Poetry

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 that there

is 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 twinkling his skin like a horse that feels a flea,

the base-

ball fan, the statistician—case after case

could be cited did

one wish it; 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 autocrats among us can be

“literalists of

the imagination”—above

insolence and triviality can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have

it. In the meantime, if you demand on one hand, in defiance of their opinion—

the raw material of poetry in

all its rawness and

that which is, on the other hand,

genuine then you are interested in poetry.

Moore, Marianne. “Poetry.” *Poems*. London: Egoist, 1921, 22.

Poetry

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There are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.

The bat, upside down; the elephant pushing,

A tireless wolf under a tree,

The base-ball fan, the statistician—

“business documents and schoolbooks”—

these phenomena are pleasing,

but when they have been fashioned

into that which is unknowable,

we are not entertained.

It may be said of all of us

That we do not admire what we cannot understand;

Enigmas are not poetry.

Moore, Marianne. “Poetry.” *Observations*. 2nd ed. New York: Dial, 1925.

Poetry

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that are important beyond all this fiddle. Reading it,

however, with a perfect contempt for it,

one discovers that there is in it, after all, a place for the genuine:

hands that can grasp, eyes that can dilate, hair that can rise if it must

the bat holding on upside down,

an elephant pushing, a tireless wolf under a tree,

the immovable critic twitching his skin

like a horse that feels a fly, the base-ball fan, the statistician--nor is it

valid to discriminate against business documents, school-books,

trade reports--these phenomena

are important; but dragged into conscious oddity by

half poets, the result is not poetry,

This we know. In a liking for the raw material in all its rawness,

and for that which is genuine, there is liking for poetry.

Moore, Marianne. “Poetry.” *The New Poetry*. Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, eds. New York: MacMillan, 1932. Also 1934 and 1938.

Poetry

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Moore, Marianne. “Poetry.” *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore*. New York: MacMillan/Viking, 1967, 36.

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Moore, Marianne. “Poetry.” *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore*. New York: MacMillan/Viking, 1967, 266-267.