



# 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 5.5 / Chapter 40 - Finis

In the autobiographical *Irish Memories* (1917), composed after Violet Martin's death, Edith Somerville recalls how the "skeleton scenario" for *The Real Charlotte* (hereafter, *TRC*) emerged at the Martin family's big house, Ross House in County Galway, in November 1889. However, it was not until April 1890 — at the Somerville family's mansion, Drishane in County Cork — that "we wrote with enthusiasm the first chapter, and having done so, straightway put her [the novel] on a shelf, and she died."

Somerville continues,

In the following November [1890] we did five more chapters, and established in our own minds the identity of the characters. Thenceforward those unattractive beings, Charlotte Mullen, Roddy Lambert, The Turkey-Hen, entered like the plague of frogs into our kneading-troughs, our wash-tubs, our bedchambers. With them came Hawkins, Christopher, and others, but with a less persistence. But of them all, and, I think, of all the company of more or less tangible shadows who have been fated to declare themselves by our pens, it is Francie Fitzpatrick who was our most constant companion, and she was the one of them all who "had the sway." We knew her best; we were fondest of her.

Later in *Irish Memories*, Somerville rehearses how *TRC* — now almost universally considered to be a masterpiece — was received soon after it debuted in 1894:

One distinguished London literary paper pronounced it to be "one of the most disagreeable novels we have ever read"; and ended with the crushing assertion that it could "hardly imagine a book more calculated to depress and disgust even a hardened reader — the amours [lovers] are mean, the people mostly repulsive, and the surroundings depressing." Another advised us to "call in a third coadjutor [writing partner], in the shape of a judicious but determined expurgator of rubbish" .... So was it also with our own friends. My mother first wrote, briefly, "All here loathe Charlotte." With the arrival of the more favorable reviews [however,] her personal "loathing" became modified.

**Chapter 40** \ At Versailles, the neoclassical palace outside Paris, a vendor of oranges and pastries misidentifies the honeymooning, "sight-seeing" (p. 303) Roddy as a "tall ... Monsieur Anglais [Englishman]" (p. 302). For her part, Francie identifies a statue of a lyre-carrying Apollo (god of music, song, poetry, and more) — at which she "fling[s] ... orange-peel" (p. 306) — as "that old thing with its clothes dropping off and the harp in its hand" (p. 305). Given that the harp is Ireland's national symbol and that the statue occupies "an enclosed green space" (p. 305), the text may imply something about the state of the Irish male under British colonialism (a project supported by the Orange Order) — that is, the Irish male forced into acting as a Monsieur Anglais. Presumably, by this juncture, Francie has had sex with Roddy, an experience that makes her description of Apollo ("old thing ... clothes dropping off") all the more resonant. Despite the romantic implications of a Paris honeymoon, Francie experiences little erotic desire for Roddy, who carries on his person a tourist "guide-book" (p. 306) that his new wife contemplates

reading. The unidentified, third-part narrator confirms that “[s]he had never pretended either to [Roddy] or to herself that she was in love with him”; her appreciation of him centers on “how big and reliable he [is]” (p. 304). Later, in downtown Paris, Francie hears a “piano-organ ... playing the Boulanger March” (p. 308), a popular tune of the time. Not in love with Roddy, she has a flashback to performing it on the Tally Ho piano when flirting with the English soldier (or colonial enforcer) Hawkins; indeed, the piece “[tears] open her past,” precipitating a fit of distraught crying that she attempts to shield from Roddy, who soon thereafter learns, via a telegram, that “Sir Benjamin’s dead” (p. 309).

1. Ross House in County Galway, seat of the Martin family, where *The Real Charlotte* was conceived
2. Violet Martin, who adopted Martin Ross as her pen name
3. Edith Somerville in horse-riding apparel
  - Hawkins tells Francie, “We’ll always have lots of horses”
4. Apollo with his lyre at Versailles, a statue that Francie characterizes as “that old thing with its clothes dropping off and the harp in its hand”
5. Henry Duprato’s “Boulanger’s March,” which Francie hears in Paris, reminding her of how Hawkins “had pretended ... that he was her music teacher ... and gone on with all kinds of [other romantic] nonsense”

**Chapter 41** \ If Francie remains infatuated with Hawkins, then the same can be asserted about Charlotte with respect to Roddy: “[S]he had not asked for love, but it had come to her” (p. 310). Precisely that irrefutable passion had caused Charlotte to react as a “quivering savage” (p. 310) upon learning of Roddy’s plan to marry Francie. Later (in Chapter 43), we discover what about Roddy’s body Charlotte has long responded to: “[T]he swaggering ease of [his] seat and squareness of [his] shoulder ... often captivated her taste” (p. 327). In response to a request, sent by Roddy from Paris, Charlotte betakes herself to Rosemount to inform its servants to expect his early return. Deploying *litotes* (i.e. the double-negative construction), the narrator conveys Charlotte’s thought “that it would not be uninteresting to look round the house [Rosemount]” (p. 311). That “prowl[ing]” (p. 311) activity deposits her in the study, where, with either a hairpin or steam from a kettle, she opens several pieces of Roddy’s mail while imbibing high-quality brandy and “munching ... sandwiches” (p. 313). One envelope contains a “severe letter from the head” of Langford’s, the coach-builder, demanding “a speedy settlement” by Roddy of a “formidable amount” (p. 312) of long-overdue money; another contains two bank books — Roddy’s “private banking account”; and “the bank-book of the Dysart estate” (p. 313).

Having examined “with greedy interest” (p. 313) the evidence of Roddy’s financial affairs, Charlotte exits Rosemount and travels to the working-class community of Ferry Row, where she enters the tobacco-smoke-filled, “dark interior” of “the disreputable abode of Dinny Lydon the tailor” (p. 314), who has been making alterations to a coat (presumably one of the late Lucy Lambert’s coats) for her. (As rehearsed in an earlier lecture, Charlotte owns property and behaves as a kind of slum landlord and loan-shark in the neighborhood.) In conversing with Dinny and his wife — a woman “renowned” for “violence ... when

under the influence of liquor” (p. 316) — Charlotte “display[s] ... **knowledge of Irish** [Gaeilge]” (p. 315). She also has knowledge (from her surreptitious engagement with Roddy’s mail) about land dealings between Roddy, in his capacity as the Bruff estate’s land-agent, and one of Dinny’s relatives-by-marriage, Shamus Bawn McDonagh. The name Shamus Bawn means “**white (or fair-haired) James**”; thus, the Lydons also refer to him as “Jim” and “Jimmy.” In conversing with her hosts, Charlotte learns that, upon the recent death of his father (Michael McDonagh), Shamus Bawn/Jim came into some of that man’s “**money**” (p. 315) and approximately half of his land. In the greater McDonagh family, *TRC* presents an instance of Ireland’s ever-strengthening **agricultural, Catholic bourgeoisie: the so-called strong farmers**. The strong farmers’ resources permitted them to survive the Great Hunger and, afterwards, to acquire (for renting from the landlord class) additional property, vacated by the peasantry, a coterie that the famine radically depleted, due to death and emigration. Cautiously agreeing with Charlotte’s assertion that the late Michael McDonagh’s brothers “**are all stinking of money**,” Dinny the tailor allows that “**they’re middlin’ snug**” (p. 317). Typically, the strong farmers wed within their socioeconomic coterie, so one is unsurprised to learn that Shamus Bawn/Jim McDonagh’s wife brought a “**good lump of a fortune** [i.e. a substantial **cash dowry**]” (p. 317) into her marriage.

Charlotte encourages the Lydons to gossip, and by that means she figures out the specifics of Shamus Bawn/Jim’s transaction with Roddy: the former used **£180 of his newly inherited money** to secure from the latter the right to rent a farm called Knocklara, part of the Bruff estate’s holdings. (In this name, “**knock**” refers to a hill; and “**lara**” could possibly mean *site of the ruin*.) “Complicated” is an apt word for the landlord-tenant relationship in nineteenth-century Ireland. As one explores it, one encounters a wide variety of terms, such as *Ricardian rent* and *tenant-right*, and we do not have space here to push deeper into the nature of Shamus Bawn/Jim’s agreement with Roddy, the landlord’s agent. Suffice it to say that new tenant’s £180 payment is referred to (in Chapter 41) as “**the fine on Knocklara**” (p. 317) and (in Chapter 47) as “**the goodwill of Knocklara**” (p. 351). Once Dinny Lydon articulates the actual sum exchanged as having been £180, Charlotte immediately recognizes the severely indebted Roddy has been embezzling from the Dysarts because his entry for the transaction in the Bruff estate’s account book is less than £70. (The embezzled amount of around £110 might be **\$15,400 or so** in today’s US dollars.)

### Reports from the Missions.

#### CONNEMARA—ERRISMORE.

(From the Missionary.)

“We have much reason to feel thankful to the Lord for His continued blessing on His work in this district during the past month, for everything in connexion with the Mission has gone on most favourably.

“The schools continue to be well attended, and some new scholars have been added during the month; and although the weather has been lately unusually severe, and many of the children but poorly clad, yet they attend remarkably well, and are advancing in scriptural and secular knowledge.

“Our congregations on the Sabbaths are most encouraging. The converts, as a body, attend more regularly than the original Protestants, although these too are much improved in zeal and moral conduct, and do not disgrace the Gospel, of which they make a profession, by drunkenness and Sabbath-breaking, as some did when I arrived first in Errismore; and I believe the Irish Church Missions is doing a great work, not only among the Romanists, but also among the Protestants throughout Ireland.

An extract from an 1859 edition of *The Banner of the Truth in Ireland: Monthly Information Concerning Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics* • Connemara was Violet Martin’s home district in County Galway



Charlotte receives “an invitation from Mrs. Corkran,” the widowed mother of the young Church of Ireland curate (or assistant minister), Rev. Joseph Corkran, “to meet a missionary”; she reacts by “tossing [it] down with ... contempt”

In focusing on Catholic strong farmers, Chapter 41 critiques the materialism manifest in Ireland's **Roman Catholic Church as an institution**. One should underscore that this negative assessment is not unique to the Protestant authors Somerville and Ross. Many Catholic novelists also exposed **worldly, even avaricious priests**. (Several examples may be found in a novel invoked in an earlier lecture about *TRC*: the hugely popular *Knocknagow* [1873] by Charles Joseph Kickham.) When discussing Michael McDonagh's funeral, Dinny the tailor indicates that the deceased's family paid three Roman Catholic priests "**five pounds apiece**" — a total of £15 (perhaps \$1,680 today) — in "**althar money**" (p. 317) for their services. Dinny's keen awareness of money precipitates an anti-Semitic allusion; the narrator refers to him as "**looking ... like a Jewish rabbi**" (p. 317). (Later, in Chapter 47, the narrator speaks similarly, associating the "**hooked nose**" of a certain Mrs. Flood with her "**barmaid**" mother's "**Hebrew**" provenance [p. 341]). In general, Dinny seems to float between religious identities; we learn that, just a week before the interview with Charlotte, he attended a **proselytizing assembly**, conducted by Protestant missionaries, possibly the Church of Ireland organization officially known as the **Society for Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics** (or ICM for short), founded in 1849. Charlotte reminds him, "**[Y]ou were 'making your sowl [soul]' at the mission**" (p. 316). In an 1875 publication, *The Story of the Irish Church Missions, Continued to the Year 1869*, the ICM's "object" or purpose was given as "promot[ing] the glory of God in **the salvation of the souls of our Roman Catholic fellow subjects [of the United Kingdom] in Ireland**, through the instrumentality of the Church of Ireland." The text indicates that, upon a "request" from a Church of Ireland minister, the ICM will "**support Missionaries** [also known as **Scripture Readers** or just Readers] in districts containing a large Roman Catholic population." The text also details core elements of missionary activity, such as "**giving lectures, and ... preaching** to the Roman Catholics," the fundamental goal being "**the conversion [to the Church of Ireland] of the Roman Catholic population of Ireland**." The text also provides a taste of ICM rhetoric by reprinting a piece that, having described Roman Catholicism in Ireland as **an enslaving "Italian tyranny,"** proceeds by characterizing Ireland's Roman Catholic priests as a "**band of Italian police, who live among the Irish with the appearance of Irishmen.**"

**Chapter 42** \ Sir Benjamin's funeral marks "**the end of an old regime**" (p. 318); thus, his elder son assumes the title. Having resigned from his diplomatic post in Denmark, the newly minted Sir Christopher Dysart of Bruff House begins adjusting to life as master, even though he lacks the quality of "**initiative energy**" (p. 319). While sailing on the lake in his newly "**painted**" (p. 318) boat one May morning, he revisits in memory Francie's romantic interactions with three men: himself, Hawkins, and Roddy. Even as Christopher regrets "**the loss of an ideal**" (p. 320) of Francie that he had constructed in his mind, Lismoyle's middle-class Protestant women (at a social gathering) rapidly construct a gossipy, condemnatory narrative about Francie in her role as Mrs. Roderick Lambert, mistress of Rosemount. Matters highlighted include: Francie's domestic extravagance and uncouthness (as evidenced by her habit of "**thrash[ing] around**" the late Lucy's "**best tea-service ... as if it was kitchen delf** [everyday crockery]" [p. 321]); and Roddy's subservience towards her ("**when she asked for the tea-cosy he flew for it**" [p. 322; emphasis original]).

**Chapter 43** \ Awaiting Francie to enter the Rosemount drawing-room during a courtesy call he makes to formally acknowledge her return to Lismoyle as a married woman, Hawkins examines the vulgar, fatuous nature of her and Roddy's "**large [honeymoon] photograph**" — a staged "**[portrait]**" of her "**[holding] a basket of flowers**" and him "**turn[ing] the leaves of a book**" (p. 323). Once she appears, Francie displays "**self-possession**," even "**swagger**," as she deliberately glances at her engagement and wedding rings while addressing Hawkins in an "**affected [English] accent**" (p. 324). As if echoing the Oriental-colonial discourse implied by the invocation of curry in an earlier chapter and the drinking of "**Indian tea**" (p. 326) in this one, Francie confirms with Hawkins that his "**regiment is after being ordered to India**" (p. 325). Francie's cousin unexpectedly invades the drawing-room, "**announcing [herself]**" (p. 326) as "**Miss Charlotte Mullen**" (p. 325). Unsurprisingly perhaps, Hawkins soon leaves, and Charlotte exploits the opportunity to "**hope for poor Roddy's sake**" that the Englishman does not constitute one Francie's "**present [admirers]**" (p. 327). Roddy then arrives, having ridden home on "**an awful wild young brat**" of a horse, a "**four-year-old**" (p. 327). When seeing Charlotte off outside, he learns from her of Hawkins's visit; thus, when he returns to the

drawing-room he “put[s] his arm round [Francie], [draws] her towards him and kiss[es] her with a passion” (p. 329), as if attempting to neutralize the Englishman as a serious erotic threat.

launch on the blue, island-studded waters of Lough Corrib, where, traversing its breadth in a trim and commodious steamer, or gliding into its glassy bays in a rowboat, we can enjoy some of the most picturesque scenery in the land, explore the natural curiosities, and speculate upon the influences and actions which, in remote times, produced these fantastic forms and disrupted chasms that present at the western termination of our great limestone formation;—or examine the architecture of the old feudal castles and ecclesiastical buildings along its peaceful shores. Our object is rather to interest the reader and the tourist in the history, antiquities, and scenery of this portion of the West, than amuse him with tales respecting pigs, pipers, praties, or potheen; fools or fiddlers; bailiffs, bullocks, or buckeens; graziers, gaugers, or ganders

In 1867, the Dublin-based surgeon, Sir William Wilde, Vice President of the Royal Irish Academy, published *Lough Corrib, Its Shores and Islands*, as a guidebook for the serious tourist • It is probable that Somerville and Ross based the lake at Lismoyle on Lough Corrib, which Wilde identifies as “the second largest sheet of inland fresh water in Ireland” • Wilde’s son, Oscar, would become a renowned playwright

Near the start of Chapter 42, we find Sir Christopher Dysart “with one arm hanging over the tiller of his boat, as she crept with scarcely breathing sails through the pale streaks of calm that lay like dreams upon the lake”

William Wilde’s *Lough Corrib* remarks on “the extensive, well-wooded, and picturesque demesne of Ross, the property of James Martin, Esq.,” whose sixteenth and youngest child Violet Florence Martin (i.e. Martin Ross) was

**Chapter 44** \ At Gurthnamuckla, after a lunch of “macaroni cheese” (p. 330), Charlotte guides the visiting Roddy and Francie through the “fortified alley ... known as the Farm Lane” to the Stone Field, wherein she has confined Roddy’s rambunctious three-year-old horses (p. 329). Roddy describes the animals as “look[ing] like money” (p. 330) — a welcome situation, given the unfavorable state for producers of the agricultural-commodities marketplace. Averring that “I’ve never known prices so low,” Charlotte wonders if Christopher as Bruff’s new landlord will consider evicting tenants — “kick[ing] people out” (p. 330) — for non-payment of rent. An epochal shift in the conditions underlying the Big House system seems reflected in Roddy’s comment that “in the good old times the [Bruff] property was worth just about double what it is now” (p. 331). Walking alone with Roddy across the Stone Field, Charlotte builds on the economics discourse to request from him repayment, during “the course of the next month” (p. 332), of what she knows he entirely lacks: “a hundred pounds or so of that money I lent you last year” (p. 331)

Bored by the farm tour and bored, too, in her “humdrum” (p. 334) marriage, Francie determines to return to the farmhouse. She fails to shut the Stone Field gate, so Charlotte heads to do so. Perceiving an opportunity to escape, Roddy’s “brown filly” leads the male horses in a “careering” movement — a “living avalanche” (p. 333) — capable of overwhelming and, thus, slaughtering Francie in the confined, alley-like Farm Lane. Charlotte contemplates deliberately “stumb[ing]” prior to reaching the gate, but she then “[runs] her hardest” (p. 333). Her “slamming [of] the gate” effectively saves Francie’s life and causes the profoundly grateful Roddy to “[wring] [Charlotte’s hand] with a more genuine emotion than he had ever before felt for her” (p. 333).

Charlotte’s scheming has extended to inviting Hawkins to Gurthnamuckla to coincide with Roddy and Francie’s afternoon there. In the drawing-room, unaware of how close she had come to a bloody death, Francie makes a show of reading “a novel of attractive aspect” (p. 333). Hawkins threatens that, unless she stops ignoring (or boycotting him), he will provoke a lovers’ squabble — “a regular row” (p. 335) — such

as a nineteenth-century romance novel might dramatize. He pleads with her to forgive him, insisting that he has suffered “**infernally**” (p. 336) over not being able to “**get out of that accursed engagement**” (p. 335). Only when she realizes that Roddy and Charlotte are about to enter the farmhouse does Francie capitulate, enigmatically declaring that “**there’s nothing to forgive**” (p. 337).

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**Chapter 45** \ As the **collector of rents from tenants**, Roddy must soon temporarily leave Lismoyle and penetrate into another county (**Mayo**), such is the range of the Dysart family’s landholdings — and the estate’s need for income. Spooked by and angry about Hawkins’s continual appearances in Francie’s company, Roddy bypasses his wife and requests Charlotte to reside at Rosemount during his absence, which may exceed two weeks. In the course of belatedly discussing the matter with Francie as they drive home from Gurthnamuckla, he reveals his “**jealously**” towards Hawkins with a “**spitefulness**” that, “**cut[ting] down**” to a “**deep place in [Francie’s] soul**” (p. 339), causes her to choose silence rather than attempt any further engagement. Frustrated, Roddy allows “**iron [to enter] into his soul**,” proclaiming, “[Y]ou treat me like **dirt under your feet**” (p. 340).

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**Chapter 46** \ Charlotte enjoys several aspects of her stay at Rosemount, which Roddy’s “**rent-collecting tour**” (p. 340) precipitates. One is the excellence of the cook Eliza Hackett’s cheese soufflés and other “**savor[ies]**” (p. 341); another is the opportunity to catch up on gossip by visiting, with Francie, old acquaintances in and near Lismoyle. One appointment brings them to the home of Major and Mrs. Waller, where Francie manages an unanticipated encounter with Hawkins in such a way as to convey “**that conversation with her was a grace, and not a right**” (p. 342). On a later occasion, while journeying to Bruff House in **Roddy’s wagonette**, Francie and Charlotte “**[come] upon**” (p. 343) Hawkins. As he is on foot, they take him with them to the big house, where Christopher is “**going down the lawn towards the boat-house**” (p. 343) to rendezvous with Cursiter for a jaunt on the lake in the *Serpolette*. As the captain is delayed, the party determines to climb a set of stone steps through beech woodland perfumed by seasonal bluebells.

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The “**spirit of the wood**” (p. 345) affects Francie and Hawkins, who lag behind the conversing Charlotte and Christopher. Francie’s “**old glamor**” (p. 344) stirs Hawkins, who deems her “**prettier now than ... ever**” (p. 346). Enthusiastically, he recollects to her the episode in which they ran the *Serpolette* aground. The anecdote renders Francie uncomfortable and embarrassed; however, the silver lining is that Hawkins’s abashment over his ill-chosen speech conveys to Francie the existence of an unexpected, unprecedented level of respect towards her on his part. The “**flattery of [Hawkins’s] respect**” may open the possibility of the development of a new, meaningful relationship between the two young people, but that scenario must wait because Captain Cursiter announces his arrival by sounding an “**eldritch note**” (p. 347) — that is, an **otherworldly or eerie sound** — on the *Serpolette*’s whistle, just as Charlotte and Christopher appear, with the former speaking “**cautiously**” (p. 348) in a lowered voice. Bluebells feature significantly in this episode, but while their “**incense**”-like smell (p. 345) gives an inexplicable pleasure, one notes the sinister nature of much of the folklore attached to them, some of it encompassing fairies. Near its start, the chapter claims that “**many bad fairies had shed their malign influence**” (p. 341) upon Charlotte’s birth; thus, the reader may not be surprised to witness, as the chapter’s final image, the adult Charlotte engaging in a seemingly covert colloquy with Christopher while exiting a bluebell wood.

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**Chapter 47** \ The “**short, black, and powerful**” (p. 351) Charlotte’s woodland dialogue with Christopher seems to continue at a new location, “**the old turf quay [or dock] at Bruff**” (p. 348), a venue whose purpose has been supplanted by **railway-delivery of coal**. Claiming the affectionate “**feeling of a child**” (p. 349) towards the Bruff estate, Charlotte conveys to Christopher “**a well-studied peroration** [i.e. much-rehearsed speech]” (p. 350) concerning Roddy’s chronic embezzlement of estate funds. While Christopher finds Charlotte’s “**feminine espionage**” to be “**repugnant**” (p. 350), he nevertheless hears her out as she reveals, “**in strict confidence**” (p. 353), Roddy’s deceit, not just as regards Shamus Bawn/Jim McDonagh’s acquisition of the Knocklara tenancy but also her (Charlotte’s) acquisition of the Gurthnamuckla tenancy. Her check for £100 was “**cashed**,” but “[n]ot one penny of that [money]” was ever “**credited to the estate**” (p. 352). The mild, dispassionate nature of Christopher’s response frustrates and angers Charlotte, who

strongly implies that monies stolen from the Bruff estate have funded multiple, high-end expenditures, by Roddy for Roddy, from “young horses” to “new carpets” (p. 352) to the Parisian honeymoon.

Back at Bruff, Christopher entertains Cursiter, who, anticipating his regiment’s departure (to India, via the garrison town of Aldershot, England), encourages Christopher to buy the *Serpolette* “at an alarming reduction [in price]” (p. 354). The captain departs just as Lady Dysart and Pamela arrive home from visiting another Big House. Lady Dysart can hardly hide her disappointment about Cursiter’s Oriental assignment, for she has “secretly nourished” (p. 355) the hope of his marrying Pamela. She contemplates the implications for the “thorough adventuress” Francie of Hawkins’s “escap[ing] from her”; and, in addition, she shares with Christopher that in the past “people” had gossiped about Francie’s “[doing] her utmost to capture [him],” even though her lower-middle-class provenance should confine her to “attorney’s clerks and commercial travelers [i.e. salesmen]” (pp. 356-357). Resenting his mother’s snobbery vis-à-vis Francie but especially her implication that he knows little about the rough and tumble of the greater dating scene, Christopher announces, in a “pseudoheroic” manner, “I gave her [Francie] the chance [i.e. an offer of marriage], and she didn’t take it” (p. 357).

**Chapter 48** \ We find Francie in the following situation: “To-night her husband would come home [by train]. In four days Hawkins would have gone” (p. 359). During Roddy’s absence, Hawkins has been calling at Rosemount each afternoon, effectively facilitated by: first, Captain Cursiter’s not intervening in his subordinate’s affairs; and, second, Charlotte’s vacating the house “whenever” (p. 359) Hawkins visits. With Roddy’s return just hours away, Charlotte directs Hawkins to “the top of the [Rosemount] shrubbery,” where Francie is sewing a “talisman”-like (p. 362) garment of Roddy’s “with the assiduity of Penelope” (p. 361), the faithful, waiting wife of the wandering Odysseus (or Ulysses) in the Greek epic, *Odyssey*. Clearly, Charlotte’s aim is to get rid of Francie by coupling her with Hawkins — a species of matchmaking. Feeling “more in love than he had ever been before” (p. 361), Hawkins (using a nautical metaphor) asserts his preparedness to “chuck everything [including his military career] overboard” for Francie’s sake; and although she answers affirmatively when he implores her to “say you love me,” she does so “with a moan that was tragically at variance with the confession [of love]” (p. 363). When exiting Rosemount to return to Gurthnamuckla, Charlotte either witnesses or comes very close to witnessing Hawkins’s act of embracing Francie for “a kiss” (p. 364). For her part, Francie is torn between “go[ing] away with Gerald [Hawkins]” (p. 365) or remaining in Ireland as mistress of Rosemount.

**Chapter 49** \ Chapters 49 through 51 (the novel’s final three chapters) all occur on the same day: “the first of June,” when “the gaiety of spring [is] nearly gone” (p. 373). Roddy’s continuance in Rosemount becomes highly doubtful, for Sir Christopher Dysart, his young boss, pays him a morning visit at home to discuss the embezzlement of estate monies. Christopher does not reveal that Charlotte has played informer, and Roddy does not suspect her as being the “infernal mischief-maker” who must have “set [Christopher] on” (p. 368) to ask the bank to facilitate an examination of the account records pertaining to the Bruff estate. Afterwards, Roddy tells Francie that he has “lost the agency” (p. 367), although he then allows that the terms and timeline of an outright dismissal remain to be clarified. Becoming overwrought to the point of weeping, he asserts, “Oh my God ... we’re ruined!” (p. 367); in fine, he allows Francie to see his “soul laid bare” (p. 374). In his duress, Roddy determines to “go out to Gurthnamuckla” to seek both counsel and a further loan from Charlotte; he reckons that she has “got a head on her shoulders” (p. 369).

**Chapter 50** \ While awaiting the “black mare” — on which she intends to ride, unaccompanied, towards Gurthnamuckla to intersect with Roddy as he returns from petitioning Charlotte — Francie receives an unanticipated visit from Christopher, who has been preoccupied with one of his new roles, namely, service as “a magistrate” on “the Bench” (p. 371). (By “magistrate” Christopher means *Justice of the Peace*, an unpaid, part-time position, as opposed to *Resident Magistrate*, a paid, permanent one.) He desires a second meeting with Roddy to convey his openness to “arrang[ing] things” (p. 371) so that Roddy can “keep” (p. 372) the agency — that is, remain the Bruff estate’s land agent, managing its farms. Reiterating the anti-Semitic sensibility occasionally present in *TRC*, Christopher does not want to be branded as “a Shylock, demanding [an] extreme ... measure of restitution” (p. 371) from Roddy. While one can produce a

sympathetic reading of Shylock, the money-lending, pound-of-flesh-seeking Jewish merchant who dominates Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*, the term *Shylock* became generally synonymous with the **unreasonable, even vengeful hounding of indebted individuals**. Deploying the modesty trope of calling herself a "**Dublin Jackeen**" (p. 373) — i.e. a worthless person from Dublin — Francie thanks Christopher for his "**leniency**" (p. 371).

On horseback on the "**white road**" that leads, through "**grey rock country[side]**" (p. 376), to Gurthnamuckla, Francie rationalizes that, via her handling of the interview with Christopher, "**[s]he had got [Roddy] out of trouble**" (p. 374) and, so, has no further obligation to him. Even as she contemplates crafting a new life with Hawkins, that individual appears, riding rapidly on a pony to catch up with her. Having claimed that, beyond his military pay, he receives £300 per year in income (from a trust fund?), he suggests that he "**ought to chuck [quit] the army**" in anticipation of emigration with Francie to the "**ripping climate**" of "**New Zealand**" (p. 375). What he fails to rehearse is "**his creditors**" (p. 376), whose invoices were a prime motivation for his engagement to Miss Coppard of Yorkshire. Although "**[e]very pulse in [Francie's] body answer[s] to [Hawkins's] touch**," she continues uncertain in herself and, thus, retains interest in "**taking refuge**" (p. 376) in the known Irish present with Roddy. As Hawkins presses her to opt for an unknown antipodean future with him, a consequential element of the past reappears, namely, Julia Duffy. Specifically, her corpse enters the scene, as a group of neighbors escorts her "**long, yellow coffin**," providing a "**country [or traditional] funeral**" (p. 376), by contrast with Lucy Lambert's funeral.

Standing by the road, anticipating the funeral procession, is Billy Grainsy, the tramp who acts as Gurthnamuckla's "**retainer**" (and mail-carrier); Francie can tell that he is inebriated, for "**the smell of whisky poison[s] the air all around him**" (p. 377). His tongue loosened by alcohol, he harasses Francie, whom he associates with Charlotte and Roddy, the two individuals most responsible for Julia's eviction from Gurthnamuckla. That action precipitated her admission into the District Asylum — a critical step in her tragic journey to death. Embittered and fuming, Billy asserts that Julia expired "**in the Union**" (p. 377), a noun that implies one of the **workhouses** maintained for the **destitute poor** by means of **regionally defined entities known as Poor Law Unions**. Although in 1836 an official report recommended that asylums should come under the purview of Poor Law Unions, that outcome did not transpire. During the late 1870s, however, significant support developed for transferring "**harmless lunatics**" from overcrowded asylums into workhouses, which were experiencing less demand than during the Great Hunger of the 1840s. The implication of Billy's observation, therefore, is that the Board of Governors of the Ballinasloe Asylum (presumably acting on the advice of a medical specialist) at some point determined that Julia was a harmless lunatic and, so, transferred her to a workhouse, perhaps the **Ballinasloe Workhouse** (one of the ten workhouses in County Galway).

Desirous of separating herself from Billy and, probably, from Hawkins, too, Francie violates the "**etiquette**" (p. 377) expected at Irish funerals of stopping as a mark of respect to allow the cortege (or procession) to pass by. Her attempt to squeeze the black mare past Julia's coffin coincides with a performance by several female mourners of "**the Irish Cry**" (p. 378) of lamentation, also known as **keening**, from the Gaelic term **ag caoineadh (to weep)**. The women are known as **keeners**, and we find a description of the phenomenon in the American educator **Asenath Nicholson's** *Ireland's Welcome to the Stranger; or, Excursions through Ireland in 1844 and 1845*:

From a far distant mountain, a mournful sound fell on my ear. It was the **wail for the dead**. It swelled in heavy tones, and then died away, as they who chanted it descended a valley; thus alternatively rising and falling, for five long miles, did the lamentation float on the air.

Sometimes, the cry is known as the **ullaloo**, a noun of onomatopoeic derivation. In the case of Julia's funeral caravan, the cry signals that Norry the Boat Kelly — whose mother and Julia's mother were "**sister[s]**" (p. 212) — should "**[fall] upon her knees and [fling] out her arms**" (p. 378) in a striking visual supplement to the sonic gesture of grief. Being "**inside her cloak**" the extended arms cause Norry to appear "**like a great vulture opening its wings for flight**" (p. 378). While the **carrion crow** fills the vulture niche in Ireland, the essential death symbolism of the vulture is understood there.



Almost certainly, Someville and Ross intended their readers to associate the vulture-like Norry with the Morrigan (“great queen” or “phantom queen”), a shape-shifting divine figure, one of whose manifestations is the Badb Catha (*cadb* = “crow”; *catha* = genitive case of “battle”). In January 1869, the bilingual (Gaelic, English) scholar and civil servant William Maunsell Hennessy presented to the Royal Irish Academy a paper about the Morrigan titled “The Goddess of War of the Ancient Irish.” Among other things, it offers an explication of the Morrigan as she appears in (the Book of Leinster version of) *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, an epic tale centered on the teenaged super-hero Cú Chulainn. One element of the tale is her perching, in the form of the Badb Catha (described as the “bird of valor”) near Cú Chulainn’s “shoulder” while he dies from battle wounds, strapped (by his own choice) to a ceremonial “pillar stone” prior to the enemy’s “cut[ting] off [his] head.” Arguably, Cú Chulainn’s situation in this well-known scene echoes in: Francie’s being attached to the black mare via “the reins”; in her possessing “incorrigible youth” (p. 373); and in her “[falling], head first, on the road” when she finally loses control of the horse upon the animal’s “third buck” in response to Norry’s “cloak [having] flapped right across [its] face” (p. 378). Multiple literary critics have acknowledged that *TRC*’s narrator regularly foreshadows this outcome. One can invoke such early, related episodes as the following two. During Francie and Roddy’s initial ride together, with Gurthnamuckla as their destination, Francie almost falls due to a “buck-jump” on the black mare’s part; in response to Roddy’s asking where she would be without him, she responds, “[s]itting on the road” (p. 36). Having arrived at Gurthnamuckla, Francie “let[s] fall both the reins in order to settle her hat,” causing Roddy to admonish her, “Some day you’ll be breaking your neck, and then you’ll be sorry” (p. 48; emphasis original). During the next, final chapter, a distraught Norry, “with outflung arms” (p. 384), informs Charlotte — who happens to be conversing with Roddy in “the potato loft” (p. 378) at Gurthnamuckla — that “Miss Francie’s killed, her neck’s broke below on the road!” (p. 384).



1

1. Oliver Sheppard’s 1911 statue, “The Dying Cuchulainn,” which places the Morrigan on the hero’s right shoulder in the form of Badb Catha (the battle crow) • This well-known incident may inform the scene in which Norry stretches out her arms like “a great vulture opening its wings,” unintentionally precipitating Francie’s death

They rise with one accord, and, moving their bodies with a slow motion to and fro, their arms apart, they continue to keep up a heart-rending cry.



2



2. Two images (and a portion of text) from the first volume (1841) of *Ireland: Its Scenery, Character, Etc.*, by the husband and wife team of Samuel Carter Hall and Anna Maria Hall • One shows washer-women laboring outdoors, and the other presents female keepers around a corpse at a wake

Chapter 51 \ Unaware of the reprieve that Christopher is prepared to offer him, Roddy engages with Charlotte as, **sawing industriously**, she repairs the floor of Gurthnamuckla’s **potato loft**: a highly resonate venue, given that the action is occurring only around four decades after the end of the Great Hunger. Confessing that **his debt to the Bruff estate is £400** (perhaps \$54,800 in present-day US dollars), he states, with a deal of “self-pity,” that he is “in most terrible trouble” (p. 380). While Charlotte concedes that “[a]ll

that's ever been between [her and Roddy] ... certainly [constitutes] a very weight argument" in favor of her granting him the loan he seeks, she declines his request, asserting, "I don't hold with throwing good money after bad" (p. 382). It is at this juncture that the narrator confirms what *TRC* has long insinuated: that (at least once in the past) Roddy had "kissed [Charlotte]," causing her to "[tremble]" (p. 382). Offended that she has determined to no longer be "his useful ... thral" due to her erotic yearning for him, Roddy attacks Charlotte for appropriating Francie's rightful share of the monies left by Mrs. Mullen, Charlotte's aunt (or, technically, aunt-in-law), upon that woman's death 18 months earlier. As their dialogue becomes more hostile — and more candid — Charlotte shocks Roddy by revealing that it was she who informed Christopher about his embezzling ways. Roddy's response is to diagnose Charlotte's betrayal of him as resulting from her "dirty devilish spite" over Francie's having "cut [her] out" (p. 384) from the possibility of receiving further amatory attention from him. Charlotte retaliates by suggesting that, because of Hawkins, Francie has cut Roddy out; however, their escalating war of words suddenly ends, for Norry the Boat arrives with the news of Francie's catastrophic accident.

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