

## **‘Black obsidian Diana’: Moore, Pound, and the Curation of Race**

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‘Are you a jet black Ethiopian Othello-hued’, wrote Ezra Pound to Marianne Moore, in a letter of December 1918, ‘or was that line in one of your *Egoist* poems [...] designed to differentiate your colour from that of the surrounding menagerie?’<sup>1</sup> The poem in question was ‘Black Earth’, and the lines that had caught Pound’s attention read as follows:

Black  
but beautiful, my back  
is full of the history of power.<sup>2</sup>

Moore explained in reply that the *Egoist* poem he had misread as a self-portrait was about an elephant that she owned, called Melancthon, ‘and contrary to your impression’ — she went on — ‘I am altogether a blond and have red hair’.<sup>3</sup> Pound’s speculations about Moore’s racial

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<sup>1</sup> Ezra Pound, letter to Marianne Moore, 16 December 1918, *The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907–1941*, ed. by D. D. Paige (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950), p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Marianne Moore, ‘Black Earth’, *New Collected Poems / Marianne Moore*, ed. by Heather Cass White (London: Faber, 2017), p. 41. Pound had read the poem in *The Egoist*, 4.5 (April 1918), 55–56. Moore retitled the poem ‘Melancthon’ in *Collected Poems* (1951).

<sup>3</sup> Marianne Moore, letter to Ezra Pound, 9 January 1919, *The Selected Letters of Marianne Moore*, ed. by Bonnie Costello, Celeste Goodridge and Cristanne Miller (London: Faber, 1998), p. 122. The elephant was a figurine; Moore owned several.

make-up did not end there; he wrote again, this time dispatching a lengthy and disturbing letter in which he fantasized about whether, had his unseen correspondent identified herself as ‘nubian ethiopean’, he might have ‘risen to it’ and ‘contemplated without squeams’ a meeting between them.<sup>4</sup> If a transatlantic exchange between poets associated with high modernism seems a ‘retreat into the comfort zone of modernist studies’, as Susan Stanford Friedman has put it, this crude and troubling racial fantasy is nonetheless a reminder of the entangled relationship between modernist experiment and race.<sup>5</sup> It’s not in itself news that a pernicious racist discourse is deeply ingrained in Pound’s thinking; the project of this essay in taking this instance of it as a cue is to think about race, coloniality and composition in Pound’s work and in Moore’s at a particular moment in the late teens and early 1920s. My suggestion is that Pound’s urge to access pure thought conceives racial embodiment as a thickened medium that intrudes between ‘intelligences’ in conversation. Moore’s indirect response is a citational practice that attends to the provenance and curation of textual objects, and especially to the

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<sup>4</sup> Ezra Pound, letter to Marianne Moore, 1 February 1919, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale, YCAL MSS 43, Box 35, Folder 1470. I quote from a passage redacted from the version of this letter published in *Letters 1907-1941*. The letter is printed in full in *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 362–65.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Stanford Friedman, ‘Planetarity: Musing Modernist Studies’, *Modernism/modernity*, 17.3 (2010), 471–99 (p. 474). In the large body of scholarship on modernism and race that has followed, I take particular note of Timothy Yu’s argument in ‘Modernist Poetry and Race’, in *A History of Modernist Poetry*, ed. by Alex Davis and Lee M. Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 99–117. Though our readings of Moore differ, my essay shares the premises that Yu’s so clearly articulates.

cultural and commercial traffic between ‘orient’ and ‘occident’. I make this case in a new reading of Moore’s 1923 poem ‘Marriage’, and I identify, along the way, Sarojini Naidu, John Cournos, and a five-inch Egyptian statue as intermediaries between Pound and Moore.

It’s not hard to imagine why D. D. Paige, editor of the *Letters*, drew the line at printing the sixty or so lines including the following, from Pound’s February 1919 letter to Moore, and why critics who have referred to them since have not wished to dwell there:

I am glad that you are red-headed and not  
woolled, dark, ethiopian.

It would have been a test case:  
you dark, nubian ethiopian; could I  
have risen to it; could I,  
perceiving the intelligence from a distance,  
have got over the Jim Crow law;  
could I have bridged the gap  
from distinguished Bengal to Ethiopia<sup>6</sup>

Pound lurches wildly in these redacted lines between stereotypes and racial slurs, from ‘Ethiopia’ as generic enslaved African reminiscent of Whitman’s ‘Ethiopia Saluting the Colors’ with her ‘woolly-white and turban’d head’, to ‘nubian ethiopian’ as ancient origin of humankind, to the racial science that would put distance between ‘distinguished Bengal’ and

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<sup>6</sup> Ezra Pound, letter to Marianne Moore, 1 February 1919, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale, YCAL MSS 43, Box 35, Folder 1470.

a darkly primitive ‘Ethiopia’, that ‘gap’ roughly overlaid onto the historical violence of Jim Crow.<sup>7</sup> Without wishing to dignify these ramblings with closer attention than did their recipient — on the evidence of Moore’s surviving correspondence, she sent no reply — pausing at ‘distinguished Bengal’ helps to anchor Pound’s letter in a more specific locale, a metropolitan modernity structured by colonialism. Pound goes on:

The most beautiful wrist-bones I have ever encountered  
were those of a young Bengali;  
race: the squareness of ivory

It’s probable that here Pound recalls (and, I will suggest, curates) his several encounters with Sarojini Naidu, the distinguished Bengali poet and activist whom he met during her second visit to London, in 1913–14. ‘Dined on Monday with Sarojini Naidu and Mrs Fenolosa [*sic*], relict of the writer on chinese art [...] I seem to be getting orient from all quarters’, he wrote to Dorothy Shakespear in October 1913.<sup>8</sup> According to Humphrey Carpenter, ‘the meeting with [Naidu] proved of no importance, but Mrs Fenolosa changed the course of his work’. For the biographer intent on separating signal from noise in the trajectory of Pound’s aesthetic development, that may be so; but if we allow ‘orient from *all* quarters’ also to include Naidu, Pound’s centripetal London draws in anti-colonial activism as well as the Fenolosa manuscripts that would supply impetus and materials to his developing poetics.

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<sup>7</sup> Walt Whitman, ‘Ethiopia Saluting the Colors’ (1871), in *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, ed. by Michael Moon (New York: Norton, 2002), p. 267.

<sup>8</sup> Ezra Pound, letter to Dorothy Shakespear, 2 October 1913, cited in Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound* (New York: Delta, 1988), pp. 218–19.

‘Scholarship treats [Naidu] *either* as a poet *or* a political activist’, says Anna Snaith, in preface to her persuasive argument for ‘the intertwined nature of these strands’ during Naidu’s sojourns in London.<sup>9</sup> It could not have escaped Pound’s attention, in 1913–14, that Naidu was active in both spheres, given the social and textual environments in which their paths crossed. A brief notice in the *Times* for 12 November 1913, for example, records a dinner given by Yeats in Naidu’s honour. Among those on the guest list were colonial administrator John Muir Mackenzie; Dusé Mohamed Ali, whose recently founded pan-African *African Times and Orient Review* was devoted to ‘politics, art, literature, commerce’; suffragette Sophia Duleep Singh; and high-ranking former members of the Indian Civil Service including Bengali social reformer Krishna Govinda Gupta, and Henry Cotton, supporter of Home Rule and recently retired Liberal MP. Among the poets also dining at the Hotel Cecil that evening were Alice Meynell, Walter de La Mare, and Ezra Pound. ‘Replying to the toast to her health’, reports the *Times*, ‘Mrs Sarojini Naidu [...] said that in the East the poet did not stand aloof from national life, but spread abroad the ideals which went into the making of a nation.’<sup>10</sup> Naidu’s feminist nationalism earned her a sour report in the small press environment she also shared with Pound, that is, in *The New Age*, the journal launched by A. R. Orage in 1907 as ‘an Independent Socialist Review of Politics, Literature, and Art’, which cultivated, according to Kathryne Lindberg’s frank assessment, a circle of ‘proto-fascists and crypto-tories’, and for which Pound

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<sup>9</sup> Anna Snaith, *Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London 1890–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 69. Snaith’s informative chapter on Naidu (pp. 67–89) focuses on the two visits to London (1895–99 and 1919–21) either side of the 1912–1914 sojourn during which she met Pound.

<sup>10</sup> *The Times*, 12 November 1913, issue 40367, p. 4. Snaith lists the poets who attended the dinner, p. 84.

was by 1914 a regular columnist.<sup>11</sup> Naidu appears in racist and misogynist caricature in a 1914 *New Age* report on a meeting of the Women Writers' Suffrage League, whose headline — 'Women Still At it! God Bless Them!' — was symptomatic of the magazine's anti-suffrage posture.<sup>12</sup> Nor, it seems, did Naidu's reformist rhetoric appeal to the magazine's anti-colonial and for the most part anti-nationalist agenda. According to Charles Brookfarmer's satirical piece, the suffrage meeting was a tedious affair consisting of reminiscences 'from the point of view of the Anglo-Indian' chair ("When I was in India...") and the 'huge chunks of cliché' spoken by Sarojini Naidu: 'Her English is perfect-journalese, and she speaks in a high-pitched, false-accenting, "oodle-oodle-eee" voice,' he reports; worse still, she winds up by quoting Arnold: "The East bow'd low beefore thee blast | in patient deep disdain." And-er-then I forgot a line — "And-er-went to sleep again" [!!!]'

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<sup>11</sup> *The New Age*, 1.1 (May 2 1907), 1; Kathryn V. Lindberg, 'Rebels to the Right / Revolution to the Left: Ezra Pound and Claude McKay in "the Syndicalist Year" of 1912', *Paideuma*, 29.1–2, Special Issue: Ezra Pound and African American Modernism (Spring and Fall 2000), 11–77 (p. 15).

<sup>12</sup> Charles Brookfarmer [pseud. Carl Becchöfer], 'Women Still At It? God Bless Them!', *The New Age*, 15.3 (May 21 1914), 57–58. For the combined socialist and anti-feminist stance of *New Age* editor Alfred Orage, and the ambiguous politics of prolific contributor Beatrice Hastings, see Lucy Delap, 'Feminist and Anti-Feminist Encounters in Edwardian Britain', *Historical Research*, 78.201 (August 2005), 377–99 (pp. 385–87).

Pound's 1919 letter to Moore sequesters the 'young Bengali' in a past far removed from the London of 1914, and quite other than the political milieu in which Naidu had come to play a prominent role by the turn of 1919:<sup>13</sup>

The most beautiful wrist-bones I have ever encountered  
were those of a young Bengali;  
race: the squareness of ivory and the Japanese  
have sent two friends from their census:

Perhaps the juxtaposition of 'Bengali' and 'Japanese' puts Naidu back in the vicinity of the Fenollosa manuscripts, and alongside Mary Fenollosa, whom Pound had designated by the archaic '*relict*' (widow).<sup>14</sup> The young Bengali too is re-cast in this wistful memorial as a kind of relic, her dismembered bones refashioned in 'the squareness of ivory'. This timeless and sanctified figuration has a literary provenance too, 'the most beautiful wrist-bones' comparable

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<sup>13</sup> By February 1919 Naidu had returned to India and was campaigning with Gandhi, whom she had met in London in 1914, against the Rowlatt bills which sanctioned trial without jury of political cases, and made possession of seditious documents punishable by imprisonment. She would be the first signatory of the Satyagraha pledge in March 1919. In July 1919, she returned to London as a member of the deputation of the All-India Home Rule League. Padmini Sengupta, *Sarojini Naidu: A Biography* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 140–141, 157.

<sup>14</sup> The 'two friends' from Japan may also have something to do with the 'two Japanese men' Brookfarmer noticed in Naidu's 1914 audience: 'Two Japanese men, evidently trying to learn the language, and a seedy middle-class man in morning dress are the only males present'.

in their phrasing and setting to ‘Beautiful is thy wristlet’, a song from among the *Gitanjali* of Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet that Pound had joined Yeats in ‘booming’ in 1913.<sup>15</sup> Much as Pound would remove Naidu from time and preserve her bones as sacred relics, Yeats had introduced Tagore, in the words of ‘a distinguished Bengali doctor of medicine’ as ‘the first among our saints who has not refused to live’. Part saint, part child, in Yeats’s rendering Tagore transmits an ‘unbroken’ civilization to the fragmented West, his ‘empty shells’ and ‘withered leaves’ serving in place of ‘pearls’.<sup>16</sup>

Marianne Moore had noticed and reflected on Yeats’s introduction to *Gitanjali*; her poem ‘To William Butler Yeats on Tagore’ (1915) casts a contrary sidelight on Pound’s treatment of Naidu, offering a more ambivalent view of the Bengali poet preserved and circulated as precious object:

It is made clear by the phrase,  
Even the mood — by virtue of which he says  
  
The thing he thinks — that it pays,  
To cut gems even in these conscience-less days;

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<sup>15</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, ‘Beautiful is thy wristlet, decked with starry gems’, *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)* with an introduction by W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1913), p. 48. For Pound’s short-lived enthusiasm for Tagore, and his joining Yeats in ‘booming’ the Bengali poet, see James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pound, Yeats, and Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> W. B. Yeats, ‘Introduction’ (1912) to *Gitanjali*, pp. ix, xiv, xxii

But the jewel that always  
Outshines ordinary jewels, is your praise.<sup>17</sup>

The first two couplets of Moore's compact poem seem to praise Tagore for the transparency of his verse ('he says | | The thing he thinks') yet what that 'thing' might be vanishes in the midst of the subordinate clause that houses it, and into the space between stanzas across which it's strung. Are 'the phrase, | Even the mood', that communicate Tagore's thought his own, or do they accrue from Yeats's reverent introduction? Moore's poem closes by sealing the suggestion that a jewelled setting outshines the artefact it sets out to set off, and in that context, 'by virtue' now hints at poetic utterance hardened into curio or antiquity, as though Bengali verse were object of *vertu*, exhibited to the effect 'that it pays'. The mood of 'To William Butler Yeats on Tagore' is not quite transparent (the poem does not amount to critique), but what it does make clear is that Moore was alive to the mediations by virtue of which thought — in this case, as she might well have put it, 'oriental' thought — is curated in elite cosmopolitan circles, and in the coterie press where her own indirect address to one poet on another would also be published.

### *O Faiënce hippopotamus*

In the fall of 1922, Marianne Moore came across a comic portrait of Ezra Pound in John Cournos's *roman-à-clef*, *Babel*. She wrote to H. D.:

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<sup>17</sup> *New Collected Poems*, p. 278. Moore dropped the poem from her *oeuvre* after the 1921 *Poems*. A borrowing from Yeats's book, *The Cutting of An Agate* (1912), has been identified in the poem's gem-cutting trope: <moore123.com/2018/04/21/to-william-butler-yeats-on-tagore> [accessed 3 October 2019].

John Cournos called a week or so ago and I thought I found in him, many of the qualities I had thought good in his work seven or eight years ago. *Babel* which I have just read, seems to me, tragic in its restlessness and its partial grasp of the old philosophical verities [...]. The sketch of Tobias Bagg is perfect I think — a most genial little interlude.<sup>18</sup>

The letter went on, in typical Moore fashion, to run through an inventory of miscellaneous objects and events: a postcard of a stone serpent which reminded her of a python that had featured in a Charlie Chaplin movie; a visit to the Metropolitan Museum to see an Egyptian faiënce hippopotamus; and a cowboy contest at Madison Square Garden. ‘O Faiënce hippopotamus’ reads the third page of Moore’s poetry notebook, the words centred and underlined, as though trying out for a title.<sup>19</sup> The hippo, its ‘nose and mouth combined | in one magnificent hopper’, would end up not as the title, but in the midst of Moore’s omnivorous 1923 poem ‘Marriage’; so too would Pound, in the guise of Cournos’s Tobias Bagg, and so also did the ‘black obsidian Diana’ that articulates, I will suggest, Moore’s indirect response to Pound’s ‘jet black Ethiopian’.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Marianne Moore, letter to H. D., 18 November 1922, *Selected Letters*, pp. 189–90.

<sup>19</sup> Marianne Moore, Poetry Notebook 1922–30, Rosenbach VII:04:04, p. 0003 recto. This notebook is now available online at <<https://moorearchive.org>> [accessed 3 October 2019].

<sup>20</sup> Marianne Moore, ‘Marriage’, *New Collected Poems*, pp. 63–70. The poem was first published as a pamphlet by Monroe Wheeler’s Manikin Press, in 1923. I quote from the version printed with notes in *Observations* (1924), and reproduced in *New Collected Poems*.

‘Marriage’ was one of three long poems on which Moore began working in late 1922 (the others are ‘An Octopus’ and ‘Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns’). Composed in the wake of *Ulysses*, and just when *The Waste Land* was appearing in print on both sides of the Atlantic, Moore’s poem is a fractious and polyglot free verse enterprise spiked with quotation marks which serve as speech marks in a marital dispute between Adam and Eve, as well as signalling the diverse textual borrowings that Moore puts into the mouths of her voluble protagonists; at the same time, inverted commas foster ironic inflections in the voice of the third person ‘one’ who presides archly over the union of ‘our first parents’. Critics agree that Moore’s ‘Marriage’ has a broader remit than the particular wedding that may have occasioned it (Moore was opposed to the marriage of convenience between Bryher [Winifred Ellerman] and Robert McAlmon).<sup>21</sup> This wordy postlapsarian Eden, by turns predatory, poisonous, and highly decorative, was accompanied, like many of the poems in *Observations* (1924), by notes that point to the complex provenances of its raw materials. My reading, which draws also on drafts in Moore’s recently digitized 1922–30 poetry notebook, reads ‘Marriage’ as a self-consciously colonial enterprise — not so much an attempt to produce a world text to rival those of Joyce, or Eliot, or Pound, but an investigation into what such a project entails, the damage it might do, and the forms of resistance it might meet.

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<sup>21</sup> For Moore’s response to Bryher’s marriage, see Linda Leavell,  *Holding on Upside Down: The Life and Work of Marianne Moore* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), pp. 187–88. Among recent readings of this poem, Stacy Carson Hubbard’s discussion of its Persian references are of particular interest: ‘Yellow Roses and Bulbuls: Marianne Moore’s Persian Effects’, in *Twenty-First Century Marianne Moore: Essays from a Critical Renaissance*, ed. by Elizabeth Gregory and Stacy Carson Hubbard (New York: Palgrave, 2018), pp. 67–85 (pp. 76–77).

The Egyptian faïence hippopotamus, donated to the Metropolitan Museum in 1917, was typical of funerary furnishings in the tombs of the Middle Kingdom.<sup>22</sup> Moore went to see it in November 1922 because she had read about a similar artefact in the *Illustrated London News* earlier that summer: she had taken a clipping about a sale of Egyptian antiquities at Sotheby's which included a blue faïence hippopotamus from a twelfth-dynasty tomb at Abydos. Decorated with water-plants and a dragonfly, this creature is pictured with its mouth wide open, to expose, says the caption, 'holes in the jaws for teeth' (Figure 1).<sup>23</sup> Two weeks later, the *News* reported again on the same sale of antiquities, this time making a full-page feature of 'the Gem of Egyptian Statuary', a five-inch bust which had sold for £10,000 and which was carved from the dark volcanic rock called *obsidian*. With an illustration 'actual size of the original' you can measure the black obsidian head of Amenemmes III — 'the finest expression of Egyptian statuary art in the world' — between finger and thumb (Figure 2).<sup>24</sup>

'Obsidian' appears early in Moore's drafting of 'Marriage', and perhaps found a match in 'Diana' by doubling its last two syllables (*obsidian Diana*).<sup>25</sup> If Pound had made glancing reference to Moore's name in his 'jet black Ethiopian Othello-hued' (Shakespeare's *Othello* is *The Moor of Venice*) then her conjoined 'obsidian Diana' answers doubly back: the dark

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<sup>22</sup> Albert M. Lythgoe, 'An Egyptian Hippopotamus Figure', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 12.4 (April 1917), 77–78 (p. 77).

<sup>23</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 1 July 1922, p. 18. For Moore's clipping, see Egyptian Art 1922–37 XICD 3 4, vertical files, Marianne Moore Collection, Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia.

<sup>24</sup> 'A 5-inch Bust Brings £10,000: the Gem of Egyptian Statuary', *Illustrated London News*, 15 July 1922, p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> Marianne Moore, Poetry Notebook 1922–30, Rosenbach VII:04:04, p. 0007 recto.

volcanic rock obsidian gets its name from its resemblance to a stone found in Ethiopia, and Othello laments that because of his marriage to Desdemona, ‘her name, that was as fresh | as Dian’s visage, is now begrimed, and black | As mine own face’.<sup>26</sup> And there is yet further evidence in Moore’s drafting that she had the 1919 exchange with Pound in mind: the page on which ‘An Octopus’ and ‘Marriage’ come first into view as recognizable poems includes the lines ‘the skillful skeleton | that owned what owned an elephant’, which surely reiterate her reply to Pound’s query about race (“‘Black Earth”, the poem to which I think you refer, was written about an elephant that I have, named Melancthon’).<sup>27</sup>

Moore’s ‘Marriage’ works in parallel also to the poem Pound was drafting when he wrote to her in the winter of 1918–1919, and which was published later that year. Canto IV is composed of coupledom. Catullus’s *Epithalamium LXI*, the marriage hymn in praise of Vinia Arunculeia, rings out in its opening lines, while the mythic structure of the Canto is made of doubles: Itys, vengefully fed to his father Tereus, pairs up with ‘Cabestan’s heart in the dish’, unknowingly consumed by his lover, Seremonda, while Actaeon, torn apart by his hounds, has a parallel in the troubadour Peire Vidal, who narrowly escapes the same fate.<sup>28</sup> The ‘double arch’ in which Seremonda sways as she falls from her window renders these pairings in sculptural form, and as several critics have pointed out, twoness operates in Canto IV’s smaller

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<sup>26</sup> *OED*, *obsidian*, etymology: ‘the name of *Obsius* (also *Obsidius*), a Roman who found a similar stone in Ethiopia’; William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by E. A. J. Honnigman, Arden 3rd Series, rev. edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), III. 3. 389–91.

<sup>27</sup> Marianne Moore, Poetry Notebook 1922–30, Rosenbach VII:04:04, p. 0006 verso. *Selected Letters*, p. 122.

<sup>28</sup> *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (13<sup>th</sup> printing, New York: New Directions, 1995), pp. 13–16.

scale too, in local textures of stammer and repetition.<sup>29</sup> This is Pound's Diana bathing, in the moment before her privacy is shattered by Actaeon's straying look:

The valley is thick with leaves, with leaves, the trees,  
The sunlight glitters, glitters a-top,  
Like a fish-scale roof,  
    Like the church roof in Poitiers  
If it were gold.  
    Beneath it, beneath it  
Not a ray, not a slivver, not a spare disc of sunlight  
Flaking the black, soft water;  
Bathing the body of nymphs, of nymphs, and Diana,  
Nymphs, white-gathered about her, and the air, air,  
Shaking, air alight with the goddess,  
    fanning their hair in the dark,  
Lifting, lifting and waffing:  
Ivory dipping in silver,  
    Shadow'd, o'ershadow'd  
Ivory dipping in silver,  
Not a splotch, not a lost shatter of sunlight.

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<sup>29</sup> Among the many readings of this Canto, see especially Guy Davenport, *Cities on Hills: A Study of I-XXX of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Epping: Bowker, 1983), pp. 127–36, and Christine Froula's indispensable study of composition, *To Write Paradise: Style and Error in Pound's Cantos* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).

As though to protect us from the deadly sight of her, Diana is bathed here in darkness, much though one's first impression is of light refracted in the variations on its absent forms ('Not a ray, not a slivver, not a spare disc of sunlight'). Participles drain time from the scene and disperse agency (is it the 'black, soft water' or the nymphs that bathe Diana — or is it the sunlight that does not?) so that movement comes not in the form of narrative, but in patterns of word repetition and sonic doubling, from 'air, air' to 'their hair', between 'slivver' and 'silver'. These light sounds are hatched across the rhythmic pattern that settles into familiar Poundian line endings ('spare disc of sunlight', 'nymphs and Diana'; 'lifting and waffing'). Diana is rendered in this design as pure transparency — 'the air, air, | Shaking, air alight with the goddess' — in lines that quiver with their recall of Cavalcanti's Sonnet VII, in Pound's translation: 'Who is she coming, drawing all men's gaze, | Who makes the air one trembling clarity.'<sup>30</sup> Pound was at pains, in his 1912 *Sonnets and Ballate*, to 'set here Guido's own words', and to be exact in his choice of manuscript, especially of that very line '*E fa di clarità l'aer tremare*', so that 'there might be less interposed between the reader and Guido' in his setting and translations of the verse.<sup>31</sup> If there is a memory of Cavalcanti's trembling air in Canto IV, and along with it a desire to purify the space between writer and recipient, that desire is also legible in the violently racialized letter to Marianne Moore that is contemporary with the Canto:

could I have bridged the gap

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<sup>30</sup> *Ezra Pound: Poems and Translations*, ed. by Richard Sieburth (New York: Library of America, 2003), p. 199.

<sup>31</sup> *Poems and Translations*, p. 194.

from distinguished Bengal to Ethiopia  
and asserted the milk-whiteness of souls  
laved in a Mithraic liquid  
or disinfected with laneline<sup>32</sup>

Pound had also invoked Mithraism, the Roman cult whose rituals involved the blood of a white bull, in his introduction to *Cavalcanti*, which was nostalgic for a lost world of wordless transparency wherein ‘men invoked Mithra by a sequence of pure vowel sounds’.<sup>33</sup>

If Diana’s bathing is Pound’s attempt to render clarity from the music of words, Canto IV ends in a stickier medium:

By Garonne.           ‘Saave!’  
The Garonne is thick like paint,  
Procession, — ‘Et sa’ave, sa’ave, sa’ave Regina!’ —  
Moves like a worm, in the crowd.

Christine Froula writes of these lines, ‘we may easily read the procession image as prefiguring what the *Usura* Canto would later term a “thickening” of religious sensibility [...] The muddy paint of the Garonne waters parallels a concomitant thickening of language.’<sup>34</sup> Froula points

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<sup>32</sup> Ezra Pound, letter to Marianne Moore, 1 February 1919, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale, YCAL MSS 43, Box 35, Folder 1470.

<sup>33</sup> *Poems and Translations*, p. 194.

<sup>34</sup> Froula, p. 51.

to Pound's own gloss on them in a letter to his father, which makes the connection with race explicit:

text clearly states that this vermiform object circulated in the crowd at Church of St Nicholas in Toulouse. Not merely medieval but black central African superstition and voodoo energy squalling infant, general mirk and | epileptic religious hog wash with chief totem being magnificently swung over whole.<sup>35</sup>

Thickness, darkness, the 'general mirk' that Pound associates here with 'central African superstition' is unmistakably the same 'Armenian thickness | which is | more Ethiopian than any blackness of Benares' in his poisonous letter to Moore.

Set alongside the transparencies and thickenings of Canto IV, Ezra Pound's 1919 letter to Marianne Moore seems a spewing of that mirky language which both appalled and compelled him; in other words, he used the epistolary space between himself and his unseen correspondent to interpose a fantasy of racial embodiment, just at the moment when he would purge all colour, even flesh itself, from the 'air alight with the goddess' in his new Canto. And if we listen again to Moore's 'black obsidian Diana | who "darkeneth her countenance | as a bear doth"' (p. 67), we might hear conjoined in 'obsidian' an obstinate and insidious retort. More broadly, the next section will show, in arranging her own 'Marriage' of disparate texts, Moore inspects at close quarters her second-hand (sometimes third-hand) poetic medium, and finds it neither thick nor transparent, but dense with relations of power.

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<sup>35</sup> Ezra Pound, letter to Homer Pound, late October 1919, *Ezra Pound to His Parents: Letters 1895–1929*, ed. by Mary de Rachewiltz, A. David Moody, and Joanna Moody (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 450.

### *Circular Traditions*

The entry on Francis Bacon in the 1910 *Encyclopedia Britannica* includes Bacon's letter to his uncle and patron, Lord Burghley, explaining that although intellectual ambition had got in the way of his civic advancement, it would, in the end, reap dividends:

Lastly, I confess that I have as vast contemplative ends as I have moderate civil ends; for I have taken all knowledge to be my province; and if I could purge it of two sorts of rovers, whereof the one with frivolous disputations, confutations and verbosities, the other with blind experiments and auricular traditions and impostures, hath committed so many spoils, I hope I should bring in industrious observations, grounded conclusions and profitable inventions and discoveries — the best state of that province.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps it was the all-encompassing scale of Bacon's ambition, along with the encyclopedic context in which she came across it, that tripped Marianne Moore into an error of transcription. When she copied this passage into her reading notebook, she wrote not 'auricular', but '*circular* traditions and impostures'.<sup>37</sup> Hence these lines, from the opening salvo of 'Marriage':

I wonder what Adam and Eve  
think of it by this time,  
this firegilt steel

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<sup>36</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> edn, 29 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910–1911), III (1910), 136, n. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Reading Notebook 1923, Rosenbach VII:01:04, p. 29.

alive with goldenness;  
how bright it shows —  
‘of circular traditions and impostures,  
committing many spoils,’  
requiring all one’s criminal ingenuity  
to avoid! (p. 63)

Whereas Bacon would have purged his learning of hearsay and ventriloquism, grounding his conclusions instead on empirical evidence, Moore’s error puts cylopedism — or at least circularity — front and centre of the conjugal experiment her poem observes and performs. Under the heading ‘Marriage’ and in proximity to ‘goldenness’, ‘circular traditions’ may contract into the small compass of a wedding ring, but there is more at stake here than the joining of one man and one woman. This poem thinks about what might be involved in a centripetal artefact that takes all knowledge to be its province, and at what cost.

When Moore referred to ‘Marriage’ as ‘statements that took my fancy which I tried to arrange plausibly’ she may have understated, in retrospect, the scale and seriousness of her project.<sup>38</sup> That throwaway remark does, however, suggest that composition in this case was largely a matter of arrangement. A lifelong habit of curation with Moore was indexing. The quirky index to *Observations* is a work of art in itself, and she also indexed her own reading notebooks — commonplace books to which she returned in search of poetic material. Turn to

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<sup>38</sup> This statement appears at the head of the notes to ‘Marriage’ in *Complete Poems*, the final collection in which Moore had an editorial hand. *Complete Poems of Marianne Moore* (New York: Macmillan and Viking, 1967; rev. edn, New York: Viking, 1981; London: Faber, 1984), p. 271.

the letter M in the index to the reading notebook for 1916–1921, for example, and you will find Chesterton’s ‘there is no such thing as a prudent Marriage’ helpfully recorded.<sup>39</sup> In ‘Marriage’ itself, the following lines reflect on that very process of composition:

He says, ‘These mummies  
must be handled carefully —  
“the crumbs from a lion’s meal,  
a couple of shins and the bit of an ear”;  
turn to the letter M  
and you will find  
that “a wife is a coffin,”’ (p. 68)

Turn to Moore’s published notes and you will find ‘a wife is a coffin’ attributed to Ezra Pound, or rather ‘quoted by John Cournos from Ezra Pound’.<sup>40</sup> It has its origin in the sketch of Tobias Bagg from Cournos’s *Babel*: ‘A wife is a coffin to an artist’ says ‘convert maker, drum beater [and] blower of fanfares’, Tobias Bagg, to the aspiring writer-protagonist John Gombarov; ‘you are not contemplating attending your own funeral, are you?’<sup>41</sup> And *Babel* offered ‘Marriage’ much more than the ‘genial little interlude’ of its Pound caricature. It also served

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<sup>39</sup> Marianne Moore, Reading Notebook 1916–21, Rosenbach VII:01:02. The index appears on pp. 208–215, and the Chesterton quotation on p. 173

<sup>40</sup> *New Collected Poems*, p. 304.

<sup>41</sup> John Cournos, *Babel* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), pp. 206, 201.

as a warning about the kind of global enterprise that ends in subjection, dismemberment and mummification.<sup>42</sup>

Here is Moore in her poetry notebook, riffing on the initials of our first parents:

Adam & Eve: Eves ashes,  
beads claws ~~diligence~~ desultory diligence  
~~Embalmer under E the letter next~~  
Adam under E, the letter next  
~~Adam~~ expert embalmer —<sup>43</sup>

As though preparing them to be indexed, Moore takes Adam and Eve by their initials and spins them round: ‘Adam & Eve’ commutates into ‘Eves ashes’, to make the ritual of coupling the flip side, at least for this wife, of a funeral service. Then the drafting sets out again from A to take a new run at the alphabet (*beads, claws, diligence*) only to end up again with E, not, this time, Eve, but ‘embalmer’. Since Moore was working on this draft soon after reading *Babel*, it seems certain that ‘expert embalmer’ files Adam under the business card of Cournois’s Hezekiah Wood, the businessman that John Gombarov meets on his journey to London.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> My thinking about globalization, and especially about encyclopedism, has benefited from Michael North’s, in *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 127-129. North also reads Cournois’s *Babel* (pp. 58-63), though he does not refer to Moore’s use of the novel.

<sup>43</sup> Marianne Moore, Poetry Notebook 1923–1930, Rosenbach VII:04:04, p. 7 recto.

<sup>44</sup> Cristanne Miller’s introduction to the digitized Poetry Notebook 1922–30 follows Patricia Willis in dating the first drafts of ‘Marriage’ to Fall 1922. *Babel* was published in September

Wood's global business venture, the 'International Embalming Company', markets 'a new process for preserving human corpses, which beats the Egyptian process to a frazzle'. To back its guarantee that the resulting mummies will last a thousand years, the company has invented a machine to accelerate the process of bodily decomposition. It has been trialled on ordinary corpses and on corpses treated by the new method — and the embalming process, happily, 'has stood the test'.<sup>45</sup>

The International Embalming Company produces a grotesque rendering of modernity's promise to speed up time, and to collapse space — Wood's business card lists branches in 'Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Paris, Berlin, St Petersburg, Tokyo, Hong Kong, etc.' It resurrects the small-world trope with which *Babel* begins, and which makes its way into the motifs of circularity in Moore's poem: 'It was as possible nowadays', thinks Gombarov, 'for a man to circumnavigate the earth as it is for a caterpillar to make a complete circuit round a cabbage. Through its fast railways, liners, telegraphs, the world was one country.'<sup>46</sup> Hezekiah Wood is keen to convince him not only that 'the world's one small country', but that what holds it together and guarantees world peace is International Finance: 'yes my boy, money is a cement. There's nothing like it to hold countries or men together'. What about the financing of battleships, and armies? asks Gombarov. 'These are used', replies Wood, 'only against the niggers, savages and the little brigand countries, the only disturbers of peace to-day. War will

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of that year, and Moore reported having read it in her November 1922 letter to H. D. In response to Pound's queries about her plans to publish, Moore had written, in 1919, 'my work jerks and rears and I cannot get up enthusiasm for embalming what I myself, accept conditionally', *Selected Letters*, p. 123.

<sup>45</sup> *Babel*, p. 19.

<sup>46</sup> *Babel*, p. 16.

cease as soon as the big countries have gobbled up the little ones and given them the benefits of civilisation.<sup>47</sup> This parodically inverted theory is made for Orage's *New Age* circle, which included Pound, for whom international finance and imperialism were the causes of war; what Moore made of this corrupt imperialist modernity comes out in one of the densest and most intriguing passages in 'Marriage', in which the colonial enterprise is figured as a brutal form of ingestion.

*'When do we feed?'*

The Christmas 1921 issue of the French fashion magazine *Femina* included six vignettes under the heading 'Memoirs of a Grandfather Clock', each set at a particular time of day, their sequence rounding the clock from 'Waking' to night-time 'Intimacy'. Moore took notes from two of these vignettes, the Comtesse de Noailles's 'Le Thé' and Robert de Flers's 'Le Dîner'.<sup>48</sup> In both pieces, daily rituals, and mealtimes in particular, are rife with tactical manoeuvres, whether in the social realm of the marriage market, the domestic arena of married life, or in the outside world of politics, diplomacy, and literature.<sup>49</sup> For the Comtesse de Noailles, five o'clock signals a welcome 'resurrection' from 'the dreadful two to five', the deathly hours of mid afternoon. Women rise to 'Le Thé' pale-faced and, so they believe, empowered:

Charming hour with its unguessed future: women are ready to please! The pale daylight

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>48</sup> Reading Notebook 1921–22 Rosenbach VII:01:03, p. 51. As well as the quotation from the Comtesse de Noailles that ends up in 'Marriage', Moore made a note describing the title illustration for 'Le Dîner'.

<sup>49</sup> Robert de Flers, 'Le Dîner', *Femina Noël*, 1 December 1921, pp. 21–24.

masks their faces just as much as their famous rice powder, and gives their eyes that confidence which adds an extra sparkle to their beauty. They are ready, they will please. But please whom? and why? Let's not ask them. In their imperious humility they instinctively play their role on the globe, endlessly and vainly rehearsing in advance for that mysterious day of secret performance, of true tragedy, when they will love, and be loved.<sup>50</sup>

The lavish magazine setting of these vignettes is especially rich in commodities from the East and far East. Six inlaid plates offer colour illustrations of Chinese laquerwork, while in the advertisements, from the double-page spread of 'Babani Parfums d'orient et d'extrême-orient', you could choose from 'Ambre de Delhi', 'Crème de Beauté, Secret Hindou', and "'Yasmak': Parfum Syrien'; you might even purchase a promise of resurrection in 'Kijja', a face cream that guarantees to restore to the purchaser 'the miraculous youth and beauty of the ancient Egyptian woman'.<sup>51</sup> Lastly, given Moore's curiosity about mummification, she would surely have noticed a full-page perfume advertisement on the inside back cover with the large heading 'UN AIR EMBAUMÉ'. Under these signs of global commerce, women are by turns embalmed, mummified, perfumed, and rejuvenated; they are at once 'imperious' and subject to the relentless performance of social ritual. And they are always ready to play their scripted and timetabled role 'on the globe'.

Over 'le dîner', of course, it's men who preside. According to Robert de Flers, the doings of the day — 'that morning's burial or marriage' — get chewed over at dinner time. De

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<sup>50</sup> La Comtesse de Noailles [Anna de Noailles], 'Le Thé', *Femina Noël*, 1 December 1921, pp. 17–20 (pp. 19–20). All translations mine.

<sup>51</sup> Edmond Jalouse, 'Le Goût des Laques', *Femina Noël*, 1 December 1921, pp. 33–34; Babani advertisement, pp. viii–ix; Kijja advertisement, p. xxiv.

Flers makes a particular point of defending 'la gourmandise', and distinguishing between dining and bestial feeding: 'feeding means opening your mouth [...]. Dining is tasting, judging...'; and dining must take precedence over talking: the true gourmand requires 'a little silence' to appreciate his meal. Feasting, talking, silence, and the threat of "“la bouche bête,”" the mastication and digestion from which 'le dîner' must be held distinct: all of these feed into that 'that quixotic atmosphere of frankness' (read Frenchness) of Moore's quarrelsome colonial marriage feast:

'When do we feed?'  
We occidentals are so unemotional,  
we quarrel as we feed;  
one's self is quite lost,  
the irony preserved  
in 'the Ahasuerus tête à tête banquet'  
with its 'good monster, lead the way,'  
with little laughter  
and munificence of humor  
in that quixotic atmosphere of frankness  
in which 'Four o'clock does not exist  
but at five o'clock  
the ladies in their imperious humility  
are ready to receive you';  
in which experience attests  
that men have power  
and sometimes one is made to feel it.

He says, 'what monarch would not blush  
to have a wife  
with hair like a shaving-brush?  
The fact of woman  
is not "the sound of the flute  
but very poison."' (p. 67)

At the heart of this passage is the teatime ritual in which women, 'in their imperious humility', seem to hold sway, whereas their 'roles on the globe' are circumscribed by a sphere in which 'men have power'. And Moore's poem attends not just to the presentation of gender roles in *Femina* magazine; as the quotation from *The Tempest* ('good monster, lead the way,') makes clear, it also replicates that colonial environment, structured by global capital, in which 'we occidentals' consume a carefully curated 'orient'.

A lifelong Presbyterian, Marianne Moore knew her theology. Several of the quotations in 'Marriage' derive from *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, the meditations of seventeenth-century divine, Richard Baxter.<sup>52</sup> There is another Presbyterian minister, though, whose presence in the poem has attracted less notice. Lebanese American Abraham Rihbany entered the United States in 1891, when the racial status of Arab Americans, and therefore their candidacy for citizenship, was in dispute. Rihbany's *The Syrian Christ* (1916) describes itself as 'an Oriental guide to afford Occidental readers of the Bible a more intimate view of the original intellectual

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<sup>52</sup> For an detailed account of these sources, see Andrew J. Kappel, 'The *Verba Ardentia* of Richard Baxter in the Poems of Marianne Moore', *Christianity and Literature*, 41.4 (Summer 1992), 421–41 (pp. 433–38).

and social environment of this sacred literature'.<sup>53</sup> His book serves not only as a mediator of Middle Eastern culture to a Western readership, but also, as Tanyss Ludescher puts it, to 'sanctif[y] the everyday customs, language, and beliefs of the Middle East by associating them with the life of Jesus', and so to underwrite Rihbany's own bid for assimilation: 'whenever I open my Bible', he writes, 'it reads like a letter from home'.<sup>54</sup> Moore cites *The Syrian Christ* in her note to the closing lines in the passage quoted above. What is not signalled in her notes is that 'We occidentals are so unemotional' is also from Rihbany:

The Oriental's chief concern in matters of conduct is not the correctness of the technique, but the cordiality of the deed. To the Anglo-Saxon the Oriental appears to be perhaps too cordial, decidedly sentimental, and over-responsive to the social stimulus. To the Oriental, on the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon seems in danger of becoming an unemotional intellectualist.<sup>55</sup>

'We occidentals are so unemotional', then, has a complex provenance. Taken without acknowledgement from a mediation of East to West, it also, in the context of 'Marriage', situates matters of conduct such as 'Le Thé' according to an orientalist binary. In her note to 'not the sound of the flute | but very poison', Moore cites a passage from 'The Oriental View

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<sup>53</sup> Abraham Mitrie Rihbany, *The Syrian Christ* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), p. vi.

<sup>54</sup> Tanyss Ludescher, 'From Nostalgia to Critique: an Overview of Arab American Literature', *Melus* 31.4, Arab American Literature (Winter, 2006), 93–114 (p. 100); *The Syrian Christ*, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> *The Syrian Christ*, p. 57.

of Women’ in which Rihbany makes more palatable St Paul’s commandment that ‘women keep silence’ by explaining that ‘the chief charm of an Oriental woman is her *hishmat* (modesty) [...] “she has a mouth to eat, but not to speak,” is a high tribute paid to a maiden’.<sup>56</sup> So, Rihbany goes on, ‘to Oriental ears as perhaps to Puritan ears of the good old type, [Paul’s] words are poetry set to music’. This alignment of Oriental and Puritan puts the silence of women into the service of Rihbany’s assimilationist mapping of East onto West and vice versa. The last twist in this tale of transmission is that *The Syrian Christ* is not, in fact, the source of ‘the sound of the flute’. Moore found that line in a quite different curatorial context, in Ananda Coomaraswamy’s catalogue of Indian Paintings at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. ‘The sound of the flute’ derives from a fragment of Hindi verse inscribed on an early-nineteenth-century Pahari drawing. According to the catalogue, *Krsna’s Flute* shows ‘*gopis* seated in a room swooning and stopping their ears. Krsna playing on a hillside without.’ The verse inscription is translated as follows:

Do you hear how (the flute) is being played? go home, or you will be caught in the snare of the arrows of Love;

This is not simply the sound of a flute, but venomous poison, that takes possession of the soul,

My senses are lost in rapture, my sister, and my soul is dissolved in its strains:

If ye would save your family honour, then keep your fingers in both your ears<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 332–33.

<sup>57</sup> Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of the Indian Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Part V Rajput Painting (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 150.

Moore owned a postcard of ‘The Hour of Cowdust’, the painting that precedes *Krsna’s Flute*

As curator of the Indian collection at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, a collection which by 1923 ‘far surpassed any other outside India’, Ananda Coomaraswamy, according to Dohra Ahmad, ‘presided over a [...] kind of idealized nation’.<sup>58</sup> This ‘perfectly static archival India’, curated in keeping with the anti-industrialism that coloured Coomaraswamy’s nationalist project, was replicated in print form in the magisterial catalogue from which Moore quotes.<sup>59</sup> ‘Marriage’ and its published notes, then, ingest a Christianized Syrian woman and a pre-modern archival India; but they do not go down easily. ‘The fact of woman’ in this poem is not modesty or silence, ‘but very poison’.

*He says, she says*

Ezra Pound’s innovation in Canto IV, and especially in the pairing of the cannibalistic feasts of Tereus and Seremonda, is to dissolve contingencies of context and transmission, and to see through the poem’s patterning of like stories to continuities between Hellenic and Provençal

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in the Boston Museum Catalogue (p. 149). Her Reading Notebook conflates the two pictures: ‘The Arts Jan 1923. The hour of “cowdust” that is to say sundown when the herds are brought back to the village the central motif of the picture is Krishna, the Divine Herdsman: he is seen on the extreme right of the picture, wearing a peacock crest and playing the flute ... “This is not merely the sound of a flute, but very poison.”’ Reading Notebook 1923, Rosenbach VII:01:04, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> Dohra Ahmad, ‘A Periodical Nation’, in *Landscapes of Hope: Anti-Colonial Utopianism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 67–130 (p. 88). My discussion of Coomaraswamy derives from Ahmad’s detailed account of his work in, and beyond, the context of his contributions to the New York-based Indian nationalist periodical, *Young India*.

<sup>59</sup> Ahmad, p. 88.

feasts. Moore's citational practice is different. The heterogeneous contexts of the fragments her poem incorporates hang about them, and the political histories of their transmission come back to assert themselves in displaced ways in the verse, and especially, in 'Marriage', in the voices, silences and darkened countenances of its recalcitrant women. This is partly because Moore published notes with her poem to signal the elsewheres on which her poem draws, and partly because, unlike Pound, she put borrowed words into the mouths of a dramatized Adam and Eve. Pound's drafting of Canto IV, as Froula's study of the manuscripts has shown, gradually pares down the verse as it pairs up the myths, removing 'And she said', 'And he said' from the Itys / Cabestan overlay, so as to reveal their essential isomorphism.<sup>60</sup> Moore decided, at a late stage in the composition of her poem, to put in Adam and Eve as bitterly disputatious mouthpieces, so that there could be no doubt that her own poetic arrangements were implicated in the complex interactions of speaking and ingestion that her imperious project entails. In the 'mixed and malarial' atmosphere of an encyclopedic poem that has taken all knowledge to be its province, marriage does not make two become one, but quite the reverse: it 'tears one to pieces' (pp. 67, 63). A poet who goes to the Metropolitan Museum and the *Illustrated London News* in search of Egyptian artefacts, and who scrambles French, Hindi, and Lebanese American sources is of course involved in a thoroughly orientalist project. My point is that Moore learned, in the course of composing 'Marriage', that collating and arranging materials such as these results not in what Friedman, in 'Planetarity', refers to as 'happy hybridity',<sup>61</sup> nor in a poetic that is somehow more 'democratic' in its heterogeneity than are *The Waste Land* or the *Cantos*. The result is a poisoned and murderous poem that shows damage at every turn.

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<sup>60</sup> Froula, pp. 27–28.

<sup>61</sup> Friedman, p. 482.

In 1919, Ezra Pound published a manifesto-like review in which he took Marianne Moore's poetry, and Mina Loy's, to instantiate a verse form distinct from 'melopoeia, which moves by its music' and 'imagism, wherein the feelings of painting or sculpture are predominant'. This third kind of poetry he called 'logopoeia [...] which is a dance of the intelligence among words', a medium so pure that it represents nothing but itself. 'These girls', as he calls Moore and Loy, transmit in their poetry a kind of bodiless intellect or 'mind cry' whose lament is "In the midst of this desolation, give me at least one intelligence to converse with."<sup>62</sup> The letter to Marianne Moore that is exactly contemporary with this much-quoted review has had a narrower circulation — and perhaps rightly so. But it's as well to remember that 'arid clarity' for Pound always has its viscous and vicious counterpart — that the conversation of 'intelligences' has its other in a dark fantasy of racial embodiment. Moore did not reply directly to Pound's letter, though their correspondence would continue, on and off, for fifty years. But nor, I think, did she fastidiously ignore it. It stayed with her as provocation to consider the politics of her own encyclopedic ambition, and to develop a poetics that would acknowledge the contingencies of sourcing and transmission. The medium of 'Marriage', and the citational practice that is Moore's legacy, are neither transparent nor murky; they are, like the back of her thick-skinned elephant Melancthon, 'full of the history of power'.

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<sup>62</sup> Ezra Pound, 'A List of Books', *The Little Review*, 4.11 (March 1918), 54–58 (p. 57). The article was a delayed review of Alfred Kreymborg's *Others* anthology for 1917 (New York: Knopf).



FIGURE 1. 'A blue faïence hippopotamus', *Illustrated London News*, 1 July 1922, p. 18.

Moore's archive holds a clipping of this page.



FIGURE 2. “The finest expression of Egyptian statuary art in the world”: the obsidian head of Amenemmes III. Recently sold for £10,000 (actual size of the original), *Illustrated London News*, 15 July 1922, p. 108.