

In Memory of Marianne Moore

By Alireza Shams

November 15 is the birthday of Marianne Moore (1887 – February 5, 1972) who was an American modernist poet and writer [1] and I wrote this essay in memory of her. T. S. Eliot says that Moore’s poetry might be classified as descriptive. In other words, he locates her work in the general vicinity of imagism [2]. I choose her most famous poem, the one entitled "Poetry" [3] as my source text for producing a mesostic. Before discussing my mesostic, I’d like to explain her poem shortly. It starts with “I, too, dislike it” where the speaker informs us that she doesn't really like poetry and further she explains what she doesn’t like about it. Also the "too" implies the readers must agree with her judgment against this kind of poetry. In the next line we have “Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in”. Here the speaker indicates that one can still find something in poetry, even if one reads it against one's opinions. The switching from “I” to “one” is interesting. Bonnie Costello, in her book “Marianne Moore, Imaginary Possessions” suggests that the speaker moves from a particular, individual position ("I") to a more general, impersonal position ("one") in order to build up and strengthen her defense of poetry [4]. Finally she mentions “it, after all, a place for the genuine” which means after all, one can find something genuine in poetry.

Using seed words “Marianne Moore” and after more than ten times trying Mesostomatic, I reached a satisfactory result; however, I had to add wing words from the source text to have something more meaningful:

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All
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discovErs

Must,

nOt
a high sOunding
be Reused
SomEtimes

May
sAid
foR
bat holdIng
to eAt,
pushiNg,
takiNg
tirEless

iMportant.

One
distinction however:
dRagged
by poEts

I used the seed words “Marianne Moore” two times, so my mesostic has four parts. Two first parts are connected: “Important all, however with contempt, one discovers (that) must not a high sounding be reused sometimes”. Moore believes a poet should be more careful of using words and sounds different times. In the third and fourth parts, we reach this Moore’s idea that usually we do not admire what we cannot understand. The poet may select a situation to describe like “a tireless wolf under a tree” which cannot be found in “business documents and school-books” but all these words and the process of writing lead to creating a poem. Actually In this poem, she hopes for poets who can produce "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." It also

expressed her idea that meter, or anything else that claims the exclusive title "poetry" is not as important as delight in language. On the other hand, Cage is doubtful of the ability of language to express something; but he also believes that the reader should enjoy reading a poem regardless its style. In fact for Cage the description of the poetry is a little different from what Moore explains; but it is obvious that both of them emphasize the power of words which can be clearer in Cage's style.

References:

- 1- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marianne_Moore
- 2- Harold Bloom, *Modern American Poetry*, Chelsea House Publications, 2005
- 3- <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/poetry/>
- 4- Bonnie Costello, *Marianne Moore: Imaginary Possessions*, Harvard University Press, 1981