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Review of Victoria Bazin, *Modernism Edited: Marianne Moore and the Dial Magazine* (2019)

Bartholomew Brinkman

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Victoria Bazin, *Modernism Edited: Marianne Moore and the Dial Magazine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019). 259 pp. ISBN 9781474417303

Victoria Bazin's *Modernism Edited: Marianne Moore and the Dial Magazine* (2019) is the first full-length consideration of a previously understudied moment in the career of the modern American poet Marianne Moore: her editorship of the *Dial* magazine between 1925 and 1929. As such, it makes key contributions to modern periodical studies, Marianne Moore studies, and literary studies more generally — drawing connections between modern textual production and reception within the context of one of the most prominent modern American magazines. Bazin's core argument is that in order to fully grasp the impact of Moore's editorial practice at the *Dial*, it is necessary to understand the ways in which she negotiated the magazine's existing 'institutional habitus' (p. 8).¹ Bazin illustrates this thesis throughout her book, focusing on the ways in which Moore worked within the magazine's already distinguished reputation to shape individual contributions and the magazine as a whole, while foregrounding the importance of gender and sexuality in the production of modernism.

The first chapter examines how the groundwork for the *Dial's* institutional habitus was laid by its founding editors and owners, Scofield Thayer and Sibley Watson. It outlines the ways in which content, advertising, and bibliographical codes presented the magazine as a fine cosmopolitan magazine that could yoke together established and experimental writing, positioning it between the avant-garde little magazines and the middlebrow quality journals.

Chapter two focuses on Moore's editorial labor (so extensive that she did not find time to write poems during this time) and her personal editorial habitus, which both reinforced and complicated the *Dial's* established institutional habitus. The considerable cultural capital 'Miss Moore' brought to the magazine gave her a transgressive authority (partly enabled by the periodical form itself) that allowed her to challenge Thayer and Watson in service of the magazine itself. As Bazin argues, Moore's 'editorial performance of an aesthetic purity detached from the pressures of the marketplace put into circulation a model of avant-garde feminism that challenged the misogynist tropes of modernism and, more fundamentally, queered femininity itself' (p. 56). In many ways, Moore stood as an outsider and an 'other' to the founding editors in terms of economic and aesthetic priorities as well as in assumptions surrounding gender and sexuality.

Chapter three looks specifically at the editorial comments and promotional advertisements Moore wrote for the magazine. As Bazin argues, Moore's editorial comments use 'instinct' and 'feeling' to 'move with breathtaking swiftness between items, categories, ideas and images deploying the "force of omission", dispensing with connectives and "too academic adverbs", achieving what Moore describes as "compactness compacted"' (p. 93). This selection and assemblage of textual materials draws upon Moore's interest in curatorial theory as well as the formal resemblance of the museum and magazine form as it recalls an 'aesthetics of display' in many of her poems.

Chapters four and five examine Moore's specific editorial decisions at the *Dial*. Chapter four focuses on Moore's

¹ Bazin derives the term from Matthew Philpotts' discussion of Bourdieu in 'The Role of Periodical Editor: Literary Journals and Editorial Habitus', *Modern Language Review*, 107 (2012), 39–64.

(in)famous revision of Hart Crane's poem, 'The Wine Menagerie', into 'Again.' Moore had previously adapted her own poetry as a contributor to the *Dial* by turning to a more direct free verse, and now as editor, she aimed to continue to satisfy its readership. This often involved collaborating with other contributors in order to thread the needle between their artistic independence and the perceived needs of the magazine. The handling of 'The Wine Menagerie' exemplified this practice; Moore would 'practise a form of distillation on Crane's poem, thereby solving the problem of Crane's desperate need for money while maintaining the magazine's image of distinction' (p. 134). Such revision, however, did not only cut the length of the poem in half and remove the wine-reverie setting of the poem that brings about the speaker's ecstatic state, but it also importantly 'severs the poem from a queer tradition of poets who are punished for what are perceived to be their sexual and textual transgressions' (p. 131). Ironic, to say the least, considering the ways in which Moore was herself attempting to queer modernism in the magazine.

Chapter five considers Moore's editorial relationship with other key modernist figures: James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, D.H. Lawrence, and Paul Rosenfeld. It investigates Moore's hesitations to publish Joyce's 'Work in Progress' (which would eventually become part of *Finnegans Wake*) and the ways in which Moore helped to repair the *Dial's* relationship with Stein, noting how 'Moore was in the position where she could culturally consecrate works that might otherwise be dismissed as unreadable' (p. 152). Moore's publication of these figures underscores her willingness to go toe-to-toe with modernist luminaries, to promote the work of those she felt had been unfairly maligned (largely due to gender), and to look past her own aesthetic preferences to publish quality work.

Chapter six examines the *Dial* on a more formal level, noting how 'the affordances of display, arrangement and

pattern in magazines, while not wholly within editorial control, are, nevertheless, a vital component of editorial agency' (p. 167). Such agency, which Moore frequently exercised in order to foreground gender in particular, is evident through the formal arrangement of individual issues as well as across multiple issues. As Bazin notes, her 'arrangements of women writers, artists and critics in associative clusters reproduced in terms of design the kind of condensation that Moore desired in language', bringing together such poets as Lola Ridge with visual artists like Hermine David and Georgia O'Keeffe (p. 170).

There are opportunities to strengthen some of the insights in *Modernism Edited* through additional engagement with recent scholarship on both Marianne Moore and modern periodicals. For example, Bazin's likening of the *Dial* to the limited-edition book that enabled an aesthetics of display comparable to that of a museum collection has been located in other modern magazines, such as *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. Similarly, Moore's editorial practices of clustering, layering, and juxtaposition of texts have been identified not only in her poems but also in the manipulation of print snippets in her personal scrapbooks kept prior to her *Dial* editorship. Engaging more fully with such scholarship would further illuminate formal similarities between the *Dial* and other modern magazines while also strengthening the already convincing case Bazin makes between Moore's editorship and her poetic production.

Bazin, an accomplished Moore scholar, has with *Modernism Edited* helped to further pull back the curtain on one of modernism's most inscrutable figures, revealing how Moore wielded significant editorial influence at the *Dial* and underscoring the symbiotic relationship between Moore as editor and Moore as poet. At the same time, Bazin extends existing scholarship on women as producers and editors of modernism in a book that is deeply attentive to both poetic and periodical form as it demonstrates the

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complex negotiations between individual editorial agency and a more general periodical habitus.

Bartholomew Brinkman
Framingham State University