

## Taffy Martin: On "Spenser's Ireland"

"Spenser's Ireland" makes no direct reference to the subject of "Sojourn in the Whale," but it portrays an even more subtle and evasive power. The poem concludes with its speaker's admission that "I am troubled, I'm dissatisfied, I'm Irish," but it has already offered a solution to the alleged dissatisfaction by portraying freedom and success as states of mind rather than as action. We learn, for instance, that dull perseverance which

again and again says, "I'll never give in," never sees

that you're not free until you've been made captive by supreme belief

If the eccentricities of Ireland thus seem merely fussy--and Moore's language itself is deliberately fussy when making the point--she has her own suggestion for a method of escape:

Erie-- the guillemot so neat and the hen of the heath and  
the linnet spinet-sweet--bespeak restlessness? Then they are to me like  
enchanted Earl Gerald who changed himself into a stag, to a great green-eyed  
cat of the mountain. Discommodity makes them invisible; they've dis- appeared.

"Spenser's Ireland" thus shows that imagination offers escape both from discouragement and, on a whim, from discommodity.

From Marianne Moore: *Subversive Modernist*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.  
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### **Publication Status:**

Excerpted Criticism [1]

### **Publication:**

- Private group -

### **Criticism Target:**

Marianne Moore [2]

### **Author:**

Taffy Martin [3]

### **Poem:**

Spenser's Ireland [4]

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