

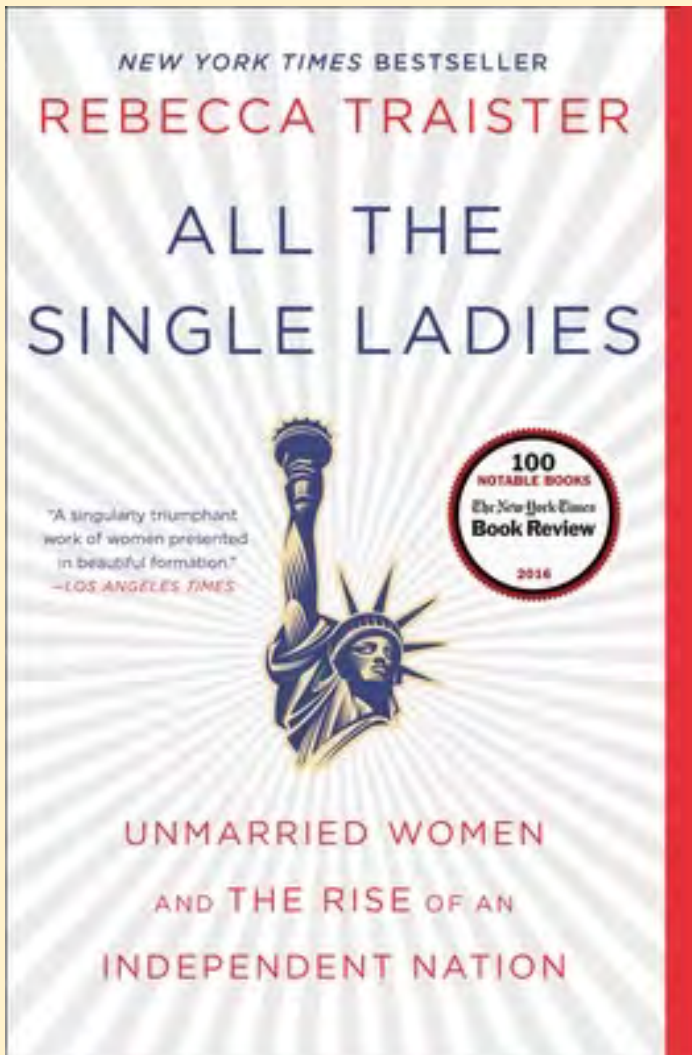
All the Single
Ladies:
Women,
Autonomy, and
Alternate
Households in the
Novels of Anthony
Trollope

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AUTHOR INTERVIEWS

Single By Choice: Why Fewer American Women Are Married Than Ever Before

March 1, 2016 · 2:24 PM ET

Heard on Fresh Air



37-Minute Listen

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According to the U.S. Census, single adult women now outnumber married adult women in America.

Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households Releases New Report

26/04/2023

LOVE MATTERS



It's OK to Be Single, the Church of England Says: So Was Jesus

In a new report, a church commission looking at families and households called on society to “honor and celebrate singleness.”

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The Most Rev. Stephen Cottrell, archbishop of York, left, and the Most Rev. Justin Welby, archbishop of Canterbury. Pool photo by Justin Tallis



By Lauren McCarthy

April 27, 2023



Anthony Trollope:
Realistic social historian?
Or revelatory crafter of worlds?
Or both?

Photographic realism: “faithful likenesses of living people;” a craftsman, not a “poetic genius” from *Anthony Trollope: The Critical Heritage* 11 (Donald Smalley ed., 1969)

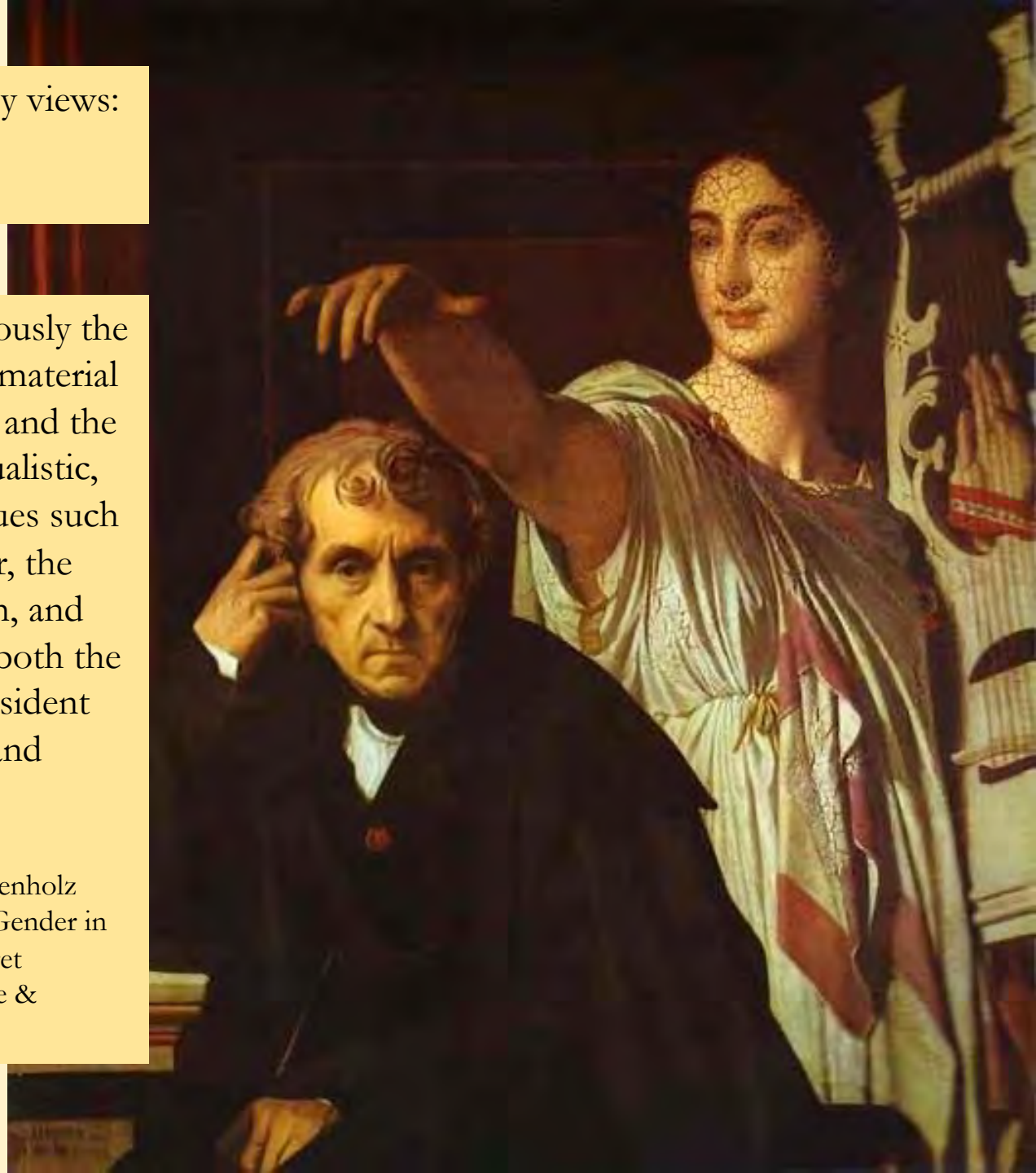
Social historian: Trollope “[did] the family life of England to perfection,” with neither “exaggeration” nor “false comedy.” *Unsigned Notice*, 14 *Saturday Review* 444 (1862) (reviewing *Orley Farm*)

Recognizable “sketches of ordinary domestic experiences” *—Rachel Ray: A Novel*, 1887 *Athenaeum* 492 (1863)

Late 20th and early 21st century views:
Trollope a literary artist,
not just a photographer

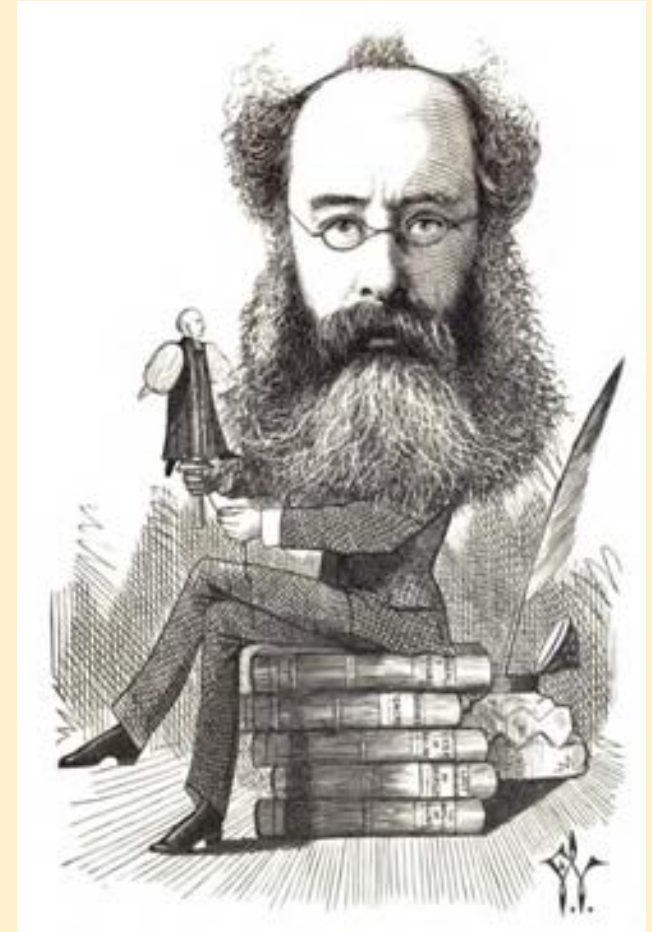
“Today, Trollope is simultaneously the sociologist providing the raw material for every researcher’s project, and the originator of a highly individualistic, esoteric, visionary take on issues such as colonialism, imperial power, the ethics of capitalism, liberalism, and gender. Thus he has become both the reflector of his time and a dissident voice subverting convention and inviting change.

_Margaret Markwick & Deborah Denenholz Morse, *Introduction to The Politics of Gender in Anthony Trollope’s Novels* 2 (Margaret Markwick, Deborah Denenholz Morse & Regenia Gagnier eds., 2009)



Our argument: On either approach, Trollope's novels are rich texts for studying intimate and family life, including varieties of singleness and nonmarital intimacy:

- As a dedicated social chronicler, Trollope's novels record a vast ecosystem of family pluralism, a terrain in which multiple kinds of families existed outside of the marital framework. Trollope's rich and intricate variety of households signals the actual diversity in patterns of family and intimate life
- As a generative artist, Trollope takes some of these basic household iterations and expands on them, modifies them, or creatively configures them to make points about the elements of successful relationships and to explore how households and families can operate outside of the heterosexual and financial economies of marriage.



Cartoon Portrait of Anthony Trollope, Frederick Waddy, 1872.



What's rare in
the world of
singles?
nonmarital
intimate
partners

Also rare? The Feminist

Wallachia Petrie, “The Republican Browning”

- American who is successful lecturer, poet, critical of marriage; a caricatured picture of women’s rights supporter
- WP hates **chivalry** and wants **equality**
- Trollope argued that women’s rights would harm **chivalry**



Elizabeth Barrett Browning, poet

Possible models for Wallachia . . .

Kate Field (Mary Katherine Keemle Field);
actress, journalist, lecturer; in intimate long-term
relationship with Lilian Whiting



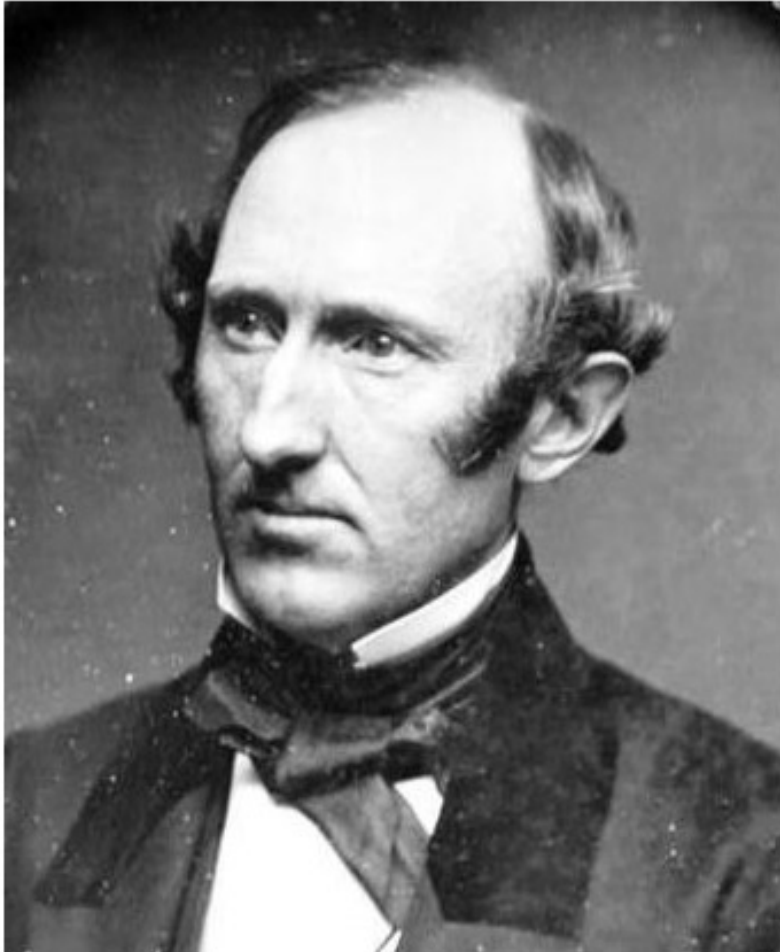
- Trollope and Field first met in Florence in 1860
- AT's *Autobiography* describes Field as “ray of light” and their friendship as “one of the chief pleasures which has graced my later years”
- Possibly a source for WP, although WP a very caricatured portrait of women’s rights advocate



Other sources or inspiration?

Wallachia Petrie possibly “amalgam of Wendell Phillips” and Lizzie Doten
(OUP World’s Classics ed. of HKHWR, p. 947)

Wendell Phillips -



“Miss Todd I am, and Miss Todd I mean to remain. To tell the truth plainly, I like to be number one in my own house. Lady Bertram, I am quite sure, will be a fortunate and happy woman; but then, she’ll be number two, I take it. Eh, Sir Lionel?” – Miss Todd

The Bertrams (1859)

- Caroline Waddington
- Miss Todd
- Miss Baker

“Of the rosy Miss Todd, there is nothing to be said but this, that she is still Miss Todd, and still rosy. Whether she be now at Littlebath, or Baden, or Dieppe, or Harrogate, at New York, Jerusalem, or Frazer's River, matters but little. Where she was last year, there she is not now. Where she is now, there she will not be next year. But she still increases the circle of her dearly-loved friends; and go where she will, she, at any rate, does more good to others than others do to her. And so we will make our last bow before her feet”



Frances Power Cobbe: Possible model for Miss Todd*

- Travelled throughout the East and Europe; camped in desert
- Anglo-Irish writer and journalist
- Feminist and advocate of women's emancipation
- Lived with Mary Lloyd for 34 years in “female marriage”**
- During travel, met unmarried women in Italy who lived together independently and who had developed close and sometimes intimate relationships.

*Kate Flint, *Queer Trollope*, in Cambridge Companion to AT 103 (Carolyn Devers & Lisa Niles eds. 2011).

**<https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/cobbe-frances-power-1822-1904>



Frances Power Cobbe (Wikipedia)

Two Contrasting Portraits to the “Rosy” and Independent Miss Todd

- Her close friend Miss Baker in Littlebath:
- “Unmarried ladies” such as Miss Baker “generally regret” their condition because of the “world’s dictum” that “an unmarried lady past forty has missed her hit in life.” (Ch. 32)
- “That the English world may become better informed, and learn as speedily as may be to speak with more sense on the subject, let us all pray.”
- Lacks the same economic independence
- Her finances tied to her tyrannical uncle, Mr Bertram, who shuts down his brother Sir Lionel’s marriage proposal





JUNO

(JOO-noh) noun

A WOMAN OF
STATELY BEARING
AND BEAUTY.

WORDSMITH.ORG



The Tragic “Juno,”
Caroline Waddington,
Miss Baker’s Niece

Lacking economic independence, Caroline views a brilliant marriage as the only proper sphere for her ambition—her only chance for a “career,” “work,” and being of “use” to anyone.

“The question with me was whether I should be useful as a wife, or useless as an unmarried woman.” (Ch. 29)

Other happily single women and “old maids” in Trollope’s world

Aspasia Fitzgibbon, from *Phineas Finn*:

- an “old maid,” over forty, into whose hand a “wonderful windfall,” a “considerable fortune” of twenty-five thousand pounds, fell “unexpectedly.”
- The only member of the family with money at her command, Aspasia lives by herself in a small house in Mayfair, and “walked about sturdily by herself, and spoke her mind about everything.”_Phineas Finn 35 (Oxford U. P., 2011) (1873)



Aspasia (Rosalind Knight) settles with Mr. Clarkson, debt collector, on Phineas’s debt (incurred on behalf of her brother, Laurence) and advises him never to sign such a bill again.

Source: <http://www.jimandellen.org/trollopeblog/856.html>

The delightfully irascible Priscilla Stanbury,
confirmed marriage resister in *He Knew He Was Right*

Chap. 16, Nora walks while her
sister, Emily, and Priscilla look on.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5140/5140-h/5140-h.htm>



Advises her sister Dorothy: “I suppose there can be no doubt that for most women a married life is happier than a single one . . .” (Ch. 34)

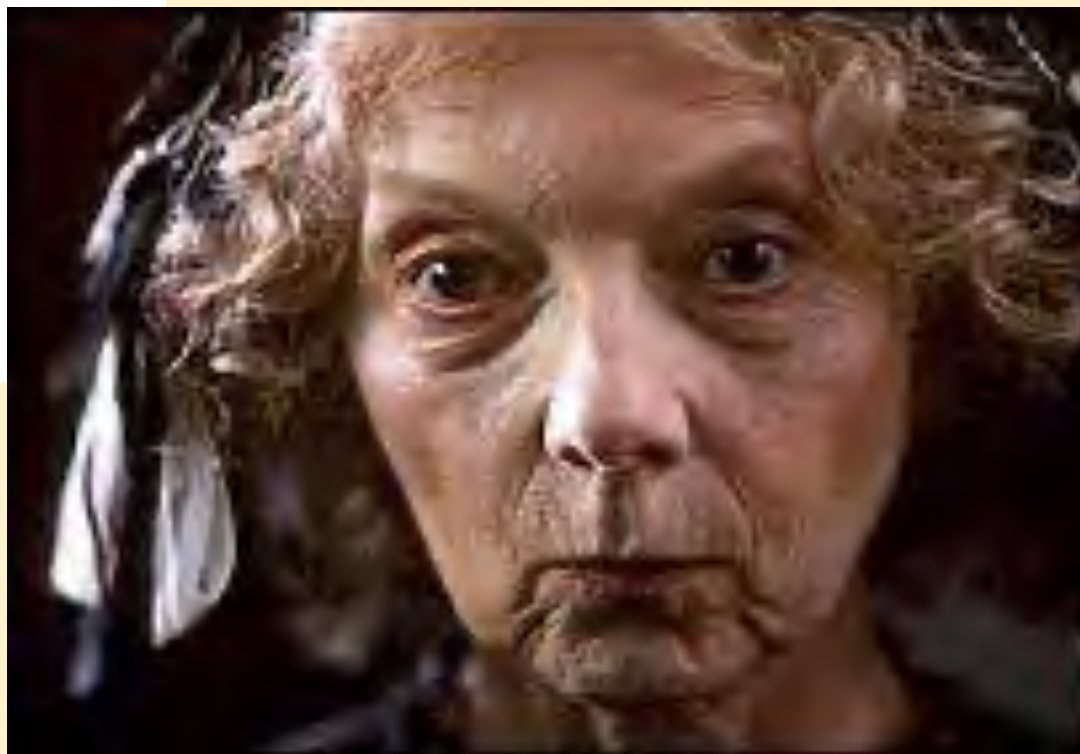
Also tells her that while Dorothy “would make any man heppy,” Priscilla would not: “I know that I am quite unfit for any other kind of life than this. I should make any man wretched, and any man would make me wretched. But why is it so?” (Ch. 97)

Refuses to be bridesmaid: ‘You might as well ask an own to sing to you.’ (Ch. 97)



Household intimacy and closeness beyond marriage:
Miss Stanbury and her niece, Dorothy

“It was your looks won me first,
Dolly, -- like an old fool as I am. It is
so pleasant to have a little nature
after such a deal of artifice.”



Rachel Ray (1863)

- Rachel Ray
- Mrs. Ray
- Mrs. Prime

“such a one as Mrs. Prime is often necessary,” we “all have our own pet temptations, and I think that Mrs. Prime’s temptation was a love of power.”

Mrs. Prime “delighted in the sight of the bit of paper which conveyed to her the possession of her periodical wealth,” and whose ambition was “to be mistress of her money.”

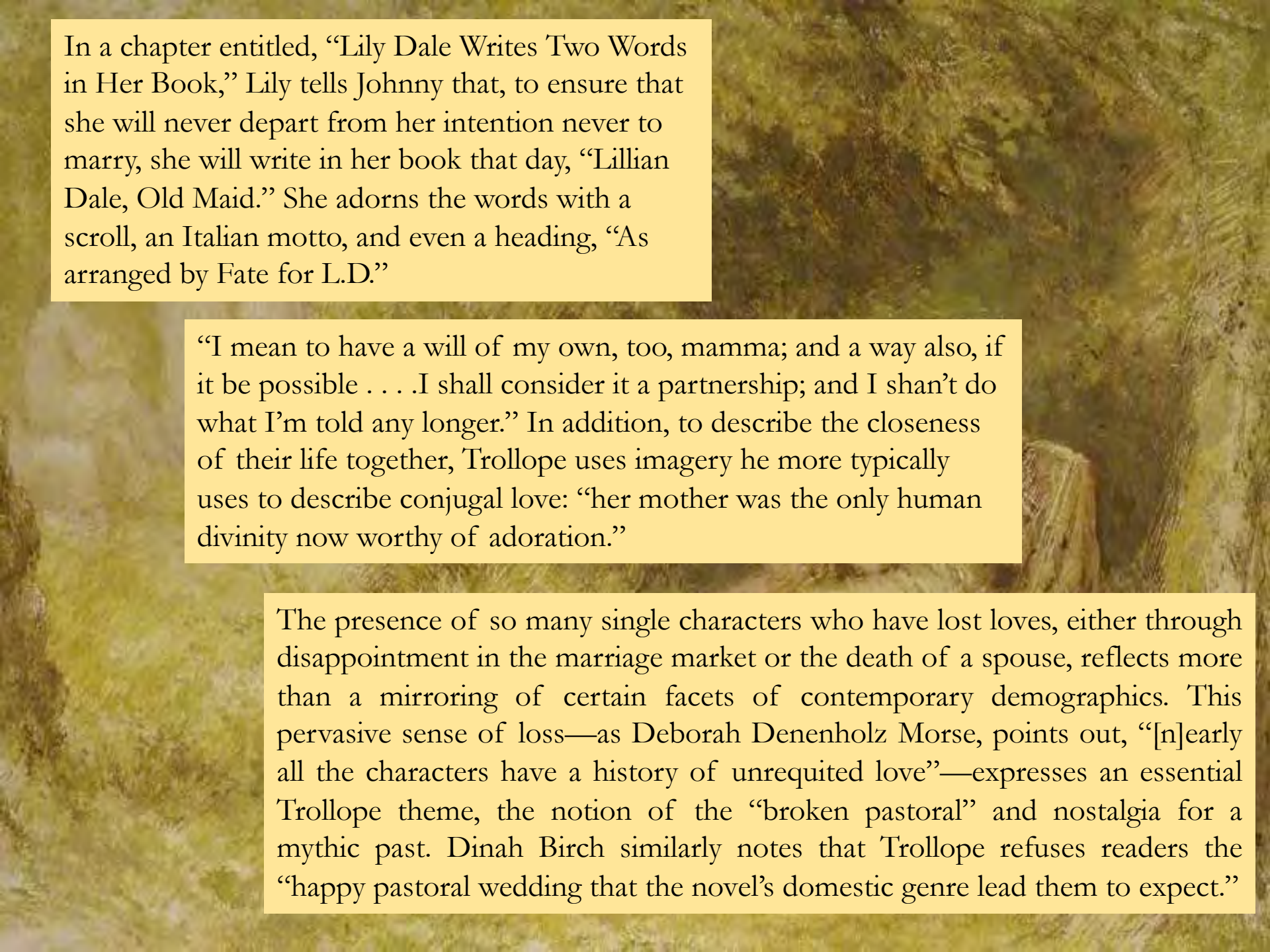


Small House at Allington (1864)

- “Lillian Dale, Old Maid”
- Mrs. Dale
- Squire Christopher Dale
- Lord De Guest, and his “maiden sister” Julia



"MAMMA," SHE SAID AT LAST, "IT IS OVER NOW, I'M SURE"



In a chapter entitled, “Lily Dale Writes Two Words in Her Book,” Lily tells Johnny that, to ensure that she will never depart from her intention never to marry, she will write in her book that day, “Lillian Dale, Old Maid.” She adorns the words with a scroll, an Italian motto, and even a heading, “As arranged by Fate for L.D.”

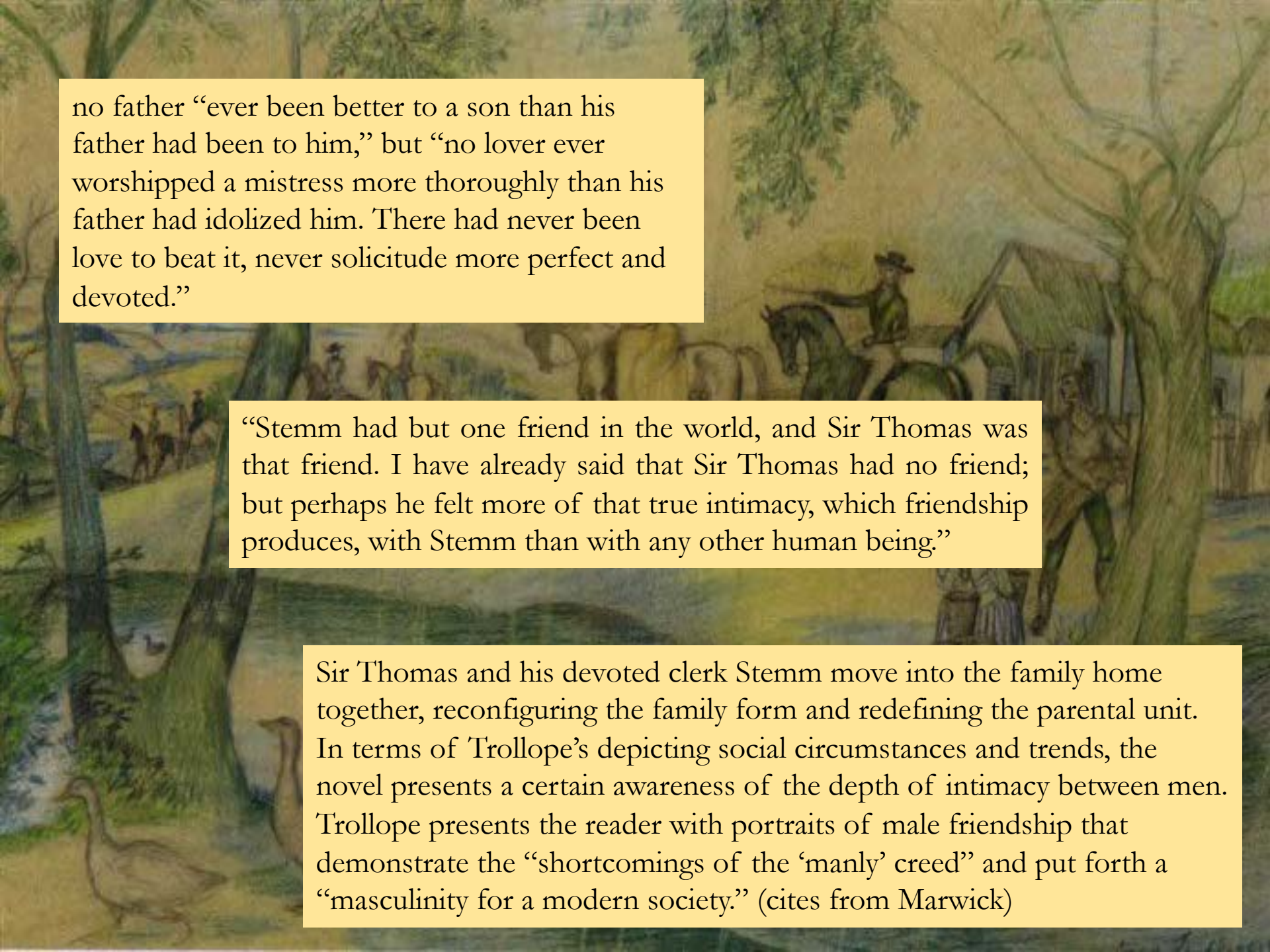
“I mean to have a will of my own, too, mamma; and a way also, if it be possible . . . I shall consider it a partnership; and I shan’t do what I’m told any longer.” In addition, to describe the closeness of their life together, Trollope uses imagery he more typically uses to describe conjugal love: “her mother was the only human divinity now worthy of adoration.”

The presence of so many single characters who have lost loves, either through disappointment in the marriage market or the death of a spouse, reflects more than a mirroring of certain facets of contemporary demographics. This pervasive sense of loss—as Deborah Denenholz Morse, points out, “[n]early all the characters have a history of unrequited love”—expresses an essential Trollope theme, the notion of the “broken pastoral” and nostalgia for a mythic past. Dinah Birch similarly notes that Trollope refuses readers the “happy pastoral wedding that the novel’s domestic genre lead them to expect.”



Ralph the Heir (1871)

- Patience and Clarissa
- Mary Bonner
- Sir Thomas Underwood
- Joseph Stemm
- Squire Neville and Ralph the son

The background of the slide is a painting of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are several large, leafy trees. In the middle ground, a man in a dark coat and hat is riding a dark horse. To the right, a woman in a long dress and bonnet stands near a small, simple house. In the background, there are more trees and a fence. The overall style is that of a 19th-century landscape painting.

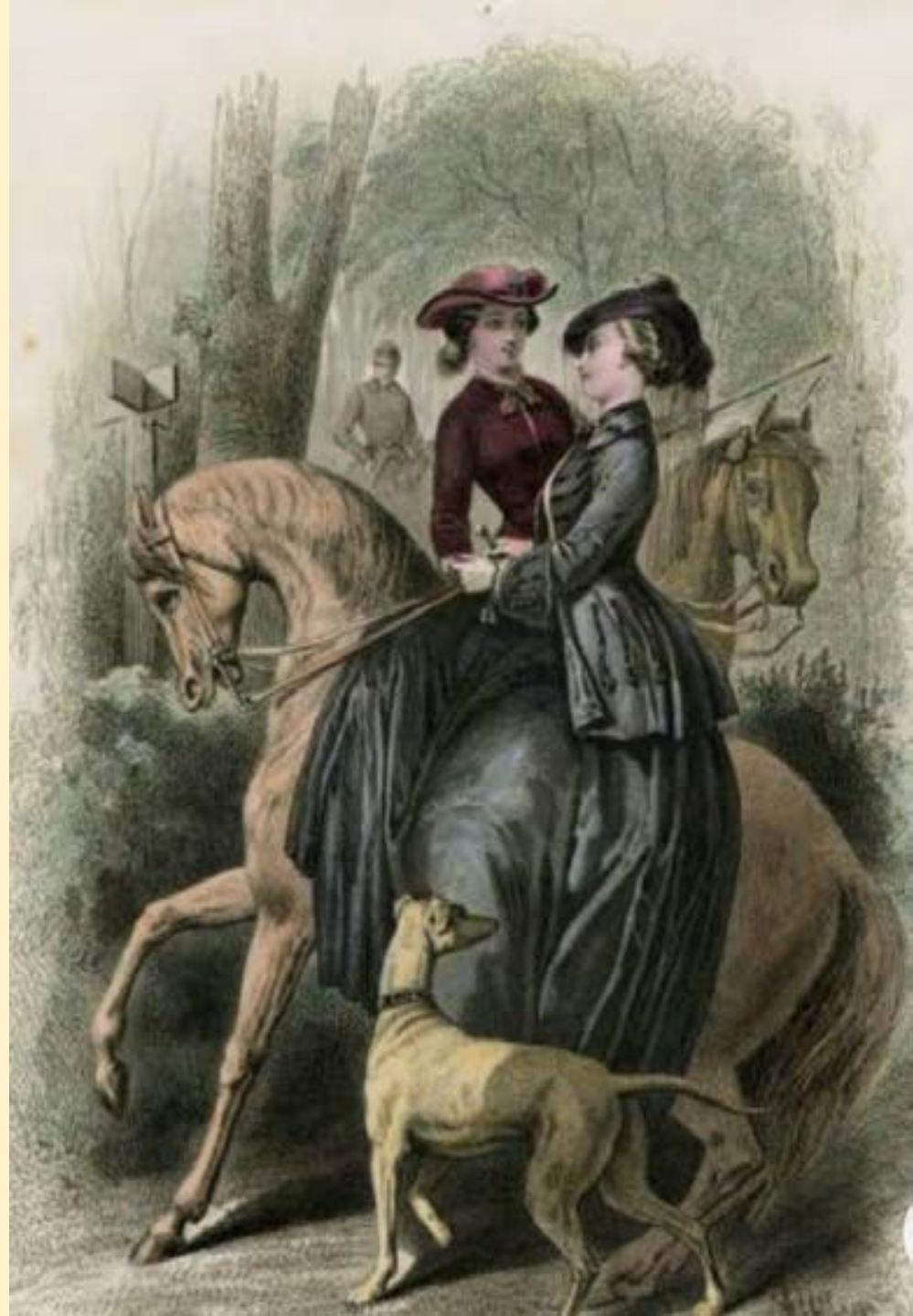
no father “ever been better to a son than his father had been to him,” but “no lover ever worshipped a mistress more thoroughly than his father had idolized him. There had never been love to beat it, never solicitude more perfect and devoted.”

“Stemm had but one friend in the world, and Sir Thomas was that friend. I have already said that Sir Thomas had no friend; but perhaps he felt more of that true intimacy, which friendship produces, with Stemm than with any other human being.”

Sir Thomas and his devoted clerk Stemm move into the family home together, reconfiguring the family form and redefining the parental unit. In terms of Trollope’s depicting social circumstances and trends, the novel presents a certain awareness of the depth of intimacy between men. Trollope presents the reader with portraits of male friendship that demonstrate the “shortcomings of the ‘manly’ creed” and put forth a “masculinity for a modern society.” (cites from Marwick)

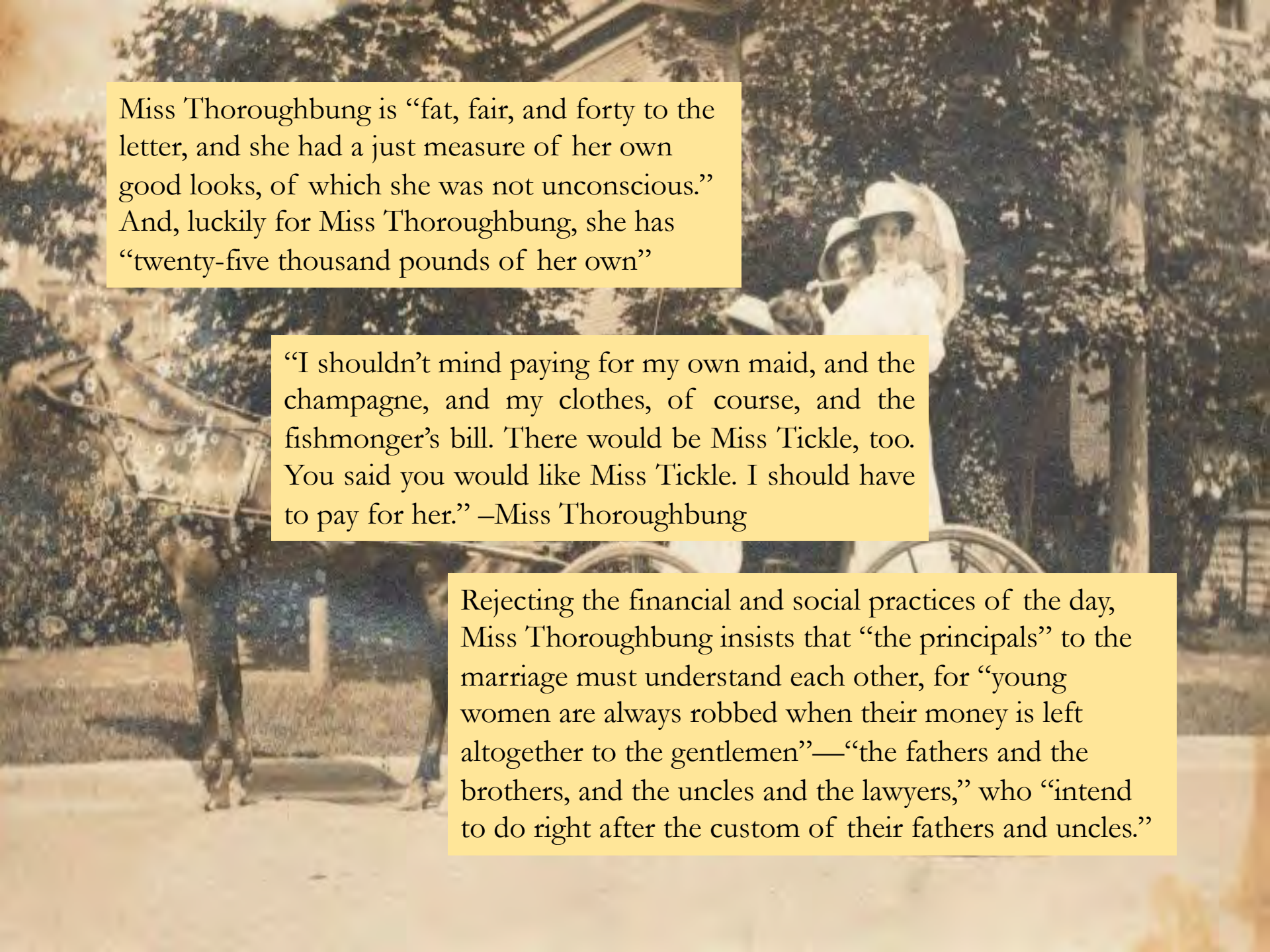
Mr. Scarborough's Family (1883)

- Miss Thoroughbung
- Miss Tickle
- Dolly Gray
- Mr. Scarborough
- Mr. Prosper
- Mr. Grey





“[Do] you think that I am a person likely to be able to transfer myself suddenly to the first man that comes my way?” Dolly envisions that if she left her father and went to live with Mr. Barry, pouring his tea and keeping his house, “[h]e’d come to kiss me when he went away, and I—should plunge a knife into him [. . .]. Or into myself, which would be more likely. Fancy that man calling me Dolly.” – Dolly Gray



Miss Thoroughbung is “fat, fair, and forty to the letter, and she had a just measure of her own good looks, of which she was not unconscious.” And, luckily for Miss Thoroughbung, she has “twenty-five thousand pounds of her own”

“I shouldn’t mind paying for my own maid, and the champagne, and my clothes, of course, and the fishmonger’s bill. There would be Miss Tickle, too. You said you would like Miss Tickle. I should have to pay for her.” –Miss Thoroughbung

Rejecting the financial and social practices of the day, Miss Thoroughbung insists that “the principals” to the marriage must understand each other, for “young women are always robbed when their money is left altogether to the gentlemen”—“the fathers and the brothers, and the uncles and the lawyers,” who “intend to do right after the custom of their fathers and uncles.”



Questions?