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A DREAM OF PROPERTY: THE THEME OF IDENTITY
IN ANTHONY TROLLOPE'S FIRST SEVEN NOVELS.

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A DREAM OF PROPERTY: THE THEME OF IDENTITY IN ANTHONY TROLLOPE'S FIRST SEVEN NOVELS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
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OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By
John Robert Crull Burroughs

June 1970

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I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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PREFACE

A very personal sense of the meaning of landed property is an important part of the texture and design of the first novels of Anthony Trollope. Land and character are related in these books and this study is a reading of that relationship. In all of these novels the identity of the main characters, the traits by which we recognize them, is manifested to a great extent by their relations with landed property. Property and identity are connected. I think the sources of this connection can be found in Trollope's own youthful ambitions, his way of thinking about the possible fruition of his life. This mode of his thinking can be termed a dream of property because his youthful fantasy of happiness was so deeply involved with the land and the hereditary owners of the land that his imagination became suffused with a sense of property that was like a dream or a vision of attainment. In a sense, his whole notion of what a person was as a distinctive entity was related to this dream, so that even his efforts to become a novelist mirror a reflection of it.

His first seven novels record his self-discovery as an author. He was twenty-eight when he began The Macdermots of Ballycloran in the fall of 1843, and he was almost

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forty-three when he finished Doctor Thorne on April 1, 1858, in Egypt, where he had been sent to negotiate a postal treaty.[1] On the next day he began The Bertrams, his eighth novel. Before that day he had been a seeker and a discoverer of a fictional method that would allow him to satisfy his ambitions to be known as an author. Afterwards, while he might find much in the world that was distressing, he would never have to doubt his own powers of imagination, nor would he need to fear that he lacked command of the ability to write.

He had had many failures during the fifteen-year period of his self-discovery: his first three novels did not sell, a guide-book and a play were rejected, one novel had been abandoned altogether, one was unfinished.[2] There was much to shake his confidence, but there was something indomitable in this blunt, hearty man which made him persist during all the lonely hours of writing against the experience of failure. His passion to succeed was partially the result of a bitterly unhappy childhood, but his persistence was also the result of mature affirmation of his ambition.

The novels which resulted from Trollope's struggle for

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[1]Michael Sadleir, Trollope, A Commentary (London, 1961), p. 197.

[2]Ibid., pp. 147-151; pp. 168-169; pp. 177-178. Trollope gave up writing The New Zealander, a satiric novel, after he read a publisher's unfavorable comments on the beginning; The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson was later finished in 1861.

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confidence in himself as an author, The Macdermots of Ballycloran (1847), The Kellys and the O'Kellys (1848), La Vendée (1850), The Warden (1855), Barchester Towers (1857), The Three Clerks (1858), and Doctor Thorne (1858), reflect the growth of a profoundly social imagination. Trollope is, as Robert Polhemus observes in his recent book, "the explorer and poet of that complex shaper of the modern world, middle-class mentality,"[3] and I wish to discuss in this study the way in which Trollope's ability to describe his world is related to his development as a novelist. I think this development can be understood in terms of the manner in which themes of property and land serve to modulate and to qualify the presentation of character. A complex imaginative web lies behind the fashioning of good novels, and with Trollope land, character, and identity were frequently connected in that complicated structure of fantasy, memory, revery, and thought. His writing of novels consisted partly of discovering how to make those associations interesting and meaningful.

He left a record of those discoveries in An Autobiography (1883) where, although he was reticent about much, he was frank in his judgements of himself, and these judgements reflect a characteristic pattern of self-regard. This pattern, the habitual way a man thinks about himself, derives part of its force from the norms of his society. A

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[3]The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, 1968), p. 6.

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person incorporates these norms into his self-image in order to participate a certain way in the human community. For Trollope successful participation meant to become famous as an author, and among the complicated motives authors have had for writing, one of the most imperative has been the need to compensate for an unhappy childhood.[4] Apart from the development of his craft, such a man thinks of writing as a means to a goal, some condition in which he will find compensating happiness. He may envision a situation in which he will no longer feel lonely because he is famous, or he may merely want at last to be understood--the goals of writing are as various as the tribe of authors, and the degree to which these fantasies of requital enter their works is a variable too. For Trollope it was crucial.

He felt that the happiest people of his time were the landed gentry; he admired their stability and confidence, and he identified with them to the extent that later, when he was famous, he adopted one of their pastimes, fox hunting, to solace his rare moments of leisure. But before that his identification was imaginative only--he was an obscure government clerk, an unknown. He had not inherited land from his poor eccentric father, and the psychic pleasure he could derive from his identification with the fortunate ones was

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[4]See for example George Orwell's discussion of this point in "Why I write," in The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York, 1968), I, 1.

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the result of sublimation. The sorrows of a lonely and unhappy boy were displaced in this sublimation by a dream of a happier way of life, a compensating dream of immeasurable security. I think this vision of a world stable and rightly ordered is the source of what I call Trollope's dream of property.

I believe that by understanding the force of this dream as it animates Trollope's imagination, we can arrive at a more detailed knowledge of his subtle artistry. A sense of what the dream of property meant to Trollope helps to explain the successes and failures of these early books. It contributes also I feel to the sort of understanding Donald Smalley asked for in a review of research when he noted that "Trollope's particular qualities both as a writer and as a personality continue to evade definition, perhaps more so than with any other Victorian novelist of note."[5] The best of these books afford a compelling sense of reality and to read them all as evidence of the psychic growth of a remarkable nineteenth-century individual is not to slight that quality--it is, rather, to attempt that definition from an untried point of view.

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[5]"Anthony Trollope," in Victorian Fiction, ed. Lionel Stevenson (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), p. 213.

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CHAPTER I

THE THEME OF IDENTITY

Identity, Erik Erikson suggests, is achieved.[1] It is the result of a dynamic life process in which awareness of the self seeks accord between inner and outer reality. The modern sense of the term is complicated by our consciousness of the fragmentation of experience: we are likely to think of identity as being many-faceted in terms of the various functions and roles which life discovers to us, and we are apt also to be ontologically uncertain in consequence of various assaults on the integrity of being in this century. But if in the past a sense of the self tended to be regarded as more of a constant, it was sometimes considered to be the result of a process. John Keats wrote to his brother George in the spring of 1819 about experience as painful conditioning and made the following observation with respect to the primacy of the emotions in the growth of identity:

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[1] Young Man Luther (New York, 1962), p. 14; he speaks here of identity crisis, a point in life where a youth "must detect some meaningful resemblance between what he has come to see in himself and what his sharpened awareness tells him others judge and expect him to be."

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> Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul: A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways! Not merely is the Heart a Hornbook, It is the Minds Bible, it is the Minds experience, it is the teat from which the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity.[2]

His metaphor is earthy, but it is well taken; identity is nourished by emotional experience and, as such, it is apt to be unstable.

This passage from Keats suggests another point: until the rise of modern psychology much of the evidence in the past for the way in which people regarded themselves is literary. The notion that identity is unstable is really evident, for example, in a novel like Great Expectations (1860-1861) where the hero, Pip, suffers so much confusion as to his role in life. There too the fragmentation of identity modern life prompts is seen in the character Wemmick who is an enigmatic clerk in Mr. Jaggers' office during the day, but who goes home at night to a suburban house shaped like a miniature castle where he relaxes and becomes genial. Urban life makes demands on Wemmick which are not made on the blacksmith, Joe Gargery, who lives in the country and has his forge at home. These examples of an awareness of the instability of identity could be illustrated from many places in the work of Dickens, but insight into the phenomenon was not limited to him.

In Mrs. Gaskell's North and South (1855), for example,

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[2]The Selected Letters of John Keats, ed. Lionel Trilling (New York, 1956), p. 258.

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the heroine, Margaret Hale, returns after her father's death to her old home in the New Forest from the great northern industrial city where she has recently been living. She stays at an inn and cannot sleep:

> A sense of change, of individual nothingness, of perplexity and disappointment overpowered Margaret. Nothing had been the same; and this slight, all-pervading instability had given her greater pain than if all had been too entirely changed for her to recognize it.[3]

She looks out at the stars and then she reflects, "and I too change perpetually." Margaret later comes to welcome this instability as an aspect of life's increased possibilities, but not everyone in the nineteenth century could share her optimism. For while people perceived that identity was becoming unstable, the problem was compounded for them by the fact that the world was changing so rapidly. One witness, Trollope's brother, writing in his eighties, said,

> I have been here so many many years. And then those years have comprised the best part of the nineteenth century--a century during which change has been more rapidly at work among all the surroundings of Englishmen than probably during any other century of which social history has to tell.[4]

A sense that the world is unstable complicates the process of effecting a resemblance between inner and outer reality because the dynamics of self-regard are both personal and social--awareness of the self is derived from the deepest

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[3](London, 1908), p. 483.

[4]Thomas Adolphus Trollope, What I Remember (New York, 1888), p. 1.

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inner recesses of being, as well as from the school and the marketplace.

Trollope saw himself as a professional. An Autobiography is replete with what Professor Polhemus calls "worldly rhetoric,"[5] where Trollope illustrates his business-like methods and accounts for his success. And although he was ambitious, he tells his middle-class readers that he was not so different from them:

> I have certainly always had also before my eyes the charms of reputation. Over and above the money view of the question, I wished from the beginning to be something more than a clerk in the Post Office. To be known as somebody,--to be Anthony Trollope if it be no more,--is to me much. The feeling is a very general one, and I think beneficent. It is that which has been called the 'last infirmity of noble mind.' The infirmity is so human that the man who lacks it is either above or below humanity. I own to the infirmity. But I confess that my first object in taking to literature as a profession was that which is common to the barrister when he goes to the Bar, and to the baker when he sets up his oven. I wished to make an income on which I and those belonging to me might live in comfort.[6]

He wanted to be known as "sombody," and yet he insists that he is just like anybody:

> While I was in Egypt, I finished Doctor Thorne, and on the following day began The Bertrams. I was moved now by a determination to excel, if not in quality, at any rate in quantity. An ignoble ambition for an author, my readers will no doubt say. But not, I think, altogether ignoble, if an author can bring himself to look at his work as does any other workman. This had become my task, this was the furrow in which my plough was set, this was the thing the doing of which had fallen

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[5] The Changing World of Anthony Trollope, p. 218.

[6] An Autobiography (Oxford, 1947), p. 98.

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> into my hands, and I was minded to work at it with a will.[7]

And he did, somewhat to the detriment of his reputation, as has been widely recognized.[8] But these comments on his work were made in the winter of 1875, well after his fame as a novelist had been established, and he did not intend to publish them until after his death. He might have said many things about himself, but he chose to speak of his art as an ordinary professional activity. Readers of the chilling early chapters of his autobiography can understand the urgency of his desire for the ordinary because the young self he reveals there was so out of place, so bitterly conscious of not belonging to his circumstances, that it is not surprising that he should afterwards yearn to be like everyone else.

Another reason for this matter-of-factness was that writing was not uncommon in his family. When his mother had been desperate for money, she wrote. The Domestic Manners of the Americans, her first book and a best-seller, had been published when Anthony was nearly seventeen. By the time An Autobiography was being written, Trollope's brother had also written novels and travel books; it was not strange for a Trollope to write. But while there were many reasons for Anthony to claim in An Autobiography that writing for him was

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[7] An Autobiography, p. 112.

[8] See for example, H. S. Davies, Trollope, Writers and Their Work Series, No. 118 (London, 1960), p. 10; also, Robert Polhemus, p. 248.

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just like any other pursuit, it had not always been so. There had been a period in his life when the desire to "be known as somebody" was the expression of a longing for recognition which was unfulfilled, when the desire "to be something more than a clerk in the Post Office" was a portion of his inner reality only and resembled nothing in his achievement.

He later acknowledged a connection between his early fantasy life and his subsequent achievement in an important passage of the autobiography:

> As a boy, even as a child, I was thrown much upon myself. I have explained, when speaking of my school-days, how it came to pass that other boys would not play with me. I was therefore alone, and had to form my plays within myself. Play of some kind was necessary to me then, as it has always been. Study was not my bent, and I could not please myself by being all idle. Thus it came to pass that I was always going about with some castle in the air firmly built within my mind. Nor were these efforts in architecture spasmodic, or subject to constant change from day to day. For weeks, for months, if I remember rightly, from year to year, I would carry on the same tale, binding myself down to certain laws, to certain proportions, and proprieties, and unities. Nothing impossible was ever introduced,--nor even anything which, from outward circumstances, would seem to be violently improbable. I myself was of course my own hero. Such is the necessity of castle-building. But I never became a king, or a duke,--much less when my height and personal appearance were fixed could I be an Antinous, or six feet high. I never was a learned man, nor even a philosopher. But I was a very clever person, and beautiful young women used to be fond of me. And I strove to be kind of heart, and open of hand, and noble in thought, despising mean things; and altogether I was a very much better fellow than I have ever succeeded in being since. This had been the occupation of my life for six or seven years before I went to the Post Office, and was by no means abandoned when I commenced my work. There can, I imagine, hardly be a more dangerous mental practice;

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> but I have often doubted whether, had it not been my practice, I should ever have written a novel. I learned in this way to maintain an interest in a fictitious story, to dwell on a work created by my own imagination, and to live in a world altogether outside the world of my own material life. In after years I have done the same,--with this difference, that I have discarded the hero of my early dreams, and have been able to lay my own identity aside.[9]

The process is a dual one: the young man discovers his identity as novelist at the same time as he manages to shape his fantasy life into a world of believable fiction. But while he conceals his own identity in his creations, he does not discard the values his fantasy hero was striving for. These values persist in the novels as still discernible vestiges of the lonely child's imaginative life. The first seven novels reflect the mature author's sublimation, through effort, of his early need for recognition and love.

Trollope transmuted these early needs into a viable means to a satisfactory identity; many successful artists do this also; but he was distinctive in that he transformed the characteristics of his youthful hero into qualities that gave shape to a whole way of life. His first seven novels seek to discover a world which is socially faithful to the spirit of his fantasy hero--generous, decent, and humane. The discovery is made through the realization of a vision.

That the nature of this vision corresponds in many ways to the world around him is not surprising: as he recollects them, his youthful fantasies were notable for

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[9] An Autobiography, pp. 38-40.

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their consistency and their probability. He was bound "to certain laws, to certain proportions, and proprieties, and unities." He is very careful to record that his "architecture" of compensation was not outside the bounds of human possibility, and, while he was the hero who was clever and beloved, his strivings were largely ethical and selfless. He was "altogether . . . a very much better fellow than I have ever succeeded in being since." Composure, poise, confidence--not the loftiness of king or duke--are the qualities which sustain a hero who is "kind of heart, and open of hand, and noble in thought, despising mean things." The hero, in short, was a gentleman, and he is characterized by an incantatory prose rhythm which reflects a quiet but intense passion.

Another kind of intensity is reflected by the need for probability in the fantasy; probability nourishes values which are susceptible of realization. As this sort of fantasy is translated into action, the encounter between inner and outer will not be shocking, damaging, or annihilating. If the original vision sounds cautious and inhibited, the dreamer is at least assured that it contains the possibility of fulfillment. Trollope wanted security and not transcendence: the castle, he says, was "in the air," but it was also "firmly built within my mind." This realistic cast of imagination helped to win his success. It led to novels, in Hawthorne's famous phrase, "just as real as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a

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glass case, with all its inhabitants going about their daily business, and not suspecting that they were being made a show of."[10] But before the way to that achievement was discovered, Trollope's vision of the world had to be tested and explored.

As had been pointed out by commentators before, the predominating characteristics of that vision were essentially middle-class.[11] The contradictory tendencies associated with this ethos are present in the vision of the novels; they reflect an essence which is liberal and tolerant at the same time that it is prudent and cautious. A perceptive Frenchman who was a contemporary of Trollope said of the novels of this period:

> Ses romans sont écrits dans un esprit très radical, et cependant il est presque touchant de voir avec quelle affectueuse réserve il parle des gens qu'il semble le moins aimer. Il se sent enclin a excuser chacun des défauts qu'il veut blâmer, et il arrive à pardonner par toute sorte de raisons ingénieuses les fautes qu'il condamne intérieurement.[12]

This perception of Trollope's generosity is similar to the observation made by M. R. Goldberg in discussing Trollope's ability to capture "the spirit of his age: peace, quietude, equipoise, stability, compromise."[13] But like the best in

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[10]As quoted by Trollope in An Autobiography, p. 133.

[11]Most recently by Robert Polhemus, op. cit., p. 7; See also Seymour Betsky, "Society in Thackeray and Trollope," in From Dickens to Hardy, ed. Boris Ford (London, 1963), pp. 144-168.

[12]Émile Montégut, "Le Roman de Moeurs en Angleterre," Revue des Deux Mondes, XVII, Part 5 (1858), 759.

[13]"Trollope's The Warden: A Commentary on 'The Age of Equipoise,'" Nineteenth Century Fiction, XVII (March 1963), 383.

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Trollope's art, this happy spirit was preceded by considerable tension:

> The uneasy Victorian snobbery was probably the result of the impact of new classes who wanted to secure their position in a traditional hierarchy, Victorian hypocrisy the result of the attempt to lay claim to new standards of conduct which proved to be too hard to maintain consistently, Victorian prudery the result of a struggle for order and decency on the part of people just emerging from the animalism and brutality of primitive society.[14]

These cultural problems are reflected in Trollope's vision: like many of his fellow countrymen, he feared revolution and upheaval, what he could say about sexual life was limited, and what he could imagine of human evil was circumscribed. Sheila M. Smith is probably quite fair to him when she says that "like Ruskin and Robert Buchanan, Trollope feels that the artist and writer should defend the threatened structure of society by supporting its moral standards."[15]

But if Trollope's vision is that of a middle-class man, it is a vision which takes much of its inspiration from the peace of the rural shires. And if that vision acts, as it does, partially in defense of an order that is threatened, it comes to find the best means of making that defense on ground where the order flourishes most. Trollope looked at the failure of certain kinds of society before he found what he felt was the key to the success of his own, and that

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[14] G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), p. 64.

[15] "Anthony Trollope: the Novelist as Moralist," in Renaissance and Modern Essays, ed. G. R. Hibbard (New York, 1966), p. 129.

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discovery was intimately connected to his development as a novelist. He wished, as he put it, "to make an income on which I and those belonging to me might live in comfort." He dreamed vicariously, and the most obviously comfortable people of his time were to be found among the landed gentry.

This is part of the middle-class vision too. Seymour Betsky observes that "actually, by the nineteenth century middle-class virtues and middle-class attitudes had so permeated the gentry that often little separated them."[16] And if, as Elizabeth Bowen says, Trollope "yearned for the ordinary like a lover,"[17] it was for the ordinary as represented in the life of the landed squire. That life, he felt, was the most secure in his time, and it was in that class that he saw the greatest possibilities of being faithful to the spirit of his fantasy hero. To him, struggling for attainment, the life of the old landed gentry of England was especially attractive: when Harry Norman, a character in The Three Clerks, inherits an estate, Trollope says that he becomes one of perhaps the most fortunate men on earth.

Trollope did not want the leisure the squire possessed for himself; he was attracted rather to the security that leisure was based on, for this gave rise to a life style and a code of conduct that was distinctive. This life style permeates the spirit of his heroes--whatever their station.

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[16] "Society in Thackeray and Trollope," p. 164.

[17] Anthony Trollope, A New Judgement (Oxford, 1946), p. 28.

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No matter what their condition, they live by the gentry's code. They can summon dimensions of assurance which reflect the presence of land and wealth whether they have them or not. While they might not own property, their conduct mirrors a vision of it. It does this because in each one of these novels the shape of the hero's identity is made a function of his connection to property; he finds his destiny territorially. Even with heroes who pursue careers, their physical milieu, the environment that surrounds them, characterizes the way they achieve resolution to conflict. As Trollope develops his art during the course of writing these novels, he learns to make this physicality of identity more subtle and to integrate it more successfully into his stories, but it is always an important aspect of the fiction he is constructing.

This identification between land and character derives from an almost mythic sense of property. While it is never spelled out explicitly, this sense constantly seems to imply that belonging to a recognized social order such as the old landed gentry offers a defense against perplexity. In this feeling about property one attains identity as a member of the social class and not as a lonely individual struggling and competing for a place in the world. Belonging to the group confers identity on the individual magically--as if from birth one were divinely assured of discovering a community of acceptance offering a world of love instead of loneliness and alienation. This mythic sense of property is

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regenerative, for it proclaims psychic rebirth:

> From the vestal flame kept burning in the inmost recesses of the house, where the sacrifice was offered and the images of the dead were exposed, sprang the reverence for the home as something more than a mere place for shelter for those in possession, the sense of mysterious presences out of the invisible world which still clings to us with a kind of dim inexplicable comfort and awe when we gather about the kindled hearth. Hence the wider sacredness of the enclosed land about the house, originally revered as the underground abode of the buried which could not be alienated without interrupting the memorial rites of homage and so cutting off the communion of the living with the dead. Who shall track the devious channels by which these primitive beliefs have travelled down the centuries? Who shall say how much their influence rests on the mere momentum of superstition, and how far they are rooted in the deepest strata of human experience?[18]

So Paul Elmer More in an essay on Trollope sought to define some of the implications of the meaning of property in his novels. In this meaning property is regenerative because one who inherits land does not lose touch with those who are gone, they become internalized--one belongs to them.

This feeling about property has much to do with the gentleman's code by which many of the characters in these novels act. For this code derives from the psychic security of the propertied classes, and to make it a part of one's conduct is, in some degree, to participate in their identity. The code's regard for manners can help to implement such values as consideration for others, generosity, and tolerance, and these novels investigate ways it can be made to fulfill its benevolent potential in the face of difficult or

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[18] The Demon of the Absolute (Princeton, 1928), p. 122.

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thwarting circumstances. That the code rests on what has since come to be recognized as a fundamentally oppressive system does not interest Trollope so much as does the problem of how the code's decent and generous features can be sustained against a world which seemed, especially at first to him, to contain so few humane alternatives.

In all of these novels the implementation of this code is no abstract matter. Time and again, at the level of deepest feeling, Trollope demonstrates the vital importance of a need to belong, of a need to be appreciated and recognized, as being integral to the web that makes family, society, and, ultimately, civilization, possible. For this web is built of loving relationships, relationships that nourish identity as much as do property relationships, and Trollope's sense of the current of feeling that connects personal desire to the texture of the whole society is profound, even, as Montégut saw, radical. In making his fantasy life conform to the canons of ordinary probability, he comes very close to the fundamental structure of social living--the strata of experience where individual need intersects with social demand.

Sometimes the connection does not take place; a man may adopt a portion of the genteel ethic for himself in defiance of his circumstances, rather than as a complement to them. Such a man, these novels reveal, is apt to become a misfit, an outcast, a hypocrite, or a villain. He cannot make peace with reality. But the reality these novels offer

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is a complex one, and, while the ethic they sustain is in accord with the general tendencies of the Victorian code, they do not, for all that, celebrate repression. Trollope was too intelligent, too humane for that, and his vision constantly urges us to regard ourselves as we really are in our ordinary selves, finite, limited, comic, and loveable.

The first of these novels explores defeat in a society which precludes emotional nourishment and therefore precludes the ability to love; the last of them vindicates the self in a society which affords nourishment to the feelings and therefore insures the possibility of loving. In all of the books the identity of a character is made manifest through some aspect of his relationship to property. Property and identity are connected because a feeling about property--Trollope's dream of its meaning--governs the way character is understood. This dream helps to connect the inner motives of identity to outer reality. It presents a vision of a possibility for living which encourages the benevolent virtues that Trollope felt were desirable in the life of the ordinary person as hero; it attains this, at least partly, because it also provides a way of being accepted, a way of guaranteeing inclusion in society, a way, therefore, of being human. A dream of property helps to shape these novels because aspects of life in the fantasy castle, that "castle in the air firmly built within my mind," are discernible in the lives of all the leading characters--whether they are Irish landlords, French counter-revolutionaries, English

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clergymen, government clerks, or village doctors. The chapters which follow discuss the seven novels in terms of the ways this ideal vision informs their design.

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CHAPTER II

THE MACDERMOTS OF BALLYCLORAN (1847)

Trollope's first novel, written between 1843 and 1845[1] invites comparison with other novels of the eighteen forties showing a concern for the condition of man in a troubled world. Unlike Mary Barton or Alton Locke which pay attention to urban society, however, The Macdermots is a novel of rural Ireland, yet the bogs and glens of that land are witness to social and economic injustice as brutal and oppressive as any in the slums of Manchester or London.

As a first novel, this is a compelling book. It has faults of tone and it becomes digressive, but it presents an unblinking look at a harsh world. A major critic of Trollope, Bradford Booth, says, "it is a good novel, of firm texture, adequate if not beautiful in design, and a sensitive coloring that picks up but does not exaggerate the native Irish hues."[2] It portrays the final ruin of a broken-down family of Irish landlords, the Macdermots. The two children of drunken old Larry Macdermot both die as a consequence of

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[1]Michael Sadleir, Trollope, A Commentary (London, 1961), p. 406.

[2]Anthony Trollope: Aspects of His Life and Art (Bloomington, 1958), p. 107.

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the inadequacy of their society, and the family house is left as a melancholy ruin. Feemy, the daughter, has an illicit affair with Captain Ussher, an English excise officer, and her brother Thady kills him unintentionally when he thinks that Ussher is forcibly abducting her. The peasantry, who live in grinding poverty, turn increasingly to violence and in the unsettled condition of the country, Thady cannot obtain a fair trial and is executed. Feemy dies as a result of her efforts to conceal her pregnancy. The family estate has, moreover, been hopelessly burdened with debt, and the desolate landscape that the narrator sees in the beginning of the story reflects the final extinction of the former owners.

The novel does not attack a specific social problem; it presents rather the life of its hero as that of a man assailed by the vicissitudes of fate and the ills of his social condition. Trollope sees no easy cures for the evils that produce the shame and defeat of the Macdermots. They are victims of a pervasive disorder; they confront the harshness of the economic system of Ireland in the early forties with stubbornness, pride, and ignorance. Not only are they poor, they live in a world where the mitigating virtues--compassion, love, justice--are almost as unobtainable as is cash in the financial scarcity caused by the bad state of the potato market.

The hopelessness of their lot is a consequence of the poverty of their means--the dream of property here is a

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nightmare of scarcity. What informs the dream and what intensifies the sense of impoverishment, is an awareness of better things. The pretensions to gentility of the Macdermots make their condition even more unbearable, more hopeless. Part of the pathos of the book is derived from the fact that they are never quite aware of the difference between their real status and the one they pretend to. And while Trollope looks askance at their uncleanliness, their ineffectiveness, and their irresponsibility, his sympathies are aroused by their suffering. But the effect of the book, as a seemingly conventional observer presents us with a tale of illicit love, violence, and injustice, is chilling. Thady is not a romantic hero and his sister is not a spotless heroine; they are ordinary poverty-stricken children of the Irish gentry, and the things that happen to them are cruel and the things they do wrong. The narrator does not muffle their actions behind a facade of respectability or of sentimental virtue. These characters live in a very real world and some of the book's power derives from the violence and injustice that occur in that world which is so indifferent to their sufferings. The novel reflects an intuition into the fundamental aloneness of man in a society where material worth is the sole ground of human value.

The somberly intense tone reflects the state of Trollope's imagination at the time he began writing. The quality of life in the novel suggests a pervasive sense of loss and a sense of the failure of ordinary familial

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relationships to mitigate the harsh conditions of life. When he wishes "to be known as somebody," he turns for his first subject to a genteel class that was menaced and insecure. The novel posits that land, an estate, income, are the sources of well-being, and it dramatizes the human failures that result from an economy of scarcity in terms of the primal relationships--family love, brotherhood, love between the sexes. The youthful author seems to be exploring every avenue of his own suffering. He implies this in his autobiography as he relates the inspiration that led to his writing the novel. He was on a tour for the post office in rural Ireland and was being visited by a friend. He tells us,

> As we were taking a walk in that most uninteresting country, we turned up through a deserted gateway, along a weedy, grass-grown avenue, till we came to the modern ruins of a country house. It was one of the most melancholy spots I ever visited. I will not describe it here, because I have done so in the first chapter of my first novel. We wandered about the place, suggesting to each other causes for the misery we saw there, and while I was still among the ruined walls and decayed beams I fabricated the plot of The Macdermots of Ballycloran.[3]

In commenting on this experience, Trollope's biographers note that "in his intense desire for security, a house had become a symbol," because, they add, "his neglected and distressed childhood had been punctuated by abandoned dwellings."[4] Trollope himself suggests the manner in which his imagination seized upon the ruin and converted fantasy into a probable

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[3] An Autobiography (Oxford, 1947), p. 64.

[4] Lucy and Richard Stebbins, The Trollopes: The Chronicle of a Writing Family (New York, 1945), p. 113.

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tale:

> When my friend left me, I set to work and wrote the first chapter or two. Up to this time I had continued that practice of castle-building of which I have spoken; but now the castle I built was among the ruins of that old house.[5]

The property gives him the inspiration to relate a story in which, with the castle already crumbling around its live inhabitants, the human spirit is twisted, not as in The Fall of the House of Usher by a decadent and opulent perversity, but by the meanness of heart-breaking want.

Something present in the sad scene of desolation galvanized the deep inner sources of novel writing. The setting might have been specially impressive to an ambitious young man who felt unappreciated or deprived; but whatever inspired him in this landscape, the tragic story of Thady Macdermot, overwhelmed by economic and historical circumstance, was derived as if inevitably from this particular scene of ruined land. The narrator at the beginning of the book wants us to understand "this characteristic specimen of Irish life":

> The sun was setting beautifully behind the trees, and its imperfect light through the foliage gave the unnatural ruin a still stronger appearance of death and decay, and brought into my mind thoughts of the wrong, oppression, misery, and despair, to which some one had been subjected by what I saw before me.[6]

The realism of the unhappy story derives from an imagination

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[5] An Autobiography, p. 64.

[6] The Macdermots of Ballycloran (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, n.d.), p. 24.

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seeking a way perhaps to exorcise its own suffering. Building his imaginary castle among ruins enables him to write a novel, enables him to discover a way to be "somebody"; he finds sanction for creativity in despair. In writing about threats to identity he can master them internally, even if he is powerless to change them in the outer world. But this inability to change the real world is a source of pessimism in the novel.

As Trollope saw in Ireland, the real world was complex and full of suffering. He recognized that the overwhelming problem of the country lay in the inability of the economic system to provide a decent standard of living for the inhabitants. He perhaps knew of the report of the Devon Commission of 1843, which "exposed the dangerously impoverished state of the people and the injustices of the landlord system."[7] He saw that the system of absentee-ownership particularly was an evil because absentee landlords lacked contact with their tenants and such people had little compunction about draining their tenants' meager substance. The miseries of the land counterpoint the tragic story. The following long passage in a description of a country town is one of many asides on the condition of the people and it is important because it reflects a peculiarly bewildered indignation:

Look at that mud hovel on the left, which seems

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[7]Edmund Curtis, A History of Ireland (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961), p. 367.

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> as if it had thrust itself between its neighbors, so narrow is its front! The doorway, all insufficient as it is, takes nearly the whole facing to the street. The roof, looking as if it were only the dirty eaves hanging from its more aspiring neighbor on the right, supports itself against the cabin on the left, about three feet above the ground. Can that be the habitation of any of the human race? Few but such as those whose lot has fallen on such barren places would venture in; but for a moment let us see what is there.
>
> But the dark misery within hides itself in thick obscurity. The unaccustomed eye is at first unable to distinguish any object, and only feels the painful effect of the confined smoke; but when, at length, a faint, struggling light makes its way through the entrance, how wretched is all around!
>
> A sickly woman, the entangled nature of whose insufficient garments would defy description, is sitting on a low stool before the fire, suckling a miserably dirty infant; a boy, whose only covering is a tattered shirt, is putting fresh, but, alas, damp turf beneath the pot in which are put to boil the potatoes--their only food. Two or three dim children --their number is lost in their obscurity--are cowering round the dull, dark fire, atop of one another; and on a miserable pallet beyond--a few rotten boards, propped upon equally infirm supports, and covered over with only one thin black quilt--is sitting the master of the mansion; his grizzly, unshorn beard, his lantern jaws and shaggy hair, are such as his home and family would lead one to expect. And now you have counted all that this man possesses; other furniture has he none--neither table nor chair, except that low stool on which his wife is sitting. Squatting on the ground--from off the ground, like pigs, only much more poorly fed--his children eat the scanty earnings of his continual labor.
>
> And yet for this abode the man pays rent.[8]

The scene is vividly realized; the voice is indignant, shocked. Trollope will later satirize absentee landlords who are responsible for the bestial and inhuman life of the poor in the book, but the whole tendency of the novel is to despair of Irish life. Trollope impresses one in this first

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[8] The Macdermots of Ballycloran, pp. 105-106.

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work as a man who could see very clearly into the consequences of injustice--Pat Brady, a rent-collector, is fairly well-off for example: he "had never been rendered desperate by want and oppression"--but like many Englishmen of his time Trollope could not imagine a viable political solution. Perhaps some sense of impotence in the face of such conditions encouraged the melancholy tone of the book; nevertheless Trollope's descriptions of the life of the Irish poor still manages to communicate his raw shock at the encounter.

People like the Macdermots suffer from a different kind of problem. Their pretensions to genteel status cannot be sustained on the basis of the value of their land. This insubstantiality has been going on for generations, however, and with the poverty-stricken gentry the environmental conditions which stunt life are no less oppressive because they result in anxiety rather than in starvation. Thady's father is hopelessly in debt and is presented as a kind of ultimate figure of human abasement--if starvation reduces the poor to bestiality, insecurity squeezes the spirit out of the genteel:

> It had come to that, that if he were left throughout the morning without his whiskey and water, he would cry like a child; whatever power he had of endurance would leave him, and he would sit over the fire whining the names of Flannelly and Keegan [his creditors], and slobbering over his wrongs and persecution, till he had again drank himself into silence and passive tolerance.[9]

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[9] Ibid., p. 65.

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His stupefying self-negation is a daily suicide and it foreshadows the doom of his son. The environment of the Macdermots cannot sustain their life as a family: father cannot help son, and the son in turn is unable to help his sister. Their economic insufficiency denies them emotional resources; we are told of Thady,

> He had been called on at a very early age to bear the weight of the family. From the time of his leaving school he had been subjected to constant vexation; on the contrary, his pleasures were very few and far between; his constant occupation for many years had been hunting for money, which was not to be got. If his heart could have been seen, the word "Rent" would have been found engraved on it.[10]

"Rent" is scarcely an adequate motto with which to endure the testing Thady will have to face. It is significant also that in his life there is no heart "interest." He has neither the time nor the opportunity to fall in love and the absence of love is a measure of his loneliness--as well as of the hard clarity of the book. No heroine redeems Thady in a sentimental denouement. He is not miraculously saved from hanging by the love of a devoted girl as is the hero of Mary Barton. His short life is unsatisfying and frustrated. He is wracked between his tenants whose pitiful incomes do not allow them to pay rent for their land and his father's creditors whose yearly demands for interest payments serve only to remind him of the principal of a debt that he can never hope to reduce.

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[10] Ibid., pp. 65-66.

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It is no wonder that he cannot help his sister. Although people gossip about her, Thady can do nothing about her relations with Captain Ussher. He is plagued by self-doubt and doesn't know what to do: "He felt that his sister despised him, the more from her being accustomed to the comparatively gentleman-like appearance and refined manners of her lover."[11] Shame is perhaps his deepest conduit of feeling. He gets drunk and schemes with some of the wilder tenants to do away with Ussher, but afterwards he feels remorse:

> Though Thady had never known the refinements of a gentleman, or the comforts of good society, still he felt that the fall, even from his present station to that in which he was going to place himself, would be dreadful. But it was not the privations which he might suffer, but the disgrace, the additional disgrace which he would bring on his family, which afflicted him.[12]

Given the state of the family fortunes and the condition of drivelling Larry, the family status is negligible, but for Thady it is an important motivation--one that governs his actions and one that will cause him the greatest remorse. Family pride is almost his only positive resource and even that receives minimal support from the world around him. He lacks refinement in comparison to Ussher, but it is even more damaging to him that his life is as impoverished in the content of self-esteem as is the life of the common people in material substance. "Rent" engraved on his heart testifies

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[11] Ibid., p. 77.

[12] Ibid., p. 202.

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to the insufficiency of both economic and emotional means.

Yet Thady's fragile pride is crucial to him, just as it is crucial to the story. At one point he tells the parish priest, Father John, that he would give up the ruinous estate were it not for his sister: "but I couldn't bear to see the house taken off her, and she to lose the respect of the counthry entirely, and the name of Macdermot still on her!"[13] With no real resources, emotional or financial, Thady's self-esteem hangs by the slender thread of his family's reputation. This sense of reputation is part of his motive in attacking Ussher, for he thinks Ussher is carrying her off forcibly. He acts impulsively to protect her, striking a blow for the family honor as well, but he does not mean to kill him.

One of the most effective sections of the novel is the account of Thady's flight to avoid capture after Ussher's death. By presenting the real life of the outlaw in its boredom, meanness, and squalor, Trollope allays any romantic notions Thady might have had that he would "sthrike one blow for the counthry,"[14] and then take the consequences. The whole description cautions against illegal action, against revolution and insurrection. There is no glory among those who have turned their hands against society. Thady is exhausted by his flight and one of the outlaws who has conducted him to a mountain hideout says to a girl sleeping on a pallet on the floor,

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[13] Ibid., p. 63.

[14] Ibid.

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> "Get out of that, and make room for this man to lie down. You've been asleep all night; make room for yer betthers now."
>
> The girl, without grumbling, turned out of bed, and burthened with no feeling of conventional modesty, commenced and finished her toilet, by getting into an old ragged calico gown, and tying up, with a bit of antique tape, her long rough locks which had escaped from their bondage during her sleep. Thady for a long time resisted, but Joe at last was successful in persuading him to take advantage of the bed which Meg had so good-humoredly relinquished.[15]

The girl's lack of refinement prompts a judgement about social class--we soon appreciate that this is no place for Thady. He comes to see this too. He is bored in his hideout, and his conscience troubles him:

> Again he counted the rafters, counted the miserable scraps of furniture, counted the sods of turf, speculated where the turf was cut--who cut it? who was the landlord of the cabin? what rent was paid? who collected it? But a minute--half a minute sufficed for the full consideration of all these things, and again he began to reflect how long it would be before the police would find him, and drag him forth from that dreary place; how long it would be before he should feel the handcuffs on his wrists; and before the first day of his concealment had passed over, he had become almost impatient for that time; and looked forward to the excitement of his capture, which he knew must sooner or later take place, with something like a wish that it might soon occur, to relieve him from the weight of his present condition.[16]

It comes as no surprise that he decides to give himself up. The center of focus shifts from him to Father John's efforts to save him, and, while the reader knows just how slender are his chances, the suspense is great. The jury's verdict comes like a sharp blow.

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[15] Ibid., p. 301.

[16] Ibid., p. 304.

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We are not entirely unprepared for it: the sufferings of Feemy, the violence in the brutal mutilation of lawyer Keegan by outraged tenants, and a general sense of despair, contribute to a feeling that Thady's death is inevitable. But, inevitably, he is the victim of his society's history. As the universal wretchedness produces more and more violence, "people in the country began to say that some severe example was necessary--that the country was in a dreadful state--and that the government must be upheld."[17] Father John can barely comfort him:

> . . . when the iron door was opened, and he saw Macdermot seated on the one small stone seat in the wall beneath the high iron-barred window; when his eye rested on the young man's pale and worn face, he forgot all his studied phrases and premeditated conduct, his acute grief overcame his ideas of duty, and falling on the prisoner's bosom, he sobbed out, "My boy--my boy--my poor murdered boy!"[18]

The only public cognizance given to mercy is the mildly subversive boycott of the hanging in which the citizenry, encouraged by their priests, allow Thady to die in privacy. His last shred of self-respect is that he does not have to hang as a public spectacle. This, the only successful demonstration of protest, is a passive and mute rejection of the governing system. But the system is satisfied as long as Thady is hung. The Irish, as Trollope portrays them, are helpless in the face of the historical conditions which oppress them. As Robert Polhemus notes, "The Macdermots is

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[17] Ibid., p. 324.

[18] Ibid., p. 434.

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one of the most powerful indictments of colonialism written in the nineteenth century."[19]

The book suggests another kind of oppression as well, for it illustrates the tyranny of opinion. Shaming, dread of the society that will point its finger and ostracize the transgressor, is an important theme in the novel. Feemy literally dies of shame. Like Thady, she lacks inner resources and has insufficient knowledge of the world to cope with some of its dangerous, although beguiling, complexity. Lacking a mother, she has not had proper guidance from her father and brother. She is the most talented member of the family and is the most dissatisfied--she is "addicted to novels." She imagines that Ussher offers her the possibilities of a better life. Trollope's initial description of her as a lovely but rustic girl who is imaginative and lonely is mildly comic in tone, but when he dramatizes her plight this lightness is gone. Her slowly dawning recognition that Ussher, who has been promoted, will leave without her is touching; she asks, "an't I to go with you, Myles, when you go?"[20] Her struggle when he asks her to go off with him without getting married is deftly presented:

> During this time, old feelings, principles, religious scruples, the love of honor and fair fame, and the fear of the world's harsh word, were sorely fighting in her bosom; they were striving to enable her to conquer the strong love she felt for Ussher,

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[19]The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, 1968), p. 17.

[20]The Macdermots of Ballycloran, p. 211.

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> and make her reject the disgrace to which he was alluring her. Then he stooped to lift her up, and as he kissed the tears from her face, passion prevailed, and she whispered in his ear that she would go.[21]

When she is pregnant and Ussher is dead, she has nowhere to turn; she can only attempt desperately to conceal her shame. She tortures herself by binding her clothes tightly around her body and, when she flees to return home from the neighbor's house where she has been staying after Thady's arrest, her father is hopelessly insane. She dreads Thady's trial, for there she will be exposed:

> She already anticipated the tortures of that day, when she would again be dragged out from her resting-place before the eyes of all mankind, and placed in the very middle of the crowd, conspicuous above the rest, to be stared at, bullied, and questioned horribly about that dread subject, which it ever wracked her mind to remember.[22]

Her fear of the world cuts her off from whatever comfort she might find in it. When Father John comes to her, "she again submitted herself to those agonies which she trusted, for a time would hide her disgrace, which at last must become known to all."[23] She inflicts this torture on herself again to go to the trial and dies before she can appear. One of the most painful aspects of the book is the utter loneliness of these doomed people. They dread what others will think, and this helps to isolate them further from a world which has, at best, little to offer them.

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[21] Ibid., p. 214.

[22] Ibid., pp. 349-350.

[23] Ibid., p. 354.

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The inadequacy of the society is illustrated in Trollope's satiric description of the meeting of an assize court. Here the claims of the individual are met not with justice, but with humiliation, inconvenience, and indifference. Witnesses are badgered, lawyers are callous, and the law is presented as an arcane mystery that really provides an opportunity for rival showmen to beguile the audience. Trials have a sporting interest like the race meetings where absentee rack-renters put up prizes as sops to their need for popularity. The rendering of an elaborate and foolish breach of promise suit is quite funny, except that Thady's life is at stake in the same feckless surroundings.

The description of him as he waits for trial is somber and restrained:

> From the years to which his earliest memory could fall back, he had been fighting an earnest, hard battle with the world's cares, and though not thoroughly vanquished, he had always been worsted. He had never experienced what men call luck, and he therefore never expected it. Few men in any rank of life had known so little joy as he had done, or had so little pleasure; his only object in life had been to drive the wolf from his father's door and to keep a roof over him and his sister.[24]

Circumstances have made it impossible for him to provide for his family; he is beaten, and is resigned to his fate:

> He knew little of the Grecian's doctrine of necessity; but he had it in his heart that night, when he felt himself innocent, and was at the same time assured that all the kind efforts of his friends would not save him from his fate--a hangman's rope and the county gallows.[25]

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[24] Ibid., pp. 377-378.

[25] Ibid., p. 378.

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The quiet tone is akin to Thady's fatalism and lack of expectations. The inevitability of his death, the satisfaction of vengeance by a system which has been indifferent to his needs, is shocking--he is innocent of the crime for which he is hung. The muted details are like a very quiet and terrible nightmare:

> There is nothing further to relate respecting him. As the clock struck eight he was standing on the iron grate over the front entrance into Carrick gaol. He had supported himself firmly--though evidently with difficulty. The cap was over his face--his hands were tied behind his back--and the rope was around his neck. The last sound that met his ear was the final prayer which Father John sobbed forth that God would receive him into his mercy; the bolt was drawn --and Thady Macdermot was soon no more.[26]

Brother, sister, lover, all die--the moral code is rigorous here--but the real causes of the sexual transgression which leads to their downfall lie in the past. The poverty of the family insures that Feemy doesn't have the resources to fend off the subtle blandishments of flashy Captain Ussher; Thady doesn't know how to help her, and when he tries to, the strife-torn history of his violent society insures that he will hang. Love, and therefore life, is well-nigh impossible in such an insecure and poverty-wracked world. Those Macdermots in the past who sought to maintain their family honor on the basis of insufficient economic means, who sought to satisfy their pride with a country mansion they couldn't pay for, contribute, as does the history of their unfortunate land, to this tragedy of straitened gentility.

What Trollope saw in looking at Ireland in his first

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[26] Ibid., p. 440.

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novel is that there is a correlation between the economic order and the possibilities for that fullness of consciousness which is necessary to humane existence. In the Trollope world, substance precedes happiness. But this is not just a bourgeois commonplace for him; his novel is a negative demonstration that this is the essence of life, and it exposes the cruelty and heartlessness of a world subject to this iron law. Unlike many Victorian novels, this is a book in which neither religion nor romantic love alleviate the fundamental fact of man's suffering. No sudden quickening of the spirit can reverse the inexorable power of matter-of-fact existence. Reality here is implacable.

Such conditions are distressing to any humane person and that person might, as Trollope did in his next book, seek to make matter-of-fact existence as ample and capacious as his imagination, grounded in reality, could possibly make it. The Macdermots explores the ways a world can deny happiness to individuals; it seeks to account for "the wrong, oppression, misery, and despair," that can kill life. Feemy's pinched little spirit, loving Ussher, brings only disaster to her family. This is partially the result of Irish history, partially the result of what can happen to human nature in a terribly insecure environment. Like their creator, the Macdermots wanted to be known and well regarded in the world; their tragedy mirrors his own inner uncertainty and it reflects, in its analysis of insecurity, some of the doubts which his background prompted in him. The specific causes

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for his attraction to this story are unknown, but his creation of a novel out of the ruins of a house suggests that he found a way to translate his own emotional insecurity into a meaningful form by reflecting on a reality that correlated with his feelings. But if his inner life is the source of this novel, the tragedy of the Macdermots also mirrors his acknowledgement of the harshness of the environment in which he found himself, and his next book seeks a viable way of coming to terms with the harshness of life, even in the Ireland of his time.

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CHAPTER III

THE KELLYS AND THE O'KELLYS (1848)

This novel is seriously flawed. Trollope's interest in his story seems to flag and both plot and characterization suffer as a result.[1] There are interesting minor characters, but, in Bradford Booth's phrase, "the principals are tepid and conventional."[2] The book is not coherently sustained and what seems to be a promising historical account of the struggles of the Irish to repeal the Act of Union with England branches out into two rather artificial love stories. But the book has been seen as important in the development of Trollope's comic art because he begins here to shape the kind of comedy of social outlook that pervades his later novels.[3]

Trollope himself rather liked the book, and when he called it "a good Irish story,"[4] he was probably thinking of the Irish literature of his day by authors like Robert

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[1]Robert A. Donovan, "Trollope's 'Prentice Work," Modern Philology, LIII (1956), 179-186.

[2]Anthony Trollope: Aspects of His Life and Art (Bloomington, 1958), p. 109.

[3]Robert Polhemus, The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, 1968), p. 20.

[4]An Autobiography (Oxford, 1947), p. 69.

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Griffin and Charles Lever. Yet, like The Macdermots, the book did not sell, and the comment he makes years afterwards on this in An Autobiography scarcely conceals his disappointment:

> Again I held my tongue, and not only said nothing but felt nothing. Any success would, I think, have carried me off my legs, but I was altogether prepared for failure. Though I thoroughly enjoyed the writing of these books, I did not imagine, when the time came for publishing them, that any one would condescend to read them.[5]

One way to defend oneself against failure is to expect it, and certainly the doubts reflected by the vision of life in The Macdermots would not seem to augur expectations of optimism for the subject of the next book, but The Kellys and the O'Kellys is an optimistic book. Indeed, it insists on being optimistic, so much so that its failure to cohere as a novel can largely be traced to this insistence, because the political material which promises no easy solution is completely superseded by a rather conventional interest in the pursuit of love and fortune.

The Macdermots explores harshness and The Kellys, quite obviously, seeks a way around it; but the conventional optimism which spoils the book is not unrelated to the expectation of failure. The expectation of failure is an attitude which encourages a certain kind of triteness in fantasy--the imagination becomes obsessed with fantasies of gratification, with dreams of unearned rewards, rather than with more realistic assessments of the means to fulfillment.

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[5]Ibid., p. 69.

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To expect to fail is, implicitly, to envision a success which is all the more euphoric because unexpected: "any success would . . . have carried me off my legs." An unacknowledged longing for recognition plays a part in the problems of this book as a novel because it breaks into the story in ways that detract from the effect. Trollope learns in later novels to dominate and to control his yearning for happiness through recognition. Here the wish to succeed seems uncontrollable. Yet a fantasy of the bestowal of euphoria is part of the motivating vision of this book, and as such, it reveals something about both Trollope's methods and his values. This novel is important in the shaping of his art because here he connects human love to the acquisition of property, and so, albeit clumsily and with flaws of development, he begins to imagine a world which is both probable and benevolent like the England of his richer and greater novels.

What is more, he did "thoroughly enjoy the writing," and there are many felicitous vignettes in this book. But the trial of the Repealers with which the book opens serves only to bring the two heroes to the fore. Martin Kelly is an Irish Catholic farmer, distantly related to John Mountmorris O'Kelly, Lord Ballindine, a member of the Anglo-Irish ascendency who is called Frank in the story. Both men need money: Martin is ambitious to acquire more land to farm, and Frank, a viscount, needs money to support his title. Both of them come to woo girls appropriately suited to their station in life who have the money their suitors lack.

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Fanny Wyndham, Frank's chosen, is a rich heiress who is the ward of the Earl of Cashel, and Martin Kelly wants to marry Anty Lynch, a village heiress ten years older than he who has a socially ambitious brother, Barry, a former Etonian like Frank.

In both cases the heroes are satisfied; they win money in their marriages and attain a kind of life that was impossible for the Macdermots. The story of each hero is treated in accordance with his social rank: that of Martin's love contains broad comic touches, but the story of Frank pays such great deference to his status as a nobleman that it becomes impossibly romantic. The bestowal of unearned rewards becomes uncontrollable fantasy here. Class distinction operates in the case of each blocking agent in the comic plots as well. Barry Lynch aspires to genteel status, but contemplates murdering his sister in order to keep her money. The Earl of Cashel however, is a figure of stuffy decadence who slyly contemplates giving Fanny to his dissolute son. Money-greed produces melodramatic tendencies towards violence and crime among the lower orders, dishonesty and scheming among the higher ones. The financial rewards of love, a literal feature in this book, go to a middle-class man who knows his place in the world and to an aristocrat who is noble and selfless. The grasping social climber and the hypocritical aristocrat are punished as befits their station: perhaps the most coherent thing in the book is its sense of class distinction.

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The fatuous Earl is a paragon of the aristocracy, but he is selfish and complacent. Grey Abbey, his home, fits him well:

> The present mansion, built on the site of that in which the family had lived till about seventy years since, is, like the grounds, large, commodious, and uninteresting. It is built of stone, which appears as if it had been plastered over, is three stories high, and the windows are all of the same size, and at regular intervals. The body of the house looks like a huge, square, Dutch old lady, and the two wings might be taken for her two equally fat, square Dutch daughters. Inside the furniture is good, strong, and plain. There are plenty of drawing-rooms, and offices; a small gallery of very indifferent paintings, and a kitchen, with an excellent kitchen-range, and patent boilers of every shape.[6]

This setting of wealth, of dull and well-furnished comfort, masks the subtle corruption of the family. The Earl muses complacently on the life of his son, Lord Kilcullen, whose habits are ruinously expensive, and on his chances of marrying Fanny:

> Lord Kilcullen, when about to marry, would be obliged to cashier his opera-dancers and their expensive crews; and, though he might not leave the turf altogether, when married he would gradually be drawn out of turf society, and would doubtless become a good steady family nobleman, like his father. Why, he--Lord Cashel himself--wise, prudent, and respectable as he was--example as he knew himself to be to all peers, English, Irish, and Scottish,--had had his horses, and his indiscretions, when he was young. And then he stroked the calves of his legs, and smiled grimly; for the memory of his juvenile vice was pleasant to him.[7]

He ostensibly opposes Fanny's marrying Frank because of Frank's own addiction to the turf. His position in the

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[6] The Kellys and the O'Kellys (London: John Lane, 1906), p. 175.

[7] Ibid., pp. 204-205.

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world as a respected member of the peerage is shown to be a hollow triumph; his good reputation seems small compensation for his stupid wife, his prissy, complacent daughters, and his greedy, corrupt son. But the harm the Earl does is low-keyed, in line with the plainness and dullness of his house. He temporarily frustrates the lovers, and in portraying him the comedy is subtle, emphasizing with a nuance like the supply of "patent boilers of every shape," the essential trivialness of his life and values. His selfishness makes it impossible for him to understand or to sympathize with other people. He is a model to the aristocracy, but the effect of his trying to fob his coarse son off on Fanny Wyndham is to expose a callousness at the heart of this complacent respectability.

Barry Lynch wants to keep his sister from marrying Martin for different reasons. If she marries he will lose the money she contributes to sustaining his barely genteel status. His father had been estate manager to the O'Kellys and had dishonestly acquired property. In a fit of rage at Barry he had revised his will, leaving half of his estate to Anty, the neglected sister. Barry needs this money to maintain himself as a gentleman and part of his rage at his sister derives from the fact that she is fond of a mere inn-keeper's son who farms. If she marrys Martin, Barry will lose status as well as income. He treats her like a servant in their house. But Barry is the victim of his father's aspirations to rise as much as he is of his ill will: Lord

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Ballindine tells Martin at one point that "I thrashed Barry at Eton for calling himself the son of a gentleman."[8] Unlike the Earl, Barry's position is not assured.

His hunger to qualify causes him considerable pain. He drinks heavily and schemes to murder his sister; he has some of the characteristics of a melodramatic villain, but his potential for doing harm is never allowed much latitude in the story. He is brutal to his sister--he knocks her down at one point--but most of the evil he actually commits occurs in the wild and feverish schemes hatched in his own mind. The greatest harm he does is to his own self-respect. In his aspirations to genteel status he represents the pressure of the classes in British life that were thrusting upwards, that were antagonistic to the established order because of their exclusion from its benefits. But in portraying this figure Trollope fails to realize the full potential of a character who promises energy and color. He is careful to avoid melodrama with Barry when it could suggest destructive violence, but he almost welcomes it when it suggests loss of self-esteem or remorse. The real problem of control occurs because Barry's guilt is dramatized more than his wrongdoing.

Barry doesn't belong in this society, and it is partly his longing for status that excludes him. He shows up at a fox hunt over-dressed and out of place. Even Martin the farmer is made to feel more welcome than this son of an upper servant whose presence is an intrusion. Not knowing how to

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[8] Ibid., p. 44.

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hunt properly, Barry unsuccessfully tries to ingratiate himself by being aggressive, but in his ignorance he carelessly injures a dog with his horse. Frank, the host, rides up to him and criticizes him:

> "It wasn't my fault then," said Barry.
> "Do you mean to give me the lie sir?" replied Frank.
> "The dog got under the horse's feet. How was I to help it?"
> There was a universal titter at this, which made Barry wish himself at home again, with his brandy-bottle.[9]

Shortly after, Frank says to him, "may I trouble you to make yourself scarce?" and Barry slinks off. Shame overwhelms him. When Anty, now on what everyone thinks is her deathbed, reproaches him, he collapses into regression; she tells him that he will now have her money but that it will not make him happy and, "Barry shook like a child in the clutches of its master."[10] When the long interview is over,

> Barry leaned over the bed, and kissed her, and then crept out of the room, and down the stairs, with the tears streaming down his red cheeks; and skulked across the street to his own house, with his hat slouched over his face, and his handkerchief half across his mouth.[11]

Final exposure by the respectable men in the community--Frank, Martin, the doctor, Reverend Armstrong--causes him to sneak away into foreign obscurity. He tries to be a gentleman, but lacks the real substance, both the money and the moral qualities, and his punishment is to be shamed, to be

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[9] Ibid., p. 379.

[10] Ibid., p. 402.

[11] Ibid., p. 407.

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humiliated by gentlemen.

Anty recovers, Martin marries her, and they move into the Lynch's big house at Dunmore. Martin moves up from his mother's inn to an income of four hundred a year, but he is a bit uncomfortable in the big house and his wife is, after all, ten years older than he is. Presumably he is happy in his lot. He is responsible and not overweening; if his success is qualified by the nature of his plain wife, he has not aspired too high and is content to remain in the middle orders--but now more solidly established.

The parallel story of Lord Ballindine has thematic affinities with the story of Barry Lynch, for if there guilt was dramatized over deed, here the whole intention of the story is to present its hero as being uncontaminated. He is the heir of a noble family that has squandered much of its substance on maintaining a position at court during the Regency. In real terms, the straitened family finances mean that their dependants like the curate, Mr. Armstrong, undergo hardship. But unlike Barry, Frank does not scheme for money; he is even improvident in his passion for fine horses. He is noble and selfless--impossibly so, and by some twist of the property ethic here, his indifference to money means that he will be guiltless of any devious action in trying to obtain it and, therefore, will deserve it all the more. The fantasy about property requires that the hero not be soiled in any way by the acquisition of it. Fanny's brother dies unexpectedly at the age of twenty-one, and her fortune is now huge.

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The problem of control arises here because the spirit that showers these rewards on Frank tries to deny at the same time that they are important. Like the fantasy hero of his author's youth, Frank despises "mean things." Money is less important to him than Fanny. At one point before he wins her he is turned away from the Earl's house and discusses his situation with a friend:

> "There can be no doubt, I suppose," said Dot, when Frank had consoled himself by anathematizing the earl for ten minutes, "as to the fact of Miss Wyndham's inheriting her brother's fortune?"
> "Faith, I don't know; I never thought about her fortune, if you'll believe me. I never even remembered that her brother's death would in any way affect her in the way of money, until after I left Grey Abbey."[12]

His selflessness, in spite of the fact that he has unmarried sisters to provide for and that he himself is hard-pressed for money, strains credibility. The book is determined to show, without openly acknowledging it, that money is a fitting accompaniment to the beauty and grace of the truly noble.

A man who does not have to struggle for wealth acquires no taint; effortless endowment makes the cleanest break with those messy involvements in the world that can make the quality of life mean and harsh. Each plot interests itself in discovering how a man can acquire the good things of the world, the things necessary to life, without acquiring guilt as well. Barry Lynch wanted no more than the Macdermots did, wanted no more than Trollope himself wanted,

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[12] Ibid., pp. 250-251.

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but Trollope at this point could not successfully illustrate the satisfaction of those desires, perhaps because he was still so uncertain of realizing his own success. He wanted so much that he expected to fail.

The villain of this story wants prosperity without having the real substance for it and is therefore humiliated and driven right out of the society. One of the models of conduct in the society, a great aristocrat, has really only a sham distinction, and his improvident son menaces the family position with his greed and his lack of scruples. One of the heroes attains a success which can provide him with modest, but rather comically circumscribed, gratification. One of them effortlessly wins the prize: Fanny Wyndham is intelligent, beautiful, and rich; she sparkles like a fine jewel in the Earl of Cashel's Biedermeier castle. The problem was how to get such a wonderful prize, a prize conveying, as beautiful Fanny does, so much of a sense of the richness and fullness of life, into the hands of men who had to strive in the real world, who might become tainted, or who might fail.

These tensions are largely unresolved in the novel. The world of men, of work, farming, politics, fox-hunting, and the law, was attractive to Trollope, but that same world had crushed the life out of the Macdermots, and he has not yet come fully to terms with it. This novel gropes towards a life style which offers humane possibilities in the same environment that had once crushed them out. Human love,

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families, can offer as much stimulus to an imagination as can melancholy ruins--once the threat implicit in the ruins has been exorcised by form. But if the result is an unread novel, the exorcism is only partial and the tensions which accompany failure influence the direction of the imagination in the second book as well. The heiresses here are remote, are not of the ordinary condition, and too little of the ordinary condition enters the being of the principal characters in terms of conflict.

Minor characters fare better: Lawyer Daly with his conflict between professional ethics and the demands of his client Barry is an interesting study; Martin's mother, worried over the legal troubles she may bring on her family by the protection she extends to Anty, is a believable character; and so is the impoverished, fox-hunting rector, Mr. Armstrong. These characters experience conflict in the way that major figures will in later novels. But the main characters here tend to live without inner conflict, as if the author felt that the really desirable condition were to be free of any conflict at all.

The Kellys represents an unsuccessful attempt to try out a new genre, social comedy. Some of the book's defects reflect the difficulty of grafting a fantasy of attainment onto the reality of Ireland in the eighteen forties. In a well-ordered and flourishing society, such a fantasy might be muted into probability; even so, Barry's murderous impulses and the Earl's corruption suggest an awareness of

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some of the problems lurking behind the genteel surface of the hierarchical order. In his next novel Trollope does not manage to incorporate his habitual imaginative direction into a probable world either, but he does allow his imagination to speculate melodramatically on some of the evils that beset the genteel world by which he is so captivated. He confronts one of the dominant nightmares of nineteenth-century England, the revolution of eighteenth-century France.

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CHAPTER IV

LA VENDÉE (1850)

The historical impulses which led the Victorians to reflect on the French Revolution are well known.[1] Events on the continent in 1848 gave fresh impetus to these reflections, and for Trollope, these events had even more immediacy because his mother and brother were living abroad in Florence.[2] He wrote to his mother about the turmoil of that year, speculating coolly on the possibilities for revolution in the British Isles, and the letter is an important document with respect to understanding his development as a novelist, for in it he reveals an ability to appraise the life of his time and to assess its meaning. The possibility of revolution did concern him--at least enough to reassure his mother that it would not happen--but the letter also reveals how well-informed he was about the political reality of his day:

> Here in Ireland the meaning of the word Communism--or even social revolution--is not understood. The people have not the remotest notion of attempting to improve their worldly condition by making the

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[1]See Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven, 1957), pp. 54-58.

[2]Michael Sadleir, Trollope, A Commentary (London, 1901), p. 145.

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> difference between the employer and the employed less marked. Revolution here means a row. Some like a row, having little or nothing to lose. These are revolutionists, and call for pikes. Others are anti-revolutionists, having something to lose and dreading a row. These condemn the pikes, and demand more soldiers and police. There is no notion of anything beyond this;--no conception of any theory such as that of Louis Blanc. My own idea is that there is no ground to fear any general rising either in England or Ireland. I think there is too much intelligence in England for any large body of men to look for any sudden improvement; and not enough intelligence in Ireland for any body of men at all to conceive the possibility of social improvement.[3]

The tone here is judicious and balanced, even witty. The attitude is fairly conservative; Ireland is hopeless, but even so, the assurance that revolution will not occur in England implicitly acknowledges that there are unsatisfactory conditions there. The most notable thing in the passage, more important perhaps than the dismissal of revolution, is the reasoned and balanced prose which seeks to weigh and to come to terms with political reality.

In contrast to this, a passage from his third novel suggests a rather different feeling about revolution. La Vendée deals with the anti-revolutionary struggle in France during the First Republic. It has rightly been called "almost unreadable,"[4] and "the worst book he ever wrote."[5] Certainly it is a bad novel, but if it is read with the

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[3]The Letters of Anthony Trollope, ed. Bradford A. Booth (Oxford, 1951), pp. 6-7.

[4]Bradford A. Booth, Anthony Trollope: Aspects of His Life and Art (Bloomington, 1958), p. 140.

[5]Robert Polhemus, The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, 1968), p. 20.

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the intention of understanding the growth of his vision as a novelist, it is a very revealing book; even a bad novel reflects its author's opinions and these, social historians remind us, can be important.[6] In the following passage, Cathelineau, one of the heroes of the Vendean cause has been mortally wounded and is speaking to the woman he loves on his deathbed; he had been a postilion before he became a military leader:

> "If we could make one great and glorious effort," said he, and his eyes shone as brightly as ever while he spoke; "if we could concentrate all our forces, and fill them with the zeal which, at different times, they all have shown, we might still place the King upon his throne, and the white flag might still wave for ages from our churches, as a monument to the courage of La Vendée. But if, as I fear, the war becomes one of detached efforts, despite the wisdom of de Lescure, the skill of Bonchamps, the piety of D'Elbée, the gallant enthusiasm of Larochejaquelin, and the devoted courage of them all, the Republic by degrees will devour their armies, will consume their strength, will desolate the country, and put to the sword even their wives and children: neither high nobility, nor illustrious worth, nor surpassing beauty will shield the inhabitants of this devoted country from the brutality of the conquerors, who have abjured religion, and proclaimed that blood alone can satisfy their appetites."[7]

In contrast to his letter to his family, what is striking here is the strained rhetoric. The speech is impossible in

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[6]William O. Aydelotte in "The England of Marx and Mill Reflected in Fiction," Journal of Economic History, VIII (1948), pp. 42-58, says for example that "a novel helps to show not the facts of the age, but the mind of the novelist, not social conditions, but attitudes toward social conditions. The historical value of fiction, often misconceived, unfortunately, is not for the history of facts but for the history of opinions."

[7]La Vendée (London: Ward, Lock and Co., n.d.), p. 184.

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its situation. The rhetoric is grandiose, cadenced like an oration, and reflects a melodramatic fealty to a lost cause. The contrast between the two passages, a balanced appraisal of political reality in the letter and histrionic absurdity in the speech, suggests perhaps the degree to which this novel was for Trollope a kind of melancholy nightmare of political chaos.

That nightmare reflects his own desperation. An Autobiography contains quite a bit of practical advice to authors and in one of the most extensive passages on writing Trollope speaks of the difficulty of the profession. He refers to his own ten-year period of failure and then adds, "the career, when successful, is pleasant enough certainly; but when unsuccessful, it is of all careers the most agonising."[8] While he was nearly finished writing La Vendée, the publisher of The Kellys wrote to him about its lack of sales and added, "you will perceive it is impossible for me to give any encouragement to you to proceed in novel-writing."[9] Turning to historical fiction was a frantic attempt to discover a subject, as much as it was an opportunity to meditate on social turmoil. In desperation at his inability to write a successful novel he turned completely away from the constraints imposed on the novelist who wishes to write in a realistic manner about his own time. In La Vendée he

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[8](Oxford, 1947), p. 194.

[9]Ibid., p. 72; he did, however later agree to publish La Vendée.

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surrenders his fidelity to the ordinary life around him and quite deliberately turns to a subject that, while there were many reasons in the late forties for thinking about revolution, allowed him free reign to imagine holocaust. His full-blown fantasy of destruction is, indeed, a bad novel; but, after writing it, he was in some way liberated, and in time his imagination returned to his own world.

The events of the novel are episodic and loosely joined. It tells the story of two noble families of the rural Vendée, the de Lescures and the Larochejaquelins, who resist the revolutionary destruction emanating from Paris by becoming leaders of the monarchist cause. They are joined by other figures, the heroic postilion Cathelineau among them, and the action follows the course of various seiges, ambushes, gatherings, and retreats through central France during the war. Unlike the Macdermots who are destroyed through want, the Vendeans are destroyed by a political force in history. Their land is originally presented as a flourishing and happy one, but the owners' loyalty to the monarchy brings destruction down upon it. The main characters become involved in a number of melodramatic incidents, and their motivation is often highly artificial. The book dramatizes one thing quite successfully however, and this is that the happiest family living on the most prosperous estate can be destroyed by events completely outside its control.

Some of the individual scenes in the book are good: the defeated Vendeans fleeing across the swollen Loire, the

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immediate sense of danger and fright as the Republican Army invades the homeland, and some of the vivid accounts of street-fighting. At times Trollope can achieve a very immediate realization of the cruelty of history, as in this scene where Republican troops have been ordered to shoot the servants of a Royalist marquis:

> The soldiers could not get them to stand; they were crouching down on the ground in all positions, one or two with their heads almost buried in the earth, one or two kneeling, and still screaming for mercy. The old housekeeper had fallen on her haunches, and was looking up to heaven, while she wildly struck upon the ground with her hands; and the poor page had made a last, but futile effort to escape with the aid of his heels, but he had been at once caught, and was now bound by his waist to a tree, which grew close to the road on which the wretched party were huddled; the poor boy had quite forgotten his attempt at manhood and mingled his loud screams with those of the women.[10]

This painful scene is intensely realized; it is a shocking glance at horror. But it is only a glance after all--they are soon reprieved and then rescued. Too often the real events in the book take place offstage and the foreground is filled with heroic posturing. The main characters move through a blighted and uncertain landscape while they are driven from place to place, but Trollope chooses to concentrate on their noble and heroic qualities rather than on the real suffering that their historical situation causes them.

The book reveals that he has a good sense of history, little ability to bring it to life. His sense of the balance of opposing forces, of the contrast of temperament

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[10] *La Vendée*, p. 233.

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and attitude is acute, but his ability to bring this into meaningful action here is limited. He can, for example, see why Robespierre would want to exterminate all the Vendeans in order to defend the republic; he is fascinated by a man with so many gifts and with so much power:

> With such qualities, such attributes, why was he not the Washington of France? Why, instead of the Messiah of Freedom, which he believed himself to be, has his name become a by-word, a reproach, and an enormity? Because he wanted faith! He believed in nothing but himself, and the reasoning faculty with which he felt himself to be endowed. He thought himself perfect in his own human nature, and wishing to make others perfect as he was, he fell into the lowest abyss of crime and misery in which a poor human creature ever wallowed. He seems almost to have been sent into the world to prove the inefficacy of human reason to effect human happiness.[11]

Trollope can see the revolutionist's contradiction between ends and means, but he has little ability to integrate this realization into his story, except peripherally. His vision of Robespierre is conservative; it implies that vanity and the ego, unchecked by traditional social institutions, can become destructive. He presents the French Revolution from the point of view of a man faithful to the slow rhythms of rural life, not from a point of view which is alert to the conditions that render masses of men desperate. He implies that the society which lacks faith in slow progress will inevitably end by casting up egotistical monsters like his figure of Robespierre, toiling away into the night on the hopeless task of reforming mankind and murderously suspicious of the woman who loves him. And the cost: lovely chateaux

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[11] Ibid., pp. 268-269.

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burned to the ground, gardens destroyed, innocent people slaughtered.

But if the Vendeans' sufferings represent a nightmare of the consequences of revolution, the actual characters who experience these sufferings are hollow and unreal figures. Trollope could appreciate some of the historical complexity of the French Revolution, but he seems to have had a difficult time imagining actual human beings caught up in it. In this sense, too, the book is chimerical, for these are creatures from an adolescent fantasy of heroism. They are suffused with the peculiarly baroque chivalry that sometimes attracted the Victorian sensibility:

> Cathelineau had heard how knights of old, famed in song, had spent their lives among scenes of battle and danger, and all for the smiles of the lady of their love; and now he thought he understood it. He could do the same to be greeted with the smiles of Agatha Larochejaquelin, and he would not dream of any richer reward. She was as an angel to him, who had left her own bright place in heaven to illuminate the holy cause in which he had now engaged himself; under such protection he would not be other than successful.[12]

Worship from afar, reminiscent of courtly love, inspires the postilion to heroism and ennobles him:

> "It was your beauty that softened my rough heart, your spirit that made me dauntless, your influence that raised me up so high. I have not dared to love you as love is usually described, for they say that love without hope makes the heart miserable, and my thoughts of you have made me more blessed than I ever was before, and yet I hoped for nothing; but I have adored you as I hardly dared to adore anything that was only human."[13]

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[12] Ibid., p. 47.

[13] Ibid., p. 186.

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After he dies, Agatha seeks out his old mother who cannot understand the changes revolution is bringing even to the rearguard of the ancien regime. Her reactions are not as stereotyped as her son's:

> "A Marquis obey a poor postillion! Yes, you stuffed him full with such nonsense as that! You made him fancy himself a General! You cannot fool me so easily. My son was not a companion for noblemen and noble ladies. A wise man will never consort with those who are above him in degree."[14]

Revolution, the novel suggests, defeats the traditions that this prudential wisdom is rooted in; but few characters in the book have the vitality or energy of this old lady.

The story proper ends with the Vendeans conducting a successful defense against a pursuing revolutionary army. One of the heroes, Henri Larochejacquelin, marries the girl he loves, but the book itself contains another chapter in which some of the secondary characters reunite years later and recollect the fate of the principal figures; all have perished except Henri's widow. This was the testament of history, the Vendeans were largely overcome, and the novel suffers because too little of this truth functions as a part of the lives of believable characters. Romance predominates here: the book takes an occasion of violence and destruction and then grafts onto it an impossible chivalric fantasy which undercuts the realization of the actual historical experience. The chivalric code, as Trollope frames it, has little connection with actual conduct.

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[14] Ibid., p. 333.

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This illusion of chivalry is clearly illustrated when one of the major characters betrays his friends. Andre Denoit aspired to heroism; he was jealous of the success of the lowly Cathelineau, but during an attack across an open bridge against a fortified city, his courage failed him. He loves Agatha as well, but after his failure of nerve he becomes more bitter and more estranged. He betrays his friends, guiding the revolutionists to the chateau where they have taken refuge and asking that Agatha be given to him as a reward. When she is his prisoner, his crude advances shock even the republicans and he is restrained. Agatha is rescued, Andre is reviled by his friends, but they let him go. Late in the story he reappears as a mystery figure, a "mad captain" leading a band of guerillas against the republic, and he has the opportunity to rescue some of his former friends, heroically, before dying. Here the themes of extreme jealousy, revenge, retribution, and expatiation, combine in a melodrama of restoration. He gives his life (and even his sanity) for the friends he had betrayed. Even as melodrama this is strained and awkward; it tries too hard to restore a transgressor. It stretches credibility too far --good melodrama can satisfy our emotions even as our reason is aware of prestidigitation, but here we are tricked without satisfaction. The fantasy resolution refuses to come to terms with the implications of the historical insight--in the past men have betrayed their friends, political conflict has meant that innocent victims have been abused, violated, and murdered.

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The book persistently obviates the darkness of its implications by choosing the melodramatic as its mode of presentation. The author seeks in this way to sustain the identity of his characters against the historical forces that were overwhelming them. The Vendée is despoiled, the land is burned and its people harried out of their homes; they are the victims of their history, but as characters they do not come alive in this book. The dream of the lost cause is an attractive one for a person who is dissatisfied with himself; but even in our century when so many of the attractive lost causes are radical ones, the dream of the lost cause is regressive. It offers a wishful correlation between the failure of an historical event and one's dissatisfaction with one's own being; it is an escape from actual present suffering that may be psychically unmanageable into an imagined sorrow distanced and contained by the past. This is perhaps why this is such an unsatisfactory book, why the characters with their impossible chivalric heroism seem to resemble figures from an adolescent daydream. The destructiveness of history is here transformed into a retrogressive vision--like every yearning for a lost cause, a revery over the real worth of one's unappreciated self: to the later connoisseur of their failure, the victims of history, no matter how fine they were, were also unappreciated.

The Robespierre of La Vendée wants to extirpate the royalists root and branch and to repopulate their land with people loyal to his cause; the lost white flag of Bourbon

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attracted Trollope in his despair, perhaps as a kind of historical correlative to his own sense of failure. But one of the key problems of this book is that he is unable to find the kind of spatial sanction his imagination seemed to require in order to provide a sense of living character. His first-hand acquaintance with Ireland had given this sanction to the scene of The Macdermots, but his knowledge of revolutionary France was derived almost entirely from his reading, and, much as he was drawn to the subject, he had no firm ground upon which fantasy could quicken into the portrayal of believable figures. The France of this novel is a story-book land, troubled, but also quaint and remote. The characters who dwell here suffer from a lack of connectedness to a land of experienced space and seasonal change: like story-book figures, they are wooden and fixed; nothing can happen of their own volition. The main characters are frozen in their histrionic postures by their reactions to events offstage in Paris. They are motivated largely by a desire to protect their bucolic province from the excesses of the capital. Trollope's vision of the Vendée, rural, pastoral, soft, is a dream of their property as heroic eden which animates them, as the vision of unattainable Agatha does Cathelineau, into quaint and stilted chivalry.

In The Warden he manages to create a world which resembles a real one much more closely. It too reflects dread of failure, but in it he triumphs over despair. Sometimes the intensity of a nightmare can return us to the

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familiar world at dawn with relief, even if that world is vexing and difficult. After envisioning an imaginary society destroyed in spite of melodramatic heroism, Trollope now seems free to create one in which heroism consists of a more modest entity--but a much more believable one.

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CHAPTER V

THE WARDEN (1855)

> When my historical novel failed, as completely as had its predecessors, the two Irish novels, I began to ask myself whether, after all, that was my proper line.
>
> --An Autobiography, p. 77.

There is a connection between yearning and adopting, between the desire to satisfy a longing and the manner of satisfaction,[1] which helps to explain the pleasing quality of this subtle and delicate novel. Its success has been well-documented: Henry James praised the character of Mr. Harding,[2] and modern criticism has seen virtue in its plot,[3] fidelity to its social background,[4] and even mythic significance in

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[1]See the discussion of myth as working-through of psychic conflict in Rudolf Eckstein and Elaine Caruth, "From Eden to Utopia," American Imago, XXII (1965), pp. 128-141.

[2]"Anthony Trollope," in The Future of the Novel, ed. Leon Edel (New York, 1956), pp. 233-260.

[3]Maude Houston, "Structure and Plot in The Warden," The University of Texas Studies in English, XXXIV (1955), 107-113.

[4]G. F. A. Best, "The Road to Hiram's Hospital: A Byway of Early Victorian History," Victorian Studies, V (1961), 135-150.

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its themes.[5] Robert Polhemus has recently noted Trollope's recognition in the book that "work comes more and more to determine identity, that what a man does tells him who he is,"[6] while explaining the manner in which the novel comes to terms with change. Trollope himself recognized that the book represented the breakthrough in his literary career.[7]

He had written nothing for almost two years and had spent the time travelling in the rural southwest of England for the Post Office.[8] Characteristically, the location of his story was important to him: when he began writing it he tells us, "it was more than twelve months since I had stood for an hour on the little bridge in Salisbury, and had made out to my own satisfaction the spot on which Hiram's hospital should stand."[9] Here he envisioned an enclosure belonging naturally to the environs of the mild old city of Barchester. Unlike La Vendée where no meaningful interaction between character and space had taken place, in this novel the connection is a fruitful one. His vision from the little bridge in Salisbury, recollected for over a year, operates on his imagination somewhat like the prospect of ruin which

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[5]Sherman Hawkins, "Mr. Harding's Church Music," ELH, XXIX (1961), 202-223.

[6]The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, 1968), p. 28.

[7]An Autobiography (Oxford, 1947), p. 90.

[8]Michael Sadlier, Trollope, A Commentary (London, 1961), p. 150.

[9]An Autobiography, p. 88.

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inspired The Macdermots, but here his imaginative completion of the scene results in a book in which characters flourish.

The plot is fairly simple. Mr. Harding, warden of Hiram's Hospital, an ancient foundation for the support of twelve poor old men, is torn in conscience between the claims of an energetic reformer, John Bold, who charges that Harding wrongfully obtains funds from the endowment of the hospital, and the outright dismissal of these claims by his son-in-law Dr. Grantly, an archdeacon determined to preserve the established customs of the church in the face of outside criticism. The problem is compounded for Harding by the fact that his younger daughter, Eleanor, falls in love with John Bold, and it is further complicated by the fact that the popular press takes up the issue, thus making it a matter of interest to the great world beyond Barchester. In spite of the tremendous pressure placed upon him, Mr. Harding manages to follow his own conscience and even though he resigns, his daughter marries the man she loves. The book affirms the integrity of the individual conscience.

But Mr. Harding's moral victory is won at some cost to himself. When Trollope sent this fourth novel off to his publisher he called it The Precentor, after the name of a minor cathedral office Mr. Harding holds when he resigns as warden.[10] This title suggests that he loses one kind of identity, as well as giving up much of his income and his comfortable prerogatives. On the advice of an editor at

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[10]Michael Sadleir, p. 165.

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Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, Trollope changed the title to The Warden, however, indicating that Harding's identity is preserved in spite of his sacrifice. This change, although a minor one, qualifies the import of the book, making it more optimistic. The revision accords well with the book's themes.

A recent critic has observed that Trollope "constantly surprises the reader by the complexity of his vision of ordinary life."[11] and this complex vision is evident here for what the book does in effect is to reconcile a seemingly absolute contradiction between the inner and the outer self. The contradiction implies that to be faithful to either aspect of being will deny the other: to follow the claims of conscience will negate social position; to follow the claims of the world will negate the integrity of the inner voice. The book persuades us that the integrity of the inner self--evidenced in the conscience of an ordinary man--can not only be affirmed, but that this affirmation enhances the outer man. In this novel reality substantiates the existence of ideal values. An affirmation of the claims of the inner life is an attractive theme for a failed novelist. In its triumph of renunciation, the book makes a virtue of what in ordinary worldly terms would be sheer loss; at the end Mr. Harding is tranquil and happy.

To a great extent his victory is an aspect of the

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[11]Sheila M. Smith, "Anthony Trollope: The Novelist as Moralist," in Renaissance and Modern Essays, ed. G. R. Hibbard (New York, 1966), p. 136.

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milieu in which he lives. For Trollope shapes here a world which includes and protects Mr. Harding even as he surrenders his position. Although he gives up much, he does not lose his identity; he belongs to a social order which is secure enough to accept even renunciation. In this novel of clerical life Trollope is interested in the same themes which have interested him before: the possibilities for the good life, a sense of the power of history, an awareness of man's social being, the threats to identity; but here he studies them not in terms of the world at large as in his first three novels, but in terms of a restricted world, a world of belonging. This restricted setting is an important result of that fruitful perception of the initial scene at Salisbury. While this world of belonging is connected to the greater world, its inclusiveness mitigates the harshness of that world.

The English Church as Trollope portrays it is a society within a society where the mild failings of ordinary individuals are cushioned by their membership in an exclusive community. The cathedral establishment of Barchester is notably self-contained:

> Let us presume that Barchester is a quiet town in the West of England, more remarkable for the beauty of its cathedral and the antiquity of its monuments, than for any commercial prosperity; that the west end of Barchester is the cathedral close, and that the aristocracy of Barchester are the bishop, dean, and canons,[12] with their respective wives and daughters.

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[12] Barchester Towers and The Warden (New York: Modern Library College Edition, 1950), p. 3; hereafter referred to as The Warden.

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The assurance here is unimpeachable; the city is above commerce, and the clergy are above the city. The aristocracy, in Trollope's day those few thousand fortunate proprietors of the landed estates of England, were granted well-being as a right of birth and he wants this aura to surround his higher clergy. The identity of the professional man is, largely, derived from his work; Trollope suggests much about the identity of his clergy by allusions to feudal property relations in his description of the setting. The vision he saw of Hiram's Hospital from the little bridge is like a vision of feudal life:

> A broad gravel walk runs between the building and the river, which is always trim and cared for; and at the end of the walk, under the parapet of the approach to the bridge, is a large and well-worn seat, on which, in mild weather, three or four of Hiram's bedesmen are sure to be seen seated. Beyond this row of buttresses, and further from the bridge, and also further from the water which here suddenly bends, are the pretty oriel windows of Mr. Harding's house, and his well-mown lawn. The entrance to the hospital is from the London road, and is made through a ponderous gateway under a heavy stone arch, unnecessary, one would suppose, at any time, for the protection of twelve old men, but greatly conducive to the good appearance of Hiram's charity. On passing through this portal, never closed to any one from 6 a.m. till 10 p.m., and never afterwards, except on application to a huge, intricately hung mediaeval bell, the handle of which no uninitiated intruder can possibly find, the six doors of the old men's abodes are seen, and beyond them is a slight iron screen, through which the more happy portion of the Barchester élite pass into the Elysium of Mr. Harding's dwelling.[13]

The imagery here suggests an establishment that is secure, exclusive, and lasting; charity itself appears solid and

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[13] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

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comfortable in this protected and highly-privileged Elysium. A description of this setting at the end of the novel symbolizes a change for the worse, for near the conclusion we are told,

> . . . the whole place has become disordered and ugly. The warden's garden is a wretched wilderness, the drive and paths are covered with weeds, the flower-beds are bare, and the unshorn lawn is now a mass of long damp grass and unwholsome moss. The beauty of the place is gone; its attractions have withered. Alas! a very few years since it was the prettiest spot in Barchester, and now it is a disgrace to the city.[14]

Change and reform do not necessarily bring improvements. In terms of the connection between identity and material adjuncts, it would seem that the being of the warden himself has suffered through this change since the snug, orderly, and well-nigh inaccessible garden has been despoiled by the would-be reformers. But the warden is still beloved in his community and we are shown that he does not really lose by his renunciation of his position. Again we are given a vision of feudality, protected and snug:

> An arrangement was made which . . . put Mr. Harding into possession of a small living within the walls of the City. It is the smallest possible parish, containing a part of the Cathedral Close and a few old houses adjoining. The church is a singular little Gothic building, perched over a gateway, through which the Close is entered, and is approached by a flight of stone steps which leads down under the archway of the gate. . . . It contains an old carved pulpit and a reading-desk, a tiny altar under a window filled with dark old-coloured glass, a font, some half-dozen pews, and perhaps a dozen seats for the poor; and also a vestry. The roof is high-pitched, and of black old oak, and the three large beams which support it run

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[14] Ibid., p. 197.

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> down to the side walls, and terminate in grotesquely carved faces--two devils and an angel on one side, two angels and a devil on the other. Such is the church of St. Cuthbert at Barchester, of which Mr. Harding became rector, with a clear income of seventy-five pounds a year.[15]

The ironies here, the balance of good and evil in the carved faces, the tiny income, do not essentially detract from the image of the church as a cosy haven, an ancient refuge, like the hospital--time-worn, protected, and secure. These characteristics are associated with the identity of Mr. Harding as a means of qualifying the kind of defeat he receives at the hands of the world when he is warden of the hospital. But if the description of St. Cuthbert's suggests protectiveness, these allusions to ancient and respected practise convey also a sense of the meaning of Mr. Harding's goodness. The description relates this middle-class man with his family concerns and his problems of conscience to such traditional virtues as meekness and humility.

In this manner the symbolic appeal made by these survivals of feudalism does not encourage a reactionary dream of a better way of life. Trollope's emotional affinity with the past does not lead to a Tory fantasy of ersatz well-being such as we find in Coningsby. He employs the attractiveness of the past, rather, to demonstrate value in the present. Through this use he seeks a way of civilizing and humanizing the forces that were changing his society by suggesting balance and compromise: "two devils and an angel on one side,

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[15] Ibid.

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two angels and a devil on the other." If Mr. Harding's descent from offic can be softened a bit through his belonging to an established order that protects him, the nature of the community is then implicitly important. The cathedral society of Barchester in this novel turns out to be an accepting and tolerant community.

As befits such a community a great deal of the comedy in the book is concerned with mitigating and humanizing rigidity of attitude. Dr. Grantly, the presiding force in the cathedral establishment, is continually and deftly undercut; John Bold, the dedicated reformer, becomes linked to the very institution he is trying to change through his love for Eleanor. The book constantly seeks to present its important ethical issues in immediate human terms. By investigating the origins of the hospital endowment in John Hiram's will, John Bold unsettles the established calm of the existing system, as Grantly recognizes. His enquiry makes an oblique attack on the special privileges of the establishment. But this enquiry overlooks things that are crucial to Trollope--the lives of the particular individuals involved. At one point Bold tries to explain to his sister Mary what is so important in the issue that concerns him:

> "Why, it's a long story, and I don't know that I can make you understand it. John Hiram made a will, and left his property in charity for certain old men, and the proceeds, instead of going to the benefit of these men, goes chiefly into the pocket of the warden and the bishop's steward.'
> 'And you mean to take away from Mr. Harding his share of it?'

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> 'I don't know what I mean yet. I mean to inquire about it. I mean to see who is entitled to this property. I mean to see, if I can, that justice be done to the poor of the city of Barchester generally, who are in fact, the legatees under the will. I mean, in short, to put the matter right, if I can.'
>
> 'And why do you do this, John?'
>
> 'You might ask the same question of anybody else,' said he; 'and according to that the duty of righting these poor men would belong to nobody. If we are to act on that principle, the weak are never to be protected, injustice is never to be opposed, and no one is to struggle for the poor!' And Bold began to comfort himself in the warmth of his own virtue.[16]

Altruism is bound up with self-interest here; the logic of social change in the book is continuously askew, providing comedy. The comedy distances the ethical issues somewhat and this distancing protects the society. The whole perspective would change if people were starving in Barchester--as they starve in Castle Richmond (1860).

The comic attack on reform is balanced, however, because the pretensions of the establishment are deflated also. The archdeacon stands before the old men of the hospital to admonish them and is described in a comic typology: "the decorous breeches, and neat black gaiters showing so admirably that well-turned leg, betokened the decency, the outward beauty and grace of our church establishment."[17] Perhaps the most famous instance of this undercutting occurs in his library:

> On entering this sacred room he carefully opened the paper case on which he was wont to compose his favorite sermons, and spread on it a fair sheet of paper and one partly written on; he then placed his

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[16] Ibid., p. 55.

[17] Ibid., p. 48.

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> ink-stand, looked at his pen, and folded his blotting paper; having done so, he got up again from his seat, stood with his back to the fireplace, and yawned comfortably, stretching out vastly his huge arms and opening his burly chest. He then walked across the room and locked the door; and having so prepared himself, he threw himself into his easy chair, took from a secret drawer beneath his table a volume of Rabelais, and began to amuse himself with the witty mischief of Panurge; and so passed the archdeacon's morning on that day.[18]

The scene offers rich social comedy; the passage deftly suggests the inner life of the Victorian gentleman without being strident about its revelations. Grantly presents none of the corrupt menace that the Earl of Cashel exudes in The Kellys when he remembers his youthful indiscretions. It is a fairly sympathetic portrait; Grantly is a big, easy, comfortable figure. He hides away and disguises his activity, but he does so with gusto.

This warm comic tolerance influences the dialectic of the book. We have seen how John Bold can congratulate himself for his sense of virtue; he is quite human and so we are prepared when Eleanor pleads with him to stop the campaign that, she feels, will ruin her father:

> She still held him, and looked eagerly into his face, with her hair dishevelled and her eyes all bloodshot. She had no thought now of herself, no care now for her appearance, and yet he thought he had never seen her half so lovely; he was amazed at the intensity of her beauty, and could hardly believe that it was she whom he had dared to love. 'Promise me,' said she; 'I will not leave you till you have promised me.'
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> 'I will,' said he at length; 'I do--all I can do, I will do.'[19]

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[18] Ibid., p. 75.

[19] Ibid., p. 107.

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With the reformer confused by the beauty of Eleanor and the conservative Grantly revealed as being eminently human, the struggle is placed on ground that allows for a tolerant perspective. The forces that can potentially rend a society apart--energies that had proven so destructive in the first three novels--are here changed into motives that are contained within a wise and tolerant comic vision. In turning to the English Church as a subject, Trollope's imagination seizes upon a contest of attitudes that takes place within a world of belonging, within a milieu of acceptance that can afford to be tolerant.

The great world outside is still fairly harsh and unforgiving. Bold, who relents for reasons of the heart, is unable to stop the attack, now being waged from the aerie of Tom Towers of the Jupiter. The human proportions of the contest in Barchester are lost in the dimensions of the great world. Public opinion is a thing outside of individual control; Towers tells Bold that "I really cannot answer for the Jupiter":

> The discretion of Tom Towers was boundless: there was no contradicting what he said, no arguing against such propositions. He took such high ground that there was no getting on it.[20]

In the world of slogan and sensation, individual motives do not count. Complicated personal life has no meaning for smooth falsifiers like Dr. Pessimist Anticant or Mr. Popular Sentiment with his sensational novel about the clergy. It is

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[20] Ibid., p. 142

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highly significant that both Grantly and Bold are frustrated by their dealings with the great urban world. Mr. Harding, in his quiet way, triumphs over it.

He does so because his shyness and meekness make him somehow indifferent to its ego-involved strife. Innocent and passive, his resignation brings him inner peace. Some of his greatness as a character derives from his eccentricity; playing his imaginary cello in the air suggests that a depth in his being is untouched by his surroundings. In London against a background of corruption and evil, he reacts to Sir Abraham Haphazard's ambiguous answer about the justice of taking money from the foundation in a way that makes his inner music a metaphor for an ethical ideal:

> And, as he finished what he had to say, he played up such a tune as never before had graced the chambers of any attorney-general. He was standing up, gallantly fronting Sir Abraham, and his right arm passed with bold and rapid sweeps before him, as though he were embracing some huge instrument, which allowed him to stand thus erect; and with the fingers of his left hand he stopped, with perter-natural velocity, a multitude of strings, which ranged from the top of his collar to the bottom of the lappet of his coat. Sir Abraham listened and looked in wonder. As he had never before seen Mr. Harding, the meaning of these wild gesticulations was lost upon him; but he perceived that the gentleman who had a few minutes since been so subdued as to be unable to speak without hesitation, was now impassioned--nay, almost violent.[21]

The warden's fantasy cello becomes huge as his inner rectitude triumphs over the world. His inner music may be an index of his agitation, but it is also a sign of the inviolable private self of this meek man; it suggests here a

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[21] Ibid., p. 165.

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triumph of the individual over impersonal social forces. He is sustained in his triumph by other kinds of social forces, however; these are the more private and personal ones of the "ecclesiastical snuggeries" of the Barchester Cathedral establishment.

As Trollope presents it, this establishment is a humane institution. Personal values count. After Mr. Harding resigns, the bishop still invites him to dine every other day. He is loved by his family, he is "never left alone, even should he wish to be so."[22] The things in the environment that he really cares about still exist for him. All of this contributes to a sense that his renunciation of office is a victory, a victory which celebrates the integrity of personal values. And certainly part of the triumph of his renunciation comes about because, no matter how much he has to forgo, there is never any doubt as to his proper community --he belongs.

His belonging is a large part of the means whereby this novel of a failure that transcends disappointment is made to reflect an ideal world. For Barchester is the land of acceptance. The renunciation that affirms his integrity is made in a world which is carefully shaped to demonstrate that his modest and unassuming claims will not prevent him from flourishing as an individual. In Mrs. Gaskell's North and South, published in the same year, the heroine's father resigns from his parsonage because of scruples of belief and

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[22] Ibid., p. 198.

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the consequences are devastating to him: he finds a job as a teacher in a bleak industrial city far from his quiet country parish and his loss of status is painful. Mr. Harding is fairly certain that John Bold, a wealthy man, will marry his daughter. He is not so concerned about this, however, as about finding a way to follow his conscience. That he can do so and not lose anything crucial to his happiness and still remain a believable figure, is a measure of the kind of success Trollope has in creating him. Unlike Frank in The Kellys and the O'Kellys who wins love and riches without effort, Mr. Harding is tested in a more difficult contest, and he does the right thing in spite of his material interest. His decision to renounce office is an altruistic one, but in this book Trollope has matured as an artist, and is able to convince us that Harding's nobility is genuine. Frank tells his friend that he never thought of Fanny's money; but Mr. Harding is compelled to think of the warden's salary. Such details help to win the reader's assent to the reality of Harding's moral victory.

A sense of that victory is heightened, moreover, because it takes place in a world where pressure for acquisition never lets up. After his resignation Harding returns to the hospital to say goodbye to the old men. All that reform means to them is greater hardship, as they now begin to realize, all except the oldest:

> 'And so you're really going?' the man again asked.
> 'Indeed I am, Bell.'

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> The poor old bed-ridden creature still kept Mr. Harding's hand in his own, and the warden thought that he had met with something like warmth of feeling in the one of all his subjects from whom it was the least likely to be expected; for poor old Bell had nearly outlived all human feelings. 'And your reverence,' said he, and then he paused, while his old palsied head shook horribly, and his shrivelled cheeks sank lower within his jaws, and his glazy eye gleamed with a momentary light; 'and your reverence, shall we get the hundred a year then?'[23]

The scene offers a chilling moral recognition in its awareness of the disparity between the weak deathly figure on the bed and his lively greed. Much of the success of the book derives from the deft handling of human incongruity which underscores the moral themes.

In contrast to his first three novels, The Warden has a sureness of tone, an ease with its subject, a lightness of effect, and a seriousness of import, that seem startling. The book has awkward moments: sometimes the satire is a bit heavy-handed, and the old men are patronized painfully at times, but these are small blemishes set against the richness of vision and maturity of outlook the book achieves.

Discussing the success of the archdeacon as a character, Trollope observes in the autobiography that he had never spoken to an archdeacon, but that the character was "the simple result of an effort of my moral consciousness."[24] He had envisioned a world on that Salisbury bridge where, at last, the fruits of that consciousness could be affirmed.

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[23] Ibid., p. 193.

[24] An Autobiography, p. 85.

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This world attracted him imaginatively as nothing else had, and its beauty would possess him for years to come. In shaping Barchester he had at last been able to create the sort of place where his fantasy hero could flourish "kind of heart, and open of hand, and noble in thought, despising mean things." Such a hero had been foreshadowed by Frank in The Kellys, but he did not participate with credibility in a believable world. Cathelineau, the heroic postilion, was also noble, but impossibly so. Thady Macdermot faced hard choices, but "Rent" engraved on his heart mirrored too much of harshness and despair. Here in The Warden Trollope animates characters who are vexed by problems of ordinary middle-class life; they worry about income, status, marriage, and career. Grantly, Haphazard, Bold, and Harding feel the pressure of these imperatives in various ways, but only for Harding does such pressure not outweigh ethics.

As Trollope portrays him, life in a quiet way had given him much: work he liked, attractive daughters, grandchildren, an absorbing avocation, and respect in his community. In strictly quantitative terms, however, life had given more to Grantly, Haphazard, and Bold. But Mr. Harding comes off best. He makes the kind of ethical choice that only a truly free man can make. The others are locked in their causes. To Harding the cosy hospital grounds are not ultimately determining. Grantly ensconced at lush Plumstead peeks furtively at Rabelais, and Sir Abraham Haphazard flickers equivocatingly through the Attorney-General's

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chambers in dark London. Mr. Harding, whose nobility is of the spirit, is happy in any surroundings. Misdirected reform may leave the hospital garden weed-choked, and St. Cuthbert's is only a tiny edifice perched over a gateway, but Mr. Harding has made the most of his advantages. If life has given him, in terms of property, a fair prospect, he knows well how to value it. Thus is he freer than the others.

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CHAPTER VI

BARCHESTER TOWERS (1857)

In many respects this novel answers the warden's dilemma. If Mr. Harding had to give up many good things in order to remain a moral man, Barchester Towers seeks ways to resolve the contradiction between material well-being and a good conscience. Trollope here suggests that the dream of property can be realized in life without sacrificing ethical requirements. The book posits that middle-class life can be productive and fulfilling, and it indicates that material enhancement befits the worthy. The story restores the warden's garden: property here compliments the lives of good men.

Before writing this novel Trollope turned to another project--writing a political tract in the manner of Carlyle. All that is known of this work is contained in a report of Longmans' reader; the manuscript has not survived and Trollope does not mention it in An Autobiography. As Sadleir prints it, the report reads in part,

> The object of the work is to show how England may be saved from the ruin that now threatens her!! And how the realization of Macaulay's famous prophecy of the "New Zealander standing on the ruins of London Bridge" may be indefinitely postponed.

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> With this view the author goes through all the leading influences and institutions of the State and pours out the vial of his wrath upon them. This he does in such a loose illogical and rhapsodical way that I regret to say I would advise you not to publish the work on any terms.[1]

How much of "the ruin that now threatens" England participates in the impetus to write Barchester Towers cannot for certain be determined, but the novel does celebrate a particular way of life as wholesome, prosperous, and desirable, and may be read as a comic lesson in the contribution of selfish motives to public strife.

As he worked on this novel, Trollope's perception of himself as an author began to change. While he was writing Barchester Towers, The Warden became a small success: "I could discover that people around me knew that I had written a book."[2] The autobiography reveals his sense of modest accomplishment at this time, and at the place in the autobiography where he describes writing this novel he speaks of "the charms of reputation," and of his life-long desire "to be known as somebody."[3] If he was unsure when he began this novel, by the time he finished it he was more confident of himself, for he stoutly resisted his publisher's suggestion to cut it by one-third.[4] The same reader who had rejected The New Zealander found much wrong with this novel and

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[1] Trollope, A Commentary (London, 1961), pp. 168-169.

[2] An Autobiography (Oxford, 1947), p. 90.

[3] Ibid., p. 98.

[4] Michael Sadleir, p. 193.

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Trollope did agree to make some changes in the interests of good taste.[5] He wanted the book to stand essentially as he had written it, however, and his insistence suggests his confidence in the worth of the story.

By repopulating Barchester, he found that he could discuss issues that were widely significant in his time--for the book deals not just with the lives of clergymen, but with the lives of men as they relate to social institutions. Barchester became an imaginative model for social behavior, one that could examine real conflict in ideal conditions. His imagination seized upon the setting of his earlier novel and developed its thematic possibilities rapidly--it had taken him years to write The Warden, but Barchester Towers was written in eighteen months.[6] The thematic possibilities that he discovered are not unlike the reported interests of The New Zealander, for this novel does deal with threats to social equilibrium, but unlike that book, it does so optimistically as Trollope, reflecting his own growing confidence, fashions a success story about upper-middle class civilization.

This novel has a more intrusive narrator than any of the earlier books. A narrator is present in all the stories, but he is nowhere so noticeable as he is in this one.[7] Here

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[5]An account of the correspondence discussing the changes is given in Sadleir, pp. 169-175.

[6]Sadleir, p. 164.

[7]In The Warden he finds Plumstead "unattractive" and "dull" as a first-person observer, Barchester Towers and The

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we find what Wayne Booth calls a self-conscious narrator, that is, one of a class of narrators who are "aware of themselves as writers."[8] This writer figure comments directly on the plot, even letting the reader know at one point that an improbability is necessary in order to prolong the novel. The narrator delights in his role as writer, suggesting that Trollope enjoyed this identity and relished exercising his power to create a world. With respect to the populace of that world, it will be remembered that in speaking about his desire "to be known as somebody," he had added a reference to his ordinary middle-class ambitions, saying "I wished to make an income on which I and those belonging to me might live in comfort."[9] This suggests a man willing to compromise his art in order to meet the demands of public taste, but it also suggests a man for whom the family takes a certain priority. This priority is crucial in the novel, for Barchester Towers is concerned with the way families are to prosper.

The book is, as Professor Polhemus observes, "the story of a community rather than of one man,"[10] and it deals,

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Warden (New York, 1950), pp. 74-75; he is most noticeable as author at the end of the story: Chapter XX closes with Mr. Harding crying after saying goodbye to Bunce, the best of the twelve old men, and then Chapter XXI begins, "Our tale is now done, and it only remains to us to collect the scattered threads of our little story, and tie them into a seemly knot"; he speaks here as author proper--and the tying of the "knot" lightens the tone of the book considerably.

[8] The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1963), p. 155.

[9] An Autobiography, p. 98.

[10] The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, 1968), p. 35.

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as he indicates in his discussion, with how the community adjusts to change. It inquires into the consequences of social forces operating beyond the control of the individual will, and it investigates the possibilities of maneuver in a social framework characterized by conflict of opposing wills. The dimensions of concern in the book are social in the widest and in the narrowest sense, for as the characters relate to each other, so they relate to the life around them, and both kinds of relations affect the life of the community. The book seeks to discover how the good and the worthy shall inherit this portion of England and it wants to know furthermore how the heirs of such a wonderful property are to be loved.

The novel begins right away with the issue of inheritance, for in the beginning we see Dr. Grantly's painful dilemma as he watches his father the old bishop die. If he dies before the dissolving Conservative Ministry is out of office, Dr. Grantly's chances of being named bishop are good, but if he lingers until after the Ministry goes, Dr. Grantly will not have a chance. Worldly ambition, parental love, and his duty as a clergyman, all contend within him as he waits at his father's bedside. As Polhemus says, "Grantly represents one of the great comic paradoxes of nineteenth-century life, the extremely worldly man walking around in clerical garb."[11] As a worldly man, the things he longs for

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[11] Ibid., p. 37.

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are quite tangible:

> He would be a richer man as archdeacon than he could be as bishop. But he certainly did desire to play first fiddle; he did desire to sit in full lawn sleeves among the peers of the realm; and he did desire, if the truth must out, to be called 'My Lord' by his reverend brethren.[12]

Quite simply, Grantly wants "to be known as somebody" in a special way. It is not a major failing, but the desire here places him in an awkward position, both as churchman and as son. Many characters in the book share similar desires, desires that have to do with achieving status through possessing the accouterments of it. Almost all the characters think in this typically middle-class way. They often reflect upon the material goods that will enhance their lives and make them happy.

When the Ministry is out and Dr. Proudie is named bishop instead of Grantly, the old ways of Barchester are changed, for the new party is Evangelical, but among them too, the vision of status has a definite material cast. Mr. Slope, the new bishop's chaplain, arrives with such visions in his head:

> Such is Mr. Slope--such is the man who has suddenly fallen into the midst of Barchester Close, and is destined there to assume the station which has heretofore been filled by the son of the late bishop. Think, oh, my meditative reader, what an associate we have here for those comfortable prebendaries, those gentlemanlike clerical doctors, those happy well-used well-fed minor canons, who have grown into existence at Barchester under the kindly wings of Bishop Grantly!

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[12] Barchester Towers and The Warden (New York: Modern Library College Edition, 1950), p. 211; hereafter referred to as Barchester Towers.

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> But not as a mere associate for these does Mr. Slope travel down to Barchester with the bishop and his wife. He intends to be, if not their master, at least the chief among them. He intends to lead, and to have followers; he intends to hold the purse strings of the diocese, and draw round him an obedient herd of his poor and hungry brethren.[13]

Mr. Arabin, who will be the champion of the High Church party, yearns for a family and a home with a well-mown lawn. Even the narrator shares a sense of achievement as authenticated by material possessions. On the day of Slope's first sermon in the cathedral we are told,

> On this occasion the new bishop took his seat for the first time in the throne allotted to him. New scarlet cushions and drapery had been prepared, with new gilt binding and new fringe. The old carved oak-wood of the throne, ascending with its numerous grotesque pinnacles half-way up to the roof of the choir, had been washed, and dusted, and rubbed, and it all looked very smart. Ah! how often sitting there in happy early days, on those lowly benches in front of the altar, have I whiled away the tedium of a sermon in considering how best I might thread my way up amidst those wooden towers, and climb safely to the topmost pinnacle![14]

The climb literally is a defense against boredom, but in the context of the new bishop sitting "up amidst those wooden towers," a figurative sense of the climb reflects the worldly themes of the book, implicitly placing a material valuation on ecclesiastical accomplishment. The narrator's irony should lead us also to recognize how he judges this materialistic habit of mind: he assumes that everyone has it, and the moral economy of the novel seeks to insure that people with decent versions of the tendency will rule the community.

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[13] Ibid., p. 230.

[14] Ibid., p. 248.

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Money and love are connected to the drama of inheritance that is played out, for the lovely Eleanor is "now, alas a widow" with all John Bold's money. Since all her suitors are present as a result of the new succession in the diocese, the question of who will marry her is related to the issue of ecclesiastical supremacy. Who is to rule the lovely demesne of Barchester thus has a great deal to do with the kinds of people who deserve to inherit, in the character of Eleanor, the fruits of the earth.

In this way the book complicates the problems of power and status raised in The Warden, for there the conflict of interest was played out in the life of one good figure who stood at the center of the action and found his way through conflicting demands to rectitude. Here there are three major factions in the contest for supremacy in the bishopric: Dr. Grantly; Mrs. Proudie, the bishop's dominating wife; and the hypocritical Slope--and there are three suitors for Eleanor, Bertie Stanhope, Mr. Arabin, and Slope again. That the contests are not unrelated is shown by the resolution because, as it turns out, the winning of Eleanor by Arabin enhances the Grantly position and seriously qualifies the victory of Mrs. Proudie over the others. The victory of Arabin, Trollope lets us know, is never in serious doubt: the narrator even takes the reader into his confidence about Eleanor's rejection of the undesirable suitors. In terms of structure, just after Grantly and his wife have discussed the unsuitability of Eleanor's marrying Slope, Arabin is

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introduced into the story as "the new champion." As it develops, the story becomes a fantasy of accomplishment and reward. Barchester Towers is more than a comedy of status, it celebrates a way of life that insures victory for those who despise mean things; it is a fable about maturity.

The book's sense of maturity is illustrated by the way the plot works to heal the sadness of Mr. Arabin. A lonely, celibate intellectual, he enters the story late to rescue the community. The first third of the book presents an illustration of the disorder which threatens and menaces the episcopal see and the desirable widow. All the other antagonists are introduced first and have their inadequacies clearly demonstrated before "the new champion" appears on the scene. He is the "younger son of a country gentleman of small fortune in the north of England,"[15] and is forty years old, the same age as the author. Like his author too he attended Winchester, but Arabin went on to Oxford and a quietly distinguished career. A High Churchman, he resisted the impulse to follow Newman, and learned from a rural clergyman in Cornwall the virtues of humility and a sense of the proper mission of his church. He is a "droll, odd, humorous, energetic, conscientious man."[16]

With the exception perhaps of Mr. Rochester and the hero of Two Years Ago, he may be the oldest romantic hero in Victorian fiction. That he is psychically close to the

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[15] Ibid., p. 384.

[16] Ibid., p. 326.

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identity of the author is suggested by the latter's difficulty in describing him:

> How often does the novelist feel, ay, and the historian also and the biographer, that he has conceived within his mind and accurately depicted on the tablet of his brain the full character and personage of a man, and that nevertheless, when he flies to pen and ink to perpetuate the portrait, his words forsake, elude, disappoint, and play the deuce with him, till at the end of a dozen pages the man described has no more resemblance to the man conceived than the sign board at the corner of the street has to the Duke of Cambridge?[17]

Trollope adds that "there is no royal road to learning; no short cut to the acquirement of any valuable art," and then goes on to describe this curiously attractive figure who is like his author also in coming rather late in life to a full realization of his abilities. And in spite of his promising university career, Mr. Arabin is not a happy man. He suffers from a divided consciousness. Outwardly he is witty and sparkling, but we are told,

> Wit is the outward mental casing . . . and has no more to do with the inner mind of thoughts and feelings than have the rich brocaded garments of the priest at the altar with the asceticism of the anchorite below them, whose skin is tormented with sackcloth, and whose body is half flayed with rods. Nay, will not such a one often rejoice more than any other in the rich show of his outer apparel? Will it not be food for his pride to feel that he groans inwardly, while he shines outwardly? So it is with the mental efforts which men make. Those which they show forth daily to the world are often the opposites of the inner working of the spirit.[18]

Arabin suffers. The imagery here suggests that his malaise has to do with a deprivation of love: the rich outward show

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[17] Ibid., p. 383.

[18] Ibid., pp. 394-395.

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belies the inner torment which is likened to the starvation and mortification of the anchorite. He is celibate but he begins to miss family life and he doubts his own ambitions:

> In the archdeacon's drawing-room Mr. Arabin had sparkled with his usual unaffected brilliancy, but when he retired to his bedroom, he sat there sad, at his open window, repining within himself that he had no wife, no bairns, no soft sward of lawn duly mown for him to lie on, no herb of attendant curates, no bowings from the banker's clerks, no rich rectory. That apostleship that he had thought of had evaded his grasp, and he was now only vicar of St. Ewold's, with a taste for the mitre. Truly he had fallen between two stools.[19]

Comfort, opulence, nourishment--all these are suggested by the objects of Mr. Arabin's daydream. In Victorian novels the proving of wills and the discovery that the girl one loves is an heiress often become part of the fable of happy marriage, as if riches were showered upon the wedded pair to compensate for reticence about physical gratification. Here the novelist's irony judges his character's objectives, and, as the story develops, Arabin has to come to terms with his dream. During the course of his falling in love with Mrs. Bold, he misjudges her, thinking like Dr. Grantly that she wants to marry Slope. Arabin has to learn to value Eleanor for herself before he can claim his rewards; he has to learn to encounter her as a human being, to be honest with her. The whole ethic of the book directs us to envision a world in which, even if we do dream of property, we do not manipulate and exploit each other. In decent relationships we do not aggrandize ourselves at the expense of others.

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[19] Ibid., p. 395.

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The hypocrisy of Slope, the bullying morality of Mrs. Proudie, and the schemes of Charlotte Stanhope, all assault the integrity of the individual in this society. A code of decent middle-class values operates to lessen the damaging effect of these assaults. The way the code works can be illustrated by parallel scenes which portray the installation of new tenants in households--property relations. In both scenes Grantly, the pillar of the establishment, suggests a proper response. In the first, the Proudies and Slope are complaining of their new house--the bishop's palace where Dr. Grantly's father had lived for so many years:

> 'And the gas,' chimed in the lady; 'there is no gas through the house, none whatever, but in the kitchen and passages. Surely the palace should have been fitted through with pipes for gas, and hot water too. There is no hot water laid on anywhere above the ground-floor; surely there should be the means of getting hot water in the bed-rooms without having it brought in jugs from the kitchen.'
>
> The bishop had a decided opinion that there should be pipes for hot water. Hot water was very essential for the comfort of the palace. It was, indeed, a requisite in any decent gentleman's house.
>
> Mr. Slope had remarked that the coping on the garden wall was in many places imperfect.
>
> Mrs. Proudie had discovered a large hole, evidently the work of rats, in the servants' hall.
>
> The bishop expressed an utter detestation of rats. There was nothing, he believed, in this world, that he so much hated as a rat.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Mr. Slope was going on with his catalogue of grievances, when he was somewhat loudly interrupted by the archdeacon, who succeeded in explaining that the diocesan architect, or rather his foreman, was the person to be addressed on such subjects; and that he, Dr. Grantly, had inquired as to the comfort of the palace, merely as a point of compliment. He was sorry, however, that so many things had been found amiss: and then he rose from his chair to escape.[20]

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[20] Ibid., pp. 239-240.

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The Proudies and Slope are rude and insensitive. Their long series of complaints suggest people who have a compulsion to be dissatisfied with things as they are. Certainly they do not find things as they have been for so very long in Barchester to their liking.

In contrast, a scene when the Grantlys, with Eleanor, show the parsonage of St. Ewold's to Arabin, emphasizes the comfort of old traditions. After Mr. Harding rather slyly brings up an old superstition about the parish, that once a priestess with a magic well lived there, the whole party makes her influence the subject of their pleasantries:

> 'The grate is really very bad,' said Mrs. Grantly; 'I am sure the priestess won't approve of it, when she is brought home to the scene of her future duties. Really, Mr. Arabin, no priestess accustomed to such an excellent well as that above could put up with such a grate as this.'
>
> 'If there must be a priestess at St. Ewold's at all, Mrs. Grantly, I think we will leave her to her well, and not call down her divine wrath on any of the imperfections rising from our human poverty. However, I own I am amenable to the attractions of a well-cooked dinner, and the grate shall certainly be changed.'
>
> By this time the archdeacon had again ascended, and was now in the dining-room. 'Arabin,' said he, speaking in his usual loud clear voice, and with that tone of dictation which was so common to him; 'you must positively alter this dining-room, that is, remodel it altogether; look here, it is just sixteen feet by fifteen; did anybody ever hear of a dining-room of such proportions!' and the archdeacon stepped the room long-ways and cross-ways with ponderous steps, as though a certain amount of ecclesiastical dignity could be imparted even to such an occupation as that by the manner of doing it. 'Barely sixteen; you may call it a square.'[21]

The impression here is of easy welcome in a comfortable home.

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[21] Ibid., pp. 404-405.

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The playful allusions to the priestess and her "cure" promise to heal Arabin's melancholy and to nourish him. The criticisms of the house are made with the intention of improving Arabin's material life and are part of the welcome he is made to feel. The Proudie's domestic innovations offend; those contemplated for Arabin suggest not only a comfortable domicile, but also allude to the magic of love.

This domestic welcome with its promise of future happiness is associated with the part Arabin is designed to play in the struggle for control of the diocese. A prior scene in this house between Arabin and Eleanor intuitively connects a sense of the proper use of power with a sense of the private life of the family. They speak in a small upstairs room:

> 'You will, at any rate, have a beautiful prospect out of your own window, if this is to be your private sanctum' said Eleanor. She was standing at the lattice of a little room up stairs, from which the view certainly was very lovely. It was from the back of the vicarage, and there was nothing to interrupt the eye between the house and the glorious gray pile of the cathedral. The intermediate ground, however, was beautifully studded with timber. In the immediate foreground ran the little river which afterwards skirted the city; and, just to the right of the cathedral, the pointed gables and chimneys of Hiram's Hospital peeped out of the elms which encompass it.
>
> 'Yes,' said he, joining her. 'I shall have a beautifully complete view of my adversaries. I shall sit down before the hostile town, and fire away at them at a very pleasant distance. I shall just be able to lodge a shot in the hospital, should the enemy ever get possession of it; and as for the palace, I have it within full range.'[22]

His raillery changes into a serious discussion in which he

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[22] Ibid., p. 400.

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reveals to her his lack of dogmatism and partisanship; she is struck by his intelligence and his decency. The setting of the exchange suggests intimacy between man and woman, but it is an intimacy in which Arabin speaks quietly and seriously to her on the problem of church governance, and reveals to her his sense of balance and fair play. This impresses her:

> And now she found to her surprise and not without a certain pleasurable excitement, that this newcomer among them spoke in a manner very different from that to which she was accustomed.[23]

The emotions she feels are stimulated by his intellectual quality, but the fact that she feels them in this situation indirectly alludes to other intimacies between men and women --there are no covert sensual implications, but the spirit of the scene suggests potency, tenderness, and intimacy.

The prospect from this "private sanctum" is an important bearing in Trollope's imaginative geography, for this view, like that from the fallen tree of the ruins of Ballycloran, is a creative talisman for him: here is the river that flows through the opening scenes of The Warden, the river that led his imagination to the original inception of The Precentor, helping to stimulate the whole solid creation of the world of Barchester. Here also, included within range of the eye, is the now-neglected garden of the warden's former home, and here also, is the "glorious gray pile," towering into the clear air above the petty concerns of the Barchesterians and reminding us of their historical effort to

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[23] Ibid., p. 402.

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transcend their limited circumstances. It is indeed a "beautiful prospect" from the lattice window, suggesting so much of mastery, accomplishment, and creativity.

And while some of these associations are lost on "the new champion," he nonetheless understands the significance of what he sees. From the private sanctum of his future home with his future wife he does see the tactical advantages of his situation with respect to the coming struggle for supremacy. The imagery of his speech, playful as it is, suggests superiority and potency. St. Ewold's is a living which belongs to the ancient estate of the Thorne family:

> The picturesque old church of St. Ewold's stands immediately opposite to the iron gates which open into the court, and is all but surrounded by the branches of lime trees.[24]

The location of the church close to venerable Ullathorne House further deepens the significance of the imaginative geography. Arabin's future career will connect him to the past, to tradition, and to continuity, as well as to fruitfulness and love. The imagery here suggests even more: Miss Thorne, his patroness, is described as a "druidess," and it is significant that she prepares to celebrate his installation by feasting the country people from miles around. Intimations of nourishment, love, and ancient magic, all coalesce around the figure of Arabin, helping to make him welcome, and thus helping to effect a cure for his loneliness and sadness.

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[24] Ibid., p. 421.

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But it is not magic alone that can heal him; he has to come to understanding through experience. Professor Polhemus has pointed out the importance of Madeline Neroni's conversation with him in teaching him "to value the world,"[25] and he adds that "she draws out his humanity,"[26] helping him to understand his love for Eleanor. Polhemus analyzes the figure of Madeline carefully, showing the way in which her wit and intelligence help to expose some of the sham that takes place in the polite world, and he also explains Trollope's ambivalent feelings towards her, making her alluring sexually and censuring her for it at the same time.[27] Cold, witty, beautiful, she is the most attractive woman in Barchester, but her crippled condition places her at a safe distance--she has to be carried about "in such a manner as in no wise to disturb her charms, disarrange her dress, or expose her deformities."[28] She is irrepressible; her father wishes that she would stay away from Mrs. Proudie's reception, but she is determined to go:

> 'Indeed, I shall,' she had said to her sister who had gently endeavoured to dissuade her, by saying that the company would consist wholly of parsons and parsons' wives. 'Parsons, I suppose, are much the same as other men, if you strip them of their black coats. . . .'[29]

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[25] The Changing World of Anthony Trollope, p. 48.

[26] Ibid., p. 49.

[27] Ibid., p. 43.

[28] Barchester Towers, p. 277.

[29] Ibid., p. 286.

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She meets Arabin at the fête champêtre Miss Thorne has arranged and penetrates his aloofness right away:

> 'Oh, you are not to look for such success as awaits Mr. Slope. He is born to be a successful man. He suggests to himself an object, and then starts for it with eager intention. Nothing will deter him from his pursuit. He will have no scruples, no fears, no hesitation. His desire is to be a bishop with a rising family, the wife will come first, and in due time the apron. You will see all this, and then--'
>
> 'Well, and what then?'
>
> 'Then you will begin to wish that you had done the same.'
>
> Mr. Arabin looked placidly out at the lawn, and resting his shoulder on the head of the sofa, rubbed his chin with his hand. It was a trick he had when he was thinking deeply; and what the signora said made him think. Was it not all true? Would he not hereafter look back, if not at Mr. Slope, at some others, perhaps not equally gifted with himself, who had risen in the world while he had lagged behind, and then wish that he had done the same.[30]

They talk further and she leads him to reveal his feelings for Eleanor, and after he leaves her she reflects,

> This teacher of men, this Oxford pundit, this double-distilled quintessence of university perfection, this writer of religious treatises, this speaker of ecclesiastical speeches, had been like a child in her hands; she had turned him inside out, and read his very heart as she might have done that of a young girl.[31]

She likes his honesty, however, and resolves to help him. Thus he gains a potent ally, for it is she who will finally pave the way for Arabin's approach to Eleanor by affirming what Eleanor wants to hear--that Arabin loves her. She helps Eleanor in this way to overcome her own reticence and thus

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[30] Ibid., p. 596.

[31] Ibid., p. 602.

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gives a sanction to their match.

In this sanction her worldly intelligence helps Arabin to the right path. In spite of the morality that must remind us of her "deformities," she does represent the physical side of human nature that must be accepted in order to achieve completeness of being; both Arabin and Eleanor benefit from her advice in their love. Thus she becomes a symbolically important figure in the story. If her intelligence compliments Arabin's, her sexuality serves somewhat the same function for Eleanor, for while Madeline has a kind of scandalous aplomb about her own life, Eleanor operates at times as if it were a rather serious crime to be a woman. When Madeline archly observes to her that "everybody" must like Mr. Arabin, Eleanor becomes highly uncomfortable:

> Mrs. Bold felt it quite impossible to say anything in reply to this. Her blood was rushing about her body she knew not how or why. She felt as though she were swinging in her chair; and she knew that she was not only red in the face, but also almost suffocated with heat.[32]

She is so shocked at what Madeline tells her about Arabin's feelings that she can scarcely speak, but she goes away from the interview feeling joyous, even though "mortified that the man whom she owned to herself that she loved should have concealed his love from her and shown it to another."[33] During the course of the story she has much to be mortified about since she is seriously misunderstood by all those who are

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[32] Ibid., p. 678.

[33] Ibid., p. 680.

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close to her. She has to be rescued from being misprized as much as Arabin does from being lonely. Through the way both of these characters overcome the perplexities of their circumstances Trollope demonstrates a satisfactory intuition about relationships between men and women. And if Eleanor is twice likened to a "parasite plant," she is no Amelia Osborn, for although she is a widow who worships her son, she does not immolate herself over the memory of her dead husband. The story of these lovers avoids much contemporary sentimentality by dramatizing their mutual understanding and realistic self-valuation. The plot is balanced in this respect because as Arabin discovers what he wants from the world through her, his discovery means in turn that she is vindicated before the world. Even her father thought her capable of marrying Slope, and had decided that he would love her in spite of it:

> If Tarquin could be prevented, well and good; but if not, the father would still open his heart to his daughter, and accept her as she presented herself, Tarquin and all.[34]

That Eleanor will violate herself by marrying Slope is one of the dreads of the High Church community. Grantly is convinced that she will marry Slope, and Arabin himself fears it. He must come to know her worth better.

Misjudging Eleanor is an important issue in the book and it is at points where the characters might become enlightened about Eleanor's feelings that the narrator steps most noticeably into the story. He has said that "the author

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[34] Ibid., p. 483.

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and the reader should move along together in full confidence with each other," in the famous passage where he tells the reader that Eleanor will marry neither Slope nor Bertie Stanhope.[35] When Arabin indicates to her that he thinks she is attached to Slope, she is so affronted that she cannot speak of how she really feels, and the narrator steps in again:

> How easily would she have forgiven and forgotten the archdeacon's suspicions had she but heard the whole truth from Mr. Arabin. But then where would have been my novel?[36]

At a similar point of revelation with her father "one word would have cleared up everything,"[37] but the word is not spoken. These contretemps are important because they suggest a concern for much that is intractable and baffling in relationships between men and women. The remark about the existence of the novel is not so offhand as it sounds, for as part of its subject the novel wants to come to terms with the differences between men and women. These misunderstandings between Eleanor and the men who love her suggest, even within the restricted compass of the mid-Victorian moral sensibility, that much of what aggravates the community has a sexual origin.

The impact of sexual strife is demonstrated time and again. Madeline, who had been forced to get married because she was pregnant, says to her sister, "marriage means tyranny

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[35] Ibid., p. 343.

[36] Ibid., p. 509.

[37] Ibid., p. 492.

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on one side and deceit on the other."[38] Certainly all the marriages in the book are charged with edges of discomfort and dissatisfaction, whether it is mild Mr. Quiverful, whose wife acts for him, or Dr. Grantly, whose wife knows best, or, in the most notable instance, Dr. Proudie, whose wife wants to be bishop. Contrary to Madeline's observation, in these relationships it is the wife who tyrannizes, treating the husband like a child--and even Madeline had thought of Arabin as a child. Dr. Proudie is the most extreme case; when the venerable Dr. Gwynne, Master of Lazarus College, comes to speak about the hospital appointment with him, his wife is present:

> 'I will not delay his lordship much above a minute,' said the master of Lazarus, rising from his chair, and expecting that Mrs. Proudie would now go, or else that the bishop would lead the way into another room.
>
> But neither event seemed likely to occur, and Dr. Gwynne stood for a moment silent in the middle of the room.
>
> 'Perhaps it's about Hiram's hospital?' suggested Mrs. Proudie.
>
> Dr. Gwynne, lost in astonishment, and not knowing what else on earth to do, confessed that his business with the bishop was connected with Hiram's hospital.
>
> 'His lordship has finally conferred the appointment on Mr. Quiverful this morning,' said the lady.[39]

She dominates her husband because she can use her feminity in a vengeful way against him:

> . . . not only could she stun the poor bishop by her midnight anger, but she could assuage and soothe him, if she so willed by daily indulgences. She could

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[38] Ibid., p. 342.

[39] Ibid., p. 655.

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> furnish his room for him, turn him out as smart a bishop as any on the bench, give him good dinners, warm fires, and an easy life; all this she would do if he would but be quietly obedient. But if not--![40]

At one point when she wants him to do something, she "petted and fondled her little man sufficiently," and then "she proceeded to business."[41] But while the novel directs some comic laughter against threats of emasculation, it gives assent to the Victorian code.

This assent is illustrated most clearly perhaps in the case of Mr. Slope. There is something unclean and repulsive about him; he doesn't belong: "Did you ever see any animal less like a gentleman?"[42] asks Dr. Grantly after his first meeting. As the narrator describes him, he is reminiscent of Uriah Heep,

> I never could endure to shake hands with Mr. Slope. A cold clammy perspiration always exudes from him, the small drops are ever to be seen standing on his brow, and his friendly grasp is unpleasant.[43]

And yet women are attracted to him:

> . . . with the ladies, old and young, firm and frail, devout and dissipated, he is, as he conceives, all powerful. He can reprove faults with so much flattery, and utter censure in so caressing a manner, that the female heart, if it glow with a spark of low church susceptibility, cannot withstand him. In many houses he is thus an admired guest: the husbands, for their wives' sake, are

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[40] Ibid., p. 554.

[41] Ibid., p. 545.

[42] Ibid., p. 244.

[43] Ibid., p. 230.

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> fain to admit him; and when once admitted it is not easy to shake him off. He has, however, a pawing, greasy way with him. . . .[44]

Sweating, greasy, unpleasant--such is the man Eleanor's relatives fear she will marry. He has a large following in Barchester:

> Ladies are sometimes less nice in their appreciation of physical disqualification; and, provided that a man speak to them well, they will listen, though he speak from a mouth never so deformed and hideous. Wilkes was most fortunate as a lover; and the damp, sandy-haired, saucer-eyed, red-fisted Mr. Slope was powerful only over the female breast.[45]

His approach to Eleanor is sexual; he proposes to her by saying, "next to my hopes of heaven are my hopes of possessing you."[46] He sounds almost like an eighteenth-century rake here and when he tries to pass his arm around her waist, Eleanor "sprang from him as she would have jumped from an adder," and then slaps him. Slope is both repulsive and sexually aggressive, and by treating his sexuality in this way the novel distances and contains it.

In this respect Mr. Arabin is an ideal Victorian hero because he presents such a direct contrast to Slope:

> Poor Mr. Arabin--untaught, illiterate, boorish, ignorant man! That at forty years of age you should know so little of the workings of a woman's heart.[47]

But if Arabin is reticent and shy, he is not like another

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[44] Ibid., p. 232.

[45] Ibid., p. 256.

[46] Ibid., p. 616.

[47] Ibid., p. 516.

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rival for Eleanor, Bertie Stanhope, passive and supine. Like Slope, Bertie is attracted to Eleanor's money, but he has to be urged to court her by his elder sister for the sake of it. He does so half-heartedly, and Eleanor learns a painful lesson about her money:

> All this had been done to secure her comfortable income for the benefit of one of the family!
>
> Such a feeling as this is very bitter when it first impresses itself on a young mind. To the old such plots and plans, such matured schemes for obtaining the goods of this world without the trouble of earning them, such long-headed attempts to convert 'tuum' into 'meum', are the ways of life to which they are accustomed. 'Tis thus that many live, and it therefore behoves all those who are well to do in the world to be on their guard against those who are not. With them it is the success that disgusts, not the attempt. But Eleanor had not yet learnt to look on herself as fair game to be hunted down by hungry gentlemen. She had greatly liked the cordiality of Charlotte, and had been happy in her new friends. Now she saw the cause of all this kindness, and her mind was opened to a new phase of life.[48]

These reflections present the norm of the world of scarcity and competition which the book is seeking to humanize by providing plenty for its chief characters; they "earn" by being good. Eleanor learns that she was not valued for herself and her humiliation at being the intended victim of the acquisitive schemes of this family is a further trouble that Arabin rescues her from. Yet Bertie is not a figure of revulsion as is Slope; he is pleasant and easy-going and he is not sexually aggressive. Although he is a bohemian, his background insures that, unlike Slope, he ranks as a gentleman.

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[48] Ibid., p. 642.

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Arabin wins the prize. His betrothal to Eleanor takes place in the midst of a series of professional relationships that are competitive and a series of marital relationships that suggest hostility. These tensions in the community are related: the problem of who shall be named warden, for example, is an issue which depends on Mrs. Proudie's feeling of animosity towards Slope in her contest with him for the control of her husband's will. Slope's courting of Eleanor is part of his campaign to become dean. Arabin, brought in as a champion by Grantly, is, with his modesty and intelligence, somewhat above these struggles. He can take his place outside the city at St. Ewold's, securely protected by the lime trees of Ullathorne. And even though his patrons the Thornes are eccentric, they are remote from the struggles of other men. They are secure; although their house is accessible from the public way, they do not mind:

> Men, when they are acquiring property, think much of such things, but they who live where their ancestors have lived for years, do not feel the misfortune.[49]

But for other people like Mrs. Quiverful with her fourteen children, life is not so easy, and the outcome of the contest of wills that the powerful figures engage in is a matter of crucial importance to such as them. Mrs. Quiverful begs a ride in a farmer's cart to go to town to plead her husband's cause with the bishop's wife, and she is subjected to this kind of inconvenience daily. The novel dramatizes the connection between her hard circumstances and the wills of

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[49] Ibid., p. 421.

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others. It looks at the complicated way in which conflicting claims interact with one another. But it makes another equation too, one suggested by the Quiverfuls as much as by anyone else; it investigates a connection between economic substance and emotional well-being.

This connection is not quite as simple as the equation, "money equals love," but it is similar. The comedy of the Quiverfuls, who are faced with "the impossible task of bringing up as ladies and gentlemen fourteen children on an income which was insufficient to give them with decency the common necessaries of life,"[50] depends partly on the contrast between their fecundity and their poverty. But this contradiction of the equation of money and love suggests a moral consequence. Mr. Quiverful has to kowtow to Slope because his economic difficulties mean that "niceties of conduct" are not for him: "It must suffice for him to be ordinarily honest according to the ordinary honesty of the world's ways. . . ."[51] As Trollope sees it, the plight of Quiverful is one of the problems of decent life; he cannot afford to refuse the wardenship if it is offered to him even though he may feel qualms about Mr. Harding's claims to it.

This novel presents a world where such issues are raised, and it finds a way to solve them in terms of its comic action--the plot of the book triumphs over meanness of circumstance, over loneliness, over sadness and

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[50] Ibid., p. 435.

[51] Ibid., p. 436.

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misunderstanding. The marriage of Arabin and Eleanor brings him the good things of this world:

> . . . John Bold had left his widow in prosperous circumstances. He had bequeathed to her all that he possessed, and that comprised an income much exceeding what she or her friends thought necessary for her. It amounted to nearly a thousand a year; and when she reflected on its extent, her dearest hope was to hand it over, not only unimpaired, but increased, to her husband's son, to her own darling, to the little man who now lay sleeping on her knee, happily ignorant of the cares which were to be accumulated in his behalf.[52]

Increasing one's substance and not spending one's capital mean love for one's offspring. Savings are emotional gains here, and when life provides the possibility of these gains, then it can be very good indeed. The romance of Arabin, when it comes to fruition, suggests this economy:

> And he, though he knew but little of women, even he knew that he was loved. He had only to ask and it would be all his own, that inexpressible loveliness, those ever speaking but yet now mute eyes, that feminine brightness and eager loving spirit which had so attracted him since first he had encountered it at St. Ewold's. It might, must be all his own now.[53]

He finally embraces her: "Eleanor, my own Eleanor, my own, my wife!" She reflects, "she was now all his own." Arabin takes little Johnny and says, "he shall be all as my own--all as my own." The language of possession renders intimacy; the correlative for loving contact is ownership.

In spite of the way Trollope's consciousness of the nineteenth-century ethic works to subdue details of physical

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[52] Ibid., p. 218.

[53] Ibid., p. 708.

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expression in the scene between them, the correlation does suggest the possibilities of happiness and the fruition of love. The mean circumstances of the Quiverfuls must be overcome, rendered morally harmless, if the good life is to become a possibility. With the lovers, the same upper middle class scruples that make it hard for them to approach each other, their distance from each other and their reticence, are part of the proof of their worthiness. Their hesitations suggest the scruples of people who will have a decent regard for each other. When they marry they are asked in the ceremony if they will "live together according to God's ordinance":

> Mr. Arabin and Eleanor each answered, 'I will.' We have no doubt that they will keep their promises; the more especially as the Signora Neroni has left Barchester before the ceremony was performed.[54]

Trollope is being only half-facetious in so dismissing her; she did bring them together and she was an alluring woman. Even crippled, she was a free spirit. The scene at the fête champêtre is, as Professor Polhemus remarks, "revolutionary comedy,"[55] because she denies the Countess De Courcy's claims for respect on the basis of her title. The novel shows a different kind of distinction than aristocratic rank: these clergymen who write and deliver sermons, who worry about the furnishings of their houses, and who are concerned about the dispensations of office, are more worthy of admiration than

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[54] Ibid., p. 742.

[55] The Changing World of Anthony Trollope, p. 42.

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the hereditary magnates.

Like many professional men, they worry over their careers, but the case of Slope shows that there are many ways to pursue one, some distinctly better than others. When Arabin wins love and riches by coming to possess Eleanor, he reflects the desirability of the virtues of intelligence, patience, and tact. He deserves all those good things, because although a partisan, he is a civilized and humane one. At college he was "remarkable for humorous energy," and was also notable for winning arguments with his wit and reason. The deserts that Trollope provides for him are, ultimately, rewards for these moral qualities. A gentle knight of his church, he becomes, after marrying, Dean of Barchester and "the most promising clerical ornament of the age." He is a champion of the professional classes. The story of his winning Eleanor is a story of how people can care for each other in a world of involved conflict--how in that world, one can, through effort and work, attain the good life. The Victorian reticence of the love story expresses a desire for decent and considerate relations between people. This was a morally urgent subject.

Henry Mayhew in a section of London Labour and the London Poor titled "Of the Filth, Dishonesty, and Immorality of Low Lodging-houses," had been shocked at the way in which the young of the poor classes huddled together indiscriminately in their crowded beds. But he begins the chapter by likening the vices there to the "gross profligacy on the part

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of some of the most licentious of the rich (such as the late Marquis of Hertford and other worthies of the same depraved habits)."[56] With squalor high and low, Barchester seeks a civilizing mean. The comic candor of Madeline reduces the high to an object of laughter. Her emotional candor brings together the worthy pair in a relationship that is secure and humane where they will enjoy the good things they have inherited and have worked for. Material things are civilizing. When Arabin is made dean and Mr. Harding finds a home in his house, the wardenship is open for Quiverful, and his taking office is now acceptable to the Grantly party. If the low end of the human scale is represented by the Quiverfuls in this novel, this reflects an insight as to the quality of life in Barchester more than it does a limitation of the author's imagination. Dr. Grantly on his way home to tell his wife of Eleanor's engagement, "drove by the well-remembered entrance of Hiram's hospital," and he sees Mrs. Quiverful looking at the family possessions in a wagon as she is about to move in. He says to her, "it's a comfortable place, Mrs. Quiverful, and a comfortable house, and I am very glad to see you in it."[57] This accommodation of Mrs. Proudie's protégée is acceptable to him now because of his joy over the news of the engagement, and the scene suggests the harmony that Barchester can achieve through compromise and good will. It suggests also the way in which this

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[56](London, 1965), p. 51.

[57]Barchester Towers, p. 723.

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marriage validates the moral qualities of life in this community by affirming that inequities will, in time, be overcome--the order of life in Barchester is inclusive and sustaining.

Slope, finally defeated by Mrs. Proudie leaves town for his rich London widow. The Stanhopes quietly return to Italy, and the society finds stasis in accommodating to the new bishop and his wife. The goodness of life which this new harmony reflects is also suggested by material things. At the wedding Grantly makes everyone generous presents:

> 'Twas thus that he sang his song of triumph over Mr. Slope. This was his paean, his hymn of thanksgiving, his loud oration. He had girded himself with his sword, and gone forth to the war; now he was returning from the field laden with the spoils of the foe. The cob and the cameos, the violincello and the pianoforte, were all as it were trophies reft from tent of his now conquered enemy.[58]

These emblems of victory attest to Trollope's notion of how middle-class life is a civilizing force; the mock-heroic mode here domesticates conflict--these objects are the properties of ladies and gentlemen. Cobs and cameos are the rewards of someone's efforts and they gratify the possessors. The musical instruments, right there in the drawing-room, attest to one's culture and to one's appreciation of fine things, to a genteel, civilized way of being human.

This is a richly-furnished, complex, novel. It presents a thickly-textured social world, one in which men contend for power and office to enhance their being and to

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[58] Ibid., p. 743.

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make it easier for them to live in harmony with one another. It is an upper-middle class world: younger sons of north country landowners, the cathedral establishment, the consumption of cobs and cameos, violincellos and pianofortes, are above the line of gentility. Trollope was faithful to that. At the same time his vision of life here has room for great and complicated variety; it is also the vision of an artist who is maturing in his ability to give form to an imaginative world, and his vision suggests the way in which he saw material civilization contributing to a humane order of life.

That order provides the means to a fuller and richer existence for that "droll, odd, humorous, energetic, conscientious man," Mr. Arabin. In coming to Barchester he wins a beautiful widow, economic security, and clerical preferment; Barchester, to the champion of its values, provides love, wealth, and, at age forty, a newly-enhanced identity. The social institution reflects the life of the great outer world. The next novel turns directly to that world. It turns also to themes of growth and development rather than to ones of fruition and accomplishment, as if Trollope's own recognition of the fine achievement of this novel sanctioned a return to the actual content of his youth in London. Now that his identity was, to a certain extent, won, he could look more closely at the threats to it, the things that had almost denied him any achievement at all in the world he knew best. The Three Clerks is in many respects a story of sterility and failure, but it is also a story of winning identity as a writer.

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CHAPTER VII

THE THREE CLERKS (1858)

This is an unsatisfactory novel. What criticism the book has received in this century is nearly unanimous in pointing out its uncertainty and confusion.[1] The tone is often sentimental or urgently didactic, and almost all the characters seem wooden and stilted. After the complex and subtle comedy of Barchester Towers, this heavy-handed moral parable of urban life seems to derive from a lapse or faltering in creative power. Its defects have been attributed to the fact that it contains autobiographical material in that one of the clerks has a troubled career in a government office before becoming a writer.[2] It is a book which suffers from much confusion of purpose, but it also reveals much of Trollope's imaginative development, and repays study. If for no other reason, the book is now of interest because Anthony Trollope thought so highly of it.

As he looked back on his career in his autobiography,

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[1]See for example Michael Sadleir, Trollope, A Commentary (London, 1961), pp. 374-375; Robert Polhemus, The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, 1968), pp. 50-52.

[2]Bradford Booth, Anthony Trollope: Aspects of His Life and Art (Bloomington, 1958), p. 112.

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Trollope said of this book that "it was certainly the best novel I had as yet written."[3] This judgement reflects the taste of the age: Browning and his wife shared this opinion, and Thackeray liked the book.[4] But the novel suffers from more than inevitable shifts in literary taste and a changing sense of the purposes of fiction. In a way it is too faithful to the spirit of its time: in celebrating middle-class life at mid-century, it participates in many of the ambiguities and contradictions of that life. It maintains, for example, that the nature of the world is such that hard work can enable one to rise and to find love and success through honest effort at the same time that it recognizes that the social system contains abuses so gross as to stunt ambition. The novel detects many of the paradoxes of nineteenth-century economic life, but it cannot reconcile its insights with the action of the story. It is a novel which at times seems baffled by the world it encounters, assenting to the inequities which affront it and unable to come to terms with its own despair.

Trollope's career at the point after he had written Barchester Towers, reflects a flagging of imagination. He began a novel, The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson, and then put it aside for some four years.[5] But even that abortive attempt suggests the direction his imagination was

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[3]An Autobiography (Oxford, 1947), p. 101.

[4]Sadleir, p. 196.

[5]Ibid., p. 178.

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taking, for the work was to be a satire of the methods of advertising in business. He was seeking a way out of Barchester; as this attempt and the actual content of The Three Clerks reveal, he wanted very much to write a novel of contemporary urban life, away from the protected enclosure which had proven so fruitful. In doing so he was impelled to use his own experience among people who lived insecurely on the borderline of respectability, among the children of Quiverfuls who had not moved into comfort.

This world had been important in his formative years when he drudged away as a clerk in the post office administration. His estimation of his sixth novel illustrates more than the literary taste of a bygone epoch--it expresses how closely he identified with the concerns of the book. After saying that it was the best book he had written to that date, he added:

> The plot is not so good as that of the Macdermots; nor are there any characters in the book equal to those of Mrs. Proudie and the Warden; but the work has a more continued interest, and contains the first well-described love-scene that I ever wrote. The passage in which Katie Woodward, thinking that she will die, tries to take leave of the lad she loves, still brings tears to my eyes when I read it. I had not the heart to kill her. I never could do that.[6]

He was not able, that is, "to lay my own identity aside," and to let the story work itself out as he had done with a surrogate hero like Mr. Arabin. The "more continued interest" of which he speaks probably has to do with the earnest moral

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[6]An Autobiography, pp. 101-102.

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insistence of a story reflecting concerns the age was delighted to ponder: love triumphing over economic obstacles, the man who is sadder-but-wiser, and virtue-rewarded. In his earnest concern for the quality of social life he perhaps felt that he had succeeded in capturing something essential to the public sensibility from his own experience; he may have felt that his book triumphed over some of the distressing conditions of life as experienced in the actual world. With respect to letting his heroine live, he had after all, before he was twenty, seen two older brothers and a younger sister die.[7]

In a way that none of his earlier books had, this novel affirmed the need to rise in the world through dedicated striving, and perhaps this affirmation pleased him also; it was a subject close to him. The problems of focus and control that result from this closeness convey much that is ambiguous in the motives to ambition. In doing so, they also reveal a great deal about the negative and menacing aspects of middle-class life in nineteenth-century England. Trollope liked the book because it is a success story of his time that was close to his own experience; the confusion of the book derives from what at this point in his experience that kind of success was trying to convey. In a later novel like Phineas Finn he would be able to control much better his sense of the ambiguities of the struggle to do well in the world; here he is evidently still uncertain of attainment and

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[7]Sadleir, pp. 93-95.

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has difficulty in defining its significance outside of the imaginative enclosure of Barchester where his insights into social complexity are protected to a degree by ideal conditions.

Here, as in actual life, conditions are far from ideal. In bare outline the plot conveys a rather rigid sense of the value of business honesty and the power of love to inspire, but suggests little of the feeling of moral doom the book reflects. The three young heroes of the story are government clerks, and the novel follows their careers until they establish their families. One of them, Henry Norman, is the younger son of a landowner. He is fashionable and shares lodgings in the city with Alaric Tudor, a fellow clerk from a more modest background. Along with Alaric's cousin Charley, they become involved with the three daughters of a suburban widow, Mrs. Woodward, who lives in quiet seclusion at Hampton. Norman courts the eldest daughter, Gertrude, Alaric flirts with Linda, and Charley is attracted to Katie, the youngest. Alaric opportunistically proposes to Gertrude when he finds that she will inherit the money of Captain Cuttwater, an old relative who has come to live with the family, and thus jilts Linda. Gertrude is disposed to accept him because she finds that Norman, who resigned from a competitive examination for promotion, is not aggressive enough. He too is jilted. Alaric meanwhile, has gone on an inspection tour of some mines and accepts stock shares in one of the mines he reports on. He is befriended by Undy Scott, the moneyless younger

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son of a Scottish peer. During a weekend visit to the family Charley rescues Katie from a fall into the Thames and reads the family a story he has written. He is hopelessly in debt, leads an irregular life in the city where he is involved with a barmaid, and Mrs. Woodward asks him to stop visiting the family because she suspects Katie's growing affection for him.

Alaric and Gertrude are married and have a son. Norman takes a long leave of absence to the country, and the story follows Charley's tribulations with his barmaid and creditors. Alaric rises quickly in the world, speculates with some stock over which he has been appointed a trustee, and is blackmailed by Undy's brother. He is caught with worthless stock and is arrested. Norman's brother unexpectedly dies (of dissipation) and he inherits the estate. He proposes to Linda and is accepted. Alaric is sentenced to prison and Gertrude gives up her style of life. Katie, pining for Charley, becomes more and more ill. Charley publishes a story and begins to help Alaric's family. He continues to write and because of his efforts to reform, and the success of his stories, he is welcomed back to Hampton. At the end of the novel, two years after the main action, he has married Katie, has been promoted in his job, and has settled down in the suburban house to write and raise a family. Alaric and his family emigrate to Australia and Norman tends the family estates.

Trollope's version of the life of the clerk is very different from that in a tale like Gogol's "The Overcoat";

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the novel is more fantasy of avoiding the lower orders than an analysis of degradation and failure. Yet much that is denied through the resolution of the story finds its way into the life it renders. It starts with a description of the Bureau of Weights and Measures where Harry Norman and Alaric Tudor work. This office, "exactly antipodistic of the Circumlocution Office," is important in the governance of life:

> All material intercourse between man and man must be regulated, either justly or unjustly, by weights and measures; and as we of all people depend most on such material intercourse, our weights and measures should to us be a source of never-ending concern.[8]

As befitting their importance, the clerks who work here are sober, quiet, and industrious. The office is efficient and even puritanical.

In contrast to this, Charley Tudor finds work in the office of the Commissioners of Internal Navigation, a lackadaisical bureau frequented by bargemen. The clerks here are singular:

> they are one and all addicted to Coal Holes and Cider Cellars; they dive at midnight hours into Shades, and know all the back parlours of all the public-houses in the neighborhood of the Strand. Here they leave messages for one another, and call the girl at the bar by her Christian name. They are a set of men endowed with sallow complexions, and they wear loud clothing, and spend more money in gin-and-water than in gloves.[9]

All three of the heroes want to rise, but Charley in particular feels degraded working in this office with its vague

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[8] The Three Clerks (London: Oxford World Classics, 1959), p. 2.

[9] Ibid., p. 11.

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suggestions of darkness and guilt which hint at sexuality and vice. Charley's ambitions have much to do with avoiding the coarseness and squalor associated with the Internal Navigation. The ostensible business of this office is the regulation of canals, but the descriptive language suggests that internal navigation, inner commerce, is not well-regulated, and that there is something dark and shameful about it. As Charley describes it walking one night with Henry Norman (they are walking, "Norman to his club, and Charley towards his lodgings"),

> 'You don't know the sort of place that office of mine is, continued Charley. 'You don't know the sort of fellows the men are. I hate the place; I hate the men I live with. It is all so dirty, so disreputable, so false. I cannot conceive that any fellow put in there as young as I was should ever do well afterwards.'
>
> 'But at any rate you might try your best, Charley.'
>
> 'Yes, I might do that still; and I know I don't; and where should I have been now, if it hadn't been for you?'
>
> 'Never mind about that; I sometimes think we might have done more for each other if we had been more together. But remember the motto you said you'd choose, Charley--Excelsior! We can none of us mount the hill without hard labour. Remember that word, Charley--Excelsior! Remember it now--now, tonight; remember how you dream of higher things, and begin to think of them in your waking moments also;' and so they parted.[10]

To pursue one's ambition is a way of rising, not just above the meanness of small lives and narrow circumstances, but in Charley's earnest words, above the filthy contamination of the Internal Navigation. Norman's priggish and moralistic answer equates ambition to moral cleanliness. The moral

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[10] Ibid., p. 215.

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judgements of these pietistic speeches are also class judgements: Charley in his city life is "one of the navvies." Like sexuality repressed by guilt, the Internal Navigation is dirty, and the bond of association between one's relative degree of cleanliness or dirt and one's class status constantly suggests a guilty attitude towards the lower orders. Feelings of guilt pervade the imagery of both class and sexual relations, and if the Internal Navigation hints at sexuality, Weights and Measures, the material commerce of the world, suggests class struggle.

The Bureau of Weights and Measures is a painful world of antagonism where clerks compete for position and status. The office is like a model of business society, and Trollope employs his opposition to competitive examinations in the civil service to illustrate the way human relationships are perverted by this antagonism. The measure to institute competitive examinations is a bureaucratic scheme designed to further the career of Sir Gregory Hardlines, chief official of the office. Suddenly, when his scheme is established in the bureau, the traditional system of seniority is overthrown and men no longer stand in the familiar hierarchical relationship to each other; they become afraid of each other. They see each other as competitors instead of colleagues, and the description of the office at the inception of the examination offers a nineteenth-century version of Ulysses' specialty of rule speech in Troilus and Cressida; order is over-turned:

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> The senior of those who might become competitors, was of course a miserable, disgusted man. He went about fruitlessly endeavouring to instigate rebellion against Sir Gregory, that very Sir Gregory whom he had for many years all but worshipped. Poor Jones was, to tell the truth, in a piteous case. He told the Secretary flatly that he would not compete with a lot of boys fresh from the school, and his friends began to think of removing his razors. Nor were Brown and Robinson in much better plight. They both, it is true, hated Jones ruthlessly, and desired nothing better than an opportunity of supplanting him. They were, moreover, fast friends themselves; but not the less on that account had Brown a mortal fear of Robinson, as also had Robinson a mortal fear of Brown.[11]

The competition affects all the clerks in the office: Alaric, whose income is only £200 a year, has to compete against his friend Norman, because he cannot afford to pass up the opportunity of earning £600 a year. His career illustrates the perils of "mounting the hill," the steps up are precarious ones, and the danger of the ascent is that one may fall down among the anonomous masses below--over whom one is climbing.

Alaric's motto, like Charley's, is also Excelsior, but his attempt to rise the easy way reveals a harsh world of social antagonism. This is defined most clearly during the inspection tour of the Cornish mine where he is accompanied by an old civil servant noted for his integrity, Fidus Neverbend. But even Neverbend is daunted by the mine into which they are supposed to climb:

> It was an ugly uninviting place to look at, with but few visible signs of wealth. The earth, which had been burrowed out by these human rabbits in

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[11] Ibid., p. 63.

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> their search after tin, lay around in huge ungainly heaps; the overground buildings of the establishment consisted of a few ill-arranged sheds, already apparently in a state of decadence; dirt and slush, and pools of water confined by muddy dams, abounded on every side; muddy men, with muddy carts and muddy horses, slowly crawled hither and thither, apparently with no object, and evidently indifferent as to whom they might oversit in their course. The inferior men seemed to show no respect to those above them, and the superiors to excercise no authority over those below them. There was a sullen equality among them all. On the ground around was no vegatation; nothing green met the eye, some few stunted bushes appeared here and there, nearly smothered by heaped-up mud, but they had about them none of the attractiveness of foliage. The whole scene, though consisting of earth alone, was unearthly, and looked as though the devil had walked over the place with hot hoofs, and then raked it with a huge rake.[12]

Alaric descends into the pit; Mr. Neverbend, in spite of his reputation for thoroughness, cannot make the precarious descent. He is subject to a whiff of the pervading "sullen equality":

> 'Thee bee'st for sartan too thick and weazy like for them stairs,' said the miner.
> 'I am, I am,' said Neverbend, turning on the man a look of the warmest affection, and shoving the horrid, heavy, encumbered cap from off his spectacles; 'yes, I am too fat.' How would he have answered, with what aspect would he had annihilated the sinner, had such a man dared to call him weazy up above, on terra firma, under the canopy of heaven?[13]

The mine is a rich one; men speculate in its shares, but the blighted scene at the source of economic wealth suggests both social and psychic dangers. Mr. Neverbend is protected by his distance from the masses, and obscure clerks toil to climb away from the wilderness of "sullen equality" into

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[12] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

[13] Ibid., p. 113.

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which they might fall and lose their genteel identity. The dreary landscape of the mine is similar to the atmosphere of the office of Internal Navigation with its suggestions of filth and damnation; Charley too must escape. The disaster of obscurity is that one's lot will be cast among the low, the fallen, and the shameful; the shame of being allied to coarse women, the oppression of unlovely surroundings, and the humiliation inherent in constant association with those who do not know their place, all these menace identity in this novel. All the main characters seek to avoid contamination by the lower classes.

Alaric is tempted to deal in mining shares by Undy Scott; he is motivated by his desire for preeminence:

> Power, station, rank, wealth, all the good things which men earn by tact, diligence, and fortune combined, and which were so far from him at his outset in life, became daily more dear to his heart. And now his honourable friend twitted him with being a mere clerk! No, he was not, never had been, never would be such. Had he not already, in five or six short years, distanced his competitors, and made himself the favorite and friend of men infinitely above him in station? Was he not now here in Tavistock on a mission which proved that he was no mere clerk? Was not the fact of his drinking bishop in the familiar society of a lord's son, and an ex-M.P., a proof of it?[14]

The landscape of the mine resembles a Hobbesian state of nature; men, in the society of this novel, are primarily competitors, and they compete to avoid dirt, ugliness, and shame. The hazards of life in such a society are fierce, and ambition becomes a kind of torture because the "good things"

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[14] Ibid., p. 102.

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--"power, station, rank, wealth"--which compensate for the humiliations of obscurity and deprivation are so frequently purchased by sacrificing what is humane and decent. Alaric begins to perceive the contradiction in his circumstances:

> He had already learnt the great utility, one may almost say the necessity, of having a command of money; he was beginning also to perceive that money was a thing not to be judged of by the ordinary rules which govern a man's conduct. In other matters it behoves a gentleman to be open, above-board, liberal, and true; good-natured, generous, confiding, self-denying, doing unto others as he would wish that others should do unto him; but in the acquirement and use of money--that is, its use with the object of acquiring more, its use in the usurer's sense--his practise should be exactly the reverse; he should be close, secret, exacting, given to concealment, not over troubled by scruples; suspicious, without sympathies, self-devoted, and always doing unto others exactly that which he is on his guard to prevent others from doing unto him--viz, making money by them. So much Alaric had learnt, and had been no inapt scholar. But he had not yet appreciated the full value of the latitude allowed by the genius of the present age to men who deal successfully in money.[15]

Money assures the class position that enables one to rise above the "sullen equality" of the mire. A gentleman is accorded different treatment than an ordinary man, even though his crime may be as great.

Undy, the villain who is responsible for the ruin of Alaric's hopes and the pain suffered by his family, is no less a criminal, Trollope suggests, than Bill Sikes. In an aside to the reader he illustrates the injustices of the class system:

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[15] Ibid., p. 186.

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> Lady, you now know them both. Is it not the fact, that, knowing him as you do, you could spend a pleasant hour enough with Mr. Scott, sitting next to him at dinner; whereas your blood would creep within you, your hair would stand on end, your voice would stick in your throat, if you were suddenly told that Bill Sykes [sic] was in your presence?[16]

Bill is not as genteel. The punishment of Undy befits his class:

> We hang men, I believe, with this object only, that we should deter others from crime; but in hanging Bill we shall hardly deter his brother. Bill Sykes must look to crime for his bread, seeing that he has been so educated, seeing that we have not yet taught him another trade.
>
> But if I could hang Undy Scott, I think I should deter some others. The figure of Undy swinging from a gibbet at the broad end of Lombard Street would have an effect. Ah! my fingers itch to be at the rope.
>
> Fate, however, and the laws are averse. To gibbet him, in one sense, would have been my privilege, had I drunk deeper from that Castalian rill whose dark waters are tinged with the gall of poetic indignation; but as in other sense I may not hang him, I will tell how he was driven from his club, and how he ceased to number himself among the legislators of his country.[17]

He suffers humiliation instead of hanging. He is driven from his club by a "discreet old baronet," who is further described as "a man of broad acres, and a quiet, well-assured fame which has grown to him without his seeking it, as barnacles grow to the stout keel when it has been long a-swimming."[18] This is the most authoritative voice in competitive society, one who stands above the struggle, but who yet

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[16] Ibid., p. 517.

[17] Ibid., p. 518.

[18] Ibid., p. 521.

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possesses, without effort, all the things which the contestants are striving for. Undy flees to the continent and a life of cadging in obscure gambling spas--a punishment suited to his station, as hanging suits the mean life of the poor.

Men without "broad acres" live in danger of falling into the abyss; this is a society wracked by contention and strife where the quality of life is marred by exploitation and dread. The security of "a quiet well-assured fame which has grown to him without his seeking it" is not available to anyone who has to struggle as Alaric does for the good things. It is almost as if this security must come to those without it as salvation comes to the Calvinist elect--without reference to their efforts--otherwise, they become tainted in the mire. Such conditions make well-nigh impossible demands on the psyche. Living by a code that suggests that to be good one needs money, and yet implies that to obtain money one must do evil, presents an impossible paradox. The result is a kind of bad faith, an escape into a false consciousness which encourages sentimentality--this novel is most unsure of itself at the points at which it accords the favorable characters the very things which its insights into the harshness of life would like to condemn. It is an uneasy book.

The novel suffers because the characters live out the emotional consequences of a guilty logic. Identity in this society is a very fragile thing. Many of the characters here behave as if they were constantly unsure of themselves; they burden themselves with guilt and are therefore intolerant of

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each other's conduct. After Alaric has been punished and has gone into exile with his family, his remaining relatives still suffer:

> That evil which Alaric had done to them was not to be undone in a few moons. We are all of us responsible for our friends, fathers-in-law for their sons-in-law, brothers for their sisters, husbands for their wives, parents for their children, and children even for their parents. We cannot wipe off from us, as with a wet cloth, the stains left by the fault of those who are near to us.[19]

Everyone is threatened in a society in which there are so many responsibilities; every relationship makes one more vulnerable. Ego cannot be a sustaining portion of identity because it here incorporates too much anxiety about opinion that might be unfavorable; relationships in this uneasy middle-class are a function of guilty scrutiny. Presumably Bill Sikes doesn't care and the venerable baronet needn't care what the world thinks of them, but the middle classes, dreading contact with Bill yet lacking the baronet's assurance, need to be all the more wary lest they lose what status they have. This uncertainty tends to promote a rigid propriety: Norman criticizes Gertrude for the crudities of Captain Cuttwater at the dinner table. Yet there is also little certitude: Alaric is troubled by the money paradox and asks Norman, "cannot a man be good and great?" Norman answers,

> 'That is the problem for a man to solve. Do you try that. Good you certainly can be, if you look to Him for assistance. Let that come first; and

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[19] Ibid., pp. 538-539.

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then the greatness, if that be possible.'[20]

But how to be good, if, unlike Norman, one has to live in the jungle of money relations, is not answered. There can be no answer because money itself is seen as evil. Property in land, "broad acres," is somehow above censure, but money is filth:

> Oh, the city, the weary city, where men go daily to look for money, but find none; where every heart is eaten up by an accursed famishing after gold; where dark, gloomy banks come thick on each other, like the black, ugly apertures to the realms below in a mining district, each of them a separate little pit-mouth into hell.[21]

The pit-mouth damns Alaric, but in the hellish condition of competitive life, the lack of money is an even worse damnation; without money one is unable to find love.

The career of Charley illustrates this paradoxical money-guilt of the book. He begins as the most impoverished of the three clerks, and when he is arrested for debt, Mrs. Woodward exiles him from her home and from love:

> She felt that, however anxious she might be to assist Charley for his own sake, it was her bounden duty to separate him from her child. Whatever merits he might have--and in her eyes he had many--at any rate he had not those which a mother would desire to see in the future husband of her daughter. He was profligate, extravagant, careless, and idle; his prospects in life were in every respect bad; he had no self-respect, no self-reliance, no moral strength. Was it not absolutely necessary that she would put a stop to any love that might have sprung up between such a man as this and her own young bright-eyed darling?[22]

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[20] Ibid., p. 78.

[21] Ibid., p. 432.

[22] Ibid., p. 340.

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Her thinking about him compounds his poor financial prospects with his poor character: he is a man with an insolvent ego. He must find security in order to be saved; the probability of the book is strained considerably as the author tries to show him finding money without being guilty. He must earn it without being condemned. As it turns out, his salvation is sentimental--and erotic.

As Alaric is menaced by the pit-mouth to hell in each bank of the financial district, Charley is menaced by coarse women. The explicit disaster that he narrowly avoids associates sex, money, and class in a self-condemning vision of loss of status:

> Charley walked off a miserable man. He was thoroughly ashamed of himself, thoroughly acknowledged his own weakness; and yet as he went out from the "Cat and Whistle," he felt sure that he should return there again to renew the degradation from which he had suffered this night. Indeed, what else could he do now? He had, as it were, solemnly plighted his troth to the girl before a third person who had brought them together, with the acknowledged purpose of witnessing that ceremony. He had, before Mrs. Davis, and before the girl herself, heard her spoken of as his wife and had agreed to the understanding that such an arrangement was a settled thing. What else had he to do now but to return and complete his part of the bargain? What else but that, and be a wretched, miserable, degraded man for the rest of his days; lower, viler, more contemptible, infinitely lower, even than his brother clerks at the office, whom in his pride he had so much despised?[23]

He is highly conscious of status; in his degradation he will be lower than his fellow clerks. He loathes himself; "how he hated now that lower class world with which he had for the

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[23] Ibid., p. 229.

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last three years condescended to pass so much of his time! how he hated himself for his own vileness!" And his self-disgust is also a class-conscious mood. His relationship with a barmaid removes him from what was "decent, good, reputable, cleanly, and polished." Because of the coarse reality of his lot his aspirations are mere fantasies--"he that was praised by Mrs. Woodward for his talent, he that was encouraged to place himself among the authors of the day!" Lonely and lacking proper guidance in the city, some desperate poverty of spirit leaves him few alternatives; he spends his money on gin instead of gloves; without status he might as well be dead. The following passage posits a connection between moral suicide and the perils of the barely respectable; it suggests the degree of class antagonism this insecurity creates:

> There are those who boast that a gentleman must always be a gentleman; that a man, let him marry whom he will, raises or degrades his wife to the level of his own condition, and that King Cophetua could share his throne with a beggar-woman without sullying its splendour or diminishing its glory. How a king may fare in such a condition, the author, knowing little of kings, will not pretend to say; nor yet will he offer an opinion whether a lowly match be fatally injurious to a marquess, duke, or earl; but this he will be bold to affirm, that a man from the ordinary ranks of the upper classes, who has had the nurture of a gentleman, prepares for himself a hell on earth in taking a wife from any rank much below his own--a hell on earth, and, alas! too often another hell elsewhere also. He must either leave her or loathe her. She may be endowed with all those moral virtues which should adorn all women; and which, thank God, are common to women in this country; but he will have to endure habits, manners, and ideas, which the close contiguity of married life will force upon his disgusted palate, and which must banish all love. Man by instinct desires in his wife something softer,

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> sweeter, more refined than himself; and though in failing to obtain this, the fault may be all his own, he will not on that account the more easily reconcile himself to the want.
>
> Charley knew that he was preparing such misery for himself. As he went along, determined to commit a moral suicide by allying himself to th barmaid, he constrained himself to look with his mind's eye 'upon this picture and on that.'[24]

The opposite of all this is in suburban Hampton where pure respectable Katie lives who spends her leisure constructing imaginary palaces on an island in the Thames. She is the opposite of moral suicide and damnation: for the writer she represents the possibility of creative fulfillment; for the poor clerk she represents the possibility of redemption. This is a compelling theme: at one point Alaric suggests to Charley the opportunistic course of marrying an heiress, Miss Golightly, and he rejects it. She is rich but vulgar, reflecting the source of her wealth in trade. Payment must be earned by something more worthwhile, something above the common run of things. Charley tells Alaric with respect to his money troubles that "perhaps I may do something by writing."[25] An honorable way out.

The first of his works that we see in any detail is a story called "Crinoline and Macassar; or, My Aunt's Will." In this story, a clerk loves Lady Crinoline; his aunt's will stipulates, however, that if he is to inherit her fortune, he must marry before a certain age and he must have a child before a certain age, otherwise the fortune will be given to

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[24] Ibid., p. 374.

[25] Ibid., p. 303.

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charity. The clerk, Macassar Jones, is excessively shy, and much of the story deals with his difficulties and his embarrassment in communicating his predicament to the lady. The story parodies contemporary romantic literature, but Charley and the Woodwards take it seriously when he reads it:

> "In his early years Macassar had had a maiden aunt. This lady died and left behind her a will, in which with many expressions of the warmest affection and fullest confidence, she left £3,000 in the three per cents.--"
>
> 'What are the three percents.?' said Katie.
>
> 'The three per cents. is a way in which people get some of their money to spend regularly, when they have got a large sum locked up somewhere,' said Linda.
>
> 'Oh!' said Katie.
>
> 'Will you hold your tongue, miss?' said Mrs. Woodward.[26]

These girls know little about investment and profits, although they live on them; the tale, connecting money and love in the baldest fashion, doesn't bother them at all. Clean, genteel surroundings transcend money as dirt.

Each of Charley's stories is ridiculous. The first, "Sir Anthony Allan-a-dale and the Baron of Ballyporeen," was written at the suggestion of an editor of a popular magazine. The stories suggest that Charley's daydreams are rather callow, but they also reflect the author's condemnation of public taste. Charley, on the basis of his writings, is a hack. But in terms of the resolution of the novel, even hack work is preferable to the questionable schemes of Alaric. Charley's ambitions come within the compass of modest professional success and modest respectability; no one could

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[26] Ibid., pp. 255-256.

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mistake him for a serious novelist. In this sense, the author is protecting himself. The exaggeration of Charley's creations suggests Trollope's uncertainty with respect to his own writing; the kinds of things that he has Charley write are absurd parodies, yet he wants these to provide the means to the character's redemption. The content of the stories belies the serious way these trifles work in the plot to transform Charley's life. They are part of the uncertain handling of this novel: it represents a difficult passage in internal navigation.

Just how difficult it was is revealed in the scene which could still bring tears to the eyes of the mature writer. After his exile, Katie begs permission from her mother for a last private interview, and during it, she tells him that she loves him:

> 'When I am dead, Charley, will you think of this, and try--try to give up your bad ways? When I tell you that I love you so dearly, and ask you on my deathbed, I think you will do this.'
>
> Charley went down on his knees, and bowing his head before her and before his God, he made the promise. He made it, and we may so far anticipate the approaching end of our story as to declare that the promise he then made was faithfully kept.[27]

She gives him a parting gift, a purse she made for him after he had rescued her from the river but which he had returned to her when her mother separated them:

> . . . putting her hand under the pillow, she took it out, carefully folded up in new tissue paper. 'There, Charley, you must never part with it again as long as there are two threads of it together; but I know you never will; and Charley, you must

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[27] Ibid., p. 501.

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> never talk of it to anybody but to your wife; and you must tell her all about it.'
>
> He took the purse, and put it to his lips, and then pressed it to his heart. 'No,' said he, 'I will never part with it again. I think I can promise that.'
>
> 'And now, dearest, good-bye,' said she; 'dearest, dearest Charley, goodbye; perhaps we shall know each other in heaven. Kiss me, Charley, before you go.' So he stooped down over her, and pressed his lips to hers.[28]

This, "the first well-described love scene that I ever wrote," in the "best novel I had as yet written," seeks to transform the plight of the poor clerk by inspiring him; it translates the need for money into the need for love. She asks Charley to give up his "bad ways," give up relationships with women beneath his class, and to give up his insolvency. He swears like a man taking a holy vow, and then she gives him the secret talisman of their love, a purse. When she lives, what really enables Charley to marry Katie is the fact that he is no longer solely dependent on his salary as a clerk to support her; his earnings from his stories can sustain his growing suburban establishment. The associations here--purse, money, wife, kiss--suggest a symbolic act of love which enables Charley to transcend his mean circumstances. Alaric married prissy Gertrude for her money and is punished. Charley's course is more romantic; he sublimates self-interest into renunciation, humility, and hard work. The sublimation in this scene depends on an altruistic logic: when he gives up his low ways, she symbolically confers her womanhood on him. This inspires him to the efforts that will

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[28] Ibid., p. 502.

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enable him to support her as a wife; in so doing, his gift to her is an exchange that is more than symbolic, he gives her his manhood. The family is made the vehicle of transcendence.

The three clerks represent three versions of middle-class fortune in Trollope's time. The book does not devote much space to stuffy Henry Norman, but when his older brother dies, we are told,

> Harry was Mr. Norman of Normansgrove, immediately about to take his place as the squire of his parish, to sit among brother magistrates, to decide about roads and poachers, parish rates and other all-absorbing topics, to be a rural magistrate, and fill a place among perhaps the most fortunate of the world's inhabitants.[29]

Contrasted to him is Alaric, a convicted felon, slinking away to shameful exile in Australia where he will work as a clerk in expiation. Norman's good fortune is gratuitous; Alaric struggles and fails. When Norman leaves the Weights and Measures, he passes his position on to Charley, suggesting a connection between "broad acres" and the fruits of ambition and work. But Charley had been introduced in the first place to Harry and to the Woodwards by false, unsuccessful Alaric, whose credentials of belonging are never affirmed by experience--success comes out of failure for Charley. Katie marries a successful man:

> She married Mr. Charles Tudor, of the Weights and Measures, that distinguished master of modern fiction, as the Literary Censor very civilly called him the other day; and Mr. Charles Tudor became the master of Surbiton Cottage.[30]

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[29] Ibid., p. 508.

[30] Ibid., p. 541.

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It is a tiny Normansgrove of its own kind; two years later:

> . . . sundry changes had taken place at the Cottage, and of such a nature, that were it not for the old name's sake, we should now find ourselves bound to call the place Surbiton Villa, or Surbiton Hall, or Surbiton House. It certainly had no longer any right to the title of a cottage; for Charley, in anticipation of what Lucina might do for him, had added on sundry rooms, a children's room on the ground floor, and a nursery above, and a couple of additional bedrooms on the other side, so that the house was now a comfortable abode for an increasing family.[31]

But this happy part of the fable is unable to counter the inadvertent revelations about what really goes on in such houses. The book reveals to a great measure the smugness, the hypocrisy, and the inexpressiveness of English life.

Charley and Alaric are of the lowest class that can be called gentlemen. They work in the government and not in counting-houses; they have connections and ambitions; they can escape the city and visit in the suburbs. But at work and at leisure, much of their lives are uncomfortable and constrained: Alaric and Norman are supposed to be friends for example, but they hardly exchange a friendly word. When they do talk, Norman preaches on conduct or is made uncomfortable by his friend's indiscretions. When Alaric declares for Gertrude and is accepted, the family reaction illustrates the hypocrisy of their relationships. Alaric has to be congratulated, even by Linda:

> Alaric, with an assurance which told more for his courage than for his heart, came up to her, and with a smiling face offered her his hand. She rose up and muttered some words which she had prepared for the occasion, and he, still holding her by the hand,

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[31] Ibid., p. 541.

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> stooped down and kissed her cheek. Mrs. Woodward looked on with an angry flush on her brow, and hated him for his cold-hearted propriety of manner.

But,

> For Gertrude's sake she had to make Alaric welcome; she forced herself to smile on him and call him her son; to make him more at home in her house even than Harry had ever been, to give him privileges which he, wolf as he was, had so little deserved.[32]

Charley is much more welcome when he finally makes a home here, but, given the constraints of conduct, there is little to insure that guilt about money and guilt about sex will not create similar situations of uncomfortable buried feeling. In spite of the happy ending the book reflects a mood of sadness.

Charley is a blooming writer, but his writings, and this is clearly Trollope's intention, are patently absurd. Were novels worthwhile? Charley's experience suggests that writing, while possibly lucrative, was after all, only a clerk's way out. The sentimental scene of the purse reflects his goals: the young man is offered love and the possibility of winning a respectable identity, in spite of his unpromising beginnings. One without merits, a guilty sinner, could join the elect through hard work. This part of the story reflects a nourishing and encouraging dream; the problem of the novel is that the author doesn't quite seem to believe in the productions that save his character. The writer behind The Three Clerks is an unsure man, but as he gained confidence in himself, he learned to write about this same world,

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[32] Ibid., p. 162.

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the world of upper middle class life, more objectively, perhaps because he became more confident of belonging in it himself. At the time of writing this novel, he does not seem sure of his arrival.

He was quite right in one sense, however, in calling this rather dismal story his best book to date, because this book, botched as it is, tells the story he really wanted to write. This was the life that was closest to him, and closest to the people he knew best. In terms of the way he judged novels, this book was more faithful to the life of ordinary middle-class Englishmen than any of the others he had written. When he becomes surer of himself, he treats similar materials in a more objective way and comes to write truly great novels of English life like Phineas Finn, The Prime Minister, and The Way We Live Now, where marriages need not be happy, careers need not be successful, and where property itself can be questioned. This was his best book to date in that it was closest to his own voice and his own metier, real people living in a real world that he knew intimately, and when he had won his own struggle more assuredly, he could present these things more clearly. In this sense the book is important as a record of self-discovery.

What this imaginative failure presents, as much as anything else, is a painful review of Trollope's emotional life, a reflection of his lack of faith in his own ability and of his intense fear of failure. More clearly here than in any other place in his early novels, one senses the

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terrible wounds, the unhealed scars of his youth--if for no other reason than because so much of the spirit of the book, in contrast to his best ideals, seems ungenerous and unforgiving, guilty and harsh. What the story dramatizes in terms of its full content is not really the successful career, it presents rather, a rendering of a failure narrowly averted, a disaster which almost occurred. The title suggests this: The Three Clerks--three nonentities.

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CHAPTER VIII

DOCTOR THORNE (1858)

Trollope did not think as highly of this novel as he did of The Three Clerks.[1] His judgement may reflect a later questioning of the optimistic and hopeful spirit of this book. The book presents a world where, as Robert Polhemus says, "the ways of compromise and reconciliation remain open,"[2] and it portrays a life where honesty and love prevail over powerful and disturbing social changes. It is a book which insists on harmonious compromise, and it avoids some of the darker insights of The Three Clerks. It takes place in rural Barsetshire and it recounts a Cinderella fable which has been seen as a defect.[3] Yet Trollope himself felt that this novel had a good plot,[4] and, while he had reservations

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[1]He likens it to the novel following it, The Bertrams, and says, "I myself think that they are of about equal merit, but that neither of them is good. They fall away very much from The Three Clerks, both in pathos and humour." An Autobiography (Oxford, 1947), p. 115.

[2]The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, 1968), p. 58.

[3]See for example, Bradford A. Booth, Anthony Trollope: Aspects of His Life and Art (Bloomington, 1958), p. 45; Robert Polhemus, op. cit., p. 56.

[4]An Autobiography, p. 115.

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about the importance of plot in novels, his estimation here is significant in that it reveals something about the priorities of his imagination: he liked the story of the outcast restored to worth.

His favorable judgement of this plot may also reflect his indebtedness for it to his brother, but this indebtedness as well suggests an important event in his imaginative life. As he relates the events of 1857, he says,

> I had finished The Three Clerks just before I left England, and when in Florence was cudgelling my brain for a new plot. Being then with my brother, I asked him to sketch me a plot, and he drew out that of my next novel, called Doctor Thorne. I mention this particularly, because it was the only occasion in which I have had recourse to some other source than my own brains for the thread of a story.[5]

His only reference in the autobiography to an occurrence of "writer's block" in his own career comes at the point when he speaks of finishing The Three Clerks, a novel ostensibly about success, and one which reflects his own career. The extent to which Thomas Adolphus "drew out" the plot of Doctor Thorne is unknown, but a Cinderella story must have been particularly appealing; his mother was also living at the Villino Trollope:

> It was the first year in which she had not written, and she expressed to me her delight that her labours should be at an end, and that mine should be beginning in the same field. In truth they had already been continued for a dozen years, but a man's career will generally be held to date itself from the commencement of his success.[6]

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[5] Ibid., p. 105.

[6] Ibid., pp. 102-103.

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At the point when his mother can affirm the judgement of the world, Anthony Trollope will be known as a novelist, he finds himself without a subject--for the only time in his long life as a writer. But more important than the irony in this passage about his mother's reactions to his career, is the acknowledgement that his ambitions were beginning to be realized; in combination with the reference to his failure to discover a subject, the passage suggests that for him the time of achievement was perhaps also a period of ambivalence and stress. Yet to a greater extent than before, he writes a novel with an awareness that he is a successful novelist, that he is "somebody": Michael Sadleir observes that "with Doctor Thorne Trollope had definitely found himself."[7] It is significant that this novel, so different in mood from The Three Clerks, returns to Barsetshire, but the focus of the book moves outside the cathedral close and finds its compromise between the protected ideal of Barchester and the competitive life of actuality in the countryside.

The world of this novel is not as complicated as is that of Barchester Towers; there are no characters as distinctly original or as memorable as there are in the earlier book; nor are there the sentimental attachments and the autobiographical affinities of The Three Clerks, but Trollope here chooses a plot which is, like the Cinderella fable, about the fortunate discovery of an identity. Elizabeth Bowen observes that "Doctor Thorne is a love story, but

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[7]Trollope, A Commentary (London, 1961), p. 385.

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nevertheless it involves the passions of class."[8] The book is a significant development in Trollope's imaginative life and is in its own right a compelling novel because, like the Cinderella story, it deals with misprisal and vindication, with class passion, and it illuminates the social basis of the kind of identity which Trollope felt could assuage that passion. To a great extent the chief characteristic of that identity is its remarkable self-confidence, for it is this self-confidence which authenticates and sustains the other desirable traits of being that the book embodies: selfless generosity, skepticism of pretense, and an independence of spirit. It is not surprising that this kind of confidence would emerge as a desirable quality in the imagination of Trollope, for whom it was such a long-sought and, in terms of "cudgelling" his brains for this story, fugitive quality. The book is about surety.

It gives a hopeful cast to the vision of well-being based on property relationships. Whatever configuration of psychic pressure led to the writing of the book, it presents an almost magical sense of the humane presiding figure. Doctor Thorne is not the central figure in the book but he is in command of the destinies of many of the characters; a professional man, he rules his portion of Barsetshire through his knowledge; he advises squire and businessman; he knows their secrets, and, while he is familiar with the great ones,

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[8] In her introduction to the Riverside Edition of the novel (Boston, 1959), p. x.

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he keeps his own counsel. There are no direct parallels with the author's own life here but there are two imaginative issues in the book which were vital to him: in the first place, Doctor Thorne, in that he is aware of the inner life of his community, is like a novelist who imagines and populates a world; in the second place, Mary Thorne, in that she moves from exclusion to acceptance, is like any estranged being whose true worth is at last discovered. Both tact and love can flourish in the Barsetshire of this novel, and both things contribute to the merger of the old landed order with the new wealth of capitalist enterprise; as Polhemus says of the economic themes of the book, "the influx of industrial wealth, with all the dangers that it brought, might eventually lead to an improved moral and physical well-being of the entire commonwealth--provided men could fight down the money passion."[9] Circumstances are favorable here for grappling with that passion; unlike the overwhelming city of The Three Clerks, the rural milieu seems to protect the characters by limiting the damage that can be done to them--they suffer in their self-esteem rather than in the fundamental ground of their being. This is a protected world: as Elizabeth Bowen observes, "in so far as there is class conflict in Doctor Thorne, it is between the country gentleman and the aristocracy--the latter represented by the De Courcys."[10] Yet within the restricted compass of this protected realm

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[9]The Changing World of Anthony Trollope, p. 56.

[10]Doctor Thorne, p. xvii.

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Trollope does convey a sense of a variegated social whole that is rife with tension and full of consequence for the members. He can, in this realm of surety, control his vision so that his story delivers his social insight coherently: he wants nothing less than that men cherish one another.

The plot of the story suggests an extended fantasy about property; it relates the manner in which the Greshams, an old family of Barsetshire squires who are reduced in fortune, encounter changing social conditions by becoming allied to the virtuous heir of manufacturing wealth. At the beginning of the novel, the squire's eldest son, Frank Gresham, comes of age. His father had married into the aristocratic De Courcy family and in becoming allied to these Whig magnates had lost the old Tory political prominence of his family and jeopardized the family wealth in ruinous election contests which he entered in order to satisfy his wife's aristocratic pride. Frank, the family feels, must "marry money" in order to restore the Greshams to their pre-eminent position among the squires of Barsetshire. But Frank first flirts with, and then falls in love with the penniless niece of the squire's oldest friend and neighbor, Dr. Thorne. Dr. Thorne had assumed custody of Mary when she was an infant; she was the daughter of his younger brother who had seduced a village girl and then had been killed by the girl's brother. Mary's mother gave the child up to Dr. Thorne and then emigrated to America; her brother, Roger Scatcherd, after a jail sentence, goes on to become enormously wealthy

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as a contractor, and returns to Barsetshire, buying up the lands that the Greshams have been forced to sell. Dr. Thorne remains Sir Roger Scatcherd's friend.

When Frank Gresham's mother finds out about his infatuation for Mary Thorne, she banishes Mary from the house and sends Frank off to Courcy castle in the hope that he will woo an heiress, Miss Dunstable. Mary waits patiently for him and patiently endures the exclusion from Greshamsbury Park that Lady Arabella's contempt has earned for her. Meanwhile Sir Roger dies, leaving his fortune to his dissolute son Louis, with the proviso that if Louis dies, the estate will pass to his sister Mary's eldest child. Only Dr. Thorne knows that this is his niece Mary when the will is made. During this time, Frank has become a friend of Miss Dunstable who encourages him in his love for Mary. He is invited to Omnium Castle for the duke's annual dinner, returns to Cambridge, and goes to London to horsewhip a man who jilts his sister. When he graduates from Cambridge, he returns home and proposes to Mary. He promises his mother, however, that he will wait a year and goes abroad. Dr. Thorne, now Louis's guardian, is unable to prevent the heavy drinking which endangers his poor health. Frank learns from his father that Mary is illegitimate but remains loyal to her. At the request of Frank's mother, however, Mary writes to him, offering to break off their engagement, but at almost the same time Louis dies, and Mary becomes heir to the Scatcherd fortune. Dr. Thorne, who has been distressed over

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Mary's unhappiness, is able to tell the squire and Frank about Mary's wealth. The dream of property connects money to love here and even the remote Duke of Omnium attends the brilliant wedding with which the book closes.

But the book is much more than an upper-class idyll of old land and new wealth; it presents a study in the psychology of belonging. While the meaning of the story is close to his own life, Trollope here is able to distance his own identity to the extent that he can speak of acceptance and belonging as part of his fable of man as a social creature. When Mary becomes aware of Frank's love, she thinks that "it would be so sweet to be the sister of Beatrice, the daughter of the squire, to belong to Greshamsbury as a part and parcel of it,"[11] and she begins to question the doctor about her proper station in life, about who she is. Her doubts and her growing dread in conjunction with his reticence make for a difficult scene between them:

> 'But, uncle, I and Augusta Gresham--are we of the same class?'
> 'Well, Minnie, you would hardly have me boast that I am of the same class with the squire--I, a poor country doctor?'
> 'You are not answering me fairly, dear uncle; dearest uncle, do you not know that you are not answering me fairly? You know what I mean. Have I a right to call the Thornes of Ullathorne my cousins?'
> 'Mary, Mary, Mary!' said he, after a minute's pause, still allowing his arm to hang loose, that she might hold it with both her hands. 'Mary, Mary, Mary! I would that you had spared me this!'
> 'I could not have spared it to you for ever, uncle.'

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[11] Doctor Thorne (London: Oxford World's Classics, 1963), p. 88.

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> 'I would that you could have done so; I would that you could!'
> 'It is over now, uncle; it is told now; I will grieve you no more.'[12]

Part of the reticence derives from avoidance of matters of sexuality, but part of it also has to do with a sense of personal worth, and of shame:

> There was nothing more then said on the subject between them. Mary asked no further question, nor did the doctor volunteer further information. She would have been most anxious to ask about her mother's history had she dared to do so; but she did not dare to ask; she could not bear to be told that her mother had been, perhaps was, a worthless woman.[13]

He later assures her that her mother was unfortunate rather than disgraced, but he recognizes that his generosity to her has placed her in a difficult position. She is vulnerable in a way that he is not because he at least is able to earn a modest living as a doctor; her identity is less secure:

> But yet, what man would marry this bastard child, without a six-pence, and bring not only poverty, but ill blood also on his own children? It might be very well for him, Dr. Thorne; for him whose career was made, whose name, at any rate, was his own; for him who had a fixed standing-ground in the world; it might be well for him to indulge in large views of a philosophy antagonistic to the world's practice; but had he a right to do it for his niece? What man would marry a girl so placed? For those among whom she might have legitimately found a level, education had now utterly unfitted her.[14]

Her ambivalent class position is complicated by the shame of her conception; her father's violent death and her mother's

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[12] Ibid., p. 92.

[13] Ibid., p. 93.

[14] Ibid., p. 96.

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subsequent immigration jeopardize her security in quiet, orderly Greshamsbury. These facts of Mary's origin indicate that guilt as well as feelings of shame and mystery attach to the condition of being uncertain as to one's proper station. To wonder about the question of where one fits in the scheme of things is like some primal burden of dishonor. To be uncertain of one's class, as Mary is, is to have doubtful feelings about one's immediate family, as the orphaned Mary has ample cause to have; her situation is not unlike that of young Anthony Trollope, a poverty-stricken boy attending fashionable schools: "his form of early anguish is not often discussed, being depressing rather than picturesque, and even (some might consider) discreditable."[15] The novel does not intensively analyze Mary's inner doubts and anguish; it uses the facts of her condition, rather, as the equivalent for feelings of unworthiness and uncertainty.

As an illegitimate, penniless yet respectable girl, Mary is an archetype for all those who through no fault of their own are excluded, injured, or humiliated by society--like Cinderella. The degree of her loss is represented not so much by inner suffering as by a sense of the desirability of the realm which she must relinquish. This is presented largely in terms of land and space:

> The Greshamsbury grounds were on one side somewhat too closely hemmed in by the village. On this side was a path running the length of one of the streets of the village; and far down the path, near to the extremity of the gardens, and near also to a wicket-

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[15]Elizabeth Bowen, p. ix.

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> gate which led out into the village, and which could be opened from the inside, was a seat, under a big yew-tree, from which through a breach in the houses, might be seen the parish church, standing in the park on the other side. Hither Mary walked alone, and here she seated herself, determined to get rid of her tears and their traces before she again showed herself to the world.
>
> 'I shall never be happy here again,' said she to herself; 'never. I am no longer one of them, and I cannot live among them unless I am so.'[16]

Church, village, park, garden, estate, all these combine into a vision of a serene, peaceful, harmonious world, a world which, perhaps because of the careful framing of the scene through the gate and between the houses, gives off a sure sense of belonging to itself completely. Mary's recognition that she does not fit into this quiet idyll comes in consequence of her learning about the real nature of her family, and this in turn has been prompted by Frank's awareness of her as a beautiful young woman at the party which celebrates his coming of age. Adulthood, offering the possibilities of love, brings with it to Mary the consequences of knowledge about her circumstances--a painful sense of the difference between herself and the fair prospect before her.

All is not well in that prospect as the troubles of the Greshams suggest. Even though he is one of the fortunate ones, Frank's coming of age is complicated by the fact of his father's relative poverty. He is not free to do as he chooses; he must do as his aunt, Countess De Courcy, tells him:

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[16] Doctor Thorne, p. 99.

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> 'You have but one line of conduct left you, Frank: your position as heir to Greshamsbury, is a good one; but your father has unfortunately so hampered you with regard to money, that unless you set the matter right yourself, you can never enjoy that position. Of course you must marry money.'
> 'Marry money!' said he, considering for the first time that in all probability Mary Thorne's fortune would not be extensive. 'Marry money!'[17]

The phrase obsesses all the members of the family at Greshamsbury: Lady Arabella suffers acutely because of her need to keep up her aristocratic pretensions, and the squire is burdened with a sense of guilt because of the limited prospects of his son. Their life is infected by anxiety about money; Lady Arabella complains to her sister the countess about her husband:

> 'Now Augusta is to be married, I must of course have a few hundred pounds. You should have heard how he groaned when I asked him for it. Heaven only knows where the money goes!' And the injured wife wiped a piteous tear from her eye with her fine dress cambric handkerchief. 'I have all the sufferings and privations of a poor man's wife, but I have none of the consolations. He has no confidence in me; he never tells me anything; he never talks to me about his affairs. If he talks to any one it is to that horrid doctor.'[18]

There is a fine irony here, but her neurotic complaints go far to suggest the atmosphere of mistrust and lovelessness which pervades the house. The novel suggests that this atmosphere menaces something fine in the spirit of the Greshams, their independence. This is perhaps best articulated by Frank after he dines at the Duke of Omnium's:

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[17] Ibid., p. 109.

[18] Ibid., p. 46.

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> 'I may be wrong; but it seems to me that a man insults me when he asks me to dine with him and never speaks to me. I don't care if he be ten times Duke of Omnium; he can't be more than a gentleman, and as such I am his equal.'[19]

This egalitarian pride of class counters the false standards prompted by money greed. Valuing things rather than men is a danger in the society and the Greshams, if they are made secure enough, can oppose these tendencies with their authority and the weight of their traditions. The problem is, that this too costs money.

The book strives to reconcile the difference between money as a damaging force and money as a positive one. It is partly a matter of attitude; people should come first. Miss Dunstable who has inherited a fortune made in the sale and manufacture of a patent medicine, Oil of Lebanon, reacts to Frank's predicament in terms of this ethical valuation:

> 'Sell yourself for money! why, if I were a man I would not sell one jot of liberty for mountains of gold. What! tie myself in the heyday of my youth to a person I could never love, for a price! perjure myself, destroy myself--and not only myself, but her also, in order that I might live idly![20]

The paradox here is that in measuring her capital in hundreds of thousands of pounds, she is rich enough not to have to sell herself. Her wealth gives what she says, moreover, an authority it might not otherwise have. She urges Frank to be "true to his vows" to Mary, and Frank's persistence in his love for Mary becomes a way of dramatizing the integrity of

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[19] Ibid., p. 240.

[20] Ibid., p. 246.

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human, as opposed to materialistic, values. At the same time, the drama is presented in property terms:

> Then once again the aunt tapped her nephew with her fan. It was the last time in her life that she did so. He looked up in her face, and his look was enough to tell her that the acres of Greshamsbury were not to be reclaimed by the ointment of Lebanon.[21]

Many fine acres were, in fact, reclaimed by the ore of Silver City or the pork of Chicago in the nineteenth century; the difference to the Greshams in the Scatcherd railroad money is a matter of feeling: Mary does not sell herself to belong to the fair prospect of Greshamsbury, nor does Frank sell himself to balance the estate ledgers--the fable prompted by the dream in this case insures that they love each other before money is a consideration.

Dr. Thorne teaches Mary that "of all the vile objects of a man's ambition, wealth, wealth merely for its own sake was the vilest."[22] Frank's sister, Augusta, plans to marry Mr. Moffat, an unattractive young man who had represented the De Courcy interests in Parliament until he was unseated by Sir Roger Scatcherd; the wedding is scheduled for February:

> February is certainly not a warm month; but with the rich it is generally a cosy, comfortable time. Good fires, winter cheer, groaning tables, and warm blankets, make a fictitious summer, which, to some tastes, is more delightful than the long days and the hot sun. And some marriages are especially winter matches. They depend for their charm on the same substantial attractions: instead of heart beating to heart in sympathetic unison, purse chinks to purse. The rich new furniture of the new abode is looked to instead of the rapture of a pure embrace.

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[21] Ibid., p. 249.

[22] Ibid., p. 135.

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> The new carriage is depended on rather than the new heart's companion; and the first bright gloss, prepared by the upholsterer's hands, stands in lieu of the rosy tints which young love lends to his true votaries.[23]

Amply-furnished interiors are no substitutes for real feelings: materialism perverts eros, and Trollope recognizes that such transpositions are among the vices of his civilization. What helps save Frank and Mary from the taint of such a substitution is the very predicament which prevents their union, and this predicament in turn helps mitigate any suggestion that Greshamsbury is in any way tainted by the new sources of its economic restoration. The story of the love between them is one of delay and restraint.

In the beginning of their relationship, Frank is young, impulsive, and not entirely stable in his enthusiasms:

> 'Oh, oh! Mary; do you love me? Don't you love me? Won't you love me? Say you will. Oh, Mary, dearest Mary, will you? won't you? do you? don't you? Come now, you have a right to give a fellow an answer.'[24]

The nursery-rhyme quality of his speech suggests his immaturity; Mary is hesitant:

> Though Frank was only a boy, it behoved Mary to be something more than a girl. Frank might be allowed, without laying himself open to much just reproach, to throw all of what he believed to be his heart into a protestation of what he believed to be love; but Mary was in duty bound to be more thoughtful, more reticent, more aware of the facts of their position, more careful of her own feelings, and more careful also of his.[25]

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[23] Ibid., p. 254-255.

[24] Ibid., p. 83.

[25] Ibid.

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When she answers him by telling him that she is afraid of him, Frank is surprised. He must, in the economy of love, take more responsibility for his feelings and, as Mary begins to teach him, he must take responsibility for the consequences of them as well. Mary, even though she is unsure of her place in the social order, does not exploit her advantage over him; she tells him that he must not joke about such things or she will be forced to avoid him. Her counsel is prudential; one's emotional capital must be saved for future security. Because of the opposition of his family it is a year before he sees her again and when he does so, he proposes to her. She is staying with Lady Scatcherd at Boxall Hill in order to be out of his way. When he goes to her this time it is with quite a different feeling than before:

> He took the road to Boxall Hill, but he did not ride very fast; he did not go jauntily as a jolly, thriving wooer; but musingly, and often with diffidence, meditating every now and then whether it would not be better for him to turn back: to turn back--but not from fear of his mother; not from prudential motives; not because that often-repeated lesson as to marrying money was beginning to take effect; not from such causes as these; but because he doubted how he might be received by Mary.[26]

This hesitation indicates the degree to which he has become worthy of her; in doubting about how she will receive him, he fulfills the most important obligation she has laid upon him --that he think of her as a real person. If Mary does not use Frank as a way of rising above her social plight, Frank

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[26] Ibid., p. 350.

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no longer uses his situation as the handsome young heir to play with his lovely neighbor's affections.

When he finds her on the grounds of Boxall Hill, she is, like a courtly lady, riding a donkey. Their passage of love is interrupted by an unwelcome intruder, and their separation lasts for nearly a year. Frank is much more articulate on this occasion, and it is no small part of Trollope's psychological subtlety in characterization that now, when Frank has less confidence and a much more highly developed sense of the consequences of his actions, his speeches to Mary are firm and direct. While he becomes impassioned, his language has none of the regressive, child-like quality of the dallying boy; he knows better now how to value Mary:

> 'Mary, Mary!' said Frank, throwing his arms around her knees as she sat upon her steed, and pressing his face against her body. 'Mary, you were always honest; be honest now. I love you with all my heart. Will you be my wife?'[27]

Mary, torn by the knowledge of the difficulties that face them, is reticent:

> But still Mary said not a word. She no longer bit her lips; she was beyond that, and was now using all her efforts to prevent her tears from falling absolutely on her lover's face. She said nothing. She could no more rebuke him now and send him from her than she could encourage him. She could only sit there shaking and crying and wishing she were on the ground.[28]

She says only his name before Louis Scatcherd interrupts them.

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[27] Ibid., p. 360.

[28] Ibid.

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Frank is sent abroad for twelve months where, as his mother complacently reflects, "Frank will meet women that are really beautiful," and, she is sure, "he will soon forget Mary Thorne." The long separation tests their constancy and their worthiness; Frank matures further and Mary suffers patiently and quietly. This denial of the fruits of their mutual love represents, in the ethics of restraint, proof of their suitability. The reticence and brevity of their communications, the brief, interrupted encounters, test their qualities of patience and fortitude; they save up good qualities for each other.

Their worthiness is demonstrated in a variety of ways. When Frank's father tells him the real story of Mary's birth on his return from Boxall Hill that day, it makes no difference:

> 'Ah, sir, tell me this: who were Miss Dunstable's parents? What was that fellow Moffat's family?
>
> This was perhaps cruel of Frank. The squire, however made no answer to the question. 'I have thought it right to tell you,' said he. I leave all commentary to yourself. I need not tell you what your mother will think.'
>
> 'What did she think of Miss Dunstable's birth?' said he, again more bitterly than before. 'No, sir,' he continued, after a further pause. 'All that can make no change; none at any rate now. It can't make my love less, even if it could have prevented it. Nor, even, could it do so--which it can't the least, not in the least--but could it do so, it could not break my engagement. I am now engaged to Mary Thorne.'[29]

The recognition in his bitter questions is an important moral one: money counts for more than gentle birth in his society.

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[29] Ibid., pp. 367-368.

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Money is everything. In the way the plot of the book works to counter, negate, and transcend this truth, it affords an insight into the inadequacy of the existing materialistic value system. The system is inadequate because it forces people, in their desire for gains, to be false to each other: Lady Amelia De Courcy advises her cousin, Augusta Gresham, to reject a proposal from the De Courcy family solicitor, Mr. Gazebee, because he has to work for his living; four years later she marries him herself. The lives of the hero and heroine offer a vivid contrast to these grasping standards. When Mary is confronted by Lady Arabella with the charge that she has nothing to offer Frank, she dismisses her by saying, "I will not listen to your calculations as to how much or how little each of us may have to give to the other."[30] Her altruism reaches its fullest expression when she releases Frank from their engagement if he wishes. While final arrangements are being made about the Scatcherd inheritance, silence surrounds her; she has no great or wild expectations, and she does not learn that she is an heiress until quite late in the story--so late that her life in its changed circumstances is left almost entirely to the imagination. She sits alone in a room for three hours while Frank, the squire, and her uncle discuss the fortune that has been left to her:

> 'To me!' she cried, and putting both her hands to her forehead, she seemed to be holding her temples together. 'To me!'

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[30] Ibid., p. 502.

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> 'Yes, Mary; it is all your own now. To do as you like best with it all--all. May God, in His mercy, enable you to bear the burden, and lighten for you the temptation.'[31]

She has been sitting there "wondering, wondering, wondering," and there is an awesome feeling about the money; Dr. Thorne's portentous words accord with the action of the book in which anxiety about money has brought trouble to the Greshams, has infected the moral atmosphere of De Courcy castle, and has blighted the life of the Scatcherds. No one is more aware of these conditions than Dr. Thorne.

As explained by Michael Sadleir, Dr. Thorne faces a number of painful dilemmas: he knows of the feeling between Frank and Mary, he knows that the Greshams are heavily indebted to the Scatcherds, and he knows the terms of Sir Roger's will; his duty as a professional man demands that he keep Sir Louis alive, and his personal honor requires that he remain silent about the terms of the will.[32] The confidences that are entrusted to him give him, potentially, a great deal of power, but he does not abuse it. When Lady Arabella upbraids him about Mary and Frank, he is firm, even angry with her, but he never uses an unfair advantage over her; he is never rude or overbearing. He handles petulant Sir Louis with tact and delicacy, even though, as the squire recognizes, Sir Louis feels that with respect to the Gresham debt, the doctor is shielding his friend. To the squire, "it seemed to

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[31] Ibid., p. 522.

[32] Trollope, A Commentary, pp. 382-383.

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be his fate to be depending always on the clemency or consideration of Dr. Thorne."[33]

As a doctor he has authority in the community and his integrity helps him to win the respect of others. He is a model of inner rectitude and self-confidence; in his deepest being he is as independent in spirit as is any squire with land:

> He had within him an inner, stubborn, self-admiring pride, which made him believe himself to be better and higher than those around him, and this from some unknown cause which he could hardly explain to himself. He had a pride in being a poor man of a high family; he had a pride in repudiating the very family of which he was proud; and he had a special pride in keeping his pride silently to himself. His father had been a Thorne, and his mother a Thorold. There was no better blood to be had in England. It was in the possession of such properties as these that he condescended to rejoice; this man, with a man's heart, a man's courage, and a man's humanity![34]

His finest property is his inner sense of his own worth; this is expressed in terms of his family pride, but his love for his niece and the service he renders her shows that even that is an external quality; in his deepest self, he is an autonomous man. His self-reliance helps him to overcome whatever dire consequences might have arisen later from the violence and shame that surround Mary's birth. If the family is tainted, his independence and steadfastness help to redeem it. And if his knowledge of the lives of his neighbors and friends brings him personal distress, he is, nevertheless, able to preside over their lives with considerable grace and

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[33] Doctor Thorne, p. 486.

[34] Ibid., p. 26.

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tact. He earns his own way in the world, but his qualifications as a gentleman are impeccable; he is an archetypal wise man, clothed in English middle-class decency. He not only belongs in Greshamsbury and Barsetshire, he is indispensable; he is independent enough to be immune to snobbery and self-seeking. It is the way in which his character becomes a repository for these values that substantiates beyond question the desirability of the match between Frank and Mary. His good will is enough to assure the reader that this union provides a transcendence over the imperfections of the ordinary self-seeking world.

But at times the doctor's reticence can seem like impossible stuffiness. He is upset when Lady Arabella banishes Mary from the house where she might meet Frank. The thought that Mary might become the heiress "would recur to him again and again," although this was "a dangerous subject on which to ponder."[35] He is not able to tell Mary what has taken place at the manor:

> 'Uncle,' she said at last, 'what makes you so sombre? Shall I read to you?'
> 'No; not to-night, dearest.'
> 'Why, uncle; what is the matter?'
> 'Nothing, nothing.'
> 'Ah, but it is something, and you shall tell me;' and, getting up, she came over to his arm-chair, and leant over his shoulder.
> He looked at her for a minute in silence, and then, getting up from his chair, passed his arm around her waist, and pressed her closely to his heart.
> 'My darling!' he said, almost convulsively. 'My best, own, truest darling!' and Mary, looking up

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[35] Ibid., p. 179.

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> into his face, saw that the big tears were running down his cheeks.
>
> But still he told her nothing that night.[36]

Women had to be protected; sheltering and withholding were considered appropriate responses. In this scene it is painful for the doctor not to tell Mary, but the pain caused by his reticence is the price of his knowledge. In terms of the plot of this novel, the "dangerous subject on which to ponder" becomes, in time, the way out of the characters' dilemma, the very resolution of the action. The "dangerous subject" is transcended: the misalliance becomes, in fact, a rescue.

But before this happens, Dr. Thorne suffers because he has well-grounded insights into the nature of the world around him. Part of his suffering demonstrates altruism, as his sheltering Mary from painful knowledge suggests; part of it is a consequence of his professional knowledge, as his relationship with the Scatcherds suggests. Both his knowledge and the suffering it causes him contribute to healing the divisions in his society, however, because, in spite of his reticence and his apparent powerlessness to alter immediate circumstances, the wedding between new money and old comes about largely through his agency.

In taking up the cause of his brother long before, he had broken with his well-to-do relatives, the Thornes of Ullathorne. In assuming custody of the fatherless child, he had obligated himself for years with a burden which was more

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[36] Ibid., p. 180.

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than financial--the Thornes would not accept Mary as a cousin. But when Mary becomes Mrs. Gresham, wealthy mistress of broad acres, "all this was altered," and the relationship is renewed. The vindication brought about by the union thus applies to his original deed as well as to his discomfort and difficulties in his relations with his friends. He had said to the mother (also named Mary):

> 'And what will you do for her here, Mary?' said the doctor. Poor Mary replied to him with a deluge of tears.
>
> 'She is my niece,' said the doctor, taking up the tiny infant in his huge hands; 'she is already the nearest thing, the only thing I have in this world. I am her uncle, Mary. If you will go with this man [her future husband] I will be father to her and mother to her. Of what bread I eat, she shall eat; of what cup I drink, she shall drink. See, Mary, here is the Bible;' and he covered the book with his hand. 'Leave her to me, and by this word she shall be my child.'[37]

This is a sacred act: in becoming psychic mother and father to the child, he performs a magic rite--he becomes a surrogate creator. Thomas Adolphus Trollope may have furnished the plot of the novel; he could not have suggested the specific language that Dr. Thorne, a mid-Victorian Prospero, uses here.

It is through the fortunate identity of this character that reconciliation, healing, and promising hopes for the future come about. The creation of such a figure suggests, moreover, a fortunate discovery within the author's own being or perhaps it would be better to say, the fruition of inner striving and hard work, for Dr. Thorne represents the best of

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[37] Ibid., p. 25.

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what Anthony Trollope was seeking in hiw own life and work. He makes an optimistic identification here between the success of the independent professional man and the presence of good auguries for the future of the community to which he belongs. Dr. Thorne's achievement is modest and undramatic: his victory is won by intelligence, patience, and tact, and his advantages are the fruits of maturity.

The degree to which Dr. Thorne's victory represents a psychic gain for his author is best illustrated by comparison with earlier characters who face similar situations. Like Thady Macdermot, Dr. Thorne confronts the trauma of illicit sexual passion in his own family, but Dr. Thorne is unburdened with an inheritance of debt and has a profession by which he can earn his way in the world if he is persistent. People as important as Squire Gresham look up to him, and he is Sir Roger Scatcherd's only friend. Both instances attest to the fact that his society recognizes his worth, that it needs him. He shares attributes with another character in that book, for like Father John, he is a professional man who watches over the life of the community around him. But unlike Father John who presides helplessly over the tragedy of his young friend's life while ministering to his soul, Dr. Thorne benefits from his professional capacity to enhance his relationships with others. He wins trust and loyalty; he is an "insider" who can look on the possibilities of fulfillment and happiness for the young people he loves. With respect to his success, the beneficial qualities of his environment have

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no little influence on the outcome of his prospects. In this environment the landed gentry is supreme, and while Dr. Thorne himself does not own land, his influence and his connections give him access to it. In this respect, his situation is psychologically similar to Charley Tudor's at the end of The Three Clerks because close connections to landed property through friends and relatives is sublimated landowning. But with Dr. Thorne, the dream of property which buttresses and sustains his identity is closer to the real conditions of his life than it is with Charley: through Dr. Thorne's actions the ascendency of the landed order is sustained. In assuming responsibility for the consequences of his brother's sexual transgression, he virtually assures, through his independence and integrity, that Frank Gresham will "marry money," happily, and without the taint of selling himself. Through his role in the Cinderella fable, he helps to create the rewards of property which here serve to transcend "the passions of class."

Dr. Thorne's story, the motivating background to a love story, reflects Trollope's own recognition of "the commencement of his success." The optimism of the story suggests that he felt himself coming into possession of what he wanted for himself, what he had earned the right to be, a kind of Dr. Thorne of the imagination, sought out and appreciated in the real world for his knowledge of the imaginative one.

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CONCLUSION

The Bertrams (1859) is a strange book. In its rendering of an unhappy marriage and of promising ambitions which are never realized, it presents a story of lives blighted by neurotic behavior. It has, in many respects, a more modern quality than Doctor Thorne: the characters' anxiety about their marriages and careers suggests quotidian frustration rather than heroic striving, the failure of youthful hopes reflects themes now familiar, and the characters live and travel in a recognizable British Empire. But much in the book is tedious and it seems uneasy with the kind of life that it renders. If the urban life portrayed in The Three Clerks has a faintly Dickensian ring in some of its broad effects, the cosmopolitanism of The Bertrams is more mundane and matter-of-fact. It is a more pessimistic book than Doctor Thorne; it seems less hopeful of the possibilities of combining success and happiness in middle-class life.

The Bertrams represents the beginning of a new phase in Trollope's career. Speaking of The Bertrams and the succeeding novels, Castle Richmond, Framley Parsonage, and Orley Farm, one critic says that Trollope "in these novels explores the ways that time and the world crush the hopes of

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the young and the dogmatic beliefs of the old."[1] The author's sense of the problematic seemed to deepen as he became more confident of his own success. Doctor Thorne, somewhat to his surprise, sold well but The Bertrams did not, and his remarks on this in his autobiography seem offhand:

> At this time there was nothing in the success of the one or the failure of the other to affect me very greatly. The immediate sale, and the notices elicited from the critics, and the feeling which had now come to me of a confident standing with the publishers, all made me know that I had achieved my object. If I wrote a novel, I could certainly sell it.[2]

Perhaps the more pessimistic attitudes revealed in these later novels reflect some inner qualification with respect to the meaning of success; it is measured differently by one who has experienced it than by one who merely dreams of it. Trollope certainly wrote all his life like a man who was compelled to effort--at one point he published novels anonymously to see if they would be as successful as the ones that appeared under his name. He was never quite sure of his success; perhaps his reputation never entirely satisfied him; but if his doubts persisted, they never could be the same as they had been in the period of initial achievement because it is different to be uncertain about a result than to be uncertain about a possibility. In the latter case one deals with fact instead of imaginings and can perhaps have less cause for optimism than when everything consists of

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[1]Robert Polhemus, The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, 1968), p. 59.

[2]An Autobiography (Oxford, 1947), p. 116.

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opportunities unmeasured by reality.

In this sense The Bertrams is a somewhat bitter reappraisal of what life holds out, and it seems to be a natural outgrowth of the euphoric mood of Doctor Thorne. For that book is a fable about the power of love to heal the divisions in the community. These divisions are presented in such a way that the greatest rift in the social fabric is not between the rich and the poor but between those who deserve to belong to the genteel order and those who do not deserve to. The most deserving are the most unselfish; unlike The Three Clerks where class antagonism is a sharp and bitter aspect of conflict, the drama of exclusion and belonging in Doctor Thorne can be effectively resolved with a marriage and a fortunate inheritance because that drama presents a much more private and personal conflict. At the same time this conflict is able to suggest much about the tension within the social order and about the ethical qualities which confront that tension.

As presented in these novels, these qualities, detachment, selflessness, a regard for the feelings of others, are embodied in such men as Mr. Harding, Arabin, and Dr. Thorne--men who belong. They are professional men but they participate in the lives of the propertied classes. The acceptance accorded them by the well-to-do helps to sustain and to affirm the desirable traits which they evidence by their conduct; they are powerless in a world of deprivation like that of The Macdermots or in a world of political violence

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like that of La Vendée, but where property can guarantee a certain stability, as in Barchester, they flourish. Even in The Kellys and The O'Kellys and The Three Clerks, one can see an unselfishness similar to theirs contending with a world which contains more of damaging antagonism and dangerous conflict; in both cases the books suffer because the themes of unselfishness derive from fantasies of good fortune which seem to be imposed on settings where it is unlikely. In Barchester however one finds property relations which are benevolent and nourishing; its serene distances of green shade encourage detachment and humane conduct:

> The race for power and personal position seems to destroy all men's characters. I believe that the only creature who can keep his honour is a man living on his own estate; he has no need to intrigue and struggle--for it is no good intriguing for fine weather.[3]

The observation is made by a German army commander of the first world war, General Hoffman, but it is a kind of commonplace of upper-class pastoralism in the nineteenth century. The aristocrat is an unsatisfactory model for Trollope, but the commoner with land or the professional man who associates with him as a social equal has the psychological equivalence of economic independence, a surety of being which represents a prized possession in an age fraught with uncertainty.

Confidence implies self-approval, and it is possible in these books to observe a struggle between approval and dissatisfaction as Trollope becomes more conscious of achieving

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[3]As quoted in the epigraph to B. H. Liddell Hart, The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart, II (London, 1965).

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his object. In this sense Thady Macdermot, a victim who does not deserve his fate, represents a psychic state analogous to that of a man whose guilt inhibits life-sustaining self-approval; society destroys Thady as the nemesis of inner torment destroys the descendants of an unhappy family. The Kellys and The O'Kellys insists on rewards to the extent that it duplicates the story of good fortune in two spheres, an ordinary and an elevated one, and it posits disapproval and shame as the just deserts of guilty conduct. In La Vendée the favorable characters, figures from an adolescent fantasy of heroism, are overwhelmed by their society; the outer world menaces an inner, protected one. In The Warden self-approval is made victorious over the assaults of the outer, unappreciative world by affirming that those assaults in a final sense do not really matter. Barchester Towers is a fable of healing and love; the society works to accept Mr. Arabin and to welcome him. The Three Clerks dramatizes self-approval as the reward of effort; money and love are the surrogates of approval here, but the condition is checked by uncertainty as to the product of effort. In Doctor Thorne the poles of acceptance and exclusion are reflected in the beings of the doctor and his niece; the story allows confidence to overcome the disadvantages of rejection and exclusion, to the benefit of all.

The successes of real men can never be as complete as the victories of fantasy heroes can; unlike life in the fantasy castle, the struggle for self-confidence in the world

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of fact is always qualified by the complex nature of reality. Men as they mature learn to accept and to live with results that are only partially satisfactory, even as they remember the absolutes they had once dreamed of:

> While I was in Egypt, I finished Doctor Thorne, and on the following day began The Bertrams. I was moved now by a determination to excel, if not in quality, at any rate, in quantity. An ignoble ambition for an author, my readers will no doubt say. But not, I think, altogether ignoble, if an author can bring himself to look at his work as does any other workman.

A measure of disappointment and of failure, a sense of the ambivalent nature of the sought-after rewards, goes into phrases like "ignoble ambition," and "if an author can bring himself." Yet much is accomplished imaginatively among the well-tended gardens in some of these early books; they suggest a vision of a humane community where people live by values which really are decent. It is remarkable in Trollope's imaginative geography that while these stories reflect an assured upper-class world, many of the estates and enclosures are readily accessible from the public way--Hiram's Hospital, Ullathorne Court, and Greshamsbury Park are all close to the road--in this sense the traditions and the quiet peace they reflect are meant not to exclude the world, but to bring it in.

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