Poetry

by Marianne Moore

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