

Intriguing Women and Their Friendships in Trollope  
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It is a truth almost universally acknowledged that Anthony Trollope can empathize at length and thoroughly with utterly transgressive women characters who flout the very taboos and conventional norms which his overt rhetoric and the endings of his novels seem to uphold. What I'll call foundational (from the 1980s) feminist studies and more recent gender, post-colonial and political studies have shown time and time again that in the clash between a society and an individual's selfhood, an authentic identity as understood and gradually realized by the character through acts, words, and their consequences, Trollope compassionates the pain, struggles and losses his characters experience in their failures to achieve what they desire, decisions to forgo or compromise seriously some dearly cherished goal or way of life (1). He often also makes explicitly visible a particular group's injustice to the individuals who seemingly belong to or stand just outside a social community, or to an individual who just cannot cope with the injustice or humiliation, by showing us cracks and consequent losses in society's arrangements (2). A recurring type in Trollope is the mildly autistic, high functioning (in effect) disabled character, males we recognize but the females we tend not to (3).

This theme or characteristic conflict in Trollope between self and society has been studied in such a number of its permutations that it might seem otiose to go to it again (4), even if you've discovered or reconfigured a particularly egregious set of contradictory political and social arrangements. Luckily (or maybe not so luckily) it seems women have been losing ground (even constitutional rights in the US) bodily, thematically and in recent points of view taken by gender studies. So, I've chosen women who are openly transgressive, often sexually, at some point in their lives, taking them from across the second half of Trollope's career in very different types of novels (5). I call my selection intriguing women because they merit or repay investigation. What I'll show is a frequently repeated pattern or type of scene often ignored or not seen as the most important by critics (especially in novels or criticism by men), where Trollope dramatizes the important function of women's friendships in women's lives (6).

First up, *The Belton Estate* (1864) a relatively short domestic romance, not that well known, perhaps regarded as dull, sad and somber, anything but glamorous by those who don't read Trollope regularly. Henry James famously said (mischievously and unfairly because unanswerable) it put him to sleep, and seemed to be "written for children (7). I begin with Jane Nardin who evaluates the heroines of *The Belton Estate* in the context of Trollope's whole oeuvre. The novel is a "progressive comedy," a kind of culmination of a group of novels where Trollope "subverts" the patriarchal ideals of submission and conventional obedience to hierarchies that are obeyed by his chief heroines in his earlier novels.

Now most interpretations of *The Belton Estate* concentrate on the heterosexual love triangle between the now penniless Clara Amedroz (her brother killed himself after, with the father, wasting the family fortune), her guarded, demanding, gentleman-like cousin, Captain Fredrick Aylmer, and the open-hearted, generous-natured and farmer-like squire, heir to the Belton property, William Belton. To be sure, the novel's plot-design enacts an adage Trollope's narrator makes explicit: "What is there that any man desires ... that does not lose half its value when it is found to be easy of access and easy of possession? ... The fruit that falls easily from the tree, though it is ever the best, is never valued by the gardener" (*BE*, pp 126, 134). Clara makes the mistake of not (in Trollope's terms) "coying" her love (Trollope usually and even here praises his woman characters for candor, frankness) and (more than once) she openly shows Aylmer how much she thinks she values him; this puts him off every time. When after she has endured an insulting ordeal at Aylmer Park, and breaks off the engagement, Aylmer

rushes back to her, and begs her to resume the engagement. Will too, though loving Clara without having to have this added thrill of seizing something out of reach, in Halperin's words "grows more aggressive and tenacious when he learns he has a rival in the field" (*BE*, p xi).

The book also shows Clara repeating a pattern we see many times across Trollope's novels: she regards herself as shamed if she sees herself and openly admits to switching from an erotic allurements and deluded attraction to one man (the cold mean Aylmer) rather too quickly to a much more active desire and genuine respect and congeniality with another (the nearly uncontrollably passionate Belton). I suggest the lessons we are served become more than variations on how to cope with an absurd problem, how to say yes and not say yes at the same time. The inner worlds of Belton and Clara as depicted by Trollope especially in the first proposal scene are shaped by genuine insights into two specific well-meaning young or naïve people. And there is a more serious issue here: Clara has not divested herself of her society's norms and these threaten her – she might make a choice that would lead to misery for life for her (8).

I find subversive and therefore questioning of patriarchal norms – and unusual in Trollope's oeuvre Clara Amedroz's relationship with her book-long friend, Mrs. Mary Askerton. Nardin sees Clara Amedroz and Mary Askerton as set up by Trollope to be parallel characters (he does this in other novels, e.g., *Carrie Brattle*, a "castaway" in *The Vicar of Bullhampton* with Mary Lowther, like Clara, genteel but broke). Nardin argues that the novel demonstrates how destructive and dangerous for women are the supposedly moral conventional norms they are taught will keep them safe. I don't doubt it (9). I suggest in this case, though, the transgressive woman, Mrs. Askerton is not primarily in the novel to function as a parallel to Clara, the apparently virtuous one.

Mary Askerton is there to show us a defiant and loyal friendship between these women, a defiance important in the book's plot-design. When Aylmer's mother realizes how poverty-stricken Clara is, she looks to break up her son's engagement in any way she can. Discovering the rumors about Mrs. Askerton's previous life, that she left an abusive husband, and lived with Colonel Askerton before her first husband died, Lady Aylmer demands that Clara promise that she will have nothing to do with this woman who had been her friend. This will be an act by which Clara demonstrates how she appreciates Aylmer's sacrifice in marrying her and will in future obey what the Aylmer family thinks is in his and its interests.

Now it is true that Mrs. Askerton's thinking about men and women even now many years later is the familiar sexualized talk often used to justify domineering or hegemonic masculinity, in the usual softened form it comes, the notion that women want a man hard to get, aloof (rich, high rank), who will dominate and thus thrill them. It seems to have been notions such as these (as Trollope's narrator presents these scenes) that attracted Clara when she said yes to Aylmer; but gradually and after Mrs. Askerton has experience of Will's decency towards herself and the ugly way the Aylmer family treats Clara, she encourages Clara to accept the man who does not conform to these norms. Will is clumsy, awkward, not elegantly handsome, not *au courant* with upper class culture, and openly eager to be friends. Mrs. Askerton's experience of her husband's behavior to her, thoughtful, kind and good, he is the sort of person who stays home with her reading French novels, is as important in the story as these delusions – Will is thus another generous man.

Trollope also makes Clara's friendship with Mrs. Askerton central to the book because this allows him dramatize the loneliness and isolation of Mrs Askerton's life; how she remains an untouchable in her society and can scarcely live a life except one of reading and domesticity with her husband, who can

get to go out among people. Clara was a rare person to visit and to befriend Mrs. Askerton. Mrs. Askerton is suspected of having done something wrong, of being unacceptable because she refuses to socialize, anticipating the abject socially frightened self-stigmatizing behavior of Mrs. Peacock, who is perhaps guilty of bigamy (*Dr Wortle's School*, 1879) Mrs. Askerton's gratitude to Clara prompts her to offer Clara the Askerton cottage to stay in when Lady Aylmer has made the Aylmer estate impossible for her unless Clara is prepared to ostracize and insult Mrs Askerton.

Trollope shows the conversations between the two friends (Chapter 18, "Mrs. Askerton's Story," which tells us of Mrs Askerton's past and memories) to be supportive of Clara in ways we never see in, say, Lady Glencora's conversations with Alice Vavasour or other of Trollope's heroines with an older female authority figure, say a mother, or aunt. Mrs. Askerton through irony defends non-conventional choices. Trollope astonishingly is leading us to approve of Clara's defiance of Lady Aylmer and critique the world's exclusion of Mrs. Askerton. In this novel, human bonds between women (Clara is also befriended by Will's crippled sister, Mary Belton) are presented as more important in securing safety and happiness for a woman than marrying high rank and money.

The second long chapter devoted to Clara and Mrs. Askerton's relationship (Chapter 21, "Mrs. Askerton's Generosity") concludes on a crucial letter written by Mrs. Askerton to Clara, rather like an 18<sup>th</sup> century epistolary novel where characters write letters to one another while they live in the same house and are in different rooms (10). So here, as throughout the novel, Mrs. Askerton's conversation shows her to be generous-hearted to her friend, exposes cant, is anything but the witch-like and abject caricatures of fallen women we find Trollope occasionally alludes to and depicts in the case of sexually transgressive women: Carrie Brattle, the "castaway" of *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1868) is to me a site of cringe-worthy abjection. Mrs. Askerton prompts Clara to think candidly to herself about what she really feels, what she herself wants.

I can quote only a tiny part of the dialogue surrounding and Clara's response to this letter:

Clara's first impulse on receiving this letter was to go off at once to the cottage, and insist on her privilege of choosing her own friends. If she preferred Mrs. Askerton to Captain Aylmer, that was no one's business but her own. And she would have done so had she not been afraid of meeting with Colonel Askerton ... As she thought of all this, she asked herself various questions concerning him, which she did not find it easy to answer. Did she wish to be his [Aylmer's] wife? Could she assure herself that if they were married, they would make each other happy? Did she love him? ... (Chapter 21, pp 276-79)

This epistolarity, inwardness and frank dialogue in *The Belton Estate* will enable us to segue into *The Way We Live Now*, a late book, massive, with global reach, regarded by many as one of Trollope's masterpieces and one of his signature texts, given unforgettable realization and popularity by Andrew Davies' 2001 serial adaptation (11). I again want to show a rather different set of patterns than people usually emphasize when they talk of this book.

Trollope unfolds his story through a series of character portraits where the women are linked to one another and brought into the book through their relationships with men. Strikingly, as all remember who have read *TWWLN*, the novel opens by introducing us to Matilda, Lady Carbury by means of three manipulative letters she has written to three different male editors of influential newspapers in order to pressure them to write favorable reviews of her book, *Criminal Queens*, which caricatured title Trollope uses to suggest Lady Carbury's work is titillating trash (Chapter 1) (12). Marie and her

stepmother Madame Melmotte emerge as part of the material that links Sir Felix Carbury to Augustus Melmotte as a “solution” to Sir Felix’s problem that he is bankrupt (Chapter 4). Georgiana Longestaffe emerges in a chapter linked to the story via her father’s problem with money to keeping up his estates, and looking to Melmotte for help; and Dolly Longestaffe’s Beargarden connection to Felix (Chapter 13). We meet Ruby Ruggles as the country girl Sir Felix is exploiting sexually on the side (as it were) when forced to visit Carbury Manor with his mother (Chapter 18). Mrs. Hurtle first appears (Chapter 26) as an incident in Paul Montague’s life, someone he cannot get himself break off from since she has brought herself – beautiful, intelligent, gifted, and in love with him, to London. In my analysis *TWWLN* will remain (as Trollope refers to it in his notes) a “Carbury novel” with Lady Carbury and her connections (which include Roger and his unofficially adopted son, Paul Montague) as central characters; her literary world as described by Trollope is as corrupted by money as is Melmotte’s (13).

I don’t say we shouldn’t study these women’s characters scenes with the males who are important to them (Mrs. Hurtle with Paul Montague especially, but also Lady Carbury with Mr Broune as well as her son, Felix; Marie with her father, Felix and Lord Nidderdale; and study Georgiana’s correspondence with Mr Breght) or downplay Melmotte (especially in the later parts of the book where he has over-reached himself through the gargantuan dinner, and election, where he is called hostile attention to. Rather that a way to grasp the valence, the intrinsic full tone of the novel and the functions of its women is look at the scenes of their relationships with one another, study the interior views Trollope gives us of them deciding what to do next or what to plan on their own and with one another, and again their letters.

Time will permit us to go into only the climactic scenes of caring and supportive friendship or behavior between Marie Melmotte and Hetta Carbury, and Hetta Carbury and Winifred Hurtle. Of the many semi- and wholly antagonistic abrasive self-protective scenes between women who have a relationship to one another, as for example the on-again off-again interwoven scenes between the (to her daughter) resentful and callous Lady Carbury and her daughter, Hetta Carbury (there are numerous longer and shorter such scenes woven in with the various people who come to Welbeck Street, framing and underlining these further scenes); the tussle-like class threats Mrs. Hurtle, and Mrs. Pipkin hurl at Ruby Ruggles; -- we’ll just look at those antagonistic frenemies, Georgiana Longestaffe and Julia, Lady Monogram. To me tellingly, once you start to look at the book this way, through these kinds of scenes and interior views (and those with men too), you realize how frequently Hetta Carbury occurs and how she is central to the book, and how courageous and individually motivated she can be, though she is often talked about in a dismissive way as dull, conventional, and one note, which just shows people are not reading her.

The scenes where Hetta Carbury visits Marie Melmotte, and later Mrs Hurtle (Chapter 68, pp 508-14, Chapters 90-91, pp 675-89) provide Marie and Hetta with more than needed information to resolve an important decision in their lives (and some of book’s closely knitted story lines). Hetta and Mrs, Hurtle respectively show Marie and Hetta a condition of mind that demonstrates to Marie and Hetta the nature of the particular male who is involved, and his past actions in such a way that Marie and Hetta can draw upon an emotional terrain communicated between the two that escapes the literal pragmatic and normative criteria their society says they must act by. Impulses and understandings associated with feminine and intangible psychology, intuitive and empathetic, not goal-oriented are what’s relied on and turn the scenes in the directions they take. Important also are personal subjectively difficult events and feelings that occur to the women just before their conversations.

I’ll begin with Hetta and Winifred (if I may use her first name) because the scene is complicated by

inward interactions, goes on at length: as many have said Winifred Hurtle is the most complicated and from the point of view of individuating characteristics the most interesting major character in the book. Hetta arrives after a final touching scene between Paul and herself, Hetta has been racked by Lady Carbury as brutal mother (tried, tormented, afflicted in ways parallel to the physical abuse Melmotte has just heaped on Marie), received an indignant reproachful letter from Paul, and decided she does in fact want to spend her life with him (his final point in his letter is to ask if she can give this up), no matter what he has done (Chapter 84, pp 638-39). We've heard some poignant talk between Mrs. Hurtle and Mrs. Pipkin (who is very sorry the engagement is over because her tenant will be returning to America), and we've listened to Winifred decide to give up Paul Montague and tell herself that she can do no good to herself by telling her wrongs to anyone, much less another woman (pp. 678, 680).

Defying her mother and an anticipated harrowing sexual mortification, Hetta goes to Mrs. Hurtle's lodgings. Mrs. Hurtle does not deny her recent encounters with Paul, including whatever occurred at Lowestoffe (in the book this is left ambiguous), but she says that Paul emotionally stopped loving her well before Lowestoffe. He came as a loving friend so that she would not be alone. She says that she was "true of heart," and has been "broken in spirit" by what has happened, but she has "forgiven" all his "treachery" and is now not "strong enough to punish one I still love." In effect, Winifred presents a picture of Paul's nature as a loyal, kindly, sincere man and of herself as a wronged woman without further specifying why Paul has chosen Hetta than that Paul has preferred a virginal girl to an experienced woman (pp. 685-89). What she conveys reaches some profound place in Hetta and Hetta begins to cry and leaves with a determination to reconcile herself to Paul. Nothing her waiting mother whose spiteful response to Hetta's "she is a wonderful woman," is "And she has told you wonderful lies" (p. 689) can now deter her.

Less verbal information passes between Hetta and Marie in the earlier climactic scene (Chapter 68). Marie does most of the talking; Hetta sticks to variations on the same words her brother told her to say: "It must all be over, Miss Melmotte" (p. 511). This scene occurs after the harrowing and mortifying humiliation Marie has endured when Felix spends all the money she has given him on drink and gambling, never even trying to get to the train to Liverpool; she has been arrested, separated from Didon (who fled with her jewels), and is living not in Grosvenor Square (for there is no money for this after the extravaganza of the Emperor's dinner) but the Longestaffe house in Bruton Street. This time Hetta confronts Melmotte himself, persuades him to take her to his daughter (though she has identified herself as Sir Felix's sister), and agrees to walk with him (pp. 508-11). This time the conversation consists of short declarative sentences in vociferous give-and-take style, highly excited in feel, with Marie's exasperation, shouted laments coming out of her loneliness, despair no one has or will ever love her (we have been told that Marie's mother died when Marie was very young, an abused woman who may have ended living on the streets), and, as the conversation continues, Marie's increasingly bitter anger. Hetta has been self-controlled, revealed nothing of herself, and wished she had not come, but conveyed accurately what kind of a human being her brother is. Here is just one passage:

"[Hetta]'Men are not, I think, like girls.'  
'I suppose not,' said Marie slowly. 'What liars they are, what brutes; --what wretches! Why should he break my heart? That other man [Nidderdale] never said that he loved me. ... [a little later] If you loved a man and told him of it, and agreed to be his wife and done as I have, could you bear to be told to think of him no more, -- just as though you had got rid of a servant or a horse? I won't love him. No; -- I'll hate him'" (p 513)

Marie has been directed into beginning to build a carapace around herself (14).

It's by focusing on women's friendships in this novel, we can understand the importance of Julia, Lady Monogram's refusal to maintain even a slightly friendly, barely supportive relationship with Georgiana when Georgiana is staying with the Melmottes in order to socialize with her peers to husband-hunt. Georgiana finds she can meet only those people who visit the Melmottes and whom they visit, and she finds them as unacceptable as her friend. Georgiana is as obdurate as Julia, incapable of throwing off any of the social codes of her group, including ethnic and racial prejudice (in this case against Jews) all of which are presented by Lady Monogram as her excuse for dropping Georgiana because they are crucial criteria for status and self-protection.

Although seemingly such a small part of the book, Georgiana's encounters with Julia are memorable (Chapter 32, 239-48; Chapters 60-61, 65) because in them we see operative inexorable socially-derived patterns of exclusion (and inclusion) that Georgiana and Julia agree are crucial to a young woman's fate (15). Georgiana shows no sense she needs to make a biological or sexual connection with a man (which is what Mr. Breghter is offering, especially since he specifically includes step-motherhood). Georgiana's mother is to her only a conduit to reach her father. It's not irrelevant to compare Mrs. Hurtle's apparent caring for Mrs. Pipkin's children: she goes beyond presents to take them to the seashore. Georgiana never understands why she loses all social leverage, which is why she must run away with a curate to maintain any respect from others and at the same time a distance from them in order not to hear their scorn. She is not willing to give anything of herself and thus has made no friends.

I'm one of those who denies a common view that *The Way We Live Now* is a starkly and exaggerated dark and bitter book: at least a fair assessment leads me to assert that Trollope seems less alienated from its characters and content than he is in say *The Claverings* (medium length novel, 1864, with central allusions to caustic and amoral 18<sup>th</sup> century plays); or *Kept in the Dark* (a late fierce novella against women's sexual liberty (1880), a kind of *He Knew He Was Right* (1869), without the six tonic stories qualifying that of the Trevelyans (16).

The wonders of the last book I've chosen to discuss, mellow and often beautiful in its picturesqueness, the unabridged *The Duke's Children*, for the sake of its tragic heroine, Lady Mabel Grex, and her faithful unmarried companion, Miss Cassewary, includes the reality that there is no consensus about it as yet. Written 1876, serialized in an abbreviated form, 1879, first and finally published whole in 2015, I also choose to take my women from *The Duke's Children* as it one of the 12 famous most popular of Trollope's novels, the Barsestshire-Palliser books. In my view in its present form, it is a culmination, a crowning book to the *Pallisers* in the way of *The Last Chronicle of Barset* is to the Barset books (17).

Hitherto the admired studies of *The Duke's Children* (we must call it abridged) have focused on the Duke himself as a grieving and hurt widower, an unprepared and socially disabled father; on the maturation of Lord Silverbridge signaled by his choice of a sexually innocent American heiress over the disillusioned sexually knowing Lady Mabel Grex, and Silverbridge's realization he cannot separate himself from his family's politics because no one will allow this. In this perspective the other primary couple of the book are Silverbridge's sister, the Duke's daughter, Lady Mary Palliser and Silverbridge's friend, Frank Tregear. It was Frank Tregear's intelligence and conservative rhetoric that lured Silverbridge into attempting a rebellion against his father in the form of a conservative political identity; with Lady Mary Tregear's role that of a personally unambitious moneyed aristocratic lover. He and Lady Mary, become surrogates in the Duke's mind for the now dead Lady Glencora and Burgo Fitzgerald. From more than 21 years ago the Duke recalls painful moments of Lady Glen showing

herself coerced into marrying him whom she hardly knew beyond a felt incompatibility of temperament and instinct. The family aim was to provide him with an immense fortune and saddle her with a controlling prudent husband. He is correct to think Lady Glen herself identified Mary's romance with her own long ago.

In most of these readings Lady Mabel becomes a surrogate for what would have happened to the young Lady Glencora had Glencora refused to marry a man she didn't love; Lady Mabel's significance is as a reinforcement or contrast for some aspect of the other characters' stories (for example, by not marrying her, Lord Silverbridge avoids repeating his parents' frustrations) (18). In feminist readings across Trollope's oeuvre, she is such another as Mrs. Hurtle (who cannot give up her previous beloved so may end living alone), but I would note she is not berated and egregiously punished like another openly sexually transgressive heroine whom Trollope seems at times to sympathize, Julia, Lady Ongar (*The Claverings*, 1864) who may have committed adultery during the worse days of her high-pressure marriage, or Mrs Euphemia Smith (*John Caldigate*, 1877), who after a very favorable entrance ends up the worst treated of any of Trollope's heroines, imprisoned while her possibly bigamous husband in the end is freed and rewarded (19)

Having read the abridged and unabridged *The Duke's Children* last summer, back-to-back, it seems to me the put-back material shows us there was intended a third not-so-ghostly couple, who would function significantly in their own right, Lady Mabel Grex and Frank Tregear, whose past story haunts the book as surely as that of Lady Glencora. Across the book starting with the often-quoted Chapter 7 ("In medias res"), where Trollope's famous outburst against novels which start *in media res* seems to me to both call attention to and cover up the hidden stories of Lady Mabel and Frank which started where there is no text and carry on existing with nothing, but memories referred to. Their scenes bring us right back to Trollope's fundamental theme of an authentic self in conflict with the circumstances and demands of his or her environment, and other people.

Lady Mabel's history is of a girl orphaned young (20), living with a vicious brother and callous father, falling deeply in love with an intelligent young man and then wresting herself away because she adheres to the hierarchical patriarchal values of her society, and does not believe she could endure a lower status and money-straitened condition. It's important to recognize Frank and Lady Mabel were lovers. That's partly why she holds it against him that he could forget, he could find a woman to provide him with a fortune – rather quickly; and act on his own otherwise in seeking a career; it also explains why he reiterates that he begged her to take him, that he would have married her and they could have made it; he remains bitter at her for having rejected him (well played by Jeremy Irons in the 1975 episodes of *Raven's Pallisers*) (21).

The immediate question is why Lady Mabel cannot get herself to take advantage of Silverbridge, for the narrator suggests after her initial "sparing" of Silverbridge, there were three more opportunities across the novel for her to soften and say yes, and yet she will jeer at and triumph over him, be wry and sarcastic over all the social activities going on around her. In the scenes in Scotland she keeps apart. I suspect that John Butte in his study of ambivalence in the abridged *Duke's Children* is accurate to say that in "the recesses of her heart" Lady Mabel wanted neither man, and still does not. The scenes at the end of the novel where she begs Silverbridge to ask her to marry him, Frank to let her become his mistress (22) are so harrowing and mortifying because she is acting against an inner grain of her being. She takes as her one friend, her sympathizing and impoverished never married female cousin, Miss Casewary, and at the close of the book retires on a very small income, seemingly as someone haunted.

Let us listen to what Lady Mabel says to Miss Cassewary early in the book (Chapter 20): she has been berated by her father as forcing him into the expense of a house in Belgrave Square, and she has offered (in contrast to Marie Melmotte) to sign away all her rights to him; she has gone through the work of dining out with him in an atmosphere of gaiety, where she finds she gives away to Dolly Longestaffe (of all people) her real concern over Frank Tregear's dissolute behavior, and it is here we learn in an unexaggerated way how much she cares for Frank. Returning home she finds Miss Cassewary alone and very relieved she didn't have to go to Mrs. Montacute Jones's ball, and they have a heart-to-heart talk

“Who am I?” said Miss Cassewary.

‘About the dearest friend that ever a poor girl had ... ‘

Lady Mabel comes closest to the Duke in criticizing and worrying about Frank's gambling because it is also a mean way of triumphing and acquiring money; she tells Miss Cassewary of how and why she has let Silverbridge escape a trap he had set for himself, asking ‘Shall I go to heaven for doing that?’, at which Miss Cassewary reassures her “he will come again.” Lady Mabel says she is not so sure, and then, tellingly, associates both Tregear and Silverbridge with other “eligible suitors” so “odious to me, - - with whom I could not bear to be linked for life, as to whom the idea of marriage seems to be mixed somehow with an idea of suicide” (pp. 155-58). The depth of interchange reminds me of Mrs. Peacock talking to the somewhat bewildered but very good Mrs Wortle (*Dr Wortle's School*, Part 7, Chapter 7) or Mary Lady Mason to Mrs Penelope Orme where the crime has been forgery, perjury and Lady Mason has held onto the property thus far (*Orley Farm*, 1867). Miss Cassewary is shocked. But we come across this idea of marriage as form of death in other of Trollope's women. I suggest Lady Mabel resembles Mary Lady Mason in having masked herself for so long rather than face her alienation. Lady Mabel makes a strong contrast to another woman character who has not belonged to the female types I've talked about here, someone who has known how to keep her transgressions well out of view, Madame Max Goseler, whose behavior in social situations is only partly a mask.

In a talk I delivered at a Trollope conference in Exeter I argued that Trollope's novels are comfort romances for heterosexual men, where he empathizes deeply with men who have contradictory and difficult demands made on them; here I have found the best way for a contemporary person like myself to reach what Trollope has to say about women usefully and morally is to look for a particular pattern of fiction and voiced attitudes of mind found most frequently in women's novels and delve into what he has made of these. He does include mother-daughter scenes throughout his books.

Here I've chosen to dwell on women's friendships, a book topic if you take in the many other kinds of heroines I've not had room for: Lady Glencora and Madame Max (across the Parliamentary novels), Nina Balatka and the woman who saves her from killing herself, Rebecca Loth (*Nina Balatka*, 1865), predatory relationships, Julia, Lady Ongar, and Sophie Gordeloup (*The Claverings*), more minor pairs, especially sisters, say the letters between Dorothy and Trollope's one openly lesbian character, the character he said was the heroine of *He Knew He Was Right*, Priscilla Stanbury (1869). *Doctor Thorne* yields quite a crew (1857), of not-so-supportive and treacherous friendships, and last of all the temporary partnerships, once again Madame Max this time with Emilius's landlady, Mrs Meager (*Phineas Redux*, 1870). If we looked at these women's patterns, I suggest we would end up paying attention to very different kinds of turning points and learn differently about women's experiences in Trollope's novels, especially from his women characters' voiced points of view when with other women. His books might open up to us in a new or different way than they hitherto have.



*Nota Bene:* I mentioned at the end that I had not included an individual analysis of *Dr Wortle's School*, *The Claverings* or *Orley Farm*. Although they were germane to my talk I felt it would have taken too much time to do justice to these patterns. The problem with *Dr Wortle's School* is Mrs Wortle is not the confident friend or frenemy to Mrs Peacocke the other women in my paper are: the book is about the taboo Mrs Peacocke has broken itself as it relates to the radically enlightened Dr Wortle. The predatory relationship of Sophie Gourdeloupe to Julia Lady Ongar would have taken us in another weighty direction which would overload the paper. Finally of course Mary Lady Mason has not been sexually transgressive, but desperately tried to gain property for her son in order to bring him up a gentleman, and has forged a document and perjured herself. It is a genuine crime she has committed. I feel she is also one of Trollope's autistic women, which again would complicate our angle too much.

### Notes

1 For Trollope these studies are: Nardin; Markwick, *Trollope and Women*; Morse, *Women in the Palliser Novels*.

2 See my "On Inventing a New Country." Occasionally at least we also see the cost to the larger society as a whole of depriving and marginalizing an individual group, say women, but also other types of characters, for example, lower status poorly paid clergymen, lower status males whose occupations make them objects of distrust (I'll instance Sam Brattle of *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, 1868, in order to make clear what I mean here), or the less easily categorizable individuals whose variously vulnerable social psychologies puts them at a severe disadvantage to high ranking or effectively aggressive and ambitious characters

3 For example, Josiah Crawley, Thady Macdermot, Sir Thomas Underwood (that's *Ralph the Heir*, 1869), Louis Trevelyan, and even Plantagenet Palliser, all somewhat inarticulate, and at times socially anxious characters. Trollope does not have any overtly autistic women, which I attribute to the reality that until recently autism in women was not recognized, but they are there in Trollope too, fewer of them, recognizable through a choice to retreat, a way of masking themselves, and having but one close friend with whom they exchange letters. A prime example is Mary, Lady Mason, and her friend, Mrs. Penelope Orme (*Orley Farm*, 1860). Trollope's father would today be diagnosed as autistic, and he is one of the sources of a number of Trollope's famous male failures. It is only in the last 20 years have

autistic women begun to be diagnosed and helped; see Tornvall. I make a case for Joshua Crawley in my online talk, “The Modernity of the Last Chronicle of Barset” available at academia.edu [https://www.academia.edu/43459219/The\\_Modernity\\_of\\_the\\_Last\\_Chronicle\\_of\\_Barset](https://www.academia.edu/43459219/The_Modernity_of_the_Last_Chronicle_of_Barset) and the Trollope Society Website: <https://trollopesociety.org/lectures/online-reading-group/chronicle-barset/> In older studies of characters in Trollope you can find such characters shown to be “perverse,” e.g., King, on Lucius Mason as one of Trollope’s several studies of perversity. Gilead’s study bringing together Lily Dale, Mary Lady Mason and Mr Harding has at its core a similar undiagnosed insight. Although some of the literary criticism of HKHWR is startling in its open antipathy to Louis Trevelyan, see Weisenthal’s “The Body Melancholy.” An argument that depression was central to Anthony Trollope’s achievement is found in Stebbins’s group biography, *The Trollopes*. I’m suggesting that Trollope could empathize with an autistic man (or woman) because he recognized the source of his or her problems from what he saw in his father: an inability to interact socially in an effective way.

4 The almost universal awareness of this today was given its first striking formulation by Bill Overton, *The Unofficial Trollope* and in his essays, “An Interior View,” *Modern Language Review*, 71 (1976):489-99; “Self and Society in Trollope,” *ELH*, 45:2 (1978):285-302. It may now be found as a commonplace: see Gorra’s eloquent “Apostle of Common Sense.”

5 Strongly influential on this paper are studies of women’s psychology in the context of various societies as enacting a social ethic of caring and concern, e.g., Gilligan. I’m also using studies of women’s literature which bring out patterns intrinsic to what has been called *l’écriture-femme*, Pratt, Murdock. I find troubling many of the new “book studies” points of view have come to project an unqualified celebration of commercial success as a criterion for unassailable quality or interest (pro-capitalist). But think of all the discussions of egalitarianism, representation, and modes of doing different kinds of politics and fights about reform in the *Palliser* novels and *The Prime Minister*. John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* is an important influence in the era behind *He Knew He Was Right*, as well as various women’s journalistic views printed during Trollope’s life. See Elizabeth Hamilton’s and Pyle’s anthologies. My perspective is also one which brings this back if in a differently phrased ethic of social caring or concern, the common or social good (which I believe fundamental to a working society), liberal beliefs in the John Stuart Mill sense to find in Trollope however ambivalently they are regarded as a real social asset in his characters’ behaviors and communities. Madame Max repeatedly presents herself as going in for all socially advanced and progressive views.

6 I agree with Nardin and others who see a gradual evolution in Trollope’s depiction of women; I’m not sure it’s in a feminist direction, but he is in the later books likely to choose much less conventional women. Of course women who skirt or disobey or want to expose the unfairness of society’s norms at least to their friends and family occur across his career as do the obedient women, e.g., in the Barsetshire-Palliser series Lucy Robarts who will not accept Lord Lufton’s marriage proposal until his mother asks her to marry him, anticipates Isabel Boncassen’s refusal to say yes to Lord Silverbridge until she is wholly welcomed into the Palliser family by the Duke.

7 James’s review is in the Library on America volume *Literary Criticism* and is often quoted. See Halperin; see also Mullen, *Penguin Companion*, pp 37-39 (he canvasses other themes, like Christian charity, the responsibilities of having an estate); and Walter Kendrick, *Oxford Companion*, pp 47-49: he brings up Clara’s loyalty to her friend, Mrs. Askerton but regards this phase of the book as a minor incident. *The Routledge Companion* does not bring up *The Belton Estate*; *The Cambridge Companion* has only citations. I have not seen *Edinburgh* or other more recent and popularly oriented *Companions*.

8 See Markwick, pp 142-45. This is a book many of whose studies demonstrate how Trollope shows us women coping with hegemonic masculinity everywhere they turn in such a way as to win out what is in their best interest as conventional society saw then and an altered set of conventions sees it now.

9 Nardin, pp 162-78.

10 See my paper: “Trollope’s Storytelling Art: Partly Told in Letters” published in *Trollopiana* and on the Victorian web. I show that letters are central to Trollope’s story-telling art.  
<https://victorianweb.org/authors/trollope/moody2/comfort.html>

11 See my paper, “Epistolarity and Masculinity” in Davies’s Trollope adaptations. Davies shows considerable insight into the hegemonic masculinity of Trollope’s book when he has Paul Montague assail Roger Carbury for the shameful practice of trying to take over a vulnerable and powerless young girl’s body. It’s a critique of Victorian and other norms (still practiced in some societies today). Davies ends the story quite differently, with Paul and Hetta escaping the morally corrupt yet rigid society that Trollope places them in. He shows both Marie and Georgiana remaining unmarried, Marie by choice.

12 I take mild issue with Trollope’s mockery of the familiar female icon, a compensatory glamorous victim, often presented as central to women’s silly historical romances. That titillating ideas lie behind historical fiction written by women is one of the reasons the historical romance was so despised from early until later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See Perkins, “Sixteenth Century Queens.” There is an assumption in Trollope that it is laughable to take seriously the idea that earlier women in powerful positions had any serious importance. I agree with Mark Green (and others I’ve talked to) that the portrait of Lady Carbury is an uncomfortably close caricature of Fanny Trollope’s commercial career, with Sir Felix standing in for her favoritism of her son, Thomas, who lived off and with her. See below where I quote the later chapter in *TWWLN* where Lady Carbury is hawking a new book, *The Wheel of Fortune*.

13 The early outline and notes of Trollope for *TWWLN*, which have been published as appendices to different editions of Trollope show that, after he initially getting down his characters, he is seeing the females in terms of the male they appear with. Sutherland’s thorough “Trollope at Work in *The Way We Live Now*” supports the idea that Melmotte becomes central to the book, but Sutherland has a masculinist bias. See Pateman who argues that until the 20<sup>th</sup> century and still today the way the law regarded women (and where therefore placed by society) was as part of society through their relationships with a male or their family headed by a male. Lady Carbury begins the book, is there thought out (down to the last hawking a seemingly junk books, *The Wheel of Fortune*, from publisher to publisher, Chapter 89, pp 671-79), until the penultimate chapter. By then Melmotte has been long dead (end of Chapter 83, pp 629-32). If you look at detail, space, and a linchpin holding the various stories together, Melmotte is secondary to Lady Carbury and Felix.

14 I much prefer the fates Davies gives Hetta and Marie: Hetta escapes her mother and the stifling conventions of English society; Marie marries none of them, thus remaining in charge of what’s left of Melmotte’s wealth.

15 None of Lady Monogram’s scenes are omitted from Andrew Davies’s 4-part rendition of the book. See my view of Sol’s study of Fanny Burney’s novels and those Burney influenced: Sol shows how the

conventions that women are taught will make them safe actually endanger them; an insight we find first in Fanny Burney and then many women's novels of the 18<sup>th</sup> century:

<http://www.jimandellen.org/Reviewers.Corner.Sol.html> *Cecilia* remained a popularly read book throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Thackeray presents both Becky Sharpe and Amelia Sedley as readers of Burney's enormous novels.

16 In my view among the bitterest books in Trollope's oeuvre are *The Claverings* and *Kept in the Dark*. An important source for the *The Claverings* are two raunchy misogynist 18<sup>th</sup> century plays where the action is amoral and cruel (Van Brugh and Colley Cibber products); it has a derisory portrait of a homosexual (Archie Clavering) used to show up the lack of any decent values in the Clavering family. Harry Clavering is without any qualities that we can use as part of an assured identity; the chief male, Hugh Clavering, is an unrelieved portrait of toxic masculinity. See my chapter in my book, *Trollope on the 'Net on The Claverings* and pp 89-90 on Trollope's later dark or extremely emotional novellas where a central character is truly a victim.

17 The apparatus materials that Professor Amarnick and his team have prepared speak for themselves. You may see more on the Trollope Society website: <https://trollopesociety.org/works/dukes-children/>

18 I have found it startling to read the older much-admired essays on *The Duke's Children* where except if the writer is determined to talk of women in Trollope Lady Mabel ends up a minor character. See Butte and Hagan in contrast to Morse and (Juliet) McMasters.

19 At the close of *John Caldigate*, Mrs Smith goes to prison; she will be transported. Caldigate gets off scot-free. I find this outrageous; extremely dismaying when you think of the reality, and on whose labor Caldigate took his original fortune. Grennan frees her and has her returning by ship to Australia. As with Davies's rewrites of *TWWLN* and *HKHWR* (so that we see Emily at long last freed with her son), Grennan rewrites Mrs Smith's story by drawing different inferences from the evidence.

20 The mother-daughter relationship is yet more central to women's novels than women's friendships (sisterhood is a substitute). See Hirsh. Those many novels where mothers are absent are often loaded with aunts, older sisters, a grandmother. One could read *TWWLN* through the perspective of Lady Carbury's relationship with Hetta; *The Belton Estate* from Clara's relationship with her faithless (yes) aunt, Mrs Winterfield. Lady Mabel's lack of a mother is an important part of her story. Is it arguable that Lady Glencora is the chief character in *The Duke's Children*?

21 Careful watching of Irons's performance in the 1975-75 *The Pallisers* Episodes 20-21 reveal how strongly emotional is Tregear's response to finding Lady Mabel at Lord Silverbridge's apartment in Venice. Anna Carteret as Lady Mabel plays her words with studied neutrality but also manages to convey there is nothing beneath her surface; not Irons as his face contorts, and looks darker; as he turns from Lady Mabel as it were in disgust. Irons manages to convey a lot in these few moments and scenes for apart from later on Silverbridge seeming to know (for the first time perhaps) there had been something between Tregear and Lady Mabel, there is nothing else to signal the past. The series did not have enough time left to include more than the scene of Silverbridge refusing Lady Mabel and that is done in a discreet manner – so as to keep the viewer sympathetic to Anthony Andrews as Silverbridge.

22 See Morse, *Women in the Palliser Novels*, pp 125-32; but see also Walton, *Lacanian Reading*, who finds everywhere in Trollope's novels women re-imprisoned or never escaping control by a man; she

quotes Elaine Showalter on later *fin-de-siecle* European literature (from Showalter's book, *Sexual Anarchy*) where Showalter finds reinforcement of anti-feminism patterns in much of the literature of the era.

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