



Marianne Moore

(1887-1972)

Poetry (1921)

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
the 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.