

democracy as it existed in England and America also excited his distaste.

He continued to write criticism (*Dante*, 1929; *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, 1933; and *On Poetry and Poets*, 1943, collecting his later essays). He edited *The Criterion*, a journal of literature and ideas which he founded in 1922 and which lasted until 1939. He attempted to develop a poetic drama that would be viable on the modern stage. *Sweeney Agonistes*, his first and most brilliant experiment, was left unfinished in the 1920s and published in 1932. It was followed by *The Rock* (1934), *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), and *The Family Reunion* (1939). In these plays the poetry is still compelling, but when, after a ten-year interval, he returned to the form in *The Cocktail Party* (1950), it was not. Though the play had considerable commercial success, it seems unlikely to last except as a curiosity in the career of a great poet. The same thing may be said of his two subsequent plays, *The Confidential Clerk* (1954) and *The Elder Statesman* (1959).

Between the early 1930s and 1942 Eliot composed the finest sequence of long poems yet written in the twentieth century, the *Four Quartets*. The first of these, *Burnt Norton*, grew out of lines not used in *Murder in the Cathedral* (just as *The Hollow Men* crystallized around bits left over from *The Waste Land*). The final three, *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages*, and *Little Gidding* developed out of the first and kept the same form. *The Four Quartets* are poetry of a widely different kind from *The Waste Land*. The dramatic vignettes of *The Waste Land* are absent, as is, for the most part, the urban scene. There is still allusion to past literature, still a fragmentary or, at least, disjunctive progression, but these features are less noticeable. It is still densely symbolic, even symbolist writing; the same or closely associated symbols—the fire, the rose—weave incrementally through the whole work. But it also employs a directly meditative and generalizing style not found in *The Waste Land*. It makes a poetic use of place as the subject or occasion of meditative reflection; in doing so it adopts a convention which has persisted in English poetry from the descriptive-meditative verse of the eighteenth century to the present day. The feeling of piety before past life and history, as they are embodied or brought to mind in the village of East Coker, for example, or in the chapel at Little Gidding, was also usual within this convention. Thus, the *Four Quartets* were a more traditional and accessible type of poetry than *The Waste Land*.

THE NEW YORK AVANT-GARDE STEVENS AND WILLIAMS TO THE EARLY 1920s AND MARIANNE MOORE

BETWEEN 1912 and 1922 poets and painters in New York City formed a thriving avant-garde. The dates are chosen to mark approximately the first phase of the Modernist movement, extending from the founding of *Poetry* magazine to the publication of *The Waste Land*. During this period there were numerous little magazines in and around New York: *Others*, *Rogue*, *Camera Work*, 291, *The Seven Arts*, *Broom*, *The Dial*. *The Little Review* moved from Chicago to New York in 1917. The New York poets were Alfred Kreymborg, Mina Loy, Maxwell Bodenheim, Orrick Johns, William Carlos Williams, Walter Conrad Arensberg, Donald Evans, Pitts Sanborn, Allen and Louise Norton, Wallace Stevens, Lola Ridge, and Marianne Moore. Thirty to forty years later, some of these New York poets were to become famous, but compared with Eliot, Pound, and H.D. in London, Amy Lowell and Robert Frost in New England, and Masters, Lindsay, and Sandburg in the Midwest, they all seemed of lesser significance in the 1910s.

Surveying the city in 1915, we may begin with nearby Grantwood in New Jersey. Here Alfred Kreymborg shared a three-room shack with two artist friends, Man Ray and Samuel Halpert. To this shack in 1913 came a parcel from London, wrapped in butcher's paper, containing the manuscript of

Pound's Imagist anthology (*Des Imagistes*). Unknown and impecunious though he was, the delighted Kreymborg managed to publish it in 1914.

In Greenwich Village, Allen and Louise Norton were editing *Rogue*. To them the mode of London twenty-five years before seemed the last word in modern daring, and *Rogue* aimed to be exquisite, dandyfied, and decadent. Allen Norton may be sampled in *Saloon Sonnets: With Sunday Flutings* (1914). Donald Evans was the best of the *Rogue* poets, unless we include Wallace Stevens among them. Poems of Stevens in *Rogue* were "Tea," "Cy Est Pourtraicte . . .," and "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock."

At parties for *Rogue's* contributors Kreymborg met Walter Conrad Arensberg. The wealthy Arensberg agreed with him that Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* was much too conservative and conventional, and the two poets decided to found a rival poetry monthly, Arensberg paying the printers. *Others* thus came into being in 1915. Edited by Kreymborg, it printed in its first year poems by Mina Loy, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Amy Lowell, Maxwell Bodenheim, T. S. Eliot, John Gould Fletcher, Richard Aldington, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Padraic Colum, and Carl Sandburg—not to mention Kreymborg, Arensberg, and numerous poets now forgotten. After undergoing the crises of erratic editing and failing finances common to little magazines, *Others* folded in 1919. Its last word was a prose supplement of wild and sour "Belly Music" by William Carlos Williams.

Others was not devoted to a particular group or school. Its representation of the "new" poetry was broad, and Kreymborg was admirably eager to help unknown poets by printing their work. His magazine differed from *Poetry* mainly in that it did not also find space for the more conservative or traditional verse of the age, though this was a considerable difference. Those who helped Kreymborg edit the magazine and published frequently in it—such as Bodenheim, Williams, Orrick Johns, and Mina Loy—were said to make up an "Others group." Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore were sometimes classified with them. As their contemporaries viewed them, the *Others* poets were the fantastics of the avant-garde.

Alfred Kreymborg (1883-1966) probably most wished to be

remembered as an experimental dramatist. His first volume of poetry, *Mushrooms* (1916), was read with at least enough interest to excite parody. (In Orrick Johns it excited emulation; see his "Olives" in the first issue of *Others*.) The mushrooms are short, free-verse utterances, and include the notoriously cute "The Tree" ("I am four monkeys . . ."). They are fanciful, wistful, graceful, touched with humor and resignation, and expert in rhythm and music. "Nocturne" is typical:

The pantaloons are dancing,
dancing through the night,
pure white pantaloons
underneath the moon,
on a jolly wash line
skipping from my room,
over to Miranda,
who washed them this noon.

"Vista" may also be quoted:

The snow,
ah yes, ah yes, indeed,
is white and beautiful, white and beautiful,
verily beautiful—
from my window.
The sea,
ah yes, ah yes, indeed,
is green and alluring, green and alluring,
verily alluring—
from the shore.
Love?—
ah yes, ah yes, ah yes, indeed,
verily yes, ah yes, indeed!

Like several of the early champions of free verse, Kreymborg in later years took to composing in regular stanzas and meters and even brought forth a multitude of sonnets. In 1921 and 1922 he edited a second little magazine, *Broom*. He also wrote novels and put together an admirable anthology of American poetry. *Our Singing Strength* (1929), a critical history of poetry in the United States, and *Troubadour* (1925), his charming autobiography, contain a wealth of information about twentieth-century poetry.

Kreymborg dropped in frequently at the photography and art galleries of Alfred Stieglitz at 291 Fifth Avenue. Known for his experimental photography and for his magazine, *Camera Work*, Stieglitz decided in 1907 to exhibit drawings and paintings as well. Between 1908 and 1911 his gallery showed the work of Matisse, Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri Rousseau, Cézanne, and Picasso. Modern European painters had not been publicly exhibited in the United States up till then, not, at least, in a selection and quantity that allowed them to be intelligently studied. *Camera Work* began to publish reproductions of their paintings and drawings and it explained Cubist and abstract art in essays. Stieglitz's next journal, *291*, continued this effort and also presented some literary experiments with dream sequences and with collage techniques adapted from painting.

In 1913 the famous exhibition of Modern Art at the Armory on Lexington Avenue brought paintings by Renoir, Matisse, Picasso, Cézanne, Braque, Gauguin, and Picabia to America. The interest in modern European painting that had gradually been spreading among avant-garde writers in New York now reached new intensity. "We'd have arguments," Williams later recalled in his *Autobiography*, "over cubism which would fill an afternoon. There was a considerable whipping up of interest in the structure of the poem." In his apartment on West 67th Street, Arensberg had already begun to assemble the famous collection of modern paintings now in the Philadelphia museum. Painters and writers met at his parties. Stevens, for example, spent an evening with Arensberg and Marcel Duchamp. Looking at Duchamp's "things," he "made very little out of them," for, as he told his wife, he was "without sophistication in that direction, and with only a very rudimentary feeling about art." (Despite these intimidated disclaimers, he had a very considerable interest in paintings and later collected them to the modest extent that his purse would bear.) The intentions, values, and techniques of all the painters thus brought to the attention of poets differed widely. Moreover, they could not easily be adapted to the different art of poetry. But familiarity with Modernist painters, sculptors, and photographers was possible in the United States only in New York, a fact that helps explain why poets of the avant-garde in New York developed somewhat differently from "new" poets elsewhere.

A COMPRESSED IDIOM

Discussing Modernist style in British poetry, we dwelt on the dense, active texture of the phrasing—for example, the nimble associations of Edith Sitwell or the compressed, cerebral wit of Edgell Rickword. In England such texture developed in the 1920s, with the work of Eliot an important stimulus. The same stimulus was felt by younger poets who began publishing in the United States in the twenties. But in New York an equally active, close texture of phrase had evolved independently of Eliot during the 1910s.

Imagism was a concise, precise, elliptical way of writing, but it was seldom packed or difficult, at least as practiced by Amy Lowell, H.D., and their American followers. Neither was the poetry of Robinson, Frost, and the so-called "Chicago school" of Masters, Lindsay, and Sandburg. But in the 1910s Mina Loy was writing:

We might have coupled
In the bed-ridden monopoly of a moment;

and Marianne Moore, in a swift succession of witty metaphors referring to a carrot:

with everything crammed belligerent-
ly inside itself, its fibres breed mon-
opoly—
a tail-like, wedge shaped engine with the
secret of expansion;

and Maxwell Bodenheim in "An Old Negro Asleep,"

As spilled, dried wine that colors earth,
The yellow-white light sinks into his rubbed brown face,
And perhaps reaches even the seeded dreams below,
Melting then to webbed shapes he cannot hold;

and William Carlos Williams, adapting Futurist and painterly effects in "Spring Strains":

But—
(Hold hard, rigid jointed trees!)
the blinding and red-edged sun-blur—
creeping energy, concentrated

counterforce—welds sky, buds, trees,
rivets them in one puckering hold!
Sticks through!

and Wallace Stevens, at the start of "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle":

"Mother of heaven, regina of the clouds,
O sceptre of the sun, crown of the moon,
There is not nothing, no, no, never nothing,
Like the clashed edges of two words that kill."
And so I mocked her in magnificent measure.
Or was it that I mocked myself alone?

Pitts Sanborn occasionally experimented with elliptical juxtapositions in his "Vie de Bordeaux" poems, and even Arensberg, whose verse was often old-fashioned, is quoted in an *Others* article as having written,

which have the butters of extra broken,

though I have not seen the poem from which this is cited. The quotations are all taken from *Others*.

Mina Loy was English and came to New York with imposing avant-garde credentials, for she had known Marinetti in Milan and Apollinaire in Paris. As a woman poet, she was regarded as a serious rival to Marianne Moore. Her best-known work was her "Love Songs." They are witty, physical, philosophical, anti-sentimental, and vigorously phrased:

I must live in my lantern
Trimming subliminal flicker
Virginal to the bellows
Of experience
Coloured glass;

or,

I am the jealous store-house of the candle-ends
That lit your adolescent learning.

Her poems were published in journals but were not collected in books. At least, the only volume of hers I have seen dates from 1923 and was printed in Paris by Robert McAlmon.

John Pitts Sanborn (1879-1941) knew Wallace Stevens from Harvard. He joined the editorial staff of *Trend* in 1914 and the

journal was thereafter open to avant-garde poets. In fact, Stevens himself was first published in *Trend*—"Carnet de Voyage" in 1914. Sanborn's *Vie de Bordeaux* poems are sometimes fantastical in their conceptions. They have a French setting, may be influenced by Laforgue, and include nicely flowing free verse. Sanborn became a noted music critic and a radio commentator for the Philadelphia Orchestra. Walter Conrad Arensberg was also a friend of Stevens from Harvard days. His translations of French symbolistes were valuable but he soon ceased to write poetry.

Because Maxwell Bodenheim (1892-1954) ended as a dervish, selling poems for whiskey, his life has been more talked about than his writing. He has been viewed as the prototypical bohemian, free and tragic, whose existence is somehow closer to essentials than that of most of us. This is a sentimental myth. As Jack B. Moore points out, in the only book about Bodenheim, there is nothing to romanticize in the mental fears that preyed on him.

At the start of his career he seemed promising. Some poems were printed in *Poetry*. He got to know a number of writers in Chicago before moving to New York, where he stayed for a while with Kreymborg and his wife. Here he met other poets and also became acquainted with the Provincetown Players, who performed two of his plays in 1917. He was now twenty-five. The next year his first book of poems appeared, to be followed by five more in the next five years.

Many of Bodenheim's poems show the influence of Sandburg. They are warmly sympathetic, free-verse impressions of people and scenes, usually in an urban, working-class milieu ("The Vagabond in the Park," "The Rear-Porches of an Apartment Building"). They differ from Sandburg's in that they make a more frequent and surprising use of metaphor. His metaphors, typically, are vivid as images or pictures and indefinite in their implications. In "Sunday in a Certain City Suburb," for example, the lives of the dominoe-players

are the centers of half-cloudy days,
With now and then a noisy evening
In which they hang the crude little japanese lanterns
of their thoughts
On the ever-swaying strings of their minds.

In "Advice to a Forest" there are

trees, to whom the darkness is a child
Scampering in and out of your long, green beards,

and in "To Li T' Ai Po,"

Faces where middle age
Sits, tearing a last gardenia.

He is a relatively inward poet, whose elaborations of metaphor capture complex emotional impressions. "Images of Emotions," the title of one of his poems, indicates the intention and method to which he was increasingly attracted.

We come now to three poets who were later to acquire wide reputation—Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and Marianne Moore. Of Williams and Stevens we shall here notice only their early careers down to 1923, when Stevens published *Harmonium* and Williams *Spring and All*. Both continued publishing into the second half of the century and became major influences in modern American poetry. Hence it seems useful to postpone a full discussion of their whole career until the forthcoming volume, where they can be viewed along with the younger poets who turned to them for example. With Marianne Moore the case is different. She also continued to publish, and her reputation grew steadily. But her style was so idiosyncratic that other poets could not do much with it, and she was admired without being much emulated.

WALLACE STEVENS

Wallace Stevens (1879–1955) was born in Reading, Pennsylvania. He studied at Harvard (1897–1900), acted as president of the college literary magazine, the *Advocate*, and met other student poets such as Arthur Davison Ficke, Witter Bynner, and Walter Conrad Arensberg. He tried to make a living at journalism in New York City until, yielding to his father's arguments, he entered Law School. He was admitted to the bar in 1904, and for the next twelve years practiced law or did legal work for business firms in New York. In 1909 he married Elsie Kachel of Reading, whom he had long courted and by whom he had a

daughter, Holly Stevens. In 1916 he joined the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Co. and moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where he lived for the rest of his life, working with the same firm and concealing his activity as a poet from his business colleagues. At least, he concealed it as well as he was able and until he was well established in his firm. At his office he is said to have hid his poems by writing them on small pieces of paper which he tucked inside large law books.

Through Arensberg, Stevens met the *Others* group in New York. He published in little magazines ("Peter Quince at the Clavier" and "Sunday Morning" in 1915, "Letters d'un Soldat" and "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" in 1918, for instance) and wrote three experimental, hopelessly undramatic plays.

In 1923 *Harmonium* appeared in an edition of 1,500 copies. The book aroused little interest and was soon remaindered. For the next few years Stevens wrote very little. He devoted his energies to the insurance business and relaxed with books, music, and gardening. But his reputation as a poet continued to grow, and his sense of this helped revive his imagination or ambition. In his fifties his career entered its second phase. Beginning with *Ideas of Order* in 1935, one book followed another in rapid succession: *Owl's Clover* (1936), *The Man with the Blue Guitar and Other Poems* (1937), *Parts of a World* (1942), *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction* (1942), *Esthétique du Mal* (1945), *Transport to Summer* (1947), and *The Auroras of Autumn* (1950). *The Necessary Angel* (1951) was a collection of essays on his central theme of "Reality and the Imagination."

Until the 1950s Stevens had enjoyed only a gradually spreading *succès d'estime* as a "poet's poet" or a "critic's poet." He now discovered that graduate students were reading him with enthusiasm, and some wished to write about him. At this academic reception he was wryly ironic as well as incredulous. Honors piled on him in his sixties and early seventies, including the offer, in 1954, to serve as Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard. (He turned it down, for he was diffident about lecturing on poetry. He also feared that acceptance would entail retirement from the insurance company.) Despite his growing reputation, he had been unwilling to bring out a collected edition, fearing lest such a climax to his career might also prove a termination. But in 1954 he admitted to his publisher,

embodies Stevens' central theme, the relation between imagination and reality. Endless permutations of this theme were possible. Was reality the world seen without imagination? If so, was imagination the world seen without reality? That was a bitter truth, if it was a truth. But perhaps the snowman, who heard no "misery" in the wind, was projecting himself into the scene just as much as the other listener. Perhaps the snowman beheld nothing only because he was "nothing himself," since, to cite a later poem, whoever "puts a pineapple together" always sees it "in the tangent of himself." "Crow is realist," but "Oriole, also, may be realist." Perhaps imagination was not the opposite but the reordering of reality, like the "mountainous coiffures of Bath" in relation to the natural mop of hair. Coiffures express human creativity, but that does not make them less real. Was the important distinction simply that the mop of hair is always the same, while its rearrangements into coiffures vary with time and place? Perhaps religion was like a hairdo. It was a myth that humanized the facts of man's situation and fate. The facts never changed essentially, but the myth did and must. Perhaps the role of poetry now was to create a new myth. But in sketching some aspects of this central theme, we have already gone beyond *Harmonium* and drawn on poems of a later period, and further elaboration must be deferred.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

Since William Carlos Williams (1883-1963) is also discussed at some length in my forthcoming volume, along with the younger poets he strongly influenced, the account given here confines itself to his early career down to 1923. He belonged to the Modernist avant-garde of writers and painters and shared their point of view to an extreme degree. No poet was more imbued with the idea that the modern age required a new style "consonant" with modern sensibility. Yet in some essential respects the appeal of his poetry resembles that of the Georgians and Robert Frost. Common sources of appeal may be suggested by noting that Williams, Frost, and the Georgians were all accessible and entertaining; they possessed or cultivated poetic personalities that have much charm; and they discovered "poetry" in the

familiar circumstances of contemporary life. An additional reason for their rising reputations in the 1950s was the attraction readers found at that time in the deliberately scaled down, the unassuming. Williams' emotions are not romantically intense; his profundities, if any can be claimed for him, are not insisted on. Hence he was not much recognized in the 1920s. But precisely these qualities contributed to the eager discovery of his poetry later.

He was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, and went to secondary schools there and in New York City, with a two-year interval in Europe. By the time he enrolled in medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, he hoped to become a poet as well as a doctor. At the university he became a friend of Ezra Pound, a "fine fellow . . . a brilliant talker and thinker," he wrote his mother, and through Pound met Hilda Doolittle, a "rather bony" but "bright" girl of nineteen. With Miss Doolittle, Williams took long country walks in suburban Philadelphia and "talked of the finest things: of Shakespeare, of flowers, trees, books, and pictures." Conversing with Pound, he already felt how difficult it was for him to compete. He lacked time to study literature and was doomed to an amateur role, whereas Pound was "making a life work" of it. In later years Williams struggled to overcome this sense of inferiority; parts of his theory of poetry—for example, the emphasis he placed on immediacy and spontaneity—were motivated, among other considerations, by the need of a busy doctor to justify a type of poetry he had time to write.

He received his medical degree in 1906 and became an intern in a New York City hospital. He specialized in obstetrics and pediatrics. In 1909 and 1910 he was in Europe for medical study and for travel. Returning, he married and settled for the rest of his life in Rutherford. He wrote much of his prose and some of his poetry late at night or between patients. The total number of his books amounts to more than forty titles, including fiction, drama, and essays, as well as poetry.

In London he had visited Pound, who had escorted him to the literary haunts, including a visit to Yeats's lodgings, where the famous older poet had read his own verse by candlelight. Characteristically, Williams tried not to feel intimidated by London glamour and sophistication. He was already telling himself that

the "old world spirit" was "run down," while the "New World spirit," in which he naturally included himself, was "young, ignorant but . . . full of the strength of abundant resource and opportunity not unmixed with contempt for old forms."

But his early poetry did not exemplify this contempt for "old forms." In his teens Williams had admired Whitman and burst out occasionally in imitations. But he loved Keats and composed a long verse romance in what he conceived to be Keats's style. One of his starting points as a poet may be seen in a sonnet he included in a letter to his brother. It was written in 1906, after meeting "one of the most sensible and generally likeable, beautiful girls I have seen in a long time." He "came home feeling sort of funny" and sat down to write:

Last night I sat within a blazing hall
And drank of bliss from out a maiden's eyes.
The jeweled guests passed by . . .

In 1909 his first book of poems was printed in Rutherford at his own expense. In 1913 a second book, *The Tempers*, was published in London, Pound having persuaded Elkin Matthews to bring it out. Pound was now the dominant influence on Williams' writing, and *The Tempers* included several poems in types Pound had favored in his early verse, such as the Browningsque monologue and the Renaissance lyric—

Lady of dusk-wood fastnesses,
Thou art my Lady.

Despite the stylistic and thematic emulations of Pound, Williams' characteristic humor, liveliness, unpretentiousness, ingenuous happiness, and charm are also strongly present.

By 1912 Pound was propagating, as Imagism, the principles of "efficient writing" to which he had gradually sifted during four years of conversation, experiment, and self-criticism in London. No American poet was more receptive than Williams to Pound's practical instructions for Imagists. The founding of *Poetry* had another, less traceable, impact on his career. After he had appeared in its pages, he could henceforth feel that he was himself among the "new" American poets. This feeling was enormously reinforced by his association in and around New York City with the *Others* group. He read their works in manuscript,

eagerly debated their theories, and felt that he was in the thick of a new movement. Throughout his life his happiest times seem to have been of this kind, when he saw himself as a member—or even a leader—of a movement that was going to capture the future of poetry, or the poetry of the future. A favorite rhetorical device in his prose is the first-person-plural "we," which he used to identify himself with unspecified fellow writers, with the movement: "What a battle we made of it. Merely getting rid of capitals at the beginning of every line!" From 1920 to 1923 he edited *Contact I* with Robert McAlmon.

Meanwhile, he had also met the painters Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray and the photographer Alfred Stieglitz. In 1913 came the Armory Show. Moreover, between 1914 and 1919 Pound had printed some of Williams' poems in *The Egoist*, and Williams had become an attentive reader not only of the literary part of the magazine but also of the feminist and philosophical essays by Dora Marsden with which each issue began. He was both an *Egoist*, he said, and an Imagist.

These excitements were reflected in his volumes of poetry in the next several years: *Al Que Quiere* (1917), *Sour Grapes* (1921), and *Spring and All* (1923). There was also *Kora in Hell* (1920), a group of prose poems he wrote as spontaneous improvisations. *Kora in Hell* had a Preface attacking Pound and Eliot for aping the poetry of Europe, and *Spring and All* included swatches of theorizing about poetry. In fact, many of the poems in these volumes were intended as demonstrations or metaphors of poetry, what it should be and how it should be written. These early books contained many of the poems that were later to be reprinted in one anthology after another—"Tract," "The Young Housewife," "El Hombre," "Danse Russe," "To Waken An Old Lady," "Queen-Ann's Lace," "The Widow's Lament in Springtime," "Spring and All," "To Elsie," and "The Red Wheelbarrow"—and in them Williams' poetry was fully formed in its first phase. The attractions of this poetry are at least fourfold: the personality and attitudes of the speaker; the clarity and vividness in presenting things to the senses; the use of spoken language, in other words, Williams' liveliness, authenticity, and immediacy in imitating spontaneous, characteristically American talk; and the subtlety and many-sidedness of emotional awareness and response.

The images are close, fresh, concrete, and empathetic. In "Spring and All" he catches "the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf" with memorable, typical exactitude. There are not only color and motion in the

surge of the blue
mottled clouds driven from the
northeast—a cold wind,

but also in "surge" and "driven" there is Williams' characteristic organic participation in dynamic energies and tensions within the objects or events he renders. In the same poem the seemingly lifeless bushes of early spring are described in a string of accurate yet unexpected adjectives:

All along the road the reddish
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of bushes . . .

"Tract" illustrates his rendering of American speech. The poem is an address to his "townspeople," telling how a funeral should be performed. The directions are implicitly a commentary on the writing of poetry. "Knock the glass out" of the hearse, he says, for glass suggests a wish to deny reality.

My God—glass, my townspeople!
For what purpose? Is it for the dead
to look out or for us to see
how well he is housed or to see
the flowers or the lack of them—
or what?
To keep the rain and snow from him?

The exclamation, the heaped-up questions, the blunt irony of "housed," the mention that there may be no flowers are all brought to a focus in the aggressive-contemptuous question, "or what?" The question would lose much of its effect if we could not recognize the typically American intonation implied. After the question there comes, as the line indicates, a deafening pause, before the speaker piles on another aggressively ironic question. The whole passage is flat, blunt, energetic, and driving and renders what Williams conceived to be a typically American voice.

The fineness of Williams' "emotional equipment," as Pound

called it, is seen in "To Waken An Old Lady." If the poem is read as a metaphor of old age, every detail expresses a delicate, complex awareness. It is winter and life is on the whole diminished to a "shrill piping." But, just as the poem is the opposite of the sentimentally wishful, it also refuses to simplify into mere pathos or pessimism. Winter is no unchanging state but a varied season that includes its times of content:

Old age is
a flight of small
cheeping birds
skimming
bare trees
above a snow glaze.
Gaining and failing
they are buffeted
by a dark wind—
But what?
On harsh weedstalks
the flock has rested,
the snow
is covered with broken
seedhusks
and the wind tempered
by a shrill
piping of plenty.

Though Williams was bringing out books steadily from 1909 until his death, his appeal to readers and his influence on younger poets increased greatly toward the end of his career. He himself felt that his own poetry was the polar opposite of Eliot's and that the hegemony of Eliot had delayed his recognition. *The Waste Land*, Williams said in his *Autobiography*, "wiped out our world as if an atom bomb had been dropped upon it." He felt that Eliot's poem had set back for twenty years the acceptance and spread of the poetic values for which "we" contended. Be this as it may, in the 1940s and 1950s, when younger poets began to follow his lead, the reason was partly that he was a poet of the older generation—and Pound's friend—whose work offered younger poets a way out of the cul-de-sac in which many of them felt that contemporary poetry was expiring. This is not the place to tell the history of American poetry between 1930

and 1950, but it may be noted, in a too simplified summary, that the premises and methods of the New Critics were much influenced by the poetry and critical writings of Eliot, that they trained readers especially to appreciate formally complex, compressed ways of writing and that they gradually influenced the teaching of literature in schools and colleges. Eventually this approach to literature began to seem "academic," to separate literature from life.

Rebelling against this, young writers after World War II looked about for alternative premises and styles. They found Williams. As James Dickey put it, Williams was "usable." "Many beginning writers," he suggests in praise of Williams, "were encouraged to write" because they felt, "Well, if *that's* poetry, I believe I might be able to write it, too!" The attractions of his open, natural, low-pressured idiom were further enhanced by his conceptual moilings in essays and manifestos. These formulations explained and defended his way of writing; they worked the more suggestively because they were vague. But Williams' increased appeal in the forties, fifties, and sixties did not come about only because young poets sought a new parental model. They were responding to trends in American life that shaped literature by shaping feelings, values, and life styles. In other words, many readers, especially the young, recognized in Williams attitudes with which they felt a warm sympathy.

At the center of these poems is the "I," the speaker, who presents himself as a plain, unpretentious man, a doctor, living an ordinary life with his family in Rutherford. He has and feels that he has freshness of response, humor, wholesomeness, and *joie de vivre*. Watching his "wife's new pink slippers,"

I talk to them
in my secret mind
out of pure happiness.

His pose is nonchalant, off hand; his subject matter frank. In "The Ogre" he tells with much charm of his sexual response to a

Sweet child,
little girl with well-shaped legs.

Erotic feelings are diffused throughout most of his responses, not only to people but to weather, flowers, trees, and bushes,

and they are presented casually, as an omnipresent, natural aspect of life.

His poetry exhibits Williams vis-à-vis the world. Sometimes it exhibits only the world, or parts of it, leaving the speaker out. In either case the situation is essentially the prototypical one of Romantic poetry, the poetic imagination alone with nature. Confronting the welter of phenomena, the imagination attempts to find or create order and meaning; especially it strives for an order or meaning that would support feelings of acceptance, or even of joy. So also with Williams.

The poetry of Williams can be read as a demonstration that here, now, and everywhere the world is always fresh, full, and vivid. More exactly, the world has this character for whoever can see it this way. We must strip away preconceptions, habitual associations, and literary and social conventions in order to see the thing as it immediately is. This fresh, authentic perception is enough, but there may also be a discovery or creation of aesthetic value in the objects seen. In Williams' well-known "The Red Wheelbarrow," composed in two minutes, the objects—a wheelbarrow, rain water, chickens—evoke no associations from poetic tradition. Neither, as Williams renders them, do they evoke any particular associations of other kinds; we do not think of rural life, for example. They are merely things perceived and they are so familiar that they would usually rouse little interest or emotion. In each pair of lines the poem notes first a color and then an object, and thus enacts a process in which a bright, pleasing quality is located in an ordinary thing. Together the things make a pattern of contrasts, an aesthetic composition. The poem says that so much depends on these objects or the composition they make. But it also means that so much depends on the eye that perceives.

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

"The Red Wheelbarrow," like so many of Williams' poems, is about poetry, but it is also about finding and relating to reality—the themes are inseparable for Williams. The poem derives its interest solely from its character as an implicit credo or demonstration. It is remarkably easy and obvious and might almost have been written as a parody, reducing Williams' style and theme to their minimum.

But Williams' poetry is built on the paradox that less is more. Beneath this there is the paradox that all is nothing. As with most human beings, Williams' beliefs were partly shaped by subjective needs. His emphasis on making "contact" with the world was a natural expression of a personality for which some kinds of contact were difficult. And his poetic exhibitions that he, for one, could be vital, full, happy, and related to the world are not to be taken literally. They were counterattacks in a lifelong battle with disgust and despair. The prototypical situation is that in "Danse Russe," where the speaker dances alone and naked at dawn in his "north room." Who, he asks, "shall say I am not / the happy genius of my household?" But the demonstration is for himself. He is watching his dance in a mirror.

The only person Williams' poetry characterizes in depth is himself. Many poems, however, are sketches of other people. He portrays especially the unfortunate—the impoverished, old, alienated, deprived, derelict, criminal, or ill—and he makes us sympathize with their situation and feelings. His attitude toward such characters is unsentimental, tolerant, and appreciative. He admires their tough-mindedness, endurance, vitality, and stubborn assertion of identity. He sees himself in them, and them in himself, with a fellow feeling that might be called democratic. Despite this, there is an essential detachment, for his interest in such persons is primarily aesthetic. As he later explained in his *Autobiography*, he sought "poetry" in the lost, the dispossessed, the renegade, and the uneducated because such persons seemed to him to be whole and integral. They were "sure, all of a piece . . . instant and perfect."

His program for poetry—or "the poem," as he called it—may be quickly stated, at least as it was by 1923. The core of it was the idea that poetry must be "consonant" with the modern age. Despite his early fondness for Keats, Williams soon convinced himself that previous poetry was irrelevant, for the forms of ear-

lier ages could not embody contemporary states of consciousness. It is likely that in his mature years he spent more time reading little magazines than in reading the great poets of the past. Poetry that is alive, he told Miss Monroe (she had criticized two poems he submitted to *Poetry*), must be, like life itself, "at any moment subversive of life as it was the moment before. Verse to be alive must have infused into it some tincture of disestablishment."

He subscribed to the ideas of Imagism as Pound had formulated them. A poem, as he then thought of it, "was an image, the picture was the important thing." Just what was pictured mattered less. "We have discarded beauty," he said in 1914. Following the principles set forth in "A Few 'Don'ts' by an Imagiste," he stressed the value of swift, uncluttered, functional phrasing, without the inversions and redundancies imposed by the effort "to fill out a standard form." On this ground he still argued at this time for free verse. He differed from Pound, however, in that he put less emphasis on a compressed presentation but spoke rather of momentum, "an unimpeded thrust through a poem from the beginning to the end." He was highly attracted to spontaneous composition as a method; it would guarantee that worries about "formal arrangements" would not deflect the "development of what you see and feel"; it would bring about, at least, promote "immediate contact with the world." He was also beginning to stress that poetry must find its "primary impetus," as he later put it, in "local conditions." Local implies, in his sloganizing, the opposite of classical, medieval, or similarly remote subjects—"I was determined to use the material I knew." And among "local conditions" Williams included the spoken American language, its vocabulary, rhythm, and syntax.

Williams was forty years old when *Spring and All* was published. His life henceforth continued to center in his active medical practice and his career as a writer, along with the usual domestic troubles and happinesses. In the early 1920s he started to write his important prose work, *In the American Grain*. His aim was "to try to find out for myself what the land of my more or less accidental birth might signify. . . . The plan was to try to get inside the heads of some of the American founders . . . by examining their original records." The book "fell flat" when it was published in 1925 and was soon remaindered, though it has

since been reprinted several times. In 1924 he spent some months in Europe, where he saw much of the American expatriate colony in Paris, and he was again in Europe in 1927. He continued to found or help others found little magazines, for, he said, without them he would himself "have been early silenced." One of his enterprises in the early 1930s was the Objectivist Press, in which he was associated with Basil Bunting and Louis Zukofsky. At this time he also articulated an "Objectivist theory of the poem." About this time he also edited *Contact II* with McAlmon and Nathanael West. In the 1930s he began to be invited to read his poems at colleges. He was not yet counted among the more important poets, however, and his pay was the average fee for a "reading" in those days—twenty-five to fifty dollars. His poetry won the *Dial* award in 1926 and the *Poetry* magazine prize in 1931, then there were no more prizes until 1948. Between 1946 and his death, however, he received five honorary degrees and seven prizes or awards. From 1946 to 1958 he was working on *Paterson*, which he left unfinished. He suffered a stroke, and resigned from medical practice. Despite further paralyzing strokes, he heroically continued to write, and some of his finest poems date from his last years.

MARIANNE MOORE

Marianne Moore (1887–1972) was born in St. Louis, the daughter of John Milton Moore. Her father left the family when she was still a child, and she was brought up in the home of her maternal grandfather, John Warner, a pastor in the Presbyterian church. Her girlhood ambition was to become a painter, though she was also interested in medicine and biology. In 1894 the family moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and she received her education at the Metzger Institute there and later at Bryn Mawr College (A.B., 1909). After a year at the Carlisle Commercial College, she spent four years (1911–1915) teaching stenography and bookkeeping at the United States Indian School at Carlisle. Always interested in athletics (she was a good tennis player, and in her later years became an enthusiastic baseball fan), she also coached the Indian boys in outdoor sports. In 1918 she moved to New York, taught, and then

worked (1921–1925) in the Hudson Park branch of the New York Public Library.

In 1915 she began to publish verse in the *Egoist*, *Poetry*, and *Others*. In 1921 the Egoist Press, without her knowledge, brought out a volume of twenty-four of her poems. In 1920 she began to publish in the *Dial*, and received the *Dial* award for the first volume she herself published: *Observations* (1925). She became acting editor of the *Dial* (1925–1929) for the remainder of its publishing life. Her verse, praised by Ezra Pound for its "dance of the intelligence" (1918), continued to receive applause from distinguished poets and critics, such as T. S. Eliot, Yvor Winters, W. H. Auden, and Randall Jarrell. *Selected Poems* (1935), with a commendatory Introduction by Eliot, was followed by *The Pangolin and Other Verse* (1936), *What Are Years?* (1941), *Nevertheless* (1944), and *Collected Poems* (1951), which received the Bollingen and other prizes. By now Miss Moore's reputation was widely as well as firmly established. In 1954 her long-awaited translation of the *Fables* of La Fontaine appeared, and in 1955 a collection of essays, *Predilections*. Now almost seventy, she continued to publish prolifically: *Like a Bulwark* (1956); two lectures given at the University of California, *Idiosyncrasies and Technique* (1958); *O To be a Dragon* (1959); *The Absentee* (1962), a comedy based on Maria Edgeworth's novel of the same name; *The Arctic Ox* (1964); *Tell Me, Tell Me* (1966); and *Complete Poems* (1967).

According to her own testimony, Miss Moore met no writers before 1916 and until then was, as she said, "isolated" from contemporary poetry. The Imagists, she said, were not an important influence on her work. She had not read the French symbolistes. Perhaps she learned more from prose writers, but she was aware of no literary antecedents for her style. The statement corrects some stock notions about literary history. It suggests that modern poetic style depended rather less on Hulme, Pound, the Imagists, and the Symbolists than is usually supposed. Instead, it developed from sources and tendencies so multiple that it was in the air, so to speak, and by 1915 even a young schoolmistress fresh from Bryn Mawr College could be writing it. For stylistically her poems are Modernist. She shared with the Imagists the effort for exact presentation of the object and the use of prose rhythms. She employed with Pound and

those he influenced, the techniques of the ideogram and juxtaposition by excision of connecting statements. Before the Metaphysical Revival was much heard of, she was writing a poetry of irony and wit. Her diction sought the colloquial and the specifically American spoken idiom. She was part of a reaction against the traditionally beautiful or poetic in favor of the authentic and functional. Hulme's opinions that poetry should be inorganic, contracted rather than expansive, impersonal, disciplined, hard, and dry found an exemplification in her work. But if her technique was Modernist, her temperament was not. She seemed to have little connection with conventionally modern attitudes, unless she was felt to rebuke them. Shy, rationalist, and bristling with rectitude, her views were simple. She was untouched by existential angst, and the delighted reading of her work among so many highly sophisticated writers resembles Werther's love for Charlotte.

Marianne Moore's career evolved without dramatic changes in style or attitude. The poems published in magazines between 1915-1921 and in *Poems* (1921) are often astringent comments in discursive, economical speech. They deal especially with writers, other types encountered in the literary world (the steamroller, the pedantic literalist), ideas about writing ("Ecstasy affords / the occasion and expediency determines the form"), and so on. The much-quoted "Poetry" is typical. They are in syllabic verse, although the scansion of "To a Prize Bird" is traditional and such poems as "England," "When I Buy Pictures," and "Those Various Scalpels" are in a free verse very close to prose. Only in "The Fish" does one find among these early poems a fully developed example of the several idiosyncrasies of manner especially associated with her, although she never had merely one manner. With the *Selected Poems* of 1935 the liking for animal subjects became noticeable for the first time ("The Jerboa," "The Plumet Basilisk," "The Frigate Pelican," "The Buffalo"), and only now could critics begin to speak of her "bestiary." (The remark became commonplace, prompting the conspiracy of encouragement that helped elicit her translation of La Fontaine's *Fables* in 1954.) The poems written between 1921 and 1935 were on the whole more elliptical, oblique, and difficult than the earlier ones; they showed for the first time an effort of accurate observation that went almost to fantastic lengths. In the

next few years, in important poems such as "Virginia Britannia" or "The Pangolin" she reversed or at least halted these tendencies. These poems were more spacious and accessible, closer to the descriptive-meditative tradition.

Her approach toward a more accessible style continued. During the Second World War some poems were in an emotional, rhetorical vein ("In Distrust of Merits," "Keeping Their World Large"), and throughout her later work there was a slightly more direct expression of personal feeling. The looser manner was also present in a good many occasional poems written either to support worthy causes or out of local Brooklyn patriotism. The humor of her verse was also more varied. Where it was once a tart remark or darning-needle stab, it now ranged from broad effects to verbal play:

The pin-swin or spine-swine
(the edgohog miscalled hedgehog) with all his edges out . . .

At the same time there was an occasional or partial return to traditional versification, either in poems that scan and rhyme in the old ways or in the blending of syllabic with accentual verse, as, for example, in "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing." The melowing was not necessarily a good thing, for her work tended to become rather less taut and brilliant. But neither did it go very far. The poetry still gave the effect of "stepping as though through / harp-strings in a scherzo." She could still say: "If tributes cannot / be implicit, / give me diatribes and the fragrance of iodine."

Her technical or stylistic innovations were chiefly four: syllabic verse on a new principle, light rhyme, inorganic stanza forms, and miscellaneous quotation. By syllabic verse is meant simply that the line is measured by counting not the number of accents but the number of syllables. It is the ordinary scansion of French poetry. What is novel in Marianne Moore, however, is that the line may have any number of syllables from one to twenty, and caesuras fall where they may. As a result, there is no way of knowing that it is a meter until the same number of syllables are counted in corresponding lines of each stanza. This compels, as one reads, a primary attention to the prose rhythm. Other rhythms are going at the same time of course, created by the di-

vision into lines and the occasional counterpointing of syllabic with accentual meter, but syllabic verse does not create a rhythm of its own. Its function in English seems primarily to negate accentual scansion and allow the prose rhythm to move forward and receive first emphasis. For the poet, syllabic meter may serve more personal needs. One easily learns to think in blank verse, for example, and to a lesser degree in other traditional meters also. Thus, for most poets the metrical aspect is partly unconscious. But syllabic meter can never become habitual. The syllabic line presents itself to the poet as an external form that must be filled consciously.

"Light rhyme" is a phrase applied by T. S. Eliot to what Miss Moore was doing. In English poetry the rhyme word normally takes a special emphasis, and among the unquestionably valid contributions of the Modernist poets is their renewed recognition that, since the rhyme word is emphasized by its position and function, it should be worthy of the attention it receives—that is, it must do more than merely rhyme. In Marianne Moore, however, there is rhyme that receives no emphasis and would be anticlimactic if it did. Eliot points out that "the effect sometimes requires giving a word a slightly more analytical pronunciation, or stressing a syllable more than ordinarily," or "the use of articles as rhyme words":

ac-
cident—lack
of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns, and
hatchet strokes, these things stand
out on it.

Similarly with stanzaic patterns. In the simpler forms of English verse the pattern of the stanza coincides with the grammatical and syntactical ordering of sense and feeling:

Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees
Letting his arms hang down to laugh,
The zebra stripes along his jaw
Swelling to maculate giraffe.

When the sense and feeling overflow or run on beyond the verse or the stanza a counterpoint is set up, the versification maintaining one pattern while the sense and feeling set up another. But the disjunction is rarely complete; the sense and feeling

slightly coincide with the units of the verse, even while they run on, and the partial violation of a norm is itself expressive, a further refinement of meaning. In the case of Marianne Moore, however, the syllabic verse, the light rhyme, and the arbitrary lengths of the line contribute to a stanzaic pattern that may be intellectually recognized but is not much felt in reading:

The Indian buffalo,
led by bare-legged boys to a hay
hut where they
stable it, need not fear comparison
with bison, with the twins,
indeed with any
of ox ancestry.

The separation or lack of relation between the pattern of verse and pattern of meaning is rarely so complete as in this instance, but separation is the norm, the expectation, with which the reader starts, and any, even slight convergence of these patterns becomes the more noticeable and felt. This indeed is one gain to Miss Moore's poetry. If you begin with external, inorganic forms, any more organic relation of pattern and meaning dramatically enhances expressiveness. More than this, however, these arbitrary forms make the meaning more difficult to grasp and so rouse attention. They also contribute to the air of eccentricity and self-imposed difficulty that pervades her verse, "the love of doing hard things."

The quotations from various sources, such as the *National Geographic Magazine* or the sports pages, are a further oddity. They are not usually memorable in themselves. Miss Moore explains them as simple integrity: if you use someone else's words, it is right to acknowledge the borrowing. But, then, why use someone else's words? Moreover, some of the quotations she seems to have invented herself, and quotations are used with a frequency that gives some readers the impression of a nervous tic. Her quotation marks function generally in two ways: they call attention to the words and they give them an ironic cast. Quotation may be a way of disowning the words she uses, of refusing to take full responsibility for them. It is a mode of armor, of hiding from the reader. Her book reviews are frequently mosaics of quotation.

In structure her poems seem often to lack a principle of tran-

sition, whether by narrative, argument, meditation, stream of consciousness, or free association. The impression arises in part from the fact that she often prefers to speak through concrete instances rather than discursive generalization. The steps of the argument, if there is one, must be inferred through the juxtaposition of images. But there is much discursive statement in her work, although it is likely to be elliptical and fragmentary. "The Hero" is an example:

We do not like some things, and the hero
doesn't; deviating headstones
and uncertainty;
going where one does not wish
to go; suffering and not
saying so; standing and listening where something
is hiding.

Here the assertions, though slightly elliptical, are not difficult to follow. Immediately, however, one comes to a dense cluster of negative or positive examples, and the ellipsis is drastic:

Jacob when a-dying, asked
Joseph: Who are these? and blessed
both sons, the younger most, vexing Joseph. And
Joseph was vexing to some.
Cincinnatus was; Regulus; and some of our fellow
men have been . . .

Jacob, one infers, is tricky and noncommittal, as the hero never is, and so is Joseph. But Cincinnatus and Regulus were true heroes. The poem as a whole is static. The hero is presented through instances of his attitudes, tastes, behavior, and so on, but the purpose is to give his character ("This then you may know / as the hero"), which, as in a bestiary, is known from the start, not thought out in the course of the poem. Put another way, the poem is an assemblage of images and statements around a general theme. In this it typifies many of Miss Moore's poems, such as "England," or "Marriage," a poem she footnotes with ironic modesty as "Statements that took my fancy which I tried to arrange plausibly." In other poems, however, an argument proceeds, often in ample discourse; a poem such as "Snakes, Mongoose, Snake Charmers, and the Like" enacts the seemingly casual or natural transition from apprehending the

object to reflection upon it that typifies meditative verse. The tendency in her work to construct poems by aggregating rather than developing is only a tendency, not a rigid instinct.

Her idiom, like her stance generally, is low-keyed, prosaic, American, and precise. Precision is the master word. It is the effect and—because it is a moral as well as a stylistic value and effort—to some degree the meaning of her poetry. It involves not only accuracy ("certainty of touch") but also self-discipline. It is from the game of bowls or from the "Chinese lacquer carving," where "layer after layer" is

exposed by certainty of touch and unhurried incision
so that only so much color shall be revealed as is necessary
to the picture,

that Miss Moore is gratified to

learn that we are precisionists,
not citizens of Pompeii arrested in action
as a cross section of one's correspondence would seem
to imply.

That the carving exposes layer after layer may be taken as a reminder that precision does not preclude suggestion. The suggestions are activated here by the associations and semi-puns (layers exposed—cross section—incision—precision—carving—picture—arrested in action, with a separate pun in "arrested"), but the suggestions are as controlled as everything else in the poem. The seemingly prosaic and low-keyed talk is minutely ordered and vibrant with intellectual energy. This idiom stands equally removed from romantic beauty, direct emotion, and vagueness, on the one hand, or modern tolerated opaqueness, on the other. (Miss Moore's opacities are the opposite of self-indulgence; they are excesses of excision.) The precision appears not only in the way of saying but in the selection and ordering of things said, and the precision of speech and form expresses a further precision of feeling. But precision is easiest to illustrate as a quality of the idiom.

For one thing, there is the scrupulous minuteness of description: the newt "with white pin-dots on black horizontal spaced / out bands"; "The fine hairs on the tail" of the jerboa that repeat

"the other pale / markings, lengthen until / at the tip they fill / out in a tuft—black and / white." In the manner prescribed by T. E. Hulme, one is ordinarily compelled to visualize the thing still more exactly through comparison or metaphor. The whiskers of Peter the cat are "shadbones regularly set about the mouth / to droop or rise in unison like porcupine-quills." The things compared are ordinarily quite disparate—"the lion's ferocious chrysanthemum head"—and a special peculiarity of Miss Moore is that the thing used for illustration is at least as closely seen as the thing itself. Fledgling mockingbirds emit "the high-keyed intermittent squeak / of broken carriage springs." *Camellia Sabina* has a pale stripe "that looks as if on a mushroom the / sliver from a beetroot carved into a rose were laid." Even when she uses metaphor to convey something indefinite, an impression or feeling, the particular things are still very particular, as in the brilliant impression of the mind's brilliance, "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing":

is an enchanted thing
 like the glaze on a
 katydid-wing
 subdivided by sun
 till the nettings are legion.
 Like Gieseking playing Scarlatti;
 like the apteryx-awl
 as a beak, or the
 kiwi's rain-shawl
 of haired feathers, the mind . . .

We may never have noticed the glaze on a katydid wing, or read about the apteryx (also called kiwi), or heard Gieseking playing Scarlatti, but the particularity elicits confidence that Miss Moore has remarked these things and that, if we look them up, we will find out exactly what she means.

Even when Miss Moore is not elliptical, her style is terse. She never uses more words than she needs and is always trying to use less. One result is a mode of statement that, if not quite aphorism—for it is part of a context—can at least be said to carry as much meaning in as few words as possible: "His shield was his humility"; "uncircuitous simplicity / with an expression of inquiry"; "all are / naked, none is safe"; "a spruce

tree— / vertical though a seedling—all / needles." Terseness requires search for the exact word, and she illustrates the search through unexpected discriminations of nuance or implication: marriage, for example, "This institution, / perhaps one should say enterprise"; "Henry James, 'damned by the public for decorum'; not decorum, but restraint"; her father used to say,

"The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence;
 not in silence, but restraint."
 Nor was he insincere in saying, "Make my house your inn."
 Inns are not residences.

Terseness is related to understatement: "Discreet behavior is not now the sum / of statesmanlike good sense"; the mind is "not a Herod's oath that cannot change";

The passion for setting people right is in itself an afflictive
 disease.

Distaste that takes no credit to itself is best.

And the juxtaposition of laconic statements almost always produces the surprise of wit:

I have seen this swan and
 I have seen you; I have seen ambition without
 understanding in a variety of forms.

There is rarely anything in Miss Moore's verse that is not a species of wit.

The animals which make up the subject or illustration of so many of her poems are of either the more harmless or exotic sort (jerboa, swan, basilisk, frigate pelican, buffalo, cat, unicorn, snail, ostrich, reindeer, pangolin, kiwi, arctic ox, elephant). Because they are used as in fables to present moral types and states they are not always beheld sympathetically, but even so her poetry creates through them a simpler and more charming world than our own. Moreover, they are usually treated not as a mirror to the human race but a contrast, and the contrast is altogether in favor of the animals. Miss Moore admires their prudence, courage, and functional adaptation to the conditions of their life. Above all she admires their seriousness and sensibleness, that they are free from affectation and romantic illusion, how precisely they know and submit to the discipline of fact. They are rigorists. Miss Moore would have liked us all to be

like that. "It is self-evident" that the way to "romantic" achievement is prosaic "capacity for fact":

that one must do as one is told
and eat rice, prunes, dates, raisins, hardtack, and tomatoes
if one would "conquer the main peak of Mount Tacoma."

The moral realm is as plain and inexorable as the natural, and here, too, Miss Moore would have us "rigorists." "Guns, nets, seines, traps and explosives" are not allowed in the National Park, for it is or should be "self-evident / that it is frightful to have everyone afraid of one." She is committed to a copybook morality with its definiteness and simplicity and cites the old-fashioned heroes—"Cincinnatus was; Regulus"—of the copybook. She sympathizes with whatever is integral, positive, self-controlled, and self-respecting. Reticence is a virtue, and few things can be worse than crying in someone's lap. In poetry there must be no adventitious charm or seductiveness. It "must not wish to disarm anything." It must be what it is and you must like it or leave it, for that is the way superior people behave. They respect one another's individuality and do not intrude by offering or seeking intimacies, much less confessions. If the way they express themselves is rather complicated and punctilious, this is partly to effect the precise nuance and implication, partly to secure close attention, and partly, it must be acknowledged, to keep people off. The matter and the rind of her poetry are somewhat prickly, like the upright spruce tree, "all needles," like the hedgehog "with all his edges out," like the monkey puzzle tree, "this pine tiger,"

This porcupine-quilled, complicated starkness—
this is beauty—"a certain proportion in the skeleton
which gives the best results."

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

THROUGHOUT the entire period covered in this volume Yeats was one of the major living poets. We have discussed his work in connection with the poetry of the Celtic Twilight, with the development of Symbolism in the 1890s, with the reaction against *l'art pour l'art* after the turn of the century, and in several other contexts. For this reason he can here be discussed more briefly than would otherwise be the case. He was born in Ireland in 1865, and named William Butler after his grandfather, a clergyman. His father, John Butler Yeats, married Susan Pollexfen, who was descended from a family of shipowners. J. B. Yeats was a painter. He delighted in conversation and argument, and his opinions changed like shot silk. Chesterton used to say that he never knew but one man who could talk like old Yeats, the painter, and that was young Yeats, the poet. Yeats spent his boyhood and early youth in London and in Sligo, on the west coast of Ireland, where he stayed with his maternal grandparents. Between these two homes was no very long journey, but they were different worlds.

In the 1890s Yeats's lyrics evoked a bleakly beautiful landscape of streams, lakes, hills, rocks, woods, wind, and clouds, and it was the countryside about Sligo that planted these images in his imagination. Persons and places in the vicinity came back