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 3.5 \ Chapters 20-30

In this lecture we take a chronological approach, exploring a handful of the themes and concerns that *The Real Charlotte* (hereafter, *TRC*) rehearses between the start of Chapter 20 and the end of Chapter 30.

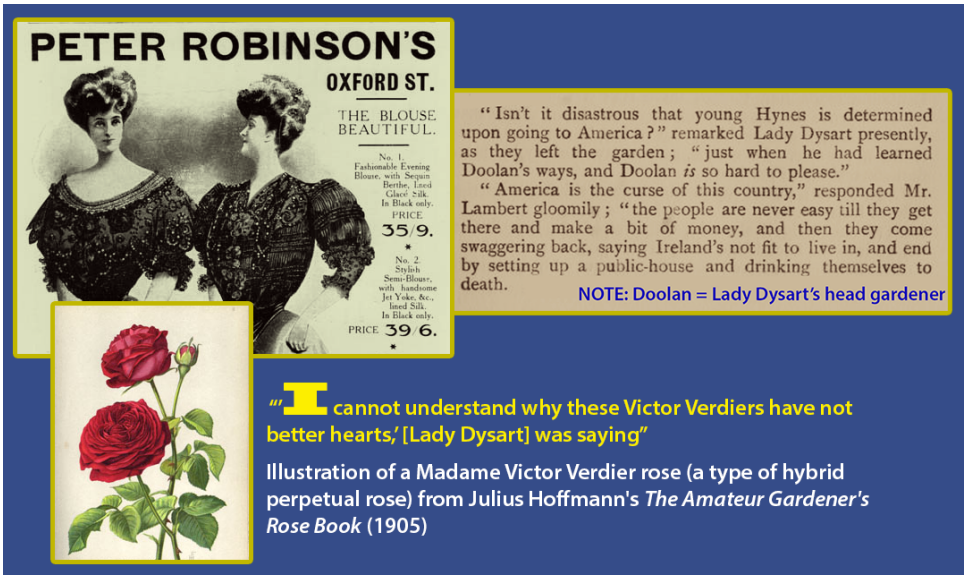
Chapter 20

As Lieutenant Hawkins and Captain Cursiter travel from the infantry barracks to the Bruff House coach-house — a space appropriated by Garry Dysart "for theatrical purposes" (p. 149) — we learn that Francie Fitzpatrick's arrival in Lismoyle has rendered Hawkins's heart an "overworked organ" (p. 148). We also learn that (back in the day) Cursiter had transferred into the infantry from a different army division after a physical altercation with another man over his (Cursiter's) then-girlfriend. The incident caused him to conclude "that all women were liars" (p. 148), and it seems to echo in possible renderings of his family name: *curse it her*; *cursèd her*. (Later, the captain will warm towards Evelyn Hope-Drummond, reckoning that "[s]he knew how to let a man alone" and "did not scream twaddle at you like a peacock" [p. 168].) ¶¶¶ During the performance of dramatized "snatches" from Walter Scott's 1821 historical novel *Kenilworth: A Romance*, Francie and Hawkins sit apart from the other audience members in a retired "brougham [horse carriage with an enclosed cab]" (p. 150). They chat and laugh, ignoring the drama and angering Lady Dysart; ultimately, they kiss repeatedly, a situation from which Francie "[does] not try to escape" (p. 153). *Keniworth* centers on the discovery by Queen Elizabeth I (played by James Canavan) of the secret marriage between her favorite nobleman Robert Dudley (Garry Dysart) and Amy Robsart (Kitty Gasgogne). The actors develop costume and prop elements from Sir Benjamin Dysart's "deputy-lieutenant's uniform" (p. 150). In Ireland, the Deputy Lieutenant of a given county was in charge of that county's militia units (the equivalent of our state-based National Guard), which could be called on in times of emergency, such as a military invasion.

Chapter 21

Lady Dysart's concern over Francie derives from the latter's being a guest at Bruff House during Charlotte Mullen's absence in Dublin (for dental work). Throughout the day after the theatrical performance, Francie frets about "being in disgrace" (p. 154) with her hostess, a situation made worse by Garry's asking her, in company, "Why on earth did you let Hawkins jam you into that old brougham, Miss Fitzpatrick?" (p. 155). Later, Francie confides in Christopher concerning her class- and culture-related discomfort: "I've never stayed in a house like this before. … [Y]ou're all so different [from me]" (p. 162). ¶¶¶ During an outdoor sequence, Garry saves Francie from Sir Benjamin's unwanted attentions by displaying to her a "young rat" (p. 158) obliged out of a hole by "Stinking Jemima," his "regular ripper" (p. 159) of a rabbit-hunting pet ferret. An urban-rural contrast emerges: while James Canavan has no compunction about clobbering the bloodied rat to death, Francie compares the rabbits that the un-muzzled ferret seeks to "toys from

Robinson's," perhaps a reference to Peter Robinson's department store on Oxford Street in central London, which boasted over one hundred different departments.



Chapter 22

Friendly rivals in the hobby of gardening, Roddy and the English native Lady Dysart converse in "[t]he Bruff garden" (p. 162). Admiring both her "ultra feminine qualities" and her "go" (p. 163) or energy, he uses the tête-à-tête to discuss the Dysart family's awkward, in-arrears tenant, Julia Duffy, whose mismanagement of "that nice farm, Gurthnamuckla" has rendered its pastureland moss-infested and its residence "falling to pieces" (p. 164). Manifesting some human sympathy towards "the poor old creature," Lady Dysart contemplates relocating Julia to "the back-lodge when Hynes [an under-gardener at Bruff] goes out of it" (p. 164). Her allusion is to a house on the estate likely to be vacated due to its current resident Hynes's "[being] determined upon going to America" (p. 163). Both Lady Dysart and Roddy regret the loss of young Irish talent to emigration, with Roddy declaring, "America is the curse of this country" (p. 163). Of course, Roddy's motivations respecting Gurthnamuckla encompass Charlotte, his creditor, who, in reference his efforts to oust Julia, characterizes the place as "the seat of war" (p. 196). ¶¶¶ The repeated sounding of the steam-whistle on Captain Cursiter's coal-powered launch, the *Serpolette*, interrupts the conversation, and both parties (Roddy and Lady Dysart) become dismayed when they realize that the perpetrator is Francie, who is voyaging with Hawkins. Roddy contemplates exploiting the moment to reveal to Lady Dysart (Francie's temporary guardian) a problematic "love and ride away" incident (p. 165) involving Hawkins and a "Limerick tobacconist's daughter" (p. 166). For his part, "Snipey" Cursiter is "indignant" (p. 167) over his "bland and self-satisfied" (p. 168) subordinate's use of his vessel "without permission" (p. 167). The boat's name, *Serpolette*, would have resonated with contemporary readers in two ways, both having to do with audacious young women, not unlike Francie.

(1) The hit 1877 French comic opera *Les cloches de Corneville* (*The Bells of Corneville*), often performed in English translation, presents a character named Serpolette who transitions from being a maid to being believed to be a noblewoman. Ultimately, her true identity — a gypsy founding — is revealed.

(2) Around the time of *TRC*'s composition a French teenager, known as Mademoiselle Serpolette, was gaining attention on the international bicycle-racing circuit. Towards the end of the 1890s, she was being promoted as "the champion lady cyclist of the world."

By the way: Roddy's yacht, the *Daphne*, is named after a naiad or water-nymph from Greek mythology, transformed by her river-god father, Ladon, into a laurel tree. Daphne pleads for Ladon to save her from the god Apollo, who is attempting to kiss her, having been rendered infatuated due to a curse placed upon

him by Cupid, son of Venus. (One thinks perhaps of Hawkins's efforts to kiss Francie.) Laurel wreaths were issued to musicians, poets, and other competitors who distinguished themselves at the quadrennial Pythian Games, held at Dephi, Apollo's sanctuary. In response to the cockatoo's "infernal screeching" in the Tally Ho kitchen, Charlotte "carrie[s] him … out to the yard and fasten[s] him" to a "laurel bough" (p. 22).

Chapter 23

On board the *Serpolette*, Hawkins takes a break from steering to "let her [the vessel] rip a bit by herself" (p. 169). In response to his initiating contact, Francie kisses Hawkins "with passionate, innocent sincerity" (p. 170) while the *Serpolette* veers off course. When attempting to rectify matters, Hawkins first runs the steam-launch "at full speed upon [a] soft, muddy shallow" off Curragh Point (visible from the Lamberts' home, Rosemount) and then causes it to "[dig] … deeper and deeper into the mud" (p. 170).

Chapter 24

Dinner at Bruff House gives way to a search, under a moonless night sky, for the *Serpolette*. While "Gorman the butler" (p. 133) beats out a "warlike roar" on a dinner gong, hauled down to the Big House's lakeside landing-place to act as a "siren" (p. 172), Christopher and Captain Curstier prepare to "[start] in a boat" to look for Hawkins and Francie. Suddenly, Roddy pulls up in a rowboat with the missing pair. Having delivered Francie to "face … alone" a "tribunal" (p, 174) from Lady Dysart, he transports Hawkins and Curstier back across the lake to the *Serpolette*.

Chapter 25

Concluding that Lady Dysart believes her "[to have] transgressed beyond forgiveness" (p.175), Francie returns to Tally Ho Lodge on the day after the *Serpolette*'s accident. Christopher's tight farewell handshake contrasts with Evelyn Hope-Drummond's comment (to Lady Dysart) that Francie is ignorant of "*convenances*," a French term that refers to social proprieties and conventions; for her part the noblewoman is blunter, declaring, "[O]f all the man-eaters I have ever seen, [Francie] is the most cannibalistic" (p. 176). ¶¶¶ Francie, returned from Bruff House, and Charlotte, returned from Dublin, intersect at Tally Ho before attending together an evening raspberry party, an annual tradition, hosted in her Lismoyle home by Mrs. Beattie (with help from her six daughters). Amid rumors about "the steam-launch adventure" (p. 180), the distinctly middle-class attendees closely observe (as a musical entertainment unfolds) Hawkins's acts of conversing with Charlotte and of casting "tender looks" (p. 181) at Francie. Hawkins gets to sit beside Francie briefly before the hostess enjoins him to escort one of the married female guests or "matrons" (p. 182) — Mrs. Rattray, a doctor's wife — into tea, "a serious meal" (p. 183).

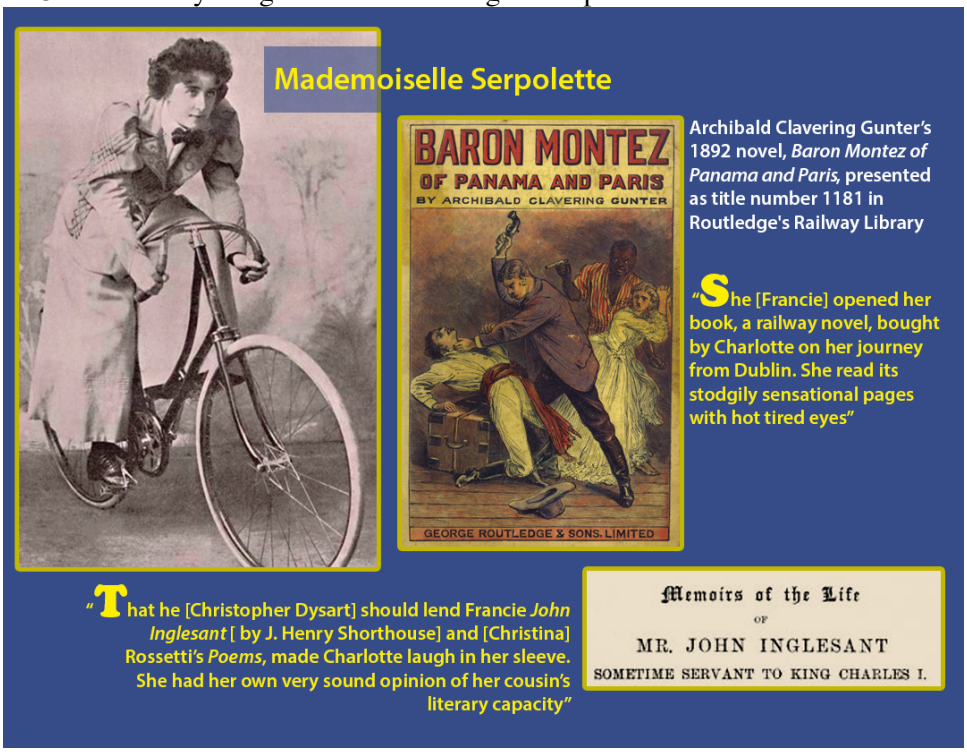
Chapter 26

Over tea, Mrs. Rattray offers to lend Hawkins copies of a gentleman's publication, taken by her husband, "the *Pink One*" (p. 183) — a term for *Sporting Life*, a daily newspaper particularly focused on horseracing, to which Hawkins already subscribes (and which Roddy also reads). While Mrs. Rattray speaks, Hawkins notices how the "tall" Roddy is addressing Francie in a "very serious" (p. 182) manner. It turns out that Roddy uses the raspberry-party repast to inform Francie that Hawkins is "engaged" and due "to be married before Christmas" (pp. 188-189), information he received from Michael, the horse-groom at Rosemount, who in turn had gleaned it from a "soldier-servant" (p. 190) or male domestic at the Lismoy barracks. That individual had clandestinely read Hawkins's mail; and he claims that the affianced woman is English — "a Yorkshire girl" (p, 205) with the family of Coppard. ¶¶¶ After tea, "the younger members of the company" chez Beattie engage in dancing in an upstairs "space" that is "so limited as to make movement a difficulty" (p. 184). Charlotte discerns that Francie refuses Hawkins's request to dance. When, offended by the snub, he tries to exit, Mrs. Beattie obliges him (as her "prize guest") to return to the dancefloor, where he works out his anger by vigorously "whirl[ing]" two young women — the eldest Beattie daughter and Miss Lynch (daughter of a local solicitor [lawyer]) — "round the room with him in a many-elbowed triangle" (p. 186)

until he ends up "fall[ing] flat on the floor" (p. 187). Francie persuades Charlotte to drink up her "gentlemanly glass of Marsala [fortified wine]" (p. 187) so they can return to Tally Ho Lodge. On the walk home, Francie reveals the shocking intelligence about Hawkins's engagement, but not before Charlotte threatens to dispatch her back to Dublin on account of her "goings on" the previous night in the *Serpolette* with Hawkins, whom she deems an "impudent little upstart" sprung from some English "gutter" (p. 188).

Chapter 27

The next day sees the residents of Tally Ho Lodge produce blackcurrant jam, using a "preserving pan … borrowed … from … the [local] hotel" (p. 189), an artifact that signals the leisure industry and, thus, Ireland's expanding bourgeois economy. Being "accustomed to making herself useful," Francie assists in the process until a headache drives her into the garden to seek relaxation in "a railway novel" (p. 190), also known as a "yellowback" — that is, a cheap edition of a novel, sized at around 4.8 X 6.9 inches (for portability) and priced inexpensively, usually between one shilling and two-and-a-half shillings. One London-based publisher, George Routledge, issued 1,277 titles in its *Railway Library* series, which ran from 1849 to 1899. ¶¶¶ Having espied "through the [Tally Ho] trees" Francie's "dress" (p. 191) — another bourgeois artifact — Hawkins approaches the young woman and proceeds to enact a scene such as might occur in the kind of novel she is holding. Distinguished by "white teeth" and "yellow hair" (192), he behaves in a sexually coercive manner that make Francie feel "like some trapped creature" (p. 192). While interrogating Francie "as if … speaking to a child" (p. 191), he "forcibly [takes] possession of her hands" (p. 192). When she resists, demanding, "Let me go" (p. 193), he responds by asserting, "No, I will not let you go," and, furthermore, by "drawing her towards him with bullying tenderness," while pointing out that "[she is] not able to stand" because of the physical positioning of their respective bodies (p. 194). The above sequence constitutes a remarkable late-nineteenth-century portrayal of a woman's experience of male sexual intimidation, derived from a radical sense of entitlement. The narrator emphasizes that "Mr. Hawkins was not in the habit of being baulked of anything on which he had set his heart" (p. 193). Somerville and Ross end the chapter by pointing out that Hawkins "does not count the cost either for [himself] or others" when he concludes the encounter by kissing Francie. Further complicating the episode is the colonial context of Hawkins's being a British soldier and Francie's being an Irishwoman who lacks financial independence. One can easily imagine various hashtags in response to the overall scene.



Chapter 28

Three weeks after the raspberry party, Hawkins is temporarily out of the country, taking a musketry course in the county of Kent, England: specifically, at the Hythe Ranges, one of the British Army's oldest shooting ranges, situated on coastal heathland. Its importance increased in 1853, when a School of Musketry was founded there in response to a new generation of firearms, the original of which was the French-designed Minié infantry rifle (1847). Hawkins's absence pleases Charlotte, as do recent visits to Tally Ho Lodge by Christopher Dysart, who uses Charlotte's longstanding request that he photograph her cats as a pretext to engage Francie in a species of courtship. The possibility that Christopher might propose marriage to Francie is the sole reason for Charlotte's not forcing her to return to Letitia and George Fitzpatrick in the Greater Dublin area. ¶¶¶ By contrast with railway novels, Christopher presents Francie with a book of poetry by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882; also an accomplished painter) and a copy of the historical novel *John Inglesant* (1881) by Joseph Henry Shorthouse (1834-1903). Both authors identified with the Oxford Movement in the Church of England —known, too, as the Tractarian, High Church, or Anglo-Catholic Movement — which sought to reintroduce some traditional elements of theology and liturgy into religious life. The impetus for the Oxford Movement had been government-mandated reorganization of the Church of Ireland, which (like the Church of England and the Episcopal Church in the United States) is an independent member of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Christopher's literary choices likely do not surprise the reader because his sister, the "faithful, conscientious" (p. 57) Pamela Dysart, owner of Max the dachshund, has "High Church tendencies" (p. 56). While *John Inglesant* is set in the 1600s, the July 9, 1881, issue of *The Saturday Review* — a publication that Charlotte "[takes]" (p. 24) — identified in it the "views and ideas" of "High Churchism" and the "tone and temper" belonging to "the finer and more poetical minds in the Tractarian movement." Predictably, Francie's "literary progress" with *John Inglesant* and the D.G. Rossetti poems will prove "slow," despite Christopher's "missionary resolve to let the light of culture illuminate her darkness" (p. 204). ¶¶¶ The granddaughter of an "attorney" (p. 196) but also the possessor of an "Irish peasant-woman's" (p. 195) blood and, thus, land-consciousness, Charlotte visits Rosemount to encourage Roddy to "writ [Julia Duffy] now" (p. 196) — that is, to organize a court order obliging her to pay her past-due rent or else quit Gurthnamuckla. Roddy thinks about his significant financial debt to Charlotte, but also about a kind of power that, for many years, he has had over her, namely, her sexual attraction to him. He confirms the continuing existence of that clout by articulating a "*double entendre*": the notion that he and Charlotte might "stable our horses together" at Gurthnamuckla (p. 197). ¶¶¶ Charlotte extends her visit to Rosemount by conversing, separately, with Roddy's wife, Lucy Lambert, whom the narrator regularly identifies as "the turkey-hen." One focus of their discourse is the decision by the Rosemount cook, Eliza Hackett, to convert from the Church of Ireland to Roman Catholicism, a matter that animates Charlotte, "one of whose most genuine [or real] feelings [is] a detestation of Roman Catholics" (p. 198). Doubtless, Somerville and Ross had in mind how a number of high-profile members of the Oxford Movement determined to leave the Church of England and become Roman Catholics. From an Irish perspective, perhaps the most notable was the ordained Anglican minister John Henry Newman, a native of London (and now a saint). In 1845, Newman was received into the Catholic Church; in 1854, he became the founding rector (i.e. president) of the Catholic University of Ireland (a role he occupied for four years); and in 1879, he was elevated to the rank of cardinal. Newman died in 1890, just four years before *TRC* debuted. ¶¶¶ Lucy's hypochondria is manifest in her chronic concern over her "palpitations, and buzzings in her ears and roarings in her head" (p. 198). She extends her focus on health to her husband, whom she refers to as Roderick. As well as discussing his recent turn to dietary moderation ("taking only … one cut of meat at his dinner these times"), she also notes "all the exercise he's taking" (p. 199). Charlotte responds by invoking a Shakespearean metaphor for sweating while exercising — "larding the lean earth" (p. 199) — a phrase spoken in *Henry VI, Part One*. One assumes that Roddy is attempting to get in shape to impress Francie. Considering Charlotte to be her closest female confidante in Lismoyle, Lucy shares her anxieties about the increasing attention paid by Roddy to the young woman. "[H]e's always going down to Tally Ho," she asserts, "[to] take her out riding or boating or something" (p. 200). However, worse in Lucy's

opinion is Roddy's "talk[ing] about her in his sleep," a scenario that can extend to his "springing up [in bed] and saying she'll be drowned" (p. 201) — presumably the result of a dream-memory of the incident in which he capsized the *Daphne*. Lucy overexcites herself, but Charlotte addresses the resulting hysterical palpitations by administering "smelling salts" and "unfasten[ing] the neck of [Lucy's] dress" (p. 201).

Chapter 29

Using the phrase "metal more attractive" (p. 201), derived from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Charlotte taunts Roddy that Francie might be entertaining Christopher at Tally Ho Lodge. While Charlotte converses with Lucy, Roddy — originally from the city of Limerick (p. 207) — brings his "black mare" (for himself) and his "chestnut" horse (for Francie) to that residence, in whose "drawing-room" (p. 202), amid "billows of pink cambric [fabric]" (p. 203), he finds Christopher helping Francie with a "dressmaking" (p. 202) task. When Francie leaves the room to change into horse-riding attire, Roddy reveals to Christopher that Hawkins is engaged to Miss Coppard of Yorkshire, England, and that, in the past, Francie "fanc[ied]" him, "your humble servant" (p. 207). The latter assertion creates tension between the two men, and during the subsequent ride — an excursion wherein Roddy and Francie accompany Christopher for most of his journey home to Bruff House — Christopher allows his "tall bay" (p. 202) horse to attain a pace that Lambert cannot match due to the "dreadfully wild" (p. 208) or undisciplined nature of his black mare. Francie's chestnut does manage to keep up; thus, when Roddy finally arrives at the cross-roads where Christopher will take his leave, he finds Christopher and Francie "enjoyably" engaged in a conversation about "the Dublin theaters" (p. 209), which by 1898 were principally three: the Gaiety Theater; the Theater Royal; and the Queen's Royal Theater. ¶¶¶ The last phase of Christopher's journey, the approach to the "gates" into Bruff House, is along a road that had been constructed — "cut down" into a hill, below the level of the surrounding fields — "in the Famine" (p, 209). During the Great Hunger or potato famine, the starving Irish were often obliged to engage in public works, such as road-building and stone-breaking, in order to obtain financial "relief" (i.e. money) with which to buy food. From 1846, the second year of the Great Hunger, this cash-for-work program (averaging around 13 pence in wages per laborer per day) became the British government's primary response to the disaster. To manage the initiative, the government appointed officers known as Relief Commissioners, who interfaced with local Relief Committees. In general, only one member at a time of a given household was allowed "on the works." The severity of the labor and the proximity to diseased fellow-workers rendered the scheme problematic for many participants, but if the local landlord refused to offer rent-concessions and/or failed to provide a soup-kitchen, many families had no choice but to participate. ¶¶¶ The existence of a so-called famine road near Bruff House might cause the reader of *TRC* to conclude that Christopher's father, the elderly Sir Benjamin Dysart, had acted in an unsympathetic, even cruel way during the Great Hunger. Deliberate blindness to the plight of the Bruff House tenants may be suggested by the plot detail that, as Christopher navigates along the road, he is unable to see above the "yellowing corn" (p. 209) on either side of it, even though he is mounted on a "tall" horse. Some of the most intensive scholarly research into the Great Hunger has focused on the town of Skibbereen in County Cork. In December of 1846, an observer visited a "gang of about 150" engaged in a work-for-cash assignment, overseen by the Relief Commissioners. Via a newspaper, he reported that while "the severity of the cold" made it next to impossible to handle the work-implements, the people persisted because "most of them … had not tasted food for the day." He concluded, "I could not help thinking how much better it would be to afford them some temporary relief [i.e. charitable donations of food] in their homes during this severe weather, than thus to sacrifice their lives to carry out a miserable project of political economy."

Chapter 30

Julia Duffy receives from Roddy a letter "saying he'd process [her]" — that is, bring legal proceedings against her — absent receipt from her of "half of what's due" (p. 214) on the rent-in-arrears for Gurthnamuckla. Painfully aware of the fact that "Joyce that [i.e. who] has the grazing" on the farm has gone "bankrupt" (p. 214), she dons the "black bonnet" that she had originally acquire for "her mother's funeral"

(p. 211) and walks "the three miles to Rosemont," only to discover that Roddy is "away for a couple of days" (p. 212), visiting his native city of Limerick. Julia then redirects her steps towards Bruff House, intent on making a case directly to her landlord, Sir Benjamin Dysart, whose land-agent Roddy is. Becoming tired on the journey, she stops in at Tally Ho Lodge to rest and obtain a glass of water from her maternal "first cousin" (p. 212), Norry ("the Boat") Kelly. Julia knows that the mistress of Tally Ho, Charlotte Mullen, has had a hand in the insolvency of the farmer Peter Joyce. At one juncture, Charlotte had lent him money to sustain his cattle-grazing enterprise; however, when he approached her for a second loan she refused him. In the next chapter, Julia liberally deploys the first-person-possessive pronoun to explain to Christopher Dysart that Charlotte's strategy was directed at having Joyce "go bankrupt on me" so she could acquire "*my* farm and *my* house that *my* grandfather built, thinking [i.e. intending] to even herself [in social status] with the rest of the gentry" (p. 222; emphases added). ¶¶¶ In the current chapter, Julia finds out additional information, however. Norry explains that Charlotte "[drove]" Roddy to produce the formal rent-demand because she "wants" and is "afther" Girthnamuckla (p. 214). Elaborating on the intelligence, Norry maintains that Charlotte's plan is twofold: first, to acquire and then move into Gurthnamukla; and second, to sell Tally Ho and use the proceeds to honor the demand articulated by her late aunt, Mrs. Mullen, on her deathbed that "Francie must have her share" (p. 215) of the old woman's fortune. To help Julia process the shocking news that Charlotte is the manipulator-in-chief, Norry reverts to Gaeilge (the Irish language) and offers her guest a shot of "potheen" (moonshine) before organizing a horse-drawn "cart" (p. 216) to transport her to Bruff in hopes of an interview with Sir Benjamin. Even when speaking English, Norry uses words and phrases from Gaeilge — for example, she advises Julia not to be "sthreelin' through" (p. 213) the countryside. The conventional spelling of the term is "streel," which is a transliteration of the Gaeilge word *sraoill*. As a verb, *sraoill* has several meanings, including, "to straggle" or "to trudge" (as well as "to tear apart" and "to flog"). As a noun, its principal meaning is "ragged person" or a "slovenly person."

Special Focus I: Moustaches

As he prepares to attend the amateur-dramatics evening in the coach-house at Bruff House, the "subaltern" (p. 169) or low-rank officer Lieutenant Gerald Hawkins reveals his male vanity by noticing that his sunburn (on "a complexion that burned red") causes his "fair [blond] moustache" to "tell" (p. 149) — that is, to show more distinctly. Hawkins's commanding officer, the tanned Captain "Snipey" Cursiter also maintains "a moustache" (p. 83), and, indeed, moustaches generally function in *TRC* as a symbol of male sexuality. Both Hawkins and Cursiter are Englishmen who serve in the British Army, an organization that, beginning in 1854, permitted the wearing of moustaches (but not the "full set" of moustache and beard, which was reserved for Navy personnel). A commentary from 1855 noted, "After a protracted struggle [within the force] the 'great moustache movement' carried its point, and henceforward the British army is to be as hirsute [hairy] as their continental rivals." In 1860, moustache-wearing became mandatory, with Command Number 1695 of the King's Regulations stating, "The hair of the head will be kept short. The chin and the under lip will be shaved, but not the upper lip." That order remained in effect until 1916. ¶¶¶ Constituting an alternative to late-Victorian male norms, Christopher Dysart cultivates "an old-fashioned, eighteenth-century look" by "not wearing a moustache" (p. 18). Incidentally: Roddy considers another aspect of Christopher's self-presentation — his "rather long" hair "with a wave in it" — to be "the height of effeminacy" (p. 204). For her part, Frannie Fitzpatrick proves highly responsive to the manly moustache. She essentially rejects the grown-up version of her longtime urban (Dublin) acquaintance Tommy Whitty because he fails the attractiveness test: his moustache amounts only to "three sickly hair and a pimple" (p. 283). By contrast, even in adolescence Francie's libido was drawn to the rural-dwelling Roddy Lambert's "long black mustash" (p. 4). While the Englishman Hawkins's moustache is "small" (p. 64) or "bitten" (p. 149) — possibly a factor of British Army regulations, which specified "moderate length" — the Irishman Roddy's is "precocious" (p. 262). ¶¶¶ Ultimately, the reader may conclude that the performance of a kind of hyper-masculinity by means of the moustache cannot compensate for moral and character failures. Between his yacht, dog-cart, and copious lip-hair, Roddy may engineer an impression of being a man in full; however, Francie learns that he "dyes [his moustache] black" (p. 283). When Charlotte Mullen

discovers that Roddy's business affairs have entered a full-blown crisis, "[o]ne thing and another [having come] against [him]," the outward and visible sign of the predicament is "his moustache drooping limply" (p. 381), a condition readily readable in phallic terms! Also phallic is the "moustache and … cigarette" (p. 122) that register as the outstanding elements of a blotting-paper cartoon produced by Francie to represent Hawkins.

Members of the 145th Battery of the British Army's Royal Field Artillery display their moustaches in a 1904 photograph, taken in the city of Waterford. Somerville and Ross imagine a military "barracks" in Lismoyle, where "red coats [British soldiers] and bugle-blowing "[keep] up an outward seeming [show] of life and cheerfulness."

Special Focus II: Amateur Dramatics

Set in the coach-house at Bruff, Chapter 20 of *TRC* presents Garry Dysart's staging, by an amateur cast, of dramatized extracts from a historical novel: the Scottish author Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*. Edith Somerville had a keen interest in amateur dramatics. In 1887, the year in which she and Edith Martin (penname of Martin Ross) began work on their first novel, *An Irish Cousin*, Somerville persuaded her immediate family, plus her Coghill cousins, to perform *Choral … A Fairy Extravaganza*, a rhyming-verse dramatic work she had authored (based on the Sleeping Beauty story). The venue was the village hall in Castletownshend, County Cork, close to the Somerville family's Big House, Drishane. ¶¶¶ Well before Somerville and Ross's era, theatrical performances were popular throughout provincial Ireland — that is, outside Dublin, which (being the capital city) could sustain at least some professional venues. One of the country's greatest women writers, Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan), author of the highly successful novel *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), was the daughter of the actor and theater-manager Robert Owenson, recorded as having presented theater performances beside Kilkenny Castle, in the small city of Kilkenny, in 1795 and 1796, before running into financial difficulties. In 1802, the vacuum was filled when the Flood family, owners of Kilfane, a Big House relatively near the city, sponsored the establishment and running of the Kilkenny Amateur Theater Society, which operated for 14 seasons. ¶¶¶ An argument exists that the theatrical scene in *TRC* amounts to a safe space for the expression of his queer identity by James Canavan, the former schoolmaster, whose default occupation is valet to Sir Benjamin Dysart. The narrator explains that, "from time immemorial," Canavan "had been the leading lady in Garry [Dysart]'s theatricals" (p. 151). In *Kenilworth*, he plays Queen Elizabeth I, wearing "a skirt," plus "a crown made of gold paper … a ham-frill ruff … and the deputy-lieutenant's red coat, with … silver epaulettes [ornamental shoulder pieces]" (p. 151). While such cross-dressing is, apparently, permissible on stage, should it have occurred elsewhere the contemporary society would probably have used language such as Canavan articulates in a "piping falsetto," while delivering his role as a queen: "Oh fie, fie, fie! … Oh, dear, dear, this will never do!"

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