

Ellen Moody

What holds has Money or Family Ties over Companionate Friendship, Love & Charity of Spirit

or

The Changing World of Trollope's *The Bertrams*?

Focus: Chapters XXV – XXXVI

I begin by quoting from *He Knew He Was Right*, early in the novel

‘Have you heard from Colonel Osborne this morning?’

‘I have.’

‘And where is his letter?’

‘I have destroyed it.’

Again, he paused, trying to think what he had better do, trying to be calm. And she still stood opposite to him with the scorn of her bright angry eyes. Of course he was not calm. He was the very reverse of calm. ‘And you refuse to tell me what he wrote,’ he said.

‘The letter is there,’ she answered, pointing away towards the door. If you want to play the spy, go and look at it yourself.’

‘Do you call me a spy?’

‘And what have you called me? Because you are a husband, is the privilege of vituperation to be all on your side’ (HKHWR, 9:76)

This scene bears an uncanny resemblance to a closely similar moment in the final crack up of the marriage of one of *The Bertrams*’ central couples, Sir Henry Harcourt and Caroline Waddington, including the accusation of spying, the vilification, and the word or a name uttered by the husband to the wife, which instantly leads to both women refusing to go to bed with her husband, apparently ever after. The word is *harlot*, which we are told immediately, in *The Bertrams*. It takes us 657 pages to be finally told in *HKHWR*. Scenes which occur in the couple’s bedroom at night in *HKHWR* produce sounds and glimpses of behavior which rock with hysteria (HKHWR, e.g., 3:27). Analogous also mostly referred-to, rather than dramatized, searing scenes in *The Bertrams* just beyond their bedroom are repeatedly associated with the words uttered by both Caroline and our narrator: “wretchedness,” “silence, “unbearable,” and “a foul Mezentian embrace”(Note 1) (e.g. XXXVI:454, Harcourt qualified

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the noun with “brazen-faced,” “unmitigated”).

Last week, Chris Skilton provided us with a comprehensive perspective through which to unify, or connect and understand *The Bertrams*' seeming disunity, startling changes of mood, taboos broken; for example, in this week's chapters, plangent paragraphs of religious doubt from our central hero, George Bertram before he goes to church for the first time in a long time (XXVI:328-30); and the seeming misplacement and incongruous amounts of space given over to different sections of *The Bertrams*, e.g., Miss Todd's wonderful picnic and card party, three wide apart but narratively central chapters 47 pages long, while the important reunion of our primary hero, George Bertram with our central heroine, Caroline Waddington, takes three paragraphs, two of them short, altogether less than half a page at the very end of the Conclusion of the book, as if it were an afterthought (IX-X:93-129, XXII:272-293).

My line of argument for this talk is to make concrete Chris's perspective across the book with my focus and quotations from this week's chapters on the theme in the book where we see considerations of money and family ties in conflict with the characters' companionate friendships, need to give and receive love, and charity of spirit found in most of the characters. Not all.

Chris suggested that many of the novels' chapters read like travelogues. Three of the seven that I counted, are told from the disillusioned surprise and disappointment of someone looking to find scenes like those he imagined when reading his Bible (VI-VII, IX, XVII- XVIII, XXXVIII-XXXIX). (Note 2) Chris thought George's “wrestling with uncertainty” and search for an “identity” in these chapters paralleled George's various self-betrayals elsewhere in the novel, his overspending and contradictory lending money to his father that he cannot afford to give and knows he'll not get back, his distaste for the kinds of career networking demanded for the kind of success that he wants, and political, social and religious debates of the 1830s. Chris mentioned Trollope's preoccupation with Peele's repeal of the Corn laws, which were in effect tariffs (these are import taxes paid by importers, and then passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices). The motive is usually to keep foreign products out, in the case of grains keeping the price of bread high to protect the profits of landowners, never mind who starves.

I agree that in *The Bertrams* we are seeing a realignment of power, money, and marketable occupations. The “old county” families whose sons married seemingly rich women, went into the legal professions, became military officers, or lived on rents or tithes as gentlemen and clergymen (the vicarage supplied by the church), now find the payments are not enough to sustain an upper middle-class life. As we see, our secondary hero, Arthur Wilkerson (George's cousin), is unwilling to marry his beloved and loving Adela Gauntlet without an inherited allowance and/or salary given him by an ex-student of Arthur's father, Dean Stapleton. Arthur is unaware that, like George Bertram, Adela's primary desire in life is not a prestigious position and circumstances such a position's level of secure wealth usually brings. Arthur and George (iconic allusive names) know that to live a luxuriously upper middle-class life, or on the other end, sometimes just to survive, they will probably need to marry money, go into business in the world's merchants' marketplaces, to wheel and deal in the corridors of power, or learn how to manipulate or gamble in the stock market. The double first degree that George earns at Oxford and is made the subject of Trollope's opening meditation on what is regarded as success is no guarantee that George will obtain desirable patronage as such positions are shrinking and must be competed for. In Trollope's previous novel, *The Three Clerks*, he inveighs against competitive examinations and certificates for learning that have nothing to do with the skills or sort of person needed for the work that needs to be done for the specific job.

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This is the world that Sir Henry Harcourt is thriving in; unlike Phineas Finn, Harcourt's idea of success in politics does not seem to have much to do with serving his constituents. The “fixer” in the Palliser series, Barrington Erle, would not have to worry Harcourt will not vote with his party, no matter what the consensus demands (as we see he has to with Phineas Finn). Caroline longs to be the admired of this world as a rich socialite or at least securely middle class wife amid expensive furniture at the right address as the *sine qua non* to her happiness (note 3).

George's father, Sir Lionel Bertram, had rather live the life of a gentleman drone, without working, by begging or being given money by relatives -- as perhaps was once the understood thing to do. Only reluctantly does George learn to judge his father as contemptuous. George seems to yearn to live the life of a gentleman scholar in a pre-capitalist non-industrialized environment. What troubles him for real occurs in an early phase of this sequence, Trollope in an earnest voice in the person of Bertram on prayer, the peculiarity of his own individual passions, beliefs. In one passage Bertram reminded me of Claudius in Hamlet, trying to pray (328-32). He lives in another spiritual world (Note 4). In this week's chapters we are shown how & why George gives in to his father's peremptory, persistent demands for money at a “quiet little dinner” George cannot afford either (XXXIII:415-16). George's aged more than solvent uncle, Sir or old George (Lionel's older brother and secretly Caroline's grandfather, Note 5) was the family heir. In these contemporary re-arrangements of life and mores, old or Sir George despises Sir Lionel (young George's father), because Lionel, not having inherited wealth, has made no money to pay for young George's schooling.

This recalls the early chapter in which (as I said) Dean Stapleton refuses to provide an income for Arthur Wilkerson (III:27-35) to go with his position as vicar and to support the vicarage: “No one has a claim on me; I allow no one to have such claims” (34). Though there is no family tie, there seems to have been enough respect between Stapleton and Arthur's father, the Dean's teacher. So, says the Dean, since he must give someone this living (which he hates doing), the person might as well be his teacher's son. At the same time his resentment at having to act this role (he claims to want to give the income to the curate) leads him to give most of the income to his teacher's widow, Arthur's mother. The Dean enjoys berating Arthur under the pretense of shock when he in effect accuses Arthur of indifference to the “unfortunate” Mrs. Wilkerson, and his sisters (left with nothing) whom Stapleton has never seen, and years later at first refuses to see when on what Mrs. Wilkerson supposed had been recognized grounds of human obligation. Stapleton treats her with arrogant, amused contempt when she has come to complain to him that Arthur is taking charge of the house and grounds, the income from these, and keeping the tithes to marry Adela (the whole of XLII).

What happens in these searing scenes at Stapleton's great house and estate of Bowes, are not side issues; they are set up as parallels anticipating what's to come: Old George will likewise resent someone he is expected to support and likes to tell his nephew that he is just loaning young George the money which enables young George to go to Oxford. These loans, old George says, he expects young George to pay back, with scheduled interest payments, which money old George knows very well young George has no means of paying back unless old George tells his business manager, the rueful empathetic Mr. Pritchett quietly to supply it from other of old George or the family's funds. He urges and pressures young George to marry Caroline because she stands to inherit some of the Bertram money (as she is his granddaughter, a relationship, as I said, kept hidden because of some shameful transgression involved in Caroline's birth, Note 5). Caroline may inherit some of the Bertram wealth.

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Old George's insistence the money is a loan is his way of pressuring George to do as he wishes, that is, marry money within the family (i.e. Caroline) thus keeping it in the family. At the same time old George prevents Lionel from marrying Caroline's soft-hearted aunt, Miss Mary Baker, another of his nieces (perhaps Caroline's mother's sister), by the simple expedient of dictating to her a brief note to Lionel to the effect that "he will not give me a penny during his life, or leave me a penny after his death, if I were to become your wife" XXXII:412)

I looked for a family genealogy but Trollope does not provide one.

Sir George may be said to represent the book's older or previous' generation whose lessons in life in *The Bertrams* include repeatedly coming up against a new psychological reality or stance found in the new or younger generation. Aging George finds that cannot he control Caroline's nor young George's choices in life by withholding or offering his apparently substantial money and property. Even if Sir George wishes and thinks "the world" expects that Caroline will live with her husband, Sir Henry, she refuses to return to Henry's house. She can stay with her aunt, the above Miss Mary Baker who rents a small inexpensive lodging in Little Bath.

The contemporary world or society with its new kinds of habitat in *The Bertrams* countenances a whole new subset of people in the towns set up for holidays and sickness, like the relatively inexpensive Little Bath where not only was it socially acceptable and convenient to provide safe places and spaces where unmarried women, spinsters and widows live alone (or with a paid female companion or maid) relatively freely, independently, without obligation, usually on limited incomes. Their money regarded cumulatively supported these towns, with their forms of paid-for entertainment, assembly rooms, theaters and bathing spas (where the mineral water was to be found) private card parties, concerts, and *conversations* that we encounter in middle class English novels like *The Bertrams* or Austen's *Persuasion* .

The entertainment itself was also used as forms of support: Bath was a place where people gambled away large sums of money, drank freely at bars where prostitutes plied their trade, usually discreetly, and aristocrats turned real estate magnates, like James Brydges, the 1st Duke of Chandos, could feel they were contributing to the growth of wealth around them in a respectable manner creating aesthetic beauty, while collecting or pulling in immense profits. Other names that are still recognized among readers of such books are Ralph Allen, famous for reforming the post office and being the living original of Henry Fielding's Mr. Allworthy was a financier, a man who dealt in Bath clay and stone; John Wood's Druidical fantasies provided the architectural paradigms of circles (crescents) on grassy carved hills and cliffs, but father and son made their money as as astonishingly successful businessmen architects (Note 6).

What brings Sir Lionel there? The possibility of marrying a desperate monied spinster. The third great unmentionable about Bath in most polite middle class English novels of the period set there (the first two are husband and wife hunting, and prostitution) is how you could try to live as a gentleman card-sharper. Gambling and alcoholism. Read the life of Richard "Beau" Nash who besides forming the ceremonial role of introducing people to one another at dances and keeping out the lower classes was in charge of regulating gambling: he booked tables, was supposed to restrain addicted gamblers and crooks. As he was living beyond his means, he became addicted and died a bankrupt (Note 7)

This new or reset or change in economic, social and therefore political arrangements has some new

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winners as well as new losers. Who seems to be the happiest character in the novel? Why clearly Miss Sarah or Sally Todd (Note 8). It is her party and her picnic to which so many pages are given and also occur on either side (before or after) the literal center of the book. It's not just that she has the freedom of wealth, but like, from another Trollope book. Miss Martha Dunstable, is rich enough and unmarried as are most of the "visitors" who peopled the worlds of Bath, Little Bath, but that she also sees through hypocrisy and recognizes cruelty and kindness, honesty and lies.

The problem that places like Little Bath solved for unmarried or single women only occurred from from the middle of the 18th century and later in the more citified, town parts of European cities where it became socially acceptable for a woman or women to live in a house without a male (unless they were in a convent or some kind of "orderly" recognized institution). Easily, almost anywhere a woman living alone could easily find herself the target of a thug or thugs as presumably a prostitute. (Note 9). A maid or entourage of servants such as Miss Martha Dunstable surrounds herself with may not be affordable by every woman but, as traveling and other kinds of newly liberated or semi-professional women did, very respectable clothing, and firm sense of yourself as a member of a middling to upper caste and enough money (as Catherine Morland discovers at the close of *Northanger Abbey*), and at least one companion servant will take you far and safely. The women of *The Bertrams* do not have the power, rights or unless a widow or heiress with inherited money), but given the default settings so to speak of their gender (women tend to be social, they form households in which they tend to stay put) in general in Trollope they are much happier than the equivalent unmarried males -- unless like Mr. Harding with Elanor early in the oeuvre or Mr. Grey and Dorothy in one of his last books, they are blessed with daughters or, like Dr Thorne, a niece.

Trollope quietly reinforces the continued precariousness of an unmarried woman's life when Aunt Mary has to be away at first. Caroline's access or entitlement to housing seems to become non-existent when she leaves her husband; she is dependent on the kindness of an aunt who reluctantly moves back to old George's house when he commands her. When Aunt Mary is gone, she has no place to offer Caroline and herself is dependent on her friendship with another Little Bath spinster, the rich Miss Sarah (or Sally) Todd. Caroline is acutely aware that she has never met Miss Todd; they are "strangers." But Caroline must sojourn at first uncomfortably with the (as she finds) easy welcoming Miss Todd until her aunt returns; Caroline does not know, as we do, Sally's relaxed generosity of spirit from that lengthy card party and picnic, or that a favorite word with her to her other single women friends in distress is "come". But having refused to go to bed with Sir Henry Harcourt, Caroline needs "to escape" him or his house (the whole of chapter XXXV) as it is not also hers. She previously escaped George's angry pressure while in London that she marry him by showing Harcourt George's wrathful letter, then telling Harcourt that she loves George and told George so, when George came inquiring after his angry demanding letter. The dialogue between her and Harcourt (which I alluded to above) is not as painful as her words with George Bertram:

'Caroline, speak to me—say one word. I will go alone one word. I will go if you will bid me. Yes, even alone, I will go even alone if you have the heart to say so. Speak, Caroline.'

'What would you have me say?' And she looked at him through her tears so haggard, so wild, so unchanged, that he was almost frightened at her countenance. 'What would you have me say? What would you have me do?'

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‘I will be your slave if you will let me.’

‘No, George, you mean that I might be your slave ...’ (XXXV:449)

She then hurried to Littlebath and the hoped-for haven, Aunt Mary from where she can write a long letter to her friend Adela, to tell Adela what happened (XXIII:295).

She had earlier refused to obey Sir Henry’s “suggestion” she to go to live with or visit old George when she says she will leave him because old George is “your grandfather” (he would know this), which pressure she ignores because, she thinks, “it was not part of her bargain that she should toady an old man who had never shown any special regard for her” (XXXV:442). But then where should she go? Emily Trevelyan is on the move throughout *HKHWR*. It is during on of these liminal journeys her husband is able to kidnap their son.

At this point, ironically, Sir Henry gives Caroline permission to go live with Sir George (which, this grandfather demanded, or he would throw her out) because Sir Henry is hoping this will make it more likely old George will be softened by family affection and leave her a substantial sum, and thus by law as her husband, he, Harcourt, will have control. Why he should think this we are not told. There are many more instances in this novel where family ties do not seem to offer the strong support, the heroine of another previous novel, *Dr Thorne*, Mary Thorne says they have to (note 10).

Young George was not driven to Aunt Mary's or Caroline's kinds of expedients when he did not try to become a lawyer because old George wanted this and instead ignored him, went to Jerusalem, meditated on the Mount of Olives, studied and close-read the Bible, and wrote and published skeptical essays of learned exegesis (Chapters VI-VII). How did he manage this? It does seem at enough convenient moments old George relents and there is Mr. Pritchett with another few hundred pounds to tide young George over.

But then our omniscient novelist exercises his power and instead of finding out how Caroline overcomes her dilemma, we suddenly switch to more moving about, then travel to Cairo, and meet two completely new characters (widows) with whom our heroes (there they are too) become very friendly for a time. Then we return to our secondary couple and the “unfortunate Mrs. Wilkerson (Chapters XL to XLIII, with a brief look in at Harcourt and Bertram now furiously quarreling (XLI) But I have gone beyond my chapters or remit and must leave Caroline in her liminality.

Our chapters are the book's antepenultimate, the third grouping before the last. We can now cover chapter matter we have omitted and see how they relate. The first 5 chapters, “Bidding High” ”Hurst Staple” (we are in the Wilkerson's Vicarage), “The Wounded Doe” (vexation, poignancy and knife-edge hurt in Adela as Arthur lets her know marriage for them is out of the question, just at this juncture George comes up with the idea Adela and he might marry and asks her), “Does He Know it Yet?” (George's unawareness Harcourt has won Caroline for his wife by bidding high, he tells his that he and Caroline have seriously quarreled and broken up at which the uncle returns to pressuring him marry her nonetheless), “The Solicitor-General in Love” (a long remarkable conversation between Harcourt and Caroline where they tell one another some of their motives for marrying, which do not seem to include compatibility, much less love). The sixth chapter, Mrs. Leake of Rissbury,” centers on a deaf unmarried woman who required that people speak into her trumpet. Trollope is not exactly generous to her, repeating what to me seem conventional ideas but in the era, about how her lack of sexual experience and babies makes her envious, frustrated, filled with spite. A conversation between

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Caroline, Adela, and Miss Todd shows Trollope genuinely debating what values women should adhere to, and in line with the rest of the book, rejecting money as a measuring stick of just about anything, with Miss Todd through patience and self control trying to get the others to be kind to the deaf woman and get out of there asap, There's cool satire and mockery where it's deserved ("Sir Lionel goes to his wooing"; "He tries his hand again"), and some unexpected empathy towards Sir Henry as well as Caroline ("The Solicitor General in Love, "Marriage Bells") anticipating the book's close

For me, the concluding three chapters, "Mrs. Madden's ball," "Can I escape?" and "A Matrimonial Dialogue," with their penetrating exploration of hatred as well as well as vulnerability, jealousy, possessiveness, and wanting out, cravings for independence and safety, go much further than anything Trollope wrote about love, courtship, sex, and marriage anywhere else. I'll close by suggesting that while novel is not centered on the love stories, Trollope suggests by the events that happen after a long series of characters choices, that erotic and satisfying companionate love, a need for congenial friendship are stronger driving forces or needs than anything else, even food, a roof or money. Patience and practicing charity of spirit are this novel's alternatives, compromises (think of Mr Pritchett and Miss Todd) and fighting back, not fearing, or worrying what other people think may go far to success in life. Larry Dessner's argument that *The Bertrams* is the most autobiographically intimate of his books may explain its pain and beauties (note 11).

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Notes to The Changing World of the Bertrams

1: a mythical Etruscan king who had living people tied up to corpses and left there to starve to death. An early citation is Virgil's *Aeneid*, *The Bertrams*, XXXV: 445-46)

2 See a study of contemporary guidebooks to the Palestine area and environs where we see Trollope's mix of disillusion, dismay, and uplift is typical of such writing during the mid-19th century. Kristine Kelly, "Aesthetic Desire and Imperialist disappointment in Trollope's *The Bertrams* and the Murray Handbook for Travelers in Syria and Palestine, *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2015), 43: 621-639.

3 There is a direct close parallel between Caroline Waddington and Jane Austen, Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*. Mary Crawford explicitly refuses to marry Edmund Bertram in, Austen's *Mansfield Park* the same grounds: Edmund won't make enough money; the position lacks the prestige of a genuinely competitive high management job. Mary adds that she despises anyone willing to take a position and good income without competing for it. Trollope is alluding to this Jane Austen novel; Like Caroline Waddington, Mary Crawford is "a modern woman" and in love with her suitor. The name Bertram links the two books openly.

4 See Russell J. Perkin "From St Paul to Pecksniff": Trollope's Bertrams and Arnold's God "Theology and the Victorian Novel", McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal (2009), pp. 103-235 (

5 There is a scandalous liaison of some sort (left obscure) in Mary's parents' background. Her mother was old George's daughter and would have been Sir Lionel's niece. Mary and young George are second or 3rd cousins.

6 See Bryan Little, *The Building of Bath* (London: Collins. 1948) Graham Davis and Penny Bonsalt, *Bath: A New History* (Staffordshire: Keele Univ Press, 1965)

7 "Richard Beau Nash," Wikipedia, "Nash was a notorious gambler who was forced to move in with his mistress, Juliana Popjoy, because of his debts ... His death caused quite a stir at the time, with the celebrated author Oliver Goldsmith being moved to write *The Life of Richard Nash* as early as 1762.:

8 It's said Miss Todd is modeled on the political activist, a quietly lesbian spinster, Francis Power Cobb, whom Trollope would have known of, might have met. She was an Irish journalist who fought for animal rights (she was ferociously against experimenting on animals) and women's rights (her most famous pamphlet was *Wife Torture in England*). See Sally Mitchell's massive *Francis Power Cobbe, Victorian Feminist Journalist, Reformer* (Charlottesville: Univ of Virginia, 2004

9 See Sheila Jeffries, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1870-1930* (Melbourne: Spinifex, Queen Margaret University Press, 1985); ; *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*. edd .,Nocole Pohl, Betty Schellenberg (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2003). We see this transition in Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right* where Aunt Stanbury as a young spinster had enough inherited money to live alone and now Nora Stanbury wants to and apparently can – if someone provides an allowance. A rich kind aristocratic woman friend of the family of Nora's brother-in-law, Louis Trevelyan, Emily, Nora's sister's estranged husband, insists Nora live with her until she marries, Hugh Stanbury, of whom Nora's family disapproves because he works for a living as a journalist.

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10 I'm with the 1970s Robert Polhemus (The Changing World, see below) who says the "moral core" of the book can be found in a conversation between Mary and Dr Thorne, where Thorne says "money is a fine thing" and he would be a "happier man" if he could "insure her against all wants." Mary interprets this as "that would be selling me, wouldn't it, uncle? ... No, 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."

He: "But if I were to die, what would you do then?"

She: "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)

11 See Dessner's analysis of the book as autobiographical Lawrence Jay Dessner , "The Autobiographical Matrix of Trollope's *The Bertrams*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 45:1 (1990), 26-58, Although apparently not popular and seen as unusual in its stances, among even Trollope readers and scholars, it is not been treated as an anomaly among literary critics, venerable and more recent, who close-read and research it. Robert Polhemus' *The Changing World of Anthony Trollope*, James Kinkaid's first book on *The Novels of AT*, David Skilton (in the introduction to the Folio edition of the novel and now Gabriel Harvey (in the Oxford paperback), and some feminist scholars (Kristine Kelly above) see the book as characteristic. Like Dr Thorne, and *The Three Clerks*, just before, and *Framley Parsonage*, Trollope focuses on young men attempting to build a career in this new environment – railways, circulating libraries, magazines & newspapers. It is the increasing spread of real literacy that gave Trollope the opportunity (a word repeated throughout *The Bertrams*) to turn his gifts (socially and as a reader and writer) to money-making in the new profession of writer of novels and in periodicals.

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