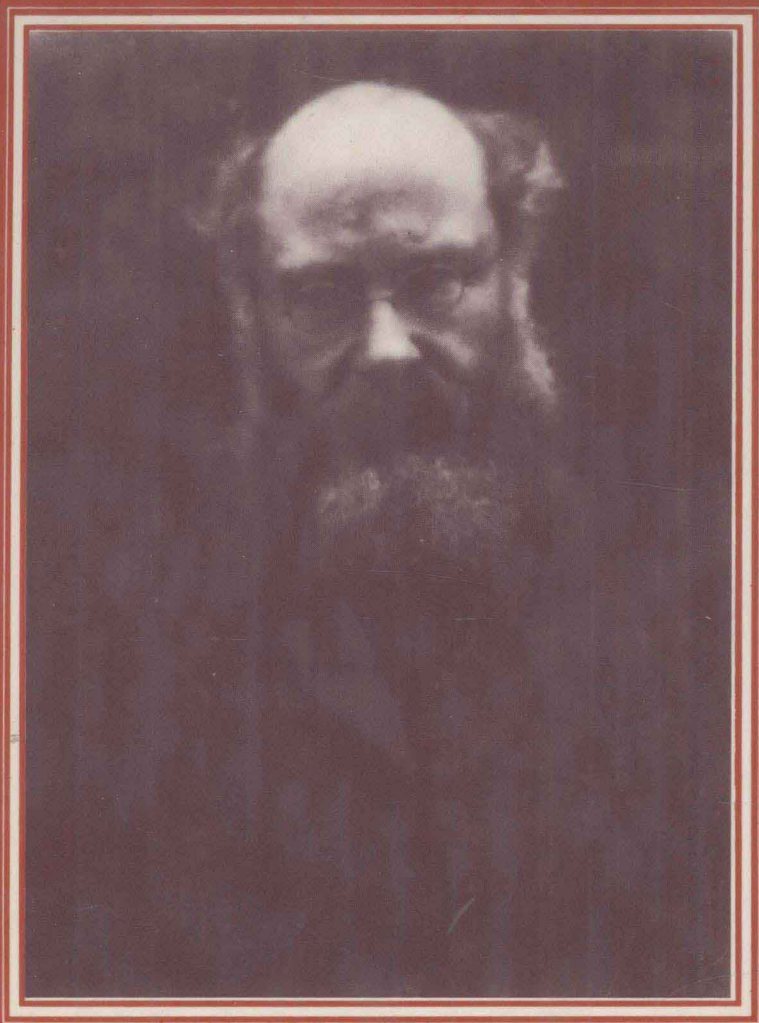


TROLLOPE

CENTENARY ESSAYS



Contributions by Asa Briggs, Janet Egleson Dunleavy,
N. John Hall, Juliet McMaster, Robert M. Polhemus,
Arthur Pollard, A.L. Rowse, Robert Tracy, Andrew Wright

—EDITED BY JOHN HALPERIN—

TROLLOPE CENTENARY ESSAYS

Edited by
John Halperin



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Robert Tracy, Asa Briggs, Janet Egleson Dunleavy, Juliet
McMaster, Arthur Pollard, Robert Polhemus, Andrew Wright,
A. L. Rowse, N. John Hall (their respective essays) 1982

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Introduction

JOHN HALPERIN

Anthony Trollope ceased to be read for thirty years because he confessed that he wrote at regular hours and took care to get the best price he could for his work.

Somerset Maugham, *The Summing Up*

In 1958 Bradford A. Booth, in a summary discussion, referred to 'the chaos of criticism' in Trollope studies in these terms: 'I know nothing in literary history to match the divided opinions on Trollope's novels . . . among [the] forty-seven novels there are only a handful that someone has not called his best . . . On the other hand, there is the widest possible divergence of opinion on a single title. If there is someone to declare that a given novel is certainly Trollope's best, there is someone to retort that it is without the slightest doubt his worst.'¹

A quarter-century later there is little more that we can be certain of as far as Trollope's many books are concerned – except for one important, one over-riding thing. Gordon Ray has said it: 'Trollope was a great, truthful, varied artist . . . who left behind him more novels of lasting value than any other writer in English.'² While readers may disagree about their favourite or least admired novels among Trollope's productions, on one thing at least it would seem there is no disagreement at all: Trollope's indisputably major status on the roll of the great, the pre-eminent, English novelists.

Evidence of academic interest does not make this so, for academic interest, like other kinds, is fickle. But a continuing readership is something else, something transcending the sort of disputation to which Booth refers. Trollope's works have attracted an ever-widening audience as the years (especially the last fifty) have passed. Just now the critical interest is there as well.

More has been published during the past few years on Trollope than on Dickens or George Eliot or Thackeray. In terms of scholarly output alone, only Hardy among the Victorian novelists has kept pace with Trollope.

A perusal of Trollope-related volumes published during the years 1977–83 renders up the following list (I omit articles):

1977

John Halperin, *Trollope and Politics: A Study of the Pallisers and Others*
James R. Kincaid, *The Novels of Anthony Trollope*

1978

P. D. Edwards, *Anthony Trollope: His Art and Scope*
Johanna Johnston, *The Life, Manners, and Travels of Fanny Trollope*
John Charles Olmsted and Jeffrey Welch (eds), *The Reputation of Trollope: An Annotated Bibliography 1925–1975*
Arthur Pollard, *Anthony Trollope*
R. C. Terry, *Anthony Trollope: The Artist in Hiding*
Robert Tracy, *Trollope's Later Novels*

1979

Betty Jane Breyer (ed.), *Anthony Trollope: The Christmas Stories*
Helen Heineman, *Mrs Trollope: The Triumphant Feminine in the Nineteenth Century*
Juliet McMaster, *Trollope's Palliser Novels: Theme and Pattern*

1980

Tony Bareham (ed.), *Anthony Trollope* (new essays)
N. John Hall, *Trollope and his Illustrators*
Geoffrey Harvey, *The Art of Anthony Trollope*
Walter C. Kendrick, *The Novel-Machine: The Theory and Fiction of Anthony Trollope*

1981

N. John Hall (ed.), *The Trollope Critics* (reprinted series)
Coral Lansbury, *The Reasonable Man: Trollope's Legal Fictions*
B. J. S. Breyer (ed.), *Anthony Trollope: The Complete Short Stories* (forty-two stories to be published in five volumes; three volumes in print through 1981)
N. John Hall (General Editor), *Selected Works of Anthony Trollope* (thirty-six titles in sixty-two volumes: a facsimile edition)
R. H. Super, *Trollope in the Post Office*

1982

Andrew Wright, *Anthony Trollope: Dream and Art*

Anthony Trollope: *The Complete Short Stories* (remaining two volumes; see above)

John Halperin (ed.), *Trollope Centenary Essays* (new essays)

Another collection of new essays on Trollope edited by Arthur Mizener

Shirley Letwin, *The Gentleman in Trollope: Individuality and Moral Conduct*

1983

N. John Hall (ed.), *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*, two volumes

The total is ninety volumes – an astounding figure for a six-year period.

Trollope has become the favourite English novelist of a great many people. His literary reputation, however, has had a chequered history. His first novel, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, written in 1845 when he was in his thirtieth year, was published in 1847. The reviewer in the *Critic* assumed the new author was a young lad: 'if he have already reached maturity of years, his case is hopeless'.³ After *The Macdermots* came *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (1848) and *La Vendée* (1850). All were failures with the public, though *The O'Kellys* is a passable novel. In 1852 Trollope began to write *The Warden*; it came out in 1855. Now forty, he commenced at last to enjoy some critical success. But it was not *The Warden* and its successor *Barchester Towers* (1857) that established his reputation, though this is the popular idea. The appearance of *Framley Parsonage* in the widely read *Cornhill* (under Thackeray's editorship) in 1860–1 made Trollope an instant public favourite – he was by then closer to fifty than forty.

His greatest years of popularity were those from the early 1860s to the early 1870s. By 1863 the *National Review* could declare, truthfully, that Trollope had become 'almost a national institution'⁴ (between *The Warden* in 1855 and *Framley Parsonage* in 1860–1 Trollope had published *Barchester Towers*, *The Three Clerks*, *Doctor Thorne*, *The Bertrams*, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* and *Castle Richmond*). The *National Review* article went on:

So great is [Trollope's] popularity; so familiar are his chief characters to his countrymen, so wide-spread is the interest felt

about his tales, that they . . . form part of the common stock-in-trade with which the social commerce of the day is carried on . . . [There are] imaginary personages on Mr Trollope's canvas with whom every well-informed member of the community is expected to have at least a speaking acquaintance.⁵

Between 1862 and 1874 Trollope's annual income averaged £4500 – high indeed. Towards the end of his career his income diminished, but he continued to be widely read. His popularity extended to America, France and Germany, among other places.

In the two decades following his death in 1882 and the publication of his *Autobiography* in 1883 (it was written in 1875–6), demand for his books virtually disappeared. This has often been attributed to Trollope's admission in the *Autobiography* that he wrote for money and thought of himself as just another tradesman providing a product at a price for public consumption. The general public tends to know little about art; it is often thought of as being produced in a highly rarefied atmosphere – in a garret, amidst starving infants and a wife who coughs. To those who believe this sort of thing, the *Autobiography* would be shocking. It hurt Trollope's immediate posterity; there is little doubt about that. But even without its publication, as Donald Smalley has pointed out, it is more than likely that Trollope's work would have suffered neglect: 'A new generation with new predilections found the scenes and characters of Trollope too remote for the impact of immediacy and too near for possessing the charm of the remote.'⁶ We should know by now that every generation puts back upon the shelf the books its fathers and grandfathers venerated – it is the way of all flesh. And when one had written as much as Trollope and been as popular, the reaction is likely to be more violent when it comes – as indeed it had come earlier in the century against the works of Byron, Scott, Tennyson and Dickens. And there is another factor. The 1890s witnessed a romantic revival of sorts, with renewed public interest in plot and escapist adventure (this was the age of Haggard, Stevenson and Kipling) and considerably less in character, in psychological realism. The nineties marked the nadir of George Eliot's reputation – and the resurrection of Disraeli's. These were Henry James's 'treacherous years'. George Gissing watched in despair as Hall Caine's novels outsold his.

The rest of the Trollope story is better known. After the anti-Victorianism of the war-weary Edwardians and Georgians had

gone its way and the builders of the Empire had been dead a while, Trollope's world seemed sufficiently remote to be fascinating once again. Interest in him revived. Several studies appeared in the 1920s. With the publication of Michael Sadleir's *Trollope: A Commentary* in 1927 and his bibliography of Trollope the following year, the race was on. During the Second World War Trollope suddenly became the favourite reading of an English population badly in need of a quieter world to contemplate and into which to disappear, if only for a few hours. Full-length studies of the novelist began to proliferate after the war. In the 1950s and 1960s the revival burgeoned – until, in the 1970s, as I have indicated, the stream became a flood. In a time of moral chaos, the sure, fixed values of an earlier, more self-sufficient age seem soothing, reassuring.

I shall not attempt to say why Trollope speaks to us today with a voice so powerful and unique. Different readers will always hear different voices. Trollope buffs know how compulsively readable he is, how real his people seem, how engaging their predicaments are. For us, as for Trollope himself, the fictional personages are often more interesting than the people we actually meet – more 'real' in the sense in which great art is always more 'realistic' than 'real' life. This is what James meant when he said that Trollope's genius lay in his complete appreciation of the usual. Most readers of fiction want to believe the truth of what they read, and Trollope convinces us of this truth more effectively perhaps than anyone else who has ever written novels (Jane Austen may be the one exception). Trollope's mimetic genius makes a mockery of all the formalist arguments about 'showing' and 'telling': if you want to know what the texture of life was like in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, go to Trollope.

Readers of novels, like spectators at a play, often wish to be able to suspend their disbelief and enter body and soul into the human dramas unfolded before them. It takes a master to make this spiritual exchange possible. If anything is clear now, a hundred years after Trollope's death, it is that he is a master. Posterity is especially lucky that a man with so great a gift was so compulsive a writer: one need never stop reading him.

NOTES

- 1 Bradford A. Booth, *Anthony Trollope: Aspects of His Life and Art* (Bloomington, Ind. and London, 1958) p. 229.
- 2 Gordon N. Ray, 'Trollope at Full Length', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XXXI (1968) 334.
- 3 See *The Critic* for 1 May 1847, vol. 344.
- 4 *Anthony Trollope: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Donald Smalley (London and Boston, Mass., 1969). Introduction, p. 4.
- 5 *National Review*, XVI (Jan. 1863) 28–9.
- 6 *Critical Heritage*, Introduction, p. 6.

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Lana Medicata Fuco: Trollope's Classicism

ROBERT TRACY

'... They were putting up the hatchment . . . and Master Fred saw that the undertakers had put at the bottom "Resurgam". You know what that means?'

'Oh, yes,' said Frank.

"'I'll come back again'", said the Honourable John, construing the Latin for the benefit of his cousin. "'No", said Fred Hatherly, looking up at the hatchment; "I'm blessed if you do, old gentleman . . . I'll take care of that." So he got up at night, and he got some fellows with him, and they . . . painted out "Resurgam", and they painted into its place, "Requiescat in pace"; which means, you know, "you'd a great deal better stay where you are". Now I call that good . . .'

Frank could not help laughing at the story, especially at his cousin's mode of translating the undertaker's mottoes. . . .

Doctor Thorne, ch. 4

Trollope's acquaintance with Latin and Greek began early, with his father as his teacher. 'From my very babyhood . . . I had had to take my place alongside of him as he shaved at six o'clock in the morning,' the novelist tells us in *An Autobiography*, 'and say my early rules from the Latin Grammar, or repeat the Greek alphabet; and was obliged at these early lessons to hold my head inclined towards him, so that in the event of guilty fault, he might be able to pull my hair without stopping his razor or dropping his shaving-brush.'¹ Thomas Adolphus Trollope, Anthony's elder brother, recalls a similar early introduction to the *Eton Latin Grammar*, a confusing and badly arranged work originally compiled by the Tudor schoolmaster William Lily, and in general use until the middle of the nineteenth century. Tom was about six

when their father began his teaching, and describes how the elder Trollope 'used during the detested Latin lessons to sit . . . so that his hand might be ready to inflict an instantaneous pull of the hair as the *poena* (by no means *pede claudo*) for every blundered concord or false quantity'.²

This kind of paternal instruction was not uncommon, as the boyhoods of John Stuart Mill and Tennyson indicate. Thomas Trollope, the father of Anthony and Tom, was a graduate of Winchester College and of New College, Oxford, both founded by William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester in the fourteenth century, with the intention that Winchester College would act as a preparatory school for New College. The elder Trollope was eager that his sons should follow in his footsteps, not because he particularly admired classical learning but because he knew that such a course – the acquisition of Latin and Greek – certified a man's status as a gentleman, a necessary prerequisite of a professional career. The ability to quote Latin or Greek, and to understand them when someone else quoted them, was one of the outward signs of a gentleman, implying an education at one of the great public schools and perhaps also at one of the universities, the early gathering places of those who were to rule. The reforms of Thomas Arnold, who became headmaster at Rugby in 1828, assumed that the study of Latin and Greek could be given a moral as well as a social function.

In an essay 'Public Schools', written for the *Fortnightly Review* in 1865, Anthony Trollope quotes with approval from Howard Staunton's *The Great Schools of England* (1865); Staunton concedes the scholarly and educational inadequacies of the public schools, but argues that 'these schools have to be regarded less in themselves, perhaps, than in their relation to a particular fashion of society . . . The great endowed schools are less to be considered as educational agencies, in the intellectual sense, than as social agencies.' And Trollope himself, in words that are somewhat at odds with his account of his own school-days in *An Autobiography*, extends the argument by claiming that the schools enable 'the sons of those among our gentry who are rich, and of those who are comparatively poor, to be educated together, and thus to be welded into one whole, which is the backbone of English public and social life'. Thomas Trollope and his son would have agreed that the public schools educated their students for life by allowing those who were to govern the nation to recognise each other early.

'Whilst there we made our friendships', Anthony writes;

There we learned to be honest, true, and brave. There we were trained to disregard the softnesses of luxury, and to love the hardihood and dangers of violent exercise. There we became men; and we became men after such a fashion that we are feared or loved, as may be, but always respected, – even though it be in spite of our ignorance . . . few among us do not feel that it has more than compensated for that lack of real instruction of which we all complain.³

The passage echoes Squire Brown's meditations in *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) as he sees Tom off to Rugby: 'Shall I tell him to mind his work, and say he's sent to school to make himself a good scholar? Well, he isn't sent to school for that – at any rate, not for that mainly. I don't care a straw for Greek particles, or the digamma; no more does his mother. What is he sent to school for? . . . If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian, that's all I want.'

The elder Trollope's ambitions, combined with his financial problems, led him to propose an unconventional *cursus studiorum* for his sons. Each was destined to be a Foundation Scholar at Winchester, one of the seventy pupils supported by an endowment created by the school's founder. To become a Scholar it was necessary to be nominated by one of the trustees, who filled up vacancies in rotation, a system adopted for Hiram's Hospital in *The Warden*. Thomas Trollope solicited a presentation for each of his sons as each was born. Once promised, however, the place would only be available when the potential Scholar was of age *and* when one of the seventy already in residence departed for one reason or another. To obtain for his sons the benefit of a public school education while they awaited preferment, Thomas Trollope moved his family to Harrow, 'as he had friends among the masters at Harrow, and as the school offered an education almost gratuitous to children living in the parish'.⁴ To do so, he rented a local farm at a very high rent – high, Anthony suggests in 'Public Schools', because those who owned land in the parish of Harrow were well aware that they could charge a tenant for the educational benefits his sons would receive.

At Winchester, when the Trollope brothers were there, the school consisted of the seventy Scholars plus 130 fee-paying

'Commoners'. The number of Scholars and their traditional status meant that there was no invidious distinction in favour of the fee-paying boys. Both Trollope brothers attest that all students at Winchester considered themselves equals, and were so treated. But Harrow was different. There fee-paying boys – 'foreigners' – were very much in the majority; their number fluctuated between about 280 and 115 in Anthony Trollope's day, while only a few local boys claimed their free tuition: ten in 1818, seventeen in 1825. The inhabitants of the parish had brought suit in 1809 over what they considered a subversion of the school founder's original intent – again there is an anticipation of *The Warden*. A succession of eighteenth-century headmasters had increased the number of fee-paying pupils from outside the parish, who gradually crowded out the local boys. But the courts upheld the school's right to admit 'foreigners'. Although boys from the parish retained their rights, they were despised by the foreigners, 'received', Anthony writes, 'not on equal terms, because a day-boarder at Harrow in those days was never so received'. His brother confirms this account of miserable exclusion: 'What a Pariah I was . . . a . . . "village boy" . . . one of the very few, who by the term of the founder's will, had any right to be there at all; and was in consequence an object of scorn and contumely on the part of all the *paying* pupils. I was a charity boy.'⁵

Each Trollope son duly entered Harrow as a 'village boy' at the age of seven, Anthony in 1822, but his subsequent academic career was erratic. At the end of three years his tutor, Henry Drury – Thomas Trollope's friend and Byron's Harrow tutor – apparently 'expressed an opinion that' Anthony's 'juvenile career was not proceeding in a satisfactory manner at Harrow', and he was sent 'to a private school at Sunbury' near London 'kept by Arthur Drury', Henry's brother. There, despite his poverty, he 'lived more nearly on terms of equality with other boys than at any other period during my very prolonged school-days'. But at Sunbury he was also accused, with three others, of perpetrating 'some nameless horror', probably an experiment with sex. Trollope was considered the leader 'because I, having come from a public school, might be supposed to be the leader of wickedness!' The incident throws a not unexpected light on the contemporary reputation of Harrow.

In 1827, in accordance with his father's plan, Anthony received his place at Winchester, and spent the next three years there. His

brother Tom had preceded him, in 1820, and left in 1828. 'In accordance with the practice of the college, which submits, or did then submit, much of the tuition of the younger boys to the elder', Tom became Anthony's tutor, which made him responsible for such instruction as his younger brother received, emphasised by daily thrashings 'with a big stick'. In 1830, Anthony became a day-boy at Harrow once again, since his chances of a scholarship to New College seemed remote. He remained at Harrow until April 1834, when he ended his formal education. In the summer of 1834 he spent six weeks as a classics teacher at a Brussels school kept by another of the ubiquitous Drurys.

Latin and Greek comprised the entire course of study at Harrow and Winchester – and the other public schools – in Trollope's day. He tells us that he had 'never learned the multiplication table, and had no more idea of the rule of three than of Conic Sections'.⁶ At Harrow, Mathematics did not become a compulsory subject until 1837, nor Modern Languages until 1851, and even then not very much time was allotted for these subjects. The exclusive attention given to Latin and Greek did not, however, mean that they were well learned, or well taught; they were not, in fact, taught at all in our sense. The masters' responsibility was not to instruct but to hear recitations and punish failure. Each student was supposed to work through a set passage of Latin or Greek for each recitation period, and to be able first to translate the passage word by word in the word order of the original, occasionally parsing or answering questions about constructions, and then to offer an idiomatic English translation.

Students prepared for recitation periods by studying the assigned passage together, or, as at Winchester, with an older student acting as tutor; at Harrow the masters acted privately as tutors, being directly feed by each pupil's guardian, but not feed for their work with village boys. Students were also expected to write from two to six lines of Latin verse each day, on a theme set by a master, and to recite these verses, which were required to be grammatically and metrically correct. Since masters tended to repeat themselves, the boys knew that themes recurred. Darwin, a year older than Tom Trollope, was at Winchester with him, and recalled that, while the better students wrote their own verses, many depended on 'small, but bulky quartos, the accretions of I know not how many generations of boys; in which almost every possible subject had been made the theme of a verse-task'.⁷ The