

"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 base-

ball 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.