PROJECT MUSE®

Sitting on "The Outer Skin": Somerville and Ross's Through
Connemara in a Governess Cart as a Coded Stratum of
Linguistic/Feminist "Union" Ideals

Anne Oakman

Éire-Ireland, Volume 39:1&2, Earrach/Samhradh / Spring/Summer
2004, pp. 110-135 (Article)

Published by Irish-American Cultural Institute

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.2004.0008>

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/170169>

ANNE OAKMAN

Sitting on “The Outer Skin”:
Somerville and Ross’s
*Through Connemara in
a Governess Cart* as a Coded
Stratum of Linguistic/
Feminist “Union” Ideals

INTRODUCTION

In her study of the West of Ireland and Irish identity, Catherine Nash notes the increasing pervasiveness of “the West” in popular travel accounts of Ireland throughout the boom years of the professional tourist industry during the 1880s and 1890s. The late Victorians’ “growing taste for the primitive” fueled interest in the region, and the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travel accounts of Connemara that Nash details are further seen to take part in a process of romanticization whereby the West became an almost barbaric but tantalizingly exotic “other” both within and without Ireland.¹ This overt primordial gloss, however, becomes dynamically problematic when viewed within its discursive framework of travel-writing’s British entrepreneurial imperialist values. In his preface to an anthology of travel narratives on Ireland from 1800–2000, Glenn Hooper notes that:

an ever increasing number of travel accounts reflected the discourse of British imperialism of the early and mid-nineteenth century, a discourse which was to flower supremely in the 1880s and 1890s. The nineteenth century was stamped by the rhetoric of empire, and many of its trav-

1. Catherine Nash, “‘Embodying the Nation’: The West of Ireland Landscape and Irish Identity,” in Barbara O’Connor and Michael Cronin, eds., *Tourism in Ireland: A Critical Analysis* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 90.

ellers mirrored, and in some cases passionately articulated, empire politics.²

The idealized purity of Ireland's western corner was posited by ensuing travelers as a unique representation of untainted Irish authenticity that was simultaneously celebrated by the Irish-Ireland movement and patronizingly denigrated by British empire politics. The West exuded Irish authenticity for the educated traveler and avid tourist alike, largely bypassing the ever-increasing cultural split between the "sensitive traveler" and the "vulgar tourist."³ Moreover, the common iconic fodder employed in both political and cultural circles gradually encouraged the establishment of an authentic discourse on the West of Ireland. This textual dialogue was inscribed in the travel writing of the period, and Melissa Fegan suggests that travel writers "appeared to see themselves as successive editors of the text Ireland" and that the assumed stability of this text "produced diachronic generalisations more often than synchronic truths."⁴ As a result, the travel book became a "palimpsest" that was "over-written by succeeding travellers" who preserved and added to its "anachronistic interpretations."⁵ Subsequent to this layered narratorial process Martin Ryle argues that by the early twentieth century the West of Ireland was decisively recognized both as "a unique place within Ireland, and as quintessentially Irish."⁶ Its cultural status had become so time-honored and anchored in its physical geography that any exposition on the subject was deemed almost redundant.

It was into this maelstrom of cultural certainty that Somerville and Ross launched their own definitive account of Connemara in 1893, arguably attempting to reverse the trajectory Fegan describes above. In this light, *Through Connemara in a Governess Cart* becomes an endeavour not only to re-write but also to re-fashion the ubiquitous images of the West of Ireland extolled in popular and commercial travel writ-

2. Glenn Hooper, ed., *The Tourist's Gaze. Travellers to Ireland 1800–2000* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2001), xxii–xxiii.

3. James Buzard, *The Beaten Track. European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 6.

4. Melissa Fegan, "The Traveller's Experience of Famine Ireland." *Irish Studies Review* 9:3 (2001), 360.

5. Ibid.

6. Martin Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland. Literary Travellers, Rural Landscapes, Cultural Relations* (Hampshire: Aldgate, 1988), 65.

ing.⁷ It was Ross's evident abhorrence of an "intolerably vulgar guide to Connemara" published in Dublin in the early 1880s and detailed in a letter to Somerville in 1889 that provided the extra stimulation that she and her writing partner needed to embark on their own travel narrative of Ross's native Irish district.⁸ The two travel writers' retaliatory tactics against the perfunctory Dublin guide, *The Midland Great Western Railway of Ireland Tourists' Handbook: Through Connemara and the West of Ireland*, continually push against the grain of the nineteenth century's kitsch and colonial image of Ireland as preserved in the many popular commercial accounts of the region. Interactions with local people in these largely factual and functional guides, such as Charles and Adam Black's and Thomas Cook's, are few and far between. Instead, the landscape is engaged and appropriated within the commercialized language of the tour book that foregrounds Connemara as a wild yet picturesque and untouched outdoor sporting playground. In contradistinction the fishermen in *Through Connemara* are conspicuous failures at their sport and usually greeted with some disdain by the two lady travelers. The landscape is conversely transformed into an acquiescingly spectacular but deliberate backdrop upon which various exchanges between tourist and native take center stage.

Embroidered within these dialogues and largely humorous exchanges, however, is a very specific convolution of the traveler text that is exposed by the fact that Somerville and Ross do not venture abroad to explore and report on foreign lands but instead return home to Ireland. This maneuver forces the two writers to adopt the jarring position of both tourist and native that mirrors their already anomalous Anglo-Irish status and forces the issue of their dual identity to the narrative's surface. The opening pages of *Through Connemara* are set in London and provide a scathingly rendered condemnation and reversal of the familiar rhetoric that emanated from various English quarters, from

7. It is important to mention at this stage that throughout this essay I have differentiated between "Somerville and Ross" as authors of *Through Connemara* and "Somerville and Ross" as the two cousins depicted therein in order to avoid reading the text as a purely autobiographical account. *Through Connemara* is based on an actual tour undertaken by Somerville and Ross, but many of its incidents are significantly fictionalized. Moreover, to read the text as purely autobiographical would be to ignore its collaborative authorship; the single narratorial voice is notably a dual authored creation.

8. Martin Ross to Edith Somerville (exact date unknown), c. 1889, Somerville and Ross Correspondence, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

the typically wet Irish weather lamented by nearly every English traveler to the degrading images of the Irish as Britain's dim-witted swine in the cartoons of *Punch* magazine:

My second cousin and I came to London for ten days in the middle of last June, and we stayed there for three weeks waiting for a fine day.

We were Irish, and all the English with whom we had hitherto come in contact had impressed upon us that we should never know what fine weather was till we came to England [. . .].

As the fifth party of moist ladies came in and propped their dripping umbrellas against the wall behind us, and remarked that they had never *seen* such rain, our resolution first began to take shape.

"Hansom!" said my second cousin.

"Home!" said I.

By home, of course we meant the lodgings— [. . .].

[. . .]

"England is no fit place for a lady to be in," said my second cousin, as we drove away in our hansom with the glass down.

"I'd be ashamed to show such weather to a Connemara pig," I replied.

Now Connemara is a sore subject with my second cousin, who lives within sight of its mountains, and, as is usually the case, has never explored the glories of her native country, which is why I mentioned Connemara. She generally changes the conversation on these occasions; but this time she looked me steadily in the face and said, "Well, let's go to Connemara!"⁹

This evident snubbing of England, using the very terms usually associated with Ireland, sets up a coded binary opposition that Somerville and Ross go on to navigate with both caution and a certain amount of

9. E. Æ. Somerville, and V. M. Ross, *Through Connemara in a Governess Cart* (London: Virago, 1998), 1–3. All citations from *Through Connemara in a Governess Cart* have been taken from this edition and, henceforth, all references will be cited parenthetically within the body of the essay.

relish. In London the two travelers are able to assert that they are Irish with confidence, but their self-possession and their national identity are pointedly in the face of England's Englishness and they seem much less assured once back on native soil. In Connemara their twofold national rivalry becomes a three-way affair as notions of Englishness and Irishness become entwined with the fact of political union and also with issues of class status. Somerville and Ross's boldly affirmed national identity, then, becomes a much more problematic topic during their tour of the West of Ireland, and this complexity is foreshadowed early on in the text in the opening passage quoted above. The exuberant and finalized "Home!" is strangely and swiftly unnerving as we realize that they merely mean their lodgings in Bayswater. Moreover, Connemara is introduced not as "home" but as "my second cousin's native country" which is notably a "sore subject" and a place that is, as yet, unexplored by the two "natives" (1-3).

In this essay I argue that while neither ratifying a strictly imperialist English viewpoint nor glorifying a wholly de-anglicized Ireland, *Through Connemara* sits, as Somerville once suggested of the partners' stance toward the Irish Revivalists, on the "outer skin" of these cultural and political movements.¹⁰ From this vantage point Somerville and Ross create English-Irish "unions" of their own that can be variously seen as attempts to assimilate their own familial and class histories to the dominant mode. Furthermore, they rather contentiously but nonetheless trenchantly stage these unions within *the* geographical arena of prototypical Irishness, "the West." This battle of collaborative identities also challenges the dominant mode with which they are trying to integrate by displacing some of its core constituents, namely linguistic purity and conventional standards of Irish femininity. As we will go on to see, however, these politically fueled linguistic and feminist unions increasingly suffer from internal instabilities and the history of the landscape Somerville and Ross are so feverishly attempting to re-write acts as a destabilizing force throughout the narrative.

10. Edith Somerville to Cameron Somerville, 31 Jan. 1906, Edith O'neone Somerville Archive, Drishane House, Co. Cork.

THE UNION SISTERHOOD:

MARY MARTIN, CAROLINE BLAKE, AND GRACE O'MALLEY

Dismissing the usual gushing tirade of inflated epithets used to describe the idyllic wonders of Britain's Emerald Isle, the landscape of the West takes a noted second place in Somerville and Ross's more populated account of Connemara. Encouraged by their editors to keep things at all times pleasant, the narrative is punctuated by human incident and amongst this pint-sized and largely humorously depicted native population, Somerville and Ross accord special significance to the three women they deem eminent enough to treat with some seriousness. This triumvirate of actual and legendary women, namely Mary Martin, Caroline Blake, and Grace O'Malley, metaphorically adorn and redefine the political landscape of "the West" just as their houses literally embellish and cultivate the wild Connemara setting. All three are united as inimitable representatives of female empowerment while simultaneously serving as icons of an emblematic "decline and fall" trajectory, from the financial ruin of the once wealthy and landed Protestant gentry to the faded glory and colonial disestablishment of Gaelic feudal society. In *Through Connemara* their family homes still stand but only as ruins (Curradh), hotels (Renvyle), and empty "show places" for the eager tourist (Ballinahinch), and Somerville and Ross can only reconcile themselves "to the loss of an ideal" as they travel this increasingly haunted wilderness (62 and 140). This harmonious trinity, however, suffers discordance at the very hands that bind them so tightly together for how can Mrs. Blake and Mary Martin's aristocratic endurance of Irish unrest cordially amalgamate with the O'Malley clan's bloody and long-standing Gaelic resistance to English domination? The harmony of this alliance is further ruptured by the seventeenth-century dispossession of Grace O'Malley's grandson from the Barony of Ballinahinch, an event that led directly to the estate's ownership by the ascendant Martin family. The Martins of Ross were the notable descendents of this particular clan. The Blakes at Renvyle also acquired their land in similar fashion, purchasing their estate from the privileged élite to whom Cromwell dispersed England's conquered lands. It is interesting to note that both the Martins and the Blakes, leading Catholic merchant families of Galway, subsequently converted to Protestantism. Somerville and Ross knew

their family histories intimately and these facts won't have escaped their notice. Ireland's and their own familial history are forever catching up with them on this supposedly humorous tour, and both continually disrupt the English-Irish identities Somerville and Ross attempt to carve out.

This disruption of female union is paralleled by the two cousins' attempts to civilize and unite themselves with their half-breed jennet in the cultivated and technologically progressive surroundings of Kylemore Abbey, Renvyle House Hotel, and the Ballinahinch estate. The human animation credited to "Johnny Flaherty's . . . nice jinnet" goes beyond mere comic strategy as the colloquial and native "Sibbie" graduates to the classical and Greek "Sybylla" and the reformation of her moral character begins in earnest (27). The two cousins and their jennet symbolically parallel the uneasy relations between colonial tourist and colonized native, and the antics of the jennet persistently disrupt the main narrative of the tour with a growing impudence:

It was painful to find that Oughterard credited the jennet with the sole conduct of the expedition, and regarded us as helpless dependents on her will and pleasure. . . . With the subtlety of her race, she cloaked her design in a fulsome submissiveness, as the deadly spirit is sheathed in the syrup of the liqueur, and turning in full career, without so much as an indication from her long expressive ears, she made for the gate of which we had been warned. . . . The seeds of distrust were from that moment sown in our hearts, and we proceeded with a want of confidence that we had never afterwards reason to regret. (34-36)

The two cousins' strategies to enlighten their unfortunate mule center on the oases of civilization that they direct her to in the otherwise baleful and treacherous countryside that surrounds them. Each sojourn in an hotel or country house brings Sibbie closer to attaining a higher level of social refinement, and the influence of her aristocratic masters steadily begins to show in her supposedly educated behavior:

No one could have supposed that in her short intimacy with "the quality" she could have already developed a fine-ladyish affectation of horror at the sight of an estimable poor relation; yet so it was. Casting one wild look at the appalling spectacle, she sprang sideways across the road,

whirled the trap round, . . . and fled at full speed in the direction from which she had just come. (84)

The scene is redolent of the two cousins' own horror at being accosted in public by "my cousin's own little Judy from Menlo," a Galway beggarwoman persistent in her distant and embarrassing kinship to Miss Martin. This "seventy-year-old nightmare of two foot nothing" is hastily dispatched with the "necessary blackmail" money and the quick thinking aristocrats make a swift exit with their horse and cart (17). It is notably Sibbie's "pride" at having also run away from an intolerable familial confrontation that spurs her to toil gallantly onward across the increasingly steep and stony shortcut to Letterfrack, encouraged "in a way no mere whip could have done" (91). Furthermore, Sibbie's vulgarity is repeatedly overlooked because of the "quality" company she keeps and is continually accorded "brevet rank" wherever she goes and stabled in the finest accommodation each hotel has to offer. But this eventually seems to have little overall effect on her ethical principles and physical character (95):

I am sure that Sibbie felt small gratitude to the sulphate of zinc that brought about the complete healing of her sore shoulder, which took place during her visit at Renvyle. Probably never before since her entrance into society had she spent three whole days in a stable on terms of delightful equality with real horses, and with at least two feeds a day of real oats. "Beggars can't bear heat," is a tried and trusted saying in Ireland, and it soon became apparent that the moral and physical temperature in which Sibbie had been living had been too high for her. (162)

Nonetheless, by the end of the journey, Miss Martin remains tentatively convinced that "we have converted Sibbie" (199). Her optimism at their successful master-servant union is only quenched when they reach Sibbie's hometown of Oughterard, and their pampered jennet enthusiastically returns to Mr. Flanigan's stable in the same manner that she had rather ostentatiously left it:

"I have noticed several little things about her lately that make me sure she regards us with a stern affection. I daresay," she went on, "that she will detest going back to her old life and surroundings."

. . . Nothing was further from her expectations or from mine than the eel-like dive which, just as the sympathetic reflection was uttered, Sib-

bie made into the archway leading to Mr. Johnny Flanigan's stable; and we have ever since regretted that, owing to our both having fallen on to the floor of the governess-cart, Mr. Flanigan could not have credited the brilliant curve with which we entered his yard to our coachmanship. (199)

This admittance of failure brings Sibbie's fragmented story, as well as the tour itself, to an end but it arguably leaves the main "humorous" narrative at odds with itself just as the trio of Mrs. Blake, Mary Martin, and Grace O'Malley sit somewhat uncomfortably within their bond of sisterhood.

Malcolm Kelsall's recent study of Irish country house fiction under the union uses Somerville and Ross's *Through Connemara* to demonstrate the complex symbiosis of the savage and the civilized, a binary opposition that foregrounds Ireland's cultural and political relations with both England and Europe. His reading of the two cousins' visit to the Martin estate at Ballinahinch identifies the house and its surrounding signs of modernization, such as the telegraph poles and developed roads, as "the ultimate sign of 'civilisation.'"¹¹ He goes on to argue that Ballinahinch is the "crucial locus" of the tour, metaphorically representing "both historical continuity . . . and familial connection" but also significantly "deserted."¹² The disturbance of the house's now "secured comfort and prosperity," which occurs as "history reasserts itself" in the grounds of the estate by Mary Martin's garden seat, are rightly identified by Kelsall as an unwelcome "*frisson*" in the air that mars the house's current opulence.¹³ I would argue, however, that this physical tremor/textual shudder *repeatedly* infiltrates an otherwise relatively giddy travel narrative. Rather than view the incident at Ballinahinch as a "crucial locus" I want to suggest that it is merely the first in a line of such episodes that both link and tear asunder the ambitious union of Mrs. Blake, Mary Martin and Grace O'Malley, and that this union symbolically sets up an alternative framework for Somerville and Ross's English-Irish political identity. The significance of the house at Ballinahinch, however, is only fully revealed in relation to the

11. Malcolm Kelsall, *Literary Representations of the Irish Country House. Civilisation and Savagery under the Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 139.

12. Ibid., 142.

13. Ibid.

other houses the journey through Connemara takes the cousins to, namely Kylemore Abbey, the Widow Joyce's cabin, Renvyle House, and the briefly glimpsed Curradh Castle.

The Ballinahinch estate provides the initial major stop of the tour. It is also the first to yield a significant historical and local narrative from the two cousins, who describe in some detail the fate of the house's former inhabitants and of its infamous last resident, Mary Martin, the Princess of Connemara. Before reaching the Castle the travelers pass a little Roman Catholic Chapel, its broken windows are boarded up and its graveyard lies "huddled under a few wind-worn trees," unnamed graves shelter in this "forlorn hollow" with "crooked wooden crosses" and "single upright stake[s]" as the only "landmarks of the dead" (62–63). The scene is both spellbinding and sinister, and even the redoubtable Sibbie chafes and sighs to move on as her masters remain rooted to the spot. The pauper-like graves portend the cousins' necessary re-telling of the Martins' ruin and the famine history within which it is embroiled. All of the cultivation and modernization of the Ballinahinch estate cannot erase this past. In fact, technological advancement is seen here as somewhat disappointing:

We were prepared for anything, for an acre of gables and thatch to a twelfth century tower with a dozen rooms one on top of the other, and a kerne or a gallows looking out of every window, but this admirable mansion with plate-glass windows, and doubtless hot water to the very garrets, shook down our sentimentalities like apples in autumn. We drove on in silence. (64)

By the time of Mary Martin's flight to America and subsequent death in 1850 her troubled and debt-ridden inheritance had passed through the Encumbered Estates Court and fallen into the hands of the London Law Life Assurance. There it remained as its indebted tenants were slowly evicted and its battlements erected until 1872, when Richard Berridge, a wealthy London brewer, bought a substantive amount of the property. It was Berridge's son, also Richard, who had modernized the house and disappointed his two lady visitors. Yet his "civilising hand" (67), which had also cultivated the estate and planted numerous varieties of trees, acts as a welcome break after the barren and exposed roads the cousins have been forced to travel to get there:

at the first turning [of the estate's avenue] a great and sudden calm fell about us. For the first time in our travels we were in a large plantation. . . . Here at all events the civilising hand had done its work, and we slackened pace in the greenness and shelter. . . . (67–68)

This affluent and woody oasis of tranquillity contrasts starkly with the roughly hewn stakes of the Catholic churchyard on the outer edges of the demesne. While this image is not allowed to directly interrupt the cousins' luncheon on the estate, their "nightmare of yesterday" rears its ugly head instead as an unsavory reminder of the uneasy union between the estate and its natural surroundings and the inhabitants of each realm (70).

Earlier in the trip the narrators had found themselves face to face with the sudden and threatening appearance of a large bulldog, the said "nightmare of yesterday," and a herd of villainous looking cattle. During this scene Miss Martin pulls out her contraband gun (Connemara was, as the cousins admit, a "proclaimed" district) and fires a shot into the air that sends the cows fleeing across the mountainside with the bulldog in hot pursuit. The bulldog finishes the chase by latching himself onto the nose of the largest cow in the herd and the cousins quickly lament their hasty and heavy-handed conduct:

This was a more appalling result than we could have possibly anticipated. Not only had we failed to intimidate, but we had positively instigated him to crime . . . we had no time to argue away the illogical feeling that we were responsible for the bulldog's iniquities. (55–56)

Miss Martin's felony and consequent misdemeanor become problematically intertwined with the bulldog's delinquency, and this leaves Somerville and Ross's bold cousins in an insalubrious relationship with the now corrupted "Stripes," a decidedly frosty union founded on blackmail tactics and dirty secrets. Upon unexpectedly meeting Stripes on the Ballinahinch avenue, this time accompanied by his owners and restrained by a strong leash, Miss Martin and her second cousin remain cool in the assurance that: "he won't tell. He knows if he gives us away about the revolver we will inform about the cow" (70).

Frequent calamities along the road through Connemara such as that just described bring untimely reminders of the Protestant ascendancy's position within the political and social landscape of Ireland,

further tightening the noose of history around the authors' necks and their attempts at a carefree narrative. Shortly after the party of three file through "the entrance to Connemara," for example, the weather changes for the worst and "the first mishap to the expedition" occurs as the narrator's hat is blown off her head and plunges "with the élan of a Marcus Curtius into a bed of waterlilies by the bank" (39–40). Unlike that legendary Roman's exploits, however, the hat fails in its suicide mission and is retrieved "pale" and "half-drowned" from the bank only to be swiftly replaced by a "chilly knitted Tam O'Shanter" (40). The flamboyance of classical Roman courage and valor is superseded by the comedy of modern parody, a Scottish mock-epic of the valiant hero returning home Odysseus-like over the River Doon, fueled by superstition and embodying the transition from the natural to the supernatural, the earthly to the otherworldly. Again, the notion of "home" is significantly disturbed as the exotic other they are about to enter is sufficiently foreign to destabilize the authors' homecoming. The two cousins and their trip back to Ross House will first have to contend with this foreboding tour of the resident wilds of "my second cousin's native country," a landscape that has previously only ever been within sight, actual but unexplored.

The home of the Blakes, like the Martins's estate, provides another troubled but sophisticated haven of aristocratic refinement and tranquillity that again yields a problematic family history. Their delight with Renvyle House and its "old-fashioned, even mediaeval, dark, and comfortable" interior is at once contrasted with the modernity and ahistorical environment of Ballinahinch. The Blake's home retains its "cultured and artistic" status despite the "Innkeeper's Regulation Act hanging framed on the wall" (139–40). Even the Blake's pet dog manages to exude its "suave good breeding and friendliness" and the two travelers cannot help but contrast the "refined behaviour of the Renvyle dog with the brutal cynicism of the Recess [Hotel] penwiper and the *blasé* effeteness of its fox-terror" (142). The demoralizing effect of hotel life and the boorish manners of its inhabitants has not yet penetrated Renvyle which remains a somewhat anomalous icon of archetypal respectability and patrician fortitude among the degrading ranks of the licensed home. Mrs. Blake, like Mary Martin, is accorded her own historical narrative, which details the arduous and very public battle she fought with the Land Leaguers in her district:

Anyone who knows Galway at all, knows the name of Blake; and anyone who read the reports of the Parnell Commission will remember that Mrs. Blake whose evidence there was thought by both sides to be of so remarkable a kind ... The bad times and the agitation hit Renvyle very hard; so hard that when the Land League was over, Mrs. Blake was not able to sit down and tranquilly enjoy her victory. She had, on the contrary, to rise up and give all her energies to repairing the ruin that such a victory meant. Her plan was a daring one for a boycotted woman to undertake ... We looked as hard at Mrs. Blake as politeness would permit, while the broad columns of the *Times* seemed to rise before our mind's eye, with the story sprinkled down it through examination and cross-examination of what she had gone through in the first years of the agitation. It required an effort to imagine her, with her refined, intellectual face and delicate physique, taking a stick in her hand and going out day after day to drive off her land the trespassing cattle, sheep, and horses that were as regularly driven onto it again as soon as her back was turned. (142–44)

Constant attempts to evade this disturbingly recent history, “it is both easier and pleasanter to speak” of other things (137), are futile as the cousins’ narrative inexorably revisits Mrs. Blake’s unsettled past. Their sojourn at Renvyle also brings them into close proximity with the ruins of Curradh Castle, one among many of the surviving but desolate relics of the O’Malley stronghold. It is here that we are also introduced to Connemara’s pirate queen, Grace O’Malley, the infamous Granuaile:

Grace O’Malley is a lady of too pronounced a type to be ignored, and even our very superficial acquaintance with her history compels us at least to express our regret that such a female suffragist as she would have made has been lost to our century. (151)

Energetically discussing O’Malley’s “probable action in modern politics” (152), however, merely leads the two cousins *further away* from their intended exploration of her nearby home and they instead settle into a heated stupor close to the shingled beach, playing a futile game of stone-throwing. After lunch, the tower “seemed farther off than ever,” and they opt for a more leisurely stroll on the beach only to be disturbed by the “sinister suggestion of spying eyes” which turn out to belong to the rather reserved Englishman also staying at Renvyle House Hotel (153, 155). This sequence of events sets up a politicized

geography marked on the one side by the “untainted Atlantic” and the “muffled ghosts of Innis Boffin and Achill Islands,” the latter a mere “cloudy possibility of the horizon,” and on the other by the “immense certainties of the north-eastern middle distance” and the dominating reassurance of Croagh Patrick and Mweelrea, which is also the way “home” to Ross House (144, 154). Somerville and Ross choose to explore the middle ground that lies in between these two positions, their narrative creating an idyllic halfway-point of childlike and paradisiacal proportions. The smooth and creamy sand embodies the “romance of new-fallen snow” with “none of its horrors,” and the cousins are swept away by an “insane and infantine ardour” that is nonetheless checked by the “lovely realities” of what is largely suggestive of colonial enterprise and exploration of foreign lands and its flora and fauna: “at our feet were laid lovely realities of long lace-like scarves of red seaweed, flattened out with such prim precision that we expected to find their Latin and English names written beneath them on the sand” (154). Their perfectly constructed haven, however, is nonetheless somewhat traumatized by the misty piratical fortress of Grace O’Malley’s untranslatable Atlantic to the West and the menacing presence of the unnamed English scout to the East who eventually brings their happy revelry to an abrupt end.

The textually derived unions of West and East, Gael and Saxon, myth and reality, past and present are soured by these historical and contemporary events and further betrayed by an internalized text of paternalistic English-Irish union, namely a Blake family-authored publication entitled *Letters from the Irish Highlands* published in 1825. Evidence suggests that Somerville and Ross knew this book quite intimately, the fictionalized account of the cousins’ stay in the Widow Joyce’s cabin is arguably an idea cribbed and expanded from the Blake *Letters*. Somerville and Ross’s personal diaries pay testament to the fact that they never stayed in such a cabin, and the incidents they describe therein are variously and curiously similar to a night spent in a hotel in Rossroe that Henry Blake describes in one of the published family letters. The superficial acquaintance the cousins profess with the history of Grace O’Malley may also have derived from the personal details given of her in these same letters. Much of the information about the pirate queen in *Through Connemara* is identical to that related in the let-

ters, and both the Blakes and Somerville and Ross incorrectly cite Curradh Castle as one of Grace O'Malley's private abodes (it was in fact only her son who lived there). This linkage between Somerville and Ross's travel narrative and the Blake letters lends some credence to an otherwise possibly tenuous connection. With the writers' knowledge and use of the Blake text in mind the almost tangible Latin and English names the cousins perceive written in the willing surface of the sand become significantly reminiscent of particular letters in the Blake book, namely those that habitually detail the Latin and English horticultural names of Connemara's wild fruits and flowers. This oblique reference to *Letters from the Irish Highlands* at a moment of potentially idealized union seems far from coincidental when the main thrust of the letters themselves is an attempt to portray what becomes an overly optimistic recipe for compatible relations between Ireland and England. This union is largely based on the kindly but superior paternalism and modernizing impetus of the latter:

As the improvement of Ireland necessarily depends upon England, the first step towards that improvement must be, to make our English brethren acquainted with the true state of this portion of the empire . . . It is therefore with an earnest desire to lend some assistance, however trifling, towards removing the veil which reveals the real state of Ireland, that the following work is offered to the British public.¹⁴

The Edgeworth family notably took some considerable interest in the book, and Maria Edgeworth would later comment that despite Mr. Henry Blake's ingenious philanthropy he was altogether "too Pierce Marvelish" and it had brought him much financial ruin.¹⁵ His patronage, however benevolent, also did nothing to save Renvyle from the land agitation of the 1870s and 1880s. The story of his son's widow, Mrs. Blake, is painfully testified in Somerville and Ross's *Through Con-*

14. Blake (Family Party), *Letters from the Irish Highlands* (London: John Murray, 1825), xv-xvi.

15. Maria Edgeworth, in Harold Edgeworth, ed., *Tour in Connemara: and the Martins of Ballinahinch* (London: Constable, 1950), 72. Pierce Marvel is the central character in Maria Edgeworth's short story, "The Will," collected in volume one of her *Popular Tales* (London: Johnson, 1811). He is a largely injudicious and enthusiastic man full of schemes of improvement that generally fail until he unites himself with his more prudent cousin, another "ideal" union.

nemara. The Innkeeper's Regulation Act that welcomes the two cousins to Renvyle is a "relief" to the weary travelers looking for bed and board but a "shock" to their aristocratic sensibilities. Significantly, it is here at Renvyle that they markedly reconcile themselves to the "loss of an ideal" while simultaneously trying to create an alternative one (140).

Unable to relate to the passive goddess figure that adorned the front cover of Cook's *Programme of Tours and Excursions in the Emerald Isle* or the exoticized "dark-eyed and dark-locked beauties" of the Claddagh peasantry in the railway guide (11), Somerville and Ross re-create unconventional Irish female identities of their own. The two authors use their alternative female union, however precarious or idealized it may be, to create a common ground of mixed heritage and feminist feeling that enables them to assimilate into and understand the native culture that they are purporting to describe. This stepping-stone from unfamiliar ground to recognizable territory forms an important process of identification for the travel writer, whose identification with another society and ability to represent that society's way of life requires a certain level of acquired acculturation. It is interesting to note that while traveling abroad in France and Denmark, commissioned tours Somerville and Ross undertook in the early 1890s, a common dislike of the English is used to create a cultural passage through which the writers can pass into mutually understood territory. This movement allows them to gain a more illumined insight into the culture they are trying to translate for their readers. In Bordeaux, for example, the two traveling cousins are frequently introduced as "les Anglaises," but the narrator asserts that:

We always found it advisable in France to announce our true nationality as soon as convenient. We found ourselves at once on a different and more friendly footing, and talk had a pleasant tendency to drift into confidential calumny of our mutual neighbour, perfidious Albion, and all things ran more smoother and more gaily.¹⁶

Language necessarily plays its part in this process, for without the travelers' confident knowledge of French they would be sorely disadvantaged in communicating with the French natives.

16. E. O. Somerville and Martin Ross, *In the Vine Country* (London: Vintage, 2001), 116–17.

Michael Cronin's study of travel and translation, *Across the Lines*, foregrounds language as one of the most crucial stepping-stones required to establish a connection between two disparate cultures. Cronin supports the notion that the travel writer's acculturated status is a condition requiring visible assertion and, furthermore, argues that if he or she is not already a native, this is often most easily rendered by learning the language of the foreign culture being described:

If the reader is to be told about a particular place then the people who would appear to be best informed are those who actually live there. If they are to emerge as fully articulate subjects rather than indifferent objects of observation, then the traveller has to immerse himself into the language and culture of a community in order to give a first account of the places s/he tracks through.¹⁷

The language of the Irish community Somerville and Ross encounter, however, is not a homogenous national entity but one that is divided between Irish and English, each of which is further fragmented by regional and social forces. *Through Connemara* once again steps into the middle ground between these two distinct poles and exults the Hiberno-English dialect not only as the dominant means of communication but also as a language in its own right. Hiberno-English becomes a unifying force that provides the common ground between tourist and native, English and Irish. Like the female union of Martin-Blake-O'Malley, this linguistic union abuses the position of the "native tourist," enabling Somerville and Ross to both create the common ground that unites tourist and native while simultaneously dictating what it is to be "native."

ENGLISH BRICKS AND IRISH ARCHITECTS: POLITICIZED LINGUISTIC UNION

Shortly after their potent opening distinction between Ireland and England, Somerville and Ross follow this up with the further contemptuous division of English as it is spoken in Ireland and English as

17. Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines. Travel, Language, Translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), 52.

it is spoken in England, by a short but nonetheless forceful comment on the use of the word “turf”:

It may be as well at this point to seriously assure English readers that the word “peat” is not used in Ireland in reference to fuel by anyone except possibly the Saxon tourist. Let it therefore be accepted that when we say “turf” we mean peat, and when, if ever, we say Pete, we mean the diminutive of Peter, no matter what the spelling. (12–13)

Language operates in several different ways within the narrative but here serves essentially to create a sense of the different and foreign combined with a covert sense of the authors’ ability to navigate and communicate this difference to their readers with an overwhelming sense of authority, admired personal acculturation, and assured “nativeness.” Somerville and Ross are evidently keen to point out that while their traveling natives may not have adopted the Connemara peasant’s thick brogue and variant idioms, which they faithfully transcribe throughout the text, the subtle nuances in their wording and phraseology are more than enough to ensure their native Irishness. Moira Somerville’s short biographical piece on Edith Somerville sheds further light on these delicate gradations and allows a more aural comprehension of the kind of Hiberno-English used by the southern Irish Protestant of Somerville and Ross’s class: “She had a pleasant low voice with no trace of an Irish accent, though one would have known her to be an Irishwoman from her choice of words and expressions, from a fluency and ‘lift’ to the voice that belongs to no other nation.”¹⁸ The very obvious language difference that exists, then, between the two narrators and the Irish natives with whom they interact is largely explained by disparities in class and social ranking rather than a difference in nationality.

This linguistic strategy pervades nearly all of Somerville and Ross’s works and arguably reaches its zenith in their most critically acclaimed novel, *The Real Charlotte*. Nicole Pepinster Greene’s study of dialect and social identity in this novel details the linguistic accuracy of the

18. Quoted in Otto Rauchbauer, *The Edith Somerville Archive in Drishane. A Catalogue and an Evaluative Essay* (Dublin: The Irish Manuscript’s Commission, 1995), 167.

Hiberno-English speech transcribed in the text and the careful way that “characters use language to define themselves” on a personal, social, educational and ethnic level.¹⁹ This ties in with Cronin’s assertion that “language is a fundamental constituent part of a people’s culture” but it also significantly fragments the consequential role of language in the formation of national identity.²⁰ In *Through Connemara* and *The Real Charlotte* language becomes both a source of national and individual distinctiveness, unique to one country but also to one person or one region or one class within that country. Language provides communality when the travelers distinguish between Irish “turf” and English “peat” (us and them), but it also provides individuality and class distinction when the aristocratic second cousin and her near-English accent confront the wandering Irish peasant and his Irish brogue (I and you). This latter situation creates what Greene terms in *The Real Charlotte* a “dialect continuum” with the Hiberno-English of the Irish peasantry at one end of the scale and the Hiberno-English of the landed classes at the other. The Ascendancy dialect is the one that most closely approximates to Standard English or Received Pronunciation.²¹ Individual social identity is therefore partly shaped and designated by the point that a person occupies on the dialect continuum, and yet Somerville and Ross’s fascination with and promotion of Hiberno-English takes language’s identity-forming power onto national levels.

The authors’ interest in Hiberno-English and Anglo-Irish identity is in some ways part of the founding bedrock of their literary collaboration. The family “Buddh Dictionary” and a history of the Somerville and Martin clans were the first collaborative projects the two cousins embarked upon together. The dictionary literally represents a historical, élite, and almost dynastic linguistic code that constitutes a familial identity for the Martins and the Somervilles, cataloguing the words and phrases (often a hybrid of Irish and English) that were peculiar to both families.²² It also betrays a strong ascendancy trait of demarcat-

19. Nicole Pepinster Greene, “Dialect and Social Identity in *The Real Charlotte*,” *New Hibernia Review* 4:1 (2000), 130.

20. Cronin, *Across the Lines*, 52.

21. See Greene, “Dialect and Social Identity in *The Real Charlotte*,” 122–37.

22. Gifford Lewis has reproduced sections of this dictionary in her biography of the two cousins and in a glossary to her selected letters. See Lewis, *Somerville and Ross. The*

ing a self-important heritage and forging strong ancestral ties. Their interest in the use of language stretched far beyond the family, however, and is demonstrated in four manuscript notebooks that the cousins kept to record the Irish idioms and Hiberno-English dialect that they heard Irish people using in everyday speech.²³ The notebooks are extensive and wide-ranging and convey the enthusiasm the cousins had for Hiberno-English, their keen linguistic accuracy in transcribing it, and the creative possibilities it opened up for them. These notebooks provided inspiration and actual dialogue for nearly all of their works and the minute detail, thematic indexing, and almost scientific use of the largest and most comprehensive of these manuscripts argue for its status as a work in itself, albeit unpublished.

Furthermore, Somerville and Ross also wrote several prose pieces that indicate their formal and studious linguistic interest in the use of Hiberno-English. In their 1910 review of Dr. P.W. Joyce's book, *English as we Speak it in Ireland*, the two cousins assert the following:

Ireland has two languages; one of them is her own by birthright; the second of them is believed to be English, which is a fallacy; it is a fabric built by Irish architects with English bricks, quite unlike anything of English construction. The Anglo-Irish dialect is a passably good name for it, even though it implies an unseemly equality between artist and material, but it is something more than a dialect, more than an affair of pidgin English, bad spelling, provincialisms, and preposterous grammar; it is a tongue pliant and subtle, expressing with every breath the mind of its makers.²⁴

In an early article detailing the use of Hiberno-English by English writers, Ross also comments that "right or wrong pronunciation and spellings are small things in the presentment of dialect. The vitalising power is in the rhythm of the sentence, the turn of the phrase, the

World of the Irish R.M. (New York: Viking, 1985), 54–56; and Lewis, ed., *The Selected Letters of Somerville and Ross* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 297–302.

23. Notebooks, Somerville and Ross Manuscript Collection, Queen's University, Belfast.

24. E. Æ. Somerville and Martin Ross, "The Anglo-Irish Language (A Consideration of Dr. P.W. Joyce's Book 'English as We Speak it in Ireland')," in *Stray-Aways*. (London: Longmans, 1920), 184.

knowledge of idiom, and of, beyond all, the attitude of mind.”²⁵ Persistent in these two extracts is the firm belief that language, or at least Hiberno-English, is a prescribed representative of individual identity; it expresses “with every breath the mind of its maker” and reveals his or her “attitude of mind.” It is exactly this kind of linguistic philosophy that Greene examines in *The Real Charlotte* when she argues that “Somerville and Ross manipulate Southern Hiberno-English so that it reflects the class of each speaker and so that each idiolect also reflects each speaker’s immediate social situation and psychological position.”²⁶ In *Through Connemara* this analysis is extended and appropriated within the concerns of the travel writer. Successful merge into the native culture is achieved largely through language, and it is interesting to compare and note the similarity between the way in which Somerville and Ross intersperse lower class Hiberno-English phraseology into the main narrative to the italicized French and German words that are assimilated into the texts of their other tours. In all cases this allows for a reasonable amount of native fluency and understanding to exist between tourist and native, but in *Connemara* it further allows Somerville and Ross to retain a dominant yet native position which is crucially enabled by their use of language and the union between “English bricks” and “Irish architects.”

Again, studying the behavioral differences and similarities of the Irish travelers abroad and at home yields additional fruitful results. In both their French and Irish travel narratives, the cousins describe a stopover in a peasant home, but the need to sustain their ascendancy class status clearly takes a back seat when the travelers are outside Ireland. The nights the narrators spend in the homes of the peasantry are actual in France but invented in Ireland. The overnight visit that takes place in Suzanne’s home is faithfully related from actual events, whereas their stay in the Widow Joyce’s cabin is conspicuously fictionalized. Moreover, the two narratives read side-by-side frame a compelling exhibition of the evident necessity of differentiating class position on home soil. In Bordeaux the travelers discreetly but significantly ask Suzanne if they can lodge in her house for the night; they rather

25. Martin Ross, “Children of the Captivity,” in *Some Irish Yesterdays* (London: Longmans, 1906), 248.

26. Greene, “Dialect and Social Identity in *The Real Charlotte*,” 126.

“diffidently” suggest the idea to her and she delightfully accepts.²⁷ In Connemara, however, the two cousins enter the Widow Joyce’s home with all the brashness of the ascendancy class they can muster: “We did not ask the Widow Joyce if she could take us in. We simply walked into her house and stayed there” (94). Once inside they cannot refrain from commenting that it was the “beneficent influence” of a certain sporting “Meejer” that had equipped the cabin with its only signs of “civilisation” and “sense of decorum” (96).

There is also a significant linguistic difference that impacts on the essential class distinction the authors create in Connemara and the unifying potentiality of Hiberno-English. In Bordeaux the Irish tourists converse quite freely and confidently with the peasant Suzanne in her own idiomatic French style, an idiolect and accent that approximates more closely to the French spoken by the lower class *Borderlairs* than with the region’s more aristocratic inhabitants. When in Denmark the travelers remain painfully aware of the “improper” French and accompanying mannerisms they have picked up during their travels both in Bordeaux and Paris’ *ateliers*:

the pointed moustache of my cousin’s companion was twitching in the assiduity of his conversation, and she herself was evidently saying “*Vraiment!*” with a gesture whose Parisian *abandon* had yet in it some unconscious touch of the Skibereen apple-woman.²⁸

While in France these incidents can be used to humorous advantage, Somerville and Ross are less entertainingly conscious that their indulgence in peasant French has fewer social consequences in France than a similar extravagance would have in Ireland. An unfamiliar environment allows for unfamiliar behavior abroad, but no such luxury is afforded in the homeland—and the narrators are rarely seen to code-switch in their conversations with the lower class Irish natives.²⁹

27. Somerville and Ross, *In the Vine Country*, 111.

28. E. Æ. Somerville and Martin Ross, “In the State of Denmark,” in *Stray-Aways*, 112.

29. The linguistic term “code-switch” is borrowed from Greene’s article on *The Real Charlotte*, where she uses this term to describe the ways that characters like Charlotte Mullen and Julia Duffy consciously and unconsciously switch between dialects depending on whom they are speaking to and what speech community that person

The dialect continuum therefore enables this social preserve to remain intact and further facilitates successful communication between the supposed “tourists” and the natives. Moreover, it also significantly alters the linguistic and political make-up of the Connemaran native. The gamut of Hiberno-English evident in *Through Connemara* relies on a crossbreed of the Irish and the English languages, as stipulated in Somerville and Ross’s other prose works, and yet this hybrid language is “more than just a dialect.” It is, according to *Through Connemara*, the language of the whole of the West of Ireland; it represents that quintessentially Irish region and thus becomes representative of the “native” norm. In a climate of Irish Revivalism and active de-anglicization, these are daring claims to make. And yet they are not so far-fetched given Somerville’s later declination of Douglas Hyde’s proposal that she collect, compile and translate Irish folk tales for him with a view to her own eventual publication. Ross would also go on to turn down an offer by Yeats and Lady Gregory to write a play for the Abbey Theatre. Neither “revival” project appealed to their literary sensibilities nor, it would seem, to the multifaceted hybridity that governed their ideological stance on matters of Irish identity and authenticity.

From a dialect that makes social distinctions and provides individual identity, therefore, Somerville and Ross also translate Hiberno-English into a unifying (and unified) national language. In his 1993 study of the lexicography of Hiberno-English, Michael Montgomery discusses the reasons why scholars have failed to develop a Hiberno-English dictionary given the now wide-ranging dictionaries published on Standard-English variations. He concludes that one of the main obstacles to this enterprise is the lack of “an informal political initiative and consensus that a dictionary and the language it organizes and codifies represents a nation, territory, or like-minded group of people. . . .”³⁰ Somerville and Ross certainly seem to believe that the

belongs to. It is a particularly apt and useful term in this essay because it signifies that operating on different levels of a dialect continuum entails both a cultural/social as well as linguistic “switch.” Code-switching embodies the idea that language operates within its own cultural codes and systems and cannot necessarily be separated from these conventions without significantly altering the language itself.

30. Michael Montgomery, “The Lexicography of Hiberno-English.” *Working Papers in Irish Studies* 93:3 (1993), 23.

Hiberno-English dialect represented the Irish nation or territory they knew and understood best, and they reveal a tentative but definitive political initiative in their faithful transcriptions and isolation of Hiberno-English speech as a language in its own right. Their own artistic ventures in the form of the “Buddh Dictionary” and the working manuscripts filled with instances of Hiberno-English dialogue are not ideologically far from the kind of language development Montgomery laments. Furthermore, Hiberno-English relies on a significant linguistic union between Ireland and England and a social structure that sustained the privileged Ascendancy class in Ireland. Like the union between the three celebrated females of the West, this linguistic union also suffers a similar fate in that the very thing that binds it together paradoxically helps to pull it apart. The social and racial domination/subordination dynamic has already been seen to fail with the formidable Sibbie, and who is to say it can survive within the coded dialect continuum that upholds the national unity of Hiberno-English.

CONCLUSION

The feminist and linguistic unions that Somerville and Ross create in *Through Connemara in a Governess Cart* are never as stable as their authors would like them to be, and yet they still manage to achieve several important effects. Firmly planting themselves on the “outer skin” of English and Irish modes of archetypal Irishness, Somerville and Ross are able to shift the goalposts that traditionally demarcate the permitted authenticities of Irish nationality. By temporarily adopting the generic boundaries and rhetoric of the travel writer, Somerville and Ross exploit the geographical and social spaces that this narrative occupies and which are primed for exactly the kind of national contestation the two authors re-enact.

Several critics of the travel-writing genre have suggested that the travel writer works in a space of cultural limbo, or transculturation, where two distinct cultures come into contact and contest to appropriate the other within its own cultural and linguistic codes. Derek Gregory and James Duncan call this space of transculturation a “tense space in-between,” which is generated by the act of translating one cul-

ture into another.³¹ Mary Louise Pratt further defines it as the “contact zone,” a social space where “disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination. . . .”³² Cronin’s book extends the ideology of the contact zone by formally examining the linguistic consequences of writing, translating and culturally grappling in these in-between spaces. The contact zone more than facilitates Somerville and Ross’s tussle with competing versions of Irishness, and yet they don’t quite play within the rules of the game. As tourists in their own country they get to revel in the grey areas that the middle ground affords them, blurring the divide between tourist and native. In so doing they construct a series of unions that attempt not only to appropriate the other to which they are bound but to significantly alter that other. The Ireland to which Somerville and Ross purport to be natives has first to be revised or rescued from the successive English travel texts and Irish-Ireland cultural movements that have colonized its representation. The cultural passages through which this new Ireland is mediated in the traveler text are English-Irish unions of differing sorts and varying strengths, but unions nonetheless.

During their travel-writing years Somerville and Ross’s political loyalties were seemingly clear-cut; they both campaigned for the Unionist Alliance in 1895. And yet their travel narratives account for a much more complex and fluid notion of “union” than their political activism perhaps suggests. Somerville’s full-blooded assertion of her Irishness in a letter to one of her brothers has become an oft-quoted citation but one that traditionally glosses over the more interesting line within that quotation that distinguishes between English and British. Berating her brother for writing to her and telling her that he increasingly feels more English than Irish, Somerville replies with the following:

Nonsense about being “English”! I don’t mind if you say “British” if you like, but the only pallid trickle of *English* blood comes from *one* marriage, when Hester Coghill married Colonel Tobias Cramer, *a pure blooded hun*—if not Jew! You might just as well say you were German!

31. James Duncan and Derek Gregory, eds., *Writes of Passage. Reading Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 1993), 4.

32. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4.

[. . .] My family has eaten Irish food and shared Irish life for nearly three hundred years, and if that doesn't make me Irish I might as well say I was Scotch, or Norman, or Pre-Diluvian!³³

The term "British," with its union associations and all-encompassing anomalous capacity, seems to be a more acceptable nationality than English. A British title allows Somerville and Ross to remain fully Irish in a colonized Ireland without relinquishing the English ties so essential to the sustenance of their class and without having to blur the cultural line between Irish and English. *Through Connemara* is largely a complex extrapolation of this position. While favoring the Unionist Alliance for which Somerville and Ross campaigned in Ireland, it also foregrounds the Hiberno-English language and a feminocentric perspective as integral and internal unions/identities that serve to complicate the broader political union it subtly advocates. Moreover, the narrative identifies and succumbs to the weaknesses within both the old unions that haunt the cousins' travels and the new unions they attempt to forge. This self-awareness crucially relies on Somerville and Ross's play on the generic instabilities of the traveler text that this essay has exposed. As a result, the two authors decisively empower an otherwise minor literary discourse within the dominant political and cultural debates of their late nineteenth-century Ireland. Far from having their voices marginalized in questions of national importance, Somerville and Ross's strategic position on the "outer skin" gives those voices an added and vital resonance.

33. Quoted in Lewis, *Somerville and Ross*, 165.