



Edith Somerville  
& Martin Ross

*The Real Charlotte*

*The Real Charlotte* (1894)

a novel by **Edith Somerville** (1858-1949)

and her cousin **Martin Ross** (1862-1915; pen name of Violet Martin)

**Lecture 2.5** • Selected themes and episodes occurring in  
Chapter 9 through end of Chapter 19

### **Charlotte as Middle-Class Businesswoman**

Arguably, the start of its ninth chapter marks a turning point in Somerville and Ross's 1894 novel *The Real Charlotte* (hereafter *TRC*). By that juncture, the unidentified, third-person narrator has established the major players in the drama: (1) Charlotte Mullen and Francie Fitzgerald of Tally Ho Lodge (which, apparently, came into the Mullen family through the upscale Butler family [p. 94]); (2) the Dysart family of Bruff House, the local Big House; (3) Roddy Lambert of Rosemount (a place big enough to have a "gate lodge" [p. 68]); and (4) Julia Duffy of Gurthnamuckla. Equipped with foundational knowledge as to who's who, the reader, by the turn into Chapter 9, is able to comprehend how the work's multiple subsequent episodes constitute a larger whole. In this lecture, we will consider only some selected aspects of Chapters 9 through 19. It is not possible, given the available time, to analyze all details of that chunk of the text!

When thinking about Charlotte as a businesswoman in a man's world (our initial focus for today), it's useful to begin by observing that Tally Ho Lodge configures as a female dispensation, created by a pair of women writers. (As the 1985 feminist pop anthem puts it: "Sisters Are Doin' It for Themselves.") After a Church of Ireland choir practice, when walking to Tally Ho Lodge for a tea party that will feature such middle-class artifacts as a "grocer's [i.e. store-bought] cake" and "electro-plated teaspoons" (p. 62), the 19-year-old Dubliner Francie Fitzgerald informs the 27-year-old aristocrat Christopher Dysart (heir to Bruff House and its lands) that Charlotte's cats hide "up the chimney or under Norry's bed" whenever "a man comes into the house" (pp. 59-60).

*Charlotte's Business Dealings with the Working Class and Peasantry* ¶ Equally at ease operating via middle-class "account books" or, alternatively, the paperless, "absolutely accurate business memory of the Irish peasant" (p. 66), the distinctly independent, self-sufficient Charlotte finances her bourgeois lifestyle by several means. One of those means, when dealing with the working class, is her collecting rent (as a kind of rural slum-landlord) from "two or three householders in Ferry Row," and another is conducting "money dealings ... of a complicated kind" with other residents of that down-at-heel, lakeside neighborhood, best known as the local center for the cottage industry of professional clothes-washing, carried out by "laundresses" (p. 66). (The first electric washing machine didn't appear until the early twentieth century.)

*TRC* portrays those women's working and living conditions as pretty awful, and in general the novel does not romanticize or aestheticize the Irish-peasant lifestyle, as the Irish Cultural Revivalists (such as Somerville and Ross's fellow Protestants Lady Gregory, W.B. Yeats, Douglas Hyde, and John Millington

Synge) tended to do. The Revival had become an identifiable movement by 1894, when *TRC* debuted, and an expression of its **green-tinted-spectacles** approach to the peasant experience occurs in the 1906 **pamphlet** titled *Irish Plays*, issued by dramatists associated with one of its outstanding institutional achievements, the **Abbey, Ireland's National Theater** (founded in 1904):

[T]he Irish peasantry of the hills and coast speak an exuberant language, and have a **primitive grace and wildness**, due to the wild country they live in, which gives their most **ordinary life a vividness and color unknown in more civilized places.**

When Charlotte encounters “three old” **Gaeilge-speaking** and **pipe-smoking** Irish peasant women (including Peggy Roche and Mary Holloran) “**squatt[ing]** on the floor” of the kitchen at Gurthnamuckla, she notices that — amid surroundings of general “**squalor**” (p. 70) — their “converse [chat] ... [is] punctuated with



At Tally Ho Lodge, Charlotte serves “grocer’s cake,” purchased at an establishment such as the one in the above photo, from 1916. One assumes that this retailer’s cakes didn’t taste of “tallow, saw-dust, bad eggs, and gravel” (Christopher’s opinion of the concoction that Charlotte offers).

loud sniffs and coughs” (p. 68), symptoms of their chronic bad health; furthermore, they rely on “**mighty bad potheen** [potato-based moonshine]” for existential comfort and medicinal relief (p. 69). Later, in the scullery at Tally Ho, the reader is introduced to the peasant Nance the Fool, who, vocalizing “mouthings and mumblings in Irish [Gaeilge],” seems not to be a “person” but rather “**an object which [can] only be described as a bundle of rags with a cough in it**” (p. 124). Nothing about Nance aligns with the “primitive grace” and “vividness” in “ordinary life” highlighted in the document *Irish Plays*.

*Charlotte’s Business Dealings with the Middle Class* ¶ As regards her economic interactions with her fellow middle-class residents of the greater Lismoyle area, Charlotte demonstrates hard-headed, strategic acumen. A multifaceted example of this quality is her sometimes lending and

sometimes refusing to lend money to the **grazier (or pastoral farmer) Peter Joyce**. During her first visit of the novel to Gurthnamuckla (in Chapter 10), Charlotte informs Julia Duffy about Joyce’s having gone “**bankrupt**,” a circumstance that will oblige him to appear “in the **courts** before the year is out” (p. 73). The news discomforts Julia because she **sub-lets the fields at Gurthnamuckla** to Joyce, an arrangement that constitutes her primary source of income.

We never find out why Peter Joyce sought a loan from Charlotte in the first place. It might have been to expand his cattle-raising business in response to strong demand (especially from the populations in **large, industrial British cities**) for beef and dairy. Conversely, the requested loan might have constituted an attempt to keep his enterprise afloat during one of the **occasional dips in the agricultural economy** caused by bad weather, poor harvests, weak consumer demand, a change in international trade policies, or some other factor.

## **TRC and the Plan of Campaign**

Despite experiencing a general upward trend after the Great Hunger of the 1840s, Irish farmers certainly faced periods of uncertainty or anxiety. One **significant downturn in 1879** (please remember the date for testing purposes!) became the principal impetus for the establishment of the **Irish National Land League** in October of that year. To this day, the “Land League” remains chiefly associated with its founders: a Protestant of landlord stock, **Charles Stewart Parnell**; and a Catholic of peasant stock, **Michael Davitt**.

The Land League’s stated aims were fundamentally two, expressed at its inaugural meeting as follows: (1) “to bring about a **reduction of rack-rents** [excessive rents]”; and (2) “to facilitate the obtaining of the **ownership of the soil by the occupiers** [i.e. the tenants].” The League went through a number of iterations (for example, the change, in 1882, in its official name to the **Irish National League**). However, the essential history is that the broader movement prosecuted the **Land Campaign (or Land War) from 1879 to 1903**.

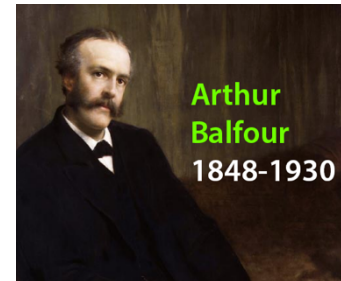
The latter year (also a date to remember!) saw a seminal victory: passage in the UK Parliament of the so-called **Wyndham Land Act**.

Along with the follow-up **Birrell Land Act** of 1909, the Wyndham Land Act of 1903 **effectively ended the Big House regime in Ireland** by providing legal and financial mechanisms for the purchase by tenants, from landlords, of farms amounting in total area to approximately **nine million acres**. Looking at the bigger picture: The result of all the post-Great Hunger land acts and their amendments through 1909 was the purchase by over 316,000 tenants of around 11.5 million acres of Ireland's 20 million acres: a revolutionary change. An important entity, the **Irish Land Commission**, came into existence under the Land Act of 1881; its core job was to oversee transfers in ownership from landlords to tenants.

Of particular concern in *TRC* is the phase of Land War activity known as the **Plan of Campaign**. Different scholars give slightly different end dates for that initiative. One of the most respected in the field, the economic historian **Cormac Ó Gráda**, regards the Plan as having run from 1886 to 1891. Certainly, the Plan was announced via an October 23, 1886, article ("A Plan of Campaign," by Timothy Harrington) in the **Irish National League's newspaper *United Ireland***. At that time, an agricultural depression (largely caused by a decline in export prices) had transpired and was hurting most Irish farmers.

While complex, the Plan of Campaign can be summarized as an attempt to **better coordinate** (rather than substantially alter) the tactics used in the Land War theretofore, such as: (1) intimidating landlords by damaging their property; (2) **boycotting (i.e. ignoring, shunning)** landlords, their agents, and even some tenants; and (3) withholding rents. Typically, the Plan encouraged tenants on a given Big House estate to **unite together** (i.e. to practice collective *versus* individual action) in order to programmatically exert pressure — by violent acts, if deemed necessary — for a **broad-based reduction in the rent** (usually **between 20% and 40%**). Tenants participating in the Plan refused to pay their rent as usual (through the estate's agent [think of Roddy Lambert]), thus depriving the landlord of what was known as his **rent roll**, a term that appears on p. 353 of *TRC*. In the meantime, though, tenants continued supplying rent, minus the reduction, to a Plan-approved **local trustee** (sometimes a sympathetic parish priest) to be held in **escrow** until the landlord acquiesced.

Matters were rendered tense by a decision on the part of Britain's **Conservative Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury**, to appoint his nephew, **Arthur Balfour**, as **Chief Secretary of Ireland**, one of the top colonial jobs in the country. In an attempt to bring an increasingly unsettled, even (in places) violent situation under control, Balfour secured passage of the **Irish Coercion Act** of 1887, also referred to as the "**Crimes Act**." Among its provisions was the **power to "proclaim"**: that is, to formally identify a district as having become so agitated that a kind of martial [military] law could be imposed there. This shift in policy explains why, at Lady Dysart's tennis-party in Chapter 3, Major Waller offers "a fine outburst on the **advisability of martial law**" (p. 15).



Balfour also sanctioned use of the **Royal Irish Constabulary** (i.e. the national police force) and the British army as "**emergency men**" to help carry out large-scale evictions from cottages and farmhouses of tenants involved in the coordinated non-payment of rent. Unlike other so-called **Irish land novels**, such as **Charles Kickham's** bestselling *Knocknagow; or, The Homes of Tipperary* (first published in 1873, before the Land War), *TRC* does not present a full-blown eviction (also known as **ejectment**) scene, although Roddy Lambert, when conversing with Charlotte about Julia Duffy, admits that the elderly female tenant of Gurthnamuckla "won't stir [i.e. leave the place], and I don't see what's going to make her **unless I evict her**" (p. 197). Later, Norry the Boat, who is Julia's cousin, suggests that Julia's failure to improve Gurthnamuckla may be strategic: "If it [the house] was clane itself, it's all the good it'd do her that **they'd throw her out of it [eject her] quicker**" (p. 125).

*TRC's* lack of a set-piece eviction episode notwithstanding, one notes that Francie's taking possession of the "**spare bedroom**" at Tally Ho Lodge, early in the novel, causes the aged tom-cat Susan to "**[be] evicted**"

from his preferred shelter: “the lowest shelf” of that room’s “wardrobe.” Also cast out from the room at the same time are Susan’s “great-niece, Mrs. Bruff” and “her five latest kittens” (p. 20). The cats’ various reactions could be those of the human victims of an eviction, at least as described in much nineteenth-century Irish land literature. While Susan “[thinks] unutterable things” about the forced change in circumstances, he “[is] too dignified to give utterance to his wounded feelings”; by contrast, Mrs. Bruff “[strides]” about, “uttering harsh cries of rage and despair,” a cacophony of “lamentations” (p. 20).

Parallels seem apparent with the following lines from the eviction sequence in the Irish Protestant poet William Allingham’s verse-novel *Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland* (originally 1864), whose subtitles have included *The New Landlord* and *Rich and Poor in Ireland*:

One old man, tears upon his wrinkled cheek,  
Stands trembling on a threshold, tries to speak,  
But, in defect of any word for this [the mass eviction],  
Mutely upon the doorpost prints a kiss,  
Then passes out for ever. Through the crowd,  
The children run bewilder’d, wailing loud.

In 1938, Maud Gonne published her memoir, *A Servant of the Queen: Reminiscences*. One chapter details her work for the Plan of Campaign during the 1889 mass-eviction event on the Big House estate of Wybrants Olphert in County Donegal in northwest Ireland, which attracted reporters, photographers, and artists.

One influential artistic image was titled “The Fight for Bare Life on the Olphert Estate.” Created by J.D. Reigh, it appeared in the Jan. 12, 1889, edition of the Land League organ, *United Ireland*, edited by William O’Brien.



In this extract from Gonne’s text:  
“D.I.” = District Inspector (of police);  
“ram” = battering ram.

the eviction forces moved on to a cottage close by. Here when the door was smashed in a woman with a one-day-old baby was carried out by the Emergency Men on a mattress followed by a crowd of crying children and a man, his face white and distorted with helpless rage. Their household goods made a great pile on the road. “Better knock down the gable or they will go back,” said the foxy man but the D.I. said it would take too long to unload and erect the ram, there were one hundred and fifty evictions to be done this week, so they must lose no time, he promised to post two men to see the people did not get into the house again, so the Emergency Men only smashed the two windows and went to the adjoining house, where the bailiff was already reading the eviction decree.

Balfour’s plan to expedite mass evictions by using emergency men (a combination of the Irish police and British army units stationed in Ireland) frequently backfired because the ejection events attracted press photographers whose images of ruined homesteads and dispossessed families stirred international public sympathy for Irish tenants. A photograph of an 1888 eviction in County Galway follows on the next page.

- Eviction on Sep. 1, 1888, on estate of 2nd Marquess of Clanricarde (Hubert de Burgh-Canning) at Woodford, County Galway; an absentee, he was considered Ireland's worst landlord
- The tenant was farmer and boat-builder Francis Tully, who had stopped paying rent on the 17-acre farm he rented from the Clanricarde estate
- Known locally as "Dr Tully," he was a prominent activist for the Plan of Campaign
- Tully had built the house, but the system in Ireland meant that it belonged to the landlord
- In *TRC*, Julia Duffy describes Gurthnamuckla as "my house that my grandfather built" (p. 223), even though the Dysart family as landlord could choose to evict her from it



Someville and Ross may have been aware of the **evidentiary power of eviction photographs** when inscribing cameras, loose individual photos, photo albums, and a darkroom into *TRC*. Christopher Dysart maintains a belief in the "**attainable perfection of photography**" (p. 90), but it is the undeniable proof contained in a couple of photographs that allows Charlotte to attain or perfect her goal of revealing to Lucy Lambert the fact of a **longstanding amorous connection** between Lucy's husband Roddy and Charlotte's cousin Francie.

In an encounter between Charlotte and Lucy at the latter's home, Rosemount, "some bundles of letters and a few photographs [are] brought to light" (p. 231). The episode proceeds:

"Show the photographs!" said Charlotte in one fierce breath.

But here Mrs. Lambert's courage failed. "Oh, I can't, don't ask me!" she wailed, clasping her hands on her bosom, with a terror of some irrevocable truth that might await her adding itself to the fear of discovery.

Charlotte caught one of her hands, and, with a guttural sound of contempt, forced it down on to the photograph [reminiscent perhaps of the dying Mrs. Mullen's hand on Susan in Chapter 2?].

"Show it to me!"

Her victim took up the photographs, and turning them round, revealed two old pictures of Lambert in riding clothes, with Francie beside him in a very badly made habit, with her hair down her back.

"What d'ye think of that?" said Charlotte. She was gripping Mrs. Lambert's sloping shoulder, and her breath was coming hard and short. "Now, get out her letters. There they are in the corner!"

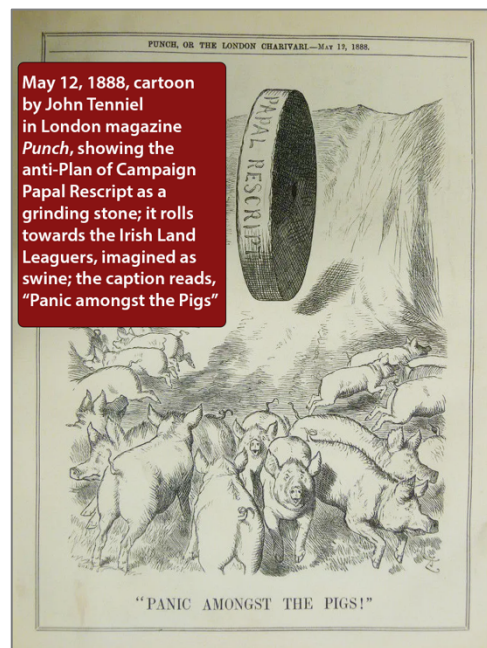
"Ah, she's only a child in that picture," said Mrs. Lambert in a tone of relief, as she hurriedly put the photographs back.

"Open the letters and ye'll see what sort of a child she was."

(p. 231)

Another action on Balfour's part was to lobby the Vatican to oblige Irish Roman Catholic priests and bishops who supported the Plan of Campaign to desist from doing so as the initiative, it was claimed, bred violence. (It may be that Balfour sweetened his appeal by hinting at the possibility of the British government's restoring full diplomatic ties between the UK and the Vatican.) Persuaded by Balfour's argument, the Vatican denounced the Plan of Campaign by means of two documents: first, a Rescript (or

official response to a prompt), issued in April 1888; and, second, an Encyclical (or papal letter), titled *Saepe Nos* ("we often"), from Pope Leo XIII to Ireland's bishops. Among other things, the latter text decreed that "those methods of warfare known as Boycotting and the Plan of Campaign, which had begun to be employed by many, may not lawfully be used." Deploying the third-person plural, the Pope insisted, "We yield to no one in the intensity of Our feeling for the condition of the Irish people"; however, many Irish Catholics vehemently resented what they perceived to be unwarranted, unhelpful papal interference in their political affairs.



In *TRC*, it seems that a Roman Catholic priest in or near Lismoyle has decided to align himself with the Vatican and work to undermine the Plan of Campaign. Specifically: we learn that, as the Dysart family's land agent, responsible for collecting the tenants' rents, the Protestant Roddy Lambert has received intelligence (in the form of a letter) from the "religious director [i.e. priest]" who ministers to "several of Sir Benjamin's tenants" concerning those individuals' attendance at "a Land League meeting the Sunday before" (p. 73). The

priest further "inform[s]" Roddy that "they had there pledged themselves to the Plan of Campaign," a fact that "annoy[s]" the agent, although he can reflect that he'd recently collected "the May rents" (p. 73). This reference is to the first day of May (known in Gaelige as *Beltaine*) as one of the quarter days (also called *gale days*) when rents generally fell due: February 1; May 1; August 1; and November 1. Sometimes, the Irish quarter days are called *cross-quarter days* because they observe a different schedule than the English quarter days. One notes that the willingness of Dysart tenants to configure as a collective mass under the Plan of Campaign should be taken as an indication of Sir Benjamin's being other than a good, popular landlord.

## TRC and Commodity Fetishism

“[T]ough and forty [years old],” Charlotte can (the narrator avers) “[b]y sheer strength of will ... **force her plan of action** upon other people, as a conjurer forces a card, till they [come] to believe it was of their own choosing” (p. 67). Intending to apply such pressure to Julia Duffy, she visits Gurthnamuckla, whose “rich, sweet pastures” (p. 67) she wants to add to her **property portfolio**. In other words, Charlotte’s principal plan of action (her mid-life plan of campaign, so to speak) is the acquisition of Gurthnamuckla. The craving is not confined to its 20 acres of exceptional, limestone-rich pasture land. She also hankers to renovate the house, judging it to have “**substantial [i.e. structural] excellence**”: “‘There wouldn’t be a better kitchen in the country,’ she th[inks], ‘if it was **properly done up**’” (p. 68). Certainly, Julia Duffy maintains that the edifice “was built by them that **didn’t spare money on it**” (p. 71).

For her part, the bourgeois Lucy Lambert also engages in **domestic materialism**, enhancing the “drawing-room” at Rosemount with “blue **rep [silk-upholstered] chairs**” whose “hard magnificence” renders them “**too good to be used** except by ‘company’” (p. 28). Being more for show than for use, the chairs function almost as items in a **museum of middle-class attainment**. When she visits the room and sits in one of the chairs, Lady Isabel Dysart “rais[es] her large eyes dramatically to the **cut glass chandelier**” (p. 108), another sign of *arriviste* attainment. Middle-class consumerist desire, directed at the house and its artifacts, features in many nineteenth-century Irish novels, increasingly so after the Great Hunger, when the bourgeoisie grew as a percentage of the population. In recognition of that socioeconomic reality, Kickham’s exceptionally popular *Knocknagow* (1873; invoked earlier) presents such phrases as “**Irish Catholics of the middle class**” and even the observation, on the part of a trainee priest, that “a **compound of ridiculous pride and vulgarity**” characterizes the Irish “bourgeoisie.”

A prideful (and perhaps even vulgar) aspiration to **purchase and display** property and various **lifestyle goods** drives several key characters in *TRC*. We can assume that advertisements in newspapers and magazines

helped fuel that aspiration. In addition to subscribing to **English periodicals**, Charlotte expresses awareness of the efficacy of advertising in the *Irish Times* newspaper (p. 16). Contemporary periodicals generally relied on advertising revenues, and one of the most heavily advertised nineteenth-century products, “**Holloway’s pills**” (p. 43) — a purported cure-all — is part of Julia Duffy’s repertoire as a healer. Pictured on this page are just a few of the many ads that constituted the front page of

Selection of advertisements from front page of *Irish Times* newspaper for Mo., Jun. 1, 1891, around the time in which TRC is set

the edition of the *Irish Times* for June 1, 1891 — a credible year as the setting for much of the action in *TRC*. In addition to such household artifacts as **electro-plate cutlery** and **suites of furniture for drawing-rooms and dining-rooms** (spaces alien to a peasant cottage or cabin), the available items include various types of **carriage** (the contemporary equivalent of today’s automobile), offered with a **three-year repayment plan**.

Intent on comporting himself as a “young **gentlemen of fashion**” (p. 73), Roddy Lambert had, five years earlier, married Lucy Galvin, a widow older than he, primarily to access funds she inherited from her late father’s “mills [factories]” (p. 28). In particular, he aimed to buy consumer goods marketed chiefly to men,

such as **state-of the-art carriages** or “traps” (p. 27) and **the *Daphne***, a yacht for sailing on the large local lake.

Roddy did secure enough of Lucy’s cash to purchase the *Daphne*, whose significant price tag was a factor of its having “**air-tight compartments**” (p. 105). Lady Dysart describes the vessel as a “**most dangerous yacht**” (p. 82) due to its sails’ being designed to maximize speed. Anticipating (but not yet in receipt of) additional Galvin money, Roddy agrees to **credit terms** with “**Langford the coachbuilder**” (p. 78) or carriage-maker so he can obtain — and then “[**flourish**] about the country[side] in — a “**dog-trap**” (p. 28), a vehicle whose name refers to an under- or behind-the-seat compartment for hunting dogs. (Francie, too, craves a carriage — in her case, a “**landau**” [p. 111], such as Pamela Dysart uses.)

When we encounter Roddy in Chapter 11, his indebtedness extends beyond monies still owed to Langford, for he has recently lost a considerable sum while **gambling recreationally** at “**the Galway [horse] races**” (p. 74). Roddy faces a fiscal dilemma: the “**trustees**” of Lucy’s inheritance (who seem to be “her relations”) have **refused to liquidate “some of her capital,”** which he desperately needs because the coachbuilder has “**threatened legal proceedings**” (p. 74) over his failure to make payments for the carriage. As he confesses to Charlotte: “[I]t’s the most I can do to keep going .... I **never was so driven [pushed] for money** in my life” (p. 78).

NOTE: While *TRC* does not offer a detailed description of Roddy’s carriage (dog-trap), we can perhaps gain a sense of such a conveyance from a scene in the Englishman Thomas Hardy’s rural novel *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872). In the incident, the focal carriage is called a gig. Two characters “[hear] light flying wheels” and then suddenly “there **whizze[s] along past them a brand-new gig [carriage], so brightly polished that the spokes of the wheels sen[d] forth a continual quivering light** at one point in their circle, and all the **panels [glare] like mirrors.**” Perhaps predictably, the driver, who also appears to be the owner, is “a handsome man.”

One way of interpreting the adjective in the phrase *The Real Charlotte* is that Charlotte is at her most real — or is most really herself — when in charge of what she calls “**base business dealings**” (p. 79) that pertain to **consumer desire**. Specifically: She **manipulates and manages other people’s desires for commodities and property**, but ultimately those efforts are in service of fulfilling her own supreme consumer desire. Charlotte’s fundamental mid-life ambition is to gain possession of (i.e. to consume) “that **nice farm, Gurthnamuckla**” (p. 165) and become “the **bland lady of the manor**” (p. 262) there: a kind of bourgeois version of Lady Dysart at her Big House. It’s that grand goal that causes her to offer Roddy a loan so he can retain his expensive, flashy, beloved dog-trap.

In making the proposal, Charlotte deploys what the Irish call **the poor mouth** (i.e. the pretense that one is less well off than is the case): “[Y]ou know I’m a poor woman ... but I daresay I could **put my hand on a couple of hundred [pounds]** ... if they’d be any use to you” (p. 78). As the Dysart family’s land agent, Roddy is uniquely well positioned to aid Charlotte in removing Julia Duffy from Gurthnamuckla, so it makes strategic sense for the novel’s title character to put him in the position of **owing her a big favor**. She has a vision for revamping the place, which she tells Roddy “**isn’t in such a bad way** as you think” (p. 77). One gathers that the best-case scenario for Charlotte would be to have Gurthnamuckla’s house for herself and to sub-let its pastures for horse-raising and -breeding to Roddy, to whom she is sexually attracted. She assures him, “[I]f you get me Gurthnamuckla ... you **may buy up every young horse in the country and stable them in the [house’s] parlor**” (p. 197).

Being anxious over Langford’s potential lawsuit, Roddy borrows £300 (three-hundred pounds sterling) from Charlotte, **perhaps around \$40,200 in today’s money**. It’s entirely possible that Charlotte knows that, rather than honor the entirety of his debt to Langford, Roddy will merely make a partial, gestural payment and then spend the rest of the loan-money on more goods, such as horses and horse-drawn carriages, and more leisure experiences, such as horse-track gambling. Indeed, the next year, Charlotte (stealthily, in Roddy’s study at Rosemount) will open a letter, sent by Langford to Roddy, that reveals “the fact that **twenty pounds only** of the money she had lent [Roddy] last May had found its way into the pockets of the



coachbuilder” (p. 313). In a subsequent lecture, we will return to the matter of Charlotte, money, and Roddy Lambert the agent — as we will to that of Charlotte, money, and Peter Joyce the grazier.

Charlotte’s drive to be in charge of material acquisitions (by her and by others) may derive from such factors as: (1) a historical consciousness of Ireland’s many centuries of dispossession and enforced subservience as **England’s first overseas colony**; and (2) her daily observations of the **socioeconomic powerlessness of most women under patriarchy**. An example of the latter is Francie’s reliance on her paternal uncle, Robert Fitzpatrick. He experiences a near-failure in his own business affairs, so while Charlotte has a realistic chance of acquiring Gurthnamuckla (which Francie deems “**Tally Ho over again on a larger ... scale**” [p. 334]), he must suffer the indignity of having to move his family from a socially respected address in central Dublin (Mountjoy Square) to “**Albatross Villa**, [a] crowded, carpetless house” (p. 267) in the **suburban commuter town of Bray**, south of the capital. As to Robert Fitzgerald’s management of Francie’s **£500 trust, her “little fortune”** (p. 300): we discover at one juncture that the “security in which he had invested [the money] [is] becoming less sound than he could have wished” (p. 281). Things go from bad to worse; Robert’s selected investment ends up in “a **very shaky state**,” such that “there is **no ... chance of dividends** from it” (p. 300) — that is, the yield of £25 per year on which Francie relies to support herself.

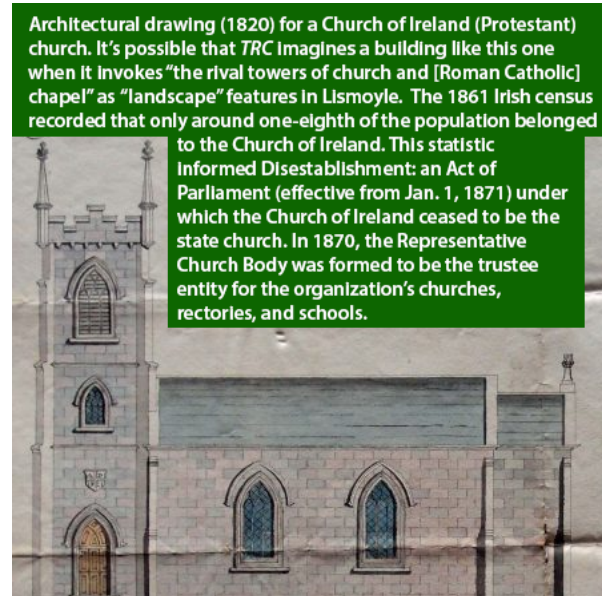
Due to her paternal uncle Robert Fitzpatrick’s loss of business control, Francie comes close to being excluded from the consumer economy. Just as Charlotte’s life largely orbits the object that is Gurthnamuckla (or her vision of a rehabilitated Gurthnamuckla) and Roddy’s requires the purpose and definition apparently supplied by a cutting-edge carriage, so too does Francie **acquire and assert identity by means of prestige commodities** — clothes, in her case. As “[t]wenty-five pounds a year does not go far,” she overextends herself financially on fashion and, thus, receives “a letter from a **Dublin [draper’s] shop**, containing **more than a hint of legal proceedings**” over a past-due invoice. Like their near-contemporary, the English author **Anthony Trollope** (whose Ireland-based novels include the unfinished *The Landleaguers* [1883; published posthumously the year after his death]), Somerville and Ross pay attention to financial minutiae. We learn that Francie’s debt to the draper is £7, well over a quarter of her total annual income.

While Francie has, on occasion, settled for cost-effective “**ready-made**” clothes — such as a “horrid ... pink” dress and a “**shirt with ... big pink horse-shoes on it**” (p. 111) — she has also purchased pricey, made-to-measure garments, such as the “olive-green [riding] habit” that she seems “pour[ed] ... into” (p. 34) in Chapter 7. In Chapter 18, in anticipation of a multi-day stay at Bruff House, she acquires “a pair of new yellow silk gloves” out of a “great need” for the “support” (p. 134) that she feels they provide (a matter we’ll return to soon). One can imagine Francie giving custom to a store such as **Switzer & Company** of the **fashionable Grafton Street**, Dublin, which (although it had existed for several decades already) formally incorporated in 1890, around the time of the action in *TRC*, as “Linen and Woolen **Drapers ... Silk Mercers** [dealers], Dressmakers, **Mantlemakers** [cloak-makers], **Milliners** [hat-makers], and Ladies’ Outfitters, Tailors, Hatters, Boot and Shoe Makers ... and Perfumers,” among other things. Certainly, Francie possesses an awareness of perfume; at one point, she contemplates how the “slow pleasure of a perfume makes itself slowly felt” (p. 138).

The thought about perfume emerges during the first day of Francie’s sojourn at Bruff House, during which she discovers that Lady Isabel Dysart’s charitable work extends to “the **cutting-out of poor clothes**” (p. 138) — that is, clothes for the poor — on behalf of the “**Dorcas Society**” (p. 141). Referring to the biblical character **Dorcas (or Tabitha)**, an early Christian who aided the needy, charitable societies using this name became associated with church groups across many countries. An article in Volume 4 of *The Irish Monthly* (published in 1876) describes a visit to an Irish village, identified only as K—, disadvantaged by poverty and an absentee landlord. The article’s authors praise efforts by **two Church of Ireland women**, “**Mrs. W. and Lady H.**,” to establish a Dorcas Society there, and they cite such achievements on the organization’s part as distributing “sheer alms,” teaching local women “**the ABC of sewing and knitting**,” establishing “a **co-operative shop**,” and acquiring coal to be sold at discounted process for heating cottages.

Manifestly, the likes of Francie and Charlotte occupy the socioeconomic space between Isabel Dysart and the recipients of her Dorcas Society benevolence in the area of clothing. Underscoring the impact of advertising on garment sales, when returning to Bruff House with Francie and Roddy on the yacht *Daphne*, Christopher is put in mind of a **fashion photo feature “in colors”** that might be found in a “supplement” to the **“Christmas number [issue]”** of “any” popular magazine (p. 99). Prompting the thought is Francie’s donning of a “red knitted [sailor’s] cap” for protection, an item that Christopher fancifully compares to “the **red cap of liberty**” (p. 99).

Multiple artifacts in *TRC* are contextualized in terms of advertising and the retail marketplace, and we witness how conditioned as consumers the populace has become when, in a letter to her Dublin-based friend Fanny Hemphill, Francie points out that “the half of” the Lismoyle “townspeople” who attended a Church



Architectural drawing (1820) for a Church of Ireland (Protestant) church. It’s possible that *TRC* imagines a building like this one when it invokes “the rival towers of church and [Roman Catholic] chapel” as “landscape” features in Lismoyle. The 1861 Irish census recorded that only around one-eighth of the population belonged to the Church of Ireland. This statistic informed Disestablishment: an Act of Parliament (effective from Jan. 1, 1871) under which the Church of Ireland ceased to be the state church. In 1870, the Representative Church Body was formed to be the trustee entity for the organization’s churches, rectories, and schools.

of Ireland fundraising sale — a two-day “bazaar” — “came thinking they’d **get every thing for nothing**” and, furthermore, argued over prices with the organizer, Kate Gascogne, the archdeacon’s wife, “**as if she was a shopwoman**” (p. 121).

Although she sings in the Protestant church choir, by no means does Charlotte eschew covetousness; she openly violates the first seven words of the **last of the Ten Commandments** as that decree appeared in the Church of Ireland’s **Book of Common Prayer** of her day: “**Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house**, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.” We know that Charlotte receives regular reminders of the interdiction, for it is the archdeacon’s practice at church to “**sternly [fulminate] the Commandments**” (p. 129). One could argue that it’s because Charlotte covets — wants to own and

consume — that she determines not to rely on men. Certainly, she is adamant about her separateness from any male Fitzpatrick. Early in the novel, she insists, “[M]y **first cousin, Isabella Mullen, married Johnny Fitzpatrick [Francie’s father and Robert’s brother], who was no relation of mine, good, bad, or indifferent**” (p. 15). Later she declares, “**I’m no relation** of the Fitzpatricks, thank God!” (p. 93; emphasis original).

In fine, one could argue that **desire for commodities emerges as the principal driver of action** in *TRC*, a matter that we can fairly readily put in the context of a concept articulated by the German economist **Karl Marx** in his three-volume work *Das Kapital* (“**Capital: A Critique of Political Economy**”). In the first chapter of the first volume (published in 1867), Marx introduces *Warenfetischismus* or “**commodity fetishism**,” defining it as the libidinal or emotional or “metaphysical” connection that humans make with commodities, as if those objects were “**autonomous figures** endowed with a life of their own.” (Recall Francie’s “great need” of yellow silk gloves, rather than a person, for “support” [p. 134] when *en route* to Bruff House for a short stay.) Whatever the value of a commodity as calculated by the raw material and labor put into it, its marketplace value will almost always also factor in the libidinal worth that consumers are prepared to ascribe to it. We call this latter value the **objectified value**.

For many present-day male consumers in the U.S., a Polo-Ralph Lauren polo shirt carries a greater objectified value than a Walmart “George” brand polo shirt; they retail, respectively, for over \$80 and under \$10 each. If one pays \$80+ for a Ralph Lauren polo shirt, one is effectively bearing out the truth of Marx’s contention that a given “commodity-form” can have a “**mysterious character**,” a kind of **aura**, that makes it specially attractive. Clearly, Francie places a very high objectified value on certain items of clothing; she does not have to but yet she does devote 28% of her available yearly funds to them.

Consistent among all *TRC*'s main middle-class protagonists is their **possessing some version of commodity fetishism**. While Charlotte's libido is attracted to the distinctly masculine Roddy, it has become more attracted to an object: Gurthnamuckla. For its part, Roddy's libido has never been attracted to Lucy; however, the professional land-agent sees his spouse as the best means of acquiring an object that very much excites his libido — the Langford-brand carriage.

One notes, incidentally, that the text's **most conscientiously religious individual**, the aristocrat Pamela Dysart, is significantly less invested in consumerism than are the middle-class characters. Admittedly, she has lived with material sufficiency since birth; nonetheless, she evinces little understanding of or sympathy for the bourgeois aspirations of others. While standing in the shadow of the church building, Pamela characterizes the objects retailed at the parish's recent fundraising sale as "that **awful bazaar rubbish**" (p. 130). For its part, Francie's purview seems fully bourgeois-materialist. The fact that she hasn't been seeking an aristocratic lifestyle is borne out in how, when socially uncomfortable amid the "**unintelligible oil paintings**" and other supposed "glories" at Bruff House, she thinks wistfully about "**making toffee on the parlor fire**" (p. 137) at the Hemphills, the Dublin family that in her mind best exemplifies middle-class living.

It takes little imagination to understand why the middle-class Irish of the 1880s and early 1890s — characters such as Charlotte Mullen — would have been **susceptible to commodity fetish**. Charlotte's birth must have occurred near the end of the Great Hunger or potato famine, so the memory of that trauma would have informed her upbringing. In addition to the famine's creating a radical lack of **consumable instances of a key commodity, the potato**, the event also saw around 350,000 people (4.38% of the population) **evicted from their dwellings**. The state of "not having," therefore extended beyond basic food to also include basic shelter. It's likely intentional on Somerville and Ross's part that, when Charlotte eventually acquires Gurthnamuckla as her "country seat" (p. 294), the room she chooses to have "[begin] life again" — by means of **new wallpaper**, "bits of [her late aunt] Mrs. Mullen's silver," and "the [family] Bible" — is "[t]he room that, in Julia Duffy's time, had been devoted to the **storage of potatoes**" (p. 292). Charlotte designates the space as Gurthnamuckla's dining room.

## **Some Other Developments**

In this lecture, we have privileged just a few concerns. To end, please review the following non-exhaustive summary of important episodes in the assigned chapters that we haven't time to cover on this occasion.

**Chapter 11** • After the conversation in which Roddy accepts Charlotte's offer of a £300 loan, Roddy and Charlotte happen upon an incident that involves Francie, the Church of Ireland curate **Rev. Joseph Cockran**, and a **tricycle**.

**Chapter 12** • The Dysart siblings, Charlotte, and others embark from Bruff House on an early-July boating trip across a portion of the twenty-mile-long lake, using Captain ("Snipey") Curister's **coal-powered steam-launch, *Serpolette***, as well as Roddy Lambert's yacht, *Daphne*. The group lands at **Innishochery**, a "large wooded [lake] island" (p. 85) to partake in a "**gypsy-like**" (p. 86) picnic.

**Chapter 13** • In an "**elfish**" (p. 89) glade on Innishochery (distinguished by a steam-source and a ruined chapel), Charlotte boasts to Christopher Dysart about her **Butler ancestors**. In addition, she entreats him to **pay attention to Francie** in consideration of the young woman's hard life prior to her current sojourn in Lismoyle. As they leave the glade, Charlotte (but not Christopher) spies **two handkerchiefs** that have been tied to a **hawthorn prayer-bush** at a "**holy well**" (p. 95) by **F.** and **G.H.** — respectively, her cousin Francie and the English soldier **Lieutenant Gerald Hawkins**.

**Chapter 14** • As evening approaches, the boating party begins the return trip across the lake; all are in the *Serpolette*, except for Francie, Christopher, and Roddy, who use the *Daphne*. When a bad storm blows in, Roddy as captain refuses to heed Christopher's advice to take down the "**top-sail**" (p. 102). Soon, the *Daphne* is "**flung ... flat on her side** on the water" (p. 104), an action that submerges its three occupants. Christopher proves the hero of the hour, **saving the unconscious Lucy and the panicking Roddy from drowning**, even as the *Serpolette* redirects its course for a rescue mission.

**Chapter 15** • On the day after the *Daphne* accident, Lady Isabel Dysart and her cousin Kate Gascogne, wife of the local Church of Ireland archdeacon, visit Lucy Lambert at Rosemount to chat about the Daphne incident. Traveling home, they criticize Charlotte's having reacted with "raging hysterics" (p. 110) on board the *Serpolette*. Later, at Tally Ho Lodge, Charlotte informs the recovering Francie that her lifesaver, Christopher, will soon visit her. Secretly, the older woman hopes that a Francie-Christopher romance will evolve.

**Chapter 16** • At Tally Ho Lodge, awaiting Christopher's arrival (which does not transpire), Francie must deal with an unannounced visit from a jealous Roddy, who attempts to compensate for "nearly drowning" her by presenting the gift of an inscribed, eighteen-carat "gold bangle, with a [double] horse-shoe in pearls on it" (p. 119). Before leaving, he "kiss[es] her" (p. 120).

**Chapter 17** • At Tally Ho's dining-room table, Francie writes to her Dublin friend Fanny Hemphill, detailing how she and Hawkins had operated the flower stall in the Protestant church hall during the second day of a two-day "bazaar" (p. 121) or fund-raising sale organized by Mrs. Gascogne (Kate), wife of the archdeacon. The missive also boasts that she and Hawkins had then "sat up in the [hall's] gallery most of the evening" (p. 121). Later, while making a sponge cake from scratch Francie observes, in the scullery beside the Tally Ho kitchen, an interaction between Norry the Boat and the visiting Nance the Fool. Recently returned from Driscoll's butcher shop, Charlotte offers praise for the completed cake in order to hide her guilt over having surreptitiously read Francie's letter and examined her bangle. Charlotte has confirmed that the piece of jewelry contains real gold, and she assumes that it's a gift from Hawkins (although it's from Roddy). After choir practice but while still at the church, Charlotte asks Pamela Dysart to be a "good angel" and "come in [to Tally Ho]" on occasion to check on Francie over "three or four days" of the following week, when Charlotte must be in Dublin for a dental procedure. The reason for the request becomes clear when Pamela drops Charlotte home: they catch Francie entertaining Hawkins there by means of "the new sponge cake" (p. 131).

**Chapter 18** • While Christopher develops photographs in his chemical dark room in the attic at Bruff House, Pamela informs him that Lady Dysart has determined that they should "take [Francie] in" (p. 132) during Charlotte's absence. Upon arriving in the hall at Bruff, Francie intersects with Sir Benjamin and his "cadaverous attendant" or "henchman" James Canavan (p. 135). After an awkward drawing-room conversation with Evelyn Hope-Drummond, Francie becomes more at ease with Big House life as the day proceeds towards tea, a light meal taken at five o'clock in the garden. During the repast, Christopher announces that he has invited "the soldiers" to "come and dine [at Bruff] to-morrow," a development that annoys his brother Garry, whose "birthday" falls on that day (p. 139). It is to be celebrated by "charades" (p. 139) — that is, amateur dramatics — in which Kitty Gascogne (Mrs. Kate Gascogne's daughter) and James Canvan, among other, have agreed to act.

**Chapter 19** • The first full day of Francie's stay at Bruff House ends with Christopher, at Pamela's prompting, sharing his "large photograph-book" with the visitor. While Pamela plays the Norwegian composer Edvard Greig's "Peer Gynt" on the piano, Francie delivers a stream of anecdotes to Christopher, who begins to feel some attraction to a "limpid quality ... transparent and fresh" in her; and who also worries about the role that Roddy apparently plays in her life. He believes Roddy, his father's agent, to be "a first-rate man of business" but otherwise to have "nothing else first-rate about him" (p. 146).

... ..