



Holding On Upside Down: The Life and Work of Marianne Moore

Linda Leavell

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Winner of the Plutarch Award for the Best Biography of 2013

A mesmerizing and essential biography of the modernist poet Marianne Moore

The Marianne Moore that survives in the popular imagination is dignified, white-haired, and demure in her tricorne hat; she lives with her mother until the latter's death; she maintains meaningful friendships with fellow poets but never marries or falls in love.

Linda Leavell's *Holding On Upside Down*—the first biography of this major American poet written with the support of the Moore estate—delves beneath the surface of this calcified image to reveal a passionate, canny woman caught between genuine devotion to her mother and an irrepressible desire for personal autonomy and freedom. Her many poems about survival are not just quirky nature studies but acts of survival themselves.

Not only did the young poet join the Greenwich Village artists and writers who wanted to overthrow all her mother's pieties but she also won their admiration for the radical originality of her language and the technical proficiency of her verse. After her mother's death thirty years later, the aging recluse transformed herself, against all expectations, into a charismatic performer and beloved celebrity. She won virtually every literary prize available to her and was widely hailed as America's greatest living poet.

Elegantly written, meticulously researched, critically acute, and psychologically nuanced, *Holding On Upside Down* provides at last the biography that this major poet and complex personality deserves.

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