

24. A Portrait of a Poet Beyond Borders: Marianne Moore¹

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Abstract

As a modernist poet, editor, and critic, Marianne Moore is outstanding with her innovative poetry loaded with wit, irony, and linguistic precision in terms of style. Moore's poetics is based on the responsibility of transferring the explicit or implicit meaning of words to others by assuming the role of the cultural transmitter through language. Moore challenges traditional patriarchal notions of womanhood in her poetry. She praises the feminine while she rails against the masculine. She portrays gender roles in an intricate and ambiguous way. She achieves poetic subjectivity by rewriting the body, mimicking the language of patriarchy, and performing gender roles to expose their constructed nature. Simultaneously, she distorts and revises these roles, creating space for female subjectivity. She creates a successful feminist textual politics without referring to women or femininity. Moore's feminist writing thus becomes a political act, using its subversive, revisionary, and multifaceted nature to reimagine both writing and the female body. Marianne Moore is a significant poet whose poetry fits into the framework of post-structural feminist analysis. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how she challenged the phallogocentric writing conventions that were already in place and had a penchant to subvert them. Her poetry encourages women to fight for a position in the literary world and demonstrates how language can be a crucial tool in gender struggle and conflicts. As a singular voice in poetry, Marianne Moore stands out with her conciseness.

Keywords: Marianne Moore, modernism, feminism, poetry, imagist

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Sınırları Aşan Bir Şairin Portresi: Marianne Moore³

Öz

Modernist bir şair, editör ve eleştirmen olarak Marianne Moore, üslup açısından ince zekâ, ironi ve dilsel hassasiyetle dolu yenilikçi şiirleriyle öne çıkmıştır. Moore'un poetikası, dil aracılığıyla kültürel bir aktarıcı rolü üstlenerek kelimelerin açık veya örtük anlamlarını başkalarına aktarma sorumluluğuna dayanır. Moore, şiirlerinde geleneksel ataerkil kadınlık kavramlarını sorgular. Kadınsılığı överken erkekliği eleştirir; toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini karmaşık ve belirsiz bir şekilde tasvir eder. Şiirsel öznellik elde etmek için bedeni yeniden yazar, ataerkinin dilini taklit eder ve toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini sergileyerek bu rollerin kurgusal doğasını açığa çıkarır. Aynı zamanda bu rolleri bozup yeniden yorumlayarak kadın öznelliği için bir alan yaratır. Kadınlardan ya da kadınsalıktan doğrudan bahsetmeksizin başarılı bir feminist metinsel politika ortaya koyar. Moore'un feminist yazımı, bu nedenle, yazıyı ve kadın bedenini yeniden hayal etmek için yıkıcı, yeniden yorumlayıcı ve çok yönlü doğasını kullanan bir politik eylem hâline gelir. Marianne Moore, şiirleri post-yapısalcı feminist analize uygun olan önemli bir şairdir. Bu nedenle, bu makalenin amacı, onun hâlihazırda var olan fallogosantrik yazım geleneklerini nasıl sorguladığını ve bunları alt üst etmeye nasıl eğilim gösterdiğini göstermektir. Şiirleri, kadınları edebiyat dünyasında bir konum elde etmek için mücadele etmeye teşvik eder ve dilin toplumsal cinsiyet çatışmaları ve mücadelelerinde nasıl kritik bir araç olabileceğini gözler önüne serer. Benzersiz bir şiir sesi olarak Marianne Moore, özlülüğüyle dikkat çeker.

Anahtar kelimeler: Marianne Moore, modernizm, feminizm, şiir, imgeci

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Introduction

One of the leading poets in American literature, Marianne Moore was born in Kirkwood, Missouri, in 1887. As a modernist poet, editor, and critic, she is outstanding with her innovative poetry loaded with wit, irony, and linguistic precision in terms of style. Her family was very important to her, especially due to their great contributions to her moral vision, and their influence could be seen in the moralistic tone of her poems. When she was 24, she took a trip to Europe and had the opportunity to visit several museums, where the visual displays drew her in. A few years later, her poetry was acknowledged by publications like *The Egoist*. Notwithstanding the fact that an American modernist poet, Hilda Doolittle (also one of the leaders of the Imagist movement) collected and published Moore's poetry, the editor of *Imagiste* eventually published these poems elsewhere without Moore's knowledge. She became well-known due to her poetic accomplishments and developed close relationships with Stevens, Pound, Eliot, and other notable writers (Kineke, 1997: 121). She was able to revitalize her lyrical style with the encouragement this society of poets gave her, and in this new setting, she was also able to work at various jobs. In her Paris Review interview with Donald Hall, Moore tells Hall about her career approach:

I was just trying to be honorable and not to steal things. I've always felt that if a thing had been said in the best way, how can you say it better? If I wanted to say something and somebody had said it ideally, then I'd take it but I'd give the person the credit for it. That's all there is to it. If you are charmed by an author, I think it's a very strange and invalid imagination that doesn't long to share it. Somebody else should read it, don't you think? (Moore, 1989: 86)

Acting with this mindset, Moore's poetics was based on the responsibility of transferring the explicit or implicit meaning of words to others by assuming the role of the cultural transmitter through language. As referred by David Herd, "one task Moore set herself in her poetry, therefore, an obligation – 'should' – under which she wrote, was to present things, but more importantly words, she liked in such a way that she should be construed as sharing or passing on their value" (Herd, p.111). Moore made this holy obligation as the central philosophy of her poetry.

On the other hand, the lack of women's voice in male-dominated discourse, and the proper representation of women are the main concerns for feminist writers and intellectuals. Drawing on the ideas of feminist theorists like Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, Marianne Moore challenges traditional patriarchal notions of womanhood in her poetry. She praises the feminine while she rails against the masculine. She portrays gender roles in an intricate and ambiguous way. She achieves poetic subjectivity by rewriting the female body, mimicking the language of patriarchy, and performing gender roles to expose their constructed nature. Simultaneously, she distorts and revises these roles, creating space for female subjectivity. She creates a successful feminist textual politics without referring to women or femininity. Moore's feminist writing thus becomes a political act, using its subversive, revisionary, and multifaceted nature to reimagine both writing and the female body. She criticizes the prevailing patriarchal system shrewdly by pretending to write in men's language but giving subliminal messages and deferring the meaning in a subversive way. In her article entitled "No Moore of the Same: The Feminist Poetics of Marianne Moore," Rachel Blau DuPlessi refers to the challenges facing a woman writer oscillating between gender oppression and sexism:

A woman writer is a marked marker. She is marked by the cultural attributes of woman, gender, sexuality, the feminine, a whole bolus of contradictory representations which are as much her cultural inscription as ours. She is marked by being variously distinguished – defined, singled out – by her gender. She is marked by some unevenly effective traditions of both "unspeaking" and "unspeakable" female self, and by some also uneven set of incentives to cultural production. She – any woman – is culturally represented and interpreted; the works and the workings of those representations, in

ideology, discourse, and text, mark or inflect the precise configuration of her “marking.” Her own marks on the page—writing and her capacity to write, and what she marks, or notices—will bear some marks of this matted circumstance, of “the career of that struggle.” (DuPlessi, 1988: 6)

Her poetry, which was distinguished by syllabic lines, erratic rhyme schemes, and an assertive style, was praised when she released *Selected Poems* in 1937 to a largely good reception. The years that followed were filled with success. She received recognition, gained high-profile employment, and published multiple poems. She was at the peak of her writing career in the 1950s and 1960s. She experienced many strokes at the start of the 1970s and passed away in 1972 (Kineke, 1997:122). Being the friend and companion of many prominent modernists, she left a great legacy as a noteworthy modernist and feminist poet. When she concentrates on a specific subject, she expresses everything there is to say about it, drawing on all that she can recall. She distills the entire breadth of her era’s culture into even the smallest detail. Gladstein refers to this, in essence, as her greatest achievement as a poet. He stresses:

Moore’s rhymes, too, are more visible than audible. They are silent because she does not want to give them complete possession over the line. Her rhymes, like candles, blaze and burn out. She creates the impression of being a difficult writer only because her simplicities are assembled in a complex fashion. Miss Moore writes by association, yet she never offers the dream- only, at once, the interpretation; and the interpretation is full of the phantasmagoria of a dream. (Glatstein, 1973: 136-137)

Marianne Moore: Against Patriarchy

Marianne Moore is a significant poet whose poetry fits into the framework of post-structural feminist analysis. She challenged the phallogocentric writing conventions that were already in place and had a penchant to subvert them. She also emphasized pluralities and lyrical agency, obfuscating the distinctions between the self and the other, fixed and unfixed, and I and you (Irigaray, 1985: 76). “To play with mimesis — [here the mimesis of prosodie traditions] — is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to It ... to make ‘visible,’ by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible.” (DuPlessi, 1988: 7). In Luce Irigaray’s view, Moore “works at ‘destroying’ the discursive mechanism” through this very mimicry. By consciously adopting the prescribed “feminine role,” she imitates the rituals of poetic tradition and excellence, only to replace them with her own. She invents a new form of control—one that she alone governs, a law over which she alone holds authority (Luce, 1985: 76,78). There is no “Authority” before hers. She subverts traditional, rule-bound prosody by creating her own set of rules. This approach results in a poetry that is both uniquely Moore’s and distinctly different. The refined sophistication of her syllabic structure embodies the “disruptive excess” that Irigaray argues counters the theories of female inadequacy and absence. As a marked presence, Moore transcends expectations—offering, when read in this way, something entirely new and beyond repetition (DuPlessi, 1988: 8). Being the sole authority and controller of her own life, Moore conquered the patriarchal castle from the inside by following feminine roles derisively. She achieved to be a visible female poet with her unique style and acquired a distinctive position in a male-dominated discourse through mimesis.

Moore avoided a binary notion of empowerment while parodying patriarchal language through mimesis, both for her readers and for herself in relation to lyric poem traditions. This was accomplished by means of the Kristevan transposition, or passing from one signifying system to another, of one or more sign systems. Contrary to the traditional concept of regular rhyme schemes and coherence, Moore often employed irregular rhyming patterns. Regarding her poetic style, Diehl asserts: “The imposition of one’s own norms is relevant to Moore’s poetic devices as well, which include syllabics, absurdist rhyme schemes, and a boldly distinct and demotically erudite language” (32). In Moore’s work, lineation and

stanza structure often conflict with syntax and phrasing, resisting any sense of “voice” or physical embodiment through poetic form. Moore uses defiant and unconventional writing styles to explore the boundaries of female desire and capacity, to create a space of freedom, and to bring the female body back to speech. These goals are closely related to Moore’s desire to create autonomy in her poetry. By approaching poetry as though it were the female body, Moore hopes to accomplish her goal of raising awareness of gender as a social and political issue. She appears to be abiding by the Law-of-the-Father, yet on the other hand, she alters the meaning and plays with syntax, igniting an internal rebellion (Miller, 1995: 74).

Indeed, because Marianne Moore skillfully tackles a variety of women-related issues in her poems—from sexual to political—and because she skillfully blends elements of high and low culture, she demonstrates her expertise as a female poet, with nearly all her poems exploring the boundaries—or boundlessness—of female creativity. Through frequent allusions to contemporary and historical authorities, she validates her work and lays the groundwork for feminine polyphony. This collage-like and multifaceted poetics underscores Moore’s distinctly feminine perspective. Moore’s collage-based poetics and intertextuality mostly rely on citations from scholarly sources, the majority of which are ambiguous. Obviously, she undoubtedly attempts to eradicate the masculine canon in her new discourse, which is the reason behind this. In order to subvert the prevailing discourse and develop her own epistemology, Moore purposefully gives quotations from a wide range of less well-known sources a lot of space. By modifying quotations and presenting them in unconventional ways, Moore highlights the unpredictable nature of meaning and the inherent fallibility of language. Slatin underscores this point, stating: “We must avoid treating Moore’s quotations as if they are executing the literary device of allusion” (274). Moore takes the lead in writing a new discourse that she can alter to suit her needs. What emerges is a style that neither elevates feminine ideals nor is supportive of power (otherwise she would turn into a manist). She avoids blatantly elevating feminine values and romanticizing the female form and attractiveness, since she rejects established conventions for poetry and writing. Thus, she prefers to remove gendered differences or distinctions in her poems.

As a modernist poet operating within a tradition largely rooted in masculine discourse, Moore faces the challenge of representing the “other” as a female poet situated outside the conventional symbolic realm of language. Instead of adhering to standard forms of coherence, she embraces a broad spectrum of dualities as well as diverse voices by reflecting her aversion to traditional poetic norms. She certainly feels pressured to create a distinct literary style in which she writes, not as one or the second sex, but as a sex on her own. She honors herself and boosts her standing as a poet, because she believes that her poems are the only arena in which she can claim power on behalf of women. In other words, Moore attempts to maintain her ontological status as a female writer in the male-dominated field of language by doing this. Instead of politically and overtly asserting her feminist perspective, she aims to undermine the patriarchal order by endlessly reproducing its rules, pushing them to the point where they begin to unravel and lose their significance. Moore’s vocabulary leans more toward transcendentalism. However, this transcendentalism is also more in line with the Irigarayan sensuous divine, which views the divine as immanent and blurs the lines between the divine and human. She looks for divinity in the physical and observable things because she works primarily with animals and the natural world. Her goal goes beyond just developing a worldview and language that contrasts with men’s (Buxton, 2007:533).

It is clear that Moore did not want to write in a hierarchical, male-dominated language where one thing is smaller or less significant than another. In other words, she endeavors to guarantee that her written works are free of hierarchy. Her writing is never obviously sexual in the same way. She does not develop

a writing politics that addresses female subjugation or upholds women's rights. Consequently, in order to perceive her feminist side, we must employ a post-structural deconstructionist methodology. It is also an appropriate method to comprehend how she approaches and uses language in order to de-phallogocentrize it. Through this approach, Moore exposes how patriarchal ideology is embedded within language itself. She illustrates that language lies at the heart of gender struggle, prompting her efforts to reclaim it and subtly challenge the relationship between the signifier and signified. Moore attempts to twist and invert the meanings and representations created in masculine terms as a result. Because she refuses to function as the text's authority and draw conclusions, her writings are rife with ambiguity and complexity. Her poetry becomes a space where the prevailing literary tradition collides with a new, unrestricted, and subversive form of female writing, giving rise to what Baker describes as a Kristevan "subject-in-progress" (86).

Rooted in her personal experiences, her poetry is characterized by imbalance and uncertainty, avoiding overtly political or explicitly feminist themes. Furthermore, she does not resolve any disagreements or inconsistencies. When examining her poetics, it becomes clear that her approach to gender politics is rooted in her nontraditional approach to addressing feminine issues. DuPlessis argues that Moore increasingly critiqued gender stereotypes, striving to create a *tertium quid*—a gender-neutral space—situated between the polarities of the masculine and feminine, addressing the challenges these extremes posed to poetic expression (6). As response to the question "What did it feel like to be one of the women in New York creating the structures to support avant-garde arts and literature?", Cristanne Miller indicates that Moore is socially not an ideal representative for addressing this question as she lived with her mother, never married, and had minimal involvement in the surrounding bohemian culture. However, her experiences as an ambitious poet, editor, and critic may reflect the feelings of other women in similar positions. Moore's letters reveal that her primary reactions to the city were a blend of challenge and excitement, though she also expressed feelings of isolation, apprehension, and dislike. As previously noted, these challenges often evoked a sense of defiance in Moore. (Miller, 2000: 350-351)

"Marriage": Showing the Icon

Moore expresses her disapproval of marriage in the poem "Marriage," which was first published in 1923, despite the fact that marriage is a socially acceptable institution for individuals. She freely expresses her distaste for and protest against society standards by openly favoring being single, in addition to her profound doubts about the value of marriage. She does note in the poem, though, that society does not support or condone remaining unmarried. It is unworthy and not in accordance with the Law-of-the-Father. In the first place, and above all, it is illegal because marriage silences women and forces them to live as objects of submission. Implying that Moore was a true democrat in her article entitled "My Marianne Moore," Maureen N. McLane refers to her pointed social satires and baroque syntactical devastations: "But she is the stealth weapon of American poetry, with a ferocity and a lacerating intelligence few poets have matched. She has a capacity for a Swiftian savage indignation, and for a courtly feline bitchiness one finds more regularly in Saint-Simon and Proust." (McLane, 2012:181) In *Marriage*, Moore symbolizes marriage as "a thing that one has believed in" and McLane interprets this poem as both a tribute to the tensions inherent in marriage and a lament for the improbability of its genuine fulfillment. She claims:

We are in the presence of a dramatized scrupulosity as the poet considers the case. It is, then, with extreme precision that Moore gives us a strenuously ungendered, apparently unmarked speaker: one. It is as if she stands outside or beyond gender and indeed beyond the species, or rather that she aims for that position, that generous god-like yet unsexed position from which to assess them both, gently

mocking, shaking the head. She forces us to reckon with the position of the speaker, generalized and impersonal as that one, but also, equally, forced into that impersonality, as if too close to a very live wire (McLane, 2012: 184)

Moore intricately incorporates these subjects into her poetry, assembling a collage of diverse voices to emphasize the message of the poem, ultimately creating a narrative with a fragmented core (Bloom, 95). This aids Moore in distributing power throughout several centers as well. A key aspect of the poem is the abundance of footnotes, which eventually causes readers to become confused about who said what and the text's authority. Even though she states, "*Statements that took my fancy which I tried to arrange plausibly*", in reference to the quotations, this is undoubtedly a calculated tactic to assure the latent politics behind her writing (Moore, 271). Moore delivers a critical indictment of the institution in the opening portion of the poem, which is written in the third person, although it seems to be reserved for a brief explanation of marriage and how it begins.

This institution,
Perhaps one should say enterprise
Out of respect for which
One says one need not change one's mind
About a thing one has believed in,
Requiring public promises
Of one's intention
To fulfil a private obligation (Moore, 66).

Moore views marriage as a business, a commerce, or a transaction along these lines. In addition to introducing indeterminacy, the usage of "one" as a subject demonstrates Moore's social and emotional distance from the concept of marriage. This poem's eight-line introduction leads the reader to believe that marriage is a meaningless institution devoid of profound significance. In fact, it does not seem random that marriage is chosen as the theme. It is through marriage that female oppression is institutionalized and systematized. Moore exposes how meaningless it is by subverting all of the apparent meanings, even if they appear to be superficial. The poem's subversion operates on multiple levels, a method which is typical with most of Moore's feminine poetics. Moore manipulates syntax, linearity, and grammar, conceptualizing the text as a body, to transform the inherent dynamics of language while paradoxically preserving a discernible form and structure in her poetry. Through this approach, she gains poetic agency, asserting control over the discourse and creating an endless space for the oppressed and the feminine. As Sielke notes, Moore's "passion for language and a concern with form" primarily disrupts speech and destabilizes the speaking subject, rather than reinforcing uniformity (5). According to Bergman's suggestion of the poem's form, "she begins the poem from the end, rather than where we might expect; in other words, she enters the subject of marriage where most of us exit" (248).

Moore defines marriage in opposition to traditional views shaped by custom and Christianity, where it often signifies male control over women and offers little space for female autonomy. For Moore, marriage is not an institution to be completed in order to adhere to phallogocentric norms, nor is it a platform for asserting male superiority. It stands in stark contrast to these historically entrenched beliefs. In "To Be Liked by You Would Be a Calamity": Self-Positioning", she makes a reference to the English poet and writer Thomas Hardy when she states that "Attack is more piquant than concord." Elfride Swancourt, the innocent young heroine of Hardy's *Blue Eyes*, has pledged to marry Stephen Smith, who loves her unconditionally. However, she finds herself increasingly drawn to Harry Knight, a

stern, sharp-witted scholar (Schulze, 219). Even though Hardy's setting may seem that the poet wishes for an authoritarian male, the poem's subsequent words demonstrate the reverse. Marianne Moore rewrites and inverts some of Hardy's lines. Moore objects to the notion that women should behave in harmony. By quoting Hardy, Moore asserts that a woman should "attack" through quiet as opposed to acting in a way that is stereotypically associated with men. As long as she succumbs to masculine desires and fails to assert herself, she will never be able to fully embrace her own autonomy or discover her sexuality. According to Cristanne Miller, the speaker proves their superior strength and efficiency by redefining the manner of fighting rather than participating in a duel, which is the pinnacle of masculine honor (108). Heuving adds that even though Moore does not focus on sex and gender issues in her poetry, this does not imply that she produces poetry in accordance with patriarchal norms (119).

Moore challenges the perception of women's bodies as weak and the fact that they should be treaded upon. The female body is not flesh, nor is it a source of desire. Contrarily, Cixous believed that the female body is more than just a material and that it is also producing and reproductive. By using her body as a vehicle for her own physical, irrational self-expression, Moore gets rid of her body entirely as the foundation for men's conversation (Heuving, 1987:118). As a result, the female instantly defends herself against the male's onslaught on her body. The object of desire thus takes on the role of an active defense agent. Moore skillfully incorporates her subversive manner throughout the poem. In fact, the poem's title is a site of resistance in and of itself, as the poet openly questions the notion of receiving a man's approval, as such approval amounts to nothing more than the mistreatment of a woman's body and a serious assault on her identity.

In psychoanalysis, genders have deeper meanings and are not always associated with biological sexes. It is evident from this poetry that there are no genders other than male and female. Here, the term known as "unsheathed gesticulation" is equally noteworthy. Moore is referring to the realm of the imagined here, whereby things retain their essential qualities and remain pure. When paired with politeness, unsheathed gestures can shift a one-sided monolithic conversation into a two-way discussion. Furthermore, when we encounter the line "Since in your hearing words are mute, which to my senses / Are a shout," a post-structural feminist reading of the poem highlights the diverse ways in which female intelligence and perception are expressed (Moore, 34). The woman is actively preventing the violence, even though the male recipient cannot fully comprehend what she is saying and believes that she is passive. In this instance, Moore assumes the role of the enigmatic female speaker, her words eluding comprehension by the male listener. Her invocation of hysteria implies a form of expression rooted in the body highlighting a rupture in communication between men and women, rather than conforming to the structure of patriarchal language⁴. Similarly, female poets often face difficulty communicating with men through their poetry, as their work speaks for itself, bypassing traditional male-dominated discourse. Some women poets use the discourse of madness to expose hysteria as a constructed performance rather than an inherent condition. In doing so, they replace it with a form of performativity that challenges patriarchal definitions of femininity and opens space for female subjectivity beyond societal constraints.

⁴ Also see Denise Russell's book *Women, Madness, Medicine*. Conditions such as depression, hysteria, and PMS are often framed as biological afflictions, yet they can also be understood as tools of control imposed by patriarchal culture. Russell extends this critique to major illnesses, questioning the role of pharmaceutical companies in shaping medical discourse. She highlights the aggressive marketing tactics of drug companies—pointing out that in the United States, they spend between \$6,000 and \$8,000 per doctor on drug promotion (155) - and critiques the broader ideology that encourages women to accept psychiatric diagnoses in exchange for diminished social expectations (155-156).

“Feed Me, Also, River God”: Supplication

At first look, Marianne Moore’s poem “Feed Me, Also, River God” seems gender neutral because Moore frequently relishes both disclosing and defending her status as a woman. But when she uses gendered implications to remark, “*I become food for crocodiles,*” (182), it reminds us of how weak and vulnerable she has been. The placement of the word “also” in the title leads us to believe that the poet expects to be nourished because this maternal River God feeds certain people. In addition, the poet turns to the River God for protection from the crocodiles, acting as a kind of maternal figure. The poem offers multiple layers of interpretation: it can be seen as a prayerful plea for understanding female discourse in a world dominated by masculine voices, or as a female writer’s desire to reposition herself within a male-dominated literary tradition. From an Irigarayan perspective, a woman-to-woman relationship provides an avenue for women to escape the roles imposed by patriarchy, serving as a crucial step toward liberation from paternal authority. This is because men’s language “separates her from her mother and other women,” maintaining the patriarchal divide (Irigaray, 1985: 50).

Leavell claims that “each of Moore’s poems is a room that contains the things she sees, the things of which she is ‘the imaginary possessor’” (Leavell, 1995: 132). By using the metaphor of a crocodile to push the boundaries of male imagery, Moore also serves as a reminder that she is part of the poets’ legion and that this may have prompted her to call upon the River God or goddess in an attempt to gain acceptance. She needs the help of a female divinity in order to create the words necessary to redeem herself as a feminine poet since she must stay in that domain. Miller interprets Moore’s position and sense of helplessness in the poem by suggesting that, when read autobiographically, it reveals Moore’s perception of herself as a marginalized figure—someone who is despised and rejected, having faced years of her submissions being turned away by literary periodicals (107). The primary reason why Marianne Moore has been referred to as the “spinster poet” is likely due to the fact that she avoids explicitly addressing sexual themes or the sexuality of her poetry. However, the psychoanalytic feminist theory offers us a telescopic glass through which we can view the sexuality-related latent issues in Marianne Moore’s poetic legacy.

Conclusion

The ideology that Moore and other modern female poets were filled with was based on the concepts of rearranging, altering, and correcting. Since writing can resist the connotations and impositions associated with the feminine body, it is undoubtedly the technique employed in this philosophy (Glatstein, 1973: 134). She primarily uses parody or imitation to accomplish her goals of rearranging and transforming. Most of the time, she uses her sexless voice in her poetry to parody and change the social discourse in which she lives, deftly pointing out its artificiality and decay. Moore plays with the mimesis of prosodic traditions, even though her poetry is anything but staged theatricality or parody (DuPlessis 1988:8-9). Therefore, Moore reveals herself and her stance in the world in her poems. Moore differs from certain modern feminists who argue that a woman can successfully find a balance between her career life, domestic life, marriage, and social life. In response to a question from the Grolier Society in 1957, which asked, “Has the net result of woman’s ‘coming out of the kitchen’ been helpful or detrimental to society?” Moore clearly expresses her conviction that women must make choices from a range of options. Her full response is worth quoting:

The net result of woman’s “coming out of the kitchen” has been helpful, I think. Who could regard in any other light the activities of such women as Florence Nightingale, Susan B. Anthony, Helen Keller, Jane Addams, Katherine E. McBride, Millicent Carey McIntosh, Margaret A. Clapp, Elizabeth Gray

Vining, Marie Curie, Florence Sabin or Eleanor Bliss?” With regard to careers outside the home, delegated motherhood can be a threat, for I believe that our integrity as a nation is bound up with the home. Good children are not the product of mothers who prefer money and fame to the well-being of their families. [...] But steadfastness, conscience and the capacity for sacrifice, on the part of both parents, are basic to good family relations which, in turn, are basic to the well-being of society in general. (Moore, 1986: 161)

A woman is stuck between two paths: the path of intellectual and professional fulfilment, or “the path of wifely and motherly sacrifice” as referred by David Bergman in his article “Marianne Moore and the Problem of Marriage” (Bergman, 1988: 242). Both paths are significant and valuable. They should be supported by society, as each contributes to the greater social good. However, they are mutually exclusive. A woman who tries to juggle both raising children and pursuing a career will ultimately fail at both (Bergman, 1988: 242). “Clearly Moore, like M. Carey Thomas, was not unconscious of the “historical and cultural pressures under which [women] worked;” rather she believed that women were the equals-not superiors-of men, and needed merely the removal of barriers in order to show their true aptitude” (Bergman, 1988: 244). Poetry by Marianne Moore is a significant component of feminist critique of modernist literature. She was successful in challenging patriarchal language and norms in her poetry, resulting in fresh methods for women to express their identities and wants. Moore’s writing style can be interpreted as a kind of linguistic and social resistance. Her poems, which push the boundaries of female creative ability, tackle gender inequity in poetry and promote role-reflection. Moore is notable for her deliberate use of collage and intertextual techniques to question and reimagine the masculine literary tradition. Through the complexity of language, the many levels of meaning in her poetry form a stage for gender issues. Moore’s use of language shows how brittle and malleable current linguistic frameworks are, while also providing a platform for female poets to express their own identities. Her poetic legacy is, therefore, seen as an essential component of feminist literary critique as well as the modernist movement. Her poetry, on the other hand, encourages women to fight for a position in the literary world and demonstrates how language can be a tool in gender struggle and conflicts. As a singular voice in poetry, Marianne Moore stands out with her conciseness. She managed to gain the admiration of her fellow poets as an industrious craftswoman during her productive career life.

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