Lady Anna - Chapters 25-36

(Installment 7 of 12 so a little more than half way)

Ellen Moody

"The lady ought to marry the tailor"!

> I take my title from a series of exclamation Trollope probably wrote to Mary Holmes, ex-governess to Thackeray's daughters, "with whom "according to Richard Mullen, one of Trollope's many biographers, Trollope corresponded for many years, and wrote about his works with an intensity few others saw," Mullen, *AT, A Victorian in his World*, p 560)

Trollope's Lady Anna (published 1873) is a novel that apparently upset its first readership, at least as recorded in readers' familiar letters, and published reviews. Many objected to what Trollope said was the very reason he wrote the book. Here he is telling a correspondent, Lady Wood, about its origination and conclusion, "Of course the girl has to marry the tailor. It is very dreadful, but there was no other way. The story was originated in my mind as to whether she ought to be true to her troth, or to her heritage … and I determined that in such case she ought to be true all through. To make the discrepancy as great as possible I made the girl an earl's daughter, and the betrothed a tailor" (Mullen, pp 533-34)

I'd volunteered to take the penultimate (second to the last set of) chapters of *Lady Anna*, the novel, without realizing that in these we reach an explicit core of the story's personal matter plainly discussed, even eloquently, first by Daniel Thwaite in his letter of appeal to Anna (Chapter 25), which alas she is prevented from reading, and then by Anna in her honest letter to the young Earl of Lovel (Chapter 27). These two letters contain crucial statements of their emotional states of mind set in truthful autobiographical contexts as they see them, put forward as what is fueling their stubborn stance (a Romeo & Juliet who fall into one another's arms on the rare occasions they come into personal contact) as they refuse to obey the hierarchical values motivating their relatives, friends, and lawyers who want to prevent the match as unthinkable, much less doable. The Lovels and their team of lawyers want Lady Anna to marry the young Earl of Lovel and argue as an Earl's daughter she cannot marry a tailor; her mother, Josephine Murray, is traumatized by the idea of such a match. She has been fighting all her life to be recognized as the Earl's legitimate wife. Her chief attorney, Sergeant Bluestone, a man who does not like to compromise, and can grow angry, is at this point against any compromise. Given their childhoods spent growing up together, their shared vulnerable statuses, and long-term relationship, to Daniel and Anna, their rank at birth, while certainly mattering, is of secondary importance.

Daniel Thwaite's evident sincerity and generosity in his letter leads Bluestone, again, attorney for the Countess, to concede Thwaite's is "a fine manly letter." (*Lady Anna* p 263). Thwaite first tells Anna her mother is wrong to say Anna cannot marry him. Once she is 21 nothing in law or their religion can prevent them from marrying (pp 259-61). Nonetheless, Daniel offers to release Anna from her vows, despite years of loyal attachment to one another, if what her mother says is so, that she now freely prefers Lord Lovel, that it was only ties of gratitude that kept her insisting she must fulfill her promise to marry him. Daniel declares that he loves her in his "heart of hearts" and has done so through years of poverty, against denigration of her and her mother as fakes and liars; he reminds the reader of this letter he has defended her at every turn.

Trollope as omniscient narrator contextualizes this document by vividly picturing Daniel as "forlornly" in front of the door to Keppel Street, where he believes the Countess and her daughter reside and finds "just one servant" "who could hardly be made" to come to the door to take his letter.

For her part in her letter to the young Earl Lovel asking him to desist, Anna confesses to painful self and social revelations about herself. She ought not to be writing this letter. Daniel is today a tailor (for which she is told he is unacceptable) because his father and he spent their income and savings to defend her and her mother in court and to support them in a decent middle-class way. She is being asked to break a real emotional bond as well as a promise, to behave wrongly to Daniel Thwaite, and Daniel Thwaite himself has been mischaracterized hostilely. The trigger of the situation is the earl will inherit only the title; he is so poor, he has to leave his horses with his uncle, the Rector Lovel. She may well be unfit to associate with the Earl now (which idea he projected when he was horrified to be told by her that Daniel and Anna are engaged); but as Earl's acknowledged biological daughter, she inherits the Lovel family fortune. If in his letter, Daniel is prepared to be all generosity, Anna is all candor in hers (pp 281-83).

Lovel's letter in reply to Anna's placed next (still Chapter 27) shows him explicitly not recognizing the validity of all she has said about herself and Daniel when it comes to marriage. He accuses her of not daring to say (which she didn't think to say) that the working-class Daniel is unfit to be her husband. Instead of a physical picture of the letter's writer at the moment of delivery, Trollope provides her most immediate thought upon perusing Lovel's words. She simply says aloud or to herself what she had omitted: "But I do dare … why should I not dare? why should I not love him now, when I was not ashamed to love him before" (p. 284).

Sandwiched between these three letters is a chapter where we find an account of a conversation between Daniel and "the Keswick poet," i.e.,Robert Southey, once one of the famous radical romantic poets of the 1790s where to Daniel's deep dismay Southey asserts Anna's presumed rank at birth places her "infinitely" above him (a tailor is just "too low"). This from a man whom Daniel as a boy and young man (Daniel is self-educated to a high cultural level) had so looked up to as a mentor. Southey reinterprets or qualifies what he had written long ago, and then turns to argue on very different kinds of grounds (in keeping with Trollope's disillusioned romance and social realism in other of his novels), that love for someone cannot last unless accompanied by social acceptance of that person by other people, and by enough money to provide respectability and comfort for the family that the marriage will create. Southey says that Lady Anna will not be able to escape the values most people around her are now imposing on her and Daniel and will continue to impose and she will become dissatisfied and he resentful of how she might then see him (Moody, *Trollope on the 'Net*, p 177).

Trollope has for the moment shown clearly the central political, social, and psychological debate; he pushes aside the surface arguments of law and evidence relevant in a trial (who was married to whom when, arguments over probabilities of events). Here laid out before us is a pellucid discussion of opposed values and outlooks in the context of personal feelings (Lovell opens his letter by asserting he has no interest in keeping Daniel Thwaite from Anna), and the writers' personal histories and the identities at stake before Trollope proceeds to dramatize the court proceeding (Ch 28, "Lovel v. Murray and Another."). We are about also to experience the proceeding from the perceptions and exacerbated feelings of Daniel Thwaite (Chapter 29, "Daniel Thwaite alone). He remains unnamed, he is the "another", has had trouble gaining admittance to the courtroom when he is one of the principals; he

stands alone listening to his role in the proceedings ignored. It's as if somehow he doesn't exist, certainly doesn't count.

In the novel Daniel is sometimes a surrogate for Trollope (as was the Jewish and therefore unacceptable Anton Trendellsohn [AT]in Trollope's novel set in Prague, *Nina Balatka*) as the previously ostracized and derided Anna is also sometimes a Trollope surrogate (she corresponds to the impoverished Christian Nina, betrothed to a Jew and accused by him and others of lying and hiding important papers). Like Anton who distrusts Nina, Daniel's impulse, since he is already more than a little embittered by what we'd call prejudiced bigoted behaviour towards him, is to distrust Anna (how could she hold out against this array of the upper-class world's power and prestige). He has behaved openly, and fairly, and the Lovels, Countess and all their lawyers, have been "hard and unjust and bad" to him (p 308). Trollope, ever there as narrator, moves to "correct" Daniel's angry and hurt musings as one-sided, as forgetting all the just and important civic functions these titled, propertied and educated men perform.

All this interiority (epistolary and meditative) becomes preface to the various lawyers reasonings in the court proceeding, especially that of the leading councilor to the young Earl, Sir William Patterson, Q.C (Chapters 30 and 31, "Justice is to be done," "The Verdict"). Trollope pauses his story to explain the book's first unconclusive climax,: we go over all that has happened presented as court evidence. So for our discussion's sake, it is time to place this week's chapters in the plot-design of the novel as a whole, and where in the storyline its back-and-forth repetitive episodes have occurred.

The opening 4 chapters of the novel (Installment 1) dramatize and meditate a sardonically gothic tale. It occurs in Cumberland, a rural landscape, with the old Earl Lovel a villain equivalent to a Lovelace (the rapist in the 18th century novelist Samuel Richardson's famous epistolary romance, *Clarissa* (which Trollope knew well to write an informative review on the Victorian abridgement). He may also be meant to recall the diabolical Montoni in Radcliffe's *Udolpho*. He has tricked (so he claims gleefully) Josephine Murray into believing he has legitimately married her. Now she is pregnant, and he offers to take her to Italy as his mistress; devastated (she had married him because she wanted a title as well as wealth), she pleads with him to marry her. When he scorns and mocks her, she leaves him and takes shelter for many years with a Thomas Thwaite, kindly, a politically radical tailor, and his son, Daniel. All go to court (for which the Thwaites pay) where the Earl is acquitted of bigamy. So Josephine is perhaps really an Earl's wife. But her title remains dubious; she is not accepted partly because of who she turned to (there was no one else). The earl returns and exhibits yet more defiant wild behavior (including open adultery with another Italian woman), until at the close of the Chapter 2, the Earl dies. He leaves a will. A distant male Lovel will get the title. But all else remains insufficently validated and contested by others.

By chapter 5 (Installment 2) two teams of lawyers have emerged, one headed by Sir William, fighting for the young earl's right to the legacy (as Sir William sees it one obstacle is a court decision that the Earl could not be convicted of bigamy), the other for the putative Countess, headed by Sergeant Bluestone. The Lovels need money; the Countess craves recognition, seared as her mind has been, by the shaming she and her daughter have known. Then astoundingly to most concerned, Sir William proposes a compromise: let the two young Lovels wed, and title and money will go into one shared purse and one legitimate new family. He is intervening with the actual events in these people' lives. It's the right thing to do, he says (later he will deny the engagement between Daniel and Anna is "a disgrace") and anyway Mr Frick, solicitor, part of Sir William's Lovel team, has discovered in Italy that it is impossible to discover whether the old earl was married in Italy before he wed Josephine Murray.

Seemingly all the other lawyers are horrified by the number of taboos Sir William must enact to engineer this felicitous outcome, (Installment 3, Chapter 9, "It isn't law"); as we listen to debates, differing opinions on what legal game to play, get to know something of the nuances in their personalities, rank and place in life, with whom and where they reside, all of which help determine what each lawyer proposes. We naturally begin to wonder, What is this novel about?

In "The Ethics of High Expectations," in an issue of the *South Carolina Law Review* (Vol 62, No 439, 2010, pp 440-469, esp. pp 440ff), Jean Galbraith makes a strong case for the novel as about legal ethics, with Sir William as its hero. It is the high-ranking much respected Sir William who takes us through the intricacies of what occurred and if there is anything trustworthy in what documents or testimony they are left with. Sir William means to suggest that the young Earl should drop the lawsuit, that the Countess is undoubtedly legally married, and they must enact his proposed compromise. This is not allowed by the judge until all arguments and skeins of evidence are gone over. What is ambiguously produced is the verdict and solution Sir William has said they should agree to – so as to stop further litigation. Is this novel to be placed alongside *Orley Farm*? Or does it radically expose trials as places where not truth but some outcome everyone can agree to whether just or unjust (for example, at the end of *The Macdermots of Ballcloran* where our hero, Thady, is hung though many know he did not commit premeditated murder).

But wait. The trigger of the law case – what everyone acknowledges as important, why the young Earl seeks to replace Daniel Thwaite, is the young earl's lack of money. Understanding this motive, Anna has proposed to share her legacy with the Earl – which we gather, except for her mother's protest against her marrying Thwaite, might content everyone. This week's remarkable chapters also bring out that Daniel is due £9,000. Upon learning this, it is Sir William's turn to be astounded and say he would never have conducted the court proceeding the way he did had he known the huge amount (Chapter 33, "Daniel Thwaite receives his money"). The worst mistake it seems that Goffe (for the countess) commits is when he offers Daniel a £400 annuity. Daniel becomes livid at the contempt Daniel assumes Goffe has for him. Has he, Daniel, ever shown himself to be so base? Another low or mean moment occurs in this chapter when Rector Lovel, thinking the Earl will now get nothing, asks to be paid for stabling the Earl's horses. The deeper question the Rector is asking his nephew is how does he as relatively penniless Earl plan to provide for his way of life? So is this another of Trollope's novels intended to show us (as Trollope puts it in *An Eye for An Eye*) "how great and terrible is the power of money.".

I've already alluded to the gothic opening of this novel (Chapters 1-2); the narrator's opening lines declare it's the story of the "hardest fiercest cruelty" to which to which a woman (Josephine Murray) was ever subjected by a depraved predator (these are not too strong words). In terms of plot-design – the opening of the book and its long-drawn out close centering on the countess (perhaps the book's most destroyed character; whether tragic or pathetic misfit or more objectively obsessively mad (Kincaid, "Trollope's Tragedy,", *Routledge Companion*), I'd say it's feminist or female gothic, as the subgenre is sometimes called. Among Lady Anna's last explanations for her adamantine refusal of her mother choice is that if she obeys her now she will become "mother's slave." The countess Lovel has shocked everyone by asserting she would prefer her daughter to die than marry this tailor. What could be more like a modern woman than Anna wanting to own herself, to make her own identity? These chapters end with Chapter 36, "It's still true" Anna asserts to Daniel that she loves him. But given Daniels's statements about Anna's money – she must be wholly dependent on him – I cannot say I think her willingness to follow him literally across the earth argues anything feminist here.

I first read the book with a listserv community in the later 1990s, and from their comments it emerged as dramatizing common "social, sexual, and familial experiences which leave sensitive people with long-lasting, painful and easily irritated memories" (*Trollope on the 'Net,* pp 154-58). Among the motives for Anna's refusal of Lovel early on is the Lovels are not comfortable around her; like her mother she too does not quite fit in anywhere. They put me in mind of Trollope' profound portrait of Roger Scatcherd, originally a stone mason, now a fabulously wealthy bridge and railway maker and banker who lends out money in *Dr Thorne*. Lady Anna's story has a parallel with Thorne's bastard niece, Mary (like Anna who is perhaps illegitimate but an heiress), Mary tells her "uncle" near the end of the novel:

"uncle; you must bear the misery of having to provide for me—bonnets and all. We are in the same boat, and you shan't turn me overboard."

> Dr. Thorne: "But if I were to die, what would you do then?"
> Mary: "And if I were to die, what would you do? People must be bound together.
> They must depend on each other" (Chapter 11, p. 153; Polhemus, pp. 56-57).

Using the grandiose vocabulary P. D. Edwards uses in his survey of all Trollope's fictions, Are Mary and Anna ,"champions of their sex" and "the sanctity of human relationships" (Edwards, p 146)? P. D. Edwards' perspective on Lady Anna turns it into an uncomfortable but characteristic Trollopian masterpiece (pp 130-32).

Those who speak most highly of the book set it in a political context and it is illuminating how it is not dated. Just change a few terms. Substitute race prejudice for class and rank. In Kincaid's great book, *The Novels of Anthony Trollope*, far from an anomaly, *Lady Anna* is situated politically with a group of less well-known "Variations in Irony" between the two popular series, the *Barsetshire* and *Palliser* novels. What I find intriguing about the book is its resemblance to *Rachel Ray* (about religious prejudice and class) which George Eliot described thus:

> I am much struck in Rachel with the skill with which you have organized thoroughly natural everyday incidents into a strictly related well proportioned whole, natty and complete as nut on its stem. Such construction is among those subtleties of art which can hardly be appreciated except by those who have striven after the same result with conscious failure.

All the different far reaching and feelingfully deep themes I've summarized are in *Lady Anna* exquisitely woven together to the point they continually morph into one another. The book's ending can accommodate an attempted murder for which no one will be prosecuted but one person vanished from the social order (tragedy), a kind of exile for our central couple as a good compromise (comedy), and a highly theatrical melodrama with a veneer of everyday reconciliation between all but the self-destroying embittered countess.

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I thought of some questions for our smaller groups to respond to:

1. What makes us enjoy a novel, or perhaps I should say what do you or anyone think of when that question is raised? Did you find Lady Anna enjoyable? At the time people complained about its radicalism. Do you think its politics was what made people reject it? (It was Sadleir who discovered it didn't sell well.)

2. Is one of your criteria likable characters? Is there anyone in this book that you could bond with? Aunt Lovel for example? I happened to be rereading the opening of *Dr Thorne* at the same time, famous for its supposedly first tedious chapters and Trollope's tedious apology. I found them marvelously entertaining as Trollope immersed me in these people's hidden pasts. In comparison *Lady Anna* is obsessively almost one note. Trollope's narrator in *Dr Thorne* uses an array of wry ironic tones, subtle and inimitable.

3. Is this a book which asks the question, is integrity achievable in our fallen world? Here think about the choice Sir Willam makes. How does law function in this book? Who can it help? Should the Lovel family regard Sir William as someone who did not look out for the best solution for their client even if the final settlement satisfied many.

4. Thinking along feminist lines, was Mrs Bluestone justified in her seemingly mild but incessantly coercive behavior to Anna?

Notes

1 To Lady Wood," Of course the girl has to marry the tailor. It is very dreadful, but there was no other way. The story was originated in my mind as to whether she ought to be true to her troth, or to her heritage … and I determined that in such case she ought to be true all through. To make the discrepancy as great as possible I made the girl an earl's daughter, and the bethrothed a tailor" FMullen, *A Victorian in his World,* pp 533-34). Christine Kypriandes, A Few Words about Miss Mary Holmes, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, No 2 (2017):527-47

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