READING REVISION: THE ARCHIVAL IMAGINATION IN MARIANNE MOORE’S EARLY POEMS

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ABSTRACT

In order to better understand Marianne Moore’s revision practices, my thesis examines Moore’s copies of Poems and Observations, which are currently held in the Rosenbach Museum and Library, as well as the unpublished and published revisions of three poems that have some of the most protracted revision histories: “Poetry,” “When I Buy Pictures,” and “A Grave.” Moore made myriad revisions to both of these texts and poems, from radical omissions and minor substitutions, to corrections of spelling and textual errors. Some of these revisions ultimately become variants in her many published versions of the poems, while others are like ghosts, never appearing in publication. My thesis traces the changes that took place between each draft and typed manuscript of these three poems. While it is both difficult to locate these revisions within a timeline, Moore’s archive nonetheless facilitates an authoritative reading of these revisions.

Moore’s revisions can be understood both as a practice and a theme in her work, enabling readers to resist narratives of textual and compositional closure and concision. Finally, Moore’s revisionary practice and archival habit informs the contemporary experience of the public-facing writer on digital sites of composition, curation, and archiving.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am grateful to Professor Cóilín Parsons, whose enthusiasm about my interest in archival research from my first day of graduate school helped solidify my decision to go to the Marianne Moore Library in the first place. His extra push is representative of the many times I found myself and my research questions invigorated by his above-and-beyond approach to being the Thesis Seminar Advisor for our 2018-19 cohort. I also have endless thanks for my cohort, whose suggestions on my earliest drafts, presented in the afterhours of the English Department’s conference room on Tuesdays, made the whole thing more fun.

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The Rosenbach Museum and Library contains The Marianne Moore Library (MML), the largest collection of Moore’s personal objects and literary papers. Among these objects and papers are her personal copies of each of her published books. One of the first observations to be made about Moore’s revising method is her habit of revising on copies of her books from her first publication, *Poems* (1921), through her final publication, *Complete Poems* (1967), often neatly writing in an updated word or phrase in small cursive handwriting—handwriting that was likely that of her younger years. She was as scrupulous about these post-publication revisions as she was about the creative pre-publication revision process, and it is likely, as I will demonstrate in this thesis, that her lifelong habit of using published texts as sites of revision began with *Poems* not long after it was published.

Indeed, this revision habit led Moore to make revisions upon her two copies of *Poems* and on her first edition of *Observations*, an act that turned them into something like copy texts. To date, I have not found a study that addresses these revisions made upon her own copies of her books.¹ In order to better understand Moore’s revision process in her early years before becoming editor of *The Dial*, their curious presence becomes a prerequisite to properly reading and positing a chronological order to the revisions on her manuscripts and typed scripts of her other early poetry. Appendix 1 enumerates each of the revisions that Moore made on her two copies of *Poems* and on *Observations* (1924) (none were made on her copy of *Observations* (1925)), along with a few chosen facsimiles, and Chapter I will explore one possible way to date them.

Chapters II, III, and IV will look at Moore’s revisions to “Poetry,” “When I Buy Pictures,” and “A Grave.” For the most part, Marianne Moore did not date her manuscripts, typed manuscripts, and copy-texts—and she did not date any I will use. Although some documents retain helpful clues as to when they were written, such as home addresses, there can be no real consensus over the fundamentals about when these drafts and their revisions occurred. This is especially true because some drafts display such similitude, such as when Moore revised “When I Buy Pictures” in two different ways upon the same carbon copy (see Appendix 3, Figures 11a and 11b). It is not the goal of this study to date the manuscripts and typed manuscripts, but I have done my best to order them based on my close reading of their revisions in relation to their published versions and place them within a potential timeline. A close reading of the progression of decision-making and deliberation that these documents reveal in correspondence to their published versions produced this particular ordering. To distinguish between these documents, I have provided Appendices 2, 3, and 4 at the end of this thesis with the facsimiles, to which I refer throughout the following pages.

¹ This is with the exception of Charles Molesworth in the following (unfortunately, he does not mention his source, thus whether or not the book of *Poems* referred to here is either of the two in the Rosenbach): “She went on to mention that the book was beautifully printed, and had no misprints whatever. (If this were so, then apparently the corrections she was to make before sending it to Warner were those habitual revisions of published texts for which she was later to become so well known. This shows that the habit was not a result of her growing old and revising the work in her youth.” Molesworth, Charles. *Marianne Moore: A Literary Life*. The University of Michigan: Atheneum, 1990. 169.
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The sediment of the river which
Encrusts my joints, makes me very gray but I am used

To it, it may
Remain there; do away
   With it and I am myself done away with, for the
   Patina of circumstance can but enrich what was

There to begin
With.

INTRODUCTION

*A highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty [...] Had she survived, whatever she had written would have been twisted and deformed, issuing from a strained and morbid imagination. And undoubtedly [...] her work would have gone unsigned.*

— Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*¹

*Keep, keep, keep, trees say when I sleep. They teach.*

— Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*²

When we ask to what extent the social world is a construction, poetry, no less literature on the whole, is often thought to be the signified, not the signifier. At most, it is considered the imaginative medium and metaphor by which we understand the scope and extent of our constructed experience. It helps us to see and re-see, to envision and revise, the ostensibly competing spheres of fact and legend, desire and structure, nature and nurture, and rationality and intuition. Every now and then, great art will affect their strange combinations. But reading even that remains primarily an imaginative, not a material, social exercise.³

For Marianne Moore, the creation, curation, and social meaning of art held a material authority. Her poetry constitutes an effort to create units of space and time—in books, poems, and archive rooms—to sign and to signify. While names and spaces have limits, the imaginative spaces that they facilitate do not. Moore’s materials—her revisions, poetry, and archive—reveal an effort to facilitate such an imaginative space. If literature is to play out such a metaphor, then

³ Technology—especially smartphone—changes this material/social experience completely, as will be discussed in my Conclusion.
this is it: The act of physically collecting, keeping, and archiving both miscellaneous and meaningful facts, objects, processes, works of art, and works of words can create an imaginative space in which readers must eventually engage with, as Moore once wrote and then omitted, “that which is better without words:” the silence that comes after the poem; the affect in oneself; the affection toward another. A poem might dwell within the self, but not as the single genius. It lives in many drafts and potential forms. A poem, like all words, represents not just an idea, but a history. Words are archives. Even if that archive is forgotten or destroyed, it cannot be unwritten.

In spite of Moore’s tendency toward omission throughout her lifetime, she did not destroy the evidence of her linguistic and material processes. Today, the majority of her work rests in the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia in the Marianne Moore Archive, which is, according to former archivists Evelyn Feldman and Michael Barsanti, “considered the most complete single-author collection of the Modernist era, thanks in no small part to Moore’s habits of keeping nearly every scrap of paper she came across.” The amount of information in the archive cannot be understated—nor can how it facilitates this particular study of Moore’s poetry and her work of revision. What are readers to make of the thousands of pages and items—let alone her living room, which currently sits in a reconstructed form—in her archive? But more importantly, what are we to make of the fact that Moore made these private things public, in something like a final act of authorship?

The possibility that Moore’s selection of the Rosenbach as the permanent site of her literary and personal papers—which include her rough drafts, manuscripts, typed scripts, and

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5 To see a full study of Moore’s archive, see Karin Roffman, “Accidents Happen in Marianne Moore’s Native Habitat” in From the Modernist Annex: American Women Writers in Museums and Libraries (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press), 2010. 103-142.
copy texts—represents a final act of authorship and therefore intention, is what makes her decision so profound. In this thesis, I argue that Moore’s archive can in fact be historicized by readers, and possibly by future editors, as one act of publication in her literary publication history. This is not to say that readers should privilege the authority of these archived objects and texts over the authority of the literature that she formally published during her lifetime. Rather, Moore’s authorial intentions or selections (a term that Robin Schulze uses and that will be explored) are temporally and spatially destabilized by her archive. This invites and facilitates a reading of Moore which, like her poetry, bursts with allusions and citations, requiring an archival imagination.

At the heart of this question of the personal archive is not an interest in biographical criticism. This reading is practical and material, deeply related to the question of what a writer’s relationship is to a constructed and shared literary past—that is, to a “tradition” that one can hold in material form. This fraught yet “new” relation to the past is a part of Modernism’s brand. But for Moore, as it is for all women writers, even up to the present, this relationship is fraught in a different way by the reality of literary exclusion. As Virginia Woolf establishes in a line I used in the epigraph to this Introduction from *A Room of One’s Own*, this fraught relationship is defined/deformed by either the perception of the woman writer, where “whatever she had written would have been twisted and deformed, issuing from a strained and morbid imagination,” or by the reception of woman writer, where “her work would have gone unsigned.” One response to this exclusive literary past is to create a past of one’s own: not necessarily a shared past, though that is important too, but a personal one that can be made new by and for oneself again and again. I want to argue that we can interpret Moore’s act of archiving and revising as *self-reflexive tradition-making*. It is not a rejection of the value for tradition—of looking to the literary past for
answers or authority. It is simply a relocation of that value and practice within one’s own selection and collection process. Through this feminist literary interpretation, I read Moore’s unpublished revisions alongside her published ones not only to establish Moore’s revision practice more clearly for scholars, showing that the revisions are a vital part of what it means to read her work as a whole, but also to posit just how significantly Moore’s work and archive contributes both symbolically and materially to the formation of the women writer in the twentieth century. While others explore this same realization by reading her notebooks, I begin this project my reading her revisions.

While I will later address the implications of the archive on editorial theory, it is worthwhile to clarify my stance briefly here. I do not hold that reading revision in this way, from the authority of her archive, implies editing the revisions into new editions of her work. The project of reading revision should not entail a variorum edition of Moore’s poetry that “puts to rest” the “archival ghosts” of her unpublished work. At the same time, these revisions and archived objects should mobilize the common reader to enjoy a fuller understanding of Moore’s writing process and of the poems themselves. This seems to be one of Moore’s reasons for selling and donating her work to the archive—to create a new, ongoing, and posthumous public. As future scholarship and now the Marianne Moore Digital Archive make these objects and writings accessible to any online reader, I argue, especially in Chapter 1, that this archival access requires both boundless imagination and ceaseless accuracy toward the material. 6

First, it calls for boundless imagination. Despite the rich material that is available to readers in the archive, only a few scholars, such as Bonnie Costello, John Slatin, and Robin Schulze have responded to Feldman and Barsanti’s invitation that Moore’s manuscripts and

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rough drafts “enabl[e] the reader to follow the poet at work on a particular poem,” tracing how the revisions show the inner workings of the author’s mind and effect the meaning of the poem. Some notable critics of Marianne Moore have taken up that task of comparing her published revisions on particular poems, mentioning her unpublished revisions here and there. In *Becoming Marianne Moore*, an extraordinary account of genetic criticism and textual history of the early poems, Robin Schulze hopes that readers will take up the task of looking at Moore’s early variants in order to see her “authorial selections” rather than “intentions,” stating,

> While the word ‘intention’ has come to imply a singular, teleologically driven sense of authorial purpose, the phrase ‘authorial selection’ implies that the author’s goal in each new version of his or her text is, in fact, the local fitness of that text in relation to its social, cultural, or textual environment rather than the achievement of some always present abstract ideal of perfection.

Schulze beneficially focused on creating an editorial standard for editing Moore. Alternatively, yet with the same interest in accurately reading Moore’s revisions, this thesis will focus on how a reader might respond to Moore’s practice of revision, analyzing the correlative relationships between the published and unpublished revisions and tracing, imagining and theorizing about her compositional or selection process. Schulze’s theory of authorial selection is a useful alternative; however, I still hold that revision can be a process of intention toward expressing an idea, so I will use both “intention” and “selection” where they seem fitting.

Archival reading also calls for ceaseless accuracy. In this balance between imagination and fact, a shadow of irony always falls over an archive’s reader, especially when reading unpublished revisions. Unpublished revisions can enliven the reading of a text through the theoretical lens of authorial intention, but the facticity of such material can never ultimately reveals those intentions. We can avail ourselves of every last dash, omission, addition, scribble,

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7 Feldman and Barsanti, “Paying Attention,” 15.
and scrap of Moore’s archive in order to better understand what Moore was doing as a person and writer, but the whole is not the sum of its parts; these things do not ultimately pull the veil from Moore’s individual intentions and consciousness. Problematically, such a view continues to promote a romantic notion of authorial intention, a notion with which I contend later in this Introduction. All this is to say that Moore’s archive and the acts of her past that it holds is not accountable to any telos or myth of Moore, the author.

It is important to hold in mind that Moore wanted her archive to be accessible at the Rosenbach: she authorized the now-public nature of her personal archive. In doing so, she was perhaps facilitating a reading of her work, one that actively asserts her lifelong value of archiving. This is not only a formal reading, but also a thematic one. On Moore’s archiving habits in relation to her poetry, Taffy Martin states that:

This material forms a remarkably detailed and complete record of Moore’s intellectual and professional development, particularly for the early years of her career. During that time, Moore prepared herself to be both a critic and a poet. She considered everything, regardless of source or chronology, potentially appropriate material for her writing. The manuscripts document her breadth of reference and her use of fragmentary quotations, but more importantly they show that these practices were lifelong habits, part of her conscious preparation for a public career.⁹

Moore’s archive “considers everything” and does not shy away from the act of inexhaustibly attending to the ostensibly mundane, unimportant details of the world. Her poetry does the same. Srikanth Reddy states that Moore’s poems often do the work of “placing ‘useless’ subjects like the pangolin at the center of didactic utterance … reorient[ing] poetic instruction toward an oblique teleology of self-culture and enrichment.”¹⁰ Reddy further reformulates the romantic notion of spontaneity through the archive by saying that for Moore, “the spontaneous overflow

of powerful feeling enters representation through … a painstaking, deliberate arrangement of curious material into elliptical ornaments of identity.”¹¹ In every way, as these scholars have shown, Moore was not only an archivist, but an “archival artist.”¹² To read her poems as such includes reading her unpublished and published revisions with the same care that she took to “keep, keep, keep” the drafts that made her a poet. Her archival practice establishes a relation to the past that self-genealogizes her own tradition—one which she then gave to a reading public.

Whether or not her unpublished revisions are dated, the material in Moore’s archive provides something to the imagination of contemporary readers and writers, not to construct a myth, but rather to create an affective experience of Moore’s inclusive modernist authority and authorship: this is reading revision. Moore’s revisions, connected to the archive, have potential to serve this reading function in a way that has not yet been realized. Moore’s archive may be opened up by readers in such a way that mimics her own approach to the imagination: that is, in a way that is fervent for facts but does not ultimately conclude with facticity. The archive, like her poetry and revisions, becomes “an imaginary garden with real toads” in it. Reddy states that, “More than any other American poet, Moore’s development is nurtured by this national project of archiving knowledge and making it available to the public in a democratic fashion.”¹³ I hope to demonstrate a material, not only thematic, archival engagement with Moore’s democratic fashion invites and deserves the imaginative dimension of reading revision.

But, again, facticity is required: it is truly a democratic archive because Moore gave it in its entirety. She did not make distinctions between materials. It would be absurd to show up to any archive and reject reading all it contains. If we value the intention not only of Moore’s

¹¹ Reddy, “‘To Explain Grace Requires a Curios Hand,’” 34.
¹² Ibid.
¹³ Reddy, “‘To Explain Grace Requires a Curios Hand,’” 36.
publication, but also of her decision to elect the Rosenbach Museum and Library as the archival site of her personal items, then readers should view the texts and revisions found there as their own kind of publication. Her archive acts as a destabilizing force against her texts.

_Understanding Revision_

The word “revision” often refers to the act of shifting one’s conceptual or philosophical stance on a foundational, collective idea: we might elaborate on the feminist revision of the modernist sublime. But a concern for the modernist aesthetic is not only with its theoretical revisions, but also with its empirical ones. It examines revision as a praxis—a readable, archivable, and valuable innovation of modernism. As Hannah Sullivan writes, this innovative practice of the work of revision presents a writing process that depends on both material resources to externalize the artistic and thinking process and on temporal resources to prolong or destabilize the publication of that process.\(^\text{14}\) She states that modernist revision “requires interacting with something that is already achieved in material form.”\(^\text{15}\) In the process of working with a fixed text, Sullivan goes on to state that, “counterintuitively, being able to see texts fixed in many visually different forms promotes textual fluidity.”\(^\text{16}\) In this way, because materiality is what chiefly enables artistic revision, it can also expressly characterize it. A reading of the early revision practices of Marianne Moore offers not only a theoretical revision of modernist aesthetics, but also offers a kind of poetics of its own that invites readers to engage with text in particularly modernist _material_ modes of experience.

\(^\text{15}\) Sullivan, _Work of Revision_, 8.
\(^\text{16}\) Ibid., 8.
Even though this definition of revision (as an externalization of a thinking process) relates to the work of editing, a study of revision goes beyond that of editing through the significant artistic, epistemological, and authorial dimension it extends to the writer. Passing through a material process that involves various ephemera, artistic revision limits and/or liberates an already existing text into something different than, but recognizable to, what was, as Moore put it, “the sediment [that] was / there / to begin with.”

Textual Authority: Romantic to Modern Views

The study of this artistic and epistemological process (understood through the reading and study of her material practices) for Moore leads into an historical and formal discourse on modernist poetics as a whole. Moore’s revisions to her early poems open up a discourse on key tropes of modernist literature: textual instability and the theory of impersonality. The relationship between these key tropes will be both clarified and complicated through reading Marianne Moore’s revisions. This section will provide an historical summary on how a study of the general practice of revision is but one empirical vehicle that moves readerships from romantic to modern views of authorship and text. The modernist art and poetry movement largely reject romantic notions of the author’s self and of their authority within the text, disrupting our ability to receive the author as a pure and autonomous “mediator” between the text and the ideas it represents.17

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17 Insofar as we talk about textual instability in early 20th century in terms of a general “modernism,” the notion of textual instability opposes Pound’s radical notion of the source of the poetic “idea.” Pound famously stated in his essay, Vorticism, that, “The image is not an idea. It [the image] is a radiant node or cluster; it is a ….VORTEX, from which ideas are constantly rushing.” In other words, Pound held that the image the writer paints with their words does not actually represent the idea. In omitting the possibility of readers coming into contact with an idea within the poem, Pound reveals Vorticism’s inclination to uphold some semblance of superiority over the reader. I argue that an understanding of “modernism” that accommodates Moore’s work takes up a notion of textual authority that includes revision, which includes the author attempt to create an idea within their image and reveal the process of coming to know that idea to the reader. Pound, Ezra. (1914). VORICISM. Fortnightly Review, may 1865-June 1934, 96(573), 569.
The subsequent section will explore how this textual shift affects the reception of the notion of the “personality,” reconceptualizing revision in relation to gendered representations of the self.

Romantic and neo-romantic (i.e. New Critical) approaches to the text—and textual variation—tend to oppose modernist understandings of text and textual variation. Romanticism fostered a relationship to texts that aesthetically idealized the production of a telos. Throughout the nineteenth century, published developed texts within and toward a telos in a similar way that we might talk about the work of editing. The publication marked textual closure, ensuring the production of a future of readership, criticism, and discourse. In the twentieth century, neo-romantic, leading to New Critical, notions of the text were expressed in *The Intentional Fallacy* (1947), where Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley notably state,

> If there is any sense in which an author, by revision, has better achieved his original intention, it is only the very abstract, tautological sense that he intended to write a better work and now has done it … his former specific intention was not his intention.\(^\text{18}\)

Many scholars have argued against this, stating that revision *can* express an artistic process and be read sans the perception that the final form is “better” than the original. This is not to stage an absolute historical dualism between romantics and modernists. Rather, it is to show that reading Moore’s revisions values an emergent textual philosophy that turns from 19\textsuperscript{th} century romantic textual views and its neo-romantic modernist strains. Moore actively destabilized these schools of thought through her revision practice and the publication of her archive.

New Critical understandings of editing and the role of the editor also work for this purpose of closure. When we say we are going to “edit” something, we mean that we will progress a work of writing into its final and best form. Editing does not “make it new” in the Poundian sense, but makes it what it always “should have been,” in the sense that Wimsatt and

Beardsley talk about revision undoing the authorial intention of the original. When Wimsatt and Beardsley state that the writer’s “former specific intention was not his intention,” they presume that the ideal text exists by means of a writer’s authority to make it so. The author, and by extension, the editor, become superior mediators between the idea and the world. Ultimately grounding the work of representation in the “genius” of the author, this ideal text abstracts the idea before it is written. Problematically, this approach to writing results in an approach to reading that would strive to take the text up from the same so-called superior and objective reasoning of the author.

At the same time, revision shares many commonalities with editing. All of this is not to say that my study of revision rejects authorial intention. Rather, I suggest that our understanding of the author’s “idea” in the text that uses a romantic approach should not be seen solely through their final act of publication. The practice of editing and the practice of revision can both work on the presumption that an “idea” is represented and discovered in the text. A “subject” is indeed at hand. Moreover, revision involves many of the same practices of editing: omitting, adding, re-ordering, and restructuring punctuation, words, and whole sub-ideas. Sullivan contends for a simple taxonomy of revision, stating that, “at the simplest level, we can say that a revising writer has three choices: a) to add material, so the final version is longer than the first draft, b) to delete, so it is shorter, and c) to substitute, producing a first and final draft of similar length.”\textsuperscript{19} These three categories of addition, omission, and substitution describe Moore’s acts of revision at the most basic textual level. Her revision practice involves revising already-published text and upon already-published text. In turn, every addition, omission, and substitution changes the meaning and materiality of the poem, further developing her particularly modernist poetics and personal

\textsuperscript{19} Sullivan, \textit{Work of Revision}, 15.
concerns as a writer. Moreover, while Moore’s acts of dashing commas and adding articles looks a lot like editing, I argue that this work shows an experimentalism and artistic innovation. This is especially true because some of the revisions on Moore’s copies of her Poems and Observations do not always ultimately revise. The issue with these is not that they lack formal publication; it is that they have an ambivalent ontology even within the archive. I describe and explore these revisions as “ghosts” in Chapter 1.  

To read revision is not to suggest that each draft or scribble of a poem should be taken on its own terms, or that it is of equal value to the published version; it is to argue that publication does not cease the writing process. Thus, scholars should welcome critical readings of Moore’s unpublished revisions alongside of her published revisions. Sullivan poses the question, “What would cause an endless, Sisyphean, process of revision to stop, enabling publication?” But Moore did not view revision as a process that enabled publication: she took the event of publication on far less certain terms. Affirming this for Moore, Heather Cass White states that, “the publication of a poem in a periodical, or the ordering of poems in a book, marked resting-places in her poetry’s development, not its final form.” Supporting this in her study of Moore’s revision to “Half Deity,” Christina Pugh writes, “I’d like to interpret her revisions not as promoting indeterminacy but instead as revealing a lyric teleology, one that participated in print publication but that also rejected the authority provided by any particular print publication.”  

Along these lines, I argue that Moore’s lifelong event of revising her work marks it with a lack of closure, a closure typically thought to be achieved in publication. Aligning with Pugh’s

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20 See Appendix 1.
21 Sullivan, Work of Revision, 2.
distinction, this textual instability does not necessarily imply a lack of authorial intention; rather, Moore’s revisions and archive suggest that an understanding of that authorial intention should be situated within Moore’s revisionary practice, one that accounts for the material and textual exigencies that led to each published version.

Revision and Gender

Romanticism’s patriarchal influence on the tradition of textual authority demands a gendered reading of this revision process. Tracing the history of revision practice, Sullivan notes that “the romantic creed of anti-revisionism, premised on a belief in inspiration, spontaneity, and organic form, persisted for most of the nineteenth century.”24 Not only did romantic writers venerate spontaneous thought over slower and more corporeal forms of reasoning, ultimately viewing the poetic genius in terms of a sublime achievement of reason over sensation, this war between spontaneity and practice—or organic form and process—was staged in gendered forms of personhood. Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar point out that patriarchal modes of writing, especially as they understood the imagination and expressions of reason, conceded to the sentiment that nothing was more intractable than a woman who spoke her mind, let alone in written form: “As the Romantic poets feared, too much imagination may be dangerous to anyone, male or female, but for women in particular patriarchal culture has always assumed mental exercises would have dire consequences.”25 In sum, the imagination, when left unregulated, produces mental instability. If revision externalizes the mind’s work in progress, then the unstable text indicates the unstable mind. This is why a study of revision should not be

thought of as a particularly feminist poetics; it would be problematic if it was. Rather, it is to suggest, as my work will contest, that the actions revision entails—thinking and processing “out loud”—have a long history of constituting negative stereotypes of women.

This is why both men and women, including Moore, who have been known to revise have been called “mad.” According to Sullivan, until the beginning of the twentieth century, the act of revision was associated with mental disability. The implication here is that the spontaneously inspired or imagined text was also the most rational and mentally stable one.26 This is a bias that we see in Moore scholarship. Scholars who have written on Moore’s revisions have often characterized not only Moore herself, but also her revised texts, with language of feminine stereotypes, violence, and disability. Helen Vendler points out that “words like ‘tidy,’ ‘fussy,’ [and] ‘finicking’” appear in criticism of Moore’s style.27 The words “distortion,” “effacement,” and “truncated” have appeared in reference to her revisions. One scholar stated that Moore’s 1925 revision to “Poetry was borne of “self-contempt;”28 another that Moore “lashed out against herself again” when she revised “Poetry” in 1967. 29 John Slatin uses strange emasculating undertones by stating that Moore, as a reviser, did not want “to go in” to her poems, otherwise she would get “lost.”30 All of this language undergirds the misogynistic idea that Moore’s poetry and revision practice—if not Moore herself—was in her “contempt” for poetry also volatile and erratic toward it. In sum, her writing was “womanly.” Ageist language persists in scholarship, as well. As K.L. Richardson aptly points out in an unpublished dissertation, Moore’s “aesthetic of self-production,” which includes her revisions practice, was

26 Sullivan, Work of Revision, 22.
27 Vendler, Marianne Moore, 74.
30 Slatin, The Savage’s Romance, 43.
viewed, alongside her contemporaries, as evidence of “her failing intellect later in life.”31 This sexist and ageist rhetoric that relates revision to mental instability and female “weakness” continues to uphold not only a theory of composition, but an entire social text theory, that capitalizes on classically liberal notions of the male abled-body. Thus, the language that I have adopted of textual instability to describe her poetry and revision process attempts to avoid this rhetoric by characterizing her revisions as a prolonged process of authorial intention toward an idea, producing various texts or a Text of many versions. This language rejects any characterization of the author and of her writing process as mentally unstable or unhinged.

Clearly, and as Sullivan shows, the practice of revision creates a particularly modernist aesthetic. Moreover, to read against the negative sensibilities associated with it serves our reading of it as a feminist mode of representation. In light of this, Moore’s revisions stress the way in which we receive her poetry—and her work of revision—as that of a woman writer or as feminine. Since her literary career began, critics and scholars have indeed noted Moore’s gender, but have used romantic and modernist neo-romantic modes of thinking to criticize her literary project. Indeed, modernism’s neo-romantic strain not only valued the teleological text, but also valued a poetics that expressed an “objective” or “direct” mode of seeing the world. This was not only in how the act of publication was received, as explored in the previous section, but also in what the text was actually saying, as if a poetic perspective could in fact be untainted by subjective and social experiences.

Scholars have praised Moore’s poetry for achieving a modernist “objectivity” that represented a distance, if not a severance, from one’s personal self and the object one beholds.

These responses especially attempted to locate Moore within the critical discourses introduced by Imagism’s liberating “direct treatment of the [external] thing,” as well as within T. S. Eliot’s defective “Impersonality theory of poetry.” As many scholars have shown, Eliot’s theory of impersonality is problematic because it does not account for a female (or non-European, for that matter) literary tradition in the first place. It holds that “the poet has, not a ‘personality’ to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.” For Eliot, works of art are differentiated by the way they are produced in the mind of the author, who has obtained a unique objectivity, which abides as a neo-romantic assumption about mind/body dualism and reason’s superiority over sensation. In order to compare Moore to her male counterparts, scholars have used Eliot’s theory of Impersonality to articulate Moore’s achievement as modernist in order to encapsulate her apparent self-distancing from the objects of experience that her poetry represents, thereby stating that her poems lack any representation of gender.

On the other hand, scholars have also accused Moore of having failed a gendered personality, framing her as shunning the task of representing women. In her study of modern women writers, Elizabeth Dodd sidelines Moore for being too devoid of individuality, writing: “I do not find the hints of a truly personal tone, nor the interest in the individual spirit.” Later in a footnote, she reiterates: “I do not see in the poems themselves the kind of shielded emphasis on personal feeling that would warrant her inclusion here. She seems to me a mainstream modernist.” Dodd reaffirms that supposed “mainstream modernists” are those who can

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36 Dodd, Veiled Mirror, 9.
“achieve” the absence of selfhood by attempting to perfectly mirror the world with “direct” language, somehow remaining objective and not integrating one’s own personhood into the work of art. According to Dodd, Moore, by virtue of not realizing her feminine self and then attempting to “partially veil” it with the poetic strategies of other women modernists, fails to represent a “personal” and therefore a “feminine” poetry.

Against such a view of impersonality, Moore adopts a kind of “self-fashioning,” a word that Alison Rieke has used for Moore’s gender performativity and artistic element of her aesthetic form. Rather than veiling or failing to veil a personality, Moore’s self-fashioning is simply a more accurate way to describe Moore’s work as a woman writer, including her work of revision. Moore was not attempting to chip away at herself through her poetry until some impersonal, individual spirit was all that remained. Revision for her was not a process of depersonalization—nor a cry to “unsex me here.” Especially for Moore, the revision process shows a poet working with a form to articulate the stimulating power of the world around them. This is a far cry from the impersonal voice and the “failed unveiled” body of work that these critics read in her aesthetic. Thus, a study of revision does not attempt to demystify or unpack the myth of Moore’s gender nor to affirm an essentialized gendered reading of the content of her poems. My interest in this thesis is the historical significance of her writing practice, which informs our understanding of how to locate her within the female gender.

Reading Revision: (De)Stabilizing Moore

From the standpoint of literary scholarship, what remains to be said is this: a feminist reading of Moore’s revisions is still a complicated one. How do we further establish a female author in the literary canon—moreover, one who has largely been underappreciated—by further destabilizing her texts? How do we answer the question of authorial intention when Moore herself troubled that notion? How do we think about Moore’s precision as a work in progress that included imprecision—an imprecision that she has given her readers access to? This project is not an attempt to say that the unpublished versions should be collected as “Moore’s final intentions” or as another attempt to create a “best text.” As previously stated, I do not think that the creation of a variorum edition of her work is what follows from a project completely committed to reading her revisions. For example, Appendices 1-4 of this thesis should not be read in isolation from the rest of her archive nor from the published versions and revisions of her poetry. Also as previously stated, the publication of the archive (both the material and the digital) is a precursor to putting such emphasis on reading her revisions at all. The editions and the archive perhaps exist in tension; a commitment to reading both at the same time, here starting with revision, is the formal and thematic instability that her poetry allows us to decipher and embrace.

How did Moore write? I will explore this question by looking at three poems that Moore revised and published in various versions until her second edition of Observations (1925): “Poetry,” “When I Buy Pictures,” and “A Grave.” While the RML contains many more typed manuscripts and drafts poems that contain equally interesting revision histories (“Dock Rats,” “An Octopus,” “Marriage,” and “Black Earth,” to name a few), these three poems have some of the most protracted revision histories and some of the most emblematic characterizations of Moore’s revision process: omissions, punctuation change, the stripping of form, as well as more
thematic changes, such as the nature of an poetic address, the contemplation of a polemic, the role of imagination.

Before exploring these poems, my first chapter attempts to show how Moore used her personal copies of *Poems* and *Observations* as sites of revision and explain what that might mean for understanding Moore as a writer. A close attention to Moore’s revisions within each of these chapters will force readers to ask questions about even the smallest parts of a poem, such as the punctuation or the substitution of a single word. When we pay close attention to those small changes throughout her revision process, it becomes clear that, if anything destabilizes Moore’s text, it is her constant shifting and shaping of punctuation. We can also see that those decisions do in fact change the meaning of the poem, even if slightly. These decisions should not be ignored in scholarship, that is, both in our reference to those textually unstable lines (such as the comma in Poetry: “I too, dislike it” and “I, too, dislike it,” as will be explored in Chapter 2) and in our understanding of how that instability changes the meaning of the poem.

I will also explore how Moore thematized “revision” in her poems. Many literary scholars have noted that Moore voices self-correction in her poems. To take this further, it seems that many of her poems attempt to work out how to discover something with or without one’s sense of vision; Moore often leaves the speaker with a sense of what they know and what they still do not know. The act of seeing, re-seeing, seeing without or with interruption, seeing through multiple perceptions at once, seeing uninterruptedly, and wanting to see without a man in the view—all of these types of seeing are ultimately revised images of “the self.” Throughout this thesis, I will explore how Moore, through revision, also re-envisions the imagination by sifting through one’s material, handling one’s pictures, and addressing one’s surroundings, even
if those surroundings are autocratic or as indifferent as the sea, the imagination becomes a democratizing force.

Finally, questions might be raised as to why I chose to use only Moore’s early poems for this study. Some scholars have viewed Moore’s revisions through a longer timeline, seeing how a post-WWII Marianne Moore might have been responding to her earlier self. As Heather Cass White states,

Moore frequently did what she could to turn her poems written before the 1940s into poems she would have written later. The end result is that Moore has been widely misperceived as primarily a (witty, but nonetheless insistent) moralist, and this has happened because she took pains to ensure it would. It is true that a method and study of Moore’s revisions could have considered Moore’s later publications her later writings. It is also quite possibly the case that the conclusions of this study could have drawn from any number of Moore’s poems throughout her lifetime. However, I chose to look at the revisions of the poems she worked on and heavily revised before she became editor of The Dial in 1925, because the editorship marks an important transition in her writing and public life. The poetic silence during her years working for The Dial suggests not only the importance of her work there for her other literary ambitions, but also the possibility that revision was a fundamental part of her most personal writing process, one that required a degree of domestic capacity—of thought, time, and scrutiny that she did not have in her role as editor and which she only regained afterward. I do not want to reinforce the idea that Moore’s archive and its revisions unveil the “myth of Moore.”

But if origin can somehow be of interest on its own, then what follows can be read as an interest in the origin of a writer before that writer could even be in a position to sell her living room to an archive, before she labored over editing the work of others and before she even had a

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book. In other words, I am interested in these objects and papers because they were written when, for Moore, to sit down and write, meant to sit down and revise the poems that launched such a public literary career.
CHAPTER I: THE GHOST REVISIONS OF POEMS AND OBSERVATIONS

“I don’t know what to do with these and don’t know what to do next.”

— Marianne Moore

Your Now Naked Dactyl

For Marianne Moore, revision has a complicated archival and publication history. Given this, it would be useful to momentarily withdraw into her biography. The first eight years of Moore’s writing life consisted of rejections from multiple magazine editors, who found her avant-garde verse beyond their readers’ taste for difficulty of form and eccentricity of subject matter. Such a profusion of submissions and rejections spurred a long process of revision and resubmission to various magazines and newspapers. Between 1916-1920, she finally gained traction with the editors of The Egoist, Others, The Dial and Contact. These publications led to correspondences with some of the most influential people in the high modernist circle, with whom she would go on to sustain friendships throughout her life. By 1920, Moore had published seventy-three poems, but she had not yet established herself as a poet who was a part of a particular circle or group; she even openly rejected association with the Imagists.

In 1920, Moore received separate offers from T.S. Eliot, Harriet Weaver, and H.D. and Bryher to help her publish a book collection of her poems, which would have been one strategic way to firmly embed herself into the literary spheres of New York and London. But Moore was chary about publishing her work in book form and ultimately decided to reject each offer. Then

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in the spring of 1921, H.D. and Bryher collected twenty-three poems by Moore and surreptitiously published the collection with The Egoist Press, titled it Poems, and sent a copy of it to its author across the Atlantic. Moore received it on July 7, 1921 in her New York apartment. The package included a letter from Bryher, asking what she thought of it. Moore composed a response that day. By the second sentence, she related herself to an extinct pterodactyl as described by Darwin,\(^{40}\) whose protective rock had been preemptively torn away by H.D. and Bryher’s “hardened gaze”—the gaze of a symbolic and now actual public.\(^{41}\) In her reply, Moore continued:

> I had considered the matter from every point and was sure of my decision—that to publish anything now would not be to my literary advantage; I wouldn’t have the poems appear now if I could help it and would not have some of them ever appear and would make certain changes … \(^{42}\)

In letters written between July 8-10, 1921, Moore broke the news of the publication to her family. She also apologized to those whose publication offers she had rejected only months before. To T.S. Eliot, she emphasized her understanding that H.D. and Bryher’s intrusive act against her “stubborn[ness]”\(^{43}\) was borne in friendship as a “testimony of affection.”\(^{44}\) Nor was her response to them entirely negative; although she wished the title had been Observations, she noted that she was pleased with the “beauty of all the printing details” and that “there is not a single misprint.”\(^{45}\) (This latter comment seems to be an overstatement: “Talisman” is missing a word). In her standard grace—even extending a filial tone by using an animal name for herself, as she often did in her letters with her mother and brother—she made a joke of the exposure with

\(^{40}\) An extinct dinosaur bird that, according to Darwin, evolved into the present-day pigeon.


\(^{42}\) Moore, Selected Letters, 164.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 164.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 171.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 164.
the signature: “Your now naked, Dactyl.” Yet Moore refused tidy closure to the event with a vulnerable and unmarked P.S. beneath her signature, wherein she confessed: “I don’t know what to do with these [copies of Poems] and don’t know what to do next.” As H.D. and Bryher proceeded to send Poems to the literary circles within London and New York for review, what Moore did do next was turn at least two copies of Poems into working drafts for the next publication. She revised.

Until this point, revision had always been a part of Moore’s writing life. She extensively revised her poems, even after their publication in magazines, and published some poems in multiple versions before 1921. Her correspondences and desires leading up to the publication of Poems shows that Moore held a certain reverence, or perhaps a dislike, for the book form. The poems that appear in Poems, most of which had been published at least once before in various magazines, needed development or “certain changes” presumably for some future form of representation. She had intended to republish at least some of them all along; it was only a matter of time.

H.D. and Bryher’s work of collection and publication of Poems, the latter of whom was the financial patron for it, becomes a paragon of modernist collection, mediation, and patronage practices. This patronage is potentially problematized in a gendered way by the fact that Moore had told them that “she didn’t want to publish a book” and later reiterated to Robert McAlmon that “the poems ought not to have come out; I know that.”

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46 Ibid., 165. Italics in original.
48 Currently residing in the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia, these two copies of Poems are marked as MML 1547 and MML 1544. I will be referring to both of these copies of Poems as simply “Poems” unless otherwise indicated.
49 See Schulze’s Becoming Marianne Moore.
50 Moore, Selected Letters, 170.
51 Ibid., 168.
Dactyl (a name which she thereafter used affectionately in letters to H.D. and Bryher), Moore, however playfully, also suggests that the publication of Poems affects an instance of exposure. Although they managed to not project their own idiosyncratic subjectivities over her work, H.D. and Bryher stripped Moore of her agency over the body of her text.

Whether or not Moore knew about this publication has been a source of debate. Scholars, such as Celeste Goodridge, have tried to argue that Moore contradicted herself in her response to H.D. and Bryher’s publication. Goodridge states,

The record does reveal that she was shy, reticent and reserved; but in her letters she also emerges as deeply ambitious, confident and outspoken, though she was equally capable of denying her ambition.52

Noting that Moore was literarily ambitious, her biographer, Charles Molesworth, writes,

Moore cannot have been that surprised when the book appeared, though in later years she created or at least fostered the legend that she had no idea the book was being published and that H.D., Bryher and McAlmon worked entirely on their own.53

But the letters clearly show a Moore who was not pleased with the fact that the publication had happened. Her most recent biographer, Linda Leavell, writes:

No sooner had Poems arrived on their doorstep that Marianne revealed what the title should be and the selection of poems that should be there. She had adamantly refused to allow the book to be published yet had already privately assembled the book in her mind.54

Our understanding of Moore’s reaction to the surreptitious publication of Poems impacts the way we extend a gendered reading of her revisions to this publication. If the book was a kind of exposure—Moore’s letters suggest that it certainly felt like one—then we could interpolate revisions to it to signify an act of reclaiming the authority from which she was stripped. To take this further, the revisions could be a type of veiling or covering of herself from a textual

53 Molesworth, Marianne Moore, 168.
authority that she did not yet wish to possess. These readings could suggest that future published versions of the poems that appeared in Poems are reflections or re-presentations of a forcibly mediated textual body, evidence of an anxious reaction to the book’s very existence. While these speculations might be theoretically interesting, it is biographically and textually clear that Moore was not motivated to revise upon Poems out of a contemptuous, hair-raising reaction to this surreptitious publication. As much as the regulation of textual and formal appearances is historically gendered for Moore, the nature of her revisions to Poems do not prove to be a kind of gendered remediation of herself and her poems.

What we learn from this event is that Moore’s revision practice remains both self-generated and self-reflexive. In the same way that she used strict formal patterns to regulate the language of her poems, Moore was formally strategizing the “literary advantage” of publishing a book and on which versions of poems that book would contain. This indicates an intent to carefully shape the temporal and spatial units of her literary appearance in a way not unlike how she turned her archive into a unit of analysis. Moore wanted to carefully form how her poetry appeared as an event in time and as an object in space, not unlike an archive.

*Which Omissions Are Not Accidents?*

In 1967, Moore collected and published her final book of poems, Complete Poems—an illusory title, as it only contained 127 poems of the multiple hundreds she had published. The epigraph to Complete Poems, “Omissions are not accidents,” confirmed her “reviser” persona.55 There is a general consensus amongst scholars that “Omissions are not accidents” is an epigraph that demonstrates a strong claim to authorial intention over her work. My study of Moore’s

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revisions troubles that notion of authority through this epigraph. Omissions may not be accidents, but which ones? Omissions just to Complete Poems, or is Moore’s epigraph making a statement about how we are to read her entire life’s work? What does she mean by “accidents”? Does this implying that “all revisions are intentional”? Moore goes from having had her compositional process prematurely exposed with the publication of Poems to exposing it freely with the publication of her archive, to which this epigraph is nothing less than an invitation.

The year of 1967 was also when Moore sold her lifelong collection of personal literary papers and letters—along with bequeathing her living room—to the Rosenbach Museum and Library. She chose this archive with care and intention after reading a biography of Dr. Abraham Simon Wolf Rosenbach and for the intimate space it would provide as a converted townhouse. Because of this decision to make public her private process, can we view her archive as another authoritative act of publication? As argued in my Introduction, her archive can be read as an act of publication. Moore’s unpublished revisions can—and should—be read in tandem with her book publications. Yet there is no doubt that even the most scrupulous archival reading would not triangulate an ultimate authorial intention within her texts, revealing the meaning of this epigraph. Rather, Moore’s act of publishing her collection as an archive destabilizes her texts perhaps more for her than an archive does for any other American poet.

In the archive, the revisions that Moore made upon her book copies of Poems and to the first edition of Observations best exemplify this destabilization, showing why readers are faced with the impossibility of knowing her ultimate authorial intentions—and that is very much in spite of her epigraph. Turning product into process, these revisions, which I call “ghost revisions,” destabilize the “Ideal” published text and reveal an undated and ultimately undatable

56 See Karin Roffman, “Accidents Happen in Marianne Moore’s Native Habitat,” 103-142.
57 She had two copies, MML 1544 and MML 1547
authorial play. To track change is not only impossible—it’s no longer the question. Error and silence between the past and the present are both imminent and permanent.

This realization is part of what drove Modernism’s fraught relationship to the past and spurred on such phrases such as “make it new.” Yet as Tim Conley has shown, modernist authors often process this experience on less optimistic terms, with novels that explore tropes of error, silence, the “incomprehensible,” and “speech that cannot speak” through symbols of paralysis and figures of zombies and ghosts. I want to suggest that Moore’s revisions on these books encourage an engagement with a larger symbol of silence, and/or error, and/or a sense of delay within her poetry. The existence of her archive actively facilitates this symbol, inhabiting that uncertain relationship to the past. With the metaphor of “ghost revisions,” a term that intends to encompass “unadopted revisions,” “unadopted corrections,” and/or “delayed revisions,” I do not mean to suggest that these revisions are trapped within the archive, neither living nor dead, haunting her publications. In the archive, there they are: full-bodied markings on her texts. Nor do I assert that they have potential to be “put to rest” in a variorum edition of her earlier poems. Rather, calling attention to the possibilities of where we can place these revisions on the timeline is important for simply understanding the Marianne Moore Library—and certainly for understanding what’s at stake as her digital archive is under construction. Perhaps more destabilizing and incomprehensible than the image of silence and error in the modernist novel is Moore’s real act of placing her personal work to the archive at the Rosenbach to be read and interpreted under any number of situations: error, forgetfulness, editorial failure, intentionality, and—despite what Moore herself famously stated—accident.

First, I will analyze the revisions on Poems using two examples, “A Talisman,” and “When I Buy Pictures.” Second, I will show a series of ghost revisions on Observations. Some of
these revisions did eventually gain life in publication. Why, then, do I still refer to them as “ghost” revisions? I assert that they can be thought of as “ghosts” because, whether or not they are ultimately adopted in subsequent texts, they have an ambivalent ontological status in terms of her revisionary process. This ambivalence requires a consciously quixotic and inferential reading of their historical position. I hope to show that reading them—that close-reading the archive in this way—can serve this imaginative function without sacrificing accuracy.

Texts Turned Copy Texts

The revisions on Moore’s copies of Poems are myriad, both extensive demolitions and small tweaks. Between them, at least four read-throughs are indicated by what appears to be markings of four different types of writing devices: blue pen, black pen, fountain pen, and graphite. Sometimes she wrote the same revision on top of another with a new device; other times she wrote “stet” next to a revision previously made.\(^\text{58}\) However, the majority of these revisions are carefully marked dashes and substitutions to words and punctuation marks, strikes to whole phrases or reworkings of a particular poem’s form. Moore revised the title of “You Are Like The Realistic Product of An Idealistic Search for Gold At The Foot of The Rainbow” to simply “The Rainbow.” On her second copy, she wrote “A Rainbow,” and then wrote above that “An Exercise.” It is unclear as to whether this was a note to herself, or another potential title. Yet it never appears as “A Rainbow,” “The Rainbow,” or “An Exercise,” except in the archive. This is the poem that we know as, “To A Chameleon,” ultimately titled as such in Observations (1924). But the archive does not show us where she made that decision. On Poems she revised “My Apish Cousins” to “The Monkeys.” She did the same on Observations (1924); she didn’t

\(^{58}\) Stet is an annotation to indicate that the writer should disregard a change that had been previously marked.
bother with it on *Observations* (1925); the title was finally changed in *Selected Poems*. We could go on: sentence structure is changed “In This Age of Hard Trying Nonchalance is Good, And.”\(^{59}\) Commas are dashed from “To A Steam Roller”\(^{60}\) and “Reinforcements.”\(^{61}\) And none of these revisions appear in *Observations*. Readers are left with two archival objects that reveal only a few revisions made to twenty-three poems that she ultimately included in *Observations* (1924).\(^{62}\) At the very least, these ghost revisions indicate a potential delay in intention for her revisions to actually revise.

It is speculative to state that Moore made these book revisions, turning them into copy texts, within her immediate “next.” It would imply that, between the years of 1921 and 1924, the revisions on *Poems* were made for the next publication, *Observations* (1924). Unlike with a dated manuscript, it is difficult to date these book revisions based solely on their material existence in the archive. They could have been made decades after the publication of both editions of *Observations*, long after she had published and republished those poems in *Selected Poems* (1935), *Collected Poems* (1951), and *Complete Poems* (1967). The best dating method available to readers is to simply close read them.

Based on this close reading, I argue that it is plausible to date the *Poems* revisions during the interim period before the “next” publication. That is to say that the revisions in *Poems* existed with the intention of being included in *Observations* (1924). However, the *Observations* (1924) revisions tell a different story. Based on how many of the revisions in *Observations* (1924) that do not appear in *Observations* (1925), but rather in *Selected Poems*, it seems most

\(^{59}\) MML 1547. Page 14. Line 9. Revises “was dumb. At last it threw itself away” to “was dumb, at last it threw itself a way.”


\(^{62}\) See Appendix 1 for a full account of ghost revisions.
plausible that Moore used the *Observations* (1924) book to revise sometime in the early 1930s when she was preparing for the publication of *Selected Poems*. However, there is contradictory evidence to this—revisions that do appear in *Observations* (1925) that are found on *Observations* (1924), as will be explored later in this chapter. It is unclear as to whether those revisions were instances of Moore looking toward the next opportunity to publish or rather looking backward on decisions she had already made on typed manuscripts. Indeed, the relationship between some of these revisions on both *Poems* and *Observations* make clear that Moore did not use these books as sites of creative revision to work out the creative process, but rather as sites of transference of revisions already decided upon on typed manuscripts. In other words, to what extent was Moore, more or less, putting a period on the revisions that she had already worked out on other drafts on these texts? Yet some revisions (such as those with “When I Buy Pictures,” as will be explored in the next section) complicate that theory.

What are the implications of the conjecture that these books are neat sites of revision, yet nonetheless revisions that did not always ultimately revise? Historically, it raises questions about the intention and attentiveness of Moore’s editors at *The Dial*. Theoretically, it speculates about Moore’s acceptance of error. As Sullivan states, citing Christine Froula, “The modernist practice of revision coexisted with unusual attitudes toward textual authority and accuracy, including a relative openness to error and fallibility in its printed transmission.”63 Biographically, it could show Moore’s own lack of precision between her revision practice and her publications. Or perhaps, and at the very least, it could just indicate play.

While I will explore each of these hypotheses to various extents, I want to reiterate that one positive thing we can say about Moore’s revision practice is that she constantly wanted to

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see a visual representation of her new work. Sight powerfully informed her creative decision, as well as her sense of closure of those decisions. Furthermore, Moore resisted accepting the published form of the text as “ideal.” While she does not use her published books as sites of new creative processing, she formally destabilizes the book’s form by importing already-decided revisions onto them. No matter when these revisions were made, the thrust of my argument is that by revising onto these books, Moore destabilized “text” for herself in a deeply personal way, thereby destabilizing the symbolic authority of publication and the superiority of herself as the author.

*The Articles of “A Talisman”*

To accurately date the revisions that do not appear in the published versions would enable an understanding of the larger picture of her early revision process. Even further, in order to use the books as touchstones in tracing her revision process in any chronological sense, one must close-read the revisions that did not appear in the next publication. At the same time, in order to accurately read what is absent, one must attempt to accurately reading what is present. In other words, in order to understand the collective revisions that did not appear in *Observations* (1924), we can look at those that did appear, starting with “A Talisman.” On the Title Pages of *Poems* (both copies), Moore writes “A” in front of “Talisman,” retitling it “A Talisman” (it was first published in 1912). She does the same on page 9, where the poem is printed. Second, on both copies, Moore writes the word “the” in front of the word “ship.” This addition of the article, so that the revision reads “torn from the ship and cast,” realigns it with previously published versions of the poem.64 The lack of this article, so that the *Poems* version reads “torn from ship

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64 Although Moore stated that the publication contained no errors, this might have been an overstatement, made in an effort to be a more amiable recipient of the publication. This is because the poem was published as “Talisman”
and cast” instead of “torn from the ship and cast,” deviates from all of the previously published versions of the poem, as well as with her normal use of syntax. Moreover, the addition of this article allows the poem to maintain Moore’s favored syllabic meter, which is in this case 6/6/3. When Marianne Moore elected to publish *Observations* (1924), she reintroduced the poem as “A Talisman,” along with the revision to the second line:

*A Talisman*

Under a splintered mast,  
torn from the ship and cast  
  near her hull,  

  a stumbling shepherd found  
  embedded in the ground,  
  a sea-gull  

  of lapis lazuli,  
  a scarab of the sea,  
  with wings spread—

curling its coral feet,  
parting its beak to greet  
  men long dead.”

The addition of the two articles appears at the very least uninteresting to understanding the overall meaning of “A Talisman.” However, it is their very inconsequence that makes them consequential. They bear meaning not only for the meaning of the poem, particularizing rather than Platonifying the Talisman, but also for their meaning in the archive. “A Talisman” is the only poem in her revisions of these copies of *Poems* where one-hundred percent appeared in *Observations* (1924). Indeed, despite the multitude of revisions that Moore made to both her

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copies of Poems, this revision is the only fully manifested set of revisions made to a single poem. What happened to all the other revisions on those twenty-three pages that were only partially implemented or not implemented at all? Did Moore or an editor simply forget to include them?

Moore changes the poem from referring to a capitalized and singular “Talisman,” as if it were a universal thing to which readers would have direct access, to “a” particular and collective “talisman.” The addition of the article “a” distances the readers from the object of both the poem and instead emphasizes that it is any object, not all talismans or the idea of “Talisman.” The particularity and collectivity are then thematized by “a splintered mast” (line 1), “a stumbling shepherd” (line 4) “a seagull” (line 6), and “a scarab” (line 8). These particular objects are juxtaposed against the larger and more forceful environments in which they are both carried and found: “the ship” (line 2), “the ground” (line 5), and “the sea” (8). Given the tight linguistic formality of the poem—the alliteration of “curling its coral feet” (line 11), the tight 6/6/3 meter, the a/a/b c/c/b d/d/e f/f/e rhyme structure—with the sharp image created through juxtaposition of “things,” Moore facilitates a feeling, a sensory experience, a of the talisman itself. Like many of Moore’s poems, and like her archive, a “A Talisman” tells a story of an object with an aesthetic of smallness. The talisman, discovered within the world of the ground, ship, and sea, is venerated not by way of its abstraction into an idea as equally universal or encompassing as the landscape, but by way of its description as something forceful and sensational—perhaps even destructive to the landscape that bears it up. Like the act of revision and the ephemeral objects of ghost revisions, it haunts the very landscape that holds it.

In this way, the revisions to “A Talisman” present a metaphor for the work of historically, chronologically, and imaginatively locating the ghost revisions Poems and Observations within Moore’s revision process. Continually preventing textual closure, they are
embedded in the basis of her work and thus have potential to speak to—while only being activated by—the imagination of a readership. The etymological root of “talisman” is in the word “telos,” which means “ending.” Oppositely, Moore shows in “A Talisman” how the object of its title works against its intended function. It signifies the tragedy of the “splintered mast” (line 1), becoming “embedded in the ground” (line 5), for an arbitrary discovery—the non-ending—of a “stumbling shepherd” (line 4). The talisman brings about no ending, nor does it receive one. It is neither lost nor found: displaced from its intended trajectory with the living, it is still “parting its beak to greet / men long dead” (lines 11-12). Like with any kind of signifier, the potential power to address imbues the talisman, but that power must be activated by the imagination of a shepherd—or a reader. In this sense, the poem not only provides an analogy, but enacts its own analogy through the revision of these ostensibly insignificant articles.

_The Dial Revisions of “When I Buy Pictures:” Antarctic Penguins or Adam’s Grave?_

Revisions on Poems that do not appear on subsequent publications—or those which do, but perhaps only after years—have an ambivalent ontology. As previously stated, it seems that some revisions are transferences of already-made decisions from her typed manuscripts. However, the revision process of “When I Buy Pictures” complicates that theory. Specifically, its line about Adam’s grave. The stanzaic version of this line as it first appeared in Poems is as follows:

the grave of Adam, prefigured by himself; a bed of beans or artichokes in six varieties of blue; the snipe-legged hieroglyphic in three parts; it may be anything.

https://www.etymonline.com/word/talisman#etymonline_v_4337
The MML contains two identical carbon copies of this stanzaic version as it appears in Poems. There are two typed manuscripts that look like the source version of that which appears in Poems. They are carbon copies of each other, indicated by the identical handwriting of the “not published” on the top of the page, which I am calling Poems-1 and Poems-2. The “not published” suggests that Moore revised on these typed manuscripts before she was aware of the publication of “When I Buy Pictures” in Poems.

There are five typed manuscripts that can be placed after the writing of the stanzaic version that appeared in Poems but before the 1921 free-verse publication of “When I Buy Pictures” in The Dial magazine. Based on my reading, we can confidently conject that these typed manuscripts were written as drafts for The Dial publication. In order to distinguish between the typed manuscripts, I will refer to them as Dial-1, Dial-2, Dial-3, Dial-4, and Dial-5. I title them each “Dial” because genetically they lead up to The Dial version published in 1921. However, that is not to say that this is actually the best way to understand them as “types.”

Based on my ordering of these revisions, Moore started this revision process on Dial-1 no earlier than October 8th, 1920, because the typed script exists on the back of a Pennsylvania Real Estate Association dated “October 8th, 1920.” Because this was published in July 1921, we are looking at a revision process leading up to The Dial publication that was potentially. This is a relatively fast revision process compared with some of her other poems, which took her months if not years to complete. What these five typed manuscripts tell us about Moore’s revision process is perhaps the obvious: Moore liked to use typed versions of the poem as sites of handwritten revision, evidence of her liking for visualizing the form of the poem as she wrote.

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68 See Appendix 3, Figures 12a-12f.
With *The Dial* revisions, we see her typing up the poem anew in order to integrate even the tiniest revision.

This line about Adam’s grave becomes key to seeing the genetic progression of the rest of the *Dial* typed script. The progression of these revisions are:

- **Dial-1, typed script:** the grave of Adam prefigured by himself;
- **Dial-2, typed script:** the grave of Adam prefigured by himself;
- **Dial-3, typed script:** the grave of Adam prefigured by himself;

On the fourth typed script, Moore omits this line completely, but she dedicates the entire typed script to drafting a new version of the line, writing:

- **Dial-4, typed script:** (Moore omits this line completely)
- **manuscript:** The silver fence protecting Adam’s grave
- **Antarctic Penguins** of silver or of what you please
- Of any of any use medium
- Adam and eve stepping over a
- Or Michael holding adam by a wrist
- Of any size in any medium

Perhaps it is not so surprising that Moore—a poet who loved animals and for whom pictures “may be anything”—was considering including the phrase “Antarctic Penguins of silver instead of the silver fence protecting Adam’s grave,” representing a named creature rather than a naming one. But rather than choosing to write about an animal that in reality lives at the bottom of our southernmost continent, she writes about the myth of Adam. In a sense, Adam may seem like a less fictional figure than penguins, pointing to the cultural power of religious symbolism, making us all “literalists of the imagination” to some extent. She blotted out the word “Penguins,” which, on the typed script, is nearly unreadable. Ultimately, the fifth typed script reads:

- **Dial-5, typed script:** the silver fence protecting Adam’s grave or Michael holding Adam by the wrist
- **manuscript:** taking (with arrow to “holding”)

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69 The revision history of the stanzaic version will be fully explored in Chapter III.

70 See Appendix 3, Figure 12d.
Moore combines the previous revisions into a line that is still about Adam’s grave, adding “Or Michael holding Adam by the wrist” instead of “a” wrist. She writes an arrow to “holding” and writes “taking” instead. These are the revisions that Moore made to “When I Buy Pictures” leading up to the publication of it in The Dial (1921).

On the Poems version, this story gets most strange. Looking at this page (Figure 10c), we can see that on other pages, Moore seems to be transferring the decisions she made throughout this manuscript revision process. As will be thoroughly explored in Chapter 3, Moore omits “both white and brown” (line 9), and changes the ending to, “it must be ‘lit with piercing glances into the life of things; / it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it.’” These decisions align perfectly with the free-verse Dial-5 version. That is with the exception about the line on Adam’s Grave. On Poems, Moore crosses out, “the grave of Adam prefigured by himself” and substitutes it for “the silver fence protecting Adam’s grave.” This aligns with the first part of the decision she made on Dial-5. Yet she does not write “and Michael taking (or holding) Adam by the wrist,” the second part of the decisions made on Dial-5. If Moore were to have been transferring her decision from her typed manuscript to her book, then the full line would have appeared. What happened here? Was Moore toying with the possibility of omitting, “And Michael taking Adam by the wrist.” If she was transferring previously decided-upon revisions onto this text, then could she have forgotten what she decided upon? While Moore will later say, “Omissions are not accidents,” here it seems that they very well could be. The ghost revision, then, is not a presence of an alternative version that did not ultimately appear, but the absence of a phrase that did ultimately appear. Solely in the context of the poem, this ghost revision exists for no explicit reason. But in the context of the archive, it communicates, at the
very least, Moore’s willingness to destabilize the authority of her published text, creating a unique “found” poem through dashes and additions.

*Revising for Selected Poems with Observations*

So far I have just been dealing with the revisions Moore made on *Poems*. Lastly, I want to look at the revisions on *Observations*, of which many, but not all, appear in *Selected Poems*. I am wary to jump to the conclusion that Moore used this book as her site of revision in the 1930s, when there are many contradictions to such a theory. It remains another likely possibility that she used it as a site to revise the second edition of *Observations* (1925) but which most failed to actually revise. For instance, in “An Octopus,” we see that she does successfully replace the word badger for “marmot” in two places (lines 106 and 111; see note in Appendix 1), and that decision appears in *Observations* (1925). We also see her marking in a semi-colon after the word “particular,” and that also appears in *Observations* (1925).\(^{71}\)

On the other hand, most of the revisions do not appear in *Observations* (1925) but do appear in *Selected Poems*. For instance, on “Peter,” she dashes a comma, corrects a misspelling and capitalizes the T in “to” that should have capitalized as it starts a sentence.\(^{72}\) On “The Pedantic Literalist,” she corrects a typographical error in form, wanting the line “to and for” to be indented once more.\(^{73}\) We see more extensive revision to a line in “Marriage,” changing this to “in him a state of mind perceives,” which does not appear until *Selected Poems*.\(^{74}\) On “Black Earth,” another more extensive revision appears: the substitution of “compared with phenomena

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\(^{71}\) See Appendix 1, page 94, note under “An Octopus.”

\(^{72}\) See Appendix 1, page 92, note under “Peter.”

\(^{73}\) See Appendix 1, page 92, note under “The Pedantic Literalist.”

\(^{74}\) See Appendix 1, pages 93-94, note under “Marriage.”
which vacillate like all translucence of the atmosphere, the elephant is.”

Finally, to the infamous “Poetry,” we have an odd addition of parenthesis around the line “when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry.” And she changes the “nor” to “not” by writing a “t” over the “r,” so as to read “not until the poets among us.” Of course, this revision do not appear in the subsequent publication because she reformulated it into 13 lines, for which we have typescripts, as I will explore in Chapter 2. But neither does this decision appear in Selected Poems. In other words, when Moore restored a version of the 1924 version, these parentheses and this “not until” does not appear. Thus, it is completely unique to her copy of Observations (1924). As if this is not enough, in the back of Observations (1924), Moore wrote a list of many of these revisions. But again, not all align with those that appear in Selected Poems. A great deal of work remains to be done on comparing these revisions against those in both editions of Observations and Selected Poems.

The Digital Archive

Once scholars have logged and postulated what ghost revisions on Poems and Observations mean for the individual poems, and what they are doing in relation to the publications and typed manuscripts, we might think of “A Talisman” as a symbol of our attempt to historicize them. The talisman brings about no ending for its bearer, nor does it receive an ending. The meaning derived from both the past origin and future purpose fall apart; what is left is the present attempt to grasp something we have found.

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75 See Appendix 1, page 93, note under “Black Earth.”
76 See Appendix 1, page 91, note under “Poetry.”
77 Appendix 2, Figure 8c.
78 See Appendix 1, Figure 3.
The poem not only provides this metaphor, but enacts it with this revision of the additions of “A” and “the.” What kind of ethic of careful reading and shepherding of such small but powerful archival objects are critics invited into when attending to these articles? Turning to Moore’s digital archive, this is also why scholars cannot afford to dismiss omissions as mere accidents, nor to accept them as always intentional, taking Moore’s epigraph at face-value. As future readers find embedded in the ground of her texts these revisions on the digital space and attempt to track change and understand such textual instability, it is important that they know to read them alongside her manuscripts and typed manuscripts, her publications, and the most accurate editions of her poetry.
To understand how revision functions for Moore as a poetics that destabilizes her body of published work, we must turn to the revision of “Poetry,” which Moore revised multiple times over the course of her career. The revision history of “Poetry” works mostly as a public one, with only a few typed manuscripts in the archive. All other revisions were published in Selected Poems, Collected Poems (1951), and, finally, in Complete Poems (1967), which presented the poem in three lines:

I, too, dislike it.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it, after all, a place for the genuine.79

Although this final revision was both radical and important, this study will not analyze it in depth here. I limit this chapter to analyze the early revision process of “Poetry” from its first appearance in Others 5 (July 1919) to its publication in The New Poetry (1932). This will look at three typed manuscripts and eight publications.80

Published on the crest of a decade of modernist avant-garde manifestos, “Poetry,” in all its many versions and forms, was for many literary scholars Moore’s attempt to polemically “define” the genre of poetry for herself as “the genuine.” It was often compared to a modernist manifesto because it does, in a sense, seek to justify its own poetics: the title of a capital-P “Poetry” puts it in league with the European manifesto-writers of the 1910s, as well as the romantic poets in the 19th century who were also attempting to redefine the genre. In recent scholarship, however, it is generally a matter of consensus that “Poetry” is not defining “poetry as a genre” or as the “genuine,” but is presenting, as Bonnie Costello writes, “a conception of their relationship,” describing how readers of poetry experience the genuine.81

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80 See Appendix 2, Figures 4-10-ii.
Costello, I argue that “Poetry” is not a personal or literary attempt to define the genre or regulate what it should contain. Instead, it shows an effort to present an exploration and performance of the imaginative encounters that happen around, before, and after writing and reading a poetic text.

The reading of a poetic text—of Poetry as a genre—is, of course, the subject of the poem. Yet “Poetry” the poem refrains from creating a clear distinction between critics and common readers of the genre, even though both ilk are present in the poem: this is key to understanding why the poem itself is not a definition of the genre. Moore did not make a strong distinction between the act of writing and reading poetry, and thus neither between its primary speaker or addressee: a reader or a writer. Moore’s revisions focus on how the poem’s address and descriptions facilitate and implicate both the writer and reader’s imaginative encounter with poetry. In terms of that address, Moore’s revisions show a lineage of decisions about how exactly she wanted to represent herself as the speaker in relation to both readers and writers, as well as how much she wanted to ask the reader to animate the seemingly unpoetic objects within the poem with their imagination. This lack of distinction within the speaker’s voicing combats the hierarchical structures typically instigated by the notion of a superior author.

As it appeared in Others 5 (July 1919), its first publication, “Poetry” contains an almost essay-like organization. It begins with a premise, demonstrates that premise with a list of objects or things, leads into the one summative and memorable image of “imaginary gardens with real toads in them,” and concludes with a paradoxical if/then hypothesis. This version displays Moore’s mastery of the syllabic meter of 19/22/11/5/8/13 in five stanzas and a/b/b/c/c/d rhyme scheme that is deployed in her early work:

I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers that there is in
it after all, a place for the genuine.  
Hands that can grasp, eyes  
that can dilate, hair that can rise  
if it must, these things are important not because a

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

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the base-ball fan, the statistician—case after case could be cited did one wish it; nor is it valid to discriminate against “business documents and school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry, nor till the autocrats among us can be “literalists of the imagination”—above insolence and triviality and can present for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have it. In the meantime, if you demand on one hand, in defiance of their opinion—the raw material of poetry in all its rawness and that which is, on the other hand genuine, then you are interested in poetry.  

The poem contains an indirect address indicated by the speaker, yet it is unclear who the speaker addresses until line 30 says “you,” someone who is either the reader (us), the reader-subject (within the poem), the still somewhat apostrophized fellow poet (within the poem), or all three. Without neglecting one’s own contempt for the genre, the addressee is told that they are interested in poetry if they demand it on both hands: on the one “the raw material of poetry in / all its rawness” and on the other “that which is … / genuine.” Moore does not define the genuine and the raw, but rather positions them next to one another as distinct but conjugal values.

82 See Appendix 2, Figure 4.
Textually, these values are unstable and undefined; at the very least, they are affective functions of a text, as well as imaginative paradigms for demanding, creating, and reading that text. Moore weaves in a list of mental and physical experiences with poetry that elaborate on how to hold those affective and imaginative paradigms: dislike, contempt, dilating eyes, grasping hands, rising hairs, admiration, understanding, demanding, and interest. These simultaneously physical and mental experiences with language activate both the fantastic and the substantive, the fiction and the truth, of this art form.

The “genuine” can bring about the “raw material” while the raw material can bring about the genuine. Both of these qualities are held in tandem, so the content of poetry should not be regulated. The raw material suggests that there are no limits as to what subject the genre can contain. Indeed, “case after case could be cited” of unpoetic things, from bats to twitching critics. The speaker of the poem wants the use of vibrant and imaginative language to contain and demand the creation of such text. At the same time, a theory of this writer revising the raw material of the poem itself over the course of decades is hidden in the conclusion at the very start: it is not until the autocrats can be literalists of the imagination that poetry shall be possessed, but in the meantime, we are to attempt its acquisition. The “genuine” in “Poetry” encapsulates the textual instability and affective delay that both writers and readers experience in an encounter with Poetry the genre.

Are these credos the main “ideas” that remain consistent throughout each version? Bonnie Honigsblum’s 1990 article on the revisions to “Poetry” states that by looking at the various texts, we can find a “spirit or core of the poem” that remains “intact throughout the revisionary process.” 83 She states that these are: “the title and the final word, ‘poetry’; the

opening disclaimer, ‘I too dislike it’; a miscellany of ‘phenomena’; the importance of the
‘genuine’ and the rhetorical device of a speaker addressing an audience, an ‘I’ and a ‘you.’”84
As I will now demonstrate, these ideas do not stay intact throughout each revision. If there is any
main idea in “Poetry” that stays intact through its revisions, it is the very instability and un-
definability of these concepts. As Patrick Reddy states, “Poetry” attempts to “construct a space
for vital new beliefs, pleasures, and feelings.”85 Ultimately, what stays the same through each
revision is the imaginative space between the concepts, not the concepts themselves.

Understanding Versions
To begin this study on the revisions, it is worth contextualizing the discussion on these
different “versions.” Literary scholars have tended to use only formal interpretations of Moore’s
revisions. Honigsblum’s reading leads her to amass each publication of “Poetry” into four
different versions, what she refers to as the five-stanza version, the thirteen-line version, the
three-stanza version, and the three-line version.86 In an abstract sense it is reasonable to name
four species of the poem, based on the common poetic denominator of form. Barbara Johnson
states that for Moore, “However distant or inappropriate an object may seem, the poet of
things… is still working on ‘form.’”87 As a poet of things, Moore was one of the greatest
modernist innovators of form. In terms of Moore’s revision practice, it is the case that form is a
valuable measurement. For example, when tracing the revisions between the “five-stanza
version—which for Honigsblum refers to Others (1919), Others (1920), Poems, and

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84 Honigsblum, “Revisions of ‘Poetry,’” 195.
85 Patrick Redding. “One must make a distinction, however”: Marianne Moore and Democratic Taste. Twentieth
33.
Observations (1924)—one finds form to only four minor revisions: one substitution of a word and three punctuation changes. Although these revisions slightly alter the 19/22/11/5/8/13 syllabic meter, they are far less drastic than those formal changes made to the Observations (1925), or the “thirteen-line” version, wherein Moore rids the poem of its syllabic meter, puts it into free verse, and omits the rhyme scheme.

While Moore is clearly a poet of form, it would behoove critics to not use solely formal categories to describe the revisions to “Poetry” because it does not adequately capture Moore’s poetic and revisionary concerns. For example, between the 1919 and 1924 versions, Moore’s only revision was the substitution of the word “autocrats” for “poets,” a change that significantly alters the implication of poem’s address, which I will discuss later in this chapter:

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nor till the poets among us can be
“literalists of the imagination”
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Clearly the substitution of this single word can be just as altering to the meaning of the poem and to an understanding of Moore’s work as a change in form: we could just as well distinguish between the “autocrats” and the “poets” version of “Poetry.” Because Moore’s ongoing work of revision in “Poetry” shows larger ideological progressions, this study will refer to each version of the poem on its own terms, either according to a publication date or simply as a particular typed manuscript.

_Beyond All This Fiddle_

With each poem beginning with an “I,” the focus begins on the internal and mental action of the speaker: “I too, dislike it” communicates a shared dislike of poetry. In these lines, the speaker introduces the raw/genuine complex as values to be weighed: the mental feeling of

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See Appendix 2, Figure 7-1.
dislike is immediately juxtaposed against what is “important beyond all this fiddle,” that is, that which is important beyond poetry. The speaker dislikes poetry not based on its intrinsic qualities, but rather based on its comparative value in an economy of other important things. In other words, she is asking: What is the role of art in the world? More specifically, what is its role in democracy, a political system that allows its participants to weigh and discuss value? Yet the external things that “Poetry” names are not a list of global crises, a plea for peace, a defense of women’s suffrage, or any other political issue, which we see Moore contemplating in her World War II poem, “In Distrust of Merits.” It is as if Moore is voicing the sentiment that poetry is, in a democracy, ultimately useless beyond developing the individual’s taste. Indeed, the social work of poetry is arguably contemptible when weighed against the urgency of larger global problems. But instead of expressing this political criticism, the speaker calls the reader to attend to a list of things that are ostensibly mundane, natural occurrences that happen in the everyday world: some hair-raising sensation, some wolf under a tree, some baseball fan. If these “important” things are not all that urgent, but rather natural parts of human life, then why are they “useful” in poetry? More importantly, why is it useful not only for the individual “I” but for the democratic “too,” the community implied, to discover the abstract “genuine” in it?

The question of the “genuine” that Moore raises is this: what if even the most mundane object in the world could become communally useful through the act properly discovering and articulating it? Moore wants to simultaneously introduce and justify a poetics that is—like the work of revision—deeply pragmatic. All of the affective and imaginary paradigms—from, for example, the grasping hands induced by a poem about romantic love to the contempt for poetry provoked by a Petrarchan sonnet—are “useful” because they require an imaginative movement or motion into a new experience of knowing. What Moore ultimately values throughout each of
these versions is the knowledge that comes through a real encounter with poetry. Costello calls this a kind of poetics of searching when she asks:

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\text{Is the genuine, then: the act of finding? Moore’s method of argument…is not to answer a question, or to resolve a duality, but to get at the question from every-new vantages. We have on the one hand exploration, on the other hand discovery, joined by ambiguity.}^{89}
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Each iteration of the poem emphasizes the importance of poetry remaining within the realm of knowability: it should not be “unintelligible” nor “unknowable.” Yet it should also hold this act of finding that leads to a knowing that occurs when we animate the minutiae of our lives with the meaning. The speaker’s appeal is not for readers of poetry to step inside the poem of “Poetry” to find the meaning of the genuine or the raw material within it, but rather for them to use “Poetry,” which includes this very poem, to search “beyond” it. For Moore, literature as a whole, but poetry in particular, is a part of the phenomena of the world, even one of great political evil, that invokes meaningful and democratic action.

\textit{The “I too” Speaker}

In the Others (1919) version, Moore writes, “I too, dislike it.” The “I” speaker personalizes the nature of this appeal to action. The extent of the personal aspect is determined in indefinitely unstable terms, starting with the revision of the presence or absence of the second comma in the first line. In the Others for 1919: An Anthology of the New Verse (1920) version, Moore revised to, “I, too, dislike it.”\textsuperscript{90} Moore’s lifelong revisionary practice shows a great attention to punctuation. It was not uncharacteristic for her to experiment for many years with the placement or presence of a comma, as is shown in the ghost revisions on Poems and Observations. This play and experimentation facilitates a modernist reading of Moore: attention

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\textsuperscript{89} Costello, \textit{Imaginary Possessions}, 21.  
\textsuperscript{90} See Appendix 2, Figure 5-i.
to such textual concerns allows us to see just how willing Moore was for our notion of her authorial intentions to be shifted and changed by something as small as a comma. She posits the comma as an object for knowledge, both a presence and an absence, throughout the decades-long revision of “Poetry.” While its function is to be a linguistic marker that shifts the emphasis between what the “I” and the “too” are doing in the poem, it also serves as a marker of readers’ collective self-awareness of the interrelationship between the various publications. Pointing to the balance between what changes and what stays the same, as Sullivan writes, reading the revision of the comma creates an awareness of the text’s temporal instability—a sense of its fluidity from the very first line. Within its first two words and long before the Complete Poems version, Moore thematizes textual instability in “Poetry.”

Each version of the poem contains some variation of this first line, with or without the comma, which presumes an audience, a company of poets and readers, who are now conscious of the text’s fluid material life, but who also have an aversion for the genre’s abstracted and historical life. In the 1919 version, a comma does not fall after the “I,” which puts less emphasis on the presence of an individual self, making it more intently communal. The absence of a comma allows one to read the first clause quickly, with emphasis falling on the word “too,” pointing to the fellow reader. Without the comma, the poem from the start becomes more focused on others and less on the speaker—more about how the speaker and their audience might agree or seek to agree. There is no visual distinction between the speaker and the implicit community whom they address. When Moore adds the comma into the 1920 Others Anthology,91 each individual word, especially “I,” contains a greater emphasis. The presence of the comma creates a greater distinction between the speaker and the reader-subject within the poem.

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91 See Appendix 2, Figure 5-i.
In most of versions “Poetry,” “I” is addressing a personal “you” and apostrophizing a “we” and “us,” thus showing that the speaker speaks not only as an individual poet, but as a community of readers. Although the “you” is absent in the 1925 and 1967 versions, as well as the typed manuscript from 1932, the all-inclusive “one” or “us” who is “reading it” remain an important and consistent part of each version and revision of the poem. This dual-identity of the speaker, of both writer and reader, entails a responsibility to address both poets and readers in the poem. The individual responsibility of the speaker stresses itself more in versions that contain the comma between “I” and “too.”

H.D. and Bryher clearly used the 1919 version, void of the second comma, when collecting for Poems. Moore did not re-add the second comma when making revisions on her copies of Poems and no second comma appears in either edition of Observations. In TMS-C, there is no comma whatsoever in the first clause, reading “I too dislike it,” but it reappears in The New Poetry publication (1932). Moore would not restore the second comma to read “I, too, dislike it” until the 1967 revision. Despite all of this, scholars tend to use both “I too, dislike it” and “I, too, dislike it” interchangeably, without it consistently corresponding to the version from which they pull other sections of the poem. The comma effects how we understand the authority of the “I” and the emphasis on the community of fellow poets and readers. This is a small change that critics seem to bypass in writing and criticism, yet it is one that Moore thought about carefully until her final publication of the poem and that should not be ignored.

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92 TMS-C. See Appendix 2, Figure 9a.
93 See Appendix 2, Figure 6a.
94 TNP. See Appendix 2, Figure 9b-i.
Autocrats and Literalists

This address to fellow critics who also dislike poetry is a central function of the poem, but it is particularly prominent in the 1919, 1920, 1921, 1924, 1935, and 1951 versions. In it, “we” shall not “have” poetry until “the autocrats among us can be / ‘literalists of / the imagination’— above / insolence and triviality.” However, Moore’s revisions show a wrestling with lines 21-24 in the early years of its publication. Scholars have especially aimed to use these lines to locate Moore’s standing within the high modernist circle based on this address. On the one hand, Vendler views the list of things and people as a way for “Moore [to] tel[l] all her fools to their faces exactly what she thinks of them, finding her own annihilating metaphor for each one.” Slatin biographically theorizes that Moore “sees a group of ‘autocrats’—herself among them—busily passing judgement and prescribing aesthetic criteria.” I am sure that, throughout her life, Moore saw a group of autocrats, and perhaps she saw herself among them. She criticizes no particular movement in order to set herself apart. In this sense, “autocrats” is perhaps ironically not to be taken literally, but rather read in reference to autocratic behavior, along with the behavior of the animals, critics, and readers. Rather, the speaker of “Poetry” is critiquing a mode or attitude of writing that assumes superiority over the things it represents. The political word “autocrats,” as opposed to the “literalists,” implies regulated, rather than imaginative, language. Far from this “literalist,” the autocrat, like the "half-poet, uses language according to their own arbitrary standards of taste. Along the same lines of this behavioral critique, autocrats are not “above” the insolent and trivial. The “triviality” in this case is not necessarily a critique toward trivial things in themselves (Moore’s avid collection and inclusion of mundane things

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96 Slatin, The Savage’s Romance, 41.
testifies to this), but rather toward a particular mode or behavior of possessing things. The speaker of “Poetry” rejects a theory of poetics that attempts to possess (or represent) things with gaudy intellectualism—one that makes artistic distinctions by distinguishing one’s self above others. This does not mean that the poet detaches or decentralizes themselves with an “Impersonality,” as so many have mistaken Moore to do. Rather, it means that the poet has a kind of egalitarian regard for the object of representation. The imagination that true poetry requires of a poet is that which refuses to trivialize even that which seems trivial.

In this way, the phrase of the 1919 version, “nor till the autocrats among us can be / ‘literalists of / the imagination,’” creates a strong focus on the difference between the autocrats and the literalists—that is, that the autocrats need to become literalists. “Autocrats” and “literalists” are strongly contrasted and contradictory identities, which implies that a more forceful act of self-liberation needs to take place in the process of the autocrat becoming a literalist. The 1924 revision that substituted “autocrats” for “poets” disrupts that stark effect of process and replaces it with a gradual effect of progress. It is now the “poet” who is becoming a literalist of the imagination. This revision changes that evolutionary process from an unnatural to a natural one, from a distant to an intimate one. It is the poet, not the autocrat, who moves from strength to strength. All of these 1919-1924 revisions show that Moore was revising to a less polemical address.

Upon both her copies of Poems, Moore omits the entire phrase, “nor till the autocrats among us can be / ‘literalists of / the imagination,’” and writes next to it, “not until the poets can be.” This is a variation of the smaller substitution Observations (1924) for the phrase “nor till the poets among us.” However, “Not until” is a more directive and didactic phrasing, whereas

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97 MML 1544 and MML 1547.
98 See Appendix 2, Figures 6a and 6b.
“nor till” is more poetic. The ghost revision on Moore’s copy of *Observations* (1924)\(^99\) shows her considering again the word “not” instead of “nor,” again: Moore writes a “t” over the “r” in “nor” to change it to “not.” This revision on *Observations* is also accompanied by two parentheses marked around most of line 20, “when dragged into prominence by half poets the result is not poetry.”

One interpretation of these parentheses is that Moore was considering what line 20 would look like as its own sentence, causing the need for “nor” to become “not” and starting a new sentence. This revision, “not until the poets among us,” would have made this famous sentence a much starker statement, adding emphasis to the earlier decree against the “half poets.” Perhaps it did not appear in the second edition of *Observations* because of its drastic revision. Why, then, was this revision written in the first place? It is in this version that she decides to omit the line “in defiance of their opinion.” This revision is first seen in Moore’s copies of *Poems*, where Moore crosses this line out. In sum, these revisions, from “autocrats” to “poets” to the preservation of “nor till,” create a less direct address and more of a subtle acknowledgement of fellow poet readers for the *Observations* (1924) version.

This omission further removes the poem from a polemical tone where the true literalists do not also need to possess poetry by way of defiance. Possession of poetry comes about not by way of siege, but by way of simply naming or acknowledging what is already at hand: an interest in the genuine and the raw, and an ability to imagine not by way of difference but by way of relinquishing her ability as a poet to articulate exactly what or how to pursue it even for herself. All that is required is a continual pursuit of the opaque raw and genuine. Like the textual instability caused by revision, Moore’s de-polemicization creates a message about poetry that

\(^{99}\) See Appendix 2, Figure 7a.
has more marginal room for error, process, and evolution. The experience of claiming the imagination is not giant leap for autocrats to literalists, but merely from poets to literalists, from “I, too,” to “I too.”

*Enigmas Subvert the Genuine*

The citation, which creates a politics between Moore and the modernist romantics, is omitted in what becomes the *Observations* (1925) version of the poem. It could have been the case that Moore was fearing that she was creating too much of the paradox or riddle that would distance readers from keeping the reader too far at arm’s length. The role of the citation as a link between the speaker and the audience is reformulated.

The typed manuscript *TMS-A* drafts what would become the version that appears in *Observations (1925).* Below, I show the typescript that includes Moore’s revisions:

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I too, dislike it: beyond
there are things that are more important than all this fiddle.
The bat, upside down: the elephant pushing,
The base-ball fan, the statistician--
“business documents and school books”--
These phenomena are pleasing, but when they have been fashioned
Into that which is unknowable, or trivial, or glib,
We are not entertained.
It may be said of all of us
That we do not admire what we cannot understand;
enigmas are not poetry,
and not until the misled literalist of the imagination
presents for our inspection
imaginary gardens with real toads in them,
shall we encounter its misrule.
we shall have nothing of the kind
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Moore ultimately omitted these final four typed lines and one hand-written line. As many scholars have pointed out, Moore was considering a completely different use of Yeats’s phrase.

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100 See Appendix 2, Figure 8a.
She removes the quotations from around “literalists of the imagination,” so as to present it as her own words, whereas in the 1924 version, Moore manipulated the quotation that paraphrases William Butler Yeats on William Blake. As Bonnie Costello has noted, “Moore makes his ‘excess’ the absolute criterion for writing good poetry.”¹⁰¹ In this context, Yeats was critiquing Blake, saying that he was a “too literal realist of imagination…because he believed that the figures seen by the mind’s eye, when exalted by inspiration, were ‘eternal existences,’ symbols of divine essences.”¹⁰² This seeing with the mind’s eye is the kind of exactitude of a “literalist.” At the same time, it shows the speaker root the inspiration in the empirical image of the poem. The fact that Moore mediates her opinion through that of Yeats’s quotation comes through more starkly in versions that read “poets among us.” The 1919 “autocrats” is forceful, putting emphasis on both the autocrats and the literalists. It is not as if Moore changed her mind about the meaning of the phrase “literalists of the imagination.” She did, however, reframe it to be the very thing that makes poetry dislikeable and unruly.

In TMS-A, Moore explicitly connects the “misrule” of poetry with the initial affective and imaginative paradigm of disliking it. A sardonic, negative account of the literalist emerges: the imaginative literalism—not the autocratic behavior—is the misrule of poetry. Moore seems to toy with the idea that even “the genuine” is produced by the literalist’s misrule. This omission, then, leaves the poem at a didactic conclusion against enigmas rather than one that creates a paradoxical dislike or desire for poetry’s imaginative misrule. This textual omission also omits the ideological enigma: the pursuit of the genuine and the discovery is lost. There is still a sense of the delay—we await the misled literalist to revise their own imaginative process to present the

¹⁰¹ Costello, Imaginary Possessions, 108.
“imaginary gardens with real toads in them.” Perhaps that is what makes this omission so striking: it clearly shows that Moore was willing to move the poem not toward a paradox—a multilayered perceptual experience, as she creates in “When I Buy Pictures,” as will be explored in Chapter 3—but rather on a firm statement. The “genuine” is displaced for “enigmas” as the most important concept of the poem. The word “enigmas” subverts the “genuine” as the most significant concept. Ironically, by ending on the didactic formula that is essentially X≠Y, the 1925 version becomes the most non-enigmatic. The ambiguity, noted by Costello, that holds together the search and the discovery for the genuine, is gone.

The 1932 Version

The New Poetry version has a consistent syllabic meter of 8/13/11/19/16. Thus, here we see not only a revision of content, but a revision of Moore’s own unique visual and verbal presentation of syllabic meter a reinventing of her syllabic meter. In her drafting of this version seen in TMS-C, Moore likely reverted back Observations (1924) to draw from the form and general outline. The primary difference in this version is that Moore omits “if you demand on the one hand” and “on the other hand,” instead of allowing the word “and” to do the work of bridging the rawness and the genuine. Below is a typescript of lines 11-15 of TMS-C:

--these phenomena
are important; but dragged into conscious oddity
by half poets, the result is not poetry.
this we know. In a liking for the raw material in all its rawness,
and for genuineness, yes--there is liking for poetry.

Moreover, this version goes from disliking to liking, instead of disliking interest and demanding, which are words that imply proprietorship. As opposed to the reader “demand[ing]” the text with both of their hands—“all its rawness” on the one and “the genuine” on the other — TMS-C toys

103 Appendix 2, Figures 9b-i and 9b-ii.
with a less polemical reconciliation of the paradox. Readers do not acquire the genuine through demanding it with “hands that can grasp,” but by being merely “in a liking” for both the raw and the genuine. Readers do not possess it, but simply “have” it, in all the previous versions and drafts. Rather than these things begin undefinable and unstable concepts within the poem, the speaker here presupposes a common understanding of the “raw” and “genuine.” This reconciliation runs against the hallmark of Moore’s poetry in this era, which is the explicit and didactic presentation of two opposing sides. This is summed up in the extremely straightforward assumption of “this we know” and the affirmative “yes.” However, in TNP-32 version, she ultimately omitted the “yes,” a decision that her material revisions do not contain. Moore also brings us back to the conclusion that focuses on “that which is genuine,” implying that certain things can have the ontological status of genuine, instead of the vague adjectival term “genuineness.” Even while Moore does not pursue the definition of the genuine, the word itself must remain a stable entity, even if that stable entity is ultimately an imaginative space, always riddled, of course, with subjective complexity.

Revising the Imagination

The constant experimentation with “Poetry” shows an articulation of a complex belief system about what a reader’s relationship to poetry should be. This revision process did not stop after the 1932 version. Although Moore published the poem in a form similar to the 1924 version in Selected Poems and Collected Poems (1952,) she continued to use the public sphere and publication to create a lack of closure around the poem. When Moore published the 1967 version in Complete Poems, as shown at the beginning of this chapter, she reformulated it into a version of the first three lines. Even so, she cited the Selected Poems version in her endnotes. On this
three-line version, she infamously stated in an interview with Grace Schulman that “the rest of it seems to be padding.”\textsuperscript{104} Many scholars have agreed, stating that the 1967 version is a “distilled” version of “Poetry,” saying that it reveals “the image-within-the-image,” proving how much Moore was an Imagist at heart.\textsuperscript{105} However, this critique is a misreading of Imagism. The poem was not attempting to paint a visual effect of poetry or talk about the “thing itself.” What is left in the 1967 version is not an image wrought through the objective precision of Imagism, but rather a prosaic lyric that uses a subjective and distinctive “I” addressed to a “you.” It becomes a confession. Many of the ideas that Moore was working through during the early revision process are absent from this version. In this way, lines 4-29 do not seem to be mere “padding;” they are crucial to understanding the conceptualization of the genuine and the imaginative and affective encounters that Moore wants her readers to experience around the text. At the same time, Moore’s revisions facilitate a modernist reading of this text through such a public revision process. Each new publication relinquishes and allows authorial intention to not center around her as an author, but rather around the text as a “living” thing that relies on mutual knowledge of the previous versions. For Moore, performing revision to “Poetry” was simply a reflection on her own words: the emphasis is on the sense of time passing and the question of whether we “have it yet.” If it is “not until” or “nor till” the poets can be “literalists of the imagination” that we shall we have “it,” then Moore, it seems here, is not so much revising the “literalist” or the “literal” within her poetry, but rather the role of the imagination in attaining poetry. In the final version, the business documents and school books, the bats holding on upside down, are omitted. Or perhaps not omitted, but substituted with the presence of the blank space on the page, the space


\textsuperscript{105} Honigsblum, “Revisions to ‘Poetry,’” 195.
for the capacious imagination of not the authoritative “I” speaker, but the addressee of that distinctive “I:” the common reader. No hands grasp or demand the raw and the genuine. The imagination only reaches out in solidarity to the speaker in both contempt and curiosity. In the 1967 version, the reader is forced to hold the tension that exists between opposing concepts in simply a shorter amount of time. Revision, for Moore, means giving her reader the opportunity to think in the presence, yet independent, of the author. In the end, “Poetry” is the same poem—it is the same poem revised to even more explicitly situate itself beyond the page.
Chapter III: Revising Acquisition in “When I Buy Pictures”

“When I Buy Pictures” contains one of the most protracted revision histories in the MML—and one that is deeply complicated by the surreptitious publication of Poems. In July 1921, it appeared in two different versions: The Dial published it in the free-verse form by Moore’s submission, while Poems published it in stanza form without her knowing. It is an accident that we have a published version of the stanzaic/syllabic version at all, but we do know that Moore sent Scofield Thayer of a version of it. Schulze writes in her commentary, “No record remains of Thayer’s handing over Moore’s manuscript to the editors of Poems. Moore’s comment to Bryher seems to suggest, however, that Thayer was the only person who could have passed the poem along without her knowledge.”

Many scholars date Moore’s transition from stanzaic form to free verse in the early twenties, but the revision process from stanza form to free verse does not appear on the typed manuscripts. Rather, Moore may have decided to change the poem from stanza form to free verse in her head, not on the page, typing up a new version in free verse and then revising on that, potentially first as Dial-1. Moore wrote many poems in syllabic meter, and she continued to draft her poems in syllabic meter. Her poems shift from address to animals or descriptions and voicings of “things” to her criteria poems and lyrical descriptions, we also see an interest in getting rid of the syllabic form and using free verse. The motivations for this change have been speculated to be Moore’s desire to fit in with her contemporaries or experiment with her poetic authority, having made herself known for the skillful syllabic meter by the late teens. However, oppositely, I claim that they show Moore prioritizing her ability to make more local, substantive revisions. When closely reading the revisions to Poems-1 and Poems-2, for example, we see how

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106 Slatin, Savage’s Romance, 7.
word choices might have influenced her decision to change the poem’s form. On Poems-2, she writes the words, “openly acknowledge decisively” below the final stanza in a blue crayon. Then, in Dial-1, the first draft of the free-verse version, the word “decisively” appears for the first in line 19: “It must decisively acknowledge the forces which have made it.”

Whereas in the stanzaic/syllabic meter the word “decisively” would have been a 4-syllable word in what she had consistently kept a 15-syllable line, a difficult fit, the addition of this word is not problematic in a free verse form. In this, we see the possibility that Moore was choosing free-verse over syllabic because free verse would further liberate her revision process as she prioritizes words and phrases over meter. Given this and other omissions that we see on Poems-1 and Poems-2 (she substitutes “that which” with “what;” to lines 17-18, omitting “ironic or other;” and to lines 24-25, omitting “and it must admit that it is the work of X, if X produced it: of Y, if made / by Y”) that also appear in Dial-1, it is clear that these minor word choices could have served as a motivation to eliminate the syllabic form. Again, we see that a hyper-formalist approach to interpreting Moore’s revisions limits our understanding of Moore as a reviser. In this poem, it seems that the revisions to “When I Buy Pictures” reveal a greater concern for being able to make small local changes to the poem, changes that reframe the tone around some of its main ideas around the difficult of being a consumer: what it means not just to see an object, but to properly possess it.

The stanzaic version appears in Poems as follows:108

When I Buy Pictures

or what is closer to the truth, when I look at
  that of which I may regard myself the
    imaginary possessor, I fix upon that which would
      give me pleasure in my average moments: the satire upon curiosity,
        in which no more is discernible than the intensity of the mood:

108 See Appendix 3, Figure 10c and Figure 10d.
or quite the opposite – the old thing, the medi-
æval decorated hat box, in which there
are hounds with waists diminishing like the waist of the hour-glass
and deer, both white and brown, and birds and seated people; it may be no more than a square
of parquetry; the literal biography perhaps – in letters stand-
ing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse;
or that which is better without words, which means
just as much or just as little as it is understood to
mean by the observer – the grave of Adam, prefigured by himself; a bed of beans
or artichokes in six varieties of blue; the snipe-legged hiero-
glyphic in three parts; it may be anything. Too
stern an intellectual emphasis, i-
ronic or other – upon this quality or that, detracts
from one’s enjoyment; it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved tri-
umph easily be honored – that which is great because something else is small.

It comes to this: of whatever sort it is, it
must make known the fact that it has been displayed
to acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it;
and it must admit that it is the work of X, if X produced it; of Y, if made
by Y. it must be a voluntary gift with the name written on it.

Based on this original version, we see why Moore’s work is often caught between these two
opposing critiques of having achieved a genderless Impersonality and of having failed a
gendered personality. The “I” in Moore’s poetry does indeed ostensibly seek to distance itself
from the object of its imagining. However, in “When I Buy Pictures,” a speaker is bringing
readers into an intense field of play with their own perception. Aligning with the descriptor “self-
fashioning,” Jeanne Heuving notes that “critical response to [Moore’s] poetry has tended to
confirm the stereotype of Moore as removed and pristine, rather than as a poet who actively
creates the conditions of her creativity.” We also see what Leavell calls, “The collector’s
sensibility in Moore [that] tends toward multiplication of both the image and the perspectives

109 See Introduction: Revision and Gender, pages 12-17.
through which it is viewed.”\textsuperscript{111} The series of objects and the compounded multi-perceptual intake of them does not create an omniscient point of view, an impersonality. Rather, the speaker bears up their surroundings with a complex mode of seeing in order to articulate an acute awareness of the personal ramifications of such an acquisition. As many scholars have noted, Moore’s poetry often makes an art of the speaker voicing self-correction—or, in other words, revision—by naming a thing only to refine that naming process through negation. Akin to the need to wait “till” the poets can be literalists in “Poetry,” the speaker in “When I Buy Pictures” thematizes poetic revision within the poem itself, demonstrating the tracings and movements of a mind facilitating their own experience. In this way, Moore or the speaker is not veiled behind the poem nor pretending to be non-gendered: the active reformulation of language into something “closer to the truth” for the speaker. This “truth” is not necessarily that which “reflects” her experience. It is a truth that encompasses multiple experiences and perceptions at once.

In line 2, Moore creates a kind of simile of seeing: “When I look at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor.” Importantly, the speaker “may” regard themselves as the imaginary possessor. The word “may” indicates that this self-regard is an extraneous, not a necessary, reality that has been made possible by the object of the picture and which the speaker chooses to opt into, creating their own field of perception. The speaker considers themselves looking at each object not as its actual but as its imaginary possessor. The speaker is willing to see, but is using the poem to move away from that image of seeing into something more abstract, which is the “intensity of the mood.” This self-consciousness about how the speaker is looking at the pictures undoes both romantic notions of “reflection” upon the thing in which one develops

the capacity to see in the stillness of one’s mind, while also subverting Imagism’s “direct”
treatment of the thing, which removes the self from the seeing. This multilayered perception
ultimately leads to an interrogation of the word “imaginary.”

What does it mean for her to be the “imaginary possessor”? The word “imaginary”
signifies a speaker who has transitioned from having commodity power to not having commodity
power, from buying to looking, from reality to imagination. Rather than proceeding in a voicing
that stages the speaker as subject to an action that bestows upon them a commodity power and
frames the poem around an economic transaction, the speaker correct into voicing their own
perception of these pictures once they are bought. It is not the moment of economic transaction,
but the moment afterwards that it transports the speaker into being “the imaginary possessor” of
the thing that the picture represents. The speaker buys the picture, but it is closer to the truth for
them to subsequently consider themselves as only the imaginary possessor of that picture. Moore
portrays a poet who is not poeticizing the object in order to possess it. By abstracting possession
into an act of the imagination, the speaker is able to understand it beyond the constraints of
sensory experience. But to what extent can looking become owning without objectification
(transforming the object) or affectation (transforming the viewer)?

The Dial Revisions

Moore’s revision process on Dial-1 – Dial-5 show that she particularly grappled with
three parts of this poem. First, she revised the presentation and organization of the list of things
(lines 5-14) between Dial-1 and Dial-2. This revises our reading of the form. Second, Moore
revised the line about Adam, which bears upon her notion of naming-power, as I explored in
Chapter 1. Third, Moore revised the final four lines of the poem in nearly each draft, going back
and forth between similar formulations of the same few phrases. In many ways, Moore’s revision
process to “When I Buy Pictures” can be summed up in Holly’s statement that “she could change her mind about the abstraction more easily than about the image.” Thus, in a similar way that we can talk about the “autocrats” and “poets” version of “Poetry,” we can talk about the different versions of Moore’s development of “When I Buy Pictures” according to these three parts of the poem, all of which begin on the premise of the speaker’s imaginary possession.

“Or That Which Is Better Without Words”

After the speaker introduces themselves as the imaginary possessor, they launch into a list of objects, each of which are symbols of civilization and cultivation, that are represented in the pictures that they own. As they list the objects, it is as if the poet is saying “or” without saying “or” with each semicolon. In a cascade of appositives, the vague “whats,” “that of whichs,” and “its” create an egalitarian linguistic economy of meaning between each of the items. It does so in a way that is similar to how the poem began in its first three lines “When I Buy Pictures / Or what is closer to the truth / When I look at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor” — an equalizing paraphrase where buying becomes looking, looking becomes imagining, and imagining becomes possessing. The overarching question here is about whether that economy applies to things that can be seen. Toward this exploration, one of the most significant revisions that occurs in Dial-I is its omission of what was originally lines 10-11: “or that which is better without words / which means just as much or as little as it is understood to mean by the observer.” Below I provide a full typed manuscript of Dial-I:

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When I buy pictures
or what is closer to the truth,
when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average moments:
the satire upon curiosity, in which no more is discernable than the intensity of the
or quite the opposite--the old thing, the medieval decorated hat-box,
in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like the waist of the hour-glass
and deer, both white and brown, and birds and seated people;
it may be no more than a square of parquetry; the literal biography perhaps--
in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse
or that which is better without words,
which means just as much or as little as it is understood to mean by the observer--
the grave of Adam prefigured by himself; a bed of beans or artichokes
in six varieties of blue; the snipe-legged hieroglyphic in three parts;
it may be anything.
 Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that, detracts from one’s
it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph easily be honored--
that which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must decisively acknowledge the forces which have made it; *I see that it is lit w piercing glances into a life of things and I take into hand as a savage would take a looking glass*
and it must admit that *it is the work of X, if X produced it;*
of Y, if made by Y. *It must be a voluntary gift with the name written on it.*

*it must be a distinct distillation of personal experience
 omit XY
that interests me impersonally divided
 it must be acclaimed
 does not need to plead its desirability

*I see that it is lit by piercing glances into the life of things*
*It answers my questions*

*It makes no distinction betwene things
It confines analysis it does not disappear under admiration
It does not disintegrate under repeated admiration
It snakes
Snaking away my discretion
And it continues in force and what I bury it and having made a note of the grave dig it up*¹¹³

What difference would it have made if lines 10-11, “or that which is better without words, /
which means just as much or as little as it is understood to mean by the observer--” had been
included? First and foremost, this sentence serves to distinguish one list of things from another.
Those things which are better represented *with* words are the objects with formal and corporeal

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¹¹³ See Figure 12a.
qualities—the deer, the birds, the seated people. On the other hand, those things which are better represented without words are things that are stationary abstractions with more motion or movement: Adam foreseeing his own deathbed, the bean-bed, the intricately colored artichoke, the hieroglyphic split between a tryptic. The presence “or that which is better without words” distinguishes these two lists. With this line, readers would be forced to ask what is it about the latter list that is different than the former list, which contradicts both the egalitarian language and the way the speaker is allowing these individual words to represent themselves. If it is important for the thing to be able to represent itself in the word, then this distinction between that which is “better without words” implies that some things are better “with words,” undoing that logic of the poem. In sum, it appears that Moore saw the list form as a way to show an uninterrupted act of seeing.

In *Dial-2*, with the omission of these lines 10-11, there is an uninterrupted effect of things that incites readers to gaze upon each word in it of itself. Costello aptly points out, “Because of Moore’s manner of presentation, our inclination is to skip over the list and return to the more ‘significant’ language at the end of the poem. But the argument the poem makes prohibits us from preferring the ‘intellectual emphasis’ to the ‘life of things.’”114 This demonstrates that Moore was aware that if she would not distinguish between the value of the objects in her pictures, then she could not distinguish between the words that represented them in her form. On a formal and organization level, Moore, like in other poems, reserved her value-judgments and abstractions for the end of the poem. By omitting lines 10-11, it favors the concrete parts over the abstract image, thereby increasing the difficulty of the poem because it does not give readers the opportunity to step outside of this long list of things.

In that final “more significant language” in the last few lines of the *Dial* drafts, we find Moore still debating between the egalitarian and hierarchical language with the words “and” and “then.” The final line of *The Dial* version is “then I take it in hand as a savage would take a looking glass.” The significance of this is that “then” relays a kind of cause and effect, a final conclusion, whereas “and,” keeping with the egalitarian effect of all of this, the conclusion too offers not a final narratological conclusion, but a response that happens simultaneously and all at once. *On Dial-2*, Moore contemplates between the word “and” and “then” for this final line: she writes “and I take it in hand” and then a capital “And” at the bottom of the page. *On Dial-3*, she’s typed “then,” but considers the word “and” again. *On Dial-4*, she has typed “and,” but revises it to “then.” She ultimately chooses “then,” breaking the egalitarian economy of language and launching the speaker into action—a real, not imaginary, taking in hand. This “then” gives the poem greater closure.

*Omitting the Mirrored “Savage”*

While it is the case that Moore uses naming as a way to gain authority, Moore’s revision process shows that one of the overarching ideas in this poem is not acquisition through self-perception or self-reflection within her imaginary possession. Moore seems to be showing through “When I Buy Pictures” that the poet can only name things directly when they complicate their own understanding of how naming works with possession, taking the complexity upon themselves rather than placing it on the object. This is not necessarily a form of self-portraiture—or perhaps it is, but is one that inherently complicates the idea of the “self” in a kind of Cubist fashion. It is a self that she does not recognize—which she “regards” as an imaginary
possessor. Again, it is not a “veiling,” but an act of extricating a “self” from the “average moments.”

This dynamic is played out in the final lines of The Dial version:

> It must acknowledge the forces which have made it;
> It must “be lit with piercing glances into the life of things.”
> Then I “take it in hand as a savage would take a looking glass.”

There is indeed a note of self-portraiture involved in this final line. The final object is not a picture, but a mirror revealing one’s own form. Heuving, amongst other scholars have often mischaracterized the motivation for this final image as a transformative act of “narcissistic gratification of seeing herself.” She continues, “No longer content to be an ‘imaginary possessor’ but savagely desiring reflection, Moore breaks with the middling and anti-specular consciousness of the poem.” It is as if the poet, now having detailed a variety of symbolically cultured objects, can turn to invest in an unfamiliar “savage” self rather than the world at large. In this interpretation, it is as if Moore is attempting to escape from a world of economic transaction through “imaginary possession,” viewing possession through a prelapsarian lens, despite that Adam has been, in the final revision, linguistically decentered (as explored in Chapter 1).

The word “savage” has important ramifications on our reading of Moore in this version of “When I Buy Pictures” that has not yet been adequality historicized. Scholars have typically read Moore’s use of the word to portray the speaker’s “ignorance,” “wildness,” “strangeness,” “dangerousness,” all of which are definitions of the word when used as an adjective. This reading of The Dial version in order to softened Moore’s use of the word does not acknowledge

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116 Ibid., 103.
117 Ibid., 103.
the racist connotation of the word, rooted in Anglo-European literature’s portrayals of people “regarded as primitive and uncivilized.”\textsuperscript{118} Costello disproves this by pointing out that Moore used this word to describe her own thinking about poetry: “I have always regarded readings of poetry—even talks about poetry—with the skepticism and curiosity of a savage.”\textsuperscript{119} Clearly Moore is using the word in a positive light, portraying the “savage” as someone who is not beholden to conventional ways of doing things, or, perhaps in the Rousseauian sense, as someone who has not yet seen a certain historical stage. Yet in any of these cases, the word problematically reduces the person to their behavior, rather than their origin or their subjective vision. When Moore writes, “Then I ‘take it in hand as a savage would take a looking glass,’” the word “as” here places emphasis on the image that she is creating with the so-called savage and the looking-glass. Rather than the speaker saying that she becomes like a savage, and then takes the picture in hand, and looks at it like a looking glass, Moore is comparing the way or the mode of taking the pictures to that way or mode of the so-called savage looking into a mirror. What can be drawn from this image then is not that Moore was using the word “savage” to talk about an actual savage. Even worse, she plays on the reader’s assumption of a savage’s behavior.

Thus, it is significant that Moore revised this, whether or not it was out of a realization of its potential to offend. In Observations, Moore changes the ending to:

\begin{quote}
It must be ‘lit with piercing glances into the life of things.’
It must ‘acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it.
\end{quote}

With this revision, there is no longer a final moment of self-reformation and self-reflection. Rather, we have a moment of knowledge, the “seeing” that the picture of the object “is lit” and that it “acknowledges.” The speaker comes closer to the truth by seeing not the object’s form but


\textsuperscript{119} Costello, Imaginary Possessions, 32.
by seeing that which allows it to be seen in the first place. To see the world, one must attempt to see light itself. What allows them to be seen is, in part, herself, her own “piercing glances.” This is why scholars have stated that there is still an element of neo-romantic self-reflection through the external world in this poem. Slatin (always slipping into autobiographical criticism) argues that this is an instance of the speaker’s “self” as whittled down to their externalized form.

Costello writes that for the poet, the “pursued objects become oblique mirrors of the pursuer in Moore but retain their position as objects.”\textsuperscript{120} Viewing the objects as any mirror, even a muddled one, misses the multi-layered perceptual experience that Moore has been staging throughout the poem with the uninterrupted list of objects that are pictures within pictures. Regarding oneself as an “imaginary possessor,” keeping the self and the object distinct, is a fundamentally different metacognitive activity than looking at the object as a dirty mirror, but a mirror nonetheless.

Victoria Bazin suggests this reading, stating, the “poem is more concerned with preserving the integrity of the object world than it is with the integrity of the subject and the way to do that is to resist attempts to co-opt it via representation.”\textsuperscript{121} For Moore, the objects themselves are not opaque. In the same way that “Poetry” has remained so intriguing to its readers through the fact that we cannot define the abstractions of the raw and the genuine any more than the speaker themselves, we can see that also in “When I Buy Pictures,” the ultimate abstraction of the poem, the imaginary possessor, remains opaque by way of being “lit” by one’s own variegated and multiple perceptions.

\textsuperscript{120} Costello, Imaginary Possessions, 32.
The Final Lines in Observations

In *Poems*, the final four lines in the typed version originally reads:

- it must decisively acknowledge the forces which have made it;
- and it must admit that it is the work of X, if X produced it;
- of Y, if made by Y. It must be a voluntary gift with the name written on it.

Throughout *The Dial* revision process, Moore gets rid of the “XY” line, as she calls it in *Dial-1*, an ending where objects must admit an exact origin. On the margins of *Dial-1*, Moore writes a version of what will become the final two lines in the *Dial* version: “I see that it is lit with piercing glances into a life of things and I take into hand as a savage would take a looking glass.” Because this does not appear in any previous typed manuscripts, one has to wonder if she had formulated that line in her mind before writing it down, as it not only seems like a solid line of poetry but it also appears in the final version. We see, perhaps, a moment of clear, spontaneous inspiration in her drafting.

On *Dial-1* (see the transcription on page 66), we see Moore considering the ending: “it continues in force and what I bury it and having made a note of the grave dig it up.” The possibility of that being the last line is really astounding for this poem. The burying of the picture is that the speaker charts where a picture is buried and then returns to it in order to dig it up. When Moore finally does write the line “the silver fence protecting Adam’s grave or Michael taking Adam by the wrist,” what really changed from this line to that was the notion of the grave being “protected.” We no longer have an Adam who is seeing or foreseeing his future grave, nor do we have a gravedigger who is reviving the ghost of a past image. Another interesting potential addition for the final line in *Dial-2* is indicated in her hand-written notes at the bottom of the page. We see her reconsidering bringing back the line “it must be a voluntary gift with a name

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122 See Appendix 3, Figure 12a, for Moore’s note, “omit XY,” written diagonally in small letters near just under the typed script.
written on it.” It is interesting that she rewrote that phrase by hand after it was in the Poems-1 and Poems-2, as if she was contemplating it for its own sake rather than alongside the other phrases. In both of these, the “not of the grave” of Adam and the “gift with the name written on it,” alongside her drafts that read, “it does not disappear” and “it does not disintegrate,” explore the power names have to preserve the presence of a thing, even after the thing itself is gone. On Dial-5, the line “it must be a voluntary gift with the name written on it” was still included in the typed script. She also writes, “I see that it is ‘lit’” as opposed to “it must be ‘lit.’” She silently omitted and substituted these phrases before sending them off to The Dial, which means that it is possible that we do not have the final typed manuscript.

“When I Buy Pictures” was published in its final form in Observations (1924). It should be noted that although there are no textual variants between the first and second editions of Observations, Moore did pencil in a comma after the word “hourglass” on her copy of the first edition, a ghost revision that did not appear in the 1925 publication, but it does appears in Selected Poems. All previous versions and typed manuscripts of the poem do not include that comma, which shows that it was an original revision on Observations (1924). This is an instance that shows that Moore uses her published texts as working copies both to neatly edit in previously decided or already published revisions, as well as a site of original revision and creativity. The final four lines of the Observations (1924) poem appears as follows:

it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph easily be honored—
that which is great because something else is small.
it comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must be “lit with piercing glances into the life of things”;
it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it.
The *Observations* ending has been called a more abrupt and overstated ending than the former versions. The speaker concludes with four authoritative statements, “it comes, it is, it must, it must” (lines 16-18). While this might sound like a diagnosis about what the art must do, here the speaker actually presents a non-discriminatory ethic in their perspective of the objects, stating “of whatever sort it is: it must.” The perception, which is a new exploration of “imaginary” possession, extends only so far as to see that the pictures are abstractly, even impressionistically, “lit with piercing glances into the life of things” (line 17). This appears to stage a larger spiritual dimension. This is unlike romantic responses to nature, where the sublime leads to an excess of unknowability. Instead of that romantic dynamism, Moore draws a conclusion that condones a more hard-and-fast knowability: “it must ‘acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it.”

Importantly, Moore included the word “spiritual” forces in this version, whereas in *Poems 1 and 2*, and throughout the revision process, she debated about whether or not to include it. By including it here, Moore clarifies how it might even be possible for a picture to “acknowledge” its forces. While the object that is inside the picture is what makes the picture *possible*, it doesn’t *make* the picture. This is in the same way that Adam (a naming creature) makes his grave (a picture or a representation of himself) *possible*, but does not *dig* (or make, have, acknowledge) his own grave.

Through this revision process, Moore formulates a type of poetic acquisition not through the act of naming the origin things, but through creating an associative structure between them based on the linguistic surrounding environment. In other words, in the same way that Adam’s grave only is his grave when he is no long alive, pictures can only belong to the speaker of the poem when certain aspects of themselves transcend the real and become imaginary. The revision

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process concedes that seeing oneself does not necessarily require making oneself a “savage.”

Rather than an inward turn toward the origin of the savage or the prefigured grave, Moore’s final version of “When I Buy Pictures” shows an authoritative and didactive acknowledgement of the significance of seeing beyond oneself: that an image “must” become lit by the life that surrounds it. Rather than moving backwards in time toward innocence or death, it seeks to transcend. From version to version of “When I Buy Pictures,” the act of imaginary possession is revised from self-reflective ownership to temporary stewardship.

The revisions to “When I Buy Pictures” demonstrate a process that works toward an understanding of acquisition that is ultimately entirely uninvested in the actual act of acquiring, though it does not attempt to escape it, either. Rather, it focuses on the state of the thing once it is acquired and how that state can be even further transformed, revised, and rejuvenated by the speakers liturgy of “musts.” In speaking this, the poet temporally destabilizes the objects: we know the speaker things they must acknowledge the spiritual forces that have made them, but we do not know if they will. It ends on a commission, not a conclusion. Once again, as in “Poetry,” Moore’s revisions instill within the poem the poetic experience of revision itself, through a sense of instability and delay that depends on the reader—or the imaginary possession. The acquisition of an object, as it is with the discovery of the genuine, is an imminent, but not consumeristic, act of imagination.
CHAPTER IV: REVISIGN FRAGMENTATION IN “A GRAVE”

Marianne Moore’s revisions engage with long-standing concepts of poetics. In “Poetry,” Moore reformulates the voice of a poetic speaker and the nature of the address. In doing so, she seems to postulate a social reading function of poetry that is radical and reader-responsible. In “When I Buy Pictures,” Moore demonstrates a sequence of egalitarian objects, stressing that the acquisition of them is not done through the possessor knowing an object’s name and origin, but through the possessor imaginatively acquiring it in such a way that commissions it to acknowledge its own names and origins. In all of these, a study of Moore’s revisions also seem to reveal a theme of delay and textual instability. The raw leads to something genuine over time—over the work of revision.

As we turn to “A Grave,” critics have shown how this poem shows an explicit instance of Moore writing within the tradition of romantic lyricism, using one of the most common poetic devices: the sea. As Moore portrays it, the sea, as a grave or graveyard, is not a mirror that reflects herself, nor does it pose an opportunity for odyssey. Further, the man looking into it is eventually decentered from the poem, a decentering of the emblematic romantic sublime. The poem itself shows this with the “Man” begins at the center of the poem but quickly becomes centered. Moore also shows this through the revision history that included correspondence with Ezra Pound, who wanted to change the final words from “volition nor consciousness” to “consciousness nor volition.” Some of these revisions have been thoughtfully examined by Jeredith Merrin, who also plays on the word “revision” to refer to a representation of a greater shift in thinking about the sea and the man looking into it are represented in poetry. Although “Man,” as Merrin as pointed out, stands for humankind, it also
Scholarly efforts to account for Moore’s place in literary tradition have thus focused most exclusively on the evident anti-romanticism in this poem. Building on Merrin’s work, I am suggesting that these anti-romantic sentiments should also be explored with reference to a close read of her overarching revision process between the first to the final draft. With this, I am going to assert that Moore’s revision shows an interest in fragmentation, a particularly modernist aesthetic. I will also clarify formal decisions in terms of her revision practice.

The Revision History

The revision history of “A Grave” demonstrates a writer who typed out many drafts in order to visualize even the smallest changes. The drafts leading up to The Dial publication in 1921, published as “Two Poems” with “When I Buy Pictures” will be called Drafts 1-8. The poem started with the title “A Graveyard in the Middle of the Sea.” Between Drafts 2 and 3, Moore changes the poem from syllabic meter and stanzaic form to free verse, and also changes the title to “A Graveyard.” In regard to the change in form, it is unclear whether she does for the same reasons as “When I Buy Pictures,” based on the need to include new words. Moore keeps most of the words that she originally had in the stanzaic version, with only a few additions and substitutions here and there. It seems that in this case, it’s more likely that Moore wanted to change the verse into free verse for its own sake, rather than to accommodate a revision process that would have broken the syllabic meter anyway. On Draft-8, while the typing is clearly that of Moore, the hand-written revisions are not those of Moore, but likely of a friend of possibly of her

mother. Therefore, I do not consider the hand-written revisions on Draft-8 as a part of Moore’s revision process in this study. After it was published in The Dial, it was followed up by a publication in The New Poetry. It appears that on this version, the editors made a few textual errors with punctuation, because the following drafts, Grave-1, show Moore reverting to the punctuation on Draft-7-8 and The Dial publication.

From Stanza to Free-Verse

The first version of the poem was probably written during the late teens. Holly notes that Moore sent Pound a version of “A Graveyard” by 1918, so the stanzaic versions that are entitled “A Graveyard in the Middle of the Sea” must have been pre-1918. However, Pound publishes the stanzaic version in his 1932 Profile, An Anthology Collected in MCMXXI.

Draft-1 and Draft-2 are nearly identical. However, Draft-1 has extremely long lines such that, as Holley has noted, Moore needed to turn the paper horizontal on the typewriter in order to fit it all in.125 However, “A Graveyard in the Middle of the Sea” also had a fairly inconsistent syllabic meter: stanza 1 consisted of 32/15/19/19/27; stanza 2 consisted of 31/14/18/19/27; stanza 3 consisted of 32/14/19/19/27; and stanza 4 consisted of 29/15/20/19/27. Whereas Draft-1 reads “and the noise of bell-buoys,” Draft-2 reads only “and noise of bell-buoys,” turning line 13 into a 21- instead of a 20-syllable line.

When we look at the revision from form to free verse, we again encounter misogynistic and dramatized interpretations of this revision process. Holly calls the long stanzaic/syllabic meter of these first two drafts an “awkward” form and says that the revision was done to “remove a certain visual evidence of artifice and to increase the sense of naturalness.”126 Playing

125 Appendix 4, Figure 14a.
on the theory that Moore was contemplating suicide in this poem, Slatin suggests that “the strangled articulation of the syllabic pattern shows us how close Moore is to coming undone, manifests the intensity of her struggle to keep from becoming one of the ‘bodies’ she has found floating.”  

This characterizes Moore’s long syllabic verse as an over-exertion a “fragile” imagination. But such long lines that were difficult to follow, full of independent clauses, were quite natural for Moore. She continues to use long lines and difficult sentences throughout Observations and her character, such as in “Marriage” and “An Octopus.” Rather that this meter being a form of artifice or veiling of the self, it seemed that Moore wanted to simply use the poetic form that she liked best and had grown confident and skillful with. The revision process thus seems to show, as it is the case in “When I Buy Pictures,” that she came to favor her ability to make minor changes that could be made to the poem without the constraint of meter. It is possible that this was motivated by not wanting to risk making the meter even more inconsistent stanza by stanza than it already was.

It is also possible that the omission of the first stanza, as seen on Drafts 1-2, that was eventually omitted in Draft-3, welcomed the change to a shorter and more compact free verse poem. Drafts 1-2 begin not with a “Man, looking into the sea,” but with the poet looking at the cypresses lining the shore: 

The cypresses of experience dead, yet indestructible by circumstance; shivering and stony in the water; not green
   But white, surrounding all that is loathsome: inanimate
Scavengers guarding permanent garbage: watched over by sharks which cruise between
   Them—petrine like death yet not so petrine as patient; everything everywhere
   Yet nothing, because nowhere; infinity defined at last, still infinity because there
   Where nothing is.  

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127 Slatin, Savage’s Romance, 113.
128 See Appendix 4, Figures 14a and 14b.
There is a great sense of both accumulation and fragmentation in this first stanza. This poem is the only one analyzed in this thesis with no citation practice, and here we see how this first stanza set the tone for the rest of the poem: rather than citation being the fragmenting force that destabilizes the lyric, as is typical in modernist poetry, she uses fragments themselves. The first line “cypresses of experience dead, yet indestructible by circumstance; shivering and stony in the water; not green / but white, surrounding all that is loathsome,” is not a proper or complete sentence. The poet does not so much as allow the cypresses to be activated by a verb so that they “are dead.” A modifier signifies their only action, which is that they are “surrounding all that is loathsome and inanimate.” With the cypresses already dead, this stanza essentially functions to scan the horizon and introduce death before it has been narrated. The inextricably abstract conclusion, “everything everywhere / yet nothing, because nowhere; infinity defined at last, still infinity because there / where nothing is,” only introduces paradox between the physical expansion of the sea and the force of death that it holds, but it does so before we know why or have seen how it holds that death, that “nothing” and “nowhere.” By omitting this stanza, not only is there no more contrast between the trees and the sea, but there is a sense that we have to start with the Man rather than the Trees, with the act of looking directly at a form of death—a death that is more personal. Throughout this poem, the speaker comes to see the death, but not directly. Because it exists underneath the sea, the speaker only sees it in her imagination.

In Draft-3, the first version in free verse and without the stanzaic form, the first three lines then become an address to the “man.” Again, Moore phrases this as a fragment:

> Man looking into the sea, taking the view from those who have as much
> Right to it as you have to it, yourself it is human na-
> ture to stand in the middle of a thing
> but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
> the sea has nothing but a well-excavated grave.

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129 Appendix 4, Figure 14c.
There is the “man” looking into the sea, who begins as the subject of the poem, but it is not even as the subject of the sentence. Indeed, and once again, the first three lines are essentially a fragment. The fact that it is a fragment would be emphasized if she included the article applied to the specific man and the helping verb for “looking,” unless she used the colon after the word “yourself,” clarifying that it is an address. Therefore, Moore reformulates the meaning of the comma, using it to split things up movement by movement, as if the movements themselves are objects that ripple out from the man.

*Draft-3* also breaks up the first line into two lines, so that the second line begins with the word “Right to it as you have to it yourself, it is human na-”. This line is particularly powerful because it emphasizes two things: first it puts the word “right” at the forefront of the poem. With the first two lines beginning with “man” and “right,” one cannot help but think of the 18th century revolutionary political texts by those titles, the “Rights of Man,” by Thomas Paine and “A Vindication of the Rights of Men” by Mary Wollstonecraft, whose arguments were concerned with the rights that individual men had to property and land ownership. These issues that romantics such as Wordsworth were attempting to reformulate into an autonomous and independent relationship in the century that followed. In *Draft-3*, like in *Drafts 1-2*, Moore continues to split the phrase “human nature” between two lines, interrupting the flow of the word, which anticipates the rebuttal that comes in the next two lines: “but you cannot / stand in the middle of this.”

*The Emergence of “A Grave”*

*Draft-4* is where the most recognizable version of “A Grave” emerges. While Moore had been whittling down the first line progressively on all previous drafts, from “Man, looking into
the sea, taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have to it yourself, it is human na-
” (Draft-1 and Draft-2) and “Man looking into the sea, taking the view from those who have as much” (Draft-3), but on Draft-4 we see Moore decide to put, “Man, looking into the sea” on its own line. From Draft-4 to Draft-8, she will proceed with the trilemma of no comma, a comma, or a dash after the word “see.” Below is a typed-script of Draft-4 (each of the errors indicate Moore’s spelling):

Man, looking into the sea, taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have to it, yourself, it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing but you cannot stand in the middle of this: the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave. The trees stand in a procession, reserved as their contours, saying nothing; repression however is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea; the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look. There are others beside you who have worn that look. To what purpose? Unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave, their contemporaries row across them – the blades of the oars Moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing as death. The wrinkles move themselves into a phalanx–beautiful under networks of foam and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the sea-weed; the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as hertofore–the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet fo the cliffs, in motion beneath them and the ocean, under the pulsation of light-houses and noise of bell-buys, advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink— in which, if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.

whose bones are unable to assume an expression of protest

whose expression is no longer a protest whose bones comply when fishes investigate their bones or when fishermen let down their nets unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave or row swiftly across them—the blades of the oars

who now comply when fish investing te their bones fishermen let down their nets, unconscious of the fact unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave or row quickly away..the blades of the oars.\(^{130}\)

\(^{130}\) See Appendix 4, Figure 14d.
Perhaps in another burst of inspiration and insight, Moore seemed to type this draft quickly as it includes many typos, which are anomalous for Moore’s drafts, as well as ten lines of various formulations of what will eventually become lines 11-12, “Whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them, / for their bones have not lasted.” For Moore, the typewriter was associated with a messier revision process that welcomed creative manuscript revisions, whereas her published poems were sites of neat and decisive revisions.

Starting with Draft-4, “Man, looking into the sea” is placed on its own line. What we know about this poem by the second line is that there is no private viewing of the sea. Unlike the romantics, the man cannot retire into his gaze without disrupting, or fragmenting, the gaze of others. Rather than creating a contrast between the dead cypresses and the dead sea, she seems to draw a contrast between an oblivious, experientially living-yet-dead man and the sea. She heightens our awareness of the man by shortening the line to the first clause only and reinserting the comma. Like the “I, too” in “Poetry” puts greater emphasis on the “I,” this comma puts greater emphasis on the “Man.” This makes for an even starker contrast as the poem ends with a focus not on the man at all, but on the death that is hidden and anticipated within the sea.

“When I Buy Pictures” sets up a landscape of temporal “happening” of acquisition with the word “when,” yet with a focused attention on the detailed and graspable objects. Even though those objects are readily acquirable, she chooses to make herself their “imaginary possessor.” “A Graveyard,” a title that is a singular object, plays on the sublime desire to attain whatever it is that we look at, but it is unattainable. The sea is not just a space, but a constant “happening.” Moore further emphasizes this by removing the “-yard” suffix after its 1921 publications to “A Grave,” thus creating a focus on the “object” or a singular “image” of the grave, rather than the landscape of many graves. This is illusive and ironic; the grave is still the vast and infinite space
of the sea in which many things “turn and twist.” The sea, like the archive, is “democratizing,” yet also indifferent. Through this dualism, Moore refuses to romanticize its power and the destruction and death that comes with that power. The sea attempts a punctuation and a pattern, spotting geometrical design: it “wrinkles itself into a diamond-spotted octagon of giraffe skin.” Yet we know that the skin ultimately “wrinkles itself” and that the bones of men ultimately move without patterns or punctuation: “they turn and twist neither with / volition nor consciousness.” While she omits this line from later versions, it reveals how the poet imagines the sea, from its surface to its depths, as an entity that contains no “grammar” that constructs meaning.

Even while the sea is a collector, it evades being perceived. The sea is not a place of magic, adventure, voyeurism, tourism: it offers nothing to humans except a thoroughly dug out grave. It represses the verb of its “excavating” by framing this in the past tense, implying that it is a grave to which things have done the *excavating*. Indeed, for such a living and looked-at thing, a living thing that is, it is, in reality, repressed: “repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea…[it] advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink.” Balancing the space between determinism and nihilism, Moore reveals the inadequacy of language to describe what it means for things that were once alive to now turn and twist neither with volition nor consciousness. These things do turn and twist through their *surroundings*. Like the potential first stanza in *Draft-1* and *Draft-2*, even the dead trees that surround the ocean seem to move the “inanimate” sea.”

*Ezra Pound’s Letter: The Man Looking Into the Sea*

Scholars have noted Ezra Pound’s letter 1918 to Moore, which pressured her to switch the last line from “volition nor consciousness” to “consciousness nor volition,” writing:
Perhaps you will find a more drastic change to suite you better. I do not offer an alternative as a dogma or as a single definite possibility… Comme est ridicule. I have copied your own order, instead of the thing that came into my head this P.M., namely ‘consciousness nor volition.’ Hang’d if I now know which I thought better. But I think the eye catches either cadence rather better if you break the line at is.131

Moore replied, “I realize that by writing consciousness and volition, emphasis is obtained which is sacrificed by retaining the order which I have, and I am willing to make the change, though I prefer the original order.”132 And on Draft-8, we can see that Moore tries the words “consciousness nor volition,” having crossed out the original “volition nor consciousness.” However, when the poem eventually went to press, it was reverted back to the original. As scholars have noted, Moore’s decision to favor her ordering over Pound’s shows her sense of authority as a woman writer. Moreover, ending on the word “consciousness” puts greater emphasis on the lack of knowledge, rather than the lack of “will” or “right,” that death brings about. In the end, the tragedy of death is not one of property or one of the rights of man, but the ending of consciousness, which enables vision and imagination.

*From “A Graveyard” to “A Grave”: 1921-1924*

After “A Grave” was published in *The Dial* (1921), the poem was also published in *The New Poetry* (1923). This version contains minor changes that are not evident in any of Moore’s drafts: a comma is omitted after “thing” (line 3), a dash is substituted for a semicolon after “top” (line 6), a period is substituted for a semicolon after “nothing” (line 7), a comma is added after “them” (line 11), a semicolon is substituted for a period after “seaweed” (line 17), a dash is substituted for a semicolon after “heretofore” (line 18), and a semicolon is added after “them”

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Most of these decisions are reverted or changed in the draft of Grave-1, her second drafting stage that retitled the poem “A Grave” and led to the Observations (1924) version.

The Observations (1924) version has only a few minor variations that we do not see on the copy of Grave-1. There is no comma after the word “them” (line 11). Two of the ghost revisions on Observations are only concerned with punctuation. Moore penciled in a semicolon after “this” (line 4). She also penciled in a semicolon after “them” (line 19). While the earlier drafts of the poem contained mostly commas and dashes for punctuations, the later versions contain more semicolons and periods. This revision process shows that Moore was moving toward a more pronounced phrasing and away from the syntactical fragmentation that the poem produces, even though the syntax of the words, the subject and the predicates, remain the same from Draft-5 through the final version of the poem.

Rather than “A Grave” being a romantic lyric, it is a feminist revision of the romantic sublime. Her practical revisions show an attempt to define the relationship between what one can see and what one cannot see. Moore pulls in a fragmented linguistic landscape between the man and the sea, with the speaker decentering both by attempting to see beyond the man and into the sea. The only objects that anchor the liminal space are the fish that no longer investigate the bones of the men, the pulsation of the lighthouse, and the noise of the bell-buoys. The stark and fragmented reality of the grave leads the speaker to stabilize that which smacks not of immanence, but rather of transcendence: the jaded fish, the piercing light, the endless gong.
CONCLUSION: THE MAKING OF THE PUBLIC SELF

“For we think back through our mothers if we are women.”

—Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own133

The work of Marianne Moore, from her poetic texts to her archive, facilitates constant delay and discovery. This private and intimate space contains such a public intention of lack of closure: she did not leave behind a legacy of finality. The difference between how we understand her act of revision and ours is in the spaces we consider to be archival and the way we consider ourselves to be our own archivists.

Revision happens everywhere now, especially through the way that technology has fundamentally changed the nature of a Text and therefore the nature of a writer. Because of this, common sites of writing in 21st century Western culture—from Gmail to Twitter to a Notes app—also facilitate fundamentally different types of drafting, revision, and collection. We have more material to work with and we have more time to work with it. Insofar as these sites of revision are public, social media provides the best example as to how revision complicates our notion and making of the self through writing. Facebook and Instagram both allow users to edit their posts with an “edit” button. On Facebook, revisions are saved so that readers can click on the post and see not only two different versions, but who liked which version. On Instagram, however, the textbox does not track those changes and chronologize those reactions whatsoever. One can silently edit an Instagram post with the previous version never saved and the new version never known as such. On the other hand, Twitter is the only social media platform whereon one cannot edit or revise a post. If a user tweets something that they would eventually like to change, the only option is to delete the tweet, retweet/reply to oneself with an emendation,

133 Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, New York: Harcourt, 1957. 79.
or to write a new tweet. Anyone with a verified account is placed under greater scrutiny (rightly so), with tweets written by their past selves (yet selves really not that far in the past, only as early as 2006, when even the oldest Millennials were 25) often getting resurfaced as evidence for how they have changed or for who they might potentially still be.

Our algorithmic world creates even greater angst surrounding revision and the construction of a self as a digital footprint. Large corporations such as Google and Amazon track our online movements to market more personalized items, while media services such as Netflix track the shows we watch to make recommendations. This consumer-focused tracing obviously backfires on the individual’s sense of privacy. One cannot shop online for something without tomorrow’s self being reminded of it through an ad. Netflix might email a recommendation for a show that one used to watch with an ex. In friendship anniversaries, Facebook regurgitates images of people who were perhaps once close friends, but who now feel like strangers, or of reminders to wish “Happy Birthday” to our dead. These automated digital materialities, a much less poetic form of observation—a form of surveillance—create a new and truly impersonal textual terrain for our imaginations, one that is oftentimes unwelcome and disruptive, and that will never leads to silence. This automatic archiving of our “selves” (put in quotation to say: insofar as we understand that self through our behavior) can serve as a painful reminder of who we no longer are. One has to wonder if there is a way to revise the self in an algorithmic world and if this revision will be, as it was for Moore, chiefly the act of omission and deletion. Indicative of this are certain politics protecting the right to be digitally forgotten. Both our

134 Although one can hide watched episodes so that they will no longer be used to make recommendations.
136 On May 25, 2018, the EU implemented the General Data Protection Act. Article 17 includes The Right to Erasure. Currently, the United States has no such law on the federal level.
public sites of composition and our most private digital tools might not allow individuals to retrace our steps, make order out of chaos, and discover ourselves through a self-generated archive without it coming back to haunt us. Even if it is possible, it might not be easy, and it might be impossible to erase only one part without omitting the whole.

The angst that drives our revising relationships with these (web)sites of composition, curation, and archiving are also found in Moore’s relationship to text. On a very simple level, in “Poetry,” we see her writing a poem with an implicit address, but wrestling with the nature of that address. One year, she shifts the tone by replacing a word and changing a few punctuation marks. The next year, she reworks it to be half its length and completely changes the meaning. The question of how to properly position the “I” in her address is never an attempt to escape, downplay, or distance the self from a public display of personhood. Rather, her art simply refuses to allow that “I” to become interested in power over things: fellow poets, poetry itself, objects and images of desire, the thrill of possession, the conquest—and the death—that the sea (re)presents.

In doing this, Moore’s writing practice almost necessarily develops an epistemology of the archive, because, unlike reading and being in the public sphere, reading and being in an archive embraces a mysterious, abundant, imaginative, and internally democratic value-system. Today’s public sphere could never do this with a work of art nor with its maker. As I stated in my Introduction, revision, characterized as a material production, is self-genealogizing that produces a history and tradition of one’s own. In this way, Moore’s revisions show a practice that not only demonstrates a woman writer creating a tradition of her own, but perhaps also a
poetics of revision as a way of historicizing text. If Moore was “think[ing] back through our mothers,” as Virginia Woolf states, then Moore, in a sense, was thinking back through herself.137

How we revise reveals what kind of power or what kind of “I” that we need to find over our pasts. Through what—and through whom—do we think back? To what extent can—or must—we simply use our imaginations, nor our material and textual realities, to do so? Moore’s presentism on July 7, 1921—when she received Poems at her doorstep and wrote, “I don’t know what to do with these and don’t know what to do next”—teaches me that, in the midst of finding one’s “self” in the public sphere being wholly out of one’s hands, there is value in acknowledging what one does not know. This recognition is why we might slow down enough to look back, search for our intentions, and ultimately, as Moore did, find an agency—a socially constructed, but, nonetheless, a creative agency—to archive and revise. As I hope this thesis showed, Moore’s poetry and revisions show that her agency attempts to move through her work with a level of skepticism about that very agency. As Schulze warns, “In the most radical formulations of social text theory, the search for authorial intention constitutes a romantic vestige of the belief in an autonomous liberal humanist subject.”138 In other words, as Moore thought back through herself, her revision process did not become a mirror in which to undergo the objectification of her own self, emerging with a faulty bias toward the more advanced and autonomous individual. And yet writing often has this effect; the revision process aggravates the text with sense of superiority found in new clarification and precision. What is wonderful about Moore, as I stated in my Introduction, is that, at the end of her life, she democratized the knowledge of her process through her archive. We know that she was not as immediately precise as her syllabic meter has her appear and that her revisions grapple with the centralization of the

137 Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, New York: Harcourt, 1957. 79.
“I.” When we think back through Moore as our mother, we think back through her material. If the gift of Moore’s notion of modernity is the newfound freedom to think back to the past through the treasuring of one’s personal process, then Moore teaches us to do so without a sense of poetic right or superiority.

To ardently think back through, to treasure, the ongoing draft—to read revision—is to attempt to embrace our own ghostly and bodily imprint that is both fading and changing on an already published and hyper-published world. In reading such ambivalent textual ontologies, we might exercise, not a useful, but a necessary, poetics that makes us capable of thinking back through our own.
APPENDIX 1: MOORE’S COPIES OF POEMS AND OBSERVATIONS

BLACK EARTH

the I of each,
a kind of fretful speech
which sets a limit on itself; the elephant is?
Black earth preceded by a tendril? —It is to that

phenomenon —
the above formation, —translucent like the atmosphere—a cortex merely—
that on which darts cannot strike decisively the first

time, a substance
needful as an instance
of the indestructibility of matter; it
has looked at the electricity and at the earth—

quake and is still
here; the name means thick. Will
depth be depth, thick skin be thick, to one who can see no
beautiful element of unreason under it?
Ghost Revisions on Poems (MML 1547 and MML 1544)

“Reinforcements”

Revision: Dashes out comma after “ears.”

Revision: Dashes out comma after “ears,” then writes “stet.”

“In This Age of Hard Trying Nonchalance is Good, And”

Revision: Dashes out “A” in “At” so as to make it lowercase using official
editing symbol for using a lowercase letter; uses official symbol to
omit the quotation mark before “At.”
Appearance: Not implemented in Selected Poems (1935).

Revision: Dashes out comma after “ears,” then writes “stet.”

“To A Steam Roller.”

Revision: Dashes comma after “conformity.”

Revision: Dashes comma after “conformity.”

“My Apish Cousins.”

Revision: “The Monkeys.”
Appearance: Not changed in Observations (1924) or (1925)
Ghost Revisions on *Observations* (1924) (MML 1555)

Colons revised to semi-colons; semi-colons revised to periods; periods added:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Revision:</th>
<th>Appearance:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“People’s Surroundings.”</td>
<td>Page 68. Line 51. Substitutes a semicolon after “amethyst” to a period, capitalizing the “h” in “here.”</td>
<td>Change is implemented in <em>Selected Poems</em> (1935).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hyphens added between multiple words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Revision:</th>
<th>Appearance:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Change: In *Complete Poems*, this is changed to one word, “dragonfly.”

Sentence structures changed:

“Snakes, Mongooses, Snake-charmers and the Like.”
Revision: Page 69. Lines 10-11. Splits sentence, substituting semicolon for period after “this” and capitalizing “Thick.” Note: On the *Broom* publication (Jan. 1922) these revisions are not adopted.
Appearance: Changed in *Selected Poems* (1935).

“Peter.”
Revision: Page 51. Line 17. Omits the comma after “say.”
Appearance: Changed in *Selected Poems* (1935).

“People’s Surroundings.”
Revision: Page 67. Line 27. Adds a comma after “can.”
Appearance: Changed in *Selected Poems* (1935).
Revision: Line 45. Adds comma after “thickness.”
Appearance: Changed in *Selected Poems* (1935).
Revision: Page 68. Line 67. Adds a comma after “gentlemen.”
Appearance: Changed in *Selected Poems* (1935)

“Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns.”
Appearance: Changed in *Selected Poems* (1935).
Appearance: Changed in *Selected Poems* (1935).
Revision: Page 93. Line 62. Adds a comma after “which.”
Appearance: Changed in *Selected Poems* (1935).

“Novices.”
Revision: Page 72. Line 27. Adds a comma after “harper.”
Appearance: Changed in *Selected Poems* (1935)

“To a Snail.”
Revision: Page 23. Lines 6-7. Parenthesis added around “that occurs as a concomitant of something well said.”
Appearance: Not changed in *Selected Poems* (1935).

“The Bricks Are Fallen Down, We Will Build With Hewn Stones. The Sycamores Are Cut Down, We Will Build With Cedars.”
Revision: Page 24. Line 1. Parenthesis added around “be able to.”
Appearance: Not changed in *Selected Poems* (1935).

“Poetry.”
Revision: Page 30. Line 19. Parenthesis added around “when dragged into prominence by half poets the result is not poetry.”
Appearance: Not changed in any following publication.
Quotation marks dashed from or added to:

“The Labors of Hercules.”
Revision: Page 63. Line 8. Omits the quotations marks around “till the sky is the limit.”
Change: In Complete Poems, this line is omitted altogether.

“People’s Surroundings.”
Revision: Page 67. Line 25. Omits the quotation marks around “a good brake is as important as a good motor”
Appearance: In Selected Poems (1935), this change is implemented.
Change: In Complete Poems, these quotation marks are omitted.

Revision: Line 51. Omits quotation marks after “escalator”
Appearance: In Complete Poems, this comma is added.

“Novices.”
Revision: Page 72. Line 45. Adds quotation marks after “lightning,” so as to make lines 45-46 two quotes.

Grammatical and spelling revisions:

“Peter.”

Revision: Line 34. Corrects the capitalization of “to.”

“In the Days of Prismatic Color.”

“Silence.”

“Marriage.”
Revision: Page 75. Line 90. Corrects grammar by omitting quotation mark after “past states.”
Appearance: In Selected Poems (1935), these quotation marks are omitted.

Corrections to typographical errors relating to the form:

“Roses Only.”
Revision: Page 41. Line 7-8. Corrects form by drawing arrow to bring up the phrase “cannot make us,” which appears in its own line, but is actually meant to be the final four syllables of line 7, as it appears in Poems.
Appearance: Changed in Selected Poems (1935).

“The Pedantic Literalist.”

“New York.”
Revision: Page 65. Line 21. Corrects form by drawing arrow to bring up the phrase “others wear,” which appears in its own line, but should be the final three syllables in line 20.


Omission, addition, and substitution of words or phrases:

“Black Earth.”

Revision: Page 46. Line 48. Omits “one.” (This “one” appeared originally here; it was not in Poems).

Revision: Page 47. Lines 56-59. Substitutes “It is to that phenomenon the above formation, translucent like the atmosphere—a cortex merely—” with “compared with phenomena which vacillate like all translucence of the atmosphere, the elephant is.”

Appearance: Changed in Selected Poems (1935).

“Snakes, Mongooses, Snake-Charmers, and the Like.”

Revision: Page 69. Line 5. She substitutes “captured” for “caught.” Note: On the Broom publication (Jan. 1922) these revisions are not adopted.

Appearance: Changed in Selected Poems (1935).

“Bowls.”

Revision: Page 70. Line 19. She omits “as to.” Line 21. She omits “modern.”

Appearance: Changed in Selected Poems (1935).

“Novices.”

Revision: Page 70. Line 41. She inserts a “u” above the word “color” so as to re-spell it “colour.”


“Silence.”

Revision: Page 82. Line 4. Substitutes “nor” for “or” by dashing out the “n.”

“Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns.”

Revision: Page 91. Line 11. Adds “to” between “give” and “Queen.”

Appearance: Changed in Selected Poems (1935).

“Marriage.”

Revision: Page 74. Line 49. Adds “stones” between “flesh” and “gold.”

Appearance: In Selected Poems (1935), “stones” is added. Line is split.

Revision: Line 148. Moves the phrase “that will.”

Appearance: Changed in Selected Poems (1935).

Revision: From line 148 to the end of line 147. changes “every” to “very,” Line 203.

Appearance: Changed in Complete Poems (1967).

Revision: Line 208. and omits the word “and.”

Appearance: Changed in Selected Poems (1935).

Revision: Page 75. Lines 97-100. Substitutes “There is in him a state of mind / by force of which, / perceiving what it was not / intended that he should, / “he experiences a solemn joy / in seeing that he has become an idol” with “In him a state of mind /
peoples’ surroundings.”

<table>
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<th>Appearance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page 58. Line 52. Dashes the “s” in “one’s” and vertical brackets “one’s self.”</td>
<td>Changed to “oneself” in <em>Selected Poems</em> (1935).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“those various scalpels.”

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<th>Revision</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
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“an octopus.”

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<tr>
<th>Revision</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyphen added between “ice-fields.”</td>
<td>Changed in <em>Selected Poems</em> (1935).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyphen added between “manganese blue.”</td>
<td>Changed in <em>Selected Poems</em> (1935).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Revisions on the Endpaper of Observations (1924)

Transcription of Revisions on the Endpaper of *Observations* (1924):

28  self-
33  move to left
35  fleet
40  The Monkeys
41  ➝
46  hairy- tree trunk one
47  2 changes
49  e
52  Y these T
55  = ☒
56  a right good
57  , x
59  hourglass
60  ; houses
62  -towers
63  “ “
65  -down
67  3 changes

Line 3  68  oneself gentlemen,
69  caught
70  as to
72  harper,
74  stones lemon yellow
75  ” other is etc.
78  very ,
79  and
81  , ,
82  nor
83  3 changes
85  maintaining
86  4 changes
87  4 changes
88  paddles, 4 changes
91  to
92  ,
93  , which,
95  ?
97  
98  R Tirtoff
98  Negro
100  “1420”
Sees others wear
102  A.R.
104  parody 1924 ?
this thick
108  embroidered
modern
POETRY

I too, dislike it: there are things that are important
beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it,
one discovers that there is in
it after all, a place for the genuine.
Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise
if it must, these things are important not because a
high sounding interpretation can be put upon them
but because they are
useful; when they become so derivative as to
become unintelligible, the
same thing may be said for all of us—that we
do not admire what
we cannot understand. The hat,
holding on upside down or in quest of something to
eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll,
a tireless wolf under
a tree, the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a
horse that feels a flea, the base-
ball fan, the statistician—case after case
could be cited.
One wish it; nor it is valid
to discriminate against “business documents and
school-books”; all these phenomena are important.
One must make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets,
the result is not poetry,
nor till the autocrats among us can be
“literalists of
the imagination”—above
insolence and triviality and can present
for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads
in them, shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on one hand,
in defiance of their opinions—
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is on the other hand,
genuine then you are interested in poetry.

Figure 4. “Poetry,” published Others 5.6 (July 1919): 5. For Emanuel Carnevlai Williams, ed. William Carlos. New York: William C. Williams 1919-07. The Modernist Journals Project: “modernist began in
the magazines.” A joint project of Brown University and the University of Tulsa.
I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important 
beyond all this fiddle. 
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, 
one discovers that there is in 
it after all, a place for the genuine. 
Hands that can grasp, eyes 
that can dilate, hair that can rise 
if it must, these things are important not be-
cause a

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

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, 
a tireless wolf under 
a tree, the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a 
horse that feels a flea, the base-
ball fan, the statistician — case after case 
could be cited did

Figure 5-i.
one wish it; nor it is valid
to discriminate against "business documents
and
school-books"; all these phenomena are important.
One must make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half
poets,
the result is not poetry,
nor till the autocrats among use can be
"literalists of
the imagination" — above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads
in them, shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on one hand,
in defiance of their opinion —
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness, and
that which is on the other hand,
genuine, then you are interested in poetry.

I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers that there
is in
it after all, a place for the genuine.
Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise
if it must, these things are important not because a

high sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are
useful; when they become so derivative as to become unintelligible, the
same thing may be said for all of us—that we
do not admire what
we cannot understand. The bat,
holding on upside down or in quest of something to
eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under
a tree, the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a horse that feels a flea,
the base-
bull fan, the statistician—case after case
could be cited did
one wish it; nor is it valid
to discriminate against “business documents and

school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinc
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“literalists of
the imagination”—above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on one hand, in defiance of their opinion—
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is, on the other hand,
genuine then you are interested in poetry.
I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle. Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers that there is in it after all, a place for the genuine. Hands that can grasp, eyes that can dilate, hair that can rise if it must, these things are important not because a high sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are useful; when they become so derivative as to become unintelligible, the same thing may be said for all of us—that we do not admire what we cannot understand. The bat, holding on upside down or in quest of something to eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under a tree, the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the baseball fan, the statistician—case after case could be cited did one wish it; nor is it valid to discriminate against “business documents and school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry, nor till the autocrats among us can be non-literalists of the imagination—above insolence and triviality and can present for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have it. In the meantime, if you demand on one hand, in defiance of their opinion—the raw material of poetry in all its rawness and that which is, on the other hand, genuine then you are interested in poetry.
POETRY

I

TOO, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers that there is in it after all, a place for the genuine.

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

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

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the base-ball fan, the statistician—nor is it valid to discriminate against “business documents and school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry, nor till the poets among us can be “literalists of the imagination”—above insolence and triviality and can present

30

I too, dislike it;
there are things that are more important than all this fiddle.
The bat, upside down; the elephant pushing,
a tireless wolf under a tree,
the base-ball fan, the statistician—
“business documents and schoolbooks”—
these phenomena are pleasing,
but when they have been fashioned
into that which is unknowable, or trivial, or glib,
we are not entertained.
It may be said of all of us
that we do not admire what we do not understand;
enigmas are not poetry,
and not until the misted interior of the imagination
presents for our inspection,
imaginary gardens with real toads in them,
shall we encounter its misuse.

WITH ADDITIONS THIS BOOK IS A REPRINT OF “POEMS”
PUBLISHED IN LONDON IN 1921 BY THE EGOIST PRESS
THAT COLLECTION BEING MADE AND ARRANGED BY H. B.
MR AND MRS ROBERT McCALLON.
I too, dislike it:
there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
The bat, upside down; the elephant pushing,
a tireless wolf under a tree,
the base-ball fan, the statistician--
"business documents and schoolbooks"--
these phenomena are pleasing,
but when they have been fashioned
into that which is unknowable, or trivial, or glib,
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The bat, upside down; the elephant pushing,
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the base-ball fan, the statistician—
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these phenomena are pleasing,
but when they have been fashioned
into that which is unknowable,
we are not entertained.
It may be said of all of us
that we do not admire what we cannot understand;
enigmas are not poetry.

I too, dislike it; there are things
that are important beyond all this fiddle. Reading it,
however, with a perfect contempt for it,
one discovers that there is in it, after all, a place for the
genuine:
  hands that can grasp, eyes that can dilate, hair that
can rise if it must,
the bat holding on upside down,
an elephant pushing a tireless wolf under a tree,
the immovable critic twitching his skin
  like a horse that feels a fly, the base-ball fan, the statisti-
cian—nor is it
valid to discriminate against business documents,
school-books,

---

Figure 9b-i. “TNP-32.”

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trade reports—these phenomena
are important; but dragged into conscious oddity by
half poets, the result is not poetry.
This we know. In a liking for the raw material in all
its rawness,
and for that which is genuine, there is liking for poetry.

---

I, too, dislike it; there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in
it another, a place for the genuine.
Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise
if it must, these things are important not because a
high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are
useful. When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible,
the same thing may be said for all of us, that we
do not admire what
we cannot understand: the bat
holding on upside down or in quest of something to
eat, elephants pushing a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf
under
a tree, the immovable cricic twitching his skin like a horse that
feels a flea, the base-
ball fan, the statistician—
not is it valid
to discriminate against 'business documents and
school-books,' all these phenomena are important. One must make
a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry,
[36]

nor till the poets among us can be
'literalty of
the imagination'—above
insolence and triviality and can present
for inspection. Imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is on the other hand
genuine, then you are interested in poetry.
or what is closer to the truth, when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor, I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average moments; and, in which I may have the most of my curiosity, in which is the intensity of the or quite the opposite—the old thing, the mediaeval decorated hat-box, in which there are hordes of little dimpling like the waist of the hour-glass and deer, both white and brown, and birds and seated people; in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse; or that which is written out of hand, which means just as much or as little as it is understood to mean by the observer—little letters comprising a complete book, a bed of books, or a complete book, comprising a complete book, a complete book;—it may be anything.

Too stern to intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that, detracts from one's taste. It must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph easily be honored—that which is great because something else is small.

I agree to this: of whatever sort it is, of whatever sort it is, it must not make a claim to be the one, or the other, or the other, or the other. It must be a voluntary gift with the name written on it.
When I Buy Pictures

or what is closer to the truth,
when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor.
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average moments;
the entire upon curiosity, in which no more is discernible than the intensity of the mood;
or quite the opposite—the old thing, the medieval decorated hat-box,
in which there are hounds with masts diminishing like the waist of the hour-glass
and deer, both white and brown, and birds and seated people;
it may be no more than a square of parquetry; the literal biography perhaps—
in letters standing well apart upon a penumbra-like expanse;
the grave of Adam presupposed by himself, a bed of beams or articulates
in six varieties of blue; the snake-legged hieroglyphic in three parts;
it may be anything.
Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that, detracts from one’s enjoyment;
it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph easily be honored—
that which is great because something else is small.
it comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must acknowledge the forces which have made it;
it must be "lit with piercing glances into the life of things."
Then I take it in hand as a savage would take a looking-glass.
When I Buy Pictures.

or what is closer to the truth,
when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor,
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average moments:
the entire upon curiosity, in which no more is discernible than the intensity of the m
or quite the opposite—the old thing, the mediaeval decorated hat-box,
in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like the mist of the hour-glass
and deer, both white and brown, and birds and seated people;
it may be no more than a square of parquetry; the literal biography perhaps—
in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse;
the grave of Adam prefigured by himself; a bed of beans or artichokes
in six varieties of blue; the snake-legged hieroglyphic in three parts;
it may be anything.
Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that, detracts from one’s enj
it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph easily be honored—
that which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must acknowledge the forces which have made it;
it must be “lit with piercing glances into the life of things.”
Then I take it in hand as a savage would use a looking-glass.”

or what is closer to the truth;
when I speak at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor.
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average moments;
the entire upon curiosity, in which no more is discernible than the intensity of the mood;
or quite upon the opposite—the old thing, the medieval decorated hat-box,
in which there are bounds with waists diminishing like the waist of the hour-glass
and deer, both white and brown, and birds and seated people;
it may be more than a square of parquet; the literal biography perhaps—
in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse;
and a bed of beams or artichokes in six varieties of blue; it may be anything.
Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that detracts from one's enjoyment;
it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph easily be honored—
that which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must be a voluntary gift with the name written on it;
it must acknowledge the forces which have made it.
I see that it is "lit with piercing glances into the life of things"
and I take it in hand as a savage would take a looking-glass."

When I Buy Pictures

or what is closer to the truth,
when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary possessor,
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average moments;
the entire upon curiosity, in which no motive discernible than the intensity of the monk
or quite the opposite—the old thing, the medieval decorated hat-box,
in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like the waist of the hour-glass
and deer and birds and seated people;
it may be no more than a square of parquetry; the literal biography perhaps—
in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse;
an artichoke in six varieties of blue; the snake-legged hieroglyphic in three parts;
the silver fence protecting Adam's grave or Michael holding Adam by the wrist.
Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that, detracts from one's enjoyment;
It must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph easily be honored—
that which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must be a voluntary gift with the name written on it;
it must acknowledge the forces which have made it.
I see that it is "lit with piercing glances into the life of things"
and I "take it in hand as a savage would take a looking-glass."
TWO POEMS
BY MARIANNE MOORE

WHEN I BUY PICTURES
or what is closer to the truth,
when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the imaginary
possessor,
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average moments:
the satire upon curiosity, in which no more is discernible than the
intensity of the mood;
or quite the opposite—the odd thing, the mediaeval decorated
hat-box,
in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like the waist
of the hour-glass
and deer and birds and seated people;
its may be no more than a square of parquetry; the literal biography
perhaps—
in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse;
an artichoke in six varieties of blue; the snipe-legged hieroglyphic
in three parts;
the silver fence protecting Adam's grave or Michael taking Adam
by the wrist,
Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that, de-
tracts from one's enjoyment,
it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved triumph
easily be honoured—
that which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must acknowledge the forces which have made it;
it must be "lit with piercing glances into the life of things;"
then I "take it in hand as a savage would take a looking-glass."

FIRST PRESENTATION
The Dial 61 (July 1921): 33. See page 101.

When I Buy Pictures

Or what is closer to the truth,
when I look at that of which I may regard myself as the
imaginary possessor,
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average mo-
ments:
the satire upon curiosity in which no more is discernible than
the intensity of the mood;
or quite the opposite—the old thing, the medieval decorated
hat-box,
in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like the
waist of the hourglass
and deer and birds and seated people;
it may be no more than a square of parquetry; the literal
biography perhaps,
in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse;
an artichoke in six varieties of blue; the snipe-legged hiero-
glyphic in three parts;
the silver fence protecting Adam’s grave, or Michael taking
Adam by the wrist.

Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that,
detracts from one’s enjoyment;
it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved
triumph easily be honored—
that which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must be “lit with piercing glances into the life of things”;
it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it.
WHEN I BUY PICTURES

Or what is closer to the truth,
when I look at that of which I may regard myself as
the imaginary possessor,
I fix upon what would give me pleasure in my average mo-
ments:
the satire upon curiosity in which no more is discernible than
the intensity of the mood;
or quite the opposite—the old thing, the medieval decorated
hat-box,
in which there are hounds with waists diminishing like the
waist of the hourglass
and deer and birds and seated people;
it may be no more than a square of parquetry; the literal
biography perhaps,
in letters standing well apart upon a parchment-like expanse;
an artichoke in six varieties of blue; the snipe-legged hiero-
glyphic in three parts;
the silver fence protecting Adam’s grave, or Michael taking
Adam by the wrist.
Too stern an intellectual emphasis upon this quality or that,
detracts from one’s enjoyment;
it must not wish to disarm anything; nor may the approved
triumph easily be honored—
that which is great because something else is small.
It comes to this: of whatever sort it is,
it must be “lit with piercing glances into the life of things”;
it must acknowledge the spiritual forces which have made it.
A Graveyard

Man, looking into the sea,

The view from those who have as much right to it as you have to it—yourself—

It is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing,

but you cannot stand in the middle of this;

The sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.

The trees stand in a procession, reserved as their contours, saying nothing;

and the sea, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;

the sea is a collector, quick to return a repulsive look.

There are others beside you who have worn that look—

whose expression is no longer a protest.

The fish no longer investigate them for their bones have not lasted.

Warden left off their nets. #266#316/06/17/46

Accusation of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,

as row quickly away—the sides of the bar

moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing as docks.

The waves progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam and face breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the seavees:

the birds walk through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as herefore—

the tortoise-shell scurries about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them and the ocean, under the pulsation of light-houses and noise of bell-buoys,

advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink—

in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.
Man, looking into the sea,
"taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have to it yourself—
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing,
but you cannot stand in the middle of this;
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The fish stand in procession, reserved as their contour says nothing,
the fire stand in procession—each with an emerald turkey-foot at the top—
reserved as their contour, saying nothing;
repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.
There are others besides you who have worn that look—
whose expression is no longer a protest;
the fish no longer investigate them for their bones have not lasted;
men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,
and row quickly away—the blades of the oars 
moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing as death.
The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam
and fade breathlessly while the sea rushes in and out of the seaweed;
the birds swim through the air at top speed, muttering cat-calls as heretofore—
the tortoise-shell scurries about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them
and the ocean, under the pulsation of light-houses and notes of bell-buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bomed
in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.

whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them
for their bones have not lasted; men lower nets.
A Graveyard

Man, looking into the sea--

taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have to it yourself--
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing,
but you cannot stand in the middle of this.
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The fire stand in a procession--each with an emerald turkney-foot at the top--
reserved as their轮廓, saying nothing;
regression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a superfluous look.

There are others besides you who have worn that look--
whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate thus
for their homes have not lasted;
men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,
and row quickly away--the blades of the oars
moving together like the feet of hetero-sexes as if there were no such thing as death.
The weightless progress upon themselves in a shaman-beautiful under networks of foam
and (to breathe while the sea merrily in and out of the seafood;
the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as heretofore--
the tortoise-shell encapsules about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them
and the ocean, under the pulsation of light-houses and noise of bell-buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound
in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.
Man, looking into the sea—
taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you
have to it yourself—
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The fins stand in a procession—each with an emerald turkey-foot
at the top—
reserved as their contours, saying nothing;
repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the
sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.
There are others besides you who have worn that look—
whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investi-
gate them
for their bones have not lasted:
men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating
a grave,
and row quickly away—the blades of the oars
moving together like the feet of waterspiders as if there were no
such thing as death.
The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful
under networks of foam,
and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the sea-
weed;
the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as
heretofore—
the tortoise-shell scorpions about the feet of the cliffs, in motion
beneath them
and the ocean, under the pulsation of light-houses and noise of
bell-buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which
dropped things are bound to sink—
in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor con-
sciousness.

FIRST PRESENTATION
The Dial 71 (July 1921): 34. See page 102.

A GRAVEYARD

Man, looking into the sea—
taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you
have to it yourself—
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The first stand in a procession, each with an emerald turkey-foot at the top;
reserved as their contours, saying nothing.
Repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic
of the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.
There are others beside you who have worn that look,

Figure 14j-i.

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THE NEW POETRY

whose expression is no longer a protest. The fish no longer in-
vestigate them,
for their bones have not lasted:
men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrat-
ing a grave,
and row quickly away; the blades of the oars
moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were
no such thing as death.
The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx, beautiful
under networks of foam,
and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the sea-
weed.
The birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls
as heretofore;
the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion
beneath them;
and the ocean, under the pulsation of light-houses and noise of
bell-buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which
dropped things are bound to sink—
in which, if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition or
consciousness.

Man looking into the sea,
the view from those who have no much right to it as you have to it yourself,
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The first thing in a procession, each with an overall burly-foot at the top,
reserved as their umbrellas, saying nothing;
repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.

There are others besides you who have worn that look—
whose oppression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them
for their bones have not lasted.

man lower note, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,
and one quickly says—the blades of the are
moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing as death.
The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam,
and fade breathlessly while the sea moves in and out of the seaweed;
the birds move through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as heretofore—
the tortoise-shell scorching about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them
and the ocean, under the pelicans of lightness, and noise of bull-dozers,
sink—advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which droppings things are bound to
in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor necessities.

MAN looking into the sea,  
taking the view from those who have as much right  
to it as you have to it yourself,  
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing  
but you cannot stand in the middle of this;  
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.  
The first stand in a procession, each with an emerald tusk-foot at the top,  
reserved as their contours, saying nothing;  
repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of  
the sea;  
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.  
There are others besides you who have worn that look—  
whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer  
investigate them  
for their bones have not lasted:  
mens lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are des-  
crating a grave,  
and row quickly away—the blades of the oars  
moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there  
were no such thing as death.  
The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam,  
and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the  
seaweed;  
the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-  
calls as heretofore—  
the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them;  
and the ocean, under the pulsation of lighthouse and noise of bell-buoys,  
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink—  
in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.

A GRAVE

Man looking into the sea,
taking the view from those who have as much right
to it as you have to it yourself;
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The first stand in a procession, each with an emerald turquoise
foot at the top,
reserved as their contours, saying nothing;
repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of
the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.
There are others besides you who have worn that look—
whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer
investigate them
for their bones have not lasted:
men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are des-
ecrating a grave,
and row quickly away—the blades of the oars
moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there
were no such thing as death.
The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beau-
tiful under networks of foam,
and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the
seaweed;
the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-
calls as heretofore—
the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in mo-
tion beneath them
and the ocean, under the pulsation of lighthouse and noise
of bell-buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in
which dropped things are bound to sink—
in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition
nor consciousness. 60

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