

MARIANNE MOORE'S ALTERNATIVE NATURE:
THE EMERGENCE OF MODERNISM
IN THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN NATURE
AND CULTURE

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

Jennifer Coleman, B.A., M.F.A.

San Marcos, Texas
May, 2007

COPYRIGHT

by

Jennifer Coleman

2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking my husband, Eddie Lieber, for encouraging me not to take an easy route and challenge myself every day.

I am very thankful for the members of my committee who continued with me as I discovered Marianne Moore. First I would like to thank Dr. Blanchard who fostered my interest in Modernism. I also owe many thanks to Dr. Leder who gave me her time and patience, especially in being the first to take on my project. Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Peirce for encouraging me to give voice to my poetic sensibility while maintaining an academic approach.

This manuscript was submitted on March 23, 2007.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. LOOKING, PERCEIVING, AND LANGUAGE.....	11
III. USING MARIANNE MOORE’S “AN OCTOPUS” AS THE BODY TO UNDERSTAND THE LEGS.....	17
IV. CHAOS AND EGOS.....	40
V. CONSUMPTION, CONTROL, AND FUTILITY.....	53
VI. CONCLUSION.....	67
WORKS CITED.....	70

ABSTRACT

**MARIANNE MOORE'S ALTERNATIVE NATURE:
THE EMERGENCE OF MODERNISM
IN THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN NATURE
AND CULTURE**

by

Jennifer Coleman, B.A, M.F.A.

Texas State University-San Marcos

May 2007

SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: KATHLEEN PEIRCE

Marianne Moore has a distinct Modernist aesthetic which often times is forced into the common boundaries of high Modernism, as tenuous as they are. Instead of manipulating the poetry and the myths surrounding the poet to fit the common characteristics, it is imperative to consider Moore's distinct images, especially at the intersection of nature and culture. By considering both the content of the images and the form, readers can piece together Moore's own distinct version of Modernism.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to T.S. Eliot, “Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood” (*Dante* 8). While the reader may initially perceive emotions and overriding tones of a Moore poem, it is the combination of the initial impact of the poem and the images in the poem that give the poem meaning. The reader must pay attention to more than objects represented as words; the reader must also perceive objects as images, and images as interactive. Poetry is grounded in the act of looking and the act of perceiving. While T.S. Eliot’s statement may be true of all poetry, there is no time period more fitting for this phrase than the literary period that Eliot is most associated with, Modernism. One poet whose work is exemplified in T.S. Eliot’s quote is Marianne Moore. Her poetry is both complicated and systematic, experimental and traditional, image-laden and emotive. It asks the reader to both look and perceive. Marianne Moore is the embodiment of the Modernist poet characterized by oppositions—especially in managing a balance in her poetry between recognizing and giving credibility to those social concerns of the time that she felt compelled to embrace and critiquing those social concerns of the time that she found problematic. Moore was simultaneously “[. . .] both at the center of twentieth-century modernism and at its outer limits” (Martin x). In her poetry, the reader perceives the influence of the 20th century, yet Moore does not employ

typical high Modern characteristics that many of her contemporaries included in their own presentations of art.

The Modernist era was a time of great permissions, not only in poetry and prose, but in science, art, and many other realms of interpretive work. Because of the multitude of changes taking place both culturally and aesthetically, the characteristics of Modernism are difficult to narrow down. Writers and artists were presented with a freedom not only in what subject matter they pursued but in their forms as well. New styles emerged in poetry, and old traditional styles were quickly abandoned or reformed. With the advent of the Modernist era there arose a new desire and near obligation by writers and artists to develop new forms that were more representative of the early 20th century experience. The content of literature moved away from the traditional romantic era's reliance on sentimentality and realism in nature as well as the security of spiritual truths that could be found in the natural, and the content swiftly moved to a reality beyond nature and imbedded in the everyday or even mundane. Unlike Victorians, though, who also wrote of the everyday, Modernists wrote against the idealized world of happy endings found in Victorian texts in favor of a constructed reality where the text necessitated an open ending and the protagonists struggle in facets of life beyond mere love. This new version of reality, where reality is a construct that involves perception, required that the audience or reader be involved in creating the reality; reality exists in the act of perception. Mere description was no longer adequate; instead, there must include a realistic description that spoke not only of external characteristics but of internal characteristics as well. There must be an attempt to connect and pull further

inside a character rather than offering the reader a simple description and an absolute and reliable conclusion.

The ambiguity found in the conclusions of novels and conclusive ideas of a work permeated the Modernist texts in other ways as well. For instance, spiritual truths were questioned and religion was told as a myth. Nothing was consistent as people, objects, time, and all other topics became subject to fragmentation. Work and efforts became futile as the population began to feel that history was merely a myth where its progression was not linear, as taught in school, but cyclical and, thus, the wars of the past could easily become the wars of the future. In fact, one of the controlling structures of Modernist works is the myth form, in which the action of the texts is near cyclical and repetitive.

While Moore's poetry keeps the reader moving in a cyclical form, her images invite the reader to circle back to previous observations in order to discover meaning. The use of the poetic image is another important structural principle emerging in high Modernism, and it is a structural principle that Moore relied heavily upon to hold her works together both as individual pieces and as a complete oeuvre. In a time when form was experimental and poems were no longer held together by traditional rhyme and meter, other significant structural elements necessarily emerged. Modernism was a time characterized by change and varying stability, not only in content, but in form as well.

Because, as Oscar Wilde points out, art shapes life, in the years leading up to World War I, art took on a controversial role as commentator on the harsh realities of early 20th century life. Though texts often addressed the unsympathetic realities of everyday life, art itself, including prose and poetry, was no longer accessible to all as

widespread experimentation began to take place coupled with a heavy reliance on allusions. Yet because art also had a recognizable effect on the public as commentary on “[. . .] the threat/promise of revolutionary cultural and political change [. . .]” during the early 20th century, the impact of art forms could not entirely be ignored (Dekoven 183). As James Longenbach points out, “As art came to be seen divorced from the culture at large, the work of the ivory tower rather than the community, artists paradoxically put greater pressure on art to perform substantive social work” (103). There was an unwritten and unspoken contract between artists, poets included, and the public, though many shirked any responsibility and embraced the notion of “art for art’s sake.” This influential idea became a motivator for many poets and allowed them to justify their intense focus on form and subsequent elitism and the abandonment of traditional, more accessible forms, where readers could rely on standard expectations. The idea became a guise for ego as the once alienated artists now found artistic freedom. Many poets became egocentric in their views and in their poetry, abandoning the social responsibilities of art and any connection to art for life’s sake. Yet, not all poets swiftly and wholeheartedly embraced all aspects of Modernism, one of whom was Marianne Moore who “faulted her fellow modernists for their ego, moral failings, and lack of spiritual vision” (Erkkila 104). Moore did recognize that, “[. . .] to be a writer meant inescapably to be an ‘egoist.’ This attitude marks Moore’s writing throughout her life [. . .],” yet “[. . .] she may well be the modernist who most questions the value and effectiveness of an assertive artistic ego” (Molesworth 49). Moore balanced art for art’s sake with art for life’s sake in what came to be her distinctive vision of high Modernism.

As a poet vested in balancing a multitude of oppositions, Moore successfully both recognizes fundamental Modernist beliefs and criticizes them. She did not take the opportunity to make wide-scale obvious attacks on the current political and cultural situations worldwide in her poetry; instead, she takes an understated approach to the topics emerging at the turn of the 20th century. Her approach to her poetry does not include the intent to tell the tale of the century. Moore, instead, focuses her poetry on much smaller, more local subjects, forcing the reader to infer meaning through his or her own perceptions. As James Longenbach points out, “Some modern poets (Hardy, Moore, Stevens) resisted the twentieth century’s epic challenges, hanging on to strategically circumscribed world, but all poets felt them” (103). While many of her contemporaries were bent on creating the poems of a lifetime—Pound’s *Cantos* and Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, for example—Moore chose smaller subjects located in tangible fixed environments, which were usually natural. Though Moore was immersed in the intense beginnings of Modernism, she only recognized and adhered to some aspects that came to characterize works typical of Modernism; in fact, according to Moore’s biographer, Charles Molesworth, “At times her ethical values could make Moore seem rather like a reluctant modernist” (xiii). Critics often question Moore’s relationship to the Modernist canon and find, “[. . .] a sense in which Miss Moore is not especially modern, not of the twentieth century, except in incidentals and superficials” (Nitchie 173-74). While Moore’s form is experimental, often her clear objective observations and underlying sense of spiritual truths pose as obstacles to those critics who strive to fit Moore into a form of high Modernism that conforms to all characteristics that this multi-layered term encompasses.

Though Marianne Moore developed deep and reciprocal relationships with many of her Modernist contemporaries, she became an outlaw from much of the Modernist form and beliefs by maintaining her own traditions “and slightly offbeat rituals” during a time when the outcomes and abilities of tradition and rituals to provide any consolation or meaning were heavily questioned (Erkkila 106). While she did not fully embrace some of the beliefs held by her contemporaries, she was never excluded from parties and developed intimate friendships with some of the many artists she found while living in New York City. Yet even while surrounded by her forward-thinking Modernist contemporaries, she maintained a quiet life under the eyes of her mother, a devout Presbyterian with strong notions of proper behavior, even when it came to Marianne Moore’s own poetry. Moore was brought up in a Presbyterian household where her grandfather was a minister and her brother eventually became a minister. Spirituality and blind faith, in what most Modernists were to perceive as myths, characterized Moore’s upbringing and lifestyle where she struggled to balance notions of proper behavior in the changing climate of the early 20th century. Marianne’s mother provided her with a rock and a role model. Mrs. Moore was heavily involved in her daughter’s writing and often looked over Moore’s poems for her. “For Mrs. Moore, proper expression and proper forms [. . .] were often at least as important as proper beliefs and inner values” (Molesworth 21).

Not only was Moore steeped in her own personal history as it related to religion, she was also part of a tight-knit family where outsiders struggled to fit in. In addition to her mother, Moore had a strong relationship with her brother. In an interview with Donald Hall in 1963, Moore credits her brother, and to a lesser degree her mother, as the

two people to whom she turns for criticism of her work and in whose responses she gauges the value of her work (31). Moore's relationship with her brother was so intimate that the two of them developed a complicated system of pet names, all of which were animals. These animals reappear later in Moore's work, including "An Octopus," as a source of stability and morality in her Modernist poetry—a characteristic that most of the poetry of her contemporaries lacked.

In addition to locating morality in her poetry, Moore constructs her works counter to most Modernists in that she relies heavily upon the natural world. In a time characterized by the disappearance of nature as a subject or setting, Moore creates a multitude of poems that heavily rely upon nature as both subject and setting. Moore is most recognized for her animal poems, in which animals perform the actions most often associated with humans, yet "somehow or other, Moore's animals remain animals" (Schulze 5). Rather than refusing the pathetic fallacy as poets such as Robert Frost subtly did, Moore fully utilizes the technique to create a world in which many of the emerging values of the early 20th century did not exist. For instance, through Moore's speakers, readers sense the fragmented sense of self that typifies the time period, yet by creating an alternative natural world, Moore writes against the commonly held belief of disillusionment with traditions and rituals, or, rather, underlying truths that held fast even when surrounded by the fragmented self.

In her poetry, Moore's counter-Modernist world does not abruptly emerge with a outpouring of religious propaganda. Instead, she is able to subtly counter-balance the more Modernist beliefs found in her poetry. "Despite having a good deal of personal piety, Moore wrote no ostensibly religious poetry; in fact, relatively few explicit religious

references occur in her poems” (Molesworth xvi), yet Moore is able to create a dichotomous and reliable world for the reader. Her poetry may have an undercurrent of spirituality, yet it is not didactic; “it must be ’lit with piercing glances into the life of things’; / it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it” (“When I Buy Pictures” 17-18). As a pluralist, Moore does not need to defend her religion in an obvious way as a right or wrong religion; instead, her spirituality emits itself in her writing merely as the notion that it is not the human that is divine and that not all rituals and traditions should be deemed questionable. She can simultaneously maintain her own Presbyterian beliefs and still create poetry open to other religions. Readers get a sense of a spirituality in Moore’s work, specifically in her animals’ senses of morality where they act out of necessity and basic Darwinian survival instincts rather than pride, politics, and pleasure killing. “Woven with rare skill amongst the exotic fauna and strange protagonists in the special reality of her poetry is a lifetime of clear-eyed examination and affirmation of the eternal verities that are the strengths of any society. [. . .] she is, however, no tiresome moralist” (Edsall 516). Moore’s use of animals does not take on a didactic note; instead, she allows the reader to perceive the underlying eternal truths on their own terms. Moore supplies the reader with observations that subtly construct the natural world as that world which is most consistent and reliable, not to mention moral—especially when confronted with inherent chaos.

Marianne Moore’s primary use of poetic images of the natural world is not necessarily to objectively align the natural world with an aesthetic more morally-grounded than her socially-constructed world. As Ezra Pound says of Marianne Moore’s work, “It has none of the stupidity beloved of the ‘lyric’ enthusiast and the writer and

reader who take refuge in scenery description of nature, because they are unable to cope with the human” (46). Unlike the Romantic’s poetry that concerned the origination of spirituality in nature, Moore’s poetic observations of nature serve to provide the reader with a better sense of the human world and the egoism and isolation emerging in the characteristic Modernist worldview. In nature, she creates a location where there is no imperialistic notion of industrialization and materialism, which is counter to the cultural world she constructs. Additionally, nature becomes a setting for those “[. . .] Americans [that] cultivated a nostalgic antimodernism to help alleviate anxieties accompanying technological, economical, and social developments of the time” (Ladino 291). Not only are readers prevented from “take[ing] refuge in scenery description of nature” because the natural images function as cultural commentary but because of Moore’s open acknowledgment of unmitigated chaos in the natural world as well. Through her observations, Moore is able to present to the reader a chaotic natural world that is counter to the typical Modernist assessment associated with her contemporaries because she does not seek to control the disorder. Yet, amidst the unencumbered power and chaos of the natural world, there emerge underlying truths that many of her contemporaries touted as falsehoods passed down from Socratic times. Moore’s aesthetic, though, remains open to the surrounding chaos, and her poetry makes little attempt to instill control.

Because of the mood of uncertainty in which Modernist poets worked, the focus of many poems often became “a tiny world of which he [the author] could be certain,” where “Spiritual consolation is hard to come by, [. . .] and small objects, carefully detailed, become increasingly important” (Longenbach 104). While the typical Modernist poet relied upon a world constructed in small detailed images that carried little

spiritual significance, Moore is able to create both worlds, especially in those poems she published in the literary journal *Dial*, and these worlds usually manifest themselves as the natural world and the cultural world. The poems that Moore published in *Dial* hold a significant place in Moore's oeuvre and her role in Modernism because the literary journal was "in its heyday the best-financed, best-produced, most wide-ranging, and most widely distributed periodical with a modernist bias in America" and "in early 1920 became Moore's chief outlet for publication" (Slatin 100). By looking at the intersection of nature and culture in Moore's *Dial* poems, the reader can begin to develop a sense of Marianne Moore's distinctly personal version of Modernism as it emerged in the early 20th century, using her poetry as a basis, rather than her myth. Moore did not buy into the commonly held disdain for values that stemmed from the First World War; instead, Moore subtly maintains values and spiritual certainty in her representation of nature in her poetry. She writes against the disillusionment that was prevalent in her contemporaries' works by creating a natural environment content and thriving with rituals and traditions. While the human world was filled with much to doubt, the natural, for Moore, is far more certain, and, importantly, far more powerful. According to Charles Tomlinson, "The imaginative harmony of civilization and nature [. . .] is made doubly telling by the intermingling of human and natural attributes in each other's sphere [. . .]" (7). The natural and human images in Moore's poetry do work harmoniously together, but it is not because of what the images have in common; it is those attributes and characteristics in which they differ that give the poetic images their power and the reader a sense of Marianne Moore's distinctive Modernist aesthetic.

CHAPTER II

LOOKING, PERCEIVING, AND LANGUAGE

In art, sometimes it is that which is “no more discernible / than the intensity of the mood” (“When I Buy Pictures” 4-5) which can be enrapturing, and, sometimes, it is “quite the opposite” (“When I Buy Pictures” 6) which can be enrapturing, and, usually, as in the case of Marianne Moore’s poetry, it is both. Moore’s poetry requires the reader to both look at the distanced speaker’s observations and perceive how those images, as well as the form, contribute to the overall meaning. The act of perceiving is imperative in Moore’s work because, as she repeatedly mentions in her poetry, often times there is “an intensity of the mood” (“When I Buy Pictures” 5) which language has a limited ability to convey in an absolute way.

Moore’s images are not mere pictures, but they are clearly rendered and precisely written observations. They are “that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor” (“When I Buy Pictures” 2). Yet for Moore, the image is not just a close inspection of an event or detail, it relies heavily upon the imagination to form connections *between* images. In understanding poetry, like understanding art, “Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality of that detracts from one’s enjoyment.” (“When I Buy Pictures” 13) Just as Steven Dedalus of James Joyce’s novel *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* begins the novel with awakening of his senses, so does the reader first depend on senses when approaching the imagery in Moore’s poetry. Likewise, as

Dedalus moves forward to rely both on intellect and finally imagination to understand his surrounding world, so must the reader to understand the world contained in Moore's poetry. Moore uses her imagery to create a reality that is not based merely on the body's senses, but on the act of perception as well—a technique typical of Modernist works. Her method of creating images that connect through obscure associations is similar to the approach advocated by another important Modernist, Ford Madox Ford. Ford believed that to be authentic, the speaker must move through a varied set of digressions that eventually reveal the true nature of the human mind. Moore incorporates a similar patterning in her writing as her speakers move through images, and readers must return to those images in an attempt to end up with a creative whole. In this sense, the imagination is necessary to connect the disassociated images, and readers must look below the surface values of Moore's observations as well as take into account the poems' forms. It is the use of Moore's images and the reader's imagination and perception that gives Moore's poems structure during a time of tremendous experimentation:

This emphasis on imagination gives the cohesive quality to many of her poems [. . .] the search for traditional logical development deludes him [the reader]. When he is willing to accept the imaginative connections between the various matters of the poem, he will readily see that the common qualities are brought about [. . .].(Rees 233)

Moore's images are not merely realistic interpretations, but involve the senses, the intellect, and the imagination.

These three aspects of understanding Moore's poetry become even more important to the reader when dealing with a speaker who is usually not the focus of

Moore's poem. More often than not, Moore's speakers are observers, not participants. In her poems, Moore typically creates a speaker who is somewhat distanced from the images presented; thus, the focus of the poem becomes the object and not the subject. The personal feelings and distinct memories and associations of the speaker are not what is seemingly important, but it is the uncertain world itself in which the speaker lives and observes that is most significant in Moore's poetry.

In most instances, Moore's speakers present objective views of the world and do not shy away from openly expressing the chaos found in the environment. There is no toning down of the images and no interjection of sentimentality on behalf of the speaker. To remove the speaker even further from the environment of the poem, Marianne Moore rarely references her speakers, and when she does they are an elusive "I" who may include the reader in "we." Occasionally, the speaker becomes the second person "you," as found in "An Octopus." The conflation of the seemingly objective speaker with "you" adds to the sense of fragmentation in Marianne Moore's poetry. The effect of the disjointed speaker is a sense of distance and objectivity between the speaker and the subject, leaving room for readers to incorporate their own perceptions into the meaning of the poem. At the level of understanding then, the poem exists at the intersection of nature, or the objective observation, and culture, or the reader's perception. The poem's meaning, then, is not just contingent upon the ways that nature and culture intersect on the level of its language, but also on the level of its analysis.

Although Moore's speakers avoid outward sentiment, the speaker is not entirely objective because poetry necessitates the use of language. Language appears often in Moore's poetry as the subject of a failed attempt to properly convey meaning. For

instance, in "An Octopus" the speaker points out that the environment is one "of which 'the visitor dare never fully speak at home / for fear of being stoned as an impostor,'" (73-4). The beauty that the visitors experience cannot be put into words and made believable. In this sense, words fail the visitors as they attempt to convey meaning, especially when trying to convey an abstract idea such as beauty. This topic recurs throughout Moore's oeuvre. In fact, it is Moore's double edged sword.

While language is necessary to convey Moore's objective images, it is impossible to do so because language contains inherent meaning. Readers approach language with their own cultural connotations and historic references. Thus, though Moore must rely on language as a necessity to creating poetry, she also returns to the futility of language in its failings to accurately bridge the gap between signified and signifier. For instance in "Silence" the speaker mentions those "superior people" who "can be robbed of speech / by speech which has delighted them" (9-10), indicating that there are not always words that adequately portray emotion. The speaker later reveals that "The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence; / not silence, but restraint" (11-12). The speaker hints that often it is not through language that humans communicate their emotions, but through their actions and their refusal to adapt language to their emotions. In "Silence," language is presented as inadequate in some situations, and the futility of attempting to use language to convey all meaning in an absolute way is made evident.

Additionally, the futility of language to convey proper and absolute meaning manifests itself in Moore's poetry through form. Moore is known for her collage poetry in which she takes quotes from a myriad of outside sources and incorporates them into her poems to create one whole. Moore states her purpose for this practice in an

interview: "I've always felt that if a thing has been said in the very 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" (Hall 30). While on the surface this explanation seems satisfactory, the interest lies in the fact that when Moore pulls her quotes from their original sources and places them in her poems, the meanings of the lifted quotes change. It is not that some other writer said something ideally because what they wrote could not be misconstrued; it is the sequence and phrasing of the quotes that Moore finds attractive. The shift between the original meaning of the phrases and Moore's use of the phrases reveals the instability of language to hold meaning as absolute.

Not only does Moore's use of quotes provide the reader with a sense of language's failings, Moore's reworking of images does as well. For instance, in "The Monkey Puzzle" the image of the tree is presented as a "Paduan cat with lizard" (4) and a "tiger in a bamboo thicket." (4). The repeated reworking of an image gives the reader a sense that there is not a single phrase or image that can encompass the observation made by the speaker. The need to create a catalog of images to convey meaning also occurs in "When I Buy Pictures." The speaker articulates what gives him/her pleasure in his/her average moments. Rather than coming up with one example that could adequately explain what gives pleasure, the speaker creates a catalog of images to help project the abstract notion of pleasure, indicating that what gives pleasure is not easily put into concrete words. New instances of what provides pleasure must be added to clarify the meaning of the undefined "pleasure." Marianne Moore uses reworked images as well as reworked phrases in her poems to give the reader a sense of the futility of language in that it does not adequately bridge the gap between signified and signifier.

To understand Marianne Moore's poetry, the reader must both actively "see" the speaker's observations as well as perceive the images and the meanings that are inherent in the language. While on the surface, this may seem an easy enough task, Moore complicates the matter by keeping the inability of language to convey absolute meaning in the forefront of her poetry. It is in the intersection of the act of seeing nature and the act of perceiving through cultural and historic occurrences that reveals a form of Modernism that is specific to Marianne Moore.

CHAPTER III

USING MARIANNE MOORE'S "AN OCTOPUS" AS THE BODY TO UNDERSTAND THE LEGS

What can be known about an octopus? Why would Moore choose to title a poem with such an ambiguous image? In order to understand the octopus, the same principles must be applied that must be applied to understanding Marianne Moore's poetry—seeing and perceiving. Humans do not live in the same environment, do not interact with the animal, do not share a form of communication, and, for the typical human, the octopus remains mysterious and other. Familiarity with the octopus comes, for the octopus, in unfamiliar ways. The octopus is removed from its natural environment and looked at, providing humans with facts and observations about the soft-bodied creature. Octopi are known to be intelligent animals with a capacity for problem-solving. While part of the human concept of the animal is influenced by the observable facts, part of it is also based on human perception of the animal. Both observation and perception are necessary in understanding the creature's place in today's society because facts and observations do not fully encompass what humans conceive the octopus to be. While the octopus may have only eight arms, it has far more parts. Most find the creature invested with myths of destructive and powerful tentacles, dark retreats in isolated parts of the sea, and threatening, predatory behavior. Octopi have been the subject of countless tales of danger and death. "From the ancient Greeks to modern-day writers, people have

described giant squid and octopi as ‘sea monsters’ whose masses of arms were able to pull ships underwater. Jules Verne promoted this image in 1861 with his book *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*” (Incredible Suckers). There is a distinct difference between the observations of an octopus as an animal with both a long-term and short-term memory and the perception of an octopus as a creature intent on seeking out and destroying human life, but both are necessary in understanding the concept of the octopus and how it functions or its role in society, from stories to advertisements, tv shows to t-shirts. The importance of both the observable realm of the octopi and the human perception of the octopi in order to understand the animal is the basis for understanding Moore’s poetry. Readers must objectively absorb Moore’s observations, yet they must also rely upon their own perceptions and culture’s myths in order to create a complete understanding of the poems, which usually occurs when the reader must consider Moore’s poetic form. In “An Octopus,” the opening image guides the reader to a method of approaching the poem itself, just as the poem itself, including the title image, guides the reader to a method of approaching the other poems that Moore published in *Dial*.

While Moore’s *Dial* poems maintain some obvious similarities such as their focus on art and the role of the artist in the creation of art, “An Octopus” stands out as exemplary and receives much critical attention, both at its inception and in current dialogue concerning the poet and her oeuvre. The poem, one of the last of the poems written by Moore for publication in *Dial*, presents its reader with an outline or method of approach for subsequent understanding of all the poems that Moore had previously published in the journal. It is as though Moore finally had provided the reader the body of the beast she was creating, the connection between the eight arms she had previously

published. In "An Octopus," Moore establishes a concrete representative relationship between nature and a sense of morality, as well as establishes humanity's futility of action and desire for consumptive control. With the printing of the poem, some of Moore's most common subjects all converged in a poem whose style stood out and pushed the boundaries of her disassociated images. By forcing the reader to create connectives between these observations, Moore allows for the reader's perceptions to help shape understanding. It is in "An Octopus" that the reader can perceive two distinct worldviews, that of the culturally-based, social world and that of the naturally-based, spiritual world. Additionally, the reader senses a natural world that speaks against those aspects emerging in the early 20th century with which Moore disagreed such as egoism and the indiscriminate violence of war.

In typical Moore fashion, her presentation of images strays from traditional poetic forms where there seems to be a procession of "images with more conventional shared relations of time, place, or logical type" (Lordeaux 366). In "An Octopus" Moore takes her use of the poetic images one step farther. While most of Moore's previous works contained sets of observations delicately placed next to one another, "An Octopus" provides a strong image that bookends the piece and brings the reader forward in the action of a single image instead of only moving through a string of tenuously connected observations. The "octopus," the glacier, while being massive and majestic, is powerful and destructive. The image is simultaneously concrete and mysterious. The paradoxical image cannot be missed. Because the end harkens back to the beginning, the reader's movement through the poem is not linear, but cyclical, mythical. The poem does not move away from its starting image, but reconfigures it, both in the speaker's approach to

the subject and in Moore's incorporation of loosely associated cultural images that the reader seeks connectives between. "An Octopus" becomes a guide not only for reading Moore's previously published poems because of its content, but also because of its form—specifically the poem's obvious return to its starting image.

Compared to her previous poems, the associations found throughout the "An Octopus" are more tangible, but the ultimate point is just as elusive,, because the images circle back upon one another in a labyrinthine attempt to locate meaning. Moore does not merely create a poem of observations with puzzling connectives; she creates "An Octopus" quite differently by creating a compact view for the reader of, nearly, a single object with more parts than eight arms. For the majority of the poem, the reader moves cleanly and fluidly through the observable realm of the glacier perceiving the speaker's observations from varying distances. Not only is the reader taken through various distances in viewing, but the reader is forced into remembering, specifically by the introduction of the Greeks. The close proximity of the act of remembering with the act of perceiving in the poem highlights the relationship between these two activities. The reader has been guided into sensing the two acts as related because, similar to perceiving, notions of memory, and thus history, are constructed rather than concrete. All acts of perception are relative to the perceiver and affected by past occurrences. The reader's sense of the cyclical and mythical nature of the poem is heightened by bringing into close proximity the act of perception, as involved with the image of the octopus, and the act of remembering, as involved with the image of the Greeks.

While it is typical of Moore's style to invite the reader to create meaning through her juxtaposition of images, the difference in "An Octopus" lies in the fact that the

images do not leave the original image behind in a forward thrust of new observations.

Moore limits her common method of movement through disassociated images in “An Octopus” and opts, instead, for an overriding image that permeates the entirety of the poem though it is viewed at varying distances. As R. P. Blackmur points out in his 1935 essay “The Method of Marianne Moore,” compared to her previous poems:

[. . .] there is less freeing of emotions and images under the aegis of the title notion, than there is a deliberate delineation of specific poetic emotions with the title notion as a starting point or spur: a spur to develop, compare, entangle, and put beside the title notion a series of other notions, which may be seen partly for their own sakes in passing, but more for what the juxtapositions conspire to produce [. . .] [I]n attempting to explain one of these poems you find yourself reading it through several times, so as not to be lost in it and so that the parts will not only follow one another as they must, being words, but will also be beside one another as their purpose requires them to be. (82)

The result is a poem that leads the readers forward while forcing them to return back, requiring them to simultaneously perceive and remember, just as the introduction of the Greeks does. The reader can never move steadily forward through the maze of poetic images, but must return back to the start of the poem to see the entanglements of observation and memory that Moore creates, as well as their significance. While one arm of the octopus may be reaching forward, another is always reaching back.

It is not just the octopus that is capable of chaotic and unrestrained movement; the images that Moore presents of the natural world throughout “An Octopus” are infused with an unrestrained chaos, a characteristic far different from her contemporaries’ poetry.

Moore does not flee from the existing chaos, but chooses to recognize it in her natural images. For instance, Moore's speaker observes the mountain in images of chaos like a "sea of shifting snow dunes" (3). Most evidently, in "An Octopus" the speaker closes on the dangerous image of an avalanche with "lightening flashing at its base, / rain falling in the valleys, and snow falling on the peak—" (188-89). It is unusual to find these three destructive aspects of nature existing in one place and time, which only emphasizes nature's ability to defy human expectations and create an environment where humans are "left at the mercy of the weather" (20). Additionally, the close of the poem also reintegrates the symbol of the waterfall, a recurring image throughout the poem, which finally releases its potential build up of energy into an avalanche of kinetic output, "with a sound like the crack of a rifle, / in a curtain of powdered snow launched like a waterfall" (192-93). The avalanche does not occur because of human intervention, or gunfire, it merely sounds similar to shots being taken. The avalanche occurs under its own rules and as a result of natural occurrences.

Adding to the detailed image and destruction-laden language, Moore uses repetition to impart to the reader the chaotic power of the waterfall by raising the image in various forms and circumstances throughout the poem. The first instance of the waterfall is marked by stasis at the pinnacle of the mountain, the dwelling of

the goat

its eye fixed on the waterfall which never seems to fall—

an endless skein swayed by the wind,

immune to force of gravity in the perspective of the peaks. (56-59)

Motionless, the waterfall defies the “law” of gravity; it does not operate within the bounds of explanation and would be an obstacle to Grecian understanding as defined in the poem. Similarly, the power of the avalanche and the weather leading up to the fall is also outside of the bounds of human explanation or control, although final appearance of the waterfall is marked by movement. Because Moore creates the waterfall in two distinctive forms, both of which exemplify chaos in that they do not fit into an explainable pattern, she is able to emphasize, through repetition, the range of chaos that exists in nature.

Additionally, because the images found in the poem must naturally be aligned one after the other as language necessitates they be, the reader gets an overwhelming sense of the multitude of flora and fauna, as well as rocks and weather, existing simultaneously. It is not just “the rat ‘slipping along to its burrow in the swamp’” (43) that the speaker observes, but the rat with the “‘thoughtful beavers / making drains which seem the work of careful men with shovels’” (45-46). The images of the animals exist simultaneously, which the reader senses based upon the syntax of the lines. The images are not separated by powerful final punctuation, but extended through the use of the semi-colon. This allows the images to exist side by side in an undefined multitude rather than as one at a time. Because of the myriad of details, there exists a chaos that the poet has not stepped in to control.

In addition to an uncontrolled chaos, Marianne Moore’s speaker observes natural power so severe that it is capable of death and destruction. For instance, the glacier is capable of “killing prey with the concentric crushing rigor of the python” (9). It takes the life of both flora and fauna and is given a sense of life itself in its comparison to the

mysterious octopus with its “relentless accuracy” (173) and “capacity for fact” (174).

The glacier becomes an animal that fully embodies the human concept of the octopus.

The glacier possesses both the intelligence and problem-solving skills of the octopus and the myth and mysterious capacity for destruction that are perceived as part of the octopus.

Most importantly though, the mountain, while capable of devastation and destruction, is rather egoless given its power. In a time marked by the emergence of the ego in psychology, the emergence of the ego in art, and the emergence of the ego in war, Moore’s poem and the controlling natural images are marked by a humility and necessity rather than just gross consumption of power, which speaks to Moore’s own concerns with the ego and the artist. Though she recognized that to create art, as to be human, one must have an ego, she continuously struggled with the notion of the role of ego in creating art and felt that her contemporaries were far too self-indulgent in creating their art. Moore establishes in “An Octopus” a natural and spiritual locale that is void of ego, even while possessing an immense power that is often chaotic. For instance, the animals are accustomed to, “the unegoistic actions of the glaciers” (90) where natural acts happen because of the necessity of survival and cycles of natural change, not out of the sheer desire, such as that found in war, to cause destruction and exercise power. Through this prevailing image of the unegoistic mountain, the reader can sense Moore’s turn from the emergence of the ego for gain, and her acceptance of the power and destruction necessary for survival.

While Moore presents images of destruction and mystery associated with the glacier and the fir-trees and rocks surrounding the glacier at the beginning of the poem, they exist harmoniously. She explains their placement, function, and relationships all

with a rather detached and straightforward tone. All of the elements that exist amicably in this location do so without the intervention of culture. Nothing is favored over another, that is, until the introduction of the ambiguous “you.” When “you” emerges rather abruptly in line 24, it is “you” who feels deceived, not any of the flora or fauna making their tenuous home on the mountain. The “you” in the poem takes note only of their personal internal perceptions, believing that they have progressed, but, in fact, they have only moved in a circle. Because reality is constructed for “you” through internal perception only and not an intermingling of perception and reality, Moore is able to subtly hint at an emerging solipsism and the potential deception that solipsism, in its extreme existence, creates. While the natural world managed to remain egoless even while capable of such destruction, the speaker centralizes “you” and marginalizes the natural world. More importantly, it is “you” who finds the lake “[. . .] in the shape of the left human foot, / which prejudices you in favor of itself / before you have had time to see the others” (31-33). While the plants and animals that live on the mountain are rather indifferent to one another and the potential destruction caused by their entanglements with one another, Moore makes the humans the first to judge or qualify the environment. There is no choice between lakes “for bears, elk, deer, wolves, goats, and ducks” (40). Moore, who does not shy from personifying nature, gives no natural element the desire to favor one location over another, one animal over another, or themselves, whatever they may be, over another, yet there is a preference put forth by the ambiguous “you.” “You,” a member of a socially constructed culture, is the first to place judgment and qualifications on a natural world.

In “An Octopus,” the human ego manifests itself in a myriad of forms. This involves not only the “you” and the poem’s contemporary inhabitants, but the ancient Greeks as well. Moore’s introduction of the Greeks into her poem is perhaps one of the most abrupt shifts in observation that Moore takes in her oeuvre. She turns from the closely-observed natural world of the glacial mountain to the ancient civilized world of the Greeks who are merely “Like happy souls in Hell, ’ enjoying mental difficulties [. . .]” (128). The introduction of the Greeks into “An Octopus” occurs at a location in the poem where observation is at its finest and minute details are surfacing in the speaker’s periphery. Mt. Rainier is active and living on a microscopic level, participating in and instigating changes, “among the white flowers of the rhododendron surmounting rigid leaves / upon which moisture works its alchemy [. . .]” (125-26). The movement, then, is from a living natural organism capable of causing change and metamorphosis to that which is dead, yet concerned with a civilized intellect. Formally, Moore introduces the Greeks at the beginning of the only split in stanza in this 193 line poem, indicating that there is a distinct difference between what has come before and what is to come henceforth.

Because Moore is not forthright in what the distinction between these two subjects is, the readers are left to their own perceptions. Just as the octopi are historically associated with dark myths, the Greeks also have historic associations. The ancient Greeks are most commonly associated with a reliance upon intellect and avoidance of emotion. They are known as stoic and grounded in logic. How this information relates to the previous observations is left unstated by Moore except in an expanse of white space. “The white space between stanzas means something. If nothing is conceived to be taking

place within it, if no kind of silent pressure or advance or reconsideration or illumination or perception seems to be going on in that white space, the reader has a legitimate question to ask: Why is that white space there, and what am I to do with it?" (Fussell 155). The reader must infer the purpose of the introduction of the white space in "An Octopus." Because it is the single stanza break, it marks a significant shift in thought and observation. By creating a distinct shift in the momentum of the poem, the poem evokes in the reader a sense of two differing worldviews that do not necessarily rely upon one another for meaning—that of the intellect-based cultural world and that of the necessarily distinct natural world, a world that struggles to gain knowledge and understanding, and a world that is changing and adapting. This sense is heightened in the readers when they consider the Greeks from the perspective of Christianity. While the Greeks are an innovative and enlightened culture, they hold an interesting place in time because they are located after the fall of Adam, but before the resurrection of Christ. According to Christianity, the Greeks would not have had the opportunity to ascend to heaven as the gates had yet to be opened by the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus, creating an even more evident distinction between the worldviews that each side of the white space represents.

Moore used the Greeks to characterize her contemporary humans because the Greeks had a pervading sense of control and ownership that came with a lofty ego. According to Patricia C. Willis in "The Road to Paradise: First Notes on Marianne Moore's 'An Octopus,'" "Moore took [John Henry] Newman's view of the Greeks—philosophers who chose to deify the beautiful, observing propriety as their code of conduct [. . .]" (252). Not only were the Greeks characterized as decorous, but they "are

said to have overstated their case and the suggestion is made that they had built their code of conduct upon a moral philosophy with a shaky first premise, the perfectibility of man” (Willis 258). If man is perfect, man is divine. If man is divine, man is God’s equal—a notion that does not fit within the beliefs of Christianity. For Moore, the Greeks are aligned with a way of life and a philosophy that centralizes the human and subordinates all that surrounds.

In addition to the belief in the perfectibility of man, the Greeks sought knowledge, but, according to Milton in *Paradise Regained*, a book Moore had read and returned to throughout her life, the Greeks fell short in terms of “a failure of love [. . .] and a failure of intellect: they sought knowledge without spirit and judgment” (Willis 263). They are characterized as searching for an understanding and a logical and detached explanation in their approach to understanding. In “An Octopus” Moore does use scientific language to produce observable fact, but she uses it in conjunction with a perceivable sense of morality as her images project destruction, when done by nature, as survival, not as intentionally harmful. Moore’s language is not based strictly on logic, but it relies on the reader’s sense of the morality that can subtly be perceived in the poem. “Convinced of the scientific fact of evolution by natural selection, Moore, as her verses suggest, could not bring herself to believe that the natural realm was spiritless or inherently evil” (Schulze 8).

While Moore may admire the intellectual advancements of the Greek civilization, “she boldly offers [. . .] charges as real limitations” (Molesworth 185). Moore points out that “The Greeks liked smoothness, distrusting what was back / of what could not be clearly seen / [. . .] / ‘Emotionally sensitive, their hearts were hard’; / their wisdom was

remote” (140-41, 152-53). The Greeks wanted explanation in easily understood terms, even methods of coexisting with and controlling that which they could not explain; thus, they were

not practiced in adapting their intelligence

to eagle-traps and snow-shoes,

to alpenstocks and other toys contrived by those

‘alive to the advantage of invigorating pleasures.’” (131-34)

They are unable to appreciate the natural world largely because it lies outside of their scope of understanding and thus out of their control. Ultimately, the Greek’s attempts at control and understanding are futile because they can never fully understand that which is incomprehensible. In the poem, “she [Moore] lauds their intellectual powers and emotional sensitivity but she sees the same failure of love that Milton found in them and in Adam: lack of trust in what they could not understand and hardness of heart. Because of these flaws, the Greeks do not adapt their intelligence to a setting like Mt. Rainier” (Willis 263). The Greeks, who struggle with gaining an understanding of the natural world because they could not explain it, are similar to Moore’s contemporaries who have a difficult time understanding and believing in spiritually-based traditions because they cannot explain them.

Moore creates images of the Greeks that support the notion of them as a group that could not integrate into the natural and, as Moore characterizes it, moral world. Their attempts at understanding, and thus controlling, are futile. Even though Moore was deeply committed to her Presbyterian beliefs, her approach to the Greeks in her poem is not pity-filled or sentimental towards their untimely location in the history of the world.

Instead, she presents the Greeks as the designers of their own fates whose philosophies and codes would not support notions of the unexplainable or incomprehensible, particularly the chaos and communion of the natural world, a chaos and communion that was also occurring in the early 20th century. Moore is able to draw a connection between the ancient Greeks of “An Octopus” and her contemporaries. For instance, the Greeks strive to find the logic to remove the mystery from the world they live in, which inevitably means displeasure where comprehension does not come based strictly on logic. The desire for tangible explanation of that which seems illogical not only characterizes the Greeks but also Moore’s contemporaries, who began to question religion as a myth used to sustain the masses. By introducing the Greeks, Moore is able to subtly comment on the current worldview as well as the ancient Greek worldview because both required logic to sustain belief. And this worldview could be established as distinct from the worldview held by the natural world. Additionally, if the Greeks could not supply a paradigm for explaining the natural world, they would inevitably not be able to comprehend and accept certain underlying spiritual truths that are not dependant upon logic and where control is not readily acquired. The Greeks are similar to Moore’s contemporaries who face disillusionment with religious ritual and the truths associated with them. It is important to note, though, that Moore does not endorse a sense of futility that emerges as disillusionment, which is why it is necessary for her to concretely split the two world views, allowing the tradition and ritual to remain in the natural locale.

Through her collage poem, “An Octopus,” Moore is able to create nature as loosely analogous to a spiritual world, one in which her own Presbyterian roots could subtly hold firm even while giving credence to other new attitudes emerging in the early

20th century, specifically new scientifically-based information such as Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Moore does not subject the reader to an absolute form of spirituality, but locates an underlying truth that crosses the boundaries of an abstract faith and an absolute science. "She is not a prophet-preacher manqué, if we think her that we misplace her vision, which is not that of the visionary but that of the scientist, the scientist of conduct and value" (Koch 107). The Greeks cannot locate themselves in a natural setting because of the same reason that many of Moore's contemporaries found they could not locate themselves in a world that necessitated a sense of spirituality and belief in what could, ultimately, be simply lies; they could not "adapt their intelligence." But because Moore finds that art exists not just in intellectual interpretation but also in "the spiritual forces which have made it" ("When I Buy Pictures" 18), the reader still senses her reliance upon the spirit to provide meaning. For Moore, who has a strong commitment to her Presbyterian roots, the emerging disillusionment with religion in the early 20th century is not a characteristic of the Modernist movement that she takes up. Thus, the subject of locating a scientifically-based spirituality in a strong and mysterious, though not sentimental, natural world reoccurs in her poems, specifically in the emergence of rituals and traditions in nature.

If the ancient Greeks are unable to control or appreciate nature and the rituals found in nature, then those aspects of culture that seep into the park experience of the early 20th century are unable to be contained and controlled by humans as well. Like the Greeks in Moore's poem who could not acclimatize their way of life to the natural setting or control it, the guides and "those who 'have lived in hotels / but who now live in camps—who prefer to'" (76-77) can neither adapt themselves to their surroundings nor

gain possession of the mountain itself. For instance, in Moore's poem, surrounded by nature, the tourists prefer to be in their camps with manmade comforts, and the guides, though needing less material comfort than the tourists, still have not managed to adapt to the natural world because their clothing is ill-suited, "the mountain guide evolving from the trapper, / 'in two pairs of trousers, the outer one older, / wearing slowly away from the feet to the knees'" (78-80). There is a distinct divide in "An Octopus" between the humans visiting Mt. Rainer and Mt. Rainer itself because they are unable to understand the environment nearly to the point of not understanding a world outside of their own intellect. This notion is only intensified by Moore's juxtaposition of the guides next to animals possessing qualities that allow them to work with the natural environment, for instance the both beautiful and camouflaging "nine-striped" (81) coats and the "agility" (82) in potentially harmful situations.

Furthermore, the culturally designed rules and regulations instituted by the National Park Service fail in their attempt to disperse knowledge. The pamphlets serve to invite and entice visitors to the natural world of Mt. Rainer, yet restrict tourists' access to their surroundings. The reader senses an immediate connection made between the Greek civilizations and the current civilization as it exists within the park boundaries. For instance, in both the Greek civilizations and current culture of the poem, there exist oracles whose wisdom is unquestioned and whose objective is to guide future decisions and actions of those who have heard, or, in the case of the contemporary oracles, read, the pronouncements by the oracles. This comparison between the Greek oracles, whose declarations were futile in their attempts to help or predict the future of the Greeks as the Greeks ultimately, in Moore's view, descended into Hell, shows the futility of the actions

taken by the National Park Service to control human's interaction with nature in the park setting. The ancient Greeks, "[. . .] whose primary errors are the simplification and intellectualization of nature [. . .]" (Ladino 302), avoided the natural world, or that which is unexplainable by their philosophies, just as Moore's contemporaries, as exemplified by the NPS, attempt to control and supply rules and regulations, or philosophies and oversimplifications, to the natural world. If, as determined from analyzing Moore's use of the Greeks, nature represents those aspects that exist in an unexplainable and illogical locale, nature and all unexplainable that it represents cannot be controlled even by written word because the parameters of what cannot be explained remain undefined and any use of rules to control what cannot be defined is futile. By relinquishing notions of rules in the natural world, the reader can determine that the perspective of spirituality as represented in the natural world includes religions outside of Moore's Presbyterian roots—nature become much more emblematic of a general spirituality that can contain aspects of Moore's post-Darwinian education rather than a directly Presbyterian didactic entity. Ultimately, the reader can legitimately allow for a broader idea of the spiritual worldview than a pervading sense of morality that is strictly religious-based; it can permit science as a tempering force.

Perhaps one of the most evident locations of futility in Marianne Moore's oeuvre is in her approach to language. (The paradox being, of course, that she relies upon language to convey the futility of the cultural construct.) In the setting of the early 20th century national park, guides and pamphlets existed in order to create an understanding of the natural world, but Moore shows the inadequacy of this attempt in her use of direct quotations from both the pamphlets about the park and the rules and regulations. Moore

approaches lifted quotations with sarcasm, a sarcasm that obviously did not exist in the original copy, but which Moore has created through her juxtaposition of the Greeks and their desire to gain knowledge and their ultimate failure with the direct quotes from the NPS. “Moore’s written account of the park refuses to adopt the expected tourist perspective and instead treats the NPS instructions as, first and foremost, ‘rewritable’” (Ladino 298). Moore’s ability to lift the language of the National Park Service and recreate new meanings using the same sequence of words further emphasizes the instability and futility of the efforts of the NPS in creating the rules and regulations, as well as the enticing informational pamphlets, in order to maintain some tangible comprehension of the natural and some clearly-defined control. In addition, Moore’s ability to lift the quotes and change their meaning so significantly indicates the inadequacies of language to create a stable interpretation between signifier and signified—again representing futility in a socially constructed medium.

In addition to using the quotes to emphasize that modern humanity is crippled by the same beliefs of the ancient Greeks, Moore is able to emphasize one of the key characteristics that emerge in the previous poems she had published in *Dial*—man’s greed and materialism. By removing the text from their original sources, Moore is able to exemplify that, “[. . .] the rhetoric of the NPS subsumes modern nature into a particular kind of consumptive nationalism—one based on leisure, wealth, and the exploitation of resources” (Ladino 293). In the language of the National Park Service, as surrounded by Moore’s observations, nature is presented as a resource desired for consumption and entertainment by the wealthy. For instance, Moore writes, “Instructed, none knows how, to climb the mountain, / by businessmen who require for recreation / three hundred and

sixty-five holidays in the year” (114-16). Not only are the consumers of this natural world presented as the wealthy who feel that certain leisures are their due, but the direct quotes concerning the flora and fauna taken from pamphlets designed to attract tourists appear in terms designed almost to sell. For instance, the mountain, when quoted, is given “graceful lines which prove it a volcano” (69), yet, when reconfigured in Moore’s own words in the next lines of the poem, Mount Rainer appears with “its top a complete cone like Fujiyama’s / till an explosion blew it off” (70-71). The second description given directly by Moore’s speaker, and not the pamphlet, gives a clear indication of a strength and destruction found in the volcano, while the lines quoted from the NPS pamphlet seem to indicate a tall, reticent mountain which could potentially be controlled. Not only is the human desire for consumption of a natural object emphasized, but the reader can sense, again, the inadequacies of language to properly convey meaning in an absolute way.

Moore’s interest in creating a natural world that is incapable of being controlled is found throughout “An Octopus” in the images that she creates of the mountain itself. Nature is both powerful and devastating, and because man is incapable of controlling it and understanding it, man is not divine or able to achieve a state of perfection. For instance, as they ride up the side of the mountain on their horses, the businessmen are distinguishable, even to the point that they can be defined as businessmen rather than merely men, yet the horses they ride upon remain hidden, “hard to discern among the birch-trees, ferns, and lily-pads” (118). The men, in their attempt to domesticate the horses, are unable to make them seem alien in their own environment; instead, the horses remain a part of the integrated natural world. Failed domestication of an animal comes

up again in “An Octopus” when the speaker takes note of the mysterious goat, “its eye fixed on the waterfall which never seems to fall.” (57). Introduced in the midst of a severe shift in tone, the reader senses an “otherness” in the goat that is not usually associated with the animal. Because the goat is the one free-roaming animal on the mountain that has a history of domestication, by making this typically domestic animal the epitome of otherness, an alternative view of the animal arises. The goat is not related to milk or its qualities of human consumption; instead, it is mysterious and immune to the dangers of the heights of Mt. Rainer. Similarly, Moore presents images of a typically fearsome animal, forcing the reader to perceive that fear has led to misunderstanding on the part of humanity. For instance, the bear is presented as gentle and somewhat thoughtful, “[. . .] inspecting unexpectedly / ant-hills and berry-bushes” (47-48). The bear is not searching out meat, stalking animals, or hunting fish. Instead, he is doing much more mundane and “unexpected” activities. The bear is represented in a light that is counter to traditional notions, showing that the misrepresentation and misunderstanding that humanity possesses leads to a need to classify and control, to remain in cabins and tents and abide by rules and regulations. Additionally, the notion of “property” of the mountain is given to the animals that live there. Even though the animals have no notions of property or the language of an economy, the term is used to portray the animal’s relationship with its environment, again hinting at the inadequacies of language to serve a distinct meaning. More importantly though, the poem gives ownership not to humanity, but to animals who are typically thought not to be capable of ownership.

In addition to the distanced speaker and the ambiguous “you,” one of the most important formal aspects that Marianne Moore uses in her observations is the juxtaposition of natural images and cultural images. Through this juxtaposition of images, Moore’s images of futility are enhanced by a sense of futility as well. The location of the two distinct images next to one another serve to further the disconnect between culture and nature. For instance, in line five, Moore introduces the term “invention”—a distinctly cultural term. The “invention” that is “much needed” is “glass that will bend.” While this may be beneficial to culture, the importance and impact of this “invention” is eclipsed by the subsequent description of the mountain as “comprising twenty-eight ice-fields from fifty to five hundred feet thick, / of unimagined delicacy” (6-7). Because of the impact of the image of the invention juxtaposed with the image of the mountain, the reader can perceive the limited power of man and his inventions and the increased power of the glacier. Moore creates a similar scenario in line 172. There are distinctive cultural qualities that can be perceived in the exclamation, “Neatness of finish!” in that nature is associated with unending cycles not truly capable of a “finish.” Additionally, neatness is a term that can be qualified only by society. This desire for neatness of finish is diminished and nearly mocked by the images of nature that follow the exclamation. What follows are images of natural destruction and chaos that occur with the glacier and avalanches. Again, this destruction is so severe and the result of the “winds that ‘tear the snow to bits / and hurl it like a sandblast / shearing off twigs and loose bark from the trees’” (177-79) is so obviously destructive and messy, that the previously exclaimed desire seems trivial. It alludes to a beginning of solipsism, where the speaker, desiring a neatness of finish, has mentally constructed the environment not to

give note to the natural disarray of the setting in the midst of the exclamation. The juxtaposition of the social and natural again aligns power with nature and futility with culture because nature does not possess a “Neatness of finish!”

Perhaps one of the most important ideas to emerge in Marianne Moore’s poem, “An Octopus,” is that a lack of understanding or desire to understand is needed to comprehend the mountain just as it would be in order to comprehend spirituality. Moore does not champion an entirely scientific reading of the mountain or explanation of it as the Greeks would do, “[. . .] [S]he invokes the language of scientific observation in her poem to critique the extent to which modern science has objectified the natural world. When she invokes language of scientific knowledge it is usually with a sense of mockery” (Ladino 304), yet she does utilize the language of science to temper the morality present in the natural world that she observes. As represented by Moore, the natural world cannot possibly be fully rationalized in scientific or logic-based terms, which is why the Greeks and Moore’s contemporaries seeking a logical understanding of nature and religion are unable to comprehend the natural world. In “An Octopus” Moore is able to develop an association between the natural world that is spiritually-based, though not sentimental or didactic. It is a locale where Moore gives herself permission to write against ascribed Modernist characteristics like egoism and disillusionment with religion or eternal truths. In the process of establishing this relationship, Moore also raises the existence of futility in culture, though in a limited form, as well as the desire for control in the form of materialism and consumption. In content, as well as in form, Moore supplies her readers with an approach to the poems she previously published in *Dial* in order to gain a deeper understanding of her observations. The method to

understanding Moore's poetry relies heavily upon the intersection of nature and culture.

Just as the reader must approach a search for knowledge with factual evidence and cultural understanding, Moore's poetry invites the reader to look at Moore's images as objectively as possible, given that language must be used, and still perceive. Moore's poetry relies on the understanding of an octopus; it must be looked at, yet so much of the conceptualized animal is based on how it is perceived. "An Octopus" is more than a poem that represents Marianne Moore's oeuvre; it is a poem that maps it.

CHAPTER IV

CHAOS AND EGOS

Upon initial investigation, Marianne Moore appears to be the quintessential quietly meticulous artistic woman in the corner. She remained single, sharing her home with her mother and finding comfort in her close-knit family. She kept a journal and fastidiously recorded encounters that intrigued her and documented texts that were to later make their way into her poetry. She scrupulously recorded her reactions to books, articles, and advertisements, all of which also influenced her future works. Concerned with her outward appearance and “fashionable paraphernalia that were, and still are, the markers of female status and economic privilege posing as signs of taste and cultural discernment” (Rieke 149), Moore and her mother nearly obsessed over notions of what was proper and subtly, and occasionally blatantly, turned away from what, or who, they considered vulgar. Moore even chose where to send her poetry based on what affiliations she felt the literary magazine had and the personal reputations of the owners and editors. Over time, Moore became associated with her tricorne hat and cape rather than with her innovations in poetry. Her exactitude in her personal life carried over into her poetry as well, which is known for its precision, and often she is “condemned as fussy” (Martin xii), an interesting fact given her embrace of the chaotic.

As Taffy Martin points out in the introduction to her book, *Marianne Moore: Subversive Modernist*, “It is easy to see why Moore’s poetry appears so frequently in

anthologies but difficult to understand why she continues to be known more for her personality or for quotable phrases than for the body of her work or her importance to other poets” (ix). While it is true that the persona of Marianne Moore is recognized, she is most often noted for her “otherness.” And the reader senses Moore’s “otherness” in her poetry, especially in the range of content she investigates instead of taking up typical Modernist themes or images. On the other hand, Moore is also often associated with experimentalism in her distinctly syllabic verse and distant detailed observations. While these two aspects are important to Moore’s overall contribution to American poetry and her own body of work, the content and meaning in Moore’s poetry should also be addressed as markedly her own instead of as strictly a by-product of high Modernism. In fact, during the height of Modernism:

Moore’s contemporaries, unlike later readers, recognized both the surface brilliance of her poetry and the subversive nature of her endeavor. Not many years later, academic critics met with frustration when they tried to fit Marianne Moore into the paradigm of high modernism that they were busily developing. Unwilling and unable to ignore Moore’s work entirely, that second generation of readers developed a mythic Marianne Moore whose role in the canon of modernism reflected their perceptions of her personality. Moore’s elaborate constructions became defensive, virginal attempts to escape from the chaos in which, they decided, she was distressed to find herself. That myth still exists, in spite of several good recent studies of Moore, and it has come to obscure the poetry itself. (Martin ix-x)

In her poetry, Marianne Moore did not attempt to flee, diminish, or control the chaos that was becoming prevalent at the onset of World War I. Instead, she simply recognized and often embraced it. In this sense, Moore becomes a group distinctly her own, combining a recognition of aspects of high Modernism with a refusal to accept other aspects typical of high Modernism. Her distinctive version of Modernism can be found at the meeting of culture and nature in her speaker's objective images, as well as the aspects of culture that readers inherently bring with them when interpreting the work.

Unlike her contemporaries, Marianne Moore does not attempt to control, understand, or diffuse the chaos found in her art. As seen in "An Octopus," Moore's poetry is not a location of stasis, particularly in her natural images. Unlike the night in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Moore's natural arena is not characterized by inaction; it is not "Like a patient etherised upon the table" (3), nor is the air or fog given the soft seductive quality of meandering like a cat through dusky streets enveloping senses and legs (15-25). Instead, Moore's images are grounded in a scientific approach and language that removes sentimentality from her speaker's observations and takes note of the chaos, as well as destructive power, inherent in nature. Her speakers appear objective and detail-oriented, giving the reader a sense of stability even amidst the use of an unstable construct—language.

Just as chaos reined through the image of a waterfall in "An Octopus," the image of the waterfall echoes throughout Moore's oeuvre, often times as images of lost romantic ideals. For instance, in "New York," the image of Niagara Falls is one of nonexistent "dime-novel exterior[s]" (15). The overall sense that Moore gives of the waterfall is that, though beautiful and admired by humans, it is thought to be so under a

sentimental haze without knowledge of the destructive power that exists within the falling water—a destruction that Moore does not shy away from revealing. Additionally, the picturesque presentation of the waterfall reveals human inability to comprehend the dangerous and chaotic action below the enchanting and idealized surface.

In addition to the images of the waterfall, the most powerful and reoccurring images in Moore's poetry are forms of water—be them sea or lake or river. The sea is often characterized as dangerous, though it is also capable of life and containing life. For instance, in "A Grave" the speaker notes that "you cannot stand in the middle of this" (3). The reader can perceive a chaotic power in this statement because of the use of the negative. Having a middle indicates that the object has boundaries or edges. On the other hand, if no middle can be found, even by boat, then it must be inferred that the object lacks boundaries; therefore, the sea is uncontrolled and borderless. The man viewing the sea has no access to it and no way of bounding it in to a comprehensible size and shape. Similarly, the speaker in "Novices" notes that the shore and the perspective offered to the speaker of the poem is detailless, minus the "chaos of rocks" (31) and "this drama of water against rocks" (43) that is "'crashing itself out in one long hiss of spray'"(47). The tide against the shore rocks is uncontrollable, and the speaker can note no description of the shore outside of power and relentless action. In fact, all action in the poem is given to the sea, even as the sea functions in a larger metaphor aligning language with the body of water. In the midst of the metaphor, Moore continuously uses the word "action" indicating the importance of movement, yet all action is associated with the uncontrollable and unpredictable sea. To create the feeling of chaotic action as opposed to a more sentimental view of the sea, Moore chooses her diction and collage of

quotes carefully. For instance, to reinforce the continuous, nearly frantic, action of the ocean, she uses the terms, “perpetuates” and “incessantly panting,” which give the reader a sense of repetitive action that feeds upon itself rather than a single one time occurrence. Additionally, the form evokes the rushing in and out of tides. The line lengths vary, and the right hand side of the poem juts out in waves. The effect of this upon the reader is to create instances of longer pauses, as the eye travels from the end of a long line to the beginning of the next line, and shorter pauses, as the eye returns from shorter lines. Line length, coupled with the absence of final punctuation, serves to force the reader into partaking in an act of cyclical occurrence and repetition that feeds upon itself as it gains momentum. It creates in the reader a sense of the chaos that the speaker’s observations point out. In “Novices” the sea eventually works itself into a frenzy that creates “one long hiss of spray” (47). The constant impact of the sea crashing in upon itself has manifested in a single continuous spray, never to be controlled or relaxed.

It is not merely forms of water that possess chaos and power, but aspects of flora and fauna as well. About “The Monkey Puzzle,” the speaker states, “it will not come out” (5), indicating that the tree will not conform to human desires. By constructing her syntax to give the notion of the action to the tree itself, Moore is able to create an image of the tree not as a static immobile inanimate object, but as a living natural element with the power to make decisions and create confrontations. The syntax does not indicate that it is human failure that prevents the emergence of the tree; instead, it is the tree’s will to not emerge. To further emphasize the distance between the natural image of the tree and the confusion present in the cultural world surrounding the tree, the poem closes by dwelling on the unknowable aspects of the monkey puzzle’s natural world where “One is

at a loss, however, to know why it should be here / in this morose part of the earth—/ to account for its origin at all; / but we prove, we do not explain our birth” (19-22). It is impossible, according to the speaker, to account for the origin of the tree. The only certainty is in its appearance. Like the Greeks in “An Octopus” who could not explain through logic and reason aspects of nature, neither can the speaker explain through logic and reason the origins of the delicately-colored tree—the surety is merely that the tree is there.

Marianne Moore does not just investigate the mysteries found in flora, she also takes into consideration the natural world of animals. For instance, in the poem “Novices,” aspects of nature and language are associated with darkness and mysterious animals. By calling attention to “‘Dracontine cockatrices, perfect and poisonous from the beginning’” (8), the speaker reveals that even with uncontrolled power and destructive ability, the natural object is perfect. The speaker is quick to interject that this uncontrollable power has nothing to do with adapting or politicking in the animal world; instead, this power is inherent and given at the onset of the mythological species. Additionally, the reader senses the import of attributing perfection to a non-human animal when the speaker later comments on “stupid man” and “stupid woman” (20, 21). By creating an image of dark perfection associated with the cockatrices that still exist as the pinnacle of power at the moment the speaker comments on the less than perfect humans, Moore creates a noticeable contrast between the animal and the human where the flawed culturally-influenced world is sub-par to the myth-based and natural world.

Another occurrence of Moore’s use of animal imagery emerges in “Silence.” In this poem, the speaker’s father suggests that superior people are “self-reliant like the

cat— / that takes its prey to privacy, / the mouse's limp tail hanging like a shoelace from its mouth—" (5-7). The cat's destructive power is considered, by the speaker's father's standards, to be of the highest quality. The cat removing its prey to privacy is significant because it reveals to the reader the sense of spiritual morality that underlies Moore's poems. Though the cat is given the power to kill, it does not parade its victim in an act of pride. Killing, for the cat, is egoless. This speaks in direct contrast to the bloody images emerging during World War I where the victims and death tolls were numbers used to determine power, and the reader senses "her [Moore's] grave concern for the tragedy of war" (Therese 29). Additionally, the cat in "Silence" does not kill out of a desire to gain anything more than a meal. The cat is self-reliant, indicating that he is not a cat kept as a pet, pampered and fed by its owner, but a cat that has its own self-will, and that self-will necessitates killing in order to live. The cat's killing can be described in scientific terms as a primal instinct—a need to survive, a "product of her [Moore's] twentieth-century post-Darwinian education and the scientific 'observations' of the naturalists she admired and emulated" (Schulze 5). The killing is done out of a need to survive, not a need to gain outside influence. The body of the mouse will not remain on a battlefield, but will be used to sustain the humble cat's own life.

Not only does the cat from "Silence" exemplify Moore's underlying truth of morality courted by scientific tradition, so do most aspects of the natural world in that they, like the cat, also remain egoless while possessing power. For instance, as noted above, the sea in "A Grave" possesses immense power, yet does not feign to use the power as a means to a more personal ends. Moore does not present images of the sea that support a perception of the sea as a murderer or calculated killer but as more subdued

“collector” (9) of the unconscious. The human bodies that gather below the surface are of no consequence to the sea as the current “advances as usual” (21). Similarly, “the fish no longer investigate them [the human bodies] / for their bones have not lasted” (21-22). The fish, once using the human body when it was still able to provide shelter and a means for survival, move on from the death when the protective qualities of the human skeletons have faded. The sea, the grave, and the associated natural elements found in Moore’s images do not take pride in their ability to kill and contain the human body. Instead, they remain indifferent to their own power to take life, in contrast to what was occurring in Moore’s contemporary world. Just as in “Silence,” Moore creates images which lead the reader to perceive a world that is vested with an underlying spiritual morality tempered with scientific notions of survival that counter ideologies emerging in Moore’s early 20th century world. Additionally, because of the juxtaposition of the “unconscious” fisherman and the indifferent sea, Moore makes a distinction between human reaction to death and the natural reaction to death. The humans are rather static, merely acting “as if there were no such thing as death” (15) even when dropping nets and desecrating a grave, while the sea recognizes the necessity of “advance[ing] as usual” (21) when death occurs and the life-sustaining values of the deteriorating bodies are no longer apparent. Contrasting images of the fisherman with the fish and sea emphasize the egoless and inexorably advancing tide of the sea that must continue on “as usual” in order to adapt and survive.

Humans, on the other hand, possess ego throughout Moore’s oeuvre, just as they possess it in “An Octopus.” For instance, in “New York” humans possess material emblems merely for status and not for other benefits such as survival. Unlike the animals

that Moore so often uses in her poetry, the humans in “New York” do not cause their destruction, in this case of animals, out of necessity as the cat in “Silence” does. Instead, the humans in the poem kill animals for their fur so that the owners of the furs can parade them through the streets in an idealized fashion. It is not even the fur itself that drives the fur-wearing; instead, it is the “accessibility to experience” (24). The desire to be the romanticized, “dime-novel exterior” (15) of the “‘queen full of jewels’ and the beau with the muff” (10-11) keeps the humans in the poem in fur and wanting the fur. In “New York,” destruction occurs not out of the need to survive, but out of the desire to “experience” a lifestyle different from and more idealized than “the savage’s romance” (Moore 1).

The human ego in Marianne Moore’s poems often reveals itself as one of the characteristics that Moore shares with her contemporaries—the recognition of alienation. In her delicately constructed observations, Moore creates a locale where alienation is recurring, though she is able to construct such locale quite matter of factly rather than with a sentimental tone. Although Moore moved in the artistic circles emerging in New York, she still had a sense of isolation, albeit self-inflicted. As Alison Rieke points out in her article “‘Plunder’ or ‘Accessibility to Experience’: Consumer Culture and Marianne Moore’s Modernist Self-Fashioning,” “Moore’s ‘originality’ and her ‘alienation’ are crucial to her construction of a poetic persona, a private and public self-fashioning that thoroughly encompassed her career as a writer” (149). Moore recognized her own distinct beliefs against the backdrop of emerging Modernist sentiment and used this to create herself as “other” to her contemporaries, and it is this “other” that she is often recognized for instead of for her body of work. While Marianne Moore was effective in

creating herself as a much-recognized myth, it is important to understand how her sense of her self and her times permeates and influences her poetry. Her sense of alienation and lack of connection to people and places located around her carries through in her poetry, specifically in her construction of a social world through poetic observations. But in Moore's observations, alienation often can be perceived as an extreme that verges on the boundaries of solipsism.

Because Moore accepts the sense of alienation emerging during the early 20th century, in her speaker's images and observations human figures are often times isolated and lack a connection to any immediate influence. For instance, in "A Grave" the introductory image is that of a man who, under the somewhat ambiguous nature of the title, is "grave." This man stands alone, looking into the sea, and, as the speaker notes, he is not just blocking the view but "taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have to it yourself" (2). This somewhat critical commentary reveals a subtle frustration with the man's emerging solipsism. In viewing the sea, the man is oblivious to the speaker's obstructed view and "right" to an unhindered access to nature. Both the man of the opening image and the speaker each have a sense of reality which is limited to that which exists within each human's own perceptions. The man found in the image "assumes his own central importance" (Fast 376) as the only observer, and the speaker asserts his or her own central importance by failing to recognize that that which he or she is recognizing, he or she, by remaining close enough to the sea to observe it, must also be guilty of. The pervading hypocrisy that the reader can perceive in the speaker's tone is indicative of the speaker's solipsism.

Not only is the observed man unable to connect to the speaker, but he is unable to comprehend the environment which he is in as well, because the man seems unaware that “you cannot stand in the middle of this” (4). He is alienated from his surroundings in the same way that the travelers found in “An Octopus” were alienated from their environment, commenting on the eagles “happy seeing nothing” (93) when, in fact, the eagles are engaged with their environment. Additionally, human behavior in general is “trivial, solipsistic, even despicable” (Fast 370) because “it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing” (3), implying that it is human nature to centralize the self in relation to the surrounding environment; it is human nature to construct the ego as vital and marginalize the surroundings. In the men who are sitting upon the sea, found later in the poem, the reader senses the same solipsism found in the man at the beginning of the poem. The men, who appear to be fishermen who have experience with the sea, are marked as “unconscious” by the speaker. The fishermen do not recognize the true power of the environment in which they work or basic certainties, “[. . .] as if there were no such thing as death” (15). Moore juxtaposes the two men, “unconscious” of their surroundings, with the fish who, though no longer interested in the human bodies below the surface, are at least aware of the existence of the bodies—even those bodies that “have not lasted” (12). Because of the close proximity of the two different approaches to the same locale, the reader can sense the depth of the men’s alienation from their everyday environment. The fishermen appear unaware of the role of the sea as a grave or of the men who have existed before them. The men seem alienated in that they exist in a static time and place and cannot link with their past or the past of the environment in which they work daily. As evidenced by their oblivious forward movement through the

water, they are also alienated from certainties that will become their future in the mythic circling of the life-taking sea.

Solipsism surrounded by water is found in other poems that Moore published in *Dial* as well. In “Novices,” the speaker concludes on “the detailless perspective of the sea” (30), yet Moore juxtaposes this observation with the obvious detail of the “chaos of rocks” (31), making it clear to the reader that the speaker does not recognize his or her surroundings. In a fashion similar to the fishermen in “A Grave,” the speaker appears alienated from the environment in which he or she is located. The speaker is “bored,” yet the images of the water show a relentless, tension-filled sea characterized by “action.” It is as though the speaker is unable to fully partake of the natural locale and is isolated from the observable occurrences in the poem.

Another tactic that Marianne Moore employs to evoke a sense of alienation is her manipulation of form and line length. In “The Labors of Hercules” the lines begin long and detail-laden causing the reader to move slowly through the lines. Yet, when the poem focuses on specific types of men, the lines shorten. By stacking the lines so that the humans being discussed are isolated from others as well as from any details about themselves, the humans seem alienated and unrelated to the reader. The men do not appear to exist on the same plane. Instead of using longer lines, Moore breaks her lines quickly, leaving the reader to travel back across the page often to find the start of the following line. This distance from line ending to line beginning creates a nearly continuous gap in time between the images of each line and, thus, a sense of alienation between the types of men who are “kissing the feet of the man above, / kicking the face of the man below” (18-19). The observable men are not side by side and shoulder to

shoulder but distanced by body lengths, and the reader senses this as their eyes quickly travel down the page rather than across it.

In the poetry Marianne Moore published in *Dial* in the early 20th century and as exemplified previously in “An Octopus,” Marianne Moore distances herself from the typical high Modernist style by refusing to succumb to the desire to control, through her poetry, the chaos apparent in the 20th century. She allows the natural world to dwell in chaos and power and never attempts to supply it with quaint meaning or explanation. She never ropes the chaos in by subduing her images or preventing the reader from perceiving the chaos in her forms. Though unmitigated chaos necessarily includes destruction, Moore makes the destruction of the natural world distinctive in that it is egoless and operates on a basis of survival observable through scientific understanding coupled with an underlying sense of morality. Natural images juxtaposed with observations of culture only serve to broaden the gap between the two worlds in that the humans have developed a sense of ego counter to the egoless realm of the flora and fauna. In fact, the ego present in Moore’s observations, coupled with the effects of her poetic techniques, has created a sense of alienation that has pushed humans to the point of solipsism where they themselves are unable to bridge the gap between natural and cultural, past and present, and even life and death. While allowing the cultural world of her poetry to recognize emerging philosophies and trends of the early 20th century such as alienation and egoism, Moore is still able to produce an alternate view where egoism and solipsism do not exist and a sense of morality, grounded by scientific fact, does. Her poems, when investigated at the intersection of culture and nature, both at the level of image and at the level of perception, reveal Moore’s distinctive concept of Modernism.

CHAPTER V

CONSUMPTION, CONTROL, AND FUTILITY

Readers can sense that Marianne Moore's poetry is of two distinct worldviews, and observing where the two worlds meet sheds light on those aspects of Modernism to which Moore gives credibility to and those of which she is critical. Just as Moore finds fault with the emerging ego and subsequent alienation and solipsism, she finds fault with the emerging consumerism and consumption, especially when it manifests itself in a desire to control. Additionally, Moore creates images of futility as emerging directly from this need for consumption and control, yet she is careful not to push futility to the extreme of disillusionment, particularly with ritual and traditions, which she shows in her natural images of consistency and fulfilled expectations.

As Robin Schulze points out in her essay "Marianne Moore's 'Imperious Ox, Imperial Dish' and the Poetry of the Natural World,"

[. . .] much of Moore's verse [. . .] ruminates on the intersection between nature and culture, on the issue of human use and misuse of the natural world and the cost, *to nature*, of human ignorance and arrogance...and her poems suggest that she found man's willingness to assume the role of divine director not only presumptuous but cruel. (5, 8)

Often times, the "intersection between nature and culture" occurs in images of humans attempting to wield power over the natural world. Along with personal ego that isolates

humans from each other and their environments, comes the human's desire to control nature, particularly through economic and materialistic means. As evidenced in the previous chapter, the natural world found in Moore's imagery is infused with chaos, commotion, and destructive power. In an attempt to counter this natural chaos, the people and objects of Moore's images seek consumptive power and control of the natural world, similar to the desire of the National Park Service to wield power in "An Octopus." Through the juxtaposition of images of the cultural world's attempts at consumption with images of the natural world, the reader can sense that the intense desire for capital gain emerging in the early 20th century is an attitude that Moore seeks to write against. Yet, this too is a paradox for Moore, who "throughout her career, was caught between her self-critical acuity and an apparently unreflective consumption of fashion, especially fashion depending upon animal by-products" (Rieke 150). While Moore's personal life may call into question her position on consumption, especially that of animal by-products, her poetry makes a definitive stance. "Moore sees beauty and moral good in animals that act, as they must, out of 'inner necessity' and evil in those human beings who act out of 'outer necessity' especially those who act 'out of ambition and greed'" (Leavell 264). While most flora and fauna found in Moore's observations are destructive, they use the destruction out of a need to survive, unlike most of the culturally-influenced people and objects in Moore's poetic observations.

Moore's disapproval of human beings acting because of "outer necessity" rather than "inner necessity" can be found embedded in her poetic images, where she reveals "that her aesthetic, intellectual, ethical, and spiritual codes conflicted with codes of value placed on animal products in the marketplace" (Rieke 157). For instance, the fur coats

worn by the humans in “New York” are worn for presentation rather than survival. One indication that Moore gives of the frivolity involved in wearing and even desiring such coats is the description of the deer-skins as “white with white spots” (6). An object that is white with white spots could essentially just be described as white, yet the speaker includes the meaningless detail about the fur, presumably to add value and richness to the find. The coat is not merely white; it is distinct because it is white with white spots.

Additionally, in a list of New Yorkers as metaphoric animal skins, the desire for economic status is apparent in images that focus strictly on appearance, but fall short because of the origination of the furs. In a time characterized by anglophilia and expatriation, Moore compares her New Yorkers in animal skins to the European “queen full of jewels”/ and the beau with the muff, / from the gilt coach shaped like a perfume-bottle” (10-12). But, because the New Yorkers wearing the fur do not achieve the economic positions of the Europeans and, in fact, are “a far cry” (10) from the European model, the New Yorkers fail in gaining an equal cultural status. While America may not have access to crown jewels and emblems of historic monarchies, it does have access to the wilderness, “the otter, the beaver, the puma skins” (21), and the New Yorkers found in the poem have discovered a way to use America’s resources for economic gain. As noted in the observations of animal skins, Moore is able to emphasize how human encounters with the world “[. . .] involve reclassifying, revaluing, and thereby in some sense changing, the world” around themselves into something they can understand and possess (Steinman 216).

In addition to the consumption found in “New York,” Moore characterizes the cultural world found in “A Grave” as overly consumptive as well. For instance, though

the sea is quick to “Return a rapacious look” (9), indicating the sea desires the bodies it absorbs, the body of water is not instigating this hungry look. Moore is careful enough to interject that the sea is returning the look already given to it by human faces. Though the sea itself may be somewhat predatory in its collecting, it is a mere reflection of human actions found in the poem. It is a reflection that can be found at the poem’s opening in the man who is gazing into the sea. Thus, the use of the natural in this greed-laden image is a commentary on the human world which serves to be the origination of the look; it is not designed to ascribe the look as solely belonging to a gluttonous sea. Though the sea may ultimately be the object which consumes, it had originally been the victim of proclaimed ownership.

Along with a desire to proclaim ownership, “to stand in the middle of a thing” (3), come the reoccurring images of human attempts not merely to consume, but to control. Often, Moore presents images of human’s attempted control of flora and fauna. For example, in “The Labors of Hercules,” the title character desires to make the mule popular for no reason beyond “its neat exterior / expressing the principle of accommodation, reduced to a minimum” (1-2). Moore begins with the poem with an oversimplified “labor” and then progresses to “labors” over art and philosophies. By beginning the poem and quickly complicating the matter, Moore gives the reader the sense that the popularization of the mule is concrete and nearly trivial in comparison with such abstract struggles as “teach[ing] the patron-saints-to-atheists / that we are sick of the earth” (10-11). Simply, the mule is not given a sense of self-identity such as that given to the cat in “Silence.” The mule does not act of any independent will. Instead, the mule is

reduced to its tangible qualities which will prove to be beneficial to humans. The mule is only understood in terms of how it can be controlled and commodified.

Just as Hercules labored over transmitting the mule's benefits to humans, the speaker in "The Monkey Puzzle" admits to laboring over understanding the tree found in the poem. In the poem, the speaker admits that "one is at a loss, however, to know why it should be here" (19) and that "society's not knowing is colossal" (15). The speaker hints at the value of the tree but recognizes that its value is lost because it is not understood by society as a commodity to own and control; it is "a curio in this bypath of curio-collecting" (13). The tree is not accessible nor centrally-located and found. Because the tree cannot be understood as property in economic terms, the tree remains outside of human control and consumption.

Usually, the desire to control the chaotic natural world results in futility similar to that faced by the society in "The Monkey Puzzle" that simply could not know and comprehend the value of the tree. Human need to control drives many of the culturally-based images found in Moore's poetry, but usually the images lead to futility on the part of humans to gain the control and desired effect. One of the ways that futility manifests itself in Moore's images is through observations of paralysis. For instance, in "A Grave" the man found in the opening image is immobile as he looks at the sea. His only action is to take the view from the speaker. Moore constructs her syntax and observations in a way that the action is not directly performed by the man, but only observed by the speaker. For instance, there are no action verbs directly associated with the observation of the man, only participles. Though participles are verbals and thus based on verbs, the man is still only in a state of being, not in the midst of performing. Moore's syntax

serves to remove any ability to act from the immobile man. Additionally, the speaker is also in a state of paralysis as he or she is unable to prevent the “man looking into the sea” from “taking the view” (2).

In order to reinforce the futility and paralysis of the human aspects found in “A Grave,” Moore juxtaposes the images of the cultural and social world with natural elements characterized by fluidity and relentless action. In fact;

[. . .] the offending man’s presence is grammatically effaced, as ‘you’ disappears after the tenth line, and the sea takes over, semantically as well as thematically.

Correspondingly, human actions—looking, taking, and fleeing—are undermined by denials of all kinds [. . .] and all evidence of human presence, let alone volition or consciousness, is submerged. (Fast 366)

In addition to the subtle shift of the speaker’s focus, the reader perceives the paralysis of the cultural world through Moore’s reliance upon negation. The cultural aspects of the poem are best characterized by what they do not do and do not recognize rather than what they are capable of doing. Another of Moore’s tactics to emphasize the differences between the inaction of the humans and the action of the sea is to give human qualities to the sea. The comparison between the sea and the humans in the poem makes it easier for the reader to perceive because both elements are presented in like terms. For example, the sea is presented as a face whose “wrinkles progress among themselves in a phalanx” (16). That the sea is moving fluidly and continuously contrasts with the immobile man, making his lack of action more evident. It is not only the sea’s relentless action that serves as a contrast to the paralyzed men of the poem, but the animals’ as well. Even amidst the sea’s power to contain human bodies, the animals that live in the sea, as well

as the animals that surround the sea, move forward in their daily activities, instead of becoming immobile with the sight of the sea. “The birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls [. . .]” (18) just as they have been doing. The birds and the tortoises of the poem continue in movements, unlike the man found in the beginning of the poem who remains in a moment of stasis or the fishermen who remain best characterized by what they do not do. Moore uses the juxtaposition of the image of the immobile men with the fluid actions of the animals and water to emphasize the men’s, as well as the speaker’s, paralysis.

Similarly, a subtle observation of human inaction occurs in “When I Buy Pictures.” In this poem, the speaker creates a catalog of images that would “give me pleasure in my average moments” (3), and the list gives the reader a sense of human stasis. In the catalog, Moore includes “seated people” (8), who stand out against the images surrounding them. The “hounds with waists diminishing like the waist of the hour-glass / and deer and birds” (7-8) that are juxtaposed against the seated humans emphasize the fact that the people remain seated. The hounds are described merely through their physical shape, while the deer and birds are listed with no descriptors. That the speaker provides the single word “seated” to describe the people, when there had been no activities being performed by the preceding images, breaks with the parallelism of the structure. A break in expectation emphasizes that aspect of the poem because the reader cannot move seamlessly through it. In “When I Buy Pictures,” the reader falters over the phrases consisting of the activity, or lack of, performed by the people in the poem. In the following sentence, the stasis is again emphasized because the images that follow the “seated people” contain notions of movement, such as adaptation. Artichokes,

“in six varieties of blue” (11), change color depending upon the season. By focusing on the detail of the artichokes in multiple colors, the reader perceives the artichoke’s ability to adapt to season and adjust to change. Juxtaposing the ever-changing artichokes with the stagnant people again emphasizes the stasis of the humans seated. Additionally, the only other human that exists in the poem’s images is Adam, and he is being led by a spiritual force, Michael. Adam, like the seated people, is not acting of his own accord, but by a spiritual energy. By presenting two differing worlds, the natural and the cultural, Moore is able to emphasize the paralysis and futility facing many in the early 20th century.

While paralysis is one way that futility manifests itself in Moore’s poetry, a retreat to the primitive is another way that futility makes itself evident. A return to the primitive is an admittance of the futility of the current paths of life, the current thought processes and worldview. Moore’s speaker addresses the status quo by indicating that he or she must search for “what would give me pleasure in my average moments” (“When I Buy Pictures” 3) indicating that which is average is not inherently pleasurable, much less desirable, and a new view or “picture” is necessary. “In the modernist period a radical questioning of the present civilization [. . .] gave a new edge to the primitive impulse” (Bell 20), which caused a resurgence of nostalgia for the primitive. The desire was for “not just a prescientific, but a wholly opposed worldview” that included following “contours of the psyche and of the sacred” (Bell 21). For Moore, who embraced both scientific and spiritual aspects in her worldview, the return to the primitive complements the existence in her poetry of a natural world that was characterized by both a sense of a spiritual moral responsibility and a sense of scientific detachment. Moore speaks to this

need for a new worldview by noting in “When I Buy Pictures” the speaker’s pleasure in “the snipe-legged hieroglyphic in three parts” (11). By indicating the pleasure in primitive views, Moore directly addresses the “central paradox of Modernism: the most sophisticated achievement of the present is a return to, or a new appreciation of, the archaic” (Bell 20). The return to the primitive in Moore’s poetic images offers an “alternative worldview” (Bell 21) to the early 20th century worldview; the desire for which indicates the futility of the Modernist worldview to encompass and explain the changing climate of the time.

Futility does not just emerge in the form of paralysis or a retreat to the primitive, but also in the culture’s attempt to control and subsequent failure to control the natural elements. For instance, in “New York” animal skins have been turned into fur coats, yet they do not function in the same manner and for the same purposes as they had on the animals. The fur as a cultural object to be consumed is sub par compared to the fur while it is still on the animal. For instance, the eagle’s down is now “wilting...compacted by the wind” (8). The down is not in impeccable shape, and it is now a victim to other natural elements. While the culture may have been able to proclaim ownership of the furs, the furs do not function as practically as when on their original, natural owners. The human owners of the furs have not been able to fully manipulate and control the natural elements they consume; thus, their actions to control the elements they have proclaimed ownership over are futile.

Not only are the attempts of humans to understand and control the natural world futile, but so are their cultural constructs. In a similar way, the cultural constructs found in “A Grave” do nothing to prevent the ever-advancing sea. The lighthouses and bell-

buoys, constructs designed to aid the human in navigating the natural, are futile in that they only create “pulsation” and “noise” (20). The speaker observes that even amidst the culturally-constructed elements created to prevent human death in the sea, humans are still “bound to sink,” (21) and the sea “advances as usual” (21) in its taking of human consciousness. Juxtaposed with the ineffectual lighthouse and bell-buoys are the animals that live in the sea’s environment, who, though noisy, are more appealing than the cultural constructs. For instance, by noting the birds are “emitting cat-calls” (18), Moore specifically refers to the exact sound of the birds rather than referring to their sound as merely “noise,” a word that the reader perceives as a negative disruptive sound. By placing the two very different sounds together, the reader can sense an intensification of the disruptive and ineffectual sound of the bell-buoys. The culturally created elements do not blend seamlessly with their environment, and, furthermore, they are still unable to perform the actions for which they were created. “For Moore, in ‘A Grave’ meditation on the sea becomes meditation on the limits of human power [. . .]” (Fast 369), which is evident in the images she presents of objects that humans designed to control and understand the powerful natural elements.

Likewise, the actions of the novices in “Novices” are characterized by futility, though their futility manifests itself in their failed attempts to create and understand. For instance, the novices are projected as “acquiring at thirty what at sixty they will be trying to forget” (10). That the novices can create and years later turn from their creation, their art, shows a futility in the original creation, because, in retrospect, it falls short of the novice’s expectations. Given that Moore finds it necessary to understand art in terms of “the spiritual forces which have made it” (“When I Buy Pictures” 18), the reader senses

that the novices failed in their ability to capture the spirit of the work which is necessary in artistic creation and artistic understanding. Similarly, the novices' desires to interest the men and women they write for are futile. The "men are strong and no one pays any attention" while the "women have charm, and how annoying they can be" (20, 21). The men's attempts at communication are futile, even though they have strength, and, subsequently, they are just glossed over. Women, on the other hand, are listened to and considered charming, yet their opinions seem marginalized by being characterized as "annoying." Both the men and women are isolated from others as they are unable to relay opinions and have their opinions heard. Their attempts to correspond with humans outside of themselves are futile as are the novices' attempts to appease the noncommunicative and isolated men and women.

The approach that the speaker in "When I Buy Pictures" takes to art work is similar to the novices' futile desires to appease the men and women who go unheard. The speaker indicates that an intelligent, strictly culturally based, understanding of a work is incomplete, and it is futile to attempt to comprehend art based strictly on intelligence because "too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that detracts from one's enjoyment" ("When I Buy Pictures" 13). What the speaker does note is needed for full comprehension of a work is to "acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it" (13). It is not the culturally learned intelligence that is going to bring about understanding, and the attempt to understand through strictly intelligent means is futile. What is needed is an innate comprehension of the work "lit with piercing glances into the life of things" (17), an ability that is not acquired strictly through social and cultural means. In "When I Buy Pictures" Moore focuses on the futility of basing the

appreciation of art strictly upon intelligence and the need to approach art through an alternative means.

Though Moore's poetry provides ample images of human futility in thought, intellect, and control, the view of futility that emerges in her observations is somewhat limited. As though influenced by the speaker in "When I Buy Pictures" who noted the futility of viewing art without acknowledging spiritual forces behind the work, Moore's sense of futility acknowledges spiritual forces in that she is careful not to push her images of futility to the extreme of disillusionment. Her observations are not of unmet expectations in nature. Her speaker's observations, particularly those of nature, still note the reliability of rituals and traditions, counter to typical high Modernist poetry. For instance, in "A Grave" the "firs stand in a procession, each with an emerald turkey-foot on top" (6), calling to mind images of theology and stability. The trees themselves evoke in the reader a sense of security in that they are evergreen conifers, so they remain the same color, as well as maintain their needle-like pine leaves, throughout the year. The trees are reliable, counter to the notion of disillusionment as arising from unmet expectations. Likewise, the first definition of procession in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "The action of a body of persons going or marching along in orderly succession, in a formal or ceremonial way; esp. as a religious ceremony, or on a festive occasion." The firs surround the sea, the grave, keeping watchful eye, but not verbally, just as a religious figure would keep watch over a funeral or death bed and the reader can perceive a spirituality in the image of the fir trees keeping vigil over the sea. Because the firs are "saying nothing" (7), they are not attempting to prevent human interaction with the sea; they are merely observing the interaction that is already in process. Moore,

through presenting this poetic image of the natural world, subtly pulls religious tradition into her poetry as an objective observer rather than an invasive entity that must be believed and followed regardless of the accuracy of its predictions. She permits the ritualistic act of the procession to exist within her poem, yet does not give it any action or commentary that could be misconstrued as misleading or futile. By not creating a ritual act that falls short of expectation, Moore is able to counter notions of disillusionment.

Just as Moore used the image of the fir trees in “A Grave” to circumvent disillusionment through creating a consistency and lack of expectation in the natural world, she uses conifers throughout her oeuvre to create the same effect—a natural world that is void of expectation. Her use of conifers rather than deciduous trees creates a scenerio in the natural world where there is no discovery by humans that the trees are not what the humans anticipate them to be. Moore is able to create a worldview that does not carry futility to the point of disillusionment. For instance, in “The Monkey Puzzle,” the tree, the monkey puzzle itself, is a conifer. It is consistent in its color and makeup, yet it still cannot be found using the knowledge gained by culture. The juxtaposition of the predictable look of the tree with the human’s inability to find the tree creates a distinction between the futility of human intelligence and the disillusionment caused by unmet expectations. In Moore’s poetry, futility does not always encompass disillusionment, and, in fact, in her poetry the reader senses a distinct separation between the two. By creating two dissimilar worldviews, Moore is able to acknowledge the futility of the human condition, but, by incorporating ritual and consistency into her natural elements, she is able to stave off the sense of disillusionment with ritual and tradition that occurred during the early 20th century.

While Moore's poetry does not recognize and give credit to a number of rising Modernist notions, her poetry does present emerging ideas of materialism and ownership as well as the futility of human actions. Through presenting images and observations of two distinct worlds, the natural and the cultural, Moore is able to provide subtle commentary on the cultural worldview. It is where nature and culture meet that Moore's most profound and relentless ideals emerge, some of which work to support and objectively realize Modernist notions such as futility, and others of which work to speak of the ills of the rising Modernist notions such as consumption of the natural. In viewing the moments when Marianne Moore's natural world and cultural world collide, her poetry can be understood as distinctly her own, rather than a mold of high Modernism. She is both a participant and an observer of her culture, giving her fodder for her observations of the early 20th century, where she permitted herself to find relevance in some characteristics of high Modernism, but also permitted herself to turn away from others or to criticize their existence.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

As William Carlos Williams begins his essay on Marianne Moore, “The best work is always neglected [. . .]” (“Marianne Moore, 1923” 52), and though Williams said this as Moore’s contemporary, it still rings true. Unfortunately, Marianne Moore has been relegated to a near-afterthought in the current discussion of Modernism. Her poetry has been criticized as “fussy, uncertain as to direction and development [. . .]” and an example of “[. . .] the danger of too insistent sophistication and complexity” (Pearce 150). Time and again critics are put off by Moore’s complexity, but it is a complexity that she recognizes as inherent in language. Moore states, “[. . .] I never knew anyone who had a passion for words who had as much difficulty in saying things as I do” (Hall 28). Moore’s “difficulty in saying things” emerges in her poetry as a reworking of images—images which invite the reader both to look at objects and to perceive the objects in their historic and cultural sense. By looking at Moore’s images and the placement of culture and nature, the reader can perceive her distinctive Modernist aesthetic.

Moore is different from her contemporaries, and not just because she wore an oddly shaped hat and continued to live with her mother through her adult life. She is not set apart merely because she was a precisionist in her work as well as in her meticulous system of recording other print she found interestingly phrased. She separates herself because she turned her back on some of the characteristics most commonly associated

with high Modernism. Disillusionment with religion does not reveal itself in Moore's poetry; in fact, Moore's poetry is instilled with a sense of spirituality. Similarly, though the reader may sense fragmentation in the speaker's quick shifts between images as well as the shifting point of view, Moore permits underlying truths, such as morality tempered with scientific observation, to permeate her poetry. Critics may struggle to fit Moore within the boundaries of high Modernism, as tenuous as they may be, but Moore does supply critics with an overwhelming amount of work that can be considered Modernist because of her recognition of the futility of human action as well as human's materialism and desire not only for control, but for consumptive control. Marianne Moore both fits the characteristics of high Modernism and establishes her own version of high Modernism. As fits with high Modernism, her forms are experimental yet they are still distinctive. Her subject matter is distinctive as well, but more so because it does not fit in with the perceived definitions of high Modernism. While Marianne Moore's poetry may be complicated, much can be discerned by focusing on her images of nature and culture, both the images' contents as well as forms, particularly the early poems "which afford the basis for Moore's claim to status as a significant poet" (Slatin 1).

Most know Marianne Moore through the myths that center around her peculiar lifestyle. They know of her correspondence with the Ford company and her ropes of red hair. "How so slight a woman can so roar, like a secret Niagara, and with so gracious an interference, is one with all mysteries where strength masquerading as weakness—a woman, a frail woman—bewilders us" (Williams, "Marianne Moore, 1948" 112). But it is not the woman behind the poems that need be understood to reveal the power of the poetry; the poems themselves reveal the woman and her distinct aesthetic. "I don't know

what else to say of Marianne Moore—or rather I should like to talk on indefinitely about her, an endless research into those relationships which her poems, her use of the materials of poetry, connote. For I don't think there is a better poet writing in America today or one who touches so deftly so great a range of our thought" (Williams, "Marianne Moore, 1948" 113).

WORKS CITED

- Bell, Michael. "The Metaphysics of Modernism." The Cambridge Companion to Modernism. Ed. Michael Levenson. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 9-32.
- Blackmur, R.P. "The Method of Marianne Moore." Marianne Moore: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Charles Tomlinson. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969: 66-86.
- Dekoven, Marianne. "Modernism and Gender." The Cambridge Companion to Modernism. Ed. Michael Levenson. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 174-93.
- Edsall, Constance. "Values and the Poems of Marianne Moore." The English Journal. 58 (1969): 516-18.
- Eliot, T.S. *Dante*. London: Faber and Faber, 1965.
- "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." The Waste Land and Other Poems. New York: Signet Classic, 1998: 5-11.
- Erkkila, Betsy. The Wicked Sisters: Women Poets, Literary History & Discord. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Fast, Robin Riley. "Moore, Bishop, and Oliver: Thinking Back, Re-Seeing the Sea." Twentieth Century Literature. 39 (1993): 364-79.
- Fussell, Paul. Poetic Meter and Poetic Form. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1979.
- Hall, Donald. "The Art of Poetry: Marianne Moore An Interview with Donald Hall." Marianne Moore: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Charles Tomlinson. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969: 20-45.
- Incredible Suckers. PBS. 11 Mar. 2007
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/suckers/myths.html>.
- Koch, Vivienne. "The Peaceable Kingdom of Marianne Moore." Modern American Poetry: Essays in Criticism. Ed. Guy Owen. Deland, FL: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1972: 99-115.

- Ladino, Jennifer. "Rewriting Nature Tourism in 'an Age of Violence': Tactical Collage in Marianne Moore's 'An Octopus.'" Twentieth-Century Literature. 51 (2005): 285-315.
- Leavell, Linda. "When Marianne Moore Buys Pictures." American Literary History. 5 (1993): 250-71.
- Longenbach, James. "Modern Poetry." The Cambridge Companion to Modernism. Ed. Michael Levenson., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 100-29.
- Lourdeaux, Stanley. "Marianne Moore and a Psychoanalytical Paradigm for the Dissociated Image." Twentieth Century Literature. 30 (1984): 366-71.
- Martin, Taffy. Marianne Moore: Subversive Modernist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.
- Molesworth, Charles. Marianne Moore: A Literary Life. New York: Atheneum, 1990.
- Moore, Marianne. The Poems of Marianne Moore. Ed. Grace Schulman. New York: Penguin Classics, 2005.
- Nitchie, George. Marianne Moore: An Introduction to the Poetry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969.
- Oxford English Dictionary. Second Edition. 1989. 10 Mar. 2007.
<http://dictionary.oed.com.libproxy.txstate.edu/cgi/entry/50189155?query_type=word&queryword=procession&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=zVsY-Wfz62I-22717&hilite=50189155>.
- Pearce, Roy Harvey. "Marianne Moore." Ed. Charles Tomlinson. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969: 150-58.
- Pound, Ezra. "Marianne Moore and Mina Loy." Marianne Moore: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Charles Tomlinson. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969: 46-47.
- Rees, Ralph. "The Reality of the Imagination in the Poetry of Marianne Moore." Twentieth Century Literature. 30 (1984): 231-41.
- Rieke, Alison. "'Plunder' or 'Accessibility to Experience': Consumer Culture and Marianne Moore's Modernist Self-Fashioning." Journal of Modern Literature. 27 (2003): 149-70.
- Schulze, Robin. "Marianne Moore's 'Imperious OX, Imperial Dish' and the Poetry of the Natural World." Twentieth Century Literature. 44 (1998): 1-33.

Slatin, John. The Savage's Romance: The Poetry of Marianne Moore. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986.

Steinman, Lisa. "Modern America, Modernism, and Marianne Moore." Twentieth Century Literature. 30 (1984): 210-30.

Therese, Sister M., S.D.S. Marianne Moore: A Critical Essay. USA: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969.

Tomlinson, Charles. "Introduction: Marianne Moore Her Poetry and Her Critics." Marianne Moore: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Charles Tomlinson. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969: 1-15.

Williams, William Carlos. "Marianne Moore, 1923." Ed. Charles Tomlinson. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969: 52-59.

--- "Marianne Moore, 1948." Ed. Charles Tomlinson. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969: 112-23.

Willis, Patricia. "The Road to Paradise: First Notes on Marianne Moore's 'An Octopus.'" Twentieth Century Literature. 30 (1984): 242-66.

VITA

Jennifer Leigh Coleman was born in Danville, Pennsylvania on April 1, 1979, the daughter of Patti Coleman and Thomas Coleman. After completing her B.A. in English at York College of PA, she entered University of Maryland, College Park and earned her M.F.A. in poetry in 2004. After relocating to San Antonio, Texas in 2004, she enrolled at Texas State University-San Marcos to pursue her M.A. in Literature.

Permanent Address: 1240 Wiltshire Ave.

San Antonio, Texas 78209

This thesis was typed by Jennifer L. Coleman.