

Dialogue between marianne moore and elizabeth bishop essay

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



A Dialogue Between Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop
Moore: How do you do? Bishop: Quiet well thank you. Moore: Since we have both penned poems entitle “ Fish,” I thought it would be great to take this time to discuss their similarities and differences. Bishop: That is a great idea. I have always really looked up to you as a poet and even have modeled many of my poems after your style. I have always loved your poetic advice that we, as poets, should present “ imaginary gardens with real toads in them” (Marianne Craig Moore). Moore: Well, some of my favorite subjects are animals - even toads and fish (Marianne Craig Moore).

Bishop: Your poem really keeps to your sense of structure and precise vocabulary. Your use of jade as an image is interesting as jade is opaque and not generally considered an attribute of water or streams.

Moore: I really like to use color imagery, and combine several instances of blue and green in this poem. I notice that you use colors as well, most notably the use of the color brown at the beginning of the poem to describe the aged condition of the fish. Bishop: Yes, I wanted to show a progression from the drab images to the sudden oil-inspired rainbow at the end of the poem.

Moore: I noticed that too, but I would urge you to explain why you choose “ to hide behind a neutral narrator’s voice,” (Shore). It seems like the point of view you choose, the speaker, is very neutral and unemotional.

Bishop: Yes, I hear that a lot. One think I will say is that I am doing this for a stylistic purpose.

I think Shore explains this well when she says “ When Bishop changes her mind, she is also changing our minds by showing us a thing one way and then showing it to us in another way. She and we are like the people disembarking the boats. Through masterful fusions of metaphor, Bishop creates a new world and resolves and dissolves its differences in the dazzling dialectic of her vision.” Moore: So you are basically offering a scenario and asking the reader to reach his own conclusion about the accuracy or precision of what he is seeing? Bishop: Basically, yes. When the rainbow appears at the end, the reader is interpreting the narrator’s decision to let this weathered, survivor (albeit a fish) go. In doing so, the reader is examining himself. What would he have done? Moore: I see.

Most critics have noted that I use precise language as well, but tend to have a more unique, some have called it cryptic, writing style (Marianne Craig Moore). Bishop: I can definitely see that in your poem. Your use of enjambed lines move the poem along quickly, much like a fish itself would swim. Because my poem is more of a narrative style, its pace is a little more slow. Moore: Of course, we both present the fish as older and unattractive.

Yet our themes of survival are similar. Bishop: You achieve that theme by an intense description of the fish and its environment..

I love your simile in the line –“ mussel-shells, one keeps adjusting the ash-heaps; opening and shutting itself like an injured fan.” The sea scene you present is realistic, not romantic. Moore: Well, it all goes back to the

presentation of the toads! Of course, your poem achieves much the same theme, only it adds the human element of emotion. Your mention of the "pool of bilge where oil had spread a rainbow around the rusted engine" ends with the novice fisherman exclaiming "rainbow, rainbow, rainbow," before he lets the fish go. This seems almost a little religious in scope.

I should know as I am a devout Presbyterian (Marianne Craig Moore.) Bishop: Well, perhaps, I think it is more for the individual to determine. There is definitely evidence of pathos there, as you mentioned. Moore: I suppose a lot of readers would not understand the point of our specific concentration on subject matter (fish) in these poems. I hope that our readers will be able to see that nature and man's experiences with it are not all idyllic, nor are they raging tragedies.

There is this precise middle where experience meets art, even if it is in a small observation as that of a fish. Bishop I couldn't agree with you more.

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