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TROLLOPE IN PERSPECTIVE

N.D. Hamilton

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ABSTRACT

The Thesis opens with a brief summary of the ups and downs of Trollope's literary reputation. In the first chapter the extent of his range and his ability to create characters convincingly are examined. This is pursued further in Chapter Two with an analysis of some of the characters as moral beings and some consideration of the writer's claim to intimacy with his readers.

In Chapters Three, Four and Five, I have looked at a representative selection of the novels in chronological sequence in order to show the development of his art and his ideas together with a steady growth towards ironic detachment. The relationship of individual characters to some of the main institutions of Victorian England is investigated in Chapter Six, while the wider background of the nineteenth century and the ways in which we view it today are the subject of Chapter Seven. In Chapter Eight Trollope's own perceptive view of man is discussed.

In the last chapter I have sought to assess Trollope's artistic contribution in the context of a discussion of some current ideas about the value of literature.

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PREFACE

No one becomes a Trollopian overnight and my own interest in Trollope grew out of a sixth-form study of Barchester Towers for 'A' level. This interest was developed during the time I was at Durham and after graduating I decided to pursue research as a part-time student. Although the reading and study has been spread over several years, the initial writing was compressed into the summer holidays of 1975 and 1976, since when several new books have appeared, confirming the revival of academic interest in Trollope.

I would like to record my thanks to the following, without whose help this thesis would not have reached its present form: Mr. B. Stokes, who helped me to appreciate much of the comic irony in the early writing; Dr. A. Morrison, who encouraged me to begin; Dr. J.W. Blench, who as my supervisor has monitored the progress of the writing and given particular help and encouragement in the later stages; Mr. N. Lee, for help in obtaining books and some help with the notes; Mrs. M. Dale for her painstaking typing of the script. I would also like to thank relations and friends without whose tolerance and encouragement part-time study would have been impossible : in particular, my parents and Mr. and Mrs. R.B. Smyth. Most of all, I want to thank Debbie for her unfailing interest and support.

The footnotes will be found at the end of each chapter and bibliographical details of texts and critical works referred to or used in the thesis are given in the Bibliography on page 254.

INTRODUCTIONViewpoints

'It is very hard to come at the actual belief of any man,' Trollope wrote in 1866<sup>1</sup>. The same caution can usefully be exercised by anyone attempting an appraisal of the work of Anthony Trollope himself, for he has received little enough serious consideration in spite of his enduring popularity. There has been a revival of critical interest over the last few years, but his novels have not commanded the attention and respect that has been accorded to the works of other great Victorian writers. Much existing criticism has tended to confirm the view that for all his popularity Trollope is not to be taken seriously. The immense quantity of his output - he wrote forty-seven novels as well as a number of other full-length books - and the prosaic manner in which he approached his art have tended to make people think that he was incapable of deep thought or artistic creativity. But whatever criteria one adopts in considering Trollope's work, patience and a degree of humility are essential before one can hope to perceive the full extent of his achievement.

It will be as well to begin by considering some of the reasons for the adverse nature of much of the criticism written about Trollope. One reason seems to arise from the expectation that all really important novelists of the nineteenth century were vitally and visibly concerned with tackling the hypocrisies and in particular the social injustices of their age. Dickens still occupies a central position because he shows up in such a clear light those abuses and



inequalities which others subsequently sought to put right. George Eliot and Thomas Hardy have attained critical acceptance because they too challenged the consciences of their readers, making them question many of their basic assumptions about the ordering of society. It has been generally held that Trollope had no such message for his fellow-men and ever since Frederick Harrison likened his art to that of photography<sup>2</sup>, he has had a reputation as a recorder of middle-class, mid-Victorian society, capable of describing the ordinary lives of ordinary Englishmen and making a readable, if somewhat voluminous, story out of very little in the way of plot-material. He has generally been considered along with Scott, Disraeli and Thackeray and his reputation has not always gained from the comparison. This general censure of Trollope as being out of touch with the major issues of his age still has currency today: Raymond Chapman expresses this view of Trollope's superficiality in describing his work as 'a guide-book to the age'<sup>3</sup>, and William Myers, writing in 1971, says that

'the treatment of major social questions in Trollope's novels, though impressive at a documentary level, is finally uninteresting ... The skeletal thinness of his achievement... emphasises his failure to experience social fact'<sup>4</sup>.

If Trollope has failed to attract attention alongside those novelists who pricked the consciences of their readers about the social wrongs of the age, so too has he fallen short of the stature of another group of novelists, centred around Jane Austen and the

Brontë sisters. These have been excused the narrowness of their backgrounds and the virtual exclusion of the wider social problems on the grounds that their outlooks were restricted by their domestic situations. Yet Trollope has been adversely criticised for the limitations of his range in the novels set in Barsetshire. Not even that imaginary county is as isolated as Highbury, for example, and although the outside world of politics, journalism and railways obtrudes more into the Barsetshire scene than it does into Emma or Wuthering Heights, for example, it is still true that in the early part of his writing career Trollope felt more at home writing about a secluded country society than in portraying the much more confused existence of man in town society. It was a natural choice that he should begin with the smaller more intimate circles of country society and build steadily towards the more open community of mankind at large as his confidence in his artistic ability grew. Had he attempted from the beginning to portray the heart of changing thought and ideas about society that existed in London, Trollope would undoubtedly have been overwhelmed by the mass of humanity and the variety of ideas with which he was confronted. It is hardly surprising that his first real literary efforts came to fruition in the quieter existence that his posting to Ireland brought him in 1841. 'This was the first good fortune of my life,' he later wrote<sup>5</sup> and he based his first novel on the small though diverse society of County Leitrim. Many of his later novels are set against a background as restricted as that of The Macdermots of Ballycloran,



though they do encompass an increasingly wide range of ideas and contemporary thought if one considers his entire opus chronologically. Throughout his writing career, however, he concerned himself primarily with the way individuals think, act, react and interact, and it is hardly surprising that for some of the time he should choose, like Jane Austen before him, a small piece of ivory on which to carve his intricate studies. '3 or 4 families in a country village is the very thing to work on'<sup>6</sup> might be quoted in Trollope's defence with equal justification.

However much of the criticism of Trollope has begun by comparing him with other nineteenth century novelists, a great deal of his individuality and an appreciation of the scope of his artistic achievement have been lost in the comparison. But far from spending his writing career in pale imitation of his contemporaries, he helped to develop the novel as a medium of artistic expression and the enormously wide readership which he enjoyed during his own lifetime encouraged him in this. Many of the critical notices which his novels received, reflect this immense success, although they rarely achieve the perception into his art which our twentieth century detachment should make possible<sup>7</sup>. I say 'should make possible', because much twentieth century criticism has not shown that detachment. To some extent this may be due to the large number of personal memories and reminiscences which were kept alive by those who had some contact with the novelist himself. Michael Sadleir's work is of immeasurable value to any student of Trollope,

for biographical detail which sheds light on the writing of the novels, and for the detailed work in sorting out Trollope's enormous output<sup>8</sup>, but his critical judgement of Trollope's achievement is seriously interfered with by his personal memories and assumptions about what literature ought to be. His service to twentieth century criticism of Trollope is similar to that performed by Robert Bridges when he arranged for the publication of the verse of G.M. Hopkins with an apology that really was an apology. There is, however, this difference: Hopkins's poetry soon came to be seen for its true worth and the introduction was soon forgotten, while in the case of Trollope, the influence of Michael Sadleir has been such that most critical opinion has accepted his somewhat faint praise of Trollope's achievement as a novelist.

Another important and influential twentieth century appraisal of Trollope, while it has done much to reawaken interest in the novels written after 1867, has left us with the impression that the earlier novels are unimportant but more seriously has put an interpretation on the later novels which is quite at odds with an overall view of Trollope as writer and moralist. A.O.J. Cockshut's study considered for the first time many of the themes which span the novels, such as 'Property and Rank', 'Father and Son', 'Religion and the Clergy', 'Death' and 'Politics and Love' (to quote some of the chapter headings), and showed how Trollope's writing career progressed towards pessimism after the initial sparkle of the Barsetshire series was over:

'The order (of the chapters) is chronological, and each chapter reveals a further stage in the steepening curve of the author's pessimism'<sup>9</sup>.

Anyone who reads sufficiently widely in Trollope's work, particularly outside the novels themselves, can become aware of his own ironic detachment from the workings of the minds of his characters and the mistake that has so frequently been made is the assumption that Trollope's characters are unconscious reflections of the mind of their author. We are only just beginning now to perceive the extent to which Trollope was the detached master of all his characters. As I hope to show subsequently Trollope developed a detachment and a universal pity of the proportions we have grown to expect from only the great figures of literature. Nor do I think that the later novels reflect a less optimistic outlook as clearly as Cockshut suggested, but even so, this defence of the novels written after 1867 leaves the impression that the earlier works were mainly a preparation for the more important work of his later years. If Trollope was finding his feet as a novelist when he chose to write about the secluded world of Ireland and Barsetshire, he was not doing so merely in preparation for the novels in a broader social setting, although that is the impression with which we are left from reading Cockshut's attempt to readjust the balance between the early and late work.

The later novels are just as selective in the number of characters introduced as were the early ones. The characters

of political London, for example, are strictly limited in number and Trollope creates the effect of a broad social background by concentrating on the day-to-day lives of a few men and women, without the necessity of introducing an oppressively large number of minor characters. We are never overwhelmed by the number of characters who appear in the later novels and one of the reasons for this is that they nearly all belong to about 'three or four families'. In The Way We Live Now, there are the Carbury, Longstaffe and Melmotte families; in addition, there is the 'family' of the Beargarden Club, and the Board of the S.C.P. and M. Railway Company; and that, apart from Paul Montague and Mrs. Hurtle, is just about the sum total. Considering that the novel fills rather more than eight hundred pages, the number of characters involved is quite small.

Apart from the critical works of Michael Sadleir and A.O.J. Cockshut, there have been many critical appraisals published. In the main these fall into two groups: the short critical essay, based on just one book or a few of the novels together; and the longer critical assessment. The first of these groups suffers because the concern with the particular book or few books makes it difficult to achieve the perspective needed for an understanding of Trollope's achievement (and it is impossible to reconsider afresh the entire output of a man as prolific as Trollope in a short essay). The second group, attempting a longer critical assessment, has, until recently, followed the interpretation of Sadleir and there

is so much to cover in biographical information and in the classification and brief introduction of the novels (the reader who has only dabbled in Trollope needs an extended guided tour of his life and his entire oeuvre if he is to stand any chance of seeing the wood for the trees) that there is little time or space for serious reflection on the nature of Trollope's achievement. It would be wrong, however, to give the impression that the entire range of criticism about Trollope has been misleading and uninformative : many aspects of his work have been enriched by perceptive writing and Trollope has received due attention for his characterisation and for his naturalism. It is only now, though, that we are beginning to question the criteria of merit by which we judge the novel and as a result the qualities which have been obscured for the best part of a century are coming into focus at last.

Of critics who have contributed significantly to this process of rethinking about Trollope, one stands out in particular. Ruth apRoberts has published a number of essays about and introductions to Trollope, but her major work on Trollope<sup>10</sup> offers a new assessment of him as a man and as a novelist, by bringing to light aspects of his intellectual interests and in particular his preference for the casuistry of Cicero over the dogmatism which was so common in his own age<sup>11</sup>. By bringing various non-fictional works by Trollope to our attention and by questioning the established modes of criticism, Ruth apRoberts has done a great service to the works of Trollope and to modern criticism of the novel in general.

There is still much to be done in forging a new criticism, however, for the established patterns by which we have been accustomed to evaluate the novel have deep roots : attention to style, symbolism and technique and the tendency to compare authors historically or even, like E.M. Forster, out of the context of the literary tradition in which they were written; all these things have been part and parcel of a literary education and it is not always easy to see that these criteria may be hindering our true judgement of the novel. Certainly many modern novels do not lend themselves to this kind of analysis, but it requires much more detachment to consider the established tradition of the novel afresh. Yet the very fact that Trollope's popularity has endured and the unsatisfactory way in which he has been critically assessed make it essential that we should constantly question the assumptions which underlie any form of established criticism.

Pressing as the reasons for thinking anew about Trollope are, there should be no mistake about the difficulty of the task. For a start, there is the magnitude of his output : how many people, realistically, have the time to read all of Trollope's novels and his other works as well, even if they can obtain them, which is not always the case? Whatever the justification for the length of his books, no one would credit him with strict economy in use of words. Yet if one is to perceive the ironic detachment which is so fundamental to understanding Trollope's art, one has to read extensively and in depth, a time-consuming business! It is indeed

fortunate that Trollope possessed qualities for which he has been duly praised over the years : his readability, his skilful handling of plot and his outstanding characterisation. Without these things the task of reading widely would be a tedious, uphill one and few indeed would be the number interested in reassessing his detachment or anything else about him. Yet the readability is there and all the evidence is that Trollope is as widely read today as ever. Nor is it only those who seek to escape from the uncertainties of modern life to the cloistered security of Barsetshire who read his books. Trollope is well worth reading, as many people know, and it is high time that we looked afresh at the remarkable achievement of this not-so-eminent Victorian.

NOTES - Introduction

- 1 Clergymen of the Church of England, p. 124 (Ch. X).
- 2 Harrison, Frederick, 'Antony Trollope', Studies in Early Victorian Literature, p. 212.
- 3 Chapman, Raymond, The Victorian Debate, pp. 187-188.
- 4 Myers, William, 'George Eliot : Politics and Personality', Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century, ed. John Lucas, pp. 106-107.
- 5 An Autobiography, p. 67 (Ch. III).
- 6 In a letter to Anna Austen, 9th September 1814. Jane Austen's Letters to her Sister Cassandra and Others, ed. Raymond Chapman, p. 401.
- 7 Many of these are now accessible in Trollope : The Critical Heritage, ed. Donald Smalley.
- 8 The two most important books are Trollope : A Commentary and Trollope : A Bibliography. Most critics have acknowledged their debt to the former since its appearance in 1927, while the latter provides a starting point for any enquiry about what Trollope wrote.
- 9 Cockshut, A.O.J., Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 11.
- 10 apRoberts, Ruth, Trollope : Artist and Moralist.
- 11 Ibid., Ch. III.



## Chapter One

### Naturalism

Although the social range from which Trollope drew many of his characters may have been rather restricted, he has, nevertheless, succeeded in portraying a very large number of interesting individual characters. They may nearly all belong to roughly the same class in society, but among them they cover most of the strengths and weaknesses of human nature in one guise or another. Trollope frequently claimed that he lived with the characters he wrote about, particularly in the Palliser series, and knew them intimately as friends. They do not strike the reader with a strong impression on first acquaintance as do those of Dickens, (immediately recognisable as personifications of one trait of human nature or another), but the more we read about them, the more their natures grow apparent to us. The characters in Dickens's novels are entertaining to meet and make a strong impression on us, but for the most part they lack the depth of personality which makes Trollope's characters so realistically alive. In Dickens's world and in the world of Vanity Fair the characters are 'flat' in Forster's term, though there are the obvious exceptions like Becky Sharp. 'Flat' characters are often entertaining, but they rarely stand up as live human beings : Trollope succeeds, by different means, in making many of his characters stand up and because they are capable of surprising the reader, many of them are 'round' by the same classification.

For example, the decision of Plantagenet Palliser to abandon politics at the time least appropriate in his single-minded career and take Lady Glencora on a European tour is a clear example of this surprise element in Trollope's characterisation. Melmotte's suicide, in The Way We Live Now, like that of Ferdinand Lopez in The Prime Minister, succeeds in surprising the reader, but there are an infinite number of smaller instances when a character does not perform to type : Mrs. Proudie, in the midst of her intrigues over Hiram's Hospital, is genuinely moved by the plight of Mrs. Quiverful and her fourteen children and in an interview at the bishop's palace:

'Mrs. Proudie proved herself a woman... There was a heart inside that stiff-ribbed bodice, though not, perhaps, of large dimensions, and certainly not easily accessible'<sup>1</sup>.

Thus is she moved to help the Quiverfuls, not by anger with her husband or Mr. Slope, but by a heartfelt sympathy for their plight.

So Trollope's characters have an ability to surprise us in a way that those of Dickens lack, but there is another way too in which Trollope's characters are nearer to being real-life people : they cannot be clearly labelled as good or evil for the most part : none of them is completely angel or devil. The portrait of Mr. Harding, for example, may approach adulation on the part of the author, but his faults are there, however venial they may seem to us:

'Doubting himself was Mr. Harding's weakness'<sup>2</sup>.

and later in the same book, when he could have found out the full nature of his daughter's association with Mr. Slope, he avoids the confrontation:

'Ah, thou weak man: most charitable,  
most Christian, but weakest of men...'<sup>3</sup>

Mary Thorne, in the next *Barsetshire* novel, may be all that is required of a heroine in English fiction; she may fit into a type as defined by Henry James:

'They are so affectionate... they have a kind of clinging tenderness, a passive sweetness, which is quite in the old English tradition'<sup>4</sup>;

but she is nevertheless very proud, especially in her dealings with the Gresham family.

Similarly the evil natures of some characters exhibited in these early novels do not go unmitigated by good qualities.

Even Mr. Slope is:

'not in all things a bad man. His motives, like those of most men, were mixed; and though his conduct was generally very different from that which one would wish to praise, it was actuated perhaps as often as that of the majority of the world by a desire to do his duty. He believed in the religion which he taught... But Mr. Slope had never been an immoral man. Indeed he had resisted temptations to immorality with a strength of purpose which was creditable to him'<sup>5</sup>.

Similarly in Doctor Thorne Trollope was careful to correct the one-sided picture we may have of Frank Gresham's mother, Lady Arabella de Courcy:

'Before we go on, we must say one word further as to Lady Arabella's character. It will probably be said that she was a consummate hypocrite; but at the present moment she was not hypocritical. She did love her son; she was anxious - very, very anxious for him; was proud of him, and almost admired the very obstinacy which so vexed her to her innermost soul ... She was as genuinely motherly, in wishing that he should marry money as another woman might be in wishing to see her son a bishop!'<sup>6</sup>

In the novels written after 1867, the turning point after which, according to Cockshut, Trollope's optimism turns into a steadily growing pessimism, one finds that good and evil are fused together in every human being with greater skill than in the earlier novels. In The Prime Minister, for example, Ferdinand Lopez is described with redeeming features, in spite of the diabolical selfishness of everything he does:

'Ferdinand Lopez was not an honest or a good man. He was a self-seeking intriguing adventurer, who did not know honesty from dishonesty when he saw them together. But he had at any rate this good about him, that he did love the girl whom he was about to marry. He was willing to cheat all the world, so that he might succeed, and make a fortune, and become a big and rich man; but he did not wish to cheat her...'<sup>17</sup>

Lopez's ambition to get into Parliament, despicable as may be the means by which he hopes to do it, is portrayed as a noble endeavour, as it is in all Trollope's political novels, and the attempt confers some esteem upon the candidate, no matter what his intentions. The same desire to succeed in Parliament and 'obtain universal

credit'<sup>8</sup> by lavish entertaining makes the reader of The Way We Live Now accept the deviousness of Augustus Melmotte as being at least recognisably human; and for all his inhumanity in the way he treats his family, one has to admit that much of what he does is motivated by a desire to secure his daughter's happiness.

Trollope's evil characters do not belong to the genre of Victorian melodrama; they are not villains in that sense and we recognise them as people and not merely caricatures of particular vices. Just as there are no villains, nor are there any saints in these novels: high as may be the ideals which inspire Palliser, as Duke of Omnium, to serve his country as best he can and noble as may be his motives in consenting to be prime minister, his belief in the importance of his own position of rank is quite inconsistent with his liberal creed; and the deeply ingrained snobbishness which results in his intolerant attitude towards the matches proposed by his own children, together with his almost Pauline dominion over Glencora, are signs that he is not a flawless hero in any sense. Phineas Finn, another idealist, is not free of human failings either, and he comes to life all the more as a result.

Trollope's characters, then, do not fit easily into categories of good and evil and are not, therefore, caricatures, though we remember many of the less important ones only by their most apparent features. This is the case in real life of course, since those we see only occasionally are best remembered

by their most obvious characteristics, while those we know better strike us by their complexity and by the fact that they are never entirely predictable. Most of Trollope's characters are neither saints nor villains and are capable of surprising us without becoming incredible : in fact they live and think and act and speak as do human beings in real life. In An Autobiography Trollope explains how they lived for him as he wrote:

'the novelist desires to make his readers so intimately acquainted with his characters that the creatures of his brain should be to them speaking, moving, living human creatures. This he can never do unless he knows those fictitious personages himself, and he can never know them unless he can live with them in the full reality of established intimacy. They must be with him as he lies down to sleep and as he wakes from his dreams. He must learn to hate them and to love them. He must argue with them, quarrel with them, forgive them and even submit to them. He must know of them whether they be cold-blooded or passionate, whether true or false, and how far true, and how far false. The depth and the breadth, and the narrowness and the shallowness of each should be clear to him...'<sup>9</sup>

If Trollope's own criterion for good characterisation outlined here is a sound basis for judging his own success, he has done what he set out to do admirably : the reader of Trollope's novels finds it easy to recognise the characters as human beings in their own right.

There are, however, more objective standards by which Trollope's ability to create characters may be assessed. Here is one such test:

'Roughly, the action of a character should be unpredictable before it has been shown, inevitable when it has been shown. In the first half, the unpredictability should be the more striking; in the second half, the inevitability'.<sup>10</sup>

It is perhaps fair to say that Trollope has mastered this balance of foresight and hindsight defined by Elizabeth Bowen ; we are encouraged to read on just because we cannot predict how the characters will react to a new situation and our enjoyment is reinforced by the satisfaction of finding that the characters always acted in rather than out of character. It is this balance that makes Trollope so readable, because it is naturalistic : people are unpredictable in real life, yet their actions seem inevitable afterwards.

Lord David Cecil admired Trollope's faithfulness to real life in the creation of characters, but his admiration is only a qualified one:

'a large number of his characters, for all their truth to fact, are not living creations in the fullest sense... (because they are lacking in) that indefinable spark of individuality'.<sup>11</sup>

One example he discusses is Sir Roger Scatcherd in Doctor Thorne, but it is difficult to see how Sir Roger lacks that 'spark of individuality'. His is the story of a self-made man who has no friend in the world, save Doctor Thorne himself, and in his loneliness he drinks himself to death. His friendship with Dr. Thorne is remarkable since Dr. Thorne's own brother was killed

by Roger Scatcherd at the time of Mary Thorne's birth. Sir Roger's success in business, in securing part of the Gresham estate and in getting into Parliament are all satisfactorily described, but it is his fall, his eviction from Parliament on account of the disclosed fraud in his election and his final illness following his excessive drinking bout that give him his 'spark of individuality'. The protracted suffering, the fact that he can in no way resist the bottle under his pillow, the interviews with Doctor Thorne, the late change in his will when he knows who Mary is and most of all his own confession that drink has been his downfall, all contribute to the impression we have that he has life and that he is as close as any fictional creation can be to a living human being. It is, perhaps, his ability to see himself for what he is that constitutes his 'indefinable spark'. Just before his death, Scatcherd is speaking to Doctor Thorne about his son, Louis:

"You'll be with him as much as possible, won't you?" again asked the baronet, after lying quite silent for a quarter of an hour.

"With whom?" said the doctor, who was then all but asleep.

"With my poor boy; with Louis."

"If he will let me, I will," said the doctor.

"And, doctor, when you see a glass at his mouth, dash it down; thrust it down, though you thrust out the teeth with it. When you see that, Thorne, tell him of his father - tell him how his father died like a beast, because he could not keep himself from drink!"

Lord David Cecil compares Sir Roger with a character in a history book and says that Trollope's power of portraying emotion is rather



weak<sup>13</sup>, but it is hard to agree with this assessment of Sir Roger.

Trollope's ability to portray living characters grew more mature in the books after Doctor Thorne. Lady Glencora is perhaps one of his greatest creations, especially as the reader knows her intimately throughout most of her adult life. The struggle which she has between following the demands of heart and mind before her marriage to Plantagenet Palliser culminating in Burgo Fitzgerald's attempt to entice her away at Lady Monk's ball gives her a life that is all her own. Her devoted services to Palliser's interests as Chancellor of the Exchequer and later as Prime Minister of the Coalition Government is always in conflict with her own half-realised desires to act as first lady in the realm. This conflict in her personality, brought to light in the various 'interviews' she has with her husband at Matching, makes her as real a creation as any one could expect to find in fiction. Her astuteness and her gullibility are nowhere better shown than in her attempts to secure the family Parliamentary seat of Silverbridge for Ferdinand Lopez, a move which among other things contributes to her husband's fall from power. She is a woman to be admired and liked, not least for her human failings, so that along with her husband we feel a real loss at her death. Nor is it only the main characters who reflect Trollope's ability to draw and create naturalistic men and women to fill the pages of his books.

Much of Trollopian criticism written towards the beginning of this century tended to judge characterisation in terms of the new

science of psychology and Trollope's achievement may well have been marred by the view taken then that his characters lacked psychological depth. Trollope himself was not a psychologist : he made no systematic attempt to explain human behaviour; but that does not prevent us from recognising, now that we are thoroughly used to the science of psychology, that Trollope was unusually observant in his characterisations and accurate in his analysis of these characters. The fact that they 'ring true' to the modern reader is ample proof of this. The character of Mr. Scarborough in Mr Scarborough's Family is a study of a man obsessed with property; the book is in many ways fantastical and improbable, but the detailed study of Mr. Scarborough himself explores interesting areas of human psychology without making us doubt his credibility:

'If you can imagine for yourself a state of things in which neither truth nor morality shall be thought essential, then old Mr. Scarborough would be your hero'<sup>14</sup>.

Trollope's created characters are as accurate in their psychology and deep in their analysis as those of Jane Austen, George Eliot and Henry James, though they lack the jargon of systematic, twentieth century psychological explanation.

Trollope himself was well aware that few people would read the entire series of his Palliser novels in sequence:

Who will read Can You Forgive Her?, Phineas Finn, Phineas Redux and The Prime Minister consecutively, in order

that he may understand the characters of the Duke of Omnium, of Plantagenet Palliser, and Lady Glencora? Who will even know that they should be so read?'<sup>15</sup>

It is hardly surprising if some of the characters who appear time and again in the full Palliser series sometimes seem less impressive to the reader who, as it were, merely dips into the world in which they live, move, love, hate and think by reading the novels in anything other than straightforward sequence. It is no small task to read all six books in order, some 4,500 pages in total, but we can only expect the characters to come to life as fully as they did for their author if we do so.

The characters throughout Trollope's novels are more realistic creations than has been recognised until comparatively recently and there is still much support for Lord David Cecil's view that although Trollope was accurate in recording the surface of a character, his imagination was never fired to search beneath the surface, 'to discover its guiding principle'<sup>16</sup>. 'He imagined truly, but he imagined faintly,'<sup>17</sup> is still a widely held view of Trollope's characterisations. In fact his characters are in the main 'round' and 'capable of surprising in a convincing way'<sup>18</sup>; they are not types, they cannot be classified into entirely 'good' or 'bad' categories, they are painted in shades rather than in black and white and they have life and vitality of their own. If at first they do not strike the reader with their personal characteristics, in the way that many of Dickens's caricatures

make an immediate impression, it is because they are more subtle, naturalistic and true to life : the reader grows to know them as he grows to know his fellow human-beings - gradually; and the more he learns of them, the more interested he becomes in getting to know them better. If the reader were presented with a collection of vividly drawn pen-portraits on the scale of those in Vanity Fair or Oliver Twist, the effect would be entirely different and the fictional stage would be filled with caricatures rather than living people. It is the way that characters are introduced to the reader gradually that makes Trollope such a successful writer in his portraits of people. As Henry James said when writing of the novelist's art:

'A character is interesting as it comes out, and by the process of duration of that emergence; just as a procession is effective by the way in which it unrolls, turning to a mere mob if it all passes at once'<sup>19</sup>.

Even Lord David Cecil, for all the adverse criticism he makes of Trollope's characterisation, admits that 'at their worst, Trollope's characters are 'probable'<sup>20</sup>, but there is one other aspect of his characterisation which has for the most part escaped critical attention. A great novelist, according to Arnold Bennett, 'has a Christ-like, all-embracing compassion'<sup>21</sup>. It is a feature of Trollope, as it was of Webster and Tolstoy, that he inspires a kind of universal pity in the reader, particularly in the books of his writing maturity. Characters do not escape reprimand from their creator (Mr. Slope's 'conduct was generally

very different from that which we would wish to praise<sup>22</sup>;  
 and to Ferdinand Lopez, 'that which we call cheating was not  
 dishonesty'<sup>23</sup>) but he invokes our sympathy for all of them.  
 That is the reason why there are no villains or saints in his  
 novels : they all have good and bad qualities in varying degrees  
 and we are helped to understand how they came to possess those  
 qualities. In this respect Trollope grew in maturity through  
 his writing career. There is no doubt that the author's  
 sympathies are not entirely engaged for Mr. Slope any more  
 than they are for Mrs. Proudie in Barchester Towers:

'Mrs. Proudie has not been portrayed in  
 these pages as an agreeable or an amiable  
 lady. There has been no intention to  
 impress the reader much in her favour.  
 It is ordained that all novels should have  
 a male and a female angel and a male and  
 female devil. If it be considered that  
 this rule is obeyed in these pages, the  
 latter character must be supposed to have  
 fallen to the lot of Mrs. Proudie. But  
 she was not all devil'<sup>24</sup>.

More will be said about the nature of such intrusions by the  
 author later on. Ten years after Barchester Towers, when  
 Trollope came to write of her again in The Last Chronicle of  
Barset, he evidently had a great 'pity' for her in spite of her  
 faults:

'It cannot be said that she was a bad woman,  
 though she had in her time done an indescribable  
 amount of evil. She had endeavoured to do  
 good, failing partly by ignorance and partly  
 from the effects of an unbridled, ambitious  
 temper'<sup>25</sup>.

What a difference there is here : the most hated woman in Barsetshire is defended by her creator, not out of any sudden realisation of the need to redress the balance, but because the author feels some sympathy for her.

The later books exhibit a greater universal pity. Lizzie Eustace in The Eustace Diamonds, for all her vanity, hypocrisy and selfishness, is portrayed in such a way that the reader cannot but feel some sympathy for her, partly because Trollope repeatedly emphasises the isolation in which she lives, even when she has the friendship of Lord George Carruthers to support her. In The Way We Live Now, Trollope openly criticises society and the changes that have come over it in the third quarter of the nineteenth century : the old established ordering of society based upon honour and inherited titles, has been replaced by a self-seeking cut-throat society in which money and influence are the only effective weapons by which a man can survive and prosper. Yet in spite of these debased values, which Trollope deplures, the characters demand our sympathy for them as human beings, almost without exception. The members of the Beargarden Club, useless parasites upon their parents and the country as they are, are all portrayed as amiable fools from whom nothing more could be expected, and are the complete opposite of Trollope himself, whose Post-Office and writing careers are as fine an example of industry and devotion to work as any industrialist could hope to find. Even the Jewish banker, Mr.

Bregbert, wins the reader's sympathy because of his devoted service to Georgiana Longestaffe, unsuitable as he is for her hand in all except money. The press, that group which Trollope mistrusted from his early days as a writer, are sympathetically portrayed in the personages of Messrs, Alf, Broune and Booker, who feature so frequently at Lady Carbury's somewhat decadent soirées. In fact, everyone and everything is decadent in The Way We Live Now, but Trollope's portrayal of each individual character is sympathetic.

Melmotte himself, monstrous as he is in his selfish greed and in the deceits he practises, unscrupulous in his methods and almost inhuman in his treatment of wife and daughter, emerges nevertheless in a sympathetic light. He fully deserves the end that befalls him, yet even he commands a kind of pity from the reader. He cannot be dismissed as a villain, perhaps because he is too fully human being for such classification. He lives for the reader, because we see him from so many angles : we observe him not only in the chair at the meetings of the S.C.P. & M. Railway Board and entertaining the Emperor of China in his own London house, but also in conference with his aide, Herr Croll, in the privacy of his city offices in Abchurch Lane and most importantly in his own domestic setting, with Mrs. Melmotte and with his daughter Marie. It is not just because it is easier to make evil more attractive than good in fiction - as seen most notably in

Milton's Paradise Lost - that makes Melmotte a man who for all his monstrous qualities has to be pitied rather than despised : Trollope's treatment of him shows that insight and understanding of human nature which makes him a great novelist.

It is this universal pity which formed the basis of Trollope's outlook on life and which lay behind most of his characterisations; and it is this same universal pity, coupled with his ability to bring characters to life as people, that made Trollope the craftsman and artist that he was. As already observed, one early critic of Trollope likened his art to that of the photographer<sup>26</sup>, implying that although Trollope was an excellent recorder of everything he saw in life, he never delved below the surface and consequently his portraits were sometimes misleading and lacking in insight. As if he foresaw this criticism, Trollope expressed his views on photography and the art of creating character in Barchester Towers, at the beginning of the chapter in which he introduces Mr. Arabin:

'The Rev. Francis Arabin, fellow of Lazarus, late professor of poetry at Oxford, and present vicar of St. Ewold's, in the diocese of Barchester, must now be introduced personally to the reader. He is worthy of a new volume, and as he will fill a conspicuous place in the book, it is desirable that he should be made to stand before the reader's eye by the aid of such portraiture as the author is able to produce.

'It is to be regretted that no mental method of daguerreotype or photography has yet been discovered by which the characters of men can be reduced to writing and put into



grammatical language with an unerring precision of truthful description. 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 perpetrate 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?

'And yet such mechanical descriptive skill would hardly give more satisfaction to the reader than the skill of the photographer does to the anxious mother desirous to possess an absolute duplicate of her beloved child. The likeness is indeed true; but it is a dead, dull, unfeeling, inauspicious likeness. The face is indeed there, and those looking at it will know at once whose image it is; but the owner of the face will not be proud of the resemblance.

'There is no royal road to learning; no short cut to the acquirement of any valuable art. Let photographers and daguerrotypers do what they will, and improve as they may with further skill on that which skill has already done, they will never achieve a portrait of the human face divine. Let biographers, novelists, and the rest of us groan as we may under the burden which we so often feel too heavy for our shoulders, we must either bear them up like men, or own ourselves too weak for the work we have undertaken. There is no way of writing well and also writing easily.

'Labor omnia vincit improbus'. Such should be the chosen motto of every labourer, and it may be that labour, if adequately enduring, may suffice at last to produce even some not untrue resemblance to the Rev. Francis Arabin!<sup>27</sup>

Trollope was well aware of the difficulties which he as a novelist, a creator of human likeness, faced; and it may be that his verbosity has been his greatest bar to critical acceptance. The last paragraph here betrays him in this respect: 'it may be that labour, if adequately enduring, may suffice...' Perhaps in his portraiture he has endured too adequately for the taste of some of his readers, but that should not deter us from recognising that his characters are more alive and more fully created human beings than any 'dull, dead, unfeeling, inauspicious, (photographic) likeness'. His art of portraiture, unwieldy as it may have been, is masterly and the characters produced bear more likeness to real human beings than many of the characters in the best of fiction. So far as the creation of character is concerned the closer the resemblance to human nature, the greater will be the art which produces it:

'It is very easy to depict a hero, - a man absolutely stainless, perfect as an Arthur, - a man honest in all his dealings, equal to all trials, true in all his speech, indifferent to his own prosperity, struggling for the general good, and, above all, faithful in love. At any rate, it is as easy to do that as to tell of the man who is one hour good and the next bad, who aspires greatly, but fails in practice, who sees the higher, but too often follows the lower course. There arose at one time a school of art, which delighted to paint the human face as perfect in beauty; and from that time to this we were discontented unless every woman is drawn for us as a Venus, or, at least, a Madonna. I do not know that we have gained much by this untrue portraiture, either in

beauty or in art. There may be made for us a pretty thing to look at, no doubt; - but we know that that pretty thing is not really visaged as the mistress whom we serve, and who lineaments we desire to perpetuate on the canvas. The winds of heaven, or the fleshpots of Egypt, or the midnight gas, - passions, pains, and, perhaps, rouge and powder, have made her something different. But still there is the fire of her eye, and the eager eloquence of her mouth, and something, too, perhaps, left of the departing innocence of youth, which the painter might give us without the Venus or the Madonna touches. But the painter does not dare to do it. Indeed, he has painted so long after the other fashion that he would hate the canvas before him, were he to give way to the rouge-begotten roughness or to the fleshpots, - or even to the winds. And how, my lord, would you, who are giving hundreds, more than hundreds, for this portrait of your dear one, like to see it in print from the art critic of the day, that she is a brazen-faced hoyden who seems to have had a glass of wine too much, or to have been making hay?

'And so also has the reading world taught itself to like best the characters of all but divine men and women. Let the man who paints with pen and ink give the gaslight, and the fleshpots, the passions and pains, the prurient prudence and the rouge-pots and pounce-boxes of the world as it is, and he will be told that no one can care a straw for his creations. With whom are we to sympathise? says the reader, who not unnaturally imagines that a hero should be heroic. Oh, thou, my reader, whose sympathies are in truth the great and only aim of my work, when you have called the dearest of your friends round you to your hospitable table, how many heroes are there sitting at the board? Your bosom friend, - even if he be a knight without fear, is he a knight without reproach? The Ivanhoe that you know, did he not press Rebecca's hand?

Your lord Evandale, - did he not bring his coronet into play when he strove to win his Edith Bellenden? Was your Tresilian still true and still forbearing when truth and forbearance could avail him nothing? And those sweet girls whom you know, do they never doubt between the poor man they think they love, and the rich man whose riches they know they covet?.....

'The persons whom you cannot care for in a novel, because they are so bad, are the very same that you so dearly love in your life, because they are so good. To make them and ourselves somewhat better, - not by one spring heavenwards to perfection, because we cannot so use our legs, - but by slow climbing, is, we may presume, the object of all teachers, leaders, legislators, spiritual pastors, and masters. He who writes tales such as this, probably also has, very humbly, some such object distantly before him. A picture of surpassing godlike nobleness, - a picture of King Arthur among men, may perhaps do much. But such pictures cannot do all. When such a picture is painted, as intending to show what a man should be, it is true. If painted to show what men are, it is false. The true picture of life as it is, if it could be adequately painted, would show men what they are, and how they might rise, not, indeed, to perfection, but one step first, and then another on the ladder!<sup>28</sup>

'Oh thou, my reader, whose sympathies are in truth the great and only aim of my work...' Beneath the mock-heroic tone can be seen the basis of Trollope's universal pity : 'the author and reader should move along in full confidence with each other,' he stated elsewhere<sup>29</sup>, and his object is to engender sympathetic understanding for all his characters, in the mind

of the reader. It is interesting to note that in the same paragraph, Trollope goes on to consider the unheroic acts of 'the heroes' of Scott's novels, Ivanhoe, Old Mortality and Kenilworth : how much more naturalistically could Trollope have portrayed the inconsistencies of these characters had he been writing in Scott's place!

In the passage quoted, Trollope deliberately confuses his reader by constant reference to the characters of real life while discussing the characters of fiction. He does this to expose the false criteria by which the reading public evaluate the characters of fiction : if they resemble men as they really are, the author 'will be told that no one can care a straw for his creations.' The reader, he says, expects to find a hero, 'a man absolutely stainless, perfect as an Arthur,' in spite of the fact that such a portrait can bear little resemblance to any real human being. Such personifications of heroic goodness 'may perhaps do much' to improve the reader, but 'such pictures cannot do all'. If the novelist's purpose is to edify his readers (which Trollope hints here that it is) he will do much better to 'show men what they are, and how they might rise, not, indeed, to perfection, but one step first, and then another on the ladder', Trollope has certainly mastered the art of showing people what they really are and quite irrespective of any didactic role he may assume, the art of showing people what they really are is the highest to which the artist can aspire.

It has already been said that Trollope deliberately confuses real and fictitious personages in this passage. In fact he goes further than this by equating the bad people in books with the good people in real life. 'The persons who you cannot care for in a novel, because they are so bad, are the very same that you so dearly love in your life, because they are so good.' By apparently turning the whole moral universe inside out here, Trollope means to show us that there is no such thing as a complete hero or absolute villain in real life and so the attempts to portray these pure qualities in fiction are always misleading:

'We cannot have heroes to dine with us. There are none... But neither are our friends villains - whose every aspiration is for evil, and whose every moment is a struggle for some achievement worthy of the devil.'

Trollope's view of human nature is essentially a realistic one:

'Men as I see them are not often heroic'<sup>30</sup>.

Such anti-heroism is nothing new in English fiction: indeed there is almost a tradition of anti-heroism in the English novel, going back to Henry Fielding. But Trollope portrayed his characters with that balance of what we label good and bad that makes them as close to real life as one could expect to find in fiction.

It has been claimed that in spite of the multiplicity of characters in Trollope's novels, his range is in general too narrow and hence his vision is limited. Compared with Dickens,

certainly, the class of society from which he draws most of his characters is very restricted. His attempts to portray working-class men and women, criminals and even servants are generally unsuccessful, witness the burglars at Carlisle in The Eustace Diamonds. The beadsmen of Hiram's Hospital in The Warden have no more life than the lesser mortals who fill up the backcloth in the social settings of Barsetshire, and the bricklayer from Hoggie End in The Last Chronicle does not strike us as vitally alive, in spite of his philosophical turn of mind. The few characters from low life who find their way into the pages of the Palliser series similarly make only a momentary impression. The beggar girl who addresses Burgo Fitzgerald in Oxford Street, for example, serves to tell us more about Burgo himself and Trollope's only comment, repeated twice, 'Poor Burgo!'"<sup>31</sup> shows just how much interest Trollope had in the fate of this pretty, sixteen year old forced to beg for gin-money on the streets at midnight! In the same manner George Vavasor's unexpected encounter with Jane, his sometime mistress, on the eve of his departure for America, is of passing interest only, though Trollope describes her appearance at some length and the dialogue is good<sup>32</sup>.

Trollope was not interested as a writer in the plight of the poverty-stricken masses in Victorian England. This does not mean that he had no social conscience, but he did not show that reforming zeal which made many of his contemporaries

so remarkable. The circles in which he himself moved and his natural reticence, coupled with the acute sensitivity to the ordinary human interactions which are so subtly portrayed in his novels, may have made him shy away from the far greater social injustices to which he must have been exposed throughout his career with the Post Office. He was not insensitive to people's needs and the injustices with which they had to contend; indeed he may have been rather too sensitive to be able to write about them powerfully enough to avoid sentimentality.

But although Trollope exhibited little or no interest in working class characters, his range is nevertheless wide. Throughout the novels there is a scattering of outsiders who bring to the English social scene variety and a fresh outlook. Signora Neroni in Barchester Towers is quite different from the other women, bringing with her something of the Italian temperament from the Stanhope villa at Lake Como. Her open flirtations which so upset Mrs. Proudie and her total rejection of the English class system at the Ullathorne Sports Party, when she outstares la grande dame of the occasion, Lady Arabella de Courcy and then asks Mr. Slope 'who on earth is that woman?'<sup>33</sup> only to laugh when hearing who it was, brings a freshness to the society of Barsetshire, as well as providing a yardstick by which its values can be judged. Similarly Isabel Boncassen and her parents have about them a very different set of values and their part in The Duke's



Children helps to illustrate the extent of Trollope's range.

Isabel is as different from Silverbridge as that other American heroine, Isabel Archer, is from Lord Warburton, in Henry James's Portrait of a Lady. Another Trollopian American lady, Mrs. Hurtle, in The Way We Live Now, contributes to the variety of characters, and like the other two already mentioned she helps to illuminate the central characters by her very rejection of English values.

But American and Italian women are not the limit of Trollope's range. His wide travel and the variety of duties that he undertook while working for the Post Office gave Trollope ample experience of human life and he used this to the full in his novels. His travels led him to write stories and novels about more than fifteen countries, as varied as Jamaica, Costa Rica and Belgium, and his novels about Ireland show a really sympathetic understanding of the Irish character, something not shared by all his contemporaries.

But the novels centred on English life display a wide range of understanding in the diversity of their characters. It is true that much of the action in the Barsetshire novels takes place in or around a small cathedral city and the political novels centre on the private studies and drawing-rooms of statesmen and the restricted world of London clubs. Nevertheless the range of characters who feature in these novels is exceptionally wide, more so in the later than in the earlier

novels. Even in the Barsetshire series, however, we have a country doctor (Dr. Thorne), a self-made business-man turned M.P. (Scatcherd), a rising government official (Adolphus Crosbie), a humble government clerk (Johnny Eames), an unscrupulous land-owner (Mr. Sowerby) and a retired major (Henry Grantly), as well as the whole collection of scheming grandes dames and a complete cross-section of the clergy in the Church of England.

In the political novels the range is even wider. The cabinet itself may be somewhat limited, but it represents only a small portion of the society of which Trollope writes : the hunting scenes, the foreign travel, the drawing-room politics, Mr. Kennedy isolated in his madness at Loughlinter, the Scottish castle of the Eustace family at Portray with its unique keeper Andy Gowran - any attempt to show the diversity of character and setting in the Palliser novels soon turns into a list so disconnected and varied that it becomes as meaningless as a tour of England by coach must be for many foreign visitors to this country : impressive, but memorable only for the confusion it creates in the traveller's mind. Reading Trollope's novels leaves no such superficial impression of human existence - it is only an attempt to summarise the diversity of situation that creates this impression.

Trollope's range is in fact as wide as his output was immense. He did not choose to write about those sections of nineteenth century England of which it was fashionable to

write, but he should not be condemned for that alone. Are the Brontës censured for not writing about London? Is Jane Austen censured for not writing about European travel or the French Revolution? Is Dickens himself censured for failing to write about the households of cabinet ministers where important social issues were debated?

The English critical bias in the first half of this century has tended to favour the writers of the mid-nineteenth century who drew attention directly to the social injustices of the age and the effects of the Industrial Revolution. Anything outside the scope of this is at times regarded as 'narrow'. Some novelists were writing in a narrow range in this sense, as Jane Austen had done a little earlier : for example Thackeray and Gosse were perhaps limited by their lack of immediate concern with social injustice and with the Industrial Revolution and even Scott, for all the variety of his subject matter, is restricted by his lack of involvement in the social problems of his day. Trollope was certainly not 'narrow' in this sense. The scope of his writing embraced most aspects of the life of the middle classes in London and the country as well as many places abroad. Had he written less it might be said that even if his range was wide, his perception must have been shallow. However, this is not so and his characterisation, as has been shown, was naturalistic, analytical and sympathetic.

It has already been said that one of Trollope's main achievements was the creation of characters so naturalistic that they seem to resemble people in real life as closely as any fictional characters can. Many people who accept this ability to portray characters well point out from a limited knowledge of Trollope's range that a large proportion of his characters is made up of clergymen, or in the later novels, politicians. False as this claim is, it affords the opportunity of showing that, far from being a reproducer of photographic likenesses, Trollope was a real student of human nature, who saw beneath the outward appearance and understood human nature with some perception. The clergy of Barsetshire are all clerics, yes, and the day-to-day duties which their calling requires of them are basically similar as are their professed beliefs and their outer garments. Trollope concerned himself very little with these aspects of his clergymen and it is only rarely that he gives serious consideration to their beliefs or to their doctrines : he was not a theologian in the traditional sense and he was interested far more in how his clergymen live and behave towards their fellow men. It was evident that he did not sympathise with the extreme evangelical outlook, as is shown in the portrait of clerics like Mr. Slope, but his judgement of the wide variety of church outlooks presented through the characters of his clergymen is based upon what they do rather than what they believe. Hypocrisy

is the weakness that Trollope exposes most clearly, in clergymen as in other characters. Clergymen of the Church of England is a series of portraits of how certain clerics behave, not of what they believe. Trollope was perhaps out of step with his contemporaries in that religion was for him primarily concerned with how men treat one another and less with soul-searching attempts to achieve personal salvation through abstract systematic theology. James Kincaid, whose recent study of the novels is the most comprehensive so far<sup>34</sup>, pinpoints Trollope's interest in clerics neatly when he says of the Barsetshire novels:

"Clergymen are only men" runs a dominant motif throughout. But what is in the first novels a comforting doctrine of unification becomes by the final novel a frightening one. "All clergymen are men" in Barchester Towers means to the reader "all men are clergymen", possessing in their common humility the source of all spirituality; in The Last Chronicle, "all men are clergymen" seems to translate into "all men are thieves"<sup>35</sup>.

It has been thought thought that Trollope regarded the spiritual aspects of the priesthood as private and 'outside... a novelist's permissible scope'<sup>36</sup> but this view fails to recognise that for Trollope religion was how people lived rather than what they believed<sup>37</sup>.

It was human nature which interested Trollope and his studies of various clerics show remarkable insight into the diversity of that nature. Mr. Proudie's grief at the

death of his awesome wife has nothing whatever to do with the fact that he was a bishop; being a curate only makes Mr. Crawley's mental torture all the worse, when he is accused of stealing Mr. Soames's £20 cheque; Mr. Quiverful has fourteen children and a wife to support whether he is a clergyman or not; Mr. Slope was no doubt as selfish and ambitious in the sugar company he went to work for when his stay in the Bishop's palace came to an end; Archdeacon Grantly would have been as quick-tempered, as warm and as fond of defending his own peace of mind against all intruders, whether he had been in holy orders or not. The list could be much fuller, but the fact is clear : although many of Trollope's characters in the Barsetshire series are clerics, they are first and foremost human beings.

Similarly, many of the characters in the later novels are politicians, but Plantagenet Palliser is as different from Sir Orlando Drought as he is from Mr. Abel Wharton, whose steady devotion to the law has taught him never to trust politics or would-be politicians. It would be a very shallow judgement to say that Trollope's novels are filled with clerics or politicians and therefore his range is narrow. It would be about as misleading as saying that Checkov's plays are of no interest to us because all the characters are Russian.

Trollope's range of characters is, then, wide and varied, and his reproductions of human life, far from being

merely photographic, show sympathetic insight and clear understanding. In this study of his fellow men, Trollope 'is primarily interested in people in their relation to the social structure'<sup>38</sup>, and part of his claim to excellence springs from the portraits he gives us of living man in his social relations.

NOTES - Chapter One

- 1 Barchester Towers, p. 222 (Ch. XXVII).
- 2 Ibid., p. 49 (Ch. VII).
- 3 Ibid., p. 239 (Ch. XXVIII).
- 4 James, Henry, 'Anthony Trollope', Partial Portraits, p. 130.
- 5 Barchester Towers, pp. 115-116 (Ch. XV).
- 6 Doctor Thorne, pp. 502-503 (Ch. XLIV).
- 7 The Prime Minister, I, p. 227 (Ch. XXIV).
- 8 The Way We Live Now, II, p. 326 (Ch. LXXXIV).
- 9 An Autobiography, p. 209 (Ch. XII).
- 10 Bowen, Elizabeth, 'Notes on Writing a Novel', Orion II, quoted in Walter Allen, Writers on Writing, p. 180.
- 11 Cecil, Lord David, Early Victorian Novelists : Essays in Revaluation, p. 257.
- 12 Doctor Thorne, p. 307 (Ch. XXV).
- 13 Early Victorian Novelists, pp. 257-258.
- 14 Mr. Scarborough's Family, p. 568 (Ch. LVIII).
- 15 An Autobiography, p. 169 (Ch. X).
- 16 Early Victorian Novelists, p. 260.
- 17 Ibid., p. 255.
- 18 Forster, E.M., Aspects of the Novel, p. 85.
- 19 James, Henry, The Spoils of Poynton, quoted in Walter Allen, Writers on Writing, p. 199.
- 20 Early Victorian Novelists, p. 253.
- 21 Bennett, Arnold, Journals, (15th October 1896), quoted in Walter Allen, Writers on Writing, p. 140.



- 22 Barchester Towers, p. 121 (Ch. XV).
- 23 The Prime Minister, I, p. 227 (Ch. XXIV).
- 24 Barchester Towers, p. 222 (Ch. XXVI).
- 25 The Last Chronicle of Barset, p. 700 (Ch. LXVI).
- 26 Harrison, Frederick, 'Anthony Trollope', Studies in Early Victorian Literature, p. 212.
- 27 Barchester Towers, pp. 156-157 (ch. XX).
- 28 The Eustace Diamonds, pp. 355-357 (Ch. XXXV).
- 29 Barchester Towers, p. 122 (Ch. XV).
- 30 The Claverings, p. 297 (Ch. XXVIII).
- 31 You Can Forgive Her?, p. 329 (Ch. XXIX).
- 32 Ibid., pp. 739-744 (Ch. LXXI).
- 33 Barchester Towers, p. 327 (Ch. XXXVII).
- 34 James Kincaid has done much, along with Ruth apRoberts, to reawaken academic interest in Trollope's novels. The appearance of his scholarly book, The Novels of Anthony Trollope, in 1977, is an indication of the serious attention now being afforded to Trollope, but it was preceded by a number of articles which appeared in Nineteenth Century Fiction and other Journals over a number of years. The need to maintain a critical awareness of the changing interest in Trollope was clearly expressed in his article 'Bring Back The Trollopian', in 1976. The Trollopian had been started with the revival of interest in the novels during the Second World War (see Gordon Ray's Trollope at Full Length), and ran from 1945 to 1949, when it became Nineteenth Century Fiction.
- 35 The Novels of Anthony Trollope, pp. 93-94.
- 36 Sadleir, Michael, 'Introduction to Barchester Towers', 1956, p. xii.
- 37 It is interesting to see how critical interest in Trollope's clergymen has changed over the last forty years. In 1944, R. Edwards wrote about Trollope's inaccuracies in matters of ecclesiastical preferment and practice, in 'Trollope on Church Affairs', Times Literary Supplement,

21st October, and in 1962 an article by S. Hawkins on 'Mr. Harding's Church Music' was published in Journal of English Literary History, xxix, seeking to establish Biblical significance in the fact that there are twelve beadsmen at Hiram's Hospital. It was not until the end of that decade that interest focused on the clergymen themselves, with 'Trollope's Clerical Concerns : The Low Church Clergymen' and 'The Professional Clergyman in Some Novels by Anthony Trollope', by J.W. Lee and F.F. Tillson respectively, in Hartford Studies in Literature, i, (1969-70) pp. 198-208 and pp. 185-197. In 1973, Helen Cors's study of the 'Paranoid Personality' of Mr. Crawley (in vol. v of the same Journal) showed the increasing interest in Trollope's clerics as men. Most recently, Peter Packer's The Portrayal of the Anglican Clergymen in some Nineteenth Century Fiction confirms my view that Trollope's concern was with how his clergymen lived their lives rather than with their formalised role in Victorian society.

38 Early Victorian Novelists, p. 270.

## Chapter Two

### Character, Author and Reader

'Let it be clear from the outset that Trollope's expression of the mid-Victorian spirit has always the limitation of class and background congenial to his taste. He is the chronicler, the observer and the interpreter of the well-to-do, comfortable England of London and the English shires'<sup>1</sup>.

Sadleir's view lies behind much of the available criticism of Trollope. In particular, the naturalism of his character portrayal has been construed as a failure to be aware of the hypocrisy of the mid-Victorian period, when different scales of public and private morality existed side by side, yet unopposed. The voice of Dickens exposing this hypocrisy stands unchallenged (well supported by names like Butler, Gissing, Gosse, Hardy and George Moore) in the view of the twentieth century. Beside them, Trollope appears to shed no light on the morality of the age of which he was the chronicler. Even A.O.J. Cockshut said that Trollope 'did not like to consider things too seriously'<sup>2</sup>. Trollope's novels have for too long been accepted as popular entertainments by a man who could invent plausible characters and place them in plausible situations and little more.

Recent research has begun to undermine this prevalent attitude, however. Most notably, in her study Trollope : Artist and Moralist, Ruth apRoberts has argued the case for taking Trollope's morality seriously. She has helped considerably to

place Trollope in his proper perspective in the Victorian age, as a man of considerable and self-taught learning, a man with ideas and a philosophy based upon close observation of human experience, a man with a conscious morality of his own devising and exposition. Ruth apRoberts, by drawing attention to his little noticed Life of Cicero and by questioning the validity of the usual tools of critical appraisal, has helped to dispel the older theories about Trollope and has forged the way for some new critical approaches to the novel as a genre.

Misleading as much of the criticism about Trollope has been in the ninety years since his death, the most serious critical blunder has as yet been hardly noticed. Perhaps people have been blinded by his eminent readability; maybe Sadleir's Commentary has prevented subsequent critics from reappraising his novels. Whatever the reason, the fundamental irony with which Trollope wrote and the skill with which he used it to achieve his effects, has passed virtually unnoticed.

It has been shown previously that Trollope's characters have a life of their own and are therefore realistic in a way that has not escaped critical notice; some critics have gone so far as to say that Trollope's characters are so alive that once he has created them they take on a life of their own and govern the direction and outcome of the plot in a way quite beyond the novelist's control. In An Autobiography Trollope stated that he 'never troubled (himself) much about the construction of plots'<sup>3</sup>, and this

could be said to imply that the characters are more powerful in giving the plot its direction than the author himself. It is generally accepted, however, that Trollope's characters are naturalistic and several reasons for this have been put forward. Another reason may well be that as they are all thinking beings, whose actions appear to the reader to be governed not by the dictates of the author or by the influence of other characters in the book, but by their own guiding moral principles : one way in which Trollope's characters are so endowed with life and reality is that they all have their own moral sense, their own 'philosophy of life'. The reader is aware not only of how the character thinks and behaves, but also of why he thinks and behaves in this way. Many authors have managed to convey understanding of one or more of their characters' rationale (these are by and large the 'round' characters), but few, if any, endow the majority of their characters with this quality. The characters do not appear for what they show us about the central figures, as most characters do in King Lear or Doctor Faustus for example; they have, each and every one, their own philosophy, their own morality - the principles on which they base their several lives. Brief consideration of any of the novels will illustrate this. Mr. Sextus Parker in The Prime Minister is not there merely to draw out one side of Lopez's character; he has a definite physical appearance and a wife and family to keep as Mr. Abel Wharton finds out. Although such clear description of circumstances and appearances might be found in many nineteenth

century novels, nevertheless Sextus Parker has his own philosophy too : pliable and corruptible he may be, but he believes that from conscientious work and a degree of risk-taking he is entitled to draw his legitimate share of the proceeds - enough to satisfy the needs of the family. It is precisely because he has this morality of his own, so clearly different from that of Lopez, that their interviews in Sextus Parker's offices in Little Tankard Yard in the city have such interest and entertainment value.

This possession of an independent philosophy or moral scheme of values characterises most of Trollope's people and gives them something of their individuality, making them almost independent of their author. Even those characters from low life who feature so rarely in the novels have their own philosophy of life, their own 'raison d'être'. The bricklayer from Hoggle End, mentioned in the last chapter, expresses an idea that is clearly the governing force of his own character and life when he says, 'It's dogged as does it'<sup>4</sup>. His advice is useful and important to the Rev. Josiah Crawley, but he is more than just one aspect of another man's character : he exists because he has his own ethical code, just as the Rev. Josiah Crawley lives in a world of his own making<sup>5</sup>. When George Vavasor receives a visit from Jane at the end of Can You Forgive Her? we are aware first of her poverty : 'I have come here because I am starving'; but then, when George threatens to blow his brains out, we are aware that her philosophy, unlike George's, is God-fearing at root and hence the dialogue at their

meeting has some life of its own. An author could easily have left this encounter, and numerous others besides, as a way of expressing George's selfishness and near-madness at the final rejection he has had from Alice:

"I am starving. I have not a shilling in the world."

"Perhaps it may be a comfort to you in your troubles to know that I am at any rate, as badly off as you are? I won't say that I am starving, because I could get food to eat at this moment if I wanted it; but I am utterly ruined. My property - what should have been mine, - has been left away from me. I have lost the trumpery seat in Parliament for which I have paid so much. All my relations have turned their backs upon me -"

"Are you not going to be married?" she said, rising quickly from her chair and coming close to him.

"Married! No; - but I am going to blow my brains out. Look at that pistol, my girl. Of course you won't think that I am in earnest, - but I am."

She looked up into his face piteously. "Oh! George," she said, 'you won't do that?"

"But I shall do that. There is nothing else left for me to do. You talk to me about starving. I tell you that I should have no objection to be starved, and so be put an end to in that way. It's not so bad as some other ways when it comes gradually. You and I, Jane, have not played our cards very well. We have staked all that we had, and we've been beaten. It's no good whimpering after what's lost. We'd better go somewhere else and begin a new game."

"Go where?" said she.

"Ah! - that's just what I can't tell you."

"George," she said, 'I'll go anywhere with you. If what you say is true, - if you're not going to be married, and will let me come to you, I will work for you like a slave. I will indeed. I know I'm poorly looking now -"

"My girl, where I'm going, I shall not want a slave; and as for your looks - when you go there too, - they'll be of no matter, as far as I am able to judge."

"But George, where are you going?"

"Wherever people do go when their brains are knocked out of them; or, rather, when they have knocked out their own brains, - if that makes any difference."

"George," - she came up to him now, and took hold of him by the front of his coat, and for the moment he allowed her to do so, - "George, you frighten me. Do not say that. Say that you will not do that?"

"But I am just saying that I shall."

"Are you not afraid of God's anger? You and I have been very wicked."

"I have, my poor girl. I don't know much about your wickedness. I've been like Topsy; - indeed I am a kind of second Topsy myself. But what's the good of whimpering when it's over?"

"It isn't over; it isn't over, - at any rate for you."

"I wish I knew how I could begin again. But all this is nonsense, Jane, and you must go."

"You must tell me, first, that you are not going to - kill yourself."

"I don't suppose that I shall do it tonight, - or perhaps, not tomorrow. Very probably I may allow myself a week, so that your staying here can do no good. I merely wanted to make you



understand that you are not the only person who has come to grief."

"And you are not going to be married?"

"No; I'm not going to be married, certainly."

"And I must go now?"

"Yes; I think you'd better go now." Then she rose and went, and he let her leave the room without giving her a shilling"<sup>6</sup>.

The whole of the interview (of which this is just a part) comes to life because Trollope shows us not merely a meeting of two personalities, but because there is a confrontation between two fundamentally differing outlooks on life, two different moralities. The fact that their 'philosophies' are different receives no comment from Trollope and the essence of the conflict is communicated to us through the juxtaposition of ideas in the dialogue. To read this interview at surface level only, without perceiving the ironies involved, is as serious an error of judgement as it would be to say that Jane Austen's novels are composed of tea-table chatter<sup>7</sup>. Recently, however, there has been a more perceptive awareness of the importance of speech patterns and of the changes in the manner of address caused by shifts in personal relationships, in studies of Trollope's dialogue<sup>8</sup>.

But we have strayed a little from the argument, perhaps because when two people are brought together in Trollope's novels, the writing is so much more perceptive than is generally acknowledged, that one is tempted involuntarily to expound the

passage. Trollope's characterisation in fact is marked by an ability to endow each of his characters with their own ethical system. In all cases the character creates the system and not the system the character, for Trollope was no doctrinaire writer creating characters to fit his different philosophical conceptions; he worked from the character outwards, believing in a pragmatic approach, using human experience as his starting point in each case.

All Trollope's characters (who show remarkable ingenuity when one remembers that Lord David Cecil censured Trollope for his 'relatively low power of imagination'<sup>9</sup>) are guided by their own moral sense in their actions; some of their actions may seem immoral or amoral, but to label them as such without careful consideration would be misleading; and since he was concerned most of all with the social interaction of man, Trollope was particularly interested in the interactions of these various moralities.

So intense was Trollope's fascination with the ideas of each of his characters and in what happened when two characters with different outlooks confronted one another, that many of the novels can be described as a Pantheon or arena in which the diversity of the moral ideas presented are being debated by the very fact that they are juxtaposed.

There is certainly strong precedent for this kind of moral debate being presented in literary form and it is surprising

that Trollope's novels have not been considered in the tradition before. Chaucer's Parliament of Fowles and The Nun's Priest's Tale are typical of the formalised manner in which such debates were presented before medieval audiences<sup>10</sup>. In a more digestible form, however, subjects of topical interest were presented in Chaucer's The Franklin's Tale or the anonymous Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Most of Middle English Literature was written with the aim of providing audiences and readers alike with material for discussion or debate about moral issues of one kind or another. The convention by which both sides of an argument were formally presented may have been eclipsed in Tudor times by the desire to create situations of human drama in more naturalistic and digestible terms, but there is still an interest in subjects of topical and philosophical importance. The Tempest, for example, exhibits contemporary concern with ideas of art and nature, just as Measure for Measure explores different levels of morality.

The tradition referred to here is only one aspect of the easily recognisable fact that all literature, if it is to capture the interest and imagination of readers, must provoke thought, reflection and some kind of mental debate. A play which evokes no active mental response or provides no material for discussion will not run long, no matter how brilliant the production in other ways. Similarly a poem must create an effect which arouses responses if it is to be worth hearing again. The novel, most of

all, needs to force the reader to think and evaluate if it is to be successful. Mere escapism from the reality of everyday life, without demanding a mental response, is no 'touchstone' for greatness in literature. The fact that Trollope's popularity has been accounted for by the escapism which it engenders is yet another sign of the failure to appreciate this quality<sup>11</sup>.

Trollope's novels present in dramatic form debates on numerous issues that are ultimately almost all moral ones. Influenced by the strong tradition of the English novel<sup>12</sup>, he was aware that a novelist's prime task was to amuse his readers and since he could only write if the public bought his books he could not present the moral issues of which he was constantly thinking in any other way than as the situations arose in his stories.

There are, in fact, debates of formal medieval proportions in some of his books, notably when he is handling political subjects in the Palliser series. Such a debate can be seen in The Prime Minister and one can see immediately that Trollope is presenting two sides of an important topical issue. Plantagenet Palliser, by this time Duke of Omnium, is walking with Phineas Finn in the grounds at Matching:

"But we put all that aside when we really think," (continued the Duke) "and can give the Conservative credit for philanthropy and patriotism as readily as the Liberal. The Conservative who has had any idea of the meaning of the name which he carries, wishes, I suppose, to maintain the differences and the distances which separate the highly placed from their lower brethren. He thinks that God has divided the world as he finds it

divided, and that he may best do his duty by making the inferior man happy and contented in his position, teaching him that the place which he holds is his by God's ordinance."

"And it is so."

"Hardly in the sense that I mean. But that is the great Conservative lesson. That lesson seems to me to be hardly compatible with continual improvement in the condition of the lower man. But with the Conservative, all such improvement is to be based on the idea of the maintenance of those distances. I as a Duke am to be kept as far apart from the man who drives my horses as was my ancestor from the man who drove his, or who rode after him to the wars, - and that is to go on for ever. There is much to be said for such a scheme. Let the lords be, all of them, men with loving hearts, and clear intellect, and noble instincts, and it is possible that they should use their powers so beneficially as to spread happiness over the earth. It is one of the millenniums which the mind of man can conceive, and seems to be that which the Conservative mind does conceive."

"But the other men who are not lords don't want that kind of happiness."

"If such happiness were attainable it might be well to constrain men to accept it. But the lords of this world are fallible men; and though as units they ought to be, and perhaps are, better than those who have fewer advantages, they are much more likely as units to go astray in opinion than the bodies of men whom they would seek to govern. We know that power does corrupt, and that we cannot trust kings to have loving hearts, and clear intellects and noble instincts. Men as they come to think about it and to look forward, and to look back, will not believe in such a millennium as that."

"Do they believe in any millennium?"

"I think they do after a fashion, and I think that I do myself. That is my idea of Conservatism. The doctrine of Liberalism is, of course, the reverse. The Liberal, if he have any fixed idea at all, must, I think, have conceived the idea of lessening distances, - of bringing the coachman and the duke nearer together, - nearer and nearer, till a millennium shall be reached by -"

"By equality?" asked Phineas, eagerly interrupting the Prime Minister, and showing his dissent by the tone of his voice.

"I did not use the word, which is open to many objections. In the first place the millennium, which I have perhaps rashly named, is so distant that we need not even think of it as possible. Men's intellects are at present so various that we cannot even realise the idea of equality, and here in England we have been taught to hate the word by the evil effects of those attempts which have been made elsewhere to proclaim it as a fact accomplished by the scratch of a pen or by a chisel on a stone. We have been injured in that, because a good word signifying a grand idea has been driven out of the vocabulary of good men. Equality would be a heaven, if we could attain it. How can we to whom so much has been given dare to think otherwise? How can you look at the bowed back and bent legs and abject face of that poor ploughman, who winter and summer has to drag his rheumatic limbs to his work, while you go a-hunting or sit in pride of place among the foremost few of your country, and say that it all is as it ought to be? You are a Liberal because you know that it is not all as it ought to be, and because you would still march on to some nearer approach to equality; though

the thing itself is so great, so glorious, so godlike, - nay so absolutely divine, - that you have been disgusted by the very promise of it, because its perfection is unattainable. Men have asserted a mock equality till the very idea of equality stinks in men's nostrils....I hope you ain't cold"<sup>13</sup>.

In this passage it is clear that Trollope was presenting ideas for his readers to think about and debate in their own minds. It is not often, however, that Trollope presents issues in as overt a statement as this : his greater skill lies in the passages of dialogue, where by the use of irony, he makes the reader aware of the broader moral issues involved in the confrontation of two characters.

Trollope the moralist rarely moralises. There is plenty of authorial comment and he often takes the reader into his confidence about one or other of his characters, but concentration on these passages of comment obscures his ability to write with irony. Critics have tended to take all such direct commentary at face value and assume that the rest of each novel is providing the story to amuse the reader and endorse the commentary. His own statement that the good novel teaches lessons of virtue and at the same time delights its readers<sup>14</sup>, can be understood to mean that there are two constituent parts to each of his novels : the entertainment part (the story, the characters), and the didactic part (the passages of comment). It is because undue importance has been attached to the passages of authorial comment that much of the irony of Trollope's writing has been missed.

Trollope often wrote or spoke in what we would now call a facetious manner. His own account of how, as an author, he disposed of Mrs. Proudie is marked by a tone of facetiousness, which in a less apparent way characterises much of his authorial comment:

"I was sitting one morning at work upon the novel... As I was there, two clergymen, each with a magazine in his hand, seated themselves, one on one side of the fire and one on the other, close to me. They soon began to abuse what they were reading, and each was reading some part of some novel of mine. The gravamen of their complaint lay in the fact that I reintroduced the same characters so often." "Here," said one, "is that archdeacon whom we have had in every novel he has ever written." "And here," said the other, "is the old duke whom he has talked about till everybody is tired of him. If I could not have invented new characters, I would not write novels at all." Then one of them fell foul of Mrs. Proudie. It was impossible for me not to hear their words, and almost impossible to hear them and be quiet. I got up and standing between them, I acknowledged myself to be the culprit. "As to Mrs. Proudie," I said, "I will go home and kill her before the week is over." And so I did. The two gentlemen were utterly confounded, and one of them begged me to forget his frivolous observations.<sup>15</sup>

In an article on this particular incident, 'The Death of Mrs. Proudie : Frivolous Slaughter or Calculated Dispatch?' Anthony Arthur has taken some preliminary steps towards evaluating An Autobiography more critically.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless for a long time Trollope's comments upon his craft, his working methods and the reasons for which he wrote have been taken as unquestioned



statements. Even some more recent criticism, for example J.W. Clark's study of Trollope's preaching about marriage, politics and social distinctions refers to An Autobiography with almost unquestioning seriousness<sup>17</sup>. 'Only in the secret autobiography could he confide...' <sup>18</sup>, wrote A.O.J. Cockshut and An Autobiography has often been regarded as the 'clef' for all his 'romans', the explanation of anything puzzling in his novels. This approach has prevented many readers from searching the novels themselves and many of Trollope's real qualities as an artist have escaped notice as a result. Secret the autobiography may have been, but Trollope knew full well that it would be published after his death and a writer as aware of his reading public as Trollope was would hardly forget them in writing the autobiography of his writing career. It is, therefore, a mistake to view Trollope's own statements about his art as final critical judgements in themselves. As Robert Tracy observes in his recent book on the later novels, 'But to take Trollope too much at his own word is unwise'<sup>19</sup>. No man writes as candidly and straightforwardly about his art if he intends it to be read by those very men who condemn or praise his books in his own lifetime. Few people read the letters of a writer such as D.H. Lawrence today without bearing in mind that some thoughts of eventual publication must have been passing through the mind of their author at the time of writing. They are too polished and rich

in 'purple passages' to represent a completely spontaneous expression of the author's thoughts. The same is true in Trollope's case : he was far too intelligent and sensitive a human being to put his reflections about his life on paper without some awareness of the effect they would have on those who eventually read them. It is reassuring to find that some material published in the last four years has begun to show a more objective awareness of Trollope's writing skills<sup>20</sup>.

The trouble has been that admirers of Trollope and others have allowed their critical faculties to be blinded by Trollope's own documentation of his art and achievement. This may be because of the sheer quantity of his writings : in a storm any port will do for shelter and security, and the novels alone are bewilderingly numerous and lengthy. 'He who recounts these details has scorned to have a secret between himself and his readers,<sup>21</sup> Trollope writes when telling us that Lizzie Eustace has the diamonds safely locked away in her desk shortly after the 'robbery' at Carlisle; and when the mysterious circumstances surrounding Mr. Bonteen's murder near Berkeley Square lead to the arrest and prosecution of Phineas Finn, Trollope is quick to enlighten us as to his innocence: 'The reader need hardly be told that, as regards this great offence, Phineas Finn was as white as snow.'<sup>22</sup> Trollope claims in both these dramatic episodes that the reader should be as much in possession of the facts as the author. As he said elsewhere, 'The author and the reader should

move along in full confidence with each other',<sup>23</sup> and critics have, for the most part, taken this as a cardinal principle of Trollope's writing.

But can anyone seriously suppose that Trollope moves along 'in full confidence' with his readers? For a start there would be no story and no plot since these depend ultimately on the suspense of 'what happens next',<sup>24</sup> and as the author cannot but know the direction in which things will work out, in outline at least, he will have nothing to say if he is already 'in full confidence' with his readers. Trollope's claim to share everything with his readers, like his claim that he often started writing with no idea of the story in mind, must be treated with more scepticism<sup>25</sup>. Trollope was far too much of an artist to expound his methods and motives as simply and explicitly as he appears to do in his autobiographical statements and in his authorial intrusions. Even in the way in which Trollope handles his story material there is a need for a more detached approach. This has also been observed by Andrew Wright who has argued that the nineteenth century narrative method was a conspiracy refined out of the eighteenth century open connection between author and reader<sup>26</sup>. An understanding of this gives the modern reader an altered vision of Trollope.

As Geoffrey Tillotson has accurately written of the novels, Trollope always 'masters complexity'<sup>27</sup> by the way he presents us with the most difficult moral problems in such a way that we are hardly aware of the complexity of the situation that has been put

before us. But if Trollope's explanations of his own art make it simple, those explanations succeed only in glossing over the real complexity of his artistic talents. Ruth apRoberts, writing about the Barsetshire novels, says that Trollope 'has found in Barsetshire that single situation which demonstrates the complexities of moral problems... Trollope is everywhere a complicator... His recurrent theme in the novels is that motives are never simple',<sup>28</sup> When writing about his own artistic qualities, Trollope is the reverse : he is everywhere a simplifier... His recurrent theme is that the art of writing is always simple. Some recent criticism has shown more awareness of the care and complexity with which Trollope revealed his characters<sup>29</sup>.

The school of Trollopian criticism which follows Sadleir has set great store by the author's *expliqué* of his own art, yet has almost failed to see the complexity of his moral perception. Perhaps there is a connection between these two critical judgements : look at the immense output of this man and one instinctively looks to his autobiography and to the passages of intrusion in the novels as milestones, as signposts in a large and confusing country; take away these guides and one is forced to look at the countryside itself, to find one's way. It is a rather awesome task, but it is likely to provide a more accurate interpretation of the countryside than unquestioning obedience to the signposts, which are misleading in their very simplicity.

If one reads the novels themselves more critically, one easily becomes aware of the achievement of Trollope as an artist<sup>30</sup>. But he is a moralist too; not because he moralises, but in the way he shows us the nature of the human situation by portraying men not as they ought to be, nor as they appear, but as they are. Few artists achieve a degree of perception which raises men to a more profound understanding of 'la condition humaine', but those who do are moralists in the sense that they have something to say about man as he is. Chaucer and Shakespeare are moralists in this sense for they both enrich man's understanding of himself, by increasing his perception. Other authors, including Trollope, achieve this too and Trollope is definitely a moralist rather than an author who moralises.

In this semantic analysis of terminology can be seen something of the complexity which surrounds criticism at the present time. Our constant questioning of the criteria by which we endeavour to evaluate leads inevitably to the analysis of the words we use, with the eventual result that our critical procedures are all ultimately determined by the form of the words in which we express ourselves.

In the case of Trollope our difficulties are increased by the fact that Trollope does moralise, superficially at any rate, in creating that air of intimacy between reader and author mentioned above. These Fielding-like authorial intrusions, albeit less formal

than those in Tom Jones, for example, have obscured the irony and perception of most of Trollope's writing and have blinded many critics to the essential moralist in Trollope. Strangely enough, the very parts of Trollope's output that have attracted attention from critics have obscured the real qualities of his writing. If Trollope was merely an author who moralised about what he wrote, he would have been unable to express the universal pity which is characteristic of him. As A.O.J. Cockshut has observed:

'In one respect, Trollope occupies the place among novelists which Webster holds among dramatists - he has a universal pity'<sup>31</sup>.

The intention of this digression has been to show the false impression that is created if Trollope's morality is taken at a dangerously superficial level. Authorial comment and the so-called intimacy between Trollope and his readers has been well documented in Trollopian criticism; but the acceptance of these pronouncements as being *au grand sérieux* has made it difficult to appreciate the much more important irony through which Trollope expresses himself. Needless to say the passages where Trollope takes his reader by the arm are not to be ignored any more than An Autobiography : they provide valuable insight so long as they are viewed with caution. Written for issue in periodical form as most of the novels were, Trollope was constantly aware of his reading public and the need to supply them with what they wanted. The wide readership which Trollope commanded expected

a chatty atmosphere in which the author took his readers into his confidence. Such intimacy was as much a convention of mid-Victorian fiction as writing about speaking birds was in Chaucer's time. Trollope's assumption of intimacy was conscious and deliberate, for he was used to writing from an assumed position: for example, in 1865, Trollope published for 'The Pall Mall Gazette' an account of an Evangelical 'May meeting' held in Exeter Hall, and he chose to do this in the form of an article submitted by 'A Zulu in London', thereby achieving an objective standpoint<sup>32</sup>. His intimacy with the reader in most of his novels is as conscious as this. He gave his readers what they wanted - it was his fortune that he achieved the right balance between story, character and comment - but the passages of comment were written with the same effort to create illusion in the mind of the reader. It was as conscious a part of his art as his use of a mock-heroic style in Barchester Towers<sup>33</sup>.

In recent years there has been a reversal of critical opinion on the subject of Trollope's style. Lord David Cecil expressed the view that Trollope had no style<sup>34</sup>, because he does not use any of the conventional stylistic devices like symbolism and imagery; more recent critical opinion shows that Trollope's style has excellence because it serves as the unobtrusive vehicle for the perfect expression of the author's ideas. Trollope provided his own justification for an unpretentious style at the end of his tribute to Thackeray:

'I hold that gentleman to be the best dressed whose dress no one observes. I am not sure but that the same may be said of an author's written language.'<sup>35</sup>

Whereas Trollope's style used to be thought of as non-existent and his writing therefore as unremarkable, its plainness and unobtrusiveness have more recently been recognised as a strength rather than a weakness. Renewed interest was shown by H.S. Davies, with 'Trollope and his Style'<sup>36</sup>, more fully explored by Geoffrey Tillotson in his essay on 'Trollope's Style'<sup>37</sup> and developed fully by Ruth apRoberts in an article called 'Anthony Trollope or the Man with No Style at All'<sup>38</sup>. The qualities of Trollope's written style had been discounted from the time of his death, perhaps because he had disclaimed artistic genius in his own accounts of his mundane approach to writing, in An Autobiography<sup>39</sup>, and this was something which the reading public and the critical world of the 'fin de siècle' could not admire. This discredit stuck almost unchallenged, although P.E. More, in a remarkably profound essay which was almost completely overshadowed by Sadleir's Trollope : A Commentary, which had appeared the year before, hinted at the true value of Trollope's style:

'But in the long run, I wonder whether his clear, manly, straightforward style is not the most satisfactory medium after all'<sup>40</sup>.

This same essay contains, in embryo, a number of our more recent ideas about Trollope, and about the relationship



between art and morality which Trollope understood so well. It is almost alone in not following the apologetic views about Trollope, so fully developed by Sadleir; indeed, P.E. More is almost alone in criticising Sadleir's approach at all. He hints at an awareness of qualities in Trollope's writing which have remained unrecognised until recently; of the novels, he says:

'Indeed, I question whether anyone has fully relished their wit and irony and their delicacy of insinuation'<sup>41</sup>.

We are still at the level of discovery in our reading of Trollope's novels today, though at least they are no longer dismissed as inartistic.

P.E. More's essay points towards the real nature of Trollope's achievement, particularly in his understanding of the highly moral approach which Trollope had towards writing:

'If any novelist ever wove his plots with a definite idea before him about the meaning of life in general, it was this same 'unideaed' Trollope; he is as clear in his conception of human destinies as George Eliot, and if anything truer to the facts.'<sup>42</sup>.

Nor is his philosophy about 'the meaning of life in general' a cynically pessimistic or 'futilitarian' one:

'To Trollope preeminently life presented itself as a game worth the candles'<sup>43</sup>.

P.E. More's assertion that Trollope had a very definite

idea about 'the meaning of life in general' is a key to understanding him. Far from being the professional literary hack dedicated to nothing but earning his bread by writing for periodicals, Trollope was a highly perceptive, sensitive and intelligent observer of humanity, whose reflections on the meaning of 'life in general' led him to some far-sighted conclusions about the nature of man in his social and universal setting.

There is no simple definition of Trollope's philosophy and even the most assiduous student will find no easy resumé in his writings. As with many worthwhile truths, it is not easily come by and the very empirical nature of Trollope's philosophy makes it even harder to state it succinctly. Broadly humanitarian, broadly Christian, his acceptance of every human viewpoint as finally reconcilable, because we all live in one universe, teaches that all incongruities merge ultimately into a harmony at which we can only grasp, through an appreciation of those very incongruities.

Victorian society itself was full of incongruities and Trollope's deliberate juxtapositioning of these incongruities is the means by which he expresses his philosophy. This outlook on life would have made near nonsense if it had been expressed in bald abstract terms and this is why Trollope didn't draw philosophical generalisations in the way that George Eliot's writing was evidently moral. Trollope was an empiricist who never went beyond the expression of first hand observation. 'How seldom it is', he stated in Thackeray, 'that theories stand the

wear and tear of practice'<sup>44</sup>. Stephen Wall has observed:

'Trollope was, as usual, much more interested in the particular case than in the general principle'<sup>45</sup>.

It would not be true to say that Trollope never makes generalisations. He does, but his attention is always focused on the point in the story rather than on the general conclusion which can be drawn from it. The generalisations he does make, however, tend towards the same theme : a deliberate placing together of apparently irreconcilable opposites. In the early works he is tentative. As he puts it in The Warden:

'the fact that in this world no good is unalloyed and that there is but little evil that does not have some seed in it of what is goodly'<sup>46</sup>.

But his self-assurance was greater when he wrote the Palliser series and he could assert with bluntness:

'the persons whom you cannot care for in a novel, because they are so bad, are the very same that you so dearly love in your life, because they are so good'<sup>47</sup>.

Ruth apRoberts says of Trollope's morality:

'He takes us to the centre of life, obliging us to recognise incongruities, forcing on us the appreciation of the dilemma'<sup>48</sup>.

and elsewhere she says that both Trollope and Cicero 'knew the irony of the good within the evil'<sup>49</sup>. Trollope presents us with the incongruities but rarely expresses them as such in so many words. He consistently rejects a systematic approach and his own empirical methods are much closer than is immediately

obvious to the existentialist's prime concern with immediate events rather than any theories by which they may be interpreted. Merçault, in Camus's L'Etranger, records his mother's death and the events leading to the beach murder with almost no elaboration or interpretation: it is the bald presentation of each fact that leads to the cumulative awareness of the absurdity of Merçault's existence. Trollope's style is quite different from that of Albert Camus and his philosophy cannot be called 'existentialist', but his method of recording and observation achieves its effect in something of the same way.

Trollope constantly puts before his readers, then, situations which contain incongruities because the characters brought together have different codes of morality; and in the confrontation which ensues, Trollope shows us the dilemma, by which he can lead us to a deeper perception of the universe. There is no short cut to the philosophical truth that exists in the possibility of entertaining two apparently incongruous notions at the same time. Indeed, it is very difficult to persuade people to hold two apparently contradictory ideas at the same time. A class I once taught were considering the motion, 'This house believes in Adam and Eve'. Unsatisfactory as the wording of the motion was, it gave rise to some interesting discussion and most students favoured the Darwinian rejection of any such proposition, though a few took the opposite view. Only one person, however, could see that it is possible to hold that man

descended from the apes and that man descended from Adam and Eve, at the same time. In the West the belief that all truth is encompassed in a rationale which logically excludes the possibility of entertaining two opposing views at once seems inviolable. A similar experiment conducted with students in the Indian sub-continent would have given rise to no difficulty in entertaining apparently contradictory ideas at the same time. As Fritz Schumacher has expressed it:

'For his different purposes man needs many different structures, both small ones and large ones, some exclusive and some comprehensive. Yet people find it most difficult to hold two seemingly opposite necessities of truth in their minds as the same truth. They tend to clamour for a final solution, as if in actual life there could ever be a final solution other than death'<sup>50</sup>.

Trollope didn't write specifically on this topic, though The Origin of Species was published in 1859 with the ensuing debate dominating the intellectual scene for some time, and he must have been drawn into discussions about theories of evolution and Biblical fundamentalism. It is worth noting, however, that the naturalistic qualities of his characters are to some extent due to the way in which he observed and recorded human nature and this way of writing was not unlike the growing scientific methodology of the mid-nineteenth century<sup>51</sup>. Though Darwin and 'evolution' do not feature in the novels, Trollope perhaps has more in common with them than might at first be realised. Geoffrey Tillotson has drawn

another parallel between these two, in writing about The Warden:

'Trollope must have had no difficulty in accepting Darwin's conception of the survival of the fittest, and it is part of the comedy... that he sees the fittest as sometimes the people who lack the most obvious sorts of strength'<sup>52</sup>.

From his writings Trollope's faith in the Christian God appears to have provoked no moral dilemma for him over this debate : perhaps he saw the reality in the apparent incongruity of these ideas.

It is well worth looking at some of these incongruous situations in the novels in more depth; and in doing so the development from simple plot situation to complex awareness that all life is composed of such juxtapositioning will become apparent.

NOTES - Chapter Two

- 1 Sadleir, Michael, Trollope : A Commentary, p. 15.
- 2 Cockshut, A.O.J., Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 22.
- 3 An Autobiography, p. 209 (Ch. XII). In the same passage, Trollope explains the importance of learning to live with created characters 'in the full reality of established intimacy'.
- 4 The Last Chronicle of Barset, p. 652 (Ch. LXI).
- 5 A fuller study of this particular character's psychology has been made by Helen S. Corsa, in "The Cross-grainedness of Men" : the Rev. Josiah Crawley - Trollope's Study of a Paranoid Personality', Hartford Studies in Literature, v (1973) pp. 160-172.
- 6 Can You Forgive Her?, pp. 743-744 (Ch. LXXX).
- 7 There is a short examination of speech patterns in Trollope's novels by Norman Page in 'Trollope's Conversational Mode', English Studies in Africa, xv:i (March 1972) pp. 33-37.
- 8 In his article on 'Trollope's Forms of Address', George Watson shows how Trollope chronicled the changes in modes of address in the mid-Victorian period, and indicates how sensitive Trollope was to the subtleties of inter-personal exchanges. Critical Quarterly, xv:iii (Autumn 1973) pp. 219-230.
- 9 Cecil, Lord David, Early Victorian Novelists, p. 255.
- 10 This point is developed in a general way in Neville Coghill's The Poet Chaucer.
- 11 Gordon Ray makes this point in accounting for his own early reading of Trollope's novels in his lecture 'Trollope at Full Length', Huntington Library Quarterly, xxxi (1967-8; no. iv) pp. 313-339.
- 12 For a survey of this tradition and Trollope's place in it, see Walter Allen's The English Novel : A Short Critical History.
- 13 The Prime Minister, II, pp. 263-266 (Ch. LXVIII).
- 14 An Autobiography, p. 200 (Ch. XII).
- 15 Ibid., pp. 244-245 (Ch. XIV).

- 16 Nineteenth Century Fiction, xxvi (1971) pp. 477-484.
- 17 The Language and Style of Anthony Trollope. It is interesting to note that J. W. Clark chooses a quotation from An Autobiography, Chapter VIII as a basis for examining Trollope's 'preaching' on these subjects : 'I have ever thought of myself as a preacher of sermons and my pulpit as one which I could make both salutary and agreeable to my audience'.
- 18 Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 25. But as Trollope pointed out in An Autobiography (p. 317, Ch. XX) : 'It will not, I trust, be supposed by any reader that I have intended in this so-called autobiography to give a record of my inner life'.
- 19 Trollope's Later Novels, p. 8.
- 20 For example, R. C. Terry, Anthony Trollope : The Artist in Hiding and A. Pollard, Anthony Trollope. The First of these in particular incorporated new approaches pioneered by Ruth apRoberts.
- 21 The Eustace Diamonds, p. 476 (Ch. XLVIII).
- 22 Phineas Finn, II, p. 77 (Ch. XLIX).
- 23 Barchester Towers, p. 122 (Ch. XV).
- 24 Forster, E. M., Aspects of the Novel, p. 35.
- 25 Much of the advice given to aspiring novelists in Chapter XII of An Autobiography is at variance with Trollope's own stated practice, and this is a further indication of the need for caution in accepting Trollope's intimate confidences with the reader at surface level.
- 26 'The Novel as a Conspiracy' in Essays by Divers Hands, xxxvii (1972) pp. 122-133.
- 27 Tillotson, Geoffrey and Kathleen, Mid-Victorian Studies, p. 60.
- 28 Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 41.
- 29 For example, William Overton in 'Self and Society in Trollope', Journal of English Literary History, xlv, pp. 286-302.
- 30 The justification of Trollope for his formal writing abilities rather than for his accurate psychology, particularly in the later novels, is made by Robert Tracy in Trollope's Later Novels.



- 31 Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 195.
- 32 Pall Mall Gazette, (10th May 1865) pp. 3-4, reprinted in the cited edition of Trollope's Clergymen of the Church of England, pp. 50-60.
- 33 For example, Barchester Towers, p. 37 (Ch. V). (See also William Cadbury's 'Character and Mock-Heroic in Barchester Towers', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, v (1963-4) pp. 509-519).
- 34 'Now of style, in this sense (the writer's power to incarnate his creative conceptions in a sensible form), Trollope has none at all,' Early Victorian Novelists, p. 262.
- 35 Thackeray, p. 200.
- 36 Review of English Literature, i, no. 4 (October 1960) pp. 73-85.
- 37 Tillotson, Geoffrey and Kathleen, Mid-Victorian Studies, pp. 56-61.
- 38 Victorian Newsletter, no. 35 (September 1969) pp. 10-13.
- 39 in Chapter XII and elsewhere.
- 40 More, Paul E., 'My Debt to Trollope'. The Demon of the Absolute, Volume One of New Shelburne Essays, p. 91.
- 41 Ibid., p. 89.
- 42 Ibid., p. 117.
- 43 Ibid., p. 119.
- 44 Thackeray, p. 52.
- 45 In his introduction to Can You Forgive Her?, p. 11.
- 46 The Warden, p. 140 (Ch. XL).
- 47 The Eustace Diamonds, p. 357 (Ch. XXXV).
- 48 Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 54.
- 49 Ibid., p. 64.
- 50 Small is Beautiful, pp. 59-60.

- 51 This point is developed to a limited extent in Chapter Six.
- 52 'Afterword' in cited edition of The Warden, p. 212.

Chapter ThreeIreland and Barsetshire

Trollope's first novel, The Macdermots of Ballycloran, centres on the presentation of one moral issue, the trial of Thady Macdermot. Thady's family were well on the path to poverty because Thady's father had allowed the property to become entailed to an attorney in the neighbouring town, Mr. Keegan. Thady's sister, Feemy Macdermot, is with child by a callous and arrogant military officer, Myles Ussher. Unintentionally, Thady kills Captain Myles Ussher in a fight outside the house and the ensuing events and trial take up well over half the book. The moral question on which the book centres is Thady's guilt or innocence. In moral terms he seems to be innocent but as the outcome of the trial shows he is legally guilty and is eventually executed. Trollope seems to be writing about the adverse effects of an imported legal system and his sympathetic presentation of the discontent in Ireland and County Connaught in particular makes the book worth reading today. In parts the story flags and Trollope lacked the confidence in his style to give it polish, but there are some interesting characterisations (notably of the parish priest, Father John McGrath, whose general benevolence and education in France made him as different in outlook from his curate, Father Cullen, as Archdeacon Grantly was to be from Obediah Slope : they were unlike in everything except zeal for the church); and the account of the trial, which lasts for five

long chapters, keeps the reader's interest well. One is constantly aware of Thady's moral innocence, because Trollope stresses the extenuating circumstances of the murder, but at the same time one suspects that the English legal system will find him guilty as it eventually does.

Trollope was uncertain of his medium in his first novel, as one would expect, but The Macdermots of Ballycloran deserves more consideration than it has generally received<sup>1</sup>. First published in 1847 and only reissued once apparently (by John Lane in 1906) it is time this little-known and inaccessible novel was republished : it is of interest as an unusually sympathetic account of Ireland and the Irish by an English postal inspector, and because it sheds light on the historical nature of Anglo-Irish conflict<sup>2</sup>. It also shows Trollope's early interest in moral issues, the law and the church, and the story is an entertaining one, even if the handling of it lacks the confidence and polish of the later novels. Trollope himself was clearly uncertain of his medium as some recent research has shown<sup>3</sup>. His only defence for it at a later date was that it was:

'Worth reading by anyone who wishes to understand what Irish life was before the potato disease, the famine and the Encumbered Estates Bill'<sup>4</sup>.

We can attribute the fact that it has remained largely unnoticed to Trollope's own dismissal of it and Michael Sadleir's condemnation of it along with The Kellys and the O'Kellys, Trollope's other

early novel of Irish life, as 'pamphlets in fictional guise'<sup>5</sup>.

Sadleir writes:

'The two chief blemishes of The Macdermots of Ballycloran are lack of imagination and excess of instructional zeal'<sup>6</sup>.

and as if that were insufficient:

'Ireland produced the man, but it was left to England to inspire the novelist. Indeed one may go further. Ireland, having by friendliness, sport and open air saved Trollope from himself, all but choked the very genius that she had vitalised by her insane absorption<sup>7</sup> in her own wrongs and thwarted hopes.'

Understanding something of Trollope's serious intent as a novelist and his concern with apparent contradictions, it seems that Sadleir's dismissal of these Irish novels may in itself have a certain unintentional irony, not least when he says:

'If, as they say, Ireland takes pride in contradictiousness, she may find satisfaction in her influence on Trllope, than which none could be more paradoxical'<sup>8</sup>.

Just so, for we can see here in embryo Trollope's life-long concern with antithesis!

In spite of Trollope's own subsequent rejection of The Macdermots of Ballycloran it was in fact quite well reviewed by the critics, who found greater skill and artistic ability than had ever been displayed by Trollope's mother in her writing career<sup>9</sup>.

In An Autobiography, Trollope declared that:

'if there was any notice of it taken by any critic of the day, I did not see it ... I think I may say that after the publication I never said a word about the book, even to my wife!<sup>10</sup>

Clearly Trollope was to some extent influenced by his mother's rather strange reaction to her son's first venture into novel writing<sup>11</sup>, but it seems unlikely that none of the press notices came to Trollope's attention, considering the literary interests of the whole family (as both James Pope Hennessy and C.P. Snow observe<sup>12</sup>) and this seems to be another example of the unreliability of An Autobiography as an interpretative guide to Trollope's work.

The Macdermots of Ballycloran deserves reappraisal then, but its interest for us lies here in the nature of the plot which presents an apparently antithetical situation in that the central figure is both innocent and guilty of the murder of his sister's seducer. Trollope offers no easy solution to this inconsistency. Indeed the book ends very shortly after sentence has been passed, and the reader is left with the court decision and the knowledge of Thady's moral innocence unresolved. Such an ending in a novel is far from unique. Hardy's Tess is legally guilty of murder though the reader knows that she is morally innocent when she goes to execution, but Hardy leaves no doubt or questioning in the reader's mind:

"Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals, in AEschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess!<sup>13</sup>

No further explanation need be sought. Trollope's story

involves the reader in moral judgement and leaves no such ready-made explanation.

The first of the Barsetshire novels, The Warden, enjoyed a more prosperous reputation after its appearance in 1855. We should 'respect it for the sake of the admirable books it heralded', according to Sadleir<sup>14</sup>, but it has probably been more widely read than any of Trollope's other books, not least, some would say, on account of its brevity. The short and simple story presents the reader with a situation of moral complexity, and Trollope deliberately allied himself to neither the laissez-faire nor the reforming factions. He presents both sides of the case regarding Mr. Harding's stipend and position in Hiram's Hospital with sympathy and skilled advocacy so that the reader can appreciate both the need to reform an out-dated will by which the incumbent receives a stipend quite out of proportion to his responsibilities, and also the dissatisfaction among the beadsmen that will be engendered by such reforming zeal, including the discomfort that will be caused to Mr. Harding himself, who is quite innocent of any wrong whatsoever<sup>15</sup>.

The novel centres on the conscience of Mr. Harding : as Henry James observed, 'it is simply the history of an old man's conscience'<sup>16</sup>, but the moral dilemma is far from simple. As Ruth apRoberts puts it : 'The situation Trollope chooses is in itself a concrete diagram of a moral complexity'<sup>17</sup>. If, as I am suggesting, this is the essence of The Warden, a concrete diagram

of a moral complexity, the various apparently irrelevant parts of the book fit into place. In particular the contemporary satire on Carlyle and Dickens (as Dr. Anticant and Mr. Popular Sentiment) and The Times (appearing as The Jupiter) all assume a meaningful place rather than being 'a disastrous attempt at satire or allegory'<sup>18</sup> which otherwise spoils the 'classic roundness'<sup>19</sup> of the story.

As Henry James also observed, the subject of the novel is indeed 'the opposition of the two natures of Archdeacon Grantly and Mr. Harding'<sup>20</sup>, but it is more than that. It is a presentation of a moral complexity which in itself directs the reader to a deeper moral perception.

A.O.J. Cockshut sees The Warden as an immature study of psychological obsession, in which Trollope compares unfavourably with Scott, who had:

'Sympathetic understanding of fanaticism, delusion and violence in his bones... It is true... that from the first (Trollope) was apt to dwell on obsessions... his keenest psychological penetration was confined, till he was over fifty, to normal characters... But for Scott from the first, the abnormal mind was as easy to decipher as the normal... In The Warden the conflicting ideas exist mainly to exercise an old man's conscience, which is the main subject of the story. And as he shows us the innocence of the man who is so cruelly tormented, satire against the two extremes and rigid ideas becomes very marked. Compared with Scott, Trollope in 1855 seems limited in his sympathies, not because he condemns extremism, but because he does not sufficiently comprehend before he condemns'<sup>21</sup>.



Trollope does not pass judgement on the issues raised in The Warden in the way that Cockshut says he does. It is true that he did not show the 'universal pity' which characterised his later books, but the comparison with Scott is not wholly just. Trollope was interested in portraying ordinary characters as they are in ordinary life and in particular he was concerned with the incongruities that arise when real people meet and their differing moral worlds engage in conflict. He was not suffering from the mental illness attributed to him by J.H. Hagan, who thought that dilemmas like that in The Warden were a sign of helpless indecision<sup>22</sup>. Trollope was a good psychologist in that he understood the workings of the minds of ordinary people in real life and in fiction, but he did not have the psychologist's interest in abnormal behaviour and obsession which Cockshut attributes to him. A.O.J. Cockshut was the first among several critics to arouse new academic interest in the novels written after 1868, but his analysis of the books under the heading 'Progress to Pessimism' rests too firmly on the assumption that Trollope's concern was mainly a psychological one, concentrating more and more on studies of obsession and unhappiness, until the final satirical statement of a pathetically misunderstood property owner in Mr. Scarborough's Family.

However, The Warden is not an early psychological study in obsession : it presents the reader with a moral dilemma to which there is no ready-made or easy solution. Trollope is not

trying to promote a neat theory. He merely points to the complexities of the situation in describing the day to day lives of ordinary people, with unmistakable skill. There may be something of Trollope himself, as Cockshut suggests, in the portrait of Harding, but that is purely incidental to the moral issues presented. The Warden stands as a novel about a moral dilemma in its own right and not just as a fore-runner of the later novels.

The next novel, Barchester Towers, was Trollope's first attempt to portray the interaction that exists in a community made up of a number of individuals. His range is altogether wider and there is no single character around whom the story is built. Trollope centres his attention here not on one situation of moral incongruity, as in the case of Thady's guilt or innocence, but on a number. The characterisation is more fully developed and as a result the conflicts arise more frequently, in different surroundings each time. It was possible for Trollope to be much nearer to the real life situation, because the conflicts arise in all kinds of ways, often when least expected. In Barchester Towers there are different shades of clerical opinion, from high church to low church, from Dr. Gwynne to Mr. Slope in their extremes; and their differing codes of theological practice are brought into sharp focus whenever they meet. There are, of course, those who do not appear to have any particular doctrinal stance, like Dr. Stanhope and to some extent the Bishop himself, whose low

church affiliations helped to secure his appointment as the Liberal nominee; but even their lack of commitment exhibits in itself a different moral outlook. The laymen too bring their individual moral worlds to the novel. Mrs. Proudie has something of low church zeal about her, but it is her strong desire to be the 'prima donna' of the Bishop's palace which leads to conflict with all and sundry. Mr. Thorne and his sister, Monica, with their interest in pre-Christian ritual, provide a refreshing contrast to the moral codes of Barchester Close. These different moral outlooks are brought into sharp contrast at the Ullathorne Sports and this is the basis for some of Trollope's best comic writing. The effect of moral confusion is such that Mr. Slope, albeit under the influence of champagne, proposes to Eleanor Bold : such are the amazing effects of bringing together entirely different moral codes! Trollope seems to have been fascinated by the results of such conflicts though here he is perhaps more concerned with the comedy that it gives rise to than with moral perception. Barchester Towers does, nevertheless, centre on incongruity.

The Ullathorne Sports is only one of the occasions where conflict arises. Whenever the Signora Neroni appears, the effect she has is devastating and she does not limit her influence to the men who gather round her sofa : both Mrs. Proudie and Eleanor Bold are much affected by their meetings with her. It is because her values are so different from those with whom she converses that conflict results. In some cases, as with Mrs. Proudie,

this leads to a hardening of line, but elsewhere it leads to a rearrangement of values, as in the case of Mr. Arabin whose outlook is considerably modified by his meeting with the Signora. The Signora is a yardstick against whom we evaluate the moral codes of the central characters, so that her value in the novel is not only that of introducing an ultramontane atmosphere into the confines of Barsetshire<sup>23</sup>. The newspaper called The Jupiter in this book is another such yardstick, with its commercial interest in upholding what it believes to be right, in this case Mr. Slope.

Besides the Ullathorne Sports and the effect of the Signora, however, there is one other scene in the novel where differing moral codes are brought together with a particularly effective comic result and that scene is Mrs. Proudie's famous reception. Here the comedy does not arise so much from the situation itself (though it is a delightfully entertaining one to read with Bertie's masterful moving of the sofa resulting in Mrs. Proudie's magnificent dress being torn from her), but more from the clash of moral values produced by such a gathering. Bertie Stanhope's conversation with the Bishop is an excellent example of this and shows that even at this comparatively early stage in his writing career, Trollope could produce dialogue with skilful and subtle irony:

"Bishop of Barchester, I presume?" said Bertie Stanhope, putting out his hand, frankly; "I am delighted to make your acquaintance. We are in rather close quarters here, a'nt we?"

In truth they were...

"Do you like Barchester on the whole?" asked Bertie.

The Bishop, looking dignified, said that he did like Barchester.

"You've not been here very long, I believe," said Bertie.

"No - not long," said the bishop, and tried again to make his way between the back of a sofa and a heavy rector, who was staring over it at the grimaces of the signora.

"You weren't a bishop before, were you?"

Dr. Proudie explained that this was the first diocese he had held.

"Ah - I thought so," said Bertie; "but you are changed about sometimes, a'nt you?"

"Translations are occasionally made," said Dr. Proudie; "but not so frequently as in former days."

"They've cut them all down to pretty nearly the same figure, haven't they?" said Bertie.

To this the Bishop could not bring himself to make any answer, but again attempted to move the rector.

"But the work, I suppose, is different?" continued Bertie. "Is there much to do here, at Barchester?"

This was said in exactly the tone that a young Admiralty clerk might use in asking the same question of a brother acolyte at the Treasury.

"The work of a bishop of the Church of England," said Dr. Proudie with considerable

dignity, "is not easy. The responsibility which he has to bear is very great indeed."

"Is it?" said Bertie, opening wide his wonderful blue eyes. "Well; I never was afraid of responsibility. I once had thoughts of being a bishop myself."

"Had thoughts of being a bishop!" said Dr. Proudie, much amazed.

"That is, a parson - a parson first, you know, and a bishop afterwards. If I had once begun, I'd have stuck to it. But on the whole, I like the Church of Rome the best."

The bishop could not discuss the point, so he remained silent.

"Now, there's my father," continued Bertie; "he hasn't stuck to it. I fancy he didn't like saying the same thing over so often. By the bye, Bishop, have you seen my father?"

The bishop was more amazed than ever. Had he seen his father?

"No," he replied; "he had not yet had the pleasure: he hoped he might;" and, as he said so, he resolved to bear heavy on that fat, immovable rector, if ever he had the power of doing do.

"He's in the room somewhere," said Bertie, "and he'll turn up soon. By the bye, do you know much about the Jews?"

At last the bishop saw a way out. "I beg your pardon," said he; "but I'm forced to go round the room."<sup>124</sup>

There is much said without being explicitly stated in this passage.

The effectiveness of the comedy and the irony lies, however, in

Trollope's ability to present the incongruity of the different outlooks

of these two men so effortlessly. Here the irony is mainly conveyed through direct speech, though as Trollope's writing career progressed, he explained characters' thoughts and reactions without necessarily having recourse to direct speech: 'The bishop was more amazed than ever. Had he seen his father?' is an example of a skill that was to be developed further<sup>25</sup>. This passage shows something of the skill of Jane Austen, whose books do not bring together such differing moral conceptions of the universe. Her characters share similar values and the irony, if more refined, is more limited in its range. Dr. Johnson's definition of imagery in Metaphysical poetry as 'heterogeneous ideas yoked by violence together'<sup>26</sup> might be applied to the kind of conflict situation in Trollope, such as that quoted above, where quite different conceptions of the world are brought into sharp focus in the way they contrast. The effect in Trollope is often comic, but as with metaphysical imagery, it can lead to a deeper perception.

Barchester Towers is full of such conflicts and it is surprising that they have not received more attention to date. Henry James noted the 'almost Thackerayan richness'<sup>27</sup> of the book, but thought that Mrs. Proudie was not as good as her fame, and Mr. Slope he described as 'a little too arrant a scamp' whose portrait is overdone<sup>28</sup>. Sadleir recognised the great advance Trollope had made since The Warden, but found its main merit in its unity: 'the use of selected material solely in the interests of the novel's plot'<sup>29</sup>. In a much later introduction to Barchester

Towers, Sadleir remarks upon the improved characterisations in the novel, but bemoans 'his unsureness in these early days' and complains that Trollope's clergy lack 'a spiritual aspect'. His comment on the Stanhopes reveals, I think, a general failure to understand (though not to enjoy) Trollope's art. He says,

'It was not that Trollope did not realise what a good thing he had invented when he imagined the Stanhopes but that, out of a vaguely formalised fear of contemporary moralism, he funked their exploitation (in later novels).'<sup>30</sup>

Trollope was not just the unthinking upholder of Victorian morality : on the contrary he was acutely aware of it and deliberately focused his readers' attention on it by introducing characters like Bertie and the Signora who have completely different outlooks. A failure to appreciate the irony that underlies Trollope's mature work has done more damage to his literary reputation than any other single factor. A.O.J. Cockshut only sees fit to mention Barchester Towers in passing, (as an example of children being used to illustrate some facet of adult character, in the chapter 'Baby Worship'). It is strange the best known of Trollope's novels has received such scant attention from well established critics. William Cadbury comes nearer to understanding Trollope's moral perception when he says that Barchester Towers originates in a conflict over social position. The theme, he says, is a matter of conflicting motivations which are resolved in the course of the book as characters with different representative



stances adjust themselves to the demands of society<sup>31</sup>. The characters do have different moral stances, but Trollope was more interested in the conflicts that ensued from these differences than in providing any easy solution as they adjust their stances. In another article the same writer comments on Trollope's detachment from his characters in Barchester Towers: 'The figures... are designed to be seen from the outside'<sup>32</sup>. It is unfortunate that he then goes on to state that none of the characters develops, since he had previously said that they all adjusted their stances to fit in with the demands of society.

More recently J.R. Kincaid has drawn attention to the way in which the comedy is more effective because our normal expectations of comedy (of youth fighting against the establishment) are reversed as the older ones struggle against their children<sup>33</sup>. More importantly, however, Ruth apRoberts has drawn attention to the issue which forms the basis of Barchester Towers. She says:

'He has found in Barchester that single situation which demonstrates the complexities of moral problems'<sup>34</sup>.

This comes nearer to identifying the real value of the novel and accounting for its popularity among educated readers. Trollope was not yet sufficiently sure of himself to write about man in a broad social setting, and he needed the fairly close-knit community of Barchester as a secure framework at this stage. Previously his concern with incongruous value systems had been concentrated into one situation, as in the case of Thady's guilt or innocence,

but in Barchester Towers he extended this to write a study of the incongruities which arise in every situation where human beings meet. The step from The Warden to Barchester Towers was in many ways a far greater one than the step from Barchester to London with the appearance of Can You Forgive Her? in 1864. As Albert Cook has written in The Meaning of Fiction,

'The greater the reality which the novelist discovers, the larger and more open his plots are likely to be.<sup>35</sup>

Trollope still found it necessary to bind up the loose ends in Barchester Towers, but his plot is larger and more open, partly because the novel had no single character as its hero. Trollope made it clear to his publisher that he did not want any character singled out for an alternative title for the book:

'I do not like a second title nor the one you name. I do not wish the bishop - male or female - to be considered the chief character in the book.<sup>36</sup>

Trollope was well aware of the difficulties posed by any attempt to tie up the loose ends of a book. He knew, however, that his reading public required a neat and tidy conclusion to the events of a story, even if it meant sacrificing a little of the credibility which had been so carefully nurtured in the rest of the book. In the following passage, Trollope defends the unnaturalistic ending of Barchester Towers, because he does not wish to incur the displeasure of his readers (the earlier novel to which he refers

obliquely is The Macdermots of Ballycloran, which did not sell very well, a fact which Trollope put down to the untidy, but true to life, ending):

'We must now take leave of Mr. Slope, and of the bishop also, and of Mrs. Proudie. These leave-takings in novels are as disagreeable as they are in real life; not so sad, indeed, for they want the reality of sadness; but quite as perplexing, and generally less satisfactory. What novelist, what Fielding, what Scott, what George Sand, or Sue or Dumas, can impart an interest to the last chapter of his fictitious history? promises of two children and superhuman happiness are of no avail, nor assurance of extreme respectability carried to an age far exceeding that usually allotted to mortals. The sorrows of our heroes and heroines, they are your delight, oh public! their sorrows, or their sins, or their absurdities; not their virtues, good sense, and consequent rewards. When we begin to tint our final pages with 'couleur de rose', as in accordance with fixed rule we must do, we altogether extinguish our own powers of pleasing. When we become dull we offend your intellect; and we must become dull or we offend your taste. A late writer, wishing to sustain his interest to the last page, hung his hero at the end of the third volume. The consequence was that no-one would read his novel. And who can apportion out and dovetail his incidents, dialogues, characters, and descriptive morsels, so as to fit them all exactly into 462 pages, without either compressing them unnaturally, or extending them artificially at the end of his labour? Do I not myself know that I am at this moment in want of a dozen pages, and that I am sick with cudgelling my brains to find them? And then when everything is done, the kindest-hearted critic of them all invariably twits us with the incompetency and lameness of our conclusion. We have either become

idle and neglected it, or tedious and over-laboured it. It is insipid or unnatural, over-strained or imbecile. It means nothing, or attempts too much. The last scene of all, as all last scenes we fear must be

'If second childhood, and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.'

I can only say that if some critic, who thoroughly knows his work, and has laboured on it till experience has made him perfect, will write the last fifty pages of a novel in the way they should be written, I, for one, will in future do my best to copy the example. Guided by my own lights only, I confess that I despair of success!<sup>37</sup>

There is little intrinsic artistic merit in this passage, though Trollope's dissatisfaction with the dictates of literary convention is expressed clearly enough. It may be said that at this stage in his writing career, Trollope was aware of the restrictions imposed by the conventions of his medium, but as yet he lacked the mastery to adapt, utilise and modify them for his own artistic expression. Such confidence was to come shortly after the success of Barchester Towers<sup>38</sup>.

All the Barsetshire novels<sup>39</sup> show Trollope's interest in the individual moral universes of his different characters and the incongruities that arise in their moral clashes with each other. He had no superficially didactic purpose, and if he succeeds in directing his readers to a deeper perception of the universe, it is by focusing attention on the individual situation as it arises in his stories. Trollope expressed the nature of his role accurately

when he wrote, 'The writer of stories... must teach, whether he wish to teach or no'<sup>40</sup>. In telling a story, an author unconsciously teaches by the very process of selection and omission. An understanding of the universe cannot easily be taught by direct homiletics. Trollope's novels leave us with an impression, a vivid and perceptive one because he observed so accurately not with a clearcut statement. As Thomas Hardy wrote a few years later:

'Let me repeat that a novel is an impression and not an argument'<sup>41</sup>.

Occasionally one suspects that the argument was stronger than the impression in Hardy's own novels, though it never was in Trollope's.

Trollope would have been wholeheartedly in agreement with Elizabeth Bowen:

'In the novel, everything that happens, happens either to or because of one of the characters'<sup>42</sup>.

He would, I think, have seen this as something more fundamental than just a literary convention. Human existence is concerned with people, and so novels, being about life, are primarily concerned with characters and their interactions. Trollope was not interested in drawing generalisations from his observation of human life, so much as in creating situations to stress the uniqueness of every individual human being and the events which surround his or her life. A failure to perceive the irony underlying the author's conventional intrusions into his stories might

lead one to suspect that this is not the case; and it is these intrusions that seem to be quoted most frequently in Trollopian criticism, often out of context. The superficial impression to be gleaned from reading such criticism is that a large proportion of Trollope's writing is devoted to intrusive moralising linked together by the outlines of a story. But it is the narrative of events and the analysis of character that form the basis of Trollope's artistic achievement. Ruth apRoberts sums it up as follows:

'The art of it makes us see the uniqueness of character in circumstances, and the end of it is moral perception'<sup>43</sup>.

It is by this constant focusing on individual man in his unique environment that Trollope leads the reader to a deeper understanding of the nature of the universe.

Doctor Thorne was the best of Trollope's novels in the opinion of Michael Sadleir who concluded Trollope : A Commentary with the words : 'at the proud apex of the pyramid of Trollope fiction (stands) the tale of Doctor Thorne.'<sup>44</sup> But when one analyses the reasons for his final choice of this novel, one cannot help thinking that his outlook was unduly influenced by a Jamesian affection for Trollope's heroines. Henry James had written:

'Trollope settled down steadily to the English girl... He is evidently more or less in love with her... (as a) paternal lover... They are so affectionate... they have a kind of clinging tenderness, a passive sweetness, which is quite in the old English tradition.'<sup>45</sup>

Sadleir wrote at the end of his survey of Trollope's work:

'At times one wonders whether (The Way We Live Now) is not the greatest novel Trollope ever wrote. But when the thought of Mary Thorne returns, and because beauty is more permanent than anger and sweetness more abiding than even righteous cruelty, the satire (of The Way We Live Now) falls into second place, leaving perpetually enthroned at the proud apex of the pyramid of Trollope fiction... the tale of Doctor Thorne.<sup>46</sup>

George Eliot had already put such utterances in their proper place when she wrote in a letter in 1870 : 'men are very fond of that doglike affection (of the Trollopian heroine)'<sup>47</sup>.

The novel is excellent in the shape of its plot and in its characterisation; it is also justly one of the favourites among readers of Trollope. Doctor Thorne himself is at the centre of the story, (Trollope calls him the 'hero' at the outset<sup>48</sup>), and he fulfils a unique role in the novel, since as the village doctor he enjoys the dubious privilege of being confided in by all his patients. Trollope was able to present us with scenes of intimacy that would have been out of place in the earlier novels and as a result we come closer to understanding the minds of some of the main protagonists. This greater intimacy leads to deeper psychological analysis and consequently the moral universe of each character is more clearly defined. Sir Roger Scatcherd his son Louis, Lady Arabella Gresham, who has cancer, and her son Frank, all confide in Doctor Thorne at one time or another. Because the common ground for these characters is generally the doctor himself, and because direct

confrontations are rare, the book is less a social comedy than Barchester Towers and a more sombre tone prevails.

Even so, we are continually aware of the incongruities of their various moral outlooks, because they expose themselves unreservedly to the central character who in some senses enjoys the intimacy afforded to several servant narrators in Victorian fiction. Although Doctor Thorne is 'more purely plot' than the novels which preceded it<sup>49</sup>, Trollope's skill in the handling of inter-personal relationships and dialogue is excellent and contributes to the richness of the novel as a whole<sup>50</sup>.

By the time Trollope came to write The Last Chronicle of Barset, he had found the confidence to handle a number of characters and several entirely different clashes of outlook, without the necessity of creating the kind of characters who stand on their own feet solely because of the lively scenes which ensue when they are 'yoked by violence together'. The deeper psychological penetration made possible in Doctor Thorne helped Trollope to create characters who live on their own as well as in social situations. Mr. Proudie would not have survived long if his wife had died in the course of Barchester Towers, but with her decease in The Last Chronicle of Barset he takes on a new dimension. Trollope was able to explore the inner workings of his characters' minds after the writing of Doctor Thorne and one result was that the characters exist as more than social beings only. The



Reverend Josiah Crawley is another figure who has a life of his own, wandering gloomily around the parish of Hoggstock, obsessed with his possible guilt in connection with the missing cheque for twenty pounds, and maintaining his stoicism by repeating the brick-layer's 'It's dogged as does it'<sup>51</sup>. Not even Mr. Harding has the psychological depth of Mr. Crawley<sup>52</sup>.

Trollope had outgrown the need for the security of an enclosed world set in Barsetshire by 1866, when he wrote The Last Chronicle of Barset. After Doctor Thorne, published in 1858, there had been the two other Barsetshire novels, Framley Parsonage and The Small House at Allington, besides Orley Farm, Tales of All Countries and the first Palliser series, Can You Forgive Her?. Trollope wrote The Last Chronicle of Barset partly in response to public demand<sup>53</sup>, but the understanding he has of his characters and their moral beings was much more sure as was his control over the story. The novel belongs to the Barsetshire series although in terms of artistic merit it should be considered alongside his most mature work. A.O.J. Cockshut has said that this book is marred by an excess of irrelevant material<sup>54</sup>, but the entire subplot of Lily Dale, Adolphus Crosbie and Johnny Eames, together with the scenes of middle-class life in Bayswater, give the novel the range which extends beyond the ecclesiastical and provincial circles of Barsetshire, and provide the reader with a different set of moral values against which to appreciate more fully the nature of the values of the main characters of the book. But Trollope has

been censured elsewhere for a failure to relate all his sub-plots to the main story in this novel:

'In a book like The Last Chronicle of Barset the relation between the Barset parts of the book and its London scenes is only of a tenuous and of a nominal kind, and a critic has to work very hard to connect thematically the two areas of the book with any plausibility<sup>55</sup>.

The relationship of sub-plot to main-plot in Can You Forgive Her?, for example, is much more obvious, since Mrs. Greenow, Mr. Cheeseacre and Captain Bellfield directly reflect Alice Vavasor's situation, just as in Shakespeare's play, Gloucester's plight reflects that of King Lear. Although the sub-plots in The Last Chronicle of Barset bear no such obvious relationship to the story, they do serve thematically as a yardstick against which we may understand the events and the people who are central to the novel and the values which exist within it.

On the face of it, this seems like a blanket justification for the inclusion of any material, no matter how irrelevant it may be in terms of story alone. Trollope was fascinated by this juxtaposition of incongruities, and far from providing light relief, or denoting the passing of time, the sub-plot in The Last Chronicle of Barset is an integral part of the novel for the very reason that the world which it represents is such a contrast to the world of the rest of the book<sup>56</sup>. In Barchester Towers the contrast provided by the Thornes of Ullathorne was more closely woven into the main plot, because the Sports brought together the two worlds



into a direct clash. Lily Dale's adventures and the whole Broughton sequence never come into direct contact with the Barchester clerical feuds, and the presentation of incongruity is all the more subtle. It is also, of course, more like real life, for the events of real life rarely fit into such a close jig-saw pattern as that of Barchester Towers. The novelist needs to achieve a compromise between an exact reflection of life as it is, chaotic, incongruous and disjointed, and an ordered interpretation of one aspect of life in the terms which his medium permits. Trollope was ahead of his time, perhaps, in making the novels he wrote more naturalistic in this respect : his books reflect the nature of life as it is and present a unified perception of life that has escaped many. It is a perception that can only be revealed through the inconsistencies of which life is really composed. Guy de Maupassant summed up the relationship of real life to life in fiction when he wrote:

'To make true, then, consists in giving the complete illusion of truth, following the ordinary logic of facts and not slavishly transcribing them as they happen'<sup>57</sup>.

Trollope came quite close to giving this illusion of truth in the writing of his maturity.

NOTES - Chapter Three

- 1 C.P. Snow, however, describes it as 'an exceptionally good novel'. (Trollope, p. 65), and R.M. Potherms has drawn attention to it for its underrated qualities in The Changing World of Anthony Trollope.
- 2 This has been recognised by E.W. Witting who describes it as the only novel of the period revealing an openness about the Irish which approaches the best of his English work. 'Trollope's Irish Fiction', Ireland : A Journal of Irish Studies, ix:iii (Autumn 1974) pp. 97-118.
- 3 R.C. Terry, 'The Three Lost Chapters of Trollope's First Novel', Nineteenth Century Fiction, xxvii (June 1972) pp. 71-80; and E.W. Witting, 'Significant Revisions in Trollope's The Macdermots of Ballycloran', Notes and Queries, xx:iii (March 1973) pp. 90-91.
- 4 An Autobiography, p. 77 (Ch. IV).
- 5 Trollope : A Commentary, p. 145.
- 6 Ibid., p. 141.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 142-143.
- 8 Ibid., p. 142. Sadleir's judgement completely eclipsed that of Sir H. Walpole (whose book Anthony Trollope appeared only a year later, in 1928). In it he describes The Macdermots of Ballycloran as 'almost in the first flight of Trollope... The story is of the simplest, but broadens, as every story ought to do, into the full bounds of its environment' (p. 25). C.P. Snow has rightly described Sadleir's dismissal of Trollope's first novel as a 'crass misjudgement' (Trollope, p. 65).
- 9 Favourable reviews were given in John Bull, Howitt's Journal and The Spectator, in 1847. See Donald Smalley, Trollope : The Critical Heritage, pp. 549, 550 and 547. A wider discussion of the relationship between Trollope and his reading public throughout his career can be found in David Skilton's Trollope and His Contemporaries : A Study in the Theory and Conventions of Mid-Victorian Fiction.
- 10 An Autobiography, pp. 80-81 (Ch. IV).

- 11 The family relationships, particularly between Anthony and his mother, Frances Trollope, who wrote novels to keep the family solvent after the failure of the Emporium venture in Cincinnati, while Anthony was still at school, are examined in The Trollopes : The Chronicle of a Writing Family, by L.P. and R.P. Stebbins.
- 12 James Pope Hennessy, Anthony Trollope, pp. 106-107; and C.P. Snow, Trollope, p. 66.
- 13 Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p. 446.
- 14 Trollope : A Commentary, p. 374.
- 15 The structure of The Warden has also been examined by M.C. Houston, in 'Structure and Plot in The Warden', University of Texas Studies in English, xxxiv (1955) pp. 107-113.
- 16 Partial Portraits, p. 108.
- 17 Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 42.
- 18 Partial Portraits, p. 111.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 21 Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, pp. 36-37.
- 22 'The Divided Mind of Anthony Trollope', Nineteenth Century Fiction, xiv (1959-60) pp. 1-26.
- 23 Trollope's novels contain a wide variety of characters from other countries, some of whom are discussed further in subsequent chapters. There is an article in The Trollopian, ii, no. 1 (1947) pp. 3-10, by D.M. Alexander, entitled 'Trollope's Cosmopolitanism'.
- 24 Barchester Towers, pp. 81-82 (Ch. XI)
- 25 Particularly in The Last Chronicle of Barset. W.J. Overton examines this in assessing the importance of the evolution of the unspoken monologue, in 'Trollope : An Interior View', Modern Languages Review, lxxi (1976) pp. 489-499. See also D. Aitken, 'A Kind of Felicity', Nineteenth Century Fiction, xx (1966) pp. 337-353.

- 26 Lives of the English Poets, p. 31.
- 27 Partial Portraits, p. 116.
- 28 Ibid., p. 118.
- 29 Trollope : A Commentary, p. 374.
- 30 Cited edition of Barchester Towers, p. viii.
- 31 'Shape and Theme : Determinants of Trollope's Forms', Proceedings of the Modern Languages Association of America, lxxviii (1963), pp. 326-332.
- 32 'Character and Mock-Heroic in Barchester Towers', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, v (1963-4) p. 510.
- 33 Initially in 'Barchester Towers and the Nature of Conservative Comedy', Journal of English Literary History, xxxvii (1970) pp. 595-612.
- 34 Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 41. Mention should be made, however, of W.D. Shaw, whose article, 'Moral Drama in Barchester Towers', showed insight into the real tensions which provide both the structure and the comedy of the novel, Nineteenth Century Fiction, xix (1965) pp. 45-54.
- 35 Quoted by Ruth apRoberts in Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 28. On this aspect of Trollope's development, see also R.H. Polhemus, The Changing World of Anthony Trollope, though this should be viewed with suspicion as regards its accuracy on church affairs (see Ruth apRobert's review in Nineteenth Century Fiction, xxiii (1968) p. 355) and a dangerous tendency to seek significance in everything, as, for example, when he notes (p. 730) the preponderance of phallic symbolism surrounding Violet Effingham and Lord Chiltern in Phineas Finn. It is strange that C.P. Snow puts Polhemus alongside Ruth apRoberts as 'two of the ablest critics who have written on Trollope'. (Trollope, p. 180).
- 36 In a letter to John Blackwood, 3rd March 1967. Not in the collected letters (ed. B.A. Booth), but quoted in Michael Sadleir's Trollope : A Commentary, p. 174.
- 37 Barchester Towers, pp. 446-447 (Ch. LI).

- 38 On the restrictions of the medium in which Trollope and his contemporaries were writing, see J.H. Miller's The Form of Victorian Fiction : Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, George Eliot, Meredith and Hardy. Also R. Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England 1850-1870, and Raymond Williams, The English Novel : From Dickens to Lawrence.
- 39 These are : The Warden (1855), Barchester Towers (1857), Doctor Thorne (1858), Framley Parsonage (1861), The Small House at Allington (1864) and The Last Chronicle of Barset (1867), following the generally accepted classification in W.G. and J.T. Gerould's A Guide to Anthony Trollope, p. xviii. Dates given are of first publication and are taken from James Pope Hennessy's Anthony Trollope, p. 389.
- 40 An Autobiography, p. 200 (Ch. XII).
- 41 Author's Preface to the fifth edition of Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1893). Cited edition, p. vii.
- 42 'Notes on Writing a Novel', Orion II, quoted in Walter Allen, Writers on Writing, p. 189.
- 43 Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 52.
- 44 p. 401.
- 45 Partial Portraits, p. 119.
- 46 Trollope : A Commentary, p. 401.
- 47 Quoted by John Sutherland, in his introduction to Phineas Finn, p. 23. I have been unable to trace the reference in G.S. Haight's edition of The George Eliot Letters.
- 48 Doctor Thorne, p. 35 (Ch. II).
- 49 B.C. Brown, Anthony Trollope, p. 53.
- 50 The case for giving further attention to Trollope's dialogue is made by C.P. Snow, who has chosen two extracts from this novel as examples. Trollope, pp. 156-159.
- 51 The Last Chronicle of Barset, p. 664 (Ch. LXI).
- 52 In his introduction The Last Chronicle of Barset, Laurence Lerner thinks that Mr. Crawley is the central character of the novel, who is 'probably the finest Trollope ever created' (pp. 20-24). Another study of him is that by Helen Corsa,

in the article already referred to in Chapter Two, note 5. Mr. Crawley is also one of the clerics studied in Peter Packer's The Portrayal of the Anglican Clergymen in Some Nineteenth Century Fiction, and his masochistic tendency is discussed in Mario Praz The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, pp. 302-304.

- 53 There has been some speculation as to why Trollope returned to Bassetshire for the last time. See James Pope Hennessy's Anthony Trollope, p. 227 and Michael Hardwick's The Osprey Guide to Anthony Trollope, p. 78.
- 54 Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 169.
- 55 In Stephen Wall's introduction to Can You Forgive Her?, p. 17.
- 56 The story of the Dobbs Broughtons, Madalina Desmolines and Clara Van Siever has its place in 'juxtaposing the incongruous' in the novel (Laurence Lerner's introduction to The Last Chronicle of Barset, p. 16). See also J. Thale, 'The Problem of Structure in Trollope', Nineteenth Century Fiction, xiv (1960) pp. 147-157.
- 57 In 'Preface to Pierre et Jean' quoted in Miriam Allott Novelists on the Novel, p. 71.



## Chapter Four

### Public and Private Life

'It is true that the full humanity of these novels only emerges when they are considered together, for only then to the effects of time on characters become fully apparent!'<sup>1</sup>

Trollope himself made it clear that all the novels in the Palliser series should be read together, in sequence, if the reader wished to appreciate them, for, as he wrote:

'It was my study that these people should encounter the changes that come upon us all!'<sup>2</sup>

The achievement of this immensely varied tapestry of life which covered over a quarter of a century in time is the greater because Trollope spread the writing of it over sixteen years of his life, from 1863 to 1879, and he was able to develop the relationships and characters in a way that would have been impossible in a shorter span. The characters formed a part of his life throughout the period in which he wrote about them:

'By no amount of description or asseveration could I succeed in making any reader understand how much these characters and their belongings have been to me in my latter life!'<sup>3</sup>

But no matter how much they may have been to their author, these six novels present the modern reader with a chronicle of which the most immediate quality is the quantity of material. The six novels contain about 4,500 pages, or about 1,350,000 words in all (approximately three times the length of War and

Peace) so it is hardly surprising that the reading of the entire Palliser series has been restricted to the die-hard Trollopian and those with plenty of time on their hands.

Thus the modern reader, faced with the enormous output that made Trollope more prolific than any Victorian novelist, and in particular confronted by the extent of the Palliser series, may well be inclined to ask what it is that Trollope has to offer that takes so long to express. The novels, particularly the Barsetshire ones, have long enjoyed popularity among those who would escape from the uncertainties of the twentieth century to the warmth and security of Trollopian England, but the more critical reader may justifiably ask what it is that makes the Palliser series worth the time it will take to read these books.

Yet in spite of the general trend of criticism concerning these politically based novels throughout the first half of this century, they have continued to enjoy a wide readership, and the 1974 television production of Simon Raven's version, The Pallisers, has made them available to a much wider audience. I suspect, however, that the lavishness of the visual presentation for television has obscured the real achievement of the Palliser series. Trollope rarely emphasises the visual aspects of his scenes and only occasionally does one find scenic descriptions in the Palliser novels. Landscapes and settings are not imbued with a rich sensory atmosphere, as for example are those of Thomas Hardy<sup>4</sup>. For instance, it is true that the river in Basle, seen from the

bridge, may have a symbolic significance for Alice Vavasor<sup>5</sup>, but there is no pictorial description of the town, the river or the hotel, any more than there is a description of the dresses worn at Lady Monk's Ball, or the effects that Lady Glencora's schemes of improvement have upon the grounds at Gatherum Castle. Visual description is included when it has a direct effect on the characters, as when Mrs. Boncassen's River Party is brought to a close by a sudden storm<sup>6</sup>. Trollope's descriptive passages are isolated and generally serve to bring in a breath of fresh air at a moment when the story needs one, as with the hunting scenes. Many of these hunting scenes, it is true, are full of excitement and atmosphere, but this is usually on account of the narrative rather than because of a description of the visual appearance of things. When Trollope does employ description, it is most often of people - their features, their clothes and their demeanour, but even then he is uncertain of his ability to convey a visual impression well. In writing of Isabel Boncassen's beauty, he says:

'I doubt even whether any description will procure for me from the reader that amount of faith which I desire to achieve!<sup>7</sup>

Our visual impressions of scenes in Trollope probably owe more to the illustrations of the early editions, particularly those by Sir John Millais<sup>8</sup>, than to the words used to evoke the scenes in the writing itself. It is by means of the dialogue, the personalities and the narrative that Trollope generally achieves his effects.

There are, it is true, some passages of description which are very effective in the course of the Palliser novels. The best of these tend to be the ones describing residences in the North-West of England (like Vavasor Hall in the Lake District and Grex 'Castle' in Yorkshire) or Scotland (with Lizzie Eustace's castle at Portray and Mr. Kennedy's home at Loughlinter). Many, however, stand out as un-Trollopian in style, like this one from The Duke's

Children:

'But the place itself was very lovely. May of all months of the year is in England the most insidious, the most dangerous, and the most inclement. A greatcoat cannot be endured, and without a greatcoat who can endure a May wind and live? But of all months it is the prettiest. The grasses are then the greenest, and the young foliage of the trees, while it has all the glory and all the colour of spring vegetation, does not hide the form of the branches as do the heavy masses of the larger leaves which come in the advancing summer. And of all villas near London The Horns was the sweetest. The broad green lawn swept down to the very margin of the Thames, which absolutely washed the fringe of grass when the tide was high. And here, along the bank was a row of flowering ashes, the drooping boughs of which in places touched the water. It was one of those spots which when they are first seen make the beholder feel that to be able to live there and look at it always would be happiness enough for life'<sup>9</sup>.

This does not come across to the reader as natural in the way that Trollope's writing normally does, and it is somewhat self-conscious and affectedly rhetorical. It may be, of course, that he was more at home describing places to which his readers probably had not been, for one imagines that his books were sold more in London than elsewhere. Of the importance of descriptive

writing he makes no mention in his advice to aspiring novelists in An Autobiography. He was a chronicler of human life and a creator of character rather than a writer of moving visual descriptions.

Yet these visual effects have been the most impressive part of the television serialisation, The Pallisers. The extravagance of the costumes, the magnitude of the settings, the munificence of the dinner parties : these are the qualities for which televised Trollope is remarkable. Lady Glencora's alterations to the grounds at Gatherum Castle to receive her guests in a style befitting the wife of the Prime Minister, necessitate, in the television production, considerable filming of an apparently infinite number of gardeners at work, and the viewer is even treated to the spectacle of a real Victorian steam engine at work. Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer could hardly have done more in the heyday of Hollywood movies! But how much is there of all these preparations at Gatherum Castle in the novels? The reader will find them referred to in The Prime Minister, Chapter XIX, entitled 'Vulgarity'. There, the whole emphasis is on Palliser's disgust at his wife's extravagance and the domestic row which ensues. The row is there in the television production, but it is almost totally eclipsed by the expense and the display of the preparations.

There is another way in which the series has been distorted, in making Lady Glencora much more the central than she actually

is. It is true that she spans the novels until her death (which is unnaturally delayed in the television version) but she does not dominate them. Simon Raven's justification for centralising Lady Glencora in his version, in The Listener<sup>10</sup>, has been rebuffed by Roy Hattersley's article, 'How the essential Trollope was lost', in the same periodical<sup>11</sup>. Televised Trollope seems quite different from the real Trollope, yet the interpretation given to him is the one to which most people probably subscribe. As the guide accompanying the television serialisation puts it:

'Trollope (and Simon Raven) reflect a kind of upper-middle-class or aristocratic view of British life'<sup>12</sup>.

This view, confirmed by the 'bon-viveur' production of The Pallisers, has not helped to achieve a genuine and widespread appreciation of Trollope's real qualities as a novelist, though it has undoubtedly encouraged people to read the books for themselves. Television may not be the right medium for Trollope. He was not the complacent chronicler of mid-Victorian opulence that many take him for: as a novelist he showed insight into human nature and the way people behave towards each other. His appreciation of human nature and his understanding of man as a social being may be more far-reaching than has generally been acknowledged. This achievement is in evidence throughout the Palliser novels. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that the relationship between Trollope and his readers, and the extent of his influence over them, was not better understood by those concerned with the television adaptation.

As R.M. Polhemus had written about the Victorian novel and the reading public, in 1968:

'The novel for thousands became an important way of knowing, and a writer like Trollope extended the consciousness of his public. The closest analogy we make today to the impact of the novel in the last century is the effect of television on our world, and when we have said that, we can begin to appreciate what a humane and noble enterprise the Victorian novel was'<sup>13</sup>.

One cannot help wondering whether the aspirations behind the television serialisation were as high as those attributed, rightly, to Trollope, by the same author:

'He changed the world by making it know itself better and by teaching his public the habits of sympathetic imagination'<sup>14</sup>.

In spite of the recent awakening of more serious critical interest, however, Trollope's artistic qualities:

'continue to evade definition, perhaps more so than with any other Victorian novelist of note'<sup>15</sup>.

In the nadir of his reputation, the works of the second half of his writing career had been openly dismissed:

'For the most part, he should be judged by the productions of the first half of his career; later the strong wine is rather too copiously watered'<sup>16</sup>.  
'The political novels are distinctly dull'<sup>17</sup>.

This rejection of the Palliser series and other novels remained almost unchallenged until A.O.J. Cockshut's Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study appeared in 1955. Michael Sadleir had little time for them : 'a return to episodic bulk' is how he described Can You Forgive Her?<sup>18</sup>, although that did not prevent him from

editing the Palliser series for the Oxford Trollope edition of the nineteen-fifties. But even A.O.J. Cockshut's book gives Trollope faint praise as an artist:

'He did not like to consider things too seriously.  
He did not know why he did the things he did...'<sup>19</sup>

'He was not gifted with the power of analysing ideas...'<sup>20</sup>

'Disraeli, the political idealist looks forward,  
Trollope the recorder of tradition, looks back...'<sup>21</sup>

A.O.J. Cockshut's analysis of Trollope's 'Progress to Pessimism'<sup>22</sup> marks all the Palliser novels except Can You Forgive Her? as novels of introspection leading to eventual despair about human nature. Yet as one reviewer of Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study remarked:

'It is so eminently readable that one may be in danger of swallowing Mr. Cockshut's argument, hook, line and sinker, without due reflection...'<sup>23</sup>

In the wake of A.O.J. Cockshut's book, much more notice has been taken of the Palliser novels, and this has given rise to a number of articles about the individual novels and several books on the contemporary political relevance of the series, some of which are discussed in the next few chapters. It is only with the advent of J.R. Kincaid's The Novels of Anthony Trollope in 1977 and Robert Tracy's Trollope's Later Novels in 1978 that full attention has been given to the artistic qualities of the whole Palliser series.

Because of the magnitude of the series it is easy to generalise without looking with sufficient care at individual passages, and



consequently the irony which Trollope employed has escaped many. It is particularly easy to be misled into thinking that Trollope's understanding extends only as far as his moral intrusions, just as there is a tendency to turn to An Autobiography when looking for safe interpretative statements about the novels : one needs something secure to hold on to to guide one through the series as a whole. But the moral intrusions, like An Autobiography, are not to be taken at face value only. Trollope was too much of an artist to expose himself as clumsily as this. The 'moralisations' in Trollope were part of the 'intimate relationship' which he knew his reading public wanted; they were a convention which he utilised to the full, though they are likely to lead the unwary modern reader into hazardous waters. It is worth considering one such intrusion in Can You Forgive Her?. Trollope asks us to think about his heroine, Alice Vavasor:

'But can you forgive her, delicate reader? Or am I asking the question too early in my story? For myself I have forgiven her. The story of her struggle has been present to my mind for many years, - and I have learned to think that even this offence against womanhood may, with deep repentance, be forgiven. And you also must forgive her before we close the book, or else my story will have been told amiss.'<sup>24</sup>

It has been doubted, on the basis of this quotation, whether Trollope's question poses enough material for the eight hundred odd pages it takes to tell of Alice Vavasor's indecision:

'To a present-day audience, of course, Alice's "offence against womanhood" is not likely to seem very dreadful, and even some of the first reviewers felt that Trollope was fussing rather.'<sup>25</sup>

But the question which Trollope puts here is not a central one in the novel, even though it is the title Trollope gives to the book. The question demands a response from the reader on a superficial level, but we should not let that blind us to the deeper levels of the novel. On its own, this question could hardly maintain the interest of readers for eighty chapters.

Moral judgement does not have the involvement that a stolen necklace or the quest for a murderer does, in terms of narrative and suspense. Trollope was a conscious artist, aware of his relationship with his readers, using his skill in taking them into his confidence as much as in telling the story. The lines which precede the passage quoted, remind one clearly that Trollope's moralising is the conscious conventional morality which his readers expected:

'She had done very wrong. She knew that she had done wrong. She knew that she had sinned with that sin which specially disgraces a woman. She had said that she would become the wife of a man to whom she could not cleave with a wife's love; and, mad with a vile ambition, she had given up the man for whose modest love her heart was longing. She had thrown off from her that wonderful aroma of precious delicacy, which is the greatest treasure of womanhood. She had sinned against her sex; and in agony of despair, as she crouched down upon the floor with her head against her chair, she told herself that there was no pardon for her. She understood it now, and knew that she could not forgive herself.'

'But can you forgive her, delicate reader?  
... 26

Here is as good a parody as one is likely to find of mid-Victorian melodrama! Yet such passages are often seen as keys to understanding the book.

If Trollope's art consisted in concealing his art, he certainly succeeds here : it would be quite wrong to suppose that the intrusions Trollope makes contain all the reader needs to appreciate his art. As Stephen Wall says in his introduction to Can you Forgive Her?:

'It is the characters' utterances rather than the author's comments that tell us the most important truths'<sup>27</sup>.

E.M. Forster likened taking the reader aside to standing a man a drink, so that he may not criticise your opinions:

'Intimacy is gained, but at the expense of illusion and nobility'<sup>28</sup>.

In the case of Trollope the intimacy is gained at the expense of obscuring the real issues about which he wrote.

There is, then, no simple key to understanding the Palliser series, but the reader who approaches them without preconceived ideas as to the novelist's viewpoint will find it easier to appreciate Trollope's art. The characters all come to life in the pages, not least because they think, act and behave according to their respective moral codes. In their relations with each other Trollope shows us how these codes differ, and the incongruities of their outlooks force us to think about their natures and perhaps even about our own.

At the risk of oversimplifying, Trollope's morality in the later novels is not a preaching morality : rather, it encourages us to increase our knowledge of ourselves by searching deeply into the minds of characters whom we can recognise as living. As one reviewer of The Way We Live Now wrote, when the book first appeared:

'It should make us look into our own lives and habits of thought, and see how ugly and mean and sordid they appear, when Truth, the policeman, turns his dark lantern suddenly upon them, and finds such a pen as Trollope's to write a report of what he sees.'<sup>29</sup>

Trollope's concern with human nature is a highly moral one, but indirectly so. Behind the façade of superficial moralising, Trollope presents us with human nature as it is and forces us to examine it in depth. The response Trollope evokes is a more far-reaching one than the title of the first of the Pallisers leads us to suppose. Can You Forgive Her? is not the real subject of that book at all. Ruth apRoberts expresses our response as follows:

'The novels are, in a way, more demanding than life itself generally is, and in reading them, one as it were flexes one's moral entity and exercises one's humanity.'<sup>30</sup>

The means by which Trollope most frequently persuades his readers to flex their moral entities and exercise humanity is the use of irony. This is most readily identified in situations of dialogue and where better to look for examples than in the

conferences that Lizzie Eustace has with her various suitors from time to time? Lizzie, as her aunt Lady Linlithgow aptly remarks elsewhere in The Eustace Diamonds, is

'about as bad as anybody ever was.  
She's false, dishonest, heartless, cruel,  
irreligious, ungrateful, mean, ignorant,  
greedy and vile!<sup>31</sup>

(This in itself is a list of attributes which tells us something of Lady Linlithgow herself!) Accurate as this strong condemnation of Lizzie may be, it is doubtful whether she is even mildly aware of her own duplicity in the interview with Lord Fawn, M.P., who comes to seek her hand in marriage. Lord Fawn is definitely unaware of the stupidity of his own behaviour as he asks for her hand offering to return later in the week to hear her answer:

'Was he to come again on Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday? Let her tell him that and he would go. He doubtless reflected that Wednesday would suit him best, because there would be no House. But Lizzie was too magnanimous for this.

"Lord Fawn," she said, rising, "you have paid me the greatest compliment that a man can pay a woman. Coming from you it is doubly precious; first because of your character and secondly - "

"Why secondly?"

"Secondly, because I can love you." This was said in her lowest whisper, and then she moved towards him gently, and almost laid her head upon his breast. Of course he put his arm around her waist - but it was first necessary that he should once more disembarass himself of his hat - and then her head was upon his breast.

"Dearest Lizzie!" he said, kissing her forehead.

"Dearest Frederic!" she murmured.

"I shall write to my mother tonight", he said.

"Do, do - dear Frederic."

"And she will come to you at once, I am sure."

"I will receive her and love her as a mother," said Lizzie with all her energy. Then he kissed her again - her forehead and her lips - and took his leave, promising to be with her at any rate on Wednesday.

"Lady Fawn!" she said to herself. The name did not sound so well as that of Lady Eustace. But it is much to be a wife; and more to be a peeress!<sup>32</sup>.

The mock-heroic tone of Lizzie's avowal of love and her assessment of the situation after Lord Fawn had departed tell us more than any comment an author could make directly and the numerous touches by which Lord Fawn is deflated (his prosaic decision to come on Wednesday when there would be no parliamentary duties to attend to, the repetition of his Christian name and his instinctive response to consult his mother) tell us everything we could want to know about Lord Fawn, without the slightest hint that the author is interfering. The handling is more certain than in the earlier novels and Trollope makes more use of implied, rather than actual, speech. The masterly touch

in this interview, however, is the intrusion of Lord Fawn's hat at a moment of what should be sublime romance. There is a similar moment in E.M. Forster's A Room with a View, when Cecil Vyse eventually summons the courage to claim a first kiss from the heroine to whom he has been engaged for some time : the rapture is broken by the author's simple comment that Cecil's pince-nez became dislodged by the kiss, and Cecil Vyse as an effective lover is deflated beyond measure.<sup>33</sup> Trollope, like Forster, achieves his effects by the most delicate of touches.

It is not only in dialogue that Trollope exercises his masterful control of irony. A few chapters after the interview between the newly engaged couple, Lord Fawn meditates on his 'high and perilous destiny':

"A peasant can marry whom he pleases," said Lord Fawn, pressing his hand to his brow and dropping one flap of his coat, as he thought of his own high and perilous destiny, standing with his back to the fireplace, while a huge pile of letters lay there before him waiting to be signed'<sup>34</sup>.

The mundane nature of Lord Fawn's immediate task as a minor government official contrasts well with the high-fallutin quality of his thoughts. Another example of Trollope's ironic presentation of Lord Fawn is the letter which he writes to Lizzie almost a year after their engagement. It is offered to the reader without any interpretative comment by the author, but it reads

exactly like a report written by a minor government official:

"My dear Lady Eustace,

In accordance with the promise which I made to you when I did myself the honour of waiting upon you in Hertford Street, I take up my pen with the view of communicating to you the result of my deliberations respecting the engagement of marriage which, no doubt, did exist between us last summer...<sup>35</sup>.

Needless to say the letter was written on a Wednesday, 'which with him had something of the comfort of a half-holiday, as on that day he was not required to attend parliament.<sup>36</sup>

Trollope's use of irony is particularly good in his treatment of Lizzie Eustace, because, like Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey, she confuses real life with life in books. Whereas Jane Austen was satirising Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, Lizzie falls under the spell of a much wider variety of books, both consciously and unconsciously, and each one affords Trollope ample scope for ironic comment. At one time or another, she affects to read Tennyson, for the benefit of Frank Greystock<sup>37</sup> or Lady Glencora<sup>38</sup>, Byron when in more daring mood with Frank<sup>39</sup> and always when with her Corsair, Lord George, who answers her imagination's dream of Byron's Conrad<sup>40</sup>; Shelley, when she is on her own or eager to impress her intellectual aspirations on any female staying at Portray<sup>41</sup> or when finally angling for the hand of Mr. Emilius<sup>42</sup>, for whom she also affects an interest in The Bible<sup>43</sup>. Her choice of books is always deliberate and premeditated, but she unconsciously falls into the trap of believing that life really



is like the book she is reading. In her eyes, the view of the estuary of Clyde which her castle affords becomes a 'dear ocean wide, with its glittering smile'<sup>44</sup>, and Portray castle itself, which is, in reality, 'sombre, exposed, and, in winter, very cold... (having) no great claim to praise on the score of scenery'<sup>45</sup>, is transformed in Lizzie's mind into a romantic castle:

'a stone edifice with battlements and a round tower... a portcullis... a cannon ... a moat... standing on a bluff land, with a fine prospect of the Firth of Clyde, and with a distant view of the Isle of Arran'<sup>46</sup>.

Lizzie persuades herself, where there is doubt, that the castle is all she believes it to be:

'In truth... the battlements, and the round tower, and the awe-inspiring gateway had all been added by one of the late Sir Florians. But the castle looked like a castle, and was interesting'<sup>47</sup>.

Lizzie Eustace, heartless as she is<sup>48</sup>, bases much of her life on what she reads, as she displays when composing her last letter to Lord Fawn:

'Nobody ever heard of anything so mean, either in novels or in real life.'<sup>49</sup>

It is the fact that Lizzie half believes herself to be sincere in everything she does that brings her to life and enables Trollope to deploy his irony and at times enlist our sympathy for her.

As well as using Lizzie for ironic comment throughout the book, the subtle changes which gradually come over her emphasise Trollope's artistry in creating living characters who

'encounter the changes that come upon us all'<sup>50</sup>. Prepared to follow her Byronic instincts at the beginning, she grows aware of other factors to be considered as all her attempts meet with failure:

'We are old enough now, Frank, to know that something more than what you call heart is wanted to make us happy when we marry'<sup>51</sup>,

she says in the light of earlier experience. By the time that her disastrous marriage with the bigamist, Mr. Emilius, has broken up, she no longer puts any faith at all in literature as a guide to real life: just imagine how different would have been her response to Mr. Lopez's proposal in The Prime Minister if it had occurred two books earlier, in The Eustace Diamonds, on the rocks beneath Portray Castle. Here is what actually happens:

'"To h--- with their purient laws," said Lopez, rising suddenly from his chair. "I will neither appeal to them, nor will I obey them. And I expect from you as little subservience as I myself am prepared to pay. Lizzie Eustance, will you go with me to that land of the sun,

"Where the rage of the vulture, the  
love of the turtle,  
Now melt into sorrow, now madden  
to crime"?

Will you dare to escape with me from the cold conventionalities, from the miserable thralldom of this country bound in swaddling cloths? Lizzie Eustace, if you will say the word I will take you to that land of glorious happiness."

But Lizzie Eustace had £4,000 a year and a balance at her banker's. "Mr. Lopez," she said.

"What answer have you to make me?"

"Mr. Lopez, I think you must be a fool."

He did at last succeed in getting himself into the street, and at any rate she had not eaten him'<sup>52</sup>.

The irony denied to those who have not read The Eustace Diamonds before reading The Prime Minister is the fact that Lopez accidentally quotes from Lizzie's former favourite writer, George Byron<sup>53</sup>. No matter how insulting the offer from Lopez might have been, Lizzie would not have dismissed him as she does here if he had approached her in The Eustace Diamonds.

So much for the irony which pervades everything associated with Lizzie Eustace. It is to be found, however, permeating the entire Palliser series. When characters appear the author tells us more about them by indirect means and by careful juxtaposition than by any amount of authorial comment or description. It is this awareness of the complexity of the individual human situation that makes Trollope's characters alive and gives their personalities the depth which has so frequently been discarded as photographic observation. Trollope 'masters complexity'<sup>54</sup> and he produced an effect of such simplicity that we are lulled into thinking that there is no complexity there at all. Trollope was well aware that no

amount of analytical writing could in itself probe the full extent of a human personality:

"How am I to analyse her kind and  
make her thoughts and feelings  
intelligible?"<sup>55</sup>

he asks himself about Alice Vavasor, and it is from what she says and what she does that we learn most.

The greater artistry that Trollope shows in these books stems from his increasingly skilful and subtle use of irony. In many of the novels published before Can You Forgive Her? (1864), authorial comment does tend to be used more often and with less subtlety. Furthermore, the characters have more evidently worked out their own codes of moral values in the novels with a political setting and the material for Trollope's stories comes from the occasions when the 'codes' of various characters are brought into conflict with one another. It is the juxtapositioning of these differing codes that enables the reader to develop a new and deeper perception of human nature.

An example of such a conflict can be found in Phineas Finn, concerning Lord Chiltern and Phineas Finn himself, both suitors for the hand of Violet Effingham. The two men belong to the same London circles, and Phineas's one-time attachment to Lord Chiltern's sister, Lady Laura, brings them together from time to time. Phineas subsequently wins the family parliamentary seat for the Borough of Tankerville (because he is nominated by Lord Chiltern's father, Lord Brentford) and he

is later clearly involved in an attempt to reunite Lord Chiltern with his father. In spite of their frequent meetings, they are quite different in temperament and outlook and their argument over who will have Violet Effingham's hand in marriage comes to a climax when a letter which Phineas wrote and posted in Loughton, takes six and a half months to reach Lord Chiltern at Mauregy's Hotel in London<sup>56</sup>. When Lord Chiltern eventually meets Phineas at his lodgings in Mrs. Bunce's house, the argument that takes place is not over the facts, but because of their different moral codes of what is acceptable conduct:

"You have Cabinet Ministers for your friends," (Lord Chiltern complains when they meet) "while I have hardly a decent associate left to me in the world. You have been chosen by my father to sit for our family borough, while I am an out-cast from his house. But I can say of myself that I have never done anything unworthy of a gentleman, while this thing that you are doing is unworthy of the lowest man."

"I have done nothing unworthy," said Phineas<sup>57</sup>.

Phineas had already written to explain his actions in the letter that got delayed:

"I am endeavouring to treat you well, and I ask you to do the same by me. I cannot address myself to Miss Effingham without telling you. I should feel myself to be false were I to do so"<sup>58</sup>.

This is more than just 'A Rough Encounter', as the chapter is called (though it is the prelude to a dual at which blood is shed).

The two men have different notions of unworthy behaviour and each considers that his behaviour has been quite correct. Of course, Lord Chiltern's character is a fiery, wild one (though Trollope modified his initial description of him considerably<sup>59</sup>), but in this encounter Trollope makes both sides appear to have about equal right. Lord Chiltern would probably treat a wife as well as he treats his beloved horses, as Phineas had unwittingly said to Violet Effingham herself before he knew of their attachment<sup>60</sup>, but then Phineas's own behaviour towards Violet and Chiltern shows that his own conscience was not entirely clear<sup>61</sup>.

The fact that Trollope was far more interested in the moral conflict over codes of conduct than in any physical manifestations of an argument is supported by the way Trollope plays down the duel at Blankenberg. This would have provided an excellent opportunity for a number of spine-chilling chapters of the events leading up to the duel, keeping the reader in suspense as to the outcome until the last possible moment (as happened in the 1974 television production), but that was not apparently Trollope's aim. The outcome of the duel is stated before the manner in which it took place is described, and the account of the incident is given only in the tone of necessary background information. (Trollope makes use of the pluperfect tense in this passage, thereby playing down the drama of the episode as much as possible).

'The manner of the meeting had been in this wise. Captain Colepepper and Lawrence Fitzgibbon had held their meeting, and at this meeting Lawrance had taken certain standing-ground on behalf of his friend, and in obedience to his friend's positive instruction; - which was this, that his friend could not abandon his right of addressing the young lady, should he hereafter ever think fit to do so... '62

This is hardly a racy narrative, the more so as the reader has already been told the outcome of the duel! The emphasis is altogether different from that in the earlier novels. One such incident, in The Small House at Allington, after Adolphus Crosbie had jilted Lily Dale, gave Trollope the opportunity to describe a scene of physical violence, as Johnny Eames gave Crosbie a thrashing at the railway station. Beyond the physical excitement the description conveys, it has little further significance in that novel. But by the time he wrote Phineas Finn, the moral issues were of far more use to Trollope than any physical excitement he could extract from such a situation.

Indeed, if one thinks of the dramatic incidents in the Palliser series (the garrotting of Mr. Kennedy, the stealing of the Eustace Diamonds, the murder of Mr. Bonteen, the attack on Everett Wharton in St. James's Park), one is aware that Trollope could have made far more of the physical drama in them. This is not to say that he never relates a story primarily for its excitement or suspense, (John Grey's eviction of George Vavasor from his rooms in Suffolk Street, Kennedy's

potshot at Phineas in Macpherson's Hotel, Tregear's riding accident at Harrington Hall and Lopez's suicide at Ten Way Junction are some examples that he can do just that). But right across the extensive range of the Palliser novels Trollope's foremost interest seems to have been in the moral outlooks of his characters and in how they adjust to each other.



NOTES - Chapter Four

- 1 Stephen Wall's introduction to cited edition of Can You Forgive Her?. 'The Palliser series' refers to the six novels which have been called 'The Novels of Parliamentary Life' (M. Sadleir) and 'Political Novels' (W.G. and J.T. Gerould). They are as follows (with dates of first publication taken from James Pope Hennessy's Anthony Trollope): Can You Forgive Her? (1864); Phineas Finn (1869); The Eustace Diamonds (1873); Phineas Redux (1874); The Prime Minister (1876); and The Duke's Children (1880).
- 2 An Autobiography, p. 169 (Ch. X).
- 3 Ibid., p. 166 (Ch. X).
- 4 This is not to say that Trollope's descriptions never evoke a strong atmosphere, which pervades the action. The description of 'Ballycloran', the half-ruined home of Larry Macdermot with which The Macdermots of Ballycloran opens is one such example. P.E. More defends Trollope's ability to write effective, relevant descriptions on pp. 109-110 of The Demon of the Absolute.
- 5 Can You Forgive Her?, p. 91 (Ch. VI).
- 6 The Duke's Children, pp. 257-258 (Ch. XXXII).
- 7 Ibid., p. 218 (Ch. XXVIII).
- 8 Trollope's works were also illustrated by H.K. Browne ('Phiz'), Luke Fildes, H.L. Shindler, Marcus Stone, W.H. Thomas and F.C. Tilney. It is a pity that they are not more frequently reproduced in reprints of Trollope's novels now, even if Trollope occasionally found them irritating, especially those by 'Phiz'. James Pope Hennessy's Anthony Trollope contains a good selection.
- 9 The Duke's Children, p. 95 (Ch. XII).
- 10 'The Writing of The Pallisers', The Listener, 91 : 2338 (17th January 1974) pp. 65-68.
- 11 The Listener, 92 : 2365 (25th July 1974) pp. 105-107. See also 'Trollope, The Pallisers and the Way We View Now' by Shirley Letwin, in The Times Literary Supplement (5th July 1974) pp. 727-728.

- 12 Lacey, Robert, The Pallisers : Radio Times Special, p. 8.
- 13 The Changing World of Anthony Trollope, p. 244.
- 14 Ibid., p. 255.
- 15 Smalley, Donald, 'Anthony Trollope' in Victorian Fiction : A Guide to Research, ed. Lionel Stevenson, p. 213. Anyone interested in the development of recent critical trends about Trollope will find Ruth Roberts's entry covering the period 1963-74 in Victorian Fiction : A Second Guide to Research, ed. G.H. Ford, pp. 143-171, and Hugh Henneidy's 'Trollope Studies', 1963-73 in British Studies Monitor, vi:i (1975) pp. 3-27, useful. See also Rafael Helling, A Century of Trollope Criticism (1956), which contains many extracts from contemporary sources and subsequent criticism, and I.G. Jones's unpublished thesis A Study of the Literary Reputation of Anthony Trollope, 1847-1953 is another work which could be referred to.
- 16 Partial Portraits, p. 113.
- 17 Ibid., p. 131.
- 18 Trollope : A Commentary, p. 390.
- 19 Ibid., p. 22.
- 20 Ibid., p. 79.
- 21 Ibid., p. 110.
- 22 This is the title of the second half of Trollope - A Commentary.
- 23 Burn, W.L., 'Victorian Divergences', Twentieth Century, lxxv (1956) p. 1.
- 24 Can You Forgive Her?, p. 398 (Ch. XXXVII).
- 25 Wall, Stephen, introduction to Can You Forgive Her?, p. 11.
- 26 Can You Forgive Her?, p. 398 (Ch. XXXVII).
- 27 p. 21.
- 28 Aspects of the Novel, p. 35.

- 29 Unsigned notice in The Times (24th August 1875) reprinted in Donald Smalley, Trollope : The Critical Heritage, p. 409.
- 30 Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 52.
- 31 The Eustace Diamonds, p. 349 (Ch. XXXIV).
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 112 (Ch. VIII).
- 33 A Room with a View, p. 115.
- 34 The Eustace Diamonds, p. 140 (Ch. XI).
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 647 (Ch. LXVII).
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 647 (Ch. LXVII).
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 209 (Ch. XIX).
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 534 (Ch. LIV).
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 271 (Ch. XXVI).
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82 (Ch. V). Lord George is subsequently referred to as The Corsair (Ch. LXIII).
- 41 *Ibid.*, pp. 232-235 (Ch. XXI) with Miss Macnulty.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 759 (Ch. LXXIX).
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 763 (Ch. LXXIX) and earlier p. 419 (Ch. XLII) when Lizzie is careful to equip herself with a Bible before going to hear Mr. Emilius preach.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 231 (Ch. XXI).
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 228 (Ch. XXI).
- 46 *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228 (Ch. XXI).
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 227 (Ch. XXI).
- 48 'She had not a heart to give'. *Ibid.*, p. 230 (Ch. XXI).
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 704 (Ch. LXXIII).
- 50 An Autobiography, p. 169 (Ch. X).
- 51 The Eustace Diamonds, p. 610 (Ch. LXII).

- 52 The Prime Minister, II, pp. 140-141 (Ch. LIV).
- 53 Mr. Lopez's quote comes from The Bride of Abydos I. i. 3, (a reference for which I am indebted to R. W. Chapman's notes in the cited edition of The Prime Minister).
- 54 Tillotson, Geoffrey, in his essay on 'Trollope's Style' in Mid-Victorian Studies by G. and K. Tillotson, p. 60.
- 55 Can You Forgive Her?, p. 397 (Ch. XXXVII).
- 56 This is a rare admission in Trollope's fiction of inefficiency in the G. P. O., and must have been written in the months just before his resignation. It is also an example of the intervention of fate in the affairs of men, since neither Phineas nor Lord Chiltern was to blame for the misunderstanding that arose. Who can say what would have happened if Thomas Hardy had picked up the writer's pen at this point?
- 57 Phineas Finn, p. 374 (Ch. XXXVII).
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 348 (Ch. XXXIV).
- 59 A note by John Sutherland on Trollope's textual changes here can be found in the cited edition of Phineas Finn, p. 727.
- 60 Phineas Finn, p. 155 (Ch. XIII).
- 61 The letter written at Loughton betrays an anxiousness on Phineas's part. *Ibid.*, p. 367 (Ch. XXXVI).
- 62 *Ibid.*, p. 382 (Ch. XXXVIII).

Chapter Five

Certain Assumptions Questioned

Trollope's concern with different moral codes led him, in the course of writing the Palliser novels, to examine a number of concepts which by and large Victorians never questioned and which Trollope himself would not have stopped to think about at an earlier stage in his writing career. In the argument between Lord Chiltern and Phineas Finn discussed in Chapter Four, Trollope was concerned with worthy conduct and honesty: 'Was he honest?' is the title of the chapter in which Phineas wrote his first letter. The implication of Lord Chiltern's accusation that Phineas had acted unworthily, however, is that Phineas is not 'a gentleman', and the exact definition of what constitutes 'a gentleman' was one concept to which Trollope frequently returned.

In The Eustace Diamonds, Lord Fawn makes a statement about this concept after being embarrassed in Parliament by Frank Greystock's question to do with the Sawab of Mygawb:

"Gentlemanlike conduct is the same everywhere. There are things which may be said and things which may not. Mr. Greystock has altogether gone beyond the usual limits, and I shall take care that he knows my opinion!"<sup>1</sup>

Lord Fawn's limited perception elsewhere makes it unlikely that Trollope would have agreed with his claim that 'gentlemanlike conduct is the same everywhere'.

A refreshingly different concept of gentlemanly behaviour is that which gives justification to Laurence Fitzgibbon for telling downright lies, in Phineas Finn:

'Laurence Fitzgibbon certainly possessed the rare accomplishment of telling a lie with a good grace. Had any man called him a liar he would have considered himself to be not only insulted, but injured also. He believed himself to be a man of truth. There were, however, in his estimation certain subjects on which a man might depart as wide as the poles are asunder from truth without subjecting himself to any ignominy for falsehood. In dealing with a tradesman as to his debts, or with a rival as to a lady, or with any man or woman in defence of a lady's character... Laurence believed that a gentleman was bound to lie and that he would be no gentleman if he hesitated to do so.<sup>12</sup>'

It is by such means as this that Trollope turned commonly accepted moral concepts inside out, leading the reader into a deeper understanding of them.

Only in The Duke's Children, the last of the Palliser novels to appear, does Trollope entrust any real understanding of the actual limitations of such a term as 'gentleman', to the Duke of Omnium, the erstwhile Prime Minister, recently made widower by the death of Lady Glencora. When his daughter, Mary, protests that her suitor, Frank Tregear, is 'a gentleman', the Duke replies:

'So is my private secretary. There is not a clerk in one of our public offices who does not consider himself to be a gentleman. The curate of the parish is a gentleman, and the medical man who comes here from Bradstock,

The word is too vague to carry with it any meaning that ought to be serviceable to you in thinking of such a matter" <sup>3</sup>.

Yet for all his political wisdom the Duke is no judge of character, for, as he is eventually forced to recognise, Frank Tregear has qualities that make him very worthy of Mary's hand, even though he had no money to recommend him. Trollope is interested in delving into the different concepts that people hold of what it is to be a gentleman, and he encourages his reader to question similarly. The final judgement seems to be that the word 'gentleman' conveys no defined concept in itself, but depends upon its users for the meanings it can convey a strangely modern view of linguistics!

It might be thought that concepts like 'gentleman' and 'duty' do not have immediate interest or appeal for the twentieth century reader. As one introduction to The Eustace Diamonds, written in 1969, puts it:

'The question "Was she being unmaidenly?" the term 'manly', the concept of the 'gentleman', or the duty implicit in "You will be true won't you Frank?" all resound to positives which the modern reader often finds it difficult to perceive' <sup>4</sup>.

Although the terms (like maidenly, manly, gentleman and duty) may not be much in current usage, the concepts are ones which are more openly the subject of debate today than they were in the middle of the nineteenth century. Meaningful definitions of acceptable concepts of behaviour are much sought after today.

The questions Trollope was asking might be wrapped in different terms now, but they still seek to define the same ideas : 'What are acceptable standards of behaviour? What are the rules which society expects its members to observe? What responsibilities does man have to his own friends and to society at large? What is justice?' This interrogative atmosphere and uncertainty pervades most aspects of western life today and there are, of course, no easy answers to such questions. Trollope was ahead of his time in exploring some of the possibilities and he questions some of the suppositions most often made, while entertaining us at the same time. He was more aware of the limitations of language, in which we seek to define our concepts, than has generally been recognised. In an essay written in 1867, he said:

'It is good to be honest and true. Yes, indeed. There is no doubt of that. But what is truth and goodness?'<sup>5</sup>

(To which question no moralising instant solution is offered!)

Questions like this are far from new. They are the recurrent ones, rephrased and presented afresh in every age. There is little merit in merely asking them, but the real artist has a contribution to make to the answer. He can, as it were, lead us a few steps further on the road to Parnassus. Trollope's contribution might be briefly put like this : he helps us to look at human situations as they really are, encourages us to think about the morality of human behaviour, and by juxtaposing the



incongruities of human morality forces us into a deeper perception of the universe.

In his introduction to Can You Forgive Her? Stephen Wall has recognised that Trollope posed questions in his novels, but he sees this as no more than 'deep moral uncertainty':

'Trollopian man lives in a perpetual quandary... Whom should he marry? And underlying these is a layer of deep moral uncertainty : what is honesty, truth, goodness?... The mood of Trollope's fiction is, typically, interrogative... Life in its modern form has become intractable to traditional moral theory'<sup>6</sup>.

But Trollope went further than just posing the questions, and he was conscious, moreover, of the part that language plays in forming our ideas. As well as asking questions about particular concepts like 'goodness', he chose words with considerable care in telling his stories. Lizzie Eustace's downright lies about her necklace are to her only 'secrets' and 'cleverness', and Trollope ironically refers to them as 'shams', 'fictions', 'schemes' and 'wiles', knowing all along that they are no better than lies<sup>7</sup>. Mr. Chaffenbrass, the eloquent and formidable barrister in Phineas Finn's trial, has no interest in the 'truth' of the murder of Mr. Bonteen; he is only interested in establishing the 'truth' of the evidence. Trollope was particularly aware of the misleading interpretations of what constitutes truth in legal cases, and the books which centre on legal quibbles all show his concern with divergent and misleading interpretations of truth. In the

case of Lizzie Eustace's 'missing' diamonds, the law concerns itself with the precise distinction between 'heirlooms' and 'paraphernalia', when the reader knows that the issue is clearly and simply one of theft or rightful ownership. None of the five lawyers in the earlier novel, Orley Farm:

'gave to the course of justice the credit that it would ascertain the truth, and not one of (them) wished that the truth should be ascertained'<sup>8</sup>.

In Cousin Henry, written in 1878, the story hinges on the precise whereabouts and dating of a will, though the issue is presented to the reader as the broader and more straightforward one of deciding who is the rightful owner of the estate at Llanfeare. The law, it seems, fails to execute justice at times because it emphasises the insignificant and misleading aspects of a case. Whereas Dickens had satirised the British legal system for its time and money-wasting abuses to great effect in Bleak House, Trollope concerned himself with the values of justice which that legal system upheld as distinct from its inefficiency. There is little, if any, open corruption in Trollope's law cases. It is the decisions which the courts come to that are so often in direct opposition to the situation, as the reader is made to see it. The verdict of the court in The Macdermots of Ballycloran is quite at odds with what really happened, and at the other end of Trollope's writing career, Mr. Scarborough manipulates the law to his own

ends in defeating the entail which exists on his property. Trollope's first concern was with the concepts and values on which Victorian society was ordered. He had no ready-made solutions, but he hoped, by making his readers aware of the complexities surrounding moral issues, to educate them into a deeper perception of their situation in the universe.

'It is this honesty, this clarity of vision that places Trollope with the greatest novelists of the nineteenth century, with Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot'<sup>9</sup>.

Trollope's own 'honesty' consisted in close and accurate observations of human nature, but for his characters in the Palliser novels, the interpretation of 'honesty' formed another concept which he examined in detail.

The question, 'Was he honest?', had already been asked about Phineas Finn's dealings with Lord Chiltern, and the reader was given no clear-cut answer. It seems that Trollope was attempting to offer a definition of 'honesty' which could be used in discussing characters, for whenever the question arises about the honesty of one character or another, Trollope expounds his meaning with some care. What is interesting is that to Trollope's mind the man who is dishonest has no understanding of the concept of honesty. The implication is that one cannot be honest unless one understands what honesty is : hence the need for men to think carefully about such concepts as honesty. Herein lies Trollope's moral purpose.

An example of a man almost totally void of personal integrity in the Palliser novels is Ferdinand Lopez, and it is significant that Trollope says of him:

'He did not know that there was such a quality as honesty, nor did he understand what the word meant'<sup>10</sup>.

Another character, Frank Greystock, whose conduct is otherwise faultless, falls under suspicion as a result of his relationship with his cousin, Lizzie Eustace, because 'honesty' in his terms is simply maintaining his integrity and his faithfulness to the girl to whom he is secretly betrothed, Lucy Morris. He is aware of the difficulties of remaining 'honest' when he explains himself to Lizzie:

"And then there is a cringing and almost contemptible littleness about honesty which hardly allows it to assert itself. The really honest man can never say a word to make those who don't know of his honesty believe that it is there. He has one foot in the grave before his neighbours have learned that he is possessed of an article for the use of which they would so willingly have paid, could they have been made to see that it was there. The dishonest man almost doubts whether in him dishonesty is dishonest, let it be practised ever so widely. The honest man almost doubts whether his honesty be honest, unless it be kept hidden. Let two unknown men be competitors for any place, with nothing to guide the judges but their own words and their own looks, and who can doubt but the dishonest man would be chosen rather than the honest? Honesty goes with a hang-dog look about him, as though knowing that he cannot be trusted till he be proved. Dishonesty carries

his eyes high, and assumes that any question respecting him must be considered to be unnecessary."

"Oh Frank," (responds Lizzie), "what a philosopher you are!"

Lizzie's comment reveals, of course, that she is incapable of understanding what real honesty is.

This passage might be said to indicate that Trollope was becoming increasingly cynical about life in the second half of his writing career, but he was not a prophet of gloom. Rather, he was aware of the complexities that surround any attempt to get to grips with the real nature of human existence. Frank Greystock here shows that 'honesty' in itself defeats any attempt to spread any more honesty in the world: 'honesty' has become a self-defeating concept.

The best example of self-defeating honesty in the Palliser novels is, of course, Plantagenet Palliser himself, Prime Minister and later Duke of Omnium. Yet Trollope's treatment of this unusually self-effacing man, whose integrity is the cause of his downfall, analyses in depth the concept of 'honesty' which is the basis of all his behaviour. The Duke of St. Bungay, the elder statesman of the series, discusses the nature of Palliser's 'honesty' with Lady Glencora in The Prime Minister:

'The old Duke patted her on the head as though she were a little girl, and was more comforting to her than her other counsellors. He would say nothing to her husband now;... "This husband of yours is a very peculiar man," he said,

smiling, "his honesty is not like the honesty of other men. It is more downright; - more absolutely honest; less capable of bearing even the shadow which the stain from another's dishonesty might throw upon it. Give him credit for all that, and remember that you cannot find everything combined in the same person. He is very practical in some things, but the question is, whether he is not too scrupulous to be practical in all things"<sup>12</sup>.

The Duke of St. Bungay accurately foresees Palliser's fall from office, because his honesty is too absolute to bear the attack of any 'dishonest' man. In his case, the attack comes from Ferdinand Lopez. Trollope wants us to understand the character of Palliser<sup>13</sup> and it comes to life because he shows us the basis of his moral code and encourages us to think about its concepts, its strengths and its weaknesses. It is in just such a way that we think about people in real life and the novel can tell us more while we are less immediately involved than in real life situations. Trollope's naturalistic observation brings us closer to reality than we may have been aware. Henry James's observation that 'Mr. Trollope is a good observer, but he is literally nothing else'<sup>14</sup>, might unwittingly be drawing attention to Trollope's most important quality, for to see clearly is to perceive truthfully and few people question Trollope's naturalism.

The ideas considered so far (like 'gentleman', 'truth', 'goodness' and 'honesty') are easily recognisable as behavioural

concepts. As such it is easy for the modern reader to understand Trollope's attempts to define them though the terms in which we discuss them might be different today.

One more particular concept which seems to have pre-occupied Trollope throughout his writing career is the idea of 'duty'. Most of Trollope's characters act according to a sense of duty, though each interprets his duty in a very different way. At the outset, like most of his contemporaries, Trollope did not question the concept at all, yet in the last two novels of the Palliser series, The Prime Minister and The Duke's Children, he seems to be examining the whole concept of 'duty' in depth.

The term 'duty' does not evoke immediate sympathy in the modern reader and it is worth looking at the current usage to understand it better in Trollope. Apart from common usage such as 'customs duty' and 'heavy duty car battery', the word 'duty' is now frequently used in defining professional responsibilities. A doctor or a policeman will say he is 'on duty', meaning that he has professional obligations to fulfil. A member of the armed forces knows that he has to 'do his duty' and in almost every profession an employee has certain 'duties' to perform. Outside the sphere of professional employment, however, few people will speak openly of doing their duty, to God, to the Queen, to society as a whole, or to their families. It is true that people speak of visiting an aged relative, for example, out of a 'sense of duty',

but the phrase carries with it a certain reluctance. In fact, 'duty', in social and general ethical senses, seems to carry a hint of obligation which is unpleasant to the person who has the duty. Of course an older usage of the word survives in some instances of traditional ritualistic language: 'I promise to do my duty to God, and the Queen, to help other people at all times...' the boy scout says, and we may still be reminded in church that 'it is our bounden duty that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father...'

It does seem, therefore, that the sense of obedience implicit in the traditional meaning of 'duty' is alien to modern ideas of 'freedom'. In a professional sphere, duties are in many instances undertaken because there is a direct reward for those duties. Any duties outside this sphere are different and little moral obligation or pressure bears upon the individual to carry them out. The notion of 'duty' to an ethical code is no longer a common concept to which an individual can appeal, knowing that he will meet with general sympathetic concordance.

Duty in Victorian England was quite different. It was a governing force in every educated man's decision-making processes, and it was, perhaps, one of the distinguishing features of man as a civilised being, that his actions were motivated not by instincts of self-preservation alone, but by an understanding of his duty as well. The divergence of behavioural patterns,



of course, indicates that not all human beings were obedient to the same moral codes, and herein lies the strength of Trollope's characters as real beings. Directed by different moral codes, they all have different notions of 'duty', and, as often as not, their notions of duty bring them into direct conflict with one another. Duty is, in sum, the connecting link between a man or woman and his or her moral code.

For over half of his writing career, Trollope accepted that his characters had their 'duty' to perform, as he observed people in real life having their 'duty' to follow, even though this often led to conflict. The early novels record such conflict faithfully, but Trollope never questioned the reasons for the conflict : he merely observed, accurately. It is worth reminding ourselves of one or two instances of this briefly, before examining the change in his approach in the later novels. In the Barsetshire series all the characters have clear notions of what their duty involves : Mr. Harding, Mr. Slope, Archdeacon Grantly, Mrs. Proudie and the rest all know what they ought to do and they carry out their duties accordingly, both good and bad. In the early Palliser novels, Trollope seems to make more use of the word 'duty', as the explanation which his characters have for their several courses of action. For example, in Phineas Finn, Mr. Kennedy absolutely insists that his wife return to her conjugal home, and Phineas remarks that Mr. Kennedy 'means to do his duty' in ensuring her return, when he is alone with Lady Laura

before she leaves for Dresden<sup>15</sup>. Phineas himself uses a sense of duty to justify making overtures to Violet Effingham when he had already promised to marry the girl back home in Ireland, Mary Flood-Jones : he 'resolved sternly that it was his duty to be constant to Miss Effingham'<sup>16</sup>. In The Eustace Diamonds, Lady Linlithgow, whose wicked and selfish nature is her most obvious characteristic, takes in Lizzie Greystock out of a sense of family duty:

'Why should such a countess have troubled herself with the custody of such a niece? Simply because the countess regarded it as a duty... she went to church... because she thought it was right. And she took in Lizzie Greystock, whom she hated almost as much as she did sermons, because the admiral's wife had been her sister, and she recognised a duty'<sup>17</sup>.

By the time that Trollope came to write Phineas Redux, in 1873-4, he was clearly much more concerned with the notion of duty. The same Mr. Kennedy, writing to Phineas, says about his estranged wife, Lady Laura,

'Her duty demands her presence here (at Loughlinter) and my duty calls upon me to receive her'<sup>18</sup>.

And in the same letter, Kennedy asks Phineas to visit him before he goes to Dresden to see Lady Laura and her father Lord Brentford, 'not as a pleasure, but as a Christian duty'. When Phineas goes to Dresden, Lord Brentford is pleased to hear his son, Lord Chiltern, praised by Phineas and 'felt that now, as ever, he had done his duty by his family'<sup>19</sup>. Another character in the

same book, the editor of 'The People's Banner', Quintus Slide, has quite a different concept of duty : as he asserts to Phineas with pride, 'We've got our duty to do, and we mean to do it,' by which duty he means to proclaim 'purity of morals, throughout the nation. 'You've no notion, Finn, in your mind of what will soon be the extent of the duties, privileges and influences of the daily press'<sup>20</sup>. For some characters, a notion of 'duty' permits them unquestioningly to accept lines of thought which are, by any standards, strange : the death of the old Duke of Omnium produces some odd judgements on his life, but none more strange than from Mr. Maule Senior:

'A great fortune had been entrusted to him and he knew that it was his duty to spend it'<sup>21</sup>.

Such indeed might be the only moral defence that could be made for that 'worn-out, old debauchee'<sup>22</sup>, the old Duke of Omnium!

In the next Palliser novel, The Prime Minister, written between 1874 and 1876, Trollope's interest in the concept of 'duty' led him to give it much fuller treatment, not only in the private lives of his characters but in their public roles as well. Palliser, or the Duke of Omnium as he has become by the beginning of The Prime Minister, is adamant that he will not interfere in the Silverbridge borough elections: 'I must do my duty', he states categorically to Lady Glencora<sup>23</sup>, and his duty, unlike other Dukes of Omnium before him, is to remain quite uninvolved in the borough's nominations. Trollope summed up Palliser's notion

of his wife's duty, later on when he wrote about the Palliser novels in An Autobiography:

'I should not choose that my wife should have any duties unconnected with our joint family and home" <sup>24</sup>.

Unfortunately for Palliser, Lady Glencora sees her duty as something more than this, and the resulting interference with the nominations for the borough has disastrous consequences for Palliser's political career. In the same book Emily Wharton has a concept of duty which does not allow her any escape from the marriage she has made to Ferdinand Lopez, a marriage as disastrous as that between Lady Laura and Mr. Kennedy: 'I am bound to do as he tells me', she says <sup>25</sup>, and her anti-feminist outlook is wrapped up in terms of duty when she says to Lopez himself later on, 'It is not my duty to have any purpose, as what I do must depend on your commands' <sup>26</sup>. But when her former suitor, Arthur Fletcher, renews his suit after Lopez's suicide at Tenway Junction, he earnestly reminds her that she now has a very definite duty:

'No man ever had a right to say more positively to a woman that it was her duty to marry him, than I have to you. And I do say it. I say it on behalf of all of us, that it is your duty" <sup>27</sup>.

It is in the last of the Palliser novels, however, that Trollope developed and examined the concept of 'duty' most fully, and it is manifestly clear from the different tone of this book

that the questions he raised and the situations he presented for the characters took him and his readers to a new and deeper understanding of the nature of 'duty'. The Duke's Children was in fact written immediately after An Autobiography was completed in April 1876, though The Duke's Children appeared first (in 1879-80), while An Autobiography was not published until 1883, shortly after his death. Consequently The Duke's Children was not part of Trollope's output when he wrote An Autobiography, and to some extent this may explain why it has perhaps been less popular than the other Palliser novels, in spite of its more domestic, less political setting. Other reasons may be because Trollope's reputation was waning at the end of a long run of popularity and success, or because Lady Glencora does not enliven the page of its story, dying as she does before the narrative begins, the second female protagonist to be disposed of in this way<sup>28</sup>. However, the novel deserves more attention, because of its more perceptive analysis of concepts, quite apart from its immediate artistic appeal. The constant return to ideas of duty and the study of how it becomes necessary to reform those ideas as circumstances dictate give the novel a depth and perception that is easily missed if one sees the novel as merely 'a work of reparation'<sup>29</sup> in an attempt to defend the character of Palliser himself.

In the Duke's Children itself, we find interest and perception quite different from the books which preceded it, and the concept

of 'duty' is central to this. As elsewhere, each character has his own notion of what his duty is. The electors of Silverbridge prefer to do their duty in returning a castle candidate, rather than enjoying the new freedom of choice which had become theirs:

'the first and only strong feeling in the borough was the one of duty. The borough did not altogether enjoy being enfranchised'<sup>30</sup>.

Reginald Dobbes, the organiser of shooting parties at Crummie-Toddie, on the other hand, has a very different notion of his obligations, for he regarded it 'as a great duty to keep his body in the finest possible condition'<sup>31</sup>. And something of his enthusiasm for the sporting life has rubbed off on another devotee of shooting, the Duke's elder son, Lord Silverbridge. The Duke does not share his son's craving for such pastimes, but tolerates in his son what he would not permit for himself:

'But as (shooting) is so manifestly a duty, go and perform it like a man'<sup>32</sup>.

As well as shooting the covers of Bassetshire, Lord Silverbridge comes to realise that he has another duty to perform, that of ridding himself of the parasitic Major Tifto. It was unfortunate for him that he procrastinated, in the belief that:

'that duty could not be performed till after this race (the disastrous one at Doncaster, which cost his father over £70,000) had been run'<sup>33</sup>.

A more seasoned sportsman than Silverbridge is Lord Chiltern whose only occupation in life besides pursuing the Trumpington

Wood question seems to be hunting. As his wife, Violet Effingham of earlier books, puts it succinctly:

"Lord Chiltern has taken up hunting as his duty in life, and he does it with his might and main" <sup>134</sup>.

These examples of 'duty' in The Duke's Children only serve to illustrate the author's frequent return to that term as a means of expressing people's reasons for behaving in a particular way. The dispute between the Duke of Omnium and his son over the choice of a suitable wife presents us with a clash of duties which heightens our perception of the characters and the situation. After acknowledging that Silverbridge has a justifiable duty to perform his shooting, the Duke proceeds to outline another duty for him:

"You have explained to me that it is your duty to have the Barsetshire coverts properly shot, and I have acceded to your views. Surely it must be equally your duty to see your Barsetshire neighbours. And you are a young man every feature of whose character would be improved by matrimony ... I could never bring myself to dictate to a son in regard to his choice of a wife... still I would wish you to bear in mind what is my idea as to your duty" <sup>135</sup>.

The contradiction in the Duke's advice is quite clear : he will not impose on his son as regards a choice, but he expects his son to comply with his own concept of his duty. This 'duty' is at odds with the Duke's naturally sensitive outlook, and it does subsequently lead him to dictate to his son in regard to his choice of a wife.

It is significant that the interviews in which the Duke seeks to impose his conception of 'duty' on his sons take place within the confines of his study at Matching. When Silverbridge tells his father that he has proposed to Lady Mabel Grex, he does so on his own territory, namely, after dinner, in the library at the Beargarden Club, and his father accepts the news though he does not really approve of the match<sup>36</sup>. The Duke never doubts that he is in the right when he is within the four walls of his own study, and he would have been unlikely to agree to a connection with the impoverished Grex family if the interview had taken place there.

In the third interview between Silverbridge and his father, back on the Duke's home ground, in the study at Matching, the conflict between them comes to a head. Silverbridge informs his father that he wishes to marry Miss Isabel Boncassen, the daughter of an American, descended from a Dutch wharf worker, and not the 'approved' candidate, Lady Mabel Grex. To the reader, Isabel is a much more attractive personality than Lady Mabel, but Trollope exposes the flaws in the Duke's sense of duty by making him stand out against Isabel as a suitable wife and as the future Duchess of Omnium:

"I thought you liked her, sir," (said Silverbridge).  
 "Liked her! I did like her. I do like her.  
 What has that to do with it? Do you think I  
 like none but those with whom I should think it  
 fitting to ally myself in marriage? Is there  
 to be no duty in such matters, no restraint, no



feeling of what is due to your own name, and to others who bear it? The lad out there who is sweeping the walks can marry the first girl that pleases his eye if she will take him. Perhaps his lot is the happier because he owns such liberty. Have you the same freedom?" '37

The Duke gives open vent to his anger in expounding his idea as to his son's matrimonial duty. Silverbridge's defence of his choice is equally valid, if less eloquently expressed. Had he completed his Cambridge education, instead of being sent down (for a prank of which Kingsley Amis's undergraduates would have been proud!), he would no doubt have responded to the Duke's arguments in a more logical way. But then, of course, the readers' sympathies would not have been so much in his favour:

"Have you the same freedom?" (continued the Duke).

"I suppose I have, - by law."

"Do you recognise no duty but what the laws impose upon you? Should you be disposed to eat and drink in bestial excess, because the laws would not hinder you? Should you lie and sleep all the day, the law would say nothing! Should you neglect every duty which your position imposes on you, the law could not interfere! To such a one as you, the law can be no guide. You should so live as not to come near the law, - or to have the law come near to you. From all evil against which the law bars you, you should be barred, at an infinite distance, by honour and conscience and nobility. Does the law require patriotism, philanthropy, self-abnegation, public service, devotion to the needs of others who have been placed in the world below you?

The law is a great thing, - because men are poor, and weak, and bad. And it is great, because where it exists in its strength, no tyrant can be above it. But between you and me there should be no mention of law as the guide to conduct. Speak to me of honour, of duty, and of nobility: and tell me what they require of you."

Silverbridge listened in silence and with something of true admiration in his heart. But he felt the strong necessity of declaring his own convictions on one special point here, at once, in this new crisis of the conversation. That accident in regard to the colour of the Dean's lodge had stood in the way of his logical studies, - so that he was unable to put his argument into proper shape; but there belonged to him a certain natural astuteness which told him that he must put in his rejoinder at this particular point. "I think I am bound in honour and in duty to marry Miss Boncassen," he said, "And, if I understand what you mean, by nobility just as much."

"Because you have promised."

"Not only for that. I have promised and therefore I am bound. She has - well, she has said that she loves me, and therefore of course I am bound. But it is not only that."

"What do you mean?"

"I suppose a man ought to marry the woman he loves, - if he can get her!" 138.

It is interesting to note that Silverbridge does not merely repudiate his father's concept of 'duty' in a matter of love. He replaces it rather by his own interpretation. 'I suppose a man ought to marry the woman he loves' is as much a 'duty' for Silverbridge

as responsibility to his class is for the Duke, or hunting for Lord Chiltern.

At the end of the story when the Duke capitulates and Silverbridge is able to marry Isabel, the way in which Mr. Boncassen accepts Silverbridge as a son-in-law is significantly different.

"I shall rejoice to give her to you,"  
 "Mr. Boncassen says, - "not because  
 you are Lord Silverbridge, not because  
 of your rank and wealth; but because  
 you are - the individual being whom I  
 now hold by the hand" 139.

Free from English class prejudices, Mr. Boncassen is able to make a judgement on the individual merits of Silverbridge as a prospective son-in-law. Americans are not on the whole treated generously in the books of either Frances or Anthony Trollope<sup>40</sup>, but at the end of The Duke's Children the Boncassens come away with more credit than the Duke of Omnium himself, because of their open-mindedness and willingness to make perceptual rather than preceptual judgements of new situations.

Another sphere in which the Duke's concepts of 'duty' are brought sharply into focus in this book is that of politics. The reader who knows the earlier novels in the Palliser series will recall that Lady Glencora was well aware of the dichotomy between the Duke's liberal politics on the one hand and his desire to preserve his personal position in the nation on the other. In Phineas Finn Glencora had been quizzing Mr. Monk and Mr. Bonteen on the

subject of equality and having confused them she explains to the equally-muddled Mr. Kennedy, on the way into dinner:

' "You will understand me. I am not saying that people are equal; but that the tendency of all law-making and of all governing should be to reduce the inequalities!"<sup>41</sup>.

The Duke's own lengthy explanation of his politics to Phineas in the grounds at Matching, in The Prime Minister, reveals the distaste he has for what he calls 'a mock equality'<sup>42</sup>. But it is in The Duke's Children that the conflict in his sense of 'duty' is more clearly expounded. Trollope offers no solution, no easy compromise : he merely states and restates the incongruity, to aid our perception of the issues involved. The explanation is given in the account of the Duke's private thoughts as he sits in his study after writing the cheque for £3,400 to clear his other son, Gerald, of a gambling debt:

'Anxious as he was that both his sons should be permeated by Liberal politics, studious as he had ever been to teach them that the highest duty of those in high rank was to use their authority to elevate those beneath them, still he was hardly less anxious to make them understand that their second duty required them to maintain their own position. It was by feeling this second duty, - by feeling it and performing it, - that they would be enabled to perform the rest.'<sup>43</sup>.

The conflict in the Duke's ideas of his 'duty' is here clearly expressed : if there is a solution, it lies only in the full perception and understanding of this dichotomy.

As far as his attempts to influence his sons in regard to their political duties is concerned, the Duke is quite unsuccessful. It is strange, however, that when his lifelong political adviser, the Duke of St. Bungay, reminds him that he is duty-bound to serve the country should another Liberal Ministry be formed, he pays no attention to the appeal to duty. His sense of political duty must be as close to that of the Duke of St. Bungay as any two men's ideas could be, but on this occasion the Duke of Omnium ignores his friend's advice completely. The letter that the Duke of Bungay writes tells the Duke a few home-truths about his pride and his diffidence, but the appeal for a return to political ministry is couched in terms such as he himself might have used to his own children:

"There are, I think, two things for you to consider in this matter, and two only. The first is your capacity, and the other is your duty... As to that matter of duty I shall have less difficulty in carrying you with me. Though this renewed task may be personally disagreeable to you... still if your country wants you, you should serve your country... when a man such as you has shown himself to be necessary... he cannot recede without breach of manifest duty" 44.

The Duke does not respond to this appeal to his sense of responsibility. Perhaps he has wearied a little of governing his own life by too rigid an observance of what he conceives to be is 'duty'.

Nevertheless, he expects his children to fulfil the duties he conceives for them, and the clash over Mary's right to marry

the penniless Frank Tregear in preference to the suitable candidate, Lord Popplecourt, produces the fullest self-analysis in the Duke himself. The agent in this searching analysis of 'duty' is the old friend of the Duchess, Madame Max Groesler, now the wife of Phineas Finn. It is a mark of the coldness of the Duke's human nature that his long acquaintance with this lady, whose integrity is well-known to him, does not prevent him from cutting her off on the slightest suspicion that she does not agree with him over Mary's right to marry Frank. It was the same with the Duke of St. Bungay : their life-long association is swept aside upon receipt of the letter referred to above, in spite of the appeal 'to our old friendship'<sup>45</sup>.

In his first major interview with Madame Max about Lady Mary, the Duke admits that he finds it hard to know what his 'duty' is in an affair of this kind:

'It is so hard that a man should be left  
with a charge of which from its very  
nature he cannot understand the duties!'<sup>46</sup>

Had Lady Glencora been still alive she would doubtless have resolved the difficulty with ease, trusting not to her 'duty', but to the emotional guidance of her heart, mindful of her own 'mistake' in marrying Palliser instead of Burgo Fitzgerald! However, the Duke is quite absolute in his belief that duty must be performed:

'But duty is - duty; - and whatever pang  
it may cost, duty should be performed...'  
"But then, Duke," (says Madame Max),  
"one has to be sure what duty requires.  
In many matters this is easy enough, and

the only difficulty comes from temptation. There are cases in which it is so hard to know...I only said that this was a case in which it might be difficult for you to see your duty plainly"<sup>47</sup>.

But the image of his daughter 'breaking her heart' merely confirms him in the conviction that 'duty' must be done: 'The higher the duties the keener the pangs'<sup>48</sup>. And he further protects himself from Madam Max's reasoned case by suspecting that her argument must be deceitful simply because she is a woman:

'And if there were not feminine wiles, - tricks by which women learn to have their own way in opposition to the judgement of their lords and masters? (It became) him to be on his guard against attacks of this nature.'<sup>49</sup>.

Later in the story, the Duke gives some thought to the character of Frank Tregear, and it is interesting that his conception of Frank's duty is as different from Frank's, as Frank's idea of the Duke's duty in this matter is different from his. First, there are the Duke's reflections on Frank:

"Here was a man without a shilling, whose manifest duty it was to go to work, so that he might earn his bread, who, instead of doing so, had hoped to raise himself to wealth and position by entrapping the heart of an unwary girl!"<sup>50</sup>.

Then there are the Duke's reflections on the gist of Frank's letter to him:

"Whether I am such a son-in-law as you would like or not, it is your duty to accept me, if by refusing to do so you will render your daughter miserable." That was Mr. Tregear's argument.

He himself might be prepared to argue in answer that it was his duty to reject such a son-in-law, even though by rejecting him he might make his daughter miserable! <sup>51</sup>.

Conflicting notions of 'duty' are here clearly presented and in this case there is a resolution of the conflict. The Duke is forced to climb down from his position by Madame Max's appeal to him as a father:

"In thus performing your duty to your order, would you feel satisfied that you had performed that to your child?" <sup>52</sup>

This together with another missive from Frank Tregear, brings about the collapse of the Duke's defence:

'He had endeavoured to strengthen his own will by arguing with himself that when he saw a duty plainly before him, he should cleave to that, let the results be what they might. But that picture of her face withered and wan after twenty years of sorrowing had had its effect upon his heart! <sup>53</sup>.

He even admits to being 'half-conquered' and there is a warmth and humanity about his affection for Mary which has been repressed in him for most of his life:

'It was sweet to him to have something to caress. Now in the solitude of his years, as years were coming on him, he felt how necessary it was that he should have someone who would love him. Since his wife had left him he had been debarred from these caresses by the necessity of showing his antagonism to her dearest wishes. It had been his duty to be stern. In all his words to his daughter he had been governed by a conviction that he ought never to allow



the duty of separating her from her lover to be absent from his mind. He was not prepared to acknowledge that that duty had ceased; - but yet there had crept over him a feeling that as he was half-conquered, why should he not seek some recompense in his daughter's love?'<sup>54</sup>

It is easy to see why The Duke's Children has over the years been considered less successful than the other novels in the Palliser series. There is no hero of the traditional kind and the lack of one has led some critics to misconstrue the whole book:

'In any case, the Duke remains the hero of the story, a role which the boyish Silverbridge is quite incapable of assuming... Since neither of the sons could be regarded as the hero, so the daughter, Lady Mary Palliser, could not fill the role of heroine... Isabel (Boncassen) easily slips into the position of heroine'<sup>55</sup>.

Yet in spite of unsatisfactory attempts to judge the novel in terms of hero and heroine, critics admit to an admiration for qualities they cannot always readily define. As the same one says:

'I find it difficult to judge Trollope's novels by any ordinary standards or accepted rules'<sup>56</sup>.

and this sums up aptly the dilemma in which Trollopian criticism has found itself.

Mario Praz, in The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, comes close to defining those qualities when he says that:

'The abolition of the hero is a salient feature in Trollope' 57,

giving Lucy Roberts (from Framley Parsonage), Mary Flood Jones, Lucy Morris, Phineas Finn and the younger Duke of Omnium himself (all from the Palliser series) as examples of the 'Biedermeier' ideal, having about them something of the plain and colourless qualities of Jane Eyre, which nevertheless endear them to us because of their closeness to real life. If readers search Trollope's novels for a Heathcliff or a Catherine Earnshaw (or a Bathsheba Everdene or a Janna Roslyn for that matter), they will be disappointed, for Trollope was:

'Too conscious of pedestrian reality to allow the atmosphere of Wuthering Heights to invade his scene' 58.

For all the glamorisation of Lady Glencora and the Duke of Omnium in the 1974 television production, we were gradually coming towards an acceptance of the novelist's art as being at its best when characters in books are most like the people we know in real life. The 'ordinariness' of the main characters in some modern fiction - like Salim in V.S. Naipal's A Bend in the River, to take a random example - are evidence of this trend, though there will always be a large market for the Castle Rackrent and The Mysteries of Udolpho style of romanticised escapism.

Art in all its forms is only true art if it helps us in our perception of life as it really is.

'Like the Pre-Raphaelites,' (Mario Praz writes) "Trollope was concerned with verisimilitude". 59,

and it is easy to see why he preferred Rembrandt to Raphael, with the attention to detail of the former as against the loftier aspirations of the latter. To make a daguerreotype, or later to take and develop a photographic plate, was a considerable scientific and technical achievement at that time<sup>60</sup>, but to many Victorians, it was more than that, for photography, in its infancy, seemed one step closer to reality than art could ever be. Is it surprising, therefore, that 'Art for art's sake' became a landmark of the cultural reaction to scientific discovery and 'progress'? Yet while the velvet besuited Oscar Wilde was delivering himself from a 'chaise-longue' up and down America, the scientific progressives were busy paving the way for a world with the potential to bring about the greatest happiness or the greatest destruction for the greatest number of people,

Perhaps Trollope, with his ordinariness and his photographic observation, his workaday methods and his knowledge of human nature, offered, without knowing it, a synthesis of the two worlds of art and science which have divided the educated people of the Western world since the time of The Great Exhibition of 1851. In spite of C. P. Snow's warnings about the rift of the two cultures, 'Arts or science?' is probably still the first major decision of an intelligent young teenager has to take in Britain today<sup>61</sup>. Are we to suppose that Trollope never visited the Crystal Palace, either in Hyde Park or later at Sydenham<sup>62</sup>? In his working life at the G. P. O., his often remarkable innovations and improve-

ments showed the spirit of progress and efficiency that characterised so many aspects of his age<sup>63</sup>. Within his novels he observed and reported about human behaviour as experience presented it to him, with the attention to detail that is at the root of modern scientific method. Our conception of Trollope, as of our Victorian predecessors as a whole, may be limited by the critical paraphernalia with which we have surrounded ourselves.

With authors as prolific as Trollope was, the terms of an established criticism provide an element of security from which it takes considerable courage to escape. To imagine Hamlet without the Prince makes nonsense, but not all works should be judged by the same criteria. The Duke's Children and the Palliser series as a whole must be judged on their own merits. Trollope has shown us one aspect of life in portraying the interactions of human beings and by pointing to the incongruities that arise between one man's code of morality and another's. The Duke's Children looks at such situations in depth, particularly when 'duty' is involved, and along with the other Palliser novels, it leads us to a deeper perception and understanding.

"If you mean to do a thing you should do it."

"Certainly", said the Duke, "but you should make up your mind first whether the thing is worth doing"<sup>64</sup>.

NOTES - Chapter Five

- 1 The Eustace Diamonds, p. 101 (Ch. VII).
- 2 Phineas Finn, pp. 381-382 (Ch. XXXVIII).
- 3 The Duke's Children, p. 67 (Ch. VIII).
- 4 Sutherland, J. and Gill, E., introduction to The Eustace Diamonds, p. 14.
- 5 Quoted by J. Sutherland in the introduction to Phineas Finn, p. 13, but I am unable to trace the reference.
- 6 Wall, Stephen, introduction to Can You Forgive Her? p. 13.
- 7 This point was first made by Sutherland, J. and Gill, S. in cited edition of The Eustace Diamonds, pp. 29-30.
- 8 Orley Farm, II, p. 165 (Ch. LVI).
- 9 Sutherland, J. and Gill, S., cited edition of The Eustace Diamonds, p. 30.
- 10 The Prime Minister, II, p. 187 (Ch. LX).
- 11 The Eustace Diamonds, pp. 521-522 (Ch. LIII).
- 12 The Prime Minister, I, p. 267 (Ch. XXVIII).
- 13 He makes him the subject of a good part of the closing chapter of An Autobiography: 'I think that Plantagenet Palliser, Duke of Omnium, is a perfect gentleman. If he be not, then I am unable to describe a gentleman' p. 314 (Ch. XX). There is, I suspect, much of Trollope himself in this portrait, as the ideal which in some ways he held up to himself, though to others he apparently appeared quite different. Plantagenet Palliser is a kind of anti-hero for all that he is Prime Minister of England. Other studies of Palliser include J.H. Hagan's 'The Duke's Children : Trollope's Psychological Masterpiece', in Nineteenth Century Fiction, xii (1958) pp. 1-21, and B.G. Kenney's 'Trollope's Ideal Statesman', also in Nineteenth Century Fiction, xx (1966) pp. 281-285.
- 14 Quoted by Sutherland, J. and Gill, S., cited edition of The Eustace Diamonds, p. 23, but I am unable to trace the reference.
- 15 Phineas Finn, p. 709 (Ch. LXXV).

- 16 Ibid., p. 354 (Ch. XXXV).
- 17 The Eustace Diamonds, p. 42 (Ch. 1).
- 18 Phineas Redux, I, p. 82 (Ch. X).
- 19 Ibid., p. 108 (Ch. XII).
- 20 Ibid., p. 203 (Ch. XXII).
- 21 Ibid., p. 269 (Ch. XXX).
- 22 The Eustace Diamonds, p. 602 (Ch. LXI).
- 23 The Prime Minister, I, p. 300 (Ch. XXXII).
- 24 An Autobiography, p. 313 (Ch. VII).
- 25 The Prime Minister, II, p. 116 (Ch. LII).
- 26 Ibid., p. 186 (Ch. LX).
- 27 Ibid., p. 377 (Ch. LXXIX).
- 28 Both Lady Glencora and Mrs. Proudie are outlived by their spouses. Unfortunately there is no anecdotal account of why Trollope let Lady Glencora die, but these two characters deserve more study. There is an article which discusses Lady Glencora's role and character by M. Hewitt in British Journal of Sociology, xiv (1963) pp. 226-239 under the title 'Trollope : Historian and Socialist' and Simon Raven's article in The Listener has been mentioned already (Chapter Four, note 10). Other criticism specifically about women in Trollope's novels tends to focus on the Jamesian 'clinging tenderness' of the young heroines (see, for example, Hugh Sykes Davies 'Trollope' in Writers and Their Work series, pp. 19-20, beginning, 'As for the girls...') though there is an interesting passage on the effects of unhappy marriages in John Sutherland's introduction to the cited edition of Phineas Finn, pp. 22-31. Mario Praz explains the masochistic tendency in many of Trollope's women in terms of the repressed sexuality and status given to Victorian women (The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, pp. 304-308).
- 29 Tinker, Chauncey B., preface to cited edition of The Duke's Children, p. vi.
- 30 The Duke's Children, p. 105 (Ch. XIV). The electors no doubt preferred the security of being ruled by the castle, and enfranchisement was probably received there with less enthusiasm than elsewhere in the country!

- 31 Ibid., p. 301 (Ch. XXXVIII).
- 32 Ibid., p. 365 (Ch. XLV).
- 33 Ibid., p. 347 (Ch. XLIII).
- 34 Ibid., p. 493 (Ch. LXII).
- 35 Ibid., p. 367 (Ch. XLV).
- 36 Ibid., pp. 209-210 (Ch. XXXVI).
- 37 Ibid., p. 485 (Ch. LXI).
- 38 Ibid., pp. 485-6 (Ch. LXI).
- 39 Ibid., p. 557 (Ch. LXX).
- 40 It is possible (but no means certain) that Trollope was trying to mollify the Americans of his acquaintance at this stage in his writing career, since he himself had had reservations about the harshness of his mother's censures in her Domestic Manners of the Americans and regrets about the severity of his own in North America. He had also given a generally unfavourable portrait of Americans in most of his novels. See James Pope Hennessey, Anthony Trollope, pp. 221-222 and W.G. and J.T. Gerould, A Guide to Trollope, p. 7 (though this makes the mistake of seeing Mr. Boncassen through the eyes of The Duke of Omnium only).
- 41 Phineas Finn, p. 164 (Ch. XIV).
- 42 The Prime Minister, II, p. 265 (Ch. LXVIII).
- 43 The Duke's Children, p. 519 (Ch. LXV).
- 44 Ibid., p. 171 (Ch. XXII).
- 45 Ibid., p. 170 (Ch. XXII).
- 46 Ibid., p. 329 (Ch. XLI).
- 47 Ibid., p. 330 (Ch. XLI).
- 48 Ibid., p. 331 (Ch. XLI).
- 49 Ibid., p. 331 (Ch. XLI).
- 50 Ibid., p. 398 (Ch. L).

- 51 Ibid., p. 403 (Ch. L).
- 52 Ibid., p. 524 (Ch. LXVI).
- 53 Ibid., p. 527 (Ch. LXVI).
- 54 Ibid., p. 528 (Ch. LXVI).
- 55 Tinker, Chauncey B., preface to cited edition of The Duke's Children, p. vii.
- 56 Ibid., p. viii.
- 57 The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, p. 267.
- 58 Ibid., p. 300.
- 59 Ibid., p. 284.
- 60 There is a description of early portrait photography, with mercury baths, metal head-clamps, vapours and numerous chemicals associated with making a daguerreotype, in The Siege of Krishnapur, pp. 90-95. Although photographic methods were doubtlessly more sophisticated in England after the middle of the century, the Victorian attitude was still one of amazement. After all, the only kind of image-making until this time had been that of the artist.
- 61 Most careers guidance and information literature still assumes this underlying division between arts and science. It is part of what C.P. Snow called 'our fanatical belief in educational specialisation' as long ago as 1959, in The Rede Lecture 'The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution', p. 16.
- 62 A letter to his mother written from Ireland in May 1850 certainly indicates an intention to visit the Exhibition: 'I hope nothing will prevent us all meeting under the shadow of some huge, newly invented machine in the exhibition of 1851. I mean to exhibit four four-volume novels - all failures! - which I look on as a great proof of industry at any rate.' (The Letters of Anthony Trollope, ed. B.A. Booth, p. 9).
- 63 In particular he did much to improve rural deliveries, was responsible for early experimentation with letter-boxes and helped to establish routines of postal deliveries taking place in the early part of the day. The Post Office Records have much material about Trollope's working life, and there are numerous references in both James Pope Hennessy's Anthony Trollope and C.P. Snow's Trollope.



64 The Duke's Children, p. 371 (Ch. XLVI).

## Chapter Six

### Some Institutions and Individuals

Trollope was always interested primarily in individual cases rather than in generalisations. Furthermore his interest in individual cases prompted him to examine the moral codes by which each of his characters lived, and the conflicts that resulted when different individuals come into contact with each other. By focusing the reader's attention on the conflicts that arise between people with different moral codes, Trollope was able to draw the attention of his readership to the incongruities that exist in real life, and in doing so he gives us a deeper perception of our situation.

But when we seek to define the exact nature of the 'deeper perception of the universe' that Trollope's novels give us, there are difficulties to be overcome. In the first place, generalisations about a system of casuistry as thorough as Trollope's are implicitly dangerous and misleading. Secondly, it is difficult to say with confidence where Trollope speaks with his own voice rather than from the point of view of one of his characters or from behind the mask that he wore to suit his readers : we can no longer turn with confidence to An Autobiography as the confessional, as has, I think, been shown. Vague notions of artistic greatness still adhere to phrases as 'deeper perception of our situation', but if criticism is to have value, it needs to be

more precise than this. By defining the nature of Trollope's 'Perception of our situation', we shall be nearer to appreciating the extent of his greatness and its relevance for today, in spite of 'the traditional settings...associated with the Tory world'<sup>1</sup>.

Trollope's perception of our situation consists in his appreciation of the fine balance that exists between individual man and the society in which he lives. Or, more specifically, Trollope understands the relationship between the individual and the institutions by which he regulates his life. The individual and the institutions are not separate forces, pulling in different directions, but inter-related and interdependent at all points. Indeed, the nature of Trollope's art enabled him to convey the transitory nature of all institutional aspects of society. We become aware, through the long perspective that his novels give us, that man changes the institutions as much as the institutions change man. It is the understanding of the fine balance between man and his institutions that underlies all Trollope's writing.

This relationship is touched upon by Ruth apRoberts when she writes about Trollope's views on religious observance:

'The strength of society seems to be in its institutions; it exists through and in custom and convention'<sup>2</sup>.

She does not, however, go on to develop the theme of the interplay between man and the institutions of society which pervades his writing, but it is a subject which is as important today as it was when Trollope's contemporary, Walter Bagehot, wrote:

'The characteristic danger of great nations, like the Roman, or the English, which have a long history of continuous creation, is that they may at last fail from not comprehending the great institutions they have created'<sup>3</sup>.

The logical consequence of such failure to understand our great institutions might well be the events described in General Sir John Hackett's The Third World War. Trollope himself certainly foresaw them in the treatise he never published, probably because it did not make sufficiently entertaining reading, called The New Zealander. It is particularly interesting, as N. John Hall's introduction to the first publication of this book in 1972 makes clear, that Trollope wrote and completed it between The Warden and Barchester Towers, in 1855, well before the bulk of his mature writing was conceived. Each chapter considers an institution of Victorian England, and we will follow a similar method here in considering briefly the four institutions which most dominated society in Trollope's time.<sup>4</sup>

### The Church

The reader of the novels is always aware of the institutions which are the basis of society's strength and stability and the one that stands out most clearly is institution of the Church of England, which forms the framework for three of the Barsetshire novels. Those who claim that Trollope was incapable of expressing ideas about religion never dispute the fact that he wrote at length about

the institution which existed to propagate religious belief. The men who fill their allotted places in the diocese of Barchester are, for the most part, 'primarily men with a stake in the county'<sup>5</sup>. But as theological disputation was not the subject Trollope chose as the basis for his novels, it does not matter whether they are 'incapable of connected thought on religious questions'<sup>6</sup> or not. Nor is it fair to censure Trollope for not conforming to the pattern of novelists who specialised in the soul-searching and loss of faith that characterized some aspects of the Church in the period from 1860 to 1900<sup>7</sup>. George Bertram's loss of faith as a result of his visit to the Holy Land, in The Bertrams, has been described as 'unsatisfactory because the religious problems are never explicit'<sup>8</sup>, but I am confident that if it had been central to Trollope's purpose he would have analysed the intellectual doubts which beset George Bertram in the theological depth that was characteristic of novels like W.H. White's The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, Samuel Butler's The Way of All Flesh and Mrs. Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere<sup>9</sup>. Trollope realised, as perhaps novelists of religious doubt did not, that religious faith is not just an intellectual exercise. Trollope achieved the ironic detachment which seems to be absent from so many of the semi-autobiographical novels of religious doubt and despair. He has a more profound understanding of man's relationship with his maker because he sees the complexity of the relationship, in which ecclesiastical rationality plays only a

limited part. George Bertram's philosophy of life is formed but little by reasoned theological argument; it is the influence of Miss Todd and Miss Waddingham on the strangely incongruous tour of the Holy Land that laughs him out of his vocation.

Trollope's deliberate avoidance of religious doctrinal controversy is quite consistent with the rest of his outlook. Suspicious of the general principle, he focused attention firmly on the individual situation and since any systematic theology is based more upon general principles, it plays but little part in the lives of his characters. This is why the Oxford movement and the evangelical revivalism which dominated the theological scene in the mid-nineteenth century have very little apparent importance for Trollope. If we have any regrets over Trollope's choice of churchmen as characters in his novels, it might be over the omission of that small but interesting band of parsons who were also scientists : Henslow, Sedgwick, Kirby and Buckland<sup>10</sup>. It is perhaps more surprising that the furore that arose over The Origin of the Species, most dramatically captured in the famous British Association meeting in Oxford between T.H. Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce in 1860, did not feature more openly in Trollope's later novels. 'Trollope's characters,' it has been said, 'are apparently unaware of Darwin's existence'<sup>11</sup>, yet Trollope's approach, based upon accurate observation and careful recording of the behaviour of his fellow human beings, is much

closer to the scientists than to the theologians. 'Those moral speculations', as the Duke of Omnium says in a different context, 'will hardly bear the wear and tear of real life'<sup>12</sup>.

It was 'the wear and tear of real life' that was of most interest to Trollope, and in this he shares something with the existentialists. The existence that precedes essence for the existentialist is there in Trollope's novels, where the realities of day to day living are more important than any theories about life which could be drawn from their experiences, in spite of the bricklayer's maxim, 'It's dogged as does it'<sup>13</sup>. Like the existentialist, Trollope is aware of the absurdity of man's predicament and the inability of logical rationality alone to encompass the absurdity in man's behaviour and interaction.

On all reasonable counts, the heiress in The Belton Estate, Lady Amedroz, ought to accept Captain Aylmer, the eminently 'suitable' admirer, but she chooses nevertheless her cousin, Will Belton, who is a farmer. One can explain her rejection of Captain Aylmer in terms of sexual impotence, but there is no evidence to support such a reasonable explanation in the book. Clara's decision is not a rational, logical one. It turns out to be a good one in her case, (though it is doubtful whether it would have been in the case of Glencora M'Cluskie, had she accepted Burgo Fitzgerald's invitation to elope at Lady Monk's Ball in Can You Forgive her?). It takes account of the irrational in men, the absurd which has so often been excluded from the realm of fiction

by the belief still prevalent, that man's existence can be encompassed by rationality alone.

Trollope's strength lies, as has always been acknowledged, in his ability to portray the lives of ordinary people as they really are. Only now, perhaps, are we beginning to appreciate the full artistic value of the novelist who sees far enough into life to reproduce it as it really is, rather than reproducing it as he would like to think that it is.

The institution of the church exercises a powerful influence over the characters who perform a function in its life, particularly in the Barsetshire novels. Within the framework of the established Church the conflicts of different personalities and different moral codes are played out. In these novels the institution always proves itself greater than the individuals. Perhaps it is the hierarchical appropriation of power which ensures submission to authority, that guarantees that the church will outlive its ministers in the Barsetshire novels. At any rate, Archdeacon Grantly can do nothing to make himself Bishop once the Conservative party is out of power and the new Bishop appointed, at the beginning of Barchester Towers. Yet from what we know of his personality we can see that he is capable of moving mountains if he so desires. To one thing he is submissive, however, and that is the institution of the church itself. Throughout The Warden, Barchester Towers and The Last Chronicle of Barset, the



characters accept the framework of the institution of the church without questioning it, even though they may be stretched to their limits in the conflicts that arise between them. The church and also the institution of Hiram's Hospital are greater than Mr. Harding, no matter how profound may be the conflict of his conscience : in the end the institutions remain the same and Mr. Harding changes his role within the church at Barchester. Mr. Slope may wish to purge the diocese and do away with all the abuses, but in the end it is he who gives way, and leaves to try his luck in London, while the church in Barchester goes on as before. Dynamic as may be Mrs. Proudie's impact on the diocese, the church remains relatively unaffected by her machinations. One has the impression at the end of The Last Chronicle of Barset that come what may in the way of Bishops, wives, archdeacons and precentors, nothing is really going to change in Barchester there will still be livings to be filled, appointments to be made, services to be conducted and abuses to be purged. It is, of course, in such a picture of a stable society that the view of Trollope as reactionary observer of clerical and upper-middle class life has its origins.

The picture of institutional stability is, however, only one small part of Trollope's interest in the interplay of man and institution. In Clergymen of the Church of England, which he wrote the year before The Last Chronicle of Barset, Trollope examined the relationship between the man and the institution and

made the point, (often omitted by those who criticise Trollope's range as being narrow because many of his characters are clerics), that clergymen are like men in all other walks of life, some good, some not so good:

'The parish parson generally has a grievance and is much attached to it - in which he is like all other men in all other walks of life'<sup>14</sup>.

The church does not provide the framework for any of the novels written in the second half of his writing career, nor is a significant proportion of the characters in holy orders. Nevertheless religion and the church still feature in many of the novels and it is worth looking at the way in which Trollope's view of them developed. For example, in the discussion about disestablishment at the beginning of Phineas Redux, there is an entirely different emphasis. Throughout the Palliser series, disestablishment is seen as a reflection of the contemporary political interest in the relation of church and state. The reader of the Barsetshire novels, however, can see here that the institution of the church is no longer inviolable. In the earlier novels the men might have been imperfect and often were, but the church remained the essential instrument for conveying the Christian message to mankind. Here it is the institution itself which is imperfect and it is the objective of political leaders to disestablish it for this reason.

Mr. Low, we are told:

'entertained some confused idea that the church of England and the Christian religion were one and the same thing'<sup>15</sup>.

The whole subject is treated with a scepticism that would have been quite out of place in the *Barsetshire* novels<sup>16</sup>.

In addition to the extensive treatment given to the subject of disestablishment in *Phineas Redux*<sup>17</sup>, there are other occasions, particularly in the *Palliser* novels when the church as an institution is attacked, (usually in passing comments either about abuses of clerical patronage<sup>18</sup> or privilege<sup>19</sup>, or in the derogatory portraits of most of the clerics who feature in them,) with the implication that the institution which supports them is unable to sustain the very qualities which it teaches. The bogus clergyman, Mr. Emilius, is an obvious example of a bad advertisement for the institutional church : he is ambitious and hypocritical<sup>20</sup>; a bigamist and a murderer<sup>21</sup>; and even the Biblical phraseology which he incorporates into his letter to Lizzie Eustace disturbs the credibility in the institution of which he claimed to be the representative<sup>22</sup>. Another cleric, who features very briefly in the Polpenno election in *The Duke's Children*, is dismissed in a way that leaves the reader in no doubt about the author's views on some clerics appointed by the Church of England:

'Then, Mr. Williams, the rector, (addressed the electors), a gentleman who had many staunch friends and many bitter enemies in the town. He addressed himself chiefly to that bane of the whole country, - as he conceived them, - the godless dissenters... It was necessary that Mr. Williams should liberate his own mind, and therefore, he persevered with the godless dissenters at great length, - not explaining, however, how

a man who thought enough about his own religion to be a dissenter could be godless, or how a godless man should care enough about religion to be a dissenter.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the treatment afforded to the church as an institution in the later books indicates that Trollope's own views changed considerably in the course of his writing career : he now saw the shortcomings less in the individuals and more emanating from the institution itself. When a young man considering the ministry wrote to him for advice in 1881, the frank reply Trollope gave indicates how he had come to feel about institutionalised religion:

'Who is your friend and why does he suspect that you desire to go into the church? Dont. Nothing cripples a man more certainly.'<sup>24</sup>

#### The Law

Another institution which recurs frequently in the novels is the legislature. The distinction between the judiciary and an abstract concept of justice in the novels has already been shown : an inappropriate sentence may have been given, as in The Macdermots of Ballycloran, a reputation may have been needlessly damaged, as in the trial of Phineas Finn or hair-splitting distinctions may have been made by Mr. Dove or Mr. Chaffenbrass<sup>25</sup>. However, the reader is constantly aware not only of the individuals who appear in these legal cases, but also of the legal system itself.

The law and those who practise in it are more closely inter-related than is the case with the church. The suspense often arises not over a character's guilt or innocence, but over whether the law will come to a just conclusion. Will Phineas be convicted? What will happen to Lady Eustace? How will the court decide on the ownership of Orley Farm? In each case, Trollope tells the reader whether the accused is guilty or innocent before the trial begins, thereby undermining any suspense of detection such as that which formed the basis of interest for novels like The Moonstone<sup>26</sup>: Trollope is careful to tell us that Phineas is not guilty of the murder of Mr. Bonteen before the trial even starts; he does not keep us long in doubt about who stole Lizzie Eustace's diamonds; and before Lady Mason appears at the Court of Assize on the second occasion charged with perjury the reader knows of her guilt with regard to the disputed codicil. All these questions arouse our interest in the relationship between man and the institution, and in whether the courts will arrive at a just and accurate arbitrement.

The short novel, Cousin Henry, written in 1879, provides an example of this interplay. It is concerned with the struggles of conscience that Henry Jones has when he finds that the property he has inherited from his uncle should in fact belong to one Isabel Broderick, by a later will than the one which initially gave him possession. He alone knows of the whereabouts of this will (it

is in his library), but his conscience prevents him from destroying it. Eventually the existence of the later will is established by Mr. Apjohn, and Cousin Henry is forced to give up the property, guilty perhaps of failing to take the virtuous action of renouncing his right to it in the first place. There is no legal trial in the novel, but the entire legal system is there in the background as the expression of public morality in accordance with which Cousin Henry must eventually adjust his own private morality<sup>27</sup>. And the struggle he has with his conscience is a representational interplay of the individual and the institutions by which men agree to live.

In the last complete novel that he wrote, Mr. Scarborough's Family, published four years later, there is still the interplay between institution and individual. But the institution has become more subservient to the individual, as Mr. Scarborough manipulates the matter of who is to inherit his property by producing his two equally valid marriage certificates at the right moments. Although his labours are wasted (because his elder son, Mountjoy, disposes of the inheritance in Monte Carlo when he finally receives it) the reader has the impression that the law is submissive to the wishes of Mr. Scarborough in a way that it certainly was not at the outset of Trollope's writing career, when Thady Macdermot was hanged for the murder of Captain Ussher. At any rate, Trollope's interest became more in how the legal system adjusted itself to the needs of the people for whom it existed towards the end of his life.

### Parliament

Another institution of society which Trollope observed closely was the political machine of government. The similarities between Trollope and Walter Bagehot have already been examined and there is nothing new in saying that Trollope shared a belief with Bagehot that it was the constitution of England more than the work of one party or leader, that had ensured stability and progress in the history of England<sup>28</sup>. Throughout the Palliser novels we are aware not only of the struggles between individual codes of morality, but also of the interplay between individual men and the institution by which government is effected. The institution does not command the subservience to its authority which had characterised the church in Barsetshire : the 'church' novels are limited in their study of man's relationship to his institutions because the church as an institution is inflexible, but this is not the case with the Palliser novels, where we are able to see the relationship between institution and individual developing, affording restraint and freedom at one time and another. The relationship is a far more interesting one because it is two-way. Men bring pressure to bear to change the institution (as in the case of reforming the electoral system in Phineas Finn) and the institution gives way; at the same time, the institution demands a degree of subservience by its individual members (as when the task of leadership falls to the reluctant Duke of Omnium in The Prime Minister, because neither Mr. Gresham nor Mr. Daubeny

has a majority) and the individuals mould themselves to the positions allotted to them.

It is this interplay between men and institutions, and the realisation that they are interdependent, that makes the novels about politics so rich and stimulating to read. Here we see political man in his maturity, ordering his life according to the institutions on which society is based but changing those institutions when modifications are needed. Much of the interplay between man and institution takes the form of controversy over a particular issue. L.S. Amery has, perhaps unwittingly, pointed towards something of the difference in emphasis between the Barsetshire and the Palliser novels:

'It is possible, as he proved, to write successfully about the clerical life without entering into religious controversy... But in political life, controversy is of the essence'<sup>29</sup>.

Political controversy of the kind meant by L.S. Amery is not abundant in the Palliser novels. Indeed he finds Disraeli a better writer of political controversy and refers to Trollope's 'complete incapacity to be interested in, or understand, political issues'<sup>30</sup>. In concentrating on the political and social issues that dominated the mid-nineteenth century parliamentary scene, however, he has missed the irony with which, as a detached observer, Trollope was writing about the subtle interaction of men and institutions. It was not Trollope's purpose to write a day by day political and historical commentary on the issues of



his day. Searching for contemporary significance in the novels about politics blinds one to the ironies that lie beneath the façade of conventional intimacy between author and readers.

In Trollope's treatment of Barsetshire, the institution prevails; in his treatment of Westminster, there is a finely drawn balance and the two are fully interdependent. Right at the end of his life, the institution of the Parliamentary machine seems at times to be totally submissive to the will of a few men, as happens in The Way We Live Now, where Augustus Melmotte appears to be far greater in stature at times than the institution by which he gained his political power. But this novel will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, there is a pattern in the way the relationship between men and institutions in political life developed during Trollope's writing life. Submissiveness on the part of the individual changes to full participation and almost dominance, as Trollope and his characters grow in confidence. To what extent Trollope was conscious of this development remains to be seen, but his own life reflects a movement from awe for the Parliamentary system to participation (in his own unsuccessful election attempt at Beverley in 1868) and finally to detached commentary about and at times almost ridicule of the weaknesses of the institution<sup>31</sup>.

### The Family

Marriage and the family also feature as institutions in Trollope's novels, though they are so central to his stories that he would hardly label them as institutions, as we are able to do, at a detached distance. Because of his understanding of individuals and their relationships, his study of the way they adjust to the institutions of Marriage and Family is most sympathetic<sup>32</sup>.

It was this quality which won for Trollope much of his popularity during his lifetime. In The Small House at Allington, for example, the love relationship between Lily Dale and Johnny Eames so entranced his readers that he later wrote:

'From time to time, I have been continually honoured with letters, the purport of which has always been to beg me to marry Lily Dale to Johnny Eames'<sup>33</sup>.

The same book also shows us a marriage that does not work out well : Lily's first suitor, Adolphus Crosbie, jilts her in favour of Lady Alexandrina de Courcy, whom he subsequently marries; but the marriage lasts for no more than a few weeks, after which she leaves him to live abroad with her mother.

Similarly, in the later novels, some marriages are very successful, as that between Phineas Finn and Madame Max; some are complete disasters, as that between Mr. Kennedy and Lady Laura. In the latter case, the institution of marriage is definitely not conducive to the happiness of Lady Laura and she

has to defy it completely by going with her father to live in Dresden in order to lead even a tolerable existence. The institution of marriage likewise traps Emily Wharton, and the sense of doing her duty to her lawful husband, Ferdinand Lopez, no matter how cruel he is, merely prolongs the misery. These are clear-cut examples of marriages which were unsuitable, but in which the affections of the individual are subservient to the institution of marriage 'per se'. Marriages like that between Lord Chiltern and Lady Violet seem to work out successfully, although we know little of their domestic life once the match is settled.

The most interesting marriage, however, is that between Plantagenet Palliser and Glencora MacCluskie. The memory of the early romance with Burgo Fitzgerald and the near elopement at Lady Monk's Ball haunts Glencora with a feeling that she made the wrong decision, for most of her married life. Suitable as the marriage into the Palliser family doubtless was, its lack of initial romance enlists the reader's sympathy for Glencora; as the years pass, however, the complementary balance between them grows into a deeply dependent relationship, and the reader is not really left with the impression that Glencora would have been happier had she been married to Burgo. Here we have a prolonged study of the institution of marriage which brought Plantagenet and Glencora together and kept them together.

Because the institution of marriage was so inviolable, the subservience of men and women to it has tended to centre attention (so far as fiction is concerned, at any rate) on the process of courtship which precedes a marital contract : Trollope's study of the development of a relationship right through married life is therefore especially valuable. It is interesting to note that however much man seems to develop interaction with (and sometimes dominance over) his other institutions during the course of Trollope's writing life, he does not start challenging the institution of marriage, which seems to remain sacred to him even if at times it does lead to cruelty and unhappiness. The interaction of the individual and the institution is, nevertheless, under continual scrutiny.

It is the same in other relationships within the family. For much of the time the individual has to submit to the family 'institution', better or for worse. The dominance of family relationships is well illustrated in Doctor Thorne, where the happy outcome which will enable Frank Gresham to marry Mary Thorne is entirely dependent upon the doctor's knowledge of events which is denied to all other characters in the story; once he reveals that Mary is the niece of the man to whom a large part of the Greshambury Estate is mortgaged, and therefore its rightful heir, the path to a much wished-for marriage between Mary and Frank is open. Such is the power that the family institution wields over its members.

At times in the novels the individual seems to dominate over the family institution. Whether it is greed, the desire to gamble, a lust for power, as often as not the institution has to submit to the will of the individual. The Carbury family, in The Way We Live Now, can do nothing to stop Sir Felix bringing them to financial ruin by his insatiable desire for gambling. Trollope has no general principle about primogeniture, or family obedience, or marriage, to promote : he only shows us what people are like in real life. It is strange that the reverence for family life which Trollope embodies has received such little critical attention<sup>34</sup>, but Paul Elmer More has shown a shrewd understanding of it in a passage near the end of his important article, 'My Debt to Trollope', when he associates Trollope with the tradition that goes back to the pre-historic roots of Aryan civilisation, captured in Fustel de Coulanges's Cité Antique from which sprung:

'the institution of the family as an embodiment of a common life passed on from generation to generation.'<sup>35</sup>

Such close relationships as exist in family life are 'rooted in the deepest strata of human experience'<sup>36</sup>. The irony with which P.E. More related views on family life to his own time in 1928 shows insight and, fifty years later, even more relevance to a post-industrial age:

'We of this day respond with waning sympathy to (the) appeal (of the sacredness of the family); we find it difficult to comprehend their hold upon their fathers, for we are beginning at last to gather the fruit of the revolution brought about by Cobden

and Bright and Peel, when the institution of the family was annulled by transferring economical power from the inheritors of land to the self-made masters of machinery. We think that revolution was final; but was it? '37

Nobody, least of all Trollope, seeks a return to days when inheritance was the only means of securing wealth and happiness. He does, however, uphold the importance of human relationships and respect for the dignity of all mankind over the single-minded pursuit of material prosperity, in the search for happiness.

NOTES - Chapter Six

- 1 Sampson, Anthony, Anatomy of Britain Today, p. 123.
- 2 Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 111.
- 3 'Essay on Lord Althorp and the Reform Act of 1832', p. 203.
- 4 See The New Zealander, ed. N. John Hall for the full list of institutions treated by Trollope. Although the chapters relate to most aspects of institutional life in Victorian England, (The Monarchy, Parliament, the Law, the Church, the Press, the Armed Forces) one notable omission is the Family and family life.
- 5 Cockshut, A.O.J., Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 67.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- 7 Owen Chadwick, in The Victorian Church, says that the appearance of unbelief, or doubt, dominated the period 1860-1900, though the decline in church membership was really less to do with intellectual doubting and more to do with the population shifts to the towns and the unwillingness or inability of the established church to respond to it. It is noticeable that social problems are often a major cause of religious doubt in novels on this subject, as in the case of Mark Rutherford and of Ernest Pontifex in The Way of All Flesh.
- 8 Cockshut, A.O.J., Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 78.
- 9 In the last of these, the hero's doubt springs from a chance reading of The Idols of the Market Place, and he reaches a state of religious despair from that alone. Robert's Christianity is revitalised through social mission at the end of the novel, and he has been described a little unfairly as 'just another propaganda prig of didactic religious fiction' by Margaret Maison, in Search Your Soul, Eustace (p. 267). Social mission, or rather sensitivity to what was needed in a time of great social change, as Owen Chadwick has shown, was very much what the established church lacked at a time when the nature of population distribution was being radically altered by prevailing economic considerations. It was only people like General William Booth who responded to the spiritual and material needs of those drawn to the towns and suburbs by the Industrial Revolution. At least Mrs. Ward

was aware of the danger that the church ran of becoming permanently detached from the lives of an ever increasing proportion of the population.

- 10 There would, I think, be room for some fruitful research into this group, discussed briefly in Owen Chadwick's The Victorian Church, vol. I, p. 564 and vol. II, pp. 90-97. Henslow's importance as a Botanist is also discussed in G.M. Young's Portrait of an Age : Victorian England, pp. 114-115. Trollope's attitude to Bishop Colenso is shown in the last of his portraits in Clergymen of the Church of England.
- 11 Cockshut, A.O.J., Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 78.
- 12 The Prime Minister, II, p. 298 (Ch. LXII).
- 13 See Chapter Two, supra, p. 49.
- 14 Clergymen of the Church of England, p. 64 (Ch. V).
- 15 Phineas Redux, I, p. 55 (Ch. VI).
- 16 Ibid., chapters VIII and IX.
- 17 Disestablishment is dealt with on the following pages, among others, in Phineas Redux, I: 33-34 (Ch. IV); 39-40 (Ch. V); 80 (Ch. X); 113 (Ch. XIII); 290-293 (Ch. XXXIII).
- 18 The Eustace Diamonds, p. 193 (Ch. XVII).
- 19 Ibid., p. 330 (Ch. XXXII).
- 20 Ibid., pp. 638, 705 (Chs. LXVI, LXXIII).
- 21 Phineas Redux, p. 287 (Ch. XXXII).
- 22 Ibid., pp. 166-168 (Ch. XIX).
- 23 The Duke's Children, p. 440 (Ch. LV).
- 24 To Arthur Tilley, 5th December 1881. The Letters of Anthony Trollope, ed. B.A. Booth, p. 464. There is plenty of reason to assume that Trollope was being frank in the rest of this letter, where he explains that although he pretends to everyone to have forgotten what he wrote when they ask about his novels, he in fact remembers every word he has written.



- 25 Ruth apRoberts has drawn special attention to Trollope's interest in legal casuistry with particular reference to his late work, The Life of Cicero (published in 1880), in Trollope : Artist and Moralist, chapter III. See also F. L. Windolf, 'Trollope and the Law' in Reflections of the Law in Literature, chapter 2, which deals particularly with the trial in Phineas Redux.
- 26 There is an early comparison of the different methods of narration in 'The Eustace Diamonds and The Moonstone' by J. H. W. Milley, Studies in Philosophy, xxxvi (1939) pp. 651-663.
- 27 On the moral issue, see also Ruth apRoberts, 'Cousin Henry : Trollope's Note from Antiquity', Nineteenth Century Fiction, xxiv (1969) pp. 93-98.
- 28 Trollope's views on the constitution and the similarity of his outlook to that of Walter Bagehot have been specifically looked into by Ruth apRoberts (Trollope : Artist and Moralist, chapter VI) and Asa Briggs ('Trollope, Bagehot and the English Constitution', Cambridge Journal (March 1952) pp. 327-338).
- 29 Preface to cited edition of The Prime Minister, p. ix.
- 30 Ibid., p. x.
- 31 There is a story that Trollope stated it to be his sole ambition in life to become a Member of Parliament to his uncle when only a youthful clerk at the G. P. O. (see James Pope Hennessy, Anthony Trollope, p. 259). The success of achieving that ambition is vicariously described when George Vavasor wins his seat for the Chelsea Districts (in chapter xiv of Can You Forgive Her?, pp. 479-480). An Autobiography is sometimes quoted as evidence that Trollope maintained his ambition to his dying day, but in the passage where he dwells upon the subject (pp. 260-263, ch. XVI) there is more than a hint that he thought his aspirations had been somewhat misplaced and his particular talents wrongly directed.
- 32 So central to Victorian thought were the concept of the fireside, the nuclear family unit and the importance of outward respectability, that they would hardly have been called institutions as such. A happy domestic life was something Trollope valued highly and by all accounts maintained throughout his married life.

- 33 An Autobiography, p. 165 (Ch. X).
- 34 There is, however, an unpublished doctoral thesis by Albert Stone Jnr., The Theme of the Family in the Novels of Anthony Trollope.
- 35 In The Demon of the Absolute, Volume One of New Shelburne Essays, p. 121.
- 36 Ibid., p. 122.
- 37 Ibid., p. 122.

## Chapter Seven

### Ways of Looking at the Nineteenth Century

I hope that I have shown that Trollope was interested in institutions and in the ways that individuals relate to them.

The four institutions which dominated his books were the bulwarks of mid-Victorian society : the Church, the Law, Parliament and the Family. To read Trollope's novels in the order in which they were written is to observe the steadily developing relationship by which the individuals gradually come to take responsibility for the institutions, and in this can be seen not only Trollope's own maturing personality, but also a reflection of the considerable shifts in public opinion and in the outlook of individuals that were taking place in the course of the nineteenth century.

To put the changes that occurred in England between the time of the Napoleonic wars and the First World War into perspective, various scholars have inevitably taken the approach of their own disciplines in seeking to disentangle the mass of material that has been inherited from the nineteenth century. No other age has left such a diversity of letters, notes, fiction and public records, handwritten and published, to be sorted, sifted and interpreted. Difficult as it is to obtain an overall view of the changes taking place during the century, there have been some studies of particular relevance to our understanding of the novels, and it will be appropriate to consider a small but representative selection of them briefly at this stage in our

assessment of Trollope's development.

One of the first of these was G.M. Young's Victorian England : Portrait of an Age. A movement from darkness to light is here charted with an understanding of events and people, though, as more recent scholarship has shown, with some obscurity of reference and occasional inaccuracy<sup>1</sup>. It is, nevertheless, a fund of information and anecdote about the changing social scene of the nineteenth century. There is plenty of insight into the lives of our great, great grandparents too : for example, in considering the age in its entirety, 'It is impossible to maintain for ever the position that Christian Responsibility was a duty in everything except in economic life'<sup>2</sup>, and 'the education of girls, as codified by eighteenth century manners and modified by nineteenth century respectability, tended to a certain repression of personality in the interests of a favourite sexual type'<sup>3</sup>. There are other examples, but one area that is not wholly satisfactory is a somewhat simplified impression of the middle of the century as being a quiet time under the genial, moderating influence of Lord Palmerston as Prime Minister<sup>4</sup>. In fact, religious uncertainty, social discontent and intellectual questioning were all very disturbing influences long before Disraeli or Gladstone came to the fore following Palmerston's death in 1865. By the time of the Second Reform Bill (1867), The Disestablishment of the Irish Church (1869), Forster's Education Act (1870) and the Ballot Act (1872), the 'quiet time was over'<sup>5</sup> as 'Imperial hopes

and aspirations (gained) an ascendancy over domestic doubts and fears'<sup>6</sup> and it became a fact that 'Church policy could shake a government'<sup>7</sup>. But the pressures that resulted in these important changes were in fact building up quite strongly in the eighteen fifties and early sixties.

From a slightly different viewpoint, the historian Asa Briggs has examined the changes that took place both at Westminster and in the country as a whole, in his book, Victorian People. While he discredits G.M. Young for his 'conversational judgements'<sup>8</sup>, he too regards the period from the Great Exhibition of 1851 to the death of Palmerston (who 'learned how to lull rather than arouse'<sup>9</sup>) and the Second Reform Bill (that 'great unleashing of popular power'<sup>10</sup>) as a period of all-round stability, when the vast majority of the population shared prosperity, a sense of national security, a trust in institutions and belief in a common moral code, together with a healthy spirit of enquiry<sup>11</sup>. As if foreseeing Trollope's Ciceronian casuistry, he also adds another quality to this period of mid-Victorian calm, a belief, apparently quite commonly held, that Truth is frequently to be found through the bringing together of opposite ideas, quoting J.S. Mill's Essay on Liberty in support of the idea:

'it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied'<sup>12</sup>.

Mill's Essay on Liberty was published in 1859, which year, as Asa Briggs notes, also saw the publication of The Origin of Species,

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Sam. Smiles's Self Help, and many others. These books were the fruit of widespread intellectual and social questioning which made the mid-nineteenth century less stable than it has often been thought to be.

Perhaps it was not without reason that Matthew Arnold had written in London in 1848, 'Carlyle gives our institutions, as they are called, aristocracy, Church etc., five years, I heard last night'<sup>13</sup>. He too must have shared the underlying current of uncertainty beneath the superficial calm of this period<sup>14</sup>.

Yet another view of the nineteenth century is afforded by the modern writer of historical fiction, who is able to blend personal and public life together in a way that the scholarly historian cannot. The Siege of Krishnapur, by the late J.G. Farrell, is one example of this<sup>15</sup>. In a carefully researched novel about colonial life in India in the mid-nineteenth century, we can see in miniature the fundamental uncertainty that rocked the outward complacency of the Great Exhibition, long before the death of Palmerston. The inhabitants of the cantonment at Krishnapur (based upon the British community at Lucknow, savagely massacred in 1854) are mildly alarmed by reports of a bloody uprising by the sepoys at neighbouring Captainjang. For security, they retreat to the rather crowded area of the Collector's Residency and gradually become more and more extreme in their increasingly narrow and jaundiced views of civilisation, duty and progress. Even when the threat of the

sepoys becomes a visible reality and the neighbouring maharajahs bring their servants and their picnics to observe the cholera-ridden, half-starved skeletons of the English men and women huddled together in the confines of the Residency, awaiting the final assault by the sepoys, and peer at them through their telescopes as at some kind of an entertainment, there is no outward admission among the English that anything might be wrong with the great march forward of civilisation and progress. From within, however, there are considerable pressures of doubt and questioning in the course of the novel, and it is the development of this theme that gives the book much of its fascination.

Fleury, who is a son of one of the directors of the East India Company and fresh out from England, is a constant thorn in the sides of the senior officials. The main reason for this is that he has brought out to India most of the intellectual discontent of the mid-nineteenth century : the dissatisfaction about the role of women, the rivalries of the Anglican and Roman Catholic hierarchies, the doubts about the fundamental truths of the Bible and the struggle between scientific rationalism and divine authority are all there, seething just below the surface as the inevitability of the impending attack by the sepoys makes the small band of Europeans appear increasingly pathetic to the reader. So it must have been in mid-Victorian England, as the intellectual ferment seemed increasingly unimportant in comparison with the great social changes that were taking place. The Siege of

Krishnapur is historical fiction, therefore, less reliable in some ways than contemporary material, but because the scene of action is a distant corner of the British Empire, a synthesis of the intellectual, social, economic, scientific and theological debates can be seen in the interactions of the small, but representative body of English people. No single novel set in England at that time could bring together so many of the cross-currents of thought and belief as this does. The doctors, the clergymen, the women and the administrators all argue their differences, often spurred into discussion by Fleury, but all the time completely unshaken by the cataclysmic events taking place around them.

In England, the increase in social and political awareness outside the ranks of the aristocracy and the intellectual elite in the thirty six years between the Reform Bills was gathering momentum in the late sixties and early seventies, with an added impetus from the collapse of agriculture in 1875, 'the greatest event of the eighteen seventies', as G.M. Trevelyan called it<sup>16</sup>. What Asa Briggs and others besides have not been able to put across with the ease of a writer of fiction like J.G. Farrell is what seems to be the relative unimportance of the squabbling between professional classes in the mid-Victorian period : the scientists, the theologians, the lawyers, the law-makers and the intellectual elite of every discipline were struggling with their consciences, their pens and each other, but all the time, the pressure for social change was growing on them.



'Ah love, let us be true  
 To one another! for the world, which seems  
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
 So various, so beautiful, so new,  
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
 And we are here as on a darkling plain  
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
 Where ignorant armies clash by night'<sup>17</sup>.

When Dover Beach was composed in 1867, Matthew Arnold was concerned with moral and cultural decline as he saw it, but ironically the military metaphor of the last three lines explains the awakening of political and social awareness in the working population of the country as a whole. Published in the same year, Karl Marx's Das Kapital represented not only one man's view of the world but also the fruit of a consciousness of which he was the spokesman<sup>18</sup>.

One of the problems to be overcome in understanding the nineteenth century fully, is, ironically, the bulk of written and printed material which may at times give a distorted view of the age. Until the advent of the movie camera, which did not really come into its own until later there could be no other reliable record of what was happening apart from the written word and some awkward portrait photography. Our understanding of the last century might be very different if we had archives of film material to explore. As it is, Trollope's photographic naturalism and the ordinariness of his characters may be helping to put our understanding of the nineteenth century into perspective.

It has been shown that Trollope did not concern himself

with theological doctrines or the fundamental questioning of religious practices and values, for all that he has written about more clerics than any other novelist. Even a brief survey of the nineteenth century background would be incomplete, however, without some mention of the religious life of the nation, and it is to Owen Chadwick's authoritative two volume study, The Victorian Church, that one naturally turns<sup>19</sup>. Here we find charted the movement from externalised worship in the early years of the century to internalised doubting of fundamental religious truth in the second half with sympathetic consideration given to all persuasions. It would be difficult in this short space to do justice to the full extent of Owen Chadwick's work, which contains a mine of researched information not published elsewhere. The growth of the Oxford movement under the charismatic leadership of men like Newman, Pusey, Keble and Liddon, is portrayed against the background of both the Evangelical wave that had swept the country in the wake of Wesley and the national fears of a return to popery with the revival of interest in ritual and in Rome<sup>20</sup>. Newman's conversion in fact took place as early as 1845, though the Apologia Pro Vita Sua did not appear until 1864<sup>21</sup>. The driving forces of the Dissenters and the relationships between the various free churches are carefully analysed in Chapter Six of the first volume, though of most direct relevance to the reader of Trollope is perhaps the chapter on the Church of England from 1853-1860, for it is on the establishment church that Trollope bases his most sympathetically portrayed clerics<sup>22</sup>.

In the second volume, Chadwick records the change from widespread certainty to widespread doubt after 1859. But perhaps most important of all, he points to the mass movement of population from country to town that resulted in a shortage of religious provision in the towns, which in turn led to the alienation of large sections of the population in the middle of the century. The church authorities apparently remained quite unaware of the effects of this large movement of people during this period and assumed that the relative decline in church attendance was due to the growth of infidelity, when in fact it was the result of a lack of adequate, appropriate provision for the needs of a shifting population<sup>23</sup>. Once again it is as if the struggles within and around the established religion of the nineteenth century appear to pale beside the more fundamental changes that were taking place and which may not have been properly recorded for posterity. Along with Chadwick's work, church records themselves provide much material for what we know about the religious (and also economic) life of the nineteenth century, and diaries like that kept by Reverend Francis Kilvert between 1870 and 1879 provide us with insight into the day to day life of the church.

Another view the nineteenth century is the political one and Trollope's later novels have attracted particular attention in this respect. Whether or not we see Trollope's novels as 'romans à clef', with Palmerston, Disraeli, Gladstone and Bright thinly

disguised in Trollope's fictional creations, the personalities of the great political leaders of the middle period of the century in particular have always proved to be a revealing and interesting subject for study<sup>24</sup>. N.J. Thorne's The Historical and Social Background of Trollope's 'Phineas Finn' and 'Phineas Redux' is a recent example of the precise matching of literary and historical material that can be undertaken. The method and research is faultless, though even he admits in his conclusion that 'Phineas Finn and Phineas Redux are not purely of even primarily, political novels.'<sup>25</sup> As he points out at the beginning, 'Trollope is far more interested in the behaviour of people in society (than in recording political history)<sup>26</sup>. Seeking a political explanation of Trollope's fiction is an interesting, though ultimately sterile, backwater for the student of the nineteenth century. There is no longer, more detailed exploration of this subject in Trollope and Politics : A Study of the Pallisers and Others by John Halperin. The main weakness of this approach lies in the necessarily superficial reading of Trollope's characters because attention is focused on the political parallels. Thus, Plantagenet Palliser, the Duke of Omnium, is reduced finally to being 'the justification for and symbol of Trollope's social conservatism'<sup>27</sup>, and Trollope himself is described as being 'a political pundit all his life, though not always a political sage'<sup>28</sup>. The flaw lies in denying artistic integrity to Trollope by assuming that he was primarily interested in the politics of the day. As Halperin

says:

'Trollope's habit of using real politicians as models for some of his fictional ones is yet another demonstration, should it be needed, of the closeness with which he followed politics'<sup>29</sup>.

One is almost inclined to agree with the reviewer who has dismissed this as 'a silly book' in which 'he tilts his argument' as if he 'wants mostly to explain the accuracy of the political fiction'<sup>30</sup>. Whether or not one chooses to interpret the novels in this way, the initiatives for change in the nineteenth century came less, perhaps, from the politicians of the day and more from the groundswell of public opinion, which is less easy to identify and define clearly. Trollope doesn't write about the kind of people who were at the grass roots level of change, but his observations of the interactions between members of the middle and upper classes may well reveal the kind of changes that were really taking place.

An approach to which the literary reader may more readily respond is that taken by Mario Praz in The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, where the changes in the nineteenth century are seen in the choice and presentation of characters in novels and in paintings. The rise of the anti-hero and the emergence of the 'Biedermeier' ideal is carefully yet entertainingly traced through individual novelists and Trollope is seen as 'the supremely faithful mirror of the Victorian age between 1860 and 1880'<sup>31</sup>, 'the abolition of the hero is a salient feature'<sup>32</sup>. The fact

that 'there is no excess in Trollope, either in virtue or, even less, in vice'<sup>33</sup> further commends him to us, for 'like the Pre-Raphaelites, (Trollope) was concerned... with verisimilitude'<sup>34</sup>.

Mario Praz also provides interesting insights into Trollope's art, as for example when he draws our attention to the parallel between the masochistic tendency in some of the female characters, like Lily Dale and Lucy Morris, and the emotional and intellectual degradation afforded to most women in the Victorian age<sup>35</sup>. On the subject of Trollope's poor reputation in literary circles for much of this century, Mario Praz quotes a journal of 1947:

'If knowledge of human nature were the first virtue in a novelist, Trollope would be a Himalaya and Dickens only a foothill. It is this knowledge that allows him, wonderfully, to survive, the only writer to do so without style, wit, trenchancy, fire or poetic feeling'<sup>36</sup>.

A knowledge of human nature is something that Trollope undoubtedly had, and the changes in literary criticism are at last allowing him recognition for it. Mario Praz and more recent styles of literary criticism can help us to understand the nineteenth century in a way that the social, ecclesiastical or political historians cannot, for the literary critic may be more readily able to lift up the evidence and examine it from different angles, to see where the changes were really taking place:

'Trollope's anti-heroic point of view led him, as it did Thackeray, to see the other side of every situation', like, for example, the self-sufficiency of doctors, the ordinariness of politicians and journalists and the

melodramatic, romantic poses of  
heartless women'<sup>37</sup>.

Like the school of Dutch painters, Trollope reveals to us 'the  
ironic bourgeois common sense'<sup>38</sup>. The tools of literary  
criticism enable us to understand, as Trollope may have done,  
the real changes that were taking place in the nineteenth  
century<sup>39</sup>.

Another literary approach of particular note is the doctoral  
thesis on The Portrayal of the Anglican Clergyman in Some  
Nineteenth Century Fiction by Peter Packer. A detailed pers-  
pective of the changes during this century is given through a  
consideration of the churchmen in the novels of Jane Austen,  
Thomas Love Peacock and George Eliot, along with Trollope.  
In an early chapter that owes much but by no means all to Owen  
Chadwick, the changes in the fictional treatment of the clergy  
are carefully studied, with an awareness of nineteenth century  
attitudes to religion and some understanding of the reasons why  
the church failed to answer the intellectual and emotional needs  
of a population that was growing increasingly aware of the gap  
between religion and the realities of life. 'The golden age of  
the Church of England'<sup>40</sup> was reached in 1860, but already the  
seeds of doubt were there, in housing, health, education and the  
Irish problem, to which one might add religious doubt, the  
problems of colonisation (as in India), the outbreaks of cholera,  
the industrial unrest, the emergence of scientific deductive

thinking about the origins of man and his evolution, among others. Peter Packer cites the growing social and political conscience of the labourer, which separated the pastor from his flock, making the church part of an establishment which was increasingly alien to the minds of the majority of the population in the second half of the century. It was, he says, the First World War which finally marked the severing of the Church from the mass of the population. He quotes Wilfred Owen's Anthem for Doomed Youth, which focuses on the humanistic considerations rather than on the ritual of the Church, but he might equally have mentioned Siegfried Sassoon's poem They, in which the Bishop weakly tries to justify his concept of The Just War in the face of human death and suffering:

'The Bishop tells us : "When the boys come back  
They will not be the same; for they'll have fought  
In a just cause : they lead the last attack  
On Anti-Christ; their comrades' blood has bought  
New right to breed an honourable race,  
They have challenged Death and dared him face to face."

"We're none of us the same," the boys reply.  
"For George lost both his legs; and Bill's stone blind;  
Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die;  
And Bert's gone syphilitic : you'll not find  
A chap who's served that hasn't found some change."  
And the Bishop said: "The ways of God are strange!"<sup>41</sup>

With all its doctrinal and spiritual developments, the Church was failing to relate the Gospel message to the men caught up in the 1914-1918 war. Even that most civilised man, Siegfried Sassoon himself felt the gap in credibility, as well he might have done:



'And here I was, with my knobkerrie in my hand, staring across at the enemy I'd never seen. Somewhere out of sight beyond the splintered tree tops of Hidden Wood a bird had begun to sing. Without knowing why, I remembered that it was Easter Sunday. Standing in that dismal ditch, I could find no consolation in the thought that Christ was risen... '42

Peter Packer's study of the Victorian clergyman in fiction deserves to be better known, not just on account of the literary skill with which fictional clerics are examined, but because he has perceived the importance of literature in helping to understand man and how he has evolved.

One other approach to the nineteenth century needs to be mentioned, though it would not be appropriate or possible to develop it fully at this stage. A method of empirical thinking, based upon observation and subsequent deduction, with great care exercised over the formulation of universal principles, is so prevalent in scientific thought today that it is almost taken for granted. Yet until comparatively recently, it was considered normal for scholars of most disciplines to work from certain unquestioned premises, in Western civilisation. It was not only fundamentalists who made the Word of God, the Bible, the starting point of any quest for 'Truth'. The Church's dominance in the Middle Ages stemmed from the acceptance of its authority to interpret the will of God for man. Deductive thinking and the growth of modern scientific thought developed side by side in the wake of the Renaissance. When James Lind discovered the value of citrus fruit in counteracting

scurvy among seamen in 1747, he did so by conducting what has been called the first clinical trial ever recorded<sup>43</sup>. This approach became increasingly accepted and even if it was not possible to conduct clinical trials in matters of belief as it was in the field of medicine, the methods of observation and deduction gradually became more widespread through the nineteenth century. That this should lead to conflict with the Church was hardly surprising : it had happened before, when Galileo Galilei was called to account for his work and that of Copernicus, in 1616. At that time the power of the church was sufficient to force him to recant formally but by the time of The Origin of Species, public opinion was more receptive to observation and deduction. In itself, The Origin of Species was not an isolated discovery about evolution : the work was already under way while Darwin was on The Beagle. Darwin based his thesis on the systematic observations and recording of details made on this voyage<sup>44</sup>, but the same conclusions were being reached by others such as Alfred Russel Wallace, whose paper, On the Tendencies of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type was ready for publication at least a year before The Origin of Species appeared<sup>45</sup>. The minds of intelligent men and women were open to the possibility that man's evolution had been a slow and perhaps even a fortuitous one.

The whole field of scientific progress in the nineteenth century, particularly in terms of medical knowledge and sanitation,

was possible not directly because of the Industrial Revolution (from which arose many of the problems), but because of a hidden revolution in thought and the processes of deduction. One of the worst diseases of urban life in the mid-nineteenth century, cholera, was only understood and so finally controlled through the application of a new scientific methodology, and the whole process by which twentieth century man regulates his survival is dependent upon this.

One interesting aspect of the novel The Siege of Krishnapur is the debate that runs through the book between Doctor Dunstaple and Doctor McNab over the method of treating cholera<sup>46</sup>: Doctor Dunstaple is traditional, binding more and more mustard plasters to the stomachs of his patients, while Doctor McNab patiently writes down his observations of patients' symptoms, deduces the connection between cholera and foul drinking water, and sees that the loss of body fluids can be counteracted by the injection of a saline solution into the blood stream. The tensions rise as the members of the community divide into the camps of the two doctors, though they steadily come to accept Doctor McNab's more scientific approach, as the patients of Doctor Dunstaple and finally Doctor Dunstaple himself, die more rapidly with the mustard plaster treatments. Through the learned journals, Doctor McNab is in touch with scientific and medical research in England, and throughout this book one senses that a great tide of scientific progress and knowledge was gathering momentum in the nineteenth century. As Asa Briggs

has expressed it in his article on 'Cholera and Society in the Nineteenth Century':

'The formulation of an articulate scientific approach was an important step forward in the history of the control of the disease (cholera), but in Britain itself the practical effects were not felt until the last quarter of the century.'<sup>47</sup>

An analysis of the written medical and scientific communications in this period would, I think, reveal much about the changes that were taking place<sup>48</sup>.

G.M. Young must be mistaken when he says that 'the rigorous deduction of the early Victorians' gave way to 'the imprecision of late Victorian thought'<sup>49</sup>. A perpetual approach which enabled an elite to rule an unquestioning populace with complete confidence had to give way to a growing body of knowledge based upon observation and deduction in which the experience of every man had a part to play. This was, perhaps, the most important yet least noticeable change taking place in the nineteenth century.

Certainly Trollope didn't write about science, or even about The Origin of Species, but the very naturalistic qualities of his characters and their conversation chronicles in part the development of such thought among the middle classes. In the encounter between Bertie Stanhope and the Bishop in Barchester Towers discussed earlier<sup>50</sup>, Bertie's assumption that he is somehow on the same level as the Bishop is essentially a subject for comedy, and the Bishop's

position remains unchallenged. But, by the time that The Duke's Children was written, Lord Silverbridge expects and gets from his father the Duke equal consideration of his own interpretation of 'duty'<sup>51</sup>. There seems to be more genuine communication of ideas and less emphasis on undisputed rank and position in the second half of Trollope's writing career.

One can approach the nineteenth century from a number of standpoints, some clearly historical, some less so. Social, religious, political, literary, fictional and scientific approaches are all fruitful in their various ways. Trollope, who chronicles the relationships between people and their institutions more naturalistically than others, helps us, because his people are so ordinary and so recognisably human.

NOTES - Chapter Seven

- 1 The annotated edition of G.M. Young's Victorian England : Portrait of an Age (1977) contains an introduction by G. Kitson Clark which points out some of the problems of using it as a source (p. 14). G.M. Young's book first appeared in 1936.
- 2 Ibid., p. 35.
- 3 Ibid., p. 99.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 92, 96 and 113, for example.
- 5 Ibid., p. 113.
- 6 Ibid., p. 120.
- 7 Ibid., p. 123.
- 8 Briggs, Asa, Victorian People, p. 15.
- 9 Ibid., p. 98.
- 10 Ibid., p. 19.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
- 12 Ibid., p. 17.
- 13 Quoted by Asa Briggs to discredit Arnold's Judgement. Ibid., p. 13.
- 14 It would be impossible to do full justice to Asa Briggs in this space. In Victorian People and Victorian Cities he has collated a vast amount of documentary evidence. Any further study of the primarily historical study of the nineteenth century would necessarily include G. Kitson Clark's The Making of Victorian England and G.M. Trevelyan's Illustrated English Social History.
- 15 The difficulty of accepting modern historical fiction as evidence of the past as that one may not know whether historical accuracy has been sacrificed in the interests of pleasurable reading. J.G. Farrell's other novels in his 'Empire' trilogy, Troubles and The Singapore Grip have, like The Siege of Krishnapur, received international recognition, not least for the thoroughness of the research that went into them.
- 16 Trevelyan, G.M., Illustrated English Social History, p. 552.

- 17 Arnold, Matthew, Poetical Works, p. 211.
- 18 This point is supported by A.J.P. Taylor, in his introduction to the Pelican edition of The Communist Manifesto, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, pp. 12 and 24.
- 19 Another important study relevant to Trollope is Raymond Chapman's Faith and Revolt : Studies in the Literary Influence of the Oxford Movement. Studying religion in the nineteenth century is almost inseparable from studying philosophy and the history of ideas. Books dealing with this aspect of Victorian England include Basil Willey's Nineteenth Century Studies and More Nineteenth Century Studies, R.D. Altick's Victorian People and Ideas, and Ideas and Institutions in Victorian Britain : Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark, ed. Robert Robson.
- 20 Chadwick, Owen, The Victorian Church, I, pp. 167-231.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 211.
- 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 440-514.
- 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 325-369.
- 24 The literature on this aspect of Trollope's political fiction is quite considerable. As well as the studies discussed here, there is an early interpretation in The Political Novel : Its Development in England and America, by M.E. Speare (1924) and articles like F.E. Robbins 'Chronology and History in Trollope's Barset and Parliamentary Novels' (Nineteenth Century Fiction, v (1951) pp. 303-316) have not infrequently sought to tie Trollope's fictional creations more closely to known historical events and people. The most seriously researched of these was R.W. Chapman's contributory essay to Essays Presented to Humphrey Milford, though this is more than justly answered by A.O.J. Cockshut, in his Appendix 'The Political Novels and History' in Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study. J.R. Dinwiddy's 'Who's Who in Trollope's Political Novels' (Nineteenth Century Fiction, xxii (1967) pp. 31-46) is evidence of a continuing interest, however, and prior to Halperin's book, the most comprehensive study was that by Arthur Pollard in Trollope's Political Novels. As A.O.J. Cockshut points out (pp. 241 and 249) Trollope (not surprisingly) denied any similarity to politicians of the day, and Frederick Harrison, who knew him personally and some of the politicians in question, confirmed that this was the case.
- 25 Thorne, N.J., The Historical and Social Background of Trollope's Phineas Finn and Phineas Redux, p. 141.

- 26 Ibid., p. 32.
- 27 Trollope and Politics : A Study of the Pallisers and Others, p. 284.
- 28 Ibid., p. 22.
- 29 Ibid., p. 23.
- 30 George Butt, in a review of Halperin's book, in Victorian Studies, xxi (1977) pp. 518-521.
- 31 Praz, Mario, The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, p. 261.
- 32 Ibid., p. 267.
- 33 Ibid., p. 281.
- 34 Ibid., p. 284.
- 35 Ibid., p. 309.
- 36 Ibid., p. 309, quoting Mr. Raymond Mortimer from 'The New Statesman and Nation' of 19th April 1947.
- 37 Ibid., p. 316.
- 38 Ibid., p. 316.
- 39 Some particularly useful books which bring a literary discipline to bear on the mid-Victorian period are: Raymond Williams, Culture and Society 1780-1950; The Pelican Guide to English Literature : 6 From Dickens to Hardy, ed. Boris Ford (particularly Parts I and II by G.D. Klingopulos; Raymond Chapman, The Victorian Debate : English Literature and Society 1832-1901 (particularly the chapter on The Victorian Age); and Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century, ed. John Lucas. Also important to understanding the literary perspective of this period is M.H. Abrams The Mirror and the Lamp : Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition, which deals with Romantic theories of criticism in the period 1800-1840. Specifically on the novel, there is, besides Mario Praz, Q.D. Leavis Fiction and the Reading Public, F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition and Arnold Kettle, The Nineteenth Century Novel, though none of these takes account of new thinking about Trollope, or about the theory of the novel as discussed elsewhere in this thesis.
- 40 Packer, Peter, The Portrayal of the Anglican Clergyman in some Nineteenth Century Fiction, p. 93.



- 41 Collected Poems 1908-1956, pp. 23-24.
- 42 Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man, p. 313.
- 43 A point made on p. 49 of Prevention and Health : III Eating for Health by The Department of Health and Society Security.
- 44 The observations were recorded on Journal of a Voyage in the Beagle, but the method Darwin employed is simply described on the opening page of On the Origin of Species: 'On my return home, it occurred to me, in 1837, that something might perhaps be made out on this question by patiently accumulating and reflecting on all sorts of facts... After five years' work, I allowed myself to speculate on the subject...' (p. 11).
- 45 See Alan Moorehead, Darwin and the Beagle, pp. 260-261. T.H. Huxley was also working along the same lines as Darwin independently, though he didn't publish Man's Place in Nature, until 1863.
- 46 pp. 277-284 in particular.
- 47 In Past and Present, xix (April 1961) p. 92. The extent of the effects of cholera outbreaks on nineteenth century society here and abroad is often underestimated. The point being made here, however, is that in learning to combat the disease, scientific method was advanced and became part of the way in which large proportions of the population thought.
- 48 At the present stage, I have not been able to pursue this adequately. T. Dobzhansky's 'Evolution and Man's Home' traces the development of scientific thought from Copernicus and Galileo to Newton and thence on to Darwin, showing how nineteenth century man came to accept that he is part of an ongoing evolutionary process, but the way in which modern scientific method became assimilated into modern man's unconscious thought-processes is not really the subject of his enquiry. Douglas Bush's Science and English Poetry, B.I. Evans's Literature and Science and Lionel Stevenson's Darwin among the Poets would be good pointers for starting an enquiry, though I think more groundwork needs to be done in the Primary Sources, presumably starting with the medical and scientific journals of the mid-nineteenth century.
- 49 Young, G.M., Portrait of an Age : Victorian England, p. 99.
- 50 Chapter Three, supra, pp. 87-89.
- 51 Chapter Five, supra, pp. 154-157.

## Chapter Eight

### The Lessons of Experience

The Way We Live Now is perhaps Trollope's greatest single achievement, though it was written three years before the last of the Palliser novels<sup>1</sup>. Critics have not generally been ecstatic about The Way We Live Now, though it has haunted them in a way that has defied definition in accepted critical terms. Contemporary reviews were sceptical, but generally hostile, because of the criticism it implied about the world of Westminster and the City, except in the case of The Times critic, who evidently shared something of Trollope's apparent concern for the way things appeared to be heading<sup>2</sup>. Henry James preferred the work of the first half of Trollope's life anyway, but Sadleir, who considered that Trollope wrote it as an angry satire on the political and financial corruption of his day (as the title suggests) had a nagging suspicion that it was his best book:

'At times one wonders whether this fierce tremendous book is not the greatest novel Trollope ever wrote'<sup>3</sup>.

A.O.J. Cockshut saw the book as having a single, unified theme of the collapse of standards and social order in the face of new methods of finance, though this is something of an over-simplification of the novel's moral issues. He admits, however, that the book is a considerable achievement:

'All the elements of a masterpiece are here except the editor's scissors'<sup>4</sup>.

R.M. Polhemus is perhaps closer to defining the book's essential

qualities when he describes it as:

'the most vitriolic satire of the Victorian era and one of the most powerful satires on capitalism ever written', (giving) 'an image of the catastrophic changes that distorted materialistic values can produce'<sup>5</sup>.

Critics do still tend, however, to interpret The Way We Live Now in relation to their own view of Trollope's art, as when, for example, J.R. Kincaid describes it as:

'stretching the comic pattern so as to include the darkest and most unlikely processes'<sup>6</sup>.

While Trollope's books do not generally have heroes, Augustus Melmotte comes very close to being the central figure of The Way We Live Now, even though Trollope may have intended Lady Carbury to fill that role<sup>7</sup>. Melmotte's rapid rise to fame governs the rest of the characters to a considerable degree. The South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway Company (the S.C.P. and M. Railway Company) involves several members of the Beargarden Club, and as his financial affairs go from strength to strength, so the number of suitors for his daughter's hand increases. His daughter Marie is the innocent victim of the corruption and selfishness personified in one of these suitors who is also a member of the Beargarden Club, Sir Felix Carbury, but she comes to be the most sought-after heiress in London. After her father's suicide everybody disowns her, in spite of her sweet nature, because it becomes known that she is not, after all, the inheritor of a large fortune. But Melmotte himself remains as influential in the work after his

death as he was before. For all the other characters he continues to be a point of reference which has a considerable bearing on their conduct to the end of the book : one almost suspects that the large number of marriages at the conclusion is in some sense a reaction to the shattering effect which Melmotte has had upon the whole community. (There are no fewer than seven matches, at least five of which are romantic compromises<sup>8</sup>.)

Melmotte's ability as an entrepreneur is most easily seen as a clear portrait of the success which accompanies such audacious lack of scruple, but it is more than that. By his bluffing, he bends the great established institutions of society to suit his own ends. The financial world of the city is quick to give him credit and helps him to launch the shares for the S. C. P. and M. Railway Company. The law does not really interfere with his machinations until he is dead and a decision has to be reached on whether he was mad at the time of his suicide or not. The church is subservient to him, as is shown when Father Barham, the zealous convert to Roman Catholicism, is convinced of Melmotte's Roman Catholic allegiance after hearing of the donation of one hundred guineas towards the erection of an altar, when in fact Melmotte had presented two hundred pounds to the Protestant Curates' Aid Society only the day before<sup>9</sup>. It might be thought that Trollope was specifically abusing the Roman Catholic Church in his portrait of Father Barham, but in fact all five of the clerics to appear in the novel are made to seem inadequate in one way or another<sup>10</sup>. Without doubt, none

of the clergymen, nor the institutions they represent, have any restraint over Melmotte himself. Even at the height of Melmotte's corrupt political and financial success, Bishop Elmham, who has invited Roger Carbury to dinner, eulogises about the world in a way that reveals how out of touch he is with it:

'taking society as a whole, the big and the little, the rich and the poor, I think it grows better from year to year, and not worse'<sup>11</sup>.

Viewed against the fifty-four chapters of corruption, intrigue and greed that has provided the background in the book up to this point, the irony is firmly directed at the Bishop himself in this utterance. When Roger gets home, before he can get to bed he has to face the self-righteous cant of Father Barham, who is staying in his home because the roof has blown off his own, much inferior, residence, much as Trollope himself had entertained a Roman Catholic priest a few years before:

'When at Waltham, I became acquainted with the R.C. priest there, & opened my house to him in full friendship. He was a thoroughly conscientious man... so poor that he had not bread to eat. I & my wife were as good to him as we knew how to be; - but he would never desist for a moment in casting ridicule and opprobrium on my religion... I was obliged to drop him. He made himself absolutely unbearable'<sup>12</sup>.

Father Barham is rubbing his hands with glee at a passage in his favourite newspaper, 'The Surplice', from which he has deduced that Melmotte, the influential, newly elected M.P. has become a convert to Rome:

"A man is great who has made for himself such a position as that of Mr. Melmotte. And when such a one leaves your Church and joins our own, it is a great sign to us that the Truth is prevailing." Roger Carbury, without another word, took his candle and went to bed<sup>13</sup>.

This leads Father Barham to seek Melmotte in person, and the impotency of the institutional church as a whole (be it Roman Catholic or Anglican) is well summed up in the following exchange between Melmotte (who is busy preparing the seating plan for his great reception for the Emperor of China) and Father Barham (who is endeavouring to ascertain whether or not he may number Melmotte among the true disciples of the Church of Rome):

'Father Barham stood humbly with his hat off... "I am the Rev. V. Barham," said the visitor. "I am the priest of Beccles in Suffolk. I believe I am speaking to Mr. Melmotte."

"That is my name, sir. And what may you want? I don't know whether you are aware that you have found your way into my private dining-room without any introduction. Where the mischief are the fellows, Alfred, who ought to have seen about this? I wish you'd look to it, Miles. Can anybody who pleases walk into my hall?"

"I came on a mission which I hope may be pleaded as my excuse," said the priest. Although he was bold, he found it difficult to explain his mission. Had not Lord Alfred been there he could have done it better in spite of the very repulsive manner of the great man himself.

"Is it business?" asked Lord Alfred.

"Certainly it is business," said Father Barham with a smile.

"Then you had better call at the office in Abchurch Lane, - in the City," said his lordship.

"My business is not of that nature. I am a poor servant of the Cross, who is anxious to know from the lips of Mr. Melmotte himself that his heart is inclined to the true Faith."

"Some lunatic," said Melmotte, "See there ain't any knives about, Alfred."

"Not otherwise mad, sir, than they have ever been accounted mad who are enthusiastic in their desire for the souls of others."

"Just get a policeman, Alfred. Or send somebody; you'd better not go away."

"You will hardly need a policeman, Mr. Melmotte," continued the priest. "If I might speak to you alone for a few minutes - - -"

"Certainly not; certainly not. I am very busy, and if you will not go away you'll have to be taken away. I wonder whether anybody knows him."

"Mr. Carbury, of Carbury Hall, is my friend."

"Carbury" D--- the Carburys! Did any of the Carburys send you here? A set of beggars! Why don't you do something, Alfred, to get rid of him?"

"You'd better go," said Lord Alfred. "Don't make a rumpus, there's a good fellow; - but just go."

"There shall be no rumpus," said the priest, waxing wrathful, "I asked for you at the door, and was told to come in by your own servants. Have I been uncivil that you should treat me in this fashion?"

"You're in the way," said Lord Alfred.

"It's a piece of gross impertinence," said Melmotte. "Go away."

"Will you not tell me before I go whether I shall pray for you as one whose steps in the right path should be made sure and firm; or as one still in error and in darkness?"

"What the mischief does he mean?" asked Melmotte.

"He wants to know whether you're a papist," said Lord Alfred.

"What the deuce is it to him?" almost screamed Melmotte; - whereupon Father Barham bowed and took his leave.<sup>14</sup>

The authority of the church, Roman or Protestant, was not quite so easily swept aside in the earlier novels.

If Melmotte takes next to no notice of the church, he has little difficulty in bringing pressure to bear on the Parliamentary system to secure a seat for himself as member for Westminster. By bluff and finance he wins his seat in the House in next to no time. Indeed so great is his influence that the institutions and the people of London are all ready to succumb to his will to the extent that even after his death, the electors of Marylebone:

'would have returned his ghost to Parliament, could his ghost have paid for committee rooms'<sup>15</sup>.



But it is the great reception for the Emperor of China that marks the height of Melmotte's success. Of all the receptions in Trollope's novels, this is perhaps the grandest. Receptions, like all the large social gatherings, are important in all the novels because they provide an opportunity for a large scale sort-out of the pecking order in which the characters find themselves. It would be interesting to make a detailed study of the receptions in Trollope's novels, starting with Mrs. Proudie's famous one at the Palace in Barchester, and including Lady Glencora's tour de force at Gatherum. On the basis of these three alone, one can see the shift from the institution to the individual as guiding force : Mrs. Proudie may be clever, but the social order is firmly dictated for her by the church and by society, no matter how much characters like Bertie Stanhope may try to upset it; Lady Glencora is the wife of the Prime Minister, but the extent to which she can decide whom she can invite and in what order is strictly limited by institutional protocol. Both Lady Glencora and Mrs. Proudie are organising these receptions to fulfil the roles they have in the institutions of which their husbands are leaders. Augustus Melmotte has no such institutional backing for his position in society, yet he has the whole of London eating from his hand or rather, in his house, and the competition to obtain tickets for the reception illustrates the extent of the influence which he has won for himself. Even though society may take over the organisation

of the reception, it is clear that Melmotte is firmly in charge of the whole event:

'But who were to be the two hundred? It used to be the case that when a gentleman gave a dinner he asked his own guests; - but when affairs become great, society can hardly be carried on after that simple fashion. The Emperor of China could not be made to sit at table without English royalty, and English royalty must know whom it has to meet, - must select at any rate some of its comrades...

But the dinner was not to be all. Eight hundred additional tickets were to be issued for Madame Melmotte's evening entertainment, and the fight for these was more internecine than for seats at the dinner. The dinner-seats, indeed, were handled in so statesmanlike a fashion that there was not much visible fighting about them...<sup>16</sup>

Even the fall of Augustus Melmotte, sudden and absolute as it is, cannot undo the effects which he has wrought upon the institutions with which he has been concerned. In a way it is true that society wins and Melmotte loses in the short term, but he has nevertheless succeeded in defrauding the whole of society into giving him anything he wants<sup>17</sup>. The fall is the result of his own greed rather than the nemesis of society and its institutions. At any rate, one has the impression that things will never be the same again after the Melmotte era is over. Such was certainly not the case in Barchester<sup>18</sup>.

At first reading, The Way We Live Now can easily be seen as a straightforward indictment of the corruption in London society,

as it was viewed at the time of its publication in 1875<sup>19</sup>, to mark the passing of the older, safer values represented in the novel by the landed gentry like Roger Carbury, and the aristocracy like the Longstaffes of Caversham, but its portrayal of human nature goes deeper than that, especially if we can view it with the ironic detachment which Trollope so clearly achieved himself. His range towards the end of his writing career is no greater in terms of the number of characters or variety of situations employed in a novel, but his ironic perception of human nature and the relationship between men and institutions is quite remarkable, and The Way We Live Now will stand comparison with many of the greatest novels that have been written.

The Way We Live Now represents Trollope's writing at its most mature. So great was Trollope's output, however, that any critic must be on guard against tedium or superficiality through attempting to include discussion of everything he wrote. Anyone writing about a single book or about an author less prolific than Trollope does not have this problem of selecting what to include and what to omit. There is a good case, though, for concentrating on the Barsetshire novels and the Palliser series, together with a representative of the early Irish novels and The Way We Live Now, as I have done here, in attempting to pick out the essence of Trollope's achievement and present it in a digestible form. That is certainly the view of R.M. Polhemus, who regards the essence of Trollope's achievement as being contained in the Barsetshire novels,

The Macdermots of Ballycloran, Orley Farm, The Way We Live Now and Cousin Henry<sup>19</sup>. Like P.E. More<sup>20</sup>, I do not have every one of the novels and stories Trollope wrote, but the pursuit of that kind of completeness has not been my objective. I do sense, though, that I have a sufficiently wide knowledge of the works to be fairly confident that there are aspects of Trollope's achievement which have not yet received full understanding and recognition. These I shall attempt to summarise in the next chapter, but before doing so, I want to mention briefly two ways in which the novels that we have looked at show a steady process of maturation in Trollope's outlook.

The first of these is the special understanding that he developed of the relationship between individual man and the institutions by which he regulates his life. We have seen, I think, how characters in the novels take a far more active role in influencing the institutions of religious, political, legal and family life in the later books, and how the institutions which towered above all the characters in the earlier novels become quite subservient to some of them in the later ones. It has been argued elsewhere<sup>21</sup> that Trollope's own experience of the civil service over many years gave him a special understanding of institutions, which influenced his novels. I am sure that this is so, but I am equally convinced that the changes in Trollope's attitudes reflect a natural and inevitable growth in his awareness of the frailty of all men's institutional attempts to organise life. The young child at school

rarely questions the way his or her education is structured, yet by the time that he or she is at university, any uncertainty, anachronism or contradiction in the organisation is enthusiastically explored. The same process, I would maintain, can go on in adult life.

Trollope, like Bagehot, knew that man needs institutions if he is to have any chance of creating a civilised existence, for:

'The strength of society seems to be in its institutions'<sup>22</sup>,

but unless the institutions are sufficiently flexible, open to inspection and sensitive to change when change is necessary, they become oppressive or else irrelevant. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the institutions struggling, and often failing, to keep up with the effects of mass population, shifts towards the cities and towns in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. For many, the church became irrelevant and trade unions grew in strength, responding, as it were, to market forces. The legal world was already hopelessly caught up in its own inflexibility, as Dickens had shown in Bleak House. Only because of a sufficiently democratic constitution and a form of representative government embodied in the parliamentary institution was it possible for social change to take place reasonably peacefully in Britain, without recourse to the violent and bloody revolution that had swept through France and was inevitably to follow in Russia and elsewhere<sup>23</sup>.

Institutional flexibility combined with a fairly democratic

constitution gave men the chance to adapt the means by which the lives of people are regulated in England. Trollope's subject matter deals extensively with the nature of the relationship between individual man and his institutions and about the ways in which that relationship can develop and change.

The second way in which the novels show a steady process of maturation is in Trollope's understanding of religion. Throughout his life, Trollope was a regular churchgoer and a Christian - which has contributed to the image of him as a conventional unquestioning representative of the mid-Victorian middle class. What he disliked and did his best to expose, as we have seen, was hypocrisy and cant, whether it was in a clergyman or a layperson. When critics have assumed that he had no interest in religion because he never deals with the professional lives of his clergymen<sup>24</sup>, they have failed to perceive that for Trollope God is revealed through the interactions of man and in what people are and in what they do, rather than in what they claim to believe. One only has to reread Clergymen of the Church of England to appreciate what Trollope thinks that man's relationship with God is all about. Far from moving out of the world of religion and into the world of politics in his maturity, Trollope deepened his conviction that following the example of Christ lies in a dull commitment to this life as it is each day, rather than in an esoteric withdrawal from it.

NOTES - Chapter Eight

- 1 The Way We Live Now was written between May and December 1873, and published in serial form in 1874 and 1875. The Duke's Children was written in 1876 and serialised in 1879 and 1880.
  
- 2 James Pope Hennessy puts this down to Trollope's friendship with John Delane, a famous editor of The Times for thirty-six years who made a point of championing the oppressed and leading a crusade against moral evil. Both men, he says, would have shared the same views on the moral disintegration of London society, the breathless cult of money and the vulgarity of the eagerly accepted 'nouveaux riches' (Anthony Trollope, p. 333).
  
- 3 Trollope : A Commentary, p. 401.
  
- 4 Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 215.
  
- 5 The Changing World of Anthony Trollope, p. 187 and p. 249.
  
- 6 The Novels of Anthony Trollope, p. 164.
  
- 7 Trollope's plan for The Way We Live Now has survived and in it Lady Carbury is marked as 'The chief character' (see James Pope Hennessy, Anthony Trollope, p. 332).
  
- 8 There are the respective pairings of : Lady Carbury and Mr. Broune; Hetta Carbury and Paul Montague; Ruby Ruddles and John Crumb; Sophie Longstaffe and George Whitstable; Georgina Longstaffe and Rev. Septimus Blake; Marie Melmotte and Herr Croll. Only the second and fourth of these are not compromises for at least one party.
  
- 9 The Way We Live Now, II, pp. 48-49 (Ch. LV).
  
- 10 The five clerics are : Rev. Septimus Blake (tutor to Sir Felix in Prussia, described as 'a brand, snatched from the burning of Rome', II, p. 458; Mr. Batherbolt (the curate who elopes); Father Barham (the evangelical R.C. convert); Bishop Elmham (ever optimistic); and Bishop Yeld (huntin', shootin' and fishin').
  
- 11 The Way We Live Now, II, p. 46 (Ch. LV).
  
- 12 In a letter to his R.C. friend, Miss Mary Holmes, 26th January 1875. The Letters of Anthony Trollope, ed. B.A. Booth, p. 332.
  
- 13 The Way We Live Now, II, p. 49 (Ch. LV).

- 14 Ibid., pp. 55-57 (Ch. LVI).
- 155 Ibid., p. 357 (Ch. LXXXVIII).
- 16 The Way We Live Now, I, p. 327 & pp. 328-329 (Ch. XXXV).
- 17 A rather different interpretation of the book is given in R. L. Slakey 'Melmotte's Death : A Prism of Meaning in The Way We Live Now', Journal of English Literary History, xxxiv (1967) pp. 248-259. In this article the relationship of language and meaning is explored, with particular reference to Melmotte.
- 18 See Chapter Six, supra, p. 181.
- 19 The Changing World of Anthony Trollope, p. 248.
- 20 'My debt to Trollope', in The Demon of the Absolute. Volume One of New Shelburne Essays, p. 89.
- 21 One of the main points in B.C. Brown's Anthony Trollope is the effect of the Civil Service on Trollope's understanding of life and people. The recent biographies of Trollope by James Pope Hennessy and C.P. Snow also develop the relationship between Trollope's working life in the Post Office and his view of mankind in his novels.
- 22 Ruth apRoberts, Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 111.
- 23 This is not the place to trace the development of the almost unique British institution of government in history, though I am without doubt that both Magna Carta and the constitutional conflicts of the seventeenth century, resulting from the Civil War were important landmarks in a historical sense in avoiding more violent revolution in nineteenth century Britain. The two great Reform Bills of 1831 and 1867 helped to make peaceful change possible, but they could not have come about themselves if the constitution had not developed in the course of history.
- 24 For example, A.O.J. Cockshut in Anthony Trollope : A Critical Study, p. 67: 'Apart from the extreme evangelicals, most of Trollope's clergy have little concern with religion.' Bradford A. Booth is quoted by James Pope Hennessy as saying that politics plays as small a part in Phineas Finn as does religious belief in Barchester Towers (Anthony Trollope, p. 279). This claim seems to me to misunderstand what Trollope conceived both religion and politics to be about.



## Chapter Nine

### Perception and Perspective

'The writer of stories must please, or he will be nothing. And he must teach, whether he wish to teach or no'<sup>1</sup>.

Whatever else can be said about An Autobiography, Trollope certainly hit on his two most important qualities here. Consistently popular for his ability to please, more recently criticism has acknowledged the moral elements in Trollope's writing and it is with these two qualities that any summary of his achievement must begin.

In his own lifetime, Trollope had become, in the words of one reviewer, 'almost a national institution'<sup>2</sup>, and however the critical establishment may have viewed him in the century between his death and now, his ability to entertain has never been seriously questioned and his popularity today is as strong as ever. His characters have an appeal and a warmth which, in spite of the fact that they belong to a different era, make them memorable and easily recognisable as human beings. There is a charm about the settings of the novels, often associated with the security and leisure of a bygone age. Furthermore, the situations are so possible, naturalistic and true to life that it is relatively easy to identify with the characters in them. As Lord David Cecil expressed it in 1934:

'The modern reader never has to adjust his mind to a Victorian angle in order to enjoy Trollope'<sup>3</sup>.

Yet the reader's sympathies are rarely engaged with one person or small group of people exclusively, and the novels entertain by involving the reader as a kind of jury in the situations so that one is constantly adjusting one's mind to the fresh evidence with which one is presented.

No novelist can expect to remain popular for long, however, without that most important quality of the narrator, the ability to tell a story well. However much the novelist's dependence upon suspense - the desire to know what will happen next - may be regretted, it remains a fact that the art of the novelist depends first and foremost on the skill of the storyteller. As E.M. Forster has reluctantly put it:

'Yes - oh dear yes - the novel tells a story. That if the fundamental aspect without which it could not exist. That is the highest factor common to all novels, and I wish that it was not so, that it could be something different - melody, or perception of the truth, not this low atavistic form'<sup>4</sup>.

We have seen already how Trollope dissolves the kind of suspense upon which the detective novel was founded, but this was an artistic device he developed to foster intimacy with his readers. Trollope has been read by many and will continue to be read in the future because novel readers want to know what happens next, secure in the knowledge that the story must have an ending just as it has had a beginning.

Trollope's reputation rests primarily, therefore, on his

ability to entertain his readers. But there is more to his achievement than that. Before half of his writing career was over, George Eliot had observed in a letter that the novels themselves:

'are like pleasant gardens where people go for amusement, and, whether they think it or not, get health as well'<sup>5</sup>.

More recently, criticism from America has shown that Trollope's purpose in writing was more than just a desire to entertain and make a living. As has already been shown, there is plenty of evidence to support the view of him as a moralist who seeks to educate his readers at the same time as amusing them:

'His concern is always moral and he is always recommending, by means of his cases, a more flexible morality... The novels are, in a way, more demanding than life itself generally is, and in reading them, one as it were, flexes one's moral entity and exercises one's humanity'<sup>6</sup>.

By putting the readers in the position of jury, Trollope leads them into a position where they must judge for themselves. His advocacy, or Ciceronian casuistry, explores the moral complexity of many human situations, not just in the books concerned with legal cases, like Cousin Henry or Mr. Scarborough's Family. In the relationships between men and women and in the struggles between parents and children, Trollope explores the complexities of moral judgements. Furthermore he does this in the relationship between people as individuals and as part of the institutions

to which they belong. As Cicero had done before him, Trollope sought to educate his readers by learning to see things in a detached way, so that they could achieve an ironic perspective of the affairs of men, and thereby make better decisions in their own lives. If one may quote Ruth Roberts again:

'it is ultimately only by means of advocacy that the detached ironic standpoint can be achieved'<sup>7</sup>.

There is no easy route to acquiring a detached ironic standpoint, which marks, perhaps, the essential difference between true education and a form of instruction masquerading as education, in whatever discipline. So far as English is concerned, anyone who has introduced Jane Austen's Emma will know that many students do not acquire the detachment necessary to observe how Emma deceives herself in her plans for Harriet Smith and for herself, until a second or third reading of the book. Even the more direct irony of Swift's satirical viewpoint in A Modest Proposal escapes many, and it is on more than one occasion that I have had to explain (pedant indeed!) that the author was not really promulgating his ideas on how to solve the Irish problem. Those who reach university may already have, or doubtless soon acquire a sufficiently detached ironic standpoint to formulate values and judgements of their own, but Trollope's very readability makes him accessible to all and enables his readers to achieve that objectivity of judgement which affords a kind of intellectual independence and self-confidence. The power of the media to exert

commercial and other pressures so successfully is only so great because of the widespread lack of the detached ironic standpoint.

Trollope's situations, both in the legal cases and elsewhere, teach us a kind of 'situation ethics', and help us to appreciate the absonant or incongruous elements of life and correlate them, so that we may see things more objectively. With ironic detachment comes a deeper sympathy for the involvement with the fortunes of others:

'it is a curious phenomenon, artistic irony, how it demands detachment as a condition for the achievement of that least detached of things - compassion'<sup>8</sup>.

Trollope does not, perhaps, have the stature of his Russian contemporary, Leo Tolstoy in his ability to express a kind of 'universal pity', but he does have something of what Arnold Bennett has called:

'(the) essential characteristic of a really great novelist : a Christlike all-embracing compassion'<sup>9</sup>,

for he does invoke our sympathies for almost all his characters, however heinous their offences. Tolstoy was in fact a great admirer of Trollope's novels, and especially The Prime Minister, and, as C.P. Snow has observed:

'In some of his characters, Trollope did reach a truth. That sounds a disparaging tribute. It isn't. There are very few novelists of whom it ought to be said. It was the reason why Tolstoy admired him so much. This was the important thing.

Obviously Tolstoy would have been a great writer if, as part of his art, he hadn't had the identical purpose. Trollope would not have been a great writer without it. But it was enough<sup>10</sup>.

Trollope's most enduring qualities, then, are his ability to entertain his readers and his capacity to educate them on the way. As he wrote himself:

'How shall (the novelist) teach lessons of virtue and at the same time make himself a delight to his readers?'<sup>11</sup>

And it was a point that he emphasized on other occasions too<sup>12</sup>.

If E.M. Forster had been preparing Aspects of the Novel at a time when Trollope was being read more seriously, he would, I think, have been delighted to find there much more than just the 'low atavistic form' of story-telling, for as Guy de Maupassant, that master of the craft of story-telling, had written a few years earlier:

'(the novelist's) aim is not to tell a story, to amuse or move us, but to force us to think, to understand the deeper, hidden meaning of events'<sup>13</sup>.

Trollope did both these things, with a rare degree of skill and understanding.

There are, however, two further qualities of Trollope which have either been taken for granted or else not noticed. In the first place, he offers us a defence of the importance of human relationships in life. Of course this is something that every good writer seeks to do, but Trollope's especial quality

lay in his understanding of the relationship between domestic and public life and in his understanding of the ties and struggles of kinship. As the world is not much nearer now to a millenium based upon respect for human dignity and life than it was when Robert Burns wrote that:

'Man's inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn'<sup>14</sup>,

modern education in the humanities has been encouraged to increase awareness of human values among mankind. Trollope's characters, especially in the Palliser series, move freely between the worlds of public responsibility and private existence and are equally at home in both. They help to bridge our understanding of the humanity common to both, when the two so often appear separated in the rush of daily life and when misunderstandings so quickly arise, sometimes with disastrous consequences. I am not claiming for Trollope's novels the power to solve poor industrial relations or ease world tensions, but his awareness of the relationship between public and private life can only promote the kind of understanding that enables the shared humanity of those in power and those not in power to become a basis for negotiation and progress, or, as the Duke of Omnium defined the doctrine of Liberalism:

'lessening distances - of bringing the coachman and the duke nearer together - nearer and nearer, till a millenium shall be reached...'<sup>15</sup>

Seeing the other person's point of view is a prerequisite of reaching

understanding and Trollope's great quality as an entertainer enables him to bring greater awareness of the importance of human relationships to a much wider range of people than just the fortunate few pursuing a literary or humanist education. It was along almost parallel lines that P.E. More must have been thinking when he wrote:

'It is because, beyond his understanding of the individual heart, I find in Trollope this feeling for the vast integrity of civilisation'<sup>16</sup>.

Perhaps, though, he was not aware of the value of Trollope's ability to reach a wider audience and integrate private and public existence in his characters.

The other quality which I do not think has been recognised in Trollope as yet, lies in the similarity he bears to the scientific approach of observation and recording discussed briefly in the last chapter. This is where Trollope's photographic naturalism so often referred to disparagingly, must prove in the long run to be his greatest strength, for it is by the accuracy of his detailed observation that truth to life is brought about. If, as I have maintained, the split into the two cultures began at about the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851, the pattern of the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries makes sense. That there was little communication between the literary world and the world of science at least until the First World War was fairly clear. As Mrs. Humphry Ward expressed it in the



1911 introduction to Robert Elsmere:

'As far as my own personal recollection goes, the men of science entered but little into the struggle of ideas that was going on. The main Darwinian battle had been won long before 1870; science was quietly verifying and exploring along the new lines...'<sup>17</sup>

While the scientists were 'quietly verifying and exploring', the artistic and cultural establishment was seeking to rid itself of the grime and dirt of the Industrial Revolution in England, with, of course, obvious exceptions like Mayhew and Gissing, who were busy charting the effects of industrial urbanisation in terms of human suffering and degredation. The main body of critical opinion, led by Matthew Arnold, with Culture and Anarchy (1869), and Walter Pater, with Studies in the History of the Renaissance, was trying to define an art above or beyond the reach of Industrial England with its ever-growing network of railways and factories as had been described by Dickens in Hard Times a few years earlier in 1854. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, among others, sought to recover an age without smoky chimneys and workmen, and even William Morris sought to improve the well-being of men by creating wallpapers of escape from the realities of a day-to-day existence. 'Art for art's sake', as the phrase borrowed from Victor Cousin came to be used, produced works as far removed from the main social concerns of the day as the poems of Swinburne, the paintings of Rossetti and the plays of Oscar Wilde<sup>18</sup>. It took a man like Ford Madox Brown, a less Keatsian member of the Pre-Raphaelite

movement than Rossetti, concerned more with truth to nature, to re-establish the fundamental identity of art with real life with paintings like 'Work' (now in the Manchester Art Gallery), just as it took a world war to focus the minds of poets on the relevance of art to matters of social concern. During this period of aestheticism in the face of industrialisation and materialism, scientists were quietly recording observations and sifting evidence, drawing conclusions where possible<sup>19</sup>.

In his subject matter, of course, Trollope did concentrate mostly, but not exclusively on the lives of the middle classes, as we have seen. It was in his method of observing and perhaps in his 'plain' style that he most clearly resembled the methods of the scientists. More recently, those who have been seeking to heal the rift between arts and science<sup>20</sup> would find much to admire in the qualities of Trollope as a writer.

\* \* \*

Putting Trollope's achievement in perspective (with particular reference to his abilities to amuse, to teach, to emphasize the centrality of human relationships and to exhibit a kind of scientific method in his novel-writing) inevitably throws up wider questions about the novel in general. The history of Trollopian criticism, as we have seen, is an uneven one, reflecting the changes that have taken place in literary taste during the last century. It does not seem to be purely coincidental that the most perceptive criticism of Trollope has, until recently, come from

outside England, particularly from America (which is all the more surprising when we remember that Trollope was less than tolerant in much of what he said about Americans!) P.E. More was able to assess Michael Sadleir's book about Trollope with more detachment than many English critics of the time, and more recently in the wake of Basil A. Booth's scholarship, American interest has shed fresh light on aspects of his art, as on the novel in general.

The bulk of serious writing about Trollope in the fifties and sixties emanates from America, with a particular emphasis on his morality by Ruth apRoberts. Another figure outside the English tradition is Mario Praz, who has given a fresh assessment of Trollope's treatment of character, and, writing in 1932, Hilaire Belloc brought something of the French critical approach though even at this stage the detachment which one would hope to find in good literary criticism is almost overshadowed by personal or inherited memories of the Victorian era. However, as H.S. Davies says in writing about Emile Montegut's criticisms of Trollope's early novels, the French critical approach was generally superior to the English at least in Trollope's own time<sup>21</sup>.

Caught up with the artistic reaction to the Industrial Revolution at the end of the nineteenth century, it seems hardly surprising now that criticism in England was in a bad way before the emergence of I.A. Richards and the Cambridge school of English studies in the nineteen-twenties, yet Trollope's artistic merits

continued to evade critical acceptance for a long time after this. One can only suppose that Michael Sadleir's judgement, intermingled as it is with invaluable biographical and bibliographical details, continued to dominate critical opinion in England for a good many years. We are at last beginning to accept for Trollope as we have already done for the novel in general, new values about the relationship of art to real life, and that art is more than merely a fanciful escape from real life into a world of 'pure art'. The new interest in various social theories of literature might seem to many to herald a final blow to our middle-class, mid-Victorian novelist's reputation, but that would be far from accurate, for if Karl Marx had been writing a little later, he would almost certainly have included Trollope in what he referred to as 'the present splendid brotherhood of fiction writers in England', among which he counted Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë and Mrs. Gaskell, along with Balzac in France<sup>22</sup>. Trollope, as recent American criticism has shown, was undoubtedly a highly moral writer, whose purpose stretched far beyond the mere telling of stories, meticulous as the accounts of his literary earnings may have been<sup>23</sup>.

Such then in broad outline is the means by which we have arrived at our present many-faceted understanding of art, and Trollope's reputation can only benefit from the changes towards a more accountable style of criticism. It must be said, however, that popular as Trollope will always be, he is never likely to gain

universal acceptance in an age of mass literacy, for three reasons. In the first place, the situations in which people find themselves in 1980 are so different from those prevailing in England in the middle of the nineteenth century that Trollope's naturalism does not readily enable easy identification by those without empathetic or cultural training. Secondly, the novels are too long for many people in the face of temptations posed by the less demanding media. And lastly, a large proportion of the modern reading public is not prepared to accept the conventions of authorial intrusion and digression which Trollope's contemporaries like the readers of the eighteenth century<sup>24</sup> found quite to their taste. One cannot be an enthusiastic Trollopien without something of what P.E. More called 'Patience under sermonising'<sup>25</sup>, and almost a quarter of all books published in England between 1816 and 1851 were religious works<sup>26</sup>.

However, within the context of a literary education today, Trollope has considerable value, because his novels encourage the development of a detached ironic standpoint, as has been shown, and this must be an essential constituent of every educated person's schooling. With the present tendency to specialise in arts or science at sixteen or even earlier, at least half of the post 'O' level population in England is being deprived of the chance to develop a detached ironic standpoint, and it is the scientists of the next thirty or forty years who will probably be most influential in formulating the progress or otherwise of civilisation as we know it<sup>27</sup>.

The acquisition of a detached ironic standpoint is scarcely possible before a certain level of maturation has been reached, at around sixteen or seventeen, by which time specialisation has taken place. One scientist who is also an educationalist of considerable standing, Jerome K. Bruner has expressed the problem from a scientific point of view in these words:

'The basic skill, supporting all others, is reading critically. 'Critical' is not the name for what I mean, but I have been unable to think of a better one. Critical reading is... something like the ability to see the connotations of sentences... the difficulty of alerting students to connotation is formidable... Eleven and twelve year olds cannot, save in quite simple instances, use written sentences as premises from which to draw connotative conclusions'<sup>28</sup>.

The case for bridging the gap between arts and science at sixth form level is a very strong one, however powerful the arguments for specialization may be, and any course in literary education would do well to include at least one novel by Trollope in its syllabus. The importance of literature in education, be it liberal, scientific or technical, is incontrovertible, and there is good reason to count the novels of Trollope as one of the more important elements of our literature.

But a conclusion which has been necessarily discursive in assessing the work of Anthony Trollope must come to rest on the man and on his achievement. As regards the man, we cannot do better than listen to the words of George Eliot, who described him

as:

'Our excellent friend, Mr. Anthony Trollope  
- one of the heartiest, most genuine, moral  
and generous men we know'<sup>29</sup>.

And of his achievement it should be said that as the novels afford us consolation and amusement when we wish to retreat from the 'wear and tear of real life'<sup>30</sup>, so too they give us encouragement and spur us to resume our involvement refreshed and renewed by what we have read.

NOTES - Chapter Nine

- 1 An Autobiography, p. 200 (Ch. XII).
- 2 In an unsigned notice in The National Review, xvi (January 1863) p. 28, quoted in The Critical Heritage, ed. D. Smalley, p. 167.
- 3 Early Victorian Novelists, p. 254.
- 4 Aspects of the Novel, p. 34.
- 5 Letter to Trollope, written on 23rd October 1863. The George Eliot Letters, ed. G.S. Haight, Volume Four, p. 110.
- 6 Ruth apRoberts, Trollope : Artist and Moralist, p. 52.
- 7 Ibid., p. 65.
- 8 Ibid., p. 87.
- 9 A jotting from a letter, quoted by Walter Allen in Writers on Writing, p. 140.
- 10 Trollope, pp. 113-114; see also p. 106.
- 11 An Autobiography, p. 200 (Ch. XII).
- 12 For example, in his 'On English Prose Fiction as a Rational Amusement', in Four Lectures (by Anthony Trollope), ed. M. L. Parrish, pp. 110-111; and in his article on 'Novel Reading', in Nineteenth Century, v (1879) pp. 24-43. See also B.A. Booth's essay 'Trollope on the Novel' in Essays Critical and Historical Dedicated to Lily B. Campbell, pp. 219-231.
- 13 In his preface to Pierre et Jean (1888), quoted by Walter Allen in Writers on Writing, p. 124.
- 14 In Man was Made to Mourn, 11, pp. 55-56.
- 15 The Prime Minister, II, p. 265.
- 16 'My debt to Trollope', in The Demon of the Absolute, Volume One of New Shelburne Essays, p. 114.
- 17 Robert Elsmere, I, p. xii, (quoted by K. Simmons, in Walter Pater's Marius The Epicurean : A Study of the Novel's Major Themes, p. 49).



- 18 The phrase was apparently adapted from the French Cours de Philosophie by Victor Cousin, who died in 1867. As evidence of the far-reaching effect that the Aesthetic movement had on the English Literature establishment, I can say that The Importance of Being Earnest among items in a similar vein, was still being prescribed for examination by the Punjab University Matriculation Board in 1969. Muffins, cucumber sandwiches and Lady Bracknell were as remote from Certificate-seeking Pakistanis as the entire Aesthetic movement must have been from the mainstream of humanity in England at the turn of the century, as even the middle classes recognised, to judge from the cartoons of Punch and the popularity of Gilbert and Sullivan's Patience.
- 19 Modern scientific textbooks do not in general adopt an historical approach, even in their bibliographies; however, there is a promising section on 'Science' in Part Four of The Pelican Guide to English Literature : 6 From Dickens to Hardy, ed. Boris Ford, pp. 453-454, which might lead to some good primary sources, for stylistic analysis and comparison. On the manner in which modern man has virtually absorbed a scientific way of thinking in the space of two generations, reference can be made to Fritz Schumacher, Small and Beautiful.
- 20 The writings of J. Bronowski are widely known, as is C.P. Snow's description of the two cultures. There are a number of books, however, which seek to bridge the gulf that has formed over more than one generation of segregation. Among these I would mention The Tao of Physics, by Fritjof Capra and The Diary of a Country Doctor by John Berger. The need for reform is at last being recognised, with recent statements by Sir Frederick Dainton, President of the British Association, (Times Educational Supplement, 3350 (5 September 1980) p. 8) and other public figures.
- 21 Hilaire Belloc's article on Trollope appeared in The London Mercury, xxvii (December 1932) pp. 150-156. H.S. Davies's comments on Emile Montegut and the French approach to criticism are in Writers and Their Work, no. 118 'Trollope', p. 37.
- 22 Quoted from The English Middle Class in Marxism and Literature by Raymond Williams, p. 201.
- 23 An Autobiography, pp. 315-317.
- 24 Some light is thrown on Victorian expectations from their books in R.K. Webb's essay on 'The Victorian Reading Public' in The Pelican Guide to English Literature : 6 From Dickens to Hardy, ed. Boris Ford, pp. 205-226. The need to read Trollope

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that this is crucial for ensuring the integrity of the financial statements and for providing a clear audit trail.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze data. It includes a detailed description of the sampling process and the statistical techniques employed to interpret the results.

3. The third part of the document provides a comprehensive overview of the findings. It highlights the key trends and patterns observed in the data, as well as the implications of these findings for the organization's overall performance.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the limitations of the study and suggests areas for future research. It also includes a list of references and a detailed appendix of the data used in the analysis.

(1.1.1) ...

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The Bibliography is not a complete guide to Trollope, but includes the relevant details of all the works used in writing this thesis apart from a few modern novels and some literary 'classics' that have been referred to in a general way. Obviously I do not claim to have a full knowledge of all the works listed here but some have been used more extensively than others in the preparation of the thesis. Under Anthony Trollope I have only listed items to which reference has been made in the text and notes.

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Much that has been written about Trollope tends to incorporate biographical details, drawing particularly on An Autobiography and the personal memories of L. Stephen and T.H.S. Escott. All the information available about Trollope's life is available in James Pope Hennessy Anthony Trollope, which is particularly good on the times spent in Ireland, and C.P. Snow Trollope, both of which really supercede L.P. and R.P. Stebbins The Trollopes : The Chronicle of A Writing Family.
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