

A Guide to the Papers of Marianne Moore

Papers of Marianne Moore 1928-1965

1928-1965

A Collection in the Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature Special Collections The University
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Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

7127-a

Language

English

Extent

10 items

Repository

Special Collections, University of Virginia Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Use Restrictions

See the [University of Virginia Library's use policy](#).

Acquisition Information

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Biographical/Historical Information

Marianne Moore (November 15, 1887-February 5, 1972) was a Modernist American poet and writer.

Marianne Moore was born in Kirkwood, Missouri, outside of St. Louis, the daughter of a construction engineer and inventor, John Milton Moore, and his wife, Mary Warner. She grew up in the household of her grandfather, a Presbyterian pastor, her father having been committed to a mental hospital before her birth.

In 1905, Marianne Moore entered Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, and graduated four years later. A few years on, she began to teach courses at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, and continued until 1915, when she began to publish poetry professionally. Her most famous poem is perhaps the one entitled, appropriately, "Poetry," in which she hopes for poets who can produce "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."

In part because of her extensive European travels before the first World War, Moore came to the attention, and received the respect of, poets as diverse as Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, H.D., T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound. From 1925 until 1929, Moore served as editor of the literary and cultural journal *The Dial*. This continued her role, similar to that of Pound, as a patron of poetry, encouraging promising young poets, including Elizabeth Bishop and Allen Ginsberg, and publishing, as well as refining poetic technique, early work.

In 1933, Moore was awarded the Helen Haire Levinson Prize from Poetry. Her *Collected Poems* of 1951 is perhaps her most rewarded work; it earned the poet the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the Bollingen Prize. After being awarded these prizes, she began to be a kind of minor celebrity, at least in New York literary circles. Moore often served as unofficial hostess for the Mayor. She attended boxing matches, baseball games and other public events, dressed in what became her signature garb, a tricorn hat and a black cape. (Tricorn hats she liked because they concealed the defects of her head, which, she added, resembled that of a hop toad.) She particularly liked athletics and athletes, and was a great admirer of Muhammed Ali, to whose spoken-word album, *I Am the Greatest!*, she wrote liner notes.

Moore continued to publish poems in various journals, including *The Nation*, *New Republic*, and *Partisan Review*, as well as publishing various books and collections of her poetry and criticism. As evidence of her importance, Moore corresponded for a time with W.H. Auden and Ezra Pound during the latter's incarceration.

In 1955, the Ford Motor Company asked Moore to help them name a new model then in development. Moore submitted a list of suggestions that included "The Intelligent Whale," "The Utopian Turtletop," "The Pastelogram," and "The Mongoose Civique." The Company decided not to use any of Moore's suggestions and instead named the car the Edsel. The model, having lost Ford \$250 million, was discontinued in 1959.

Not too long after throwing the first pitch and opening the 1968 season in Yankee Stadium, Moore suffered a stroke. She suffered a series of subsequent strokes thereafter, and died, unmarried, in 1972.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of nine letters and one photograph of Moore. Moore corresponds with Louis Zukofsky, Wallace Stevens, William Cole, and Mr. and Mrs. Clifton Waller Barrett.

Contents List

Letters

Marianne Moore to Louis Zufkofsky

Unit Date 1928 Nov 20

Extent

TLS,

1 p.

Scope and Content

Returns a piece, regrets that *The Dial* is unable to publish it.

Marianne Moore to Louis Zufkofsky

Unit Date 1934 Jan 28

Extent

TNS,

1 p.

Scope and Content

Thanks him for sending her "the William Carlos Williams and the Reznikoffs"; says she had already written to Dr. Williams about them.

Marianne Moore to Wallace Stevens

Unit Date 1936 Oct 29

Extent TLS,1 p.w/env

Scope and Content

Comments on his "Owl's Clover" in accordance with request from *Poetry* magazine; praises it highly.

Marianne Moore to Mr. Jones

Unit Date 1943 May 17

Extent

TLS,

1 p.

Scope and Content

Says he has convinced her to join the Walt Whitman Society of America; tells him that she and her mother are praying for unity since both are convinced that the people of the world are one; feels that Robert Nathan's poem to Stephen Vincent Benet makes, or should make, everyone feel better about life; says she generally declines to join clubs because of financial responsibility and necessity to stay with her ailing mother.

Marianne Moore to William Cole

Unit Date 1957 Jul 23

Extent

ALS,

1 p.

Scope and Content

Acknowledges receipt of a list of books of verse eligible for consideration by the National Book Award Committee; mentions the publication in the autumn of the *Innocent Throne* by Daniel Berrigan; proposes Berrigan's books be submitted to the committee; requests a copy; says she will let him know if she is favorably impressed by other collections.

Marianne Moore to Boys or Girls

Unit Date 1959 Jun 5

Extent

TLS,
1 p.

Scope and Content

Writes to the class at the children's request; explains poetry and the unnatural effect of some "poetry" to the children; quotes Abraham Lincoln on clarity of expression and speech; encourages them to read enjoyable poems, nothing that seems annoying or ridiculous; recommends to their teacher Hugh Kenner's *The Art of Poetry* and *Poetry Handbook* as well as remarks on poetry by Babette Deutsch.

Marianne Moore to Mrs. C[lifton] Waller Barrett

Unit Date 1960 May 28

Extent

ALS,
1 p.

Scope and Content

Says she is delighted and honored to be invited to dinner by the Barretts; hope to finally see "Monroe"; says she has seen frail [Elizabeth Shepley?] Sergeant at the Institute Ceremonial; wonders if Morton Zabel, currently at Biltmore Hotel, could be invited to tea; says she is very impressed with his latest book *The Art of Ruth Draper* (1959); recommends inviting Murray Hill, lecturing in at New York University on James, Conrad, and Dickens.

Marianne Moore to Mr. and Mrs. C[lifton] Waller Barrett

Unit Date 1960 Jun 2

Extent ALS, 1 p.w/env

Scope and Content

Treasures the party, the introductions, the kindness, but especially being seated next to Robert Frost; remarks that Miss Sergeant and Mr. Frost "seemed at peace"; says she was allowed to monopolize Miss Sergeant for a long time in the "book-room."

Marianne Moore to Mr. and Mrs. C[lifton] Waller Barrett

Unit Date 1962

Extent

TNS,
1 p.

Scope and Content

Thanks them for giving her *The Vindication of Christmas* with the benevolent face of Washington Irving as frontispiece.

Photograph

Marianne Moore, seated

Unit Date n. d.

Extent

Photograph