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Imagination of Reality:

Marianne Moore

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Abstract

For my senior project, I chose to step away from my career interests of veterinary medicine and biology and to investigate a area of my own personal pursuit. I have always enjoyed poetry; therefore, I decided to research the life of the poet Marianne Moore and to explicate some of her works. One of the primary reasons that I picked Moore out of the numerous poets is her interesting view that poetry should be created through the use of real, concrete objects. I had read many of her works in the past and chose to study them in depth noting the similarities in Moore's works.

After reviewing the vast number of works created by Marianne Moore, I realized that I must choose a few particular poems to illustrate. I chose "The Fish," "Poetry," and "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing." All of these poems help to illustrate the main theme of Moore's poetry and all created vivid images in my mind when I read them for the first time.

Through analyzing these three poems of Marianne Moore, I realized that Moore tends to have a strict structure to all of her poems and uses many literary devices to enhance the meaning and images created by her poems. Another common theme throughout all of Moore's poetry is that she uses common words that are not difficult to understand, words which the majority of her audience will already know the meaning.

Chronology

- 1887 On November 15, Marianne Moore is born to John Milton and Mary (Warner) Moore in Kirkwood, Missouri. Her father suffers a nervous breakdown and goes to live with his parents. The rest of the family moves in with Moore's maternal grandfather, the Reverend John Riddle Warner.
- 1894 Moore, along with her mother and older brother John Warner Moore, move to Carlisle, Pennsylvania after Moore's grandfather, the Reverend John Riddle Warner, dies.
- 1896-1905 Moore is educated at the Metzger Institute, a girl's school in Carlisle.
- 1905-1909 She attends Bryn Mawr College where she receives her B.A.; she attends along with Hilda Doolittle (H.D.).
- 1907 Moore has some academic difficulties and begins to write poetry. Moore's first published poetry appears in Bryn Mawr journals.
- 1910 Moore graduates from Carlisle Commercial College.
- 1911 She travels in England and France with her mother.
- 1911-1915 Moore begins to teach commercial subjects at the United States Indian School in Carlisle.
- 1915 Moore's first poems appear in the Egoist (London), Poetry (Chicago), and Others (New York).
- 1916 Moore moves to Chatham, New Jersey with her mother in order to keep house for her brother--now a Presbyterian minister like his grandfather.
- 1918 Moore moves to Greenwich Village, New York City, with her mother. Moore work's as a private tutor.

- 1918 She meets many poets including William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens.
- 1920 Moore's poems appear in The Dial.
- 1921 The Egoist Press of London publishes Moore's Poems.
- 1921-1925 Moore works part-time at the Hudson Park Branch of the New York Public Library.
- 1923 "Marriage" is published separately.
- 1924 Dial Press publishes Moore's Observations. Moore receives the Dial Award.
- 1925 Moore becomes the acting editor of The Dial.
- 1929 The Dial stops publishing. Moore and her mother move to Brooklyn, New York. Moore starts writing full time.
- 1932 The Helen Haire Levinson Prize for Poetry is awarded to Moore.
- 1934 Moore meets Elizabeth Bishop.
- 1935 Moore's Selected Poems is published in New York and in London with an introduction by T.S. Eliot. The Ernest Hartsock Memorial Prize is awarded to Moore.
- 1936 Moore's The Pangolin and Other Verse is published.
- 1940 The Shelley Memorial Award is given to Moore.
- 1941 Moore's What Are Years? is published.
- 1944 Moore's Nevertheless is published. The Harriet Monroe Poetry Award is given to Moore.
- 1945 Moore receives a Guggenheim Fellowship. She helps translate Rock Crystal.
- 1947 Moore is elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Moore's mother dies.
- 1949 "A Face" is published separately.

- 1951 Moore's Collected Poems is published.
The Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, the National Book Award, and the Bollingen Prize is given to Moore.
- 1953 The M. Carey Thomas Award and the National Institute of Arts Gold Medal for Poetry are awarded to Moore.
- 1955 Moore is elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
- 1956 Moore's Like a Bulwark is published.
- 1957 Moore participates in the First Bollingen Poetry Festival at The Johns Hopkins University.
- 1958 Moore's Idiosyncrasy and Technique: Two Lectures is published.
- 1959 Moore's O to Be a Dragon is published.
- 1961 A Marianne Moore Reader is published.
- 1962 Moore's The Absentee: A Comedy in Four Acts is published.
- 1963 Moore translates "Puss in Boots," "The Sleeping Beauty," and "Cinderella" all by Charles Perrault.
- 1966 Moore moves to Manhattan.
- 1967 Moore's The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore is published.
The Edward MacDowell Medal and the Poetry Society of America's Gold Medal are awarded to Moore.
- 1968 The National Medal for Literature is Awarded to Moore.
Moore throws out the first baseball of the season at Yankee Stadium.
- 1972 On February 5, Marianne Moore dies in her sleep at the age of eighty-four.
- 1981 The Complete Poems, definitive edition with Moore's final revisions, is published.

The Monkeys

winked too much and were afraid of snakes. The zebras, supreme in
 their abnormality; the elephants with their fog-colored skin
 and strictly practical arrendages
 were there, the small cats; and the parakeet--
 trivial and humdrum on examination, destroying
 bark and portions of the food it could not eat.

I recall their magnificence, now not more magnificent
 than it is dim. It is difficult to recall the ornament,
 speech, and precise manner of what one might
 call the minor acquaintances twenty
 years back; but I shall not forget him--that Gilgamesh among
 the hairy carnivora - that cat with the

wedge-shaped, slate-grey marks on its forelegs and the resolute tail,
 astingently remarking, "They have imposed on us with their pale
 half-fledged protestations, trembling about
 in inarticulate frenzy, saying
 it is not for us to understand art; finding it
 all so difficult, examining the thing

as if it were inconceivably arcanic, as symmet-
 rically frigid as if it had been carved out of chrysoprase
 or marble - strict with tension, malignant
 in its power over us and deeper
 than the sea when it proffers flattery in exchange for hemp,
 rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber, and fur."

-Marianne Moore

To a Steam Roller

The illustration
is nothing to you without the application.
You lack half wit. You crush all the particles down
into close conformity, and then walk back and forth on them.

Sparkling chips of rock
are crushed down to the level of the parent block.
Were not "impersonal judgement in aesthetic
matters, a metaphysical impossibility," you

might fairly achieve
it. As for butterflies, I can hardly conceive
of one's attending upon you, but to question
the congruence of the complement is vain, if it exists.

-Marianne Moore

The Past Is the Present

If external action is effete
and rhyme is outmoded,
I shall revert to you,
Habakkuk, as when in a Bible class
the teacher was speaking of unrhymed verse.
He said--and I think I repeat his exact words,
"Hebrew poetry is prose
with a sort of heightened consciousness." Ecstasy affords
the occasion and expediency determines the form.

-Marianne Moore

Sojourn in the Whale

Trying to open locked doors with a sword, threading
the points of needles, planting shade trees
upside down; swallowed by the opaqueness of one whom the seas
love better than they love you, Ireland--

you have lived and lived on every kind of shortage.

You have been compelled by hags to spin
gold thread from a straw and have heard men say:
"There is a feminine temperment in direct contrast to ours,

which makes her do these things. Circumscribed by a
heritage of blindness and native
incompetence, she will become wise and will be forced to give in.
Compelled by experience, she will turn back;

water seeks its own level":

and you have smiled. "Water in motion is far
from level." You have seen it, when obstacles happened to bar
the path, rise automatically.

-Marianne Moore

What Are Years?

What is our innocence,
what is our guilt? All are
naked, none is safe. And whence
is courage; the unanswered question,
the resolute doubt,--
dumbly calling, deafly listening--that
in misfortune, even death,
encourages others
and in its defeat, stirs

the soul to be string? He
sees deep and is glad, who
accedes to mortality
and in his imprisonment rises
upon himself as
the sea in a chasm, struggling to be
free and unable to be,
in its surrendering
finds its continuing.

So he who strongly feels,
behaves. The very bird,
grown taller as he sings, steels
his form straight up. Though he is captive,
his mighty singing
says, satisfaction is a lowly
thing, how pure a thing is joy.
This is mortality,
this is eternity.

-Marianne Moore

O to Be a Dragon

If I, like Solomon,...
could have my wish-

my wish...O to be a dragon,
a symbol of the power of Heaven - of silkworm
size or immense; at times invisible.
Felicitous phenomenon!

-Marianne Moore

I MAY, I MIGHT, I MUST

If you will tell me why the fen
appears impassible, I then
will tell you why I think that I
can get across it as I try.

-Marianne Moore

Introduction-Biographical Essay

As a young college student at Bryn Mawr College in 1905, Marianne Moore "was burning with the desire to write" ("Moore" Current 266). The only thing standing in her way was her lack of self-confidence with academic English ("Moore" Current 266). She had worked diligently and for a long period of time on an English paper that would, although she did not know it at the time, change her life forever ("Moore" Current 266). When young Marianne Moore handed in her paper to the English teacher, she, as most students would, hoped for the best. The paper was then handed back to the students. Moore's paper had writing in the margin that would cause her to change. The writing said, "'I presume you had an idea, if one could find out what it is'" ("Moore" Current 266). This one comment on her paper made her think that she was not meant to be a writer and work with words.

At that point in Moore's life, she decided to leave English behind so that she could study biology and histology. Her time in the laboratory would later influence her poetry. Marianne Craig Moore would use her study of life and the details of life's tissue through science as a basis to write poetry.

Marianne Moore was born on November 15, 1887, to John Milton and Mary (Warner) Moore. Marianne would never get to see her father though because John Milton had a nervous breakdown

before her birth. He never recovered from his breakdown. Before little Marianne was born, her father went to live either with his parents or to a hospital, but no one is certain to which he went ("Moore" Current 266).

Moore lived with her mother, brother, and maternal grandfather, the Reverend John Riddle Warner, until he died in 1894. Moore's grandfather was an influence in her life by being warm and affectionate to her family ("Moore" Something 128). With the little money left to Moore's family after her grandfather's death, they moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania where she would remain for many years. Because the family had little money, her mother had to work as a teacher at the Metzger Institute for girls. Marianne went to school at the Metzger Institute where she said her interest in art and in the beauty of nature began ("Moore" Something 129). After the Metzger Institute, Moore went to Bryn Mawr College where her conflict with English began. Moore later overcame her lack of self-confidence by mastering the art of words through self-study with her mother's guidance (Phillips 279).

Although Miss Moore had already encountered the experience that would influence her poetry, Moore did not begin to write poetry until 1907 while attending Bryn Mawr College. Her first poems were published in the Bryn Mawr literary magazine and alumnae magazine that same year. Moore did not think that her published poetry was all that great or even good enough to draw

attention ("Moore" Something 129). After she graduated from the women's college in 1909, she entered Carlisle Commercial College where she took secretarial courses. Upon graduating from the Commercial College in 1910, Marianne and her mother traveled to England and France. She must have been influenced by the French writing style because much of her own style seems to be related to it ("Moore" Current 266). When Moore returned to the States, she began to teach commercial subjects at the United States Indian School in Carlisle. She quit teaching in 1915 when she had "To the Soul of Progress" published in The Egoist of London and Poetry of Chicago. In 1916 Marianne and her mother moved to Catham to live with her older brother, John Warner Moore. He had followed his grandfather's footsteps in becoming a Presbyterian minister.

After only two years, Moore and her mother moved to Greenwich Village in New York City where the young poet worked as a private tutor to make money. In 1921, Marianne Moore's first book, Poems, was published in England but she was not aware that it was going to be; Hilda Doolittle and other poets had put twenty-four of Moore's poems together. She could hardly believe that they would want to publish it ("Moore" Something 130). The book of poems received mixed reviews; more seemed to think the poems were not any good while a few admired them (Phillips 284). For the next four years, Moore worked part-time at the public library in New York and was encouraged to do so by T.S. Eliot

("Moore" Something 130). One of Moore's well-known poems, "Marriage," was published during this period. Moore hoped the poem would not be misunderstood; about marriage itself she said it was "the proper thing for everybody but me" (Phillips 285).

Marianne Moore's career as a poet began to take off during this time of her life; she received many awards and published many books of poetry. In 1925, Dial Press published Moore's Observations that contained fifty-three of her poems. She received the Dial Award for Observations. Her next career move was to become the acting editor of The Dial, a large step from being a librarian. In 1929, after only three years, The Dial stopped publishing. Moore and her mother then moved to Brooklyn where she began to write full time. In 1947, the same year she was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, Moore's best friend and critic died ("Moore" Something 130). Moore had lived with her mother her entire life except the four years when she was at college. Between 1932 and 1968, Moore received more than fifteen awards and honors for her poetry, some of which include the following: the Pulitzer Prize in poetry, the National Book Award, and the Bollingen Prize, all for Collected Poems. Moore also published more than ten books of poetry in this time period.

Marianne Moore was a very lively lady even until she died in her sleep on February 5, 1972, at age eighty-four. She did not learn how to drive a car until the age of seventy and even

then she did not buy a car because she liked to ride the subways in New York (Phillips 295). One of her favorite past-times was baseball, especially the Dodgers, for whom she wrote a poem. In 1968, she threw out the first ball of the season at Yankee Stadium and came to practice in midseason in 1967 (Phillips 295).

Moore was always on the go, but she enjoyed her privacy ("Moore" Current 268). During her lifetime she became known for wearing her tricorne hat. Marianne Moore was a very active lady even though she looked as if she would be very dull and strict. When she died, she was still a very popular modern poet. Although some critics believe that Moore did not write as well once she had received all the recognition, they still enjoy her mind baffling work. In 1981, her last book of poems, The Complete Poems, was published.

An interesting note about Moore is that she kept revising her poems and republishing them. "Poetry" went from being thirty lines with a strict structure to them, as most of her poems, to being only three lines long. Moore saw the constant need to revise as she herself grew. Structure, end rhyme, and imagery were three consistent motifs throughout most of her poems. In her poems, she used many references to unique animals from her study of science in college; many of her poems seemed almost scientific in the detail given. Most of Moore's poems dealt with the mind creating images with its imagination using real objects. This underlying theme is shown throughout "The Fish".

The Fish

wade
 through black jade.
 Of the crow-blue mussel shells, one keeps
 adjusting the ash heaps;
 opening and shutting itself like

 an
 injured fan.
 The branches which encrust the side
 of the wave, cannot hide
 there for the submerged shafts of the

 sun,
 split like spun
 glass, move themselves with spotlight swiftness
 into the crevices--
 in and out, illuminating

 the
 turquoise sea
 of bodies. The water drives a wedge
 of iron through the iron edge
 of the cliff; whereupon the stars,

 pink
 rice-grains, ink-
 bespattered jellyfish, crabs like green
 lilies, and submarine
 toadstools, slide each on the other.

 All
 external
 marks of abuse are present of this
 defiant edifice--
 all physical features of

 ac-
 cident--lack
 of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns, and
 hatchet strokes, these things stand
 out on it; the chasm side is

 dead.
 Repeated
 evidence has proved that it can live
 on what can not revive
 its youth. The sea grows old with it.

-Marianne Moore

Explication of "The Fish"

In "The Fish," Marianne Moore uses visual imagery and the diction of the poem to demonstrate the relationship among the cliff, the sea, and the creatures within the sea. Through the use of imagery, similes, metaphores, and alliteration, Moore is able to bring the sea to life as it crashes into the cliff. The theme of the poem discusses the power of the sea as it wears against the cliff, a great strength itself, while also wearing against the life supported within it. Perpetual change is seen throughout the poem showing that neither the sea, nor the cliff, nor man can turn back the aging process. She also parallels society's destruction of nature with the sea's destruction of the cliff. Moore deals with a deep subject matter, but she goes about it using imagery with common objects (Hall 362).

Moore uses imagery to allow one's mind to picture the action taking place in "The Fish." In the first stanza of the poem, Moore personifies the fish as they "wade/ through black jade," an action normally used to describe man. The "black jade" creates the image of the thick, dark water of the sea filled with mussels. The poem goes on to discuss the movement in the sand of the mussel-shells which, through the use of a simile, are seen to look like "an/ injured fan." Crow-blue is the color used to describe the mussel-shells, allowing the reader to visualize their appearance in the sand. Again Moore uses a simile to

enhance the description of the image of the sun rays coming through the water by comparing them to "spun glass," informing the audience, who is not identifiable, that the setting of the poem is at sea during midday. The simile adds to the visual imagery produced in "The Fish." The water is then described as a "turquoise sea/ of bodies" creating in the imagination a scene of the lovely colored sea full of life. Visual imagery is also used through the personification of the sea water as it "drives" particles of iron to gather on the cliff with the iron that was previously present. The image created in one's mind is that of powerful waves crashing onto the cliff leaving their remnants behind. The visual scene of the sea animals and sea life hitting the cliff, the shore, and each other is also created as the poem moves on.

Moore utilizes implied metaphors to create imagery in "The Fish." The cliff is implied to be a "defiant edifice" showing the power and strength that allow it to survive the constant wear and tear, or aging, that it suffers. "The barnacles which encrust the side/ of the wave" is also an implied metaphor comparing the wave to a ship, which usually has barnacles encrusted on its sides. Alliteration of an "s" sound is also present in "The Fish" helping to create the auditory sense of the crashing waves. Rather than the rest of the imagery being created through Moore's use of figurative devices, the images are created through the wonderfully chosen words that describe the scene.

The diction in "The Fish" allows the images needed to understand the poem to be created in the mind of the reader. Concrete rather than abstract words are expressed in "The Fish" allowing the reader to understand all of the subjects being discussed; therefore, the mind is allowed to visualize all of the images without wondering if it is correct. Moore not only helps the reader's understanding of the poem through the use of concrete words, she also uses common words but in a sophisticated manner.

In the last stanza, the words become more abstract in meaning as the poem shifts to describe the chasm side and the "emotional focus of the poem" (Lisk 776). The emotional focus of the poem is that not even the sea can turn back time nor can one stop change. As in many of Marianne Moore's poems, one of the underlying themes is to grasp the meaning of poetry through the use of one's imagination using concrete objects to form the images. Moore chooses descriptive words throughout the poem and gives many examples when discussing the life in the sea and the destruction done by man to nature. These examples enable the reader to create better, more valid pictures in his or her own mind; therefore, the destruction on the cliff is seen to also be man's fault. The images that are created in one's mind show the relationship between the sea which crashes into the cliff, wearing it away yet allowing it to grow larger, with the new iron deposits left on it. They also allow the reader to see that the life living within the sea live on the sea and also wear at the

cliff.

In "The Fish," Moore tells of the relationship in the sea and of the destruction that both the sea and man cause on the cliff and in nature. Although the imagery and the diction of the poem help convey its theme, the tone and structure of "The Fish" help make the poem more readable allowing the reader to imagine more. The tone of "The Fish" is like that of many of Marianne Moore's other poems; it is declarative and didactic. Moore again has a strict pattern of structure. "The Fish" has eight stanza, all of which are quintets. The structure is still unusual; the lines are arranged by syllables with each line of each stanza having the following number of syllables, respectively, 1, 3, 9, 6, 8. The lines are also set up in a interesting manner on the page having the first two lines of each stanza lined up with the margin, the next two lines of each stanza indented equally, and the fifth line of each stanza indented even more. As one looks down the left side of the page, the lines seem to form the pattern of waves rising and falling. Another repetitive style of Moore's that is seen in "The Fish" is that the title of the poem is the first line of the poem as well. "The Fish" is not about a fish except in the first three lines of the poem.

Although some may not agree, Gilbert Sorrentino, a critic of poetry, believes "The Fish" is Marianne Moore's best poem saying that it discusses the inherent evil in all (262). This inherent evil that Sorrentino sees is the cause of man's destruction of nature. The main theme of "The Fish" is to show that the

relationships and powers of the sea and man upon nature will never cease, but that nature will continue to grow in size because of what the sea and man leave behind. But, as stated earlier, the underlying theme of all Marianne Moore's poems is to learn poetry through the imagination of the literal.

Poetry

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in it
after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise
if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are
useful. When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible,
the same thing may be said for all of us, that we
do not admire what
we cannot understand: the bat
holding upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under
a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a
flea, the base-
ball fan, the satisfaction--
nor is it valid
to discriminate against "business documents and

school-books", all these phenomena are important. One must make a
distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not
poetry,
nor till the poets among us can be
"literalists of
the imagination"--above
insolence and trivality and can present

for inspection, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the hand,
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is on the other hand
genuine, you are interested in poetry.

-Marianne Moore

Explication of "Poetry"

In "Poetry," Marianne Moore uses diction and imagery to express the theme of the poem which focuses on what poetry is and how to go about thinking to understand poetry. Unlike many of her other poems, "Poetry" has very few figurative devices other than imagery and diction. Like all of her other poetry, Moore uses a structure that is continuous throughout the poem.

"Poetry" has six stanzas all of which contain six lines. The first line is the only line flush against the margin while the second and third lines are indented equally. Lines four and five of each stanza are also indented equally but they are indented a little further than the first indentation. The sixth line of each stanza is indented the farthest of all the lines in the stanza. The structure of "Poetry" allows one's mind to feel as if it were drifting; therefore, more images may come into the mind.

Moore utilizes familiar conversational diction in "Poetry" to allow the reader to understand her definition of poetry more easily. By using such words as us and we Moore is able to identify with the audience, which is all of the world, even other poets and herself. This identification with the audience makes it easier to identify with the purpose of the poem. Although Moore's choice of words in "Poetry" is educated, the words are easy to understand without the aid of a dictionary. The words allow the reader to understand the first stanza in which Moore,

the speaker, states that she dislikes poetry as most other people do and that other things are more important than the frustration caused by writing it. Moore goes on to say that even with a "perfect contempt" for it, the reader discovers that the "genuine" or the real does have a place in poetry. Moore's diction creates wonderful images as she goes on to discuss the need for real objects to be in poetry and why most people do not understand it.

Many visual images are created in "Poetry" which allow the reader to have a greater understanding of the poet's goal in writing the poem. Moore mentions that examples of real objects in poetry are "Hands that can grasp, eyes/ that can dilate, hair that can rise/ if it must." Maureen W. Mills, a critic of Moore, suggests that these examples create an image in one's mind of an actual hand grasping at something it cannot reach, a large eye dilating, and hairs sticking straight up after someone has been frightened rather than an idealized image of dainty white hands and perfect eyes and hair (1710). She goes on to explain that the reason that real objects should be used in poetry is that they are useful for understanding, not to be interpreted. If one tries to interpret the objects too much, they are not understood; therefore, poetry is not enjoyed. Moore suggests that one must understand before one can appreciate. Examples are then given of real objects in unusual situations such as "a wild horse taking a role, ..., the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea;" all of these examples are actually humorous

to think about. Visual images are created to allow one to see in order to understand what Moore is trying to say about poetry. If one tries to pick apart the meaning in these examples the point will be lost; therefore, that is why one should look carefully at them as well as the rest of poetry in order to see the true, real meaning through the imagination of the mind. All the real subjects of the world may be used an infinite number of times, Moore points out, if the reader remembers to let the mind create images. She states that even the boring subjects of "Business documents and/ school-books," an allusion to Leo Tolstoy's quotation on the difference between prose and poetry (McDowell), can be made interesting if the mind imagines. Only the true poets, Moore says, are "literalists of the imagination," another allusion to William Blake (McDowell), meaning to make images of the mind into literal objects. These ideal poets of Moore's are able to discuss art and poetry as one (Costello 271). Moore's most famous quotation that also draws a picture in the mind of the reader, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," sums up Moore's meaning of "Poetry." One must be able to create imaginary pictures in his or her mind and be able to place real objects that do not always have a pleasant nature to them, such as a toad, in order to understand poetry. If it were not for the images drawn from the reading of "Poetry," the reader would have a hard time grasping the meaning of the poem.

In order to further help the audience in understanding the message in "Poetry," Moore did utilize a few other figurative

devices. Moore used paradoxes when discussing the literalists and the imaginary gardens. Bernard F. Engel, another of Marianne Moore's critics, believes that these apparent contradictions with their witty side are the essence of Moore (227). Moore also uses the repetition of the word "thing," a word normally only used in personal conversation, to reinforce the didactic and personal tone of "Poetry." Although Moore uses end rhyme in many of her poems, such as "The Fish" and "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing," in "Poetry" she writes in free verse. As for myself, I believe that the reason for this may be to allow the mind to have no restraints when imagining the pictures of the poem. Maureen W. Mills shows that in the lines "Hands that can grasp, eyes/ that can dilate, hair that can rise," Moore uses internal rhyme to keep the flow of the poetic line internally (1711). As in her other poems the title of "Poetry" is actually the first line of the poem. Although she does talk about poetry in the poem, she talks about imagery more, just as, in "The Fish," Moore discusses fish but she discusses the waves and the cliff considerably more.

Moore does an excellent job at conveying her message about using one's imagination in order to understand the concrete part of poetry in her poem "Poetry." She is only able to succeed at this task by using wonderful imagery and diction to create that imagery. The personal yet didactic tone of "Poetry" also helps convey the theme to the reader. Although this version of "Poetry" came out in 1921, Marianne Moore later cut it down to only three lines as she did much of her work; she changed her poetry as she

changed (Nitchie 397). As in "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing," Moore is saying to use one's mind in order to grasp the meaning of poetry.

The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing

is an enchanted thing
 like the glaze on a
katydid-wing
 subdivided by sun
 till the nettings are legion.
Like Giesecking playing Scarlatti;

like the apteryx-awl
 as a beak, or the
kiwi's rain shawl
 of haired feathers, the mind
 feeling its way as though blind,
walks along with its eyes on the ground.

It has memory's ear
 that can hear without
having to hear.
 Like the gyroscope's fall,
 truly unequivocal
because trued by regnant certainty,

it is a power of
 strong enchantment. It
is like the dove-
 neck animated by
 sun; it is memory's eye;
it's conscientious inconsistency.

It tears off the veil; tears
 the temptation, the
mist the heart wears,
 from its eyes--if the heart
 has a face; it takes apart
dejection. It's fire in the dove-neck's

iridescence; in the
 inconsistencies
of Scarlatti.
 Unconfusion submits
 its confusion to proof; it's
not a Herod's oath that cannot change.

-Marianne Moore

Explication of "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing"

As in "The Fish" and in "Poetry," Marianne Moore again conveys the message in "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing" that the mind creates images using the objects of the world to give the mind an active role in poetry; she focuses on the mind's active role in the world. To express this theme, the poem explores the mind and its function. Moore uses a didactic tone informing the audience, which is not identifiable, of the mind's roles. The use of figurative language provides insights into the poem's subject. The action of the poem does not have a distinct setting nor occasion, but the poem does take place during World War II as seen by the reference to Giesecking.

Although the diction of "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing" is fairly common, Moore juxtaposes words in such a way that not only are new and unusual images brought to mind but also the new images make the poem harder to understand. Out of all of Marianne Moore's poems, "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing" seems to be one of the hardest to comprehend. As Mr. Andy Smith tried to interpret the poem he said, "This is one of the hardest damn poems I've ever tried to interpret." The language of the poem is actually easy to understand, but the meaning of it is hard to grasp. Although in most of Moore's poems concrete words are used, in this poem many of the words are abstract in their meaning. The mind itself is not a real, concrete word because it has so many complicated and sophisticated parts that make it up

that not many people understand. Other words and phrases Moore uses that have abstract meaning are "enchanting," "inconsistency," "confusion," and "power of strong enchantment." The sentences of the poem are, for the most part, rather long.

As always, Moore makes use of a strict structure. The poem is made of six stanzas of sextets, all of which have the same organization. In each stanza the first, third, and sixth lines are flush against the margin while the second line is indented and the fourth and the fifth lines are indented even further. As in her other poems, Moore has a set number of syllables for each line (6, 5, 4, 6, 7, 9). The poem has end rhyme scheme which is in the pattern of abaccd. Moore has a pattern throughout most of her poetry of using strict structure and form.

In "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing," Marianne Moore makes use of visual imagery by using figurative language as she does in both "Poetry" and "The Fish." Similes, which are prevalent in this poem, make a comparison between the mind and many other concrete or real objects. Moore compares the mind to "the glaze on a/ katydid-wing" which is separated by the sun's rays, "Gieseeking" a German pianist who played "Scarlatti," and the kiwi bird's beak and feathers. These comparisons between the unlike objects cause the reader to visualize the objects and the relationship they have with the mind making the poem more than just words on paper. These similes show that the mind itself even though it is abstract is actually able to be seen as an object with many complex parts while they also show "the mind's

power of observation" (Ames 1391). The mind's power of observation is then shown through personification which suggests that the mind starts "blind" as it walks through life observing genuine objects. Metonymy is present as the poet uses "ear" to represent hearing. Mrs.. Linda Mines points out that the poem displays the power of the mind by saying that the mind has "the mental capacity to remember" something heard only once or even replay it in the mind. The mind is then said to be "unequivocal" as it is compared to a "gyroscope's fall" which has power and cannot be equaled. Another simile is used to compare the mind to a "dove-neck" that moves because of the warmth of the sun. The image created by this simile is a wonderful picture seen in the mind (Smith). The mind is compared to the eye, which is a metonymy for vision, through a metaphor. This comparison is also made by Mr. Smith saying that everyone can draw because of the mind's eye which creates pictures of objects never built except in the mind. Smith also says that it is interesting that the mind is said to be conscientiously inconsistent because that is the way man's behavior is. The mind's power is also seen by the way it can handle the body's emotions when the body's heart cannot deal with them. The mind is then shown to be forever changing as "Scarlati," the work of music. Through an allusion to King Herod in the Bible, the mind is again shown to be changing whereas Herod did not change his order to behead John the Baptist (Ames 1392). The mind is said to be an enchanted thin, a metaphor, meaning that the mind is fascinated by the

objects of the world. Yet, it is also an amazing abstract object itself that can be seen as real through all of the comparisons to real objects made in the poem.

Moore wants man to use his mind to visualize images that contain real objects and to use the mind's power to reason. Moore is able to convey this throughout the poem through her creative use of figurative language and creative diction. Mrs. Mines adds that the poem shows that "the mind has the ability to question, balance and resolve many of the major dilemmas of society." This statement of Mrs. Mines reveals the mind's power discussed throughout the poem by Marianne Moore. As in her other poems, Moore's goal is to get man to create images in his mind using real objects.

Conclusion-Philosophy and Style Essay

"Imaginary gardens with real toads in them," the central theme throughout all of Marianne Craig Moore's poetry. She wants man to use his mind, and yet to use concrete objects as well. She does not see poetry as a subject that should be straight forward nor does she want every reader to see the same image as they read poetry. Denis Donoghue, a critic of Moore, says that she provides the direction for the mind's energy to move (292). Moore is also very mechanical in the way she sees the world. She makes comparisons between many objects that would normally not seem to go together such as the mind and a gyroscope's fall both being "unequivocal." Moore always seems to take on a didactic tone as if she is trying to teach the reader; this may be a result from her teaching experience in her younger days.

Moore's grandfather and brother were both Presbyterian ministers and her mother was very religious. Although Moore is religious in a few of her poems such as "When I Buy Pictures" where she brings religion into the poem while still keeping her style of noticing great detail in the world, she believed her mother and grandfather were almost too religious ("Moore" Current 266). Marianne Moore was also a Presbyterian who believed in God but she seems to lean toward nature as part of God's wonderful creation in her poetry.

Moore's philosophy that the imagination interpret objects and matters of life because it has so much power is rather

optimistic. She seems to see that man destroys nature in "the Fish" and that man needs to make use of the powerful mind that God has given him. As seen in "Poetry," Moore seems to think the role of the artist is to create the imaginary out of the real so that the non-artist can recognize it, too. The attitude of Marianne Moore seems to be very benevolent and generally happy. To create her imagery, Moore believes in using structure and figurative language.

Marianne Moore writes in a style that involves using imagery, structure, and diction. To create the imagery, Moore uses many figurative devices such as metaphors, similes, alliteration, allusions, and metonymy. She likes to use words that cause visual imagery to take place in the mind. Concrete words are also used by Moore throughout her poems to allow the reader to grasp the idea of using the real with the imagined. "The Mind Is an Enchanting Thing" is a wonderful example where concrete is compared to the abstract (the glaze on katydid's wing to the mind). In many of Moore's poems the first line of the poem is actually the title of the poem. Quotations from other people, books, and other sources are used often in Moore's poems. William Barrett said that where many would make mistakes if they quoted others like Moore, but Moore "has a genius for singling out the apt line or passage" ("Moore" Current 267). Martin Dodsworth, a critic, points out that Moore's "love of detail," use of "accurate words," utilization of "lengthy catalogues of names and things," and "her startling ability to detect likeness

in the most unlikely places," all of which are very much a part of Marianne Moore's style, "are based on an almost childlike respect for the truth" (291).

Moore's style and philosophy seem to have stayed pretty constant throughout her life. When her mother died, it was a very tragic event in Moore's life, but it did not seem to change her poetry because she accepted the death so well. Moore's influences in poetry were prose stylists ("Moore" Current 266). Moore's writing covered most of her life time starting in 1907 and going to her death. She was recognized by many during her life time as being a great poet some even call her the greatest modern poet (Phillips 298).

Marianne Moore is more of an great imagist poet than any other kind even though she has a hard time classifying herself as a great poet. Moore is from Missouri although she loves New York. Some of the most shaping moments of her life are when the teacher in college did not understand her paper, one which I can understand, when her mother died, as well as growing up without a father. Although there were times when Moore did not have much money to spare, most of her life she had plenty. On the whole, Marianne Moore was a fairly normal poet with a fairly good life of modern times.

As for this reader of Marianne Moore, I have come to enjoy her a great deal. I chose her because she seemed fairly normal and she seemed to write with diction that I understood. Her imagery is so powerful that no matter if you miss it once, you

will see it in the next line. I believe the greatest poem of all time is "Poetry." Although at first glance, I had difficulty understanding her theme, after a second look I believe it is almost impossible to miss. I think her poetry would stand out among the crowd.

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