
John Rees Moore

On Loving Thy Neighbor

Loving thy neighbor is hard to do:
 that dirty, ignorant, stinking fellow
Black or white, Hindu or Jew,
 requires you to be somewhat mellow.
But if you don't do it, who will?
It's really a question of love or kill.

Rage is a feeling we should rarely use
 though perhaps there is some excuse:
When power resorts to cruel abuse
 of innocence. But what can hate produce?
Love is hard—even to love oneself
May require a sick mind to regain health.

It's not natural to love your neighbor, said Freud.
 But how about every mother and child?
But can we compel love or avoid
 hate? Is it enough to have mercy mild?
"We must love one another or die," said Auden.
But on second thought he cut it out. Too maudlin?

JOHN REES MOORE is Professor Emeritus of English at Hollins University.