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The Real Charlotte: Incorporating Criticism

In his article *Realism, Determinism, and Symmetry in The Real Charlotte*, Cresap Watson reviews the novel *The Real Charlotte* by Edith Somerville and Martin Ross. As Watson analyzes the novel he makes the assertion that the only dynamic character in *The Real Charlotte* is Charlotte Mullen (38). He continues to say “Static characters are a distinguishing feature of the novels Edith Somerville and Violet Martin wrote. Few, perhaps none, of their characters can be said to develop” (Watson 38). When thinking of Francie Fitzpatrick, Watson’s assertions may seem reasonable, however, upon closer reading, it is clear that Francie is a dynamic character that grows throughout the novel.

At the beginning of the novel, Francie is described in a way that presents her to be one-dimensional. The narrator describes Francie saying, “Her hair clustered about her white temples, and the colour that fighting the flies had brought to her face lent a lovely depth to the eyes that had the gaiety and the soullessness of a child” (Somerville and Ross 86). Francie’s “gaiety” and her “soullessness of a child” makes her appear to be a static character, but this is only Francie in the first half of the book. She, at first, worries little about anything and flirts whenever she feels the desire, but, in the second half of the book she changes.

This change is facilitated by a disillusionment with the happy, worry-free world she has made for herself. This can be seen in the narration of the story. Whenever Francie is described at the beginning of the novel she is described in terms of her careless and carefree actions, which is presumably because she lacks depth so there is no reason to explore her mind. However, after Francie gets evicted from living with her cousin Charlotte because of a “row” they have, Francie starts to grow as a character as the reality of her situation dawns on her. After moving in with her poor cousins, The Fitzpatricks, she realizes what she has lost which results in an evident change in Francie’s demeanor and personality. The narrator says that “Francie’s life at Albatross Villa went on, as it seemed to her, in a squalid monotony of hopelessness” (Somerville and Ross 270). We start to see more into Francie’s head because she has become more of a thought-driven being. When she returns to Tally Ho after becoming engaged to the moderately well-off Mr. Lambert, the other characters even see a change in her. Hawkins, after being snubbed by Francie who only ever adored him before, says, “You’re not a bit like you used to be. You seem to take a delight in snubbing me and shutting me up. I must say, I never thought you’d have turned into a prig!” (Somerville and Ross 363).

It may be easy to think that Francie is as one-dimensional as Watson may believe her to be, but a deeper reading will prove that she is not. The trials she face in the second half of the novel matures her, and they allow her character to grow and become dynamic.

Works Cited

- Somerville, Edith, and Martin Ross. *The Real Charlotte*. J. S. Sanders & Company, 1999.
- Watson, Cresap S. "Realism, Determinism, and Symmetry in "The Real Charlotte.""
Hermathena, no. 84, 1954, pp. 26-44. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23039158.