

Spring 2017

Women Writers: Marianne Moore & Elizabeth Bishop —Poetic Generation/s
English 4378 / Professor Gregory / T Th 11:30-1 / AH 301 / section 26507



This class will explore the interlocking, mutually generative poetics of these two major 20th-century American poets, from different generations, who enjoyed a particularly fruitful and interactive poetic and personal relationship. Moore was Bishop's mentor, and Moore learned from Bishop as well. They also differed often and interestingly. Although Bishop lived abroad for much of her life, the two maintained a steady correspondence. The class allows students to delve deeply into the work of both, exploring the dynamics of poetic influence, the evolving role of gender in poetry, and the history of 20th-century poetry. Readings will include: poetry by both, their correspondence and biographies, and critical and contextualizing secondary materials.

ROSES ONLY

You do not seem to realize that beauty is a liability rather than
an asset—that in view of the fact that spirit creates form we are justified in supposing
that you must have brains. For you, a symbol of the unit, stiff and sharp,
conscious of surpassing by dint of native superiority and liking for everything
self-dependent, anything an

ambitious civilization might produce: for you, unaided to attempt through sheer
reserve, to confute presumptions resulting from observation, is idle. You cannot make us
think you a delightful happen-so. But rose, if you are brilliant it
is not because your petals are the without-which-nothing of pre-eminence. You would, minus thorns,
look like a what-is-this, a mere

peculiarity. They are not proof against a worm, the elements, or mildew
but what about the predatory hand? What is brilliance without co-ordination? Guarding the
infinitesimal pieces of your mind, compelling audience to
the remark that it is better to be forgotten than to be remembered too violently,
your thorns are the best part of you.

—Marianne Moore