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ANTHONY TROLLOPE'S TRANSFORMATION OF THE NOBLE JILT INTO CAN YOU FORGIVE HER?

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# ANTHONY TROLLOPE'S TRANSFORMATION OF THE NOBLE JILT INTO CAN YOU FORGIVE HER?

by
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# INTRODUCTION

It is a fact frequently overlooked by critics of Anthony Trollope that his first novels were published in the 1840's. The Warden, his fourth, did not appear until 1855. Even so, most readers and critics of Trollope mark the real beginning of his writing career with that date.

The England of 1855, however, the year of The Warden, was as different from the England of the 1840's as The Warden was from the three novels and play that preceded it. But if those early works seem to us curiously inappropriate antecedents to The Warden, we discover, I think, on closer analysis, that they are appropriate to the times in which they were written; and, more importantly, are connected thematically to The Warden and Trollope's subsequent novels.

From the early 1830's until the mid-point of the century, England was in a state of growing tension and agitation. The Reform Bill of 1832 is usually taken as the beginning of the great period of parliamentary reform that paralleled the social and economic revolutions of the nineteenth century; though what one might call the reform impulse began before 1832 and the social revolution now associated largely with nineteenth-century developments had roots that went back two, perhaps three, centuries. Nevertheless, the Reform Bill of 1832 is an important enough event to afford a

convenient dividing line. It extended the franchise to include at least the upper reaches of the middle class. It did not, however, accomplish as much as the radical agitators had hoped. There were still large sections of the middle class not yet enfranchised; and the condition of the working classes created by the industrial revolution that had transformed both the face and the economy of England had hardly been looked to at all. The Reform Bill of 1832 was a necessary concession to the increased power of the middle class, a power that came to it by way of the industrial revolution. The interests and power of the middle class had become so important to the nation that the ruling class was willing, or forced, to make the concessions embodied in the legislation of 1832.

But if Parliament, on the one hand, was willing to admit the necessity of granting the middle class an increased share in governing the nation, commensurate with its increased share of the nation's wealth and power, there also developed, with time, opposition to the most conspicuous representatives of the middle class, the industrial princes. The factory and farm workers, victimized by the industrial revolution, were beginning to grow vocal and to organize. At the same time, some sections of the general public began to realize what kind of world the industrialists were creating in the north of England, the new center of capital and power. The Chartist movement made its first appearance in 1838, by which time Dickens had already succeeded in startling his reading public with the grim worlds portrayed in Oliver Twist and Nicholas

Nickleby. The Chartist movement waxed and waned for the next ten years, until 1848, as the economy of the land swung back and forth between temporary prosperity and temporary depression, to threaten the country with violence and revolution and to haunt the consciences of men who had thought through the implications of laissez-faire or who had seen what miracles of deprivation and degradation the new faith had wrought in the great capitals of the North and in London.

The Chartist movement, however, accomplished little. Its significance lay more in what it was than in what it did: a great cry of protest from the workers against the working conditions forced on them by the industrialists and the desperate living conditions in which they and their families lived. Against the power of the middle class, however, Chartism was ineffectual. With the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, in fact, the middle class industrialists may be said to have won the day. The industrialists, under the banner of laissez-faire, were now unchecked.

Despite the double triumph of the middle class, in the repeal of the Corn Laws (a blow to the landed, aristocratic interests) and the collapse of Chartism (a blow to the laboring classes), the 1840's were troubled and dangerous. Mass meetings, conducted frequently with evangelical fervor, though with surprising order, and occasional outbreaks of violence were watched with alarm. And gradually, the working classes, the oppressed, the exploited, won important converts to their cause. Writers now took up the job of agitation, of exposing

the evils of the new world, condemning its creators, and urging correction.

In 1845, Disraeli brought out Sybil, exposing not only "the Condition of the People,"[1] as he saw it, but analyzing the causes of their misery and the means for overcoming those causes in the future. In 1848 appeared Mrs. Gaskell's first novel, Mary Barton. It also exposed the desperate circumstances in which industrial workers and their families found themselves: "At present they seem to me to be left in a state, wherein lamentations and tears are thrown aside as useless, but in which the lips are compressed for curses, and the hands clenched and ready to smite."[2] Eighteen hundred and fifty saw still another novel that aimed both to inform and warn, Charles Kingsley's Alton Locke. Kingsley's novel pictures the collapse of the Chartist movement; but it also portrays the ghastly working conditions of London laborers (in this case, the tailors) and the relationship between workers' desperation and mob violence.

More famous novelists were also concerned with social analysis in the 1840's. In 1847, Dickens and Thackeray began to publish, respectively, Dombey and Son and Vanity Fair.

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[1]Benjamin Disraeli, "Advertisement" for Sybil, or The Two Nations ("The Bradenham Edition of The Novels and Tales of Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield," Vol. IX; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), p. xi.

[2]Mrs. Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, "Preface" to Mary Barton ("The Works of Mrs. Gaskell," Vol. I; London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1906), p. lxxiv.

Neither novelist deals with the condition of the people as Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, and Kingsley had attempted to deal with it. Instead of analyzing or describing the oppressed, they used their pens against the oppressors. Dickens is perhaps the more successful of the two, since he holds more tenaciously and ruthlessly to his purpose of exposing middle class greed, cruelty, and hypocrisy than does Thackeray. For Dickens, Mr. Dombey represents a system, a powerful and influential segment of society grown villainous. As Edgar Johnson puts it, in his critical biography of Dickens, "Mr. Dombey is the living symbol of the nineteenth-century theory of business enterprise and its social philosophy."[3] That theory had created Mr. Dombey and Dombeyism. Where Paul and Florence Dombey, Captain Cuttle, Polly Toodle, Toots, and others are all heart, Mr. Dombey is all self-interest. He, and the system he represents, have no room for compassion, let alone understanding. Dickens cannot bring himself to let Dombey escape, as does the equally shrewd, equally heartless Becky Sharpe: the good, hearty folk eventually triumph in Dickens' novel as inevitably as the house of Dombey and Son collapses in the end. Still, Dickens, even more than Thackeray, damns a whole class of people--in fact, the most powerful class in Dickens' own society--because it has substituted business interests for human interests.

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[3]Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), II, 631.

Trollope's first four works--The Macdermots of Ballycloran, The Kellys and the O'Kellys, La Vendee, and The Noble Jilt--belong to this period of the late 1840's, though they deal neither with the condition of the people, i.e., the oppressed, nor with the oppressors. In fact, the four works are not even about England. The first two novels are set in Ireland, the third in France, and the play in Belgium. Nevertheless, Trollope's early works also reflect the period of agitation and unrest in which they were conceived and written. In them, he too is concerned with the unsettled conditions of the times, and particularly with the bearing of social change on moral values.

Trollope's fame has so long been associated with The Warden and Barchester Towers and he has so long been represented as the Victorian novelist who gives us, intact, the golden days of prosperous Victorianism, that one is frequently led to think of him as little more than a faithful recorder, a kind of mirror in which we see unedited pictures of the past. His vogue in the twentieth century, and particularly during the second World War, is undoubtedly associated with this popular notion of Trollope and the world he portrays. An article in The New Statesmen and Nation for October 14, 1944, is indicative:

> Why has he not only survived but become admired again and popular? The answer is . . . that his novels are convincing . . . that he provides in an age when most novelists have confused moral views, pictures of life judged by standards of which the writer himself is at any rate absolutely sure. He does not only ask

> questions, but answers them. This is both restful and interesting.[4]

It is simply impossible to imagine the bombing of Barchester.

Despite the popular estimate of Trollope, however, and the critical tendency to date his significant emergence as a novelist with the publication of The Warden in 1855, Trollope was not merely a writer of comedies of manners. His social and moral concerns were as earnest as Dickens' and Mrs. Gaskell's; and it is precisely because those concerns are particularly apparent in the early novels, where they are associated with the overt violence of social overthrow, that they are of interest to the student of Trollope. With The Warden, Trollope's social and moral concerns seem to go underground, to reappear again more forcefully later in his career; but even in The Warden, in the golden land of Barchester, the social and moral problems that occupied Trollope's attention are at work, though the social analyst and the moral speculator has learned to smile, and one tends to see the smile and hear the gentle irony at the expense of the earnestness beneath.

The early novels are not so benign. In the first of them, The Macdermots of Ballycloran (1847), the heroine becomes pregnant by a man who decides not to marry her; her brother kills her betrayer; her father goes mad; and her brother is hanged for his deed after she has died as the result of a miscarriage. This sort of thing is an unexpected commencement

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[4]Desmond MacCarthy, "Trollope On The Stage," The New Statesman and Nation (New Series), XXVIII (October 14, 1944), 252.

to a career that supposedly began in the mood of The Warden; a surprising product to come from the pen of the man whose name is frequently linked with Jane Austen's.

In The Kellys and the O'Kellys, Trollope's next novel (1848), the mood is considerably lighter, in atmosphere more like the Barchester novels than The Macdermots of Ballycloran. Still, one of the chief characters--and probably the most interesting one--is a drunken, brutal young man who, in a drunken rage, knocks his sister senseless and comes so close to killing her that she flees for her life. Later, the same young man hints to the doctor who attends his sister in a subsequent illness that should she die, through the doctor's neglect, there would be something handsome in it for the compliant doctor.

Trollope's next novel, La Vendée (1850), is a curious tale about the French Revolution. It tells of a group of royalists who try to resist the republican overthrow of constituted monarchy. Their attempt, of course, is in vain, and the leading male characters pay with their lives for their efforts. It is a book of battles, burning chateaux, midnight escapes, treachery, and bloodshed.

The Noble Jilt, Trollope's only play (except for a later adaptation of The Last Chronicle of Barset), was also written in 1850. It, too, is set against a revolution, though in the play the revolution only figures in the background and has little to do with the action of the drama. The play lacks the violence of the first three novels, but

its action hinges on what might be called a bit of social, or moral, violence: the play's villain suggests to the heroine that they live together as man and wife without bothering about the orthodox and outmoded formality of marriage.

Trollope's first four works do more than reflect the social agitation and unrest of the period in which they appeared; they also indicate Trollope's own appraisal of the social revolution which England was actually engaged in from the first Reform Bill in 1832 and which only seemed to have come to an end with the collapse of Chartism in 1848 and with the economic affluence and stability that accompanied the triumph of the Victorian middle class from 1850 on. It was only later in his career, of course, after he had both analyzed the social situation more profoundly and had mastered his craft that Trollope succeeded in stating his case with a clarity which we hope later to demonstrate. Already, however, in The Macdermots of Ballycloran, Trollope's perception of the social revolution is apparent. The situation, as he saw it, was briefly this:

In the past, society had been led by a class of men known as gentlemen. Gentlemen came, as a matter of course, from the two upper echelons of society, the aristocracy and the landed gentry. Both classes were associated with the land and the eminence of a gentleman in society depended largely on the size of his land holdings. A gentleman had two major responsibilities. It was his job to care for the land by having it cultivated; and it was also his job to serve the land by supplying it with its leadership, whether at the level of local

or national government. If his concern was with his land holdings, he lived in the country. If he had been chosen to serve the nation in Parliament, he lived in London, for at least part of the year. In either event, he was entrusted with large responsibilities: the life of the nation depended on him.

If a man were born into the aristocracy or the landed gentry, he was automatically, on birth, ranked as a gentleman. If he were not an eldest son, however, and thus not the inheritor of the family land or the family's title, there were various courses open to him, various professions which he might undertake. He did not, however, go far beyond government, the Church, or the military without danger to his reputation as a gentleman.

If a gentleman was marked by his birth and by the manner in which he used his life, he was also marked by his social behavior and attitudes. He shared with other gentlemen a code of honor that bound him to recognize certain social responsibilities and to be loyal to certain high principles that served as the foundation for his social and private life. He was, in fact, the direct descendent of the feudal lord who, in exchange for the pre-eminence allowed him in society and government--a pre-eminence based originally on his wealth in land--returned his services as leader, protector, and social and moral example.

By the 1840's, it was apparent to the thoughtful observer that the old feudal order had either been changed

drastically or come to an end altogether. With the transformation affected by the industrial revolution, a new class of men, living by different principles and values from those espoused by the gentlemen class, had won wealth for themselves. It was, of course, wealth of a different kind from the wealth of the aristocracy and the gentry: instead of land, they had capital, factories, industrial products to sell. Having wealth, they were now interested in acquiring power; and they were willing to buy their way, marry their way, or fight their way to the position in society they desired. Their aspirations brought them into direct confrontation with, and in many instances conflict with, gentlemen of the old order who did not want to yield their own position in the world. They were the traditional leaders of the nation. They stood for principles that held society together. They were allied with civilization, culture. Their overthrow would bring chaos, disaster.

Trollope had not reduced the social revolution to these simple terms at the time he wrote his first novel; nor, for that matter, did he ever see things in quite the way that we see them. We have the advantage of hindsight and a vocabulary to match social concepts which now seem to us self-evident. Trollope's objectivity as an observer was necessarily partially limited by his involvement with the society he sought to analyze. Nevertheless, he was able to describe, to dramatize, the social revolution which marked the end of the old feudal order and the beginning of a new order.

The outlines of the drama are already indicated in Trollope's first novel. The Macdermots of Ballycloran is about an old, landed family that has fallen prey to both inner decay and outer encroachments. Partly through its inability to manage its own affairs, the family has fallen into terrible poverty. Waiting to buy the property, when he has forced the owner into legal submission, is a man representative of the new order--shrewd, unscrupulous, opportunistic--who, having acquired money, now aspires to power and the trappings of prestige and respect formerly accorded only to the landed, the inheritors of property or title or both. Ready to fight back is the young heir of the Macdermot line, wanting to preserve his birthright. His weapons, however, are ineffectual against the legal machinations of his opponent, who has law on his side as well as money. The agent for law and order in the area, though a man generally sympathetic, is nevertheless an outsider and committed, by the nature of his office, to the enforcement of the law, which is tantamount to being committed to the overthrow of the Macdermots and their traditional place. His seduction of the Macdermot girl serves an important symbolic function, as well as providing the novel with the chief hinge for its action: young Macdermot's murder of his sister's seducer is an act of rage that is totally ineffectual to stop the advance of the real enemy and an act that seals the doom of the old order.

In the two novels and the play that follow, parts of the pattern established in The Macdermots repeat themselves:

there is an old order corrupted by its greed, weakened by its expenditure, made ineffectual by its social indifference; there is a new order, claiming rank because of its sheer power (either monetary or military) and able to seize it from the old order. At the heart of each, there is a struggle for social, political, and economic control, and the struggle frequently manifests itself by actual instances of overt violence.

There is a five-year interval between Trollope's only attempt to write a play, in 1850, and the appearance of The Warden in 1855, the longest interval between works ever to interrupt the flow of material from Trollope's pen once he had begun his novel-writing career. When he emerged from this significant period of gestation, Trollope seems, on the surface, to have turned away from the violence and the serious social concern that characterized his early works and from the foreign settings against which he made his first efforts to be serious. He had come home, it seemed, back to England, back to the land where the problems of Irish poverty, misery, and temper, where continental revolutions, violence, and moral turpitude, were not present. But The Warden is an intensification, not a diminution, of Trollope's concern with social revolution. He is committed to Mr. Harding because he represents the class of gentlemen which was for Trollope a moral necessity. A nation without gentlemen to lead it, according to those fixed standards and principles by which gentlemen had always lived and performed their duties to society and to the state, was a

nation not to be imagined: it would be a state of chaos. But Trollope had also to admit that the old order was proving itself unable to handle the new world created by the industrial revolution. And he was also forced to admit that the nation's new leaders were coming from a different class than leaders traditionally had come from. Was, therefore, the gentleman class defunct, and with it the principles by which it had lived? Or was the term "gentleman" simply to follow where power led? Should one honor the new leaders of the nation with the old title, though they were not associated with land or the values that had become associated with landowners?

Orley Farm dramatizes as well as any of Trollope's novels his own moral dilemma in the face of the social revolution. Sir Peregrine Orme is an aged aristocrat, living on his lands, who stands for the values and the way of life of the old order: he is generous, trusting, loyal to his family and friends, unwilling to believe evil of anyone whom he likes. Lady Mason, on the other hand, though a neighbor of Sir Peregrine and accepted by him as an admired friend, has not been born into his class. Her grandparents were "thoroughly respectable people in the hardware line . . ." And her parents "had risen from retail to wholesale, and considered themselves for a long period of years to be good representatives of the commercial energy and prosperity of Great Britain."[5] As a young woman, Lady Mason married a much older man, not because she loved him, but because

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[5]Anthony Trollope, Orley Farm ("The World's Classics"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1956), I, 13.

she had been taught by her family the values of the new order--particularly that money was essential to happiness and marriage as good a means to gaining it as any. Once married, she is willing to commit forgery and perjury in order to insure for her son the financial security she has been taught to value above all other things.

When the novel opens, twenty years have elapsed since Lady Mason forged her husband's will and acquired a portion of his estate for her infant son. In the meantime, Lady Mason has acquired the values of the class to which her marriage raised her and of which her neighbors, Sir Peregrine and his daughter-in-law, are such perfect embodiments. Her new values, her association with Sir Peregrine and Mrs. Orme, make her despise what she has done in the past. She has learned that her old values were wrong, leading her to commit evil deeds.

Eventually, Sir Peregrine discovers the truth about Lady Mason. The woman who, by marriage, was raised to his class proves to be, by the standards of that class, no lady at all. Lady Mason proves that her husband's children were right when they announced to one another that their father "had positively disgraced himself" by marrying outside his own class.[6] At the same time, Lady Mason has, by Trollope's own admission, greater "force of character" than Mrs. Orme, with whom she is compared, an unsullied representative of the old order. Lady Mason is "a stronger woman in every way, endowed with more force of will, with more power of mind, with greater

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[6]Trollope, Orley Farm, II, 14.

energy, and a swifter flow of words."[7] Furthermore, she has won the love of old Sir Peregrine and even her exposure cannot shake, finally, his admiration of her.

Though Orley Farm dramatizes the confrontation of two antagonistic classes and two codes of conduct and morality, it does not solve the conflict attendant on that confrontation. Sir Peregrine withdraws from life and sits in darkened room, waiting for and hoping for death. Lady Mason wanders away into foreign exile. But the moral dilemma must nevertheless be solved. Sir Peregrine and his daughter-in-law are too simple to cope with it. They have assumed that Lady Mason, because her marriage to a man of station raised her to rank, and because she has acted in a manner appropriate to that rank, must be a lady; i.e., her actions and attitudes must be those appropriate to all ladies. Conversely, there would be some actions and attitudes she would be incapable of. Sir Peregrine and his daughter-in-law have, in other words, an exalted view of their own class that is both pure and over-simple. When Lady Mason demonstrates to them, however, that a woman can assume the part of a lady, despite unladylike actions in her past that ought, according to their lights, to remove her permanently from the privilege of playing the role she has assumed, they are stunned, unbelieving. The world is clearly no longer what it was. One now encounters, knows, even likes people who are not gentlemen and ladies according to the old standards. They may have money, even land; but they are counterfeits.

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[7]Trollope, Orley Farm, II, 200.

Despite the admission Trollope must make about the ineptness of the upper class, in the person of Sir Peregrine and Mr. Harding, he is nevertheless interested in, even loyal to, that class because of its allegiance to the same principles that Trollope believed in. His loyalty, however, must not be exaggerated. He was able, not only to admit the weaknesses of the upper class, but to criticize it sharply, as we shall show later; and among the middle class he was to find those whose vitality he recognized, whose human worth he was to admit: next after Lady Mason, Miss Dunstable, of the Barchester series, comes immediately to mind. But without being sentimental about the upper class, he was as sympathetic with it as its loyalty to Trollope's own values would allow; and in a world of shifting social and moral values, he seemed to see in the upper classes some staying power against the influx of false values which he saw flooding the country. It is, in fact, his looking to the upper classes at all that separates Trollope's social attitude from that of Dickens and Thackeray; and his perception that the upper class could not emerge intact from its conflict with the threatening middle class distinguishes him altogether from Disraeli.

If the traditional social and moral function of the upper class was to be maintained at all, it was certain that something more was required from those threatened than shock and withdrawal. If the upper class was not strong enough to maintain its position of social and moral leadership in the face of the vigorous monied middle class, then Trollope was

sure that the social revolution would be accompanied by a moral wilderness.

Trollope saw his country's society engaged in a struggle both social and moral. The implications of that struggle were certainly every bit as serious for him as the Irish and continental struggles he began his writing career by portraying. In Barchester, of course, there was little overt violence. But gradually, as he looked more closely, things grew awry. England's social upheaval began to exact its penalty. Lady Mason (Orley Farm) proves a forger, a perjurer; Lily Dale, a Barchester heroine, is jilted by the man she loves and decides on spinsterhood for life (The Small House at Allington); Josiah Crawley, the high-principled man non pareil, is accused of theft (The Last Chronicle of Barset); He Knew He Was Right contains a monomaniac, The Eustace Diamonds a gigantic swindle; Phineas Finn is accused of murder (Phineas Redux); and Augustus Melmotte (The Way We Live Now) and Ferdinand Lopez (The Prime Minister) commit suicide. The list could be extended.

As he saw his own society more clearly, in other words, Trollope recognized that it was engaged in the same kind of social and moral revolution he had associated earlier with Ireland, France, and Belgium. One would have liked to believe that England was to be spared those upheavals that had brought violence and suffering to her neighbors; that Barchester and Mr. Harding and the things they stood for were not, in fact, endangered. With time, however, Trollope was

to admit that Barchester had been attacked, that it was, in fact, destroyed. There was, after all, a Last Chronicle of Barset in which Mr. Harding, too, dies.

Even before the death of Mr. Harding, however, Trollope was finding his way to new characters who were loyal to the principles of the way of life traditionally ascribed to the upper class at the same time that they were learning to live in the market atmosphere imposed on the world at large by the power of the monied middle class. They did not react to a world made bewildering by social and moral revolution by withdrawing in shocked dismay. Complex characters, needless to say, need something to be complex about if their difficulties are to be convincing; and it must be admitted that Trollope created complicated characters before he saw clearly, or admitted, the social and moral causes for their inner divisions. As he came to see England's social revolution more accurately, however, and the difficulties it imposed, particularly on those who were apt to be the losers as a result of the revolution, his portraits of complex personalities became increasingly convincing.

Fortunately, Trollope gave us an unusual opportunity to study his progress toward understanding the moral consequences of social revolution; and also to study his progress in creating characters capable of understanding, and coping with, the complicated world in which they lived. In 1850, he wrote The Noble Jilt, a play that belongs to the first phase of his writing career and to the period of social

agitation mentioned earlier. Thirteen years later, in 1863, at the peak of his popularity and at a time when the social agitation of the 1840's had given way to the outward calm of Victorian prosperity, Trollope took the play and transformed it into a novel, Can You Forgive Her? (first published serially, beginning in January, 1864). But beneath the outward calm and prosperity of Trollope's work, he is still intent on analyzing the effects of the social revolution that displaced a class, or at least made the upper class share its prerogatives with the middle class whose values were different from its own. With the novel, Trollope's social analysis is sharper, his awareness of moral implications keener, and his ability to create characters who dramatize social and moral conflicts attendant on the social revolution greater.

It is the purpose of this study to examine The Noble Jilt and Can You Forgive Her? as indicators of Trollope's development as a serious novelist who successfully handled, eventually, complex characters in complex moral and social situations. The center of our interest will be three heroines: Margaret de Wynter, Alice Vavasor, and Lady Glencora Palliser. All three are members, by birth, of the upper class. All three are tempted to forsake the values of their class for values traditionally antithetical to that class. In time, all three come to their senses and return to an allegiance to those values which Trollope was always loyal to. The motives of the three women, however, both in flirting with an order outside the order to which they belong and in returning, intact, from

the danger of contamination, are different. Margaret de Wynter's motives for straying are so involved as to be almost inexplicable, though the reason for her return is unduly simple. Lady Glencora is tempted to stray for rather simple reasons; but the process of overcoming her temptation is complex. Alice Vavasor's case lies somewhere in between.

The three women are, in fact, a single heroine whom Trollope tried to clarify. He was only able to do so as he learned to relate the difficulty of her private situation to the social and moral difficulties brought on by England's nineteenth-century social revolution. That he succeeded eventually in reducing his heroine to clarity as he expanded and understood the social and moral background against which she moved, we shall now try, for our part, to demonstrate.

## CHAPTER I: THE TRIANGLE PRESENTED

### 1. Introduction

In 1850, having failed to find popular success with his first three novels, Anthony Trollope turned his hand to drama and wrote a three-act play, The Noble Jilt. The manuscript was submitted to George Bartley, an actor friend, who returned it with a letter condemning the play for its lack of sympathetic characters: "There is not one character, serious or comic, to challenge the sympathy of the audience; and without that all the good writing in the world will not ensure success upon the stage."[1] Trollope put the play aside. It was never produced and remained unpublished until 1923, forty years after Trollope's death.

Superficially, the play is imitative of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, which Trollope read and admired greatly.[2] It is divided into five acts, each act being further subdivided into either three or four scenes. Within each act, the serious and comic scenes alternate with almost perfect regularity. Further, Trollope uses blank verse which he alternates with prose dialogue. The alternation is used as in Elizabethan and

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[1]Michael Sadleir, "Preface" to Anthony Trollope's The Noble Jilt (London: Constable & Company, 1923), p. xiv.

[2]Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 366-67.

Jacobean drama; the blank verse dialogue is reserved for the serious characters at heightened, or elevated, moments, the prose dialogue for more mundane conversations and for the use of the comic, or "low," characters.

If the play superficially resembles Renaissance models, its background of political revolution and, more particularly, its foreground of social and moral revolution relate to Trollope's own preoccupations in the mid-nineteenth century. The play is set in Bruges in 1792 against a background of political unrest and revolution. Belgium, led by native rebels and supported by post-revolutionary France, is in the process of breaking free from Austrian domination; and the rebel leaders are eager, at the time of the play's action, to secure the support of Bruges for the revolutionary cause.

Trollope's real concern in the play, however, is only indirectly related to its revolutionary background; and the Elizabethan and Jacobean trappings are of little relevance to Trollope's themes. The issue at stake is not the conflict between Belgium and Austria. It is, instead, the choice that Margaret de Wynter, the play's heroine, must make between two men, each of whom represents a different way of life. She may have, as her husband, Count Upsel, a gentleman who is noble and wealthy but who is dull; or she may have Mark Steinmark, a rebel without money or position but with the ability to excite her imagination. If she chooses the gentleman, she will please her family and be acting as sensible young ladies of her class are expected to act; but if she chooses the

rebel, she must fly in the face of family and convention and insist that her own interests are more important than the aggregate interests of family and society.

The comic triangle presents a comparable situation, though on a lower plane. There, Mme. Brudo must choose between Van Hoppen who, though no gentleman, is wealthy but also dull; and Belleroach, a rebel like Steinmark, who has little to recommend him aside from his masculine charms.

In the process of drawing these six characters, and particularly in presenting Margaret de Wynter and her two suitors, Trollope associates each with certain social and moral characteristics which form the basis of the conflict at the heart of the play and, later, of the novel derived from it.

## 2. Margaret de Wynter

Margaret de Wynter's situation is this: having, prior to the beginning of the action, refused the hand of Steinmark, she finds herself engaged to marry Count Upsel. Since her engagement, however, the excitement of revolution has come to Belgium; and the reactions of her rejected and her accepted suitors to the political situation throw on each a new light. Mark Steinmark is actively engaged in the revolutionary effort while the Count, her fiancé at the moment, is unmoved by and uninvolved in his country's struggle for independence, his scholarly interests and retiring nature apparently precluding the possibility of his participation.

Margaret herself is keenly interested in the revolution and wants to be involved in it, the more actively the better. Her interest contrasts sharply with her fiancé's indifference. She continues to profess her love for the Count, however, and refuses to find fault with him; though she is gradually forced to admit that they are at least temperamentally incompatible, he being "close and careful" (5) while she is "intent on stirring active scenes, / longing to mix with those who love mankind . . ."[3]

Margaret's best friend is Helen Steinmark, the sister of Mark Steinmark. As might be expected, Helen is openly antagonistic toward Count Upsel since he has been preferred over her brother. But her dislike for the Count goes deeper. She sees a greater gulf between Margaret and her fiancé than Margaret does. The real problem, Helen asserts, is with Count Upsel's basic attitudes. He is old-fashioned, bound by tradition. This is most apparent in his attitude toward Margaret and the role he expects her to play as his wife. His wife, says Helen, will be his chattel, his "slave" (20). Such a position is all right for "those who are content / to reign securely o'er a kitchen stove, / and quilt a petticoat or roll a pudding" (20). But being himself "a useless, harmless, household fowl" (22), he should not have chosen for his mate "a bird of noble mien, a falcon gentle. . ." (22). Helen is

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[3]Anthony Trollope, The Noble Jilt, ed. Michael Sadleir (London: Constable & Company, 1923), p. 6. (Note: All further references will be to this edition, pages noted parenthetically in the text.)

willing to admit the Count's advantages; he has land, a country estate, inherited wealth. But all he offers a person of Margaret's ambitions is a "golden cage" against which Margaret can only "break [her] wings . . ." (22).

Helen implies that her brother would be a more suitable match. This Margaret denies. After all, does she not love the Count, does she not respect him, esteem his ways? In truth, however, as she later admits to herself, she does view the life he offers as restrictive. She begins to wish that she could again "enjoy / my pure, free will, my own unfettered thoughts. . ." (45). She eventually persuades herself that she must break away from the Count and the quiet, traditional life he offers her. She wants something more from life than to be the wife of a country gentleman. She wants to be an active participant in the world of affairs, "to stem its eddies, feel its varied throbs, / risk all its chances, dare its threatened perils, / and earn one triumph with a thousand pangs" (46).

Count Upsel's life is one of rural retreat, isolation, withdrawal. The life of Mark Steinmark is one of involvement and action. When Helen suggests, therefore, that Margaret transfer her allegiance back to Helen's brother, Margaret agrees. The bond between them, however, is not to be love, as was the bond between Margaret and the Count. Instead, it is to be their adherence to the same cause, the independence of Belgium.

Having made her decision, Margaret is unable to explain her motives to the Count. She insists that she still loves him and will only account for her defection by urging her own "deep demerits," though these remain unspecified. She makes herself clear enough, however, when dealing with Mark Steinmark. She tells him she wants to share his lot as a soldier. She yearns for "other cares and sterner duties" (92) than would have been hers as the Count's wife. She prefers being Steinmark's "partner," his "friend" (92). Refusing to grant him the kiss he asks for, she reaffirms thereby that their relationship is not to be based on love.

Having broken with the Count and having agreed to marry Steinmark in the course of the first three acts, Margaret reverses her actions in the last two. In Act IV, Scene 1, Mark Steinmark proposes to her that they do without a formal, religious ceremony in establishing their union, that they substitute private assurances for public vows. In the face of his proposition, all of Margaret's resolves collapse. She is shocked and withdraws her hand. When Helen joins her in reviling Steinmark's proposition, Margaret asks her to desist, however, saying that she has at least "learned a lesson" which "may serve me much hereafter" (121).

Throughout the rest of the play, Margaret expresses herself almost exclusively in terms of remorse and self-deprecation. She speaks of her "treachery" and "gross injustice" toward the Count (145); of her "cruel strength to break his happy hopes" (146), as one who is "low" and "deeply

shamed" (148). She accepts the full responsibility for what she has done, and rebukes Helen for suggesting that she has been the cause of Margaret's break with the Count (144-45).

At the end of the play, Count Upsel is persuaded to try his hand again at winning Margaret. Despite her protestations that, having jilted him, she has made herself permanently unsuitable to become his wife, she succumbs to his entreaties and they are reconciled.

To explain Margaret's vacillation in the play between Count Upsel, whom she "loves," and Mark Steinmark, who offers her what she claims to want, Trollope offers two suggestions: she thinks too much, and she has too exalted opinion of woman's possibilities in general and her own in particular.

Margaret herself admits that she is too much given to the habit of ratiocination. Unable to accept the life offered her by Count Upsel, she tells Helen that she has been guilty of "thinking too much of it. For some time past I have thought of it till--till. . . . Till I fear to think of it further" (18). She thinks about it long enough, nevertheless, to persuade herself to give up the man she loves for a man she prefers for other reasons. Her intellect and her emotions, in other words, are supposedly pitted against each other, reason pulling her one way, love another.

With practicality, however, Margaret's rationality has nothing to do. Her father and her aunt, Mme. Brudo, urge Margaret to consider the practical, material advantages of being Count Upsel's wife. "Did you ever think / what 'tis to

be a countess?" Mme. Brudo inquires. Margaret answers, "No indeed . . ." (85). For her, the solid, material advantages of the Count fade before the romantic, exciting prospect of being Mark Steinmark's bride.

That Margaret is drawn, despite her "love" for the Count, to Steinmark relates directly to the second reason for her vacillations: her inherent feminism. At first glance, Margaret's attitude toward the role of woman, as she herself wishes to exemplify that role, seems merely an extension of her rationality, since it appears, on the evidence of her own statements, that it is her feministic attitudes which prompt her to go against her professed emotional inclinations. On closer examination, however, one discovers that whenever Margaret speaks of what she would like, ideally, to do with her life, she speaks with more emotion than reason. She is aroused considerably more by the prospects she imagines for herself, once freed from the encumbrance of the Count, than by Count Upsel himself. When Helen asks her, on learning that Margaret has decided to break with the Count, what she intends to do, she bursts out, "Give every nerve to Flanders, / to freedom and to France; drown thought in action, / forget my sex and be a stirring rebel" (49).

Margaret's feministic enthusiasm eventually carries her almost entirely into the masculine camp. Her attitude toward marriage is no longer the traditionally servile one. As Margaret contemplates her union with Steinmark, she thinks of his joining his lot to hers as <u>she</u> faces the "troubles and

perils of the world. . ." (50). She addresses him almost as one man to another: "Mark, let us know the terms of that compact, / by which we hope to bind us to each other. / . . . I'll be your partner" (91-92).

The various reactions Margaret elicits from other characters further confound the reader's attempt to understand her. The men tend to criticize her actions without probing to understand her motives; while the women criticize both her actions and her motives.

Margaret's father and Count Upsel contribute the least to our understanding of her. Mr. de Wynter gives us one significant piece of information about Margaret's situation: he reminds her that her own family is poor, warning her, by implication that, having found a rich count, she had better keep him. The Count himself is not much better at helping the reader assess Margaret's motives or actions. He sees her constantly through a haze of loving clichés: "My idol, / my sum of worldly wealth, my single treasure!" (54) He lapses momentarily into invective when faced with her perfidy (55-56), but returns almost at once to his previous attitude of unadulterated admiration. When he reappears at the end of the play, he assumes the same tone in addressing her as he used before: "You now are free," he says to her, "unsullied, honest, full of noble purpose, / high in esteem. . ." (176). Since he will admit no fault in her character, he is obviously of little value in adding to our knowledge of Margaret.

Mark Steinmark's attitude toward Margaret is essentially one of indifference. Advised by his sister that she is again free to accept his suit, and willing to do so, he is simply surprised at the news and tells his sister that Margaret's break with the Count is an act of "sheer frenzy" (75). Rather unconvincingly moved by a desire to revenge himself on the Count for having earlier stolen Margaret from him, Steinmark agrees to attempt a reconciliation with Margaret. Confronted by Margaret, however, his indifference warms into something else; he would at least like a kiss from the woman who agrees to be his wife. Her haughty rejection of his advance leaves him surprised, irritated, and confused (93). He is further, and finally, confounded to discover that Margaret is "revolutionary" only within certain limitations, that she makes no connection in her own mind between political and moral revolutions, that her criticisms of the Church do not include a criticism of the morality sanctioned by the Church. Steinmark assumes that Margaret's professed abhorrence of "Priest-ridden nations / and cities grovelling under monkish rule" and her violent anti-clericalism indicate an attitude of moral emancipation that would at least consider the possibility of an extra-legal liaison (113). But Steinmark is wrong. His fourth act proposal is greeted with surprise and anger; and the intensity of her reaction makes him think himself well rid of her (122).

If the men are slow at assessing Margaret's actions and motives, the women who know her are not. As far as Mme.

Brudo is concerned, Margaret is, by virtue of her break with Count Upsel, a "foolish, frantic hussy!" (84) Incredulous at Margaret's inability to appraise properly the value of the Count, she pronounces Margaret "a very child" (86).

Helen Steinmark has the most pertinent things to say about Margaret's character. As she works to foster Margaret's break with the Count in order that Margaret and her brother may be reconciled, she criticizes Margaret for those qualities that make her cling to her first engagement. She suggests, in the first place, that Margaret's doubts regarding Count Upsel are little more than pretty "affectations" (18), implying some minor hypocrisy in Margaret's concerns about her engagement. And eventually, Helen openly accuses Margaret of dishonesty: "you come hither, / half-uttering thoughts, and when I speak them out-- / your own thoughts, mark you--then you say I'm cruel" (25).

Once Margaret has determined to break with the Count, Helen finds that she now has another matter to contend with before the reconciliation with her brother can be effected. This is Margaret's impracticality, also criticized, indirectly, by Mme. Brudo. Helen must persuade Margaret that she still requires a husband if she is to have that contact with the great world of affairs she dreams of. Helen succeeds in carrying her point, and Margaret and Mark are subsequently reconciled.

When Helen learns of her brother's ungentlemanly proposal, she decides that it is now her duty to reconcile

Margaret and Count Upsel. Once more, however, she discovers, or points to, a fault in Margaret that blocks her scheme, namely Margaret's pride. "Your high pride-- / . . . will mar his every hope / and chain him to his sorrow" (148).

It is not, however, news of Margaret's pride that Helen carries to Count Upsel to serve the end of reconciliation. He, it seems, must know only of Margaret's "love" for him. "'Twas passion only / that joined her lot with yours, strong passionate love . . ." Helen reports; and though Margaret has tried to emancipate herself from the bondage of love, she is unable to do so. "Love still is lord of all," Helen says to the Count (171).

Helen's inconsistencies parallel Margaret's vacillations; she may be said to be, in a way, the objective counterpart to Margaret's subjective inconstancies. She is consistently the spokesman for thoughts which Margaret herself entertains but resists. Margaret requires persuasion which she insists is the result of her own mental exertions. But since her inner debates could not be presented dramatically, Trollope needed a character who would represent one half--and always, in fact, the winning half--of the inner debate. This is Helen's role. At first she is partisan on behalf of her brother, though what private reasons she has for wanting to arrange a match between her penniless friend and her poor brother are never explained. Later, she becomes the voice that urges Margaret to marry the Count after all. Whether she does this, however, because she really believes that

Margaret loves the Count or because she has come to think, like Mme. Brudo, that the match is a prudent one, remains unclear.

It is significant that Helen is the only one of the five commenting characters who is not baffled by Margaret. I would suggest that this is because her role in the play is so bound up with Margaret's confusions that the two are incapable of separation. She is the outer reflection of Margaret's inner state.

If Margaret baffles those around her, she seems to be clear in her own mind about her actions and motives. She is determined about the inadequacies of Count Upsel and the consequences that would follow from her marriage to him; and she is also decided about the kind of life she wants for herself. She may be troubled by feelings of guilt related to her own unspecified unworthiness and the hurt that she must inflict in acting on her resolve. But so certain is she of the justice of her actions that neither guilt nor love deter her, and she proceeds first to break her engagement with the Count and then to accept Steinmark as her fiancé. Eventually, of course, she recognizes her mistake; but she is as determined to have her way after breaking with Steinmark as she was before and is only persuaded to return to the Count in the end by the greatest certainty of all, apparently: that she loves him.

Readers must make of Margaret what they can from the evidence given both by her and by those around her. Despite

the decisiveness with which she seems to be endowed, our impression of her is confused. She loves that which she rejects and accepts that which she does not love; and her motives throughout are unclear. Is her rejection of the Count motivated by reason which hides behind the mask of emotion in order to ease her conscience and to soften the blow for Count Upsel? And is her subsequent acceptance of Mark Steinmark motivated by the private emotion of ambition which hides behind a show of rationality? Or has Trollope borrowed her vacillations, her hesitations, from the stock Victorian heroine who shied away from the physical realities of love-making and marriage? Such explanations, however, cannot account for Margaret's behavior in the fourth and fifth acts of the play. The suddenness with which she repudiates Steinmark is perhaps justifable, given his proposal. But that she can so easily return to her engagement with the Count remains inexplicable. It becomes necessary, in order to justify her return to Count Upsel, to establish the fact that Margaret really does love the Count and has loved him all along, as she claims, a fact which contradicts her apparent motivation earlier in the play.

In the last act, Count Upsel asks Helen if Margaret is able to "command her heart," to which Helen replies, "Oh God, she cannot!" (171) Margaret's love, Helen says, is "strong passionate love," and though she strives to quench it, control it, she cannot. This appears so inappropriate to the character of Margaret, as we have understood it

earlier, that one initially suspects Helen of lying on Margaret's behalf in order to persuade the Count to renew his suit. But apparently Trollope wishes us to believe that Margaret does, in fact, still love Count Upsel. When the Count presses her, in the play's final scene, to answer his question, "Didst ever love me, / Margaret?" she replies, "Oh God, you know I did!" (178)

What then about her former objections to the Count and his way of life? What about her fears regarding the life he offers her? And, most important, what about her own ambitions? There is nothing in the play to suggest that Count Upsel has changed or, for that matter, that Margaret has. And if her love for him is so strong and passionate that it can so easily overcome her feelings of guilt and unworthiness at the end of the play why was it not strong enough to overcome the doubts that troubled her at its beginning?

Margaret is not only baffling to the other characters in the play, she is also an unsolved puzzle for the reader. It is rather clear, in fact, that Trollope himself hardly knew what to make of her. Eventually, he saw and admitted what was wrong. In The Eustace Diamonds (1871-73), Lizzie Eustace and Mrs. Carbuncle attend the theater to see

> a new piece, "The Noble Jilt," from the hand of a very eminent author. . . . Mrs. Carbuncle had talked a great deal about "The Noble Jilt," and could boast that she had discussed the merits of the two chief characters with the actor and actress who were to undertake them. Miss Talbot [the actress] had assured her that the Margaret was altogether impracticable, and Mrs. Carbuncle was quite of the same opinion.[4]

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[4]Anthony Trollope, The Eustace Diamonds ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), II, 107.

When the play is over, Mrs. Carbuncle pronounces it a failure.

> On their way home Mrs. Carbuncle declared that Minnie Talbot had done her best with such a part as Margaret, but that the character afforded no scope for sympathy. "A noble jilt, my dears," said Mrs. Carbuncle eloquently, "is a contradiction in terms. There can be no such thing."[5]

### 3. Margaret's Choices

The central conflict of The Noble Jilt has to do with Margaret's dilemma in choosing between two men, which also involves choosing between a traditional, domestic role for herself as a gentleman's wife or an unorthodox, more masculine, active role as the wife of a rebel. Each man clearly represents a different way of life to her; and it is what each symbolizes that constitutes his interest for her and for us.

At the level of generality, Margaret is always loyal to Count Upsel. When she stops to examine him at the level of particularity, however, she is inevitably critical. He is "close and careful" (5) and offers little but "long years of gilded idleness. . ." (6). He has learned "to disregard all worldly interests; / to think no subject worth the studying," ultimately "indifferent" to all the things Margaret thinks important (7). More specifically, he is indifferent to Margaret's views: "I speak and speak, but he will never heed me" (24). Helen, in keeping with her role, is even more outspoken in condemning him. She speaks of him as a "monster" (19),

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[5]Trollope, The Eustace Diamonds, II, 109.

as arrogant (23), as heedless of the thing he has purchased "with a price" (24).

To the other characters, however, Count Upsel represents an almost perfect match. He is both a gentleman and a man of wealth. According to her father, "Count Upsel owns / every good gift which could bestead a suitor. . . ." He has wealth; "His form and gait are perfect, and his lineage / higher than your own"; he is modest and wise; and he respects Margaret (4-5). Mme. Brudo particularly emphasizes his wealth, though she is also cognizant of the personal qualities which mark him as a gentleman: He is, she says, "a man of birth and wealth, a noble man / the richest man of the day"; "The richest man in Brabant or in Flanders; / and steady too"; "a true gentleman, of noble aspect, / unlimited in wealth. . ." (84-85). And even Mark Steinmark recognizes the noble attributes of the Count and speaks of him as "the wealthiest gentleman in the Netherlands; young, handsome and a scholar; noble by birth and one of nature's noblemen" (75-76).

If the audience is to understand Margaret, let alone sympathize with her, it must be made to see at least some validity in her objections to the Count. The Count's occasional, brief appearances in the play do little, however, to support her objections to him. Of his supposed lethargy, or indifference, we see nothing. His reaction to Margaret's dismissal of him is vigorous in its dismay; and in his soliloquy following his dismissal neither his language nor his mood indicate that he is the retiring, passive scholar. Count Upsel's final

speeches, too, show him to be other than reported by Margaret and Helen. Whatever qualities of scholarly idealism he may have had offstage, whatever tendencies to withdraw from the rough-and-tumble of the everyday world, these are apparently gone when he says to Helen, of his relationship to Margaret: "The happy day-dreams of our perfect love / have flown away, and we must wake and work / and take the rough world for our bed-fellow / with all its stinging evils" (170); "Is she prepared and ready for the battle?" (171) Furthermore, and more important, he is prepared to take Margaret back and urges the suitability of her return against her hesitations, feelings of guilt, and objections with an efficacy which is both sympathetic and aggressive. His appearances on stage, in short, give the lie to Margaret's and Helen's criticism of him.

There need have been no contradiction between the picture we get of him from Margaret and Helen and the practical advantages he has to offer, as indicated by Mr. de Wynter and Mme. Brudo; he could have been both a good match from one point of view and a bad one from another. As it is, however, what strikes the audience as his principal defect, namely a manner that is rather overbearingly rhetorical, is a fault shared by other characters in the play and hence is hardly noticeable as a defect peculiar to the Count; while Margaret's chief objection to him, that he is withdrawn and uninterested in the affairs of the world, is given no substantiation by Upsel's own appearances in the play. It is finally impossible to understand exactly the basis either for Margaret's professed

loyalty to him or her more apparent dissatisfaction with him.

Her attitude toward Mark Steinmark is even more difficult to fathom. Though she has been romantically linked with him in the past, before the engagement to Count Upsel, she supposedly has never loved him. She does, however, admit to admiring him (7); and to Helen she confides, "I have esteemed your brother, and well know / his courage and his worth." At the point, however, when Steinmark began to press his suit in earnest, Margaret drew back. "He was my friend / till he became my lover" (23). And when Margaret and Steinmark actually confront each other she shows, in fact, the same indifference to him that she accused Count Upsel of showing to her. She sees him merely as a soldier, refusing to individualize him further (92).

Margaret's indifference to her second fiancé is most apparent in her response to his news that the Austrian troops have been withdrawn from Bruges and that he must lead his own recruits in pursuit of them. Margaret shows no concern over the dangers to which Steinmark will be exposed. She is interested in the cause which Steinmark supports, not in Steinmark himself. Steinmark, of course, has other things on his mind than the coming military campaign, and as he makes his designs on Margaret clear to her, she is gradually forced to look away from "the cause" to the man and, in the process, her attitude toward him changes. As she begins to perceive his drift, she accuses him of cowardice: "You have

a meaning that you dare not speak" (119). Steinmark, however, is willing to make himself perfectly clear, and as soon as he has done so, Margaret becomes hostile. The man and the cause are separated. Steinmark would have Margaret "for his harlot" and when he fails to apologize for suggesting so base a thing, she terminates their relationship (120-121).

Though Margaret admires Steinmark's "spirit" and mentions his "energy and high ambitions," it remains for others in the play to point up the crucial fact that Steinmark and Margaret are temperamentally more compatible than Margaret and Count Upsel. It is her father who speaks of Steinmark's "busy active energetic spirit" (7); and it is Helen who reminds her that they share the same thoughts and that her brother would allow her much greater scope to express her own interests and ambitions (23).

Count Upsel, of course, and Mme. Brudo see Steinmark in quite another light. The Count's statements that Steinmark is both without money and an unreliable person are later supported by Mme. Brudo, whose views, though perhaps colored by her anti-republican bias, are more disinterested than the Count's. To Count Upsel's epithets for his rival--"a swine--a broken rebel-- / a needy bankrupt" (56)--Mme. Brudo adds her own. Three times she refers to him as a beggar and finally as "a loose, scrambling rebel" (88).

All the characters who have anything to say about Steinmark eventually disapprove of him. He is "the villain"

of the piece. But his appearances do little to support the villainy attributed to him. He is introduced as an adjunct to the comic plot of the drama: we meet him with Belleroach, one of the suitors for Mme. Brudo's hand, when Belleroach asks for his assistance in winning the widow. From the outset, Steinmark is distinguished by his high spirits and his forthrightness: he is neither interested in the institution of matrimony nor in Margaret de Wynter. He makes sport of Belleroach's marriage plans in a manner that is more amiable than sardonic. Our first impression is reinforced when Van Hoppen joins Belleroach and Steinmark and the pair proceed to have their fun cajoling and forcing the pompous and fearful conservative into committing himself to support the revolutionary cause.

With his sister, too, Steinmark is open and forthright. There is no trace of opportunism in his response to the news that Margaret has broken with the Count. He is simply surprised at Margaret's act, particularly in view of the Count's virtues, which Steinmark readily admits. He even contrasts himself unfavorably with the Count. Where the Count is noble, his own "chiefest merit" is "a restless daring which renders me unfit to be a husband--!" (76) And when Helen claims to have been instrumental in effecting the break between Margaret and the Count, he chastises her: "you have been a false friend and a wicked woman!" (76) Helen claims to have acted for her brother's benefit, assuming that he still loved Margaret. When she discovers, however, that her brother no

longer loves Margaret, she suggests to him the baser motive of revenge. Steinmark confesses that "there is so much of the devil's blackness" in him that he would like to be even with Count Upsel; and his willingness to seek revenge is obviously intended to mark his villainy. But he discusses the matter so light-heartedly with Helen that when they are joined by Belleroach, who wishes to discuss his own plot to capture Mme. Brudo, the devil-may-care attitude of their ensuing conversation affords little or no contrast to the mood of the preceding dialogue between the brother and sister.

Steinmark is most noticeably forthright in his first dealings with Margaret. He goes so far as to say that he thought her original choice of the Count over himself a wise one; and further declares that, though he loved her once, he has mastered his feeling for her. Later, however, he says, "I feel I love you still" (91). Whether or not this is meant to be taken seriously is difficult to determine. It becomes clear, when he soliloquizes after Margaret's departure, that he would prefer at least a show of love between them and is irked by her refusal to comply with his preference.

When it comes time for Steinmark to fulfill his villainous function in the fourth act, he suddenly contradicts his own character, as already given. Instead of the amiable, honest young rebel, he becomes the devious, crafty stage villain. Announcing that he must leave shortly with his troops, he tells Margaret that "we must go forth together" (116). He appeals to her modernity, her emancipation,

and even her sense of class distinction in attempting to persuade her that their joint departure need not be preceded by the formal rites of matrimony. "Must we trot together to a church, / and, like some Joan and Darby, kneel and pray, / and rise up man and wife in good old fashion?" (117) In trying to persuade her, however, he obscures his character. When Margaret grows suddenly conservative in the face of Steinmark's diatribe against the Church, or the orthodox religious view of marriage, he also grows conservative. He continues to speak out against marriage, but he speaks of his relationship to Margaret in terms that are entirely orthodox and traditional. When Margaret asks him what he intends to call her after their extra-legal union, he answers, "Companion of all hours; my best recourse / in every perilous strait; my bosom friend; / my ever-constant counsellor--my wife" (119). Further, he claims, when confronted first by the scorn and anger of Margaret and then by the surprise and wrath of his sister, that he will be as true to the union as if bound by legal and religious vows. "I've wooed her for my wife and so I'd wear her. / I've sworn to owe her all a husband's duty. . ." (120). It is impossible to know what we are to understand of Steinmark from this speech. Does he simply wish to put the best face possible on the thing he has proposed; or does his statement reflect a kind of naive idealism, meant to be taken seriously? Neither view accords with what we have been led to expect of him.

Strangely enough, Trollope shows Steinmark in one more scene, in the fifth act, which reconfirms the audience's original impression of him as a high-spirited and rather innocently mischievous fellow, without any trace of villainy. The scene is a comic one, as was the first scene in which he figured. In this final scene, Steinmark, and the others in the scene, work to effect the release of Belleroach, whom Van Hoppen wants to imprison so that he can have a free hand to woo and win Mme. Brudo without the interference of his rival. By this time it has become clear that Belleroach is the suitor preferred by Mme. Brudo and the audience. Steinmark's part in the scene, therefore, supports the popular cause and erases whatever attempts have been made to make him appear villainous.

### 4. The Resolution

We have already indicated the manner in which Trollope resolves the romantic tangle of the serious triangle: Margaret discovers Steinmark's villainy and returns to Count Upsel. The three characters are, in other words, as they were at the beginning of the play. Margaret, alone of the three, claims to have learned some "lesson" in the course of her wanderings, but what that lesson is remains a mystery.

It is indicative of the vagueness at the heart of the play that the characters who are directly involved in the serious triangle, or who comment on it, are unable to communicate with or to understand one another. Margaret surprises

and baffles even those who are closest to her and who might be expected to know her well enough to anticipate her actions and to understand them.

The lack of communication among the major characters suggests an even more serious flaw in the play, namely that basic issues are raised, or implied, in the process of presenting the history of the romantic triangle, which are finally avoided and left unresolved at the play's conclusion. Margaret's inherent feminism, Count Upsel's wealth, and Mark Steinmark's sexual license are important to the conflict at the heart of the play, but none of them is ever dealt with seriously or directly and, as a result, one feels, at the play's resolution, that only the superficial problems raised by the serious triangle have been solved while other, more interesting and more important, issues have been by-passed.

Margaret's feminism raises the question: What is the role most appropriate for a woman? a question of timely interest in nineteenth-century England. Margaret's own opinion is clearly revolutionary, appropriate, in fact, to the background of the various revolutionary motifs that run through the play. Her ideas regarding her own possibilities and those of women in general are in sharp contrast to those of the society in which she lives. For Margaret's father and aunt, a young woman has before her only one prospect, one possibility: marriage. The social obligation to marry does not necessarily mean, however, that a woman is subservient to her husband. Mme. Brudo believes, in fact, that the

husband is ultimately subservient to his wife, though she warns against allowing a man to see the mastery to which he is inevitably subjected until after she has secured him through marriage.

Margaret is willing to admit that, given the benighted traditionalism of her society, she must have a husband; but she is unwilling to pretend that she is in any way inferior to him, even if her pretense is only a ruse to gain the upper hand after marriage. She advocates a new role for women; she wants to be her husband's equal, to have and to speak her own thoughts, and to play some active role in the great world. She hates "the honeyed terms and cloying prattle, / with which men strive to sweeten the contempt / they feel for women" (92).

But when Margaret recoils from the improper suggestion of Mark Steinmark and returns to Count Upsel, what happens to her hopes and ambitions? Is the Count's attitude toward her, and the life he offers her, not condescending and confining after all? Does Margaret finally willingly accept the traditional role of woman and, if so, is she right in doing so? Is woman's place in the home; should she not entertain ambitions beyond matrimony? None of these questions is ever clearly asked or answered. Suddenly, all Margaret's objections to Count Upsel disappear, all her hopes and ambitions vanish. So complete, in fact, is her deflation that she is literally wordless in the last scene of the play. Having assured Count Upsel that she has always loved him, she has nothing further

to say for herself. Her last speech is indicative: "Oh, father, father, / speak to him for me!" (178)

Trollope's unsatisfactory handling of the feminism associated with Margaret is related to another unanswered question in the play: How important is Count Upsel's money in accounting for Margaret's return to him? To everyone except Margaret the Count is most notable because of his wealth; it is, among his assets, the most frequently mentioned by others. But Margaret never once herself refers to Count Upsel's wealth, even though we learn from her father that the de Wynters, as a family, are actually poor (5).

Margaret eventually returns to the path of prudence, as advocated by her father and Mme. Brudo. But in doing so, does she thereby admit that money is a factor to be considered in matchmaking after all? Apparently Trollope did not intend us to think so, since Margaret's supposed reason for returning to the Count is that she has loved him all along. Furthermore, it would not become a young lady of distinction to concern herself openly with so mundane a consideration as money. But what is it about Count Upsel that she loves? Margaret is loud, particularly when she feels called upon to defend him against Helen's criticism, in claiming that he is the embodiment of perfection. But whenever she talks about his qualities, she is general and vague. When she becomes specific, she becomes critical. Thus the Count's positive virtues, except for his wealth and his learning, which is never made a relevant issue, are never quite defined.

Even if we allow Margaret to justify her return to the Count simply on the grounds of her love for him, the relationship between marriage and prudence, clearly one of the issues of the play, remains unsettled. Are we to believe that a woman's prudence is to marry where she loves, regardless of whom she loves? Is Helen's pronouncement in the penultimate scene of the play, that "Love still is lord of all" (171), a sentiment she attributes to Margaret, the "message" Trollope wishes to convey? There would seem to be, as we shall see later, some support for this view in the resolution of the comic triangle; but the question of whether a woman is free to love where she will remains unanswered, particularly if love is to be the sole grounds for marriage. Is it, in other words, only accidental that Margaret loves where there is also money; or does she, or Trollope, give herself away when, early in the play, she speaks of Count Upsel's blood as "perfect gold" (45)?

Still another unresolved issue of the play has to do with Margaret's attitude toward passion, toward the physical, or sexual, expression of love. The Count and Steinmark have loved her in different ways. Steinmark, in wooing Margaret, is reported to have been a passionate suitor; and when we see him with her, he continues to give evidence that he is a passionate young man. Count Upsel, on the other hand, is not as warm-blooded as his rival. Not only are his ways retiring, sedentary, and scholarly, his relationship to Margaret is apparently without passion: "the love he offers you," Mr.

de Wynter tells his daughter, "is grafted on respect. It was not passion-- / that yearning for a toy which men call love-- / that brought him to your feet. Wanting a mate, / he has chosen her he deems of highest worth" (5).

Margaret's view of men and the nature of the relationship between men and women is ambivalent and confused. She has been friendly with Steinmark up until the time that his friendship warmed into passionate love, whereupon she rejected him (23). She has subsequently become engaged to a man whom she repeatedly professes to love but whose love for her is as unimpassioned as hers for him. That relationship also proves unsatisfactory and is ended by Margaret, who is persuaded, with surprising ease, to re-establish her former connection with Mark Steinmark. She insists, of course, that the relationship with Steinmark is to be only a friendly one, a union of partners.

Nevertheless, Margaret also shows that she is attracted by the passion she rejects and seems to be running from. It is delicious and sweet, but it is also poisonous and destructive; it entices and repels. "Delicious poison-- / to lose the world for love!" she says on one occasion. "The cost were dear, / the pastime very fleeting and the penance / life-lasting, life-destroying.--'Twere a bargain / fit for a fool" (47). On another occasion, she expresses the same sentiments, referring, as in the passage just quoted, specifically to her relationship with Count Upsel: "love was sweet, so sweet; and I, weak woman, / sucked in the subtle poison" (54). The same ambivalence is reflected even more intensely in another speech of Margaret's.

"No! No soft feelings! I am done with such! / They nearly overwhelm me. Not again / shall my heart sink to love. The dead sea fruit, / so luscious to the eye but inwardly / all foul decay, is not more false than love" (51).

It seems that the only kind of love Margaret can accept is the love that is sexless, that does not involve passion. Men and women should be friends, not lovers. On the other hand, she reveals a side of her nature that is passionate and draws her toward the expression of another kind of love than the one she claims to want. The on-again, off-again nature of her relationship to Steinmark gives concrete evidence of the conflict within her.

Apparently Trollope would have us believe that Margaret honestly expects Steinmark to conform to her notion of the ideal relationship between a man and wife, as she imagines it; that her surprise and horror at learning the real aspirations of Steinmark are justified. But how justifiable, how convincing, is Margaret's shock? She has known in the past Steinmark's passionate nature and has, because of it, rejected him. Her later encounters with him confirm the fact that he is still the man he was. Are we to understand, then, that Margaret is simply obtuse in the face of the evidence of Steinmark's passionate nature? Or are we to assume that Margaret is attracted, despite herself, to Steinmark for reasons other than those she enumerates; because he is, in fact, particularly in contrast to Count Upsel, warm-blooded, passionate, loving? The problem remains unsettled.

The issues which Trollope leaves unstated and, therefore, unresolved result in a dramatic vacuum at the heart of the play. What he gives us in the serious triangle is a contest to determine which of two men is to win the lady in question; or, since the contest goes on largely in the lady's mind, which of the two men she will choose. Either way, however, the terms of the contest remain vague, unclarified. Not only are we unsure of the attractions that draw Margaret to Count Upsel in the first place, then to Steinmark, then back to the Count; we are also unable to understand why the two men are so concerned to win Margaret. Her qualities are almost all negative. The only thing she has to offer the Count is her love, to Steinmark the support she intends to lend the cause he champions. But since her love is never made quite convincing, or her support to the revolutionary cause of any practical value, she seems ultimately to have nothing substantial to offer either. As a result, the contest for her hand is finally insignificant because there seems to be nothing at stake, no prize to be given or gained.

### 5. The Vulgarized Inversion

The issues stated imperfectly, if at all, in the main triangle are dealt with and resolved, at least in part, in the comic triangle, consisting of Mme. Brudo, the pivotal lady, and Van Hoppen and Belleroach, her suitors. Mme. Brudo, recently widowed, has been left, by her first husband's death, wealthy, independent, and supposedly in mourning. Her

professions of grief, however, are not to be taken seriously. Her mourning is largely an affectation. She is required by custom to grieve; but her grieving is merely the amusing hypocrisy of a middle-aged flirt who is out to find a replacement for her dead husband as soon as possible.

Being newly widowed, it would be unseemly for Mme. Brudo to appear openly interested in a new husband. She claims that her devotion to her dead husband precludes the possibility of a second marriage. No one, however, is fooled by her words. Mme. Brudo, her maid reports, only "takes on" when someone is around "that's worth while"; and her "taking on" involves no damage to her physical attractions (10). Helen Steinmark only gives the widow "a month to choose and another month to come to church" (16). By the end of the play, her prophecy is fulfilled.

Mme. Brudo's other interest, besides men, is money. Having gained wealth from her first marriage, however, she does not feel compelled to marry a second time for money, though the attractions of wealth are not lost on her.

Mme. Brudo is drawn in sharp contrast to Margaret de Wynter, despite the fact that their situations are much alike: each has to decide between two men who are decidedly different as men and who offer the ladies different things, appealing to different aspects of their characters. But where Margaret is supposed to be a serious young woman of high ideals in rebellion against the role of women prescribed by her society, Mme. Brudo is a practical, shrewd, middle-aged woman who

hypocritically accepts both the traditional role of the widow and the wife in order to gain her own ends, a replacement for her dead spouse and the mastery over her next husband once she has married him.

The two men available to Mme. Brudo are comic, vulgar counterparts to the men in the life of Margaret de Wynter. Van Hoppen, the burgomaster of Bruges, is a parallel to Count Upsel. The first and most important thing we know about him is that he is rich (10). Furthermore, he wishes, again like the Count, to take no part in the revolution, though his motives are different: Whereas the Count is uninvolved because of an indifference apparently connected to his scholarly ways, Van Hoppen wants to keep himself clear of involvement with the revolutionary forces for more selfish reasons. His political conservatism is related to his fear that the overthrow of the established order will have an adverse effect on his own interests. Furthermore, he sees that Mme. Brudo, whom he wishes to marry, is "very conservative," and he thinks his chances of winning the widow will be enhanced if he shares her political views.

Belleroach is closer to his counterpart in the serious triangle, Mark Steinmark, than Van Hoppen is to Count Upsel. He is, like Steinmark, associated with the current revolution. He, too, is open and above board in announcing his aims and his motives. What he wants, he tells Steinmark, is "downright, honest, straightforward matrimony" (30). When Steinmark counters by insisting that marriage is an "obsolete, sacerdotal

ceremony," Belleroach answers: "Money, Steinmark, coined francs, by the thousands and tens of thousands will never be obsolete. I desire to join myself in holy wedlock to the accumulated savings of a late honest ironmonger" (30). The other charms of the widow, though admitted, are of secondary importance.

Belleroach also makes it clear that his method of winning the widow requires his being together with her in enforced, close physical proximity, since he is persuaded that his only chance of winning her is to impress her with his physical charms. He has been masquerading as an Austrian aide-de-camp in order to make himself politically acceptable to the widow, and in order to give Steinmark the opportunity of arresting him, along with Mme. Brudo, as an enemy of the revolution: "you will have little difficulty in arresting us both, when the town is in your hand--both together, mark you" (32-33). After their arrest, of course, Belleroach and the widow will be allowed to escape, according to his plan, "both together still." Then his plan is to

> "hide together in a little, friendly cabaret not unknown to me; help to disguise each other; assist each other in a thousand comfortable little ways--and then probably be recaptured. With such opportunities I shall be much to blame, if I cannot convert her to love and democracy."(33).

The scene in which Mme. Brudo is wooed by her two suitors in turn is heavy-handed as comedy, but it serves to highlight the interests of the three comic figures. Mme. Brudo, while professing her grief to Belleroach at the loss of her

husband and her anger at Belleroach's confession that he is glad Mme. Brudo is now a widow, allows him nevertheless to take and hold her hand. Word then comes that Van Hoppen has come to talk with Mme. Brudo about her husband's affairs in order "to pore over figures and talk of money," an interest he shares with the widow, despite her statements to the contrary (59). Belleroach counters the news of Van Hoppen's arrival by again taking the widow's hand and slipping a ring on her finger, the meaning of which is "nothing but love--unutterable, unalterable, unquenchable love!" (61) The kind of love he has in mind is apparent when he reminds her that her widowhood forces on her "Long, cold, lonely nights--solitary mornings--comfortless meals--tedious hours--melancholy evenings--and then again the long, cold, cold, lonely, lonely night. . ." (61-62). The burgomaster's entrance interrupts his passionate pleas, and he leaves, giving Van Hoppen a chance to present his case.

Van Hoppen, too, knows what he has to offer the widow and where she is susceptible to his particular influence. Having told the widow that Belleroach is an imposter, a rebel masquerading as a loyalist, he at once announces what is to him, and he hopes to her, an even more relevant fact. "Madame Brudo, he hasn't a sou in the world. . ." (66). He goes on to confess his own love, assuring the widow that her own fortune is of no matter in the love he feels for her. In fact, he claims to be "as indifferent to money as any man." He makes sure, however, that Mme. Brudo realizes the extent of his wealth. "Do you know, Madame, I have five thousand

francs a year on rents? . . . and the best furnished house in Bruges?--" (69-70). He, too, then takes her hand and urges his love, but the widow refuses his kiss. The men, in the course of the scene, have made their bids, and Mme. Brudo's interest in each is obviously related to what each has to offer: Van Hoppen money; Belleroach relief from the "long, cold, cold, lonely, lonely night."

Belleroach's plot to get the widow alone for a night succeeds, and he is apparently able to use his opportunity to advantage. On the morning following their enforced confinement, the widow protests that she has been "most shamefully treated!" (155) Belleroach, however, refers to Mme. Brudo as his wife, and despite her protests, it is clear that he has, as far as he is concerned, made her his wife in the course of the preceding night. That she finally concurs is apparent in the play's last scene, when Mme. Brudo enters dressed in bridal attire. She has got the man of her choice, and is already subjecting him, if only mildly, to the kind of treatment he must expect from the lady, now that she is his wife (180-81).

It is perhaps already obvious that some of the problems that Trollope either did not face squarely or state clearly in the serious triangle are dealt with more satisfactorily in the comic triangle. The characters of the comic plot clearly understand each other. Mme. Brudo's insistence that she will never remarry fools no one. Both Van Hoppen and Belleroach understand the game she is playing and consequently never allow her protestations of grief to interfere with their own

pursuit. She has to offer money and, as a secondary prize, some physical attractiveness. They offer, between them, the two things that interest her most: Van Hoppen money; Belleroach masculine charms. At the heart of the contest is money and the contest is a lively one because the prize is clearly identified and of sufficient value to ensure the full efforts of the contending parties. Unlike the contest of the serious triangle, where neither of the contenders is seen actively engaged in trying to win Margaret de Wynter, the contest on the comic level is an active one. Since Mme. Brudo, unlike Margaret, has what both of her suitors want, they pursue her eagerly, contending with each other, trying to lure and win the widow. Furthermore, Mme. Brudo is faced with a very real dilemma requiring a difficult choice. Love and money are not to be had with the same candidate, as was the case in the serious triangle. She must choose one or the other.

It would seem, at first glance, that Mme. Brudo's final choice supports the idea suggested by the resolution of the serious triangle that it is a woman's prudence to marry in the direction indicated by her emotion, rather than where reason would indicate. On the surface of things, Mme. Brudo chooses, from a worldly, material point of view, the imprudent match. She marries Belleroach, the man without money, who is obviously unprincipled and opportunistic, but whose male charms appeal to her emotions, or passions, rather than Van Hoppen, the man of money. She goes against her own advice to Margaret, whom she urged to marry money. If she thought it imperative

for Margaret to regard the Count as more suitable than Steinmark because the Count was rich and Steinmark a mere "beggar," why should she herself marry Belleroach, Steinmark's counterpart and certainly no less a beggar than he, and not Van Hoppen, Count Upsel's counterpart? Why, indeed, unless Trollope intended to undermine Mme. Brudo's arguments to Margaret, to say, finally, that Mme. Brudo is wrong in what she says but right in what she does, that she is correct in marrying where affection draws her, just as Margaret does, despite the fact that the ensuing marriage is, from a prudential standpoint, not the most desirable one available to her.

There is, however, a crucial difference between Mme. Brudo's situation and Margaret's, for Mme. Brudo is herself rich. What Van Hoppen has to offer, Mme. Brudo already has; and therefore she can judge him as she judges Belleroach, evaluating his appeal as a man. Having married once for money, she marries a second time for love.

## 6. Conclusion

In the last scene of The Noble Jilt, Helen Steinmark speaks of "the comedy of matrimony" in referring to the brace of marriages that provides bridal veils for all the conflicts of the drama, brought now to resolution and rest at the altar (180). But despite the relief occasionally provided by Trollope's comic characters, and despite the marriages provided for the heroines, The Noble Jilt is only superficially a "comedy of matrimony." All ends happily, it is true, at least

for those worthy of reward. But Sybil also ends with the heroine getting her man, as does Mary Barton; and one would hardly place either work in the comic category. Helen's epithet, in other words, is only appropriate to the play's ending.

For behind the comedy of matrimony, we have watched a curious story play itself out. A young lady of the upper classes has been tempted to break with the traditions of her class and to revolt openly against its demands and strictures. She is persuaded to break her engagement to a gentleman of the highest order, a man who combines intellectual, physical, and financial accomplishment. Subsequently, she entertains the fantastic idea of marrying a man who is both poor and an avowed enemy of traditionalism. By so doing, she becomes a traitor to her class; like the villain she is tempted to marry, she is a rebel against her society. She will not be a mere domestic in her husband's household. She demands something more of the world than the world is wont to give its women; and in the act of rebellion, she joins forces with a man who is also a revolutionary, a man who advocates freedom and the overthrow of the old order.

The young lady is, of course, saved from her mistake in time. The revolutionary friend turns out to be a villain, associated (as he perennially is) with sexual license. Discovering her mistake in time, the young lady returns to the arms of vested interest. The Revolution is ended.

The history of this young lady has obvious social implications. She finds the values of her own class restrictive and impersonal while those of the rebels seem to her dynamic, exciting, daring. In joining forces with the rebels, however, she is blinded to the moral danger of her act, to the moral consequences of political and social revolutions. She realizes eventually what those moral consequences are and, repelled by them, returns her allegiance to her class, within which she marries after all.

Ostensibly, then, the villains of The Noble Jilt are revolution and moral turpitude, the one leading to the other. Mark Steinmark embodies both, and his role in the play is to lead Margaret down the garden path of Revolution until she discovers that the bouquet of roses he offers her is unexpectedly prickly.

Revolution--whether it be political, as with Steinmark, or social, as with the feminism of Margaret--and moral turpitude are not, of course, the real villains, and neither survives Trollope's closer inspection. But there are real villains in The Noble Jilt, though Trollope has not yet discovered their import. There is, in the first place, the attitude of indifference to the affairs of the world which Margaret criticizes Count Upsel for. If the Count is, indeed, to insist on returning to his estate at Lindenbrock, and living for his books, his gardens, and his wife, he will hardly be prepared to guard his position when it comes to be challenged by those who aspire to usurp his power and influence in society.

If the indifference of Count Upsel is eventually obscured in the course of the play, two other forces, openly let in through the comic back door, are constantly in evidence in all parts of the play: money and sex, both of which serve in the play as counters of self-interest. That Margaret should show no interest in money and be indifferent to love, in all its aspects, are attitudes intended to mark the excellence of her breeding and ladylike taste, despite the errors into which they lead her. The open concern with money and the obviously sexual interests of the low, or comic, characters, on the other hand, mark Mme. Brudo and her set, including Mark Steinmark, with unmistakeable vulgarity.

When the curtain that fell on "the comedy of matrimony" in 1850 was raised again in 1864-65 and The Noble Jilt became Can You Forgive Her?, the same characters walked on stage, but they were clearer, surer. Issues never stated in the play, or relegated to a secondary position in the comic plot, were now grappled with, dramatized, and resolved.

## CHAPTER II: THE TRIANGLE IMPROVED

### 1. Introduction

Thirteen years after he put aside The Noble Jilt, Trollope recast it in the shape of a novel, Can You Forgive Her? All the characters of the play, with the exception of the soldiers who appear briefly in Act IV, Scene 3, and the unnamed burgomasters in Act V, Scene 1, reappear in the novel, although their names have been changed. Margaret de Wynter is now Alice Vavasor, Count Upsel is John Grey, and Mark Steinmark appears as George Vavasor. The supporting characters are Mr. Vavasor (Mr. de Wynter) and Kate Vavasor (Helen Steinmark); and the comic figures are now Mrs. Greenow (Mme. Brudo), Mr. Cheesacre (Van Hoppen), and Captain Bellfield (Belleroach). The setting is now England, and the background is domestic politics instead of foreign revolution.

The major characters of the novel are again presented in two romantic triangles. As in The Noble Jilt, the pivotal woman is asked to choose between two men, and the difficulty of her choice lies in the fact that each man offers the lady something different and appeals to different, and conflicting, sides of her own character. Each man also represents a different way of life, the one associated with the old order of gentlemen, the other with values unlike, if not actually antithetical to, those of the old guard.

More important than the similarities that tie the novel to its origins, however, are the differences that separate the novel from the play. Trollope succeeded in the novel in stating and, finally, in resolving the social and moral problems only suggested in The Noble Jilt and in dramatizing those problems by relating them to the personal dilemmas faced by his individual characters.

The process that led from muddle to clarity, however, was not accomplished in the simple transformation of the play's serious triangle into its counterpart in the novel. The transformation of Margaret de Wynter into Alice Vavasor partially clarified the confusions that beset the history of Trollope's heroine. Final clarification, however, did not come until Trollope introduced Lady Glencora. Only then did Trollope master the materials of the story he had been trying to tell, but which were obscured by his earlier inability to get hold of the things that were really relevant to his heroine's dilemma; only with Lady Glencora and the men who figure together with her did he succeed in clarifying the dilemma introduced with Margaret de Wynter and her suitors.

Separating Alice Vavasor's history from Lady Glencora's, the second telling from the third, is, in a sense, unfair since both belong to the same novel. Still, the stories are distinct and, in fact, usually handled separately by Trollope which justifies, I think, separate consideration of them here.

## 2. Alice Vavasor

Alice Vavasor, whom the reader is asked to forgive, is presented in a situation comparable to that of Margaret de Wynter at the opening of The Noble Jilt. She is, when first introduced, engaged to marry Mr. John Grey. Before her present engagement, however, she has had another suitor, her cousin, George Vavasor; but for misconduct on his part--precisely what his misbehavior consisted of the reader is never told explicitly--the relationship has been broken off and Alice has subsequently become engaged to Mr. Grey. Since her second engagement, however, Alice has come to see that she and Mr. Grey are incompatible; he, like Count Upsel, is too passive and too good to be a match for Alice's ambitiousness and unworthiness. She also begins to think, when she learns that George Vavasor is going to run for Parliament, that he is perhaps a better match for her after all. Kate Vavasor, George's sister, whose role is comparable to Helen Steinmark's in The Noble Jilt, in that she objectifies, verbalizes, Alice's unadmitted desires and anticipates Alice's actions, encourages Alice to believe that she has chosen the wrong man and urges her to see her brother as the right man.

The character of Alice, like her history, parallels Margaret's. Her financial situation, however, is noticeably different. Where Margaret was well-connected but poor, Alice has inherited from her mother four hundred pounds a year. She has therefore a distinct material value, aside from whatever personal qualities she may also have, that Margaret

never had. Since Alice's concern, like Margaret's, is matrimony, the modest fortune of Alice gives her the same attracting value that Mme. Brudo had but which Margaret lacked.

If Alice's financial situation is unlike Margaret's, her character is much the same. Like Margaret, Alice is determined, willful, ready to have her own way, despite the advice and objections of her family. "Alice was immoveable. As a matter of course she was immoveable."[1] In particular, she is determined, immoveable, on two subjects. She will not, in the first place, do anything that would be solicitous of her high relations' good opinion, an attitude she shares with Margaret. In the second place, she is immoveable on the subject of her projected Continental tour with her two cousins, Kate and George Vavasor. When her aunt, Lady Macleod, hints that Mr. Grey, Alice's fiancé, will not approve of travelling arrangements that bring his future wife into such intimate contact with her former suitor, Alice replies that her fiancé's wishes on the subject do not interest her (I, II, 17).

Nevertheless, when Mr. Grey writes without objecting to the tour, Alice has "almost a feeling of disappointment in that he had not written such a letter as [her aunt] had anticipated" (I, III, 26). Alice's annoyance with Mr. Grey's letter is the same kind of displeasure Margaret felt for Count

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[1]Anthony Trollope, Can You Forgive Her? ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1948), I, 15. (Note: All further references will be to this edition, pages noted parenthetically in the text. To assist in locating the references in other editions, the chapter number will be given after the volume number.)

Upsel. Alice, too, must admit that her fiancé is "noble, generous, clever, good,--so good as to be almost perfect . . ." But his perfection is oppressive. "Would that he had some faults!" she wishes (I, III, 24). She is loyal to him on the one hand, displeased with him on the other.

Alice's attitude toward her former suitor, George Vavasor, however, is unlike Margaret's attitude toward Mark Steinmark. Alice admits that "she had once loved her cousin." In fact, she "was tormented by a feeling that she had had a more full delight in that love than in this other that had sprung up subsequently." Furthermore, the old love for George, we are told indirectly, is not altogether dead. "Now, as she told herself that in truth she loved the man to whom her troth was plighted, I fear that she almost thought more of that other man from whom she had torn herself asunder." In any event, she has decided that love is not important, as it is commonly understood. Instead, she now sees, much as Margaret had seen before her, that "love meant a partnership, in which each partner would be honest to the other, in which each would wish and strive for the other's welfare, so that their joint welfare might be insured." Her former love for George had involved "a total abnegation of self," and with that kind of love she now wishes to have nothing further to do (I, III, 24-25).

It would seem, given Alice's new attitude toward love, that her engagement to Mr. Grey is exactly what she wants. It is an engagement of equals: he never attempts to coerce. Nevertheless, Alice is restive. Her emotional needs, it turns out,

are greater than her prospects as Mrs. John Grey will be able to satisfy.

The trip to the Continent brings to a head Alice's dissatisfactions with Mr. Grey and leads to her break with him. That break, in turn, frees her to receive the attentions of other men, and particularly the attentions of one man who is desperately in need of money, Alice's cousin, George Vavasor. Trollope describes and analyzes Alice's change of heart in the course of one scene in which the issues at stake are dramatically and symbolically presented.

The scene commences as the three travellers sit one evening on a balcony of their hotel in Basel, overlooking the Rhine. The first subject that comes up between them is money. Kate announces that the trip has been a great success but financially ruinous (I, V, 46). There is then some banter about marriage; and the connection between their respective financial situations and marital prospects grows clearer and increasingly serious as the scene goes on. George does not have the money he needs to achieve his ambitions. Alice does have money. Kate is interested in matching her brother's need with her friend's wealth; and since George and Alice have been romantically connected in the past and remain on friendly terms, there is no reason why, she thinks, the two should not marry except, of course, for the fact that Alice is engaged to John Grey. Since it is apparent to all that Alice is dissatisfied with Mr. Grey, Kate proceeds, with her brother's complicity, to induce Alice to break her engagement, as a necessary first step to her plans for George and Alice.

Alice requires only a little persuasion. She is aware that the life offered her by John Grey is safe and secure; but the very idea of Mr. Grey's orderly, solid life now seems to her restrictive. She has begun to imagine for herself other possibilities, suggested to her by her cousins and, symbolically, by the mysterious song of the Rhine below. "Were the waters . . . telling her of the mistake she had made in accepting Mr. Grey as her husband?" Was George right in insisting that she had grown too used to a brandy diet ever to be satisfied again with one of milk? (I, V, 54).

When the three cousins walk out onto a bridge over the Rhine, the two women separate themselves from the man and talk together about their rich aunt, Mrs. Greenow. The real subject of their conversation, however, is the worthiness of George's ambitions and the necessity of his acquiring money to realize them. Kate lets it be known that she is committed to helping her brother and that she is willing to play up to her rich aunt in order to gain her support for George's cause. If Kate's attitude toward Mrs. Greenow is openly mercenary, she justifies herself by saying, "It's the way of the world." Furthermore, her motives are unselfish.

> "I do not want the money, but he may. And for such purposes as his, I think it fair that all the family should contribute. I feel sure that he would make a name for himself in Parliament; and if I had my way I would spend every shilling of Vavasor money in putting him there." (I, VI, 57)

The women then stop and lean over the parapet of the bridge. Kate calls to her brother to join them and when he

does, she makes room for him between her and Alice, itself a symbolic act. The rest of the scene is also conveyed symbolically. The Rhine and her cousin, George, have become associated in Alice's mind with the mysterious, the exciting, in sharp contrast to John Grey's simple openness and stolidity. An alternate way of life has been suggested, linked to the swift current of the river and the projected career of her cousin, a life more lively and exciting than the one offered by Mr. Grey. Surely a parliamentary career is a more worthy ambition than rural retreat. Why should not Alice make possible the realization of that ambition since she has the means of doing so?

Despite the substantive way in which the choice is presented, Trollope admits, as he never admitted of Margaret de Wynter, that Alice's motives at this point are vague.

> She had filled herself, or had been filled by her cousins, with an undefined ambition that made her restless without giving her any real food for her mind. When she told herself that she would have no scope for action in that life in Cambridgeshire which Mr. Grey was preparing for her, she did not herself know what she meant by action. . . . And yet she told herself that she feared to be taken into the desolate calmness of Cambridgeshire. (I, XI, 110-11)

Admitting that Alice's desires are undefined is at least a partial admission of what is wrong with her characterization. But the now admitted uncertainty of her motives jars against the assurance with which she continues to assert herself, particularly <u>vis-a-vis</u> John Grey. When he tries to persuade her that her doubts concerning their relationship are nothing more than the results of an "irrational spirit of sadness" (I, XI, 115), she tells him, with the same decisiveness that

Margaret used in dealing with the Count, that the engagement must be broken. When he refuses to accept her unfitness as ground for her decision, she becomes imperious and announces her intention boldly: "I feel quite sure that I should not make you happy as your wife. . ." (I, XI, 117). She is equally determined with her father, insisting with him, too, "that I should not make him happy as his wife" (I, XIV, 142). With Lady Macleod, she stands by the same excuse: "It cannot be right that I should go to a man's house and be his wife, if I do not think that I can make him happy" (I, XV, 153).

In time, however, Trollope provides Alice with a realizable goal, which he failed to do for Margaret de Wynter. As she is about to start for Matching Priory to visit another cousin, Lady Glencora Palliser, Alice encounters George, who asks her to make a friend of Mr. Palliser, during her visit under his roof. Alice fails to understand why she should do so, and George explains the connection between his own political aspirations and the probable future position of Palliser. "But I mean this chiefly, Alice, that I do hope I shall have all your sympathy in any political career that I may make, and all your assistance also." When Alice protests that her assistance would be worthless, George replies: "By no means worthless, Alice; not if I see you take that place in the world which I hope to see you fill. Do you think women now-a-days have no bearing upon the politics of the times? Almost as much as men have." Alice, on hearing this, "felt in some way pleased and flattered" (I , XXI, 221).

Despite the fact that Alice has openly told her cousin, just before this exchange, that an attempt to re-establish their old relationship is out of the question, it is apparent that George has just offered Alice the specific antidote to the vagueness of her desires, the very thing that John Grey was never able to offer: a chance to be of specific value, a chance to figure in the great world of affairs, however insignificantly. She does not want a sedentary country life any more than Margaret de Wynter did. She wants, like Margaret, a more exciting life. Unlike Margaret, however, Alice has something to offer in exchange for the thing she wants: she has money and important connections.

At Matching Priory, Alice has her first chance to assert herself in that "political" area in which she now imagines herself figuring. During a dinner discussion, she is made to represent the "radical" point of view (I, XXIII, 236). The world which George has suggested to her, which he represents in her mind, becomes even more appealing as Alice finds that she can hold her own in the great world.

George does not await a summons from the ladies, as his predecessor did in The Noble Jilt, in taking action to obtain the prize his sister has freed for his purposes. He writes Alice, asking her to marry him. Alice is "half inclined to give way," not because she has learned to love him again, but because she was "beginning to think that love . . . did not matter. . . . How might she best make herself useful,--useful in some sort that might gratify her ambition;--that was

now the question which seemed to her to be of most importance" (I, XXXI, 325).

George's offer makes it possible for Alice to satisfy both her desires: her desire to be useful, and her desire to find some outlet for her own political ambitions. Her money makes her useful; and the nature of George's own ambitions coincides with her own and would give her that contact with the world of public and political affairs she longs for. In contrast to Mark Steinmark, George has a definite interest in Alice because of the objective value that she has for him; and he does not hesitate to mention that interest, that value, openly. He writes:

> "If you were my wife tomorrow I should expect to use your money, if it were needed, in struggling to obtain a seat in Parliament and a hearing there. I will hardly stoop to tell you that I do not ask you to be my wife for the sake of this aid;--but if you were to become my wife I should expect all your co-operation;--with your money, possibly, but certainly with your warmest spirit." (I, XXX, 314)

Alice writes to accept, promising him, if not love, at least "warm affection" (I, XXXII, 338), and any portion of her money "which may be needed for his purposes" before their marriage, postponed, at her request, for a year. If such an arrangement causes Kate unexpected anxiety--feeling "that her brother was a man to whom such an offer could hardly be made with safety" (I, XXXII, 332-33)--it is a bargain quite satisfactory to Alice. The terms of the match are not quite as equitable as those between a couple in Thackeray's Pendennis, the Baronet and Lady Clavering, in which "she wanted rank,

and he wanted money,"[2] but they are equitable enough to suit Alice. George wants her money; and she, in order to satisfy her own ambitions, wants George in Parliament. "Dear George," she writes to him, "let me have the honour and glory of marrying a man who has gained a seat in the Parliament of Great Britain! Of all positions which a man may attain that, to me, is the grandest" (I, XXXII, 339).

Kate is not the only one who fears the terms of the engagement. George's grandfather also issues a warning to Alice: "You've got money of your own. He'll spend all that now" (I, XXXII, 336). And her father tells her outright she is being married for her money. But Alice retorts "Of that I am well aware. . . ." She goes on to enlighten him.

> "It seems to me, papa, that there is a great deal of false feeling about this matter of money in marriage,--or rather, perhaps, a great deal of pretended feeling. Why should I be angry with a man for wishing to get that for which every man is struggling? At this point in George's career the use of money is essential to him. He could not marry without it." (I, XXXIV, 354)

She further tells him that she will give George money even before their marriage. What she expects to gain by this generosity is a

> "husband whose mode of thinking is congenial to my own. . . . A husband who proposes to himself a career in life with which I can sympathize. I think I may perhaps help my cousin in the career he has chosen,and that alone is a great reason why I should attempt to do so." (I, XXXIV, 355-56)

But if Trollope succeeded in clarifying the relationship between his heroine and the "wrong man" in her life by

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[2]William Makepeace Thackeray, The History of Pendennis ("The Oxford Thackeray," XII; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1908), p. 267.

relating both his self-interest and her desire to be useful to her money, he proceeds to confuse our understanding of that relationship by introducing, again, his heroine's ambivalence toward the man she has chosen in preference to her first fiancé. Like Margaret de Wynter, Alice recoils from the idea of the physical side of her relationship to George. So alarmed is she, in fact, by the possibility of his advances that the scene in which he simply asks for a kiss serves to alienate the couple as irreparably as Steinmark's more openly sexual advance in The Noble Jilt alienated him from Margaret. Alice's repulsion for George becomes so great that she realizes the impossibility of their marriage. She will, however, observe the promise she made him at the time of their engagement. "He should have her money as he might call for it. . . . Then . . . he should go free . . . and there should be an end of the question of marriage for her" (I, XXXIV, 359).

Eventually, of course, Alice succeeds in breaking with George. Mr. Grey then dutifully reappears and, despite Alice's insistence that she has made herself permanently unworthy to be his wife by jilting him, he manages to overcome her hesitations and the couple are reconciled. Alice is finally happy, we are told. She realizes that she has "taken her fling at having her own will. . . ." Now, having learned her lesson, she will submit to "her master."

> She had assumed the command of the ship, and had thrown it upon the rocks, and she felt that she never ought to take the captain's place again. It was well for her

> that he who was to be captain was one whom she respected as thoroughly as she loved him. (II, XXXIV, 358)

As Trollope puts it earlier, "Alice was proud to a fault. She had nursed her pride till it was very faulty. All her troubles and sorrows in life had come from an overfed craving for independence" (II, XLIII, 31-32).

What Alice and Trollope mean by pride is not clear, however, unless we associate it with more apparent faults that represent Alice's pride working in the novel. Margaret de Wynter, too, was accused of excessive pride, but it is obvious that there are basic differences between the pride of Alice and the pride of Margaret, though superficially, if one equates pride with self-assertiveness, the two heroines are guilty of the same fault. On closer inspection, however, one finds that Trollope saw the nature of pride more clearly in Alice's case than in Margaret's and succeeded, furthermore, in making the fault operative. As he saw the self-assertive person, finally, he saw that the type is not only self-assertive in action but also in thought; i.e., he is able to rationalize his actions to his own satisfaction, he is characterized by his ability to justify his actions intellectually. His efforts to rationalize and explain his own selfishness lead him to assume the mask of intellectuality behind which his real motives are given free play. But if he intellectualizes, rationalizes, his own behavior, he refuses to allow others the same right. Falling back on rationality to justify himself, he falls back on morality in condemning those who disagree with him or whose

interests oppose his own. He therefore is both an "intellectual," one who, in Trollope's terms, thinks too much, and a prude, a rather curious combination, but one which operates to perpetuate the egotism that inspires it.

Trollope's greater understanding of pride, however, particularly as it operates in Alice, does not serve to make his heroine more sympathetic. She continues to baffle her associates, and the impression she makes on the reader is at least partially unsympathetic. Kate, like Helen Steinmark in The Noble Jilt, is the one person who openly accuses Alice of dishonesty, who sees that there is a disjunction between the intellectualized explanations of Alice and her motives (I, III, 30). But Alice claims that there is nothing dishonest, or even mysterious, in what she does. Her motives, like those professed by Margaret, are "noble." She gives up Mr. Grey for his good and she takes up with George for his good. Mr. Grey, however, is the only one in the novel who believes in Alice's altruism. "In all that she has done I think that I have seen her motives; and though I have not approved of them, I have always known them to be pure and unselfish" (II, LXX, 315).

Trollope, too, committed to securing the reader's forgiveness for his heroine, also pleads her altruism.

> In all the troubles of her love, of her engagements, and her broken promises, she had thought more of others than of herself. . . . She had left John Grey because she feared that she would do him no good as his wife,--that she would not make him happy; and she had afterwards betrothed herself for a second time to her cousin, because she believed that she could serve him by marrying him. (II, LXIX, 298)

The bulk of the evidence, however, is on the other side. Trollope himself begins his portrait of her by emphasizing, after her money, her independence, her self-assertiveness, her immoveableness. And even at the end of the novel, he is forced to admit, in view of Alice's hesitation to reaccept Mr. Grey, that "There still clung to her what I fear we must call a perverseness of obstinacy, a desire to maintain the resolution she had made,--a wish that she might be allowed to undergo the punishment she had deserved. . ." (II, LXXIV,355-56).

As a mask for her self-assertiveness, however, Alice is, by Trollope's own admission, given to too much thought. She thinks about her marriage to John Grey "till her mind had become filled with some undefined idea of the importance to her of her own life," in which idea, Trollope tells us, she is wrong (I, XI, 109-110). Being "too thoughtful" is, for Trollope, being "too hard" (II, LXIX, 298).

If she is too intellectual to suit Trollope, she is too prudish for Lady Glencora, and it is her prudery that most damages Alice in the eyes of the reader. Since her prudery is called most actively into play in her relationship to Lady Glencora, it is not surprising that the latter should be her most damaging critic, though she is also supposedly her faithful friend. When Alice reprimands Lady Glencora for wishing she had eloped with the man she loved instead of marrying a man she is indifferent to, Lady Glencora asks, "Alice, where can your heart be? Or have you a heart?" (I, XXVII, 284) Further

lessons in morality elicit from Lady Glencora additional criticism. "Of all things in the world, I hate a prude the most. . . . Alice, you are the unkindest creature that ever lived. You are as cold as stone. I sometimes think that you can have no heart" (II, LXII, 224-25).

Trollope has made important advances in his characterization of Alice over her predecessor in the play. Her independence and her pride and her desire to be useful are made understandable and functional. Understanding her, however, does not make her likeable. We are told that she is consistently unselfish, thinking of others, in what she does; yet we are told by the two women who know her best that she is heartless and a prude. In her "attempt to be greater and grander than other girls" (II, LXXIX, 409), she brings unhappiness to Mr. Grey and her own family, retreats from the obligations she incurs when she accepts George's proposal, fails to provide Lady Glencora with the kind of sympathy and understanding that one would expect from a friend, and alienates the sympathies of the reader.

If Trollope was to gain for his heroine the reader's forgiveness, he had first to gain his interest and then his sympathy. Alice may be interesting, but she remains primarily a problem, not a human being. As a result, Trollope failed, finally, to arouse the reader's sympathies on her behalf; and without the reader's sympathies, the question of forgiveness remains irrelevant to Alice's history.

## 3. Alice's Choices

Alice's objections to John Grey, though they are frequently stated indirectly, are clear enough. In the first place, he is too good to suit her. "How could she, full of faults as she knew herself to be,--how could she hope to make happy a man perfect as he was!" (I, III, 24)

Not only is he too good, he is also too withdrawn, too uninterested in and uninvolved with the world that interests Alice. He tells her that he thinks London a place of of "feverish idleness, in which one is driven here and there, expecting some gratification which not only never comes, but which never even begins to come" (I, III, 22). For Alice, on the other hand, London is the place where any man worth his salt would want to be.

Perhaps both of Alice's initial objections are summed up in her third: that Mr. Grey is not passionate enough, that he is always too much in control of himself to feel or care very much about anything. This is most apparent to her in his reaction to the news that she has decided to break their engagement: "though he spoke in strong language of his love, and of his longing that she should come to him, yet he was so well able to command his feelings, that he showed no sign of grief at the communication she had made to him" (I, XI, 118). Alice would have preferred it had he "scorned her and reviled her." His failure to do so is a reaffirmation of her judgment against him: he is a man "not passionate by nature" (I, XXXVII, 382).

Trollope flatly contradicts Alice on this point. He tells us that Mr. Grey's emotional responses are sensitive and keen and consistently misunderstood by Alice. He is "somewhat reserved" (I, X, 107); but though his reserve makes him chary of any emotional display, he nevertheless suffers intensely at Alice's treatment of him. When Alice reflects that "her separation from him would cause him no uncontrollable grief," Trollope counters, saying "she utterly failed to understand his character. Had she known him better, she might have been sure that such a separation now would with him have carried its mark to the grave" (I, XI, 118-19).

Usually, however, Trollope supports Alice's objections to Mr. Grey by the testimony of others in the novel. It will be remembered that Margaret's criticisms of the Count, in The Noble Jilt, were largely unsupported, except by Helen; and that the direct impression made by Count Upsel contradicted the things claimed against him by Margaret and Helen. In Can You Forgive Her?, however, this disagreement in the evidence is avoided. Two people who want Alice to marry Mr. Grey and who therefore would be expected to oppose Alice's reservations concerning him are nevertheless forced to admit the truth of her objections. Alice's father feels himself obliged to concur that John Grey "never does anything wrong." "He is just a shade too good. Well, I have always thought that myself," he says, though he goes on to say that "it's a fault on the right side" (I, XI, 119). And Alice's aunt, Lady Macleod, also a strong partisan of John Grey, is forced to admit to herself,

after an interview with Mr. Grey, that Alice is right. "Strange to say that after she had seen him, Lady Macleod entertained for him an infinitely higher admiration than before, and yet she was less surprised than she had been at Alice's refusal of him" (I, XV, 158).

Furthermore, Mr. Grey's appearance in the novel supports Alice's charges, even to the point of contradicting Trollope's own assertions of his sensitivity and suffering. Everything about Mr. Grey is controlled, unemotional. In response to Alice's news that she is breaking her engagement to him, he responds, "To my thinking she is the finest of God's creatures that I have known" (I, XXXVI, 376). But his impassivity perhaps reaches its high point in his failure to react strongly to George Vavasor's attempt to murder him:

> Grey, when he perceived that his enemy was gone, turned round to look for the bullet or its mark. He soon found the little hole in the window-shutter, and probing it with the point of his pencil, came upon the morsel of lead which might now just as readily have been within his own brain. There he left it for the time, and then made some not inaccurate calculation as to the narrowness of his own escape. (II, LXXII,333)

Two of the faults, then, that Alice criticizes in Mr. Grey--that he is too good and too passionless--are faults that are made apparent to the reader through the evidence of other characters or through our own observation of Mr. Grey. As a result, Alice's reservations about him and her fears concerning their marriage are made justifiable where the reservations and fears of Margaret de Wynter regarding the Count were not. Further, Alice's return to Mr. Grey, at the end of the novel, is justified in a way that Margaret's return to Count Upsel

never was; in the novel, though, the justification for Alice's return to Mr. Grey comes after their reconciliation rather than before it, where it might better have been placed. Nevertheless, Alice's third criticism of Mr. Grey, the "very point [on which] she had left him"--his "scornful superiority to the ordinary pursuits of the world" (II, LXIII, 233)--gradually loses its basis in fact; and since Mr. Grey's aloofness from the world of affairs has become his most serious fault in Alice's eyes, the removal of that fault justifies Alice's return to him, even though the fault is removed after Alice has agreed to return to him.

The reader, however, is prepared for the removal of Mr. Grey's fault before Alice is aware that he is, in fact, going to change his ways. Under the influence of Mr. Palliser, whom he comes to know and esteem when they become acquainted on the Continent, Mr. Grey begins to see that his notion of the good life is too passive. Eventually persuaded by Mr. Palliser to try for a seat in Parliament, he first merely mentions the possibility to Alice; but there is enough in what he says to make her "think that the only flaw in his character was in process of being cured" (II, LXXVII, 381). By the end of the novel, Mr. Grey has stood for a vacant seat and won it. Alice, now his wife, is delighted. There has been, finally, that leaning toward one another which Alice prescribed, early in the novel, as the necessary but missing ingredient in her relationship with Mr. Grey; he has removed his most grievous fault, and she, apparently, has learned to accept the others.

There is, then, in Mr. Grey's total portrait not the same disjunction that marred the presentation of Count Upsel in The Noble Jilt. Alice's criticisms of him are supported even by those in the novel who most want her to marry him. His own words and actions also support Alice's criticism of him and convey directly to the reader the same impression that Alice has of him. In short, Mr. Grey is of a piece, as Count Upsel never was. He is, one might say, Count Upsel fully realized.

Of the three serious characters whom Trollope took from The Noble Jilt and transformed for new uses in Can You Forgive Her?, George Vavasor is the most highly altered. Alice remains largely what Margaret had been, and John Grey is at least what Trollope had intended Count Upsel to be. George Vavasor, however, is only initially and superficially like Mark Steinmark, whose main quality, it will be remembered, was his amiability. It is true that Alice insists to Lady Macleod that George is "very good-natured" to escort her and Kate on their trip to Switzerland (I, II, 16), but Alice's comment is the only one that attests to any amicableness in his character. Lady Macleod, on the contrary, insists that he is "very wild" (I, II, 19), though what constitutes his wildness is not specified, although we know it has something to do with his "mode of life" (I, II, 18). In any event, Alice also thinks "that her cousin was wild,--very wild,"

though she does not admit it to Lady Macleod (I, II, 20). George defines his own wildness in a way that reminds one of Mark Steinmark. "I hold myself in readiness to risk everything at any moment, in order to gain any object that may serve my turn. I am always ready to lead a forlorn hope" (I, IV, 40).

The daring of the two young men is not really alike, however, on close examination. Mark Steinmark is exuberant; but George Vavasor's "wildness" is, or becomes, diabolical. Trollope only allows him to assume villainous proportions gradually. In sharp contrast to Dickens, Trollope usually eschews the use of villains altogether. He comprehends villainy, as Beatrice Curtis-Brown puts it, "as human personality in defeat."[3] Men and women--with the possible exceptions of Augustus Melmotte and Lizzie Eustace--become villainous only when their good qualities are defeated by their bad ones under the exigencies of life. Thus, when first described George is neither good nor bad. Those qualities which later come to dominate and destroy him,--his violence, his recklessness, his lack of principle--are mentioned, but they are only part of the picture that Trollope gives us of him. While working in the office of a parliamentary land agent, he makes "himself so useful that he had before him the prospects of a lucrative partnership in the

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[3]Beatrice Curtis-Brown, Anthony Trollope ("The English Novelists Series"; Denver: Alan Swallow, 1950), p. 54.

business." Everything, in fact, "was going on swimmingly" until one unfortunate day when he knocked down his employer "with a blow between the eyes. . . ." Subsequently, a partner in a firm of wine merchants, he "worked very hard, like a man," though "the boldness and extent of his views" frighten his partners (I, IV, 35-36).

After leaving the wine business, however, "he had gone back greatly in the estimation of men. He had lived in open defiance of decency [apparently by keeping a mistress]. He had spent much money and had apparently made none, and had been, as all his friends declared, on the high road to ruin." But then he takes himself in hand and his reputation mends. He makes a name for himself as a "working man" in the City, "a shrewd fellow who knew what he was about" and "who was fairly and decently honourable in his money transactions." At the same time,he begins to engage in political activities. He runs for Parliament on an "extremely Radical" platform; and although he fails to win a seat, he nevertheless "gained reputation by the struggle, and men came to speak of him as though he were one who would do something" (I, IV, 37-38).

In spite of his salvaged reputation and good prospects, George is without money. His attempt to raise money on the estate he expects to inherit is frustrated by his grandfather; and his efforts to gain the fortune of a young heiress, by marrying her, also fail when that lady dies.

At the outset, then, George is a fair balance of debits and credits. He has bad qualities--his temper and violence,

his excessive ambition and his recklessness--, but he also has his good points: he is hard-working, forthright, energetic. If, by some stretch of the imagination, the credit side of his character connects him to his predecessor, Steinmark, that connection is severed once George is faced with the necessity of acquiring money enough to accomplish his ends. As his efforts at acquisition are frustrated or made to seem mean in his own eyes and in the eyes of others, his bad qualities come to dominate his character until, finally, he is destroyed by them.

Trollope establishes early the relationship of George's financial plight to his interest in Alice. Ostensibly, his motive for wanting Alice back is the same that motivated Steinmark: the chance to get back at the rival who won the first round in the contest for the lady.(I, XII, 122). He assures himself, in fact, that Alice's fortune and physical attractions are of little interest to him (I, XII, 123). The revenge motive, however, dwindles in the face of mounting financial needs. George's creditors demand payment. Mr. Grimes, who operates a pub, and Mr. Scruby, an attorney, have conducted Vavasor's unsuccessful first campaign for a parliamentary seat; and the expenses of that campaign have not yet been paid. Both men urge the same point. "Business is business," says Mr. Grimes; and "Money is money, certainly," Mr. Scruby echoes (I, XIII, 129). George reassesses the attractions of Alice: "'She can turn it all into capital to-morrow, if she pleases,' he had said to himself when thinking of her income" (I, XIV, 144).

He therefore writes to Alice, proposing marriage. When he receives her acceptance, his attitude toward it reflects his real interests, as they have become. He is indifferent toward Alice herself; and he has forgotten about revenge. "But before the day was over he had made many plans,--plans made almost unconsciously,--as to the benefit which might accrue to him from the offer which she had made of her money" (I, XXXII, 340).

Having got her back, George hides his lack of feeling for her, and his interest in her money, behind a show of loving; and when she thwarts his efforts to create the illusion of love between them, he turns on her. He is forced to curb his anger, however, because "he remembered that her money was absolutely essential to him. . ." (I, XXXV, 365).

His constant need for money, in fact, makes George increasingly desperate as the novel moves on; and as he becomes desperate, he also becomes increasingly the victim of those negative qualities which have always been part of his character but which were held in check under the influence of better days. No sooner has he paid the expenses of his first campaign than the seat for the Chelsea district is again vacant--its holder, inheriting a title, must vacate it--and George must run again or abandon his political ambitions. Alice supplies another two thousand pounds; and this time George wins the election. But he at once learns that a "further sum of thirteen hundred pounds was wanted at once. . ." (II, XLIV, 43). This time, however, in the face of Alice's

repugnance for him, he does not have the courage to request another advance. He swears to himself "that under no circumstances would he be indebted to her for another shilling. But before he had reached Great Marlborough Street . . . he had reminded himself that everything depended on a further advance" (II, LI, 110).

His hostility toward Alice gradually becomes part of a larger fury. Infuriated at the discovery that Mr. Grey has actually been supplying him with the money he thought was coming out of Alice's fortune, at having his meanness exposed to the view of another gentleman, he seeks Mr. Grey out and accuses him of interfering in affairs that are no concern of his. His animosity finally breaks out into violence, and he hits Mr. Grey "a sharp blow upon his face" (II, LII, 122). The fact that Mr. Grey gets the better of him in the ensuing struggle does nothing to soothe his temper or to alter his determination to get the money he needs. His thoughts again return to Alice. He goes to her and threatens her "with some fearful punishment" if she reneges on their engagement. He demands five thousand pounds in order to repay Mr. Grey and to meet present needs. But at this demand, Alice breaks down. "Then," Alice writes to Kate later, "he came and sat by me, and took hold of my arms. . . . He put his mouth close to my ear, and said words which were terrible . . . he was threatening me with his anger if I did not obey" (II, LIV, 141-42).

When George discovers, on the death of his grandfather, that he has been excluded from any share of the estate by his

grandfather's will, his rage grows dangerous: "a Fury was driving him, and he was conscious of being so driven. He almost wished to be driven to some act of frenzy. Everything in the world had gone against him, and he desired to expend his rage on some one" (II, LVI, 165). The person turned on, in the first place, is his sister, who has been his most loyal friend. Following a violent argument over his scheme to contest their grandfather's will, in which he threatens to kill Kate if she refuses to testify as instructed, he throws her to the ground "so that she fell heavily upon the stony ground" and, as she later learns, breaks her arm (II, LVI, 166-67).

George makes one more attempt to salvage his career. Obtaining one last loan from Alice, he stands for re-election in the Chelsea district, but this time he stands without success. In defeat, he reviews his position.

> He had lost his inheritance. He had abandoned one profession after another. . . . His ambition had betrayed him. . . . He had estranged from himself every friend that he had ever possessed. . . . He had nothing now but himself and that five hundred pounds, which he still held in his pocket. (II, LXXI, 318)

He decides on suicide. But before he turns his pistol on himself, he will use the weapon "for another purpose" (II, LXXI, 320). John Grey, he decides, at least, must pay for his part in George's ruin and humiliation. He goes to Mr. Grey's apartment and calls him "a coward, and a liar, and a blackguard" (II, LXXII, 331). He challenges him to a duel and when Mr. Grey refuses to give him satisfaction, he takes the gun from his pocket and announces his intention to use it at once.

As Mr. Grey moves toward the bell, Vavasor fires; but he misses. With a final curse, he rushes from the room and out of the novel.

As these details show, George's relationship to his antecedent, Mark Steinmark, is almost entirely superficial. Steinmark's daring spirit is related to Vavasor's wildness; and the two men share similar views on marriage (George, too, would rather do without it). But Steinmark's spirit is too amicable and generous to compare with George's wildness, once it grows malignant. And George's attitude toward marriage is simply a carry-over from the drama and plays no part in the novel worth considering.

In two important ways, however, George is a radical departure and improvement over his predecessor. In the first place, he becomes admirably suited to his role in the novel. This is a happy coincidence always, but it is of particular interest in this case because of Trollope's failure, in The Noble Jilt, to make Steinmark appropriate to a villainous role. But where Steinmark was high-spirited, fun-loving, amiable, and incapable of performing a villainous act, Vavasor becomes selfishly ambitious, opportunistic, and ruthless, a genuinely villainous force.

Secondly, whereas Steinmark was a static figure, George undergoes a definite and an observable development in the course of the novel: He "becomes" a character appropriate to his villainous role. All three of the serious characters of the play are static: they are at the end of the play much

as they were at its beginning; and it is their lack of development that makes the play's resolution seem a matter of mere contrivance. None of the basic character conflicts have been resolved. The static quality of Margaret and the Count comes forward into Alice and Mr. Grey. Alice learns that she has been wrong in preferring George to Mr. Grey for a time, but that realization is not accompanied by much inner growth, as far as we are able to determine from the evidence Trollope gives. And John Grey, though he has changed his mind on the subject of the individual's social responsibilities, remains the good, understanding, loyal fellow he always was.

The same is not true of George. When introduced, his character is unformed. But by the time Trollope has done with him, he has been shaped, gradually and with convincing reference to a mountingly desperate financial situation, into a monomaniac of even more terrible proportions than Louis Treveleyan (He Knew He Was Right), a portrait that A. O. J. Cockshut finds one of Trollope's most impressive and terrible.[4] If George lacks the final desperation that later drives Ferdinand Lopez (The Prime Minister) and Augustus Melmotte (The Way We Live Now) to suicide, he rages through the novel, once his energies and his fury combine, with a force that is increasingly dangerous and destructive. He becomes one of Trollope's very few out-and-out villains. Cockshut, in fact,

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[4] A. O. J. Cockshut, Anthony Trollope: A Critical Study (London: Collins, 1955), p. 169 et seq.

sees him as perhaps the only example in Trollope of the diabolical.[5] His portrayal is the most energetic and interesting of those who come into the novel from the play, because there is in his presentation a movement, a development, some sense of actual character progression.

### 4. Partial Clarification

In redrawing the serious characters taken from The Noble Jilt, Trollope made significant progress in making them credible and their dilemmas real. Alice's financial independence not only gives her an objective value, but also makes possible for her the kind of independent moral life that was later to interest Henry James. Alice is, like James's Isabel Archer, free to give her hand where she will, and consequently her "will" is of some importance. John Grey's characterization is also improved over Count Upsel's by Trollope's almost consistent handling of him. Other than Trollope's special pleading on behalf of Mr. Grey's sensitivity and suffering, his character is consistent within itself and with Alice's objections to it. George Vavasor is so different from Mark Steinmark that the two are hardly comparable. George is a character consonant with his role in the novel, however, as Steinmark never was; and he also has the distinction--a distinction he shares with Lady Glencora in the novel's great triangle--of being a character that develops in the course of the novel.

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[5] Cockshut, p. 25.

But Trollope's progress in handling the triangle he moved from the play into the novel did not stop with improvements in character delineation. Of the three problems inherited from the play--the roles of feminism, money, and passion--two are stated and dealt with or obviated.

It is perhaps too much to say that Trollope really comes to grips in the novel with the problems raised by the feminism of Margaret de Wynter. It may even seem that Trollope simply side-stepped the whole issue in the novel. More accurately, however, I think we can say that he obviates, rather than avoids, the issues raised by feminism by suggesting that the aims of feminism, at least as those aims were expressed by Margaret de Wynter--a new role for woman, a broader, more independent scope than the one traditionally allowed her--are irrelevant to the issues that face a woman in her life. As Trollope puts it:

> A woman's life is 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 . . . if she shall have recognized the necessity of truth and honesty for the purposes of her life, I do not know that she need ask herself many questions as to what she will do with it. (I, XI, 110)

Trollope's explicit statement here is entirely conservative by implication. If women are misdirected in seeking to "do" something extraordinary with their lives, then they must, by implication, be content with that which ordinarily comes to women: marriage and the ensuing domestic responsibilities that the bearing and raising of children and the maintenance of a home for her family entail.

If Trollope handled the issue of an expanded role for women by obviating the aims of feminism, he met openly and frankly the part played by money in the affairs of the serious triangle taken over from the play. In The Noble Jilt, the question of the relevance and importance of money to the interests and motives of Margaret, the Count, and Mark Steinmark was never raised. Although Count Upsel was reportedly one of the richest men in Flanders and Margaret herself a member of the respectable poor, never were Margaret's thoughts sullied by a consideration of the Count's money. Only the vulgar were concerned about money. The crass materialism of Mme. Brudo, the pompous boastings of Van Hoppen about his material possessions, and the frankly avaricious view which both Van Hoppen and Belleroach take of the rich widow are all handled comically. But behind the comedy, one has a strong sense that Trollope, like many of his contemporaries and like many of his readers in the twentieth century, believed that attitudes toward money marked class distinctions. Members of the upper classes were "above" a concern for money.

By the time he came to rework his play, however, Trollope had taken a closer look at the realities of his own day. A concern for money was no longer associated exclusively with the vulgar. It had become the means for action, the medium in which one lived. John Grey and George and Alice Vavasor all belong to the landed gentry, the class which aroused Trollope's warmest sympathies. Despite their belonging to a socially genteel class, however, money has become

the chief concern of all three. Alice's money is, of course, the crucial issue at stake; and the struggle to preserve or gain her fortune intensifies the struggle for her hand, which it parallels, to the dramatic advantage of the narrative. Mr. Grey, himself a wealthy man, is not initially concerned with Alice's money. But George is interested in it from the time that Alice's freedom from Mr. Grey and George's financial desperation coincide. Alice herself takes it for granted that George's chief interest in her is financial and is not at all disconcerted that this is so.

The engagement between George and Alice is, then, frankly based on his financial need and her ability to gratify that need. And once their engagement has become repugnant to both of them, the only basis for continuing it is admittedly financial and neither of them scruples to turn away from that fact even after it has become the source of remorse and pain to both.

Even John Grey eventually becomes involved in the financial bargain between George and Alice. At Mr. Grey's suggestion and insistence, the money that Alice has agreed to give Vavasor prior to their marriage is not taken from Alice's private fortune, as Alice and George think, but from Mr. Grey's. The idea behind Mr. Grey's move, known only to Alice's father and the lawyers involved in the transaction, is to test the real motives of George and preserve Alice's fortune intact. As he works to those ends, his concern for Alice's fortune finally becomes as great as George's. In

other words, money--the fortune of Alice Vavasor--is the pivotal issue around which the romantic triangle revolves in the novel; and it is the admitted issue.

Trollope does not take any particular moral stance toward money. As usual, his view is balanced. He realizes and admits the centrality of money to the affairs of the transposed triangle, despite the social standing of the three involved. But he presents money as a force for both good and evil. Insofar as Alice is freed by money to choose a husband according to his merits; and insofar as money empowers her to act generously and beneficially to others, it is a good thing. But Trollope also sees and presents the danger of an excessive concern with money. George Vavasor is his case study. Coming from a distinguished family, as he does, and expected to distinguish himself, as he has ambitions of doing, a lack of money becomes for him an insupportable obstacle, a mortal enemy. He fights to gain funds by whatever means he can, and in the process demeans himself as a gentleman and brings pain and suffering to everyone connected to him. Whether for good or evil, in any event, money has become very much the heart of the matter.

The possibilities for dramatic and, more importantly, ethical conflict in the transposed triangle continue to be unrealized, however, because of Trollope's failure to clarify the "love" issue as satisfactorily as he clarified the money issue. The attraction Alice feels for her cousin remains inexplicable, as do her feelings for Mr. Grey. George's

interest in Alice is clarified along with the money issue. But though Alice's motives in engaging herself to her cousin are more sharply defined than Margaret's motives vis-a-vis Mark Steinmark, the place of her emotions in her vacillations is never quite located.

In contrast to Margaret's early attitude of disdain toward the love of Steinmark, Alice "had loved her cousin George passionately. . ." (I, XXXIV, 358). We may assume from this that Alice is capable, unlike her predecessor, of loving passionately and that the first object of her passion was George Vavasor. We are also told that Alice loves Mr. Grey: "she always admitted to herself that she had accepted him simply because she loved him" (I, II, 13)--though her love is not spoken of as a passionate one. As the novel progresses, in fact, it becomes increasingly clear that Alice's feeling for Mr. Grey is more accurately described as a kind of affectionate respect. In any event, the issue is supposedly irrelevant: she has decided that love does "not matter." "How might one best make herself useful,--useful in some sort that might gratify her ambitions;--that was now the question which seemed to her to be of most importance" (I, XXXI, 325). Committed to her utilitarian view of the subject, she breaks with Mr. Grey and becomes engaged to George.

Alice's interest in George, however, is clearly motivated by more than her desire to be useful to him. Her attitude toward him is, in fact, as ambivalent as Margaret de Wynter's was toward Steinmark. Margaret was both

fascinated and repelled by the idea of love; it was both delicious and poisonous. Alice's attitude toward love, too, seems to fluctuate between fear and longing. George is, like his predecessor in the play, associated with sexual license, though perhaps not quite so persistently or blatantly as Steinmark was in The Noble Jilt. We know, however, that Alice has broken off with George when some unspecified conduct of his came to her attention, conduct so reprehensible that even George's partisan sister, Kate, could find no fault with Alice for ending the relationship. We also know that George has a reputation for being "wild" and that there is something rather suspect, if not sinister, about his solitary habits. We know too that sometime earlier he has "lived in open defiance of decency" (I, IV, 37). None of these imputations against him is overtly related to any unacceptable sexual behavior on his part, though one suspects from the outset, given the kind of hush-hush manner George's early history is dealt with, particularly that part of it that bears directly on Alice's first break with him, that George has committed some kind of offense against the social conventions. And when, at the end of the book, there appears at his door the character of Jane, who turns out to have been once his mistress, the reader assumes that Jane symbolizes the indiscretion which has caused Alice to break with George and which has earned for him an unsavory moral reputation. George is also associated with sexual license by his attitude toward marriage, an attitude shared with his predecessor in the play.

If, then, Alice knows about the bad reputation of George, as she does, and the basis for it, which she has had experience with herself, how seriously can the reader take her expectations that her second engagement to him is to be based exclusively on the rational apprehension of their mutual self-interests? Are there no remnants in her mind of the romance and excitement that attached to him on the balcony and bridge at Basel?

Her attitude toward him is finally inexplicable, a combination of fear and attraction. Just after her engagement to Mr. Grey is broken off, George happens to meet her and uses the occasion to congratulate her on her new freedom. In the process, he takes her hand.

> There had been days when she had loved to feel that her own was within [his], when she trusted in it, and intended that it should be her staff through life. Now she distrusted it; and as the thoughts of the old days came upon her, and the remembrance of that touch was recalled, she drew her hand away rapidly. (I, XIV, 148-49)

In the very next chapter, however, Alice is confronted with Mr. Grey, now her rejected suitor, and as she considers what she regards as his indifference, she contrasts him to her cousin. Having told him again that she does not intend to become his wife, she looks at him and finds that his face "was still serene in all its manly beauty."

> Her cousin George, if he were moved to strong feeling, showed it at once in his eyes,--in his mouth, in the whole visage of his countenance. He glared in his anger, and was impassioned in his love. But Mr. Grey when speaking of the happiness of his entire life, when confessing that it was now at stake with a decision against him that would be ruinous to it,

> spoke without a quiver in his voice, and had no more sign of passion in his face than if he were telling his gardener to move a rose tree. (I, XV, 160)

It can hardly be doubted, on the basis of these two passages if nothing else, that Alice simply does not know where she stands emotionally in relation to George. Her emotional relationship to both George and Mr. Grey, in fact, is a source of puzzlement to the reader throughout the novel. Her "love" is either synonymous with esteem, and therefore available only to Mr. Grey; or it is associated with George's ambitions and her own, but without particular reference to George himself. In either event, it constantly confuses the issues struggling for clarity in the novel. Not until he introduced Lady Glencora did Trollope use his heroine's love to clarify and dramatize her dilemma.

## 5. Conclusion

The social and moral implications of Alice Vavasor's romantic dilemma and choice of husbands are different from those attendant on Margaret de Wynter's dilemma and choice. Margaret had to choose between a gentleman and a rebel, the former a member of the aristocracy, the latter of indeterminate social position. Alice Vavasor, on the other hand, must choose between two gentlemen, both belonging to the landed gentry. She is not, in other words, tempted to forsake her class, as Margaret was.

Nevertheless, a decision for George Vavasor would have constituted a disloyalty to the principles traditionally

and ideally associated with her class; because George has given up those principles himself. There is nothing in his portrait to indicate that he is interested in anything but himself: he is utterly selfish. No loyalty to principles of conduct or human ties softens the picture Trollope gives us of him. He is ambitious only in the cause of his own interests.

Not only does George's indifference to the welfare of others remove him from the class of gentlemen, his professional career has also sullied his class standing. He has worked first in the office of a parliamentary land agent and later becomes a partner in a firm of wine merchants. Both connections serve to sever him from his class. So, too, does the secretive, clandestine nature of his private life.

George's decision to enter Parliament would seem to be a move in the direction of re-establishing himself as a gentleman. But his reasons for doing so are ungentlemanly. He has no notion of public service in wanting a parliamentary seat. He gets up a "cause" that relates him superficially to the interests of the Chelsea district; but his only interest is in his own advancement. Furthermore, his ambitions hopelessly embroil him in the ungentlemanly world of money lenders, shady lawyers, and opportunistic pub owners. His selfishness drives him into an alliance with those elements of society that are also motivated by self-interest and who express that interest largely, if not exclusively, by the acquisition and exchange of money.

If George represents the old order of gentlemen gone wrong in one direction, John Grey may be said to represent the same order gone wrong in another. The ambivalence of Alice toward Mr. Grey is instructive. She claims to "love" him and Trollope gives him qualities that are, if not loveable, at least admirable and worthy of loving abstractly. He is generous, humane, understanding. He has one major fault, however, that makes it impossible, finally, for Alice to love him enough. He is withdrawn, uninterested either in London or the world of affairs. As a representative of his class, he has defaulted in his responsibilities to the world which has granted him special privileges.

Between the two men, each of whom is, in his way, completely selfish, stands Alice Vavasor. Her difficulty in choosing between them is a real dilemma. Only she, of the three, continues to have that sense of noblesse oblige that supposedly distinguished her class in the past. For her, the desire to be useful to others continues to operate. That desire, which seems superficially to be simply a modified, softened variety of the feminism of Margaret de Wynter, makes Alice, in fact, utterly unlike her predecessor. Margaret is in rebellion against the restrictions of her class; Alice would simply bring back to her class, by implication, a sense of its obligations.

The history of the attitude of the three toward Parliament parallels the history of the romantic ups and downs of Alice Vavasor. Parliament is the institution where

gentlemen can most clearly perform their duties to society. Trollope himself aspired, unsuccessfully, to hold a seat there: "I have always thought that to sit in the British Parliament should be the highest object of ambition to every educated Englishman . . . to serve one's country without pay is the grandest work that a man can do. . . ."[6] So long as Mr. Grey is untempted by a seat in Parliament, so long is it impossible for Alice to give herself fully to him, however much she may admire him for his personal virtues. The social obligations of a gentleman must be met.

It is reasonable, then, that Alice should be drawn to George Vavasor. He is interested in Parliament and actively doing what he can to gain a seat there. On closer examination, however, Alice discovers that George lacks the personal qualities she had found in Mr. Grey. Behind George's mask of Parliamentary interest, Alice discovers nothing but self-interest, no trace of wanting to serve or benefit anyone but himself. Having found with John Grey that she loved the man but not his life, she finds with George that, though she has been attracted by the plans for his life, she cannot love the man.

Mr. Palliser serves to solve Alice's dilemma by challenging Mr. Grey's basic position in life, a position represented by his life of rural retreat and seclusion. When Mr. Palliser suggests to him the possibility of standing for Parliament, Mr. Grey refuses: "It seems to me that if a man

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[6]Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 290-91.

can so train himself that he may live honestly and die fearlessly, he has done about as much as is necessary." Mr. Palliser does not answer, but he thinks to himself "that good men struggle as they do in order that others, besides themselves, may live honestly, and, if possible, die fearlessly." Trollope's own sympathies are expressed in an aside: he says that Mr. Palliser is less brilliant than Mr. Grey, but he has nevertheless "the better philosophy of the two. . ." (II, LXXIV, 348).

With Mr. Grey's final conversion to the cause of Parliamentary service and his success in achieving a seat in the House, it would seem that Alice and Trollope have got what they want: a man who combines private virtues with a sense of public responsibility. John Grey proves to be Prince Charming after all.

But what if Prince Charmings were not to be found? What if a woman had to choose between a man who had little to recommend him except his adherence to the standards of gentlemen and a man whose only recommendation was an ability to love and please her? That was a dilemma that could not be faced until the "love" of Trollope's heroine was separated from the object of his intensest loyalty. Only then could the choice of his heroine involve the agonizing confrontation of desire and duty in a dramatic struggle of social and moral consequence.

## CHAPTER III: REALIZATION

### 1. Introduction

The second major triangle of Can You Forgive Her?, presided over by Lady Glencora, does more than complement, or comment on, the first. Instead it becomes the center of the novel, the focus of Trollope's interest. In his Autobiography, Trollope admits that his special fondness for the novel depends on his relationship to Lady Glencora and her husband, Plantagenet Palliser who, along with Burgo Fitzgerald, are the characters in Trollope's third telling of the story first told in The Noble Jilt and re-told in the guise of Alice Vavasor's history: "Of Can You Forgive Her? I cannot speak with too great affection . . . that which endears the book to me is the first presentation which I made in it of Plantagenet Palliser, with his wife, Lady Glencora."[1]

In telling the story of Lady Glencora and the two men who figure in her life, Trollope finally arrives at a solution to those problems, dramatic and ethical, that have beset him from the time he introduced his triangle in the play. It is Lady Glencora who enacts the drama which Margaret de Wynter

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[1] Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 179-80.

and Alice Vavasor, Mme. Brudo and Mrs. Greenow, have been preparing. She is the complex heroine fully realized.

## 2. The Alternatives Emerge

Lady Glencora does not appear in the novel until Alice goes to visit her at Matching Priory, the home of Lady Glen and her husband, Plantagenet Palliser. Alice's story by this time is already well advanced: she has broken her engagement to Mr. Grey and is about to accept the proposal of her cousin, George. Despite Lady Glencora's late appearance, however, we already know, by references made to them, the details of her early misfortunes: how she, "on whom the properties of half-a-dozen ancient families had concentrated," had been wooed by Burgo Fitzgerald who, though a pauper, was well-connected and "who in spite of his iniquities still kept his position in the drawing-rooms of the great. . . ." The "sundry mighty magnates" related to the heiress, however, dismayed at the thought of so unsuitable a match for her, "put their heads together, and the result had been that Lady Glencora had heard reason." No sooner, in fact, had Burgo Fitzgerald been dismissed than Lady Glencora's engagement to Plantagenet Palliser was announced. As the nephew and heir of the Duke of Omnium, one of England's wealthiest men, Mr. Palliser's suitability was uncontested (I, XVIII, 187-88).

Because Alice and Lady Glencora are cousins, Lady Glen turned to Alice at the time she needed help in arranging an elopement with Burgo. When Alice refused her aid, the connection

between the cousins was dropped. Lady Glencora wrote Alice, announcing her forthcoming marriage to Mr. Palliser, whom she described as "the best man . . . in all the world." She will endeavor to make him happy, she says. "She said not a word," however, "in all her letter of loving this newly found lord" (I, XVIII, 190).

Although at the time of Lady Glencora's entrance into the novel we know something about her earlier history, we know almost nothing about her character except what is implied by the fact that she met her relatives' opposition to her desire to marry Burgo Fitzgerald "with many haughty tossings indeed of her proud little head, with many throbbings of her passionate young heart" and that she met Alice's refusal to aid her with anger and threats (I, XVIII, 188-90). We know that she is high-spirited, that she is not only young but passionate, that she not only has money but a mind of her own. We know, too, that she has been persuaded to listen to "reason" and has therefore, at least before we encounter her entering the main stream of the novel, agreed to follow the prudent dictates of society instead of her own desires.

One might expect Lady Glencora to resemble Alice Vavasor; but from the moment the two heroines meet at Matching Road Station, it is apparent that the two are dissimilar. Where Alice is pensive, serious, Lady Glencora is lively and gay. Furthermore, she presents herself directly to the reader, requiring little or no authorial comment, as Alice did. She is always reacting directly to the immediate situation at hand,

talking about it, revealing herself. Where the reader must struggle to understand the dilemmas and vacillations of Margaret de Wynter and Alice Vavasor, Lady Glencora clarifies herself through her ability to objectify verbally the division within herself. That she does so gives her a dramatic immediacy lacking in the other two heroines; that she is able to do so is the result of Trollope's own full understanding of and sympathy with his heroine's problems and their social and moral ramifications.

It is impossible to separate Lady Glencora's character from her situation, a situation like that of her predecessors except that hers is more serious: she has already married her Count Upsel, her Mr. Grey, before she realizes that another man would have been preferable. She is tempted, not merely to break an engagement--a serious enough offense for a young lady--, but to leave her husband and engage in an illicit love affair with another man. At least one contemporary reader was shocked at Trollope's audacity in writing of such a situation. In his Autobiography, Trollope reports receiving

> a letter from a distinguished dignitary of our Church, a man whom all men honoured, treating me with severity for what I was doing. It had been one of the innocent joys of his life, said the clergyman, to have my novels read to him by his daughters. But now I was writing a book which caused him to bid them close it! Must I also turn to vicious sensation such as this? Did I think that a wife contemplating adultery was a character fit for my pages?[2]

As he introduces his major heroine into the main stream of the novel, however, Trollope makes it clear that he has

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[2]Trollope, An Autobiography, p. 182.

provided her with a situation that is both dangerous and desperate. She and her husband are altogether incompatible. Mr. Palliser has the virtues of his predecessors, with whom he shares many qualities--he has wealth, personal integrity, and a reputation for a sound, gentlemanly character. He also regards the lady of his choice with esteem. But he is also, unfortunately, like Count Upsel and Mr. Grey in that he is uninteresting to the woman he loves. And for the first time, Trollope himself admits that his hero is dull. Margaret de Wynter and Alice Vavasor said that the men to whom they were engaged were dull, uninteresting to them, which meant, as far as they were concerned, that the men were too good, too withdrawn, too unemotional, too aloof from the concerns of the world. In presenting Count Upsel and John Grey, however, Trollope contradicted the ladies' judgment of them, perhaps inadvertently in the play, but by openly countering Alice's criticisms with assertions of his own in the novel. The dullness of Mr. Palliser, however, is not only admitted by Trollope, it is also shown. In the first place, his appearance is utterly unremarkable. His face shows intelligence and character; but it "was almost insignificant, being too thin; and he wore no beard to give it character. But, indeed, Mr. Palliser was a man who had never thought of assisting his position in the world by his outward appearance" (I, XXII, 228).

Secondly, Mr. Palliser's manner, as it expresses itself in personal, private discourse or before the world, in

Parliament, is dull. He is not accused, as were his predecessors, of being uninterested in the political affairs of the world. On the contrary, his life centers on Parliament and the various roles he is called on to fill there. But his public life is no assurance of personal brilliancy:

> He was not a brilliant man, and understood well that such was the case. He was now listened to in the House, as the phrase goes; but he was listened to as a laborious man, who was in earnest in what he did, who got up his facts with accuracy, and who, dull though he be, was worthy of confidence. And he was very dull. He rather prided himself on being dull, and on conquering in spite of his dulness. He never allowed himself a joke in his speeches, nor attempted even the smallest flourish of rhetoric. (I, XXIV, 246)

The most important aspect of his dullness, however, is neither his insignificant appearance nor his lack of style. It is, rather, his insensitivity to his wife and her needs. When she tells him that she has "really loved" Burgo Fitzgerald, her husband replies, "'You must love me now' . . . and then, as regarded his mind, the thing was over" (I, XXIV, 249). By his insensitivity, in fact, he is largely responsible for Lady Glencora's defection:

> I think that she might have learned to forget her early lover, or to look back upon him with a soft melancholy hardly amounting to regret, had her new lord been more tender in his ways with her. I do not know that Lady Glencora's heart was made of that stern stuff which refuses to change its impressions; but it was a heart, and it required food. To love and fondle some one,--to be loved and fondled, were absolutely necessary to her happiness. She wanted the little daily assurance of her supremacy in the man's feelings . . . and then she would have forgotten Burgo Fitzgerald. But Mr. Palliser understood none of these things; and therefore the image of Burgo Fitzgerald in all his beauty was ever before her eyes. (I, XXIV, 249-50)

In sharp contrast to the dull surface of Plantagenet Palliser, Burgo Fitzgerald is an image of beauty. It is, in fact, in his handling of Burgo that Trollope finally gets clear of the problems that beset his characterizations of Mark Steinmark and George Vavasor. They, like Burgo, are the attractions that unsettle the minds of ladies thought to be settled. In presenting Mark Steinmark and George, however, Trollope felt it necessary, in explaining the ladies' return to their original attachments, to transform the two men from attracting into repelling agents, agents, in fact, that drive the women back onto their first obligations. In presenting Burgo, however, Trollope keeps his attracting force as attractive at the end of his appearance in the novel as he was at its beginning, at least as far as Lady Glencora is concerned. This is not to say that Burgo's "beauty" is unmitigated for the reader. There are things about him that are unpleasant, but in contrast to Plantagenet Palliser, he is, to Lady Glencora's mind, an image of beauty. And Trollope is as careful to justify Lady Glencora's attraction for Burgo as he was to make understandable her repulsion for her husband. We know in the first place that Burgo is physically beautiful. He is "among the handsomest of all God's creatures" (I, XVIII, 188); and despite his dissolute life, "his beauty remained. The perfect form of his almost godlike face was the same as ever, and the brightness of his bright blue eye was never quenched" (I, XXIX, 300).

His outward attractiveness is paralleled, further, by personal qualities that are also attractive: he can be generous and kind. In the scene between Fitzgerald and the begging prostitute whom he takes off the streets and into a public house for something to eat, his outer beauty is attested to by the prostitute and others who observe it while he himself demonstrates by his act, and by his attitude toward it, the other kind of beauty that may be attributed to him. As the two enter the pub, all eyes turn toward them.

> The woman at the bar who served him looked at him wonderingly, staring into his face; and the pot-boy woke himself thoroughly that he might look at Burgo; and the waterman from the cab-stand stared at him; and women who came in for gin looked almost lovingly up into his eyes. (I, XXIX, 309)

After he has treated her to something to eat at the pub, the prostitute says to him, "I wish I might once see you again . . . because you are so good and beautiful"; and after he has left her, she says, "Gracious, how beautiful he was!" (I, XXIX, 310).

In contrast to his counterpart in the novel, George Vavasor, Burgo is valued by the world in which he moves because he is both handsome and kind. Despite the knowledge that he wastes his life in gambling and loose living, people who know him are

> fond of him because he was beautiful and never vain of his beauty;--because in the midst of his recklessness there was always about him a certain kindliness which made him pleasant to those around him. He was soft and gracious with children, and would be very courteous to his lady cousins. They knew that as a man he was worthless, but nevertheless they loved him. I think the secret of it was chiefly in this,--that he seemed to think so little of himself. (I, XXIX, 305)

The most attractive thing about Burgo Fitzgerald to Lady Glencora is that he offers her what she most wants and what she knows she cannot expect from her husband: the chance to love and be loved. The tempters in the other triangles that we have considered have also, of course, offered the wavering women the thing they most want. But in presenting them, Trollope transformed his tempters into villains, the one by exposing the villainy of his views, the other by exposing the villainy of his character; and it is their villainy that forces the women to change their minds again. But Trollope so presents Burgo that, despite his recognized faults, he is always lovable to Lady Glencora. The tempter here is made consistently tempting, not only for Lady Glencora, on whom he must act, but also for the reader who must be made to see, if Lady Glencora's dilemma is to remain dramatic and difficult to the end, not only the poison but the beautiful flask in which it comes.

The two men in Lady Glencora's life are not seen simply as dull and insensitive on the one hand and beautiful and kind on the other. Plantagenet Palliser and Burgo Fitzgerald require fuller exploration than Lady Glen is able to give them. She tends initially to see only the weaknesses of her husband and the strengths of her would-be lover. But both men are combinations of strengths and weaknesses; and as they reveal themselves more fully to Lady Glencora and to the reader, they gradually correct her first impressions of them until she is

forced, like us, to see them in the fullness with which Trollope invested them.

Though Mr. Palliser is unattractive to his wife, he has qualities that make him highly estimable to Trollope and, eventually, to the reader and even to Lady Glencora. Unlike Count Upsel and Mr. Grey, Mr. Palliser is highly interested in the affairs of the world around him. He has the same sense of noblesse oblige noticed in Alice Vavasor and expresses that sense by taking an active part in parliamentary life. His life of public service distinguishes him from his uncle, the old Duke of Omnium.

The kind of life led by the old Duke has its apologists in the Parliamentary novels. When he dies, in Phineas Redux, it is said of him that he not only had looked like a duke, he had behaved as one: "A great fortune had been entrusted to him, and he knew that it was his duty to spend it. He did spend it, and all the world looked up to him."[3] But if Trollope sympathized with the old duke, it is clear that he prefers the Duke's nephew, Plantagenet Palliser, for the same reason that he prefers the "philosophy" of Mr. Palliser to the one advanced by John Grey who, like the old duke, also stands aloof from the social and political affairs of the world. With the old order under fire, it was particularly necessary that the old order justify its existence by showing the spirit shown by Mr. Palliser. However dull he may seem to his wife and his audiences in

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[3]Anthony Trollope, Phineas Redux ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1951), I, 269.

Parliament, it must also be admitted that he was also one "who was in earnest in what he did . . . and who, dull though he be, was worthy of confidence" (I, XXIV, 246).

Mr. Palliser, then, is a composite of strengths and weaknesses, virtues and flaws. He is dull but hard-working, insensitive to his wife's needs but aware of his social duties, incapable of charm but insistent on accuracy. Furthermore, Mr. Palliser's faults do not contradict his virtues: they are extensions of them. The qualities that repel his wife are the qualities that distinguish him as a man.

Burgo Fitzgerald is also a composite of strengths and weaknesses. He is not first good and then evil, as was Mark Steinmark; nor is he first a mixture of good and evil and then evil, as was George Vavasor. He is a mixture of strengths and weaknesses, as is Mr. Palliser, and displays one at the same time that he is displaying the other. We get our first glimpse of him at a hunt where his recklessness would seem to serve him well: "no man had ever known [him] to crane at a fence, or to hug a road, or to spare his own neck or his horse's. And yet," Trollope goes on prophetically, "poor Burgo seldom finished well," apparently because his recklessness blinds him to, and thereby makes him subject to, the hazards of hunting (I, XVII, 179). And when we are first told of his beauty, that fact is coupled with his essential weakness; he was "among the handsomest of God's creatures. . . . But he lived ever without conscience, without purpose. . ." (I, XVIII, 188). Whereas with George Vavasor, Trollope gave the conscienceless man, whom he

saw as ultimately evil, an obvious, physical sign for his moral ugliness, namely the scar across his face, with Burgo, Trollope associates moral evil with physical beauty and with the perfection of manners so that it becomes genuinely dangerous. Burgo is dangerous because he is, and remains to Lady Glen, beautiful and charming.

Furthermore, Trollope has reached the point where a villain is no longer required. He succeeds, with the final triangle, in making the danger of Lady Glencora's situation an inner danger, requiring no outside villain to bring the erring lady back to her senses. With Margaret and Alice the conflict was also within; but Steinmark and Vavasor, by their villainy, served to drive the ladies back from what they had decided on. Burgo, on the other hand, serves only to egg Lady Glencora on; and he does so by consistently offering to answer her intensest longing. That he is able to do so is the result of the same want of conscience that Steinmark and Vavasor display. But he is dangerous, as they never were, not because he holds false convictions or is likely to commit acts of violence, but because he is beautiful, because he does beautiful things, and because he seems to offer Lady Glencora the chance to realize that beautiful dream of love which she once hoped to find with him and can never find with her husband.

The conflict within Lady Glencora is related, of course, to larger issues. A more important conflict is that between the money values of her society and her own personal desires. The money issue we have seen gradually approaching clarification.

In The Noble Jilt, "noble" characters were not influenced in the choices they made by financial consideration. Only the vulgar were interested in money. In re-writing the history of the play's serious triangle, however, Trollope removed his "noble" characters' disdain for money. The possession of or the lack of money is crucial to the characterizations of Alice, George, and Mr. Grey and to the dramatic situation in which they find themselves.

In the final triangle, the importance and relevance of money and material values are seen in their broadest implications. Lady Glencora, Plantagenet Palliser, and Burgo Fitzgerald belong to the aristocracy. Traditionally their class has been the most powerful and prestigious of the land. The basis of its power has been wealth; but since its power has been put to good uses, providing the nation with political, social, and moral leadership, it has been allowed its prestige and honored by title.

With the new age, however, in which capital, not land, becomes the basis of wealth, hands unaccustomed to the wielding of power begin to accumulate money; and as their wealth increases, so does their power. In consequence, the landed aristocracy finds its position in society threatened. If money is now the source of power, the aristocracy must also acquire money, must compete, in short, to beat the enemy at his own game. To do so, of course, is to be tempted to violate the principles by which the upper classes have lived and by which they have guided the nation. As long as the wealth and position

of the upper class were secure, it was free to expend its energies in making life more pleasant for itself and the nation as a whole. But if now the acquisition of money--the new basis for wealth and power--becomes the chief preoccupation of the aristocracy and the landed gentry, what will be the result for the nation? Will the aristocracy be greedy instead of useful? Will the individual within that class be ranked according to his wealth, and be sought after, or disregarded, according to his capital assets?

Trollope's own view of the wealth of the aristocracy remained balanced. In the case of Plantagenet Palliser, wealth is not only the basis of social prestige but continues to be the means whereby the individual aristocrat is freed to serve his country. At a more personal level, Lady Glencora's money gives her the same kind of moral independence enjoyed by Alice Vavasor, though, of course, to a more limited degree because she is married. But as the aristocracy succumbs to the lure of money--its acquisition and accumulation--it demeans itself by acquiring, in addition to the money, the standards of the class it emulates in its greed, namely the untitled, unlanded industrialists and magnates of the middle class.

Lady Glencora's history is indicative of the corruption of values in the upper echelons of society. Her desires in selecting a husband for herself were finally of no matter in the match arranged for her. It was not her love that her family considered in forcing her marriage with Plantagenet Palliser but her money, which, when united with the inheritance

of her husband, would constitute a fortune that, by its sheer mass, obviously should have outweighed all other considerations presented to Lady Glencora in the matter of settling herself permanently in life. That the marriage should be loveless was beside the point: its foundation on the solid basis of wealth made it automatically a success.

Such a marriage--an arranged match--does not, perhaps, in itself constitute a nineteenth century break with the practices of the past. The aristocracy had probably always been interested in assuring its position by marriages "arranged" if not actually forced. In the past, however, the sanctity of marriage had been strictly observed. In the new age, however, the aristocracy--or portions of it--has grown so avaricious that traditional morality itself is attacked by implication.

The attitude of Lady Monk, Burgo's aunt, is to the point. She would seem, on the surface, to be like her nephew: she combines beauty and a gracious manner on the outside with inner qualities that belie the outer picture. Though fifty years old, she "had been a great beauty, and . . . was still handsome in her advanced age. . . . She had come of the family of the Worcestershire Fitzgeralds, of whom it used to be said that there never was one who was not beautiful and worthless." Lady Monk also has the gracious manner attributed to her nephew: on her guests, she "smiled sweetly, speaking some pretty little word. . . ." Unlike her nephew, however, Lady Monk is superficially on the side of traditional morality and propriety. She tells her nephew, when his words betray his

disappointment on learning that he is not to have the chance he has looked forward to of seeing Lady Glencora again, that he "must not speak in that way of a married woman" (I, XXXIII, 341-42). But underneath her beauty, her graciousness, and her moral tone, Lady Monk is without moral scruple. The indifference of Burgo Fitzgerald is, in her, stripped of its benefits: in her, it has hardened into a disregard of conventional morality if that morality conflicts with material interest. The fact that Lady Glencora has married another man is of minor importance to her. What matters is that a member of her own family, Burgo Fitzgerald, needs money badly, that Lady Glencora has money that would go with her even were she to leave her husband, and that since Lady Glencora, Lady Monk believes, loves her nephew, he has a good chance of persuading Lady Glencora to run off with him. Whatever she can do to improve that chance she is willing to do, providing she can so mask her assistance that no one, save her nephew, will know of it, and that he will not need to acknowledge it. "Had [Burgo] been a man who ever reflected he must have known that such a woman as his aunt could only assist him as long as she might be presumed to be ignorant of his intention" (I, XXXIII, 343).

Later in the novel, however, on the eve of one of Lady Monk's great parties--the party at which the danger of Burgo Fitzgerald to Lady Glencora's marriage comes to a head--Lady Monk begins to show her true colors, though she is still professing a belief in traditional morality: "There is nobody alive who has a greater horror of anything improper in married

women than I have." But in the very next breath, she is assuring her nephew that, if he can succeed in persuading Lady Glencora to his plan, she will "regard the Palliser episode in Lady Glencora's life as a tragical accident. . . . If you are to say anything to her, I think you might have an opportunity at the party" (II, XLVIII, 81).

When Burgo fails, however, to make the necessary arrangements for his escape with Lady Glencora at the party, Lady Monk is prepared to take action herself to assure the capture of the prey. Angered at her nephew's ineptitude at bringing things with Lady Glencora to a satisfactory conclusion, she is not, therefore, prepared to abandon her purpose. "She was anxious enough to see her purpose accomplished. She would have conducted the matter with discretion, if the running away with Mr. Palliser's wife could, in very fact, have been done by herself" (II, LXVI, 268-69). Since that is not possible, she is forced to continue her operations through her nephew. She has a plan that may still save the day, but communicating her plan to her nephew requires that she broach the subject openly and discuss it freely with him. The mask, in other words, of morality and propriety must be laid aside, and she must face him with the naked ruthlessness of her intentions. Though she hesitates to reveal herself so uncompromisingly, she finally outlines, in detail, her plan whereby her nephew can run off with another man's wife (II, LXVI,269-71).

Lady Glencora is, then, to the society in which she moves, a highly desirable financial asset, little more.

Neither of the contending families for Lady Glencora--and one senses that both Plantagenet Palliser and Burgo Fitzgerald are finally little more than the pawns for the families who sponsor their claims for Lady Glencora--take either moral or personal considerations into account in seeking to determine Lady Glencora's final alliance. Behind the mask of prudence, propriety, and morality, marriage has become a deadly game in which the highest stakes go to the most ruthless players. And if the prize is large enough, the game need not even end with marriage.

If the society in which she moves has been more interested in Lady Glencora's wealth than in her own desires, she gradually learns that society has been wrong in its motives and that she has been wrong to allow herself to be coerced into a marriage that, as she says, "has been all false throughout" (I, XXVII, 285). But if Lady Glencora has learned to despise the selfishness and greed that lie behind her marriage, she has herself, in a sense, learned the same lessons from the new world that her class has learned: she persuades herself that she, too, will be selfish. If her family forced a marriage on her on the basis of its self-interests, she would reply by acting, now, on the basis of hers.

Lady Glencora's interest in Burgo is entirely personal, entirely selfish. By admitting as much, Trollope finally succeeds in presenting his heroine with a conflict that is both real and dramatic. The issues are clear-cut: Lady Glencora must choose between her own desires, her love, and

the dictates of a society whose values are primarily material, monetary. There is no confusion of interests. Lady Glencora does not love the man of money to whom she is married and never confuses a sense of duty or propriety with love. Her attitude toward Burgo Fitzgerald is also unambiguous: she wants to run away with him because she loves him. She is able to rationalize her projected action by claiming the immorality of her union with a man she doesn't love and by insisting that she does her husband a service by making it possible for him to divorce her so that he may marry a woman who will provide him with an heir. Even more important to the realization of her plan, of course, is the fact that she has money of her own and that she is thereby made free to do as she likes without fear, at least, of the financial consequences.

Lady Glencora's perception of her relationship to her husband and Burgo is only partially justified by the attitude of the two men toward her. Mr. Palliser does, it is true, expect his wife to behave like a lady who knows her duty toward her gentlemanly husband (that she love and honor him) and has apparently assumed that her own perception of that duty commenced automatically when she became his wife. Despite his inability to understand the nature of his wife's needs or to supply them, however, Mr. Palliser does love his wife. He sometimes disapproves of what are for him her childish ways, and he does not hesitate to state his disapproval in words that "would have in them something of unintentional severity. . . ." In general, however, he approves of his wife, even

likes her; and he shows his attitude toward her by allowing her the "almost unlimited power of enjoying her money" and by interfering "but little in her way of life" (I, XXIV, 249). Neither of these displays of devotion communicates to Lady Glencora the kind of love she hungers for, but Mr. Palliser expresses his love as best he can, and eventually she is made to know, more directly, that he loves her.

Lady Glencora's perception of Burgo's interest in her is perhaps more accurate than the view she takes of her husband's interest. She knows that Burgo loves her and the reader is reassured, by professions of love from himself, that she is right in counting on his love. She also knows, of course, of his deserved reputation as a wastrel and profligate; and she knows that he is interested in her money, that he counts as much on that as she counts on his love. Despite her knowledge of him and his motives, however, Lady Glencora feels that Burgo offers her a chance to love and thus a motive for living. But just as she minimizes the extent of her husband's feelings for her, so does Lady Glencora exaggerate the importance she plays in Burgo's life. The same indifference to social codes that makes it possible for him to tempt her with running away with him also makes it possible for him to be indifferent to Lady Glencora herself. Trollope describes him after his last interview with Lady Glen, when she has told him that she not only will not go away with him but that she will not see him again.

> For half an hour [afterward], or thereabout, something like true feeling was at work within his heart. . . . He comforted himself for a minute with the conviction that she loved him. . . . But among mortals there could, in truth, hardly be one with whom such consolation would go a shorter way . . . he turned back from Grosvenor Square, and went down to his club in St. James's Street, feeling that billiards and brandy-and-water might, for the present, be the best restorative. But, as he went back, he blamed himself very greatly in the matter of those banknotes which he had allowed Lady Monk to take from him. How had it come to pass that he had been such a dupe in her hands? When he entered his club in St. James's Street his mind had left Lady Glencora, and was hard at work considering how he might best contrive to get that spoil out of his aunt's possession. (II, LXVII, 283)

Lady Glencora's dilemma is not merely personal though; the choice she must make is not simply between her husband and Burgo Fitzgerald. She must choose, also, between what the men represent. Plantagenet Palliser stands for the social virtues, chief of which is the strong sense of duty which he feels to serve the society in which he lives, both by precept and example, by word and action. Burgo, on the other hand, represents the private pleasures, chief among which is love. For the attainment of his own pleasures, he is willing to turn to use any means that come to hand, not because he is brutal by nature but because he is indifferent, finally, to everything except satisfying his own selfish desires. What the two men have to offer, as far as Lady Glencora is concerned, is duty on the one hand and love on the other, the values of society vs. the desires of the individual, social virtues vs. private pleasures. By the time the choice is clearly before her, furthermore, Lady Glencora realizes that the sides of the argument carry almost identical weight. She wants the love

that she thinks Burgo offers her, but she is aware that he has strong liabilities as a person and that their life together would be difficult: "whatever chance she might have had to redeem [Burgo], had she married him honestly before all the world, there could be no such chance if she went to him as his mistress. . . . Burgo Fitzgerald would not be influenced for good by such a woman as she would then be" (II, LVIII, 182). She also realizes that in leaving her husband she must hurt him whom she has gradually come to respect and value for exactly those qualities which make him dull and unexciting to her personally; though she also accepts the fact that remaining with him will entail the permanent misery of a loveless marriage.

After Lady Monk's party, at which she has encountered and again been charmed by Burgo, she faces her dilemma squarely in the privacy of her room.

> Should she choose to leave her husband, they could not prevent her leaving him. It was of her husband and of Burgo that she was thinking,--weighing them one against the other, and connecting her own existence with theirs, not as expecting joy or the comfort of love from either of them, but an assured conviction that on either side there must be misery for her. . . . Whatever way she might go, she was lost. (II, LVIII, 181-82)

Stripped of the ambiguities that beset Trollope's presentation in The Noble Jilt and the other major triangle of Can You Forgive Her?, the issues at stake in the dilemma of Lady Glencora are important and clear and dramatic. Both she and the reader know exactly what her choices are and what those choices, as represented by the two men who want her, stand for in a broader social and moral context. Furthermore,

since the choices are nearly of equal value, the full burden of responsibility for making her final choice rests squarely on Lady Glencora. Trollope has finally reached that dramatic moment when his heroine must make her choice, a choice made possible by the clarity with which the alternatives are perceived and difficult by the realization that neither alternative will provide happiness.

### 3. The Choice

Lady Glencora, of course, does make the "right" moral choice as far as her society is concerned; but her choice is "right" for more important reasons than its coincidence with social sanction. Trollope does not have Lady Glencora remain with her husband simply because she is married to him and married women remain with their husbands. On the contrary, Trollope insists that Lady Glencora is not motivated in her decision by "that shame before all the world that must be hers for ever, should she break her vows and consent to live with a man who was not her husband. . . ." Of that, "she hardly thought at all" (II, LVIII, 181). She upholds, by her decision and actions, the canons of Victorian morality, as Alice Vavasor does in the same novel. But her decision to remain with her husband is based, not on a simple acceptance of the Victorian code that requires wives to remain with their husbands, but by developments in her own perception of her husband's character, her relationship to him, the nature of responsibility, and her own particular duty.

Lady Glencora makes her choice during and after a great party at Lady Monk's. Since the issues are clearly before her and the reader, the dilemma and the process of deciding can, of course, be handled dramatically and it is significant, in contrasting these crucial scenes in the life of Lady Glencora to the crucial scenes in the lives of Margaret de Wynter and Alice Vavasor, to note how unnecessary authorial comment has become to forwarding the dramatic movement of the scenes. With the issues clarified finally, with the stakes apparent to everyone, the scenes can speak for themselves; and when Trollope has completed them, Lady Glencora's decision has been reached, the crisis ended.

It is at Lady Monk's great party that Plantagenet Palliser and Burgo Fitzgerald confront each other and present themselves to Lady Glencora's vision. Left alone by her husband's early departure, she accepts Burgo's invitation to dance, and her decision to do so not only once but several times creates a stir approaching the dimensions of scandal. Warned that he had better return to Lady Monk's for his wife, Mr. Palliser comes back to the party. As he enters the room where his wife sits with Burgo, he shows "neither anger nor dismay in his face, nor was there any untoward hurry in his movement" (II, L, 107). By his attitude toward his wife, by his willingness to leave her again alone with Burgo while he goes himself for her scarf, and by his words to her the next morning over their breakfast, Mr. Palliser offers his wife all he has to offer her: a code of honor that marks the

behavior of the gentleman, a code that reflects, for all its stiffness and apparent insensitivity, a greater concern for her welfare than do the polished manners of Burgo Fitzgerald. He reveals himself to his wife at the crucial moment when her decision with regard to Burgo must be made. The process of seeing her husband and the act of rejecting Burgo are simultaneously presented: they are, in fact, the same. She sees "a touch of chivalry" (II, L, 108) in her husband's courteous bearing toward her.

The next morning she is to see even more. She is prepared not to see him. She mocks him, declaring that she is ready for her "scolding," insisting that she will be "very serious" about her misbehavior at Lady Monk's" (II, LVIII, 185). Mr. Palliser is discomfitted by her attitude, awkward; he still does not know how to deal with his wife, he still fails to understand her needs and motives. But if he fails as a husband, it may be said that he succeeds as a man, that it is by his manliness--by the kind of masculinity that only knows how to express itself by being direct and honest--that he wins Lady Glencora to respect him and his needs more than she loves Burgo.

He begins his conquest by dealing plainly with his wife, by insisting that they deal honestly with each other. Lady Glencora is herself too honest not to appreciate plain dealing in others. He forces her to admit that he has not suspected her, that he has, in fact, always shown the fullest confidence in her. The honesty of her husband, consonant with

a gentleman's code of honor, coupled with his confidence in her, make Lady Glencora uncomfortable, however, for she must admit to herself her own deceit:

> She knew that she had in truth done that of which he had declared that he had never suspected her. She had listened to words of love from her former lover. . . She had been false to her husband; and as her husband spoke of his confidence in her, her own spirit rebelled against the deceit she herself was practising. "I know that I have never made you happy," she said. "I know that I never can make you happy." (II, LVIII, 188)

She goes on to make her full confession: that she does not love her husband, that she does love Burgo, that she wishes to leave her husband so that he may marry someone who will be able to provide him with the heir he desires. By her confession, however, she puts in her husband's hands the opportunity to forgive. And Plantagenet Palliser has the strength to forgive his wife and she has the strength to accept his forgiveness. He is still dull, still awkward, still not the kind of man who is ever likely to satisfy emotionally a woman like Lady Glencora. Yet he wins her, not only by refusing to reprimand her, but by admitting his own failings and by having the bravery to admit his love for her despite her own confession that she loves Burgo Fitzgerald. Perhaps the final factor, however, is his admission of need, of human vulnerability--that behind the public man, behind the gentleman, there stands another man, as vulnerable in his affections as she is in hers.

> Softly, slowly, very gradually, as though he were afraid of what he was doing, he put his arm round her waist. "You are wrong in one thing," he said. "I do

> love you. . . . If you mean that I am not apt at telling you so, it is true, I know. My mind is running on other things. . . . But I do love you. If you cannot love me, it is a great misfortune to us both. But we need not therefore be disgraced. As for that other thing of which you spoke,--of our having, as yet, no child"--and in saying this he pressed her somewhat closer with his arm--"you allow yourself to think too much of it;--much more of it than I do. I have made no complaints on that head, even within my own breast. . . . Of course I have been anxious, and have, perhaps, shown my anxiety by the struggle I have made to hide it. I have never told you what is false, Glencora. . . . I would rather have you for my wife, childless,--if you will try to love me,--than any other woman, though another might give me an heir. Will you try to love me?"
>
> She was silent. At this moment, after the confession that she had made, she could not bring herself to say that she would even try. Had she said so, she would have seemed to have accepted his forgiveness too easily. (II, LVIII, 190)

We realize later, when Lady Glencora tells Alice Vavasor that she is to be taken to the Continent by her husband on an extended trip, that she has accepted his forgiveness and, in doing so, that the affair with Burgo is ended. Lady Glencora has made her choice. What was originally a marriage through coercion is to remain a marriage through the resolve of the lady herself. And having made up her mind, Lady Glencora never wavers again. This does not mean that her love for Burgo is ended; we are, in fact, to see later evidence in the novel that she continues to love him; and in the subsequent **Parliamentary** novels, there is to be further evidence that she is never able to love Plantagenet Palliser as she would have wished to love a husband. What it does mean is that she has resolved not to act on her love, that she has chosen duty to her husband instead of love for Burgo.

## 4. Freedom and Responsibility

The history of Lady Glencora is Trollope's realization of the story he has been trying to tell since first he introduced it in The Noble Jilt. In moving from Margaret de Wynter to Alice Vavasor to Lady Glencora, some of the characteristics of his heroine and her situation have been maintained. But there has also been a gradual transformation of his heroine, and her story, as the issues involved in the romantic conflict grow clearer and as Trollope grew increasingly aware of how those issues best aligned themselves into antithetical groupings in dramatic conflict with each other.

With Margaret de Wynter, love and money and prudence were all on one side of the scale; balanced against them was Margaret's romantic desire to play a larger part in the world's affairs than her role as Count Upsel's wife would have afforded her. But Margaret's decision in favor of Mark Steinmark is not only unconvincing because it goes against what she professes to be her own emotional inclinations but because it is a decision based on blindness and ignorance; blindness in that she refuses to see that she is not free, from a material, financial, point of view, to choose as she will; and ignorance because she refuses to see or to admit the nature of her attraction for Mark Steinmark, because she insists steadfastly, to the end of the play, that she really loves Count Upsel and because she never deigns to notice or admit the importance of the Count's wealth.

In presenting Alice Vavasor, Trollope achieved a greater simplification and clarification of the issues and strengthens the position of his heroine so that she is free to choose by virtue of her own independent means. With Alice, the ethical, or choosing factor is freed so that it can operate according to her will. Furthermore, the importance of money is openly admitted by everyone involved in or with the romantic triangle. The issue of love, or passion, or personal desire, however, is still unsatisfactorily handled because Alice insists, as Margaret did, that she loves the man she rejects. Her decision against John Grey is, consequently, unconvincing.

With Lady Glencora, finally, the issues are perceived and admitted and pitted against each other. Prudence and love no longer stand on the same side of the scale. Instead, they are clearly separated. On the one hand, there is prudence: Lady Glencora's duty toward a marriage which is a marriage, as far as she is concerned, in name only, but which is the result of weighty social sanction and which, according to even weightier moral sanctions, must be maintained. On the other hand there is love: her desire to fulfill the thwarted longings of an emotional attachment for a man who is not her husband. Money is not on the scales before Lady Glen at all, though the issue of money is fully admitted and dealt with. Money is seen as the very heart of the matter. It is the cause of the unhappy marriage in which Lady Glencora finds herself and, even more importantly, it has served as a dehumanizing force in a society

which values money more than the individual possessor of it, wealth more than freedom.

But if money values have insidiously corrupted the moral standards of the society in which Lady Glencora moves, her own wealth frees her to become a moral agent: she is free to choose because she has the means to make good the decisions she takes. She is not willing to exercise the freedom her money gives her until she realizes the sacrifice that has been made of her own happiness by those who denied her either the right or the power to decide in the matter of her marriage. But once she has seen the nature of her marriage, in its basis and in its outcome, she throws off the counsel of others--those whose counsel forced her marriage to Mr. Palliser--and insists on acting without advice.

Lady Glencora's freedom, however, is not exclusively derived from her money, and it is in this that she is a significant advance over Alice Vavasor. Lady Glencora is free in a way that Alice never is. She is freed by a clear perception of herself--of her own value, of the value the world assigns her; by a clear perception of her own situation; by a full understanding of the dilemma in which she finds herself and the alternatives available to her, given that situation. She also fully understands the two men who require different things of her and she comes, eventually, to value each fully for what he is and for what he has to offer, just as she honestly admits the shortcomings of each and the frustrations that living with either of them entails. She achieves, in other words, that

honesty and clarity of consciousness that admits the inevitability of incompleteness and suffering because choice is necessary and because the act of choosing is also the act of rejecting, having one thing at the expense of another. Unlike Alice, and even more unlike Margaret, Lady Glencora sees her situation and her motives and her choices with agonizing clarity; and hence, for her, again unlike her predecessors, whatever choices she makes will be the source to her of anguish. The repelling and attracting forces are exactly balanced for her, and they remain balanced. No discovery of villainy comes to her aid; nor can she return to "love" when she also returns to a sense of her "duty." She must choose between them, and in the act of choosing she becomes a moral agent, going beyond the benefits of independence to accept the awful burden of freedom and responsibility.

## CHAPTER IV: IMPLICATIONS

### 1. Introduction

We have examined the metamorphosis of a particular set of three characters as their story is told by Trollope, first in The Noble Jilt and then within the same novel, Can You Forgive Her? That transformation, we have suggested, was also a gradual improvement, a clarification, the result of Trollope's increasing ability to understand and represent his heroine's dilemma by means of her character and her actions; the alternatives available to her, as objectified in her two suitors; and the dramatic possibilities afforded by her situation. Trollope's success in improving and clarifying the story of his heroine also depended on his gradually coming to grips with more general problems and issues than the personal problems faced by his heroine. He invested her story, in other words, with larger dimensions than it initially had; it takes on substance, psychologically, dramatically, socially, and morally. What is a tenuous connection between Margaret de Wynter's history and the political revolution of her country becomes a substantial relation when the personal crisis of Lady Glencora reflects and symbolizes the crisis of a whole society. Lady Glencora's dilemma is not that of one woman; it is also Trollope's dilemma and, as he saw it, the dilemma of his times. Lady Glencora's solution to that dilemma, furthermore--the necessary choice she

must make in order to end it--, has implications beyond the simple solution of her personal problems.

We do not wish to content ourselves, however, only with the dilemma and the choice of the one heroine we have focused our attention on. Can You Forgive Her? is only one of Trollope's forty-seven novels; Lady Glencora only one of a multitude of his heroines. If the concerns of Can You Forgive Her?, particularly those of Lady Glencora, were unique, there would be little point in pleading special consideration for them. They are not unique, however. Lady Glencora's dilemma is perhaps the central dilemma of Trollope's novels: should one live according to the lights of the old order, an order dominated by gentlemen and the principles by which they lived; or should one, recognizing that the world has changed, transfer one's allegiance to other men who represent a new order and who live by values different from the principles espoused by gentlemen? Lady Glencora is not only the pivotal lady of the triangle in which she figures; she is a key figure in Trollope's works because she faces the crucial dilemma squarely and also suggests, I think, Trollope's maturest answer to it.

We have already indicated Lady Glencora's answer. Before analyzing the full significance of her decision, however, it will add weight to her decision to pause and examine the lines of development leading up to it from Trollope's other novels.

## 2. The Old Order

The old order, the order of gentlemen, is perhaps best represented by the world of Barchester and Mr. Harding, first portrayed in The Warden. The opening chapter of that novel provides a vision of a way of life and of a kind of man which are, despite the weaknesses of both, a standard for excellence against which later ways of life and other generations of men are to be measured. Trollope never loses sight of that vision of rural quiet, of pastoral repose. Barchester is, of course, a town and, in its region, a fairly important town. But it is a town "more remarkable for the beauty of its cathedral and the antiquity of its monuments, than for any commercial prosperity . . ."[1] The almshouse, where Mr. Harding resides, is, further, on the edge of town: it stands picturesquely on the banks of a little river, "by a pretty one-arched bridge . . ." Its lawns are "always trim and cared for . . ."[2] The almshouse represents the ancient connection between wealth and benevolence, between privilege and responsibility, a connection perpetuated by Mr. Harding's paternalistic care of the twelve old pensioners.

Presiding over the almshouse, Mr. Harding, the twelve old men, and the faithful everywhere in Barsetshire is the Bishop of Barchester, who, like Mr. Harding, is a man benevolent

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[1]Anthony Trollope, The Warden ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 1.

[2]Trollope, The Warden, p. 7.

in his ways. He is a quiet man who performs his duties without ostentation, a man of culture, a man with a modest sense of his own person and role.

> The bishop, though he had never been an active man, was one whose qualities had rendered him dear to all who knew him . . . he was a bland and a kind old man, opposed by every feeling to authoritative demonstrations and episcopal ostentation. . . . The bishop knew how to entertain the clergy of his diocese, to talk easy small talk with the rectors' wives, and put curates at their ease . . .

It was only natural that he and Mr. Harding should have understood each other thoroughly. "The bishop and Mr. Harding loved each other warmly . . . they were all in all to each other."[3]

Mr. Harding and the old Bishop of Barchester are not, of course, interesting to Trollope because they are religious leaders. He is interested in them because they are representative of a whole class of men who were traditionally associated not only with the nation's religious leadership but with its political, social, and moral leadership as well. That class of men--the nation's gentlemen--stood at the top of a hierarchical system of government and society in which privilege was exchanged for services, in which the most privileged were expected to render the greatest services.

Mr. Harding and the old bishop together represent the best of the old order--that which is humane, generous, cultivated, civilized; a world of violincellos and old wines. But they are subject to the attack of others who, like John Bold, remind the world that while Mr. Harding's salary (his privileges)

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[3]Trollope, The Warden, p. 37.

have increased, society at large (the twelve old men of the almshouse) receives proportionately less from the existing arrangement than in the past. John Bold claims that the system is outmoded and unjust; and Mr. Harding, on reflection, is forced to agree.

Furthermore, Mr. Harding and the old bishop are generally inept. Mr. Harding is, in matters concerning money, "never quite at ease," which means that he is in debt and, as a debtor, he has put himself into the hands of his creditor who happens to be his own son-in-law, "the man of whom alone Mr. Harding stood in awe . . . " His son-in-law, Archdeacon Grantley, has, we are quietly told, "assumed the arrangement of [Mr. Harding's] pecuniary affairs."[4]

The son-in-law of Mr. Harding is also the son of the old bishop. And just as Archdeacon Grantley has "assumed the arrangement" of his father-in-law's monetary affairs, so has he appropriated to himself some, if not most, of the powers which his father, as bishop, wields, or should wield. Dr. Grantley is, by his father's defection, "the working man of the diocese"; because the bishop himself was "opposed by every feeling to authoritative demonstrations and episcopal ostentation," the way is opened for his more ambitious son, who has no such compunctions as his father, "to do that which [the bishop] could not well do when he was younger, and which he could not have done at all now that he was over seventy." The

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[4]Trollope, The Warden, pp. 6-9.

bishop is good at entertainment and conversation; "but it required the strong hand of the archdeacon to deal with such as were refractory either in their doctrines or their lives."[5]

If the old order, represented by old men, is weakened by those within it who turn away from the unpleasant duties that attach to their positions of responsibility, they open the door for other, less scrupulous, men to acquire their power as they exercise their responsibility. This is not to say that Archdeacon Grantley is a sinister character. He belongs to the same order that Mr. Harding and the old bishop belong to, by professional standing; but he belongs to another generation. He has ambition and energy, lacking in both his father and in his father-in-law; but he does not have the saving graces that make the old men's weaknesses forgiveable and that makes them, finally, worthy of their positions: he lacks their warmth, their sociability, their ability to understand and sympathize with the troubles and afflictions of others, their leisurely good-will, their devotion to the arts, to refinements of all kinds. He has, in fact, assimilated at least some of the values of another class of men who now threaten the old order. Archdeacon Grantley has a way with money and a sharp eye to power. He is ambitious. As such, he is unlike his predecessors of the old guard and like his opponents, who now emerge on all sides.

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[5]Trollope, The Warden, p. 37.

## 3. The New Order

Just who, or what, the enemy from without is, Trollope is slow to determine. In The Warden, it is John Bold and his undiscriminating zeal for reform. It is Tom Towers and his newspaper, The Jupiter; it is Dr. Anticant (Carlyle) and his pessimistic sermons, and Mr. Sentiment and his emotional novels (Dickens). All these are ready and willing to exploit the abuses of others for their own purposes. They have in common a need for victims in order to display their own virtues, and their victim is Mr. Harding.

As novel follows novel, however, the enemy without becomes increasingly identified as a new order of men whose values are diametrically opposed to those of the old order. Gentlemen of old, though frequently connected with wealth, were men of principle and taste. Their wealth was inherited; and it must be admitted that there was a clear distinction in Trollope's mind between inherited wealth and new money. Inherited wealth is not debasing; it is used harmlessly to the end of one's own comfort or beneficially to the end of the comfort or well-being of others. Men of the new order, however, are concerned with the making of money, an occupation full of dangers in Trollope's mind. It is one of his favorite maxims that no one may touch pitch without being defiled by it; and for Trollope new money is pitch and those who seek it are constantly in danger of defilement. The new order of men are concerned with making money for their own selfish ends, buying

with it whatever is for sale. To Trollope's dismay, a great many unexpected things were up for sale: social eminence, political leadership, moral sanction.

Yet however defiled, the monied also become powerful, and as money is concentrated increasingly in the hands of the vulgar, the unprincipled, the unrefined, society at large suffers. Because with the shift in power society admits, unofficially and covertly, of course, that money is, after all, the basis of power and prestige. Whereas society at large benefits from the hypocrisy that separates the fruits of power from the basis of it, it suffers when the hypocrisy is removed, when money, instead of taste, culture, and principle, becomes the admitted motive of man's conduct. When money becomes man's chief passion, as it seems to do when society is in a state of flux, society and the individual are cheapened, defiled.

Dickens was saying much the same thing at about the same time. Can You Forgive Her? was published in monthly parts, beginning in January, 1864. Our Mutual Friend, also issued in monthly numbers, began appearing the following May. It proved to be Dickens' last novel and his most violent attack on the new world of the unprincipled nouveau riche. Edgar Johnson calls it "the darkest and bitterest" of his novels. "Our Mutual Friend is The Waste Land of Dickens's works."[6] At the heart of the novel is "misery-making money,"[7] so-called because it

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[6]Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), II, 1043.

[7]Charles Dickens, Our Mutual Friend ("The New Oxford Illustrated Dickens"; London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 379.

engenders greed in its acquiring and suffering in the lives of those who inherit it. From the high and mighty Podsnaps and their somewhat less affluent associates, the Veneerings, to the social depths, characterized by Rogue Riderhood and his likes, society's chief preoccupation has become money, its chief characteristic, greed. Mr. Johnson suggests that Mr. Podsnap best illustrates Dickens' point:

> [He is] the smug and deliberate complacence, comfortable in its own ease, that refuses to be told of any shortcomings in society. . . . He is the incarnate materialism of monetary barbarism that masquerades as civilization. Podsnappery is the dominant attitude of respectable society: a vast, vulgar, and meretricious idolatry . . .[8]

Dickens suggests that there is an alternative to the values of Podsnappery, an alternative best exemplified by Lizzie Hexam, who is unselfish, loving, loyal, devoted. She succeeds, though poor and without social standing, in converting Eugene Wrayburn, a member of the Veneering set at the beginning of the novel, to a better way of life. Despite the happy ending, however, and despite Dickens' final ambivalence toward money, he succeeds in demonstrating "the money ethic of an acquisitive society crippling human nature and blighting the flowering of humane values."[9]

If Trollope never saw the new order with quite as much bitterness as Dickens did--probably because he consistently refused to see things in the black-and-white terms of Dickens--he also entered a scathing indictment against that order and its

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[8]Johnson, II, 1028.

[9]Johnson, II, 1034.

values, though not until later, with The Eustace Diamonds (1871) and even more scathingly with The Way We Live Now (1874). Trollope's enemy is the same as Dickens': men and women of no conscience, ruthless in their attempts to gain money and in using money, once acquired, to gain position and power in society. Lizzie Eustace and Augustus Melmotte represent the female and the male counterparts of the same thing. Lizzie, like Lady Mason in Orley Farm, has married a man much above her in rank for his money. Unlike Lady Mason, however, Lizzie's contact with "better things" has no salutary effect on her. Her greed grows by what it feeds on. Her husband's death (which had something to do with his utter disillusionment in discovering the kind of woman he has married) leaves her well off; but not so well off as Lizzie thinks her due. She therefore refuses to return the Eustace diamonds, family heirlooms, to the estate, claiming that her husband gave them to her. The diamonds function, in fact, much as the misery-making inheritance functions in Our Mutual Friend. They become the object of a greedy combat between the Eustace family and Lizzie: They are stolen, hidden, transported under lock and key, the subject of street haggles and angry litigation.

The Way We Live Now is even grimmer. Lizzie Eustace is an insignificant adventuress when compared to Augustus Melmotte, whose unscrupulous talents at speculation and fraudulent fund-raising have brought him an enormous fortune--or the appearance of one. But where Lizzie was fought by the Eustace family--by the old guard in general--, Augustus Melmotte is

almost universally welcomed into society. His success signals the capitulation of society to the new values. Society is now willing to court a man like Melmotte, eager to award him its highest attentions, simply because he has a reputation for enormous wealth. It exposes its own degradation by electing him to Parliament, as the society depicted in Our Mutual Friend was willing to be represented in that same body by Mr. Veneering. Melmotte is eventually exposed and ruined. But he is still an impressively powerful figure who has the strength to pull down in the general ruin of his own fortunes whatever vestiges of self respect the upper echelons of society still maintained.

### 4. No Man's Land

Whether Trollope's old order ever existed at all; or whether, like Plato's republic, it was simply an ideal that never existed in the past and could not be realized in the future, is beside the point. It existed in Trollope's mind and it persists throughout his works as a measure of the worth of individuals and the values of society.

At no time, however, did Trollope present the old order in isolation. It is always, in his novels, in contact with the new order, if not actually under attack from that quarter. In other words, the two orders overlap. It is typical of Trollope that he always steadfastly refused to see things in terms of opposing camps. It is, in fact, his concentration on the no-man's land of social flux and moral conflict--Trollope's special

province--that most clearly distinguishes his view of society from Dickens'. Dickens, despite his excellences, was, to the end, socially sentimental. The one character of Our Mutual Friend whose goodness is always obvious and inviolate is Lizzie Hexam; and she is, in accord with Dickens' romantic view of the poor, from the lowest class of society. As Trollope himself observes of Dickens (speaking of Mr. Sentiment), in The Warden, "his good poor people are so very good; his hard rich people so very hard; and the genuinely honest so very honest."[10] His own views are stated in another criticism voiced in The Warden, this time against Dr. Pessimist Anticant, usually recognized as Carlyle. "'Tis a pity that he should not have recognized the fact, that in this world no good is unalloyed, and that there is but little evil that has not in it some seed of what is goodly."[11]

What is true for Trollope morally is also true socially. Just as the good people cannot conveniently be separated from the bad, so those people whom one would say belonged to the old order cannot easily be separated from those who belong to the new. The two exist side by side and the struggle between them is covert. The new order makes no claims against the values and principles of the old order, but against those who constitute the order itself. Nor for that matter is the old order attacked directly. Preferably, the newcomers would merge with the old, marry titles and estates. In their attempt to infiltrate and merge with the old order, they are aided by the

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[10]Trollope, The Warden, p. 206.

[11]Trollope, The Warden, p. 194.

divisions within the old order itself. The upper echelons of society are divided into two categories: there are those who have retained their wealth and those who have not. Among the former are the old Duke of Omnium and his heir, Plantagenet Palliser, among the nobility; and Mr. John Grey among the landed gentry. But there is a more unfortunate category: those who, while still claiming their right to eminence in society, have so squandered or lost their wealth that their only claim to distinction is their possession of the gentlemanly values and principles that distinguish them as a class. Of the two, it is the second that predominates in Trollope's novels. They are the de Courcy family, among others of the nobility; or the younger sons or cousins, like Burgo Fitzgerald, of titled families who have enough money to maintain the core of the family in aristocratic splendor, but have not enough to support extensions of that core. Among the gentry, they are represented by George Vavasor in Can You Forgive Her? and a host of others in other novels. Members of the second category constitute the chief danger to the old order. It is they who, in order to regain the material basis of their position in society, are willing to intermarry with those beneath them in rank, who have money, thereby undermining the hierarchical structure of society itself; or (far more important) who are willing to adopt the practices of the nouveau riche in the unscrupulous pursuit of wealth, thereby exposing themselves to the defilement of the pitch of money-making.

That part of society represented initially in Trollope's novels by the princes of the established Church, which traditionally, or ideally, combined financial largesse with certain fixed and civilized social, political, and moral values, was more prey to inner weakness than outer attack. Instead of standing to its principles, it began to succumb to the lure of money. In the old days, the "right" people did not have to be concerned with money. We have already seen in The Noble Jilt, where only the vulgar look at the financial standing of others, that Margaret de Wynter, despite her poverty, will not deign to consider Count Upsel's wealth when judging his suitability as a mate. It is also true that Mr. Harding and the old bishop are not concerned with money. It is taken for granted as necessary to the comforts of life and to the privilege of being open-handed with others. With the next generation, however, things change. Archdeacon Grantley has a sharp eye for property, and in the struggle for power between him and Mrs. Proudie, the new bishop's wife in Barchester Towers, and her protégé, Mr. Slope, the Archdeacon knows how to meet his opponents on their own terms, already something of a defeat for the old order.

Nowhere is the decline of the old order more sharply or more poignantly drawn than in Trollope's treatment of Griselda Grantley, the daughter of Archdeacon Grantley, granddaughter of old Mr. Harding. She is the old order gone wrong, Her only concern is with having and maintaining "position" in society. It has become her only function. With principles, with the old values, she has nothing to do. She renders

society no service in exchange for its regard. Her mother, Mr. Harding's daughter, has been concerned with a good marriage for her daughter and, in general, has wanted the good things of this world for her; but even the girl's mother finally realizes that her daughter is all surface, all face. There is nothing behind Griselda Grantley's mask, no justification for her eminent position in society.

In one of the great, understated scenes of The Last Chronicle of Barset, Griselda, just before her marriage to Lord Dumbello, goes to visit her home and in the course of that visit, she pays a call on her grandfather, old Mr. Harding. There is, during their encounter, no communication. Mr. Harding assumes that he and his grandchild speak the same language, share the same values, and so he talks to her, or at her. But the granddaughter speaks no language at all in the sense that she has nothing to say, nothing to communicate. She is exquisitely beautiful and whenever she enters a room, all eyes notice and dwell on her. But she is also a person of marmoreal coldness and silence. She says little words of greeting that are expected and acceptable. Otherwise, she has nothing to offer. Though a minor character always, she is nevertheless a fitting symbol of a corrupted society whose values are inimical to the values of the old order. She is expensive, cold, opportunistic, unprincipled, selfish. She is unable to communicate with the past, being without any appreciation of its values, and sees it, therefore, as valueless. Even Plantagenet Palliser is briefly taken in by her beauty: before

his marriage to Lady Glencora, he succumbs to her charms and almost commits the indiscretion of suggesting an elopement, despite her marriage to another man. He assumes, mistakenly, that Lady Dumbello, *née* Griselda Grantley, loves him. But she loves neither her husband nor Mr. Palliser. Loving only herself, she need concern herself only with her own desires; feeling no obligations to anyone else, she requires, and develops, no conscience. She is the moral vacuum at the heart of a corrupt society.

### 5. The End of Simplicity

Not only is Griselda Grantley, in her person, a fitting symbol of the old order gone wrong; the movement of her life from the rural land of Barchester to the urban world of London indicates a change of focus in Trollope's novels. Where Barchester was the center of his earlier preoccupations, London becomes central to later ones.

London is representative of the new world. In Barchester, land was the basis of wealth, a commodity as fixed, as solid, as permanent as the social hierarchy and moral premises built on it. In London, money, or a reputation for it, is the basis of a mobile society, a world of appearances, constantly shifting. As a result, social speculation becomes as important as financial speculation if, in fact, not simply an extension of it. It is a world of financial, social, and moral flux.

The world of London has impinged on the world of Barchester from the beginning of Trollope's writing career;

but in the golden land of Mr. Harding, the dangerous, hostile elements from the urban, financial east are either driven out, as in the case of Mr. Slope; or eventually triumphed over, as in Mr. Crawley's triumph over Mrs. Proudie.

Nevertheless, there are signs of social and moral collapse within the ranks of gentlemen, even within the Barchester novels; and usually it is money--or the show of it--that tempts the gentlemen of the old order to violate their principles and values. Dr. Thorne, in the novel that bears his name, is tempted to allow, medically speaking, the death of the man who stands between his beloved niece, Mary, and a considerable fortune, a fortune that would end all of her troubles; and Mark Robarts (Framley Parsonage) is almost destroyed when he forsakes his allegiance to the old order and its values, as represented in the novel by Lady Lufton, for the new world of false, monetary values, as represented by "the Chaldicote set." In general, however, in the Barchester series, gentlemen are saved in time; they do not permanently abandon their class and its values.

The end of the Barchester series is also the end of simplicity as an ideal operating in Trollope's novels, a simplicity associated with the stability of the old order and its clear-cut values. In the early novels, the gentlemen and gentlewomen who feel themselves securely a part of the old order are relatively simple. They perceive the world as a good, orderly place in which to live, they love their families, trust their neighbors, and believe in themselves and their

ability to choose rightly; they know their social and moral parts. It is the role of a woman to love her husband and family. The major choice of her life is that of a mate. Once that choice is made, she knows and performs her duty. The role of the man, though it also includes domestic responsibilities, is more extensive. His moral role, however, is to live by and to preserve those principles appropriate to gentlemen of rank and worth.

If the men of the Barchester novels were at least subject to the temptations of the new, crass order advancing from London, the women remained protected; if life were growing more complex, more unsavory, it was only at the fringes. The feminine center continued to hold. The early heroines, with the exception of Margaret de Wynter, an anomaly among Trollope's early women, are conceived simply. The darlings of contemporary readers and with some later critics, particularly Sadlier, were Mary Thorne, Lucy Robarts, Grace Crawley, and Lily Dale. Admirable as these girls may be, they are by nature simple and their qualities are consonant with their simplicity: they are plain-dealing, outspoken, straightforward. Trollope himself was to describe them best, though not referring to the particular girls just named, in The Eustace Diamonds:

> Within the bones and flesh of many of us, there is but one person,--a man or woman, with a preponderance either of good or evil, whose conduct in any emergency may be predicted with some assurance of accuracy by any one knowing the man or woman. Such persons are simple, single, and, perhaps, generally, safe. They walk along lines in accordance with certain fixed instincts or

> principles, and are to-day as they were yesterday, and will be to-morrow as they are to-day.[12]

They are not like those whom Trollope goes on, in the same passage, to describe as being "dual in character." They are not subject to those doubts and vexations which trouble Trollope's later heroines with questions of conscience. They know their own minds and what is right and wrong. They fall in love, usually, with some man whom, for reasons of their own, they consider admirable and worthy of their love. Once their affections are fixed, they remain so. There are no inner doubts to beset their steadfastness; and no amount of argument, no degree of opposition, can sway their purpose. Their ambition is to remain true to their loved one, to persevere in the face of obstacles and opposition, and to give their hands where their hearts are.

With time, however, even the highly protected feminine center of Barchester was no longer safe. It, too, had finally to face an unsettled and complex world. As a result of that confrontation, Trollope was forced, gradually, to abandon the ideal of simple, rural goodness that Barchester seems to have represented for him. Unlike Thackeray, however, Trollope was able not only to abandon his ideal woman, as first conceived, but even to criticize her. He was, in fact, able to transcend her with a more comprehensive idea of womanhood.

This is not say, of course, that the early heroine, as a type, is abandoned: the type goes on throughout Trollope's

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[12] Anthony Trollope, The Eustace Diamonds ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), I, 163.

novels. There is Mary Flood in Phineas Finn and Lucy Morris in The Eustace Diamonds, to mention only two from the later novels. But despite the continuation of the type, it is apparent that Trollope gradually lost interest in it and allowed more complex heroines to take the center of the stage. This is not to say, either, that his complex heroines belong any more exclusively to the later novels than that his simple heroines belong exclusively to the early ones: Madeline Neroni, in Barchester Towers, for instance, acts from complex motives. The shift is largely a shift in emphasis: whereas the feminine center of the early works tends to be dominated by simple women, more complicated women come to the fore in the later novels.

Trollope's full realization of what was wrong with the simple heroine came, perhaps, after he had already assigned her a secondary place in his novels. Violet Effingham, a late simple heroine (introduced in Phineas Finn) has something of the vivacity and sharpness that we associate with Lady Glencora. Disappointingly, however, she settles down into the role assigned the earlier heroines. Nevertheless, it is she who puts her finger on the trouble with herself and her predecessors. Violet, like Mary Thorne and other early heroines, has always known her own mind and heart. She has married the man she chose to love and continues to love him, surrounded by all the joys of domestic and connubial bliss. She is confronted in Phineas Redux, however, by the misery of her sister-in-law, Lady Laura, whose situation is as complicated and unhappy as

Lady Glencora's in Can You Forgive Her? Lady Laura, too, has married the wrong man. She is divided against herself, tormented between the recognized bonds of marriage and the love she feels for Phineas Finn, the man she loved even when she married another. She asks Violet if she is wrong to love Phineas, and Violet answers, speaking honestly from her own convictions, "If a woman, a married woman,--be oppressed by such a feeling, she should lay it down at the bottom of her heart, out of sight, never mentioning it, even to herself." To which Lady Laura replies, "You talk of the heart as though we could control it." And then Violet confesses the source of her strength, but also of her ultimate weakness. "The heart will follow the thoughts, and they may be controlled. I am not passionate, perhaps, as you are, and I think I can control my heart. But my fortune has been kind to me, and I have never been tempted."[13] Never to have been tempted makes of Violet Effingham, afterwards Lady Chiltern, a woman who is finally uninteresting. Good she may be; but after she has won through the difficulties of marrying the man she loves, she has really nothing left to say for herself. In fact, among Trollope's heroines, it is hard to think of one whose interest to the reader survives a happy marriage. Even Mme. Max Goesler loses something of her luster after she becomes Mrs. Phineas Finn.

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[13]Anthony Trollope, Phineas Redux ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1951), II, 99.

Just before Trollope reintroduced the complex heroine who first appears in The Noble Jilt, before he knew what to do with her, he pushed his simple heroine as far as he could. Lily Dale, who makes her first appearance in The Small House at Allington, the novel that immediately precedes Can You Forgive Her?, is normally and rightfully usually linked with other early heroines of the Barchester series: she is seen as another Mary Thorne or Lucy Robarts. And in her single-mindedness, her straightforwardness, her plain-dealing, her honesty and generosity, she is very much like her Barchester predecessors. But if, in character, she is like Mary Thorne and Lucy Robarts, she is, in the circumstances of her life, a radical departure from them and indicative of the growing complexity that Trollope required of himself in presenting both his characters and the society and circumstances through which they move. In the first place, Mary Thorne and Lucy Robarts are rewarded by Trollope for their simplicity, for having the right instincts and the right principles in choosing men worthy of their love. They not only get the men they love as husbands, despite obstacles and opposition, they are rewarded in other ways as well: Mary Thorne by a large inheritance and Lucy Robarts by winning the approbation of Lady Lufton, one of the fullest embodiments of the qualities that Trollope found both admirable and limited in the old order. The story of Lily Dale, however, is more complicated. Unlike her predecessors, she has two suitors. More important, however, despite the fact that one would have expected her to have the same

sound instincts that Mary Thorne and Lucy Robarts had, Lily Dale gives her heart to the wrong man, Crosbie, instead of to Johnny Eames. Having committed herself, she clings with the same kind of single-minded tenacity to her first love that characterized Mary Thorne. Despite her perseverance in that quality, however, Trollope himself later came, in his Autobiography, to see her as "a female prig."[14] Why she is any more priggish than Mary Thorne or Lucy Robarts or a score of other heroines who fit the general mould is hard to say, unless Trollope simply realized that the qualities of Mary Thorne and her like were interesting only within certain highly restricted limitations: the heroine must, in the first place, love the "right" man and she must eventually get her man. Should she choose the "wrong" man or should she find herself unable to marry the man of her choice, her continuing to cling tenaciously to her first love becomes merely tedious.

Lily Dale, Alice Vavasor, and Lady Glencora make an interesting threesome to consider together. Lily Dale, as we have been suggesting, belongs to the category of simple heroines that Trollope was originally to make central to his novels, but she is the early heroine pushed beyond her usefulness, placed in a situation that requires more of her than she has to give. She requires a protected, secure world in which perfidy does not confound the emotional instincts of young ladies. Lily Dale is presented with two possibilities: she

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[14] Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 178.

may either continue loyal to her first love, even though that love fails her, and remain single for her life; or she may accept the urgent proposals of Johnny Eames, whom all Lily's friends and relatives urge her to accept. In point of fact, however, Lily fails to recognize that there are alternatives available to her. She is the romantic heroine who, having once fallen in love, is without the subsequent ability to discover, as a Jane Austen heroine might, that she has made a mistake in her affections. Unable to admit a mistake, unable to recognize the presence of alternatives after her initial emotional commitment, she refuses, in effect, to choose. She is a simple heroine in a complex situation, a situation she is utterly unable to cope with except by withdrawal.

Alice Vavasor, however, introduced somewhat more than a year after Lily Dale, is not a simple heroine. She is aware both of the duality of her own motives and desires and of the presence of alternatives in the world around her. She thinks, furthermore, that she is in control of the complex situation in which she finds herself. But though she thinks she is free to choose, it turns out that she is not, because there are forces operating both within her and around her that she does not fully understand and which therefore have a control over her that she is not aware of. She thinks that she chooses to break with John Grey, and certainly her reasons for being dissatisfied with him as a prospective husband are her own and justifiable. But is it not Kate Vavasor who persuades Alice

to act on her dissatisfaction? And when Alice announces that she is done with love, that she has, in effect, chosen to do without a husband, is it not Kate again, this time aided by her brother, who persuades her to reconsider, to see the advantages of a marriage with George?

With Lady Glencora, finally, Trollope creates a character who not only finds herself in a complex situation but whose inner complexities parallel and match the complications she faces in the world around her. She moves, in other words, in a world--a world that is both interior and exterior--of alternatives. Unlike her predecessors, she is free to choose among the alternatives that present themselves. She has money enough to assert her own will, when she is ready to do so. And she has, unlike Alice Vavasor, a clear understanding of herself, her motives, her situation, her choices, an understanding that frees her from the kind of unperceived, and therefore uncontrolled, forces that Alice was subject to. Lady Glencora also realizes, again unlike her predecessors, that the alternatives between which she must choose are of almost equal value: their claims on her are antithetical and therefore the cause of conflict and chaos within her. She comes to realize, eventually, that the only way to bring order out of the chaos is to choose, for to Trollope choice is the ordering principle just as a willingness and an ability to stand by one's choices is the chief moral principle. Lady Glencora is his fullest embodiment of these concepts. She is the final working out of the complex heroine, a type first

introduced with Margaret de Wynter, a type appropriate to the new world in which she moves.

Lady Glencora's complexity is not, however, to be seen in terms of what we understand as psychological complexity. She is, in fact, not conceived psychologically at all. Trollope is not interested in the workings of the mind as such and consequently he does not present his characters from the inside. He sees Lady Glencora as he sees all his characters: as a cluster of personality traits that are given, nameable, defineable, clearly and easily recognized. A simple character, or person, is one whose cluster of character traits forms a harmonious whole; the complex character is one, on the contrary, whose personality is composed of elements that, though also easily named, are contradictory, at war with each other. Once we have the cluster of qualities by which we know Plantagenet Palliser of Lady Glencora, John Grey or Alice Vavasor, or anyone else, those qualities do not change. We know nothing more about the qualities of Lady Glencora, the inner aspects of her being, at the end of her life than we knew at the beginning of her career; but we do know her history. And it is in knowing her history, in knowing the series of actual events in which she participates actively, through which she moved, that we know Lady Glencora.

This may seem at first glance too obvious a point, or too unsophisticated a technique, to bear mentioning. But if we are to appreciate Trollope's successes, we must be prepared to allow him his operating premises, and to understand them, as he explained them in his Autobiography.

> There are, perhaps, but few of us who, after the lapse of ten years, will be found to have changed our chief characteristics. The selfish man will still be selfish, and the false man false. But our manner of showing or of hiding these characteristics will be changed,--as also our power of adding to or diminishing their intensity. It was my study that [the characters of the Parliamentary series], as they grew in years, should encounter the changes which come upon us all; and I think that I have succeeded. The Duchess of Omnium, when she is playing the part of Prime Minister's wife, is the same woman as that Lady Glencora who almost longs to go off with Burgo Fitzgerald, but yet knows that she will never do so; and the Prime Minister Duke, with his wounded pride and sore spirit, is he who, for his wife's sake, left power and place when they were first offered to him;--but they have undergone the changes which a life so stirring as theirs would naturally produce. To do all this thoroughly was in my heart from first to last . . .[15]

Trollope's technique assumes that people are what they appear to be to the outsider. If a man appears to be proud, he is proud; if his actions display a fixed purpose, he is stubborn; if he is interested in getting ahead in the world, he is ambitious. These are among the observable, the knowable qualities of men and women; how they came to have them, or what psychological traits or problems they either reflect or disguise, does not interest Trollope. What does interest him is pride faced with public disgrace, stubbornness opposed, ambition thwarted.

Coupled with the notion that people are what they seem to be is the related notion that external events are the important events of life since it is by them that people define and reveal themselves. His characters have little or no inner

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[15] Trollope, An Autobiography, pp. 183-84.

life except insofar as they reflect, as they do, on the activities and events which currently engage them.

These two notions, that people are what they seem to be and that our external, public lives are of more importance and interest than our inner lives, produce positive results for Trollope. The first one lends an atmosphere of immediacy to his novels. Characters seem literally to walk on stage and take an active part in the proceedings before us. They are created in the author's mind and presented complete, fully clothed at the outset in whatever qualities they happen to possess. The only thing they lack, on introduction, is a history; and that is what the novel provides. And it is in the history, rather than in the characters, that the development occurs.

The plot, the history, may be said to test the validity of the premises, i.e., the characters, on which it is built. It is, in a sense, the proving ground for each character. It makes concrete whatever has been asserted about the characters' strengths or weaknesses. How strong, in fact, they are; how vulnerable because of their weaknesses. Though Trollope's characters do not change, they become substantial, they become fully what they are through the stories that accrue to them.

Trollope's description of Plantagenet Palliser and Lady Glencora at the conclusion of Phineas Redux is instructive:

> The Duke, as all the world knows, is on the very eve of success with the decimal coinage. But his hair is becoming grey, and his back is becoming bent; and

> men say that he will never live as long as his uncle. But then he will have done a great thing,--and his uncle did only little things. Of the Duchess no word need be said. Nothing will ever change the Duchess.[16]

His characters are essentially the same first to last, some simple, some complex; but they become, like the Biblical Jacob, weighty with tales. They grow old in the sense that they have lived through and endured the things that life has brought them; but they are also what they were when first we met them, wiser because of their experiences, but carrying with them still the qualities, for good and evil, that they have always carried. Their development is, indeed, the story of their lives on the open stage of the world, the thing that proves their strengths and tempts their weaknesses; in short, the thing that makes them what they promised to be.

## 6. The Alternative to Chaos

Trollope considered Lady Glencora his finest female character: he ranked her with her husband, Mr. Palliser, and with Rev. Crawley, as his major accomplishments.[17] In doing so, he chose for his favorite heroine one totally unlike the early simple heroines. She belongs, instead, to that category first introduced in The Noble Jilt, though perhaps best described in The Eustace Diamonds in conjunction with Trollope's most accurate description of the simple heroine. In contrast to those who live "in accordance with certain fixed instincts or

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[16]Trollope, Phineas Redux, II, 360.

[17]Trollope, An Autobiography, p. 361.

principles," who are "simple, single, and . . . safe," there are also human beings who,

> though of necessity single in body, are dual in character;--in whose breasts not only is evil always fighting against good,--but to whom evil is sometimes horribly, hideously evil, but is sometimes also not hideous at all. . . . Such men,--or women,--may hardly, perhaps, debase themselves with the more vulgar vices. They will not be rogues, or thieves, or drunkards,--or, perhaps, liars; but ambition, luxury, self-indulgence, pride, and covetousness will get a hold of them, and in various moods will be to them virtues in lieu of vices.[18]

Margaret de Wynter is of this type. The gentlewoman, whose instincts are as sound as her principles, ought to fall in love with a gentleman worthy of receiving a lady's affection. This Margaret did when she fell in love with Count Upsel. But there is more to Margaret than her love for the Count. She is subject to that ambition, that penchant for self-indulgence, that pride which characterizes the "dual" character.

If Trollope failed with Margaret, it was not because he was hostile toward his heroine, but because he had not yet learned to understand or convey the basis for her inner dilemma in terms both dramatically effective and psychologically credible; or to provide her inner state with an external environment in which inner dilemmas are objectified into specific alternatives of social and moral significance between which she must choose. Her attitude toward the Count is never sufficiently justified, her motives neither clear nor altruistic enough, to convince the reader that she is, indeed, a "noble" figure.

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[18]Trollope, The Eustace Diamonds, I, 163-64.

With Alice Vavasor, however, Trollope manages to clarify his heroine if he does not succeed in making her sympathetic. As in The Noble Jilt, he is committed to two things: he must show his heroine wrong in her attitude toward her fiancé; but he must also make her attitude forgiveable. This can only be done if he can demonstrate that his heroine was in some measure justified in being dissatisfied with Mr. Grey, that her motives throughout have been well-intentioned if misdirected, and that eventually she has the wisdom to return to Mr. Grey. This Trollope does for Alice where he failed to do so for Margaret de Wynter. Nevertheless, Alice, like Margaret, fails to win the reader's sympathies. She is too cold to others to win sympathy for herself: she turns her back on the man she "loves" and a deaf ear to the sufferings of her friend, Lady Glencora.

Only with Lady Glencora, in fact, did Trollope succeed in mastering his complex heroine. She, finally, is a "dual" character faced with a real choice: her inner dilemma is clearly perceived and, at the same time, objectified within the social and moral environment in which she lives. Divided within herself along the line that divides the heart from the head, the emotions from the reason, personal, selfish desires from social and moral responsibilities, her choices are clear-cut: love or duty. The objectification of that choice is also apparent: she may remain with her husband or run off with Burgo Fitzgerald. The two sides of the dilemma, as presented by Trollope and as perceived by Lady Glencora, are justifiable: there is need on

the one hand, responsibility on the other. So nearly equal are the alternatives before her, in fact, that there is no way out of her dilemma--no thing, no one, to tip the scales for her--save to choose. Choosing itself, of course, does not make of Lady Glencora a moral agent, as Trollope would see it, though it is a necessary prerequisite to the exercise of the moral will. What is important is the realization that to choose is also to renounce, that the thing is chosen at the expense of its alternative. Most important of all is the admission to one's self that choosing is an act of commitment, and once a choice is made, it cannot be revoked. Only time can tell if one's choice has been correct, because it can only be measured finally by its long range effect in bringing satisfaction to the lives of those touched by the commitments imposed by the choice. Even if the effects of one's choice, however, are such that it becomes apparent a mistake has been made, there can be no dissolution of the ties which one has chosen to make. Our regrets about it do not undo the past; and if we have made decisions in the past, or taken steps that bind us to persons or courses of action which cause us permanent suffering, we are nonetheless responsible for what we have done. There is, in Trollope, both literally and figuratively, no divorce. Our lives are determined for us, not so much by psychological or environmental factors over which we have no control, but by our past which we <u>have</u> been instrumental in shaping for ourselves.

Lady Glencora chooses her husband over her lover, a decision criticized by the young Henry James.[19] But to have allowed her to run off with Burgo Fitzgerald would have required Trollope to give her up altogether, and that he did not want to do. He could perhaps have followed her into exile. But Lady Glencora in exile would have been Lady Glencora without a society; and Lady Glencora is not to be imagined without the environment that has made her possible. If society has sacrificed her to its own selfish ends, in one sense, it has also imposed on her certain demands, certain moral alternatives, by means of which she reaches her full stature. Lady Glencora achieves greater moral stature by remaining with her husband than she would have achieved had she fled with Burgo. Her choice to remain is, finally, the more difficult one since it requires her to give up, to renounce willingly, all ideas of ever enjoying the kind of love she craves; and knowing her as we do, we know that she is a woman too affectionate by nature ever to feel that the things of the world, which come to her in abundance as the wife of Plantagenet Palliser, are compensation enough for the kind of love she wanted and has had to do without. In The Prime Minister, the novel in which she makes her last appearance, Trollope says of her: "She was happy with her children, happy with her friends, in the enjoyment of perfect health, and capable of taking an exaggerated interest in anything

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[19][Henry James], "Can You Forgive Her?," The Nation, I (September 28, 1865), 409-410.

that might come uppermost for the moment."[20] But her husband is absent from the list of things that give her satisfaction. And later, in the same novel, in thinking of her husband, she declares to herself "that [he] was the truest nobleman in all England. She revered, admired, and almost loved him. She knew him to be infinitely better than herself. But she could hardly sympathize with him, and was quite sure that he did not sympathize with her."[21]

Until she makes her decision, Lady Glen is at odds with herself. The conflict she faces can only be solved by her own choice. She proves, however, that she is capable of choosing, knowing that choice also involves renunciation. The great and justifiable temptation to satisfy the most intense craving of her personality is put forever behind her. Having made up her mind, Lady Glencora never wavers again, demonstrating by her ability to stand by her decision that she has become a moral agent.

Unlike her predecessors, she has the courage to endure the consequences of her choosing. In doing so, she learns to control the division within herself, if not to overcome it, and to become one with herself and with the world. We know, finally, as we never knew with Margaret and Alice, where she is because her position in the world is one which she chooses and makes manifest, despite the suffering it costs her. She

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[20]Anthony Trollope, The Prime Minister ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1952), I, 50.

[21]Trollope, The Prime Minister, I, 168-69.

is both comprehensible and sympathetic because in the struggle with herself she succeeds, through her own decision, in imposing an order on the chaos which her division against herself implies and pays the price of omission which any achievement in ordering demands.

## 7. A Decision for Gentlemen

Lady Glencora represents one answer to the moral morass into which society had plunged. Her answer is the larger one, the one capable of more universal application and thus, ultimately, of greater interest to the modern reader. In her, furthermore, we have Trollope's most explicit statement of his ethical views: that in a chaotic world of alternatives, choice is the chief, if not in fact the only, means of ordering that chaos; and that morality consists chiefly in abiding by the choices one has deliberately, consciously made.

But there is another answer, the one provided by Mr. Palliser. It is the more limited answer since it requires special personal strengths and the continuation of a way of life, and its attendant values, which will perhaps not survive. It is the answer of adhering uncompromisingly to those fixed principles now rather gone of style as the old order of things crumbles before the new.

In 1876, Trollope's The Prime Minister was published, the novel that immediately succeeded The Way We Live Now. The two novels are therefore interesting to consider together. If the first book exposed the depths to which a lust for money

had led society, showing how all values except material ones had disappeared, The Prime Minister, in a sense, redressed the balance. Against the corrupt and corrupting figure of Augustus Melmotte, Trollope presents again Mr. Palliser, this time at the peak of his career, when he serves his country as its Prime Minister. Against the figure of financial speculation and investment, the opportunist who believes in no values save the value of money which he uses to buy for himself the power and position he wants, there stands the figure of Mr. Palliser who, having inherited from his uncle enormous wealth and married a fortune to match his own, is undefiled by the "pitch" of money-making, lives according to those fixed principles that gentlemen of his class, unsullied by the world, untempted as a result of the exigencies of misfortune, continue to live by; a man whose relationships to his wife, his family, his friends, and his country are still guided by those old, high-sounding words: duty, responsibility, integrity, honor--a gentleman's most essential vocabulary. He was, in Trollope's own words, "a perfect gentleman. If he be not, then am I unable to describe a gentleman."[22]

Mr. Palliser, however, like Mr. Harding of The Warden, and despite the great position and the esteem with which he is held, is weaker than his enemy. He, unlike his opponents, has scruples which make him vulnerable to the unscrupulous. Trollope's conception of him, typically, is a combination

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[22]Trollope, An Autobiography, p. 361.

of strengths and weaknesses, inextricably bound up together.

> He should have rank, and intellect, and parliamentary habits by which to bind him to the service of the country,--and he should also have unblemished, unextinguishable, inexhaustible love of country. That virtue I attribute to our Statesmen generally. They, who are without it, are, I think, mean indeed. This man should have it as the ruling principle of his life; and it should so rule him that all other things should be made to give way to it. But he should be scrupulous, and, as being scrupulous, weak.[23]

Despite his modesty and his diffidence, he is persuaded to accept the post of Prime Minister by his wife and his close friend, the old Duke of St. Bungay. But Mr. Palliser can only maintain both his position and his principles by isolating himself. Having to deal with the world requires, as far as he is concerned, hypocrisy, flattery, general dishonesty; and he will be gracious to none that he does not like and withhold his liking from any who do not live by his exacting standards. His wife is not so highly principled. Her husband's government is a coalition, and she sets out to do what she can, socially, to keep that coalition intact. But since her husband cannot be counted on to observe the compromises necessary to get along in the social world Lady Glencora creates around him, he must be allowed to withhold himself from society as much as he wishes, which is most of the time. Mr. Palliser eventually realizes that his wife has drawn into his circle those whom he considers "vulgar." He despises any compromises with his own standards and, as he begins actively

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[23]Trollope, An Autobiography, pp. 359-60.

to insist on his own way in matters both social and political, he becomes increasingly a figure of isolation, a figure for whom "principles," traditional values, are so important that they constitute his strength and his weakness. He forces his wife to end her social gambits for political support; he refuses to compromise on the issue of the Silverbridge election, though his indicating support of the Whig candidate is expected of him and would easily have gained for his government another supporter otherwise lost; he refuses to bestow the Garter on a nobleman who would have been politically useful, insisting, instead, that the honor be given to a man of scientific achievement but politically unimportant. Eventually, of course, Mr. Palliser's principles begin to drag him down. He is too obstinate to compromise, and gradually he drives from him his supporters and becomes the despair of his wife and closest associates. His defeat is inevitable. It seems, as the Duke of St. Bungay says to Lady Glencora, that Mr. Palliser is too honest to be practical.[24] Furthermore, "he was a man whom it was very difficult to advise. He did not like advice. He was so thin-skinned that any counsel offered to him took the form of criticism."[25] But though he is tortured by his own conscience and made weak by his own principles, still, once he has tasted power, he does not want to relinquish it. Perhaps this is because, as Trollope suggests at one point,

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[24]Trollope, The Prime Minister, I, 267.

[25]Trollope, The Prime Minister, II, 92.

given his sense of honor, any defeat would carry with it the onus of dishonor.[26]

Both Melmotte and Mr. Palliser are isolated men, the one because his hypocrisy requires that he allow none to approach closely enough to see through it, the other because his principles operate to hold him aloof from men less highly principled than he and to ward off those who are frightened by his uncompromising manner. Both men are defeated and, in a sense, both are defeated by the values they live by. Melmotte--opportunistic, hypocritical, motivated by a passion for money and an unscrupulous attitude toward the uses of money; insisting that all things in the world have their price, including position and prestige--, a symbol of his age, ends his own life when his valuelessness is finally exposed; but the society that has made him possible, that has flattered him, courted him, elevated him even to that ultimate Trollopian reward, a seat in Parliament, is hardly cleansed by the sacrifice Melmotte makes of himself. Plantagenet Palliser, on the other hand, though defeated in one sense, proved inadequate, finally, for the hard exigencies of political leadership, loses nothing of moral stature by his political defeat. There is nothing unseemly to be exposed; he is defeated by those weaknesses that he has always had, even when first we get closely acquainted with him in Can You Forgive Her?, and which are almost indistinguishable from his strengths and

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[26]Trollope, The Prime Minister, II, 303.

merits. He is indeed the embodiment of the old order, the greater Augustan age of the idealized past, a man of public virtues, without private vices, a man for whom the principles of the good life are fixed, a man who is unwilling to compromise.

We have suggested earlier that Mr. Palliser is connected to his predecessors, Count Upsel and John Grey, by certain personal and moral qualities. More important, however, is his separation from them because of different social attitudes. One of the things characteristic of the Count and Mr. Grey was their indifference to the world of affairs. Their attitude seemed to derive from two notions which, though simultaneously entertained, are really contradictory. The first is that to be involved with the social and political affairs of the world is to come into contact with pitch and risk defilement. The other assumption is that the world is running smoothly enough as it is--with the old social hierarchy firmly in place--and hence there is no need to exert one's efforts to defend or bolster that which is safe. The first attitude is most strongly represented, in the works closely considered here, by Mr. Grey; the second by Count Upsel: though there are elements of both assumptions in the attitudes of each. In either case, however, their attitude is oversimple. It assumes a world of blacks and whites, of apparent good and obvious evil. It assumes, further, that the white, good forces of the world are in command and that one need only

support the principles associated with one's class--if one is of the upper class--to have done one's duty to one's self and the world.

Such men are obviously the masculine counterparts of the simple, single-minded heroines whom we have already looked at. For them, too, there is no conflict, no inner complexity and no awareness of social and moral difficulties. This does not mean that these men do not know what suffering is, but that their suffering is not accompanied by any inner doubts. It is like the suffering of the early heroines; i.e., just as there are obstacles that beset the love of the heroine and threaten and delay the happy union with the loved one on which the heroine has set her heart, so are there obstacles that beset the good, simple, high-principled man. But their faith in themselves and their convictions remains a matter of course.

With time, however, with his men as with his women, Trollope was to realize that something more was required than an adherence to principles. Despite his loyalty to the old guard and its principles, Trollope was too realistic, socially and morally, not to see that the world does not arrange itself into the categories that make evil clearly distinguishable from good. Single-mindedness, obstinacy, inflexibility of any kind was perhaps not the value that it was first thought to be. Lily Dale is finally proclaimed a prig; and there is already something of the monomaniac in Josiah Crawley--the most dogged of all Trollope's men and the character whom he admired on an equal footing with Lady Glencora and Mr. Palliser--that we find

two years later dominating Louis Trevelyan in He Knew He Was Right. In fact, moral flexibility, which marked the weakness of Mark Robarts in Framley Parsonage, becomes, by the time of Phineas Finn, one of the expected--one must almost say one of the desirable--features of the Trollopian young man of the world.

Nevertheless, the man of uncompromisingly high principles is a type that survives in pre-eminent places in Trollope's novels; and it must be remembered that Trollope's favorite male characters are Mr. Crawley and Mr. Palliser, who exemplify the type most perfectly. It should also be kept in mind that the development of Mr. Palliser's character, which we wish to indicate here, is neither significantly contained nor completed in Can You Forgive Her? Lady Glencora has, by the end of that novel, reached her maturity. Her husband, however, does not, either as a man or as a symbol, reach his fullest development until much later in Trollope's writing career. Nevertheless, our present study would be left incomplete if we did not include the path of Mr. Palliser's further development, after Can You Forgive Her?

Toward the end of Thackeray's Pendennis (1848), Laura, the novel's heroine and the destined wife of the hero, offers her fiancé some advice concerning the advisability of a life in Parliament:

> "What is there in it so brilliant that you should be so eager for it? I would rather that you should stop at home, and write books--good books, kind books, with gentle kind thoughts, such as you have, dear Arthur, and such as might do people good to read. And

> if you do not win fame, what then? You own it is vanity, and you can live very happily without it. I must not pretend to advise; but I take you at your own word about the world; and as you own it is wicked, and that it tires you, ask you why you don't leave it?"
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> "And what would you have me do?" asked Arthur.
>
> "I would have you bring your wife to Fairoaks to live there, and study, and do good round about you. . . . If the world is a temptation, are we not told to pray that we may not be led into it?"[27]

For Trollope, Mr. Palliser, and Rev. Crawley, such advice would have sounded jejune, if not downright fatuous, though it seems to have satisfied Thackeray and his hero. It is on this very point, in fact, that Mr. Crawley and Mr. Palliser are significantly different from Count Upsel and John Grey. They are not tempted to withdraw from the world. They have, instead, both made themselves useful, in a real and practical sense, to the world in which they live. They continue to have a definite function, a role to fill.

It is difficult to compare Mr. Palliser and Mr. Crawley because they belong to different classes and entirely different circumstances. Mr. Palliser is a Duke and wealthy and eventually rises to what was for Trollope certainly the most distinguished position the world had to offer, that of Prime Minister of England. Mr. Crawley, on the other hand, is a poor country parson who never rises to high position. Despite the discrepancy in their positions, however, the two men share the same attitudes. They are committed to their professions which

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[27] William Makepeace Thackeray, The History of Pendennis ("The Oxford Thackeray," Vol. XII; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1908), pp. 864-65.

they see as instruments for the benefit and welfare of others, as extensions of that sense of noblesse oblige which they share.

The two men are also alike in the uncompromising nature of their characters. Each has principles in which he believes and follows uncompromisingly. Because the world in which they find themselves is not as high-minded as they, however, both are isolated men, and their suffering is made even more acute by the difficulty each has in communicating with others, even those closest to them: neither manages to include his wife in his life as she would want to be included. And when the world in which the two men move grows actively hostile, each grows even more isolated. Not only does the world grow corrupt, vulgar, it now attacks those who retain their uncompromising integrity.

The two men have another quality in common; and again, this quality separates them from Count Upsel and Mr. Grey: Rev. Crawley and Mr. Palliser both recognize their enemy and are willing to engage him. The enemy, of course, is not contained in one individual. It is, instead, a complex of forces. For Mr. Crawley--and here again we see Trollope dealing openly with the money issue--the blackest of all pitches is money. He will have none of it except what he has earned by his own labors and is horrified at the imputation and charge that he would have taken money as charity, let alone be guilty of pilfering. But the enemy is not just money for Mr. Crawley. It is also a society that is corrupted, and particularly at

its higher levels. It is a society that can believe a man of his known integrity to be guilty of theft; and not only believe the charge--and again most actively by persons who should know better--but prosecute him for it. There is the weakness of those who should have stood by him in his trial, particularly his bishop. But Bishop Proudie is little more than a pawn to his wife; and she, of course, is committed to Rev. Crawley's guilt.

Despite the almost universal belief in his guilt, Rev. Crawley fights back. He insists on his innocence, and just as he has refused the charity of others, he now refuses their sympathy, assuming that the sympathetic cater to him as a man both weak and guilty. He strikes out most effectively at those who are avowedly his enemies--most notably and successfully at Mrs. Proudie, his arch enemy--; but he also wards off any who doubt his integrity; and since he suspects everyone, finally, of such doubts, even his wife, he is, though a fighter, a lonely fighter. Only from a parishioner of his, whose circumstances in life are so low, even desperate, that his words cannot possibly imply any condescension, can Rev. Crawley accept any words at all, offered in generosity, to console him; and those words are merely, "It's dogged as does it."[28]

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[28]Anthony Trollope, The Last Chronicle of Barset ("The World's Classics"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1951), II, 222.

Mr. Palliser, too, recognizes his enemy and fights back. For him, the enemy is also complex. It is not money, though money is a source of danger in its uses. His wife's extravagances do not concern him as extravagances; he does not object to her lavish entertainments and house parties as long as he does not realize how far his wife has compromised him by inviting the "vulgar" to be their guests, people for whom he could not possibly have any regard, fortune seekers, social opportunists, political manipulators. Insofar as wealth has made it possible for Lady Glencora to be extravagant for the wrong people and insofar as the worship of money has drawn to the social baits offered by Lady Glencora people who ought to know their place better than to come to Gatherum Castle, it is an evil to be combatted.

Mr. Palliser's real enemy, however, is also a society that has abandoned the principles by which he himself lives and, in doing so, has also abandoned him and his kind. His principles are finally too rigid for even his closest associates, including his wife, and he becomes, as a good friend observes, so "thin-skinned" that he can stand no word of advice from anyone. And so he, too, becomes a figure of almost total isolation.

Despite their similarities, however, Trollope's handling of his two heroes is significantly different. For, after all, Mr. Crawley is rescued at the last minute: his innocence is established by the return of Eleanor Bold and all ends happily. Grace Crawley, whose marriage to Archdeacon Grantley's son has

been delayed because Grace will not marry until her father is exonerated, is now free to marry the man she loves, and the novel ends, at least superficially, on the golden note that one would hope for as a conclusion to the Barchester series. Nevertheless, one feels, too, that the series comes necessarily to an end because the land of Barchester can no longer be sustained. The simple heroine, as she appears here in the guise of Grace Crawley, does marry her loved one; but Lily Dale, who continues to play a large role, dooms herself to perpetual spinsterhood. Mr. Crawley himself has moments of self-doubt. He cannot remember the details about the origin of that troublesome check. And his self-doubt is perhaps symptomatic of Trollope's own doubts about the man he has chosen as his hero. Perhaps he is too unbending after all; perhaps his uncompromising attitude does border on monomania. Finally, in The Last Chronicle of Barset, Mr. Harding himself dies. The end of the golden age has come.

The fate of Mr. Palliser, however, is different. He, like his wife, is not to be rescued by a happy ending. For Lady Glencora, whatever choice she makes will cause suffering to herself and others. For her husband, Mr. Palliser, the world that made him possible, that lived by the values that he lives by and which he refuses to compromise, is gone. The world of Barchester, in which he made his first appearance, has vanished. Since no one has accused him of anything for which exoneration would be appropriate, none can be offered. The government he heads grows uncomfortable under his unbending

leadership and eventually, weakened by defection, it totters and falls. For the Prime Minister, there is no Eleanor Bold to bring good news that makes the world right again.

Not only does Mr. Palliser suffer political defeat; he also suffers personal humiliation and feelings of guilty involvement with the shoddy world of Ferdinand Lopez and the world of unscrupulous conniving and unprincipled scheming which he represents. Ironically, of course, and pitiably, since she is well-meaning, it is his wife, Lady Glencora, who makes possible his humiliation and his sense of guilt. It is she who surrounds her husband with people who represent for him the pitch of the new order, whose contact, made unavoidable by its proximity--invited to his homes by his own wife--defiles him. And it is his wife's involvement with Ferdinand Lopez, whom she misjudges, which involves him in a public scandal and, indirectly, with the suicide of Lopez. These events weigh heavily on his mind, oppress him with a deep sense of guilt.

Like Rev. Crawley, Mr. Palliser suffers from self-torture, self-doubts. He feels himself unworthy of his task, defiled by his contacts with lesser men, abandoned and betrayed by those who should have been most loyal. And inherent in his handling of the character are Trollope's own doubts about Plantagenet Palliser. Has the man of principle, the representative of the old order, become outmoded, along with the society that produced him? If values have shifted, if the old verities no longer hold, if the new generation believes in relative values of accommodation, compromise, assimilation instead of

the fixed principles of honor, integrity, duty, then what function has a man like Mr. Palliser still to serve?

The answer to that question is already implied in the relationship between Lady Glencora and her husband; and it is again apparent in the relationship between Mr. Palliser and his son, Silverbridge, after Lady Glencora's death, in The Duke's Children. Both Lady Glencora and Silverbridge defect from Mr. Palliser, she by entertaining the idea of eloping with Burgo Fitzgerald, Silverbridge by abandoning the Whig party for the Tory, despite the fact that the Pallisers have always been Whigs. The reason for the defection in each instance is similar. Neither Lady Glencora nor Silverbridge--nor, for that matter, Lady Mary, the Pallisers' daughter--are able to evaluate Mr. Palliser adequately at first. To Lady Glencora, in Can You Forgive Her?, Mr. Palliser is cold, unfeeling, without any love for her. For his children, the same is true. "A more loving father there was not in England, but nature had made him so undemonstrative that as yet they had hardly known his love."[29] Gradually, however, despite his stern talk about duty, they grow to appreciate the man behind the mask and, ironically, they appreciate him for the mask itself. They come, in other words, to appreciate and to value chiefly those old high-sounding words that tend to take a man outside himself and make him care as much for others as for

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[29] Anthony Trollope, The Duke's Children ("The Oxford Trollope: Crown Edition"; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 3.

himself. Despite the coldness, the reserve of Mr. Palliser and Rev. Crawley, they are men who care as passionately as Mr. Harding did for the world in which they live. Their principles, their adherence to those words which seem to stand for their stiffness, represent finally a kind of high courtesy toward themselves and toward the world, without which there can be no love, no happiness. Mr. Palliser describes his position most accurately, in speaking to his son, in The Duke's Children: "A man can never be happy unless his first objects are outside himself. Personal self-indulgence begets a sense of meanness which sticks to a man even when he has got beyond all hope of rescue."[30] The man of principle, Trollope seems finally to say, cares most profoundly for the world in that he is willing to sacrifice himself for others.

In a world of social and moral disintegration, a world marked by the conflict of values and class, complex characters will be engendered who will reflect the society that has produced them but who must also attempt to bring some order out of the chaos of their own inner conflicts and the conflicts around them, if their lives are to have any shape, any value at all. For those like Lady Glencora, who represent both chaos and the triumph of the individual over chaos through choosing and fidelity to one's choosing, the presence and example of Plantagenet Palliser is of prime importance. For he and his kind represent, in a world of chaos, the choice that those

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[30]Trollope, The Duke's Children, p. 207.

compelled to choose must make if civilization is to continue. Both Lady Glencora and Silverbridge eventually choose Plantagenet Palliser and what he stands for: she remains his wife, Silverbridge returns to the Whig fold. But without the presence of the man and the example he affords them, the choice he represents would not have been available to them.

Various critics have claimed for Trollope an awareness of the thin line that divides the civilized man from the savage, a claim that surely must surprise those who see Trollope as a spokesman for Victorian optimism and complacency, an entertaining but not a serious novelist. A. O. J. Cockshut, among the recent critics, has gone furthest in stressing this awareness, and in fact sees Trollope's writing career as a gradual progression, or decline, toward increasing pessimism. He suggests, as a general theme for Trollope's later novels, that "Things are not what they seem; the calm and ordinary mask violence and despair, and yet the calm and ordinary are not a sham."[31] Sadleir, earlier, had noticed the thin line that divides propriety from ruin in Trollope's novels.

> Always . . . the clash between conventional poise and secret catastrophe, the delicate adjustment of repute and disrepute which kept the life of upper-class England outwardly serene for all its inward hazard, appealed to Trollope's sophisticated and rather cynical mind.[32]

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[31] A. O. J. Cockshut, Anthony Trollope: A Critical Study (London: Collins, 1955), p. 148.

[32] Michael Sadleir, Trollope: A Commentary (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1947), p. 372.

It was, however, Escott's book on Trollope--the first full-length study of Trollope--that discussed Trollope's awareness of the dangers faced by his society most broadly and, at the same time, with specific reference to that novel which has been the central concern of this study. Can You Forgive Her?, Escott says, demonstrates Trollope's conviction, "that the thinnest possible partition divides human contact in the most civilized society from primitive savagery, and that the withdrawal of certain artificial restraints may mean a relapse into the reign of crime." Escott goes on to suggest that all the chief characters of the novel "are perpetually heading for the precipice that means ruin."[33]

It is certainly true that Trollope saw civilization as a precarious human accomplishment, the product of a society's willingness to live according to certain fixed moral and social codes. English society, as traditionally, or ideally, conceived, was under attack, and the closer he looked, the more clearly did he have to admit that it was collapsing, that it was in the process of being altogether destroyed. What concerned him most, however, was not the loss of social distinctions that he observed: he was even politically committed, as was Mr. Palliser, to the eventual lessening of social gaps, if not to the disappearance of class distinctions.[34] What concerned him was the loss of moral distinctions that seemed to be vanishing with

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[33]T. H. S. Escott, Anthony Trollope: His Work, Associates and Literary Originals (London: John Lane, 1913), pp. 208-209.

[34]Trollope, An Autobiography, p. 291 et seq.

those classes where they had been most at home, namely the aristocracy and the landed gentry. With the defeat of the old order, men of principle, men who could believe in the old moral code even as the old social order collapsed, would no longer be naturally engendered. They were inevitable only as long as a certain kind of society existed, firm and secure. But if the benefits of society--those advantages broadly associated with cultured, civilized life--were to survive social change, then men still had to choose to live by those principles that an earlier generation--if one's comprehension of it was correct--took for granted. The choice was finally between chaos and order. Chaos would happen by itself if nothing or no one opposed the money values of the corrupted new age. But order and all the things associated with it in Trollope's mind--generosity, humaneness, honesty, integrity, duty toward one's family and nation--would not happen automatically. It required effort, suffering, sacrifice; above all, it required that those who experienced within themselves the chaos of division and conflict be willing to make the difficult choice of living according to principles that require self-denial rather than self-indulgence. It was self-indulgence, finally, now aggravated by society's ever-increasing acquisition of money and its absorption with the things money can buy, that led to chaos. And the answer to self-indulgence was choice, limiting the endless, contradictory desires of the self according to those principles that past generations found most beneficial to the individual and to society.

Plantagenet Palliser is perhaps no longer the appropriate symbol for his age. He takes his principles for granted, he is never tempted to deviate, to compromise. Lady Glencora is no doubt more representative of the new order--of its worldly values, its penchant for self-indulgence, its desire to escape outmoded social restrictions. But Plantagenet Palliser has become, as Charles Kingsley said of Queen Victoria, "morally necessary,"[35] and Lady Glencora and those whom she represents, must be made to see that Mr. Palliser is a better choice than Burgo Fitzgerald. One must look closely enough to get beneath the beauty of Burgo, behind the dullness of Mr. Palliser. But if one looks closely enough, one will see which is better and choose correctly. The choice is not an easy one, and choosing does not end suffering; it may, in fact, intensify it. But it is necessary for Lady Glencora to choose Plantagenet Palliser unless she would destroy her life in exile and isolation; and necessary for society to make the same choice unless it would cut itself off from everything that gives it its value.

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[35]Charles Kingsley, "Preface to the Undergraduates of Cambridge," Alton Locke ("The Works of Charles Kingsley," Vol. II; Philadelphia: John D. Morris & Company, 1898), p. 120.

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