How an Eating Disorder May Have Informed Marianne Moore's "Nine Nectarines"

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Abstract:

How do eating disorders inform and reveal themselves in works of Marianne Moore? Using archival research at The Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia along with medical texts and theories of the 1930s, I consider Moore's "Nine Nectarines" as a means of teasing out how eating disorders play a prevalent role in her overarching oeuvre. Disorders and diseases such as depression, anxiety, and addiction have received plenty of attention as a lens to approaching a poet's work. However, eating disorders are largely left out of these types of analyses, mirroring the unfortunate fact that eating disorders today persist as the deadliest, most under-diagnosed, and under-insured of *any* mental disorder. Such an oversight is glaring, particularly considering how relevant food and hunger are as symbolism in modern poetry. Failing to incorporate the role(s) eating disorders may play in a likely anorectic's work (Moore's) leaves a gaping disparity in a poet's or poem's comprehensive literary analysis. This manuscript aims to play a role in filling this disparity by focusing on eating disorders as lens with Moore's work.

Keywords: eating disorders, Marianne Moore, anorexia, bulimia, poetry.

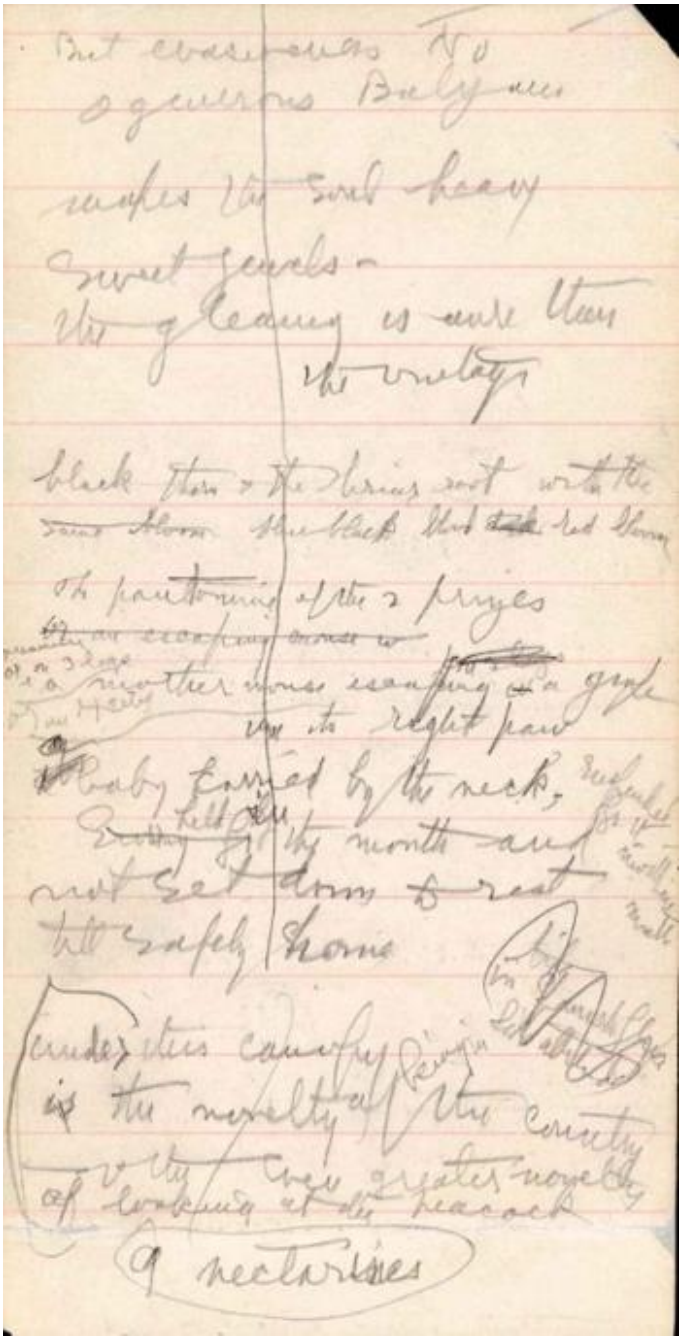
Introduction

Much has been written of Marianne Moore's poems of the 1930s with many critics ignoring the potential personal experience of the poet in favour of external influences. Moore preceded the era of so-called confessional poets, but I argue that there are hints and clues tucked within Moore's work that suggest a much more personal narrative than the majority of critics have thus far addressed. Her poetry does not exist in a silo of the natural world, as critics such as Laurence Stapleton have suggested. I argue that Moore's poetry, and "Nine Nectarines" specifically, offer insight into a more personal realm of the poet's world via an expert use and manipulation of language, themes, and symbolism.

"Nine Nectarines": In the Beginning

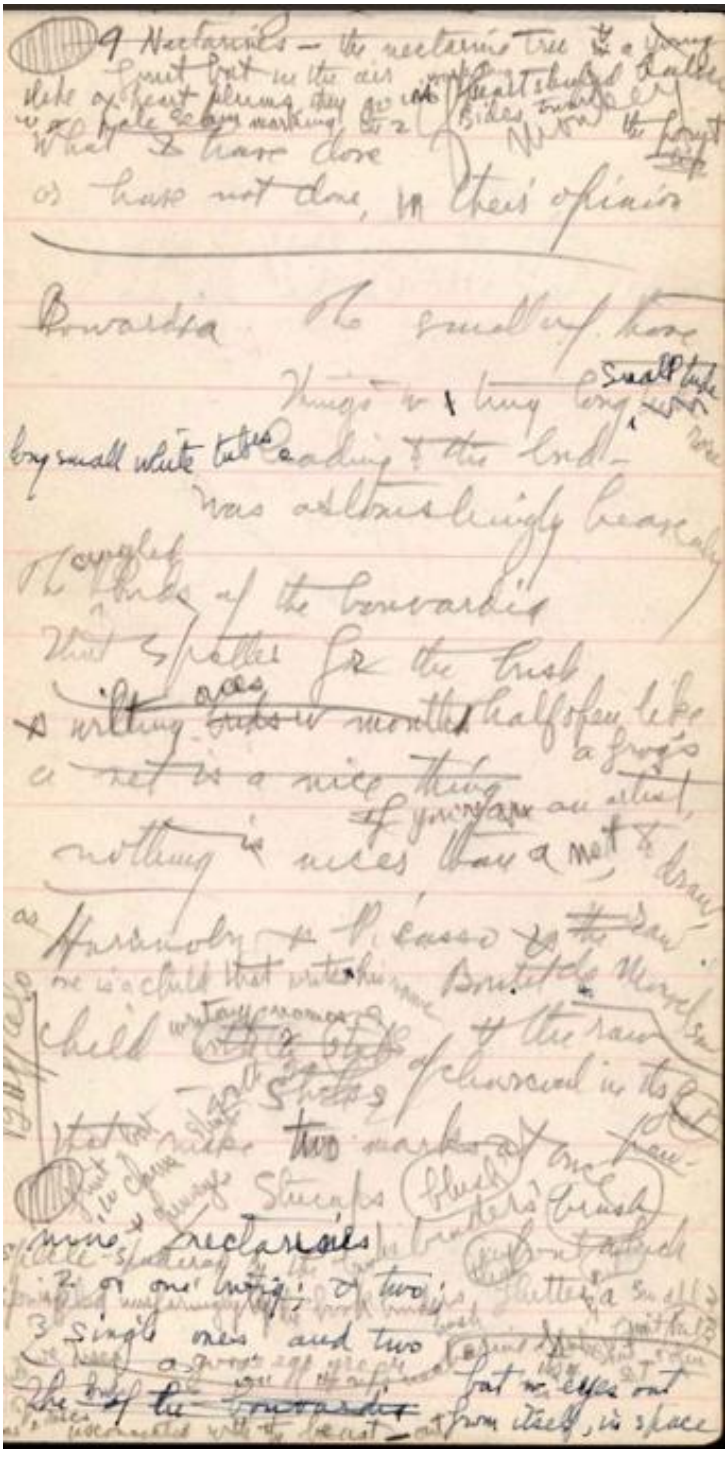
"Nine Nectarines and Other Porcelain" was originally published in *Poetry* magazine (1934). It was then collected in *Selected Poems* (1935) as "Nine Nectarines" and finally included as "Nine

Nectarines" once again in *Collected Poems* (1951).[1] There are changes between the 1934, 1935, and 1951 publications – sometimes ample changes. There are also, of course, vast differences between the draft of the poem held at the Rosenbach Museum where Moore titled the work in progress "Nine Nectarines" and the various published versions. Museum researchers estimate that Moore started this notebook in 1933, which gives a probable date to the draft. Some have called the poem an "advance" on her 1935 poem "Camellia Sabina" (Stapleton 77). However, in actuality it seems that Moore was working on ideas for both poems simultaneously. She included a simple but telling reference to "Nine Nectarines" on the second page of her 1933-1940 notebook, a page otherwise completely dedicated to drafting "Camellia Sabina." Located at the bottom of the first page are two circled words: "9 nectarines" (Moore VII:04:07, 002-verso).



Part of Moore's draft of "Nine Nectarines," held at the Rosenbach Museum (Moore VII:04:07 002-verso).

It was not until the seventh page of this notebook that Moore began working on "Nine Nectarines" in earnest:



Part of Moore's draft of "Nine Nectarines," held at the Rosenbach Museum (Moore VII:04:07 007-recto).

Crossed-out words include "with," a word suggestive of companionship and support, as well as "young," which indicate Moore's continued grappling in her various drafts to accept time and age (see, for example, her omissions of "before" and "older" in "Pigeons"). Moore's conflicts over whether

to include or omit words relating to companionship, age, and life are also reflective of her own personal (partially self-subscribed) confinement. Co-dependency was (and is) common for anorectics. By the 1930s doctors believed that separating the patient from the parents, and particularly the mother, was an important part of treatment. "Parentectomy," the method of isolating patients from their parents, was an approach coined by Murray Peshkin in 1919 and originally designed to treat asthma patients, but it quickly grew in popularity as an anorexia treatment (Robinson 199). One 1938 case describes a 19-year-old woman who was told repeatedly that she would be separated from her family but "never believed that her mother would abandon her" (Nicolle 154). It was only when she saw her family leave the care facility that she acquiesced to treatment, as she understood a split from her family had truly occurred. However, for many women of the 1930s, like Moore, such an intervention was not possible.

Dualism in "Nine Nectarines"

The splitting, dualism, and halving themes of "Nine Nectarines" are just as prevalent as Moore's selective deletions, even in her early draft. The 1934, 1935, and 1951 published versions all maintain the splitting imagery in the first stanza:

> Arranged by twos as peaches are,
> at intervals that all may live—
> eight and a single one, on twigs that
> grew the year before—they look like
> a derivative;
> although not uncommonly
> the opposite is seen—
> (*Poetry* 64)

One of the most obvious changes from Moore's draft of "Nine Nectarines" to the published versions is her decision to open the line by naming peaches instead of nectarines, only hinting at the closely related fruits through simile. It is not uncommon for the layperson to confuse peaches and nectarines since there is a single gene variant between them, and nectarines are often described as a bald peach that tastes like a plum. Nectarines are harvested by grafting their branches onto peach trees.[2] This unique dependency of nectarines was surely not missed by Moore, which may have been one of her reasons to wait until the eighth line (in her published versions) to mention nectarines by name. If a nectarine cannot be harvested without a peach tree first solidly in place, naming the nectarine well after the peach is akin to a reliant child paying respect to its elders. Moore rightly references the nectarine as "derivative," a noun to indicate something based on another source, but it would be remiss to ignore "derivative" as an adjective that insults an artist or their work. "Derivative" can serve as both a noun and an adjective in this poem's instance if we view the nectarines as metaphors for Moore-the-poet.

Her draft of the poem includes the lines "a ~~net is a nice thing~~ / if you're ~~are~~ an artist, / nothing is nicer than a net" (Moore VII: 04:07 007-recto). This may have been an allusion to James Joyce's *A Portrait of a Young Man,* and suggests that Moore read and enjoyed Joyce's work well after she notoriously rejected his submission to *The Dial* in 1927 when she served as editor.[3] A net can be a sense of security, a literal safety-net, or as a restriction and imprisonment (and is often a tool used to capture bats, animals that appear throughout the draft). Nets also work as a great metaphor for how anorectics see their lives, initially comforted by the control but eventually finding themselves in a prison of sorts. Merritt Low attempted to explain anorexia in 1936 as "undoubtedly [coming] from the struggle of trying to standardize a product which is fundamentally individual" (834). Low was referencing the "product" of a subscribed one-size-fits-all diet, but a product can just as easily describe an objectified human being – or an artist. Moore laboured with whether to include the description of a net in relation to an artist in the draft, much as Joyce described an American artist as wrestling to "try to fly by those nets" (310). She deletes the active descriptor, replacing it with a passive description. Her change from active to passive is a recurring theme in the poem *and* in much of her life. For example, in changes made between her 1935 and 1951 versions, she swaps "we" for "one" in a different stanza. It is an instance of the poet prominently trying to place herself – or someone like her, an artist – into her work with the security and distance of a third-person approach. Moore's personal passivity was displayed both through her physical appearance and in her acceptance of being kept under her mother's thumb until Mary Moore's passing. In a letter home from Bryn Mawr College dated 2 April 1908, Moore described the results from a physical appointment. Her weight and the alarm it caused the person administering the exam are indicative of Moore's potential ED and her unwillingness to take up space – a type of passivity common in anorectics:

> But my height is 4 ft 5 (5' 4"?) and my weight only 98. Miss Applebee says it is a disgrace that your weight ought to go into your height twice (or the other way about) and was most kindly and persistently prescribing stuff to eat, tonics, slow eating, sleep everything in fact. She finally pinned me down to raw eggs and said I *had* to eat one a day. (*Selected Letters* 44-45)

Moore's resistance to eating and, contrarily, her description of food binges in some correspondence with her brother, are themes in her letters throughout her life. However, in her poetry the focus on food and the results of consumption – weight and substance – are veiled in her preference for the natural world. Stapleton claims that the final (published) version of the poem suggests that a nectarine "intimates immortality" like its peach derivative now that the poem has become more "compressed" (79). He glances over the importance of immortality in the poem, although his naming of immortality as a key aspect of the poem seems to be by sheer coincidence. It is inarguably true that the final version of the poem is more compressed. Moore deleted entire stanzas in the 1935 and 1951 versions, and all these abandoned stanzas heavily featured descriptors of porcelain. It is crucial to pay close attention to what the deleted porcelain was and how it connected to food – and the nine nectarines in particular. The porcelain objects Moore deleted were all *dinner*

plates, designed for the dual purpose of serving food while also serving as works of art. When Moore removed the plates from the poem, she also removed the ability to consume food in a civil manner. This is much like how her mother was known for crafting meagre meals prepared on a hot plate before she gave them to her daughter to eat on the edge of a bathtub (*Twenty-First Century* 15).

Moore's emphasis on the number nine should also not be overlooked. Consider the number through the lens of Chinese culture, as it should be since Moore wrote about Chinese porcelain specifically and exclusively in the poem. Chinese numerology, which has been prevalent in China since it was created by Emperor Fu His over 4,000 years ago, dictates that the number nine is lucky and is often interpreted to mean "enough" and perfection (Ghannam 53). Both fullness (or resistance to it) and the quest for perfection are recurring themes in an anorectic's life. The number nine in Mandarin, 九, sounds very much like 久, which translates to eternity. This detail Stapleton either misses or dismisses when he claims the nectarine is "intimating immortality." He does not expand upon that immortality at all. Moore's western ear may have also heard the similarities between these Mandarin words, pronounced jiǔ, and "Yu," the latter being the red-cheeked peach she mentions by name in the poem. The Yu peach of Moore's poem is known for stopping death and, more importantly, "eternizes life" (Schlegel xxiv). "Nine Nectarines" describes a Yu "peach which cannot aid the dead, / but eaten in time prevents death" (*New Collected* 117). Gustaaf Schlegel's 1866 book about the "Heaven-Earth League" described how eating this peach "frees man forever from hunger" and promises immortality, and Schlegel specifies how in lieu of a real Yu peach a painting of the fruit or alternatively a *porcelain* peach can be a substitute (xxxiv).[4] Moore borrowed the phrase "prevents death" directly from Schlegel's book. The Yu is ultimately a Chinese version of Eve's apple without requiring a fall from grace, and an understandably irresistible tale for the anorectic – or a lover of obscure history like Moore.

Another sub-section here?

Stapleton only considers the three most accessible, published versions of the poem in his analysis. He does not address the initial draft where Moore briefly allows herself to be present in a rare instance, exposed as a naked peach. Still, Stapleton's work does probe deeper than some other popular criticism which suggests Moore's poems of the 1930s were largely centred simply on "engagement with animals and plants" and an "ethical and aesthetic stance toward the natural world" (Weinstein 373). Those elements are clearly present and are very much part of the outermost layer of Moore's multi-coated poems in their many versions. However, look for the poet within the poems and she reveals herself quietly in metaphors and comparisons. You can find Moore in the initial draft of "Nine Nectarines" as a very present, assumingly human interloper in the draft's fourth and fifth lines: "What I have done Monkey ~~tip~~ / or have not done, in their opinion" (Moore VII:04:07 007-recto).

Her voice is initially unapologetic at the beginning of the draft, with the nectarine boldly announcing itself in the first line. However, Moore swiftly separates the nectarines from the rest of the poem with a long dash:

> 9 Nectarines—the nectarine tree ~~w~~& a ~~young /~~ fruit bat in the air working
> like ox heart plums they go in heart shaped halves
> w ~~a~~ pale seam marking the 2 cf 2 sides toward the point
>
> (Moore VII:04:07 007-recto)

Once Moore distances the remainder of the poem from the named fruit, she is quick to compare nectarines to hearts in two ways. These comparisons include the description of the "heart shaped halves" and the analogy of fruit to "oxheart plums," but these intimate and seemingly loving metaphors prove too vulnerable to sustain. The connection between anorexia and heart atrophy and failure was already established by the mid-twentieth century (Hellerstein 122). Today, cardiac failure is attributed to 33% of deaths in anorectic patients (Sardar 88). When Moore confronts what she has "done" immediately after exposing and exploring the fruit at its most defenseless inner workings – its heart – it is a statement, not a question. There is no such sentimentality or regret in the published versions of "Nine Nectarines." Instead, these later versions abandon the first-person entirely, offering one royal "we."

Pronoun Selection

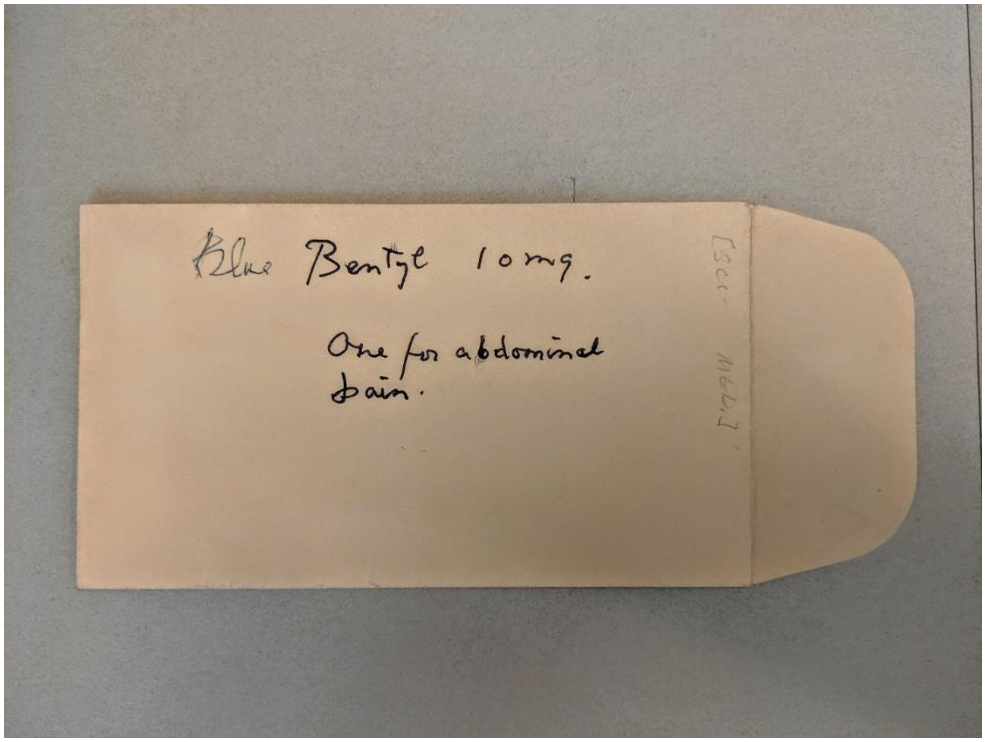
Pronoun usage is a known means of signifying a person's focus of attention. King Henry II was one of the first to use the royal "we," indicating that he was speaking for both God and himself, and today's research shows that first-person pronoun usage suggest insecurity and acute self-awareness while first-person or second-person *plural* suggests an outward focus of consideration of the feelings and thoughts of others (Kacewicz 2013, 125). "We" cannot know if Moore was using the same royal assumptions as King Henry II, speaking for God and herself, but her change from "I" to "we" before publication does suggest the adoption of sort of armour to protect herself from public scrutiny and an attempt to distance herself from the poem. The fruits, similar to the poet, are also sheathed by the time they are published, and, in the case of the fruit, they are safeguarded by their peach comparison. This may be why Moore no longer felt the need for separation with the dash. However, that favoured punctuation still makes an early appearance in published versions. It is used to separate "live" and "before" in all published versions, both terms that are indicative of life. Moore added an em-dash after "blue" and "style" in the 1934 *Poetry* version with the lines "Fuzzless through slender crescent leaves / or green or blue – or both / in the Chinese style – the four" (*Poetry* 64). However, those two dashes were removed by the time the poem was collected one year later in *Selected Poems.*

Much of Moore's early draft of "Nine Nectarines" is so different from the published versions that it is impossible to directly compare the two. What can be analysed are the themes and subjects repeatedly present in the draft and missing entirely in publications. The two most prominent figures missing from the draft stage to publications are the bouvardia plant and fruit bats. An unnamed species of bat is mentioned once in the 1934 and 1935 published versions, but Moore is no longer so acutely focussed on the animal. Bouvardia plants and fruit bats both engage themes of hunger and food in the 1933 draft. Moore describes the bouvardia with the lines:

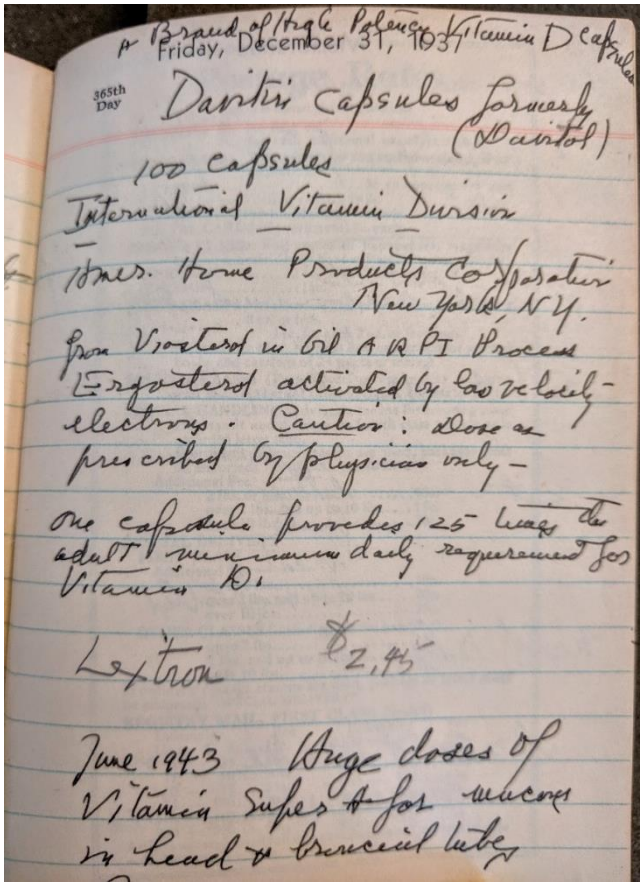
wilting ~~buds~~ w mouth~~s~~ half open like
a frog's
a ~~net is a nice thing~~
if you're ~~are~~ an artist,
nothing is nicer than a net

(Moore VII:04:07 007-recto)

The bouvardia is inedible and Moore describes it as both dying (wilting) and with a "mouth" half open as if it is begging for nourishment. These two descriptors of the plant mirror the appearance of the anorectic who wastes from the disorder but continues to refuse food. Consuming the bouvardia plant directly will poison a human, but the common side effects of pharmaceutical drugs infused with hydroalcoholic extract (which is taken from the bouvardia) mirror the symptoms and results of an ED. Donepezil causes fatigue, vomiting, weight loss and insomnia; Rivastigmine causes weight loss, anorexia and dizziness; and Galantamine causes anorexia and heart attacks (Herrera-Ruiz 537). Anorexia in these medical definitions refers to any loss of appetite, and not specifically to anorexia nervosa. Initially in the draft, Moore rightfully describes the plant as having multiple mouths (as the bouvardia has multiple blossoms), but she scratches out the plural "s" to fixate on a singular blossom. This decision circles the poem back to an inner reflective stance, perhaps associating the singular hungry blossom with the draft's individual human. There is no record of Moore taking medications with hydroalcoholic extract, but there are ample examples of drugs she was prescribed or expressed interest in that share a common thread. Bentyl, Lextron, and Thiamine are all known to treat anorexia, amongst other conditions.[5]



A pill packet for Bentyl in Moore's handwriting, held at the Rosenbach Museum.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100 capsules

International Vitamin Division

Mrs. Home Products Corporation

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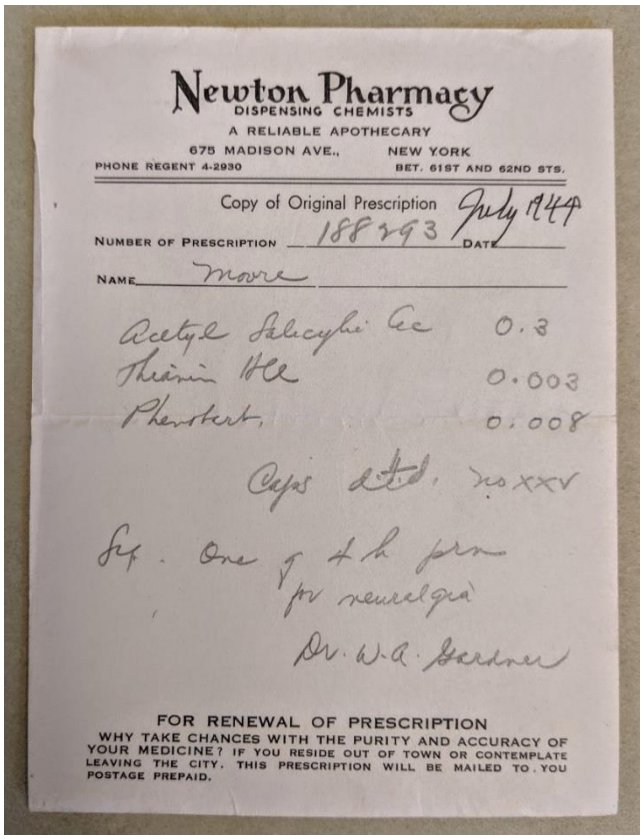
Irradiated ergosterol activated by low velocity electrons. Caution: Dose as prescribed by physician only.

One capsule provides 125 times the adult minimum daily requirement for Vitamin D.

Lextron $2.45

June 1943 Huge doses of Vitamin Super A for mucous in head & bronchial tubes

A note for the cost of Lextron ($2.45) in Moore's handwriting, held at the Rosenbach Museum.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DISPENSING CHEMISTS

A RELIABLE APOTHECARY

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PHONE REGENT 4-2930 BET. 61ST AND 62ND STS.

Copy of Original Prescription July 1944

NUMBER OF PRESCRIPTION 188293 DATE

NAME Moore

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Thiamin Hcl 0.003

Phenobarb. 0.008

Caps dtd. No XXV

Sig. One q 4 h prn for neuralgia

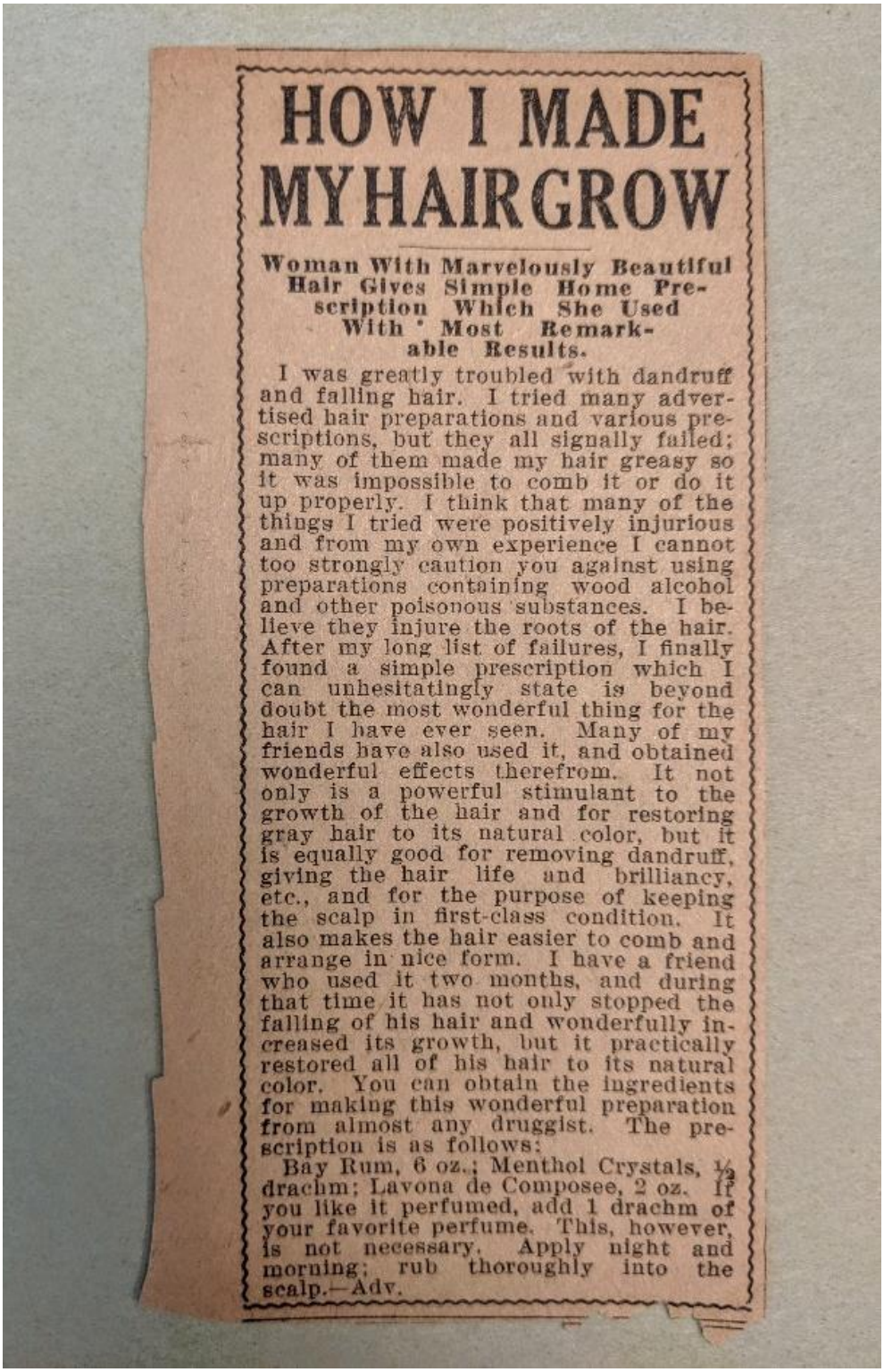
Dr. W.A. Gardner

FOR RENEWAL OF PRESCRIPTION

WHY TAKE CHANCES WITH THE PURITY AND ACCURACY OF YOUR MEDICINE? IF YOU RESIDE OUT OF TOWN OR CONTEMPLATE LEAVING THE CITY, THIS PRESCRIPTION WILL BE MAILED TO YOU POSTAGE PREPAID.

Moore's prescription for Thiamine (and other medications), held at the Rosenbach Museum.

It is clear even from this sampling of notes and prescriptions that Moore diligently sought out supplements, drugs, and medicines to help with a variety of ailments. She also regularly kept clippings and articles featuring various methods to treat afflictions from hair loss to being overweight and difficulty swallowing – all common concerns for the anorectic. Moore wrote home from Bryn Mawr on 29 March 1908 that her "hair began to fall out a while ago" (*Selected Letters* 42).



HOW I MADE MY HAIR GROW

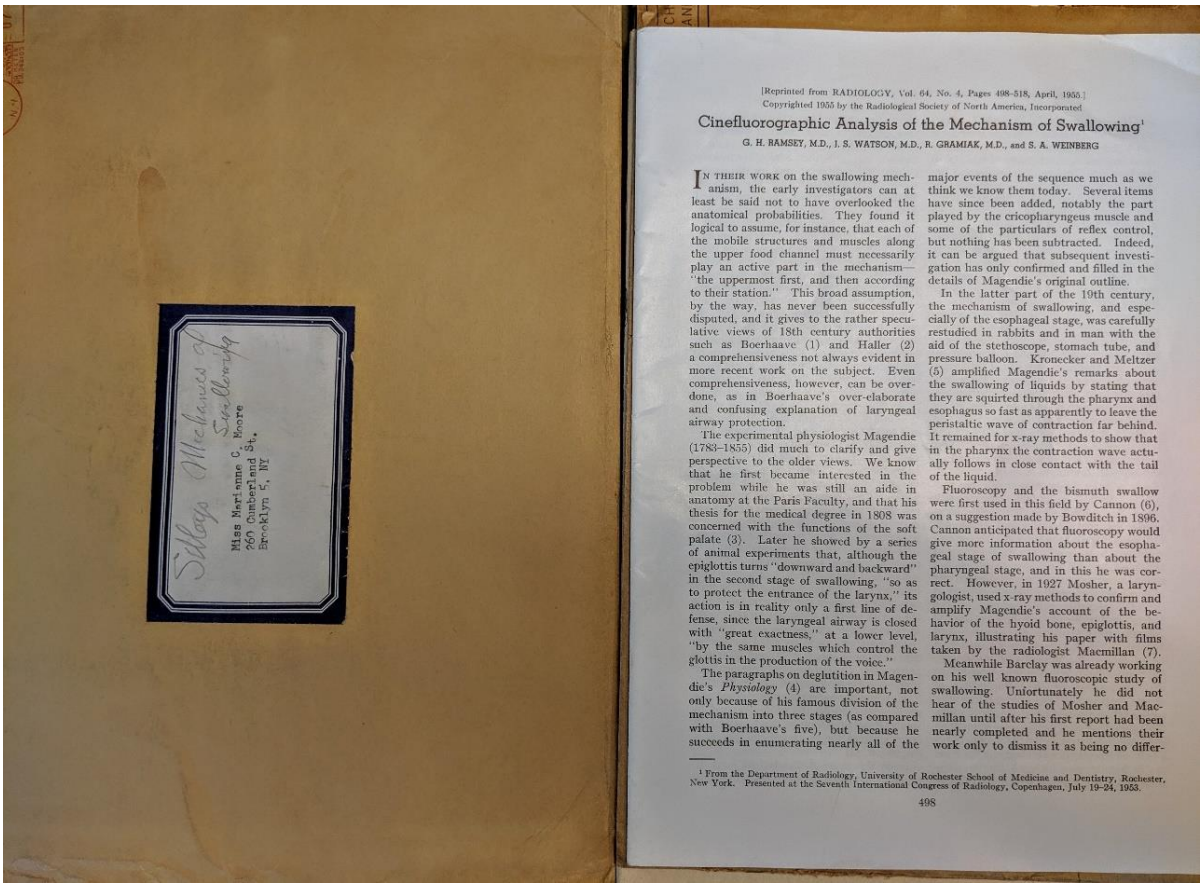
Woman With Marvelously Beautiful Hair Gives Simple Home Prescription Which She Used With Most Remarkable Results.

I was greatly troubled with dandruff and falling hair. I tried many advertised hair preparations and various prescriptions, but they all signally failed; many of them made my hair greasy so it was impossible to comb it or do it up properly. I think that many of the things I tried were positively injurious and from my own experience I cannot too strongly caution you against using preparations containing wood alcohol and other poisonous substances. I believe they injure the roots of the hair. After my long list of failures, I finally found a simple prescription which I can unhesitatingly state is beyond doubt the most wonderful thing for the hair I have ever seen. Many of my friends have also used it, and obtained wonderful effects therefrom. It not only is a powerful stimulant to the growth of the hair and for restoring gray hair to its natural color, but it is equally good for removing dandruff, giving the hair life and brilliancy, etc., and for the purpose of keeping the scalp in first-class condition. It also makes the hair easier to comb and arrange in nice form. I have a friend who used it two months, and during that time it has not only stopped the falling of his hair and wonderfully increased its growth, but it practically restored all of his hair to its natural color. You can obtain the ingredients for making this wonderful preparation from almost any druggist. The prescription is as follows:

Bay Rum, 6 oz.; Menthol Crystals, ½ drachm; Lavona de Composee, 2 oz. If you like it perfumed, add 1 drachm of your favorite perfume. This, however, is not necessary. Apply night and morning; rub thoroughly into the scalp.—Adv.

A clipping Moore kept on methods for hair growth, held at the Rosenbach Museum.

A clipping Moore saved on juicing for weight control, held at the Rosenbach Museum.



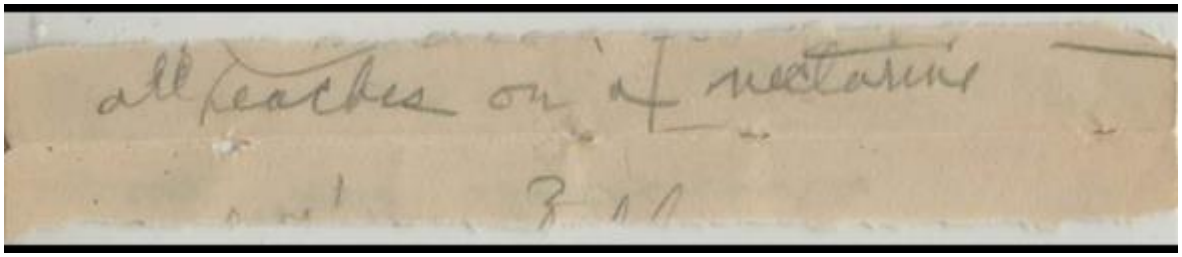
A medical article Moore saved on difficulty swallowing, held at the Rosenbach Museum.

It would be no surprise if Moore was highly knowledgeable about the side effects and lesser known off-label treatments of various medications. Her personal archives suggest that her penchant for medicines that treat anorexia and its side effects was not coincidence, but rather an attempt by the poet to treat an ED. As far as we know, Moore never sought treatment for anorexia nervosa specifically (a neglect which would not be unusual in mid-century America), but perhaps she indulged in self-treatment through various supplements and writing therapy. Her use of hunger and food themes as well as animals and objects that serve as metaphors for the poet and her ED-charged issues is highly prevalent when considering her poetry through an anorectic lens. "Bibliotherapy" was recommended to patients by Benjamin Rush and John Galt II as early as the mid-1800s (Silverberg 131). Eli Griefer, poet and pharmacist, started giving patients poems along with their prescriptions in 1928, eventually founding "poetry therapy" in two hospitals (Gustavson 55). Writing therapy was not formally introduced by Ira Progoff until 1965, but the foundational concepts had clearly been in place for decades (Hiemstra 19). It can be reasonably assumed that poets like Moore were aware of and experienced the personal benefits of writing therapy, and perhaps used writing as a type of self-medication.

Moore chooses the image of the fruit bat to bookend the poem in draft form, starting with the "~~young~~ / fruit bat working" in the first two lines (Moore VII:04:07 007-recto). The poet may have seen elements of herself and her dysfunctional relationship with food in her draft's fruit bat and its eating process. There are nearly 200 species of fruit bats, and the majority consume mostly liquid fruit juice and flower nectar instead of the usual bat fare of insects.[6] However, it is a misnomer that fruit bats actually *eat* the fruit. Instead, they chew and then spit out the skin, pulp, and seeds, only consuming the fruit juice. Moore, more so than most people, would have probably known detailed specifics about a given animal's behaviours considering her affinity for studying the natural world. "Chewing and spitting" is a relatively newly studied facet of EDs and is closely related to binge-eating disorder (BED) and anorexia, though the strategy itself is surely far from novel (Guarda 2004). Bat imagery is echoed repeatedly in the final lines along with the bouvardia:

> bat shut ~~paw~~
> that make two marks at once
> fruit- w claws & open eyes Stumps blush
> nine nectarines
> specle-spattered [sic] by the book binders' brush
> about which
> 2 on one twig; & two; that out
> sprinkled unsparingly by the book binders brush flutters ^ a small
> 3 single ones and two fruit bat
> which are discs a goose egg green
> on the ripe nectarine [illegible] shut & open eyes
> its ~~2~~ set
> bat ~~w~~^ eyes out
> ~~the buds of the bouvardia~~ from itself, in space
> as 2 discs unconnected with the beast–out
>
> (Moore VII:04:07 007-recto)

This is where Moore ends her draft of "Nine Nectarines," save for an odd scribble on page 28 of her notebook which reads "all peaches on a nectarine" (Moore VII:04:07 0028-recto). The note, followed by a brief illegible line below it, is the only writing on that page and was made after drafting several *other* poems which were published in *Selected Poems* and her later collection *What are Years.*



Part of Moore's draft of "Nine Nectarines," held at the Rosenbach Museum (Moore VII:04:07 0028-recto).

The draft of "Nine Nectarines" ends with an almost manic list of fruit bat descriptors. Moore wrote to her brother on 1 June 1934 that "I am writing like a demon with canton-flannel horns on my Nectarines poem" (Leavell 283). During Moore's revising of the "Nine Nectarines" draft, she scratches out the "paws" of her fruit bat before morphing the animal itself into fruit – specifically, a "fruit- ~~w~~ claws & open eyes" before again reiterating "nine nectarines." This marks the evolution of the draft into what became the *beginning* of the final poem versions with nectarines "arranged by twos as peaches are." However, in the draft, Moore places the mention of the fruit on its own, solitary line. The bats are described in dual pairs, the same as nectarines, all but one time when Moore denotes a trio of them – thus nine bats and nine nectarines. The bats' open eyes do not mysteriously go missing as she compares them with nectarines, but seem to be violently removed with the description of the "bat ~~w~~^ eyes out" and in the last line as "2 discs unconnected with the beast–out" (Moore VII:04:07 007-recto). This is the only time Moore calls the bats beasts, which is far removed than the young and hard-working fruit bat she describes in the beginning of the draft. The poet ends the draft with the word "out" followed by a long dash, drawing focus to the bat's enucleation and (as the dash is emphatic and much longer than an em-dash) suggestive of ostracism and loneliness.

Line Placement and Isolation

The ostracism theme persists from the draft form through various iterations to the final published version in 1951. The first stanza's only non-punctuation change from the 1934 *Poetry* version is the shift of the word "both" from the tenth line to the eleventh. Moore moves the word "peach" from "peach-nut" from the tenth to the eleventh line in the second stanza and deleted the hyphen from "bees-wax" in the same stanza. The original 1934 publication has a line in the third stanza that reads "We can not find flaw", which Moore changed to "One perceives no flaws" in all later publications (citation needed here?). She also deleted the em-dash after the word "curcilio" and de-italicised it from the 1934 version onward. The hyphen in "much-mended" is deleted from the third stanza in the 1934 version and the word "or" is moved from the tenth line to the eleventh.

These minor changes might be seen as tidying up, but each is a choice based on omissions or movement. Moore was hyper-vigilant of words and punctuations that connected and divided and worked toward perfecting what she saw as an ideal use of hyphens and dashes throughout the poem's publications. She paid special attention to the words "both" and "or," and brought food references together when she moved "peach-nut" to the same line and allowed "beeswax" to desegregate. Her fixation on connection and disconnection is perhaps most highlighted in the only major change in the first three stanzas: her shift from "we" to "one" when referencing the search for flaws in the nectarines. The 1934 *Poetry* version has a royal "we" which allowed the poet to lay claim (albeit via a group consensus) to the hunt for flaws within the nectarines. Later versions deviated to a more disconnected and formal "one" which *may* be Moore but could be any person. This anonymity allowed for honesty. She dissociated herself from the obsession with the nectarines and the examination for blemishes and began the process to eliminate complete lines and stanzas from the original 1934 *Poetry* publication. The change from "we" to an unidentified "one" is the start of Moore's dismantling of both her own poem and her preoccupation with the odd-numbered fruit.

The 1934 publication's fourth stanza had its last six lines completely deleted by the 1951 version. Consider the differences in the fourth stanza below, beginning with the original publication of the fourth stanza in *Poetry* in its entirety followed by the fourth stanza as it appeared in *Collected Poems* (again, in its entirety):

> unantlered moose, or Iceland horse,
> or ass, asleep against the old
> thick, lowleaning nectarines that is the
> color of the shrub-tree's brownish
> flower. From manifold
> small boughs, productive as the
> magic willow that grew
> above the mother's grave and threw
> on Cinderella what she wished,
> a bat is winging. It
> is a moonlight scene, bringing
>
> (*Poetry* 65)

> unantlered moose, or Iceland horse,
> or ass, asleep against the old
> thick, lowleaning nectarines that is the
> color of the shrub-tree's brownish
> flower.
>
> (*Collected Poems* 36)

Decisions on Deletions

The sweeping deletions Moore instituted after "flower" in the fifth line of the fourth stanza continued as she deleted stanzas 5-7 for the 1951 publication. These deleted stanzas largely address the "other porcelain" made in China (dinnerplates) detailed with imagery such as "a crane, a stork, a dove" and "Hunts and domestic scenes" (*Poetry* 66). A veritable menagerie of animals and what Moore called "half-beasts" are removed along with stanzas 5-7 as the poet sawed her poem nearly in half. Robin Gall Schulze claimed that the multiple versions of Moore's many poems are an invitation to rethink the nature of the modernist poems, and that Moore's always-evolving poems were a denial of the "ahistorical authority of her own literary events" (Dickie and Travisano 1996, 120). There was a 17-year gap between the publications of the poem in 1934 and 1951, and of course the context of Moore's life and sense of self (and self-as-poet) would have changed. However, Moore also entered her sixties during this time span, and the whittling away of her words while removing the overt fragility of the many porcelain objects listed in those removed stanzas is telling. Perhaps it was not simply a "compression" of the poem, as Stapleton argued, but an attempted compression to reduce the poet herself through the removal of excess (78). Compression lends itself to sturdiness, and perhaps doing away with the easily broken porcelain was Moore's way of reinforcing herself through her poetry as she entered the winter season of her life. She wrote in detail of compactness and the compacted in *Predilections* (1955) when discussing the work of Louise Bogan – a fellow poet who many suspect was anorectic.[7] Moore wrote that she was "struck by her [Bogan's] restraint" before discussing a variety of Bogan's work that focused on food imagery and hunger, such as "The Crossed Apple" (*Predilections* 131-133).

Conclusion

The final stanza of "Nine Nectarines" remains largely the same throughout the 17 years of revisions. Minor changes again focussed on punctuation, dashes, and word placement. The 1934 *Poetry* version has a hyphen between "long-tailed" and a comma after "cinnamon-brown" that is removed in all later versions. The word "who" is moved from the tenth line to the eleventh in 1935 and 1951 publications. The only major change in the final stanza is found in the first line. The 1934 *Poetry* version reads, "Theirs is a race that 'understands / the spirit of the wilderness'" in reference to Chinese people (67). The 1935 and 1951 version read, "A Chinese 'understands / the spirit of the wilderness'" (*New Collected* 209). On one level, this change is partially a simple clarification since Moore removed stanzas that directly addressed Chinese porcelain in these versions. Naming the Chinese in the final stanza is helpful in this sense, whereas using "theirs" in the 1934 version was fitting after three stanzas of detailing Chinese dinner plate art. However, it is also important to consider Moore's decision to *name* and shift the placement of "who" at the end of the poem. She points to a singular Chinese artist, "a Chinese," not *the* Chinese people or artists. The shifting of the word "who" also changed the 1934 version's final line from "imagined this masterpiece" to "who imagined this masterpiece" (*Poetry* 64; *Collected Poems* 30). She may not have inserted herself overtly into the poem's final published version, but she adopted a stronger stance than the nameless "one" who saw no flaws.

Moore ended the 1951 published version of "Nine Nectarines" with certainty, assertion, and a sprinkling of mystery. The 1935 and 1951 versions both featured an asterism before the final stanza, Moore's breadcrumbs that hinted to readers who might not have read the original publication in 1934 that something was indeed removed from these two versions – and that reading between the lines (and stanzas) was highly recommended. What is not there, the lack of excess, might be more telling both in EDs and poetry than what we see before us.

Endnotes:

1. All iterations of the poem will be referred to in this thesis as "Nine Nectarines" for clarity.
2. Peach seeds may become trees that only occasionally bear nectarines, but nectarine seeds can become trees that might equally produce nectarines or peaches—making grafting a necessity to ensure the desired crop.
3. The famed Joyce passage reads: "When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (310).
4. The full description of the Yu peach in Schlegel's *Thian Ti Hwui: The Hung League or Heaven-Earth-League, a Secret a Secret Society With the Chinese in China and India* reads:

   Peaches have been, and still are, in China the symbol of long life or immortality. Therefore the peach-fruit enters into all the ornaments in paint and sculpture which are made in rooms, on furniture etc., and, especially, in the presence of congratulation and felicitation offered to one's superiors or equals. They are preserves as Newyear-gifts; and, by want of genuine ones, porcelain, jade, or coloured-stoned peaches are offered. According to the *Shin-nung-king,* the peach *Yu* prevents death and eternizes life. If one has not been able to eat of it early enough, yet it preserves the body incorruptible till the end of the world. According to the *Shu-y-ki*, whoever eats of the fruit of the *Yu*-peach on the mountain *Kwoh liu,* gets eternal life. According to the *Shin-hian-kan,* the peach of immortality produces only one fruit in 1000 years but it frees man forever from hunger ... this fruit is of a beauty and odour not of this world" (xxxiv).
5. More information on Bentyl (also known as dicyclomine) and anorexia side effects can be found in R.A.F Jack's work; more information on Lextron and anorexia can be found in Shaine Marks's work; and more information on Thiamine and anorexia can be found in the works of Liu Mei.
6. Some species of fruit bats do eat food besides fruit, such as the Egyptian *Rousettus aegyptiacus* that eats leaves and pollen in addition to fruit. However, the majority of fruit bats enjoy a fruit-rich diet when possible, if not a strictly fruit-based diet.
7. See citation of Frances Kerr's "'Nearer the Bone': Louise Bogan, Anorexia, and the Political Unconsciousness of Modernism."

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