual at all, and suggests that hazard is critical to understanding the power and experience of the representational ritual practices he describes and their effect on historical reality. This is emphasized by "the agonism and mutual dependence that pervade public interaction" (9). It is impossible to "understand even formal representations without the verbal clash of styles, movement among registers, slippage of frames; without the social dynamics of risk and dissidence" (228). Keane's work has important applications in the analysis of linguistic response patterns and the collaborative construction of speech forms.

Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Routes/Worlds*, 2011

Povinelli's reading of Malinowski highlights the fact that the multiple, interweaving network of activities that made up the Trobriand Kula Ring established a social whole from diverse parts, defined by a hierarchy of prestige. As she puts it, "ceremonial necklaces and bracelets were given, accepted, and reciprocated, but what returned was not mere jewellery, but a world". Ritual exchanges not only encode, but construct a world of shared symbolic meanings and social hierarchies; they both represent the social relations between the

partners and create them. It is impossible therefore to state that the point of the Kula is to obtain either necklaces or prestige. The two are inseparable; or rather, they are the same thing. Povinelli introduces the idea of *embagination*, using the analogy of a drawstring bag for the social space established by the circulation of things, which is enclosed but not completely impermeable. This image emerges to serve the author's conception of the nature of subcultures within a dominant culture, in pursuit of what she terms the "anthropology of the otherwise". Gift economies "can close a world but never seal it", drawing our attention to the fact that many of the most potent gifts, surpluses, deficits, or shifts in prestige occur at the edges of community, where things and people enter or leave the territory of the gift economy. This analogy is particularly helpful to the work undertaken by this dissertation to define a gift economy taking place within the avant-garde, itself a community of the "otherwise", existing within yet apart from the dominant cultural modes of the time; even more so, since by many measures Marianne Moore occupied a marginal status within a marginalised group.

Theoretical Interventions

Beyond applied and theoretical ethnography, the theory of the gift has undergone robust development in the work of theorists and philosophers. Alan D. Schrift's anthology *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an ethic of generosity* is an indispensable collection of classic essays on the subject, which includes contributions from "deconstruction, gender and feminist theory, ethics, philosophy, anthropology, and economics", as well as poetry (Schrift). Contributors include Luce Irigaray, Gary Shapiro, and Marilyn Strathern. Key thinkers have taken the theory in many fascinating directions, many of which are of less relevance to the aims of this dissertation. Martin Heidegger exploited the etymology of the German phrase *es gibt* in *Sein und Zeit* (1927). Georges Bataille's general theory of expenditure in *La part maudite, essai d'économie générale* (1949) draws on Mauss and potlatch to postulate that advanced economies generate a surplus that must either be destroyed through warfare or utilized without gain, whether through the arts, sexual expression, or spectacle.

I have made a selection of theoretical interventions that are of particular relevance to this research. The conversation between Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Derrida on the potential and limitations of the gift is briefly recounted below. In the latter decades of the twentieth century the gift made its mark in an array of disciplines and a selection of texts have been included here to demonstrate the diversity of the theory. Particular attention has been paid to the gift's appearances in literary studies and art history contexts.

Bourdieu, Derrida, and later responses

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 1977

In his longest text on the gift Bourdieu highlights the fact that gift exchanges are conducted in time. Time structures their basic form as a succession of “irreversible ... relatively unpredictable acts”. He critiques Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist view of exchange as the product of universal laws or obligations at a systemic level, arguing that reciprocity and the fulfilment of an exchange cycle are only visible to an omnipotent observer capable of retroactively constructing the reciprocal links in the cycle. In reality, gift exchanges are the result of uncertainty and improvisation taking place in real time, and may proceed in unexpected ways: gifts may be unreciprocated or refused, for example.

Actors in the cycle temporalize themselves by making an irreversible series of choices when presented with a gift, drawing from infinitely complex options informed by a “logic of practice” which is learned mimetically or intuitively and is thus resistant to explicit expression. This allows a community to preserve an unspoken and “sincere fiction of a disinterested exchange” (112): a deliberate misrepresentation of the gift enabled by the passage of time between one prestation and another. The gift is the “social alchemy” that produces a community’s “reality-denying reality”, which misrecognises the arbitrariness of the value afforded to goods it designates as desirable to the extent that such value appears to be natural. A gift exchange is a ritual staging of the group’s view of the

world, enacting the community's *habitus* by producing and reinforcing its dispositions.

The splitting of the gift economy from capital within pre-capitalist societies implies a division between symbolic, i.e. sacred or disinterested actions and the market. This is preserved within the cultural sectors of modern societies; work expended to achieve the former is categorized differently than labour spent in pursuit of the latter: "pains are to labour as the gift is to trade" (117). The gift is also a means by which symbolic capital may be converted into material capital and vice versa. Time, "pains", and personal gifts imbued with "marks of attention" are required to generate symbolic capital. Finally, the gift allows for dominance relations to be established through the covert violence of indebtedness and moral obligation, in situations in which overt violence via blunt economic instruments is impossible. The production of cultural goods, and the production of their producers, reproduces the social order and domination relations via covert mechanisms.

Jacques Derrida, Given Time 1. Counterfeit Money, 1992

In this deconstructionist text Derrida presents a paradox: for the gift to truly function as a gift, the act of giving must be completed without reciprocation, or even the expectation of such. Furthermore, for a gift to be free it must not entail the obligation or bond, marks of relative status that emerge once an exchange has taken place. Thus the act of giving must be conducted without the recipient's knowledge, and perhaps even without the awareness of the giver, since the moral prestige and psychological rewards of giving are in themselves reciprocation: "From the moment the gift would appear as a gift, as such, as what it is, in its phenomenon, its sense, and its essence, it would be engaged in a symbolic, sacrificial, or economic structure that would annul the gift in the ritual circle of the debt" (23). For Derrida this proves that the gift is impossible, that even its acknowledgement must destroy it by initiating "the ritual circle of debt" and therefore reciprocation. Here, however, it may be assumed that a gift is subsumed by the cycle it initiates and perpetuates; that the offering itself is forgotten, or

becomes symbolically meaningless in relation to the wider texture of the “ritual circle” itself. In this way he suggests that the literature of gift exchange in the tradition of Mauss has in fact been concerned with everything except the gift. In his discussion of the gift’s relation to time, Derrida interrogates first Lévi-Strauss’s reading of the gift, then Heidegger’s *Time and Being*, viewing being and time as two elements as locked in an eternal cycle of donation, a paradoxical circle to which there can be neither entrance nor exit (22). The text concludes with an analysis of Baudelaire’s short story “Counterfeit Money”, and is therefore also a useful precedent for the application of the gift within literary theory.

Responses to Derrida

In *Marginalia: Some additional notes on the gift* (1996) Bourdieu builds on *A Logic of Practice* in order to address Derrida’s conception of the gift’s impossibility. He emphasises the “dual truth” of the gift as an individual and collective misrepresentation, and identifies two visions thereof: one, by Maussian ethnologists Lévi-Strauss saw as “phenomenological”, and the structuralist approach. Bourdieu reiterates his belief that there is no calculating action by an individual at the base of the initial generous action or inaugural gift, but rather “the *disposition* of the *habitus*, which is generosity” and which tends towards the generation and retention of symbolic capital. He cautions against the “scholastic bias” of certain writers (an ill-disguised dig at Derrida) that leads to the “intellectualist error”, which views the involved agents subjectively carrying out steps in the structural project retroactively described by the omnipotent observer, consciously obeying the “laws” of obligation and reciprocity that have been extrapolated after the fact.

Bourdieu claims that the gift may not be understood without rejecting the mindset that every action is made rationally in the calculated economic interest of the subject: rather it is based “on a denial of the economic” and the direct pursuit of material capital. It is situated outside of “the opposition between constraint and freedom, individual choice and collective pressure, disinterestedness and self-interest” (236), purely invested in accumulating social

capital. Symbolic power is seen to be capable of alchemical transformation perpetuated through exchange or communication. This requires the participants to be “on speaking terms”, i.e. functioning within the same symbolic universe and possessed of the same cognitive schemes. The transformation transmutes brute power into symbolic power, economic domination into personal dependence, “even devotion, filial piety or love” (238). The exchange relationships thus established always entail the potential of a bond or obligation, and are always asymmetrical.

Bourdieu was not the only thinker to respond directly to Derrida. Phenomenologist Jean-Luc Marion undertook ongoing conversations with him on the subject of the gift, its impossibility, and their differing view of the role of desire within exchange (Alvis). Other theorists have rejected his notion of the gift’s impossibility outright as a miscategorization, or like Bourdieu as a misreading of context. *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* Martin Hägglund clarifies, “a pure gift is not impossible because it is contaminated by our selfish intentions or by the constraints of economic exchange; it is impossible because a gift *must* be contaminated in order to be a gift” (Hägglund 37). Indeed, “the very desire for a gift is a desire for contamination” (ibid.).

Applications within contemporary society

The literature of the gift has accrued an extensive body of theory, and has transcended the anthropological context of its early 20th century beginnings. Even in the 1920s, however, Mauss drew on the gift to comment on contemporary French society and the relationship between labour and community, value and worth within it. In recent decades the gift has been adopted and adapted by scholars in diverse fields, and while the focus of this dissertation is literature and the arts, useful points may be drawn from the application of these theories in other areas. The selected papers below are helpful in transitioning the traditional view of the gift, rooted in the anthropology of the Trobriand Islands and the great metaphor of Kula, to more varied and contemporary applications.

John F. Sherry Jr., Gift Giving in Anthropological Perspective, 1983, and The Disposition of the Gift and Many Unhappy Returns, 1992.

From a marketing perspective, John F. Sherry Jr. has contributed a useful three-stage model for gift exchange: Gestation, involving planning and preparation; Prestation, the actual presentation of the gift; and Reformulation, when the social consequences of the exchange are evidenced and “person-object relations may be formed or rejected” (Sherry 158). In Sherry, McGrath, and Levy (2001) the authors discuss the attitude of consumers to returning unwanted gifts and reveal the hostile and even malicious potential of the gift. They also note the burden that the gift represents at the interstitial phase. “The promise of the present is double-edged with the strong potential for either disappointment or delight. The gift contains the potential to bond recipients more tightly to each other or to reaffirm the other’s secret suspicions of mistrust and personal inadequacy. At this point the gift carries a palpable psychosocial burden” (Sherry, McGrath and Levy 14). Not accepting an unsatisfactory gift by either returning it to a shop, re-gifting, hiding or even destroying it are seen as opportunities for the recipient to “channel hostility” which is usually concealed from the donor upon receipt.

Annelise Riles, Too Big to Fail, 2011

Applying a Strathernian reading of the gift exchange and personhood to the financial crisis of 2008, when corporations faced public breakdown of their internal systems of debt and guarantees, Riles demonstrates that the crash and bailout of AIG revealed the company’s interdependence and activated the explicit reimagination of state, corporation as relational, i.e. as transactional partners. Riles notes some important differences in the debt relations of corporations and those that emerge from gift exchanges: debt has a nominal end point, after which the debt is paid and the social bonds between the parties are severed. She also acknowledges that there are similarities, since debt is precisely the obligation to pay in the future and a means by which each party can attempt to best one

another, in a transaction “implicitly understood as a relationship of ambiguous mutual indebtedness”. The essay makes the useful point that corporations have a split interior and exterior identity as both agents and objects of exchange. Legally a “person”, from the outside the corporation exists as a “simplified” being and “the subject of jural relations”; on the inside it is rather a pool of property and assets. The failure of AIG in 2008, therefore, exposed the corporate “person” as simply a collection of property, and when “the ability to fulfil one’s obligations becomes reckoned in terms of crude quantities” (41), they must always appear inadequate. The work makes the case that there is analytical value in reading corporate debt relations in terms of the anthropology of exchange and personhood.

Interventions in art history

Marcia Pointon’s 2001 paper “‘Surrounded with Brilliants’: Miniature Portraits in Eighteenth-Century England” used the gift to explore the social meanings of small, highly ornamented portraits passed among family members of the aristocracy as souvenirs or mementos. Her work includes a helpful investigation of the semiotics of size, relating the small scale of the portraits to Susan Stewart’s definition of the souvenir. The form, tactility, size, and personal transmission of these items place them in the category of gift, which Pointon defines as a “sentimentally invested artefact”. Pointon’s work helps define the formal qualities of the gift as it has developed in the history Western Anglo-American culture, particularly how the affective qualities of the gift object are inscribed through its formal characteristics.

However, appearances of the gift in art history have more commonly been concerned with its social implications, following structuralist antecedents in prioritizing the system itself, with its balances and obligations, over the materiality of the gift object. In “Exchange Rate: On Obligation and Reciprocity in Some Art of the 1960s and After” Miwon Kwon uses gift theory to revisit the dematerialized social practice works categorized by Lucy Lippard, which de-emphasized the object to the point of its irrelevance. Kwon’s insights build on

Nicolas Bourriaud's "Relational Aesthetics" (1998), which discusses art of the same period, but takes a step further in defining the "relational" function of these works in terms of gift exchange. The deliberate downplaying of the object towards "art-as-idea or art-as-action" (Kwon 84), she argues, was an attempt to frustrate the commercialization of art by market forces manipulating it for profit. From Kwon's millennial position, it has become clear that dealers did in fact learn how to make profit from dematerialized work, and these practices must be revisited in light of that apparent failure. Instead, the author suggests that the gift may offer a solution to the curious "dual" position of the artist within the economy, picking up a key theme from Hyde.

Rather than successfully decommercializing the art market by removing the object, these artists instead attempted to replace it with alternative models of exchange based on the logic of the gift. Their works "*operate like gifts*" (87) by creating an obligation to respond within the audience. Several useful points may be drawn from her argument: first, the gift functions in dual, partly contradictory ways; it expresses a desire for a relationship of solidarity while at the same time reinforcing the superior status of the artist. Hierarchical power relations are more likely to be shored up than challenged by these structures. Gift exchanges always have the potential to create bonds, raising the stakes of the interaction and reminding the participant of the corresponding possibility for rejection and humiliation, a point that reminds us of "the tenuousness of the very notion of the gift" (93). In summary, Kwon states, "the articulation of as-yet-unrealized possibilities of social interaction and relations *is* the work" (95).

What We Want Is Free: Generosity and exchange in recent art (Purves 2005) is a collection of essays investigating the model of generosity as it pertains to contemporary art, as a means for the artist to relate to their audience in a manner which breaks down the traditionally passive space between the viewer and the work, a space which traditionally excludes the artist. The collection documents the work of fifty artists in fifteen countries from Felix Gonzalez-Torres to Rirkrit Tiravanija for whom the act of creating is literally conflated with the act of giving away services, goods, and time. The artists investigate the moral axes of giving and generosity as art practice, as acts that establish uneven power relations and distinctions between those who receive and those who do not. An

analogy is drawn between the nature of the gift and that of art, explored through the medium of dematerialized works embedded within social practices. Giving away art for free is contrasted with the apparently contradictory movement of the market, which tends to drive the commodity value of the artwork ever upwards.

Implications for this research

These developments address later periods than that of my dissertation, which mainly focuses on the high Modernist era of the 1920s–1940s. The explicit political motivations of social practice artists and the tendency toward dematerialization mean that these readings of the gift have particular and specific goals that are absent from my research. However, Kwon’s work demonstrates that there is a social, relational aspect to the work of art, which functions within society to create bonds of obligation and response between the artist and the audience, an aspect that survives even in the absence of any art “object” at all. My reading of the gift includes the additional layer of the material, i.e. the role of the form of the object or text in modulating the social fabric itself and vice versa, insisting on the material, as did Nancy Munn and Webb Keane’s poststructuralist interventions. Pinton’s work, in conjunction with that of Susan Stewart, is a useful starting point for my reading of the formal properties of the gift, which in the history of the West is associated with smallness, personal or intimate association, finely wrought, time-consuming decorative detail, and the ability to be held or worn by the recipient. These formal characteristics inform the affective quality associated with successful gifts in the West.

The gift in literature

Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: How the creative spirit transforms the world*, 1986

Despite its many flaws, Lewis Hyde's book remains perhaps the most visible and popular work on the gift in relation to the arts. *The Gift* reinvestigates much of material analysed by Mauss to reposition the gift as a totem for the role of creativity within the economy. Hyde's project is to define the work of art historically and ontologically as a gift. Hyde saw gift exchange literature as "parables or 'Just So stories' of the creative spirit" (Hyde 147), and characterized art as an "embodied gift". *The Gift* additionally attempts to equate the act of receiving creative inspiration with that of receiving a gift. Hyde makes use of the original Maori explanation of *hau* as provided to the anthropologist Elsdon Best in 1909 by the sage Tamati Ranaipiri of the Ngati-Raukawa tribe (Mauss, 14). In Mauss's reading of Ranaipiri's statement, the *hau* of the forest "which itself...possesses a kind of individuality" and is defined as a spirit intrinsic to the gift itself, wishes to return to its original owner (Mauss, 15). This reading is particularly useful to Hyde since one stage of the exchange cycle involves a non-human participant—the forest or forest spirit to which the tribe's priests sacrifice birds from the hunt in reciprocation for those taken by its hunters. This is used by Hyde as an analogue for the "divine" inspiration experienced by the "gifted" artist. The greatest weakness of this text is Hyde's failure to interrogate this concept. No discussion of the conditions or characteristics of art is undertaken except the broad assumption that an "artist" makes it under the influence of divine "inspiration".

Hyde describes how objects accrue text as they travel through an exchange system, taking as his example the exchange of Kwakiutl coppers recorded by Franz Boas. An initial copper offering between tribes sparks a ritual discussion of the item's exchange history and established worth. The "true" point of exchange appears once the donating tribe has completed its recapitulation of the copper's previous exchanges to establish its oral heritage. Once this has taken place, the receiving tribe is free to make its reciprocal gift of some hundred blankets above and beyond the proven value of the copper. This ritual functions to demonstrate the actual, current value of the object, and it does so through generating text. Oral history adds value to the gift, with its desirability as an exchange object increasing along with the length of the list of previous owners.

Hyde views art as a gift within the economy, retaining its givenness despite participating in market transactions. Art's resistance to commercialization is explained as an effect of creative labour evading automation; similarly art, whether text or object, evades value, which is given to commodities via the market and is measured instead in terms of "worth". The value of a gift, unlike a commodity, increases over time. A gift engenders future gifts, multiplies itself as the rule of exchange demands that more be given in return. In *The Gift* this "increase" arises from the generative action of an exchange transaction. Despite the text's weaknesses, Hyde's ideas have been hugely generative, and the work he has done to include modernist American poetry within the context of a reading of ethnographic insights into the gift is a major precedent for the work undertaken by this dissertation.

Hildegard Hoeller, *From Gift to Commodity: Capitalism and Sacrifice in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*, 2012

Hoeller's interdisciplinary work analyses the complex interaction between the gift and the market in nineteenth-century American culture through the lens of the period's fiction. The work of novelists including Lydia Maria Child, Herman Melville, and William Dean Howells forms the basis of her literary criticism. Hoeller's study focuses on the tension established between the market and the gift as it manifests within an increasingly capitalist society. The book investigates the capacity of the gift to resist capitalist exploitation and provide social and cultural alternatives, as well as its failures to do so. In the work of Susan Warner the gift opens up alternative spaces in which women can avoid the spiritual poverty of capitalist exchange.

Sacrifice, particularly the sacrifices of women and Native Americans within a dominant capitalist structure that privileged the interests of white men, is a central concept in Hoeller's reading, and is regarded as an act that falls under the logic of the gift. This represents a singular failure of the gift to provide an alternative mode of exchange able to shelter those oppressed by capitalism. An important contribution to the literature, Hoeller's work concentrates on the

complicated, often interdependent relation of the gift to the market, a direction suggested by Hyde and further explored by Konstantinou (see below). This economic strain within the discussion provides a useful counterpart to this dissertation, which focuses instead on the aesthetic implications of the gift and the formal manifestations of exchange.

Lee Konstantinou, Lewis Hyde's Double Economy, 2016

Konstantinou's literary history of the gift contrasts Derrida's handling of the subject with Hyde's, situating Derrida's conception of "the destruction of the gift by the gift" (125) as one among multiple possible readings permitted within "post-post modernism" [sic]. Derrida's conditions for the gift's impossibility exist only within a specific set of political, economic, anthropological, historical, or philosophical circumstances. The "unconditional" as described by Hyde is not, as Derrida applied it, a means of ruling out the gift's possibility, but a descriptor of "dominant economic practices" within the particular gift cycle. What Hyde offers in fact is a literary solution to the deconstructionist's aporia. Hyde, he argues, presented an argument for the compatibility of capitalism and the gift economy for working artists, with art retaining aspects of the gift even as it enters the commercial market, providing a solution for the creative worker who seeks to thrive "without compromising her creativity" (128). The anthropological roots of Hyde's work allow him to avoid neoliberal efforts to appropriate personal creativity into the market and, by privileging the gift's existence as a relation rather than a thing, challenge the individual autonomy that underpins market based economies.

Through a reading of Zadie Smith's 2002 novel *The Autograph Man*, Konstantinou presents his view that Hyde's model both maintains the tension between, and attempts to reconcile, the gift and market economies in a "double economy" in which the artist must not explicitly labour for money, but still attempt get paid if she can. Either the author or the work itself might be "split" in order to fulfil these dual tasks within the same work or act of labour. Konstantinou critiques Hyde's theory from a Marxist standpoint for failing to

present conditions for dismantling or constraining the market, rather than simply coexisting with it. However, in doing so, he avoids addressing the more “spiritual” aspects of Hyde’s argument and allows his romantic notion of genius and inspiration as innate, mysterious qualities within the artist to stand unchallenged.

Elizabeth-Jane Burnett, “The Poetic Economy”: Investigating Possibilities of No Return, 2007

In this article Elizabeth-Jane Burnett, a performance poet and academic, has theorized the contemporary British poetry market as a gift economy. She has explored the utopian implications of Lewis Hyde’s conception of a double economy in which art is exchanged in parallel with commodities, allowing the artist to paradoxically “give” away the meaningful aspects of their work while still interacting with the market enough to make a living. Acknowledging that poetry tends not to make much profit at all, Burnett argues that the reader nonetheless reciprocates through active engagement:

Rather than economic profit, the return in a poetic economy is an engagement with the work that allows the work to be read, processed, understood or misunderstood; felt or imagined; to cohere into or to oppose critical contexts; simply to live. This type of return not only requires an audience, but a certain type of audience, one more active than before. The development of new readerships and audiences for poetry, who *share* in the responsibility for producing the cultural work of the poem, becomes necessary. (Burnett)

Burnett is a performance poet, and her perspective is based on observations of a live audience. However, her points are salient to works primarily circulated on paper. She states that the poetic gift is a stimulus not only for active engagement—what I define as the time and attention offered in the process of

reading—but for *activism* in the establishment of new audiences, distribution networks, and venues. The reader reciprocates by assuming responsibility for the distribution of the work. Burnett’s intervention demonstrates how reader engagement can be a form of reciprocation for the poet’s “gift” of poetry.

Art and agency

A major addendum to the theory of the gift, particularly its implications for aesthetics, is Alfred Gell’s 1998 anthropological text *Art and Agency: An anthropological theory*. Gell deconstructs the hierarchy of aesthetics integral to the study of art in the West, which privileges the finished fine art object above other forms of creative or social expression. He asserts that it is impossible to compare such hierarchies between cultures, nor is it valid to construct them on behalf of another culture in order to do so. The desire to flatten the hierarchy of aesthetics is derived from a wish to isolate the social relational aspects of the cycle from its symbolic or representational parts, i.e., the semiotic. Gell chooses instead to highlight the relational qualities of art objects, their position within cycles and systems, their “active” aspect, viewing “art as a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it. The “action”-centred approach to art is inherently more anthropological than the alternative semiotic approach because it is preoccupied with the practical mediatory role of art objects in the social process, rather than with the interpretation of objects “as if” they were texts” (6). Gell’s distinction between social and aesthetic aspects of the life of an art object establishes a framework of relative rather than culturally specific aesthetic judgements. Such judgements are considered to be interior mental acts, semiotic structures set in opposition to the nature of art objects. Art objects, on the contrary, are produced and circulated in the external physical and social world, and are therefore fit objects for ethnographic study. The cycle must be sustained by certain social processes of interaction, including exchange, politics, religion, and kinship. Like the gift, this approach privileges the analysis of the object’s movement through the system over the study of its material qualities.

This research is distinct from Gell's in that it examines how aesthetics are established communally within a group of individuals producing work in sympathy with one another's goals. The shared aesthetic preferences of a group are a social function—the group is both drawn together by them, and generates them through a process of comparison and exchange as the community is constructed. The emphasis of this dissertation lies on the particular materiality of each art object and text. The direction of the analysis is however in line with Gell's, whose work extrapolates from the functionality of distinct art objects toward an understanding of the social processes in which they are involved. In this dissertation the social processes that facilitate the creation of a work of art are interrogated in order to understand how they contributed to and enabled its composition. Evidence is sought within the archive material related to the exchanges between individuals that contributed to the making of a certain work or text, and combined with practical criticism of that work or text's finished or published form. The aim of this analysis is to construct a particular and rigorous ethnography of a local and locatable community, rather than a generalized system of art.

This dissertation not only interprets art objects "as if they were texts", but extends the social relational framework it establishes to texts themselves, treating poems and letters within the same gift economy as art objects. Texts, in other words, are being interpreted "as if" they were objects, and defined as such by their position and function within the exchange cycle. Gell qualified his definition of the art object by asserting that it does not take into consideration the object's material qualities or nature. It is "whatever is inserted into the "slot" provided for art objects in the system of terms and relations" (7). The literary text is likewise here considered such due to its position relative to the social processes that produced and distributed it. However, I have made no attempt to either justify or re-establish the literary value of the poetry analysed herein according to Gell's terms. The literary value of Moore's work has been well established within literary studies by her critical reception.

The contribution made by this dissertation

This research moves the theory of the gift in literature forward by positing the text itself as an exchange object, configured to be capable of extracting a certain response in its recipient. The nature of the intended response may be extrapolated from the poet's own responses in text to objects and text items that she encountered: she repaid her obligation to the craftsman, artist, or creature by generating descriptive and extrapolative text in response to the item's prompt. Mimetic effects, both semantic and formal, tie the responsive text to the physical or formal attributes of the original gift, establishing a material connection between them. This process provides insights into the transmutations of ideas and forms between media, the material and the textual, object and prose in Chapter 2, and ultimately visual art and literary text as explored in Chapter 5 within the exchange between Moore and Cornell.

Forms of domination and control described by the processes of the gift economy are herein applied to the status hierarchies between patron and patronized poet in Chapter 3, and between mentor and protégée in Chapter 4. The gift's capacity to map the modulations of influence, power, gratitude, and obligation via the movement of texts and objects in exchange has been applied to the archival and published materials available with respect to the work and relationships of Marianne Moore, in an effort to bring the insights of an anthropological viewpoint on objecthood and status relations to the life and work of this major modernist.

After Derrida's efforts to dematerialize, even disappear the gift, and Bourdieu's latter attempt to reground it by shackling it to its *habitus*, my work seeks to re-centre the material within the theory of the gift, a category which here includes the formal attributes of the literary text. The gift is not merely an agent of social cohesion, lost within the structures of the community it serves and indistinguishable from the *habitus* from which it emerged; rather it is active in producing and defining the *habitus* or socially modulated aesthetics of the community that it binds, as the shared aesthetic and values of the community define the nature and form of the gifts acceptable for exchange within it. The

community in question is primarily defined in terms of aesthetic preference and practice, a subculture composed of self-selecting peers and patrons in a state of loose agreement on what is valuable in art. This research also builds on Hyde's concept of artistic talent as a gift that must be repaid through the production of work to suggest that the work of art is itself a call for response in the audience or viewer to respond "in kind", with further art or texts. The artist is therefore situated within a social structure established and formed by the work of those around them, the form of the individual's work is equally modulated by the socially established aesthetics of the group, and vice versa.

Chapter 2. “Collecting rare specimens”: The gift as object, text, and artwork

Introduction

This chapter comprises a close reading of the poetry of Marianne Moore, tracing the movement of the gift through the work. It demonstrates how the gift contributes to the form of the poetry, as well as often providing the occasion for it, as the poet fulfils her obligation to reciprocate by producing descriptive text. Many of Moore’s poems arose in response to gifts she accepted, and the poems themselves were offered in reciprocation for them. Descriptive passages in letters also fulfilled this reciprocal role. In the following sections three categories for the “gift” are described as they appear in Moore’s poetry.

The opening section of the chapter deals with the gift object. The importance of objects to Moore, particularly those with personal associations, is established through contemporary descriptions of her apartment and living arrangements. She considered her living room and all its assorted ephemera such a key part of her legacy she bequeathed it to the Rosenbach Museum and Library along with her papers. The objects in question were often gifts given to her by friends or professional contacts. The central close reading of this section focuses on just such an example, the poem “To Victor Hugo of my Crow Pluto”, based on the a mechanical crow given to her by a neighbour as a gift. In this case the profile of the giver, a musician, is also important. The reading shows that the form of the poem responds both to the material attributes of the object and the network of cultural association that surrounds it. In addition, work created in response to a gift is shown to reflect the characteristics of the giver. In the discussion of “People’s Surroundings”, “Nine Nectarines and Other Porcelain” and “The Paper Nautilus” that follows, the investigation of the relationship between people and objects in Moore’s thought is expanded to include the formal means by which she attempts to reveal it.

The second section discusses Moore’s handling of found text and textual artefacts, her employment of which echoes of her response to objects. The

“materiality” of the text, particularly its grammatical and semantic structures, are preserved within the new context of a poem, even when it is re-appropriated for the poet’s own purposes. In effect, the original text remains, overlaid by, juxtaposed with, or concurrent to the poem within which it is contained. As with objects, the formal structure of texts quoted by Moore informs those of the poems that she writes in response. In this way, found text functions also as a gift, to which the poet must reciprocate with poetry. The mature collage poem “An Octopus” is the basis of the analysis in this section.

Finally, Moore’s aesthetic philosophy is discussed, as informed by the writing of Wassily Kandinsky, in order to illuminate her approach to gifts that are works of art by other practitioners. Through a reading of “Injudicious Gardening” a poem written in direct response to a poem by Robert Browning, Moore acknowledges and honours the precise provenance of the image that she has “received” from Browning, at the same time that she appropriates and reuses it for her own subject. The section concludes with a discussion of aesthetic sincerity, which for Moore is symbolized most strongly by animal instinct, as context for the kind of sincere, formally constructed “reciprocation” Moore makes for the works she admires and responds to in her ekphrastic pieces. The section closes with a further discussion of “Poetry” and a reading of “When I Buy Pictures”.

The gift object

The domestic gift

In spite of lifelong constraints on the size and luxury of her living space, due to illness, family responsibility, and financial considerations, Marianne Moore made space for objects in her apartment and her life. For years after her move to New York City she lived with her mother in a one-room apartment in Greenwich Village, clearing space for herself to write and read on the couch: “While she literally had no room of her own at St. Luke’s Place, she managed to construct a

little fortress on the sofa in which to write. She sat cross-legged in front of the fire—almost year-round—with books and papers piled around her” (Leavell, *Holding On Upside Down* 165). Later, when Moore lived alone in Brooklyn’s Cumberland Street after her mother’s death, her two rooms were still modest in comparison with her family means and the earnings she generated through her writing and prize money. The apartment provided meagre space for her collection of books and objects, and in such confined circumstances, one can assume that any object Moore chose to keep was carefully selected according to her personal criteria. Her apartment was central to her legend and public persona, especially towards the end of her life. Most personal recollections of Moore’s life placed an unusual focus on describing the layout and the objects, books and images that filled it, as if the writers believed these facts might reveal information regarding their famous owner. In the absence of a husband or children to place Moore in a domestic context for their readers, perhaps it is unsurprising that contemporary commentators turned to her physical surroundings to provide background colour for their profiles. Winthrop Sargeant’s 1957 profile in *New Yorker* described a cluttered and claustrophobic home: “Miss Moore’s apartment is the apotheosis of snugness; indeed, it is snug almost to the point of restricting free movement, owing to a vast collection of miscellaneous objects she has amassed over the years ... the hoard includes a tremendous array of books, in which the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer rub bindings with Latin classics and volumes on science, history and travel...” (Sargeant 11). This description is unkind and somewhat misogynist, suggesting that the elderly poet lived an impoverished life in her modest accommodation, hoarding indiscriminately, without discernment or an eye for elegance, and ignoring the affective or symbolic potential of her collection.



Figure ii: Marianne Moore's Living Room, The Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia.

Moore “used her living room for writing, entertaining guests, and displaying countless animal figurines, autographed baseballs, and books” (Temple University). Following the example of her friend Maurice Sendak, she bequeathed this key collection of materials to the Rosenbach Museum and Library, which has reconstructed her living room as accurately as possible within the museum walls. Their collection contains “over 2,500 personal objects from the room, ranging

from furniture to figurines to postage stamps” (Rosenbach, “Guide to the Marianne Moore Collection”). The fact that so many of these objects are cross-referenced in the catalogue with the name of the person who gave it to her is an indication that a personal association was one of the most important criteria for Moore in choosing the objects she surrounded herself with.

In their presentations over the years, the Rosenbach’s curators have emphasised the primacy of the object in Moore’s poetics. In honour of Moore’s centenary in 1987, Patricia C. Willis organized “Vision into Verse”, an exhibition that attempted to demonstrate the poet’s working process by pairing objects from the collection with written materials inspired by or related to them: “We chose primarily visual material she had in hand when working poetic images, and then the visual images are documented with something from the archive - drafts of a poem, notes, letters about it to someone else. It’s like the museum of her mind, because it’s full of different objects” (Bennetts). The material remains of Moore’s domestic life have occasioned years of what Bennetts has described as “literary detective work” in order to reveal their traces within the poetry, an undertaking Willis believes can “take us down to the second level” of meanings in her work (ibid.). Fortunately for the modern scholar, contemporaries of the poet consider the Rosenbach’s recreated living room to be a near-exact replica. In his 2007 *Memoirs*, a local fan, Chester Page, recalled the layout of her apartment: “Directly above her head was a dark tea-colored painting of a woodland scene, beneath it the tusk of a narwhal captured by some relative of hers and two small drawings by E. E. Cummings [sic] ... From my vantage point opposite her I could see the long entry hall, lined on one side with bookcases and pictures, T.S. Eliot rather prominently ... ” (Page 7). Page’s description reconstructs the apartment as he recalls it from his first meeting with Moore, when he called round to collect the copy of *Poems* he had asked his famous neighbour to sign. Notably, he remarks on the personal provenance or association of the items that attract his attention, as it seems clear to him that this is an attribute Moore values in her surroundings. The small metal crow figurine that forms the basis of her poem “To Victor Hugo, of My Crow Pluto” (*Poems* 325) was a gift from this man, and remains on view as part of the Rosenbach’s installation:



Figure iii: Mechanical Crow, Rosenbach Museum, n.d. Image © Chester Page. 2 Sep. 2016, chesterpage1.wix.com/memoir-of-charmed-life-in-ny#!m--moore.

“...My Crow Pluto” is an amusing poem that overlays description with association and English with Italian, as the poet ironically reaches for her language learner’s Italian dictionary to construct a ragged “*Esperanto madinusa*” (*Poems 327*). The poem opens by describing the toy bird in terms that conflate a real crow with personal symbolic resonances:

Of:

my crow

Pluto,

the true

Plato,

azzurro-

negro

green-blue

rainbow—

Victor Hugo,

it is true

we know

that the crow

“has wings,” how-

ever pigeon-toe-

inturned on grass. We do.

(adagio)...

The mechanical crow’s kitsch appearance is surpassed by its description. Certainly, the image of the crow’s feet in the grass belongs to a live rather than toy bird (Figure iii), and an “azzurro-negro/green-blue/rainbow” evoke the sheen of a live crow’s feathers in the sun, not the toy with its palette of blue, turquoise and yellow on matte black. Even the Victor Hugo epigraph itself has been overlaid and shifted in translation. Moore kept part of the Hugo poem on a cutting among her papers (Willis 85) and adapted her translation to suit her purposes:

Soyez comme l'oiseau posé pour un instant
Sur des rameaux trop frêles
Qui sent ployer la branche et qui chant pourtant,
Sachant qu'il a des ailes! (Hugo 39)

In the French original, the bird feels the branch bend beneath its weight, but sings on nonetheless, since it knows it has wings and will not fall. The Moore translation is reworked somewhat to make an ironic comment on the fact that the toy crow cannot fly, stating “*even when the bird is walking we know that it has wings*”.

Just so, the clockwork crow is grounded. Moore’s translation has removed the possibility of flight from Hugo’s verse as well as her own, and if the reader knows the provenance of the mechanical bird, she sets up an amusing double meaning, which can be read both as the metaphor Hugo intended—we are aware that flight is possible, even if the bird is at rest—and literally, to mean that “we know/that the crow/‘has wings’”, but he cannot use them. Not only that, but the perspective has been shifted: it is no longer the bird “*sachant qu’il a des ailes*” (knows that it has wings) but “we”, the reader, who knows it. She has taken both the object and the poem as starting points, overlaid them with one another, and then again with further descriptive and associative layers. The poem is neither an ode to the toy bird, since she does not exactly describe it, nor a direct response to Victor Hugo, as she has shifted the very meaning of what he wished to say. It is an embellishment, a reimagining, a return gift rather than a simple reworking of the material.

Stretching over three pages in the Schulman edition, “...My Crow Pluto” is laid out in stanzas of two very short, mostly one to three word lines. It is an unusual experiment for a poet more often given to the long line and highly controlled stanzaic patterning, and the form is notable for that reason. The manuscript of the poem (Figure iv) reveals none of the elegance of the final version, and rather fills all the space available to it on the page: one can see Moore trying out the Italian with English translations nested alongside. In the finished

version the utilitarian sounding “I use Italian” becomes the more fluent “io parlo / Italiano”. The manuscript version also reveals the process of overlaying the actual object with the more delicate rainbow of association that survives: the “simpleton”, he is no longer “a little slow”, with its English association “birdwitted” nearby. This is transmuted into the graceful “adagio”. The bird is no longer “pigeonlike” but simply “pigeon-toe-inturned”. These visible changes all tend towards an increase in grace and elegance in the description of the bird not visible in the original item.

On the printed page, “Pluto” resembles a piano keyboard, a nod perhaps to the occupation of the giver, who was an aspiring concert pianist. In a further musical reference, she uses the term “adagio” to shift the rhythm of the poem as it moves from its first into its second part. Perhaps Moore chose to make use of this notation, usually written above the notes in sheet music, since she was working with such a short line, and unable to employ more familiar techniques of modulation and pace. On the other hand, the formal references to musical notation and Page’s instrument are a nod to the giver, and if the poem is offered in order to reciprocate his gift to her, it is shaped and styled in a way that is designed to recognise its intended recipient. The portrait painted by the poem is not an entirely positive one, and heavily ironic—rather than sing, a crow makes an unmelodious croak, and this tin bird makes no sound at all.

As an offering to a professional musician, Moore’s return gift seems to express a certain reservation about the original offering, and therefore its giver. The crow is a kitsch little mechanical toy; but Moore address it in faux “Italiano / con dizio- / nario, plays up the musicality of her imagery and form, and describes it as “gioièllo mio” and a “serafino uvaceo”. Rather than celebrate its amusing, childish appearance for what it is, the contrast of this linguistic hyperbole with the reality of the object makes it appear tawdry by comparison. In the little dramatic dialogue enacted in the poem the speaker tells the crow “I have to / let you go; / a bel bosco / generoso,” into the beautiful, generous woods: the reason given is that she believes “lucro è peso morto”, or that profit is a dead weight. The gift is almost being rejected, re-released into the exchange cycle, as it has been experienced as a “peso morto”, an unwanted and unduly heavy obligation representing a coarser, more market-oriented transaction than the more delicate imbrication of the gift.

Subtle—or not so subtle—reminders of the gift and its giver appear as traces left within the form by the “debt” the poet owes to the person who gave her the object. Page, a sometimes gauche fan, knew that his present inspired one of the poet’s later published works, and noted that its provenance had not been forgotten:

Marianne mentioned me in the November issue of Harper's Magazine as having given her a Burmese gilt owl which pleased her. She had also liked the German mechanical crow I gave her earlier. She wrote a poem inspired more or less by it ("My Crow Pluto"). She used to mention my name when she read the poem in public and I felt embarrassed to be singled out for attention. When it appeared in print, however, she said only that it had been given to her "by a friend". (Page 55)

Page recounts his mixed feelings regarding his association with the poem in public, which caused him "embarrassment". That embarrassment may have derived more from his sense that the association was not entirely positive than from his reported shyness. The tinny silent crow with its Italian pretensions is not the most positive totem for an aspiring musician. Perhaps the poet feared the deeper involvement with her neighbour that would be implicit in her acceptance of his gifts. The poem serves as reciprocation, returning the original gift by describing it in poetry—in this case, however, with its ironic tone the poem serves as a gentle rejection of the gift's symbolic values, and by extension those of the giver.

Many of the poet's correspondents from further afield also responded to her love of collecting exotic things by sending her gifts, and those from her close friends inspired more sincere-sounding descriptive responses. Elizabeth Bishop was among them, and in response Moore sent her letters of description and thanks: "Each object is full of ideas and of beauty and has livened us more than I can tell you, in our degradation of after-illness" (Kalstone 10). Moore's appreciation of the objects infuses them with life, with "ideas" and "beauty" which are apparently integral to them. Though her words the "life" of these objects seems to be transferred also to the recipients, herself and her mother, who are "livened" by it. David Kalstone, in a more understanding tone than the *New Yorker* profile, has described her Greenwich Village apartment as a repository for exotic emblems: "The apartment was full of emblematic animals and presented (as Marguerite Young has said) an "anarchic order": when you pulled the lamp chain,

you discovered a beetle-sized baby ebony sea horse in your hand ... Theirs was a life of ingestion, of collecting rare specimens" (Kalstone 8). A strong sense of an independent "life" of the thing comes across in this statement. Kalstone's sensitive response to Moore's collection of objects comes clearly in his delightfully alliterative description of the "beetle-sized baby ebony" thing. Objects chez Moore formed the occasion for surprise and the play of descriptive language. Functionality was not ignored; in this instance it was the domestic act of switching on the light that brings the guest or occupant the pleasure of touching the sea horse. Space had been made for the object within the room, a place for it to occupy set aside, and it rewarded its owner with its gifts of "ideas and of beauty". The sea horse performs doubly in Kalstone's anecdote, both in its incongruously functional context a lamp chain, and independently as a noteworthy object. This was Moore's strategy for the incorporation of objects into her domestic space as well as her poetry.

Justification for correlating Moore's domestic and poetic strategies in this manner may be found within "People's Surroundings", in the poem's argument that domestic arrangements "answer one's questions" about people, and perhaps more (*Poems* 149). This poem presents various "settings", domestic, fantastic and political, and opens with the implication that from these might be drawn corresponding portraits of the very different people that inhabit them. The opening stanzas contrast a very simple with a very lavish interior, and the poet expresses her strong preference for the first:

People's Surroundings

They answer one's questions,
a deal table compact with the wall;
in this dried bone of arrangement
one's "natural promptness" is compressed, not crowded out;
one's style is not lost in such simplicity.

The palace furniture, so old-fashioned, so old-fashionable;
Sèvres china and the fireplace dogs—
bronze dromios with pointed ears, as obsolete as pugs;
one has one's preferences in the matter of bad furniture,
and this is not one's choice. (*Poems* 149)

From these descriptions, portraits of the characters that inhabit them may be drawn. The same descriptive templates may be applied to them. In the first stanza, the sense of a taut and organised character, given neither to frivolity nor excess, is not described with an air of disapproval, except perhaps in the dryness of that “bone”. Moore’s poems often reiterate her preference for plainness and minimalism over luxury, most explicitly perhaps in “The Jerboa”. The happy merger of simplicity and functionality is also reminiscent of the artisanship Moore admires in “A Carriage from Sweden”. Although the place the Swedish cart originates from and represents is foreign to her, and belongs in fact to a character with “split/pine fair hair, steady gannet-clear/eyes” that inhabits the poem, the speaker’s comments reveal her pleasure in the design, and she states that it “makes me feel at home” (*Poems* 260).

By contrast, following the consideration of the “so old-fashioned, so old-fashionable” palace decor in the following stanza of “People’s Surroundings”, the speaker expresses her distaste for the arrangements: “one has one’s preferences in the matter of bad furniture, / and this is not one’s choice.” Reminiscent of the fairy tale of Goldilocks, none of the dwellings described in this poem quite match the narrator’s preferences, but they rather represent living styles that she admires to a greater or lesser extent. The interiors described here are otherwise attractive, and congruent with the character of their inhabitants. Even the most sinister of the settings, Bluebeard’s tower, is described as a beautiful place surrounded by lush foliage: Bluebeard is absent from home in these stanzas, however, and the inhabitant is his unfortunate new bride, the “acacia-like lady” who blends in with the exotic flowers around her, herself an attribute of the

decor. The palace has an uninhabited air. The remarks the speaker makes as she passes through it imply that the space is one that welcomes guests only. The motivating character in whose mould the interior has been made—the master of the house, Bluebeard—is absent.

The poem opens and closes its perspectives with dizzying speed, while the narrative voice remains consistent as it moves into and through each stanza. Rather than begin each scene with a new sentence, a semi-colon carries us across the stanza break:

Chinese carved glass, old Waterford, lettered ladies;

landscape gardening twisted into permanence;

straight lines over such great distances as one finds in Utah or in
Texas,

where people do not have to be told

that a good brake is as important as a good motor;

These artefacts and places seem so irrelevant to one another that it is hard to imagine how they came to be contained within a single sentence. It is a testament to the stability and power of the poet's voice that bringing together these unlikely images is not harmful to the sense or movement of the poem. The source of that stability may be located in the depth the poet reveals behind the diverse surfaces of these settings:

yet with X-ray-like inquisitive intensity upon it, the surfaces go back;
the interfering fringes of expression are but a stain on what stands
out,

This depth is a function of the congruence between habitation and inhabitant, the “livening” dual energy between them that produces “ideas”, “beauty”, the understanding that manifests between people and the place in which they, through use and time, belong. Thus in the expansive landscapes of Utah and Texas, people innately understand the ideal state of their motors, the extent of their complicity with the landscape appearing to the stranger to be so preternatural that Moore light-heartedly attributes it to “extra sense-cells in the skin.” The surfaces of places and objects reveal a depth of value derived from their interaction with people, the mutual enlivening, the “beauty”—which in this case may be defined as a well-formed adaptation to the surrounding environment—and energy generated by such contact. The people who can navigate their vast states and “can, like trout, smell what is coming” deepen the possibilities of the landscape for the poet. Moore relies on this accumulation of use and “ideas” about her subject, drawing the life of the thing from its reflection in the minds, the lore, and the creative responses of others in relation to it.

In her letter to Bishop quoted above, Moore implies that objects she receives from people she cares about as gifts are the most capable of “enlivening effects”. “People’s Surroundings” suggests that the enlivening and energizing capacity of objects appears to be drawn from the relation between them and their “owners”, and a parallel may be drawn to the relation between the gift and its donor. A habitation that is inhabited only briefly, by guests, will not develop that creative sympathy between its contents and the spirit of the owner, her *habitus* or characteristic habitual choices. If “a setting must not have the air of being one”, this palace has not shaken its atmosphere of impermanence. A gift, as opposed to a non-gift object, draws from a similar creative sympathy with the owner’s spirit, and this is the source of its affective force or “enlivening effect” on the recipient.

The qualities of a gift are particular, as Bourdieu has noted. Not all objects qualify, and the circumstances of the giving are as important as the object itself. Most particularly, the gift must be “personal”, demonstrating the expenditure of time and attention rather than money:

It also requires the (sincere) disposition to give things that are

more personal, and therefore more precious than goods or money, because as the saying goes, they can “neither be lent nor borrowed,” such as time—the time that has to be taken to do things “that are not forgotten,” because they are done properly, at the proper time, marks of “attention,” friendly “gestures”, acts of “kindness” ... —it is because gentle violence requires those who exercise it to pay a *personal* price. (Bourdieu 218)

Attention and time are exactly what Moore spends with her descriptive responses to gifts she received: what is returned in her descriptive prose and poetry is not only the material and formal conditions of the gift, but the “*personal price*” of kindness, attention, and time. As we learn from Mauss, moreover, the receipt of a gift involves accepting the obligation to return it by one means or another: the obligation to respond itself qualifies an item as a gift. This obligation is the generative force behind Moore’s production of descriptive poems in response to gifts she has received.

Artisanal objects

The artisanal or art object falls into a different category from a domestic tool or ornament, and should be discussed in distinct terms. “Nine Nectarines” (*Poems* 208) originally formed part of a series of seven pieces in the 1935 *Selected Poems* that dealt with the “power of political ideology to shape both human destiny and the natural environment” (Leavell, *Holding On Upside Down* 287), in this case taking China as its focus. The reader must wait until the end of the third stanza to find explicit reference to the poem’s subject, a “much-mended plate” with enamel decoration. “All external marks of abuse are present” on the thing, to borrow a line from “The Fish” (*Poems* 127), inflicted over a long period that predates the current possessor. The plate’s history of interaction with people is recounted, from the original “someone” who painted the design, to its previous possessors who ate from, broke, and mended it many times. These former owners generated intimacy with the object through use, a framework that disintegrates once usage

has ceased, leaving material traces in the form of wear and breakages. The sources of the “life” of this object in its relation with the poet, and poem, arise from the material traces of this activity. The emblematic description of the painting on the plate is followed by a recounting of its damage and followed by a meditation on the artist who originally made it:

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

pairs’ half-moon leaf-mosaic turns
out to the sun the sprinkled blush
of puce-American-Beauty pink...
[...]

One perceives no flaws
in this emblematic group
of nine, with leaf window
unquilted by *curculio*
which someone once depicted on
this much-mended plate
or in the also accurate
unantlered moose or Iceland horse
or ass asleep against the old
thick, low-leaning nectarine that is the
color of the shrub-tree’s brownish flower.

—

A Chinese “understands
the spirit of the wilderness”
and the nectarine-loving kylin
of pony appearance—the long-
tailed or the tailless
small cinnamon-brown, common
camel-haired unicorn
with antelope feet and no horn,
here enamelled on porcelain.

It was a Chinese
who imagined this masterpiece. (*Poems* 208–9)

The final stanza of the poem, that duality having been removed, enters rather into consideration of the Chinese master who created it. A naming of the component parts of this image “enameled on porcelain” suggests itself as evidence for the final assertion that this is a “masterpiece”. There is clearly a difference in the quality of “possession” of the object between he who enamelled it and those who bought, inherited, or ate from it. That the poet suggests that the Chinese artisan who accomplished the brushwork was the last figure to have “used” or “owned” it in a fashion comparable to her own suggests something of what that quality may consist of. The “livening” process in Moore’s terms is a creative, aesthetic one, and must be conducted separately from the processes of use and functionality, as the value that accrues from it is differentiated from use value. This value appears to derive from the artist who created it, as Moore reconstructs a vision of the national Chinese character and the personal character of the man who made the object.

The gift of the plate thus moves from the artist, whose character Moore sees as encoded in the form of the image he has created, to the poet, whose descriptive interaction with it can “decode” it. In order to do so, Moore references its former lives, its history of use, the material traces of which are often visible. Thus in “A Carriage from Sweden” (*Poems* 260) the carriage, like the Chinese plate, has been retired from use:

No one may see this put-away
museum-piece, this country cart
that inner happiness made art;

Moore however rehabilitates its affective association with a previous owner, an imagined Swedish lady “for whom it might come to the door”. This imaginative effort serves to link the “present” of the poem, and the speaker, from the past historical days of the cart’s working life, re-establishing the narrative history of the cart and its exchange of ownership. Its history serves to augment the work of the original “owner”, the artisan who made it, seeming to function as a continuation of its crafting. There is reciprocity between the cart and its imagined user of whom, Moore claims, “it reminds me”, even though that lady is an invention, an idealized character extrapolated from the carriage, given life by it, a fictional construct of the creative reciprocity between the artisan, the object and the poet. The imagined history of the object and its previous owners is a strategy employed by Moore to evoke the “livening” artisanal-descriptive matrix that she responds to with her return gift of poetry, the description which employed the poet’s time, attention, and labour. She responds with her own “skill” to the carpenter’s “skill, and a surface that says / Made in Sweden: carts are my trade”. These surfaces, like those of “People’s Surroundings”, “go back”. Scrutiny, “inquisitive intensity”, renders the invisible visible, brings to light “a meaning always missed by the externalist” (*Poems* 243). Her descriptions and imagined history attempt to reveal the framework of associations an object constitutes for

her. In an early response to her poetry, T. S. Eliot commented on her descriptive process:

the detail has always its service to perform to the whole. The similes are there for use ... They make us see the object more clearly, though we may not understand immediately why our attention has been called to this object, and though we may not immediately grasp its association with a number of other objects ... she succeeds at once in startling us into an unusual awareness of visual patterns, with something like the fascination of a high-powered microscope. (Eliot 62)

The microscope is a useful comparison in this context. The change of scale to the microscopic shifts the category of the visual experience beyond its appearing merely comical or awkward. The nature of our response to a thing is transformed. It is, through that meditative process of description, freed from its primary associative context. Most of the objects Moore selects to examine that context have a use value—less often does she turn her attention to objects with primarily aesthetic contexts. Eliot notes how “startling” her visual effects can be, with shifts in scale and perspective, holding the reader’s fascinated attention on the patterns she succeeds in making apparent. Thus a space is created, in which the reader may be, as Eliot points out, initially puzzled as to an object’s meaning, unsure in what category it ought to be placed.

The matrix of value that she constructs is formed from a reciprocal, creative engagement with an object, a form of ownership much more powerful in her terms than those defined by the laws of property or the routines of use. Her imaginary possession of the item is ensured by her act of descriptive reciprocation: in making a return gift in the poem, the poet indicates that she has accepted the artisanal “gift” offered by the cart’s maker—his time, effort, and attentive labour. Moore took the opportunity when possible to relate her ekphrastic and descriptive poems back to their source, grounding them in the material rather than making an attempt to abstract them or lodge them in a

metaphysical context. Her first collection, 1924's *Observations*, included the poem "An Egyptian Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish", based on an object she may have either seen during a visit to the British Museum during a trip to London in 1911 or perhaps only in the *Illustrated London News* of August 6, 1921 (Willis). The poem itself suggests that at some point Moore may have seen the "spectrum" of the coloured version, and the original three-dimensional object that was able to reflect the light, or as she put it to "turn aside the sun's sword with their polish": however, it appears that at the time of writing the poet was referring to her tracing of the magazine version (Figure vi). The poem has been laid out below as closely as possible to its typographical layout in *Observations*, with the dropped cap and staggered lineation causing a curve along the left side of the poem with a sharp flick at the top:

AN EGYPTIAN PULLED GLASS BOTTLE IN
THE SHAPE OF A FISH

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

Not brittle but
Intense—the spectrum, that
Spectacular and nimble animal the fish,
Whose scales turn aside the sun's sword with their polish.
(Moore, *Observations* 20)

This curve and flick matches the wave pattern on the fish bottle, but in reverse, as in the tracing, not the photograph. It seems to have been important to Moore

to preserve the relation between her poem and the object that inspired it. After receiving the Dial Award for *Observations*, Moore sent a copy to the owner of *The Dial*, Scofield Thayer, with additional illustrations drawn in her own hand and the traced black and white copy below.



Figure v: Polychrome Vase in Form of a Fish, El-Amarna, XVIIIth Dynasty, about 1365, B.C. Glass (Height, 2 3/4 in.) No. 55193, The British Museum B 379.



Figure vi: British Museum Postcard; Tracing from Illustrated London News, August 6, 1921, annotated in Marianne Moore's handwriting. Script reads "From El Amarna Fish-shaped glass bottle London Ill News - May 6 - 1921".

This copy is currently in in the American Literature collection at the Beinecke Library at Yale (Willis). Moore's gift to Thayer in recognition of her prize reinserts the object into the poem's context and requires them to be read alongside each other: again, it is not the abstract which interests the poet, but the intensely specific. The line "held up for us to see" is a direct statement of the poet's wish to show us the object she is describing, with her formal visual attempt to represent the waves along the poem's left flank. Crusoe's knife could be any knife; its meaning and materiality are derived from its history and use. This Egyptian pulled glass bottle in the shape of a fish, on the other hand, could be no other.

The gift economy

In *The Gift* by Lewis Hyde gift exchange provides a model for the enlivening transfer of objects between people and the value that accrues around them, a value separate from an object's market value. An imagined history of use is part of Moore's strategy in presenting objects as subject, and as something valuable. An object in Moore's poetry derives its "liveliness" from its association with people, how they used it and what they thought about it. Although not every object examined by Moore comes to her as a gift, many do, and as Kalstone points out the exchange of gifts forms an integral part of the organisation of her life. Many of her poems and letters express gratitude for things and texts that she has found and made use of, and description often functions as a mode of thanks. A notable aspect of gift exchange theory as outlined by Hyde is that the value accorded to the object increases each time it is given. Hyde suggests that the value increase can be isolated in the act of exchange: "The mere passage of the gift, the act of donation, contains the feeling, and therefore the passage alone is the investment. In folk tales the gift is often something seemingly worthless—ashes or coals or leaves or straw—but when the puzzled recipient carries it to his doorstep, he finds it has turned to gold. Such tales declare that the motion of the gift from the world of the donor to the doorsill of the recipient is sufficient to transmute it from dross to gold" (Hyde 35). The object itself is seen as a vessel for the feeling that arises when it changes hands. The analogy can be extended to the subjects of Moore's poetry, and these hands leave material traces and a narratable history. The enamelled plate in "Nine Nectarines" was not intended primarily as art, and by the time it enters Moore's possession, cracks and mends altered it significantly. Hyde notes that practical uselessness is actually a positive factor in the selection of a gift object (Hyde 13). This appearance of worthlessness may help to focus the attention on the attributes of the object itself and the enlivening exchange that is taking place. Certainly the things to which Moore chooses to turn her attention seem to have a quality of "uselessness" or "worthlessness". In worldly terms she favours "ashes or coals or leaves or straw" over valuable *objets d'art*.

Charles Tomlinson, responding to this aspect in Moore's work, envisages "broken things assembled into the dance of the whole" (Tomlinson 11). "The Paper Nautilus" (*Poems*, 238) comes to Moore after it has been cast off by the

nautilus, no longer of any use and of interest solely to a collector. It arrives via the agency of Elizabeth Bishop, who sent her the shell in 1937 (Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down* 304), yet Moore addresses her “return” gift more directly to the nautilus itself, reimagining its shell and home. The poem’s narrative of motherhood is reconstructed from the damage that the poet traces on its surface, “its wasp-nest flaws”. The “love” that has been imparted to it in the arms of the nautilus is the energizing factor that the poet’s loving description of it responds to and reawakens. So the history of the nautilus emerges from the kind of close and detailed examination that can only take place if the observer is holding the thing in her hands:

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.

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.

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,—
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.

A confusing timescale is created by the poet's decision to open the stanza in the present continuous tense. The mother nautilus' construction of the shell and the

poet's description of it are grammatically concurrent, and their powers of creation are in this way presented in parallel. It does not seem a stretch to suggest that some form of artisanal craft is attributed here to the nautilus, and set up as a parallel to observational, descriptive poetic power as practiced by Moore. The former's energies stream into her description, which is enlivened by it. Yet the life history of the nautilus is an imaginative act on the part of the poet, which she builds onto the process of description. There is, obviously, no reciprocation or act of conscious giving on the part of the creature, yet somehow her ownership of it is framed in terms that allow her to align herself with the nautilus's form of possession. Similarly, the inside of the nautilus is compared with the view of the sea from an observer on the shore. The private space inside the shell can only be revealed once it has been removed from the darker places of the sea, and has disburdened itself of its eggs and purpose. Moore's correlation of the two marine images, the glossy surface of the sea and the glossy inside of the nautilus shell, contains the implicit reminder that both perspectives on the ocean are different from that of the nautilus itself.

Description, however, and the animating action of turning the object into poetry, establishes a hermeneutic process that ultimately provides the poet with a kind of knowledge-ownership of the object she considers equivalent to that of its maker. That the maker should be an animal highlights the strangeness of Moore's undertaking. The "return" gift, though it should properly be given back to the original giver, Bishop, is directed by Moore towards the nautilus itself in recognition of its unconscious mode of craft. The creative processes that are counterpointed between herself and the nautilus take place on a level that she suggests might be shared by poets and their readers, beyond the crude economics of the market. The beginning of the poem may help elucidate the correspondence of values that she sees. In the opening stanza, the value of the shell is explicitly contrasted with the "mercenary" economics she repudiates. The corrupt authorities and mercenary writers she names are impelled by economic considerations, the external imperatives of a trade economy. The nautilus produces its shell under the imperative of maternal instinct: the poet, Moore suggests, produces her work under the influence of a similarly primal impulse,

which is placed in direct opposition to those of writers whose motivations are more worldly.

The true poem is offered up as a gift in the same manner as the nautilus offers its shell, as something that cannot be sold. The poet draws a correlation between the descriptive process and the artisanal one that may help to explicate the nature of the gift involved. Throughout the poem, Moore calls the reader's attention to the nautilus' attribute of close watchfulness. She remarks that "the watchful maker of it guards it day and night" and describes "the intensively watched eggs", providing constant evidence of the creature's concentration. Description likewise requires such concentration and intense watchfulness until the creation of the poem is complete, just as the nautilus's eggs are released. Moore intensifies the comparison by attributing the creature's attachment to its eggs to "love".

Moore separates the human emotion from the nautilus by the conjunction "as if", so she is not too unrealistically anthropomorphized. In the closing stanza, however, love carries the reader out of the poem, a counterpoint to mercenary impulse against which the work as a whole reacts. The object is charged with the obligation to reciprocate, all the value of the enlivening effect, which is here associated with the maternal instincts of a small sea creature. Its intensely watchful association with the shell is of the category of relationship that enlivens the object and renders it a fit subject for Moore's descriptive reverie, designed in turn to form a mutually energizing relationship with it—and of course, by extension, the giver of the nautilus shell, fellow poet Elizabeth Bishop, in response to whose initial gift the poem was written in reciprocation.

Transformation is a key outcome of Moore's descriptive processes. Even material things are transposed ultimately, of course, into the text within the poems: the life of objects in Moore's poetry exists only through the printed medium. This is perhaps the poet's most pervasive strategy, as the very process of describing an object transmutes it into a "ragged block of shade" (Holley 14) on paper. The language of the material is translated into the poet's own medium by the very act of reciprocation. Such transformations and their particular implications for works of art are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

The gift as text

Diligence

Texts, too—Moore’s native medium—are responded to and treated as gifts in her work. The words of others are received and passed on to the reader in the form of quotation. Moore collects and collages quotations into her poems: she is well-known for incorporating texts from diverse sources into her writing, usually within quotation marks that partition them off from her own words. Her strategy for dealing with such textual artefacts is similar to her way of treating objects, and is marked by her effort to preserve the "materiality" of a text: i.e., its formal grammatical and semantic structures. As seen previously with her adaptation of a Hugo line in “My Crow Pluto”, many of Moore’s appropriations take the form of found phrases and cuttings. While incorporating the quotations into a poem she responds and reciprocates with new text of her own, in much the same way as she responds to gift objects. Jean Garrigue sees Moore as “a kind of curator of verities and “briefs, abstracts and chronicles of past literatures” (Garrigue 12). She makes reference to Moore’s period of employment as a part-time librarian, suggesting that this may have contributed to the poet’s facility with the archival manipulation of texts. However, she acknowledges that “her bent for collecting rare data and, taking “a wing here and a leg there,” fitting something of them into poems was sufficiently native to her without the experience at the neighbourhood library” (Garrigue 6). Moore’s poetry can be seen as an individual’s response to the historically unprecedented amount of printed material accessible in the modern age, within the context of a life spent hunting, gathering and shepherding texts. A copious correspondent, a librarian and editor, critic and poet, Moore defined herself in many ways in terms of her relation to and interaction with texts. “Literature”, as she says, “is a phase of life” (*Poems* 138).

Despite Moore’s penchant for cutting and pasting, she continually emphasises how much she values the semantic and grammatical integrity of text,

and the good formal construction of a sentence. She gently pokes fun at a high-schooler's Latin error with its incongruous results:

very young and very rushed, Caesar crossed the Alps
on the top of a "*diligence*"!
We are not daft about the meaning,
but this familiarity with wrong meanings puzzles one.

Textual integrity is the eternal subject of her "*Observations*". Such reflections require "*diligence*", the absence of which renders one as acceptable a target for teasing as this "very young and very rushed" pupil. "Meaning" in this context functions on two levels: firstly, contextual appropriateness, to which the pupil is tone-deaf, and the internal cohesion of the poem, which admits something pleasing about the substitution. The excerpt alerts us to Moore's sense of the value that arises from integrity. The pupil's error is propagated in those who, in a more sophisticated form of infidelity to language, deal in "the opaque allusion, the simulated flight upward..." (*Poems* 138). The error here lies just as much in a lack of attention paid to the construction of the thing. "Diligence" is the source of pleasure for Moore in an article of text, the thing that links semantics with style. In her conception, diligence, like the nautilus, leaves its mark on a piece of writing, and her acts of quotation and bricolage attempt to isolate the element. An early prose piece on "The Accented Syllable" (*Prose* 31) presents the reader with a long unrelated list of sentences Moore finds stylistically pleasing, in which she claims "I am inclined to think that the meaning has very little to do with the pleasure the words give us" (*Prose* 31). The pleasure she receives from such quotations is so great that she feels the urge to preserve them and pass them on as a gift to the reader. Her selection includes these miniature delights:

Then Louisa went into the kitchen and cried for it is exasperating to be unjustly accused. (Strindberg: *Easter and Other Plays*)

And verses? Why I even composed a whole drama in imitation of Manfred. Among the characters was a ghost with blood on his breast and not his own blood observe, but the blood of all humanity. (Turgenev: *Rudin*)

Tom when very young, had presented Sophia with a little bird which he had taken from the nest, had nursed up and taught to sing. (*Tom Jones*) (ibid.)

They are clearly extremely diverse in subject matter and approach. Moore is less articulate in the explanation of her choices than she is confident in their selection. By way of explanation, she posits “in these extracts we have a distinctive, written, personal tone of voice”. However, the particular pleasure these articles of text seems to bring her lies in the diligent piecing-together of the pattern of the sentence, in a manner she describes as “unequivocal”. There is nothing “opaque” nor “simulated” about this or the other sentences she presents; their composition was obviously the opposite of “very rushed”. Their structure is a perfect fit for their content, and they function with internal coherence without a need for external contextual reference. To borrow the poet’s epigram, “expediency determines the form” (*Complete Poems* 88). Diligence, then, represents an aesthetic value, and that value can be carried out of the context from which it has been taken, as a gift is transferred from one party to another. It is this value that “has very little to do with” the contextual meaning of a phrase, the relevance to its origin. It is, however, entwined with the secondary “meaning” that arises from the internal cohesion of its elements. As Moore put it in an interview with Donald Hall: “I am governed by the pull of the sentence as the pull of a fabric is governed by gravity” (*Paris Review*). This statement illuminates Moore’s animating agenda—the formal structural integrity she looked for within a sentence that would bear the violent process of collage, i.e. being removed from its context, and placed within an entirely new one.

Collage

Moore's ambitious, gothic Frankenstein's-monster of a poem, "An Octopus" (*Poems* 167), is composed of unwieldy quotations from sources so diverse that the fact that poem coheres at all is a constant surprise to the reader. That surprise is skilfully transmuted into delight at the poet's sure-footedness. Although in later versions she cut many passages of description, even the full-length original renders "the effect of detail pulling against the hold of the theme" (Costello 70). The misdirection of the title strips away preconception, and the opening of the poem alerts us to the process of sifting and shifting that must be undergone to reveal the nature of her subject. Even the title segues into the first line:

An Octopus

of ice. Deceptively reserved and flat,
it lies "in grandeur and in mass"
beneath a sea of shifting snow-dunes
dots of cyclamen-red and maroon on its clearly defined pseudo-
podia
made of glass that will bend—a much needed invention—
comprising twenty-eight ice-fields from fifty to five hundred feet
thick,
of unimagined delicacy.
"Picking periwinkles from the cracks"
or killing prey with the concentric crushing rigor of the python,
it hovers forward "spider fashion
on its arms" misleading like lace;
its "ghostly pallor changing
to the green metallic tinge of an anemone-starred pool."
The fir-trees, in "the magnitude of their root systems,"
rise aloof from these maneuvers "creepy to behold,"

austere specimens of our American royal families,
“each like the shadow of the one beside it.
The rock seems frail compared with the dark energy of life,”
its vermilion and onyx and manganese-blue interior expensiveness
left at the mercy of the weather;
“stained transversely by iron where the water drips down,”
recognized by its plants and its animals
... (*Poems* 167)

Jean Garrigue points out Moore’s scalpel-sharp facility of addressing two subjects at the same time, “where a virtue is made of writing on two subjects as if they were one” (Garrigue 9). This particular “model of ambiguity” gives us a description of the poem itself beneath that of the mountain, which as we enter it is indeed “deceptively reserved and flat”, and subject to constant renovations of perspective. Its deceptive surface, that “sea of shifting snow-dunes”, creates a textual field in which it is easy to become lost, “deceived into thinking that you have progressed”. It is subject to the “pull of the sentence”, the inexorable step-by-step construction of Moore’s gently, carefully accented phrases. The reader is led through the labyrinth of description as the accents alight one by one onto

avalanche lilies, Indian paint-brushes,
bear’s ears and kittentails,
and miniature cavalcades of chlorophyllless fungi
magnified in profile on the moss-beds like moonstones in the water;
(*Poems* 170)

Even this passage, which concentrates on a tiny area, is a “cavalcade” of images, producing a list of extraordinary semantic density. The poet has clearly chosen the plants with the most resonant common names, those with strong associative value. Images of flora are overlaid with those of the avalanche, the bear and the

kitten, paintbrushes laden with colour foregrounded against fungi empty of all colour. These images are moonlighting in the poem, slipping in between the surface meaning of the sentence. The effect has been complicated by the inclusion of a genuine simile, when the poet compares submerged fungi to “moonstones in the water”. Her reader must jump between each gradation of meaning, constantly shifting the text to establish its relation to the poem’s reality, at the level in this case of single words. This whirlwind of perspectives is recognisable in the closing passages of the poem, which reveal the violence that can rage on the surface of the volcano:

it receives one under winds that “tear the snow to bits
and hurl it like a sandblast
shearing off twigs and loose bark from the trees.”

Beneath the maelstrom, however, the icy octopus can be discerned, waiting to “receive one”, the stillness and stealth of the glacier set at odds with the unpredictability of its surface attributes:

Neatness of finish! Neatness of finish!
Relentless accuracy is the nature of this octopus
with its capacity for fact.
“Creeping slowly as with meditated stealth,
its arms seeming to approach from all directions,”

Here again, the poet’s capacity for talking about two subjects at once is impressive. In fact, it is difficult to ascribe a “capacity for fact” to a glacier—if the passage is to “mean” anything at all, the meaning may be contained in the dialectical relationship between the two subjects; that is, the poem and its subject, the mountain. This is, of course, a simplification, as the octopus image and the layers

of quotation complicate the image. Marianne Moore's Notes attribute the "Creeping slowly..." section to the journalist Francis Ward, *Illustrated London News*, August 11, 1923 (*Complete Poems* 40). The poet has hijacked his sincerely intended natural history text. Leaving intact the internal integrity of structure that presumably caught her initial attention, she changes the scale so vastly as to leave the quotation hanging, managing to force out of the same construction a description of a glacier "creeping slowly" across a mountain over millennia, and an octopus crawling on the ocean floor. Her achievement is to open a chasm in meaning, in this case with a violence akin to that which tears the snow to pieces.

The closing images of "An Octopus" help construct a paradigm for the tensions apparent in Moore's work as a whole. Violent weather appears on the surface of a mountain, which is not as immovable as it appears. In her prose, Moore wrote that "my writing is, if not a cabinet of fossils, a kind of collection of flies in amber" (*Complete Prose* 551). She claims that the small, live things—gifts, texts, creatures—that have found their way into the poetry have been set, even fossilized. Reading through "An Octopus", however, it is questionable whether the myriad little creatures, quotations and textual artefacts that inhabit its surface have entirely submitted to petrification. Moore's self-assessment is, as ever, somewhat wry, and in this case perhaps an ironic acknowledgement of those early critics of her "stiffly geometrical intellectuality" (Monroe 213). The complexity of her poetry belies the image of petrification, and its liveliness that of the "cabinet of fossils". However, like the little dog's "right good salvo of barks" that closes "Picking and Choosing" (*Poems* 138), Moore's image puts us on the scent. Below the wild criss-crossing winds and the blizzard of texts the mountain is visible, but not unchanging, subject to volcanic eruptions, avalanches, and the slow creep of the glacier. The process at work here is not fossilization. Critical responses to her technique have noticed an element of rejuvenation; Margaret Holley notes that she both preserves and dismantles old pieces of text: "On the one hand, this procedure has an effect of preserving the past by setting the new work into the context of its forbears; on the other hand, it has the effect of dismantling prior whole texts and of separating a fragment from its original context, exchanging its old field of meaning for a new one" (Holley 16). Like the *hau* of the gift described by Hyde, the life of the thing is preserved and brought

forward into its new context. Preservation indeed puts one in mind of amber, or of layers of stone. But these texts are not merely taken out of their previous contextual life and frozen. On the contrary, they are re-appropriated and put to new use. The new “field of meaning”, often concurrent new “fields” of meaning, reanimate the phrases into that monstrous sort of life that sees a dead thing set in motion in the service of a new body. It is almost always a graceful resurrection, of course, given Moore’s sensitivity to the structural integrity of the phrase. The glacially solid structure of the poem is a constant presence at the base regulating the potential for chaos on the surface. Nonetheless, the moments of shock provided by the process are gothic in scale: “transitions thus seem more like transpositions, a strange flowering of truth upon fact” (Garrigue 14). Moore creates a live, “flowering” thing rather than a petrified set of fossils. The sense of unease about the nature of the process however is suggested in Garrigue’s uncertainty regarding what is actually happening to the images: do “transitions” or “transpositions” result when such unlike things are stitched together with the neatness and fastidiousness of Moore’s “relentless accuracy”? The octopus is still, visibly, an octopus overlaid on the glacier, out of place and uncanny, stranded on the slopes of the volcano: “its ‘ghostly pallor changing / to the green metallic tinge of an anemone-starred pool”’ (*Poems* 167). The oddness of these transitions arises from the fact that the quotation marks preserve the image from even a slight blurring at the edges. The stitches are evident. This technique does not function in the same way as analogy, metaphor, or other traditional rhetorical devices. The reader’s attention falls fully onto the octopus for an instant before moving on to the glacier, and although they are lashed together within the grammatical structure of a single sentence, they are never conflated.

Moore’s use of quotation has been compared in detail to her daily practice of scrapbooking, which involved pasting together full-page assemblages of diverse materials. In these books she kept mementoes, cut-outs from magazines, books and newspapers, and sketches of butterflies, birds and animals (Brinkman 50). Bartholomew Brinkman has theorized Moore’s logic of juxtaposition and enjambment in her mature collage poems, “Marriage” and “An Octopus”, with reference to this domestic, visually based activity, and the peculiar opportunities for semantic fidelity and infidelity that it provides: “Quotation—marking itself as

quotation—retains some fidelity to the book, magazine or newspaper from which it came, but with its meaning changed in relation to the other textual elements in the poem, and with the poem as a whole making meaning through these juxtaposed elements” (Brinkman 58). There is not space here for a thorough discussion of Moore’s scrapbooks, but her deployment of a visual technique with respect to text, as outlined here, is another important signal that she conceptualizes visual and textual material in a similar fashion, and is comfortable manipulating them together, within the same space, and transposing one into the other. In her collage process Moore transposes and preserves the formal elements of the quotations she admires, and reciprocates that gift by generating a new text in which the original is incorporated and given a new, enlivening context.

The gift as art

The etymology of the image

Bonnie Costello has outlined how Moore’s “system of responses” is key to understanding her acquisitive and reciprocal processes. Examining how the poet reciprocates illuminates the reasons that she was drawn to the item of interest in the first place: “The student of Moore needs to learn how to place a certain document of interest (a picture, an article, a note) in the system of Moore’s responses ... she is sometimes drawn by artistic sympathy or identification, sometimes by curiosity, sometimes by distaste. She may attend to the representation, to the art object itself, to the artist who made it, or to the critic observing it” (Costello 191). Often, the gift to which Moore’s poetry responded was itself art or poetry. In such cases, her strategies of reciprocation must take into account the need to acknowledge her source, as well as the need to retain its formal integrity as an independent work of art. Moore’s engagement with the visual arts has motivated book-length studies, including Bonnie Costello’s, in which she goes so far as to assert that Moore’s “dominant sense, most would agree, was sight” (Costello 186). In a discussion of Moore’s relation to visual

modernisms, “When Marianne Moore Buys Pictures”, Linda Leavell has reiterated that “critics have long acknowledged the importance of the visual arts to Moore—that she read widely about the arts, visited galleries and museums, and maintained friendships with painters and sculptors” (Leavell, *Pictures* 250). The following discussion analyses her deployment of other people’s creative work, whether poetry or an art object, in order to explore her poetic strategies of acknowledgement and reciprocation of their gift in her own writing.

Moore’s commitment to the integrity of an image, piece of text, or symbol, as discussed in the previous section, allows her to revitalize and redeploy images, including those that have become clichéd. In a love letter written as a gift to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning claims he has banished yellow roses from his garden, since in the dictionary of flowers yellow roses are said to represent infidelity. “I planted a full dozen more rose-trees, all white—to take away the yellow-rose reproach!” (*Poems* 89). This piece of romantic hyperbole illuminates the context of the poem “Injudicious Gardening”, first published in *The Egoist* as ‘To Browning’ in 1915 (*Poems* 405). The love-letter itself does not make it into the poem, perhaps out of respect for Browning’s deep “sense of privacy”, which Moore remarks on. In two short stanzas Moore delicately dismantles Browning’s gift and the symbolism surrounding the rose, then reconstructs it:

If yellow betokens infidelity,
I am an infidel.
I could not bear a yellow rose ill will
because books said that yellow boded ill,
white promised well.

However, your particular possession,
the sense of privacy,
indeed might deprecate

offended ears, and need not tolerate
effrontery.

The playfulness of the clustered *l*, *o*, *i* and *w* sounds in the first stanza causes the reader to negotiate the image with equal lightness of step. The congregation of sounds might almost lead words to imply their opposites, as “ill will” is echoed in “ill” and “well”. The logic of the proposition, however, is as precise as the language. With a rare adoption of the first person, Moore inserts herself into the poem, to take personal issue with the historical prejudice against yellow roses. The delicacy of the aural performance which follows dissipates the rather squarely stressed “I am an infidel”, allowing the impact of that statement to carry through the stanza with wit and lightness of touch. Moore’s point arises humorously from the dissipation of that energy; her proposition rests on the contrast between the insubstantiality of symbolism, in comparison with the materiality of the flower. The yellow rose, both words emphatically stressed within the line, remains a still point as the whirlwind of associations plays around it, and proves to be a more resiliently material object than just a cipher for infidelity.

The deconstruction process is quickly reined in, however. In the second stanza, the poet draws back from her analysis, acknowledging the personal resonance of the symbol the lovers constructed in service of their relationship, and by extension, preserves the integrity of Browning’s text itself. Roses are common symbolic property, but the original textual gift to which Moore is responding—the unquoted love letter that lies beneath—is not. Browning’s is a personal symbolic construction based on the selection from a dictionary of flowers and built through the personal language and exchanges between Browning and Barrett. Moore feels free to deconstruct the symbolism and formal construction of the other poet’s image, but offers her reading, then steps back, in an effort to avoid the “effrontery” of misreading, or obliterating Browning’s formal intentions with her own.

The “meaning” of the image in a Moore poem is constructed thus from the relationship between textual artefacts and the objects around which they are

clustered. In other words, an object is presented in counterpoint to the associative, textual, and symbolic material that provides its context. Objects and quotations can be transposed across texts, as a gift moves between contexts, preserving its form but changing its meaning. The symbolic material is proven not to cause a lasting change to the object, which can be reclaimed to descriptive freshness by close attention to the details of its nature and appearance. Even roses can be freed from their symbolic association. Those histories, however, remain vital to Moore's construction of a constellation of ideas around an object. This cut-and-paste poetic process relies on the history of textual representation of her subject, representations that are tested against the nature of the subject as she sees it and against rival quotations. Each is provisional and all are necessary. In an early critical response, Kenneth Burke compared her procedure with the radically different approach of a lyric poet with amusement: "But where the lyricist might set about to write, "In the moonlight, by the river, on a night like this in Spain," I can think of Miss Moore's distributing these items (discreetly and discretely) among conversational observations about the quality of light in general and moonlight in particular, about rivers mighty and tiny ... and from travel books of Spain we might get some bits that, pieced together, gave us all into which, in her opinion, the given night in Spain should be broken down" (Burke 91). Moore gives us a potential cultural "etymology" for her subjects, the result of a personal history of reading, experience and happenstance. No object, she implies, can maintain an objective existence free from such cultural detritus in the mind of an observer. Spain, to use Burke's example, is not merely this particular place, time, and climate, but a many-layered concept informed by all those travel book items and films and stories one has heard throughout one's life in connection with the subject. The lyricist depends just as heavily on such history, but silently, maintaining the expectation that the reader shares broadly similar cultural assumptions regarding "Spain". In this sense Moore is genuinely radical. She does not assume hegemony in the personal histories of her readers, nor do her own cultural "etymologies" go unexamined. Furthermore, within the framework of the gift, she acknowledges the precise provenance of an image, and shapes the formal structures of her own in response. As in "Injudicious Gardening", more than one cultural history can exist within the same poem.

The creation of personal textual associative networks (often derived from gift objects or texts) and their partial reconstruction within the poetry is central to Moore's approach to her subject. The reader's appreciation of that understanding is also contingent on her explicitness in representing them. Moore's poems are, in a sense, clusters of received artefacts: associations, textual artefacts assembled on the basis of their personal relevance for the poet to the subject in question. The subject itself, however, is glimpsed beneath, like the mountain of "An Octopus" beneath the stormy weather on its surface. In incorporating material received from others, her collage technique suggests that her multiple advances toward her subject are reliant on the approaches others have made. The subject's relation to objects in the world is tutored by cultural material previously imbibed in relation to them. Margaret Holley has recognised this strain in Moore's work: "The creation of a work of art must be recognised as not only an individual act but also an activation of a whole impersonal network of textual conventions" (Holley 42). However, in addition to the impersonal network Holley perceives, there is a personal one, composed of friends, colleagues, writers and artists, the material trace of which is the texts and objects they give to Moore (consciously or not) and to which she responds in her work. It is an entangled gift economy, modulating and mediating the interactions between object and description, quotation and text, giver and recipient, gift and reciprocation. Quotation in Moore, such a visible aspect of her poetry, is in many ways a deliberate attempt to visually recognise her the debts that arise within the context of this gift economy, in addition to serving a modernist aesthetic function in creating a disorienting, polyvocal perspective. The poet herself chooses to emphasise her obligations in terms of honour in much-quoted statement on the subject: "I was just trying to be honorable and not to steal things. I've always felt that if a thing has been said in the very best way, how can you say it better?" (*Paris Review*). Moore cannot approach a subject without reference to previous texts that struck her, held her attention, and helped develop her thinking. They form part of the subject itself, and the objects she describes do not exist for her in isolation from the cultural material she is aware of surrounding them. She acknowledges the impossibility of apprehending her subject without reliance on her "whole impersonal [and personal] network." Unlike the lyric poet, Moore

makes these debts explicit, and seeks to reciprocate by means of generating new poetry, and echoing the seed text within its new context. The gift is thus simultaneously returned, and passed on to the reader.

Form and sincerity

Moore held strong views on what constituted aesthetic sincerity, which she outlined not only in her poetry, but throughout her prose essays and reviews. If, as I have argued, Moore makes a formal reciprocation in aesthetic terms for text or material gifts she has received, the nature of the response may be illuminated by an examination of this aspect of her aesthetic philosophy. Leavell refers the student of Moore to the writings of Wassily Kandinsky (Leavell, *Pictures* 252). Art, according to the painter and theorist, must be produced at the behest of inner compulsion. Outer compulsions, especially an attempt to produce work aimed at the market, will produce forms that reveal their lack of sincerity in their aesthetic inconsistency. Kandinsky reaches the conclusion that “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” (Kandinsky 153). This echoes Moore’s sentiment in “The Paper Nautilus” decrying the mercenary work of “writers entrapped by / teatime fame and by / commuters’ comforts” (*Poems* 238). Leavell demonstrates that Moore was aware of Kandinsky’s writing on creativity and its preconditions for aesthetic success (Leavell, *Pictures* 252), and argues that her sympathy with his ideas can explain the fraternity Moore feels with animals and the things they make. The nautilus egg case was created as the result of instinct, a creative solution to an environmental problem. The beauty of the resulting object is therefore not accidental but the result of the nautilus’ fidelity to “inner necessity”. Moore aligns the productions of good poets and artisans with the unconscious and instinctual progress of animals—the intended outcome is to avoid the pecuniary entanglements of the market and place poetry within a gift rather than trade economy.

The comparison is made directly in "Poetry" (*Poems* 135), with its complaint against poets who do not reach those standards:

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. One must make a
distinction,
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result
is not poetry,
nor till the poets among us can be
"literalists of
the imagination"—above
insolence and triviality and can present
for inspection, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them", shall
we have
it.

Moore is again restrained in her anthropomorphism; the critic and the horse twitching his skin are kept in their separate categories by the agency of simile. The critic is described as "immovable", which is negative, but his actions are granted the dignity of being listed alongside those of a wild horse, elephants, a "tireless wolf". In Moore's world, this is a compliment indeed. His action, in her

opinion, is consistent with his nature—he responds to a text as to an environmental condition, as the horse to a fly—and therefore could be said to emerge from an internal consistency, which is a high moral justification for any action.

Moore's circus parade of animals and eccentric portraits is her means of presenting her thought on the nature of “right” action. Living according to instinct, as animals do, is praiseworthy in humanity when the compulsion arises from an ethical imperative. People do not have the capacity to stand in a purely instinctual relation to the world, and Moore does not suggest that they should try; however, the ascetic happiness that Moore ascribes to “a small desert rat, and not famous, that lives without water” in “The Jerboa” (*Poems* 190) can be easily related to the simple domestic arrangements that pleased her best in “People's Surroundings”. The materialistic pomp of the early North African civilisation that surrounds its habitat invokes an understated condemnation: the undeniable fascination held by the overflow of luxury is balanced by the moral awareness that this is “*Too Much*”, and that the jerboa enjoys “*Abundance*” (*Poems* 193).

The moral template is a well-defined design for living; her animals are presented as a mirror for right conduct. In aesthetic terms, internal compulsion might be best understood in relation to external compulsion, which is aligned with the “murkiness”, both formal and moral, of worldly concerns. Those “writers entrapped by teatime fame” (*Poems* 238) are excluded from the instinctual mode of creativity represented by the paper nautilus. This may be one reason why Moore chooses subjects such as shells or glass bottles that are of little value in the market. It is only outside of the marketplace that we can recognise the aesthetic value of an art object. This is not mutually exclusive to market value, as objects such as the ceramic plate of “Nine Nectarines” clearly have such a value; but it is apparently almost impossible to combine the two, certainly in appreciating if not creating art.

“When I Buy Pictures” acknowledges in its title the economic conditions in which art is produced, and recognises that gestures indicating aesthetic preference must be made in the vocabulary of the marketplace. That is, in order to thoroughly express our affinity with a work of art it is sometimes necessary to

buy it. Moore, however, quickly undercuts the statement in the title by suggesting that it is less than close to the truth. The immediate correction of the idea that such pleasures could be “bought” effectively switches one sort of value—the market value—for another.

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,
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average moments:
the satire upon curiosity in which no more is discernible
than the intensity of the mood;
or quite the opposite—the old thing, the medieval decorated hat-box,
in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like the waist of
the hour-glass,
...
Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that detracts
from one’s enjoyment.
It must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph
easily be honoured—
that which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must be “lit with piercing glances into the life of things”;
it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it. (*Poems*
144)

Moore reverts to the kind of “possession” that transcends economic and functional attachments—i.e., a gift—and which she prefers to define in terms of the imagination. Aesthetic value is a side-product of the market economy: it can neither be contained nor analysed within it. Moore tells us that possession is “imaginary”, which is not to suggest that it is a form of illusion, but rather suggests a site and an associated vocabulary for her alternative form of possession. Having established an alternative imaginative economy in which aesthetic value can be analysed, it remains to examine the sources of that value. Moore's desire for art that is not only valuable, but moral, is expressed at the end of the poem.

The “life of things” is inseparable from “the spiritual forces”, those internal compulsions brought upon the creator of a piece of art “which have made it”, at least in the form that it has materialized. In her own terms, then, Moore's work, dependant as it is upon the art and textual creativity of others, demonstrates an unbroken line back through the poetry and its painstakingly annotated sources to the spiritual facets of experience to which they respond. Leavell, describing the culture of Moore's contemporaries in the visual arts, puts it this way: “those clustered around America's leading crusader for modernism, Alfred Stieglitz, believed unabashedly in spiritual truth. They wanted not to invent truth, but to *see* it” (Leavell, *Pictures* 252). As she stated in “In the Days of Prismatic Color” (*Poems* 136) Moore did believe that an impartial “truth” would emerge beneath the waves of subjective experience passing over it:

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.”

She believed also that it was easy for an artist to deviate from the internal prompting of the spirit in creative practice, and produce work which falls far short of aesthetic sincerity, and thus formal greatness. This is the reason for her poetic championing of subjects such as the Swedish carriage that fulfil, in her

opinion, the conditions for spiritual value. It also justifies her repudiation of “people’s surroundings” and creative practices which deviate from them. Domestic settings such as Bluebeard's lead back only to Bluebeard: his human strategies of illusion and hypocrisy are merely self-revelatory. On the other hand, the poet suggests that creative practice obedient to an internal necessity that is near instinctual can reveal an unbroken line to spiritual “truth”.

William Carlos Williams recognised a “white light” in her poetry early on in her career, which like the *hau* of the gift survives all the exchanges, breakdowns, reconstructions, and transformations the text undergoes in becoming the new poem. This light emerges at the conjunction of all her disparate arms and legs and wing-joints of text: “as white is at the intersection of blue and green and yellow and red. It is this white light that is the background of all good work ... The difficult thing to realize is that the thrust must go through to the white, at least somewhere” (Williams 103). Without suggesting that Moore succeeds in revealing an objective “truth” behind the materiality of her subject matter, it may be said that she uses images of inner light to represent the spiritual qualities she values in the objects, people, texts, and ideas that she describes. The quality that she is attracted to is what she carries forward into her descriptions, as the spirit of the gift—the *hau*—moves forward with the gift from giver to recipient. The image is employed in “The Hero”, for example, to suggest that the most interesting or valuable quality is never the most obvious, but an internal and intrinsic one:

It is not what I eat that is
my natural meat,
the hero says. He’s not out
Seeing a sight but the rock
crystal thing to see—the startling El Greco
brimming with inner light—that covets
nothing that it has let go. This then you may know

as the hero. (*Poems* 188)

“Inner light” is represented somewhat inconsistently. Rock crystal is translucent, and a light set to shine behind it will be visible; the El Greco painting, on the other hand, is opaque, and any “light” visible within it is the result of the artist’s talented application of paint to the canvas. The manner in which the light is produced shifts from image to image, but the reader is not encouraged to assume that this affects its ultimate meaning. The inconsistency suggests that the “inner light” the speaker is talking about is not literal, but an image employed to gesture towards something inexpressible. Certainly analysis, or “too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that”, will fail to reveal the source of the poet’s pleasure and interest.

To make an analogy from the literature of the gift, *hau*, likewise, is an image intended to convey an inexpressible spiritual characteristic. It is a dynamic spirit that resides within the gift (Mauss 15), demanding recompense and increase, which remains constant no matter where the gift is currently situated within the exchange cycle, or to whom it currently belongs. It is an intrinsic and spiritual quality that surmounts the physical properties of the object with which it is associated. This idea has similar implications to William’s image of a “white light” that remains in the background of Moore’s poetry no matter what formal shifts and juxtapositions take place on its surface. The qualities represented by Moore’s “inner light” travel, like the *hau*, along with the gift; they are intrinsic and make up “the life of things”. Moore carries them over from the original subject into the descriptions she writes in response along with the formal elements she preserves.

Conclusion

Through a close reading of several key poems by Marianne Moore, stretching from her early through her late career, the movement of the gift may be traced through her work, illuminating the procedural strategies employed in her poetry.

“Gifts” may take the form of personal presents, artisanal objects, texts, or artworks: Moore responds to the effort, time, labour, and attentiveness put into the construction of the artefact and is moved to reciprocate with time, attention, and labour of her own. In reciprocation, she produces poems describing and recontextualizing the original offering—in the case of quotations, the original artefacts are included within the new texts; and in the case of objects, they are described in extraordinary detail and, in a way, transformed into text themselves. Gifts thus provide the occasion for poems, and that in fact that the desire or obligation to reciprocate often generates the subject of the work.

Since the gift is both the occasion for and subject of the poems analysed in this chapter, the form of the gift necessarily contributes to the form of the resulting poem. Moore’s descriptive response to materiality and her collage technique have been explored in order to demonstrate how this formal transference is achieved. As a result of these processes, the form of the poem reflects both the material attributes of the object and the network of cultural and personal association that surrounds it. In addition, the poem often simulates the characteristics of the person who gave the gift, and a reading of “People’s Surroundings” has established how closely Moore associates materiality with personal and cultural associations.

The qualities that the poet responds to in both gift objects and texts (and to which she feels the need to reciprocate) have also been examined. As stated in “When I Buy Pictures”, Moore particularly values qualities that cannot be bought, but possessed only in the “imagination”. These characteristics—for example formal elements, grammatical structures, or pleasingly unexpected juxtapositions—are carried forward from the original gift into the response poem. Finally, the inner “light” noticed throughout Moore’s work by critics such as William Carlos Williams is connected to the concept of *hau*: the spirit that moves with the gift between contexts, and which remains stable no matter who is currently in possession of it.

Moore’s magpie methodology and descriptive meditations on the gift aim to lead the reader towards a unified spiritual point that underlies the mottled and varied surfaces of her collage poems. “Insolence and triviality” is defined as the

opposite of her practice, asking the reader to consider her damaged, cast-off objects and snippets of decontextualized text as signposts to a sustainable spirit visible beyond the form. Moore responds to objects that are decorative, broken, or like the Swedish carriage in storage out of public view; items that have little value within the market, but are highly valued with her model of imaginative possession by description and a gift economy defined by formal transformation and reciprocity.

Chapter 3. “To fulfil a private obligation”: Moore and her patrons

Introduction

This chapter investigates Marianne Moore’s patronage relationships, and explores the role of the gift within them. The dual role of marriage as an institution Moore sought to avoid, and as an alternative form of patronage, is also examined. Some of Moore’s patrons supported her by offering valuable objects and clothes, allowing a deeper reading of the gift object within in her professional and social networks. However, as she also received patronage in the form of cash prizes and cheques, the chapter interrogates the concept of the gift as money. The expectations and transactions involved in these exchanges may be extrapolated from Moore’s letters and the work of her previous biographers, notably Linda Leavell’s biography, *Hanging on Upside Down*, for its insights into Moore’s years at *The Dial*. As in so many of Moore’s gift exchange partnerships, her relations with her patrons were often ambivalent. Her interactions with Scofield Thayer and Bryher particularly form a familiar pattern of refusals, breakdowns, and partial successes.

Gift exchange helps unpack the dynamics of a monetary exchange that remains partially closed off from the market, a private rather than public transaction that requires no immediate transactional return. While the visual arts retain a model of patronage, in which the collector purchases artwork, both mirroring and sustaining the art market, no direct exchange of goods for money is usually made when a patron funds a writer. Lewis Hyde explains this situation by defining a patron’s investment as a stage in a gift cycle initiated by the success of a poet’s previous work in the public sphere (279). In this reading a patron’s support is not a wage or fee for service, but a gift given in recognition of the artist’s own (Hyde 278). In relation to patronage, as opposed to earned income in affiliated fields such as teaching, editing, or librarianship, the writer’s livelihood exists within a public literary sphere defined as a gift economy, a sphere in which, as Lévi-Strauss put it: “The double assumption is found everywhere that

reciprocal gifts constitute a means of transferring goods, or certain goods, and that these gifts are not offered principally or essentially with the idea of receiving a profit or advantage of an economic nature” (Levi-Strauss 53). Moore inhabited a particular set of circumstances that uniquely positioned her in relation to patronage and related forms of institutional support available to her, particularly, as a woman in the early twentieth century, the institution of marriage. Ellen Levy described Moore as a posthumously queer-defined individual (Levy xxiii) who subversively interacted with each of the social institutions she came into contact with in order to resist them—patronage, the academy, the museum, as well as marriage. Levy argues that this resistance was the means by which Moore created a space for herself within modernity and modernism (ibid.). She certainly conducted an evasive and sometimes obstructive relationship with her patrons, as outlined below, which suggests she was aware that these interactions carried the burdensome associated with the gift economy.

Additional difficulties arose when financial support was offered, rather than objects or assistance. Moore’s usual strategy, outlined in Chapter 2, of reciprocating by generating descriptive text breaks down. Money is resistant to description, and in one example her effort to write a thank-you letter as a return gift to her patrons was uncharacteristically weak, lacking the dense materiality and buildup of precise detail that distinguish her descriptions of gift objects. Instead, she turned to abstract imagery of flames and blessings: “I shall still feel I owe it to heaven to make it again a flame that will bless others as you & S. have made it to bless me” (*Letters* 250). (This letter to James Watson is discussed more fully below). When Moore did accept cash or checks from donors, they were often invested in savings accounts at the behest of her mother Mary, and never spent, effectively ending the gift cycle. For the purposes of this chapter Moore’s fees for poems have been categorized as patronage rather than earned income, since for the most part journals such as *The Dial* were run at a loss and supported by patrons (see Joost). In these circumstances, contributor fees may be regarded as a distribution mechanism for literary patronage, rather than a market rate for services.

Overview

Marianne Moore's main patronage relationships represented a gift exchange cycle encompassing financial support, material gifts, and the writing produced by the poet. In this chapter the complicated relation of marriage with patronage is investigated with a close reading of Moore's long poem on the subject in the context of two proposed marriages of convenience: the lesbian philanthropist Bryher's marriage to Robert McAlmon, and Scofield Thayer's alleged proposal of a similar arrangement to Moore. As a female writer in tenuous economic circumstances, Moore had a complicated dual engagement with marriage in the context of patronage; as a woman with limited rights within her society, it was offered to her as a form of patronage entailing particularly onerous obligations. Moore, however, found marriage an unwelcome social expectation. Financial support from other donors ultimately helped her avoid getting married at all.

After a brief outline of the role of the patron in the avant-garde circles of the early 1920s, the chapter looks at several of Moore's most important patrons: Scofield Thayer, a wealthy patron who published her work, employed her, and probably proposed marriage; Bryher, a lifelong patron who had a close and arguably romantic relationship with Moore; and finally Hildegard Watson, the wife of *The Dial* co-owner Dr. James Sibley Watson, who offered financial assistance and gifts without the threat of romantic entanglement. Over the course of the chapter Moore's patronage network will be analysed as a gift economy, with all the potential for obligation, power imbalances, and sexual aggression such a definition implies.

Patronage of the 1920s avant-garde

In some respects the relation of the artist or writer to her wealthy patron has remained relatively unchanged since the Renaissance, as the direction of the history of art is still substantially influenced by the taste of those willing to pay for it. Patronage within the visual arts, at least, has survived to the present day in recognisable form. Patron-collectors such as Eli Broad or Reinhold Würth not

only buy and commission art, but also create spaces for it to be exhibited (Broad Collection). The history of patronage, however, is dominated by names such as Medici or Borghese (Tinagli 15), wealthy Renaissance families that commissioned works from artisans and artists for private collections or as public donations to the Church. An eternal dance was conducted between patron and patronized for control and recognition of the work and its meaning, a dance that was often played out within the work itself in material terms, a struggle that was perhaps never more explicit than in the practice of painting the portrait of the donor into the scene “flanking religious images [in] public demonstrations of piety and religious feeling, of the desire to offer sacred images for the glory of God” (Tinagli 60). The agency and intention of the artist in works featuring donor portraits were deliberately overwritten and erased in favour of those of the patron; the work of art in such cases was literally made in the image of the man or woman who paid for it. Studies of Renaissance patronage present a model of commissioner and commissioned that placed the work within a cycle of patron, artist, and occasion that diffused the concepts of authorship and ownership, and prioritized the agency of the donor.

Literature, too, was controlled and organized more by the patron than the author in the early modern period, at which time the concept of authorship was much weaker than in the last century. The patron, rather than the writer of the text, was the clear owner of the work (Garber 3). However, with the development of copyright in the eighteenth century, the system of literary patronage shifted significantly. For the first time an author could establish ownership over the things she had written, heralding a significant change in the hierarchical relationship between patrons and patronized. Legal and literary conflicts began to emerge over the control of works (Garber 4). The ongoing battle between the demands of the patron and the writer’s aesthetic vision—and their mutual dependence—became a popular subject for satire and poetic treatise (Sawaya 6). Meanwhile, the question of ownership over the text itself became ever more complex. As Garber describes it, the dynamics of patronage changed over the centuries and decades in a shift that “laid the groundwork for the modern system that integrates artists in a network of social and fiscal relations” (Garber 10).

As Francesca Sawaya has argued, the phenomenon of patronage is not limited to the pre-modern period, but “continues to be important in modernity, though its form may shift, and though the term may be used to describe a variety of different phenomena” (6). She interrogates the concepts of patronage and corporate philanthropy in the period as forms of interventionism designed to maintain the fiction of a self-regulating free market by addressing oversights and failures of the capitalist system. Sawaya makes a distinction between the range of patronage practices that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century and those related to institutionalized, professionalized philanthropy, since the former involve “complex” interpersonal links across social and institutional hierarchies that are individual and personal. They still, however, retain inherent “forms of self-interestedness (rather than benevolence) and continuous (if changing) inequality” (7).

The great patrons and collectors of modernist art and literature, such as Peggy Guggenheim, Gertrude and Leo Stein, Bryher, and Scofield Thayer were vital to the early stages of artist’s careers by creating markets and venues for the avant-garde. They also provided basic day-to-day financial help to pay the bills. Guggenheim’s activities in the literary field help define a pattern for the patronage of writers comprising publishing support, accommodation, and financial aid provided with the intention of helping them continue to make avant-garde art (Kramer). She subsidised the lives of writers such as Djuna Barnes, and provided space and sanctuary for her to write at her mansion in England (Goldstone 121–2). Patronage is not necessarily a positive relationship, however, nor is it always a mutually beneficial one; the ambivalent cycle of generosity, indebtedness, and obligation that characterize the gift economy may be clearly perceived within its dynamics. Barnes felt her obligations keenly and complained of them:

God damn, damn, shall I ever be able to have my life to myself to do my work, but on the other hand, it makes you feel so bloody when gift money is not given (and when is it?) with the whole wish and the whole heart.

To Emily Coleman, 10 Jan 1936 (quoted in Snyder-Körber 511)

Barnes is aware that accepting the money has also meant accepting certain obligations, understanding that her “gift money” was not free and required active reciprocation in the form of social obligations but also her writing itself, as Mary Ann Snyder-Körber has argued in her discussion of *Nightwood* and patronage: “In being composed through the benefit of gift money, the novel is thus subject to interests and obligations, but beyond this is itself a means of exchange: a compositional gift that tactically reciprocates the financial one” (Snyder-Körber 522).

As a return gift, Barnes’ novel is tied to the constraints and demands of the gift money that funded its composition: it must perform its role as a gift in addition to its literary ambitions, potentially limiting the latter. The tethering of one’s literary output in this manner to the vagaries of exchange, obligation, and asymmetrical power relations would obviously be alarming to a writer such as Moore. In this light patronage appears as an institution she would be motivated to resist, if she could not avoid it entirely.

The social space of modernism

Modernist patrons like Guggenheim, as well as Bryher, Thayer, and Watson, generally chose to support writers who were members of the social circles of the avant-garde in Paris, Berlin, and New York, a network of not only artists and writers but *salonnières*, reviewers, booksellers, publishers, galleries, models, drinking buddies, and patrons that comprised a semi-permeable social space that in turn collectively defined the avant-garde aesthetics of the early 1920s. That diverse milieu comprised what Lawrence Rainey has described as “the density of the particular social space that bound together the authors whose works have been deemed central to discussion of the Modernist moment” (Rainey, *Cultural Economy* 34). This social space was in no small part bounded by the institutions and people who supported its members financially. Rather than a series of texts

and their exegeses, Rainey saw modernism as: “a social reality, a configuration of agents and practices that converge in the production, marketing, and publicization of an idiom, a shareable language within the family of twentieth-century tongues” (ibid.). He designated patronage as one of several institutions that establishes and maintains these processes, an institution that had borne the brunt of commercialization and the new mass-markets for culture, morphing “what had once been an aristocracy of patron-saloniers ... into an elite of patron-investors” (43).¹⁰ The social network is partly defined by the patron, and, vice versa, the patron’s supportive activities are defined by the social network: a two-way process of modulating the social space that has the effect of generating aesthetic cohesion. This vision of a constructed social arena resonates with Povinelli’s vision of the gift economy as a partially permeable social space nestled within a dominant culture, to which it is often resistant but with which it is nonetheless interdependent (Povinelli).

With relation to the social composition of the avant-garde—the space described by Rainey as “a social reality, a configuration of agents and practices that converge”—patronage may be viewed as one of the practices that both intersects with and helps define it. The actions of patrons to support and sponsor artists and create outlets for their work make them agents of a gift economy, which situates the writer and her work within a continuous cycle of exchange and obligation. Povinelli’s “anthropology of the otherwise” deals with communities or social spaces that are at odds with the dominant culture within which they are enmeshed: communities such as the New York avant-garde. She has described the gift economy as “the embagination of space by the circulation of things”,

¹⁰ Rainey has elsewhere blamed the sheltering effects of patronage for what he sees as the weakness of H.D.’s poetry, in a reactionary argument challenging her rehabilitation in to the canon in the 1990s that implied her popularity with revisionist critics was due to her marginal status as a gay woman. Bryher’s patronage, he argued, deprived H.D. of an audience and condemned her to the status of “a coterie poet, one whose writings circulated, like bonbons at a dinner party, among a *cénacle* of friends and hangers-on in wealthy bohemia” (Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism* 148). Rainey ignored the role of patronage in supporting more traditionally canonical male writers (including Pound and Eliot). While his input is an interesting take on the burden patronage can prove to be, his argument that financial support causes some poets (but not others) to be “weaker” is difficult to countenance.

asking, “what if the dominant visual metaphor of the anthropology of the otherwise were a woven bag?” (Povinelli). She describes the mechanics of embagination within a wider cultural context: the creation of a social space that is enclosed, but not sealed. “Conceptualizing social space as a kind of *embagination* foregrounds the fact that gift economies can close a world but never seal it. Every gift economy creates simultaneous surplus, excess deficits, and abscesses in material and memory” (Povinelli). Povinelli’s view of the gift exchange builds on and complicates the structuralist concept presented by Claude Lévi-Strauss of a “structurally closed totality” (Lévi-Strauss 4), noting that from a diachronic perspective, new debt-credit relations and social nodes were constantly being added and subtracted; “Kula lines were always being made and remade” (Povinelli). Patronage establishes just such an embaginated space, where social and aesthetic dynamics overlap, and effectively functions as a gift economy, in which the transfer of objects, money, artworks, and texts establishes the bonds that create a semi-permeable social space. The movement of wealth accomplished by these exchanges functioned as all gift exchanges do: “the prohibition against hoarding valuables and the obligation to enter into debt/credit relations [is] vital to the creation of self-reflexive folds that made social and cultural worlds possible” (ibid.). Pockets of communication and interaction are formed that enable the exchange of cultural materials such as modernist texts. That space, mapped by the aesthetic material produced and exchanged by its members, in turn modulates the form and type of the material produced. It is not, however, sealed; the opportunity remains to stand in ambivalent relation to it, refusing the establishment of certain debt/credit obligations and accepting others; it is here that Moore’s reluctant and inconsistent relationships with her patrons may be located (51). The poet’s self-definition in relation to her social sphere was often, as Levy pointed out, oppositional; in addition, she sometimes refused to enter certain debt/credit obligations, while accepting other overtures from the same individual. Her contradictory stance in this regard is reflected throughout what Levy describes as her “poetics of ambivalence”.

Patronage as a gift economy

While following chapters explore the influence of peers within the visual arts and literary mentors in the socially modulated aesthetics of this community within the context of the gift economy, the impact of patrons on the developmental direction of both individual artists and writers, and the avant-garde in general, reveals a particular location for agency within this space. New York in the twenties was far from the hierarchical society of Renaissance Italy, and artists and writers enjoyed an unprecedented degree of authorship and control over their work. However, the economic disparity between the poet, living in a single room in New York with her mother, and Bryher for example—one of the wealthiest women of her era—was enormous. Garber has described the stresses inherent in patronage relations, which had not dissipated by the early twentieth century: “Twentieth-century writers, too, continued to have their patrons. Once again, this relationship often remained highly ambivalent: talent and money were equally eroticized, and some species of creative ingratitude was perhaps inevitable. The patronage relationships of modern authors were often further complicated by social and personal issues such as class, sex, and race, all of which exacerbated both the difference between patron and patronized and their mutual imbrication” (Garber 12). The vocabulary of the gift emerges within Garber’s text—“creative ingratitude” and “mutual imbrication” contributing to a “highly ambivalent” relationship. The patronage relationship, like the gift, paradoxically establishes both a closer social bond—“mutual imbrication”—and increases the difference in status between the participants and thus the potential for asymmetrical power relations (Bourdieu, “Logic of Practice” 216).

“Critics and connoisseurs”

Moore’s acute awareness of social, institutional, and gift-related obligations is a common theme in her letters. “Critics and Connoisseurs”, gives the reader an insight into her strategies of resistance to such pressures. In her critique of the poem Ellen Levy recognises a poet expressing her “acute consciousness of the

imperative to find and hold a space for herself in a competitive cultural arena” (Levy 48). Levy invokes Bourdieu’s analysis of style as “nothing other than the space of the positions and self-positionings constituting the field and within which the artistic intention of the artist in question has defined itself, generally by opposition” (ibid.). Bourdieu sees style—the personal expression of aesthetics—as a bidirectional process, taking place between the artist and her milieu. While the relation between art and critic within that milieu may be oppositional, the patronage relationship, like that of the mentor and protégée, is more ambivalent. Levy’s reading places Moore within such a field, taking stock of the positions of others and positioning herself in relation to them, either sympathetically or not, and assessing whether to take advantage of potential support from allies. Levy cites several of the poems of Moore’s pre-1920s period, including the unflattering portrait “To a Steam Roller” (92) as evidence that Moore often defined her “artistic intention” in opposition to the position of critics she disliked (*Poems* 109). Viewing this cultural space as a gift economy, however, with its dynamics of cyclical reciprocity, allows for a more dynamic model in which the positions of others shift according to changes in their relative status and obligation ties.

In “Critics and Connoisseurs”, Moore describes animals engaged in unfruitful resistance. Reactionary or unresponsive behaviours represent “ambition without understanding”—a defensively immobile swan, and an ant engaged in the Sisyphean effort of carrying heavy objects in a circle:

I remember a swan under the willows in Oxford,
with flamingo-colored, maple-
leaflike feet. It reconnoitred like a battle-
ship. Disbelief and conscious fastidiousness were
ingredients in its
disinclination to move. Finally its hardihood was
not proof against its
proclivity to more fully appraise such bits
of food as the stream

bore counter to it; it made away with what I gave it
to eat. I have seen this swan and
I have seen you; I have seen ambition without
understanding in a variety of forms. Happening to stand
by an ant-hill, I have
seen a fastidious ant carrying 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. Then abandoning the stick as
useless and overtaxing its
jaws with a particle of whitewash—pill-like but
heavy—it again went through the same course of procedure.

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? (Moore, *Poems* 106).

In the first stanza and a half the recalcitrant swan “dominated the stream in an attitude / of self-defence”, but failing to resist the offered breadcrumbs. The speaker criticizes the swan’s “making away” with her offerings of food despite its previous “fastidiousness”. Her offerings run “counter” to the creature’s initial posture. The implicit criticism is of a person who accepts anything that may arrive downstream, no matter how contrary it may be to his values or position. The outcome of its attitude is lost effort, spiral motion that does not allow development or forward action, and a “battleship”-like adversity to the ordinary movement of life.

The second stanza and a half describe the other extreme, a fruitless and isolated circle, endlessly unproductive and disconnected from the hive. Lineation

allows the poet to establish a sense of heaviness and laboriousness. Dividing “north, south” from “east, west” slows the expected progression of the compass points reflecting the ant’s slow circle. “Turned” echoes “returned” within two lines, creating the sense of a spiral that refuses to allow the movement of the poem to advance. “But” drops to “heavy” on the following line; “point” to “from which it started”. The futility of the ant’s endeavour is underlined throughout by overemphatic vocabulary: the stick is “abandoned” and the ant’s capacities are “overtaxed”. For Moore, the insect’s occupation represents the fallacy of “ambition without / understanding”.

A middle road is implied between these two extremes. Simply defining oneself in opposition to the surrounding world like the swan is not considered by Moore to be a fruitful course of action, and neither is effort spent in a lonely and Sisyphean endeavour like the ant’s. The kind of “space” Levy suggests Moore wished to construct is connected to the “ant-hill” and “the stream”. Labour, the poem implies, should have a socially useful outcome and take part in wider systems of exchange. It is not valuable simply because it is taxing. Bourdieu’s “field” of “positions and self-positionings” established between the artist and her surroundings, requires attention and response to both to the needs of the hive and the direction of the stream, not merely opposition and obstruction; neither does the poet advocate simply going with the flow of obligation or opportunity. In this middle way the poet’s strategies of resistance, partial engagement, subversion, and refusal of patronage may be discerned.

Moore’s patrons: Thayer, Bryher, and Watson

Marianne Moore received patronage throughout her life from a number of sources. The three relationships I will examine in this chapter reflect the diverse ways in which patronage manifested in the period. Firstly, Scofield Thayer and Dr. James Sibley Watson patronized modernism more broadly by purchasing *The Dial* magazine and running it at a considerable loss as an avant-garde review. To Marianne Moore they offered first publication and payment, then the \$2000 *Dial* award in 1924 (Joost 84), later employing her as editor. Thayer may additionally

have proposed a marriage of convenience to Moore. The English novelist and heiress Winifred Ellerman, known as Bryher, supported her financially with significant cheques, and alongside H.D. and Robert McAlmon funded and oversaw the publication of Moore's first volume of poetry, 1921's *Poems*. Finally, Moore's friendship with Hildegard Watson involved an exchange of gifts, and illustrated letters reminiscent of the correspondences with Bishop and Cornell. Watson subsidized the poet's life more practically with cheques, jewels, hand-me-down clothes, and emergency medical expenses (Moore, *The Selected Letters of Marianne Moore* 411, 464, 546).

Moore had an evasive and ambivalent relationship with her patrons, indicative of her awareness of the burdens of status and obligation within the exchange. If patronage established an embaginated space for her, Moore took full advantage of its permeability, often refusing or regretting support if it took a form that was not pleasing to her, while accepting and enjoying assistance if offered within an appropriate exchange. Since a gift economy implies not only the non-commercial exchange of goods, but also the establishment of social bonds and obligations, Moore was (as elsewhere in her personal and professional life) selective in the obligations she allowed herself to undertake with her patrons.

The literary sponsors: James Sibley Watson and Scofield Thayer

The Dial Award

Scofield Thayer purchased a controlling share in *The Dial* in November 1919 (Ozieblo 487) and along with James Watson transformed it into the famous modernist journal that championed e e cummings, Joyce, Eliot, and Moore, among many others. He employed Moore as editor in the mid twenties, establishing her as one of the most important nodes in the socio-economic networks of the avant-garde. Thayer and Watson ran *The Dial* at a large loss; Ozieblo notes that the deficit for September 1922 alone was \$9,000 (500). Nevertheless they managed to remain one of the few outlets for modernist writing to pay their contributors, itself an act of great importance for the history of modernism. In addition to

supplying Moore with employment and providing an published outlet for her poetry and prose, they selected her as the recipient of the Dial award in 1924, a financial prize specifically intended to be “no-strings-attached” which T. S. Eliot received in 1922. Unlike the Guggenheim fellowships, it came with no stated conditions. Rather, it was awarded at the pleasure of the owners of *The Dial* to poets whose previous work they judged outstanding: “something given to afford the recipient an opportunity to do what he wished and out of that to enrich and develop his work” (Joost 81).

The lack of immediate or stated conditions and with no requirement to make a return within a specified time frame, the Dial Award stands within the territory of the gift. Moore recognised this in the language of her response, stating that “never was a gift more complete and without victimizing involvements” (ibid. See also *Letters* 216). She described Thayer and Watson’s work as patrons as “a non-exploiting helpfulness to art and the artist...the doctrine that ‘a love of letters knows no frontiers” (Joost 81) Moore never spent her Dial Award money but placed it into savings at her mother’s insistence (Leavell 247), seemingly regarding cash received in such a manner as inappropriate for covering daily expenses.

Moore as editor

By 1925 both Thayer and Watson were distancing themselves from the daily workings of the magazine, and the current editor Alyse Gregory had resigned to join her husband in England (Ozieblo 495). The post was offered to previous contributor and occasional assistant, Marianne Moore. In the June 1926 issue *The Dial* printed Thayer’s resignation announcement (Joost 92), and from that time forward Moore acted as full editor, with Thayer in an advisory role. This gave her almost unprecedented control over the magazine as her predecessor, Gregory, had dealt with the two directors taking a much more direct interest in its running and broader decision-making role (ibid.). The opportunity to edit *The Dial* falls into a different category of support than the Dial Award. Indeed, rather than support her work as a poet, the editorship effectively prevented her from

publishing poetry for almost a decade. As historian Nicholas Joost pointed out, the arrangement in some ways diminished both Moore's production and the magazine itself: "One change, however, was, if inessential, regrettable; after she assumed the editorship of *The Dial*, Marianne Moore published no more poems in it. Distinguished though her "Comment" was, it could not replace the poems she might have published in *The Dial*. The review was immeasurably the richer for [her earlier poems]" (98). What the editorship did provide for Moore was the opportunity to work at the centre of one of the key modernist outlets of the 1920s, allowing her to create and curate a forum not only for herself as a writer of poetry and prose, but for others who shared her aesthetics and vision. *The Dial*, its editorial policy, and its award represented an enclosed space that was carefully edited and controlled according to the tastes of its owners, and support, publication, and compensation were awarded to those writers and artists who fit certain criteria—an embaginated space with mediated entry. In assuming editorship Moore took control of that space. She described her editorial criteria with uncharacteristic vagueness as demonstrating "a tolerance for fresh experiments". Her preferred type of work must be determined from what she published: D. H. Lawrence, William Butler Yeats, Paul Valéry, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, H. D., e e Cummings, and T.S. Eliot, among many others (Joost 97). Joost has emphasised the fact that Moore took pains to encourage young and novice writers (95), in a sense returning the gift of patronage and mentorship that had been offered to her.

The daily work of the magazine may itself be viewed as an exchange economy of correspondence, submission, review, payment, and publication. As Bonnie Costello has pointed out, correspondence with prospective contributors was often an extensive back-and-forth of suggested edits and revisions (Moore, *Letters* 212–3) in a manner reminiscent of Moore's later interactions with the young Elizabeth Bishop as outlined in Chapter 4. Costello considered her penchant for revising work, "rather than simply accepting or rejecting it", as "perhaps the most striking feature of Moore's editorship" (212). Many poets agreed to her suggestions with equanimity. After submitting his poem "Remote" in spring 1925, Robert Hillyer replied to Moore's request that he "permit us to publish it without the last line—and would the sequence, to you, be irreparably

impaired if the third stanza were omitted?" (212) by sending her a new draft gratefully "embodying your suggestion" (213).

However, the exchange in place at the journal under Moore could be as challenging as it was rewarding for those submitting work, with some left disgruntled. Moore was "excoriated" by Herman George Scheffauer (Hall and Moore) and complained of by Hart Crane. The latter wrote of his irritation at her edits of "The Wine Menagerie" and her insistence "on changing it around and cutting it up until you would not even recognise it. She even changed the title to "Again". What it all means now I can't make out, and I would never have consented to such an outrageous joke if I had not so desperately needed the twenty dollars." (Crane 220).

Crane's complaint regarding Moore's editorial process is reminiscent of the cutting up of ritual gift objects outlined in the Introduction, a process which while explicitly destructive added value to the artwork through the act of exchange, dismemberment, and repair (Boas 94). Moore herself described "The Wine Menagerie" edits in very different terms to Crane, stating in her Paris Review interview that he "was in dire need of money...His gratitude was ardent and later his repudiation of it commensurate" (Hall and Moore). Crane accepted both his payment and the suggested revisions. The incident serves as a reminder that accepting a gift can leave the recipient at a disadvantage they may be eager to downplay. In the same interview Moore made clear her view that editorial suggestions from others were gifts that ought to inspire gratitude, while acknowledging the fact that less confident writers may find such attentions threatening: "I feel that I would not be worth a button if not grateful to be preserved from myself, and informed if what I have written is not to the point ... As Kenneth Burke says in *Counter-Statement*: '[Great] artists feel as opportunity what others feel as a menace'" (ibid.). In January 1929 Watson broke the expected news to Moore that *The Dial* would cease production. Moore wrote to her brother describing the meeting and her desire that they "plan it carefully so we shouldn't disappoint people & end shabbily" (*Letters* 243). Eventually the magazine ran until July, which allowed its editor to publish all previously accepted submissions, as well as make some notable purchases, including twelve poems by D. H. Lawrence (Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down* 246). Moore wrote him that she had

hoped the magazine would continue until November at least, which would give her the chance to publish his poem “November” (*Letters* 249). Her efforts to “complete” the magazine demonstrate that she was not entirely resigned to the end of her editorship; *The Dial* was a continuous exchange of submissions and publications that Moore apparently felt she needed to honour. Despite her best efforts, the end of the magazine was widely unexpected and caused its contributors to express consternation and “even outrage” (Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down* 247).

In his closing statement, printed on the final page of the July 1929 issue, Watson thanked the editors who had led the magazine over almost a decade, his readers, and contributors in the language of qualified gratitude:

On the edge of quitting we want to express our immense gratitude to the distinguished men and women who, with us, have edited and helped edit *The Dial* since 1920. These are: Stewart Mitchell ... Kenneth Burke, Marianne Moore. We are also grateful to our readers, always bearing in mind that although a magazine can get along somehow without readers it cannot exist without contributors—who were, however indignantly, *The Dial*.

S. W. (*The Dial*, 633).

Watson’s wryly-phrased reference to the indignant and reluctant contributors acknowledges the unyielding approach taken by the editorial team, particularly Moore, when requesting edits and rewrites. The wording of the “Announcement” does not merely rehearse the conventional platitudes of thanks; it acknowledges not only that the exchange with contributors was sometimes difficult, but the fact that the exchange itself constituted the magazine’s existence. Watson also subtly admits the extent of the owners’ financial support of *The Dial*, which ran at such a huge loss that readers were more or less optional.

Much of Moore’s correspondence at this time deals with her difficult financial situation following the loss of her job. In the face of her brother’s

repeated offers of assistance, she wrote to assure him that she and her mother were comfortable in their one-room apartment, and would continue to live as they had before Moore started to receive her \$2,600-a-year salary. (*Letters* 244) In addition, with the severance of Moore's regular employment came a significant cheque (Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down* 247) from Thayer and Watson. The language of the gift is once again evident in Watson's accompanying letter; while the money represented an informal settlement of her terminated contract, the giver insists that he remains the debtor. "We have monopolized your time and energy and fear that *The Dial* has received far more benefit than you have from the exchange" (ibid.). Moore, for her part, expressed her sadness at receiving this last gift from *The Dial*:

But it is a sadness to be always the receiver; besides, the gift is so unbelievably great. I feel as if the wish of an old friend were being realized when she said she hoped I "would win *The Dial* prize every year."

I hope that making others rich will never make you & Scofield poor. To me this last gift is a business responsibility. It is too beautiful a thing to be turned to food and shelter. Should I borrow it for that, I shall still feel I owe it to heaven to make it again a flame that will bless others as you & S. have made it to bless me (*Letters* 250).

Again Moore's rhetoric here is far from what might be expected from a former employee accepting a severance package. Despite her family's financial worries, she appears to have kept her word on the cheque's use; like her Dial award money, Leavell remarks that it was never spent, but placed into savings (247). In her letter Moore directly associates the cheque with her 1924 prize, suggesting that Watson and Thayer's continued patronage was like winning the award "every year"—perhaps revealing her hope that this new gift would be similarly free from "victimizing involvements" and obligations to her patrons. Keeping the money untouched, investing it, and refusing to use it for basic requirements deliberately reduced her reliance on the money and therefore her indebtedness

to the two men. Furthermore, her letter positions the money as a gift made in return for her poetry. The work to be received in return for this “beautiful” gift was not the administrative grind of her editorship, but the “flame”, as she puts it, of her creative work. As discussed above, the language of this prose is a poor imitation of the descriptive responses to gift objects discussed in the previous chapter—money’s abstraction does not provide Moore with an opportunity to engage her usual reciprocal strategy of poetic description.

The fact that the recipient of the Dial Award for poetry had published no new poems in the nine years she spent as editor was presumably in the forefront of both Moore and Watson’s minds, weighting both his statement that they had benefited far more than Moore from the exchange, and her view of the cheque as “a business responsibility”. The thought dwelled with Moore until at least 1961, when she told Donald Hall she thought the decision to discontinue publication had been taken as an act of “chivalry ... because I didn’t have time for work of my own” (Hall and Moore). She worried that she had exaggerated the demands of the work to her employers.

Marriage

While Watson and Moore maintained a warm and professional relationship, a more unconventional mode of patronage may have been extended to the poet from Thayer’s direction, in the form of a rumoured proposal of marriage. Linda Leavell’s biography of Moore, *Holding on Upside Down*, charted Thayer’s initial meeting with Moore and his apparent attempts to court her, despite his estranged marriage to Elaine Orr. Leavell linked a mysterious conversation in Thayer’s apartment on April 17, 1921, with a scene in Moore’s unpublished novel in which a Thayer-like character presents the heroine with “a pendant of square emeralds set in greenish gold filigree. Her favourite stone” (Leavell 189). In the manuscript, the protagonist refuses the gift and its implied obligation to reciprocate, stating, “I take and take and take, without sullyng friendship with reciprocal givings. But I couldn’t take this”. Leavell has suggested that if there was such a proposal, it may not have been intended as a romantic union; rather “What he probably

proposed was to make his fortune available to her, much as Bryher had married [Robert] McAlmon" (ibid). Just weeks before Thayer's proposal, Bryher entered into a marriage of convenience with the American poet in order to divert her family's attention from her ongoing romantic relationship with Hilda Doolittle. She recounts this episode with typical matter-of-factness, with no attempt to disguise the financial nature of their arrangement: "I had happened to meet a young American writer, Robert McAlmon ... he wanted to go to Paris to meet Joyce but lacked the passage money. I put my problem before him and suggested that if we married, my family would leave me alone. I would give him part of my allowance, he would join me for occasional visits to my parents, but otherwise we would live strictly separate lives" (Bryher 238). The two married on 14 February 1921 at City Hall, meeting Moore afterwards for tea. She learned of the event only when H.D. apologized that the wedding ceremony had made them late (*Letters* 144). This unexpected "earthquake", as Moore described it, greatly upset her, and she freely expressed her dismay, telling Thayer "it was an outrage for anyone to marry Winifred Bryher in such style so unromantic" (*Letters* 152). The reasons for her disapproval are complex and manifold. The public erasure of Bryher's queer relationship with H.D. would have been galling to a woman who respected the queer relationships of those she knew, including her own mother's (Leavell 46), and who often preferred the company of non-heterosexual people. Susan McCabe has argued that the marriage upset the poet as she herself was engaged in her own "flirtation" with Bryher at the time: "the marriage short-circuited what had been developing between the pair over the few months preceding, what can only be called a collaborative and transferential romance lacking a literal kiss or consummation" (McCabe, "Let's Be Alone Together" 624). Mary Moore's reaction to the marriage was also strong and likely influenced her daughter's. Patricia Willis has recounted that she made her position known

in a cloud of scolding. Apparently she found the speed of the marriage contemptible and felt that McAlmon had dishonoured Bryher ... Perhaps worse, McAlmon did not even know the significance of the "Mayfair" from which he had so rudely stolen Bryher. Implied in her harangue is Mrs. Moore's concern for Bryher's parents. (Willis 268)

In Mary Moore's opinion the quickly-conducted marriage broke several related boundaries: it violated a woman's parents' right to approve or deny a suitor, and joined the "aristocratic" Winifred Ellerman with someone beneath her class, status, and wealth. The partner's haste also lacked suitable propriety. Both these critic's views are well supported by evidence from the circle's correspondence at the time, and it seems clear that both emotional strains fed into Moore's distress at the event.

The poet's thoughts on the subject of matrimony during this period are complex, as is evidenced by her long poem "Marriage". While she disarmingly mischaracterized it as "a little anthology of statements that took my fancy—phrasings that I liked" (*Complete Prose* 551), Leavell describes it, on the contrary, as the most personal of all Moore's poems (204), driven by her sense of betrayal by both Thayer and Bryher in respectively suggesting and entering into what she considered inappropriate unions with financial motivations. Willis has demonstrated that it was initiated as a direct response to the Englishwoman's marriage, and is in fact a biting "modernist's epithalamion for Bryher and McAlmon" (Willis 265). The poem fulfils the classical requirements of a nuptial hymn from the Spenserian age and beyond, including:

[the couple's] intellectual pursuits and physical beauty ... an exhortation on sleep or wakefulness; the use of legends or natural history to exemplify nuptial rites; and an address to Hymen ... Subsequent practitioners of the form allow for the comparison of the couple to Adam and Eve, the addition of dialogue, a description of the night, and anti-epithalamion elements ... these, too, characterize Moore's poem (Willis 286).

If this is a nuptial dedication, however, it is far from a celebratory one. Marriage itself is seen as something "requiring all one's criminal ingenuity / to avoid!" (*Poems* 155) Hymen is hailed as "Unhelpful!" and the inequity of the state for

women is a recurrent theme. The threat of violence—even fatal violence—runs throughout, with the Duchess of Malfi’s marital coffin making a surprising, morbid appearance. It is if anything an anti-epithalamion; its running comparison of the bride and groom to Adam and Eve functions to commemorate the loss of an Eden—“that experiment of Adam’s / with ways out but no way in” —of independence and self-reliance. Willis has summarized the attitude of the poem by commenting “To Eve, men in their affectations are as unfit to be women’s guardians as to Adam, women are “poison” (292).

Demonstrating the poem’s plurality of sources and influences, a hint of Thayer’s betrothal emerald can be found in the poem, set within lines that bustle with alarming monsters:

Adam;
"something feline,
something colubrine"—how true!
a crouching mythological monster
in that Persian miniature of emerald mines (156)

The Persian miniature described shows a landscape inhabited by leopards and giraffes and a mythological monster: only the mine, the genesis of the emerald appears, not the finished and wearable jewel itself. The landscape, with its crouching monsters and leopards, is worrying and unsafe; to retrieve the jewel here might lead to a mauling and consumption by mythical beasts. It is unclear, however, whether the danger is not greater for the suitor, who must navigate such a landscape to secure the engagement jewel, or for its recipient. The implicit threat in this image however soon emerges as a sense of horror threaded throughout the poem, with images of dismemberment and the breakdown of the body emerging unexpectedly:

The strange experience of beauty
Its existence is too much;

It tears one to pieces (156)

the spiked hand

that has affection for one

and proves it to the bone, (159)

He says, "These mummies

must be handled carefully—

'the crumbs from a lion's meal

a couple of shins and the bit of an ear';

turn to the letter M

and you will find

that 'a wife is a coffin'

that severe object

with the pleasing geometry

stipulating space not people,

refusing to be buried

and uniquely disappointing,

revengefully wrought in the attitude

of an adoring child

to a distinguished parent." (160)

The repeated violence perpetrated by the male figure on the female increases the stakes of the discourse. The third section quoted here takes Adam's perspective and echoes misogynist rhetoric on the subject of wives reducing men's freedom and the "uniquely disappointing" constraints of marriage. The line quoted by the male speaker, however, is from John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, and refers to the

duchess's murder by her brothers after her secret marriage, and the interment of her body in a coffin that is brought to her chamber for the purpose (Willis 292).

Moore's modernist collage technique, here applied to a dizzying array of diverse texts, contributes to the poem being so dense and disorienting to the reader. There is an implicit violence to collage's dismemberment of texts, resonating as it does with the destructive potential of exchange. That implication becomes profoundly disturbing when placed in conjunction with images of the physical dismemberment of women. Placing women within a marriage economy as exchange items has a devastating effect on their personal and bodily autonomy (as discussed below); Moore's imagery and technique work together to emphasise that point to violent effect.

Levy saw Moore setting up the expectation of a positive dialectic in the opening lines of the poem, an argument structured, like a marriage, to contain and unite opposites within a single frame. That expectation, she argues, is frustrated by the collaged and piecemeal construction of the remaining poem, a frustration she attributes to an Adornian embrace of negation, "the artist's deliberate frustration of an expected aesthetic satisfaction" (Levy 40-41). Dialectic cannot function without the structural integrity of both parties, and "Marriage" consistently breaks them down by means of both the collage form itself, with its truncated quotations forcibly removed from their contexts, and the poem's darker images of broken bodies. The experience of this ritual atomizes the female body, a brutal image of the effect of entering the female person into an ongoing "total system" of exchange that encompassed property, goods, and the sexual, social, and legal status of women.

Nor can the union of opposites, "opposed each to the other, not to unity," take place when the participants are not equal in power and status: when there is a hierarchy in place within the institution itself. Moore leaves no doubt about her conception of this hierarchy, writing that "experience attests / that men have power / and sometimes one is made to feel it." Further, within the rubric of each gender's complaints against the other, a female voice states that "Men are monopolists / of "stars, garters, buttons / and other shining baubles", monopolizing, in other words, the exchange of property and power in which

women, because they are component parts, cannot participate. Moore's cynicism about the ritual of marriage itself, "public promises / of one's intention / to fulfill a private obligation" is matched in the poem by her distaste for the requirements and restrictions of the married condition, particularly on women.

The economic aspect of Bryher and Thayer's proposals that so offended Moore illuminates the multi-faceted functionality of marriage within a gift economy as described in the literature on the gift. Marriage was notably analysed in Levi-Strauss's *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, in which the persons of women themselves were seen to form part of a gift economy envisioned as a structural whole that included property, wealth, and sustenance: "the exchange of brides is merely the conclusion to an uninterrupted process of reciprocal gifts" (Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* ((*Les Structures élémentaires de la Parenté*) 68) and marriage is made up of a "collection of reciprocal prestations ... sexual, economic, legal and social" (66). That total condition represents a complete "mutual imbrication" in which the woman's economic and social identity was completely altered by her marriage, with its lifelong financial commitment. In Moore's view women submit to an unequal exchange, or worse, that themselves become exchange objects. When Thayer's proposal occurred just a few weeks later, perhaps she most resented the suggestion that her writing might become part of a transfer of goods that included her own person.

Moore could not view marriage as an acceptable form of patronage, both avoiding it herself and expressing horror at Bryher's decision to support McAlmon in this way. The obligations and restrictions outlined in "Marriage" sound very much like the sort of "victimizing involvements" Moore was thankful the Dial Award lacked. "Marriage" itself marked the poet's first experiment in an extended form, taking up eight and a half pages in the second edition of *Observations*, and free verse on an unprecedented scale (Tryphonopoulos). Heretofore the master of highly controlled syllabic stanzas, Moore chose "Marriage" to make a statement on breaking bonds both institutional and formal.

She chose not to publish the piece, her longest and most ambitious to date, in Thayer's *Dial*, her usual venue. Instead she offered it to Glenway Wescott and

Monroe Wheeler to publish in *Manikin*, an occasional magazine they published with their own small press that ran to only three issues (Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down* 203) (Bryher paid for the printing, though Moore was unaware of the fact). Her decision must have struck Thayer forcibly, especially since *The Dial* would have paid her a large fee for the long poem; according to Wheeler, “Scofield turned white at sight” of the publication (ibid.). It was a pointed choice: Wheeler and Wescott were a homosexual couple, who lived together without the imbrications of marriage. To Moore’s eyes they “seemed able to maintain a relationship true to the spirit of marriage without the benefit of the social contract. Like Moore, he was an outsider to the ritual and the institution that she found problematic” (Schultz, *Becoming Marianne Moore*, 464). If the union of two people without the hierarchical implications of the “social contract” is acceptable to Moore, it becomes clearer what she finds unacceptable. To Moore, the gender hierarchy and unequal property rights implicit in marriage are to be strenuously avoided as they place women in an extremely vulnerable position. Likewise, she was wary of the entanglement of patronage and “financial convenience” with the marriage contract, to which her friends had fallen victim and she feared to, from Thayer or any man. Her wealthy acquaintances saw marriage as a means to offer support to poorer, talented friends, a confusion of roles that Moore found distressing. She, on the other hand, regarded patronage as an alternate support system offering her the means to escape the necessity of marriage altogether.

The millionaire benefactor

Bryher was herself a notable patron of Moore, and in her correspondence the poet describes her offering cheques, gifts, and travel fares, because she enjoyed Moore’s work and wished to help support it. As Susan McCabe put it, both “women took letters very seriously, so that an epistolary form allowed them to work out creative processes” (McCabe, “Let’s Be Alone Together” 616). Their correspondence included the kind of creative and editorial exchange discussed in Chapter 4. Moore read drafts of Bryer’s autobiographical novel *Adventure* and did her best to promote its publication; in return, Bryer included elements of their

correspondence and even a thinly veiled fictional version of Moore herself (ibid.). Bryher, however, was not the literary peer that Elizabeth Bishop turned out to be, and lacked her friend's talent. *Adventure* has been mostly forgotten, relegated to an obscure footnote in the literature of the period. In this respect their gift exchange was unequal, with Moore remaining the dominant literary partner, and Bryher her eternal disciple. It was not with her own writing that Bryher made her mark on modernism, however, but rather through the extraordinary level of financial support and patronage she provided to writers in her circle.

Born in England in 1894, Lady Annie Winifred Ellerman was the daughter of the wealthiest man in England at the time (Gates 553). She took her pseudonym Bryher from an island in the Scilly Isles of the coast of Cornwall, where she holidayed as a child, preferring a neutral sounding name to represent her preferred masculine gender identity (Thompson 67). A prolific author, Bryher produced many novels, memoirs, poetry, and critical works; today, however, she is remembered mostly as the romantic partner of H.D. "and secondarily as a patron of experimental modernists" (McCabe, 'Let's Be Alone Together' 608), a benefactor to many writers and thinkers including James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Edith Sitwell, Dorothy Richardson, Sylvia Beach, and Norman Douglas (ibid.). Susan McCabe notes that even in this role she is curiously absent from histories of modernism, and Jayne Marek has stated that her "multifaceted support of publishing activities has been largely overlooked" (Marek 101). Her own memoir does not mention her deep and widespread support of many notable avant-garde figures, besides noting that she had funded McAlmon's publishing endeavour, which had printed books by Stein and Ernest Hemingway (Bryher 239).

Bryher was an early and devoted admirer of Marianne Moore's poetry. When asked by H.D.'s friend Ezra Pound why she had decided to leave Europe for America, she recalls that she replied, "'because the poets I admire are American, H.D., Marianne Moore' and remembering hastily to be polite, 'yourself'" (Bryher 227). She first came to New York in September 1921, and entered Moore's circle through H.D., who had known Marianne at Bryn Mawr (Bryher 233-6). In her memoir she describes her vision of America as having been irrevocably filtered through Moore's work, marked with a sense of "clarity and freedom" (237), in a

passage that makes clear her expansive knowledge of the poet's oeuvre even before their first meeting. Her engagement with the poetry is deeply personal, attached in her recollection to childhood memories, rather than any consideration of its aesthetic importance or role within modernism: "There is an element in both Marianne and her poetry, a sense of living in an uncrowded land that links her to the mornings when I found ammonites in the chalk pits of the Downs" (238). Moore offered Bryher inspiration and guidance also: their exchange was never one-way. Marianne appeared herself in Bryher's novel *West* (ibid.) and offered her advice and encouragement on her writing (*Letters* 136). The heiress's attempts to use her vast financial resources to help her friend, however, tended to be disruptive to their relationship and were often unsuccessful.



Figure vii: Pterodactyl, drawn by Marianne Moore, c. 1920 (Rosenbach Museum and Library).

The \$5,000 elephant

Bryher's early attempts to offer patronage to Moore were often refused. Their correspondence quickly took a fantastical and anthropomorphic turn

reminiscent of Moore's interactions with her immediate family, who referred to each other as "Rat", "Mole", "Badger", and similar nicknames. Adopting an animal symbol long of interest Moore (see Figure vii), Bryher described her as a "pterodactyl stiffly watching from its Jurassic rock" (Leavell *Holding on Upside Down*, 182) and thereafter often addressed her letters to "Dactyl". The renaming game extended to the uncomfortable business of discussing money. In 1921, picking up on Moore's admission of her love for elephants—to which she felt there pertained "an especial romance" (*Letters* 134)—Bryher offered the "price of a Burmese elephant" to Moore so she could quit her work at the library; the offer was couched in a shared fantastical language of extinct and exotic beasts: "H.D. has reminded her [Bryher] that one cannot go on an adventure without gold, and that elephants cost about \$5000.00 as she knows for her father has some in connection with a rice mill in Burma, and that the amount for an expedition shall be "extended on the point of a sword" if I will be a "good pterodactyl that will come out of its rock" and write a novel" (*Letters* 140). Bryher may have partially mastered the oblique Moore family diction, but she could not penetrate the poet's defensiveness about accepting gifts and their attendant obligations. Her employment of a shared imaginative vocabulary she had established with Moore demonstrates an attempt to use their burgeoning closeness as a justification for her offer, as if she were a family member, in order to counter Moore's reluctance. However, despite H.D. writing to allay the poet's fears, apologise for the presumption of the gift, and explain that Bryher's father often sent sums to fund such projects (Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down* 182), Moore refused the offer, stating that she "couldn't write a novel" and worked at the library "as much from choice as from necessity". Her supposed inability to produce the expected novel is given as the main reason for her rejection of the gift, explaining to Bryher that she would not be able to undertake such a project for some years (*Letters* 142).

Marianne recounted Bryher's next unsuccessful attempt at offering money in a letter to her brother:

She tried most of one evening to get me to promise to take a check for a

Mediterranean trip as soon as she got it from her father ... I said I couldn't do it. She said to take it and put it away for some future time as a kind of artist's scholarship, but I refused. I said, "You shouldn't be so insistent and you don't like what I write anyhow". "I don't like what you write," she said, "but I like you". (*Letters* 144)

This record has been filtered through Moore's habitual self-deprecation and prevarication, but the excuse she provides for not accepting the money—Bryher's ironic riposte that she does not like her work—suggests that an acceptable act of patronage, in her mind, would require a disinterested response to the work itself, avoiding the entanglements of a romantic or social relationship with the writer and its "victimizing involvements".

Bryher was finally able to get a much smaller, three hundred dollar cheque to Moore only by forwarding it to her mother Mary, who promptly invested it in Pittsburgh along with all Marianne's library earnings: "Marianne had no...access to the gift" (Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down* 188). Thus Moore breaks one of Hyde's primary rules of the gift: "the increase that comes of gift exchange must remain a gift and not be kept as if it were the return on private capital" (Hyde 38)—by converting her gifts into just that. The increase that is the "core of the gift, the kernel" (37) is in Hyde's view the spiritual burden that obliges circulation. By immobilizing the gift, the Moores managed to halt if not break the cycle of reciprocity and avoid if not nullify its attendant obligations.

"Aesthetic-erotic collaboration"

Concurrently with her repeated refusals, Moore expressed concern at the scale of her friend's generosity, whose enormous wealth was so often placed at the disposal of friends and writers she admired (McCabe, Bryher's Archives). In "Let's Be Alone Together': Bryher's and Marianne Moore's Aesthetic-Erotic Collaboration" Susan McCabe undertakes a psychoanalytical examination of Bryher and Moore's relationship, building on the Freudian terminology used by Bryher in her memoirs and correspondence, herself an acquaintance of Freud and

much analysed: “Her ‘accidental’ gender, her own illegitimacy, and great wealth, among other factors, kept her giving endlessly, fuelling what I elsewhere refer to as ‘the melancholy of money,’ and what Moore called her ‘suicidal generosity,’ suggesting her need to compensate and substitute for an ongoing sense of loss” (McCabe, “Let’s Be Alone Together” 609). In psychoanalytical terms, McCabe suggests that the constant desire to give was a result of attachment failures in Bryher’s emotional life, and the need to compensate for these by establishing new bonds. Reading Bryher’s “endless” offerings through the theory of the gift complements this analysis. The gift establishes social bonds facilitating—or obligating—connection. The same obligations Moore considered to be “victimizing involvements” were sought out and initiated by Bryher through her continuous efforts at patronage. In addition, McCabe’s essay described the interaction of these two as a “complex and ignored erotic friendship and collaboration”, arguing that their relationship held a romantic significance, or at least an unacknowledged homoerotic aspect. The additional element of emotional and sexual imbrication mirrors the complexities that Thayer’s presumed proposal of marriage introduced to his relationship with Moore. Equally, McCabe’s suggestion calls to mind Garber’s statement that patronage in the modern era “often remained highly ambivalent” because “talent and money were equally eroticized”, and that patronage exacerbated not only bonds, but also unequal power relationships between participants.

The eroticization of the dynamic is literal and analogous, as in the case of “Marriage”: first, the friendship between Bryher and Moore was, McCabe argued, psychosexual in nature; second, their relative positions within the patron/patronized relationship, emulating the gift exchange, established a bond that transcended its economic implications. Lewis Hyde has also used the concept of *eros* as an analogy for the responsive and cohesive spirit of the gift, with its capacity for social and material imbrication, the contrary impulse to commercial or *logos* exchange: “A gift, when it moves across the boundary [between exchange participants], either stops being a gift or else abolishes the boundary...*Logos*-trade draws the boundary, *eros*-trade erases it” (Hyde 63). The gift’s erotic dual function of boundary-breaking and bond-making is unsurprising within the context of a total system comprised of a “collection of reciprocal prestations”

(Lévi-Strauss 66) that include the social, legal, and sexual bonds of marriage. This is not to suggest that all gift exchanges bear or inevitably lead to the multivalent involvements of a marriage bond; rather, that all gifts manifest the potential for the generation of intimacy, including the erotic. As Bourdieu put it: “Marriage itself is no exception: it is almost always set up between families already linked by a whole network of previous exchanges, underwriting the specific new agreement” (Bourdieu, “Logic of Practice” 208). The realization of this potential for institutional entrapment may help explain Moore’s often pedantic caution regarding which gift exchanges she would accept, and with whom.

Poems

Bryher’s approach to patronizing Moore quickly evolved from her clumsy efforts to hand the poet a cheque. In June 1921, Moore received a copy of a book of her own poems, entitled *Poems* and published in England at the instigation of Bryher, H.D. and Robert McAlmon without her knowledge or consent. This unwanted gift caused Moore a great deal of consternation; she had refused *The Egoist’s* offer to publish a volume a few months before, and had stated that she considered it disadvantageous to publish at that time. Her acute discomfort at her lack of control over the volume’s editing and appearance is clear in her letters dealing with the subject: “Several poems could have been put in that aren’t in—many should be left out that are in and I would make changes in half the poems that are in but as B. wrote me if anything is not right ‘it is my own fault’ for refusing to publish a book—and said if I liked I could prosecute *The Egoist* with the \$300 she gave me”. (*Letters* 170) Here again there is evidence of Bryher’s irony in dealing with Moore’s protestations—she clearly does not expect her to sue *The Egoist*. We may draw from the passage clear a sense that the patron felt an ownership over the work she had helped to sponsor, and qualified to override the wishes of its author in disseminating it. If Moore claimed she would refuse to accept support on the basis of her social relationship with Bryher, her patron would directly support and publish the poetry itself without reference to the poet at all.

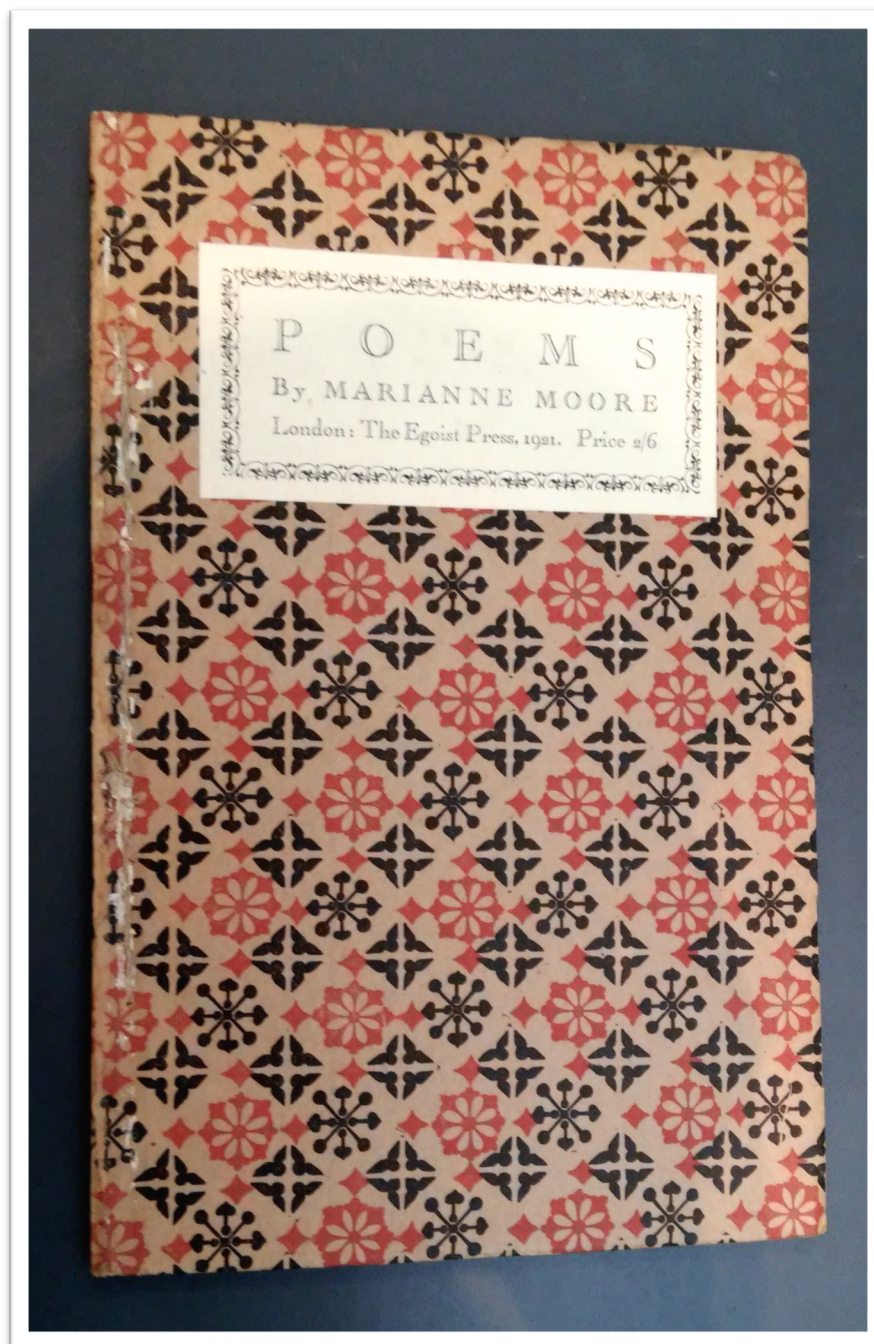


Figure viii: *Poems*, The Egoist Press, London: 1921. The British Library. Image by the author.

The presentation of *Poems* differed remarkably from that of the book that Moore herself was to oversee in 1924, *Observations*. A very fragile and slim chapbook, it is bound in brown paper with an attractive rosette pattern in black and red, and fixed with string and glue. A cream sticker bears the title and the author's name, press details and price. It appears to have been constructed by hand. The poems

are typeset in a dense, black, large serif font with ornamental details. There is little space between lines, emphasising indentation patterns. It is a beautiful object, a classic gift marked by signs of time and attention, the work of a distinct hand and personal choice.

By contrast, the first edition of *Observations* is a significantly less attractive object. It is a muted, blocky, simply produced book, with thick cream paper and a very small plain serif font in faded greyish type. A dropped initial is the only notable decorative element. While it would be near impossible to establish what choices were available to Moore in the publication of her text, it is clear that the choices she did make served to depersonalize the experience of reading the poems as much as possible, muting the voice of the editor and publisher as much as possible. The previous work of H.D., Bryher, and McAlmon in putting together *Poems* is acknowledged in an epigraph:

WITH ADDITIONS THIS BOOK IS A REPRINT OF *POEMS* PUBLISHED IN LONDON IN 1921 BY THE EGOIST PRESS THAT COLLECTION BEING MADE AND ARRANGED BY H.D. AND MR AND MRS ROBERT MACALMON [sic]

(Moore, *Observations*, Epigraph).

There is a “gentle violence” (Bourdieu, “The Logic of Practice” 208) to the suggestion here that *Observations*, with its ninety-one pages of poetry, is a simple reprint “with additions” of *Poems*’ twenty-four. It is on the contrary a completely independent and more ambitious work, with dramatically revised versions of works such as “Poetry”. The issue of *Poems* was a subject that dwelt with Moore for many decades and brought up in her 1961 interview: “To issue my slight product—conspicuously tentative—seemed to me premature. I disliked the term “poetry” for any but Chaucer’s or Shakespeare’s or Dante’s ... For the chivalry of the undertaking—issuing my verse for me in 1921, certainly in format choicer than the content—I am intensely grateful”. (Hall and Moore) At this stage Moore was still expressing distress at the event, dwelling instead on the work’s failings and “slightness”, as it stood in 1921. Though she angled the McAlmon’s action

here as an act of chivalry toward an undeserving subject and emphasised her gratitude for the book's presentation, her position that her patrons overreached was unchanged. It must be emphasised how problematic this action by Bryher was, tantamount to robbery of the poet's autonomy. McCabe even describes as an "unwanted ravishment" (McCabe, "Let's Be Alone Together" 612).

The confidante

In addition to attracting the interest of wealthy public benefactors of the arts, on a smaller scale Moore enjoyed the support of many of her private friends. Sibley Watson's wife, the concert singer Hildegard Watson, met Moore in New York through her husband in the mid 1920s, and after 1933 became a close friend and confidante (Hoy and Moore). Their correspondence spanned decades, and over nine hundred letters survive (*Letters* xii). One of her most stable and lasting friendships, their relationship often involved financial or material support on Watson's side. In this too, she was one of the most successful of Moore's prospective patrons.

Watson and Moore's correspondence, which involved exchanges of flowers, drawings, fruit, food, clothing, and books as well as money, is closer in style and tone to those she maintained with fellow creative practitioners Joseph Cornell and Elizabeth Bishop. The gifts sent by Hildegard similarly evoked writing from Moore that may be categorized within that particular genre of which she was master: what Costello described as "exquisite description ... [as] a means of reciprocation for the treasured gifts her friends bestowed on her" (*Letters* xii). While such writing often entered poems, providing phrases or concepts for published works, it should be considered in itself, as a form that inhabits the domestic space of the private letter and intimately responds to the material stimulus of the gift. The deeply personal context of this writing and its dependence on the material characteristics of the exchange it inhabits means that it relies on its native gift economy to give it meaning. In her letter of September 24, 1933, written in pencil on the back of a Chinese print of yellow blossom, Moore describes a bouquet of flowers Hildegard has recently sent:

It was sinful of you, H., to send the roses but if you could see them I suppose you would be unable to repent. They are wonderful things especially the white ones with fish-hook thorns curving down instead of up, and the foliage of all rustles like the most sumptuous taffeta. The rose-geranium (practically a tree), with the roses is a remarkable effect, and again with the evergreen green of the bouvardia, which they outdid themselves on; I never saw such whiteness or tubes so long. And I surely have examined this flower!

Marianne Moore to Hildegard Watson, Brooklyn, September 24, 1933.
Bryn Mawr College Library Special Collection.

The description takes up half of the page of the letter, and its detail is a testament to the care the poet took in constructing it: in the final line she draws attention to the time she spent in careful observation—“and I surely have examined this flower”. What is being offered here is not only the descriptive prose itself, but through the medium of detailed description evidence that great attention and appropriate time was spent appreciating the bouquet.

Moore’s images are rooted in the domestic, although the “sumptuous taffeta” evokes a particularly female-gendered space, and the “fish-hook” thorns a male. The uncomfortable juxtaposition of the soft, easily torn fabric and the predatory hook evokes the erotic tensions of the gift; in this case, however, they are contained within an emphatic whole. Moore emphasises the “foliage of all”, containing and bounding the image in the manner of a still life. Each element is set off in relation to the others: “the rose-geranium...with the roses...and again with the evergreen green of the bouvardia.” This return gift generates and resolves its tensions within itself, as a classic formal composition achieves. The tension does not spill out beyond into personal “victimizing involvements”.

A paper bouquet

Moore was also an appreciator of Watson's artistic endeavours, attending her concert performances, watching her work on film, and congratulating her, or commiserating about reviews. In September 3, 1933, the poet wrote Watson to compliment her performance as Lot's wife in her husband's film, enthusiastically describing scenes and quotations that she had enjoyed, and asking for further details about a list of sequences (Figure ix). The front side of the letter features a sketch of a tulip, another iteration of Moore's penchant for turning flowers into paper, whether by text or by drawing. Moore the biology major (*Marianne Moore Newsletter* 5) has rendered it in the botanical mode with an excerpt angled to display the tubes within the stem. Since this drawing arrived just a couple of weeks before the bouquet description of the previous letter, we may speculate that the bouquet of white flowers with exceptionally lengthy tubes may have been Watson's response to this sketch, suggesting an ongoing gift cycle was in progress.

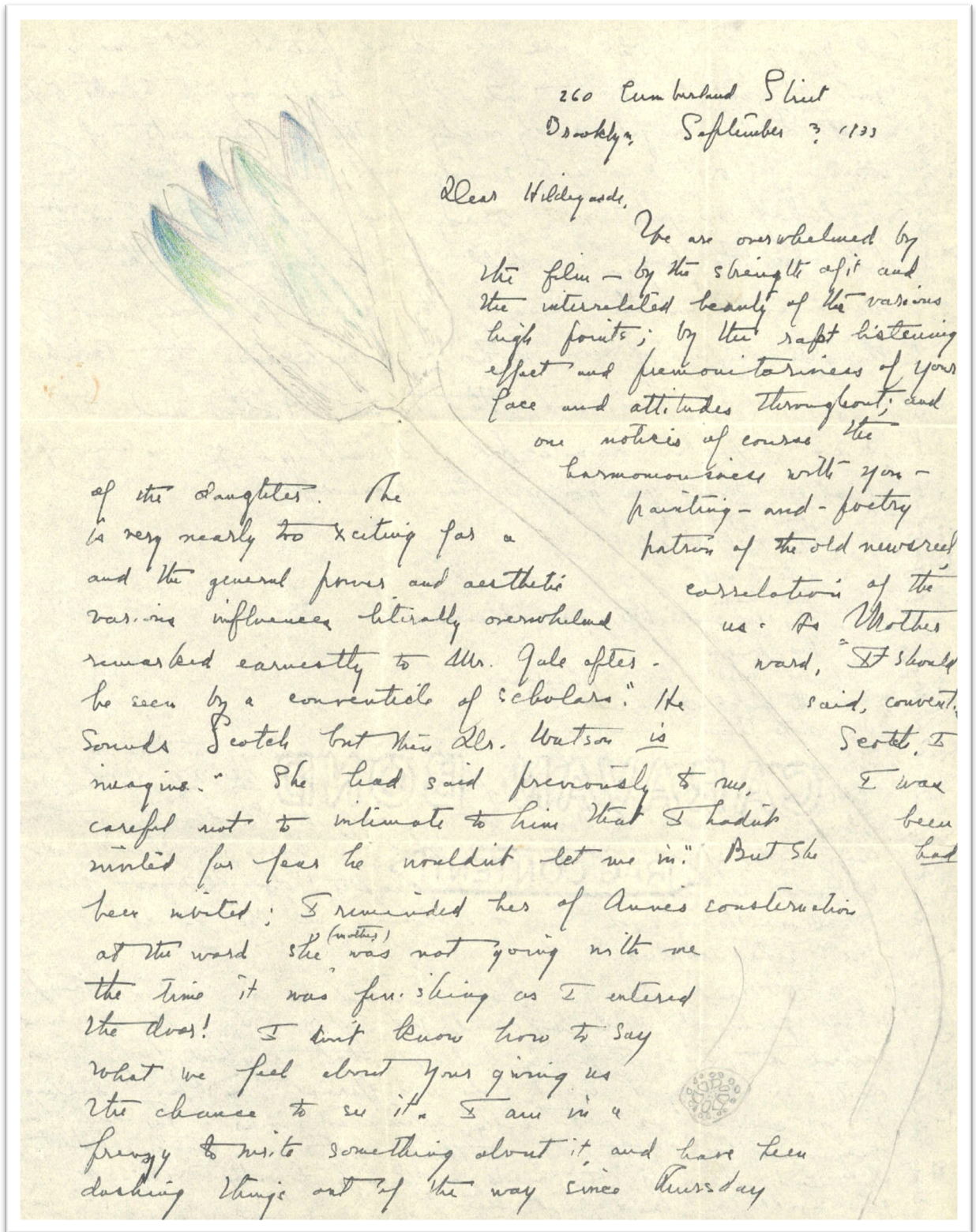


Figure ix: Letter from Moore to Hildegard Watson, recto, September 3, 1933. Bryn Mawr College Library Special Collection.

The gift cycle between Moore and Watson resembles the productive and creative

correspondences examined in Chapters 2, 4, and 5. The participants not only exchanged gifts and descriptions but demonstrated mutual appreciation of each other's creative endeavours, and supported each other in their execution. When money entered the context of this cycle, it did not have the disruptive effect of Bryher or Thayer's larger scale offers of patronage. Hildegard Watson sent Moore a cheque on June 8 1933 that was immediately accepted. As so often, her response reflects the language of gift exchange, not least the idea that giving will create spiritual "increase" (Hyde 37). In a further difference, unlike the money she eventually accepted from *The Dial* and Bryher, this sum did not go into savings to be left untouched; instead, Moore outlines her plans for to use it for travel.

June 8, 1933

I surely could not survive it if I did not superstitiously or innocently or religiously trust that you would be supernaturally "increased" by your Franciscan unselfthoughtfulness.

Need of money is a formidable adversary and is the first thing I think of for people I [pity]; —so much so that I feel almost incapable of allowing money of yours to be transferred to me. Possible for me who would dragon-like protect you from ants and caterpillars. I kept thinking all morning, to be one of them!

...

in September I think we shall try to take some of your check— "a five pound note and plenty of honey" —and go [to Pittsburgh].

(Letter, Moore to Hildegard Watson, 1926 August 1940, Bryn Mawr)

This thank you note contains an early presentiment of the 1959 poem "O to be a

Dragon”, with the poet reflecting that she has spent the last few hours wishing she could become a dragon. The idea emerges from her desire to protect her friend from whatever “ants and caterpillars” bother her; characterizing Hildegard’s adversaries as insects emphasizes that they are minor irritants compared to the “formidable” problem of a lack of money, from which Hildegard has rescued Moore. She wishes to perform a service worthy of the great help she has accepted from her friend, doubting her capacity to do so all the while. Moore’s musings on dragons emerge some years later in two poems, “O to be a dragon”, and the much longer “The Plumet Basilisk”. Zhaoming Qian has argued that while the longer poem has received more attention, the shorter is an important counterpoint and deserves a reading of its own (Qian 184):

O to be a dragon

If I, like Solomon, ...
could have my wish—

my wish...O to be a dragon,
a symbol of the power of Heaven—of silkworm
size or immense; at times invisible.

Felicitous phenomenon! (Moore, *O to Be a Dragon* 9).

The poem is a compact two-stanza meditation on the speaker’s desire to become a dragon, with an elided structure that suggests a dreamy or wistful tone. The lack of grammatical completeness breaks the connection between the act of wishing and the exclaimed declaration of the wish “to be a dragon”, creating a space within the compressed body of the text for the mysterious imaginative processes of wish fulfilment, dream, and desire. The opening line refers to the biblical story of Solomon, to whom God appeared in a dream and offered the fulfilment of any wish. Solomon asked for the wisdom to rule his people well, and the description

of his resulting powers encompasses his resultant capacity for transcendent song and description:

... And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore ... And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes (Atwan and Wieder 234).

It might seem that Solomon's gifts mirror Moore's own, in her dedication to the poetic description of animals, birds, and fishes: this implicit wish is not, however, what she would ask for if placed in Solomon's position. How to understand Moore's willingness to forgo the linguistic virtuosity and oral brilliance of Solomon and wish instead to become a dragon? In what way are the characteristics she describes preferable to his descriptive powers?

The 1933 letter to Watson provides a clue: Moore expressed her desire to become a dragon in order to protect her friend from problems. The idea of an armoured animal with fierce protective instincts recalls the Paper Nautilus (Moore, *The Poems of Marianne Moore* 238–9), the mother “devil-fish” that builds and guards a shell for its young, forming with love “the only fortress / strong enough to trust to” (see Chapter 4 for a fuller reading of this poem). In this poem the protective urge is strictly maternal, and the monster female: it may serve, in fact, as a portrait of Moore's overprotective mother (Chiasson). The dragon of Moore's wish is more powerful than the nautilus, and is in fact an avatar for “the power of heaven”. Additionally, while it may have sprung from a similarly protective sentiment, this creature-portrait moves far beyond the constrictive category of gender. This creature is in fact tied to no body or form, since it is capable of complete transformations in size and shape.

The fact that the dragon's smallest size is compared to a “silkworm” alerts

the reader that it this dragon is Chinese, like those Moore viewed in classical Chinese paintings at the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Qian 183). The poem incorporates direct quotations from *The Tao of Painting* by Mai-Mai Sze.¹¹ The dragon is a symbol for change “at will reduced to the size of a silkworm, or swollen till it fills the space of Heaven and Earth” (Sze 82–3). Rather than the power to describe, order, and rule, Moore prefers the power to transform at will, to take whatever subject position she wants; to become all-encompassing, filling “the space of Heaven and Earth” or to assume a perspective as tiny and detail-oriented as a silkworm’s. The 1933 letter’s preoccupation with scale is reflected in the poem, particularly the strange conjunction of protective power with insect-sized problems: Moore “would dragon-like protect [Watson] from ants and caterpillars”. There is something ungraspable about the Moore dragon even in this early iteration, more than two decades before the publication of her collection *O to be a Dragon*. Moore acknowledges her belief that Watson is “supernaturally ‘increased’” by her acts of giving, and that the would-be dragon-like poet is made small in relation to her friend’s generous greatness.

The dragon’s full 1959 iteration, then, emerged from the poet’s stated desire to be able to meet the obligations laid on her by the gifts she has received from her friend and patron. These obligations are expressed in dual, related sentiments: firstly, Moore’s desire to “protect” Hildegard, even if she can never protect her from troubles as great as those Hildegard saved her from (namely, the lack of money); and secondly, the desire to increase or decrease in size in order to match Watson’s “supernatural” increase generated by her generosity and “unselfthoughtfulness”. The increase involved plays with several concepts of how the gift affects social relations: Mauss’s notion of a spiritual increase that is native to the object (“the thing received is not inactive” (15)) and later concepts of an increase in the status of one who has given generously (Bourdieu, “Logic of Practice” 216). To become a dragon with the power of transformation would allow Moore to finally meet and match the status conditions signified by such increases: she would no longer be made small in relation to her patrons, and no

¹¹ Moore exchanged several interesting letters with Sze, thanking her for her influential writing and presenting her with a copy of *O to be a Dragon*.

longer obliged to them.

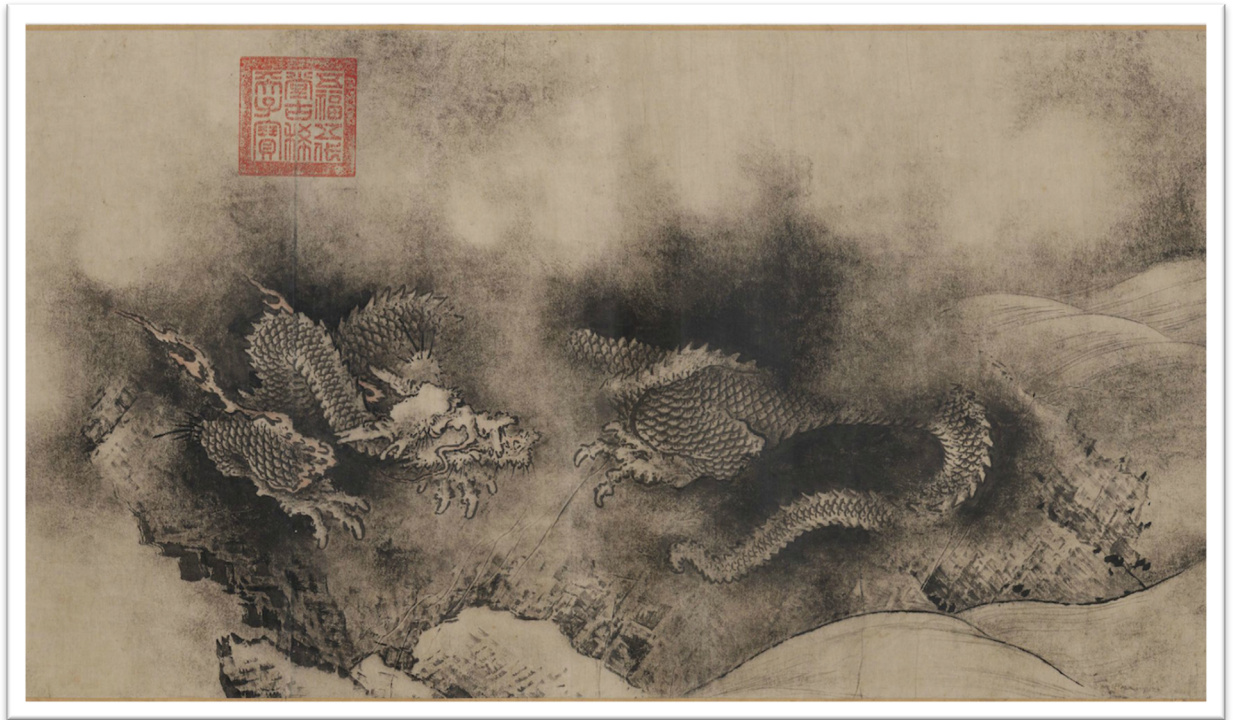


Figure x: Chen Rong, a section from *Nine Dragons*, 1244. Ink and colour on Xuan paper. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

As a final note on Moore’s unusual wish, it is interesting that invisibility is also a characteristic associated with the Chinese dragon. Along with its ability to become entomologically tiny, the dragon also demonstrates the powers of escape, avoidance, and disappearance. The most famous of classical dragon pictures, Chen Rong’s *Nine Dragons* (see Figure x) influenced all of those Moore saw in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Qian 183). The scroll shows dragons picked out in monochromatic ink, emerging from abstract backgrounds of waves, air currents, clouds, and mountains, often barely distinguishable from them. In the featured section parts of the dragon’s body have been erased where they are covered in cloud. The ultimate power of the dragon, for Moore, was presumably this very ability to melt into “the clouds, concealed but for a few claws” (*Letters* 197). Alison Rieke has suggested that Moore “coveted the animal natures she claimed as her imaginary possessions; those natures came to signify the profound originality of her poetry and also an alienation from her own human nature—and conventional constructions of the female as artist—that became her stock in

trade as a groundbreaking modernist” (Rieke 149–50). While Bryher tried to cast her as a pterodactyl and attempted to share her rock (“Let’s Be Alone Together” 622), Moore preferred an animal avatar that revealed her desire to transcend the limitations of the body altogether, with its gendered and sexualized constraints, and the potential entrapments they represent. “Beauty is a liability” (*Poems* 120) as she points out in “Roses Only”.

Diamonds and dresses

While money formed an important element of Watson’s support, she more frequently chose to send her valuable personal items, particularly clothing and jewellery. As Moore grew more famous and her speaking and reading engagements increased, she often wore “dresses, jackets, hats, pearls, diamonds, boas, and fox furs” (*Letters*, 488) that her wealthy friends had given her. Many of these came from Hildegarde. By the 1950s, this included the signature gardenias she wore in her lapel at readings. These gifts often tended toward the expensive and luxurious, but perhaps due to her need to appear well-dressed in company, Moore continued to accept them. She had likewise “a lifelong interest in fashion” (Rieke 150) and agreed to be photographed throughout her life by fashion photographers such as Richard Avedon and Cecil Beaton. She expressed her relief that a gift from Hildegarde provided her with something appropriate to wear to an upscale event: “what a blessing the blue dress has been to me— the azure one with the crystal & gold buttons. I was indeed desperate— would have been if I had not had it to wear to a dinner. To Hildegarde Watson, November 11, 1948” (Hoy and Moore). She got a great deal of use from these items, writing in 1953 that she was wearing the same blue dress, now considered her “talisman!” to a reception hosted by the Rockefeller family (*ibid.*). Many of the clothes Moore received in this manner were re-gifted to her mother Mary (*Letters* 449). Unlike the less functional gifts discussed in Chapter 2 that inspired descriptive writing, these items were a form of patronage, offered in the form Moore, with her interest in fashion and insistence on respectable appearance, was most likely to accept. Watson in this way helped to craft Moore’s distinctive public persona.

In allowing Watson to dress her, Moore allowed a more intimate relation to be established between them than even that with Bryher. It would seem that the poet accepted the physicality of her body most cheerfully when permitting it to be dressed and ornamented. Clothing and jewellery, however, are viewed in her poetry as just as much a form of armour as the scales of the pangolin. Cristanne Miller has argued that many poems Moore “warns women against passive conventional beauty or self-display” (Miller, *Marianne Moore: Questions of Authority* 113) and points out multiple occasions when the trappings of the feminine are weaponized (111). “Those Various Scalpels” makes the link explicit:

your cheeks, those rosettes
of blood on the stone floors of French châteaux,
with regard to which the guides are so affirmative—
your other hand

a bundle of lances all alike, partly hid by emeralds from Persia
and the fractional magnificence of Florentine
goldwork—a collection of little objects—
sapphire set with emeralds, and pearls with a moonstone, made fine
with enamel in gray, yellow, and dragonfly blue;
a lemon, a pear

and three bunches of grapes, tied with silver: your dress, a magnificent
square
cathedral tower of uniform
and at the same time diverse appearance—a
species of vertical vineyard, rustling in the storm

of conventional opinion—are they weapons or scalpels? (*Poems* 116).

As Miller points out, in the course of the description of her accessories, “everything natural or human in the figure disappears. There is nothing here but surface brilliance, self-protectiveness” (111). The physical features of the woman’s body are buried beneath layers of descriptions and imagery. The flesh of her cheeks is occluded by the surprisingly gruesome appearance of a pool of blood—and this is not even real blood, but an image from a highly embroidered historical anecdote. The lance-like fingers are concealed by the precious stones and metalwork of her rings. Lances are themselves a formidable weapon. Even the woman’s torso and limbs are disguised by a dress, the square lines of which convert her into an unassailable tower. The effect of introducing such heavy armaments into the description implies that the woman is in need of defending. Marriage, already “requiring all one’s criminal ingenuity to avoid” (*Poems* 155), is only one of many possible imbrications to which a woman’s beauty and body makes her liable.

Watson appears to have offered no threat to Moore that would require such ingenious defences. Heterosexual and married to Moore’s former patron at *The Dial*, James Sibley Watson, Hildegard was consumed with her own creative interests in singing and acting. She did not challenge Moore on a literary or sexual level; rather she helped supply her with the rich and valuable objects and clothes that the poet required to fashion her public persona. While the intimacy of clothing might provide a site for the erotic, Moore’s poems transform the consumable accoutrements of the feminine into “claws” and daggers: the “best part” of the rose, for Moore, is its thorn (*Poems* 120). Moore explicitly thanks Watson for helping prepare these defences: “My watch, my hand-bag, my jacket! You and Sibley really armed me for the combat” (*Letters* 526).

Conclusion

The network of patronage that surrounded Marianne Moore and many of her contemporaries may be defined as a gift economy. Not only are individual transactions conducted as gift exchanges, but the social bonds they create establish the enclosed but permeable *embaginated* space that characterizes a gift exchange network. The often-strained bonds of obligation and reciprocation created by the gift provide a means of analysing the poet's defensive postures, estranged positions, and ambiguous exchanges with her patrons. While they both provided significant financial support over a period of years, both Thayer and Bryher occasionally offered patronage in ways which Moore could not or would not accept, instead opting out of the exchange altogether. In 1921 this resulted in Bryher and H.D. taking "control" over and ownership of the work they had patronized.

The social space of the gift economy, with its permeability and potential for disruption, allowed Moore to negotiate gendered social and institutional spaces as a poet, and manage the terms on which she accepted patronage. Patronage allowed Moore to avoid the social and financial pressure to marry, which in the period would have meant to submit her legal status and body to an asymmetrical exchange in order to secure basic financial stability in return. However, patronage often threatened to come in forms that entangled the poet in the sexual relations she wished to avoid, up to and including actual proposals of marriage or mistresshood. Moore, via the strategic acceptance, refusal, and misdirection of the gifts offered by her patrons, succeeded in managing these relationships in a manner that allowed her to avoid the compromising imbrications that she feared. This process not only unfolded in the form of resistance to unwanted obligations, but more positively. McCabe has linked exchange and collaboration—social practices regulated by the gift—with the establishment of non-heteronormative intimacy and relationship: "It is not surprising then that collaboration as a form of transference needs further refinement in cases where women (or men) do not fit within expected relationships; there are many degrees of affective and intellectual kinships forged where contracts are not available (nor even desirable) for solidifying them" ("Let's Be Alone Together" 627). Refusing to submit to the legal obligations of marriage and resisting the heavy social obligations of patronage, Moore used gift

exchange to create mutual imbrications where she desired them, establishing queer-framed or platonic friendships with her female patrons; these same exchanges were employed to subvert and refuse them when she did not.

Chapter 4. “Mother; manners; morals”: Moore and Elizabeth Bishop

One would rather give away a nice thing than sell it (Moore, *Prose* 328).

Introduction

Elizabeth Bishop met Marianne Moore in 1934 while still an undergraduate at Vassar College. Twenty-five at the time of their meeting, Bishop went on to become one of the most important American poets of her generation. She actively sought out Moore’s friendship and mentorship after tracking down her early poems in periodicals (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 121). Forty-seven years old at the time, Moore had left her role as editor of *The Dial*, and was highly regarded but under-read. After an awkward early meeting on a bench outside the New York Public Library, Bishop invited Moore to the circus, where she assisted her new friend in clipping hairs from the baby elephants’ heads to repair an elephant-hair bracelet (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 125). In the following months the poets formed a friendship that lasted, despite periods of coolness, until Moore’s death in 1972.

A mentorship relationship was quickly established between them. This was primarily a matter of social convention, given Moore’s greater age, status, and formal manners, but also owed a something to Bishop’s deferential attitude towards her. For four years she addressed the elder woman as “Miss Moore”, and when finally invited to use her first name, wrote marking the occasion with a large, capitalized, “DEAR MARIANNE” decorated with a comic-style exclamation bubble (Bishop, *One Art: Letters* 76). The following decade was characterised by tensions reflecting the younger poet’s efforts to renegotiate the dynamic of the relationship and establish her own aesthetic priorities. This process was marked by Bishop’s attempts to break the cycle of exchanges between them, by refusing edits and suggestions from the older poet, or by attempting to establish

“ownership” over disputed creative material. The Bishop/Moore relationship, through its positive and negative manifestations of gift exchange, demonstrates the strength of the social, emotional and creative bonds instigated by means of this process, and through its disruptions and interruptions provides a valuable insight into its procedures.

Overview

Bishop repeatedly stated that Moore was unlike anybody else she had ever encountered, both in person and as a poet:

She looked like no one else; she talked like no one else; her poems showed a mind not much like anyone else’s; and her notions of meter and rhyme were unlike all the conventional notions—so why not believe that ... Marianne from birth, physically, had been set going to a different rhythm? (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 140).

This assertion of uniqueness implicitly excludes Bishop herself. Bishop chose to emphasise Moore’s difference from anyone else, rather than attempt to establish a sense of camaraderie or shared purpose. Moore, too, in a tone David Kalstone (4) described as “generous irritability” discounted the “unimaginative” critics who attempted to lump their work together:

As for indebtedness, Elizabeth, I would reverse everything you say. I can’t see that I could have “opened your eyes” to subject matter, ever, or anything else. And a stuffy way of appraising us by uninitiated standards blankets all effort with impenetrable fog! I roam about in carnivorous protest at the very thought of unimaginative analyses. Alexander Pope to the rescue!

It would be difficult to lump these two together to form anything as coherent as a “school”. Their differences were as apparent to each other as to their readers. Nonetheless, Moore’s early influence on Bishop was immense according to Robert Lowell, who asserted, “Elizabeth Bishop is impossible to imagine without Marianne Moore” (Diehl 81). In “Efforts of Affection”, her 1969 memoir of Moore, Bishop recalled that it seemed as if “Marianne had talked to me steadily” for thirty-five years, Elizabeth sometimes venturing to “speak some” herself (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 124). From the vantage point of 1969 the rifts between their respective poetics must have appeared with the all the clarity of retrospect, as Bishop attempted to summarise the influence of a friendship that had spanned decades, and in the absence of which in terms she claims she may never have written poetry at all. She credited Moore with revealing potential subject matter that she would otherwise never have thought of using (Kalstone 4). In this chapter, the mentorship relationship between Moore and Bishop is reconstructed and analysed in terms of gift exchange.

Their long friendship was characterized by tensions as the younger poet attempted to establish her own aesthetic priorities, by refusing edits and suggestions from Moore, or by attempting to re-establish “ownership” over creative material given to Moore in the past and used by her in poems. She succeeded in destabilizing and even interrupting the cycle at key points, in incidents intended to assert her own voice over the influence of her mentor. The exchange between the two women took the form of letters, gift objects, photographs, drafts and edits, and published works, some dedicated directly to the other, some referencing their connection more obliquely. Key moments at which their exchange broke down are highlighted, with reference to their letters, archival drafts, published poems, and Bishop’s prose memoir of Moore.

While the poets’ correspondence must be seen within the context of a wider friendship, this analysis focuses on their literary interactions. The “struggle” between them was conducted and expressed within their published texts, although materials from the archive demonstrate how dramatically it sometimes played out within the context of their personal friendship.

Distinctions between the personal and the literary are further complicated by the fact that personal exchanges often found their way into poems, to the extent that complete phrases from conversations appeared within published works. Likewise, literary matters had ramifications within the friendship. This continuity within their exchanges demonstrates that the gift exchange between the two women encompassed both contexts, the personal crossing over into the literary, and vice versa. The three major instances examined here are Bishop's gift of a paper nautilus shell, which inspired Moore's poem on the subject; Moore's redraft of Bishop's key poem "Roosters"; and Moore's use of an unaccredited phrase of Bishop's in "Four Quartz Crystal Clocks", as recalled in the younger poet's memoir, "Efforts of Affection". Fruitful as their exchange cycle was for both of them, as demonstrated by the amount of material in both of their poems that can be directly related to their interaction, they seemed to battle one another for aesthetic control or possession over their personal creative labour.

The major events of their relationship have been carefully reconstructed by David Kalstone in his indispensable study *Becoming a Poet: Elizabeth Bishop with Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell*. Joanne Feit Diehl has also analysed the available material using psychoanalytic techniques. These techniques do not, however, address the nature of the exchange between these individuals in material terms, nor do they assist us in understanding how the exchange between them influenced how their poetry was made. This chapter emphasises the gift as it manifests in material form as a gift objects or poem manuscripts. The two poets' relationship to material culture within their respective poetics is briefly discussed in order to contrast their use of objects, including gifts, in their practice. Bishop spent long periods of her life travelling, both across the United States and abroad, with the result that her correspondence was extensive. My sources are drafts of poems shared between the two, and the letters and gifts Bishop sent from her homes and travel destinations such as Brazil, Morocco, Key West, and Canada, including photographs and objects such as a snake preserved in a jar of alcohol, fruit and sketches, preserved in the Rosenbach Museum, Philadelphia, and the Library of Vassar College. These gifts inspired descriptive responses from Moore in her letters of thanks, with phrases and images preserved and utilized later in drafts and finished poems.

A literary friendship

Initial meeting

Bishop opens “Efforts of Affection” with a short introductory reminiscence of the woman that introduced them, Vassar librarian Fanny Borden. Borden loaned Bishop her personal copy of *Observations*, her first encounter with Moore’s work outside of individual poems published in magazines (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 144). She had already sent several girls to meet Moore and her mother, although they had each somehow or other “failed to please” the Moores. The students are themselves framed as “gifts” sent from Borden, presumably as much for their benefit as the girls’. Perhaps the librarian felt that she needed to offer some sort of acknowledgement of her famous literary friend, since she did not appreciate Moore’s poetry herself and did not even think it was worth keeping *Observations* in her library, even though she owned a copy (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 122). She may have felt that sending interested Vassar undergraduates to Moore for literary mentorship might have made up for her own lack of interest and support. Additionally, she may have realized she was not making particularly good use of her literary contacts in order to enrich the life of the college, and may have wished to allow at least a few select students access to the contemporary avant-garde.

Borden went out of her way to be generous to her young patrons, to the point of offering them any item they admired on her desk as a gift (*ibid.*). Her introduction was thus represented by Bishop as one of a series of acts of generosity habitually carried out by the librarian towards the Vassar students. It is impossible to do more than speculate on Borden’s motives; certainly her approach to Moore and her work was inconsistent. Bishop revealed that she learned only much later that she was last in a string of “unsuccessful” offerings, and only later still realized that she was herself one. At this point in her career, Moore was a well-known poet, and would not have felt the obligation to reciprocate Borden’s offerings—their relative difference in status was too great.

The mixed reception met by the young students mirrors Moore's unpredictable reactions to material gifts, patronage, and other attempts to establish social bonds with her. Interestingly, Moore's ambivalent attitude to Borden's "gifts" mirrors Borden's unenthusiastic reception of her old friend's work.

Following this unpromising introduction, the relationship and related exchanges that developed between the two poets would, in Bishop's words, "influence the whole course of my life". After their first meeting, Bishop followed up with the first gift of their friendship, a biography of Gerard Manley Hopkins that Moore had mentioned she had not read. The accompanying letter is a complicated mix of politeness and self-deprecation, offering profuse thanks to Moore for coming to meet her, and downplaying the value of the book. She assures Marianne that she is not expected to accept it, stating that the portrait is odd, and it would be understandable if she decided to give it away. Bishop in this way allows Moore to decide whether to accept the gift and its attendant obligations, and therefore whether to establish a further social bond between them:

I think you said you had not read the life of Hopkins by Father Lackey so I am taking the liberty of sending you my copy of it. If you have read it, or if on reading it you think it is another book one shouldn't bother to own, why don't hesitate to get rid of it. The portrait is very strange.

I can't thank you enough for talking so long to me— and for coming into New York for the purpose (Bishop, *One Art: Letters* 20).

As their friendship progressed over the years, the exchange of objects, mostly in the form of presents sent from Bishop to Moore, remained a consistent element. The younger woman was an inveterate traveller, and in the following decades wrote Moore from France, Italy, Florida, Brazil, and California, to name a few. Her gifts often took the form of souvenirs from the places she visited; local specialties

such as fruit and flowers were a common offering. A basket was sent from Florida around the end of January 1937, containing unusually named tropical fruits such as Sea Grapes, the Calamondin, and the Ponderosa Lemon. In the note that accompanied them, Bishop playfully discusses the romantic potential of their names. Revealing her linguistic focus as a poet, the words are almost presented as an offering in themselves, with the fruit as an afterthought; she remarks, in fact, “I hope the things themselves prove as interesting as their names”. Alongside the basket of tropical fruit, her description forms a miniature poem, lost now as the fruit has long disappeared: “Tropical fruits are the most interesting subjects one can imagine—their very names spell romance. Take, for instance, Sea Grapes. Grapes of any kind have appeal, but when we think of them as growing on beautiful glossy-leaved trees, kissed by the salt spray of the sea, they have an appeal of their own” (Rosenbach V:04:31). Bishop later remarked, however, that “fruit or flowers were acclaimed and examined but never, I felt, really welcomed” by Moore (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 135). Fauna-related objects met with a better reception, and were more likely to inspire an outpouring of description in return. In February 1937, Bishop sent four duck feathers held in orange sugar paper (Bishop, Rosenbach V:04:31), to which Moore replied in a letter of February 28:

Dear Elizabeth,

The Wood Duck feathers are sobering beyond anything one could suspect in five little detached feathers; but what color,—on that cinnamon paper, the evenly dull greenish bloom with the pencil edge of sand color; and the straight pliant set of the spine, which seems, though I may imagine it, quite different from the stiffness of farm bird-feathers. (Moore, Rosenbach V:04:31.)

This attentive meditation has a great deal in common with Moore’s poetry, with its precise detail, detachment from the object’s provenance in order to focus on material characteristics, and the taxonomic distinctions between types of feathers. The description is written out in a letter, and it—along with the

attention and focus Moore spent on it—is offered to her friend as a form of appreciation. The object formed the occasion for this piece of writing, and it was undertaken as a gesture of reciprocation. This is a consistent pattern in her correspondence, and mirrors her tendency to make such objects the subject of poems. Some successful gifts, such as Bishop’s paper nautilus shell, led not only to detailed expressions of gratitude, but to the creation of major works.

Family Romances

An inexperienced traveller by comparison, Moore demonstrated for her more footloose protégée what a stable (if unusual) domestic life might look like. In a 1976 speech, referring to the itinerant protagonist of her poem “Sandpiper”, Bishop claimed that “all my life I have lived and behaved very much like that sandpiper—just running along the edges of different countries, ‘looking for something’” (Heaney 177). In contrast, despite some brief European travels in her youth, by the 1930s Marianne Moore’s domestic and poetic practices were settled and accumulative. She drew a close relation between the two, as evidenced by her bequest not only of her papers but the contents of her apartment to the Rosenbach Museum (Rosenbach, *Guide to the Marianne Moore Collection*). Moore surrounded herself with objects and exotica, what Margaret Holley calls “all the souvenirs and furnishings of a varied and populous public world.” (Holley 46). She put her faith in “people’s surroundings,” as she put it, to “answer one’s questions” (*Poems* 149). Her literary habits are similarly acquisitive, her poems cluttered with quotations like a disorderly desk.

Elizabeth Bishop was able to wonder, “why had no one ever written about things in this clear and dazzling way before” (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 123) and Kalstone has commented that “Moore’s cluttered but serene ability to enter into the life of things was always a matter of envy for Bishop” (Kalstone 104). She, however, never demonstrated an acquisitive domestic strategy, not tending to occupy her houses long enough for dust to settle into the corners. The younger poet preferred to contribute to Moore’s menageries, bestowing such gifts as fruit and shells, a preserved coral snake and the paper nautilus on her as well as her

words—the phrase “the bell-boy with the buoy-ball”, which appears in Moore’s poem “Four Quartz Crystal Clocks”, for example. The general direction of the gift exchange is revealing in terms of poetic strategy—while Moore constructs her catalogues and collages, Bishop works “in the field”, mining for the raw material of poetry within lived experience, attempting to recognise what is valuable, occasionally worrying ““is it lack of imagination that makes us come / to imagined places, not just stay at home?”” (Bishop, *Complete Poems* 94). Moore may have represented an unreachable ideal of a settled, domestic life, a life Bishop imagined from the outside in her many poems about imagined houses, homes belonging to other people, lost homes, homes that cannot be reached—“Jerónimo’s House”, “Faustina”, “One Art”, “Poem”, to name a few. “The End of March” is perhaps the most explicit expression of the theme:

I wanted to get as far as my proto-dream house,
my crypto-dream-house, that crooked box
set up on piling, shingled green,
artichoke of a house, but greener
(boiled with bicarbonate of soda?),
protected from spring tides by a palisade
of—are they railroad ties?
(Many things about this place are dubious.)
I’d like to retire there and do *nothing*,
or nothing much, forever, in two bare rooms:
look through binoculars, read boring books,
old, long, long books, and write down useless notes,
talk to myself, and, foggy days,
watch the droplets slipping, heavy with light.
At night, a *grog à l’américaine*.

[...]

But—impossible

And that day the wind was much too cold

even to get that far,

and of course the house was boarded up. (Bishop, *Complete Poems* 180).

This dream home is “dubious” at best, poorly held together and providing space for only a single person. Diehl has noted that her landscapes create “a world that is reinvested with a displaced domesticity” (Diehl, 8). Moore for her part remained attentive to these repeated suggestions in her work, and reflected them back to her. In a review of *My Life as a Little Girl*, a Brazilian memoir translated by Bishop, she echoed the sentiment in Elizabeth’s own words: “We see, furthermore, as Miss Bishop says, “that happiness does not consist in worldly goods but in a peaceful home, in family affection—things that fortune cannot bring and often takes away” (Moore, *Complete Prose* 526). Certainly, in a life marked by loss and alcoholism, Bishop was aware of fortune’s unpredictability. She may have viewed Moore as both a literary and personal foremother, and a symbol of “family affection” and domestic stability. Harold Bloom has posited that “intra-poetic relationships” parallel those of the family, with all its intense affections and aggressions. Poets, he argued, are required “to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death” (Bloom 5) in a relation “akin to what Freud called the family romance” (8).

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to undertake a broad overview of literary influence. However, it is interesting to consider the implications of gift exchange for the study of influence, and is worth taking a moment to situate it within the debate. T. S. Eliot felt strong poetry could only be written if a poet was aware of the work of his predecessors and was able to build on their achievements: “the poet ... is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living” (Eliot, “Tradition

and Individual Talent” 42). Throughout his essay “Tradition and Individual Talent”, Eliot reiterated the idea that poets build on the past; we “know more” (38) because of what our predecessors have achieved. Access to the poetic tradition requires a great deal of study and practice to attain, and only through understanding the historical tradition of poetry within one’s culture can a relevant contribution be made. The underlying assumption of Eliot’s essay—that a poet benefits from and builds on the work of his predecessors—is representative of the widely accepted view of the first half of the twentieth century. While he admits that a poet will be “judged” against his forebears, this is not seen as an aggressive nor belittling process.

Harold Bloom’s 1973 book *The Anxiety of Influence* represented a stark departure from this consensus. Profoundly esoteric, Bloom’s text presented the action of influence as an agonistic battle between a “young citizen of poetry, or ephebe as Athens would have called him”, and his direct forefather, in a male-gendered re-enactment of Sigmund Freud’s Oedipal concept of family dynamics. Like Oedipus, a young poet must kill his own father in psychological terms. The older or historical poet he admires must be wrestled with and destroyed before he can free himself of their influence and assume his own greatness. Bloom distinguishes between “weak” or derivative poets and those who are “strong”, i.e. original: “My concern is only with strong poets, major figures with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death. Weaker talents idealize; figures of capable imagination appropriate for themselves. But nothing is got for nothing, and self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness, for what strong maker desires the realization that he has failed to create himself?” (Bloom 5). The language here is explicitly violent, personal, and destructive: no middle ground is envisioned between the twin poles of “idealization” and “appropriation”, no path toward literary maturity is provided that would enable the poet to consider himself the equal of his precursors. Bloom emphasises the great “anxiety” caused by the knowledge of indebtedness. Gift theory would characterize that anxiety as the fear of the loss of status or prestige (Mauss 50). However, contrary to gift exchange with its manifold strategies to manage and redirect debt, the only solution offered by Bloom’s model is complete

domination and possibly destruction of the influence, conceptualized as a physical wrestling match between two men.

Bloom diagnoses several stages in the process: firstly *clinamen*, poetic misreading or “misprision” in which a poet misinterprets the meaning of his predecessor’s work and “swerves” away from it. This leads to the stage of *tessera* (completion and antithesis), his urge to complete the work he believes his predecessor could not, based on his earlier misreading. *Kenosis* (repetition and discontinuity) involves conscious disassociation with the predecessor. By the following stage, *daemonization* (the counter-sublime), the poet ceases to see his forebear as a threatening father figure. He is, however still grappling with the illusion that he is inspired by the forebear’s work. In the *askesis* stage (purgation and solipsism), the poet attempts to make completely separate and original work and views himself as isolated from tradition and influence altogether. The final stage, *apophrades* (or the return of the dead), reverses the stream of influence, so that it is now the forebear who appears to have been influenced by the work of the younger, now-great poet.

Obligation is certainly at stake here, but the manner in which it is handled is very different than within the gift economy. The process is explicitly violent and takes place at highly psychologized level, with the emphasis placed on the poets, not the poetry. Bloom’s book is psychoanalytical in theme and occult in tone, with a Prologue that draws on the Kabbalah, placing the field of engagement on a deeply abstract plane (Bloom 3–5). The battle with influence is characterized as a mythical quest driven by “the anguish of contamination” (xi), which moves inexorably forward, and if the poet fails to progress to the next stage he inevitably fails to become “strong”. Gift exchange on the other hand is a two-way, ongoing, constant pattern of exchanges that is enacted on a mundane and material level. Status and obligation shifts between participants constantly, and debts may be settled without the complete devastation of the other. In fact, the gift economy tends towards the maintenance and strengthening of interpersonal bonds and encourages the continuation of the exchange through the dynamic precedent of the triple obligations to give, accept, and receive. It may be conceptualized more as a cycle than a direct progression, and its rewards and losses occur throughout rather than at the completion of a linear quest. It both modulates and acts as a

stand-in for the violent implications of the dominance and status hierarchies it represents.

The male-centric focus of Bloom's ideas is also problematic, and was critiqued in the years immediately following its publication. The particular dynamics that occur between women have become the focus of many critics seeking to counterbalance this masculine bias. In her compelling psychoanalytic discussion of the Bishop/Moore relationship, Diehl argues that it is worthwhile to view the difficulties of the women's interaction as stemming from the psychology of a specifically female family romance, with the younger poet seeking a literary mother in Moore. Diehl's psychoanalysis of their relationship posits itself convincingly as a means to interpret texts, or at least a process by which texts are illuminated. Drawing on psychoanalyst Melanie Klein's hermeneutic techniques, she describes the concept of transference in psychoanalysis as a process of displacing narratives from the subject's childhood onto the present, in the person of the physician. She claims: "It is but a short leap from such a narrativized understanding of analytic interaction to an interactional model for reading" (Diehl 6). In a two-pronged argument, Diehl suggests first that because psychoanalysis involves replicating and interrogating narratives, specifically narratives from childhood that have been repressed, it is an appropriate medium for analysing texts; and second, the "authorial psyche" can be seen to act in a similar fashion when creating texts as it does in other, extra-literary aspects of life. Thus, psychoanalytic techniques may be applied to texts in order to unearth the same repressed narratives that are revealed, for example, during the psychoanalytic process of transference.

Bishop, who lost her mother to a psychiatric institution at the age of five (Poetry Foundation, "Elizabeth Bishop"), never experienced the kind of filial security, close bond and "interactional patterns" that she observed between Moore and her mother, Mary Warner Moore. In fact, like many of Moore's acquaintances in the avant-garde, she viewed her relationship with the old lady with a bemused irony. Writing in the *New Yorker*, Dan Chiasson saw Bishop fitting seamlessly into the pattern of Moore's family life, which he considered, to paraphrase the title of his article, to be all about her mother. He uses the language of adoption to describe their interaction: "Moore's mother was in her seventies

when Moore adopted Bishop as a friend and a protégée, in 1934” (Chiasson, “All About My Mother: Marianne Moore's family romance”). These critics promote the popular view that in Moore, Bishop found a substitute maternal object relation, and worked through the complexities of the maternal relationship with her chosen female poet forebear. In doing so, Diehl attempts a more nuanced reading of the relationship between female forebears and protégées than the Freudian reading provided by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *No Man's Land*, the modernist volume of their feminist intervention to Bloom's theory of influence. Since Bloom's vision (5) saw a younger male poet or *ephebe* as forced to misinterpret, rewrite or overthrow his (male) literary forebear in order to find his own voice, Gilbert and Gubar did not feel it spoke to the experience of women poets. They considered that the female writer's task was yet more complicated, since she must she find a female forebear and create an alternative, female literary tradition for herself. Diehl, drawing on Klein, posits further that the young female writer is also constrained in her dealings with that forebear, since, like a birth mother, she generates ambivalent feelings in her “daughter”. Klein's interactional language echoes the terminology of gift exchange; through breast milk, a mother gives a gift to the infant daughter that is too great to ever repay (Diehl 5). The daughter resents the unending state of obligation instigated by her inability to reciprocate, as this forces her to remain in a lower status position. Conversely the mother may feel that the infant has robbed her of her resources, and become consumed by rage. The issues involve: “whether the daughter will be able, without devastation to the self, to make sufficient reparation to the mother and gather sufficient supplies from the mother to produce such a gift without maternal depletion can be recognised as feelings that inform the motives and fears of the creative process” (Diehl 5). Diehl claims that nobody “freely selects any object relation, that no matter whom we choose we re-enact in that new relation the interactional patterns we carry with us from our earliest past” (Diehl 4). However, this perspective should not obscure the great clarity with which the young Bishop recognised her literary affinity with the (at that time) broadly unknown poet, and pursued firstly a poetic, then personal relationship with her. Bishop sought Moore out on the basis of the work she read in *The Dial* and elsewhere; “Efforts of Affection” recounts her eager search for examples of her

poetry in the little magazines. Her initial enthusiasm was literary, for the discovery of Moore's "method of approach" (Kalstone 36) towards a shared subject matter, what an early critic termed an "animated ... world of pure fact," (Unterecker v). Before meeting Moore for the first time, Bishop made an entry in her notebook in which, having copied out and diligently annotated Moore's poem "The Jerboa", she lists potential topics of conversation—"does she research for a poem? or does she research & then the poem arrives? Hopkins? Crane? Stevens?" (Kalstone 106). To claim that in this friendship the young poet was primarily seeking a substitute mother is doing her a disservice, similar to that done her by the undergraduate who, in an anecdote recounted by Bishop, wondered if "'Sestina' was the name of my grandmother" (Diehl 55).

Bonnie Costello has succinctly pinpointed this nexus of mothering and influence within the wider perspective maintained by both women: "If the nouns of family life (mother, daughter, sister, etc.) do not quite fit, the verbs still do, not the oedipal verb "struggle" which dominates our Bloomian notion of literary influence, but the centrally female verb "nurture". Indeed, when the young Bishop made Moore the present of a paper nautilus shell, Moore's gift in return was a poem about mother love and its relationship to writing" (Costello, "Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop" 131). Costello's paper was published in the years following the emergence of Gilbert and Gubar's first joint publication, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, in 1979. The traditionally gendered language she uses here resonates with their narrative of an alternative female lineage, in which women writers look to nurturing foremothers rather than precursors within the aggressive, competitive male tradition. This language sounds reductive and binary now; it may be shaken by close attention to the complexity of the vision of mother love presented in "The Paper Nautilus" (Moore, *Poems* 238-9), which walks a fine line between nurture and aggression. The poem is filled with imagery of barely contained menace. Although the ostensible target of its muted threat is the outside world that may harm the unhatched eggs, they themselves barely escape being "crushed":

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,—
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.

This eight-armed devil-fish is presented in a way that does nothing to minimise its sinister air. Its tentacles do not crush the shell, but the phrasing emphasises their capacity to do so. In this mythic-scaled battle between Hercules and the hydra, loyalties remain ambiguous; while the released eggs are aligned with the

hero in the simile, the devastatingly dangerous, multi-headed hydra—itsself a sort of devil-fish—is invoked without being satisfactorily dispatched.

Costello categorised the poem as a return gift, made to Bishop in return for her present of the shell. With its close attention to the material characteristics of the gift object, it follows Moore’s pattern of offering descriptive writing in return for gifts. “The Paper Nautilus” is a masterpiece of description, with its attentiveness to the shell’s “close- / laid Ionic chiton-folds / like the lines in the mane of / a Parthenon horse.” However, the barely-restrained aggression of the language reveals the antagonism underlying exchanges in which the relative status of the participants is in question. At this point in their relationship, Bishop was beginning to assert herself and even reject her mentor’s suggestions (see discussion of “Roosters” below). The previous hierarchy, with Moore at the head and Bishop her subordinate, was being renegotiated on more equal terms.

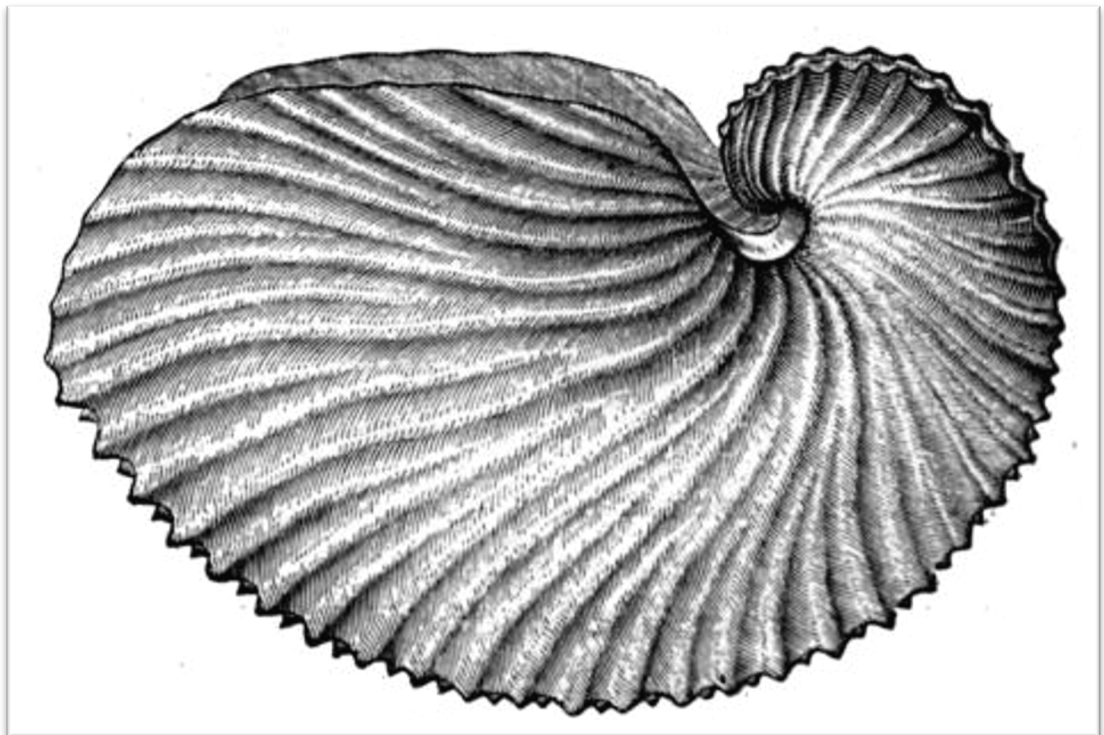


Figure xi: Shell of the paper nautilus (*Argonauta argo*) (Lee).

“The Paper Nautilus” acknowledges this to some extent, at least by merit of omission. Its emphasis is placed on the mother nautilus, with the majority of the poem’s body given over a description of the emptied shell, the rest to “the

watchful / maker of it". While the offspring are allowed, finally, to escape—they "free it when they are freed"—the progeny are of little further interest in the poem and their fate is not described. The juvenile argonauts are free to do as they wish. As Moore pointed out in the epigraph to *Complete Poems*, "Omissions are not accidents" (Moore, *Complete Poems* i). Motherhood and the marks it leaves is the subject here, not the wayward choices of the child, or protégée.

Costello read the poem as a meditation on creativity and the costs of the creative imagination (Costello, "Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop" 130)—this is a persuasive argument, particularly if the poem is considered a return gift to Bishop. Kalstone also noted that when Bishop read the first version—then titled "A Glass-Ribbed Cage"—in the *Kenyon Review*, she linked it with her own meditation on habitat and home, "Jerónimo's House" (Bishop, *Complete Poems* 34), remarking that it was a "rebuke" to her, having better expressed her intentions for her own poem (Kalstone 69). However, as he pointed out, the two pieces come from very different points of view; while both poems emphasise the vulnerability and delicacy of their respective "houses", Moore's vision of a muscularly generative force contrasts with Bishop's statements of fragility and ephemerality: "If ['Jerónimo's House'] identifies sources of creative energy in the impulse to protect, it doesn't do so with the maternal assurance of 'The Paper Nautilus' but with something like childlike surprise at being sheltered" (Kalstone 71). Kalstone's use of "maternal" and "childlike" here reveals the source of Bishop's sensed "rebuke": at this point in their relationship, she felt the force of Moore's poetic maturity and prowess in contrast to her own still-developing voice.

Methods of control

The psychoanalytic approach establishes continuity between the work and the extra-literary activities of the writer. For Diehl, this means that the same psyche is in action whether writing a poem, or a letter or personal journal entry, and that the preoccupations of all these various texts will be consistent, as will the hidden or "repressed" narrative they construct. From the perspective of gift exchange,

Diehl's position supports the assumption that the extra-literary objects, texts and favours exchanged between the poets are continuous with their literary production; they are produced, collected, or exchanged by the same authorial psyche to the same ends. Some of Diehl's insights into the character of Moore as Bishop represents it provide interesting glimpses into the older woman's personality. She describes her "mechanisms of control" (Diehl, 26): for example, her tendency to always arrive too early for engagements, her easily evoked prudishness, and her inappropriate bossiness concerning the clothing or bathroom habits of her acquaintances. Bishop certainly came to view Moore's extremely rigorous approach to poetry as a controlling behaviour designed to contain her overwhelming paranoia. In response to a review of her own work by Robert Lowell, she wrote him: "I think the beginning part about 'meticulous attention, a method of escaping from intolerable pain' is awfully good—and something I've just begun to realize myself—although I did take it in about Marianne Moore long ago. (It is her way of controlling what almost amounts to paranoia, I believe—although I handle these words ineptly)" (Bishop, *One Art: Letters* 477). This letter was written in 1967, when her view of Moore was tempered by over thirty years of friendship, not long before Marianne's death in 1972 and the composition of "Efforts of Affection". She noted there that Moore's critics believed "'she controlled panic by presenting it as whimsy'", commenting "surely there is an element of mortal panic and fear underlying all works of art?" (Bishop, "Efforts of Affection" 143–4). Over the years, she had had plenty of evidence of Moore's effort to control her own work and rate of publication; in a letter typical of their early friendship, Moore chides Bishop for submitting a story without allowing her to read it first: "It was very independent of you to submit your prize story without letting me see it. If it is returned with a printed slip, that will be why" (Rosenbach, Moore V:05:91 (2)). In her reply Bishop takes a placatory tone, informing her that the *Partisan Review* had accepted her story, but admitting that they asked for changes and defending her decision not to have sent it, demurring "I am so afraid you will not like it" (Rosenbach, Bishop V:05:91 (3)).

For the purpose of this analysis Moore's unpredictable response to gifts is the most relevant manifestation of Moore's need to control. Bishop dedicates several paragraphs of her memoir to gifts she gave her over the years and their

varying degrees of success (134–5). The paper nautilus was a resounding success, inspiring as it did one of Moore’s major poems in return. A pair of gloves was also well received, appearing in some of the poet’s most famous portraits, kept in the original packaging and brought out for special occasions—clearly, these objects were held in high regard. However, it was impossible, according to Bishop, to know what sort of gift might be acceptable in advance, and when an item was unacceptable Moore would quietly return it “unobtrusively, but somehow or other, a year or two later” (134). She goes so far as to call the many gifts Moore received from her friends a “burden” to her, characterising them as an unwanted set of obligations she found difficult to manage. The anecdotes reveal the complex means by which Moore refused, returned, or undermined presents that she had been offered, with the years-long drama of a preserved snake demonstrating her capacity for ambivalence. In February 1937 Bishop jokingly writes to tell Moore she has not quite “decided whether or not to inflict on you a Harlequin Coral Snake in a ... jar—they are very pretty, I think, very decorative as well ... but I hate to turn your home into a bestiary[?] (the snake is not alive.)” (Rosenbach V:04:31 (8)). Three decades later she recalls the snake’s unhappy history:

Knowing her fondness for snakes, I got for her when I was in Florida a beautiful specimen of the deadly coral snake with inch-wide rose-red and black stripes separated by narrow white stripes, a bright new snake coiled in liquid in a squat glass bottle. This bottle sat on her hall bookcase...for many years. The colors gradually faded, and the formaldehyde grew cloudy, and finally I said I thought she could dispense with the coral snake. A mutual friend told me that Marianne was relieved; she had always hated it. Perhaps it had only been brought out for my visits. (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 135)

This passage reveals Bishop’s own ambivalence regarding the exchange—her attentive description of the snake and its markings is rendered in remarkable detail even decades later. Her sense of its value is clear through the effort she has taken to describe it, implying that the gift, which she had thoughtfully selected

and considered “beautiful”, had emotional resonance for the giver. However, the succinct rhythm of the concluding sentences, outlining Moore’s ultimate response, gives them a light and amusing tone, reminiscent of the original letter. While this is intended to suggest that the rejection was not very important, the tone contrasts with the care Bishop has taken over the object’s description. At the far end of the scale of Moore’s reactions to unwanted presents, another friend’s offering of a gramophone is characterized as “a drama that went on for months”, ending in Moore personally carrying the heavy device back to the shop, in a vivid enactment of the gift’s failure and Moore’s refusal to take part in a cycle of exchange (135). Diehl describes these rejections and disruptions in psychoanalytical terms as a “bid for power, for control over everything that can be done to or for the self” that “diminishes the ability of the other to act and forces her/him into a position of tentativeness, insecurity, and doubt” (Diehl 26).

From the perspective of the gift, Moore’s power play over the terms of the exchange allows her to avoid forming the social bonds and obligations that come with the acceptance and reciprocation of gifts. By reserving the right to return a gift, she also reserves the right to refuse to accept it, and to refuse to reciprocate. In doing so, Moore makes a significant dominance gesture, signalling her belief that her status is such that she is not required to comply with the unstated assumptions of social life. Refusing these implicit obligations means refusing the bid for social connection made by the individual offering the gift, and denying the opportunity represented by the gift to establish a bond. According to Mauss, triple obligations to give, accept, and to reciprocate gifts bind everyone involved in a gift exchange. He characterised these as the three major themes of exchange, and dedicates much of his text to examining the unspoken principles underlying their fulfilment. Mostly these obligations are enforced by the threat of reduced status and prestige within a society: “to refrain from giving, just as to refrain from accepting, is to lose rank—as is refraining from reciprocating” (Mauss 53). Mauss identified two potential outcomes of refusing to comply with these obligations:

The obligation to accept is no less constraining [than the obligations to give and to reciprocate]. One has no right to refuse a gift, or to

refuse to attend the potlatch. To act in this way is to show that one is afraid of having to reciprocate, to fear being “flattened” (i.e. losing one’s name) until one has reciprocated. In reality this is already to be “flattened”. It is to “lose the weight” attached to one’s name. It is either to admit oneself beaten in advance, or on the contrary, in certain cases, to proclaim oneself the victor and invincible. (Mauss 52)

Moore’s refusals and partial refusals may be read in this light as attempts to enforce the unequal power dynamic between herself and the younger, less well-known poet. Moore as a bastion of the avant-garde clearly did not feel she needed to engage in the socially mandated obligations to accept or reciprocate the gifts of someone she saw as lower in status than herself. In her case, to borrow Mauss’s phrase, proclaiming herself the victor by refusing to compete.

The time that passes between apparent acceptance and ultimate refusal is also significant. A lengthy stretch of time, “a year or two” might pass before her rejection of the gift is revealed. This destabilizes the typical processes of the gift economy. Usually, time must pass before reciprocation takes place in order to prevent an exchange becoming a simple transaction. During this period, the social bond of obligation that ties giver and receiver is established. To allow time to pass before the gift is refused, however, allows the giver to believe that such a bond exists, while it is simultaneously being undermined by Moore’s protracted refusal. This is a means of subverting and controlling the gift exchange mechanisms, and by extension, the system of social networks they indicate and establish (Mauss 7). This pattern of control and subversion in her exchanges is not evidence that Moore did not believe in the social or moral importance of gifts; rather, it should be seen as confirmation that she did, and deeply, and that a gift’s implied obligation was something she was often eager to avoid.

On the other hand, Moore dedicated her *Selected Poems* to someone she clearly felt indebted and subordinate to—her mother—in an oblique postscript. She states her fear that any offered gift might be insufficient, and her doubt that it ever could be enough to repay her debt: “Dedications imply giving, and we do

not care to make a gift of what is insufficient; but in my immediate family there is one “who thinks in a particular way” and I should like to add that where there is an effect of thought or pith in these pages, the thinking and often the actual phrases are hers” (Moore, *Selected Poems* 108). The dedication goes out of its way to devalue the book’s worth as a gift. In fact, the phrasing implies that the book is not being offered at all; with exaggerated humility she suggests that any effective turn of phrase in the book was probably her mother’s in the first place. The dedication attempts to offer the book as recompense for a debt incurred, downplaying the worth of her own work, rather than establishing a new obligation by offering it as a gift. Her torturous etiquette demonstrates her awareness of the potential “burden” a gift can be, and her efforts to evade such obligations when possible.

Time, tide and formaldehyde: A brief comparative poetics

Given the focus on materiality through the prose descriptions of gift objects, it would be valuable at this stage to overview the poets’ respective approaches to the object and material in their work, in order to illustrate the significant differences in their poetics. For Bishop, value resides in a trick of the eye, or memory, that can distinguish the extraordinary within the ordinary, a value that is often hidden from other people. In “Santarém” the speaker buys a beautiful “small, exquisite, clean matte white” wasp’s nest as a souvenir of her travels, but her travelling companion, unable to recognise the beauty in the object, asks “What’s that ugly thing?” (Bishop, *Complete Poems* 186). Robert Lowell’s often-quoted sonnet “For Elizabeth Bishop 4” implies that the criteria by which she judges the world were mysterious even to the poet:

Have you seen an inchworm crawl on a leaf,
cling to the very end, revolve in air,
feeling for something to reach to something? Do
you still hang your words in air, ten years

unfinished, glued to your notice board, with gaps
or empties for the unimaginable phrase –
unerring Muse who makes the casual perfect? (Lowell 69)

Moore, it might be presumed, could have plastered the gap between herself and an unknown “something” by recourse to her notebooks. Unlike Moore’s, however, Bishop’s many mendings leave no traces on the surface. Her muse is unerring in its selectivity. If Marianne “stops” when the object has been fixed, Elizabeth will continue until the poem itself is “complete.” Selective detail meshes itself together without seams, without, at least, showing the edges, as she slips into her description of Florida with the suggestion of a pun on “state” as a mode of being:

The state with the prettiest name,
the state that floats in brackish water,
held together by mangrove roots
that bear while living oysters in clusters,
and when dead strew white swamps with skeletons,
dotted as if bombarded, with green hummocks
like ancient cannon-balls sprouting grass.

(Bishop, *Complete Poems* 32)

The state of being Florida is the climate of the poem, to which everything within is subject. It is also in something of a state, “strewn” and “bombarded” with the residue of its life cycles and barely “held together” by the mangrove. The sound patterns here are muffled, with quiet echoes such as the *s* and *w* of “strew white swamps with skeletons” or the half rhyme of “oysters in clusters”. Things are exposed to the same climate, to the meteorological forces of the poem, but they are bent to no master pattern nor set in enamel. Decay filters through the stanzas, functioning something like the “unenquiring brush” of Moore’s “Nine Nectarines”

(Moore, *Poems* 208), staining objects indiscriminately with a corrosive chemical. Corruption is busily and simultaneously undoing the weave-work of description; Bishop's poems are all busy Penelopes. In "Cape Breton" "The silken water is weaving and weaving, / disappearing under the mist equally in all directions" (Bishop, *Complete Poems* 67). Mark Ford (Ford 86) has remarked on the poem's "attempt to figure the sea's currents in terms of a woman weaving a silken cloth", a task of fairy-tale impossibility and which, as he points out, "breaks down" in face of infinity "in all directions", as before Florida's "monotonous, endless, sagging coastline". The weaving woman is more elusive than his comment suggests, however, and is often silent, or ventriloquized like the Indian Princess of "Florida" by louder voices. Like the "The Riverman" of a later poem (Bishop, *Complete Poems* 103) she is barely distinguishable from the materials with which she works.

A Marianne Moore poem constructs an archive, which could presumably be extended indefinitely to accommodate relevant material, saving the poet's stipulation that "when you have done justice to the meaning, stop" (Moore, *Prose* 435). This is a patchwork procedure, the unique "weave" of each image implying its origin, but made subject to the "pattern in the carpet" (ibid.) of rhythmic and syllabic discipline. The pattern is formed by the "external / marks of abuse" (Moore, *Poems* 127), the "much-mended plate" hardening beneath its enamel until "one perceives no flaws/in this emblematic group" (208). Despite the plurality of source material and multiple speakers that inhabit the poems, Bishop commented that she could hear a particular voice breaking through again and again throughout Moore's work. She stated that she often heard it as Moore's mother Mary (Bishop, "Efforts of Affection" 129).

Bishop has pointed to a somewhat paradoxical characteristic of Moore's verse. Despite her broad use of a collage technique, a unique "voice" can be consistently heard moving through the poems, commenting, situating, and moralizing on the diverse quotations and elements the poems introduce. This feat is achieved through the poet's grammatical and semantic virtuosity. If Bishop builds her poems from the parataxes of the travel narrative, "everything only connected by 'and' and 'and'" (Bishop, *Complete Poems* 58), Moore is a master of the semi-colon and colon, layering and amplifying her themes with imagery often

at startling odds with itself. This example from “Those Various Scalpels” uses a colon to bridge the description of the woman’s hand and cheeks. It also marks the border between two disjunct metaphors that are vastly diverse in tone, temperature, geographic location, and scale; ice formations on the rigging of ships at harbour or frozen in for the winter, and the scene of a supposed assassination in medieval French castles:

your

eyes, flowers of ice

and

snow sown by tearing winds on the cordage of disabled

ships; your raised hand,

an ambiguous signature: your cheeks, those rosettes

of blood on the stone floors of French châteaux, with

regard to which the guides are so affirmative –

(Moore, *Poems* 116)

In one of Moore’s earliest critical responses, T. S. Eliot wrote in *The Dial* praising the “dexterity of change of vocabulary” that enables her to present such a bewildering shower of imagery with clarity (Eliot, “Review” 596). The white “ice and snow” flashes out against “rosettes of blood”; the *sh* echo and half-echo of *p* and *t* between “ships” and “châteaux” places gentle emphasis on their semantic and geographic disparity, somewhere between which the “ambiguous signature” of this image composed of images is marked. Despite these scalpel-sharp distinctions, however, a Moore poem can become, as Fiona Green (Green 139) put it, “a monstrously mixed creature”, reliant on the power of the “so affirmative” didactic voice to mend it together, dramatizing the action of metaphor as enforced juxtaposition. Moore establishes a system of misleadings. “An Octopus” (which is, after all, about a glacier, as Bishop dryly noted) sets about submerging the glacier in a pool and stranding the octopus on top of Mount Rainier:

It hovers forward “spider-fashion
on its arms” misleadingly like lace;
its “ghostly pallor changing
to the green metallic tinge of an anemone-starred pool.”

The fir-trees, in “the magnitude of their root systems,”
rise aloof from these maneuvers “creepy to behold,”
austere specimens of our American royal families,
“each like the shadow of the one beside it.

The rock seems frail compared with their dark energy of life,”
its vermilion and onyx and manganese-blue interior
expansiveness
left at the mercy of the weather;
“stained transversely by iron where the water drips down,”
recognized by its plants and its animals.

[...]

Instructed, none knows how, to climb the mountain,
by businessmen who require for recreation
three hundred and sixty-five holidays a year,
these conspicuously spotted little horses are peculiar;
hard to discern among the birch-trees, ferns, and lily-pads,
avalanche lilies, Indian paint-brushes,
bear’s ears and kittentails,
and miniature cavalcades of chlorophyllless fungi

magnified in profile on the moss-beds like moonstones in the
water;
the cavalcade of calico competing
with the original American menagerie of styles
among the white flowers of the rhododendron surmounting rigid
leaves
upon which moisture works its alchemy,
transmuting verdure into onyx. (Moore, *Poems* 167)

The poem glances throughout at the consequences of conflating things that are “misleadingly like”, the concurrence of an image with the afterimage of its predecessor. The calico horses barely emerge from the diverse foliage of multiple plants. The rhododendron “upon which moisture works its alchemy, / transmuting verdure into onyx” risks an incomplete metamorphosis, “verdure” and “onyx” echoing somewhat muddily as “ordure”. On an epistemological level, Moore’s “little crochets” force quotations to comment on subjects unrelated to their original meaning, itself a manoeuvre that risks incoherence. A quotation from John Muir’s discussion of Sequoia National Park— “the magnitude of their root systems”—is forced to refer to a more northerly species: “Of course giant redwoods don’t belong in alpine landscapes so Moore plants her glacier with fir trees” (Green 140).

Fiona Green’s image of the poet “planting” her fir trees is a happy one; Moore’s poems are gardens planted “with real toads” (Moore, *Poems* 135). Despite the more incongruous grafts, in these works, as Bishop puts it, the lions are all agreeable and “the weather is all arranged” (Bishop, *Complete Poems* 82).

The overall atmosphere is an emulsion, suspended, evenly distributed, a balanced solution. Moore’s poetry is conducted alchemically if not chemically; in the same poem, Bishop sees her flying “in a cloud of fiery pale chemicals”, and returned to the imagery to describe the atmosphere of Moore’s apartment in “Efforts of Affection”: “I had ‘taken’ chemistry at preparatory school; I also could imagine that in this water, or heavy water glass, I saw forming the elaborate,

logical structures that became her poems” (137). In reality, Bishop had always been aware of the elemental disparity; her poetic pharmacy is stocked with acids and emulsions, rather than varnish and formaldehyde. Her work, as she puts it in her notebook, “proceeds from the material, the material eaten out with acid pulled down from underneath” (Kalstone 15).

The breakdown of the cycle

“Roosters”

Moore’s chemistry transmutes “verdure into onyx,” glazes, crystallises, fixes; it gilds even the tin wind-vane of Bishop’s poem “Roosters” in her revision of it. Bishop’s 1940 anti-war poem was her longest and most ambitious work at that date. Moore’s uninvited rewrite of that poem, and Bishop’s rejection of it, marked a decisive shift in the women’s relationship. David Kalstone referred to the incident as “a catastrophe, reined in only by whatever good sense and good manners the two women could muster in dealing with one another” (Kalstone 79). While this may be a melodramatic description, the event was certainly the most notable instance of an interruption in the cycle of exchanges between them, and reset the tone of their interaction for the rest of their lives.

Over a hundred lines long, “Roosters” is a strong critique of militarized masculinity and the glamorization of war. Traditional gender roles are satirized, with hens playing the role of admiring “rustling wives” and the puffed-up chests of the roosters compared to the medalled chests of generals who have proved their manhood through acts of institutionalized violence. The poem tacks closely to the figure of the rooster all the way through, first describing an actual bird, then cataloguing the biblical, mythological, and literary history of the image. The rooster is transformed as the reader moves through the poem into a small-town weathervane, a farmyard brawler, an ancient Greek sacrificial offering, the symbol of St. Peter’s betrayal of Christ, and the medieval symbol of misdirected pride, Chaucer’s Chanticleer. A stream of violent and military imagery breaks into almost every stanza; even the farmhouse window is “gun-metal blue”. Opening at

dawn with “the first crow of the first cock”, the sound of crows spreading across the waking world reiterates the possibility of violence over and over:

At four o'clock
in the gun-metal blue dark
we hear the first crow of the first cock

just below
the gun-metal blue window
and immediately there is an echo

off in the distance,
then one from the backyard fence,
then one, with horrible insistence,

grates like a wet match
from the broccoli patch,
flares, and all over town begins to catch.

(Bishop, *Complete Poems* 35).

The prevalence of these ideas in society is conveyed by the rooster's ubiquity and the “horrible insistence” of its cry. Literal cockfights stand in for conflict at a global level: the imagery, including maps marked out with pins to plan an army's advance and a portrayal of aerial warfare, make this link explicit. The poem's

explicit violence and references to bird corpses and droppings help to drive its powerful satirical message.

In October 1940, Bishop sent Moore an early draft of the poem for her opinion, as she did with almost everything she wrote at the time. Moore's response was to completely rewrite it with the assistance of her mother, changing the title to "The Cock" (Rosenbach V:04:02), (Figure xiii), excising references to the toilet and discarding Bishop's strict three-line stanza form in favour of looser couplets. Bishop's receipt of the rewritten manuscript was followed by "a flurry of correspondence and a fractious phone call" (Kalstone 79), in which Bishop politely rejected Moore's suggestions, and the older poet attempted to insist upon them. Bishop's ultimate refusal to accept any of the revisions, with the exception of one or two words, blocked the continuation of the exchange cycle. Moore's rewrite was a gift, offered aggressively, and intended to challenge what she saw as her protégée's "flicker of impudence" (Moore, *Prose* 328) and reassert her status at the top of the exchange hierarchy. By refusing to accept, Bishop caused an interruption in the cycle—the distress visible in the correspondence on both their parts, demonstrates how socially and emotionally costly it was to do so.

Moore's aggressive revision may have been driven by the awareness of an unpaid debt. In January 1937, Bishop sent several photographs from Key West, including a shot of a rooster and hen in a sunny yard, surrounded by palms. Moore's descriptive response on January 24 includes the sentence: "The bayonet points of the palms above the confident [sic] little rooster, have greatly the sense of the place" (Rosenbach V:04:31). While the word "bayonet" does not appear in Bishop's poem, the connection of the bird with violent militarism and weaponry presages the central conceit of "Roosters", an echo that Moore must have noticed. The photograph itself is a visual touchstone for the poem, and Bishop may have autonomously drawn similar descriptive imagery from it, but since it remained in Moore's possession her description in the letter would have been the most tangible remnant and trigger of its associations for Bishop. Moore's extensive revisions of the poem perhaps arose from a sense of ownership of the material that goes beyond her customary need for control over her protégée's output. The revisions remove the more overtly militaristic language and tend to tone down Bishop's weapon-oriented imagery.



Figure xii: Photograph sent by Elizabeth Bishop to Marianne Moore from Key West, Florida, 19 January 1937 (Rosenbach V:04:31).

In Moore's version, the first half of the poem is stripped of explicit violence and even words that are rougher-hewn. "Horrible insistence" disappears from stanza three, the roosters of stanzas six and seven are no longer either "cruel" or "stupid", "torn out, bloodied feathers" have gone from the twenty-fourth, and the phallic exhibitionism of Bishop's twenty-first stanza is erased entirely:

Yes, that excrescence
makes a most virile presence,
plus all that vulgar beauty of iridescence (Bishop, *Complete Poems*
37).

Although Moore changed the title to the more crude and masculine “The Cock”, it seems she was unaware of its slang meaning. “Water-closet” and “droppings” were objected to as distasteful. At a subtler level, in the new version the perspective is shifted to reduce the agency of the players, moving the tone of the piece towards the abstract and impersonal. The line “planned to command and terrorize” has been removed from the eighth stanza, and rather than “marking out maps like Rand McNally’s” the coloured roosters passively “form” them. All in all, Moore’s revisions excise the poem’s unpleasantness, leaving a parable-like piece that refigures the fierce first half as an atmospheric lead-in to a meditation on scripture. Similarly, Bishop’s evasions and qualifications have been removed from the second half, making the poem’s statements about the New Testament story much more emphatic.

Old holy scripture

could set it together

in one **small** scene, past and future: (Bishop, *Complete Poems* 37, emphasis mine).

The lines are transformed into a much more assertive statement in Moore’s version, once the words marked in bold have been removed, and the colon moved up:

Holy scripture

sets it all together :

one scene, past and future,

Similarly, “saint” is inserted into stanza thirty and “those cock-a-doodles yet might bless” is removed, cauterizing the near-satire of Bishop’s tone. The sheer amount that the Moore cut from the poem is notable in itself, and her redistribution of the lines butchers Bishop’s rhyme scheme and triplet pattern.

However, “The Cock” also undermines Bishop’s intention to satirize militarism and expose its horror, either because it was gravely misunderstood or, worse, disapproved of.

Over the course of a letter defending her choices point by point, Bishop was able to maintain that “ELIZABETH KNOWS BEST...Horror, I have changed to small initial letters!” (Rosenbach V:05:02) and to refuse Moore’s alchemical metamorphosis of “torn-out, bloodied feathers” into “flame”. The capital letters she used here echo the delighted capitals that heralded her first use of Moore’s first name in a letter after four years of correspondence: DEAR MARIANNE (Bishop, *One Art: Letters* 76). That moment marked a pivotal moment in their relationship, a shift towards a more equal status; Bishop recognised that this event was of the same order. The letter is, as always, deferential even in defiance, remarking that “I know that esthetically you are quite right, but I can’t bring myself to sacrifice what (I think) is a very important “violence” of tone—which I feel to be helped by what you must feel to be just a bad case of the threes” (Rosenbach V:05:02). Bishop’s confidence is most aptly demonstrated here by her self-deprecation and humorous acknowledgement of Moore’s point of view—nonetheless, she views the requested “sacrifice” as too costly, and is clear and immovable on the subject. The tribute that Moore implicitly requests is too much for Bishop to make. In effect, she asserts that Moore’s gifts to her, in the form of editing, redrafts and suggestions, are not valuable enough for her to give up her own creative autonomy in return, and her refusal to do so draws this phase of their exchange to a close. In her analysis of the Moore-Bishop friendship in *American Literary Mentors*, Irene Goldman-Price considers this exchange to mark a conclusive end to the mentorship phase of their relationship:

After this exchange, Bishop withdrew from close mentorship. As she wrote, “After that I decided to write entirely on my own, because I realized how very different we were.” If she wrote later for comment, it was to send along a work already accepted or published. Effectively, the mentorship period had ceased. (Goldman-Price and McFarland-Pennell 151)

An important coda to the argument over “Roosters” confirmed that the relation had been reset. In her 1946 review of Bishop’s collection *North & South* in *The Nation*, Moore praises the “sustained” and “difficult rhyme-schemes of “Roosters”” she had previously criticised, and closes the review by drawing out the theme of forgiveness in the poem: “Art which “cuts its facets from within” can mitigate suffering, can even be an instrument of happiness; as also forgiveness, symbolized in Miss Bishop’s meditation on St. Peter by the cock, seems essential to happiness” (Moore, *Prose* 407–8). In light of her retraction, it seems clear that Moore believed the person in need of forgiveness was herself.

“The bell-boy with the buoy-ball”

The exposure of the cycle and its status imbalance led to a recalibration of the exchange between the women, and in Bishop’s case the need to keep a more precise tally of the obligations and returns between the two. The ability to express affection and obligation to Moore was now mediated by the need to point out that influence did not flow in only one direction, and that Moore took more from her friend than she may have consciously been aware. Around the same time as the “Roosters” incident, an exchange was set in motion that was unresolved even after Moore’s death in 1972. In “Efforts of Affection” Bishop recalls an occasion when she saw glass buoy balls being carried through her Cape Cod hotel by a porter, causing her to say the phrase “the bell-boy with the buoy balls” while recollecting the scene to Moore. Moore went on to use this phrase in the poem “Four Quartz Crystal Clocks”.

As her annotations and references tended to be scrupulous, it was very unusual that she did not acknowledge the provenance of this phrase when the poem was published. The omission struck Bishop as strange, and was notable enough to her to be included in a memoir published many years later, a memoir she nonetheless considered “affectionate”. Her discomfort appears to arise from the fact that a suitable response had not been made within the exchange cycle, an acknowledgement or perhaps development of the material through Moore’s own creative labour. It is worth quoting the passage at length here, since it provides a context that Bishop clearly feels is necessary to ground and anchor the meaning of the stolen phrase. The anecdote is prefaced by a recollection of another occasion, when Moore offered her ten dollars for a remark about elephants, presumably to be fair to the older poet and demonstrate how seriously she took such matters:

I confess to one very slight grudge: she *did* use a phrase of mine once without a note. This may be childish of me, but I want to reclaim it. I had been asked by a friend to bring her three glass buoy-balls in nets, sometimes called “witch balls,” from Cape Cod. When I arrived at the old hotel where I lived, a very old porter took them with my bag, and as I watched him precede me down the corridor, I said to myself, “the bell-boy with the buoy-balls”. I liked the sound of this so much that in my vanity I repeated the phrase to Marianne a day or so later. You will find “The sea- / side burden should not embarrass / the bell-boy with the buoy-ball / endeavoring to pass / hotel patronesses”. It was so thoroughly out of character for her to do this, that I have never understood it. I am sometimes appalled to think how much I may have unconsciously stolen from her. Perhaps we are all magpies. (Bishop, “Efforts of Affection” 141)

In terms of the exchange, the phrase Moore took was not appropriately acknowledged or reciprocated; this created an imbalance that highlighted the problematic power dynamic of their relationship. This struggle over a single

phrase is synecdotal of their relation as a whole, which may go some way to explaining why such a slight offense from decades ago might merit inclusion in a memoir. Bishop herself described her reclamation as “childish”, pre-emptively and only partly ironically defending herself against the accusation, in an echo of the mentor/parent dynamic that was almost inevitable with Moore. The means by which she “reclaims” the stolen phrase is to place it within a descriptive context characteristic of her poetics. The scene is established through a first person narrative, with a layered series of precisely nuanced details leading to a final condensation in the contested phrase. Bishop’s description moves through space and time, gesturing to both the provenance and ultimate destination of the buoy-balls. The moment pinpointed by “the bell-boy with the buoy-balls” is transient, momentary, unsustainable, a transience that challenges the squared-off, alliterative symmetry of the phrase itself, and challenged by it. That tension, between the apparent ability of precise language to pinion the moment and the existential denial of that possibility by time, decay and movement, is as much as anything what animates Bishop’s poetics, from the carefully constructed landscapes of “At the Fishhouses” or “Florida” to the ambitious narrative arc of “Crusoe in England”.

“Four Quartz Crystal Clocks” takes a very different approach. It was inspired by a flyer that came with her telephone bill describing “The World’s Most Accurate ‘Clocks’” at the Bell Telephone Laboratories in New York (Rosenbach Museum and Library 15). Moore’s commitment to treating her subject with rigour and accuracy extended beyond the page; five years after the poem first appeared, she wrote to the laboratory to check her facts, and in subsequent versions changed “cool Bell / Laboratory” to “the 41° Bell / Laboratory” to reflect their representative’s reply (*ibid.*). The bell-boy phrase appears seamlessly in the fifth stanza:

Repetition, with
the scientist, should be
synonymous with accuracy.

The lemur-student can see
that an aye-aye is not

an angwan-tíbo, potto, or loris. The sea-
side burden should not embarrass
the bell-boy with the buoy-ball
endeavoring to pass
hotel patronesses; nor could a
practiced ear confuse the glass
eyes for taxidermists

with eye-glass from the optometrist. (*Poems* 235)

Moore's poem strips the phrase from context entirely, and places the "burden" of its function onto its own internal symmetries. The close similarity of the sounds is itself the point. The reader is reminded that similar things are not the same; that precision and contrast can be a source of delight when categories are not permitted to become confused. The less successful example, "the glass eyes for taxidermists / with eye-glass from the optometrist", is cruder and of less semantic interest, and serves to underline the qualities of the stolen phrase. The phrase is provided with just enough context to allow the reader to make sense of it; the circumstances in which the odd image arose are of no interest. The slight clumsiness of the lines preceding it perhaps belies the fact that the provenance is foreign to her. The bell-boy could be any bell-boy—the point is simply that bell-boys and buoy-balls are not the same. The superficial similarity between the sounds allows the poet to draw attention to the tiniest phonetic and orthographic rumples and inconsistencies. Emphasising once again the differences in Bishop and Moore's poetics, the image in this context is as fixed and unyielding as a taxonomic definition. Moore's use of it, however, can be seen as a successful

incorporation and increase of the gift of Bishop's offhanded phrase, which she transformed by the action of the her creative labour into a finished piece of poetry. It is placed in the context of an extended meditation on accuracy and set alongside another example to underline the reason for her interest in the phrase.

Bishop's desire to set the record straight came very late, and showed a distinct change in the attitude she had shown to Moore in 1938–41. Moore herself asked about the phrase in a letter of December 6, 1938 (Rosenbach V:05:01), asking "should not 'the bell-buoy and the buoy ball' be introduced into something". In the same letter Moore mentions that she is sending a house-warming gift, "a little sweetmeat dish (or coaster or ashtray). Perhaps you could imagine you like it because I thought you would." In her reply of January 14, 1939 (Bishop, *Letters* 78), Bishop expressed her sense of obligation to Moore, which was so great that she had trouble writing at all, feeling that she had too little to offer in return. She was particularly distressed that she has not got any new writing to show: "I put off writing originally because I wanted to send you 'something'—a sample, at least—when I did, but I have done NOTHING although I try hard every day, honestly. Then the many things to thank you for began to mount—not that it is a chore to thank you, but my discomfort grew and grew" (ibid.) Bishop's clearly regarded her position to be subordinate relative to Moore, and the perceived obligations she felt—for material gifts, but also expectation and support—was almost overwhelming at this time. Bishop was devaluing what she had to offer because she felt she has nothing of equivalent or greater value to give. While she thanks Moore for the dish, she does not reply regarding the bell-boy phrase at all. She remained reticent on the issue even when she realized Moore had used it in a major poem. Moore sent her an early draft copy of "Four Quartz Crystal Clocks" with no quotation marks or note to suggest the bell-boy phrase is not her own (Vassar: 85.10). Bishop did not mark it, and in her letter of March 14, 1940, expressed her pleasure it was included: "Just reading it through gave me the sensation of a wonderful long iced drink—and of course I am extremely proud of the buoy-ball line" (Bishop, *One Art: Letters* 89). However, after the poem was published a year later in *What Are Years*, the continued omission of quotation marks or credit provoked a distressed reaction from Bishop in a letter to Moore of October 23, 1941. At this stage she places the blame

on the publisher: “I think the cover is very nice, and everything in general, but I’ll never forgive Macmillan for the ‘bell-boy’ mistake—*my* line” (Bishop, *Letters* 104). The mistake went uncorrected in subsequent editions, although Bishop clearly felt she had made the attempt to suggest Moore do so. Her ability to be as assertive as she was in the 1969 memoir shows a distinct change in her perceived status as protégée—rather than blame the publisher or obliquely hint, she admitted that she bore a grudge and called out Moore for her mistake, who, as the correspondence made clear, did use the phrase without acknowledgement. Bishop came to value her contribution to the exchange, and therefore her own status within it, more highly. At this stage, the bell-boy phrase was considered an worthwhile gift; Bishop now felt that she did, in fact, have something worthwhile to offer all along. It was her need to assert her re-evaluated status and recalibrate the power dynamics intrinsic to the relationship that drove her attention to this apparently trivial issue forty years after the fact.

Conclusion

In 1959 Moore wrote to Bishop, recasting their long friendship from her own perspective, and playing down her earlier role as a mentor: “You have sometimes asked what I thought, Elizabeth; but even if you ever took my advice, did you ever get to sound like me? or I like you? You sound like Lope de Vega and I sound like Jacob Abbot or Peter Rabbit” (Costello, *Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop* 130). Bonnie Costello has taken this comment at face value, considering it “fair warning against elaborate claims of influence”. (ibid.) It might rather be considered evidence of Moore’s labyrinthine politeness, a quality Bishop often found tedious (Bishop, *Edgar Allan Poe and the Juke-Box* 293), as she explained in a letter to Robert Lowell of June 30, 1948: “The endless politenesses, thank-yous-for-thank-yous, etc., become like playing with a dog that likes to retrieve a little too well” (ibid.). The unremitting thank-yous also resemble an elaborate dance intended to side step any long-term debts, the kind of obligation that is unspoken and grows over time. Moore’s remark to Bishop pointedly underestimated the influence she had had and the value of her “advice”. Her self-

deprecating comparison of herself to Peter Rabbit is a similarly modest hyperbole intended to amuse. The comment may be viewed as a recalibration of the women's relationship in retrospect, twenty years after the "Rooster" rewrite, and an acknowledgement of Bishop's independent greatness, which was well established by this time.

By 1978, six years after Moore's death, Bishop was comfortable enough with her own established reputation to take credit for the times she helped out with a rhyme, admitting that Moore called her up to ask her advice about her translation of *La Fontaine* (Spires and Bishop 27). In the same interview, she described protective and maternal feelings towards Moore, as well as Robert Lowell, in a complete reversal of the psychological dynamic of the early years of their relationship. She could not, however, escape the mother-and-child image altogether; a dynamic that must always be unequal, with one partner in the exchange in a position of power, however benign:

When it was somebody like Cal Lowell or Marianne Moore, it's as if they were my children. I'd get terribly upset. I went to hear Marianne several times and finally I just couldn't go because I'd sit there with tears running down my face. I don't know, it's sort of embarrassing. You're so afraid they'll do something wrong. (ibid.)

Diehl has remarked "the true subject of literary influence could be understood as the capacity to give and receive gifts" (Diehl 45). This chapter has presented the Bishop/Moore relationship as a micro gift economy, through the analysis of their exchange of actual gift objects and texts, as well as the super-structural status relation constantly being negotiated and renegotiated between them. Gift objects exchanged between the two women provided the opportunity for descriptive writing, poetic exercises that often found their way into complete major works. The obligation to reciprocate provided a particular spur to this endeavour; as demonstrated in Chapter 1, objects that were given to Moore often had special meaning for her, and formed a majority of the decor in her apartment. Presents were often chosen and sent by Bishop as a souvenir from her travels, and

incorporated by Moore into her relatively static domestic space. Viewing the women's correspondence as a gift economy allows the shifting status relationship between them to be traced, as they moved from guru and neophyte, mentor and protégée, to mature poets expressing mutual respect. A key factor in Bishop's growth as a poet was the increasing ability to reciprocate the gifts of her mentor. As she matured, the younger poet began to recognise her own influence on Moore and increasingly felt able to point it out, both in public and private, and to reclaim unacknowledged or unreciprocated gifts of the past.

In a short poem of the late forties, Bishop herself expressed the difficulties of their relationship in terms of the gift and the potential improprieties and inequalities of exchange:

To the admirable Miss Moore,
of whom we're absolutely sure,

knowing that through the longest night
her syllables will come out right,
her similes will all flash bright,

what can we give, yet not be rude,
to show the proper gratitude? (Bishop, Edgar Allan Poe and the
Juke-Box 84).

The poem asks what gift would be appropriate to offer in recompense for Moore's poetics, her persona, and her influence on the broader culture. The question, however, is left hanging, implying that no such gift would ever suffice.

Chapter 5. “Ever-grateful wonder”: Moore and Joseph Cornell

Where the words can't go any further (Simic 49).

Introduction

This chapter applies the theory of gift exchange to the friendship of Marianne Moore and assemblage artist Joseph Cornell (1903–1972), through close readings of their work and correspondence. These major avant-garde figures engaged in an exchange of letters, ephemera and artworks that defined their friendship and provided material and subject matter for their respective works. Gift exchange plays a notable part in Moore and Cornell’s respective practices. Cornell considered many of his works to be themselves gifts, created with a specific recipient in mind, a friend or ballerina he admired, for example. As explored in the previous chapters, Moore, while rarely explicitly dedicating her poetry to others, often had a person in mind to whom she addressed the lines. Many of these poems—“To an Intra-Mural Rat”, and “To a Steamroller” are obvious examples—are far from complimentary, although others pay personal and generous tribute to their subjects. Additionally, she received many gifts from friends and admirers, and used writing as a means of reciprocating those gifts, both in personal correspondence and in poems.

Moreover, the friendship and correspondence of these two exemplifies how the gift can provide a model for exchange between the arts in modernism. The analysis investigates how the exchange between Moore and Cornell achieved the transformation of art into poetry and vice versa; gifts of poetry were reciprocated by works of visual art, carrying formal and thematic concerns across different media in the process. The chapter engages with Alfred Gell’s aesthetics and Nancy Munn’s concept that a collaborative *spacetime* is established between participants in an exchange economy. In the case of Cornell and Moore, this

spacetime takes the form of a shared, imaginative, fictional world created in their letters to one another that draw on and play with characters and images from their public artworks and poems. This nexus is a shared site located between their two favoured media and is established via exchange. The analysis briefly touches on the implications of this collaborative effort for the theory of inter-arts relations.

My analysis comprises an overview of Cornell's work as it manifests the formal properties of a gift object, a reading of the correspondence materials as exchange objects, and an exploration of the means by which the exchange creates an "aesthetic world" or "embaginated space" between the two correspondents, marked by shared procedural concerns and creative recognition. The gift provides a means of comparing Moore's poetic texts with Cornell's visual works in terms of their aesthetic, thematic, and procedural concerns, and assessing their wider relationships, both within their modernist community of peers and with the public. By representing the exchange of shared ideas and conceptions as well as physical texts and artworks as a gift system, the shifts and transformations achieved between their different media can be traced, with texts and artworks positioned in a non-hierarchical, cyclical, and continuous relation to one another. The analysis aims to demonstrate the action of the gift exchange and the creative opportunity its obligation and response patterns provided. The gift can also be applied as a reading of Cornell's actual works, his shadow boxes and small surrealist objects in particular, as well as his mode of dedicating an artwork to a particular character or muse. This context allows the Moore-Cornell correspondence to be seen in relation to Cornell's wider practice of appropriating the gift as artwork, and the artwork as gift.

Cornell and Moore's correspondence was lengthy, and their biographies took similar turns. Both chose to live in suburban New York at a time when Queens and Brooklyn were rather isolated, remaining single, celibate, and dedicated to their mothers and siblings. Deborah Solomon described their interaction as "inordinately formal" (Solomon 165), and their interactions were more fulfilling via correspondence than face-to-face. Sixteen years apart in age, they met when Moore was, in Solomon's words, "a sixtyish spinster in a black coat

and tricorn hat” (ibid.), significantly more established and better known. Nonetheless they found a good deal of common ground beyond their biographical similarities:

Both were arch-modernists who lived with their mothers in the outer New York boroughs. Both were legendary prudes. Both were appreciators of the ballet and had contributed to *Dance Index*. Both were drawn to poetic portraits of animals—the pangolin, for instance, in Moore’s case; the bird, in Cornell’s—as a form of self-portrait. (Solomon 165)

Each of these particulars formed the basis for exchanges and professional intersections between them: the love of animals inspired Cornell to send Moore natural history books and make pangolins and lyrebirds the subject of collaged letters. Their respective contributions to the ballet periodical *Dance Index* have marked similarities, and their shared preference for collage provides the occasion for the comparison of their procedural methodologies below.

Overview

Moore and Cornell first came to each other’s attention through *View* magazine, under the editorship of Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler (Tashjian 65). An interview with Moore appeared in an early issue, and the magazine printed collage works by Cornell, including the cover of the 1943 edition *Americana Fantastica* (see Figure xiv). Ford precipitated the acquaintance by forwarding Cornell a letter from Moore complimenting his piece *The Crystal Cage*, which in turn inspired him to write to her. She expressed great appreciation of his letter and its engagement with the imagery and themes of her work, and came to visit the artist’s home in Utopia Parkway, Queens, where she saw his studio in the basement and was introduced to his mother. She was, as Charles Molesworth noted, “lavish in her praise of his manners” (Molesworth 316), finding him

“generous, quiet, considerate, discerning” (Leavell, *Holding on Upside Down* 318–9). He in turn visited her in Brooklyn, where Moore also lived with her ageing mother, Mary Moore. In the summer of 1944, he visited the Moores for tea, and afterwards they went to dinner (ibid.).

Their correspondence lasted for many years, and although fitful and extremely formal, it was warm, and demonstrated a mutual respect and admiration. Moore supported Cornell professionally, although this aspect of their interaction was marked by failures and interruptions. He asked her to provide a reference for his (rather unfocussed) application for a Guggenheim fellowship in September 1945. Moore’s recommendation was supportive, but not overly kind, acknowledging flaws in the application and suggesting that Cornell was capable of better work than his proposal might suggest (Leavell, *Prismatic Color* 53). Cornell did not receive the fellowship. Later, he thought to ask the poet to write the catalogue introduction to his *Aviaries* show (Tashjian 75), but neglected to write her until it was too late (the task was eventually undertaken by his *Dance Index* editor, Donald Windham). Their correspondence on the subject reveals the ghost of an essay written by Moore, an imagined response to his aviary boxes that never actually came to be, due to the scattered, unpredictable style of his interpersonal and professional relations.

Linda Leavell has pointed out that “Cornell afforded Moore the opportunity to watch a younger artist succeed, and sometimes fail, at methods well known to her” (Leavell, *Prismatic Color* 53). Sixteen years younger than she and entirely self-taught, Cornell was relatively inexperienced, and their difference in status and sophistication showed through in strained incidents such as the failed *Aviaries* collaboration. Breakages and failures remained, however, mostly on the level of their professional lives, and the creative exchange between the two was more fruitful when confined to the world of art and poetry. Many gifts in the form of books and collages passed between them, including Moore’s volume *Nevertheless* in 1944.

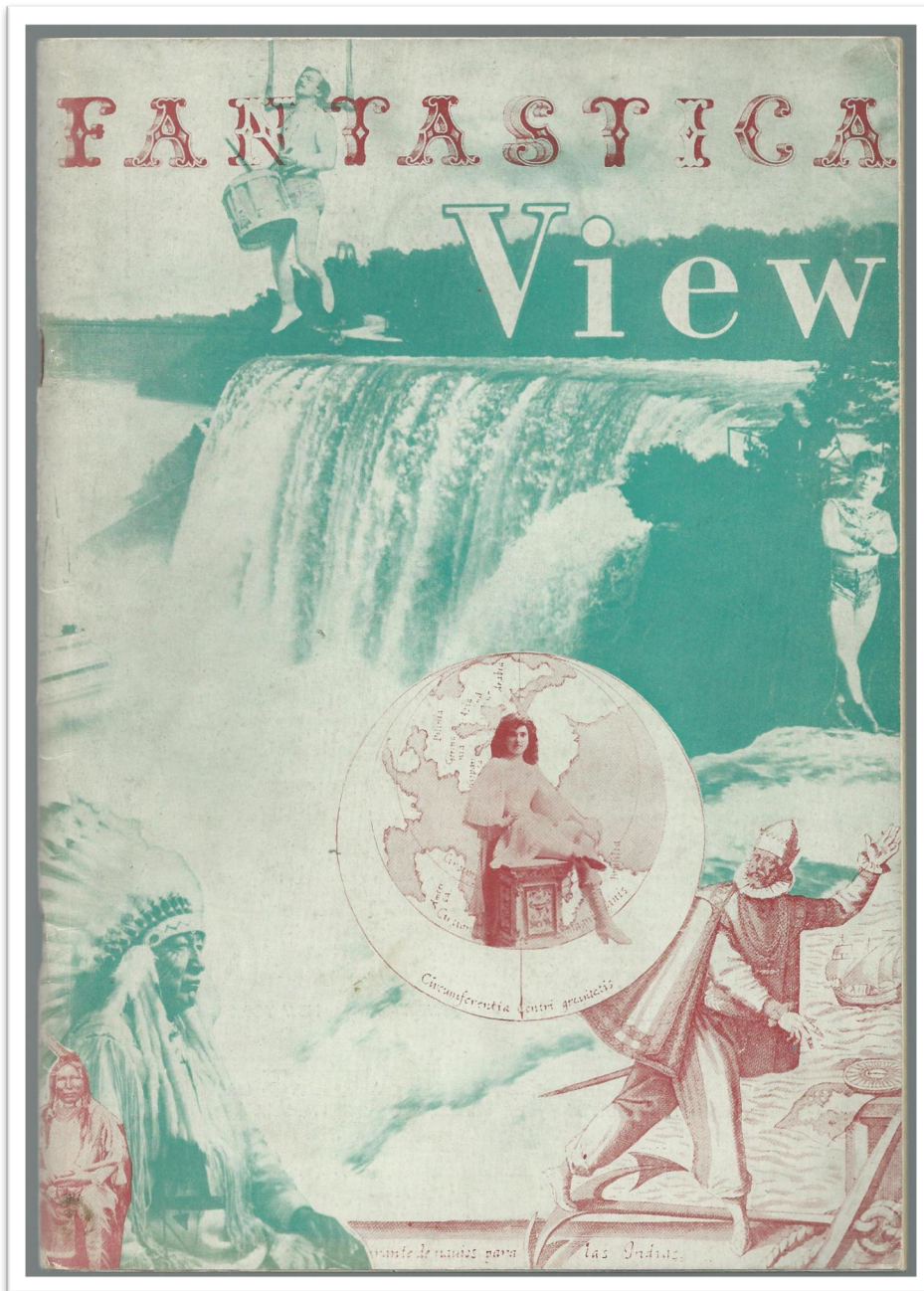


Figure xiv: Joseph Cornell. *Americana Fantastica* (detail) 1942-3.

Each gift was met with written thanks and—particularly in Moore’s case—eloquent descriptions that attempted to express the recipient’s appreciation and also provide a form of reciprocation. Cornell sent collage works and book extracts that made nuanced reference to Moore’s oeuvre, demonstrating his familiarity with and appreciation of her poetry: his “Valentine package” of 1944 included a rare book with the illustration of a pangolin, recalling her poem about the animal, as well as her tendency to use quotations from “business documents and school-

books” in her work (Moore, *Poems* 135–6). However, Cornell was also extraordinarily tardy in response to personal letters, taking sometimes up to a year to reply to Moore’s letters, thus preventing the friendship from becoming very close (Solomon 166).

Despite their enduring interpersonal reserve, however, Cornell explicitly expressed his sense of affinity with Moore. In June 1944 he wrote to her describing his experience of commuting to work in a munitions factory on the El train, passing a menagerie in a backyard:

Last year at this time I was in a defense plant (for five months) where all that ever was thought or spoken was “plain American which cats and dogs can read!” This is the experience about which ... I wish to tell you of, mostly on account of a private zoo passed daily on my way to work. Every morning it gave me such a profound feeling of consolation against the pressure and “claustrophobia” of the approaching daily routine that I could only think that Miss Moore was the *only other person in the world* who could ever appreciate the birds and animals of the zoo to such an extent ... I came to know it in such a manner as I would never dream possible, and now as I pass it often it seems distant again. (Letter, Cornell to Marianne Moore, 21 June 1944, Rosenbach)

In his discussion, Dickran Tashjian doubted the actual existence of this “private zoo” (Tashjian 73), believing it may have been a flight of fancy on Cornell’s part, but conceded that the point is probably irrelevant. The artist was demonstrating that he understood the philosophical underpinnings of Moore’s work. The anecdote opens with a quotation from her poem “England”, published in 1920: “plain American which cats and dogs can read!” (Moore, *Poems* 141). This is a gentle nod to the poet’s past work, revealing Cornell’s intimacy with her writing as he adapts her description as shorthand for the social conditions at the factory. The “birds and animals of the zoo” are of course intended to recall the exotic

creatures that form the subject of many of Moore's poems, from "The Jerboa" to "An Octopus". However, his anecdote is more than a simple nod to her preference for zoological subjects, referring to the recurrent theme of solace in captivity discovered through art, often through bird and animal avatars. The poem "What Are Years?" which first appeared in the *Kenyon Review* 2 in 1940, is a particularly forthright expression of this motif. The first stanza expresses the moral questions the poem seeks to address—"What is our innocence, / what is our guilt?... /... And whence / is courage"? The second concentrates on the image of the sea rising upon itself in a chasm as an analogy for the human condition of imprisonment within a mortal body. In the third stanza Moore turns to the image of a bird in a cage:

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

This is mortality,
this is eternity. (Moore, *Poems* 237).

Cornell's meditation on a real or imagined menagerie calls to mind the imagery of constraint and captivity in this poem, as well as the means of surmounting it: the spiritual capabilities of the imagination, which rises above itself through reference to a personal alphabet of association. He suggests, further, that he and Moore share some of that alphabet: birds, exotic animals, and ballet, for example. The bird takes greater joy in his song because he is confined in his cage, even achieving a greater capacity for singing because he "steels/ his form straight up"

to meet the constraints of his situation. Just so, the daily sighting of the zoo becomes stronger and more meaningful as a result of the “claustrophobia” experienced by Cornell at the factory, and without his sense of urgency and need of escape, the symbolism and intensity fades and “seems distant again.”

The artist also made it clear elsewhere that he considered his understanding with Moore to be mutual. From his first letter to the poet he noted how important her feedback had been to him. With regard to *The Crystal Cage*, the collage work that appeared in *View*, he remarked that “without your appreciative words I would continue to think of it as futile” (Cornell, Letter to Marianne Moore, 23 March 1943, Rosenbach) and on the subject of his 1946 exhibition at the Hugo Gallery, he wrote that “one of the things that reconciles me to parting with the OWLS that will be there is that eyes like your own may glimpse them before dispersal.” Their mutual admiration was sustained for decades; Cornell’s last surviving letter to Moore was sent to her in 1955, on the occasion of the publication of her translation of *The Fables of La Fontaine*.

The gift in Moore and Cornell

The gift manifests in the work in several ways, which may loosely be divided into two categories: firstly, in the form of the work, which by encouraging the possessor to give it away resists appropriation within the dominant market system. Particular forms may be employed in order to generate a particular reciprocal response, uniquely adapted to the initial gift. Secondly, the gift manifests in the manner in which these works were distributed between peers, in order to generate the occasion for further work, and establish a shared, intimate social world marked by shared aesthetic concerns.

The form of the gift

Cornell’s creative procedure is marked by a process of association, the accumulation of a vast amount of ephemeral material from a particular

associative field, followed by the assemblage of selected pieces - objects, cut-outs, text - within, usually, a wooden glass-fronted box. The assemblages that result have given rise to comparison with Victorian shadow boxes, amusement arcade machines or shop window displays, rather than with the work of any of his immediate peers. Dickran Tashjian's insightful book *Joseph Cornell: Gifts of desire* positions them as gift objects designed to create longing, but which can never be possessed in the manner of a consumer item. In form at least, Cornell boxes rest more comfortably within the category defined by Susan Stewart as a souvenir (Stewart 135), or as memorabilia, than that of the unique art object defined by Baudrillard (98), even though they have taken their place in the great modernist collections.

Lynda Roscoe Hartigan has described Cornell haunting the dime stores, junk shops, and second-hand bookstores of New York and compulsively purchasing items at a time in the city's history when "commerce and immigration" were newly enhanced by "the allure and substance of the modern" (Hartigan 18). Manhattan was full of petty consumables. In his history of early twentieth century consumerism *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (1989), Miles Orvell saw the emergence of the dime store with its small temptations and meagre price-tags as "democratizing the fulfilment of desire"; everyone could buy into the system according to their means (Orvell 47). This democratization however created the demand for luxurious, unique, and scarce items to fulfil the demands of the financial elite, and their most sought-after category became the *authentic*, i.e. items that were not mass-produced. After a visit to New York, Claude Lévi-Strauss remarked on the scarcity of such "beautiful artisanal" objects in relation to the competitive demand for them from the newly emerging, culturally aspirational middle classes. The widespread pursuit of a few scarce items rendered *authentic* items "inaccessible to all but the very rich" (Lévi-Strauss 263), and accelerated the embrace of kitsch, mass-produced and second-hand items by those that could not afford the *real thing*. The new classes invented their own desirables. Orvell cites Cornell's process of "reframing" his dime store purchases as artworks as an exemplary strategy to infuse *Reality* or *authenticity* into financially worthless things, "the key to the transformation of everyday objects and ephemera into

works of vitality” (Orvell 292).

While there is no space here for a thorough discussion of the subject, any mention of the division between the *authentic* and the mass-produced object—particularly with regard to the work of art—must call to mind Walter Benjamin’s concept of aura. Aura represents a form of the authentic as it clings to the original work of art, not its reproductions. Benjamin saw the revolutionary potential of mass production as facilitating access to art for a mass audience in the form of reproduction, albeit without the “aura” of the original. His essays on the subject, “Little History of Photography” and “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, defined the aura of a work of art as “a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close it may be” (Benjamin, *Selected Writings* 518). Cornell’s work was certainly democratic in construction, as it utilised cheap, mass produced materials easily available to all, but in a sense reversed Benjamin’s construction by forming these items into a work of art that became economically, valuable, scarce, and available only to an elite. Cornell established the aura of his works via a variety of creative practices, including narrative constructions and strategic juxtapositions, achieving the “appearance or semblance of distance” through the creation of desire.

Trapped under glass, a child’s arcade game that gives the satisfaction neither of winning nor of losing, frames ripped from sequence and refused a conclusion, memories bottled, labelled and preserved. Cornell’s subject was desire itself; the subjects of desire were his medium. Rather than provide the viewer with an *authentic* object, the boxes present us with symbols. The tinsel, junk-store jewellery and cut-out ballerinas have little value outside the confines of the box. Separate from the artwork as a whole, no process of exchange will allow these things to be possessed in the manner of an *authentic*, genuinely expensive or difficult-to-obtain thing. Buying the artwork might put one in possession of the symbols, but the “object” of desire remains puzzlingly absent while being constantly called to mind. The symbol leaves the “object” itself perfectly unobtainable, having cauterized the possibility of possession.

In the *Pharmacies* of the early 1940s, fragments of desire are bottled, preserved, and displayed, souvenirs of experiences that have never been had.

They remain inaccessible as they are kept permanently in view. The things inside the bottles refer not outwards but inwards, to memories and childhood impressions in the mind of the viewer, correlated with the imagined experiences of their imaginary collector. In *Untitled (Pharmacy)* (see Figure xv), a butterfly wing and shells are treasures, the landscape of never-seen mountains salvaged from an atlas. Gold glints from one of the bottles. This is worthless glitter, the gold of fairy tales, which unfortunates pay for with their soul, yet buys nothing. This fool's gold is not valid currency beyond the interior world of the collector, outside the bottle or outside the box.

Cornell turned fool's gold into gold—or in (Orvell)'s terms, has transmuted worthless mass-produced trinkets into something *authentic* and financially valuable—a work of art, a gift worth giving. He achieves this by creating the conditions of a souvenir. While the *Pharmacies* can be accessed and the bottles removed, they appear to have been long undisturbed. They are kept away from the daily wear of use, preserved untouched, and protected from the world in which dreams are threatened and dispersed. In *Museum* (Cornell, c. 1944–48), this sense of protectiveness is even enhanced. Similarly to the *Pharmacies*, the later box contains glass bottles filled with sequins, butterfly wings, gold powder and the like.



Figure xv: *Untitled (Pharmacy)*, 1943. Art © the Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation / Licensed by VAGA, NY.

In this case the box is flat with a hinged lid that can be opened or shut, hiding the contents of the box from view. The bottles here are closed with blue cloth, in a manner Diane Waldman has speculated could be a reference to 'the warehousing and preservation of art' (Waldman 51), suggesting that even exposing the bottles to scrutiny might be damaging to them. When they are placed within the rack their contents are mostly disguised from view. Display does not appear to be the object of the museum so much as concealment, and the pleasure of discovery when the bottles are temporarily removed and examined, their fragile contents protected from touch. A label is fixed inside the lid of the box, which reads:

Museum [including] Watchmaker's sweepings –
Juggling Act – Souvenir of Monte Carlo – Chimney
sweeper's relic – Thousand & One Nights – Mayan
Feathers – White Landscape – From the Golden
Temple of Dobayba (conquistador) – Sailor's
Game – Venetian Map – Mouse Material.
(Waldman 51)

The bottled treasures are connected to imaginary travels and experiences. The majority of the labels can be linked to a specific geographic destination or traveller: Monte Carlo, Arabia; these are souvenirs of imaginary journeys. The other listings relate to the watchmaker, the chimney sweep, the mouse, all figures that feature heavily in literature and folk tales. The evocative nature of the list establishes the contents of the bottles as souvenirs, of places and experiences that the artist has never had. Stewart has described the nature of the souvenir in narrative terms:

We might say that this capacity of objects to serve as traces of authentic experience is, in fact, exemplified by the souvenir ... We do not need or desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable.

Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative. (Stewart 135)

Souvenirs are most often cheap consumer items, but they are invested with emotional resonance due to their function as avatars of a lost, unrepeatable experience. Their “authenticity” is a patina they develop by process of association and memory, rather than through their intrinsic economic value as commodities. They are often offered as gifts. Cornell in his *Museums and Pharmacies* has created memories of experiences that never existed from just such cheap consumables; they are in fact perfect souvenirs by Stewart’s definition, and offered them as a gift to the viewer. The events and places to which they relate are inaccessible, unrepeatable, and in fact immaterial. They exist merely as fragments of narrative, around which associations and stories accumulate and provide meaning. Inside the bottles, feathers, sand, scraps of paper, and glitter arrange themselves into the narratives that have been provided for them, and the viewer constructs imaginative histories for each as they are revealed.

These narratives exist externally to the boxes, and the viewer can be relied on to form thematic associations and construct narrative possibilities as they explore the contents of the bottles. The phrase “Thousand and One Nights” alone evokes the memory of so many stories, so many cultural images, that the little bottles seem to overflow with visions of romance. These “souvenirs” are unconnected with any actual memory or experience. The sole memory they could be linked to is the event of their purchase in a dowdy dime store in an endlessly repeatable capitalist market transaction, the type of transaction we know from gift literature to be designed to sever bonds between the participants, not establish them. It is instead the act of giving away the resultant artworks as gifts that effected their transformation into affective objects.

Cornell tended to resist sales of his work. Boxes stayed within his studio for years, with additions and subtractions being made; a sale appeared to be an unwelcome termination to a process that might otherwise have continued indefinitely. His unwillingness to part with pieces led to his creation of multiple copies of the same box, or very similar pieces with a similar theme and layout: “Cornell was driven as much by the need for emotional security as by the wish for artistic novelty. One imagines he made duplicates and triplicates of his boxes as a way of protecting himself from the threat of loss. He had always been reluctant to part with his boxes and this way he could be sure to have another version—a sibling, a shadow, an effigy—of any box that left his workshop” (Solomon 144). On the other hand, the artist seemed more than willing to donate his works as gifts. The compulsion the artist appeared to feel to give them away as gifts suggests that he himself categorised them as such. He was even known to give them away to children, at a time when collectors including Peggy Guggenheim were offering the artist significant sums of money to purchase pieces for their collections (Tashjian). As Marcia Pointon put it, those who resist surrendering their valuables to purely commercial forces “understood that social relations are constituted by gift giving and that the slippage between commodity and gift is one that provides the measure of distinction between...what has rank and what has price” (Pointon 54). In fact, Tashjian saw Cornell’s tendency to give his work as gifts as a deliberate strategy to deal with a difficult market:

The act allowed him to circumvent in part the need to enter his objects on the art market at a time when they did not meet demand. Gift exchange became a strategy that permitted Cornell to keep on making his objects. The pleasures of making were enhanced by the pleasures of giving. In the process, he was able to engage himself with others. (Tashjian 138)

Certain formal characteristics can be attributed to gifts, particularly within

modern western culture, that are relevant to Cornell's work. Containment or enclosure, as visualized in the popular conception of a present box wrapped in a ribbon, is perhaps the most prominent feature. Scale is important. Public gifts, such as potlatch exchanges, may be extremely large and consist of hundreds of blankets, food offerings, or valuables (Mauss 47). However, personal gifts designed to generate emotional affect have been characterized in art history by their smallness, portability, and often their potential to be held or worn, as Pointon has discussed. Miniaturization of affective objects, she claimed, reflected the need for "an ever greater singularization" (Pointon 62). In the case of the aristocratic eighteenth-century miniatures examined by Pointon, their affective value was signalled by the economic value of the jewels and precious metals in which they were set. In the democratic capitalist west of the twentieth century, time spent, attention, and personalisation may be substituted as markers of emotional weight and affective potential in a gift; a democratic mode of the *authentic*. Cornell's early surrealist pieces often took the form of trinkets, pill-box sized, small enough to hold in the hand (see Figure xvi)—and, importantly, be handed to and carried by a recipient (Affron and Ramond 80–1).

Cornell told LIFE magazine that it was a shame after so much work that a box should end up being owned by only one person (Bourdon 63). Each of his boxes was sent out to its new owner with a letter of instruction as to its care (ibid.), a practice reminiscent of the tendency of gift objects to accumulate stories and histories of previous recipients who have temporarily been in possession of them (Hoskins). The traces of possession within a gift economy are not erased when an object passes to a new recipient. Rather, it is a characteristic of the gift cycle that such traces are accumulated, and as they build, add to the status of the object. Coppers from the North American potlatch exchanges become more valuable as their histories lengthen (Hyde 35).



Figure xvi: Joseph Cornell. *Object (Ogives E. Satie)* 1939–40.

Previous owners are recalled and named at each point of exchange. There is another echo of this practice within the art world; even as art is bought and sold within the capitalist system, the ownership history of a piece is noted and made available by galleries and auction houses, the process of establishing provenance. Provenance itself is gaining interest as a topic of study among art historians (Feigenbaum and Reist). Here, again, there is the sense that art does not fit entirely comfortably within the marketplace, with its clean-cut transactions and transfers of possession; rather, it retains indelible traces of the exchange cycle. Possession of a piece of artwork cannot be entirely erased, nor can the act of creating it, even by subjecting it to the anonymizing effects of the market.

In fact, Cornell seemed more than willing to keep his artwork out of the

market altogether. He made dozens of unsolicited presents to ballerinas and actresses of his acquaintance, passing tiny boxes filled with sequins, feathers or scraps of costumes backstage, or queuing to visit his crushes in the dressing room. At a more intangible level the artist often dedicated his work to an individual at the centre of the network of associations represented in the piece. His boxes were often intended for a named flesh-and-blood recipient, usually a woman, often a person not directly accessible within his social circle. Charles Simic described a Cornell box as reminiscent of “a hotel frequented by phantoms. One never sees anyone arrive, anyone leave” (Simic 70). Sometimes the character was fictional, such as Ondine; long dead, such as the prima ballerina Fanny Cerrito; or an inaccessible movie star such as Lauren Bacall (see Figure xvii). The boxes are dedicated to their muse in a subtitle, or named on a card fixed at the back. The artist takes care to make a gesture towards offering the box in gratitude to the woman who gave him the initial gift of inspiration, even if she is entirely a work of fiction.

The gift as intimacy

Public and private exchanges

Throughout their correspondence, Moore and Cornell sent one another gifts in direct reference to one another’s creative output. Moore forwarded copies of her books as they were published; Cornell sent her on one occasion a dozen etchings of birds from a seventeenth century monograph on natural history (Cornell, Letter to Marianne Moore, 17 February 1946, Rosenbach). These gifts were intended to elicit a creative response, to add to the associative material the artist or poet might draw on while composing a new piece of work, and according to the traditional purpose of gift exchanges, forge a social bond between them. In their case this manifested in their establishment of a shared aesthetic world. This shared world was collaboratively constructed within their correspondence, referencing poems and artworks by one another that they had particularly enjoyed. Their shared fictional language may be read as a manifestation of what

Nancy Munn described as: “a *template* or a *generative schema* ... a guiding, generative formula that underlies and organizes significance in different overt symbolic formations and processes, and that is available as an implicit constructive form for the handling of experience” (Munn, *The Fame of Gawa* 121).



Figure xvii: Joseph Cornell. Untitled (Penny Arcade Portrait of Lauren Bacall). 1945–46

This generative schema forms the nexus for exchange, a *spacetime* shared by the exchange participants, which is both formed by the gifts they give one another, and moulds the appropriate form of the gift in return. Munn explains that the meaning of an exchange object is a consequence of its relationship to the entire system, as the system's social strata of meanings (its *generative schema*) are derived from the form of gifts exchanged within it (vis. Munn, "The Spatiotemporal Transformations of Gawa Canoes"). In Munn's reading even the raw materials that make up the exchange objects themselves (in the Gawan case these are ritual canoes) must be considered in order to properly understand the symbolic meaning of each gift and the gift economy as a whole. In Moore and Cornell's case, the private correspondence must be read in conjunction with the public artworks and poems that inspired their interest, in order to decode the meaning of the characters and images described within the letters, as well as the physical items they chose to send one another.

Fittingly, a piece of art was the initial catalyst for the friendship and exchange. Moore wrote to Charles Henri Ford, editor of *View*, to praise Cornell's piece *Untitled (The Crystal Cage: Portrait of Berenice)* (see Figure xviii). The full work comprised a valise of documents assembled between 1943–1960; Moore saw only early selections from the work, printed over several pages in the January 1943 issue *Americana Fantastica*. Her published response encouraged Cornell to write her personally in thanks. His letter, typed on the thick blue paper he favoured in the forties, featured a collage glued to both the recto and verso (see Figures xix and xx). Included was an etching of a pangolin cut from a natural history textbook, in reference to her famous poem on the subject (Cornell, Letter to Marianne Moore, 23 March 1943, Rosenbach):

Another armored animal—scale

lapping scale with spruce-cone regularity until they

form the uninterrupted central

tail-row! This near artichoke with head and legs and grit-equipped
gizzard,

the night miniature artist engineer is,
yes, Leonardo da Vinci's replica—
impressive animal and toiler of whom we seldom hear.
(Moore, *Poems* 224).

Both the pangolin itself and the Renaissance man of the poem appear in the collage, as well as a “night miniature” of stars and planets. The male figure and the crescent moon also appeared in Cornell's cover design for the issue (see Figure xiv). The letter forms a interstitial visual and textual *spacetime* in which the imaginary worlds of the two artists meet and overlap: a nexus established by Cornell in order to allow the Berenice, the fictional little girl at the centre of *The Crystal Cage*, to thank Miss Moore personally for her kind words, thus extending the shared fictional world to include a character from the artwork itself. The language used by Moore to describe the exchange is couched in terminology of generosity and reciprocation, with the response that she makes to them presented as a gift:

“Detaining” was understatement. The pleasure given me by work of yours at the Museum of Modern art, and the Julien Levy Gallery when it was on Madison Avenue, are so great a gift that it is scarcely just that these present gifts should be added. Like the powdered rhinoceros horn of the ancients, your pulverizings, recompoundings, and prescribings, are as curative as actual. The self-curling live juggler's ball on the head of the pangolin, and the armadillo's octagonned damascened coat are not more of an armorer's dream than the way in which you have shaped the claws of the pangolin. And the whole when held to the light, with moon and stars added, forms a Bali shadow picture that Berenice might indeed have hesitated to part with...

Yours sincerely and with ever grateful wonder

(Moore, Letter to Joseph Cornell, 26 March 1943, Rosenbach).

Moore appeared to be as grateful for her public experience at the Museum of Modern Art as the hand-decorated personal letter. Similarly, Cornell was comforted by the fact that Moore saw and appreciated *The Crystal Cage in View*: without such evidence of personal approval, he claimed he would have considered the project failed. Both expressed gratitude for the personal gift they received while reading or viewing the other's work in a public space. The phrasing of Moore's letter draws an explicit correlation between the physical gifts she received from Cornell and the "gift" of viewing his work at public galleries. Both characterised their private and public works as part of the same exchange, whether the gift was transmitted via public forums such as galleries or magazines, or by private correspondence. In fact, "public" exchanges are described in these letters as if their meaning is entirely private and personal. The slippage between private and personal encapsulates Povinelli's concept of a gift economy as a world that is contained but not sealed: "Conceptualizing social space as kind of *embagination* foregrounds the fact that gift economies can close a world but never seal it. Every gift economy creates simultaneous surplus, excess, deficits, and abscesses in material and memory, and thus the most profound gift is given at the limit of community" (Povinelli). This passage suggests how the gift might not only structure but condition the space it encloses. A gift economy such as the Cornell-Moore exchange is not sealed; material moves in and out of it, the private appropriates the public, and vice versa. Furthermore, the gift economy will make indelible marks on any material that enters the social space of which it is comprised.



Figure xviii: Joseph Cornell. *Untitled (The Crystal Cage: Portrait of Berenice)* (detail) c. 1934-67.

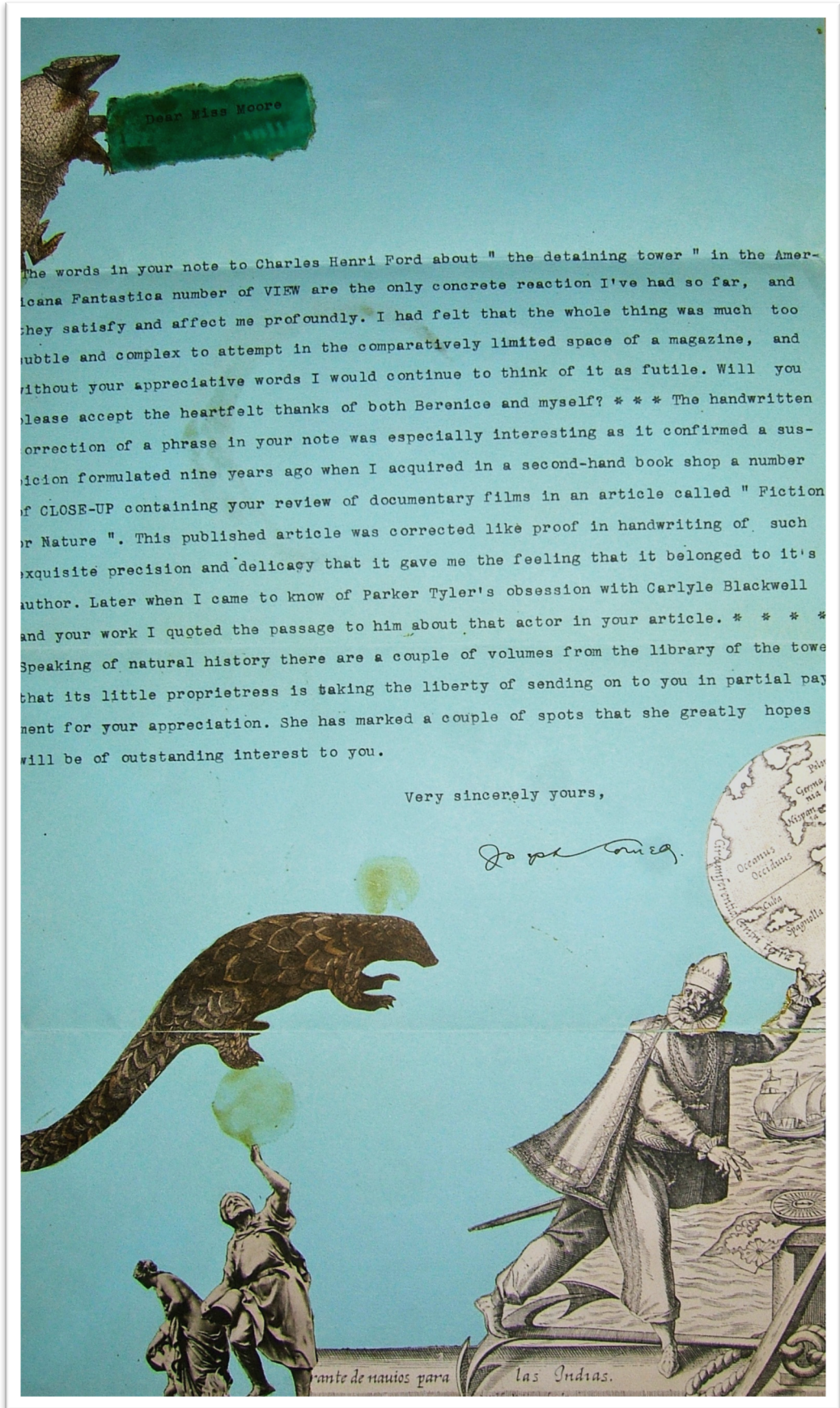


Figure xix: Joseph Cornell. Letter to Marianne Moore. (Rosenbach 23 March 1943).

3708 Utopia Parkway Flushing, NY.

March 23, 1943.

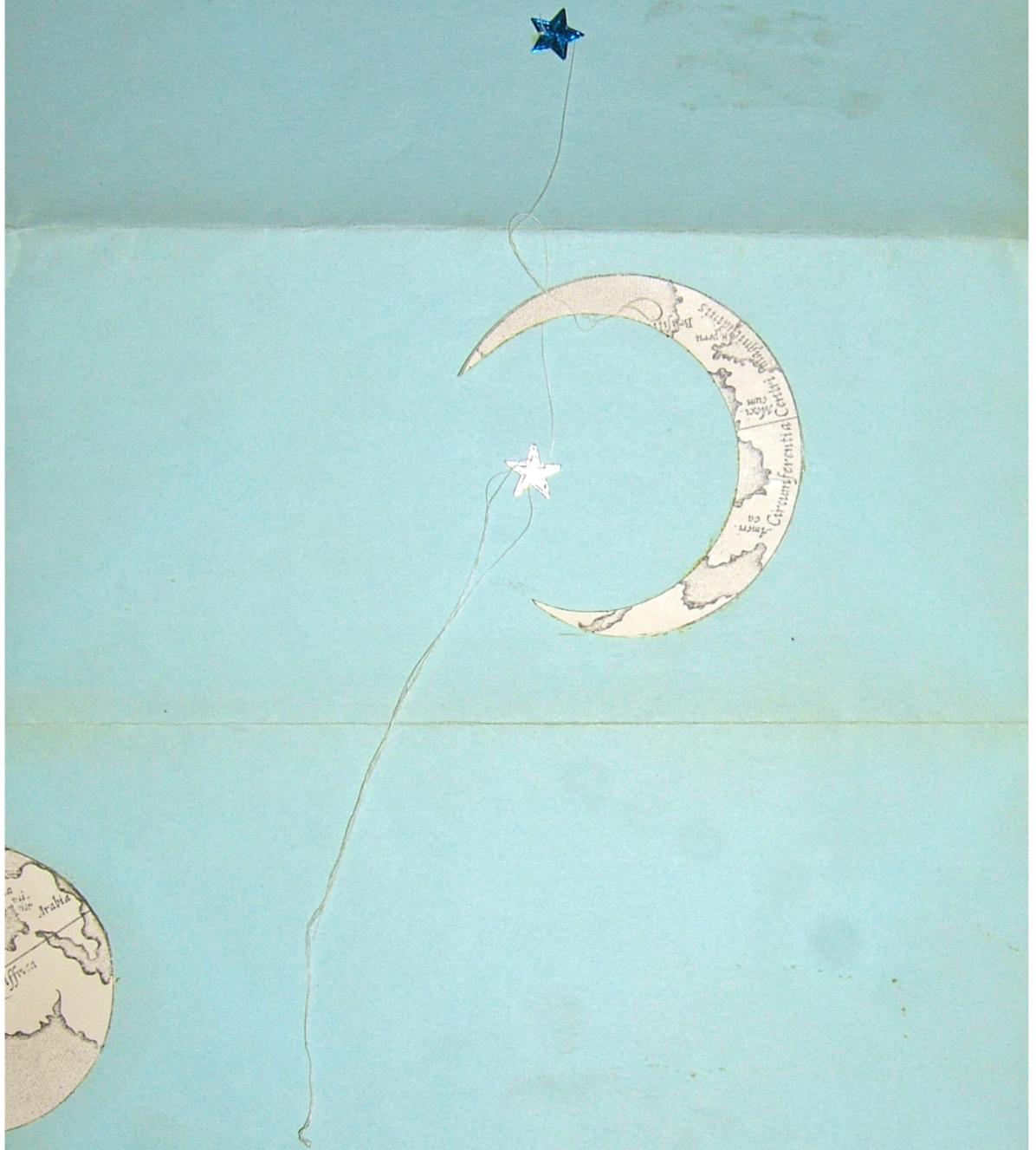


Figure xx: Joseph Cornell. Letter to Marianne Moore. (Rosenbach 23 March 1943).

Moore and Cornell's shared world was created within the context of their correspondence, which (even though the artists may have realised their letters would be archived) was a private space, personally written, opened, and read within their respective domestic environments. They referred outwards, however, to art and poetry each had previously placed within the public domain, and which the correspondents had encountered either in books of poetry, journals, or galleries, where they had been distributed to the public at large. The pangolin, the character of Berenice, and Leonardo da Vinci, and the "imaginary garden" all appear within the letters Moore and Cornell wrote to one another, reimagined to perform new roles in service of the correspondence, but the pangolin came to life first in Moore's poem "The Pangolin", and Berenice as the central figure of the *Crystal Cage* valise. However, each seems to have taken publicly available work as a personal gift that required a direct and personal response to the artist. This was the impetus for Moore's initial letter to Ford, establishing a correspondence that most often took as its subject the other's most recent work.

Their encounters with each other's work in these forums would not of course have been a matter entirely of chance. Just as their publishing venues occasionally overlapped, as in the case of *View*, their reading and viewing habits followed similar tracks based on their avant-garde interests and their social networks. Cornell and Moore's mutual acquaintance Charles Henri Ford cultivated the *View* connection. Nonetheless they were no different to any other ordinary viewer of the artworks or reader of the poems, and were addressed with no more intention than any member of the general public (with the caveat the avant-garde's readership was self-selective). Poets and artists, in the context of this dissertation, are not "ordinary" readers; rather, as argued in previous chapters, Moore as a poet responds to texts and artworks that interest her by creating new poetry as a form of reciprocation. Public artworks, if they inspire an artist by stimulating the creative imagination, are responded to in a similar fashion—personally, as if the work were directed to the artist alone. The gift in this way crosses the threshold between private and public spheres of interaction. Povinelli's theory of the *embagination* of space via "the circulation of things" demonstrates how alternative communities are established within a dominant

culture as gift economies: “conceptualizing social space as a kind of *embagination* foregrounds the fact that gift economies can close a world but never seal it. Every gift economy creates simultaneous surplus, excess, deficits, and abscesses in material and memory, and thus the most profound gift is given at the limit of community” (Povinelli). These letters, private responses to publicly distributed works, represent just such a “profound gift”, emerging at the margin of public and private discourse and the result of an affective surplus—a private reaction in response to a public piece of work. The private world of gift exchange is not sealed but permeable by the public sphere, which, vice versa, leaks material back into it. These letters and exchange objects are valuable to the literary studies scholar precisely because of that slippage; it is because we value the published works that we root around in the archives to uncover the private material that emerged from, inspired, preceded, or bolstered it. The public work is made more valuable through personal exchanges that supplemented it.¹²

The gift as a site of exchange

Supposedly, it is difficult if not impossible for visual and textual material to cohabit the same space, as one has the tendency to obscure the other. Ellen Levy has summarized the widely held view that the modernist arts were entirely antagonistic (Levy xv) with the visual determined to overwrite the literary. Broadly speaking, this dissertation falls into the critical tradition of *ut pictura poesis* or “sister arts” as defined by W. J. T. Mitchell, as it is mostly engaged in identifying “points of transference and resemblance between texts and images” as opposed to the equally vibrant alternative tradition of expounding on their differences (Mitchell 48). He outlined how the “sister arts” tradition has been

¹² A further result of this public-private slippage is that it provides evidence of the affective influence of publicly distributed works of art on private individuals. When those individuals happen to be poets and artists themselves, the influence is transformed into a reciprocal gift moulded in response to the formal characteristics and thematic concerns of the original piece that provoked the response, and the affective trace is made visible within the exchange of art as gifts.

consistently attacked as a misguided metaphorical procedure comparing unlike things, establishing conceits “generally perceived as violations of good judgment that criticism ought to correct”. Mitchell however goes on to describe the equally figurative basis for a critical judgments that emphasise the differences between the arts and seek to align them with profound cultural dichotomies such as “body and soul, world and mind, nature and culture” (49). The alignment of poetry and visual art with these oppositional categories arguably introduced the antagonistic element that Greenberg so strongly felt between them. Mitchell posited that in fact

(1) there is no *essential* difference between poetry and painting, no difference, that is, that is given for all time by the inherent natures of the media, the objects they represent, or the laws of the human mind; (2) there are always a number of differences in effect in a culture which allow it to sort out the distinctive qualities of its ensemble of signs and symbols. These differences ... are riddled with all the antithetical values the culture wants to embrace or repudiate. (Mitchell 49)

My methodology, derived from ethnographic applications of the gift, does not attempt to overturn such cultural dichotomies. Rather, it avoids engaging with them by focusing on the poems and artworks in relation to one another within the context of gift exchange, i.e. how they function within their roles as gifts. Both text-based and visual materials perform this role equally well within the ethnographic literature (as do more intangible exchangeables such as speech and time), and there is no “essential” difference in the manner in which they do so. That is not to suggest that antagonism is removed from the equation, rather that it is displaced; within gift economies it emerges between the individuals engaged in exchange transactions, not between the media of exchange. In addition, while there is a metaphorical aspect to the theory of the gift—it is an “convenient fiction”, in Marilyn Strathern’s terms—those fictions work against the grain of the embedded cultural dichotomies documented by

Mitchell. While conclusions drawn from the theory of the gift may not be any more literally “true” than those of any other critic working within the “sister arts” tradition, they illuminate a distinctive aspect of the relations between these artworks.

It should be noted furthermore that the media in question here are not poetry and painting, but poetry and assemblage, and these two are perhaps more sympathetic to one another. Cornell incorporated text into many of his boxes, in the form of pasted words and phrases, explanatory narratives and captions, and pages from books. At a more personal level, within the context of their exchange both practitioners actively searched for common ground. In their letters they expressed their regard by translating each other’s media into their own. Cornell offers a visual interpretation of Moore’s words in collage, his preferred creative language. The poet responds with a literary description of his imagery, her own primary means of expression, and her most common form of reciprocation for a private gift. She uses the pangolin collage as the basis for a descriptive paragraph that is almost a prose-poem, using the text to draw attention to both the artist’s process—the way he has shaped the claws of the pangolin—and the material circumstances of her interaction with it as an object, holding it to the light to reveal the moon and stars pasted on the back. Berenice is also drawn back into the text, demonstrating that Moore has incorporated Cornell’s expansion of the fictional world.

The point of contact between the two has a definable location in the material traces of their correspondence. The gift itself is the site of a broader imaginative exchange, a shared space external to Cornell and Moore’s respective and very different processes of making, that can accommodate both shared imagery and fictional characters, and support both visual and descriptive material without privileging one over the other. In fact, as Bonnie Costello has suggested, Moore actively welcomed the intrusion of constant alternatives that forced a state of constant revision; this represented for her “the permanent resistance of the world to our forms of expression”: “The imaginary garden with real toads in it can never be secure. If we choose “not to discriminate” against any materials, we open the form to infinite revision,

for the intrusion of one form necessarily involves the alteration of another” (Costello 213). These letters, sketches, private collages, gift objects, prints, and books were never intended to be seen as finished creative artworks or published texts, even if they relate to particular finished works. They are “embaginated” or semi-enclosed gift sites, which enabled Moore and Cornell to negotiate a response to each other’s work that was specific and personal, allowing their imaginative worlds to overlap without overwriting one another, establishing a mutual *embaginated space* or local *spacetime*.

In 1944, Moore sent Cornell a copy of her book *Nevertheless* on its publication, and he responded in a letter of October 17 with personal anecdotes and reflections on several poems. In this case, however, his gesture of reciprocation was offered in words, rather than images or objects. The artist attempted to use the poet’s medium in order to pay tribute to her. The letter opens with a long typed anecdote about a Japanese dancer (see Figure xxi), so finely aware of the balance of space and geometry that he realised a step was missing from the staircase in the temple gardens of Kyoto: the composition as it was did not fit the surrounding architecture and landscape. Cornell compares the dancer’s preternatural equilibrium to the “exquisitely and rightly proportioned” poems of Moore’s book. The quotation was designed to appeal to the author of “Nevertheless” (Moore, *Poems* 253–4) in its patterned syllabic verse.

Some two hundred years ago there lived a great dancer who was even honored by invitations from the mighty shogun himself-ruler of the land- to dance in his presence. It happened one day that he was paying a visit to a great temple near Kioto. He went up the flight of stones steps leading to a belfry. When he reached the top of the steps he bent his head to one side and seemed to reflect on something. He then turned round to his following disciples and said, " It is curious. There is something wrong about these steps. I don't think these are just as they were originally built. There must have been one more step. One of you boys will please go and ask the abbot about it." Presently the abbot came out with the disciple and explained that when he succeeded to the late abbot some thirty -odd years ago, the steps were then just exactly as now. The master dancer was not satisfied with the explanation. He asked a few laborers to be sent for. He ordered to dig at the foot of the steps, and behold, there was another stone step buried by the accumulating dust of the centuries! "There you are!" he cried exultingly. "When I ascended the flight of steps and reached to the top, I felt there was something lacking in harmony. I could not conceive that the great gardener who had designed this garden could leave this flight in such an unfinished state. Without another step it is entirely out of proportion with the surrounding scenery of the garden."

Dear Miss Moore,

After going through your recent sheaf of poems, deceptively slight in their paper-thin format, I wondered if they might not be as exquisitely and rightly proportioned as the garden steps in the above story. Mr. Elliott or Mr. Burke would be a better judge of this than myself, or Miss Moore herself! Will you forgive my staccato or "newsreel" reactions to your poems as follows? -

Figure xxi: Joseph Cornell. Letter to Marianne Moore. (Rosenbach 17 October 1944).

The poem's stanzas form eleven balanced "steps". Its subject is the virtue of fortitude, as embodied in plants that have overcome obstacles in their surroundings and become misshapen in the process. Even so, on the page the poem's formal aspects appear more architectural than organic. Each stanza is precisely clipped to the same number of syllables per line, and the indentation creates a deliberate stepped effect:

You've seen a strawberry
 that's had a struggle; yet
 was, where the fragments met,

 a hedgehog or a star-

fish for the multitude
of seeds. What better food

than apple-seeds—the fruit
within the fruit—locked in
like counter-curved twin

hazel-nuts? Frost that kills
the little rubber-plant-
leaves of *kok-saghyz*-stalks, can't

harm the roots; they still grow
in frozen ground. [...]

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

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

Cornell's return offering, the story of the Kyoto temple, responds to the incongruity of the poem's double strawberries, ram's-horn carrots, knotted grapevines and prickly pears and its serenely formal layout. The juxtaposition in fact suggests nothing so much as a Zen garden. The anecdote is offered to her in the spirit of a gift, and responds to the form of the gift that preceded it—the poem

that is at the same time a very formal “garden” full of overgrown plant life. The initial gift manifested in two ways: both the physical book, *Nevertheless*, which Moore posted to him, and the intangible gift of the work itself, its themes, ideas and formal structures. Both the material and disembodied parts, the book and the work of art, are reciprocated in the letter.

Increase and return

Lewis Hyde characterised the ethnographic literature on the gift as providing “parables or ‘Just So stories’ of the creative spirit” (Hyde 147), and described the work of art as an “embodied gift”. Even if a work of art arguably transcends its material aspects, it remains “embodied”. The gift is inseparable from the form of the work itself, and is intrinsic to the formal characteristics of the piece. In Hyde’s view the *hau* is a spiritual force that accompanies a gift object and causes its increase within the exchange economy. That value, unlike the market value of most objects, increases over time. In *The Gift* this “increase” arises from the generative action of an exchange transaction. The nature of a gift’s increase is defined in three ways: “as a natural fact (when gifts are actually alive); as a natural-spiritual fact (when gifts are the agents of a spirit that survives the consumption of its individual embodiments); and as a social fact (when a circulation of gifts creates community out of individual expressions of goodwill)” (Hyde 38). The inclusion of the first category of “natural fact”—i.e., when a gift is cattle, or a woman’s person—illuminates the wider implication that the return gift, the increase or spiritual interest gathered on the exchange, will *bear intimate relation to the form of the initial gift*, as a woman’s children will bear her genetic code and resemble her. Like children, return gifts will bear a formal or characteristic resemblance to the original. In the example above, Cornell’s anecdote was formed to respond specifically to the book of poems that Moore sent to him, as he explicitly stated:

Dear Miss Moore,

After going through your recent sheaf of poems, deceptively slight in their paper-thin format, I wondered if they might not be as exquisitely and rightly proportioned as the garden steps in the above story. (Cornell, Letter to Marianne Moore, 17 October 1944, Rosenbach).

There is further suggestion in the anecdote that Cornell no doubt intended: the dancer is the only one of many visitors to the temple who noticed the discrepancy in the architecture. It is his “special” insight, drawn from his shared aesthetic understanding with the designer, which leads to the buried step being uncovered and the true value of the composition being revealed. If, in the metaphor, the steps are intended to represent the poems and the architect for Moore, then the dancer, the only person capable of fully appreciating her work, is Cornell. The artist implied that their aesthetic understanding of one another was unique, while attempting to generate an intimate connection with Moore solely on the basis of their exchange. The form of the response is key here: it was through Cornell’s appropriation of Moore’s forms and themes that he demonstrated his understanding and appreciation of them—in other words, his gratitude.

Conditioning the exchange environment

The concept of *hau* was taken from the testimony of a Maori informant in Mauss’s *Essai sur le don* (Mauss 14–15). In it he described how a transferable spirit moves from gift to gift moving through the exchange cycle, a spirit that insists on being exchanged and eventually returning to its original source. Mauss uses this analogy to explain the impetus for exchange and increase within the system. In Hyde’s view *hau*, what he saw as the spiritual or non-material reality of the gift—its increase—is separate from the actual objects given, which are ultimately consumed. “The Maori elder who told of the forest *hau* distinguished in this way between object and increase, the *mauri* set in the forest and its *hau* which causes

the game to abound. In that cycle the *hau* is nourished and passed along, while the gift-objects (birds, *maurī*) disappear” (Hyde 37). Such a distinction is unhelpful. The gift’s non-material characteristics become difficult to define when separated from its material form. Hyde’s argument for a “natural-spiritual fact” that allows gift objects to function as vessels, “the agents of a spirit that survives the consumption of its individual embodiments” implies that individual embodiments are actually consumed, and therefore their material natures have no further implications for the continuing conditions of exchange.

Marshall Sahlins has commented that the division between these two aspects of *hau* was falsely introduced into the discussion post-Mauss (Sahlins 81). He clarifies: “to adopt the current structuralist incantation, ‘everything happens as if’ the Maori was trying to explain a religious concept by an economic principle, which Mauss promptly understood the other way around and thereupon proceeded to develop the economic principle by the religious concept. The *hau* in question really means something on the order of ‘return on’ or ‘product of,’ and the principle expressed in the text on *taonga* is that any such yield on a gift ought to be handed over to the original donor” (77). The spiritual increase cannot be meaningfully divided from the material return. Instead, Sahlins suggested a double reading of “*hau-as-spirit*” and “*hau-as-material-returns*”. Increase, constant motion, perishability, temporality, the divine, and the creative spirit are all intangibles associated with the gift that lose meaning when assessed separately from the exchange object and the particular social conditions in which it is exchanged. Rather than disappearing through consumption, the form of each successive gift mediates the conditions of its exchange—the localized rituals of transaction, or, in other words, the personal language or *spacetime* the participants employ.

Such a personal imaginative language is very much in evidence in Moore and Cornell’s correspondence. In fact, both went out of their way to establish and employ personal associative references that demonstrated their familiarity with one another’s oeuvres. Moore directly addresses a fictional character that exists only in Cornell’s work, discussing Berenice’s preferences and personality as if she were real. Her character as presented in *The Crystal Cage* helped define the terms

of their exchange through the tone, theme and content of their correspondence. The formal properties of the original gift—*The Crystal Cage* itself—mediated the spatial and temporal conditions of the exchange economy; an intermediary space conditioned and defined by the formal properties of the exchange objects that generated it.

Procedural similarity as basis for exchange

In his anthropological theory of aesthetics, Alfred Gell emphasised the relational qualities of art objects, positioning them as active agents designed to elicit a specific response within their cultural context. Art in his view is “a system of action, intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic propositions about it” (Gell 6). Gell’s aesthetics prioritise the strategic construction of the work of art with regard to its agency in creating a desired outcome. Similarly, Nancy Munn’s analysis draws our attention to the raw materials and processes of exchange and the manner in which these mediate the potential outcomes of the cycle. Since, as she suggested, it is only possible to understand the meaning of the individual gift object through knowledge of the entire nexus and its processes, the creative procedures and practices of Moore and Cornell must be taken into consideration in the analysis. Both adopted a similar approach to putting together ideas and materials to form a new piece of work. Both were acquisitive and associative, collecting material or phrases and placing them together according to a strange personal associative logic, and both were attracted to esoteric themes—exotic animals, European history, philosophy, textbooks, the arcana of vintage popular culture. Both used a collage technique, and went through periods of aggressively avant-garde experimentation somewhat at odds with the delicate, ethereal themes and images they preferred.

These similar practices have been widely noted by critics examining their relationship. Moore’s biographer Charles Molesworth noted the similarities, claiming that Cornell’s “boxes of arcane objects and collages in some ways resemble Moore’s lyric poems”, and that Moore’s works were “like Cornell boxes, locales of passionate preference and dispassionate analysis” (Molesworth 316–

7). He described her writing practices that recalled Cornell's assemblages: "[her prose writing was] an important way for her to clarify things for herself, as they usually involved weaving together quotations, axioms, and other pithy sayings from her reading with examples of poetry that had especially moved her" (ibid.). The parallels in their procedure and subject forms the basis of the comparison in the writing of Jennie-Rebecca Falcetta, who considered their "likenesses in method" to be "far more striking" than the notable similarities between the two in terms of biography, social circle, or geography (Falcetta 126). She argued that they shared a "common aesthetic of moral order through containment" which formed such a strong similarity it overrode the differences in their media.

Although Moore worked almost entirely in the medium of text, her magpie methods recall the widespread contemporary visual art practice of collage, particularly as demonstrated by the surrealists. Cornell began his career making collages inspired by the work of Max Ernst, which he first saw at the Julien Levy Gallery. His experiments in collage continued until the end of his career in parallel to his box constructions, which themselves contained elements of both assemblage and collage. Despite his expressions of distaste at the highly sexualized work of the French surrealists in New York, which he referred to as "black magic" (Hauptman 39), the movement's influence remained strong throughout the artist's career. The *Crystal Cage* itself is a valise/portfolio similar to valise works by Marcel Duchamp.

Cornell and Moore in fact shared a legendary prudishness, and were both horrified by what they saw as erotic excesses of surrealism and the macho high modernism of Picasso. Cornell's collages became more sensual in theme towards the end of his life (see Figure xxii), but for the most part he, like Moore, preferred chaste subject matter. They both valued a mode, or mood, they termed "enchantment"; the artist singled out aspects of Moore's work that he felt most clearly represented it. Tashjian pointed out that he treasured and repeated a particular phrase she used to describe his work, "inspired by-paths of romance", as late as the 1960s (Tashjian 77). In 1946 he wrote to her to express his gratitude for several phrases of hers he had recently been contemplating: "And so this particular, bright first morning of November I feel like writing and thanking you

for the reminder that “the mind is an enchanting thing” ... and that it is a power of strong enchantment” (Cornell, Letter to Marianne Moore, 1 November 1946, Rosenbach). The sympathy the two practitioners felt and expressed for each other’s work was drawn from an understanding that they shared procedural similarities; an interest in collage that underpinned shared aesthetic and formal concerns. In addition, they recognised each other as fellow mavericks, isolated from what they considered the erotic excesses of many of their peers (both in life and work). The depth of their alienation from the more chauvinist strands of modernism was often revealed in the ambivalent opinions of their contemporaries. In an interview heavily focused on generosity, Donald Revell brought up Joseph Cornell in a discussion of Moore in order to draw a correlation between their practices (Marshall). Moore, he recognised, was “willing to find and understand that art is more finding than it is making”. However, he criticised her reliance on syllabic verse and her recourse to an extremely rigid “sculpted” aesthetic that ultimately caused the poems to miscarry, since they fall back on a fixed structure rather than trusting the line to emerge in a more organic manner.

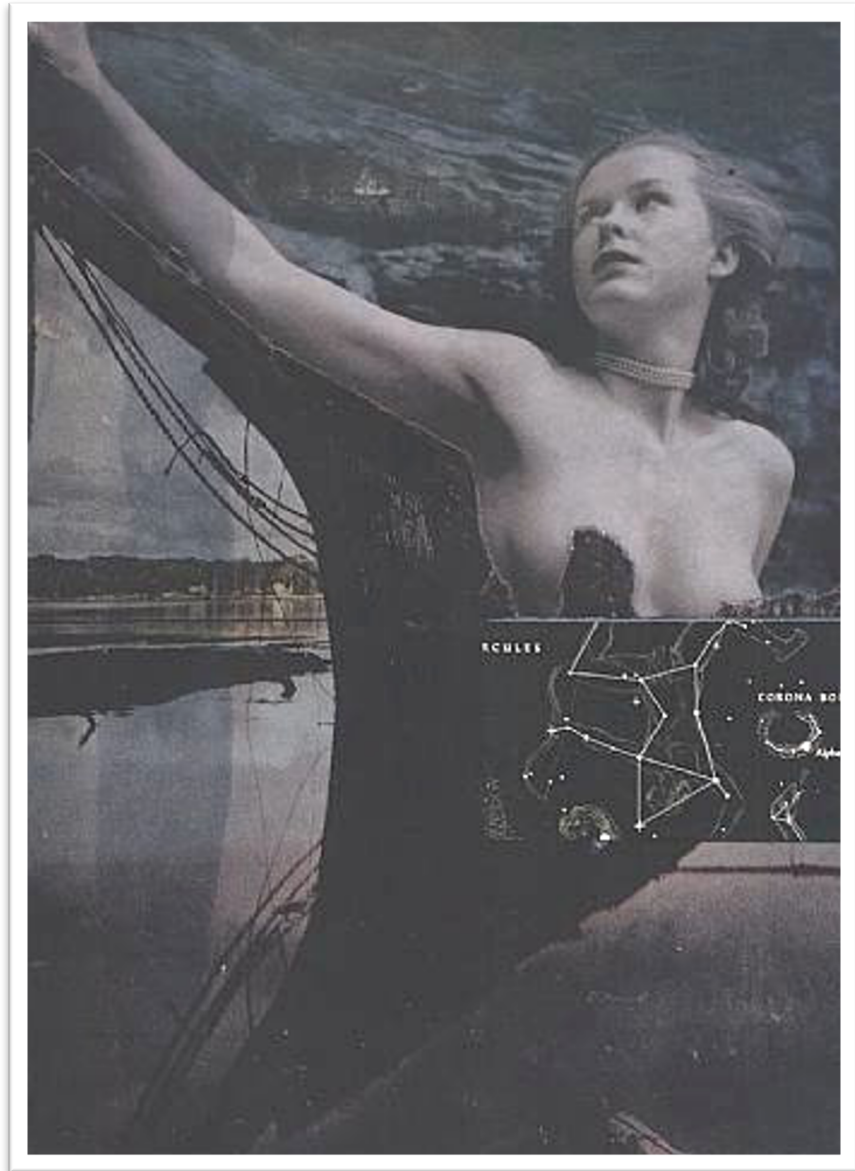


Figure xxii: Joseph Cornell. *Untitled (Ship with Nude)* c. 1964–6.

Revell drew a comparison with Cornell in attempting to describe what he saw as her failure:

So Marianne Moore, like Joseph Cornell, has this *trouvere* mentality that is wonderful. But then they put it into boxes. They somehow panic at the critical moment and seek to contain. Marianne Moore containing it through her numbers, counting syllables; Cornell literally containing it in boxes; whereas you get someone like a

Rauchenberg or a Jasper Johns and he's not interested in containment. Just put it out there, put it on the floor, tack it to the canvas. (quoted in Marshall 31)

Revell's description of their similarities is insightful, although I obviously dispute his contention that these works of art ultimately fail. His allusion to the Abstract Expressionists is intended as a reference to art that, in his opinion, succeeded, and the care and precision demonstrated in Moore's work is markedly different from contemporary collagists that "just put it out there" and "tack it to the canvas". The comparison speaks as strongly to Cornell's alienation from the cohort of American visual artists born in the 1920s and 30s. Moore and Cornell's work was the opposite of macho. Her precise juxtapositions of similar but ultimately distinctive things and his quiet collation of associative materials could not be more different from the large-scale, expressive, body-centred works of Johns or Rauchenberg that dominated the mid-century art scene, and their reputations no doubt suffered from being so far off trend.

Collage Practices: The Romantic Ballet

"Anna Pavlova" and the Homages to Romantic Ballet

One subject in particular provided fertile common ground for Moore and Cornell. From the 1940s on, many of Cornell's most famous boxes investigated ballet's Romantic period, which peaked in the mid-nineteenth century. Iconic Romantic ballerinas Fanny Cerrito, Marie Taglioni, Lucille Grahn, Fanny Elssler, and Carlotta Grisi all starred in his works. During this period Cornell began contributing to the ballet magazine *Dance Index*, and he provided collaged covers for several issues. His contribution was so valued by editor Lincoln Kirstein that he invited the artist to guest edit a special issue in 1946 that was "all the work of his hands, eyes and imagination" (Kirstein). Against this background, Marianne Moore's 1944 essay memoir of Anna Pavlova in *Dance Index* caught Cornell's

attention, and he wrote to her in June 1944 to describe the effect of her “quintessential words on Pavlova” and its ramifications for his current project: “A ballerina of the [eighteen] forties came to life for me about four years ago with such complete vividness and unspeakable grace that I have since been collecting romantic material to be combined with a little writing and ‘hommages’ (in the form of objects)—to be boxed in a little album-chest that will exhale a ‘romantic vapor’ in the words of Marcel Duchamp, spoken as an unconscious contribution to it ... Everytime something like your ‘Pavlova’ appears about the legendary past I feel a glow inside me to consummate the tying-together [sic] of this little bouquet” (Cornell, Letter to Marianne Moore, 2 June 1944, Rosenbach). Cornell here tied together his thematic inspiration; his practical procedure; and the acknowledgement of two artists, Moore and Duchamp, whose influence had been brought to bear on the work. He had been making boxes and chests on the theme of “Homages to the Romantic Ballet”, and the particular work referred to may be *Portrait of Ondine*, which, like *The Crystal Cage*, is a valise in the style of Duchamp, containing material associated with the great ballerina Fanny Cerrito in her most famous role as Ondine.

The file contains material directly related to the subject, such as a print of a lithograph depicting Cerrito onstage in *Ondine* and a copy of the ballet score, to more esoteric items: a print by de Chirico, and a print etching of the migration of swallows. Together the objects and texts form an associative map of connections and suggestive imagery, a cartography of connotation. It would be frustrating to attempt to draw a set of coherent facts about Cerrito’s performance from the items in the valise. However, together they form a portrait of an atmosphere, or the received popular memory of Cerrito-as-Ondine. The valise forms, in a way, notes towards the idea of *Ondine*, for someone who had never heard of her. The artist described his valise works as “imaginative pictorial research”, and they were intended to be “interactive, to be browsed through like a scrapbook, print stall, bookshelf, or bulletin board” (Hartigan 97). A valise allows the viewer/reader more choices than a book, in what to read next or how to navigate the content. The valise was a staple of Duchamp’s practice at the time—hence the nod to the great surrealist’s “unconscious contribution”—and Cornell delightedly adopted the idea, as Solomon puts it, of packing “your life into a traveler’s suitcase

to take anywhere and everywhere” (Solomon 135). The Fanny Cerrito box remained “open” and was continually added to until the late 1960s, and had so much personal importance to the artist that, despite its symbolic portability, he kept it under his bed (ibid).

The gratitude he expressed to Moore is framed differently than his acknowledgement of Duchamp. Moore’s essay on Pavlova formed a retrospective affirmation of his endeavour rather than an initial inspiration for it: after all, he had begun it four years previously. Cornell claimed that her essay could “both shame and inspire” him in his own effort to produce something on the subject, and suggested that she more successfully managed the “complexity” and “endless ‘cross-indexing’ of detail (intoxically rich)” to which he aspired (Cornell, Letter to Marianne Moore, 21 June 1944, Rosenbach). Again, Cornell accepted Moore’s public essay as a personal gift, crossing the private and public spheres, and sought to reciprocate or respond to its challenge in his own work.

Moore’s essay, he suggested, provided him with the means necessary to “consummate” his own work, and described the emotional effect of his perceived debt to her as “a glow inside me”. While Moore’s essay existed in the public domain, intended for a general audience and accessible to the entire readership of the magazine, but its meaning and intention were appropriated and personalized by Cornell. He chose to write to Moore to express a personal sense of gratitude and obligation generated by her work. Her public artefact has been adopted within a private exchange cycle, and in doing so, Cornell voluntarily and generously accepted the social obligation to reciprocate. He offered Moore a kind of retrospective credit for *Portrait of Ondine*, claiming her essay provided a model for him in tying together the “intoxically rich” details he had accumulated into a single work.



Figure xxiii: Joseph Cornell. *Portrait of Ondine* c. 1940–late 1960s.

Turning to the essay itself, it is easy to see why it aroused such a profound reaction in Cornell. It deals with a subject close to his heart, the early twentieth century Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova, perhaps the most famous ballerina of all time. In terms of procedure it is part memoir, part cultural history, “Anna Pavlova” bore a marked resemblance to the efforts made by the artist to select, curate, and present the most appropriate materials to the reader in order to give an impression of the dancer’s presence in the popular imagination. Hardly a straightforward biography, it is an impressionistic patchwork of quotations from Pavlova herself and those who knew her; descriptions of photographs; anecdotes about her life; and an exegesis on the nature of style in dance. Typically, there is little attempt to sort the material by relevancy or “type”—as she writes in “Poetry”, “all these phenomena are important” (Moore, *Poems* 135). No one type of information about the dancer is considered more valid than another, since her place in the public imagination—everything her name evokes—is composed of similarly varied cloth.

Moore often dramatically changes course in the middle of paragraphs. While discussing Pavlova's generosity, she introduces an anecdote illustrating her accuracy. Her appearances in Stockholm and Belgium are distinguished by barely a punctuation point. Detailed physical description segues into wide-ranging association. In describing the ballerina's hands, "the little finger apart from the fourth...its double curve...the slightly squared fingertips" (Moore, *Prose* 390), Moore discovers virtues reminiscent of Greta Garbo, such as the great independence of spirit that led to Pavlova's decision to appear in minor theatres. The effect is not at all confused: rather multifaceted, difficult to pin down, creating a shimmering mental image of the great dancer that it is impossible to look at directly. The parallels with *Portrait of Ondine* are obvious: the use of collage, the juxtaposition of disparate materials, and the attempt to create not a biographical but an imaginative history.

The impossibility of the gift

Ballet forms the landscape of the common ground shared by "Anna Pavlova" and *Portrait of Ondine*. As a performance-based art form, impossible to recreate outside the theatre, its peculiar inaccessibility as a subject seems to have fascinated both Moore and Cornell. Moore emphasised the difficulty of drawing Pavlova's portrait at all, both historically and within her own efforts: "Nothing is so striking as the disparity between her many likenesses; and nothing so eludes portraiture as ecstasy" (Moore, *Prose* 388). Only the most limited and rudimentary film footage remains of Pavlova. Her great performances are lost. Not even photographs exist of Fanny Cerrito, only descriptions, sketches, and the memory of a public reputation for greatness and grace. Anna Heyward, reviewing the modern history of dance notation, poses the question: "How do you tell a person in another place or time what a dance looks like, and how it should be performed?" (Heyward). She concludes that any dance writer would be overwhelmed by the precision and detail needed to record every "angle, attitude, and displacement" and eventually despair of language at all. She suggests that any description detailed enough to reproduce the many variables would look more

like code than writing (ibid.). Marianne Moore attempts to describe still photographs of Pavlova in just these terms, trying to capture the angle of her limbs, down to the position of her fingers: “The middle finger and little finger of each hand, higher than the finger between, adhere to classic formula but with the spontaneous curve of the iris petal” (Moore, *Prose* 389). Her effort exposes its own futility. The combination of “classic formula” with “the spontaneous curve” of a flower offers a sense of precision, evoking architectural and botanical standards of accuracy, but the effect is poetic rather than taxonomic. Moore is not interested, finally, in a scientific appraisal of Pavlova’s capacities, despite briefly ruminating on her technical ability to shift her weight *en pointe*: her attempted engagement with these “facts” in the end brings the poet face to face with her inability to pin the essence of the ballerina down. The essay becomes, in the end, an enraptured *pas à deux* with failure. After spending so much time describing the photographs of Pavlova, she claims: “Photographs of her dances taken even at the good moment fail, one feels, of the effect she had in life; and “those who never saw her dance may ask what she did that made her so wonderful” (Moore, *Prose* 391). Since the essay was written some time after Pavlova’s death, most of her readers would have fallen into the latter category (Cornell was an exception, having seen three performances by Pavlova during her farewell tour in New York in 1924–5 (Waldman 57)). Cornell, too, seems content that Cerrito’s genius remains out of reach. “Performance is ephemeral, an art destined to be lost ... between word and images,” notes Levy, suggesting that *Portrait for Ondine* “courts, and even embraces, the failure to seize the lost act” (84). As Lincoln Kirstein wrote in *Ballet Alphabet*, “A desire to avoid oblivion is the natural possession of any artist. It is intensified in the dancer, who is far more under the threat of time than others” (quoted in Heyward). Cerrito and Pavlova, the lost subjects, are ultimately inaccessible to the artists paying homage to them, either as people or artists. In this way they fulfil the stringent conditions for true generosity laid out by Derrida in *Given Time*, an extensive discussion of his concept of the aporia of the gift. Reverting to the etymology of the word *gift*, or *don*, which in many languages suggests an item given for which “there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counterfeit, or debt,” he suggests that the act of reciprocation destroys the gift’s reality as a gift, and causes it to revert to a crude

object of exchange. Adequate compensation may be received by a donor if an offering was made with the intention of doing good and gaining merit; this return is enough to render the gift void. This forms the basis for Derrida's critique of Mauss's conflation of the gift with the exchange economy. In focussing on exchange, Derrida suggests, Mauss has looked at everything *except* the gift. The conditions that make the gift possible therefore simultaneously signal its ultimate impossibility.

However, Derrida's conception of the gift may allow for certain conditions to arise in which a true or pure gift might be possible: particularly if the giver is separated from the recipient by a long enough period of time. Ideally, the giver should be unaware of the recipient or the reception of their gift, and by virtue of not being present, should be unable to receive anything in return. As Robert Bernasconi put it, "the only way in which this [structure of subordination] ... is avoided is if the agent renounces being the contemporary of the outcome of the action 'in a time *without me*' ... the work ... takes place 'in an eschatology without hope for oneself, an eschatology of liberation from my own time'" (Bernasconi 258). Ballet, perhaps—particularly the performances of ballerinas of the past—arguably represents the elusive Derridean gift, since a performance cannot be reconstituted, recorded, or effectively "possessed" in any meaningful way in art or writing (film arguably fails also). Therefore any attempt at reciprocation via these media will also fail. Moore and Cornell are performing an act of personalising and reciprocating an act which was not intended as a gift to them, creating the social bond of indebtedness in retrospect by paying tribute to the ballerinas in their own work. Or, from the other perspective, a nineteenth century ballerina cannot receive anything from our time in return for the gift of her performance; therefore it remains "pure" and unrewarded. The chronological distance and inaccessibility of the ballerinas makes them more perfect subjects for Cornell's "perfect wish".

Bernasconi points out that Derrida's reading of Mauss privileges "his interest in the ahistorical paradox, apparently at the expense of the specificity of the evidence" (262), which has broadly demonstrated that the gift can manifest

in a multiplicity of ways, including locally-specific methods of refusal of return.¹³ Ahistoricity, however, clearly functions as an effective means of separating the gift from the metaphysics of exchange, releasing it from the local social nexus of obligation and influence. By the same token, the memory of long-dead ballerinas formed an attractive locus for an offering of a “perfect wish” or “true gift”, homages that draw their functional power from the metaphysical impossibility of return. This concept resonates with Stewart’s conception of the souvenir as the token for the unattainable, “events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative” (Stewart 135).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the collage practices, thematic interests and formal concerns of Marianne Moore and Joseph Cornell align closely. The final products of their work, however, are clearly different and subject to different frameworks of analysis. Any critical vocabulary that can adequately compare visual art and poetry must be nuanced enough to contrast and compare both without erasing either. The gift provides a method of comparison that allows a rigorous examination of two distinct creative processes without privileging the textual over the visual, nor stepping too far back from the material specificity of the artworks and poems themselves. The function of the gift in the Cornell-Moore relationship has been shown to be twofold:

1) The obligation to reciprocate has been posited as the occasion for the creation of new works of art. In broad terms, the exchange relationship between Moore and Cornell was initiated in response to an artwork that Moore saw in *View*, to which she felt an obligation to publicly respond. Cornell’s work formed the occasion for Moore’s written response: her poem, “The Pangolin”, likewise formed the occasion for the collage Cornell included in his letter to her. The intention of this exchange was to support each other’s creative output, and

¹³ For a broader discussion of the consequences of refusal see Raheja, *The Poison in the Gift*.

encourage new work. The actual objects, letters and ideas exchanged functioned as intermediary agents within a continuous cycle of accumulation, association, making, giving and receiving, suggesting that the exchange actually provided the occasion for new works of art, in terms of material, content, subject matter and certain formal elements such as collage. In an illuminating reversal of this process, both artists adopted a strategy of addressing inaccessible subjects, such as Romantic ballerinas, that offered their gifts in the purest form, free from the bonds of reciprocity. In this way they demonstrated awareness that social obligations—particularly those of gratitude and influence—created formal obligations that they may often have wished to avoid.

2) The second function of the gift, the generation of an interpersonal *spacetime*, provides the rationale for the entire exchange: the establishment of an intermediary space in which to generate a shared imaginative world, and express gratitude. In terms of the wider anthropology, the gift generates social bonds between its participants, creating the material of social life itself. Povinelli's work on the "anthropology of the otherwise" defines this social material spatially as an "embaginated space" (Povinelli). This implies that each exchange between two or more people establishes a unique architecture particular to the social world being created. That architecture must be influenced by the aesthetic form and material of which the exchange is made: i.e., the form of the objects themselves: a collage-poem describing a pangolin with reference to Leonardo da Vinci thus inspired a collage that pairs a pangolin with the Renaissance scientist. It is helpful to place this argument within its historical context, particularly Moore and Cornell's shared position, central yet marginal to New York modernism. The correspondence and gift exchange into which they put so much energy was a function of their need to create community, to generate intimacy with those who shared the aesthetic and ideological concerns of the avant-garde. Their need to establish social bonds across large urban distances, both social and spatial, was urgent, and the gift is the classic means by which anthropology explains connection, especially those that happen outside dominant capitalist norms.

Within the gift exchange between Marianne Moore and Joseph Cornell, their distinct aesthetic worlds are shared and playfully expanded on, used as material in generating imaginative reciprocation and shared understanding. The gift analysis emphasizes the materiality of form, text, and idea. In the interstices between the gift exchange, biography, and relational aesthetics, the object itself and its lingering formal attributes will not be erased. This gift does not disappear, transformed into social relationship, or erased by its own reciprocation, as in structuralist and Derridean readings. In fact, its formal attributes expand and become totems in the many possible imaginative worlds—or embaginated spaces—that expand outwards from the exchange into the work of its participants. In Cornell’s words: “In going over your poems again this week, the lines ‘it tears off ... the mist the heart wears’ gave me considerable stimulus and consolation amidst a too familiar and too protracted period of sluggish groping trying to find in my various collections of notes and documents not the proverbial ‘needle’ but a ‘star’” (Cornell, Letter to Marianne Moore, 1 November 1946, Rosenbach).

For Cornell, his exchanges with Moore not only offered entry into alternative imaginative worlds, but provided a lodestar to navigate his own.

Conclusion: The burden of return

This dissertation argues that Marianne Moore's work was produced and distributed within a gift economy, which, while she capably manipulated its attendant obligations to maintain her literary autonomy, inextricably connected form with the action of exchange in her poetics. It is an ethnographic and literary study of the action of the gift in Marianne Moore's poetics, within the context of the avant-garde community surrounding her. Two main aspects of the gift have been investigated: the formal influence of the gift in Moore's practice and poetry, and its role in managing and defining her relations with peers, protégées, and patrons. Each chapter has presented a case study highlighting an aspect of the gift as it relates to Moore's poetics: the descriptive response to gift objects in poems; patronage relations; influence and status; and inter-arts relations. Each of these chapters stands alone, and read together form a literary "ethnography" of the gift as it manifests in the life and work of Marianne Moore.

The language of the anthropological literature on gift exchange can appear alienating to the literary studies scholar, dealing as it does with non-Western tribal societies and exchanges conducted via Kula shells, necklaces, or painted marks on canoes. Any gift economy from any culture is marked by material specificity and semantic idiosyncrasy. Moore's poetry makes a thematically sympathetic match with the sometimes exotic literature on the gift, as it evokes an esoteric, imaginative world populated by bizarre animals, natural history textbooks, ballet, and the contents of museum storage lockers. This dissertation has argued that Moore's poetry exists within an exchange economy characterized by unique language, patterns of interaction, and aesthetic agency, within the aesthetic world of the avant-garde. The language of exchange is defined by its community and is conversely defined by it—the community's values, rituals, and the very nature of status and agency within it.

The dissertation set out to explore two research questions: 1) how Marianne Moore established and maintained relationships with key members of the avant-garde community; and 2) how her poems interacted with objects, ideas, and other texts circulating within that community. These questions proved to be

deeply inter-related. Chapter 1 demonstrated that gift objects often formed the occasion for poems and descriptive passages in letters. This writing served as a form of reciprocation for the original gift, as required by the rules of exchange. While Chapter 2 broadly focused on the second question, approaching the work through the gift object, and Chapters 3 through 5 on the first, exploring Moore's interactions with her exchange partners, the two approaches are inextricably linked. The form of the gift has proven to be entangled with the state, intentions, and power dynamics of these relationships; to understand one, we must understand both.

Due to the influence of the exchange, Moore's feelings about the donor and the state of their relationship may be perceived within the description of the objects and the role they play within the poetry. For example, in Chapter 2, Moore's ambivalent opinion of her neighbour Chester Page is apparent in the heavily ironized description of the tin crow toy that he gave her. The following chapters explored Moore's circuitous uses of exchange within her community. With all her exchange partners and correspondents she displayed a pattern of strategic avoidance of gifts when she disliked them, or when she wished to avoid the burden of obligation or intimacy the exchange would imply. She partially refused some gifts, for instance the preserved snake offered to her by Elizabeth Bishop in Chapter 4, by never truly accepting them. Likewise, the acceptance of gifts, such as the many she received from Hildegard Watson in Chapter 3, was accompanied by expressions of both affection and the keenly felt burden of obligation.

In seeking a model for the entanglement of form with exchange, I have turned to Elizabeth Povinelli's vision of the gift economy as a permeable social space, resembling a cloth bag, defined and contained by the circulation of things within it. Nancy Munn's conception that a shared, mutually constructed, intersubjective field or *spacetime* is established between participants of exchange has also been very useful. In her view, an exchange economy shapes and is and shaped by everything within it, from the raw materials of construction to the words spoken during exchanges. With respect to the gift economy surrounding Moore, this implied that the letters, manuscripts, conversations, and journals that

contributed to genesis of a poem must be considered and understood in order to understand the work itself. These texts, phrases, and letters may then be considered subject to the logic of the gift, and the poems themselves the product of, and subject to, the processes of exchange. Thus, the form of the work was influenced by the community in which it moved, and vice versa.

This dissertation has focused on the aesthetic implications of the gift and the formal manifestations of exchange within Moore's poetics. In this way it has moved in a different direction to the economic strain currently dominating the discussion in literary theory that has arisen following the publication of Lewis Hyde's *The Gift* (Konstantinou, Hoeller, Burnett). Each of these critics has in their way developed Hyde's view that the gift economy exists in parallel with the market, and may provide a means for artists and writers to balance their contradictory requirements to sell their work while remaining free to create without an economic imperative. All of them have avoided engaging with the gift's implications for form and practice within the work itself; for such insights we must turn to art history, for instance the work of Pointon on miniatures, and the application of the gift to social practice in the 1990s and beyond (Kwon, Purves).

While this dissertation engages with Moore's manipulation of gift exchange to control economic transactions relating to her work, for the most part it does not focus on the economics of the gift within the context of the market. On the contrary, with its focus on aesthetics and transformations of form, it provides a useful counterpart to this debate, and its recentring of the materiality of the gift-as-object is an important contribution to the broader discussion. The materiality of the gift somewhat faded from the debate following the abstraction of structuralism, which viewed the gift as a socially expedited redress of economic imbalances. Since Derrida's deconstructionist intervention, the gift object has almost disappeared from the discussion entirely. I have turned to earlier theoretical discussions and to ethnography, rather than theory, to find antecedents for my handling of the formal aspects of the gift, and attempted to link this materialist reading with a literary critical one in order to offer an original theoretical approach.

While this dissertation is situated firmly within literary studies, it has strong interdisciplinary elements. In many ways it is an ethnography of Marianne Moore's poetics. As opposed to living informants, my informants have been texts. My field work took place in the archives of the Rosenbach Museum and Library, Vassar and Bryn Mawr College Libraries, and various international research institutions—some, like ethnographic work, requiring long-distance travel and periods of time spent immersed in the environment. If the analogy may be stretched a little further, the source texts, like living informants, could not be presumed to be neutral or compliant with my investigation. Letters and poems had their own contexts, intended audiences, and had been written with particular desired outcomes that sometimes included actively disguising the exchange dynamic I wished to uncover. Moore's plays for power and prestige were often covert, involving subtle refusals and the avoidance of obligation—for example, when she denied Scofield Thayer, previously her most supportive publisher, the opportunity to print "Marriage" in *The Dial*, by quietly offering the poem to someone else.

Moore has proved a particularly apt candidate for analysis through gift exchange, with her tortuous etiquette and exquisite manners that seemed to derive from an earlier era than her modernist heyday. As Bourdieu pointed out, the gift is a means to threaten and apply a euphemized form of violence when more blunt instruments would be inappropriate or counterproductive (Bourdieu, "Logic of Practice" 217). Moore was interested in mentorship, and generously took younger poets such as Bishop under her wing; she tried to maintain a level of control over their development, however, in a manner that Bishop finally resisted. This control was enforced by multiple subversions and reversals within their exchange: mostly, the hierarchical dynamics underpinning these relations remained unspoken. Outright breaches of civility were rare, which was a testament to the effectiveness of Moore's strategy of polite avoidance. The gift is a symbolic language with practical effects.

Similarly, Moore resisted the kind of social obligations that might threaten her literary or personal autonomy—particularly the institutions of marriage and patronage, in which either the poet's work or person might be placed into

exchange, and subjected to its threatening power relations and transformative potential. Moore used all her “criminal ingenuity” to “avoid” such imbrications, and manipulated and dodged gifts in order to do so. Many of her exchanges, such as that with Joseph Cornell, although vibrant were remarkably distant—that correspondence seems eerily disembodied, keeping within the realm of the imagination. While Moore was considered to be central to the avant-garde community, even a supportive “rafter”, she was heavily invested in remaining marginal and maintaining a position of extreme independence, even from her most beloved peers. The potential of the gift to be a burden was very much felt by Moore, particularly the burden of returning it. The traces of her exchanges are so remarkable in part because she resisted the gift with such gusto.

Of all her animal avatars, perhaps the Frigate Pelican comes closest to her ideal of an unencumbered, burdenless existence. A black sea bird known for its diving ability, the frigate pelican is shown using its superior grace and skill to steal food from clumsier gulls on the wing. Its brilliance in the air helps it avoid the threat of a deadly python, which threatens a paralysing “danger / that lays on heart and lungs” and “crushes to powder”. It is “unconfiding”, self-reliant, and takes what it needs without embroiling itself in reciprocal obligations. Most compellingly, the poet compares the graceful creature to the composer George Frideric Handel, who like her did not form romantic attachments, avoided the oppressive social institutions of the legal profession and domesticity, and chose to express his passions through his art:

The Frigate Pelican

Rapidly cruising or lying on the air there is a bird
that realizes Rasselas's friend's project
of wings uniting levity with strength ...
he appears to prefer

to take, on the wing, from industrious crude-winged species,
the fish they have caught, and is seldom successful....

Make hay; keep
the shop; I have one sheep; were a less
limber animal's mottoes. This one
finds sticks for the swan's-down-dress
of his child to rest upon and would
not know Gretel from Hänsel.
As impassioned Handel—

meant for a lawyer and a masculine German domestic
career—clandestinely studied the harpsichord
and never was known to have fallen in love,
the unconfiding frigate-bird hides
in the height and in the majestic
display of his art. ...

he, and others, soon

rise from the bough and though flying, are able to foil the tired
moment of danger that lays on heart and lungs the
weight of the python that crushes to powder. (Moore, *Poems* 204–5).

The coils of the python represent the menace that Handel avoided: the crushing constraints of social, economic, and domestic obligation. The comparison might

seem exaggerated, but from Moore's perspective as a woman in early twentieth century America, the personal and legal constraints to which society could subject her were indeed crushing. Such imbrications implicitly threaten the ability of the artist to create, and inhibit the true expression of an "impassioned" nature through art. The frigate pelican's independent, unrestricted life—an existence free of the gift, dodging danger and responsibility alike—is a fantasy, as all social life involves exchange leading to the establishment and maintenance of bonds. It was an ideal to which Moore nonetheless aspired. She entered exchanges only with those she trusted not to subject her to a deadly weight of obligation.

The frigate pelican lives by his mastery of flying, which is his "art", and uses the same art to avoid the python. Herein lies a clue to the nature of the gifts that were given by Marianne Moore. Bourdieu noted in the *Logic of Practice* that the most effective way to gain prestige within the gift economy is through giving. From that perspective, the analysis in this dissertation may have appeared somewhat one-sided, as I have focused on Moore's receipt of and response to gifts given to her, while her own gift-giving patterns have been somewhat neglected. The reason for the apparent imbalance is that her poems themselves have been posited as gifts; the greatest possible she could offer. Her poems were written and offered in return for public or private presents, inspiration, or stimuli. In order to maintain the freedom she required to write her poetry, Moore never married, and fiercely preserved her literary and personal autonomy. The refusal of many gifts permitted the gift of these poems. To be regarded as a genuine gift, poetry must be reciprocated by the reader, and as Glenway Wescott noted "the price is principally time; these poems cannot be taken possession of in the subway, for example. They do not fling their sophisticated intent and compact thought upon whoever runs" (Schultz 286). We must earn the right to receive the gift of a Marianne Moore poem; it is the reader who in the end must bear the burden of return.

Works Cited

- Affron, Matthew and Sylvie Ramond. *Joseph Cornell et les surréalistes à New York*. Paris: Hazan, 2013.
- Alvis, Jason W. *Marion and Derrida on The Gift and Desire: Debating the Generosity of Things*. Vienna: Springer, 2016.
- Arendt, Hannah. "Introduction." *Illuminations*, Walter Benjamin. Translated by Harry Zorn, Pimlico, 1999, pp. 7–55.
- Ashbery, John. "Straight Lines over Rough Terrain: Marianne Moore." *Selected Prose*, John Ashbery, edited by Eugene Richie, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004, pp. 108–112.
- Atwan, Robert and Laurance Wieder, *Chapters into Verse: Poetry in English Inspired by the Bible*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z: An Essay*. Translated by Richard Miller, New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The system of objects*. Translated by James Benedict, London: Verso, 2005.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings. Volume 1: 1913–1926*. Edited by Howard Eiland and Gary Smith. Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Bennetts, Leslie. "Marianne Moore in Poem and Object." *The New York Times*, 8 February 1987, www.nytimes.com/1987/02/08/books/marianne-moore-in-poem-and-object.html. Accessed 4 Aug. 2014.
- Bernasconi, Robert. "What goes around comes around: Derrida and Levinas on the economy of the gift and the gift of genealogy." *The Logic of the gift: Toward an ethic of generosity*, edited by Alan D. Schrift. New York and London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 256–73.
- Bishop, Elizabeth. *Complete Poems*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2004.
- . *Edgar Allan Poe and the Juke-Box: Uncollected Poems, Drafts, and Fragments*. Edited by Alice Quinn, Manchester: Carcanet, 2006.

- . "Efforts of Affection." *The Collected Prose*, edited by Robert Giroux. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984, pp. 121–70.
 - . Gift object (duck feathers mounted on paper) to Marianne Moore. February 1937. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:04:31. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 5 Aug. 2010.
 - . Letter to Marianne Moore. 19 March 1934. Marianne Moore Collection. V:04:30. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 4 Aug. 2010.
 - . Letter to Marianne Moore. 6 February 1937. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:04:31. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 4 Aug. 2010.
 - . Letter to Marianne Moore. 13 February 1937. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:04:31 (8). Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 4 Aug. 2010.
 - . Letter to Marianne Moore. 14 February 1938. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:05:91 (3). Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 4 Aug. 2010.
 - . Letter to Marianne Moore. 17 October 1940. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:05:02. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. 2015. Accessed 4 Aug. 2010.
 - . *One Art: Letters*. Edited by Robert Giroux. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1994.
 - . Rooster. Photograph. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:04:31. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 5 Aug. 2010.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Boas, Franz. *Kwakiutl Ethnography*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Marginalia: Some additional notes on the gift." *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, edited by Alan D. Schrift, New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 231–244.
- . "Selections from The Logic of Practice." *The Logic of the Gift: Toward and Ethic of Generosity*, edited by Alan D. Schrift, New York and London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 190–230.
- Bourdon, David. "The Enigmatic Bachelor of Utopia Parkway." *LIFE magazine*, 15 Dec. 1967, pp. 52–65.
- Brinkman, Bartholomew. "Scrapping Modernism: Marianne Moore and the making of the modern collage poem." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2011, pp. 43–66.
- Broad Collection, The. *About*, www.thebroad.org/about/collection. Accessed 23 Mar. 2017.
- Bryher. *The Heart to Artemis*. Ashfield: Paris Press, 2006.
- Burke, Kenneth. "Motives and motifs in the poetry of Marianne Moore." Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969, pp. 485–502.
- Burnett, Elizabeth-Jane. "'The Poetic Economy': Investigating Possibilities of No Return." *How 2*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2007.
- Burt, Stephen. "Nearly Baroque." *Boston Review*, 11 Apr. 2011, bostonreview.net/poetry/stephen-burt-nearly-baroque.
- Caplow, Theodore. "Rule enforcement without visible means: Christmas gift giving in Middletown." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 89, no. 6, 1984, pp. 1306–1323.
- Chiasson, Dan. "All About My Mother: Marianne Moore's family romance." *The New Yorker*, 11 November 2013, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/11/11/all-about-my-mother. Accessed 5 Jul. 2015.
- Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

- Clifford, James. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Edited by James Clifford and E. George Marcus, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 1–26.
- Cornell, Joseph. Letter to Marianne Moore. 23 March 1943. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:12:11. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 6 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Marianne Moore. 6 June 1944. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:12:11. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 6 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Marianne Moore. 21 June 1944. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:12:11 (11). Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 6 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Marianne Moore. 17 October 1944. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:12:11 (10). Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 6 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Marianne Moore containing a dozen etchings of natural history subjects, French, c.1850s. 17 February 1946. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:12:11 (7). Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 6 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Marianne Moore. 1 November 1946. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:12:11 (3). Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 6 Aug. 2010.
- Costello, Bonnie. "Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop: Friendship and Influence." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 30, no. 2/3, 1984, pp. 130–49.
- Costello, Bonnie. *Marianne Moore: Imaginary possessions*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Crane, Hart. *The Letters of Hart Crane*. 1 December 1925. Edited by Brom Weber, New York, 1952.

- Derrida, Jacques. *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Diehl, Joanne Feit. *Elizabeth Bishop and Marianne Moore: The Psychodynamics of Creativity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Douglas, Mary. "A Gentle Deconstruction." *London Review of Books*, 4 May 1989, pp. 17–18.
- Eliot, T. S. "Marianne Moore." *The Dial*, 1923, pp. 594–598.
- . "Review." *The Dial*, 1 Dec. 1923, pp. 595–96.
- . "Tradition and the Individual Talent". *Perspecta*, vol. 19, 1982, pp. 36–42.
- Falcetta, Jennie-Rebecca. "Acts of Containment: Marianne Moore, Joseph Cornell, and the Poetics of Enclosure." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 29, no. 4, Summer 2006, pp. 124–144.
- Feigenbaum, Gail and Inge Reist, *Provenance: An alternative history of art*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2013.
- Fischer, Tibor. "A Limited Definition of the Artist." *The Telegraph*, 17 Dec. 2006, www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3657034/A-limited-definition-of-the-artist.html. Accessed 8 Jul. 2016.
- Ford, Mark. *A Driftwood Altar*. Baltimore: Waywiser Press, 2006.
- Frow, John. *Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Gameson, Joshua. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in contemporary America*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.
- Garber, Marjorie. *Patronizing the Arts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Garrigue, Jean. *Pamphlets on American Writers 50: Marianne Moore*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965.
- Gates, Norman T. "Review of Published In Paris: American and British writers, printers, and publishers in Paris, 1920–1939." *Journal of Modern Literature*, 1976, pp. 552–3.

- Gell, Alfred. *Art and Agency*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Goldman, Jonathan. *Modernism is the Literature of Celebrity*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011.
- Goldman-Price, Irene C. and Melissa McFarland-Pennell. *American Literary Mentors*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999.
- Goldstone, Andrew. *Fictions of Autonomy: Modernism from Wilde to de Man*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Green, Fiona. "'The magnitude of their root systems': 'An Octopus' and National Character." *Critics and Poets on Marianne Moore*, edited by Linda Leavell, Cristanne Miller and Robin G. Schulze. Cranbury: Bucknell University Press, 2005, pp. 137–49.
- Hägglund, Martin. *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.
- Hall, Donald and Marianne Moore. "Interview with Marianne Moore, The Art of Poetry No. 4." *The Paris Review*, Summer–Fall 1961, www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4637/the-art-of-poetry-no-4-marianne-moore. Accessed 2 Jul. 2016.
- Hartigan, Lynda Roscoe. *Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Hauptman, Jodi. *Joseph Cornell: Stargazing in the cinema*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Heaney, Seamus. *The Redress of Poetry*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002.
- Heyward, Anna. "How to Write a Dance." *The Paris Review*, 4 Feb. 2015, www.theparisreview.org/blog/2015/02/04/how-to-write-a-dance. Accessed 16 Mar. 2015.
- Hoeller, Hildegard. *From Gift to Commodity: Capitalism and Sacrifice in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*. Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2012.

- Holley, Margaret. *The Poetry of Marianne Moore: A Study in Voice and Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Hoskins, Janet. *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives*. New York and London: Routledge, 1998.
- Hoy, Cyrus and Moore, Marianne. "University of Rochester Library Bulletin." *University of Rochester Library Bulletin: Marianne Moore, Letters to Hildegard Watson (1933–1964)*, 2. vol. 29. Edited by Cyrus Hoy. Rochester, Summer 1976.
- Hugo, Victor. *Oeuvres complètes de Victor Hugo*. Vol. 1. Paris: Adolphe Wahlen and Company, 1837.
- Hyde, Lewis. *The Gift: How the creative spirit transforms the world*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006.
- Joost, Nicholas. *Scofield Thayer and The Dial: An illustrated history*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, n.d.
- Kalstone, David. *Becoming a Poet: Elizabeth Bishop with Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell*. Edited by Robert Hemenway. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989.
- Kandinsky, Wassily and Franz Marc. *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*. New York: Viking Press, 1974.
- Keane, Webb. *Signs of Recognition: Powers and Hazards of Representation in an Indonesian Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Kirstein, Lincoln. "Comment." *Dance Index*, June 1946.
- Konstantinou, Lee. "Lewis Hyde's Double Economy ." *ASAP Journal*, vol. 13, 2016, pp. 123-149.
- Kopytoff, Igor. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process." *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 65–91.
- Kramer, Hilton. "Peggy Guggenheim as history." *The New Criterion*, April 1986, www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Peggy-Guggenheim-as-history-6686. Accessed 6 Jun. 2016.

- Kuhl, Nancy. "Marianne Moore, Poet." *Extravagant Crowd: Carl Van Vechten's Portraits of Women*. January 2017, brbl-archive.library.yale.edu/exhibitions/cvvpw/gallery/moore1.html.
- Kwon, Miwon. "Exchange Rate: On Obligation and Reciprocity in Some Art of the 1960s and After." *The 'do-it-yourself' artwork: participation from fluxus to new media*, edited by Anna Dezeuze, Rethinking art's histories, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012, pp. 229–239.
- Leavell, Linda. *Holding on Upside Down: The life and work of Marianne Moore*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013.
- . *Marianne Moore and the Visual Arts: Prismatic Color*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.
- . "When Marianne Moore buys pictures." *American Literary History*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1993, pp. 250–271.
- Lee, Henry. "Sea Monsters Unmasked and Sea Fables Explained." *Project Gutenberg*, 19 July 2011, www.gutenberg.org/files/36677/36677-h/36677-h.htm#fig02_031. Accessed 7 Jul. 2015.
- Levin, Harry. "A Note on her French Aspect." *Festschrift for Marianne Moore's seventy-seventh birthday*, edited by Tambimuttu, New York: Tambimuttu & Mass, 1964, pp. 40–43.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship (Les Structures élémentaires de la Parenté)*. Edited by Rodney Needham. Translated by James Harle Bell and Richard von Sturmer. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- . *The View from Afar*. London: Peregrine, 1987.
- Levy, Ellen. *Criminal Ingenuity: Moore, Cornell, Ashbery, and the struggle between the arts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Logan, William. "The Mystery of Marianne Moore." *The New Criterion*, Feb. 2004, www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/The-mystery-of-Marianne-Moore-1594. Accessed 6 July 2015.
- Lowell, Robert. *Robert Lowell: Poems selected by Michael Hofman*. Edited by Michael Hofman, London: Faber & Faber, 2006.

- Malinowski, Bronisław. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Oxford: Routledge, 2014.
- Marek, Jayne E. *Women Editing Modernism: Little Magazines & Literary History*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. *The Reason of the Gift*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011.
- Marshall, Tod. "Donald Revell: An interview." *American Poetry Review*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1996, pp. 39–51.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- McCabe, Susan. "Bryher's Archives: Modernism and The Melancholy of Money." *English Now. Selected Papers from the 20th IAUPE Conference* (2008).
- . "'Let's Be Alone Together': Bryher's and Marianne Moore's Aesthetic-Erotic Collaboration." *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2010, pp. 607–637.
- Miller, Cristanne. *Marianne Moore: Questions of Authority*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- . "The Responsibilities of Inclusion and Omission: Editing Marianne Moore's Poetry." *VQR: A National Journal of Literature and Discussion*, Winter 2004, www.vqronline.org/responsibilities-inclusion-and-omission-editing-marianne-moore%E2%80%99s-poetry. Accessed 28 Jan. 2017.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. *Iconology: Image, text, ideology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Molesworth, Charles. *Marianne Moore: A literary life*. New York: Atheneum, 1990.
- Monroe, Harriet. "A Symposium on Marianne Moore." *Poetry*, 1922, pp. 208–216.
- Moore, Marianne. *Complete Poems*. New York: Macmillan and Viking, 1967.
- . Cock, The. Manuscript. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:04:02. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 6 Aug. 2010.

- . *Complete Poems*. New York: Macmillan, 1994.
- . *Complete Prose*. Edited by Patricia C. Willis, New York: Viking, 1986.
- . Four Quartz Crystal Clocks. Draft Manuscript. Archives and Special Collections Library, Elizabeth Bishop Papers. Folder 85.10. Poughkeepsie. Accessed 20 Feb. 2013.
- . Letter to Elizabeth Bishop. 24 January 1937. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:04:31. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 5 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Elizabeth Bishop. 13 February 1937. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:04:31. Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 5 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Elizabeth Bishop. 10 February 1938. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:05:01 (2). Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 5 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Elizabeth Bishop. 6 December 1938. The Marianne Moore Collection. Rosenbach Museum and Library. V:05:01. Philadelphia. Accessed 5 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Hildegard Watson. Recto. 3 September 1933. Watson Collection, Bryn Mawr College Library Special Collection. Accessed 9 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Hildegard Watson. 24 September 1933, Brooklyn. Watson Collection, Bryn Mawr College Library Special Collection. Accessed 9 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to Joseph Cornell. 26 March 1943. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:12:11 (2). Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 6 Aug. 2010.
- . Letter to the Guggenheim Foundation: Recommendation for Joseph Cornell. 19 September 1945. The Marianne Moore Collection. V:12:11 (9). Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Accessed 6 Aug. 2010.
- . *O to Be a Dragon*. New York: Viking, 1959.

- . *Observations*. New York: The Dial Press, 1924.
- . *Poems of Marianne Moore, The*. Edited by Grace Schulman, New York: Viking, 2003.
- . *Selected Letters of Marianne Moore, The*. Edited by Bonnie Costello, Celeste Goodridge and Christiane Miller, London: Faber and Faber, 1998.
- . *Selected Poems*. Edited by T.S. Eliot, London: Faber & Faber, 1935.
- Muldoon, Paul. "Fire Balloons: The Letters of Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop." 8 November 2011, Ulster University, Cromore Road, Coleraine, Northern Ireland. Guest Lecture.
- Munn, Nancy D. *The Fame of Gawa: A Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in a Massim Society*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992.
- . "The Spatiotemporal Transformations of Gawa Canoes." *Journal de la Société des océanistes*, vol. 33, no. 54, 1977, pp. 39–53.
- Orvell, Miles. *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
- Ozieblo, Barbara. "Alyse Gregory, Scofield Thayer, and the Dial Twentieth Century Literature." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2002, pp. 487–507.
- Page, Chester. *Memoirs of a charmed life in New York*. New York: Universe, 2007.
- Poetry Foundation. "Elizabeth Bishop: Biography." *Poetry Foundation*, www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/elizabeth-bishop. Accessed 8 Jul. 2015.
- . "Marianne Moore Biography." *Poetry Foundation*, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/marianne-moore. Accessed 14 Aug. 2014.
- Pointon, Marcia. "'Surrounded with brilliants': Miniature portraits in eighteenth-century England." *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 83, no. 1, 2001, pp. 48–71.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. "Routes/Worlds." *e-flux journal*, 2 September 2011, www.e-flux.com/journal/routesworlds. Accessed 8 Aug. 2015.

- Purves, Ted. *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art*. New York: State University of New York, 2005.
- Pyyhtinen, Olli. *The Gift and its Paradoxes: Beyond Mauss*. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Qian, Zhaoming. *The Modernist Response to Chinese Art: Pound, Moore, Stevens*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003.
- Raheja, Gloria Goodwin. *The Poison in the Gift: Ritual, prestation, and the dominant caste in a north Indian village*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Rainey, Lawrence S. "Chapter 2: The cultural economy of Modernism." *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, edited by Michael H. Levenson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- . *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Raphel, Adrienne. "The Marianne Moore Revival." *The New Yorker*, 13 April 2016, www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-marianne-moore-revival. Accessed 20 Jan. 2017.
- Rieke, Alison. "'Plunder' or 'Accessibility to Experience': Consumer Culture and Marianne Moore's Modernist Self-Fashioning." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 27, no. 1/2, 2003, pp. 149–70.
- Riles, Annelise. "Too big to fail." *Recasting Anthropological Knowledge: Inspiration and Social Science*, edited by Jeanette Edwards and Maja Petrović-Šteger, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 31–49.
- Rosenbach Museum and Library. "Four Quartz Crystal Clocks." *Marianne Moore Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1981, pp. 15–16.
- . *Guide to the Marianne Moore Collection*, www.rosenbach.org/collections/categories/moore_collection.pdf. Accessed 8 Jul. 2015.

- . "Marianne Moore Newsletter." Vol. V. 1. Edited by Patricia C. Willis, Philadelphia: Rosenbach Museum and Library, Spring 1981.
- . "Marianne Moore Newsletter." Vol. 3. 1. Edited by Patricia C. Willis. Philadelphia: Rosenbach Museum and Library, Spring 1979.
- Sahlins, Marshall. "The Spirit of the Gift." *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an ethic of generosity*, edited by Alan D. Schrift, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 70–99.
- Saper, Craig. *Networked Art*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- Sargeant, Winthrop. "Humility, Concentration, and Gusto." *The New Yorker*, 16 February 1957, www.newyorker.com/magazine/1957/02/16/humility-concentration-and-gusto. Accessed 1 Apr. 2017.
- Sawaya, Francesca. *The Difficult Art of Giving: Patronage, philanthropy, and the American literary market*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- Schieffelin, Edward L. "Reciprocity and the Construction of Reality." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1980, pp. 502–17.
- Schrift, Alan D., ed. *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an ethic of generosity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1997.
- Schulman, Grace. *Marianne Moore: the poetry of engagement*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.
- Schulze, Robin G. *The Web of Friendship: Marianne Moore and Wallace Stevens*. University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Schulze, Robin G. and Moore, Marianne. *Becoming Marianne Moore: The Early Poems, 1907-1924*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Sherry, John F., Jr. "Gift Giving in Anthropological Perspective." *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 10, no. 2, n.d., pp. 157–168.
- Sherry, John F. Jr., Mary Ann McGrath and Sidney J. Levy. "The Disposition of the Gift and Many Unhappy Returns." *Journal of Retailing*, vol. 68, no. 1, 1992.
- Simic, Charles. *Dime-Store Alchemy: The art of Joseph Cornell*. New York: New York Review Books, 1992.

- Snyder-Körber, Mary Ann. *Modernism in American Centuries: Henry James, T.S. Eliot, Djuna Barnes, James Baldwin (TS)*. Unpublished, 2014.
- Solomon, Deborah. *Utopia Parkway: The life and work of Joseph Cornell*. Boston: MFA Publications, 1997.
- Spandler, Helen, et al. "'A double-edged sword': understanding gifts in psychotherapy." *European Journal of Psychotherapy, Counselling and Health*, vol. 3, no. 1, n.d., pp. 77–101.
- Spires, Elizabeth and Elizabeth Bishop. "Interview with Elizabeth Bishop, The Art of Poetry No. 27." *The Paris Review*, July 2015, www.theparisreview.org/interviews/3229/the-art-of-poetry-no-27-elizabeth-bishop. Accessed 9 Jun. 2015.
- Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Strathern, Marilyn. *The Gender of the Gift*. Berkely, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988.
- Sze, Mai-Mai. *The Tao of Painting: A Study of the Ritual Disposition of Chinese Painting*. Vol. 1. New York: Pantheon Books, 1956. 2 vols.
- Tashjian, Dickran. *Joseph Cornell: Gifts of Desire*. Miami Beach: Grassfield Press, 1992.
- Taylor, Georgina. *H.D. and the Public Sphere of Modernist Women Writers 1913–1946: Talking Women*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001.
- Temple University. *Marianne Moore's Living Room*, sites.temple.edu/litphilly/philadelphia-authors/marianne-moores-living-roo/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2016.
- Thompson, Christine K. "Fido, Cat, and the Rat: Correspondence between Bryher, H.D., and Dorothy Richardson." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Spring/Summer 1994, pp. 65–76.

- Timberg, Scott. "'The Gift' just keeps on giving." *The Los Angeles Times*, 13 January 2008, articles.latimes.com/2008/jan/13/entertainment/ca-hyde13. Accessed 15 Mar. 2017.
- Tinagli, Paola. *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender, Representation and Identity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.
- Tomlinson, Charles. "Introduction." Charles Tomlinson, *Marianne Moore, her Poetry and her Critics*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969, pp. 1–15.
- Tryphonopoulos, Demetrios P. "Conversation." EAAS Conference 2016, 24 April 2016, Constanta.
- Unterecker, John. "Foreword." George W. Nitchie, *Marianne Moore: An Introduction to the Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969.
- Waldman, Diane. *Joseph Cornell: Master of dreams*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002.
- Wasserstrom, William. "Irregular Symmetry." *Festschrift for Marianne Moore's Seventy Seventh Birthday*, edited by Tambimuttu, New York: Tambimuttu & Mass, 1966, pp. 35–40.
- Williams, William Carlos. *Autobiography*. New York: New Directions, 1967.
- Willis, Patricia. "Egyptian Fish Pulled Glass Bottle." 4 June 2010. *Marianne Moore: Poetry*, moore123.com/2010/06/04/egyptian-fish-for-scofield-thayer/. Accessed 10 Aug. 2016.
- Ziegler, Rolf. "The Kula Ring of Bronislaw Malinowski: Co-evolution of an Economic and Ceremonial Exchange System." *Review of European Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2012, pp. 15–27.
- Zona, Kirstin Hotelling. *Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, and May Swenson: The Feminist Poetics of Self-restraint*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

Works of Art

- Joseph Cornell, *Object (Ogives E. Satie)*. 1939–40, construction (box) 1 x 1/2 inches, Collection Don Joint and Brice Brown. (Figure xvi)
- . *Portrait of Ondine*. c. 1940-late 1960s, paperboard slipcase with mounted and loose photomechanical reproductions, watercolours, typed and handwritten notes, book excerpts, and pamphlets, Closed 2 1/2 x 10 3/4 x 12 3/4 inches, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, 1985. (Figure xxiii)
- . *Untitled (Penny Arcade Portrait of Lauren Bacall)*. 1945–46, construction, 20 1/2 x 16 x 3 1/2 inches, The Lindy and Edwin Bergman Joseph Cornell Collection, Chicago. (Figure xvii)
- . *Untitled (The Crystal Cage: Portrait of Berenice)*. c. 1934–67, papered wood valise with photographs, printed and photomechanical reproductions, excerpts from newspapers, books, magazines, and notes, closed 4 3/8 x 15 5/8 x 19 7/8 inches, Richard L. Feigen, New York. (Figure xviii)
- . *Untitled (Ship with Nude)*. c. 1964–6, collage, 11.5 x 8.5 inches © The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation. (Figure xxii)
- . *View. Americana Fantastica (detail)*. 1942–3, collage reproduced as the cover of a special edition of *View*, Vol. 2 No. 4, January 1943, closed 26.3 x 37 cm, Houston, The Menil Collection Library, Special Collections, RB AP 1 V 58 s.2 No. 4 C.2. (Figure xiv)