

## Bonnie Honigsblum: On "Poetry"

### "Marianne Moore's Revisions of 'Poetry'"

Although Marianne Moore's "Poetry" has for its subject a universal topic treated in general terms, an examination of the poet's many revisions and her reasons for them suggests that she became susceptible to a variety of influences while writing and revising this major poem in her canon. If we examine revised versions of "Poetry" in light of their appearances in certain of her volumes or in anthologies edited by valued colleagues, we can see that she usually revised for a new edition of her poetry and that she sometimes revised even for the occasion of a special printing. In the course of revising this poem, she admitted multiple influences: her family, a like-minded coterie, her editors, even her critics. Occasionally, a trend in publishing or writing also resulted in a revision. For our purposes, we could turn to David Daiches's theory of modern fiction to account for the multitude of forces to which she seemed to respond:

If we know just what it is in the civilization of his time that led the author to adopt the attitude he did, to shape the work the way he did, to tell this story in this way and no other, then we understand what we may call the logic of the work; we can see what its real principal of unity is; we can see the work as a whole and be sure of seeing the right whole. (216)

To see the "right whole" in the case of this poem, we must first assemble all the versions. Then we must examine the chronology of changes and consider the individuals whose influence propelled this chronology and the movements to which they belonged. This process will shed light on critical problems that have concerned scholars and will reveal a modernist application that underlies Moore's method of revision.

The variorum text appended here sets forth the four basic versions of "Poetry" (listed in order of their first publications): a version with five stanzas of six long, divided lines (roughly 19, 19, 11, 5, 8, and 13 syllables, stanzas three and five being less regular), almost rhymed (printed fifty-seven times and once as a note to the three-line version, during Moore's lifetime), hereinafter called the five-stanza version; a thirteen-line version in free verse without stanzas (printed once), hereinafter called the thirteen-line version; a fifteen-line version with three stanzas of five long, divided lines (roughly 8, 14, 11, 19, and 16 syllables), with internal rhyme (printed five times in anthologies compiled by foremost poet-editors), hereinafter called the three-stanza version; and a three-line version to which she appended a revision of the five-stanza version in a footnote (printed ten times), hereinafter called the three-line version.

The notes to the poem were printed twenty-four times in a shortened version slightly modified and expanded in *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore* (1967) to include the five-stanza version, where the notes to this version become notes on a note, referring to lines no longer part of the three-line version of "Poetry."

The thirteen-line, three-stanza, and three-line versions were printed less often than the five-stanza version: in the case of the three-line version, only ten times; in the case of the thirteen-line version, only once; and in the case of the three-stanza version, only five times, in all of these versions and their printings with only two unauthorized changes. Moore revised the five-

stanza version, however, right up until its placement in the notes to the three-line version; that is, she continued to revise this longer version over a span of nearly fifty years (ca. 1919-67). The same may be said for the poem as a whole in all of its versions and, beginning in 1924, for the notes to the five-stanza version as well.

Though many of the revisions that bring about new versions appear to be self-explanatory, the reasons for them are not. The five-stanza version in syllabic stanzas gives way to an experiment in free verse, which Moore also abandoned ultimately. The drafts of the thirteen-line version of "Poetry" show that she worked over them considerably, first by trimming four lines from the end:

and not until the misled literalist of the imagination

presents for our inspection,

imaginary gardens with real toads in them,

shall we encounter its misrule.

One of the most famous lines from "Poetry," "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," was in the course of revision dropped from an but the five-stanza version of the poem. Below the excision of the four lines above, Moore wrote, "we shall have nothing of the kind" ( see TMS A ), probably introducing a line to replace the four excised lines. In a later revision of the thirteen-line version, she trimmed phrases, changing "more important than" to "important beyond" and dropping "or trivial, or glib" after "but when they have been fashioned / into that which is unknowable" (TMS B).

The finished, free-verse version of "Poetry" that resulted from these revisions should be viewed in the context of a letter to Pound, dated 9 January 1919. In it, she stated her preference for poems in syllabic stanzas and observed that this was often the form in which she first conceived them.

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

A passage recorded in her conversation notebooks from the period when she was writing the first, five-stanza version of the poem as it appears in Others indicates that she herself may have felt an aversion to free verse?or else she only observed the presence of this sentiment in the intellectual climate.

I think he's narrow minded He likes nothing but free verse?(well- I've never written free verse and don?t know how to write it and they've been very kind to me?) Well they think it's free verse and that's all the same to them. (1250/23, 35 Rosenbach)

In any event, Moore must have been dissatisfied with the thirteen-line version of "Poetry," as she returned to syllabic stanzas for the poem's next authorized appearance in an anthology, this time in three, five-line stanzas, a version that appeared in Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson's *The New Poetry* (1932, 1934, 1935) and Louis Zukofsky's *A Test of Poetry* (1948, 1952). In 1929, Conrad Aiken, an acquaintance of Moore's and a contributor to

the Dial during her editorship (1925-29), chose the earlier, five-stanza version written in syllabic stanzas. As by that time Moore was bringing her years as editor of the Dial to a close, she could not have failed to know of this anthologization, for which she probably gave permission, although proof of her authorization is unavailable.

That the problems with the thirteen-line version may have been internal is born out by Moore's rapid dismissal of this version and by its lack of critical acceptance, even by her peers and critics. R. P. Blackmur calls this free-verse version of "Poetry" "a half-shrewd, half-pointless conceit against the willfully obscure" (141-71), a point with which George Nitchie, with more deference, nevertheless concurs (37).

But her disenchantment was not with the thirteen-line, free-verse version alone. The thirteen-line "Poetry," a free-verse experiment written for *Observations* (1925), represents one of the last times Moore resorted to the strategy of converting poetry drafted in syllabic stanzas into free verse. Many similar revisions took place before she accepted her editorial post on the Dial. From that vantage point, she must have gained the courage of her "conviction," the preference for syllabic stanzas, which she had expressed as early as 1919 in the letter to Pound. She was capable of writing to her satisfaction in free verse, as other free-verse experiments from this period demonstrate, in particular "A Grave" and "When I Buy Pictures." Several typed and autograph manuscripts show the origins of each of these famous free verse poems. Moore drafted them originally (and even published one) in syllabic stanzas. The decision to revise "Poetry," returning it to its original form in syllabic stanzas, was less the result of Moore's failure to write satisfactorily in free verse than the result of her preference for poetry in syllabic stanzas.

For an understanding of Moore's method of revision, "Poetry" is a litmus test. A poetic manifesto of sorts, it returns to a syllabic form and takes on a somewhat strident tone for its first appearance after February 1931, an important date because it marks the publication of the Objectivist issue of *Poetry* magazine. This issue joined the directions of two powerful poet-editors?Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*, and Louis Zukofsky, guest editor of the issue?both of whom later selected (or received from Moore herself) the three-stanza version of "Poetry" for their anthologies, Monroe's *The New Poetry* (1932, 1934, 1935) and Zukofsky's *A Test of Poetry* (1948, 1952). The Objectivist issue of Monroe's *Poetry* may have prompted Moore to revise her poem "Poetry" once again because in it Zukofsky had singled out Moore's poetry as among the "works absolutely necessary to students of poetry" (37).

Whatever the case, the three-stanza version of "Poetry" represents a new direction for the poem, especially in light of the previous, thirteen-line version in free verse printed in the second edition of *Observations* (1925). The thirteen-line version contained certain abstractions?"unknowable," "what we cannot understand," and "enigmas"?that were loosely joined to images of "the bat," "the elephant," and "the wolf," strung out at the poem's beginning without connectives or explanation, forming an almost Whitmanesque catalogue. By contrast, the three-stanza version joined these images with a preceding colon and tied them together with a concluding dash, forming one of Moore's idiosyncratic "miscellanies." As Louis Bogan noted, Moore had a "seventeenth-century passion for miscellany" (151). In 1927, Moore put it,

Academic feeling, or prejudice possibly, in favor of continuity and completion . . . is opposed to miscellany?to music programs, composite picture exhibitions, newspapers, magazines and anthologies. Any zoo, aquarium, library, garden or volume of letters, however, is an anthology and certain of these selected findings are highly satisfactory. . . . The selective

nomenclature?the chameleon's eye as we might call it so?of the connoisseur, expresses a genius for difference. (Bogan 151)

Not only are these elements bound together in a miscellany in the three-stanza version, the meaning of this grouping intensifies as it develops from a less structured catalogue into a more highly structured miscellany. In the thirteen-line version, "these phenomena are pleasing," but in the three-stanza version, "these phenomena are important." The three-stanza version is much more intent upon making its point than the thirteen-line version in free verse. Not surprisingly, therefore, an Objectivist credo erases the "enigmas" of the thirteen-line version, and in the three-stanza version this credo rather stridently amplifies what had once been Moore's discreetly discursive tone. The three- stanza version of "Poetry" asserts,

?these phenomena

are important; but dragged into conscious oddity by

half poets, the result is not poetry.

This we know. (TMS C)

Apparently, Moore retained an attachment to the three-stanza version in syllabic stanzas, even after 1935 when she returned to revising the longer five-stanza version in syllabic verse (her first version, dating from 1919). In "Brooklyn from Clinton Hill," an essay (first published in *Vogue* in 1960) that Moore included in *A Marianne Moore Reader* (1961), she referred enthusiastically to Zukofsky's *A Test of Poetry*, first published in 1948:

Louis Zukofsky's anthology, *A Test of Poetry*, exhilarated me when it came out. It wears well and in his courses for engineers at the Polytechnic Institute on Livingstone Street not far from the Packer Institute, Mr. Zukofsky expertly presents poetry, composition, and American literature. (*A Marianne Moore Reader* 185)

Despite her liking for this anthology, the three-stanza version of "Poetry" was probably little more than Moore's vociferous transition to yet another revision of the five-stanza version of the poem.

When she sent a typed manuscript of her poems for *Selected Poems* (1935) to T. S. Eliot at his request as an editor for Faber and Faber publishers, it must have included the revised, five-stanza version that borrowed from both the three-stanza version of "Poetry" and the original form in five, six-line stanzas. The typed manuscript Moore sent T. S. Eliot is not available. From the order of the poems in *Selected Poems*, how-ever, we may assume that even in the earliest manuscripts she must have sent him a version of "Poetry" written in syllabic stanzas, because in Eliot's ordering of the poems "Poetry" is included among others written in that form. Eliot's letter to Moore (20 June 1934) indicates as much:

I take it that the order which you give them which is the same as in "Observations" (a title, by the way, to which you have better claim than I) is the order of composition. The fact that your omissions are chiefly of the first numbers of that book lends colour to my assumption. If the chronological order were retained I think dates ought to be given. But I am inclined to re-shuffle, which is more or less arbitrary in that it could be varied considerably without damage; and I enclose a tentative list for your approval.

I want to start with the new poems hitherto uncollected, and shove some of the slighter

pieces towards the end. At your simplest, you baffle those who love "simple" poetry; and so one might as well put on difficult stuff at once, and only bid for the readers who are willing and accustomed to take a little trouble over poetry. I think this will pay better; and will excite the booksellers more.

Whether Moore first sent the three- or five-stanza version is not clear. Since it is the five-stanza version that ultimately appeared in *Selected Poems* (1935), we can assume that Eliot probably worked with it from the very beginning, particularly in view of its place in the volume. What is apparent is that, as she usually did for each new appearance of a poem in a collection of her poetry, Moore revised "Poetry," this time with a goal in mind, a goal set by the direction she took when preparing the three-stanza version that appeared shortly after publication of the *Objectivist* issue of *Poetry*.

To create the five-stanza version of "Poetry" published in *Selected Poems*, Moore revised an earlier, five-stanza version (*Observations* [1924]), introducing several significant changes. She smoothed out the structure of pauses to achieve a more conversational (and a less dogmatic) tone by adding a comma after "I" in line one: "I, too, dislike it"; and adding a period after "useful" in the second line of the second stanza, breaking up a long periodic sentence:

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but be-

cause they are

useful. When they become so derivative as to become

unintelligible. . . .

Former printings had shown a semicolon where the period appears after "useful" (see the variorum text of "Poetry" from *Collected Poems*, fourteenth impression [1968]).

In his capacity as editor for Faber and Faber, Eliot changed double to single quotes to conform to British standards of punctuation. As in the case of Eliot's remark about the booksellers' tastes, these revisions sanctioned by Moore—a change in the order of poems and altered punctuation—have more to do with the social and institutional demands of modern publishing than with the aesthetic demands of the author, yet both changes bring about revisions with aesthetic implications. For example, Moore began all of her subsequent major collections with this order from 1935 on, and the single quotation marks suggest that these are quotations inside a form of direct discourse. In regard to the poem itself, however, these changes in punctuation were usually subject to the tastes of the times throughout Moore's lifetime.

The more conversational tone punctuation changes conveyed was, however, also secured by other changes that Moore included in her 1935 revisions. She changed "one discovers that there is in it" to "one discovers in it"; and "on one hand" to the more colloquial and better balanced "on the one hand." With these changes, some of the strict prosody of the 1924 version gave way to a more idiomatic tone. By means of subtle changes in punctuation and syntax Moore soft peddles some of the heightened emphasis that supported didactic assertions in the three-stanza version (for example, "This we know"), and in the new five-stanza version, she makes her point with more of her characteristic reticence. In descriptive terms, the new version shows rather than tells its point, a method very characteristic of Moore's technique. In doing so, the poem takes on one of the most salient characteristics of

Moore's mature poetry, a lightness of touch and a conversational tone, which she is able to achieve without sacrificing depth or sincerity.

This version met its mark with reviewers. Peter Monroe Jack said of "Poetry" in an article in the New York Times Book Review,

Miss Moore is perfectly in the American tradition when she continues, ". . . these things are important / not because a / high- sounding interpretation can / be put upon them but be- / cause / they are useful." . . . When we say "the American tradition" we mean in the way it has cut into the English tradition of the singing lyric and the sacred eloquence of blank verse. Ezra Pound in his way, Eliot, Cummings and Marianne Moore in their ways have helped in this new pragmatism of poetry. (2)

It was this five-stanza version that Moore chose to revise thereafter, and it was this version that attracted the attention of more anthologists than any other. Nevertheless, after its appearance in *Collected Poems*, she dropped the poem altogether from *A Marianne Moore Reader* in 1961, only to restore it in revised form in *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore* published in 1967.

In this case, she took a very successful version of "Poetry," cut it to its first three lines, and put the longer, successful version in the notes, along with notes to the five-stanza version that were then relegated to the role of being notes on a note to the three-line version of the poem. If prior revisions were made to please a coterie committed to free verse or to a poetic dogma, or to please an editor such as T. S. Eliot, this one was probably made by Moore for herself alone, though not without a larger audience in mind.

Indeed, the final revision with its dramatic about face?cutting what was virtually an institution by 1967 and then almost nostalgically, or in a parody of nostalgia, restoring it?puts the earlier revisions of "Poetry" in perspective, particularly that version made for T. S. Eliot's edition of her *Selected Poems* in 1935. Her revisions suggest that the five-stanza version was restored not so much to please Eliot or a coterie as to sound like those she considered to be her contemporaries and her equals.

If we are to believe the message written between the lines of the conversation notebooks, there was a "coterie." As Williams said, "She was our saint" (146), and Kreymborg said of her, "She talked as she wrote and wrote as she talked" (239). No doubt she collected material for her conversation notebooks in the company of the Others group including Kreymborg, Williams, and others (Hoffman 153). Excerpts from the conversation notebook dating from the period when she was writing "Poetry," 1915-19, convey the flavor of conversation at such literary gatherings:

Dr. Williams If you don't understand the improvisation read the

explanation If you don't understand the explanation go

back to the improvisation and so on (1250/23, 69 Rosenbach)

to form an independent opinion I do not  
exaggerate wait a moment You interfere (making  
a bow)?"Miss Moore" I do not jest?I have never  
found anything of yours which I had trouble  
to discover something which had in it to me,  
meaning I might not have read into t[he] words  
t[he] meaning wh[ich] was intended that I sh[oul]d  
there to me then was meaning to find

Let me tell you about Miss Monroe, Miss M

is no more a judge of poetry than . . .

not poetry than that andiron

It is so long since they have known

what a truth looked like that if they

were to stumble on it

accident they w[ou]ld not recognize

She had included in the list every poet of

importance in America except myself?and

incidentally yourself. I had not the personality?

to interest DM. . . . Mr. Wolf

this

is not a year for art. astute impudent,

cool, collected Mr. Bodheim they want it

(Poetry) to be more lyrical, conventional

uplifting, optimistic?unoffensive

inspiring helpful educational pleasant and

inspiring

To try to put y[ou]r things in

Poetry is like putting new wine in old bottles.

I came away so loaded down w[ith] ideas

I c[ou]ld hardly keep the sidewalk.

(1250/23, 57 Rosenbach)

Her mastery of the conversational tone, one of the most striking attributes of much of her poetry (Shankar 147), an effect she notes frequently in others (see her essay on Abraham Lincoln, for example [Predilections 197-204]), is one of the most forceful organizing factors of the poem "Poetry." Which is to say, that her response to her audience may have been as much to copy its diction as to please it?or perhaps she knew that to do the first was to accomplish both at the same time. That she listened critically is evident in her prose in such works as " 'New' Poetry since 1912" published in the Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1926 (172-79) and in the unpublished essay "English Literature since 1914," an essay written for a contest held by The Athenaeum in spring of 1920. Mailed 9 April 1920, the manuscript probably did not arrive in time to meet the 19 April deadline. A transcript of a carbon of it was printed in the Marianne Moore Newsletter, "not as finished work but as documentation of MM's interests at the beginning of her career as a critic" ("MM Surveys English Literature" 13). Such essays make it abundantly clear that though she declined to mention herself in these contexts (on 13 June 1926, she wrote Braithwaite: "You suggest my name also, but would be willing should you not, that I make no comment upon myself?"), she understood her place in the social and literary circles she frequented. To these groups she may have owed in part the esoteric, witty conversational tone of "Poetry," though these influences were always indirect.

A like-minded coterie and the poet-editors who, like herself, were all caught up in a particular literary climate?all must have influenced the evolution of the poem's form. In the light of a preference for free verse in the late teens and early twenties, she converted it (and other poems written originally in syllabic stanzas) into free verse. After her term as editor of *The Dial* (roughly 1925-29), once she knew that her syllabic stanzas were acceptable, she began to focus on the content of the poem, perhaps counting herself among those who sought to convey beliefs and images via rather self-conscious forms, such as Zukofsky and other objectivists. In 1935, the return to the earlier, five-stanza version in syllabic verse took place under the editorship of T. S. Eliot, who advised discreetly at a very great distance. If these revisions suggest her changing roles?first as discovered poet, then as a colleague among poets, then as an editor, then as a major poet in her own right?the last revision of "Poetry" suggests her final status, achieved over a period of fifty years, as a major modernist.

Even prior to the revision of 1967, some had embraced the five-stanza version of "Poetry" as a modernist document. In *The Influence of Ezra Pound*, K. L. Goodwin, claiming that "her natural predilection for precise, objective description found convenient theoretical justification in Imagism, which she has practised assiduously throughout her career," declares that in "Poetry" Moore states that "poetry must be made up . . . of what is 'genuine', of 'raw material' . . . in all its rawness'." Goodwin asserts that Moore distinguishes between a symbolic and an imagistic use of this material in the same way that Pound does in his article "Vorticism" (157-58). In the same vein, Jean Garrigue called "Poetry" one of the nine poems in which Moore is both "poet and critic, writing incidentally about literature in general or poetry in particular" (204). Not only is this a modernist subject, it is also a modernist treatment, in Garrigue's view establishing "a new touchstone," which "is not the old and famous beautiful and true" but the

"genuine" which is, then, the "useful" (Garrigue qtd. in Unger 204). Garrigue concludes:

Seemingly straightforward, it is oblique when you look into it and complex in terms of what's left out as well as what's put in. And with its iconoclastic and reformist frankness it is upsetting a good many applecarts.

What could be more modernist?

Moore herself supplied the answer when she revised "Poetry" once again in 1967 for the first edition of her Complete Poems. She cut the poem to all but its first three lines and put a new revision of the five-stanza version in a note, retaining the notes that had come to append the five-stanza version, which became notes on a note to the three-line version of 1967. In one stroke, she transformed the poem, in one sense revealing the skeleton that had been there since 1919. As a self-conscious modernist?stubbornly resisting postmodernism?she reverted to an Imagist technique, perhaps grown overly familiar by the 1960s, revealing the image-within-the-image, and she deployed a modernist device, appending footnotes, a method that both Pound and Eliot had explored. In this context, her drastic revisions of 1967 seem at worst playful and at best an insightful homage to a mellowing tradition, all too susceptible of parody. What saves the 1967 revision of "Poetry" in this respect is its conscious, even self-conscious, regard for its sources?that revision of the original, five-stanza version, imbedded in a footnote.

In an important sense, the three-line version of "Poetry" with its elaborate, perhaps even ridiculous note, is Moore's precursor to this variorum text of the poem. Besides confirming the relationships among various versions of "Poetry" suggested by Moore's revision of it for the 1967 printing of Complete Poems, this variorum text of "Poetry" highlights what might be called the spirit or core of the poem, whatever remained intact throughout the revisionary process. It establishes that certain parts of "Poetry" never changed (if we consider the notes to the 1967 revision part of the poem): the title and the final word, "poetry"; the opening disclaimer, "I too dislike it"; a miscellany of "phenomena"; the importance of the "genuine"; and the rhetorical device of a speaker addressing an audience, an "I" and a "you," in the case of the three-stanza version the "you" suggested only by the locution "I too" and later, "we know." These elements afford a central unit to which Moore added an assortment of related pieces. But this dressing and undressing of the mannequin, so to speak, was a conscious technique rather than the attention-seeking gesture some critics have made it out to be. On the contrary, the revisions of the poem as evidenced in the variorum text appended here prove a case for "Poetry" as Moore's personal expression of her views of modernism in poetry and her own modernist method.

The revisions and what remains intact throughout the revisionary process also explain why several critical approaches, based on different versions of "Poetry," nevertheless still pertain. Blackmur's case (141-71) still has some validity even though it was based on what he had seen in 1935, apparently a revision of the five-stanza version. Frankenberg's reading of 1948 (173-77) still makes sense, though he would deny that Moore advocated modernism in "Poetry," and he does not refer to the three-stanza version of the poem also published in 1948 in Zukofsky's *A Test of Poetry*. Proposed in 1981, Costello's centrifugal model for Moore's creative process?the spinning out of new lines from a central core of meaning, an ongoing creative process?expresses only one view of the phenomena, from the outside looking in (228). The reader of the variorum text is at the inside, looking out, like a visitor to the Musée Pablo Picasso in Paris, gazing at various states of *David et Betsabée*, a series of lithographs after a painting [dated 1526] by Lucas Cranach, the Picasso series dated 1947-49. Like the various states of Picasso's lithograph hanging side by side, the four versions of Moore's

"Poetry" appear in the variorum text, a kind of literary museum. She never was particularly concerned to replace an early version with a new one, and in fact seems to have been quite content to allow concurrent publication of different versions. In 1934, she allowed the three-stanza version to appear in *The New Poetry*, although at the time she was probably at work on her revision of the five-stanza version for *Selected Poems*. After this five-stanza version was published in *Selected Poems* in 1935, the three-stanza version appeared twice more, even in a new anthology for which we may assume Moore gave permission herself since she speaks of it so fondly in 1960 in her essay, "Brooklyn from Clinton Hill" (Moore 1961). The three-stanza version of "Poetry" appeared twice (in 1948 and 1952 in Louis Zukofsky's *A Test of Poetry*) after the new five-stanza version of 1935, with the second printing of the five-stanza version, revised yet again, included in *Collected Poems*, first published in 1951. This revision of the five-stanza version appeared twice in later impressions of *Collected Poems* (1968 and 1975), the first of these printings appearing prior to Moore's death but subsequent to the first publication of the three-line version of "Poetry" written for the *Complete Poems* (1967).

"Poetry" in its many versions is also like the Picasso lithograph series of *David et Bethsabée* in that just as Picasso reflects upon the subject of staring in his depiction of the biblical story, Moore reflects upon the subject of poetry itself within a poem. This self-reflexive preoccupation is not exclusively the province of modern artists and authors, as Picasso's source of inspiration suggests (his lithographs are after a picture by the German Renaissance painter and engraver Lucas Cranach), but it certainly found a place in modernism. In her essay "Subject, Predicate, Object," Moore insisted, "Form is synonymous with content" (7). The self-reflexive technique is a familiar method of all modernists, practitioners of a genre that comments upon its own conventions as a way of extending meaning beyond the scope of the literal content of a work.

We are forced to cast our net wider so as to include more than the third level of vraisemblance and intelligibility and must allow the dialectical opposition which the text presents to result in a synthesis at a higher level where the grounds of intelligibility are different. We read the poem or novel as a statement about poems or novels (since it has, by its opposition, adumbrated that theme). To interpret it is to see how its various types of content or devices make a statement about the imaginative ordering of the world that takes place in literature. (Culler 151)

In the long form of the poem, she uses the word "poetry" only twice and enlists a procession of anti-poetical substitutes to make, almost invariably, the same point, one she underscores in her final revision of the poem by cutting its size to three lines. In an interview after the publication of *Complete Poems*, Moore said that this revision arose from dislike of unnecessary verbal display in the early poems (Costello 25). But as Costello points out:

The two versions [the three-line version and the five-stanza version in its note] stand not as original and revision but as two alternative statements. . . . It was not her usual practice to include her variorum. If, as she says, "omissions are not accidents," the corollary may be "inclusions are intentional." (25)

She abandoned neither version, though she carefully distinguished between them.

The Imagist technique as defined by Goodwin is particularly evident in light of the printing history of the poem, which shows a gradual revelation of the core of the poem, the image-within-the-image (159). In "A Grave," the poem's core turns up in the process of composition, long-lined drafts yielding at one point to an autograph manuscript of two lines, later transformed to the line selected by Goodwin as the core of the poem, a line linking "A Grave"

to its partner "When I Buy Pictures": "the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave." The core image shows up in "The Steeple-Jack," "The Student," and "The Hero," where the last lines take on this function. Moore seems to have gradually substituted inductive for deductive argument, a trend evident even in "Poetry's" last revision, which turned it into a three-line aphorism upon its own evolution.

Not only do Moore's exclusions result in a kind of modernist ideogram, her inclusions too are modern. Like William Carlos Williams and Hart Crane, Moore advocated a place for all types of experience in "Poetry," carrying this belief to the same extreme as had Pound and Eliot. The notes to the poem constitute another modernist inclusion, as do those of T. S. Eliot (Goodwin 162-63). She approached this task, however, with ambivalence, expressing her misgivings about the notes in Observations in letters to T. S. Eliot:

Here are the notes which pertain to the material recently sent you. They could be reduced further, or omitted if that would be best, and I would say this with respect to the notes on recent work given Mr. Morley. Despite the extreme amount of conscience I seem to have shown, in preparing the 1924 book I think I was erratic, or somnambulistic; it looks to me, that is to say, as if I had "quoted" things that were my own, and as if I had taken from you the titles, Observations, and Picking and Choosing; (16 May 1934, Rosenbach)

and to her brother:

Everything is very cheerful and convenient except that I am irked greatly by having to type the notes for my poems. They seem jejune & careless in some ways & this is a bugbear for me but soon it will be out of my paw. (16 May 1934, Rosenbach)

Though she reveals two sources for "Poetry" in the notes to the five-stanza version, she chose not to document at least eight other sources. In her notes, Moore gives the sources for the phrases "business documents and school-books" and "literalists of the imagination" (see the appended variorum text). Yet the sources she left out of her notes are no less significant.

For example, the famous opening phrase, "I, too, dislike it" appears in notes Moore copied from The Notebooks of Samuel Butler (London, 1912) not long before she wrote "Poetry." The passage sets forth Butler's encounter with Silvio, a young boy who "knew a little English and was very fond of poetry." Moore altered the first line to read "Silvio (on Wordsworth)" in her transcription of this passage:

"And you shall read Longfellow much in England?"

"No," I replied, "I don't think we read him very much."

"But how is that? He is a very pretty poet."

"Oh yes, but I don't greatly like poetry myself."

"Why don't you like poetry?"

"You see, poetry resembles metaphysics, one does not mind one's own, but one does not like anyone else's."

("On Disliking Poetry" 10)

The source gives the poem's opening phrase a new dimension, for it applies to the would-be poets as well as to those who simply "dislike it," another suggestion of the way the poem is designed to speak to a group of Moore's like-minded literary friends.

She took another phrase from a clipping from the *Spectator* (London) for 10 May 1913 in which we find the source for the phrase "the raw material of poetry / in all its rawness." The clipping is of a review by "C" of a work entitled *Ancient Gems in Modern Settings* by G. B. Grundy. It is an edition of the Greek Anthology. "C" asks how it is that despite the artificial and commonplace matter of the writings, they still charm discerning readers:

The reasons are not far to seek. In the first place, no productions of the Greek genius conform more wholly to the Aristotelian canon that poetry should be an imitation of the universal. Few of the poems in the Anthology depict any ephemeral phase or fashion of opinion, like the Euphuism of the sixteenth century. All appeal to emotions which endure for all time, and which, it has been aptly said, are the true raw material of poetry. ("On Raw Material" 10-11)

The phrase seems to have informed the content of the poem: there is nothing arcane about the content of the poem in any of its forms, even though the poem speaks to a varied, and in part a very sophisticated, audience.

That Moore neglected to cite a particular source did not mean that she was unaware of her indebtedness or of the phrase for which she was indebted. This is demonstrated in a letter she wrote 18 May 1950 to college student Thomas P. Murphy, who had asked her to explain what she meant by "the genuine" and how she felt about free verse, the rules for which he thought the poem "Poetry" set forth:

I meant by the genuine, a core of value-expressed in whatever way the writer can best express it. Like you, I prefer rhyme to free verse; I like a tune and I feel that one should be as clear as one's natural reticence allows one to be. The maximum efficiency of expression in poetry, should be at least as great as it could be in prose; certainly, one should be natural. The reversed order of words seems to me poetic suicide. We put up with it often for the sake of some preponderant virtue but it is always disaffecting?to me?except as an archaic effect sustained with an artistry as exacting as the opposite effect could be sustained. ("The Genuine in 'Poetry'" 14-15)

At the end of the letter, she reiterates, stating that the poem is "expressed in whatever way the writer can best express it." That she should define the "genuine" as the "core of value" is also significant, particularly in light of the poem's revisions, since the final, three-line version ends on the word "genuine" and contains the "core of value" of the poem in its longer version, what has been called the ideogram of the poem, the image-within-image (Goodwin 159). Thoughts such as these expressed in 1950 may have led to the dramatic revision of 1967, which drastically altered the entire poem.

Other concealed sources for phrases in the poem were Moore's conversation notebooks and, by extension, her conversations with fellow poets, friends, and her family. In the notebooks, we find verbatim a phrase from a line that was eventually dropped from the later versions of the poem, "we are not daft about the meaning" (1250/23, 40 Rosenbach: "Alfred Oct. 12, 1916 I am not daft about the meaning"). The notebooks also contain phrases that were retained, at

least in the longer versions: "hands that can grasp" ( 1250/24, 35 Rosenbach) and "we do not admire what / we cannot understand" ( 1250/24, 30 Rosenbach). Since Moore occasionally cites a conversation in her notes, why doesn't she cite these? The same might be said about sources embedded in her reading notebooks and lifted from obscure places. It is true that she never claimed precision for her notes and seems to have supplied them under duress. Whether published or suppressed, they are very unlike Pound's or Eliot's, and bear the imprint of Moore's own eclectic tastes and idiosyncratic style. It is not surprising, then, that the notes constitute her most emphatic send up?and demonstration?of modernist technique.

In her note to the poem "Poetry," she emphasizes the place for the five-stanza version; it belongs in the place for those things that came before the finished poem, its sources. By giving the note an archival function, she allowed it to become a cue to her readers, telling them how to react to her latest venture into unconventionality. In this light, the revision and its appended note are hardly frivolous. For Moore, this change was loaded with meanings, and the note tells us that she intended the revision to have meaning for readers as well, and not just shock value.

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[Ed. Note: See the original essay for a 16-page variorum edition of the various versions of Moore's "Poetry" and an extensive publication history.]

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