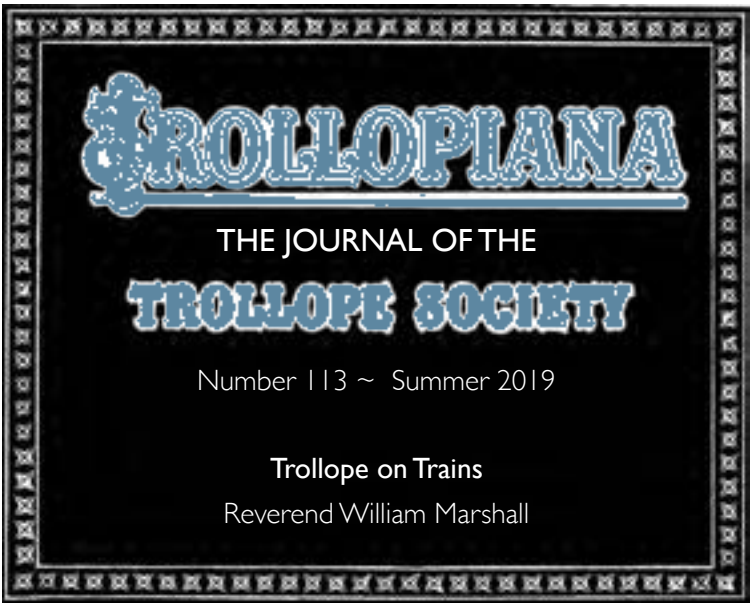

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Editorial

It is a rare pleasure for an editor to receive an unsolicited manuscript that provides a readable yet erudite article that can be shared with readers with scarcely a change. Such was my experience on first reading William Marshall's summary of the appearance of trains in Trollope's novels. The article reveals the great use Trollope made of this new form of transport across a broad range of his works and how this may also reveal something about Victorian Society and culture.

The recent dinner held by the Society for members and guests at Lincoln's Inn took as its theme Phineas Finn, marking the 150th anniversary of the novel's publication. It seems fitting therefore to look back at the connections between Trollope, in particular through his father whose law chambers were at the Inn, and the venue.

Finally, in this issue, we examine one of Trollope's most dazzling female creations (recreated to great effect for the BBC television production by Society Vice-President Susan Hampshire): La Signora Madeline Neroni. Is she the self-centred, wicked temptress leading the unfortunate men of the Barsetshire clergy astray? Or does she have a more human side that is too often overlooked? And, perhaps most controversially, what is the real extent of those injuries which have left her confined to the chaise-longue? What are your views? Why not let us have your thoughts after reading the article – we may reproduce some of the best responses to the conclusions reached in the article in a future edition.

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Trollope on Trains

Reverend William Marshall

The Reverend William Marshall, who lives in Ireland, considers the use of trains in Trollope's writing both as locations for scenes and as plot devices to drive the narrative.

Great changes in how we live occurred during Anthony Trollope's lifetime, 1815-82. Perhaps the most notable was the development of rail travel. Trollope was a great traveller and used every form of transport available in his time and must have been on trains, then the fastest form of land travel. He wrote travel books about his journeys in America, Australia, South Africa and the West Indies, but I shall only deal with his references to train journeys in his novels. He describes or at least refers to them in many novels.

He makes a few nostalgic references to public transport by horse-drawn coach, brought to an end by the railways. In *Doctor Thorne* the ostler at the inn at Courcy laments the good old days when mail coaches stopped at the inn, bringing business and prosperity to the town, which the railways have made an unimportant backwater (Ch. XV). Shap was once a coaching town but no longer so when George Vavasor took the train there (*Can You Forgive Her* Ch. XXXVIII). Railways tended to be unpopular with fox hunters and grouse shooters (*The Duke's Children* Chs. XXXIII, LXII), though Trollope himself found trains useful for getting to his meets.

The rigid class distinctions of Victorian society are reflected in Trollope's novels and the way his characters travel by train, first, second or third class. Trollope does not need to state that people of the squire and professional classes and upwards will always travel in first. Interesting situations arise on the class borders, Moulder, a wholesale commercial traveller, boasted that his firm paid him to travel first in contrast to the retail man Kantwise, who had to be content with second (*Orley Farm* Ch. XVI). Johnny Eames on a visit to Guestwick Manor was accompanied by a groom when he went to the station for his return to London and so felt obliged to give the groom a tip of half a crown and travel first which he could ill afford (*The Small House at*

Barsetshire "The Dear County"
Showing the Grand Trunk Line from London and the Barchester Branch line

Allington CH. XXXIV). The Rev. Josiah Crawley, though a gentleman by his profession in Trollope's eyes, due to his poverty travelled third class by train to consult the lawyer, his wife's cousin Mr Toogood (*The Last Chronicle of Barset* Ch. XXXII).

The station most often mentioned in the Trollope novels is Paddington, the Great Western Railway terminus from where trains go to the west, including Barchester, which is on a GWR branch. Trollope's map of Barsetshire showing the branch line is reproduced at the front of some editions of the Barset novels. He frequently mentioned a "station in Euston Square", presumably what came to be known simply as Euston Station. There are many journeys in the Liverpool direction which probably left from there. When Marie Melmotte and her maid left London for Liverpool early one morning "[a]t the station they got some very bad tea and almost uneatable food" (*The Way We Live Now* Ch. L. See also *The Eustace Diamonds* Ch. LXXVI). It would seem that complaints about railway food are almost as old as the railways themselves!

Many episodes or situations illustrating Trollope's characters happened in trains, or stations, or railway hotels. Mr Harding, Warden of Hiram's Hospital, thought he may have been paid more than he should. His masterful son-in-law, Archdeacon Grantly, maintained

that Harding should keep his full salary and had no sympathy with his scruples. Harding determined to go to London to consult the lawyer, Sir Abraham Haphazard, about the case. Like a child escaping from the scrutiny of a strict parent, he took an early train from Barchester to prevent the archdeacon stopping him (*The Warden* Ch. XVI). With great courage the diffident man resolved to resign his position and did so against all opposition from the archdeacon and other friends. In *The Belton Estate*, Will Belton was deeply in love with his cousin, Clara Amedroz. She eventually married him but first was engaged to Captain Aylmer. The two rivals and Clara met in the Great Northern Railway Hotel in London (*The Belton Estate* Ch. XXIV). Aylmer, then the successful rival, was suave and gracious but the straightforward Will could not control his dislike and contradicted everything Aylmer said. In spite of Clara's efforts the dinner was very uncomfortable and the two men almost came to blows.

"It would seem that complaints about railway food are almost as old as the railways themselves!"

In *The Small House at Allington*, the sophisticated, worldly Adolphus Crosbie and the diffident "hobbledehoy" Johnny Eames were both in love with the same girl, Lily Dale. She fell for Crosbie and they became engaged. Crosbie jilted her for Earl de Courcy's daughter, Lady Alexandrina. Almost immediately he regretted his decision but they got married. Even on the way to their honeymoon their disharmony showed. They took the train to Folkestone on their way to Paris and found little to talk about. Eventually Crosbie took out his newspaper and that gave Alexandrina the excuse to open her novel (*The Small House at Allington* Ch. XLV).

Eames determined to punish Crosbie for his perfidy to Lily Dale. He unexpectedly got his opportunity at Paddington station (*The Small House at Allington* Ch. XXXIV). Eames caught a train at Guestwick to return to his post in London after the Christmas holidays, travelling in a first class carriage for the reason noted above). Crosbie, returning from Courcy Castle to London got into the same carriage at Barchester Junction. He gave a cursory nod to Eames who made no response.

There was an old lady and a gentleman in the carriage so Eames realised he could do nothing till they reached Paddington station. They both alighted and Eames seized Crosbie by the throat, gave him a black eye shouting "you confounded scoundrel" and knocked him into Smith's bookstall. The police soon arrived, separated them and arrested Eames as the aggressor. Naturally Crosbie was too ashamed of his conduct to Lily Dale to press charges and Eames was freed.

A more tragic event occurred at "Tenway Junction" (*The Prime Minister* Ch. LX). Ferdinand Lopez, a financial speculator whose ventures had come undone, went to the junction and stepped in front of the express to Inverness. He was "knocked into bloody atoms". Some commentators suggest that this episode gave Tolstoy the idea for Anna Karenina's suicide, who also stepped in front of a train.

There were no dining cars on trains in the early days of the railways and passengers had either to bring food with them or take advantage of meal stops at some stations. Lady Eustace showed her devious character when she made the long journey from London to her castle in Scotland, accompanied by her cousin Frank Greystock. She pretended for most of the journey that she could not think of eating but secretly nibbled biscuits and chocolates while he was in the smoking carriage (*The Eustace Diamonds* Ch. LXXVI).

As well as having no dining cars, early trains were unheated. The novels often mention journeys by the "night train" or the "night mail", which must have been very cold. Passengers would have taken rugs or cloaks. Linda Tressel, in the novel of that name, made a long night journey from Nuremburg to Augsburg with her lover Ludovic Valcarm (*Linda Tressel* Ch.XI). Though she wore her warmest cloak she nearly froze to death.

There was a great expansion of railways during Trollope's lifetime which continued after his death. The building of railways, or plans to build them, are noted in some novels. In *Doctor Thorne*, Sir Roger Scatcherd, who began his life as a rough, uneducated stone mason, became a railway contractor, a baronet and fabulously wealthy (*Doctor Thorne* Ch. IX). Theodore Burton was a successful civil engineer who constructed many railways. He visited Russia in connection with a proposed railway from Moscow to Astrakhan (*The Claverings* Ch. XLIV). He was also much concerned with the "Metropolitan Railway in London", presumably a reference to the underground (*The Claverings* Ch. XLIII). There is an explicit reference to the underground in *The Way We Live Now*. Hetta Carbury went by the Marylebone underground

to Kings Cross to meet her rival, Mrs Hurtle, who was also in love with Paul Montague but realised that he had transferred his affections to Hetta (*The Way We Live Now* Ch XCI).

"In Doctor Thorne, Sir Roger Scatcherd, who began his life as a rough, uneducated stone mason, became a railway contractor, a baronet and fabulously wealthy."

The success of the early railways made them a favourite investment, resulting in the railway mania. Unscrupulous men took advantage of the eagerness to buy railway shares by setting up fraudulent companies with no intention of building a railway but rather of making money from gullible investors. In *The Way We Live Now*, Hamilton K. Fisker and his associates founded a company, "The Great Railway to Vera Cruz", which was to connect Salt Lake City to Mexico. He brushed away his partner, Paul Montague's, concerns about the cost of building the railway. His object was "not to make a railway to Vera Cruz but to float a company" (*The Way We Live Now* Ch. IX). Trollope did not make clear whether the railway was ever built. That was a matter of indifference to the cynical Fisker.

Though railways did not reach their greatest extent till after Trollope's death, more were operative in his lifetime than there are in Britain and Ireland today. For example, Phineas Finn, in the novel of that name, took the train from Killaloe at the start of his journey from his home to London (*Phineas Finn* Ch. II). A branch line to Killaloe was opened in 1862 and closed to passenger services in 1931. (K.A. Murray and D.B. McNeill, *The Great Southern and Western Railway,* pp 116-117).

The above examples represent only a very small sample of the many reference to railways in Trollope's novels which gave them a topical flavour to the contemporary audiences for whom he was writing.

2019 Biennial Dinner

The Old Hall, Lincoln's Inn, London

Lincoln's Inn and Phineas Finn!

Michael Williamson

Former Chairman of the Society, Michael Williamson, describes the connections between Anthony Trollope, his character Phineas Finn, and Lincoln's Inn, where the Society held its recent biennial dinner.

Choosing the Old Hall of Lincoln's Inn for the venue of our formal Dinner this year encouraged us to clarify and complete our investigations into the Trollope connections with the Inn over the centuries and this made our event even more enjoyable and significant.

When the Society dined at the Great Hall of the Middle Temple in 2017, we learned that it was actually there, following in the traditional footsteps of his ancestors, that Anthony's father, Thomas Anthony, began his legal studies.

The head of the family held the baronetcy at Casewick in Lincolnshire and it became the custom of the heirs to the title and secondary members of the family, who did not go into the Church or the Army or the Navy, to be trained in the law as Middle Temple Men. This was the route taken by Thomas when he was quite a young man. He was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1799 and he occupied Chambers at 5, King's Bench Walk from 1804 until 1806. He was 30 years old when he moved into the Chambers. A bachelor, reasonably well off, with expectations of ultimately inheriting his uncle's estate in Hertfordshire. He was the son of the sixth son of the 4th baronet and, as such, some way away from the title itself.

Thomas was called to the Bar in 1806 and at that time he purchased outright 5 floors of Chambers at Lincoln's Inn at 8, New Square (then Serle's Court). This was a considerable investment

and he acquired these premises from a barrister called Christopher Smyth. He also had an apartment in the building where he lived. The building looks much the same from the outside as it did in Thomas's time and is to the right of the main entrance gate towards the corner of the Square. He married Frances Milton, better known as Fanny, on his 35th birthday on 23rd May, 1809 and, at that time, he purchased 16, Keppel St in Bloomsbury which is where Anthony was eventually born as their youngest surviving son. A plaque commemorates the site of this house in the grounds of the University of London.

In 1811, Thomas sub-let the New Square Chambers, probably because of increasing family costs and then from 1811 until 1830 he practised from 23, Old Buildings renting these from the proprietor rather than purchasing them. The family moved to Harrow, purchased a farm, built a new house on land that did not belong to them and then, quite quickly, had to sell it and downsize and ultimately had to leave the country to avoid their creditors. The expected inheritance did not materialise and his practice began to suffer. Thomas became subject to regular sick headaches which made him irritable. His manner discouraged clients and this seems to have been made worse by treating himself with substantial doses of calomel (which of course is mercury chloride). It is believed that this aggravated his condition.

Number 23, Old Buildings is almost adjacent to the Old Hall and Chapel which would have been very familiar to both Thomas and his son. Originally destined for demolition, it stands on the site of the Bishop of Chichester's palace which predated the Inn. Although it escaped demolition it was substantially remodelled so perhaps we cannot imagine what it was actually like in Thomas' day. However, we do know that the space was much more limited and these are the Chambers that Anthony remembered visiting in school holidays and at other times particularly while his mother and most of his siblings were in America trying to re-build the family fortunes. In his autobiography, he calls them 'dingy, almost suicidal' and notes that on one melancholy occasion a pupil actually did kill himself there. Memories of his father at Lincoln's Inn are used to good effect in several of his books.

Thomas retained these Chambers until 1830 before moving with the family to Bruges where he died in 1835. His grave, together with that of his son, Henry, can still be visited in the Protestant Cemetery and both have recently been restored by the Society. However, this was not the end of the family's connection with Lincoln's Inn. Despite

Lord Fellowes of West Stafford, Trollope Society President
Photograph by James Basire


The
Trollope
Society

Thomas's financial difficulties, the substantial Chambers at 8, New Square had been retained and continued to be rented out until well after his death. The rents benefitted both Anthony and his surviving elder brother, Thomas. They were eventually disposed of in 1864 and Anthony's signature is on the conveyance held in the archives. A further later link with the Inn also exists there. As well as the admissions register entry for Thomas Anthony Trollope there is also one for Anthony's elder son, Henry Merivale Trollope. We have been very grateful to the Inn's Librarian, Dunstan Speight, for his invaluable help in locating the Trollope records kept there. Lincoln's Inn will always have strong Trollope memories

"His proposed route was exactly the same as that followed by Thomas Anthony, in other words, Middle Temple and then on to Lincoln's Inn."

At our Dinner, we were honoured to have Hugh and Barbara Trollope with us, all the way from Australia. Hugh, of course, is one of our respected Vice-Presidents and is a direct descendant of Anthony's younger son, Frederic, the only surviving direct line from the novelist. Hugh's brother, Sir Tony Trollope now holds the family baronetcy which seemed so far away from Thomas. Hugh and Barbara now spend part of each year with us here in the UK having purchased part of Casewick Hall, the original home of the baronetcy.

And so to Phineas Finn, who we were particularly remembering at the Dinner in honour of the 150th anniversary of the publication of the novel. Anthony made use of his detailed memories of both Lincoln's Inn and the Temple in several of his novels. *Phineas Finn* is no exception and enthusiasts will remember that a career in the law was Phineas' initial goal when he comes to England from Ireland and starts to study under poor Mr Low. His proposed route was exactly the same as that followed by Thomas Anthony, in other words, Middle Temple and then on to Lincoln's Inn. He has an opportunity of acquiring Chambers at the Inn which he eventually rejects. Of course, in Phineas' case his good looks and their reliable effect on the significant Society ladies of London enable him, ultimately, to enjoy a

successful political career without the added burden of having to earn a living. In those days being a Member of Parliament was unpaid until you were able to take Office and would normally have to be supported by outside employment or a private income. Anthony, of course, regarded a seat in Parliament as his ideal for many years. Describing himself as 'an advanced, but still a conservative Liberal' the reality of his ill-fated participation as a candidate at the election at Beverley brought some disillusionment. However, he still firmly believed and stated that 'Of all the studies to which men and women can attach themselves, that of politics is the first and foremost'.

In some ways the character of Phineas reflects Trollope's own parliamentary ambitions and his early struggles in London mirror some of Anthony's own challenges in his youth. Within the Palliser novels, the adventures of Phineas, as the Irish outsider struggling to find a place for himself within a very English world, engage our attention, sympathy and interest throughout. Phineas certainly has his detractors but also his heroic moments. It is, therefore, appropriate that we should have marked the anniversary of the publication of the first book in which he appears and the ancient Old Hall of Lincoln's Inn was a very appropriate and atmospheric venue for such an occasion.

Page 10-11 (Clockwise from top left) Lady Emma, Lord Fellowes; Professor Steven Armarnick, Lord Fellowes; Reverend Canon David Reindorp; Members of the Trollope Society Committee - Mark Green, Susan Cooper, Pamela Morgan, Dominic Edwardes, Priscilla Hungerford, Michael Williamson, Nicky Barnes; Dominic Edwardes, Barbara Trollope, Hugh Trollope

Page 14-15 (Clockwise from top left) Scaramella singers; Michael Williamson; Guests listening to speeches; Lord Fellowes; Lord Fellowes, Barbara Trollope.

Photography by James Basire www.jamesbasire.com

Madeline Neroni

Mark Green

Mark Green puts forward a controversial theory about the extent of Madeline Neroni's injuries described by Trollope in Barchester Towers.

Madeline Neroni's role in *Barchester Towers* is rather like that of Clint Eastwood in a Spaghetti Western: the stranger with the mysterious past who rides into town and, when the gun-smoke clears, the bad guy lies vanquished at his feet, the good guy has got the girl, and law and order has been restored to the town. Then, with the job done, he rides out into the sunset, disappearing forever from the townsfolks' lives.

"La Signora Madeline Vesey Neroni - nata Stanhope", as she styles herself grandly on her calling cards, embellished with a gilt coronet, without real grounds for doing so, is brought into Barchester as part of her father's household when he is summoned from the shores of Lake Como in Italy by Bishop Proudie to resume his clerical duties which he had abandoned some twelve years earlier on the pretext of requiring the sunnier climes for his health, though as we learn in *Framley Parsonage* this is mere diplomatic cover for financial difficulties which led to him fleeing creditors for a cheaper place to live. By the end of the novel, Madeline has exposed to the world the conniving Obadiah Slope for the hypocrite he is - effectively running him out of town as a result - and been instrumental in engineering the match between Eleanor Bold and the Reverend Francis Arabin. She then departs with her father and the Stanhope family once more to the distant shores of Lake Como.

In fulfilling this function, Madeline is also yin to Eleanor Bold's yang; a complementary mirror image providing a shady, manipulative alter-ego to Eleanor's open, transparent straightforwardness.

It can be no coincidence that they are much the same age - Madeline is 28 at the time when *Barchester Towers* is set in about 1850 and Eleanor is perhaps a couple of years older. The reader is invited to see parallels in the two characters. Indeed, Arabin is trapped by Madeline into making a direct comparison of the two of them. When he tells her that "Mrs Bold is a very beautiful woman, and as intelligent as beautiful." She turns this upon him as a veiled slight to herself, "'And you really have the effrontery to tell me this,' she said, 'to tell me, who, as you very well know, set up to be a beauty myself, and who am at this very moment taking such an interest in your affairs, you really have the effrontery to tell me that Mrs Bold is the most beautiful woman you know.' 'I did not say so,' said Mr Arabin; 'you are more beautiful -' 'Ah, come now, that is something like. I thought you could not be so unfeeling.' 'You are more beautiful, perhaps more clever.'" Arabin is about to go on further about Eleanor but Madeline shuts him down and will not hear it. She has achieved her objective.

Kate Lawson, in her paper, *Abject and Defiled: Signora Neroni's Body and the Question of Domestic Violence in Barchester Towers*, for the *Victorian Review* draws attention to the contrast between the past marriages of the two women. "Madeline Stanhope Neroni's married life is represented as antithetical to Eleanor Bold's lost domestic paradise." The Neroni marriage is, by implication, the setting for domestic violence which is cut short by the husband's attempts to desert the wife and, ultimately by her own subsequent fleeing from the husband to return to the shelter of her father's house. The Bold marriage was happy and ended by his premature death. Both women are, therefore, in a post-married state albeit, when it suits her, Madeline invokes her continued married state to frustrate would be suitors who are in danger of getting too close to her (physically or psychologically).

An obvious similarity between the two women is that both are pursued by Mr Slope, though for very different reasons. Eleanor is still grieving for her first husband and is less worldly than Madeline, so remains blissfully unaware of Mr Slope's intentions until late in the story, whereby hangs much of the plot's tension and humour, whereas Madeline is very consciously seeking to entrap the clergyman whose double standards she has, with her finely tuned street-wise senses, quickly identified.

Madeline has acquired this worldly wisdom through a series of romantic escapades in Italy from the age of seventeen to twenty-one. In these she has "become famous for adventures in which her character was just not lost, and had destroyed the hearts of a dozen cavaliers without once being touched in her own. Blood had flowed in quarrels about her charms, and she heard of these encounters with pleasurable excitement. It had been told of her that on one occasion she had stood by in disguise of a page, and had seen her lover fall."

These thrill-seeking endeavours have left her cynical, particularly about the willingness of men to lie and flatter in pursuit of female conquests, and cold-hearted. So much so, that I would attribute this callousness to a fear of being hurt again, if she actually were to commit herself to a relationship, given that the last of these adventures was her relationship with the ne-er-do-well Paulo Neroni who bedded her, wed her when she was too obviously pregnant by him, then promptly abandoned her and his responsibilities to his child.

Trollope says that "she married the very worst of those who sought her hand...When the moment came for doing so she probably had no alternative." Given that she turns up on her family's doorstep with her daughter six months after the date of the marriage there is little doubt left in the reader's mind that Madeline had flouted convention and indulged in pre-marital sex.

For this breach of acceptable norms of society, she suffers her punishment in the form of a physical disability. Melanie Moore in her article on *Barchester Towers* for *19th Century Disability Cultures and Contexts* notes that "As with many nineteenth century novels, Madeline's physical defect is linked to her transgressive sexuality - a physical manifestation of dubious morality... and the novel seems to frame the injury as due punishment for succumbing to pre-marital sex." Such divine retribution is frequently found in Victorian novels for women who sin against society's rules in this way. Indeed, it is almost a convention of 19th century literature that they should (even though men suffer no such punishment for their indiscretions). No doubt this is partly to preserve the morals of the young, impressionable, female readers.

However, Madeline also, notably, displays contempt for society norms in her lack of respect for those who normally commanded respect from inferiors. She alone of all those present, laughs out loud at Mrs Proudie's humiliation owing to the accident with her dress caused by Madeline's brother Bertie moving the sofa on which Madeline is reclining. She also laughs audibly - specifically within the hearing of Lady de Courcy - when she gets the better of her in a confrontation at the Ullathorne Sports Day.

There is also a sense that Madeline's malicious attempts to seduce all the men who come within her orbit is revenge for the treatment she received at the hands of her husband - a determination that in future no man shall ever get the better of her again.

Trollope refers to Madeline as both a "siren" and a "basilisk" - a mythical creature whose mere glance is sufficient to kill. Certainly, she is notable for her meaningful looks. When Lady de Courcy attempts to stare her down, "she stared hard at the occupant [of the couch]. The occupant in return stared hard at the countess. The countess who since her countess-ship had been accustomed to see all eyes, not royal, ducal or marquesal, fall before her own paused as she went on, raised her eyebrows, and stared even harder than before. But she had now to do with one who cared little for countesses. It was, one may say, impossible for mortal man to abash Madeline Neroni. She opened her large bright lustrous eyes wider and wider, till she seemed to be all eyes. She gazed up into the lady's face, not as though she did it with an effort, but as if she delighted in doing it...The faintest possible smile of derision played around her mouth, and her nostrils were slightly dilated, as if in sure anticipation of her triumph. And it was sure." It is clear that Madeline is physically excited by the contest - Trollope's description implies a state of arousal that is almost sexual in its intensity.

"She married the very worst of those who sought her hand ... When the moment came for doing so she probably had no alternative."

Madeline is, in fact, arguably Trollope's most sexual character even though, conventionally, a "cripple" in Victorian literature is sexless (or reduced to that state for past sins of a sexual nature such as Madeline's). They are, therefore, the objects of pity rather than lust. It is a master-stroke by Trollope to write against these expectations of his readership and to provide Madeline with her alluring "siren" quality.

Trollope introduces Madeline by saying she "had been a great beauty. We need not say had been, for she was never more beautiful than at the time of which we write, though her person had for many years been disfigured by an accident." We then learn that "the beauty of her face was uninjured, and that beauty was of a peculiar kind. Her copious rich brown hair was worn in Grecian bandeaux round her head, displaying as much as possible of her forehead and cheeks. Her forehead, though rather low, was very beautiful from its perfect

contour and pearly whiteness. Her eyes were long and large, and marvellously bright... The eyelashes were long and perfect... Her nose and mouth and teeth and chin and neck and bust were perfect, much more so at twenty-eight than they had been at eighteen."

She was perfectly well aware of the effect she had on men, in spite of her injuries, and exploited it to the full. She was, however, equally adept at playing the trump card of her disabilities to invoke pity where she felt this might be a more suitable approach, as when she turned her attentions to Mr Thorne, who had set his mind against her from the outset based on what he had heard of her history. "Mr Thorne had heard perhaps more of the antecedents of his guest than his sister had done, and had not as yet undergone the power of the signora's charms... She had contrived to detain him, to get him near to her on the sofa, and at last to make him seat himself on a chair close to her beautiful arm. The fish took the bait, was hooked, and caught, and landed. Within that ten minutes he had heard the whole of the signora's history in such strains as she chose to use in telling it. He learnt from the lady's own lips the whole of the mysterious tale... He discovered that the beautiful creature lying before him had been more sinned against than sinning. She owned to him that she had been weak, confiding and indifferent to the world's opinion, and that she had therefore been ill-used deceived and evil spoken of. She had spoken to him of her mutilated limb, her youth destroyed in its fullest bloom, her beauty robbed of its every charm, her life blighted, her hopes withered; and as she did so, a tear dropped from her eye to her cheek. She had told him of these things and asked for his sympathy. What could a good-natured genial Anglo-Saxon Squire Thorne do but promise to sympathise with her?"

It is likely that for many men who approached her the twin impediments of her being married and disabled made her a "safe" object for their flirtations - Victorian thinking, in public at least, having not encompassed the possibility that a disability is in fact no bar to sexual feelings and to the expression of these drives. If only they knew what they were taking on.

Indeed, far from hiding her disability, Madeline positively flaunts it - albeit doing so by creating a public spectacle whenever she appears in such a way that all attention is drawn to her as she is carried in - often by up to four supporters, usually including servants or her current "slave" - Mr Slope feels obliged to attend to her though he is not privileged to actually support her entrance to the Proudie

gathering. Naturally Madeline enters late in the proceedings whenever possible so as to make her grand entrance. "At last a carriage dashed up to the hall steps with a very different manner of approach from that of any other vehicle that had been there that evening. A perfect commotion took place." Madeline indeed made great efforts in preparing for such occasions to maximise the impact even down to arranging where she is to be seated beforehand and, which way she will be facing so that she might dress accordingly to show off her assets to their best advantage - including not least among those assets, her disabled limb. Exquisitely covered from sight and so left to the imaginations of those present who invariably exaggerated. "She has got no legs, papa." "Nonsense, she has legs, but she can't use them." "She has only one leg." "She had two. But that Signor Neroni beat her, I believe, till she was obliged to have one amputated. At any rate she has entirely lost the use of it."

"Her nose and mouth and teeth and chin and neck and bust were perfect, much more so at twenty-eight than they had been at eighteen."

This last, rather acid - one might describe it as "bitchy" - comment from Mrs Proudie, made to Lady De Courcy, causes the latter to reflect, "'Unfortunate creature!' said the countess, who herself knew something of matrimonial trials." In this brief exchange Trollope hints that behind the rather malicious gossip there is a recognition that there may be a common thread of domestic violence inflicted on wives by their husbands that is experienced in even the most socially distinguished households. It is explored no further - to do so would be impossible in a novel written as ostensibly family entertainment but its very mention, even in passing, would not have been overlooked by the more attentive reader. Trollope, even at this relatively early stage in his career, appears willing to reflect in his work sides of the middle class life that other authors did not - or only dealt with in more polemical works for a more restricted audience.

As Suzanne Rintoul points out in her article *The Mysterious Woman and Her Legs: Scrutinizing the Disabled Body in Barchester*

Towers in the journal of *Nineteenth Century Gender Studies*, Madeline's "conspicuous refusal to use her legs, and her careful arrangement of her dress, emphasise both her deformities and the fact that they cannot be seen. Madeline's attempts to conceal her body thus complement her efforts to draw attention to it." In this, Madeline consciously or sub-consciously (and I suspect she is smart enough for it to be the former) makes use of the power of the unknown to exercise a fascinating effect on an audience. Her very immobility on a sofa in the centre (note - not in some corner) of any gathering makes her the focal point and centre of attention - which she craves.

"Her clear insight into the workings of his mind reveals to her an innocence about him which she is little accustomed to finding in men of the world."

This pose of immobility is an assertion or assumption by Madeline of high status. She is carried by servants rather as earlier generations of the wealthy were carried about in sedan chairs. Jennifer Janechek in her article *Dombey and Son* for *19th Century Disability Cultures and Contexts* points out that "Patronized primarily by the wealthier classes of society, the sedan chair received much negative attention from the public....in part because the public viewed the technology as demeaning to the chairmen [who carried them]." There is thus a subtext of resentment against a disabled person who conflates her need for physical assistance with an element of showmanship which Trollope taps into in his readership. He explains that "She had still frequented the opera at Milan; she had still been seen occasionally in the salons of the noblesse; she had caused herself to be carried in and out from her carriage, and that in such a manner as in no wise to disturb her charms, disarrange her dress, or expose her deformities." In spite of being comparatively poor (and wholly dependent on her family) she gives the impression of status through the trappings of conspicuous consumption (in its modern not its Victorian sense) and achieves this through imposing upon those of lower status. This showing off for effect and attention seeking clearly embarrassed her father who when she arrived at the Proudie's soiree "retired into the furthest corner, where he might not see her entrance."

I would go further and suggest that Madeline is Trollope's response to Mrs Skewton in *Dombey and Son*, published less than a decade before Barchester Towers in 1848. Dickens describes his character noting that, "The discrepancy between Mrs Skewton's fresh enthusiasm of words and forlornly faded manner, was hardly less observable than that between her age, which was about seventy, and her dress, which would have been youthful for twenty-seven. Her attitude in the wheeled chair (which she never varied) was one in which she had been taken in a barouche, some fifty years before, by a then fashionable artist who had appended to his published sketch the name of Cleopatra... Mrs Skewton was a beauty then, and bucks threw wine-glasses over their heads by the dozens in her honour." It is not difficult to imagine Madeline as that posing Cleopatra. And when you add in the presence of Mrs Skewton's constant companion, her unmarried daughter, it is possible to see in this young woman's fate a foreshadowing of what may also befall Madeline's own daughter - "the last of the blood of the emperors". Was Trollope inspired by the Dickens characters to re-imagine them in the guise of their younger selves transplanted into contemporary society?

Having described Madeline's egoism, it cannot be ignored that by some caprice of her own she chooses to act against her own best financial interests and champion the cause of Francis Arabin as a rival to her own, worthless brother Bertie Stanhope, as potential suitor for the hand of the wealthy widow, Eleanor Bold.

Her motivation for this apparent altruism seems to stem from her response to his reaction when she turns her attentions to him after having "had almost enough of Mr Slope, though she could not quite resist the fun of driving a very sanctimonious clergyman to madness by a desperate and ruinous passion. Mr Thorne had fallen too easily to give much pleasure in the chase. His position as a man of wealth might make his alliance of value, but as a lover he was very second-rate...But Mr Arabin was game of another sort." Her clear insight into the workings of his mind reveals to her an innocence about him which she is little accustomed to finding in men of the world. She toys with him and "She expected a compliment from her admirer, but she was rather grateful than otherwise by finding that he did not pay it." He is incapable of the empty flirting that she normally received from men and so he interests her as a person. So much so that she determines

to assist him in his rather diffident attempts to woo Eleanor. No doubt he would have refused her assistance had she offered it directly, though she does advise him to pursue Eleanor and points out to him that Eleanor is clearly interested in him (with insightful reading of Eleanor's body language). Nevertheless, by subterfuge, she ensures that Eleanor learns from her, in no uncertain terms, how strong Arabin's feelings are for Eleanor. She ends by telling Eleanor, "What I tell you is God's own truth; and it is for you to use it as may be best for your own happiness. But you must not betray me. He knows nothing of this. He knows nothing of my knowing his inmost heart. He is simple as a child in these matters. He told me his secret in a thousand ways because he could not dissemble". Ultimately, Madeline, whose whole life has been a web of dissembling - whether her own or that of others - comes to care for Arabin and Eleanor because they neither of them dissemble. She is a paradox.

I am now going to turn, belatedly you might suggest, to the most important sentence in *Barchester Towers* concerning Madeline. All that has gone before, and all of the academic and literary commentary on Madeline and her role in the novel is predicated on the statements it contains which are accepted at face value, unquestioningly. Even the notable reader against the grain, Professor John Sutherland, the Lord Northcliffe Professor Emeritus of Modern English Literature at University College London, whose writings include *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?* and *Can Jane Eyre be Happy?*, and whose careful trawlings through Victorian novels for quirks and anomalies which expose either carelessness on the part of the author or else hitherto overlooked and potentially subversive hidden meanings, has made no mention of the ramifications of this sentence in his own introduction to *Barchester Towers* for the British Library's *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians* series of articles.

"She had fallen, she said, in ascending a ruin, and had fatally injured the sinews of her knee; so fatally, that when she stood she lost eight inches of her accustomed height; so fatally, that when she essayed to move, she could only drag herself painfully along, with protruding hip and extended foot, in a manner less graceful than that of a hunchback."

Now the Victorians in general, and Trollope in particular, did not go in for the concept of the unreliable narrator. So if Trollope says something is so, we, as readers, may take it as so. Provided, of course, that we are sufficiently in tune with his style to identify his extensive use of irony as a tool of his satire when writing of things of which he disapproved to any degree. He did not use the modern device of the inverted commas to flag his use of a word to mean its opposite - think of the irritating visual tic of drawing such inverted commas in the air in mid-conversation to emphasise when this is being done now. So when he refers to Madeline as "a cripple" (my inverted commas to indicate a quotation from the novel!) readers might be forgiven for taking him at his word.

"Ultimately, Madeline, whose whole life has been a web of dissembling - whether her own or that of others - comes to care for Arabin and Eleanor because they neither of them dissemble."

But is that justified in this case? Sometimes Trollope highlights his use of irony by using such absurd exaggeration that it is nigh on impossible to overlook his intention for his readers to interpret what he means as the direct opposite of what he writes.

So I am going to take a leaf from Professor Sutherland's book and examine that sentence closely.

Firstly, it begins with the words "she said". Everything that comes after it is what Madeline has said. It could be argued that the later clauses, separated from the initial clause in which those words appear, could be regarded as separate sentences with full stops rather than semi-colons used for punctuation (though they would lack verbs and so would be unusual though not impossible as sentences). However, it would be a more reasonable interpretation to understand that all of those things said in that sentence were said, in more or less so many words, by Madeline.

From this, academics and literary critics have gone on to link this sentence with Madeline's separation from her husband about which she refuses to give details and he is conveniently out of the way and can give no version of events himself and conclude that her claim that the injuries are the result of a fall is a lie to cover up the fact that

she was beaten by her husband. Trollope gives further weight to this interpretation by citing precisely that possible cause amongst the many rumours and half-truths which float around Barchester society about Madeline.

This requires the reader to accept the first part of what she says as at best a euphemism (did her husband push her) or was it a downright lie (he did something worse and deliberately injured her directly himself) but at the same time to accept as gospel truth the second part of the sentence, the precise nature of her injuries. It seems to me that such a reading is either selective or even a wilful mis-interpretation.

"As we have seen no-one actually sees Madeline's injured leg which is why there is so much ill-informed gossip and speculation about the extent of her injuries."

So what are we to make of a claim to have suffered soft tissue damage (sinews may be ligaments or tendons) in one knee (not both), which reduces her height by eight inches. In a woman of average height this represents a huge change. There is no mention of any skeletal damage (broken bones) which might account for such a loss in height. Indeed, it would require shattering of bones, followed by appalling post traumatic care (leaving the bones unset etc) in both legs to give rise to such a loss of height. Indeed, total amputation of one leg would give rise to no significant loss in height if she were to stand with the aid of a stick, for example, on her remaining leg.

Furthermore, any such catastrophic injury was sufficiently recovered for her to flee her husband and return to her family with her baby some six months after the couple went to Rome following their "prolonged honeymoon". It is difficult to conceive of her having sustained such injuries while pregnant and it not having put the baby's life at risk so the timing of the "fall" would seem unlikely to have been at the very start of that six month period. She has therefore had to recover from her injuries, for which she has not received adequate

care so that they remain permanent and disabling, sufficient to travel within a period of less than six months. This is stretching credulity.

Which begs the question: is Trollope stretching credulity here through carelessness or through deliberate choice to draw attention to the fact that Madeline's testimony is unreliable (about either or both of the extent of her injuries and their consequences, or their cause)?

To me, it seems, if we are to accept that Madeline was not honest with her family about the cause of her injuries (and academics and literary critics universally do accept this) then we must also call into question how accurate is her description of those injuries. Otherwise, why did Trollope make them so incredible?

I can hear Professor Nick Shrimpton even as I write saying that such compressions of time are part of the writer of fiction's art and quoting the dual timescales Shakespeare employs in *Othello* - events which would require weeks or months to pass if they were to unfold naturally are compressed into three days without any complaint from the audience which manages to hold both incompatible timescales in its head without suffering any cognitive dissonance. But Trollope had no need to require such mental juggling on the part of his readers. He could have inserted a longer, more credible time period for the events Madeline describes without any impact on the narrative of his novel. I must therefore conclude that he chose deliberately to describe an unfeasibly short period of six months so that Madeline's testimony should be called into question.

Which leads us to wonder to what extent she exaggerated her injuries and why.

As we have seen no-one actually sees Madeline's injured leg which is why there is so much ill-informed gossip and speculation about the extent of her injuries. However, Trollope does not qualify this by saying that no-one outside the family had seen her legs. In fact, it is not even clear whether Charlotte, Madeline's older sister and the person in the family who takes care of all matters both practical and financial, has seen Madeline's injuries. Could Madeline have concealed her legs from everyone, including servants. It seems unlikely but we do not know from Trollope's text.

However, we may speculate that there must be some form of physical abuse at the hands of her husband to have provoked her to leave him. This would be an admission of defeat in a contest of wills between the husband and wife. Madeline would be unlikely to tolerate being bested by a brute of a husband. If he were unfaithful then so too

could she be unfaithful - and probably even more flagrantly (at least within the confines of their own knowledge of each other's affairs) so as to put one over on him. So I conclude that she must have suffered intolerable physical abuse from her husband for Madeline to admit defeat and give up the fight. Therefore, it is probable that she had some injury though not, for the reasons outlined already, so great as she made out to her family.

Why then might she exaggerate the extent of her injuries?

Firstly, as the apparently injured party in a marital breakdown, who must throw herself upon the support of her family (even though we know with hindsight from *Framley Parsonage* that her father was struggling financially - and with three grown up children and a grand-daughter to support going forward this is understandable), it would help her cause to talk up the extent of the injuries done to her rather than talk them down.

"So I conclude that she must have suffered intolerable physical abuse from her husband for Madeline to admit defeat and give up the fight. "

Secondly, it would be consistent with her innate egoism to make much of her injuries so as to ensure that she is the centre of attention. At the age of twenty-two, as she would have then been, and with her thrill-seeking personality, it is to be expected that she would do so.

And once she set out on this line, what reason would she have for stopping or indeed even playing down her injuries later? Her family was too poor to re-launch her into the high society which she craved. She must therefore fall back on the use (abuse?) of people's pity for her, as she did with Squire Thorne, to secure her comfort and needs.

There is also a third possible and very much contemporary reason, to which the desire to exaggerate her injuries might be attributed. Evidence of physical abuse might be necessary in support of any legal proceedings for divorce or custody of the child (see note 1). Although married in Italy, Madeline, as a British citizen, might

have given consideration to the possibility of divorce under English law. In the 1840s, when the events of her marriage and separation took place, the law on divorce was very rigid and heavily biased in favour of the man. Marriage was regarded as a sacrament of the church and divorce was considered in the ecclesiastical courts rather than the main civil courts. For a man, the grounds for divorcing his wife could be based on her adultery alone, but for a wife, this was not of itself sufficient grounds. In order to obtain a divorce "*a vinoulo matrimony*" (what we would regard as a divorce permitting subsequent remarriage) rather than "*a mensa et thoro*" (which is more what we would call a legal separation and which did not allow for remarriage), required the woman to prove an "aggravated enormity" in addition to adultery on the part of the husband. Causing her permanent disability might satisfy this requirement and enable Madeline to obtain a divorce should she choose to seek one.

I am not suggesting that Madeline intended to seek a divorce, indeed she derived much room for manoeuvre with would-be admirers such as Mr Slope from her ambiguous position in this respect - living separately from her husband but still legally married to him. She would not, therefore, have need to incur the expense and potentially adverse public exposure that divorce proceedings (which at this time required an Act of Parliament to be concluded so that in 1857 for example there were only three divorces in the UK) would entail. Nevertheless, as a very intelligent and worldly woman, Madeline might, even at a young age, have seen the advantage of at least preparing the ground, just in case she might need to use it later. Such foresight on her part implies a high degree of Machiavellian planning ahead but it is not inconsistent with her behaviour in other aspects of her life and dealings with people.

I am therefore of the view that Madeline's injuries were not so catastrophic as she made out. I believe Trollope quite deliberately describes injuries so gross as to be incredible (in terms of their extent, their improbable nature, and impossible apparent recovery time) so that we are expected to understand that they cannot be as he explicitly states. Madeline, we are therefore supposed to understand, is exaggerating for her own ends and does so, with consummate expertise, to perfection throughout the events described.

She then, along with her daughter, disappears from Barsetshire at the end of the novel, never to return. We hear in *Doctor Thorne* that her father has died - which must have occurred not too long

after the family removed itself once more to Italy. The surviving family members, Mrs Stanhope, Madeline and her older sister, the resourceful Charlotte, Madeline's daughter and, if he is still sponging off his father as are the two grown up daughters, Madeline's younger brother Bertie (whose artwork would never support him and whose attempts to woo the rich widow Eleanor Bold were ultimately undermined by Madeline), would then have been forced to survive on the small sum which Mrs Stanhope had independently of her husband. This could not have sustained them in anything like the standard to which they would wish to be accustomed, even in Italy, so I suspect they would have been forced to live upon their wits.

In Madeline's case, I do not think this would have proved too great a challenge. I am confident that it would not be long before she hooked another sucker like Squire Thorne who would provide for her and her daughter. Who knows, if he proved slightly more of a challenge than the old Squire, and maybe saw through her sufficiently to earn her respect, then she might even apply her wit and worldly wisdom so as to make both of them happy. For I am sure that she is acutely aware that her present state, as described in *Barchester Towers*, is not conducive to her self-respect and happiness. Her moral compass is not so far off kilter as that of her, on the surface, nicer, but actually more conniving, sister Charlotte. Why else would she have acted so apparently out of character, and against her own best financial interests and those of her family, by promoting Eleanor's and Mr Arabin's happiness over her brother Bertie's self-serving needs?

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Note 1

The Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes was set up in 1850 to look into the operation of the laws on divorce. Its findings were reported in 1853 (e.g. in The London Times of 23 May 1853) and led to the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 which, inter alia, altered marriage from a religious sacrament to a legal contract between the husband and wife and provided statutory grounds for divorce which, while still favouring the man, enshrined a number of grounds for divorce for a wife including cruelty by the husband even where he was not also committing adultery! These developments would have provided a backdrop to the state of marriage while Trollope was writing Barchester Towers which was, as John Sutherland does point out in his introduction, an explicitly contemporary novel of the 1850s unlike the work of many of his fellow authors of the time. Discussions of such matters may well, therefore, have subtly influenced Trollope's writing and, it is conceivable, that discussions along similar lines foreshadowing these legal changes, would have been taking place for some time before the setting up of the Royal Commission - political will to make changes always following on some time later than the rise of the issue to be addressed in public discourse - and so would quite possibly have within the knowledge of the educated middle classes, such as Madeline, during the mid-1840s when her marital troubles took place.

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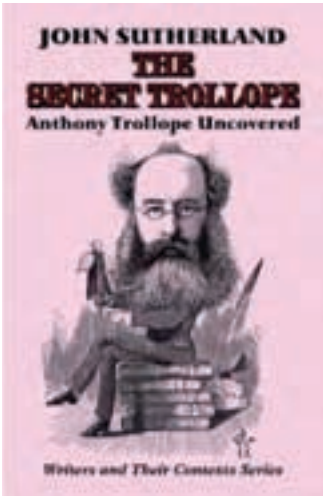

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