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A MOSAIC OF ARTS: INTERTEXTUALITY IN MARIANNE MOORE'S POETIC AESTHETICS

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ABSTRACT
Marianne Moore's poetry is famous for its complex blending of literary, artistic, and cultural references, resulting in her poetry being a detailed work of art of intertextuality. This paper dives into Moore's poetic style as a dynamic mosaic, where various elements from various sources, such as literature, visual arts, philosophy, and scientific discourse, combine to generate new meanings. Drawing on the theories of intertextuality, particularly those of Julia Kristeva, this study examines how Moore's use of quotation, adaptation, and allusion challenges conventional ideas of originality and authorship. Moore's artistry, that is, her creative skill and talent in writing poetry, and attention to structure, are grounded in the fusion of the modernist and postmodernist aesthetics, where the interaction of texts leads to layered interpretations. By studying her selected poems, this paper argues that Moore's intertextual approach not only deepens her poetic vision but also invites readers to actively connect to the dialogical nature of art. This active participation uncoils conversations between texts, where the reworking of older voices and traditions becomes a powerful method for generating new meanings. In doing so, Moore redefines the limits of modernist poetic expression, transforming borrowed voices and references into something innovative, complex, and uniquely her own, creating a space where multiple ideas can coexist and enrich one another. In conclusion, this study aims to identify and analyze the intertextual elements in Moore's selected poems.

Keywords: American poetry, Intertextuality, Julia Kristeva, Marianne Moore.

SANATSAL BİR MOZAİK: MARİANNE MOORE'UN ŞİİRSEL ESTETİĞİNDE METİNLERARASILIK

ÖZ
Marianne Moore'un şiiri, edebi, sanatsal ve kültürel referansların karmaşık bir şekilde harmanlanmasıyla tanınır ve bu da eserlerinin metinlerarasılık açısından detaylı sanat eserleri olmasına olanak tanır. Bu makale, Moore'un edebiyat, görsel sanatlar, felsefe ve bilimsel söylem gibi çeşitli kaynaklardan farklı unsurların yeni anlamlar üretmek üzere bir araya geldiği dinamik bir mozaik olarak şiirsel üslubunu derinlemesine incelemektedir. Metinlerarasılık teorilerinden, özellikle de Julia Kristeva'nın teorilerinden yararlanan bu çalışma, Moore'un alıntı, uyarlama ve çağrışım kullanımı ile geleneksel özgünlük ve yazarlık anlayışlarını nasıl sorguladığını incelemektedir. Moore'un özenli sanatçılığı, yani şiir yazmadaki yaratıcı becerisi ve yeteneği ve yapıya verdiği önem, metinlerin etkileşiminin katmanlı yorumlara yol açtığı modernist ve postmodernist estetiğin kaynaşmasına dayanır. Bu makale, Moore'un seçilmiş şiirlerini inceleyerek, onun metinlerarası yaklaşımının yalnızca şiirsel vizyonunu derinleştirmekle kalmayıp, aynı zamanda okuyucuları sanatın diyalojik doğasına aktif bir şekilde bağlanmaya davet ettiğini öne sürmektedir. Bu aktif katılım, metinler arasında diyalogları açığa çıkarır ve eski seslerin ve geleneklerin yeniden işlenmesi, yeni anlamlar üretmek için güçlü bir yöntem haline gelir. Bu şekilde, Moore modernist şiirsel ifadenin sınırlarını yeniden tanımlar, ödünç alınan sesleri ve referansları yenilikçi, karmaşık ve yalnızca kendine özgü bir şekilde dönüştürür, farklı geleneklerin ve fikirlerin bir arada var olup birbirlerini zenginleştirebileceği bir alan yaratır. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmanın amacı Moore'un seçilmiş şiirlerindeki metinlerarasılık unsurlarını saptamak ve analiz etmektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amerikan şiiri, Julia Kristeva, Marianne Moore, Metinlerarasılık.

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Introduction

Might Marianne Moore's poetry be reconsidered as involving postmodernist aesthetics? Even though she is a modernist poet, her poetry, indeed, presents a mixture of modernist fragmentation and postmodernist intertextuality. The extensive use of quotations and allusions, interlaced seamlessly into her work, connects closely with Julia Kristeva's intertextuality theory, accentuating the dialogic nature of her poetic style. Kristeva's concept of intertextuality refers to how texts relate to and transform each other. She avers that "each word is an intersection of other words where at least one other word can be read" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66). Texts, in this respect, are open to multiple interpretations and shaped by various factors, including the reader's perspective, cultural context, and intertextual references. Meaning, therefore, is not fixed or solely dictated by the author. Instead, it emerges through the interaction of the other texts and contexts. "The author," in other words, "does not primarily own the text" (Synman, 1996, p. 427), and "the birth of the reader" will "be required by the death of the Author" (Barthes, 1986, p. 55). However, Kristeva avoids defining it simply as "studying sources." She uses, instead, "transposition," which is a radical reimagining of how meaning emerges through the intricate movement and metamorphosis of signs between different expressive domains like visual arts, music, and literature. According to her, the text crosses "three dimensions:" the author, the addressee, and exterior texts (Kristeva, 1986, p. 36). She, thus, developed Bakhtin's idea of "dialogism as an open-ended play between the text of the subject and the text of the addressee" (Moi, 1986, p. 34) and "heteroglossia." For Bakhtin, all language and communication are inherently relational and interactive. Language, in his view, therefore, is not static but dynamic, involving a constant interplay of voices, perspectives, and contexts. Further, the multiplicity of voices, styles, and perspectives within a text or language reflects diverse social classes, professions, and ideologies (Allen, 2000, p. 21). "Heteroglossia," in this context, means that no text is monolithic; with its various voices, it interacts, conflicts, and enriches the narrative. These voices, Bakhtin argues in *Problems of Dostoyevski's Poetics*, are isolated or unresponsive to one another; rather, they remain in constant interaction, attentively listening and responding to each other (1984, p. 47). Therefore, for Kristeva, every text is a site of dialogue where previous texts are reworked and transformed, whether through direct quotation, allusion, parody, or subversion.

> The term inter-textuality denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of "study of sources," we prefer the term transposition because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic – of enunciative and denotative positionality. (Kristeva, 1984, pp. 59-60)

Any act of meaning-making is influenced by and interacts with different systems of meaning. The signs are constantly being "transposed" or transferred across different contexts (Kristeva, 1984, pp. 59-60). In Kristevan terms, thus, when ideas or elements move from one sign system to another, they undergo a significant transformation, which includes altering how meaning is made and communicated. This transformation requires a new articulation of the thetic, which refers to how subjects and objects are positioned in the enunciation, but perpetually in motion since it is always plural and fragmented, capable of being interpreted in different ways. According to her, signifying practice is inherently intertextual, drawing from

and interacting with multiple sign systems in ways that are far more complex than simple intersections. The "place of enunciation," in the same vein, becomes a dynamic, shifting area where voices and perspectives are never fixed but always plural, fragmented, and open to perpetual reinterpretation. This multiplicity is deeply rooted in "polysemy," fragmenting in ways that resist simplistic interpretation. It emerges from "semiotic polyvalence," which is the ability of a sign to function across different systems simultaneously. The "literary word," thus, is "an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 65).

Allen (2000) highlights intertextuality as an approach to interpreting literature and culture that emphasizes the concepts of relationship "in modern cultural life" (pp. 5-7). Marianne Moore's poetry, in this sense, embodies "relationality, interconnectedness, and interdependence" (Allen, 2000, pp. 5-7) with its layered use of quotations, allusions, and references to other texts or art forms. The world of modernism opens its gate to the postmodernist world. Since Moore's poetry incorporates intertextual connections, blending cultural, historical, and literary texts to construct layered meanings, her intertextual techniques create a dynamic interplay of voices, enhancing the notion that "poetic language is read as at least double" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 80). As Kristeva (1980) also defines intertextuality as "a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (p. 85), Moore's use of direct quotations from sources such as letters, historical texts, or other writers creates a mosaic-like structure in her poems. These borrowed elements interact with her own voice, leading to a polyphonic and dialogic interplay. Her borrowings, nevertheless, are self-contained and immediate, focusing on the surface textures of her poems rather than drawing the reader into external worlds (Costello, 1981, p. 185). The intertextual references in her poetry are recontextualized in such a way that their origin becomes secondary to their function within the poem. Moore's collage-like poetry approach thus connects with Kristeva's emphasis on transposition, as it shifts borrowed language into unfamiliar terrains, where meaning arises from dynamic interactions rather than fixed allusions. Therefore, it becomes a process rather than a product. Correspondingly, in her poems called "Silence" (1924), "He Made This Screen" (1921), "No Swan So Fine" (1932), "Is Your Town Nineveh?" (1916) and "Feed Me, Also, River God" (1921), offering a particularly fertile ground for an intertextual analysis, Moore uses intertextuality to construct maze-like, autonomous surfaces where meaning emerges from the juxtaposition and interaction of elements within the poem itself.

Intertextuality in Moore's Poetic Aesthetics

"The theory of intertextuality," Alfaro remarks, "insists that a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole" (1996, p. 268). Similarly, Moore's poem "Silence" does not exist as an independent text. In "Silence," Moore's speaker narrates an anecdote involving the persona's father, where a preference for silence over speech becomes a central theme. The poem seems to have a meaning that silence is golden at first, with an intertextual dialogue about the value of silence found in philosophical and literary traditions; however, the poem itself complicates this assertion, casting doubt on its validity and exposing contradictions. Since her father "suffered a mental collapse a few months before her birth" (Leavell, 2003, p. 140), and so she never knew him, the poem's epigraph is attributed to someone else called A. M. Homans,

quoting her father in a lecture (Heuving, 1992, p. 118), who seems to idealize silence and brevity as markers of superiority. Using the ironic phrases, which are the poet's own ideas in the middle of the father's quotation, "Silence" shows a father exerting authority over his daughter in a manner that assumes her compliance, whether through silence or restraint (Miller, 1995, p. 182). However, Moore's treatment of this theme can be read as a critique of those who impose rigid standards of decorum while failing to recognize the deeper implications of their ideals. The idea of being restraint is similar to *Hamlet*'s scene on Polonius' advice to his son Laertes about speech, in which he provides a series of maxims on how to conduct oneself wisely and prudently with the lines "Give thy thoughts no tongue […] Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice" (Shakespeare, 2012, p. 43, 1.3. 65-74). Polonius, here, utters that the wise act is to avoid speaking impulsively or revealing everything in mind, as unguarded speech can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, or loss of reputation. Instead, listening carefully and attentively to others builds trust and makes them noble as "superior people" who share their opinions or advice only when necessary or appropriate. Polonius's advice is practical and wise, yet it is ironic in the context of the play, just like the notions of the persona in the poem. While Polonius offers sage counsel to Laertes, he himself is prone to verbosity and meddling, just like the father in the poem, who thinks silence is golden but, in fact, talks a lot since nearly the whole poem consists of his words. However, the persona who seems to take the advice to her heart "tell[s] all the Truth but tell[s] it slant" (Dickinson, 1999, p. 396). The indirectness in her acts becomes more effective in conveying difficult truths in a subtle way that society cannot accept easily. Her poetic style, where she often conveys truths indirectly through metaphor and ambiguity, leaves room for interpretation.

Moore's lines here convey a sense of double-edged meaning since her use of irony invites the reader to question the poem's apparent message. Silence may not be a marker of wisdom but a performance of propriety that conceals insecurity, emptiness, or an inability to engage fully with others. Through irony, she critiques inherited wisdom's rigidity, implying that, while potentially admirable, silence can also be hollow, castrating, or pretentious. She transposes Homans' anecdote into a new textual framework, which is a hallmark of Moore's intertextual approach, but still adds ironic thoughts of the persona in the middle of the quote, altering its original intent to comment on broader cultural and artistic values. "The text," therefore, as Barthes construes, "cannot stop; its constitutive movement is that of cutting across" (2001, p. 1471). Just as Barthes introduces the idea of the "Death of the author," Kristeva indicates that meaning arises from a "dialogue" between the text, the reader, and the various "intertextual references." This dialogue is not one-sided since "the reader actively involves" in the creation of meaning (Becker-Leckrone, 2005, p. 13). Kristeva, in this view, highlights that both "the writing subject (the author)" and "the reader" are crucial in the construction of meaning because the author brings their own historical, ideological, and unconscious influences to the text. The reader, similarly, brings their own experiences, interpretations, and biases. Henceforth, meaning is "co-constructed" between these two subjects.

Moore also uses more than one reference in this poem of hers, including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Edmund Burke. "Her fundamentally Emersonian commitment" (White & Carson, 2011, p. 66) unites her poems to her intertextual mastery. For Emerson, the poet's ultimate power lies not in the mastery of words but in transcending their limitations. Words are transient,

while the divine essence they attempt to express is eternal and unchanging. The "real poem" is the divine energy itself, not the verbal form: "If they [people] were at a perfect understanding in any part, no words would be necessary thereon. If, at one in all parts, no words would be suffered" (Emerson, 1854, p. n294). Moore's "Silence" creates spaces for reflection, allowing the reader to engage actively with the poem and discover truths not explicitly stated. This poem appears as if Emerson was the father talking in the poem since it explicitly engages with the deepest forms of wisdom and emotion that often reside beyond articulation, according to Emerson's idea of discourse being more bitter than silence in his "Experience" and "Self-Reliant." Further, the father's mentioning of "Longfellow" is related to another text coming from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem titled "Resignation," as silence is portrayed as a means of "sanctifying" grief, "not concealing" (line 51). Like a mosaic of voices, Moore creates a palimpsest of meanings by embedding these references, layering her poetic voice atop Homans' anecdotal wisdom and the broader cultural symbolism of brevity and authenticity. Further, she also refers to Edmund Burke, an 18th-century British writer, when the persona quotes from the father saying: "make my house your inn" (line 13), which is actually quoted in James Prior's *A Life of Edmund Burke* (1891, p. 271), in the same sense as the concept of the vertical axis of intertextuality. Moore reveals in the notes attached to the end of the poem that this quote comes from a biography of him. Explicit citations, which are "the most mundane manifestation of intertextuality" (Porter, 1986, p. 34), such as using quotations and references like Moore did in her poetry, are blunt examples of displaying her poem as not an isolated utterance but part of a mesh of voices and ideas. Her practice of drawing from external sources and recontextualizing them into her own poetic framework inosculates with Eliot's description of "the poet" or "the artist of any art" as having no "complete meaning alone," so each work "redefines" itself with "all the works of art which preceded it" (1971, p. 26).

However, "intertextuality animates all discourse and goes beyond mere citation" (Porter, 1986, p. 34). Along with the obvious references, it is built on shared symbols and meanings, permeating all communication, as previous art forms inherently shape texts. Her poem "He Made This Screen" presupposes observing "pictures," remembering personal "experiences and situations," sensing "emotions," and undergoing moments of "intuition" (Synman, 1996, p. 429). Moore here references Chinese craftsmanship and the art of screen-making, a subject loaded with aesthetic and cultural histories. She was already fascinated by "Chinese landscape paintings," and some of her poetry, including "He Made This Screen," marks "one of [her] first of many references to the Chinese dragon" (Pechman, 2014, para. 1). This poem, having the 'multidimensional nature of the word within,' becomes explicitly intertextual, combining visual and textual artistry. As Kristeva (1986) states, the word's position is determined both "horizontally" and "vertically" (pp. 36-37). To expand and clarify this theory, it can be said that "horizontally" positioned words exist within the immediate communication between the writer and the reader, which is the direct, conversational, or narrative exchange. The writer, here, encodes ideas in words, and the reader decodes or interprets them. This is the level of interaction, context, and reception. The "vertical" dimension, on the other hand, situates each word within the broader history of language, literature, and cultural discourse. Every word carries traces of past usage, literary conventions, and the influence of earlier writers. In other words, a word is never purely original, but it is always responding to, echoing, or reshaping

existing texts and traditions. Moore, following this idea, guides the reader through the imaginative space created in the poem, using words that are accessible and meaningful to them. A vision of an artist creating a screen that incorporates symbolic images like a "dragon, a fig-tree, and a face" invites the reader to reflect on Chinese culture and mythical meanings.

Her connection to Chinese aesthetics, when she "wrote to her close friend Winifred Ellerman" about "an exhibition [that they saw] of very old Chinese paintings at the Metropolitan" (Pechman, 2014, para. 1), brings historical, artistic, and cultural reflection to her words. Her poem, thus, mirrors the 'vertical axis of intertextuality,' where her words speak to a dynamic dialogue between her own creativity and the cultural resources she engages with. Moore's poetry, in this sense, often functions as a mosaic of "borrowed" materials. According to Kristeva's theory, her work is not an autonomous creation but a "permutation of texts" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 36). Chinese culture, here, comes "into play a particular social voice, an intellectual level" (Snyman, 1996, p. 430), along with the idea of the narrator's voice being never 'objective' but "double-voiced" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 325) since every narration reflects the narrator's own thoughts, values, and experiences. Therefore, "He Made This Screen," as Kristeva states for intertextuality, "is the result of multiple origins or drives" (McAfee, 2004, p. 26); thus, it leads to a complex rather than a unified one. Linda Leavell (1995) argues that Moore's value for the artistic and cultural significance of objects is often dismissed as "mere crafts," elevating them to the status of meaningful art (p. 16). Her poetry, therefore, reflects the craftsmanship of both language and subject matter, displaying the "semiotic polyvalence." A single word, image, or symbol can carry linguistic, cultural, historical, and visual resonances that interact and transform, creating a rich, ever-evolving semantic landscape. Leavell also highlights Qian's observation about Moore: Unlike contemporaries such as Ezra Pound and Wallace Stevens, who admired the elite and refined arts of Chinese antiquity and high culture, Moore focused on household objects from the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties (Leavell, 1995, p. 42). She thus "used the Far East to express her own dissatisfaction with contemporary trends in the writing of poetry" (Stamy, 1999, p. n10). Her poetic aesthetics, therefore, come from a perspective to criticize or push back against the dominant styles of modern poetry.

Intertextuality is also related to nostalgia, which introduces "reappropriation and recontextualization of older forms and styles" (Sim, 2005, p. 297). This nostalgia that is called "retro" is a mode of intertextuality. Moore's "No Swan So Fine" is an artifact caught between past glory and present stagnation, as well, reflecting both a Baudelairean meditation on beauty and loss and a modernist reflection on artificiality and artifice. The poem's first line, "No water so still as the dead fountains of Versailles," has an elegiac, nostalgic tone. This nostalgic tone, as Linda Hutcheon avers, portrays the past in a deliberate, ironic, and questioning manner, exposing it as a constructed story rather than an obvious "'History' or an unmediated 'truth'" (qtd. in Brooker, 2001, pp. 153-54). This first line was taken from a *New York Times Magazine* article by Percy Philip (Evans-Bush, 2021, May 18), describing how Versailles had become lifeless after the French monarchy's fall, as Lachmann (1983, p. 68) remarks, intertextuality creates a dual purpose in literature: "[…] meaning-making activities are not programmed by the supply of signs available in a given text but, rather, that these activities always arise with reference to the signs of another text" (Lachmann, 1997, p. 30). However, she does not lament its lost grandeur. Instead, she emphasizes its dead fountains, a stark, almost clinical observation

rather than an emotional elegy since Versailles, the extravagant symbol of absolute monarchy, is now lifeless, like a parody of its former magnificence. The concept of retro in intertextuality is something that "borrows," "quotes," and "parodies" the past "without sentimental longing" (Grainge, 2002, p. 55). Moore's poem does exactly this: it invokes the grandeur of Versailles and the symbolic elegance of the swan but without romantic nostalgia. Instead, it presents these elements as ornamental relics, detached from their original vitality. The reference to Louis XV's mistresses, his extravagance, and his role in setting the stage for the French Revolution provides historical context, which implies Versailles's demise was inevitable, an idea that is grounded in the themes of Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil* (1857), which often mourned beauty lost to time. The dead fountains also evoke Baudelaire's decay imagery, where splendor is overshadowed by time's erosion.

The poem presents not a real swan but a chintz china figurine. "Chintz china" alludes to "Chinoiserie," the European fascination with Chinese-style decorative arts (Gloag, 1952, p. 187). This places the swan in the realm of artifice rather than nature. Like the Versailles gardens or the French aristocracy's obsession with opulence, the china swan is excessively ornate, decorative, and artificial with its "toothed gold collar" (lines 6-7), images of gilded cages, slavery, or even a king's crown, representing both power and confinement. The poem gently satirizes certain romanticized and aristocratic notions of beauty, power, and decadence since swans are traditionally associated with grace and poetic beauty, from Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819) to Yeats's "The Wild Swans at Coole" (1917). However, Moore's swan has an awkward description: "with swart blind look askance and ambidextrous legs" (lines 3-4), an unromantic representation in which the swan is not majestic but stiff, artificial, and somewhat absurd in its design. Its "ambidextrous legs" humorously make the bird sound mechanical or confused rather than graceful, parodying the tradition of swans as poetic symbols, showing an aesthetic that is more artificial than sublime. In other words, "Moore's porcelain swan," representing the French monarchy, opposes "Yeats's romantic nostalgia" and his longing for the past and his sorrow over what has been lost (Hicok, 2007, p. 118). In contrast to his untamed, living swan, Moore's swan is restrained and artificial, offering a critique of Yeats's nostalgia.

The poem also reimagines Baudelaire's swan in exile, but here, the swan is already lifeless, an inert decoration rather than a tragic, displaced figure. By emphasizing artificiality, Moore undermines the romanticism of nostalgic beauty, as if saying: "Look at this swan, so 'fine,' yet just a fragile piece of china, owned and forgotten in a dead space." The final line, "The King is dead," lands without sentimentality, a cold, ironic tone of the past's demise. The opulence eventually becomes a museum piece, emptied of its original social, cultural, and political meaning. Nostalgia here is "a commercial category and a cultural practice" (Grainge, 2002, p. 56). In this way, Moore parodies the idea that beauty and art can be preserved in dead, artificial forms, displaying that what was once sublime (Versailles, the swan) is now merely a fossil of past glory. In the end, Moore's poem undercuts an authoritative and detached tone by turning it into something ironic and critical. The retro mode of intertextuality in her poem, therefore, is not "a mere imitation," but it "often involves an ironic attitude toward the earlier style" (Sim, 2001, p. 297).

Moore, furthermore, used direct biblical references without quotations in the poem called "Is Your Town Nineveh?". Her inner-biblical allusion to the biblical story of Jonah and Nineveh involves shared themes and imagery, while her inner-biblical exegesis seeks to show that the poem has engaged critically with the source text as interpreting, reshaping, or reapplying its meaning to a new context, reflecting a new social setting (Meek, 2014, p. 289). Her use of biblical intertextuality connects her idea of modern people struggling in a cultural and spiritual framework. The direct reference to Nineveh and Jonah invokes the biblical story, drawing a parallel between the biblical setting and the modern context described in the poem with the aquarium, Statue of Liberty, and personal discontent in the modern world. The "sweltering east wind of your wishes" (line 8) specifically recalls Jonah's verses, where he feels despair under the hot wind and articulates that he is "angry enough to die!" (*Christian Standard Bible,* 2017, Jonah 4:8 and 4:9), symbolizing discomfort and resistance to God's will.

Moore asks: "Why are you so desolate, are you Jonah?", criticizing modern human beings through the lens of Jonah's story. She seems to confront the modern individual, asking why they are consumed by despair or dissatisfaction, particularly in a world where "all personal upheaval in the name of freedom could be tabooed" (lines 5-6). Moore questions whether modern humans are shirking their moral or societal responsibilities; likewise, Jonah was called to deliver God's message to Nineveh but initially ran away. She criticizes how people justify their rebellions as a quest for freedom while failing to recognize the self-destructive or misguided nature of such pursuits. She compares the modern human who has freedom in his hand with Jonah, who did not have it. With these lines, Moore invites her readers to look beyond their personal frustrations and see the more extensive implications of their actions. Then she adds, "I myself, have stood/there by the aquarium" (lines 9-10), not in the stomach of a fish, and "looking/ at the Statue of Liberty" (lines 10-11), instead of being trapped like Jonah felt. If the poem is read as "exegesis," it could be seen as "reinterpreting" or "reapplying" the story of Jonah and Nineveh as a critique of modern society. The poem's title, furthermore, contains the question: "Is your town Nineveh?", implying a moral evaluation, likening the modern world to Nineveh's sinful state in need of repentance. She criticizes modern people as being overdramatic by saying you do not even live in Nineveh, which "was notoriously wicked" (Flaumenhaft, 2014, p. 3), how can you feel desolate? This could reflect the poet's reinterpretation of Nineveh as a symbol of societal corruption or spiritual failure. Jonah's reluctance to deliver God's message, moreover, could parallel modern struggles with moral responsibility or personal calling. Moore here "intertextually echoes" to "set up a link which invites traffic, both similarities and differences" (Moyise, 2002, p. 420). Her poem uses the Jonah story as a biblical narrative, as a metaphor for more extensive themes like fragmentation, despair, or the search for meaning in a modern, broken world. It also actively reinterprets the story within a contemporary context by comparing and contrasting the modern human and Jonah.

Her poem "Feed Me, Also, River God" similarly presents a deeply intertextual connection with biblical and existential themes, particularly through "Isaiah 9:10." She, influenced by Christian rhetoric, viewed allegory as powerful, both for comforting and inspiring change, drawing from "Hebrew prophetic traditions" in World War I and adopting "a fabulist voice" in World War II and beyond (Setina, 2016, p. 1263). However, in this case, Moore shifts the focus

from collective defiance to a more personal meditation on survival, humility, and divine justice. She directly quotes: "The bricks are fallen down, we will / build with hewn stone, the sycamores are cut down, we will / change to cedars" (lines 6-7). In the Bible (*English Revised Version*, 1885, p. 509), this verse is spoken by the Israelites in defiance of destruction, showing their confidence in rebuilding despite divine warnings. In Moore's poem, however, she distances herself from this prideful attitude: "I am not ambitious to dress stones, to renew forts" (line 8). Unlike the Israelites, who responded to ruin with stubbornness and material ambition, the speaker does not wish to engage in a futile act of self-assertion. Instead, there is a rejection of the vanity of rebuilding for its own sake. She here may criticize hubristic resilience that ignores deeper spiritual concerns. There is also a possible allusion to Exodus and the trials of the Israelites in the wilderness, particularly with the mention of "gluttony and divine testing," in which she may reference the Israelites' complaints about food in the desert in "Numbers 11:4-6," when they demanded meat instead of *manna*[2] leading to divine punishment. The "quicksand of gluttony," therefore, might symbolize the temptation of material excess and self-indulgence, which consumes those who lack vigilance.

The existential theme connection appears when she questions divine fairness. "If you are a god" (line 12) plays with biblical notions of "God's impartiality," in which "Acts 10:34" says, "God is no respecter of persons," but also subtly questions whether divine justice is truly impartial. The closing lines, in the same vein, introduce a tension between prayer and transactional faith, implying that if divine favor is only granted in "exchange" for offerings rather than out of pure grace, then the prayer is futile. "Job's defiance" in the Bible is echoed here, where he rejects the idea of a faith based on reward rather than full devotion. However, Moore, in this poem, contrasts herself with the indefatigable, defiant Israelites, acknowledging her "own limits": "I am not like them, indefatigable…" (line 12) where she reflects "a humble acceptance of human frailty" as a Stoic philosophy, particularly the idea that one must recognize what is within one's control and what is not (Duncan, 1952, p. 133). The poem thus criticizes the idea of blind perseverance and questions whether rebuilding is always the right response. With the help of this biblical intertextual display, the poem deepens Moore's engagement with "Isaiah 9:10," moving from a broad social critique to an intensely personal reflection on humility, divine justice, and survival. These references, thus, contribute to her layered, intertextual style, reflecting her intellectual engagement with religious and moral questions. As Jenkins construes, "[b]iblical phrases and echoes abound throughout her work. […] she is moved by a Christian passion which is reminiscent of the best kind of preaching" (1984, p. 37). By invoking biblical defiance, Stoic resignation, and existential doubt, the poem might be referring to the fact that true resilience is not about prideful rebuilding but about accepting limitations and rejecting false security. However, the reading process of her poems becomes an active, creative process where the reader participates in shaping meaning:

> The writer assigns meaning to [their] own context and in interaction with other texts[...] shapes and forms [a] text. The reader, in much the same way, assigns meaning to the generated text in interaction with other Texts [they] know[...] A writer[...] presents them [meanings] to the reader

[2] The God-given food to the Israelites while they were in the wilderness (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

> as a text. The reader […] enters into a dialogue with the possibilities the text has to offer. (van Wolde, 1989, p. 47)

Moore constructs a text by drawing upon her own experiences, cultural context, the era she lives in, and the intertextual relationships with other texts she has read. Her writing is not created in isolation but is shaped by influences and meanings. The reader, likewise, brings their own knowledge, experiences, and familiarity with other texts into their interpretation of the generated text. She does not simply lay out a single, pre-determined meaning for the reader to follow. Although the poems offer a starting point with the exact quotations and the other modes of intertextuality, they still put the reader in a dialogue. The reader, after all, explores the text's possibilities, interpreting and reacting based on their perspective. It may hypothetically be a critique of modern society, and a personal meditation on survival, or maybe not. The process of meaning-making here is collaborative and open-ended. The horizontal axis of intertextuality, mentioned above, comes into play in her poems. Since the text is not self-sufficient due to the allusions, "it does not function as a closed system" (Alfaro, 1996, p. 268). The reader, therefore, must have sufficient knowledge to interpret the text and to give meaning to it.

Conclusion

By revisiting and reinterpreting pre-existing art forms in light of their relationships with new texts, intertextuality alters the understanding of the older work by providing fresh perspectives or alternative contexts. Further, it can approach and interpret new texts by recognizing their connections to established works. Marianne Moore's irony and references to Shakespeare, Edmund Burke, and Ralph Waldo Emerson in relation to her poem, "Silence," enrich the poem's intertextual depth, layering her exploration of silence with multi-faceted perspectives. The poem revisits the ideas of Stoicism and Confucianism, related to the fact that silence signifies dignity, strength, or wisdom, which is deeply rooted in cultural and philosophical traditions, likely to present silence as a virtue associated with self-control and refinement. However, revisiting this thought in an ironic tone presents silence as something potentially alienating or overly rigid. The persona's evocation of a father's words connects to patriarchal traditions where silence is seen as an emblem of control. Moore invites readers to reevaluate this tradition, questioning whether silence as an imposed value reflects true depth or suppresses emotional expression. In "He Made This Screen," Chinese landscape paintings and motifs encourage a reexamination of these artistic and cultural traditions. By describing the artist's ability to blend a tapestry-like sea, a fig tree, and a circling dragon, she reinterprets these symbols in a poetic context, emphasizing their imaginative and dynamic qualities over their traditional meanings. Similarly, "No Swan So Fine" blends history, art, and literature to explore power and decay. Through intertextuality, Moore shows that preservation cannot restore life. The poem's intertextual connections, its dialogue with visual art, crafts, and global traditions, help readers see Moore's work as a bridge between art forms and cultures.

Moore also creates a sophisticated dialogue between biblical traditions and modernist poetic sensibilities, reimagining religious language through her characteristic precise, observational style. Her use of biblical intertextuality in the poems "Is Your Town Nineveh?" and "Feed Me, Also, River God" transforms its original message of defiance into a reflection on humility and human limits. By reinterpreting scripture, Moore creates new meaning and

invites readers to rethink the original verse. Her poem, in the end, follows a structured progression, moving from biblical reference to personal reflection, showing how intertextuality shapes both ideas and form. Therefore, her poem draws on biblical allegories, using it as a metaphor to explore questionable themes such as disconnection, hopelessness, and the quest for purpose in a fragmented, modern world. All of this interconnectedness reflects modernist concerns with blending different artistic traditions and rejecting rigid distinctions between "high" and "low" art. For Kristeva, as well, it can be said that a literary text is not a self-contained or original creation but rather the outcome of various pre-existing codes, discourses, and other texts (Zengin, 2016, p. 315). As a result, every word in a text carries intertextual significance and must be understood not only for its meaning within the text but also in relation to the cultural discourses and texts beyond it. Moore's poetry, thus, can be seen as "mosaics of quotations" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66), where fragments from different sources come together to form a multi-voiced text.

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