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INTRUDER IN THE TEXT?:
THE NARRATOR IN THE SERIES NOVELS OF ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

by
VYVYAN BAUER, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

June 12, 1988.

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"INTRUDER IN THE TEXT?:

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submitted by Vyvyan Bauer, B.A.

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the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

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June 30, 1988

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores "the Trollope problem" in the Barchester and Palliser series. An introduction examines the background, and focusses on the relationship between Trollopeian narrator and reader as crucial to the close reading of the novels.

Chapter One discusses critical reaction, and a new reading is proposed. Chapter Two discusses the narrator-reader's response to romantic conventions. It is suggested that the critical stereotype of Trollope's capitulation to convention is inaccurate. Chapter Three confirms this suggestion, demonstrating how the narrator-reader mechanism operates to diminish the hero and heroine. Chapter Four develops this argument to include the changing relationship of narrator and reader in the Palliser series, and argues Trollope's determination to expand the parameters of the novel. Chapter Five identifies a different kind of narrative interpolation, which reinforces the argument for Trollope's commitment to constant dialogue with reader and critic about the form of the series novel.

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INTRODUCTION

In the year 1855, two events occurred which most English speakers of the twentieth century would confidently describe as classic examples of the activities and achievements of High Victorian culture: Livingstone discovered Victoria Falls and Tennyson's Maud was published.

A less immediately significant event was the publication of the fourth novel by Anthony Trollope--The Warden, a literary event overshadowed in popular interest, perhaps, by the appearance in the same year of Charles Kingsley's Westward Ho! and Charles Dickens' Little Dorrit. As Trollope himself wrote in his Autobiography (1883), in characteristically self-deprecatory style:

The novel-reading world did not go mad about The Warden; but I soon felt that it had not failed as the others had failed. There were notices of it in the press, and I could discover that people around me knew that I had written a book.¹

Trollope's three earlier published novels included The Macdermots of Ballycloran (1847) and The Kellys and The O'Kellys (1848) which were, for critical purposes, considered part of the sub-genre of Irish novels, while the spectacularly unsuccessful La Vendee (1850) had failed to capture the reading public of another popular form, the historical romantic novel. The Warden, therefore, was a

¹ Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography, (Oxford University Press 1950: rpt. World's Classics 1980), Ch. 5, p. 98.

radical departure for this hitherto unsuccessful author who, by producing it, also created the first part of the "Trollope problem." The Warden was a new kind of novel, quite different from his earlier work, which appeared to invade two other popular sub-genres: the social-problem novel and the religious novel.

In addition to these sub-genres, there already existed from the first three decades of the century other conventional categories of fiction. These--including the notorious Newgate novel, the "silver-fork" school of society novel, and varieties of sporting, military, marine, and adventure stories--had already lent themselves to popular parody, notably in Thackeray's contributions to Punch in 1847, later collected as Novels by Eminent Hands. But throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, English writers had responded to Carlyle's exhortations in Sartor Resartus (1833-34) and Chartism (1839), by writing fiction with the purpose of improving society, rather than as mere entertainment or "sensation".

Thus, the social-problem novel had explored the themes of social abuses, the misery of the poor, and the increasing isolation of the individual in a rapidly industrialising society. One of the writers in this genre was Frances Trollope, whose very successful novel on the abuses of child-labour, The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, Factory Boy (1839-40), was followed by another, Jessie Phillips, A

Tale of Today (1842-43), on the exploitation of women. As the reading public had responded eagerly to the social-problem novel (both as fiction and as a stimulus to reform), one of the fictional conventions they had absorbed was the presence of a strong authorial voice, which by stepping down from the narrative, directed the reactions of the reader.

Anthony Trollope's technique in The Warden represented a pronounced shift from an accepted mode, and created, at least for his reviewers, the beginnings of the "Trollope problem". His distinctive treatment of the convention introduced a narrator who shared the territory of the novel, not only with an intermittent personal authorial voice, but also with the implied presence of the reader's voice. The presence of the Trollopeian narrator and his relationship with the reader introduced a new dimension into the novel.

This was to provide a fruitful subject of debate for reviewers. They clearly faced a problem in deciding how to respond to an epidemic of apparent authorial interpolations. Some intrusions appeared to be entirely gratuitous, while others were so embedded in the fictional construction that their absence would have produced a denuded Trollope as radically transformed as a "bowdlerised" Shakespeare.

Trollope's narrator, while apparently extending the influence of the author in the text, did so without the parallel growth of a didactic, managed tone. Surrounded by an aura of independence, this narrator created a sense of movement both

within the text and, outwards towards the reader. This independent space in the Trollopeian novel generated the freedom for a fictional method in which writer, narrator, and reader could engage in a discussion of the novel in hand (and novels in general) without suspending their belief in the immediate fictional construction. Trollope used the narrator to comment on the actual process of writing; on the form of the novel he was writing at that moment; on the expectations of the reader about novels, and eventually, on the reactions of reviewers, both real and imagined.

All these functions depended for their intellectual excitement and artistic appeal on the active response of the reader. Thus, Trollope's new way with the narrator created a different kind of novel, in which the relationship established, via the narrator, between writer and reader itself constituted the driving force of the fictional structure. A Trollopeian reader was neither merely entertaining himself with an extension of the comedy of manners, nor was he a placid receptacle for authorial exhortation; he was required to be part of the act. Without the constant stimulus of the reader's implied reactions to the narrator's commentary, Trollope could not have constructed the form of argument-in-fiction which is the sub-textual mechanism for each novel. This argument-in-fiction is echoed by the argument-about-fiction, which, over the course of the twelve novels in the

Barchester and Palliser series, developed into a running battle with contemporary reviewers.

Several of the first critics of The Warden noted Trollope's different authorial tone only by comparing it unfavourably with what they had come to expect. The following is a typical example:

'The Warden' is a clever, spirited, sketchy story, upon the difficulties which surround that vexed question, the administration of the charitable trusts in England. . . . The whole story is well and smartly told, but with too much indifference as to the rights of the case. The conclusion is inconclusive enough, inasmuch as it is left for the reader to infer that nobody has any right to the charity²

The unknown reviewer here was clearly approaching a text with a preconceived idea of what he expected to find in this kind of a story. Writers who produced a novel with a contemporary problem were expected to assume the responsibility for the concluding moral which the improved reader could inwardly digest. Trollope had not assumed the narrative stance of educator or moral seer. This omission clearly disturbed the reviewer. Furthermore, he was understandably puzzled by the more sophisticated approach which he as reader was required to assume towards this new form of novel.

In other reviews, The Warden was praised with faint damns for characterisation which was considered so convincing that the the author was accused of either using "real" people

² Donald Smalley, ed., Athenaeum, 27 January, 1855 pp. 107-8, in The Critical Heritage, p.34. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969).

or being merely imitative in his technique. In addition, if Trollope had hoped to rival Thackeray in the delightful art of parody by his interpolated sketches in the manner of Carlyle and Dickens, he was to be roundly scolded by the critics who disliked this kind of departure from received norms within the form of the novel.

. . . The introduction of the Times newspaper into the novel is not managed in good taste, and . . . the caricatures and burlesques of living writers are also in very bad taste, anything but successful, and not calculated to raise Mr. Trollope in the estimation of the public."

So the new Trollopeian novel was not immediately recognised with unalloyed delight by the critics. Trollope noted drily that he was praised for the excellent characterisation of the Archdeacon--'declared by competent authorities to be a real archdeacon down to the very ground'--but was castigated for the creation of Tom Towers of the Jupiter, which was considered an attack on a senior man at The Times. Trollope, who had no more connection with The Times than he had with a cathedral close, commented that he had created archdeacon and journalist by "the simple result of an effort of my moral consciousness". Carlyle himself could not have found fault with such a typically High Victorian approach to literary activity; it sprang directly out of Trollope's reasons for writing The Warden:

* Examiner, 6 January 1855, p.5, in The Critical Heritage, pp.30-31.

I had been struck by two opposite evils, . . . I thought I might be able to expose them, or rather to describe them, both in one and the same tale.*

Trollope's "two evils" were the conversion of charitable funds into clerical incomes and the "undeserved severity" of the newspapers towards the unwitting clergy who received the money. Even Carlyle might have considered this an unlikely cause for a Chartist riot.

Not only was Trollope's choice of abuse more cerebral than the general run of social-problem novels, but he also confessed to a wish to "describe" and not to "expose": the fatal admission of a writer who could be characterized as a creative rather than a crusading reformer. Furthermore, he complicated his issue by yoking it together with a discussion of the newspaper reaction to the problem. As we have seen, the typical successful novels in the genre, such as Frances Trollope's books, dealt with clear-cut, single-issue abuses: bad treatment of a factory child; the seduction and disgrace of working girls. These apparently worthy social-problem fictions were also sensational, but they offered a clear, moral position to the reader as well as a sense of excitement.

Both by his choice of subject, and by his treatment of it, Trollope was bound to create a far more complicated form than the existing genre. The Warden seemed to fall into the

* An Autobiography, Ch.V, p. 93.

category of social-problem novels only by default. By using the text of his apprentice reforming screed to Savage Carlyle, the high priest of the problem-novel movement, Trollope turned The Warden into a satire-within-a-problem-novel. It was this subliminal disturbance which caused the critics to accuse him of bad taste.

In The Warden, which was envisaged as a novel of ideas, Trollope hovered uneasily between the light entertainment of the comedy of manners and the serious purpose of the social-problem novel. He attempted to deploy his arguments through the relationship between the romantic plot-line and the narrative commentary, but clearly felt that he had failed to communicate to the reader either the hypocrisy of the reforming school, or the unscrupulous pursuit of self-interest by the newspapers. So he arbitrarily introduced into his "real" text the four fake texts: the parody of Carlyle's Latter-Day Pamphlets (1850); the first number of Mr. Sentiment's novel The Almshouse, a delightfully shameless piece of Dickensian pastiche; the original Jupiter articles--grotesque in their self-righteous mock anger--and the lamentably arch sketch of three well-known clerical figures, thinly disguised as the Archdeacon's three sons.

This was a cumbersome approach to both the political and the artistic problems which Trollope consciously wished to confront in the novel, and it was not a technique to which he would return. But, paradoxically, he did discover, partly as

a result of his instinctive distrust of contemporary literary fashions, the complicated form which, in future novels, would resolve itself into his own distinctive authorial technique. The form of the social-problem novel was altered through The Warden to become a blue-print for the Trollope method. This process might be compared to the action of a man with a magic-lantern who, by rotating the pattern of the light beams, throws different images on the same backcloth.

In the remainder of the Barchester novels, and in the Palliser series, Trollope's narrator assumes the burden of the commentary without the intervention of invented texts (except for the crucial letters, which are, in a sense, extensions of the characters' internal dialogue). The fictional text is moved gently along by the commentator rotating the magic lantern, which illuminates the contradictions and ironies between the surface of the textual discourse and the commentator's debate with the reader. By appealing to the reader to exercise his own judgment, Trollope extends the discussion outside the text without having to resort to the fake interpolation. Any invented commentary exists in the imagination of the reader and does not destroy the fictional structure.

Trollope's method thus developed into an intellectual exploration of the fictional form, expressed through a fictional examination of contemporary ideas and manners. This complicated approach to the novel produced a form of

narrative which demanded time, space and length. The multiple plots reflected different facets of the same situation or problem for different characters. The reader constantly responds to the conduct of characters in changing situations as the pressure of events and the passage of time alters their positions in the fictional cycle. For the modern Trollopeian reader, the Barchester and Palliser series become one narrative broken into convenient consumer portions called novels; for Trollope's contemporary readers the embryo chronicle was available successively in a choice of packages labelled "instalment", "shilling book", or "three-volume novel"--all of which would eventually grow into the two interconnected series.

I propose to explore how this relationship between the narrator, the reader and the extended text represented a conscious experiment by Trollope to involve the reader in the development of the fictional construction. The authorial interpolation, by its very existence, presumes the commitment of the active reader; every interpolation assumes an answer or counter-argument. By his constant use of the ironic narrative technique, Trollope developed a complex relationship with the reader which, I shall argue, involves the reader as fellow-writer. I shall attempt to show that far from "intruding" on the artistic construction of the novel, the authorial interpolation amplifies the text by demanding verification from the reader. Trollope's narrative

comment not only invites the swift, subliminal response of the reader, but also acknowledges our ability to get there first.

Through a close reading of selected passages of narrator-reader activity, I shall explore how the narrator-reader partnership affected Trollope's treatment of the novel, with specific reference to the conventions of romance, heroes and heroines (Chapters 2-4). I shall examine how Trollope's narrator, working always with the reader, diminishes the artificial stereotypes of novelistic convention so that the "love interest" becomes secondary to the study of relationships over time. As a separate category, I shall consider those interpolations which reveal Trollope-as-writer arguing with the critics about fictional techniques; as well as his impatience with the requirements for beginning and ending novels, which interrupted his sense of time shared with reader and text in a continued series (Chapter 5).

Critical opinion on Trollope has been remarkable chiefly for its diversity and disagreement. In 1964 Donald Smalley commented on "something like chaos in Trollope studies"⁵ and there can be few writers who have experienced so many critical deaths and resurrections while still retaining a large readership. In a 1960 article on "Trollope and His Style", Hugh Sykes Davies commented:

⁵ Donald Smalley, "Anthony Trollope", Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research, ed. Lionel Stevenson. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 188-213.

Donne and Trollope are the two writers who have benefited most from changes in literary taste in the present century Donne has been a notable example of the power of critics to influence readers. Trollope has been quite as notable an example of the power of readers to go it alone, whatever the critics may say.⁶

Far from being a twentieth-century phenomenon, this dichotomy between critical and readerly opinion began, as I shall show in Chapter 1, with the critical reception of The Warden.

Trollope has always been a problem, and although the critical terminology has altered, the assumptions and positions of argument have maintained a startling similarity, particularly on the vexed question of the unique Trollopeian narrator.

Critics, whether enthusiasts or detractors, have, in my view, overlooked the actual effect of the narrator's relationship with the reader and its combined action on the form of the Trollopeian novel. Recent commentary on the effect of the narrator is consistently concerned with the narrator's "intrusions" on the text (see Ch. I, pp. 26-27). As I shall demonstrate, this approach, (which itself divides, amoeba-like, into yet more cells of disagreement) ignores the power which the reader exercises within the Trollopeian novel. It is, I suggest, this phenomenon of creative readership which has sustained "the power of readers to go it alone" not least because, as the "alter ego" of the narrator, the reader both is, and is not, an intruder in the territory of the text.

⁶ Hugh Sykes Davies, "Trollope and His Style," A Review of English Literature, 1 October, 1960, pp. 73-85.

Chapter 1

The Reception of a New Fiction

Trollope's new approach allowed him to comment most accurately and challengingly on the assumptions and obsessions of a highly self-conscious society. The hidden engine of the multi-plot structure, and of the narrative of authorial commentary, is the energetic curiosity of both the chronicler and his reader. Both appear to share an insatiable appetite for the examination of their society. The density of the text produced by this method proved to be exactly what the "novel-reading world" wanted--although the professional critics reserved their judgement, largely because they did not know quite how to classify this serious yet popular monster.

An unsigned notice in the Leader attacked the "Trollope problem" head-on:

. . . Mr. Trollope speaks far too much in his own person in the course of his narrative. It is always the reader's business, never the author's, to apostrophize characters. The 'illusion of scene' is invariably perilled . . . when the writer harangues . . . on the behaviour of the characters . . . This is a fault in Art; and . . . we refer to the stage as an illustration. Did he ever see a great comedian talk to the audience over the footlights . . . ?¹

The reviewer can deal with the artistic argument only by

¹ Leader, 17 February 1855, pp. 164-5 in The Critical Heritage, p.37.

reference outside the novel to a rather doubtful parallel with comic theatre. He fails to grasp that the narrator is himself an invented character, and is not to be presumed as an authorial presence in situ. Thus blinded, the Leader's critic tackles the problem of the ironic voice:

The mocking tone is well enough where the clerical aristocracy . . . form the subject . . . But where the main interest touches on the domain of real feeling-- . . . as in the struggle between love and duty in the heart of [the] reforming lover--it is vitally important to the true effect . . . that the author should at least appear to feel sincerely with his characters . . . There are certain maxims in Horace's Art of Poetry . . . which will remain great critical truths to the end of the world . . . [Mr. Trollope] cannot do better than apply them to himself the next time he gives us a novel.²

The appearance of inherited notions of "decorum", of the appropriate tone for the treatment of "real feeling", and the confident appeal to Horace, are indicators of the critic's cultural approach to the novel, as significant as his appeal to notions of dramatic unity. His further conviction that clergymen are a suitable case for satire, while reforming radicals are not, shows the combination of a classical approach to literature with a selectively progressive approach to political themes.

It is, I suggest, necessary to determine in some detail how mid-Victorians approached the novel. We must, in particular, see why the expectations and demands of the common reader differed from those of the professional reviewer, whose recorded views influenced the perceptions of subsequent

² ibid. p. 38.

generations, and who thus perpetuated the myth of the "Trollope problem".

Although the Victorian public was accustomed to the examination of society in pamphlets, in essays, and in sermons (both oral and printed), the notion of reading an entertaining novel as a way of discussing contemporary life was an almost revolutionary transposition of literary form. The sub-genre of the social-problem novel had been digested as another form of improving discourse, rather than as a development of literary form. Here, a contemporary analogy might be to the viewer's uncertain response to documentary film or television "docu-drama". What is "true", and what is dramatic invention? How is the viewer supposed to respond and judge? Should he suspend his critical and disputatious faculties, and just sit back and enjoy the drama as entertaining wallpaper? Is the commentator to be trusted? Or is the narrative intrusion loaded with value judgements and assumptions?

Critical response to the Trollope novel was conditioned by inherited notions of the form and tone of the novel--i.e. an aesthetic response--and by the contemporary demand for realism in the novel, which was, in effect, a socio-political response pressing upon the reviewers from the reading habits of the book-buying public. Since Trollope insisted on dealing with desperately ordinary people in apparently ordinary situations, he could, perhaps, be approached as a

realist. But his cavalier disregard for the conventions of the form, which were perceived as an attack on the "realistic" structure, caused offence and confusion.

Early in the Barchester series, and in the parallel contemporary reviews, two distinctive parts of the continuing critical problem begin to emerge. First, the author's ability to create credible three-dimensional characters was considered imitative rather than imaginative; and second, the narrator was considered an artistic intrusion rather than an integral part of the fiction. Trollope was the victim of inherited responses to literature, in which realistic characterization of ordinary professional people was considered "low" and unimaginative, and the presence of an uncommitted narrator in an otherwise realistic discourse appeared to be a wilful contravention of accepted mimetic practice. Trollope's natural and creative curiosity about the psychological oddities, the manners, and the mores of contemporary society demanded the development of his novel form into an extended three-dimensional narrative chronicle, rather than the restricted didactic form of the problem-novel genre.

Trollope's narrator remains the static character in the discourse while, through the narrator's minute attention to their psychological development, the fictional characters attain an enlarged realism with the passage of time. In Trollopeian realism, the narrator, who appears to be the

"real" commentator and mediator--the non-fictional friendly interpreter between the reader and the text--is himself the most complete fictional device. The characters and their activities are etched in a stronger realistic silhouette because they develop in the fictional framework like figures in a stereopticon. In addition, however, the reader is encouraged, by his relationship with the narrator, to assume that their life is continuing "off-stage", while his life, and that of his interlocutor, the narrator, remain static in the agreed contract of a non-fictional framework.

The critical problem of The Warden presented itself in particularly stark form. The four fake texts and the sardonic tone of the narrative intrusion appeared to conflict with the subject matter of rural clergy in an almost idyllic cathedral close: Mr. Harding and his daughter were highly idealized, but not quite "heroic", in the accepted aesthetic sense; the ardent lover, John Bold, was at once "heroic" but also a well-meaning dupe; and the author/narrator resolutely portrayed all facets of the "social problem" without indicating which side he favoured or signalling to the reader which position he, himself, could safely assume.

The complete picture was therefore an extremely disquieting one, both for the contemporary reader and for posterity. The reader was not instructed by the author on how to approach his text. Some of the querulous dissatisfaction expressed by mid-Victorian critics reflects the basic unease

of the professional scientist who is dealing with a new strain of microbe which he has not yet quite classified to his satisfaction. An unsigned notice in the Examiner reflects this genial, but puzzled, reception:

The Warden is a clever novel, though we are not quite content with it. There is good matter for a novel in a topic of this kind . . . at the same time there is a half-mocking spirit put into the account . . . which will tend to confuse some readers as to Mr. Trollope's real meaning . . . it is not, on the whole, so clearly put as it should be, if the book be meant for a didactic novel."

In thus focusing on the problems confronting the middle class and its reactions to accepted but changing norms, Trollope subconsciously identified a vacuum in mid-century literary culture. Members of the reading public wished to see themselves mirrored in serious fiction, but not necessarily in a didactic formula or a disguised political tract, and least of all in escapist romantic fantasy. Large sections of the reading public were weary of the fashionable novel, the sentimental novel, and the social-problem novel, and were thus ready for a new perception of realism: a faithful picture of their own lives heightened by the suspense of fictional plot, enriched by three-dimensional characters, and with the surface disturbed by the questioning voice of the narrator, to convince them of the moral and intellectual dimension of the discourse. Trollope himself constantly gives the impression of being a mildly defensive writer,

" Examiner, 6 January 1855, p.5, in The Critical Heritage, pp. 30-31.

slightly surprised by his success, who is obliged to indulge in a running battle with a Platonic idea of the novel--which a critic or reader may be supposed to be holding onto as a brown-paper wrapper, behind which he is guiltily enjoying Trollope's latest "best-seller".

The average reader, however, accepted the new genre of the Trollopeian novel as a reflection of himself. He cared little about the difficulties encountered by the professional critics. He bypassed the intellectual confusion about rules by identifying with the essentially democratic ideal expressed in the Trollope novel. This middle-class ideal had, by mid-century, challenged the fading aristocratic ideal expressed in the novels of Scott and Disraeli. It had also defeated the religious ideal, whose essentially didactic role was subsumed either by specifically religious literature (sermons, tracts and improving books for children) or by socio-political literature (lectures, reports and "blue-books".)

Professional critics, on the other hand, were still applying the rules of poetry and drama to the novel, seeking elevation in the tragic mode, lyric quality, or heroic virtues, all expressed in terms of unified literary form. The preoccupation with high-born characters in the romantic or aristocratic novel, or of high-toned morality in the social-problem or religious novel, was as much a reflection of inherited literary convention as of the expectations of a

supposedly religious, class-structured community. The division in the critical mind about the merit of a genre called the middle-class novel is clearly reflected in two reviews of 1863. Speaking of Orley Farm, an unknown reviewer comments:

The real interest of the story is concentrated upon well-to-do, decorous, and deservedly prosperous people, who solve, with a good deal of contentment and self-satisfaction, the difficult problem of making the most both of this world and the next.*

A more subtle response to the literary skill required in the delineation of middle-class values was displayed by the critic of the North British Review:

It does not in the least degree diminish - it rather increases - the skill which was required for their creation; but perhaps it may help to account for our familiarity with them, when they have been created, that they are not, as we have said extra ordinary people. Some of them have a little more wit than is common; but they are not stronger, abler, braver, richer in imagination, or more tender in sensibility than a courteous novelist must suppose the generality of his readers to be.†

One of the critical problems in dealing with contemporary reviews of the Trolloppian novel is the lack of a common critical terminology among the reviewers. This problem is further compounded by the pronounced reluctance among contemporary critics to indulge in abstract theory about every-day story-telling, particularly when these stories existed as periodical fiction or as the popular products of

* National Review 1863 in R. Helling, A Century of Trollope Criticism, p. 76.

† North British Review, 1863 (XL, 375-6) ibid.

the Circulating Library. Trollope critics display, in almost equal portions, tremendous expectations concerning the form of the novel, and lofty superiority towards Trollope's "over-production". Despite delight in the life-like reproduction of external reality, they express grave misgivings about his dubious "imaginative" processes, which are perceived as externally manipulated, rather than internally conceived and created. An unsigned review (probably by R. H. Hutton) reveals as much about reviewers' notions and demands for "romantic inspirations" as it does about Trollope's creative imagination:

. . . There is nothing, apparently, of the agony of meditative travail about his mind . . . In short, Mr. Trollope does not give us so much the impression of conceiving his own conceptions, as of very accurately observing them as they pass along the screen of some interior faculty.*

From whence these conceptions had sprung, fully-formed and ready for accurate observation, is not revealed--although the reader might discern the hand of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the reviewer's critical inheritance. While commending Trollope's "realism", this kind of critical approach was in actual fact damning with faint praise. Realism, in this sense, was taken rather to mean a power of conventional observation which, because it was so "realistic", lacked philosophic grandeur and originality of idea. Trollopeian

* Spectator, 11 October 1862, xxxiii. 1136-8. in Critical Heritage, pp.146-147.

realism was thus being implicitly condemned because it could not be measured in traditional terminology to see if it attained the "heights" of an "important art form".

Those who wished to argue the case for realistic fiction as a viable art form had to contend with the inherited assumption that it was the romance that addressed itself to the imagination, while the novel remained a transcript, or mirror reflection, requiring mere observation. The mid-Victorian critic employed the term "realism" in its widest sense as a means of distinguishing the novel of modern life from the historical, romantic or problem novel.⁷ But, by 1867 the reviewer could explicitly acknowledge the capability of the Trollopeian form to combine a study in modern realism with an examination of the crime and passion more usually associated with classical tragedy:

Mr. Anthony Trollope has yielded, in fact, to a tendency inherent in the best form of the realism of modern fiction. In the combination of realism with great and exceptional crimes, a tale of passion when told must be done with. The complicated, highly-seasoned plot, once fairly wrought out, can have no sequel, except it be of depression after excitement. The Oresteia, and that old legend of the House of Oedipus, were complete stories, and thus the several plays of a Greek trilogy were but as volumes . . . of one grand fable. A chain of novels like Mr. Anthony Trollope's Barsetshire set is essentially a birth of our own time . . . the public should have these Barsetshire novels . . . as a connected series . . . [Their author] simply follows to its

⁷ See David Skilton, Trollope and His Contemporaries, Appendix I, p.149.

natural end a form of fiction that is the true birth of our own day, and of which he is an accepted master."

This attractive image of Trollope as the Euripides of the Home Counties was reinforced by the criticism of G.H. Lewes, who consistently sought to establish that "realism" was a respectable imaginative form with its own artistic justification.

In a series of articles in the Fortnightly Review in 1865, collectively entitled The Principles of Success in Literature, Lewes argued that realism was as valid an imaginary construct as "idealism", in that it could elevate a "low" subject and required no less artistic achievement than the examination of a "high" subject. Furthermore, Lewes proposed that the distinction between "realism" and "idealism" was unhelpful and suggested instead a discrimination between realism and falsity. While it is significant that Lewes is still arguing in terms of "high" and "low" subjects, his basic position on the realistic novel enabled him to go beyond the novel-versus-romance controversy. He could thus argue for artistic selection in realism: the imagination could create "ordinary people" whose characterization was as

* Examiner, 20 July 1867, pp.452-453 in The Critical Heritage, p. 297.

artistically valid as the hitherto conventional hero/heroine figure."

Lewes' view was not shared by all critics. Those on the Saturday Review, who attacked Trollope's brand of realism as "unimaginative" and "monstrously prosaic", were supported by a member of the legal profession, Sir Henry Maine, who enjoyed literary ambitions and, presumably, book-reviewing. In June 1858, the Saturday Review published Maine's unsigned review of Dr. Thorne, which criticized Trollope for excessive fecundity, thin characterization, a languid plot, excessive authorial intrusion, and insidious moralizing. It went on:

Mr. Trollope is acquiring great mechanical skill in those parts of his art in which such skill can be acquired, but he is losing what constituted the value and promise of his style . . . Dr. Thorne does nothing very remarkable, though Mr. Trollope in one of his asides to his readers, justifies at length his own preference . . . Whenever a difficulty arises Mr. Trollope . . . turns to his reader, points out the difficulty and coolly passes it over. . . The contract of the writer with the reader is to create and maintain a reasonably perfect illusion as to the reality of the events which he relates, and he breaks that contract if he wantonly points out the difficulties of his task . . . [Mr. Trollope] invests his books . . . with a sort of atmosphere which is not incapable of being condensed into the moral that people ought to marry for love and not for money, and that wealth and station are in themselves somewhat incompatible.¹⁰

* G.H. Lewes, The Principles of Success in Literature, in the Fortnightly Review, 1865 in Victorian Criticism of the Novel, p.3, ed. Edwin M. Eigner and George J. Worth (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹⁰ Saturday Review, 12 June, 1858 in Critical Heritage pp.75-77.

Henry Maine's earlier criticism of Trollope's inadequate command of legal questions in his review of The Three Clerks was forcefully rebuffed by Trollope in an unashamed authorial intrusion in Dr. Thorne (see Chapter Five) but the accusations that Trollope's brand of realistic narrative revealed the low status of prose fiction continued unabated.

As late as 1866, G. H. Lewes, writing in the Fortnightly, challenged the position of the Saturday Review with an argument which was still qualified:

The realistic form of art is a legitimate form. When the subject is high, realism is the highest possible form of art; and when the subject is commonplace, realism gives it a warrant. But the only excuse for the artist keeping us amid details of commonplace is that thereby the commonplace is raised into art; and it can only be so raised by truthful presentation¹¹

Maine's review suggested that the realistic novel was unfit as a discourse for moral improvement because it was bound to present humanity as it was--and not as society thought it should be. The tacit admission, even from the arch-defender of realism, G.H. Lewes, was that the business of art was to "raise" the commonplace. Both views indicate the extent to which the mid-century notion of mimesis meant an artistic elevation of realism which required considerable pre-conception and selection by the writer, and a commitment to ideals and literary purpose not necessarily connected with, or generated by, his fictional construction.

¹¹ David Skilton, Anthony Trollope and his Contemporaries, Ch.2. p.56.

A recurring theme in the Trollopeian narrative discourse is a discussion about "real" life in the reader's perception, the presumption of agreed reality in the narrator's fictional construction, and the supposed expectation which the reader is ironically assumed to entertain about the nature of novels. In a sense, Trollope is conducting a running battle, through the medium of his fiction, with the critics of the nineteenth-century novel. The narrative intrusion becomes a critique on the development, expectations about, and perceptions of, the novel. The Trollopeian novel thus becomes not only a development in realistic fiction, but a revolutionary development in criticism: the analytical dialogue is sustained between writer and reader, and the critic is quietly killed off.

Those critics of the nineteenth century who objected to the author's apparent intrusions into an idealized fictional structure were, as we have seen, confused by the new Trollopeian form. The criticism of Henry James, which became a touchstone for twentieth-century critics, in effect followed the general tone of his predecessors, in that it turned on the safe assessment of Trollope as mere observer of realistic manners, an author whose stereotyped plots were orchestrated by a narrator called Mr. Trollope.¹² This Jamesian approach, adhered to by admirers and detractors alike, has

¹² Henry James, "Anthony Trollope", Partial Portraits, 1888, pp. 97-133, in The Critical Heritage, pp. 525-545.

been replicated with different terminology in our own century.¹³ As James Kincaid points out in The Novels of Anthony Trollope, modern critics divide into two opposing camps on whether the narrator distances the reader or draws him in.¹⁴ Professor Kincaid suggests that while both views are valid, his personal inclination is for the narrator as an agent of distancing.

My own argument here diverges from these positions, since I argue that the narrator is an integral component of the fiction. His purpose is neither to delude a reader, nor to disrupt the fiction. The Trollopeian narrator exists only insofar as he is recognized by the reader as an equal and active participant in the execution of the novel. Argument in terms of either intrusion or distance implies a passive, duped reader, at the mercy of both Trollope-as-writer and Trollope-as-narrator. The importance, and attraction, of the Trollopeian narrator is his capacity to create space in the novel for the reader-as-character to participate within the form. In addition, the narrator stimulates the reader's critical responses to the novel he is reading--and, by extension, to this other, difficult, undecided Platonic form of The Novel. Thus, narrator and reader share two functions, at once participatory and detached. Narrator and reader are part of the novel and, also, observers of the process. These

¹³ James Kincaid, The Novels of Anthony Trollope, Ch.2, pp.32-33. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

functions require, simultaneously, dispassionate involvement and concentrated attention as narrator and reader react one against the other in positions of symbiotic response.

Trollope would certainly not have dignified his authorial discussions with any such grandiose theory of criticism, since he was primarily concerned with fiction as a self-generating discipline. His care with the creation of his characters and his commitment to the aesthetic of their credible development is the consistent theme underpinning the chronicle series and the stray pronouncements on his art in his Autobiography:

I have been impregnated with my own creations till it has been my only excitement to sit with the pen in my hand, and drive my team before me at as quick a pace as I could make them travel.¹⁴

The author's respect for the integrity of his characters reflects Trollope's primary interest in the value of his kind of novel, which was the development of psychological interest in the behaviour of the individual who finds himself in varieties of conflicting and stress-laden situations, specifically connected with his place in society. Trollope's gift for the realistic assessment of contemporary society was deployed most effectively by the elaboration of the contract between reader and writer--but by drawing attention to its artistic construction, rather than by attempting to conceal it.

¹⁴ An Autobiography, Ch.X. p.176.

Since the narrator's position is somewhere between the characters, the plot and the reader, the tone of the narrative voice moves between the various component parts of the construction in a deceptive disguise which may be, by turns, neutral, ironic, hortatory or challenging. Having deployed for the reader the behaviour of his heroine towards her lover, the author-as-narrator then has to assume a voice of either wily insinuation or amused expiation to negotiate between his characters and his reader.

Since the gap between what people say they believe, and what they actually do when driven by their own instincts, is the most fruitful area for amused irony and speculation, it follows that the narrator's incursions and diversions on the subject of love form one of his favourite territories for psychological excursion. In tandem with the commentary on love, however, Trollope's narrator extends his range further by considering what the reader thinks about love, romance, and novels generally. In this chapter I have suggested how the "Trollope problem" was first perceived in the reactions of contemporary reviewers to Trollopeian realism, particularly in relation to his different use of the narrator. His interpolations, I shall show, were not simply a medium for observation and commentary on contemporary social attitudes, but also an opportunity for the active reader to participate in the dialogue of the Trollopeian novel. The following chapter examines the discussion between Trollope's

narrator and reader concerning the idea of romance in the novel.

Chapter 2

The Narrative Voice and the Romantic Conventions

Trollope's narratives have been consistently criticized for an apparent preoccupation with "a love story constructed on an inveterate system".¹ Such criticism is hardly surprising, since the author had cheerfully admitted in his Autobiography that "there must be love in a novel"², and, from as early as the 1860's, reviewers referred to the perpetual love interest with easy condescension:

Mr. Trollope has achieved another great success in his own peculiar line. It may not be the highest of all possible lines, but it is a very pleasant one, and suffices to show the great powers of the author. If the inner feelings of young ladies and young gentlemen are to be described as they show themselves in the bosom of comfortable and respectable English families, it would be impossible to describe them better than Mr. Trollope does.³

Even the more admiring critics commented on the apparent inevitability of Trollope's acceptance of the conventions of romantic comedy. E.S. Dallas, in The Times in December 1862:

There are the prettiest love scenes, in which all the gentlemen and all the ladies act with a correctness that is truly laudable. The correctness of Mr. Trollope's heroes and heroines in all their acts, but especially in lovemaking, does him infinite credit. None of them ever gets into a passion, or says anything foolish, or

¹ Henry James, Partial Portraits in The Critical Heritage, p.525.

² An Autobiography, p.142

³ Saturday Review, 14 May 1864, xvii. 595-6 in Critical Heritage, p. 205.

maunders, and the way in which they make love to each other without ever getting off the rails is a miracle of art."

Bradford Booth, one of the earliest and most perceptive of Trollope's twentieth-century American critics, came to much the same conclusion: "The tragedy of Trollope's career is his capitulation to the stereotype of romantic love".² And, more recently, Walter M. Kendrick asserts that for Trollope "'Life' is restricted to interpersonal relations, and to those within a fairly limited range. . . Its locus is the drawing room . . . and its overriding concern is the interaction of people in such a setting".³

While it is true that Trollope generally employed the device of romantic comedy as a skeleton-framework for his plot, what really interested him is analysis and dissection of motive rather than adherence to convention. Certainly, most of the plots in the Barchester and Palliser series turn upon varieties of romantic conventions, but the running commentary of the narrator invites the reader constantly to question rather than to capitulate.

This dissection is not the easy subversion of the cynic, but the thoughtful probing of the radical humanist. Repeated-

² Critical Heritage, p.162.

³ Bradford Booth, Anthony Trollope: Aspects of His Life and Art, p.164. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1958).

⁴ Walter M. Kendrick, The Novel-Machine. The Theory and Fiction of Anthony Trollope, p.85. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

ly, Trollope creates for the reader a wholly delightful and credible convention of romantic comedy--a self-contained tableau, complete and satisfying, which can be allowed to slip into the reader's consciousness with honeyed ease. Just as the tableau is about to be removed, the narrator quietly draws the reader's attention to the hero's false protestations or the heroine's deluded infatuation. He declines, however, the easy position of satirist by leaving his character's integrity intact. Furthermore, he genially invites the reader to consider whether or not this is the generally accepted behaviour of people in love: only in novels is Absolute Truth expected and given. So the narrative intrusion creates a movement away from romantic comedy towards satire, but finishes by creating a wholly new form of fiction. The highly artificial structure of the comedic plot engages itself with a disguised authorial discourse which encourages the reader to argue and debate with the author, the narrator, the characters, and his own set of assumptions about romantic conventions in life and in fiction.

Through this form of romantic comedy, Trollope is, in effect, planting a set of questions of which the most important is "Will the heroine accept the hero and live happily ever after?" The next in priority is "Should she?", followed by "If so, why?" With the notable exception of Lily Dale in The Small House at Allington, Trollope's heroines appear to remain faithful to the formula. Nevertheless, in

nearly every case, the author injects a sharpness of observation into the couleur de rose which is at odds with any saccharin sweetness of predictable fictional construction.

In the earliest novel, The Warden (1855), Trollope's narrator deflates the conventions of the romantic plot and attacks the popular social conventions of romantic etiquette in a characteristically disingenuous intervention:

. . . but in matters of love men do not see clearly into their own affairs. They say that faint heart never won fair lady; and it is amazing to me how fair ladies are won, so faint are often men's hearts! Were it not for the kindness of their nature, that seeing the weakness of our courage they will occasionally descend from their impregnable fortresses, and themselves aid us in effecting their own defeat, too often would they escape unconquered if not unscathed, and free of body if not of heart.⁷

The initial effect on the reader is one of humorous surprise--a surprise produced by the narrator's insouciant supposition that most women would never be won because men are so feeble and frightened. The insinuating innocence of the narrator's questioning voice prepares the already weakened reader for the next ironic thrust, as the besieged lady relinquishes her own castle to assist the failing enemy. The ludicrous absurdity of the image--depending, apparently, upon the notional idea of women's extreme kindness--slices into the kernel of the romantic imagination. The expected image of the conventional lover is no valiant, knightly suitor but the would-be rational radical, John Bold, a

⁷ The Warden, Ch. VII, pp.88-89.

floundering supplicant who would fail, were it not for the probable collusion of the clergyman's impeccably nurtured daughter. The effect is intensified by the final image of the lady who would remain at liberty but who is, paradoxically, also a prisoner " . . . free of body if not of heart". The double complexity of the image of captive in romantic bondage cuts both ways: the lady is conquered if she submits, but will remain a prisoner of her own unfulfilled affections if she does not. The narrator mocks both the conventions of the novel and the conventions of life, and points to the absurdity of both: the false elevation of the nature of woman in romantic love forces her into a false position from which she must manipulate both her own and her lover's responses.

Thus, Trollope employs this authorial intrusion to comment on the absurdity of the two conventions, but manages to do so without destroying the architecture of the plot. Within the context of the fictional structure, Eleanor's action is neither confined nor capricious, but independent and honourable. She cannot encourage John Bold while he is persecuting her father, and so she retires to the conventional fortress of the sought-after heroine. The authorial intrusion barely dents the surface of the fictional facade, but casts a shadow across the fictional and social conventions which, almost subliminally, adjust the reader's perceptions. The alert reader must consider if he normally "excuses" the customary pattern of courtship in a fictional

context because it is "only a novel"; the narrator's intervention encourages him to consider the terms of the Trollopeian novel as a fiction with a sharper realistic framework.

In Barchester Towers (1857), the narrator takes aim at another cherished convention--that love, and the response to love, is purely the prerogative of the young male:

It is, we believe, common with young men of five-and-twenty to look on their seniors--on men of, say, double their own age--as so many stocks and stones, that is, in regard to feminine beauty. There never was a greater mistake. Women, indeed, generally know better; but on this subject men of one age are thoroughly ignorant of what is the very nature of mankind of other ages. No experience of what goes on in the world, no reading of history, no observation of life, has any effect in teaching the truth. Men of fifty don't dance mazurkas, being generally too fat and wheezy; nor do they sit for the hour together on river banks at their mistresses' feet, being somewhat afraid of rheumatism. But for real true love, love at first sight, love to devotion, love that robs a man of his sleep, love that 'will gaze an eagle blind,' love that 'will hear the lowest sound when the suspicious tread of theft is stopped,' love that 'like a Hercules, still climbing trees in the Hesperides,'--we believe the best age is from forty-five to seventy; up to that, men are generally given to mere flirting.

The genial, straightforward Squire Thorne, an elderly bachelor, has fallen into the snares of the self-dramatizing Signora Neroni, and is thoroughly hooked and smitten. This comic romantic stereotype, reminiscent of Restoration Comedy, is inflated by the hyperbole of the narrator's comment to an artificial status as the acme of "true romance". By implication, all other forms of romance are reduced in status by the

narrator's airily confident generalization on young men's love. The laconic downbeat finale gains its humorous effect from the contrast with the artificially "poetic" tone of the preceding sentences. The dismissal of the universal agonies suffered by men in love is deliberately absurd, but the coup de grace is delivered outside the narrator's intrusion by the return to the fictional comic narrative.

At the present moment Mr. Thorne, aetate fifty, was over head and ears in love at first sight with the Signora Madeline Vesey Neroni, nata Stanhope.*

The narrator, having led the reader gently up the garden path with his confident intrusion on the value of an old man's love, leaves him considering the ridiculous cameo of the besotted squire and the serpentine Neroni. If the dulcet tone of the narrative intrusion has beguiled the reader into assuming that the narrator is launching a serious thesis, he is jolted out of easy complacency, not by the narrative voice, but by the fictional spectacle. Trollope is cunningly employing the "reality" of the fictional tableau to defeat the wishful thinking expressed by the narrative voice: elderly love is no less prone to besotted absurdity than the romantic swoonings of the merely flirtatious young.

In both these examples, therefore, the narrator is not necessarily to be taken at face value. The confident tone of the authorial intrusion expresses one kind of truth: a commentary on human behaviour, which can work independently

* Barchester Towers, Volume II, Ch. XXXVII, p. 116

of the fictional border to express a facet of the truth. In addition, however, when it is set in the context of the narrative, it develops a fuller shade of meaning which is more complex, both in terms of the related fictional structure and in the application of the reader's response to the truth of the narrative intrusion. This response is to the narrative intrusion on the world of the text and also to its wider application to the reader's own reality.

In Doctor Thorne (1858), the narrative voice is more didactic in its intrusions on the subject of love, acknowledging its well-worn quality as a fictional device, but nevertheless still insisting on its relevance and the importance of the imaginative ability to respond:

Had she been able to walk heart whole by his side while he chatted his common-places about love? Yes, they are commonplaces when we read of them in novels; common enough, too, to some of us when we write them; but they are by no means commonplace when first heard by a young girl in the rich balmy fragrance of a July evening stroll.¹⁰

The effect of Trollope's casual side-reference to "commonplaces when we read of them in novels" is a subtle gesture towards the invisible agreement between writer and reader which operates on two levels. The primary meaning is that light romance is the agreed formula for that acknowledged artificial construction called a novel, while the secondary meaning implies that this particular story about Mary Thorne

¹⁰ Doctor Thorne, Ch.XXII, p.302.

is non-fiction and anything but common-place. The use of the "Yes, but. . ." construction encourages the illusion of an ongoing debate between the narrator and the reader which proceeds alongside the development of the fictional text.

The hidden message slipped to the reader, behind the artless descriptions of a summer evening, is that this particular text deserves serious appraisal. The narrator achieves this effect by attacking simultaneously both the conventional affectations of the romantic novel and the conventional expectations of the reader: the fleeting image of a jaded army of hack writers churning out their commonplaces about love for the edification of gullible readers cannot be wholly pleasing to the alert reader. In this battlefield of fictional casualties, the only survivor is the continuing saga of Mary Thorne, which emerges unscathed from the narrative intrusion, its integrity upheld and its staying power strengthened by the Fabian tactics of the narrator.

Having defended himself against any charge of fictional banality, the narrator moves on to a forthright statement on the nature of woman's love.

To love thoroughly, truly, heartily, with her whole body, soul, heart, and strength; should not that be counted for merit in a woman? And yet we are wont to make a disgrace of it. We do so most unnaturally, most unreasonably; for we expect our daughters to get themselves married off our hands. When the period of that step comes, then love is proper enough; but up to that--before that--as regards all those preliminary passages which must, we suppose, be necessary--in all

those it becomes a young lady to be icy-hearted as a river-god in winter.¹¹

Once more the narrative voice, in taking issue with the conventional expectations, introduces the brusque reality of the market-place. How is the financial responsibility for a woman to be shifted from father to husband if the daughters are taught that it is disgraceful to respond to love? As though to counter a protest from an invisible interlocutor (who may be a reader) that the alabaster maiden cannot, and probably should not, feel such emotions, the narrator marshals the hard-headed commercial argument to back up his claim that it is both natural and estimable for a woman to respond to love with passion.

Having thoroughly exhorted the reader as to the desirability of the candid response, the narrator deflates his argument (and the reader's expectations) by assuring us that Mary Thorne "felt no such love as this", not because she is an ice-maiden, or fearful of convention, but because her judgement tells her that Frank Gresham must marry money. Once more the narrative voice has debated with the reader the moral argument in favour of Mary's love. It has even, by reference to the falsities of conventional behaviour, vindicated her likely action, and then has used the fictional construction to deflate the "realism" of the narrator's argument.

¹¹ Doctor Thorne, Ch.XXIII, p.302.

This reading inverts some current critical opinion¹²-- that the narrative voice is a "real" commentary outside the action, while the fictional plot is a an artificial construction on which the narrator "intrudes" with his commentary. Here the fiction becomes the reality: Mary cannot marry Frank because neither has any money. The sub-textual message is that "only in novels" can penniless young girls marry penniless young men without a qualm. In reality--and Trollope and the narrator have established that Mary's predicament is "real"--a wise woman knows that such a marriage would place her in an intolerable position.

In all these extracts, Trollope has employed the same technique of combining the narrative voice and the fictional form to provoke debate. Any attempt to separate the effect--as though there are two conflicting voices battling in the text--produces a false and diminished reading. The narrative voice may, indeed, superficially appear to call into question the received wisdom of the conventions of romantic love in fiction and in life, but it needs to be read in conjunction with the effect of the narrative. From the perspective of Trollope's own specific text, the overall effect is to reinforce the reality of his own characters grappling with their specific fictional predicament as though their lives depended on it.

¹² Bill Overton, The Unofficial Trollope, p. 1. (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982) and James Kincaid, The Novels of Anthony Trollope, pp. 17-18.

The narrative voice frequently insists on the individual's responsibility for judgement and independent initiative, even within the confines of romantic love. Just as the narrator flatly insists, in the example above, that he demands both passion and judgement from a woman, so in Barchester Towers the narrator underlines the point in a characteristic passage of interwoven hyperbole and laconic intervention:

And now it remained to them each to enjoy the assurance of the other's love. And how great that luxury is! How far it surpasses any other pleasure which God has allowed to his creatures! And to a woman's heart how doubly delightful! . . . There is a feeling still half existing, but now half conquered by the force of human nature, that a woman should be ashamed of her love till the husband's right to her compels her to acknowledge it. We would fain preach a different doctrine. A woman should glory in her love; but on that account let her take the more care that it be such as to justify her glory.¹³

The narrator's distinctive technique of exaggerated praise for the humdrum sentimentality of the hackneyed discourse of romantic love is effectively discouraging. The three exclamation marks alert the reader to the rhetoric of disingenuous irony which differs sharply from the normally dry and conversational narrative tone. On the surface of the discourse, all is sweetness and light, and the female sex is apparently patronized (God is invoked--always a danger sign with the secular narrator). In fact, however, women are

¹³ Barchester Towers, Vol. II, Ch. XLIX, pp. 239-240

encouraged to assume a liberated position demanding again the faculties of passion and judgement.

In Barchester Towers, the tone of the narrative commentary complements the line of the romantic plot. Eleanor is no clinging vine with either Mr. Bold or Mr. Arabin, and exercises judgement as well as passion both in favour of Mr. Arabin and against Mr. Slope. Thus, the tone of the narrator's commentary is consistent with the message of the text. Indeed, the narrator indicates that Eleanor's natural feelings can (and should) overcome the timidity of the bachelor Arabin:

Her sweet loving eyes were turned towards him, and she smiled softly as he answered her. The temptation was too strong even for the demure propriety of Mr. Arabin, and, bending over her, he pressed his lips to hers.¹⁴

The narrator's approach to romance in the most harsh of Trollope's Barchester series, The Small House at Allington, is also in the same muted key as the text of the novel. There is little of rhapsodic hyperbole, although there is much ironic commentary. A sense of melancholy introspection pervades the narrator's discourse and, indeed, the entire text. The conventional plot lines of romantic fiction are stretched from the outset by the early engagement of Lily Dale to Adolphus Crosbie; the subsequent unravelling of their lives, after the breaking of the engagement, occupies the entire novel. The conventions of romantic love, as well as

¹⁴ Barchester Towers, Vol. II, Ch. XLIX, p. 240.

the reader's expectations, are consistently and unrelentingly ignored.

Instead, the reader is enlisted as an accomplice in a skilful and subtle parody of existing literary convention which develops, in time, into a more complete and coherent attack on the genre than the invention and interpolation of the four fake texts in The Warden. This bleak pastoral pastiche might be subtitled "Sentiment and Sentimentality", since Trollope expands the sentimental tradition to encompass the two romantic triangles at Allington, neither of which is resolved in accordance with the expected tenets of the literary tradition. The symbolically named Lily Dale is a sentimental heroine whose passionate commitment, at once introverted and expressive, threatens to overwhelm every single character in the novel-- with the exception of the narrator.

Lillian Dale, dear Lily Dale - for my reader must know that she is to be very dear and that my story will be nothing to him if he do not love Lily Dale.¹⁵

The alert reader is made aware of ironic distance between the story-teller and his creation, and thus his active participation is demanded. The writer here is taking a conscious risk with tradition--almost tempting the reader to exasperation with the cherished heroine, before she has even had a chance to demonstrate her drawing power as the focus of the story. Trollope threatens, almost bullies, the

¹⁵ The Small House at Allington, Ch.I, p.14.

reader into laying down the book. We are peremptorily required to love Lily Dale, otherwise we will not be rewarded by our story.

The narrator's laconic assumption that the need for love must, inevitably, be destroyed by matrimony prefigures the destruction of Lily's love by the frustrated matrimonial expectations of Adolphus Crosbie. But the narrator's commentary indicates that the sentimental expectations of young ladies may contribute to their own disillusion:

There is nothing pleasanter than all this [the privileges of an accepted suitor], although a man when so treated does feel himself to look like a calf at the altar, ready for the knife, with blue ribbons round his horns and neck. Crosbie felt that he was such a calf,-- and the more calf-like, in that he had not as yet dared to ask a question about his wife's fortune.^{1*}

These images are bucolic and pastoral in imagery but the overall effect is clearly anti-romantic. The narrator and the reader are locked in ironic contemplation of Lily's folly and Crosbie's misgivings; and the reader is constantly invited to consider the implications of the rituals of courtship. Lily and Crosbie are presented, set out for observation or analysis, in a bitter-sweet romantic idyll, where the reader is permitted to know from the outset that the well is poisoned:

I think there is nothing in the world so pretty as the conscious little tricks of love played off by a girl towards the man she loves, when she has made up her mind boldly that all the world may know that she has given herself away to him . . . I am not sure that Crosbie

^{1*} ibid. Ch.VII, p.68.

liked it all as much as he should have done . . . It was the calf-like feeling that was disagreeable to him.¹⁷

The narrator's ready assumption of pagan infiltrations into the religion of the romantic plot distances the reader from the expected fictional conventions of the classic "Victorian" novel. The courtship of Lily Dale and Adolphus Crosbie becomes less a pastoral comedy and more a psychological examination of the nature of human courtship. The authorial intrusions constantly emphasize the metaphor of the hunter and the prey; the laconic voice of the narrator switches the roles between male and female, so that the reader is directed at one moment to consider The Female (disguised as Lily) as the huntress and, at another point, to see The Male (figured as Adolphus) as the marauder.

It may be objected that "darker" novels such as The Small House at Allington and The Eustace Diamonds are an easy hunting-ground for trophies of this authorial technique, but Trollope never abandoned his ironic commitment, even in the apparently sun-filled text of Framley Parsonage. Considered by the majority of critics to be the most gentle and lyrical of the Barchester Series¹⁸, and the most critically and financially successful of his early work, Framley Parsonage certainly has fewer narrative intrusions on the subject of love and romantic convention than other works. Even here,

¹⁷ ibid. Ch.IX, 92.

¹⁸ See James R. Kincaid, The Novels of Anthony Trollope (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp.113-125.

however, the convention of the final harmonious ending is ruthlessly attacked by the narrator in a lengthy commentary on the wry realities of love and marriage:

I will not say that the happiness of marriage is like the Dead Sea fruit--an apple which, when eaten, turns to bitter ashes in the mouth. Such pretended sarcasm would be very false.¹⁹

Having established that the narrator is indeed an honourable man, Trollope introduces the balanced qualifier:

Nevertheless, is it not the fact that the sweetest morsel of love's feast has been eaten. . . when the ceremony at the altar has been performed and legal possession has been given? There is an aroma of love, an indefinable delicacy of flavour, which escapes and is gone before the church portal is left, vanishing with the maiden name, and incompatible with the solid comfort appertaining to the rank of wife.²⁰

The dulcet brutality of the tone and imagery, the suggestion of commercial exchange married to the appeal to sweet reason, must, particularly when read aloud in the family circle, have raised startled eyebrows among those seeking the consolations of conventional romantic fiction.

Yet the popularity of Framley Parsonage established Trollope as a critical and financial success. The novel appeared in Cornhill Magazine (which had commenced publication under Thackeray's editorship in the previous year), and helped that publication's sales reach a spectacular 100,000 copies a month. In spite of this, the reviewers, with

¹⁹ Framley Parsonage, Ch. XLVII4, p.575.

²⁰ ibid. p.576.

characteristic lack of perspicacity, patronized both the popularity of the novel and the perceptions of its readers:

At the beginning of every month the new number has ranked almost as one of the delicacies of the season; and no London belle dared to consider herself literary, who did not know the very latest intelligence about the state of Lucy Robarts' heart and of Griselda Grantley's flounces.²¹

What, then, is Trollope's purpose? That he wrote Framley Parsonage with a shrewd eye on the market is well documented in the Autobiography (Ch.7). By using the comic framework of romantic convention Trollope attracted a substantial readership with promises of entertainment. The narrator's conversational voice amplifies, rather than subverts, this sense of easy assurance. By encouraging the reader to take his own liberties with the world of fictional sensation, the narrator and the reader enter into a jointly-created, three-dimensional world of "realism," adjacent in the novel both to the reader's reality and the novel's conventions. It is as though the narrative intrusions create a third world, liberating simultaneously both the reader and the characters. The intervention on marriage from Framley Parsonage, for instance, leaves the characters in charge of their romantic plot, but stimulates the reader into considering the subtle distinction between the happiness of engagement and the happiness of marriage.

²¹ The Saturday Review, xi, 4 May 1861, 451 in The Critical Heritage, p.121.

What the narrator has his eye firmly set on is the essential comic mechanism which judiciously separates the absurdities and random chances of reality from the solemn predictability of contrived romantic fiction. On one level, Trollope was perfectly well aware that a strong romantic narrative line was an absolutely essential part of the novelist's responsibility to his reader to stimulate pleasure. On a parallel level, the narrator's role is divided between that of pedagogue and jesting chorus. As an admirer of Horace, Trollope knew very well that an element of instruction must accompany delight: furthermore, it was essential that a self-improving middle class should feel they were learning something, as well as being entertained. Trollope's didactic mannerisms have been well described by Juliet McMaster as those "of an accommodating lecturer"²², stimulating the reader/student to think about the propositions seductively laid before him. This persona, I suggest, divides its mask to reveal, on the one hand, an amiable instructor, and on the other a jester, more reminiscent of the Vice of the old Morality plays--the Vice whose purpose is "the translating into vivid dramatic image the habitual self-deception or blindness of mankind to the real nature of the temptations to which it succumbs".²³ The metaphors of prey

²² Juliet McMaster, Trollope's Palliser Novels: Theme and Pattern, p.208. (London: Macmillan, 1977).

²³ King Richard III, Introduction by Anthony Hammond, Arden Edition, p.100.

and sacrifice in narrative intrusions on courtship, and the tendency to treat the male as victim as well as predator, are part of this specialized function of the Narrator as Vice. Very early on in Framley Parsonage, the narrative voice dismisses all pretence of romantic elevation with a Vice-like dramatic image:

Young men in such matters [making love] are so often without any fixed thoughts! They are such absolute moths. They amuse themselves with the light of the beautiful candle, fluttering about, on and off, in and out of the flame with dazzled eyes, till in a rash moment they rush in too near the wick, and then fall with singed wings and crippled legs, burnt up and reduced to tinder by the consuming fire of matrimony.²⁴

The detached amusement of the narrative voice gives the alert reader the glimpse of a commentator who, in this mode, has as much in common with Puck--of the Vice--as he has with Arnold of Rugby.

One final intervention, which links the absurdities of courtship with the equally absurd conventions of its fictional treatment, reveals the narrator's most genial snarl:

When young ladies quarrel with their lovers it is always presumed, especially in books, that they do not wish to get them back.²⁵

Thus, far from capitulating to an inveterately bland, romantic story, the total effect of Trollope's treatment of his text is one of reconstruction--the remoulding, out of familiar materials, of a more sophisticated form of novel.

²⁴ Framley Parsonage, Ch.xx. p.195.

²⁵ Phineas Redux, Ch.LXIX, II. p.258.

In this chapter, I have tried to show the different ways in which Trollope's narrator and reader work together to exploit the comic romantic framework of a novel form, while at the same time they are relating this form to the basic assumptions the reader makes about "real" romantic conventions and those expressed in the novel. The composite mechanism based on the triangular relationship of Trollope, the narrator, and the reader, gains its effect of comic wisdom from its direct engagement with the expectations of social conventions--those assumptions which, in novels, are romanticized into plot devices and replicas of sensation. The most tempting opportunities for exponents of such novelistic devices congregate around the hero and heroine. In the following chapter I shall examine the Trollopeian method with these two fictional stereotypes.

Chapter 3

Knights Without Armour, Damsels in Modified Distress:

The Ironic Treatment of the Heroic Convention in the Barchester Novels.

The mid-Victorian image of the hero as expressed in popular painting presented the male as Arthurian knight, complete with armour, horse and banner, frequently accompanied by visionary female spirits, but rarely by a woman companion of equally heroic proportions: Sir Joseph Noel Paton's Sir Galahad's Vision of the Sangreal is a typical example which shows that these cherished images of Arthurian myth were still popular as late as 1880. As Mark Girouard demonstrates in The Return to Camelot,¹ a fashion for romantic chivalry prevailed in painting, decorative art, and in historical romantic fiction such as Kingsley's Westward Ho!. As Girouard shows, all England was by no means enthralled by the extravagances of such chivalric manifestations as the famous Eglinton tournament², but nevertheless, the image

¹ Mark Girouard, The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman (New Haven and London: Yale UP 1981).

² ibid. p.103.

of the Arthurian knight and the damsel in distress was sufficiently replicated, through book-illustration and popular prints, to become a convention against which a writer like Anthony Trollope could tilt the narrator's lance.

Trollope's obsession, throughout the series novels, with conspicuously unheroic leading men matched by decidedly livelier women, and his apparent compulsion to discuss this endlessly with his readers, must be seen partly as an impatience with the myth of chivalry. In particular, the ethereal image of the heroine presented in positions of Madonna-like receptive patience was clearly a female stereotype with which Trollope consciously wished to confront his reader, while, as an alternative, presenting a woman who was flesh-and-blood, with a sharp mind, a fair degree of wit and good judgement. Such a heroine had energy, and a consequent determination to exert control over her own identity. Given the conventions of the time--which inevitably imposed limitations on action for women--Trollope was creating a difficult problem, in that he had to construct these new Trollopeian women within a fictional framework which reflected the existing realities of the female role. This approach to the heroine involved the narrator and the reader in a fresh consideration of the heroine's role, and how she related to what the reader observed, or even experienced, in life.

Trollope's approach to the hero is equally complex. He sees his task as showing that, despite the greater freedom of action for men in society, similar pressures also acted on the idea of the hero of a novel, and thus contributed to the creation of a false image of the true man. These twin concerns are the pivot of the male and female relationships throughout the series, and Trollope begins by setting up some straw heroes drawn from other fictional models. By the time he has reached Phineas Finn (see Ch.4. pp.86-88), we shall see that Trollope is using his narrator with the total support of the fictional text to demonstrate the development of the modified hero without recourse to interpolated borrowed images.

Even as early as his apprentice blue-print of The Warden, however, Trollope gives notice of his own philosophy of character by referring unfavourably to the inventions of Charles Dickens:

[Mr. Sentiment's] good poor people are so very good; his hard rich people so very hard; and the genuinely honest so very honest. Namby-pamby in these days is not thrown away if it be introduced in the proper quarters . . . a pattern peasant or an immaculate manufacturing hero may talk as much twaddle as one of Mrs. Ratcliffe's heroines . . . If his heroes and heroines walk upon stilts, as heroes and heroines, I fear, ever must, their attendant satellites are as natural as though one met them in the street²

Here Trollope is attempting to adjust the reader's approach to the assumptions of fictional convention by showing the

² The Warden, Ch.XV, p.206.

limitations of idealized notions of "heroic" character and "good" character. The intervention strives to impose realistic limitations on the heroic plot of John Bold and Eleanor Harding, but his reservation that heroes (as well as heroines) must, "I fear", walk upon stilts is a contention which the narrator perpetually invites the reader to debate throughout the Barchester series.

A comparison of Trollope's first three Barchester novels shows his determination to limit the heroic style of the young lovers. In The Warden, Eleanor is nominally the heroine, but Trollope denies her the logical development of the heroine's role. Her final encounter (and marriage) with her hero take place outside the direct action, in the narrator's dry account simply labelled "Conclusion". This device, by working against the conventional drive of the heroine's customary role-conclusion, gives Eleanor the character of a real woman, rather than the drapery of the stilted heroine. It has the additional effect of enabling her to act as a credible linking character in Barchester Towers, where her husband, John Bold, has been killed off, and she, now the wealthy Widow Bold, can re-enter the plot in a more complex and mature style. In her reappearance, Eleanor is idealized only in her relationship with her father. With the Grantlys of Plumstead, she is seen as an obstinate liability, independently wealthy but unamenable to the proper control by a male. In her relations with Obadiah Slope, Bertie

Stanhope, and Mr. Arabin, she displays by turns gullibility, frivolity, and passion, and in coming down from the pedestal, she needs some coaching by Signora Neroni Stanhope.

Similarly, John Bold's character is never allowed to develop into the immaculate pattern hero which the narrator has derided in his Dickensian formula. The narrator's steady satire on Bold's stance as a reformer reduces any heroic stature he might attain by reason of his youth, vigour, or his romantic link with the nominal heroine. Trollope begins with a passing reference to Archdeacon Grantly's view of Bold as "the impious demagogue", but couples this with the artless description of Bold's property (a very considerable urban inheritance) and his startling lack of professional success:

At this time he was not more than twenty-four years old; and though he has now been three years in Barchester, we have not heard that he has done much harm to the nine worthy practitioners. Indeed, their dread of him has died away; for in three years he has not taken three fees.*

Immediately, the narrator's ironies alert the reader to the incongruous absurdity of a property-owning demagogue who is also an unsuccessful doctor. The narrator proceeds to dig deeper, not by attacking, but by defending Bold's reforming activities.

Having enough to live on, he has not been forced to work for bread; he has declined to subject himself to what he calls the drudgery of the profession, by which, I believe, he means the general work of a practising surgeon; and he has found other employ-

* The Warden, Ch.2.pp.13-14.

ment. . . . Now I will not say that the Archdeacon is strictly correct in stigmatising John Bold as a demagogue, for I hardly know how extreme must be a man's opinions before he can be so called; but Bold is a strong reformer. His passion is the reform of all abuses; state abuses, church abuses, corporation abuses (he has got himself elected a town councillor of Barchester, and has so worried three consecutive mayors, that it became somewhat difficult to find a fourth), abuses in medical practice, and general abuses in the world at large. Bold is thoroughly sincere in his patriotic endeavours to mend mankind, and there is something to be admired in the energy with which he devotes himself to remedying evil and stopping injustice; but I fear that he is too much imbued with the idea that he has a special mission for reforming. It would be well if one so young had a little more diffidence himself, and more trust in the honest purposes of others - if he could be brought to believe that old customs need not necessarily be evil, and that changes may possibly be dangerous; but no; Bold has all the ardour and all the self-assurance of a Danton, and hurls his anathemas against time-honoured practices with the violence of a French Jacobin.⁵

The narrator's technique here gradually establishes Bold's character, background and motives as seen through the eyes of other characters. Bold is placed centre-stage as the quintessential Victorian fictional hero: self-sufficient, high-minded, and passionately concerned for the general benefit of society.

The narrator's apparently personal interpolations, within his general flow of narrative comment, convey a sense of immediacy; the narrator comments on his characters in the present tense of their fictional lives. Such interjections as "we have not heard that he has done much harm" and "by which,

⁵ The Warden, Ch.2, pp.15-16.

I believe, he means the general work of a practising surgeon" apply a lightly ironic gloss to the armour of the reforming hero. The narrator is swift in his retraction of the Archdeacon's reactionary judgement: "Now I will not say that the Archdeacon is strictly correct . . ." represents the reliable, balanced narrator's own deprecation of the Archdeacon's intemperate exaggeration. This is coupled here with the suggestion that there might be a grain of truth buried in his hyperbole.

Trollope's technique retards the progress of the heroic legend of John Bold--sincere, patriotic, energetic town councillor, scourge of complacent office-seeking mayors--and reveals him finally in the tarnished armour of a well-meaning, self-important zealot. If the reader might be alienated, the genuine account of Bold's good intentions and the gently humorous treatment of the Barchester Establishment alleviate the narrator's irony. This is reinforced by the final personal comment, "I fear that he is too much imbued with the idea that he has a special mission for reforming." The style and tense of the narrator's interventions convey to the reader a sense of actuality, of the agreement that abuses exist and should be reformed, and the hint that John Bold's particular brand of heroism might be more effective if it were not so comfortably self-serving.

Nevertheless, the narrator immediately moves to link his

modified hero to the idealized heroic couple of The Warden. Mr. Harding is John Bold's friend. His daughter Eleanor, we are told firmly, is in love with this Barchester Danton and the narrator's recommendation gently invites the reader to supply his own ironic gloss if he so desires:

Nor is there any reason why Eleanor Harding should not love John Bold. He has all those qualities which are likely to touch a girl's heart. He is brave, eager, and amusing; well-made and good-looking; young and enterprising; his character is in all respects good; he has sufficient income to support a wife; he is her father's friend; and, above all he is in love with her. Then why should not Eleanor Harding be attached to John Bold?"

Here, in microcosm, is not only the description of John Bold, but also the narrator's ironic assumption of what a fictional hero is required to be like. Any susceptible young heroine of a novel (or a susceptible female reader?) will naturally be supposed to love one who has all the correct romantic virtues. But Trollope's final rhetorical question warns the reader that, despite all these laudable heroic qualities, this piece of "real" fiction is going to limit the idealization of the love between hero and heroine. The narrator's matter-of-fact dispatch of the Bold/Eleanor marriage in the Conclusion again reduces the entire relationship to the status of something that happens in novels. John Bold will expire in the unwritten fictional world that continues between chronicles of The Warden and chronicles of Barchester Towers. When Eleanor does reappear, the narrator

merely comments piously that she is "now, alas, a widow." She is thus presented as a mature secondary character who no longer burdens herself, or the narrator, with the trailing expectations of the heroine.

Introducing Eleanor's second love-object, Trollope does not even pretend that Mr. Arabin should aspire to heroic stature. In his case, the narrative comments depict a character of such flawed complexity that the narrator interrupts his own intervention to counter the reader's assumed disapproval:

And here, may I beg the reader not to be harsh in his judgement on this man. Is not that state at which he arrived, the natural efforts to reach that which is not the condition of humanity?"

Here the narrator mediates on behalf of Arabin, who is demonstrated to be a clergyman with all the intellectual vacillation of an agnostic, and all the human envy and loneliness of an old maid. The technique of the chapter on Mr. Arabin looks forward to the treatment of mixed leading characters in the Palliser series. Trollope will place his character in a solitary situation of crisis and self-examination, and he will balance the character's reported internal voice with the narrator's ironic comments to the reader. Trollope, I would argue, feels instinctively that he can risk this technique with Arabin because he has not been forced to establish him as "hero", and he has allowed Arabin's partner,

" Barchester Towers, Ch.XX, p.196.

Eleanor, to acquire, over time, greater reality, thus to emerge, as she does, from the chrysalis of "the heroine".

Yet in Barchester Towers this authorial stance was not permanently set, and even in the subsequent novels there are still problems to be solved. Dr. Thorne demonstrates a conflict between what Trollope had begun to achieve with the combined chronicles of The Warden and Barchester Towers, and what his perception was of his readers' uncertain tastes and requirements. In Dr. Thorne, the narrator debates openly with the reader about the idea of the hero and heroine who must, by some received notions of decorum, dominate a novel. This was the only plot which Trollope did not develop himself: it was sketched out for him by his brother Thomas Adolphus Trollope, and can rightly be criticized for a certain fanciful incredibility. However, the narrative intrusions on hero and heroine demonstrate the author's reluctance to give in to the traditional requirements of the fictional form which convention, reinforced by a borrowed plot, is imposing on him.

In the famously lengthy introductory chapters of Dr. Thorne, Trollope warns the reader about "the modest country medical practitioner who is to be the chief personage of the following tale," and about Frank Gresham who "would have been the hero of our tale had not that place been preoccupied by the village doctor." He declines to use the word "hero" for Dr. Thorne, and he is determined to advise the reader

that the assumed romantic lead, Frank Gresham, can never aspire to that rank. The charming audacity with which writer informs reader of the pre-ordained disposition of his chief male characters, is simultaneously compounded and attacked by the careless challenge which Trollope then throws down:

As it is, those who please may so regard him. It is he who is to be our favourite young man, to do the love scenes, to have his trials and difficulties, and to win through them or not, as the case may be. I am too old now to be a hard-hearted author, and so it is probable that he may not die of a broken heart. Those who don't approve of a middle-aged bachelor country doctor as a hero, may take the heir to Greshamsbury in his stead, and call the book, if it so please them. 'The Loves and Adventures of Francis Newbold Gresham the younger.'

This invitation to "write-your-own-hero" challenges the conventions, and invites judgement and decision from the reader on how he approaches novels in general, and this novel in particular. Frank Gresham assumes the lineaments of a pleasant professional actor who might be hired from an agency advertising "Personable Young Men (Hero-Type), Love Scenes a Speciality, Excellent Horseman, Can Dance a Little". If that is what the reader requires in a novel, then, advises the kindly old story-teller, this reading is available, but be warned, the reader is then creating a different kind of book with a suitably windy, slightly eighteenth-century title. The reader will know from the outset that the hero will not die of a broken heart, although this may be all that the book is about.

Trollope thus warns his reader that his novel has one plot line with a partially predictable, unsentimental ending, but that there is no heroic hero. Having effectively sabotaged other fictional conventions, having apparently revealed the plot of the novel (and placed his own juvenile lead in an unlit corner well downstage), Trollope begins Chapter 2 by dropping the fig-leaf entirely.

As Dr. Thorne is our hero - or I should rather say my hero, a privilege of selecting for themselves in this respect being left to all my readers - and as Miss Mary Thorne is to be our heroine, a point on which no choice whatsoever is left to anyone⁹

Mary Thorne is the heroine, as Trollope somewhat ungraciously allows, but later intrusions indicate his discomfort even with the novelistic conception of heroine:

Of her personal appearance it certainly is my business as an author to say something. She is my heroine, and, as such, must necessarily be very beautiful; but, in truth, her mind and inner qualities are more clearly distinct to my brain than her form and features. I know that she was far from being tall and far from being showy . . . and, quiet as she was in manner . . . she could talk, when the fit came on her, with an energy [which] was occasionally a concentration of passion, which left her for the moment perfectly unconscious of all other cares but solicitude for the subject which she might then be advocating.¹⁰

The interesting effect of this highly artificial intrusion is to dispose of the "beautiful heroine" of the conventional novel. Trollope can then present the reader with a genuinely intelligent woman whose depth of character is immediately as

⁹ Dr. Thorne, Ch. II, p. 19.

¹⁰ Dr. Thorne, Ch. III, p. 46.

appealing to the reader as it is to his narrator--who clearly knows her rather well. The slightly exasperated aside, "must necessarily be very beautiful", is a crust flung to those for whom "Heroic Frank Gresham" will be going over the jumps in the promised love scenes with "Very Beautiful Heroine".

Meanwhile, those others who are interested in someone whose mind and inner qualities produce animation, concentration, and energetic commitment to ideas, can proceed with this friend of the narrator's: she is evidently going to be an interesting person to know. Thus, the narrator's intervention sets aside the conventional hero/heroine and the conventional novel, but leaves them, as it were, on ice, where a reader so disposed can safely enjoy the idea of their existence. Having made use of this convention to ensnare the imaginative escapist, the writer and his ideal reader can get inside the "real" novel which is going to be about more than love scenes, and will, perhaps, stimulate the intellect.

This Trollopeian technique of reader-education employs the narrator to set up a straw-hero and -heroine for a straw-reader. Trollope's narrator, apparently, seriously believes that his readership can divide itself, into separate segments of reader-attention, both working on the same text. This attractive suggestion is decidedly transparent in its disingenuousness to the modern reader, but to Trollope's contemporary reader, it represented a real choice. Dr. Thorne was highly successful in a way which puzzled both reviewers

and author, perhaps precisely because this split-screen technique enabled it to exert a larger appeal. Although in many ways it was an unsatisfactory novel, it did extend the Trollopeian form by providing a bridging technique between changing tastes in the reader's perceptions of, and demands from, hero figures.

With Framley Parsonage, Trollope, encouraged perhaps by the success of this new technique, is more confident about his way with heroes and heroines, and has fewer intrusions on the problems of hero selection. Nevertheless, the author still finds it necessary to remind the reader that he intends to deal with imperfect heroes, i.e. "real" characters.

I know it will be said of Lord Lufton himself, that putting aside his peerage and broad acres, and handsome, sonsy face, he was not worth a girl's care and love. That will be said because people think that heroes in books should be so much better than heroes got up for the world's common wear and tear. I may as well confess that of absolute true heroism there was only a moderate admixture in Lord Lufton's composition; but what would the world come to if none but absolute true heroes were to be thought worthy of women's love? What would the men do? and what - oh! what would become of the women?¹¹

This implies a more sophisticated approach on the part of the reader, who is assumed now to require more than a "Hero-Type (Aristocratic)". The narrator is not arguing with the reader about the superficial qualities of hero: Lord Lufton has all these. But this time, as the author probes more deeply at a more effective straw man, the narrative

¹¹ Framley Parsonage, Ch. XXI, p.251.

intervention exposes two purposes. Firstly, even though Lufton (unlike Bold, Arabin, and Gresham) has been permitted the semblance of heroic proportions, the narrator points out --horribile dictu--that even the perfect English gentleman may only have a "moderate admixture" of the genuine quality. Secondly, Lufton and Lucy must demonstrate that their hero/heroine plot is part of the "common wear and tear" and not merely a plot fit for heroes to love in.

Trollope develops his argument against the automatic assumption that heroic qualities are allied with social rank by the establishment of an "Alternative Heroine" in the character of Griselda Grantly:

She was decidedly a beauty, but somewhat statuesque in her loveliness. . . . Her mouth too was very fine - artists, at least, said so, and connoisseurs in beauty; but to me she always seemed as though she wanted fullness of lip . . . There can be no doubt, however, that she was considered by most men and women to be the beauty of Barsetshire . . . But to tell the truth openly and at once - a virtue for which a novelist does not receive very much commendation - Griselda Grantly was, to a certain extent, already given away . . . [she] was to become Lady Lufton.¹²

Here the narrative intrusion sends coded signals to the reader that this classic heroine, despite universal applause, is not to be the novelist's choice. Trollope's narrator chooses not to discuss the heroine with the reader in the didactic mode, but to beguile and mislead by apparent transparency. It is, after all, only the narrator who thinks her cold and stately; furthermore, speaking very frankly, he

¹² Framley Parsonage, Ch. XI, pp. 131-133.

confesses that she is already marked for Lufton, and he claims--by inference--praise for his honesty in letting the reader in on this secret of pre-writing. Again, the action of the narrator serves to establish a reality outside the fictional text over which the author has absolutely no control--even when, as in this case, he disagrees with what has been arranged. This nice piece of narrative duplicity is perfectly defensible since Griselda is not only beautiful and heroine-like, but we have known her since she was a young girl at Plumstead Episcopi in Barchester Towers.

In the "real" world which has been going on between the narrator's despatches, what could be more credible than that Mrs. Grantly and Lady Lufton should have arranged the betrothal of their heroically reared offspring? The reader would almost be justified in being totally misled, for the narrator has been careful not to describe Lucy Robarts as his heroine. Lucy, in fact, only appears fleetingly in the early chapters, and then disappears entirely for over 100 pages until the narrator consents to bring her forward:

And now I must say a word about Lucy Robarts. If one might only go on without those descriptions how pleasant it would all be! But Lucy Robarts has to play a forward part in this little drama, and those who care for such matters must be made to understand something of her form and likeness.¹³

Again, the narrator's expressed reluctance to describe the physical appearance of the heroine draws attention to the

¹³ Framley Parsonage, Ch.X, p.116.

artificial form of the accepted fictional process. This reflects Trollope's determination not to designate Lucy in terms which the reader will immediately presume to be heroine-like, and accentuates his fidelity to his own realism, in which character shows itself to the reader by actions and dialogue over extended time. The actions of the narrator point towards a technique which consistently demands reader-involvement in the perception of character, and, indeed of appearance. In other words, the reader will know what the heroine "is like" by the time he has read to the end of the story and has followed her actions through adventure and vicissitude.

In the fragmented description of Lucy which the narrator permits, the reader is allowed to discover, through the overheard observations of neighbours, that Lucy lacks the beauty and talents of her sisters, but has fine teeth (rarely seen), and brilliant eyes. The narrator, however, is deliberately vague on the vital conventional question of the colour of these eyes:

And who shall say of what colour they were? Green, probably, for most eyes are green - green or grey, if green be thought uncomely for an eye-colour.¹⁴

This "paint-your-own-heroine" technique reinforces Trollope's elaborate resistance to the expected novelistic heroine, and shows a stubborn determination to make the reader work at a joint commitment to this kind of fictional construction.

¹⁴ Framley Parsonage, Ch. X, p.118.

Nevertheless, Lord Lufton and Lucy Robarts are the closest that he will come to the convention of a love affair between novelistic hero and heroine as main plot.

In The Small House at Allington, Trollope turned away, surely with deliberation, from heroes and heroines "on stilts." Lily Dale, Adolphus Crosbie, and Johnny Eames are presented to the reader as mixed leading characters tout court, already locked in a mismanaged triangular relationship in the early chapters. Lily is not even as beautiful as her sister Bell, whom Crosbie had indeed fancied first. Crosbie, though handsome, is mocked both as a "swell" and as one whom the reader may describe if he wishes, as a "clerk". Meanwhile, Johnny Eames comes riding into town "with his gloves in his top pocket, but without his spurs". These three characters are presented almost defiantly, warts and all, although the narrator does warn his reader ruefully that Lily must be "very dear" or "my story will be nothing". The narrator is, however, clearly eager to enlist sympathy from the reader for the unheroic figure of Johnny Eames:

Such observations, however, as I have been enabled to make on this matter have led me to believe that the hobbledehoy is by no means the least valuable species of the human race. . . . though he blushes when women address him, and is uneasy even when he is near them, - [he] is the most eloquent of human beings.¹⁴

Eames' heroic plot possibilities are truncated immediately

¹⁴ The Small House at Allington, Ch. IV, pp. 33-34.

after this introduction by his inability to play the role of melancholy hero:

He had already abandoned the flute on which he had learned to sound three sad notes before he left Guest-wick, and, after the fifth or sixth Sunday, he had relinquished his solitary walks along the towing-path of the Regent's Park Canal. To think of one's absent love is very sweet; but it becomes monotonous after a mile or two of a towing-path, and the mind will turn away to Aunt Sally, the Cremorne Gardens, and financial questions. I doubt whether any girl would be satisfied with her lover's mind if she knew the whole of it.¹⁵

The narrator's determination to demythologize John Eames's heroic stature is nicely balanced by his refusal to "villainize" Adolphus Crosbie. The narrator's frequent interventions during the courtship tend towards the defence of Crosbie's position, and criticism of Lily's wayward impulses and "heroic" qualities:

And let it be remembered that very many who can devote themselves for great sacrifices, cannot bring themselves to the endurance of little injuries. Lily could have given up any gratification for her lover, but she could not allow herself to have been in the wrong, believing herself to have been in the right.¹⁶

It is assumed that reader and narrator hold Lily to be "very dear", and the narrator makes no attempt to mitigate her actions by an appeal to the reader's expectations of a heroine in a novel. Fear of the reader's impatience is confined to the narrator's pet--John Eames--who is shown to have taken too much from literature and not enough from life.

¹⁵ The Small House at Allington, Ch.IV, p.39.

¹⁶ Ibid., Ch.XII, p.140.

You will declare that he must have been a fool and a coward. Yet he could read and understand Shakespeare. He knew much, - by far too much, - of Byron's poetry by heart. . . . he would have thought it the greatest blessing in the world to be shut up in a room with Crosbie, having permission to fight with him till one of them should have been forced by stress of battle to give up his claim to Lily Dale. Eames was no coward. He feared no man on earth. But he was terribly afraid of Amelia Roper.¹⁷

The narrator, in defending Eames, slices away at the romantic vision of chivalric duels and poetic love, which both Eames and the reader may be thought to entertain. The diminished hero becomes a linking figure, pointing outwards to the next despatch from the front.

In The Last Chronicles of Barchester, the mature unheroic plots of Lily/Crosbie/Eames spin themselves out. The passionate Lily is now determined to write O.M. (Old Maid) after her name. Crosbie is a fat, dull, middle-aged civil servant. Johnny, however, at last assumes the plumes of the paladin, and, appropriately enough, journeys to Jerusalem, to get the evidence from the Widow Bold which will clear the Reverend Crawley. He does this partly for natural justice--a genuinely heroic action--and partly to impress Lily, Grace Crawley's dearest friend. Of course, as a ploy to win the lady, it is a failure. His heroic journey exists in its own integrity, not as part of a novelistic device likely to satisfy those readers who inundated Trollope with letters demanding the marriage of Eames to Lily. The characters

¹⁷ The Small House at Allington, Ch.XIV, p.148.

remain consistent with their development over two dense novels, and there will be no artificial happy ending to wrench them out of their consistency.

With The Last Chronicle, we are on a different level from the Allington novel, back to the world of community scandal, theological storms, the unlikely "McGuffin" of the missing cheque, and the long drama of the wealthy suitor and the poor, but pretty, young lady. If the reader is forced to choose a hero and heroine for The Last Chronicle, he is unlikely to settle on Henry Grantly and Grace Crawley, but may incline seriously towards the Reverend and Mrs. Crawley or, more perversely, towards Bishop and Mrs. Proudle. This reader-reaction reflects the change in technique between the Barchester and the Palliser series.

What Trollope has effectively achieved between The Warden and The Last Chronicle of Barset is the redirecting of the reader's expectations about the importance of heroes, heroines, and love in a novel. The focus of interest has moved gradually away from the plot-line of the young lovers, whose diminished "heroic" status contributes to the draining away of emotional intensity from their predicament. Parallel with this sense of diminuendo in the conventional couple, is a crescendo of steady concentration on the heroic qualities in married love (or their absence) in almost every other couple in the novel. The fictional exploration of the traumatic survival of the Crawleys, or the pathos of the

mutual self-destruction of the Proudles, becomes an infinitely more rewarding discussion between narrator and reader. Having employed the narrator to encourage the reader to think differently about heroes, heroines, and the kind of heroic love available to the reader of fiction throughout the Barchester series, Trollope will pursue this more profound examination of relationships under stress in the Pallisers.

In this chapter I have shown how Trollope repeatedly reminds his readers, through narrative intrusions, that heroes and heroines do not exist in his novels any more than they exist in real life. In the Barchester series these intrusions loom large, because the narrator is constantly discussing with the reader the presumed idea of romance and heroism and because, until The Small House at Allington, a notional hero and heroine are presented, with greater or lesser degrees of writerly reluctance, as integral to the demands of the reader of novels. By the time the Palliser series appear Trollope, and perhaps his readers, are more comfortable with the idea of mixed principal characters, and so the narrator discusses the nature of heroism less directly. His commentary is shared with the reader through the medium of the protagonist's internal monologue, or through the thoughts of other characters. The shared focus of attention concentrates on the actions of the characters as flawed individuals in inter-locking situations.

This development reflects a progression through Barchester and Palliser from the apparently realistic novel, in which a hero and heroine have somewhat idealized characters, while supporting characters are treated in a wholly realistic way, to the genuine realism of mixed characters--or even somewhat unsympathetic ones--throughout a novel. This is an uneven and complex process. It cannot be traced as an unbroken linear development throughout the two series. As we have seen, there are traces of Trollope's awareness of the problem as early as The Warden, and a major intervention on the question of heroes will appear as late as The Eustace Diamonds. Nevertheless, I would argue, the general trend is perceptible both in Trollope's delineation of character and in his narrator's attitude towards both the characters and his readers' expectations. In the following chapter I shall consider Trollope, the narrator, and the reader, grappling with the problems posed by this further development of the Trollopeian argument-in-fiction.

Chapter 4

Unlikely Suitors, Thoughtful Brides:

The Narrator's Approach to the Marital Dilemma

In the Palliser Novels

With Can You Forgive Her?, Trollope embarks on the chronicle of Plantagenet and Glencora Palliser, whose marriage, constructed unwillingly on dynastic principles, he will present in harshly realistic terms. Having established in the final books of the Barchester series a relationship between narrator and reader which permitted him to expand the boundaries of the comic romantic form, Trollope began to set himself further challenges with the Pallisers--in effect, to see how far he could go in opening up the entertaining novel as a vehicle for serious debate on individual psychology and relationships, and to find ways of doing this, without losing his popular readership or gaining a reputation for bad taste.

These were serious risks for an author interested in selling his wares to a family readership: to avoid these traps was in itself a challenge--not one based on cupidity or timidity, but one purely literary in character. The characters and plot of all the Palliser novels, when reduced to the lowest matter-of-fact description, seem like a chart for a

mid-Victorian minefield of shibboleth and prejudice. Having used the narrator/reader relationship to adjust the fictional conventions in the Barchester series, Trollope began to use this relationship to change the reader's expectations of how social conventions could be discussed in fiction.

Alice Vavasour, she whom we are asked to forgive, is introduced as one who, by contemporary standards, is neither very young nor very beautiful. She has made one ill-judged engagement, and now has cold feet about a second, ostensibly acceptable, one. The narrator uses the opportunity, not to discuss or defend his fictional heroine qua heroine, but to discuss with the reader the dilemma she faces.

People often say that marriage is an important thing, and should be thought of much in advance . . . I am not sure, however, that marriage may not be pondered over too much; . . . I am inclined to believe that most men and women take their lots as they find them, marrying as the birds do by force of nature . . . That Alice Vavasour had thought too much about it, I feel quite sure. . . . What should a woman do with her life? There had arisen around her a flock of learned ladies asking the question, to whom it seems the proper answer has never yet occurred. Fall in love, marry the man, have two children, and live happily ever afterwards. I maintain that answer has as much wisdom in it as any other that can be given . . . A woman's life is as important to her, - as is that of a man to him, - not chiefly in regard to that which she shall do with it. The chief thing for her to look to is the manner in which that something shall be done.²

The narrator's insouciant suggestion that marriage is purely an answer to instinctive, primeval bonding--not something on which a thinking woman should expend too much morbid energy--

² Can You Forgive Her?, Ch. IX, pp.109-110.

is an effective counterploy to introduce Alice's neurosis and the heavily ironic treatment of the fledgling women's movement. (The humour of the narrator's advice tends to be ignored by modern feminist critics, who, oddly, also have a tendency to look no further than the words "ever afterwards".)² The narrator goes on to insist, without gender qualification, that it is not what a character does--or even with whom--that signifies, but the spirit in which the action is executed. Meanwhile, the narrator indicates that in strictly real contemporary time, Alice is asking herself the wrong questions. If she is thus, unintelligently, wasting both her time, and that of the reader, should we indeed forgive her? The narrator and reader must consider the source of Alice's ideas, which, the narrator implies, have become subsumed into the contemporary "cause" of women's emancipation:

She would have liked, I think, to have been the wife of the leader of a Radical opposition, in the time when such men were put in prison, and to have kept up for him his seditious correspondence while he lay in the Tower. She would have carried the answers to him inside her stays, - and have made long journeys down into northern parts without any money, if the cause required it. She would have liked to have around her ardent spirits, male or female, who would have talked of 'the cause', and have kept alive in her some flame of political fire."

The narrator suggests that Alice's romantic notions are

² See Kate Flint's Introduction to Can You Forgive Her?, p.xviii.

² Can You Forgive Her?, Ch.XI, p.111

referred impressions from fiction--from historical romances of Jacobite or French Revolutionary flavour in which she figures as a heroine (but, the reader notes, as a married heroine, with the offending husband tucked safely away in a White Bastille). The apparently tentative note of suggestion in the narrative intrusion conveys the effect of Alice's confusion: she is attracted towards "heroic" activity and repelled by the quiet scholarly life of the apparently unheroic John Grey. Vavasour's efforts to become a Member of Parliament appear to be more "active" and noble, and it is only the realization that he is physically repellent to her that forces her to re-examine her dilemma.

The narrator plays a delicate game with the reader in conveying the confusion and despair which leads to Alice's self-knowledge:

How am I to analyze her mind, and make her thoughts and feelings intelligible to those who may care to trouble themselves with the study?

The intervention comes immediately before Alice's internal argument on the heroic activities which she will perform for her cousin's political career; in effect, she will endure anything for him, including bankruptcy, except marry him. When Alice's anguish has been described, the narrator steps in to enquire:

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 the 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 must also forgive her before we close the book, or else my story will have been told amiss."

By these disingenuous questions, the narrator involves the reader in Alice's moral dilemma, and requires him to step outside conventional notions of heroic behaviour in fiction. Have Alice's actions and internal argument convinced the reader to make a sensitive judgement, or does he wish to reserve his position until he learns more? The reader's silent answer, understood by the narrator, is that until we see how Alice acts in future we cannot make a judgement: the narrative intervention cuts into the frivolity of fiction, cuts Alice down to real-life human size, and impels the reader onwards towards the point where he will have made up his own mind. The light irony of "delicate reader" invites us to consider whether our own responses are conditioned by "fictional" notions of how the heroine of a novel should behave, or whether we should acknowledge the realities of human attraction and repulsion.

Trollope refers to the story in his mind because the plot was derived from an early play script The Noble Jilt-- but the effect on the reader is, once again, to convey the effect of an actual happening, which could have occurred to anyone whom he might know. What would his advice and judgement be to Alice, in real life, if she were his cousin? And

so the reader is encouraged by the intervention not to abandon judgement in fictional fantasy or easy moralizing, but to identify his own position, and to participate in the resolution before the end of Alice's story.

It is important to remember that the main theme of Can You Forgive Her? is the difficulties of human sexuality. This was a subject which, for the general Trollope reader and the subscribers to Mudie's Circulating Library, of necessity had to be approached with tact and sensitivity. The courtship of a widow, Mrs. Greenow; the childless marriage of Plantagenet and Glencora; the swings of repulsion and attraction which Alice experiences for Vavasour and John Grey are all, in their different ways, almost clinical studies of the pivotal nature of sexual relations. The orchestrating voice of the narrator constantly reminds the reader of the joint complexity of each couple: none is remotely heroic, each is life-size; individually they share weaknesses and delusions. The development of all these non-heroes is determined by small acts of unselfish honesty which evolve towards achievements of joint heroism. Those who have been initially presented as Byronic heroes, George Vavasour and Burgo Fitzgerald, are reduced gradually by the narrator to isolated figures of indeterminate malice. As Vavasour struggles through the storm on the mountains, after striking his sister, the narrator intervenes to emphasize, not his Gothic evil, but his abject weakness:

Wearily and wretchedly he plodded on. A man may be very weary in a walk such as that, and yet by no means wretched. Tired, hungry, cold and nearly penniless, I have sat me down and slept among the mountain tracks,-- have slept because nature refused to allow longer wakefulness. But my heart has been as light as my purse. . . . What are ten miles of walk to a young man, even though the rain be falling and the ways be dirty? . . . His sister Kate would have thought nothing of the distance. But George stopped on his way . . . cursing the misfortune that had brought him to such a pass.*

The narrator effectively sketches a comparative miniature of Kate's (and the narrator's) toughness which diminishes any grandeur of villainy which Vavasour might have garnered: he is reduced to a complaining weakling who is unable to live with the consequences of his own actions.

Similarly, Burgo the beautiful "hero" is placed under a window gazing up at Glencora: a perfectly constructed piece of romantic fictional territory:

Then he stood there, leaning back upon the railings, and looking up at Lady Glencora's windows. What did he expect to see? Or was, he in truth, moved by love of that kind which can take joy in watching the slightest shadow that is made by the one loved object. . . . Such love as that is, I think, always innocent. Burgo Fitzgerald did not love like that. I almost doubt whether he can be said to have loved at all. . . . But as for seeing her shadow, unless its movement indicated some purpose in his favour,-- I do not think that he cared much about that. And why then was he there? Because in his unreasoning folly he did not know what step to take, or what step not to take. There are men whose energies hardly ever carry them beyond looking for the thing they want. She might see him from the window, and come to him. I do not say that he thought it would be so. I fancy that he never thought at all about that or about anything. If you lie under a tree, and open your mouth a plum may fall into it. It was probably an undefined idea of some such chance as this . . . that, and a feeling . . . of lingering romance that he was

better there, out in the night-air, under the gas lamps, than he could be elsewhere.⁷

The narrator mocks the idea of the troubadour, of the grand passion, of the maudlin fantasies of unrequited love ~~between~~ the dashing scapegrace and the beautiful, unhappily married woman. Burgo, a pleasant, lazy cipher, is a victim of his own romantic fantasies and, "As the plum did not drop into his mouth" he feels cold, goes home, and breakfasts off pâté-de-foie-gras while reading a French novel.

The narrator's hints that literature promotes unsatisfactory notions of heroism are given free rein in The Eustace Diamonds: Lizzie Eustace is perpetually retiring to the rocks of her Scottish castle to read Queen Mab and The Corsair. In reality, her energies are devoted, not to Bohemian romanticism, but to the pursuit of wealth, rank, and position--all of which are to be attained through marriage. In The Eustace Diamonds, Trollope was consciously attempting a "sensational" novel in the manner of Wilkie Collins (even the title is reminiscent of The Moonstone) but, instead of foreign agents and exotic-Oriental infusions, he confines himself to raffish racing society and mock Scottish romanticism. His narrator reverts to the problems of the choice of hero and heroine again as though he is experiencing some difficulty with the form of fiction.

Although the first two chapters of this new history have been devoted to the fortunes and personal attributes of

⁷ Can You Forgive Her?, Vol.II, Ch.LXVI, p.264.

Lady Eustace, the historian begs his readers not to believe that that opulent and aristocratic Becky Sharp is to assume the dignity of heroine in the forthcoming pages. That there shall be any heroine the historian will not take upon himself to assert; but if there be a heroine, that heroine shall not be Lady Eustace . . . Nor does the chronicler dare to put forward Lucy Morris as a heroine. The real heroine, if it be found possible to arrange her drapery for her becomingly, and to put that part which she enacted into properly heroic words, shall stalk in among us at some considerably later period of the narrative, when the writer shall have accustomed himself to the flow of words, and have worked himself up to a state of mind fit for the reception of noble acting and noble speaking. In the meantime let it be understood that poor little Lucy Morris was a governess in the house of old Lady Fawn, when our beautiful young widow established herself in Mount Street.*

What is the effect of this extraordinary interpolation? The narrator is disguised as a historian writing an interesting form called "new history"; there might be a heroine of these documents, but he knows it will not be Lady Eustace. Nor does the historian (now known as a chronicler) dare to suggest that Lucy Morris is a suitable heroine. There may be a dea ex machina later, promises the writer, but only when he has a sufficiently artistic inspiration to describe what role this creation played--past tense--in the account.

Trollope is grappling again with the notions of fictional decorum and social convention, and the expectations of readers about what sort of a heroine and what kind of a novel they are involved in. Neither Lizzie Eustace nor Lucy Morris is quite going to conform to the notional ideas of heroine which the reader may be supposed to entertain.

* The Eustace Diamonds, Ch.III, p.19.

Contrary to his usual professions of candour, the narrator throws in a red herring, which looks suspiciously like the ghost of Griselda Grantly. The idea of the noble heroine, if not the noble jilt, still seems to be troubling his conscience. The confusion of the narrator's role and the switching of tenses displays Trollope's uncertainty with his form; a certain exasperation with the straitjacket of conventions infiltrates the narration. This sense of doubt is still plaguing the narrator when he comes to the equally vexed question of his unheroic male lead:

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 . . . And so also has the reading world taught itself to like best the characters of all but divine men and women . . . With whom are we to sympathise? says the reader, who not unnaturally imagines that heroes should be heroic. O, 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 to your hospitable table, how many heroes are there sitting at your board? . . . In those delineations of life and character which we call novels a similarly superlative vein is required . . . We cannot have heroes to dine with us. There are none. And were those heroes to be had, we should not like them . . . The persons whom you cannot care for in a novel, because they are so bad, are the very same that you dearly love in your life, because they are so good.*

This startling attack by the writer on the hypocrisy of social and fictional conventions is mitigated by the heavily evangelistic tone of the narrator. Preaching to the reader a sermon on self-delusion, Trollope allies himself with a

* The Eustace Diamonds, CH.XXXV, pp.318-320.

gallery of improving figures--"teachers, leaders, legislators, spiritual pastors, and masters"--whose authority is summoned up to support³ the narrator's argument with the reader about the educational merits of his unheroic hero.

A picture of surpassing god-like nobleness, - a picture of a King Arthur among men, may perhaps do much. But such pictures cannot do all.¹⁰

Having created an entire cast of unappealing characters for The Eustace Diamonds, Trollope gives a strong impression of one who is anticipating criticism on all sides for a novel of cynical depravity, and who, in defence, has taken on the mantle of Thackeray's preacher-narrator. Since he had a shrewd appreciation of the likely reactions of his audience, his precautionary treatment was well received. The critics responded in flattering terms:

There is much not only to amuse, but to learn from, in The Eustace Diamonds, if people will accept the conduct of most of its actors as a warning; nor does Mr. Trollope formally put one of them forward in any other light. He only paints society as it shows itself to him.¹¹

In his Autobiography, Trollope conceded that The Eustace Diamonds had achieved popularity where Phineas Finn had failed, although he makes it clear that he thought Phineas Finn and Phineas Redux to be superior works. Although nearly five years separated the publication (and The Eustace Diamonds restored his popularity in between) Trollope

¹⁰ The Eustace Diamonds, Ch.XXXV, p.320.

¹¹ Saturday Review, 16 November 1872, xxxiv, 637-8 in The Critical Heritage, p.376.

considered the two works to be parts of a single novel. The same effort, and conclusion, may be extended to The Prime Minister and The Duke's Children--the final two volumes of the series.

While The Eustace Diamonds may be considered Trollope's "fling" at the "sensational" novel, in the chronicle of Phineas Finn he consolidates the approach to the fictional form which the narrator and reader have been working to establish in previous novels. Trollope's narrator feels no need to discuss the status of Phineas as hero; he will be simply "the hero of the following pages" as though the narrator, and his readers, now accept as a given quality the prominence of a flawed character as protagonist. The tone is more sure; at moments of debate and crisis, the narrator does not comment on the hero's status, but suggests to the reader what he "thinks" about his human foibles:

When making this resolution, I think he must have forgotten much that he had learned of his friend's character; and by making it, I think that he showed also that he had not learned as much as his opportunities might have taught him. He knew Lady Laura's obstinacy of purpose, he knew her devotion to her brother, and he knew also how desirous she had been that her brother should win Violet Effingham for himself. This knowledge should, I think, have sufficed to show him how improbable it was that Lady Laura should assist him in his enterprise. But beyond all this was the fact,-- a fact as to the consequences of which Phineas was himself entirely blind, beautifully ignorant,-- that Lady Laura had once condescended to love him herself.¹²

¹² Phineas Finn, Vol. II, Ch. XXXIX, p. 10.

This narrative comment, while it shares with the reader incredulity at Phineas' lack of tact, also shows understanding of his lack of cunning and vanity; it invites the reader to consider the evidence for himself, reminding him that he knows only one more piece of information than Phineas. It thus frees the character of Phineas from any sense of authorial manipulation; it is entirely "realistic" that Phineas should not have known that Laura had loved him or to have realized the bitterness this has caused. The narrator's intrusion, artificial in itself, paradoxically brings greater realism to the character and involves the reader in his mental processes. At the same time, it places the character on the same level as the reader with Phineas' status as hero only implied for fictional convenience. In the reality shared between the narrator and the reader, he is the same admixture of hope, foolishness, and ignorance which the reader can identify with as his own reality.

In this way, narrator and reader can afford to share a joke at the expense of the hero, which a reader might not care to accept if the narrator were to aim his comment directly. When Phineas goes to see the charming Marie Goesler, the narrator comments disarmingly:

It is not, I think, surprising that a man when he wants sympathy in such a calamity as that which had now befallen Phineas Finn, should seek it from a woman. Women sympathise most effectually with men, as men do with women. But it is, perhaps, a little odd that a man when he wants consolation because his heart has been broken, always likes to receive it from a pretty woman. One would be disposed to think that at such a moment he

would be profoundly indifferent to such a matter, that no delight could come to him from female beauty, and that all he would want would be the softness of a simply sympathetic soul.¹²

The knowing tone of general good humour again equates Phineas' distinctly less than heroic stance with the reader's world. The reader can recognise that Phineas' reaction is much the same as his own would be: the realistic hero reacts as he would react; the narrator enables him to indulge in sympathetic amusement without moral condemnation.

One of the fortuitous side-effects of the diminished hero is the greater freedom this device allows the writer to show extended time. Because Phineas appears by the end of Phineas Finn to have failed, both politically and socially, Trollope can afford to leave the novel open-ended, pointing onwards towards "The Further Adventures of P. Finn". A triumphant hero in a riot of orange blossom, bay leaves, and laurel is in a difficult position when it comes to the encore, but a semi-failure can always be called upon again to see if matters have improved. Trollope commented in his Autobiography that novelists generally considered the account of a hero or heroine to be complete at the point of marriage; he, in contrast, was interested in the problems set by progressive change. The role of his narrator in relationship to the hero and heroine is thus crucial in putting before the reader those small realities which anchor his protagonists in

¹² Phineas Finn, Vol.2, Ch.LIV, p.144.

real time and real manners. The narrator's commentary acts as a kind of brake on the inexorable progression of the fiction --fuelled by the reader's imagination--towards heroic actions and harmonious closure for hero and heroine. The presentation of the hero as the knight sans armour is underlined by Phineas' relationship with Mary Flood Jones. In the narrator's presentation, she is a foolish lamb, ripe for the slaughter, with all the apparent attributes of an Irish Mavourneen, a print-maker's pattern heroine. The narrative intervention is, however, mined with coded signals wrapped in the arch lyricism of popular ballad, spiked with the club-man's wisdom:

Mary Flood Jones was a little girl about twenty years of age, with the softest hair in the world . . . and she was as pretty as ever she could be. She was one of those girls, so common in Ireland, whom men with tastes that way given, feel inclined to take up and devour on the spur of the moment; and when she liked her lion, she had a look about her which seemed to ask to be devoured . . . there are girls to abstain from attacking whom is, to a man of any warmth of temperament, quite impossible. They are like water when one is athirst, like plover's eggs in March, like cigars when one is out in the autumn.¹⁴

Here, says the narrator in the sub-text, is the idyllic image of the rural heroine. Is she real? Is she interesting? Is this the kind of female image, you, delicate reader, wish to have of yourself or to have portrayed approvingly in your fiction? It is, of course, attractive to men: "No one ever dreams of denying himself when such temptation comes in the

¹⁴ Phineas Finn, Ch. II, p.19.

way". The savage imagery makes direct discussion with the reader superfluous. If this is what you want in a heroine then rest assured that "our hero Phineas was not allowed to thirst in vain for a drop from the cool spring." The narrative intrusion warns the reader that there will be very little sense of progressive change with this kind of heroine and this kind of relationship. For the best part of Phineas Finn, Mary Flood Jones stays on the shelf at the print-maker's--to be brought down only for the wedding pictures.

Mary Flood Jones is the heroine in absentia, the nymph who has gone away. The mortal, flesh-and-blood women--Laura Kennedy, Violet Effingham, and Marie Goesler--have the real territory of the novel to themselves. None of the three is presented by the narrator as remotely heroine-like, yet "our hero" is, by turns, attracted to all of them, as they are to him. Trollope shows each woman, in her different ways, trying to control her emotions and the realities of her situation. Together they work to evade any sense of the manipulation of the novel towards the harmonious coupling of one male hero plus one female hero.

In his encounters with them "our hero" is, like John Bold, lightly mocked. Trollope, instead of directly addressing the reader, employs the technique he had begun with Mr. Arabin. He appears to share Phineas' internalized rationale of a distinctly un-Arthurian pose.

[Lady Laura] had on her hat and gloves and light shawl, and her parasol was in her hand. He thought that he had

never seen her look so young, so pretty and so fit to receive a lover's vows. But at the same moment it occurred to him that she was Lady Laura Standish, the daughter of an Earl, the descendant of a line of Earls--and that he was the son of a simple country doctor in Ireland. Was it fitting that he should ask such a woman to be his wife? . . . Phineas thought that he had heard that Mr. Kennedy's grandfather had been a Scottish drover; whereas his own grandfather had been a little squire . . . and his own first cousin once removed still held the paternal acres at Finn grove. His family was supposed to be descended from kings in that part of Ireland. . .

It was thus that he argued with himself; but yet he knew, - knew as well as the reader will know, - that he was going to do that which he had no right to do.¹⁵

Phineas and Lady Laura are placed by the novelist in a perfect fictional situation for "The Proposal". Lady Laura is in her version of the Printmaker's Costume, poised in a romantic Scottish Landscape. But as narrator and reader are swift to agree--indeed, the narrator implies that the reader is ahead of the game--Phineas is knowingly surrendering his judgement in a swirl of Celtic plaid. Phineas' rigmarole of Royal Irish ancestry, the apparatus of The Aspiring Irish Lad as Hero, is scythed away as swiftly as it is proffered. The reader may well wish to take this tale at face value--and he might if we were in The Irish Novel, complete with harp-shaped birthmark. But the reader, like Phineas, knows that these gestures are the stuff of romantic fiction.

This more sophisticated technique of narrative intrusion is, perhaps, even more devastating than the direct interpolation of early Barchester. Responsibility for the destruction

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of heroic fantasy and fictional possibility is shared between the narrator, Phineas Un-hero and the active reader. Refreshed by this joint attack upon romantic expectations, the narrator gallops on to open up other fictional possibilities for the reader's judgement:

It might be very well for him to wait, -- presuming himself to be successful in his love, -- for the opening of that oyster with his political sword, that oyster on which he proposed they both should live; but such waiting could not well be to the taste of Lady Laura Standish. It could hardly be pleasant to her to look forward to his being made a junior lord or an assistant secretary before she could establish herself in her home. So he told himself. And yet he told himself at the same time that it was incumbent upon him to persevere.¹⁶

The narrator takes aim at three targets. He proposes, firstly, a fantasy, in which the hero wins the love of the high-placed heroine who then--conveniently enough--waits to be a civil servant's wife. The mundane juxtaposition of this banal fictional convention, paired with its logical outcome, swiftly exposes its absurdity. There is, implies the writer, nothing credible about this formula realistically, and nothing interesting about it fictionally. The reader knows that this kind of novelistic convention is a dull counterfeit of the interesting intricacies of the real thing. Secondly, the comical sword and the solitary oyster refer, I suggest, implicitly to the heroes of Young England and the Disraeli novel, in which dashing heroes are permitted to storm insuperable conventions by magical Arthurian mechanisms.

¹⁶ ibid.

Finally, the narrator trails a shadow of doubt across the reader's mind as to the direction of the novel. If Laura Standish should ever decide that Phineas is worth one oyster, the story may change shape and form.

By taking these alarming liberties with the fictional narrative, the narrator involves the reader in the painstaking journal-like study of the development of Phineas. The reader must be prepared to negotiate with, and on behalf of, Phineas, rather than indulging in wish-fulfillment for heroes. He must resist criticism of Phineas' actions through some appeal to an external standard of fictional behaviour for pattern heroes. The confidence which Trollope establishes through the sophisticated narrative intrusion, allows him to take the risk of stripping his hero to the bone. After his trial for murder, Phineas emerges entirely vindicated, but still not a fictional hero. Instead, he is shown to be almost in a state of nervous collapse (Phineas Redux Vol.II, Ch. LXVII, pp.243-47). Trollope's painstaking depiction of Phineas's isolation, even from his female supporters, prepares the reader for the narrator's most complex intervention on the fictional philosophy of the hero. In the following chapter "Phineas After the Trial" the narrator offers the kernel of Trollope's fictional aesthetic as well as his attitude to the hero of the novel. The reader who has kept pace with the fictional development will find nothing artificial in this philosophical commentary, for here is the

theory he has been contributing to by filling up the gaps opened up by the narrator's intrusions.

Before the man can be manly, the gifts which make him so must be there, collected by him slowly, unconsciously as are his bones, his flesh and his blood. They cannot be put on like a garment for the nonce,--as may a little learning. . . . These things, which are the attribute of manliness, must come of training on a nature not ignoble. But they are the very opposites, the antipodes, the direct antagonism, of that staring, posed, bewhiskered and bewigged deportment, that ill admirari, self-remembering assumption of manliness . . . which when you prod it through, has in it nothing deeper than deportment. We see the two things daily, side by side, close to each other.¹⁷

Trollope is not just discussing the false hero of popular mythology but, by extension, he is comparing different approaches to fiction. The Trollopean novel demands the conscious participation of the reader in order to create a form which is in direct antagonism to the posed and artificial deportment of conventional fiction. It collects itself slowly, developing bones, fleshing out character and situation, with the narrative technique prompting the reader into his own contribution to the process of progressive change. The reader and narrator together have constructed a kind of fiction which "is deeper than deportment"; and like genuine heroism, "cannot be put on like a garment for the nonce".

In The Last Chronicle of Barset, it is John Eames who makes the symbolic journey to obtain information which will clear the condemned man, but with Phineas Redux readerly assumptions and perceptions have gradually been shifted. Now

¹⁷ Phineas Redux, Vol. II, Ch. LXVIII, pp. 251-253.

it seems quite natural that a female lead, Marie Goesler, should make the journey to Prague, to find the key which implicates Mr. Emilius in the murder of Bonteen, thus releasing Phineas Finn from the dock. Trollopeian woman has developed from the jeune fille of early Barchester, whose fringes of idealized drapery demanded constant rearrangement from the narrator, to the unforced complex reality of a woman like Marie Goesler. In common with Laura Standish and Violet Chiltern, Marie Goesler is unconventional in appearance and manners, strong-minded and independent. With these three entirely different feminine creations, Trollope made no concessions to the powerful image of The Angel in The House, and the resolution of all three plot lines is realistic to the point where marriage is shown to be simply another opportunity for courage and judgement rather than a scented finale.

In parallel with his development of the intensified heroine and the diminished hero, Trollope experimented with fictional conventions about the perfect marriage. / Emily Wharton in The Prime Minister appears, at first blush, to have retreated to the garden at Allington, where passion and stubbornness reduce intelligence and judgement. Emily risks seeming to be an anachronistic and exasperating puppet. But again, Trollope is experimenting with the reader's assumptions about the heroine's expectations:

There was not one there in the room that who did not know it was the wish of the united families that Arthur

Fletcher should marry Emily Wharton, and also that Emily Wharton had refused him . . . There was not one in that room, unless it was Mary Wharton who was not more or less angry with Emily, thinking her to be perverse or unreasonable. Even to Mary her cousin's strange obstinacy was matter of surprise and sorrow, - for to her Arthur Fletcher was one of those demi-gods, who should never be refused, who are not expected to do more than express a wish and be accepted. ¹⁸

Instead of the rhetorical persuasion from author to reader about the appeal of the demi-god, the reader is invited to consider the case of Emily versus Arthur through the eyes of angry relatives, and a wondering ingenue cousin. The effect is less comic, for the narrator has room for the weapons of irony, which are not available to the assembled Whartons. But the reader, less amused, perhaps, is required to consider the predicament of Emily and the infinite capacity for obduracy in human relations. The narrator is reminding the reader that the pattern hero does not always get the girl, and that even the most conventionally presented heroine, like Emily, can display apparently self-lacerating traits which are her only weapons of individual assertion.

In Trollope's increasingly sophisticated examination of the psychology of male and female (rather than hero/heroine), one can see a determined drift away from the fictional convention of "Noah's Ark couplings" towards the irresolution of the "awkward cases"--the loves of Lady Mabel Grex, Laura Kennedy, or Lily Dale. This is accompanied by an increasing

¹⁸ The Prime Minister, Vol. I, Ch. XVI, p. 145.

drive towards the erosion of taboos, fictional or social, about what constitutes lady-like behaviour in a heroine.

Lily's "failure" occurs before her engagement is public knowledge, so she can safely assume the mantle of the jilted martyr. Alice's confusions run her onto the rocks of two broken engagements and lead to a near-miss with a squalid marriage. With Emily Wharton, Trollope pushes the frontier of fiction further out, as the well-bred middle-class girl actually marries the woman-beating adventurer, and is followed through the honeymoon to the birth and death of the unwanted child. Again the narrative comment is shared between Emily's internal thoughts and the perceptions of her family, but a silent narrator appeals from this authority to the reader for his judgement:

And she did think of it;-- but still continually with an assurance to herself that her father did not understand her feelings. . . . She had said it all to [Arthur] in the strongest words she could find, but she could not repeat them to her father. . . . she looked up at him almost reproachfully. Did he think that a woman was a piece of furniture which you can mend, and revarnish, and fit out with new ornaments, and then send out for use, second-hand indeed, but for all purposes as good as new?¹⁰

Emily's rhetorical question is to the reader, as much as to her father. What does the delicate reader think about Mr. Wharton treating her as a piece of furniture? What does he think about the predicament of the second-hand woman? The narrator's silence is awesome. Trollope is sufficiently aware

¹⁰ The Prime Minister, Vol.II, Ch.LXXV, p.341.

of his readership not to commit his narrator on this question, but he has, by his fictional technique, pushed his reader into thinking about woman-as-a-piece-of-furniture. The text demonstrates that the push-pull effect of what the Wharton family expected of Emily subliminally propelled her towards Lopez the adventurer. The notion of the second-hand woman is a social convention which Trollope's reader can question, and finally, through the resolution of Emily's fictional predicament, ultimately reject.

Trollope's courageous experiment with The Prime Minister was a critical and financial failure. With characteristically veiled prescience, he confided to his Autobiography in 1876 (while the novel was still appearing in parts) that, while he thought he had succeeded with the delineation of the characters of Palliser and Glencora, he had no right to expect that work which had been carried on through three or four novels would be readily understood as such by the reading public. The reviews, almost all completely unfavourable, failed to recognize the achievement of the examination of the Palliser marriage, and the development of realistic, if unappealing, traits in cherished characters like Glencora. The reviewers tended to shy away from discussion of the pioneering treatment of the Lopez and Emily marriage, although the frequent use of the word "vulgarity" indicates, perhaps, an instinctive distaste for the subject matter. The unsigned comment from the Saturday Review supports this contention, while at

the same time returning to the old bone of Trollope's so-called surface treatment:

The want of imagination . . . is now beginning to tell upon the execution of details. . . even as a picture of manners the work is no longer free from reproach. . . the reader. . . is unable to escape the all-pervading sense of artistic vulgarity. . . but at the same time it must be confessed that the artistic shortcomings of the work might have been partly concealed had Mr. Trollope been able to make choice of a more attractive theme. . .

20

This reviewer, I would argue, is more preoccupied with the subject-matter of The Prime Minister than with the novel's shortcomings. In his reaction against what is, in fact, a sharply-imagined account of marriage and manners which penetrates well below surface treatment of contemporary society, he reaches for the familiar standards of artistic measurement which we noted earlier in the reviews of The Warden.

The readers, this time, agreed with the critics. Sales for The Prime Minister fell sharply and Trollope, now aged sixty-one, was profoundly shaken by the experience. The relationship between narrator and reader, it appeared, could only adjust the reader's tastes so far. Trollope had outdistanced the tolerance of both critic and reader to the direction he wished his series to take. From available evidence in the Autobiography or letters, there is no sign that Trollope himself realized that he had, in effect, become

avant-garde whilst appearing to be traditional. His fictional instinct almost prophesied the failure of The Prime Minister in a small, literary discussion between Mrs. Dale and Bell in the The Small House at Allington, where Bell asserts, "I like a book to be clear as running water, so that the whole meaning may be seen at once". Her mother replies "shrewdly, "The quick seeing of the meaning must depend a little on the reader, must it not?" (Ch.XLIV, p.484).

Trollope's whole meaning in The Prime Minister had eluded his readers for three reasons. Firstly, the detailed exposition of extended time in the series would not, as Trollope foresaw, be fully appreciated, so that the subtle and realistic account of the Palliser marriage became tedious. Secondly, the realities of extended time, and its effects on character, inevitably produced unacceptable character developments in cherished fictional creations. Finally, the "cad" figure of Lopez, his financial chicanery, and his attraction for Emily Wharton were, indeed, either distasteful or incredible to Trollope's readers. Trollope's commitment to his series was, however, characteristically stubborn, and despite the failure of The Prime Minister, he returned after an interval of four years to the Palliser family with the publication in 1880 of The Duke's Children. (I shall consider this last novel in terms both of its

opening and closing functions to the series in the next chapter.)

In this chapter, I have shown how Trollope's use of the narrator altered, through the Palliser series, to move the Trollopeian novel further from the stereotyped comic-romantic formula towards a more serious mixed form. The shared commentary between narrator and reader discusses the increasingly complex society of the novel, and engages itself with problems which have no easily-reconciled harmonious solutions. Heroes and heroines become men and women; the examination of marriage becomes steadily less romanticized; and the ironic tone of the narrator increasingly focusses on the pressures of social convention rather than those of fictional invention. Trollope's "Barchester narrator" has developed the relationship with the reader in a gradual movement from the position of companion, through that of commentator, towards the shared exposition which I have shown in the "Palliser" narrator. The reader of the Palliser series thus finds himself incorporated more fully into the action in an analytical role. This development, particularly in relation to the material of The Prime Minister, was not necessarily a comfortable one.

Chapter 5The Narrator as Series Maker:Alpha and Omega

In the previous two chapters, I demonstrated how discussions of the crucial fictional areas of romance, heroes, and heroines expanded the territory and scope of the Trollopeian novel, and created a different area of fictional discussion. In Chapters 1 and 2, I showed how some of Trollope's narrative interventions on the nature of fiction constituted a running battle with the critics, not only about the novel in hand, but also about novels in general.

In an entirely different category, however, are those interventions in which Trollope himself bursts into the novel to appeal to the reader or argue with the imaginary critic. Through the device of exchanging the established fictional narrator for a personal platform, Trollope continued to develop his argument-about-fiction actually inside his own novels. I would argue that it is these interventions, fewer than are generally supposed, which have caused the greatest "offence" to those critics concerned with "the Trollope problem" of the garrulous and destructive narrator.

Two unusually startling personal interventions show Trollope manipulating the narrative voice as a medium for discussing the assumptions about "rules" in the form of his kind of novel. The first, an intervention in Dr. Thorne, was a sharp response directed at Henry Maine, the critic of the Saturday Review who had, in the issue of 5 December 1857, complained of Trollope's inadequate knowledge of the law in the recently published Three Clerks:

It has been suggested that the modern English writers of fiction should among them keep a barrister, in order that they may be set right on such legal points as will arise in their little narratives, and thus avoid that exposure of their own ignorance of the laws, which now, alas! they too often make. The idea is worthy of consideration, and I can only say, that if such an arrangement can be made . . . I shall be happy to subscribe my quota; it would be but a modest tribute towards the cost. But as the suggestion has not yet been carried out . . . I can only plead for mercy if I be wrong in allotting all Sir Roger's vast possessions in perpetuity to Miss Thorne, alleging also, in excuse, that the course of my narrative absolutely demands that she shall be ultimately recognized as Sir Roger's undoubted heiress.¹

This intervention betrays exasperation rather than controlled irony, but it is of historical interest, in that it shows the extremely literal approach which a respectable reviewer could insist on taking to a work of fiction. More interesting is the quality of Trollope's own response which appeals on behalf of fiction, albeit ironically, to a parallel set of imaginary rules which are as fixed and binding as those of the legal process. The quasi-legal language "I plead for

¹ Dr. Thorne, Ch. XLV, pp. 588-589.

mercy. . . alleging that the course of my narrative absolutely demands. . ." is a mock-defensive plea for the existence of unwritten rules of fictional practice which are as inviolable and arcane as the sacred and protected mysteries of the law. There is, argues Trollope, a contract between writer and reader, and if the writer's rhetorical skills are matched by the reader's perceptions, then the rule of law has no force in this relationship. Trollope's conception of realism does not have to extend to legal technicalities, provided that the strength of the narrative is satisfactorily maintained by the shared convictions of writer, text, and reader.

Secondly, and in a parallel vein, an intervention in Phineas Finn summons up the image of "the poor fictionist" grappling with another arcane mystery, the description of a Cabinet Meeting. Trollope prepares the reader for his excursion into unreliable realism by an ironic Classical allusion:

And now will the Muses assist me while I sing an altogether new song? On the Tuesday the Cabinet met at the First Lord's official residence in Downing Street, and I will attempt to describe what, according to the bewildered brain of a poor fictionist, was said or might have been said, what was done or might have been done, on so august an occasion.²

The juxtaposition of the lyrical decorum of the Classical quotation with the prosaic "where, when, who," list of a

² Phineas Finn, Ch.XXIX, p.267.

newspaper report is a deliberate bait laid by the foxhunting man for the pack of literary reviewers. It does not matter in the least whether the Cabinet met on Tuesday, not even with the apparently heavily-considered, gossipy deliberation of "the" Tuesday. Most readers would have to double back over that First Lord, just to remind themselves that the title is an honorary piece of comical ceremonial held automatically by the Prime Minister. And this, I suggest, is exactly what Trollope intended should happen to the reader in full cry. He is pointing out that however much attention to true, actual detail the writer gives to the reader, he can still end up in a dense thicket. The fictionist is absolutely correct in his detail, but it is only by clutching at the familiar sound of Downing Street that the reader can get his bearings as to the probable location of this sacred ceremony. If Trollope's reader were the caretaker of an Emporium in Cincinnati, he might not even grasp the signification of Downing Street. So why is Trollope ironically calling upon the Muse to help him to bore or mystify the reader with all this circumstantial detail?

I suggest that Trollope is here staking out a specific battleground with those critics (and there were many) who consistently denigrated his novels by describing them as photographic.³ Trollope had already uttered a dry comment on photographic methods in Barchester Towers, lamenting

³ See Introduction to Critical Heritage, p.11.

ironically that "no mental method of daguerotype or photography has yet been discovered, by which the character of men can be reduced to writing. . ." (Barchester Towers, Ch.XX. pp. 185-186). The fascination, and suspicion, evinced by Trollope's contemporaries for the camera is reminiscent of our own generation's reactions to the computer. Like a primitive tribe, each community feared that the machine would destroy the soul; particularly the soul of the artist. Many Victorian critics of painting seriously maintained that photography would replace painting, failing to see the differences in genre, process, and the ways in which the consumer would eventually adapt his response, either as painter or photographer himself, or as observer and buyer. Just as art critics borrowed the standards and terms of literary criticism to discuss a painting as though it was "a novel in a rectangle", so Trollopeian reviewers were overfond of using terms from painting and photography to describe Trollope's imaginative processes and style.

Trollope, in his famous description of the Cabinet Meeting, is using his fictional weapons to enforce this perception, which, on the basis of his own writer's instincts, he had already grappled with as a critical problem in Barchester Towers. Demonstrating by example, Trollope is showing those critics what happens with a genuinely photo-

* Christopher Wood, Victorian Panorama: Paintings of Victorian Life. (London: Faber, 1976.)

graphic fiction: the images may be crystal clear, but the narrative has no focus. The following three pages consist of a triumphant piece of controlled authorial irony in which Trollope deplores the tendency of "a strictly honest fictionist" to mislead his readers by catching salmon in October, opening the opera-houses before Easter, and making Parliament sit on a Wednesday evening,

By solemn ridicule, Trollope destroys the ritual observances of the conventional calendar and the exaggerated importance attached to the observance of this kind of detail in fiction. He then announces that he is going to describe a Cabinet Meeting, and almost suggests that he is doing this precisely because--since no-one can officially describe the proceedings--it is a challenge to the art of the honest fictionist so to do. Trollope, who very rarely describes interiors except as an extension of character, conflict or conversation,* embarks on a ponderous account of the Cabinet Room as though beginning a children's fairy-tale:

It was a large dingy room, covered with a Turkey carpet, and containing a polished mahogany dinner-table, on very heavy carved legs, which an old messenger was preparing at two o'clock in the day for the use of her Majesty's Ministers.*

* Examples of this technique are the Duchess's boudoir in Can You Forgive Her?, the breakfast table at Plumstead Episcopi in Barchester Towers, and Maurice Maule's rooms in Phineas Redux.

* Phineas Finn, Ch. XXIX, p.268.

By the time the aged Cerberus has re-arranged the chairs a few times, and is ensconced at the door of the Cabinet room to send off intruders, the alert reader is aware that this is all a delicate hoax. (The actual description of the meeting and its participants is arguably one of the 'dullest' passages in Trollope, resembling nothing so much as a photograph with the names underneath.) The intervention exists to display the writer's impatience with those whose conception of realism in the novel is rooted on externals, and to demonstrate, as recognised by his readers, his own belief in the value of realism as the psychological and social behaviour of fictional characters representing human behaviour.

In his monograph on Thackeray, published in 1879, Trollope begins to examine Thackeray's style, but is side-tracked into a discussion of his own views on realism in the novel:

Realism in style has not all the ease which seems to belong to it. It is the object of the author who affects it so to communicate with his reader that all his words shall seem to be natural to the occasion And yet in very truth the realistic must not be true, but just so far removed from truth as to suit the erroneous idea of truth which the reader may be supposed to entertain.⁷

The writer's selection of rhetoric must invite the reader to agree that he too would speak in the well-constructed sentences of Trollopean characters, even when undergoing similar conflicts and disappointments which, in fact, would probably render him inarticulate. This collusion between

⁷ Anthony Trollope, *Thackeray*, Ch.IX, pp.184-185.

writer and reader is one of the devices on which Trollope's narrator relies, but it is significant that Trollope is still prepared to introduce himself as Author and Writer coadjutant to the narrator. He does this with greater frequency at the beginnings and endings of novels. One reason for this, I suggest, is that Trollope used the assumption of fictional conventions about beginning a novel to set up the essential relationship with the reader. It is consistent with his technique of sharing the development of character with the reader and, since the characters are still suspended awkwardly fully-sketched but inanimate for perhaps the first half-dozen chapters, this is when Trollope experiences the fictionist's form of stage-fright. Is he ever going to be able to drive these characters from his imagination, onto the printed page, and into the reader's consciousness?

Once he has had the opportunity to share the reader's mind through narrative interventions, he develops confidence in the existence of his form. Once the three-way link-up is established between writer, reader, and text, Trollope knows that the reader is thinking about his character's actions. It is as though Trollope feels that, only when he has inserted a narrative intrusion about the business of writing a novel--and only then--is there a reader out there discussing the form and the content with him. His stage-fright, instead of drying him up, tends to make him garrulous, testy, or occasionally arch, as in the beginning of Dr. Thorne:

I quite feel that an apology is due for beginning a novel with two long dull chapters full of description. I am perfectly well aware of the danger of such a course. In so doing I sin against the golden rule which requires us all to put our best foot foremost, the wisdom of which is fully recognized by novelists, myself among the number. It can hardly be expected that any one will consent to go through with a fiction that offers so little of allurements in its first pages; but twist it as I will I cannot do otherwise. I find that I cannot make poor Mr. Gresham hem or haw and turn himself uneasily in his armchair in a natural manner till I have said why he is uneasy. I cannot bring in my doctor speaking his mind freely among the bigwigs till I have explained that it is in accordance with his usual character to do so. This is unartistic on my part, and shows want of imagination as well as want of skill. Whether or not I can atone for these faults by straightforward, simple, plain story-telling - that, indeed, is very doubtful.*

Trollope is persuading the reader to accept the terms of the psychological novel. The self-deprecatory tone grates or amuses, according to the reader's personal taste, but it serves two practical functions. Firstly, the writer genuinely needs to establish the validity of his method and, secondly, the apology is a form of challenge--a sustaining hook to encourage the reader to pursue this process to see whether it works out. It might be argued that the intervention in Dr. Thorne represents an early insecurity, except that almost exactly the same discussion crops up again in The Eustace Diamonds:

Dramatists, when they write their plays, have a delightful privilege of prefixing a list of their personages;--and the dramatists of old used to tell us who was in love with whom, and what were the blood relationships of all the persons. In such a narrative as this, any proceeding of that kind would be unusual,--and therefore the poor narrator has been driven to expend his first

* Dr. Thorne, Ch. II, p. 19.

four chapters in the mere task of introducing his characters. He regrets the length of these introductions, and will now begin at once the action of his story."

It is clear that Trollope pursued the theoretical problems of the novel, not only as a response to reviewer's criticisms, but also as an intellectual challenge. A practical aspect of this particular intervention is that it comes at the end of the four chapters which made up the first instalment of The Eustace Diamonds serialized in The Fortnightly Review. Trollope was exceptionally punctilious in presenting manuscripts with exactly the number of words required, and it seems obvious that this kind of intervention provided not only a useful page-filler, but also served as a bait to keep the reader hooked for the next installment.¹⁰ It is significant that he chose this kind of personal discussion about the technique of the novel as his page-filler, and returned to it again in the last of the Palliser series, The Duke's Children.

Perhaps the method of rushing at once 'in medias res' is, of all ways of beginning a story, the least objectionable. The reader is made to think that the gold lies so near the surface that he will be required to take very little trouble in digging for it. And the writer

* The Eustace Diamonds, Ch.IV, p.36.

¹⁰ See Mary Hamer, Writing by Numbers: Trollope's serial fiction (Cambridge University Press, 1987). Dr. Hamer's examination of Trollope's working log-books and the manuscript of Framley Parsonage demonstrates Trollope's interest in the demands of the serial form and argues that it liberated his creativity. The Eustace Diamonds is not part of Dr. Hamer's investigation, so the suggestion about this paragraph is my own.

is enabled,--at any rate for a time, and till his neck has become, as it were, warm to the collar,-- to throw off from him the difficulties and dangers, the tedium and prolixity, of description. This rushing 'in medias res' has doubtless the charm of ease. . . . I have always found that the details would insist on being told at last, and that by rushing 'in medias res' I was simply presenting the cart before the horse. But as readers like the cart best, I will do it once again,--trying it only for a branch of my story,--and will endeavour to let as little as possible of the horse be seen afterwards 11

The manuscript of The Duke's Children was cut before publication,¹² but Trollope chose to leave intact this apparently expendable personal statement which expounds the same philosophy as the two earlier comments, and achieves the same effect. Read individually, these intrusions display psychological discomfort, but considered as a whole over the length of both series they reveal Trollope's determination to maintain a shared construction and conception of novel-writing with his reader.

I have noted, by reference to the contemporary reviews, the creation of the "Trollope problem," and the tendency which developed to see Trollope as merely a replicator of observed manners, an author who confined himself to safe and stereotyped plot and character. This view was absorbed by Henry James, whose accepted stature as critic and "intellectual" novelist for the twentieth-century critic permitted his posthumous essay in Partial Portraits to be

¹¹ The Duke's Children, Ch. IX, p. 69.

¹² See "Note on the Text", in The Duke's Children, p. xxvii

accepted by some as almost a Mosaic tablet.²² Although apparently praising Trollope, James, in fact, follows very much the line of the earlier 19th-century magazine reviewers in condemning Trollope's fecundity as "gross, importunate," "common," and in patronizing both Trollope and his readers for "their love of a comfortable ending". He did not accept the narrative intrusions as part of a complete reading, seizing on the intervention at the end of Barchester Towers as a particularly inartistic example of "these little slaps at credulity. . . ."

This view of the Trollopeian novel complete with the mandatory happy ending constantly present, like the other stereotypes examined earlier, is not borne out by a close examination of the texts. By boldly acknowledging the conventions for tying up loose ends, Trollope uses the narrator to diminish the importance of these activities as a form of closure. The arrangements for a marriage are acknowledged in an amused dismissive tone, which parodies the social manners of the function itself and its totemic fictional significance. At the end of Dr. Thorne, Trollope goes out of his way to draw attention to this technique:

And now I find that I have not one page - not half a page - for the wedding dress. But what matters? Will it

²² Henry James, 'Anthony Trollope', Partial Portraits, in Critical Heritage, pp. 525-545.

not all be found written in the columns of the Morning Post?¹⁴

Thus the narrator spikes the orange-blossom of comfortable sentimentality, and despatches the avid reader to the marriage columns where such realistic detail belongs. Having usurped the narrator's position, Trollope takes the opportunity to appear himself as The Author or The Writer. Why does he allow himself this liberty, and what is the effect?

In the series novels, writer and reader are conspiring to suspend closure indefinitely; the form remains permanently open, and the interventions assist in this process. Closure is controlled, and the narrator throws up signposts which, while apparently assembling the characters for the finale, indicate to the reader that there is a future for some. Furthermore, even if some characters are cut down as the volume closes, the narrator is there to assure the reader that two participants in the novel are going on: the narrator and the reader. This is regenerative and reassuring for the reader, but perhaps it also had the psychological effect on Trollope, the compulsive daily writer, of convincing himself that the "narrator" still had plenty of resources in him. The well could be replenished between the Barchester and Palliser series by other novels, but the chronicles could continue. As already noted, apparently comfortable endings such as that of Framley Parsonage are vigorously debated between the

¹⁴ Dr. Thorne, Ch. XLVII, p. 623.

narrator and the reader, while The Small House at Allington is hardly a riot of arranged marriages. In The Eustace Diamonds, Lizzie's consignment to Mr. Emilius is loaded with discomfort:

That evening [Lizzie] thought it proper to tell Miss Macnulty what had occurred. . . Miss Macnulty was unable to answer a word. She could not congratulate her successful rival, even though her bread depended on it. She crept slowly out of the room, and went upstairs, and wept. Early in the month of June, Lady Eustace was led to the hymeneal altar by her clerical bridegroom. The wedding took place at the Episcopal church at Ayr, far from the eyes of curious Londoners. It need only be further said that Mr. Emilius could be persuaded to agree to no settlements prejudicial to that marital supremacy which should be attached to the husband; and that Lizzie, when the moment came, knowing that her betrothals had been made public to all the world, did not dare to recede from another engagement. It may be that Mr. Emilius will suit her as well as any other husband that she could find, - unless it be found that his previous career has been too adventurous. After a certain fashion he will, perhaps, be tender to her; and he will have his own way in everything, and be no whit afraid when she is about to die in an agony of tears before his eyes. The writer of the present story may, however, declare that the future fate of this lady shall not be left altogether in obscurity.¹⁵

This entire passage is saturated in irony, not only at the expense of Lizzie and Emilius, but by extension to the formulaic arrangements--financial, social, and fashionable--which are presumed to accrue, with the reader's unqualified approval, at the happy end of his novel. The narrator sets the pathos of the defeated Miss Macnulty against the parody of the marital tableau, its falsity emphasised by the observance of every cliché. The wedding must, of course, be in

¹⁵ The Eustace Diamonds, Ch. LXXIX, p.369.

June, the bride is led to the hymn~~al~~ altar of an Episcopal Church : so far, so normal. The details are superficially conventional, except that the bride has been married before; the bridegroom is rumoured to have a wife tucked away in Mitteleuropa; there is no respectable relative to deliver the bride; no-one goes to Scotland in June; and Mr. Emilius is a fashionable preacher of Evangelist persuasion with a large and hysterical London congregation. The reader can fill in all these gaps in the narrator's account, and is perfectly in tune with Trollope's wavelength when Trollope intervenes as writer, not as narrator, to signal that closure will be deferred.

Where Trollope the narrator is satirizing the ceremony and sliding into the future tense to describe Mr. Emilius as a husband, Trollope as writer is holding open the Lizzie Eustace plot-line. Consistent with the two-way dialogue established by the narrator, Trollope's intervention as writer merges with the density of the text to extend the novel. ~~Writer~~ and narrator both work to overcome the contradiction implicit in the act of reading.

In a novel which has engaged the reader's attention, we stay constantly with the text, but we do not want it to end; the very fact that the act of reading will consume the text more quickly rarely encourages the reader to ration the intake. Thus, one of the attractions of the Trollopeian form, with the reader as a working participant, is its ability to

stretch out the act of reading. Numerous quotations from contemporary reviews attest to this quality even when confined to one early novel: it is, for example, remarked by a very different fellow-writer, Mrs. Gaskell:

I wish Mr. Trollope would go on writing Framley Parsonage for ever. I don't see any reason why it should come to an end, and everyone I know is always dreading the last number.^{1*}

For the participating reader, the great strength of the series novel is the hypnotic attraction of recognition of the community of the fictional world in which he, as a participating character, works alongside the narrator in the analysis and examination of incipient discovery. The end of an 800-page, three-volume novel is a long way off; twelve novels extend it even further, and there is more room for fresh insights as each novel opens and closes. Can he not read a relevant announcement any day in the Morning Post? Is Mr. Emilius still beating his wife? The participating reader has the raw material for ten additional Barchester and Palliser novels which exist in between the existing texts. At the close of the Barchester series (when of course, the reading public was unaware that the seeds of the Pallisers were already embedded in The Small House at Allington), the sense of regret was expressed by this reviewer:

Mr. Trollope is, after all, a little bit of a hypocrite. His title and his concluding page are put forward by him as merits for the sake of which readers may forgive slight defects The general effect of this

^{1*} Letter to George Smith, 1 March 1860.

announcement has been naturally enough very great discouragement. Men who do not go into society feel as if all the society they had, had suddenly agreed to emigrate to New Zealand, or Vancouver's Island, or some other place, where they will never hear of them any more. . . . Life has lost one of its principal alleviations. Mr Trollope has no right to break old ties in this cruel and reckless way. . . . What makes it worse is, there is no sort of comfort in this case as to a future reunion.¹⁷

This reviewer pinpoints the compelling importance of the reader's wish for reunion with the characters. Even with the so-called The Last Chronicle of Barset, a Trollopeian ending contains the ingredients for a beginning. All the devices for the fictional border of the novel are mined and signposted by interventions either by the narrator, or by Trollope as writer. In Barchester Towers, Trollope appears three chapters before the last one for another disquisition on conventional endings and the requirements of the market:

These leave-takings in novels are as disagreeable as they are in real life What novelist . . . 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 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 should 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.¹⁸

¹⁷ Spectator, 13 July 1867, xl.778-80 in The Critical Heritage pp. 291-2.

¹⁸ Barchester Towers, Vol.III, Ch.LI, pp. 251-252.

Trollope's assumed irritation serves to isolate another of the paradoxical demands of the novel-reading monster. Just as the novel must be both consumed and extended, so it must disturb and excite during its execution, but reassure and stimulate by its conclusion. Interestingly, Trollope implies that happy endings are by no means considered to be as generally pleasing to his readers as reviewers might suppose. The reader's demands for that degree of realism which attracts him to the Trollopeian novel continue to encompass an insistence that a credible realism be extended to a thoughtful conclusion. No-one wants Mr. Harding to die just yet, but neither is the author permitted to pretend that Mr. Harding is a fictional Methusaleh. Having set this puzzle before the reader, how does Trollope solve it?

Henry James (and others) disliked the famous last chapter of Barchester Towers, and characterized its failure by its opening words:

The end of a novel, like the end of a children's dinner party, must be made up of sweetmeats and sugar-plums.¹⁹

James (and his followers) tend to discuss the failings of this authorial comment as though the sentence stands, Ozymandias-like, in a desert of rapidly disintegrating fictional invention. But, on the contrary, I suggest, it is amplified and justified by the subsequent ironies. Trollope's following four pages are, in fact, devoted to a brief,

¹⁹ Barchester Towers, Chapter LIII, p.266.

laconic account of the Arabin/Eleanor marriage which includes the dry remark that:

We have no doubt that they will keep their promises; the more especially as the Signora Neroni had left Barchester before the ceremony was performed.²⁰

On the one hand, Trollope extends acknowledgement to the apparent necessities of the fictional frontier, while on the other, he throws out a hint that the susceptible Arabin might just as well have married Signora Neroni. Arabin, furthermore, spends his time "sifting and editing old ecclesiastical literature, and in producing the same articles new", while Eleanor becomes romantically involved with Anglican High Ritual. Such sweetmeats and sugar-plums require the reader to have a sophisticated palate.

What Trollope wants his reader to think about, of course, is not the wish-fulfillment of the happy ending, although the framework is there, as the form requires, in the capable hands of the narrator. Rather, he invites the reader to concentrate on Mr. Harding.

The Author now leaves [Mr. Harding] in the hands of his readers; not as a hero, not as a man to be admired and talked of, not as a man who should be toasted at public dinners and spoken of with conventional absurdity as a perfect divine, but as a good man without guile, believing humbly in the religion which he has striven to teach, and guided by the precepts which he has striven to learn.²¹

²⁰ ibid.

²¹ Barchester Towers, Ch. LIII, p. 271.

The categorical personal announcement of The Author signifies the personal commitment of Trollope to the existence of his artistic creation as a quietly Platonic ideal. It is this symbolic presence which he wishes to deliver to his readers, not the "conventional absurdity" of the fairy-tale ending.

The reader is invited to step outside convention with The Author in a perfect equality separated from fictional form. Because the active reader has been encouraged to consider himself as both observer and participant in the act of novel-making, the Author's invitation is not disruptive but conclusive. The logic of the fictional act is maintained, and the reader remains in control of his own part of the creation. It is the slightest, apparently conventionally elegiac, paragraph, which in fact carries a forward dynamic. Not only does it cut across the grain of the preceding four pages, but it suddenly opens up what seems to be a closed book by establishing the power of the shared imagination of reader and writer in the mutual creation of this character. The possibilities for the future contemplation of this shared construction are left open: the regeneration may be actual, or it may be merely the image left in the reader's mind for his own regeneration at will.

The idea of regeneration in a purely narrative sense is conveyed by a new generation (the children of Chiltern and Violet or Plantagenet and Glencora), or simply through the regroupings of individual characters as couples (Miss

Dunstable and Dr. Thorne, Phineas Finn and Marie Goesler). Trollope, interestingly, uses death, generally at the beginning of a novel, as a regenerative rather than a closing form. The death of Mary Flood Jones releases Phineas; the death of John Bold releases Eleanor; the death of the old Bishop releases the Proudles on Barchester like genies from the bottle. Fictionally, the most constructive use of death is the opening of The Duke's Children with the sombre chapter "When the Duchess was Dead". The killing-off of Glencora, like the despatch of Mrs. Proudie, is a bold stroke which the writer who was truly pandering to popular readership might not have risked. But the series cannot explore the problems of Palliser, his children, and their marriages if Glencora remains as the mediator and fixer of the family; the family would have remained frozen in time and place, a perfect "fictional" family. With the death of Glencora, each one has to move outwards.

While some critics consider The Duke's Children to be an elegiac coda to the entire series, this is, I suggest, a view imposed by hindsight rather than one encouraged by the text. The problems of social realignment in the last novel are forward-looking, pointing towards open-ended continuity rather than closure. The final chapters are a juxtaposition of two kinds of marriage ceremony which read as "fictional wedding finale" versus real-life wedding. Trollope and the narrator combine in a characteristic stab at currently

admired wedding conventions and their fictional reflections. (The Duke's Children, LXXIX, p.630). Trollope declines to crown his series with symbolic wedding devices or simpering mothers. The wedding of Mary Palliser and Frank Tregear is described as "very rustic;- almost improper" at which "the cake did not look so like an ill-soldered silver castle as that other construction had done". The refusal to surrender the narrator's acerbic commentary to either fictional or social fashion is matched by Trollope's determination to keep the lines of imaginative regeneration open.

The reader's requirements for the resolution by marriage is thus satisfied by two final chapters prosaically named "The First Wedding" and "The Second Wedding", and the two couples, whose marriages have challenged and overcome the conventions expressed by the Duke's reservations, are exemplified by the narrator's commentary on the symbolic device of the wedding-cake. Together, narrator and reader demonstrate their involvement in the fiction and their independence of judgement. The comparison of the central symbol calls to mind the narrator's intervention on the hero in Phineas Redux, which was discussed in Chapter IV, p.94.

Like the false hero and false fiction, the marriage conventions can be artificially inflated to a status "which when you prod it through, has in it nothing deeper than deportment."²² The reader as observer at both weddings is

²² Phineas Redux, Vol. II, Ch. LXVIII, p. 253.

invited to make his judgement and at the same time to consider the implications for the future of both fictional couples.

The series thus forms a Conclusion, which is also another opportunity to keep the form open and realistic. Trollope does not hesitate to allude to the "awkward" unresolved case of Lady Mabel Grex, nor to the divided mind of the Duke. Again, the position of the Duke, like that of the Warden at the end of the Barchester series, is isolated from the formal resolution, and Trollope invites the reader to concentrate on his real fictional achievement. The close examination of the Duke's mind in this final volume has been achieved by the reader's involvement in the gradual evolution of his thinking over time. His fictional failures in politics, the loss of Glencora and her separation from his own values, as well as the battles lost with his children, all contribute to the final image of the entirely diminished hero.

Yet the reader is aware, without direction from the narrator, that Palliser has attained the kind of stature which The Author claimed for Mr. Harding at the finale of Barchester. With this final volume in the Palliser series, Trollope has resolved his problems with the psychological development of the character over time. Furthermore, he has achieved this with a protagonist who lacks all fictional attributes supposed to accrue to "a hero". It is no longer

necessary for narrator and reader to discuss this phenomenon, but there is one final coded intervention which, characteristically, sends multiple messages to the "quick-seeing" reader. —

Perhaps the matter most remarkable in the wedding was the hilarity of the Duke. One who did not know him well might have said that he was a man with few cares, and who now took special joy in the happiness of his children, -- who was thoroughly contented to see them marry after their own hearts. And yet, as he stood there on the altar-steps. . . he was reminding himself of all that he had suffered.²³

Still determined to deflect the escapist reader away from the escapist ending, Trollope diffidently draws his attention to the ~~most~~ interesting event at the wedding: the final image of Palliser. The apparently unlikely spectacle of "hilarity" in the Duke adjusts the reader's perceptions. Is this joy or is it controlled hysteria? Trollope uses the psychological insight to remind us of the reader's own participation in the development of character and fiction. The reader knows very well what Palliser "is like". He has contributed to his character over time, space and length. Is it likely, dear reader, that this man should suddenly abandon himself to "hilarity"? Palliser remains the cerebral conscience of the fiction and looks backwards into the series "reminding himself of all that he had suffered". This sombre effect deepens the realism, and by creating an effect of retrospection, acts as a final signal between the narrator and the

23 The Duke's Children, Ch. LXXX, pp.632-3.

reader. This particular Palliser file closes with their mutual agreement, even while the perspectives are opening for the next generation.

CONCLUSION

In An Autobiography, Trollope commented that the novelist's first duty "is that he make himself pleasant," and that to achieve this he must communicate "without an effort to the reader".¹ Such deceptively patronizing comments, taken with some of the authorial intrusions, have combined to contribute to the critical problem in which Trollope was denigrated in terms of "art". Because the reading, apparently by the author's own admission, was to be made pleasant and easy, it was assumed to have small literary merit. But, as we have seen, a close reading of the text reveals the extreme complexity of the fictional debate. Trollope neither panders to the reader's laziest instincts nor indulges in rose-tinted scenarios. The employment of the comic form combined with the ongoing discussion between the narrator and the reader, encourages the reader to participate in the stimulating activity of creative reading.

One of the many critical myths which have contributed to "the Trollope problem" assumes the existence of an assured, homogenous, reading community which brought to the novel a frame of reference and a set of basic assumptions implicitly

¹ An Autobiography, pp. 234-5.

shared between reader and writer. The kind of narrative conversation we have examined which involves a debate about fictional and social conventions indicates the gap between this myth and the reality of the narrator-reader relationship.

Trollope, I suggest, despite his huge success, was more conscious of, and uncertain about, the reader's response than any angst-ridden modernist. Although he had a Platonic idea of "the quick-seeing reader", he never made the mistake of taking the reader for granted or ignoring him. In the pre-film, pre-television age the novel had to be the most consumer-conscious art form. Paradoxically, the society which produced the novel as a major form also exhibited among its protagonists and critics the most conscious uncertainty as to its validity, purpose, and achievement.

It is against this contradictory background that "the Trollope problem" has been explored. As Christopher Herbert points out in Trollope and Comic Pleasure:

In the mid-nineteenth century, everything about the writing and interpretation of novels was full of anomalies radiating from the central one, as Trollope himself analyzed it, that the primary literary form of the age had never attained full respectability and was unsure, as a result, of its status, its audience, and its functions.²

Trollope's technique with the narrator (and his own narrative interpolations as author) were an attempt to come to grips

² Christopher Herbert, Trollope and Comic Pleasure (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p.1.

with this central ambiguity. Trollope conducted the argument about the novel within a fictional framework with the operative person who could be the catalyst in this literary experiment: the reader. Through the narrator-reader discussion he was constantly trying out experiments with the form, and testing the reader's response to each new situation.

Contemporary reviews are scattered with phrases indicating how much Trollope was seen as startlingly innovative, a writer whose established reputation enabled him to undertake bold risks and hazardous experiments. But Trollope was not alone. Other fictionists were also working away at the relationship between writer, reader and novel. An interesting comparison can be made to one of the most successful of the social-problem writers, the Canadian-born novelist Edward Jenkins, author of Ginx's Baby. Brian Maidment, in an article² on this wildly popular problem-novel, demonstrates how Jenkins employed a variety of devices to hook the reader and, at the same time, to convince him of the veracity of his shock-horror material. Jenkins' devices included varieties of typographical lay-out to indicate "real" government posters or the minutes of charitable committees, dramatized dialogue in play-script form, comic picaresque treatment of an appalling social problem, and an earnest preface in which

² Brian Maidment, "What shall we do with the starving baby?--Edward Jenkins and Ginx's Baby" in Popular Fictions: Essays in Literature and History. ed. P. Humm, P. Stigant, and P. Widdowson. (London: Methuen, 1981.)

tables of actual figures of infant mortality jostled with Jenkins' worried defence of his narrative method to the captious critic. Though Jenkin's polemical text is a far cry from The Warden his anxieties are surprisingly similar. Both authors display the need to attach this reader, placate that reviewer, and defend the integrity of the novel as serious form. Both are caught in the unresolved dilemma of the mid-19th century writer-reader relationship.

As argued in Chapter 1, Trollope attempted a version of the Ginx's Baby formula in The Warden with his invented parodies of Carlyle and Dickens, The Times, and the three bishops, but dropped this technique in favour of the more direct alliance of the narrator-reader relationship. It is one of the oddities of twentieth-century Trollopeian criticism that the use of the narrator has been consistently denigrated for its comfortable conventionality: a view which, as this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, is hardly tenable either in literary or in socio-political terms.

This particular aspect of "the Trollope problem" has arisen, I suggest, firstly because of the erroneous assumption that "we modernists" are progressive, questioning readers while the much misunderstood "Victorian reader" was a jeune fille dominated by a fatherly, didactic narrator force-feeding her a diet of "sweetmeats and sugar-plums". My examination of the narrator-reader discussion on romance,

heroes and heroines has attempted to show that this assumption does not stand up to examination when one studies the actual text. Secondly, I suggest that the general critical assumption that the narrator is always dominating the reader overlooks the independent evaluation which the Trollopeian reader makes as a direct result of his own reading.

The effect of the reader's relationship with the Trollope narrator is an argument against the myth of the dominating narrator, and is another indication of how far Trollope had succeeded in involving the reader in his experimental Trollopeian form.

Trollope's concentration on reader-involvement placed The Reader in a position of equal importance in the text to the The Author and The Characters. In doing this, he anticipated the recent efforts of a modern novelist, Italo Calvino, whose If On a Winter's Night a Traveler displays strenuous efforts by the Narrator to integrate The Reader into his text. The unconcealed presence of this narrator, and his relationship with the reader, has all the dominance of a music-hall Dr. Mesmer:

You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel If on a Winter's Night a Traveler. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade . . . Find the most comfortable position . . .

Resistance to Calvino's hypnotic narrator is reported to be fairly high among readers, partly because, I suggest,

* Italo Calvino, If On a Winter's Night a Traveller. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1981; Picador edn., 1982.), p.1.

there are only cardboard characters for The Reader to encounter. But the chief weakness of this narrator is the overwhelming sense of didactic manipulation which the reader experiences. Trollope's narrator, by contrast, encourages a sense of independence in the reader, which, combined with the shared examination of the characters' motivation and development over time, produced a strong and highly individual kind of novel which continues to exert its appeal as a lasting and lively form.

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