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ANTHONY TROLLOPE

ORLEY FARM

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INTRODUCTION

IF *Orley Farm* is not now the best known of Trollope's novels, it was in its own day the most respected of them. Looking back from the mid-1870s when writing his *Autobiography*, Trollope says: 'Most of those among my friends who talk to me now about my novels, and are competent to form an opinion on the subject, say that this is the best I have written.'[1] Although in terms of sales it was overshadowed by the more popular Barsetshire novels, it won George Eliot's approval and was praised by the more serious among the reviewers, including G. H. Lewes, the most influential proponent of mid-Victorian realism.[2] It is certainly a novel which demands attention when we survey the rich field of nineteenth-century fiction.

Trollope began to write *Orley Farm* in July 1860, when he was riding high on the outstanding success of *Framley Parsonage*, which was serialized in the *Cornhill Magazine* from January 1860 to April 1861. For his new venture he decided to write a much longer novel than *Framley Parsonage*, indeed a larger novel in all respects, with more plot lines, more central characters, more deeply examined social and intellectual issues, and a wider social and geographical scope; and he chose for it the mode of publication which Dickens had made popular and which Thackeray had used for his biggest novels—part issue in twenty monthly numbers at a shilling a number, with two illustrations to each. Part issue began in March 1861, before *Framley Parsonage* was quite finished, and the same eminent artist, John Everett Millais, was employed to illustrate it. Presumably author and publisher alike were hoping for sales comparable with those of *Framley Parsonage*, which had helped the *Cornhill*

[1] *An Autobiography*, ed. M. Sadleir (Oxford, 1950; reprinted with an Introduction by P. D. Edwards, World's Classics, 1980), p. 166.

[2] See D. Skilton, *Anthony Trollope and his Contemporaries* (Longman, 1972), pp. 24–8.

to a circulation of over 100,000. This hope was not to be fulfilled. From now on the public was by and large to prefer its serial fiction in magazines, which at the same price of a shilling a month provided a wide range of general interest articles, short stories and poetry, as well as the latest instalment of a novel. Chapman and Hall, the publishers, found themselves unstapling unsold parts of *Orley Farm* and binding them up as part of their book issue of the novel.[3] The two volumes of the first edition were published separately on 3 December 1861 and 25 September 1862, at eleven shillings each, instead of the customary ten shillings, and sales were disappointing. The picture is that of a best-selling author losing sales but gaining the esteem of his fellow literary practitioners.

While consideration of *Framley Parsonage* is quite obviously relevant to *Orley Farm* and its place in the literary history of the period, a glance at one other best-selling serial novel of the time is equally instructive. Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White* ran weekly in *All the Year Round* from 26 November 1859 to 25 August 1860, overlapping with *Framley Parsonage* and, with its story of mystery, detection, violence, and death, causing a public sensation quite as large as Trollope's rendering of the problems in the life of a rural clergyman and his family. Naturally the kinds of excitement engendered by these two novels were very different. Trollope's story was linear, unfolding the events in order, one after another, with no suspense worked up by keeping the reader ignorant of the facts to date. Wilkie Collins, on the other hand, wrapped everything in mystery and contrived an almost unbearable suspense by giving his reader only so much information as would keep him or her on tenterhooks,

[3] The publication of *Orley Farm* is analysed by Michael Sadleir, *Trollope: a Bibliography* (Constable, 1928; reprinted Dawsons, 1964), pp. 37–44. Copies of the novel are to be found bound from parts in the cloth which the publishers used for the second edition. See also *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*, ed. N. J. Hall, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 142, 176, 315 and 340 1.

while the complex narrative deliberately withheld its own secrets until such time as it was finally ready to reveal them.

These two approaches to novel writing became known as 'realistic' and 'sensational' respectively, and Trollope and Collins were regarded as leading exponents of each mode. Trollope discusses the matter humorously in his *Autobiography*:

> Among English novels of the present day, and among English novelists, a great division is made. There are sensational novels and anti-sensational, sensational novelists and anti-sensational; sensational readers and anti-sensational. The novelists who are considered to be anti-sensational are generally called realistic. I am realistic. My friend Wilkie Collins is generally supposed to be sensational. The readers who prefer the one are supposed to take delight in the elucidation of character. They who hold by the other are charmed by the construction and gradual development of a plot. All this is, I think, a mistake,—which mistake arises from the inability of the imperfect artist to be at the same time realistic and sensational. A good novel should be both, and both in the highest degree.[4]

Orley Farm was a deliberate attempt to achieve the difficult union of the two qualities, and Trollope goes on to cite Lady Mason's climactic interview with Sir Peregrine Orme as an instance which he hopes may demonstrate his success. Even so, the novel is not 'sensational' in design. Rather, it is intense at certain highly dramatic moments which have been arrived at by 'realistic' means. The point is easily made by comparison with *The Woman in White*. In his Preface, Wilkie Collins begged his reviewers not to spoil his effects by letting the cat out of the bag, to which *The Times*'s critic responded in mock-exasperation :

> The cat out of the bag! There are in this novel about a hundred cats contained in a hundred bags, all screaming and mewing to be let out. Every chapter contains a new cat. When we come to the end of it, out goes the animal, and there is a

[4] *Autobiography*, pp. 226–7.

new bag put into our hands which it is the object of the subsequent chapter to open.[5]

No such comment could possibly be made about *Orley Farm*, in which the reader's uncertainty as to the facts of the case is cleared up early on. (Indeed Trollope later concluded that the plot 'has the fault of declaring itself too early in the book'.)[6] The interest in the novel is not in extracting information but in tracing the spread of this information through the fictional world, and registering the diverse effects of knowledge and ignorance on the entire cast of characters and their interrelationships.

At the very opening of the novel the narrator rejects the possible title 'The Great Orley Farm Case' on the grounds that no one would read a novel 'burthened with so very uncouth an appellation' (I, 1), and in doing so he implies that his story contains materials which differently treated might make a sensational novel—a 'Lady Mason's Secret', as it were, to rival Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, which came out to great acclaim in 1862. Such is not Trollope's ambition, for though *Orley Farm* is a novel with a purpose, it is the very different purpose of promoting legal reform by questioning the English system of legal advocacy. Trollope believes that paid advocacy on the adversarial principle frequently obscures and is intended to obscure the facts of a case in the interest of the client who can hire the most skilled and least scrupulous barristers. Such a state of affairs, he feels, is contrary both to justice and to the practical needs of society. Moreover, as a practice it corrupts those who work it or have contact with it. What Trollope would prefer to see is legal gentlemen—and the word 'gentleman' has great force in Trollope—working together to ascertain the truth, and then, having full regard to all circumstances, tempering if need be justice with mercy.

The course of the Orley Farm case makes this clear, and

[5] Anonymous notice by E. S. Dallas in *The Times* of 30 October 1860.

[6] *Autobiography*, p. 167.

to emphasize his reformist stance, Trollope has some of his characters attend the legal reform section of the first congress of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in Birmingham in October 1857. The conduct of the case involves the distortion of evidence by the browbeating of witnesses, and the defence by able lawyers of a client they believe to be guilty. The whole business reveals the moral contradictions the author finds at the English bar. The 'wrong' version of the facts of the case triumphs, so that a character who is sympathetic to both the reader and to most of the other characters is acquitted unjustly, while the villain, with right on his side, is roundly defeated. The novelist, however, as Victorian novelists so often do, operates his novel as a higher court and godlike deals with all his characters according to their deserts. Because Lady Mason is basically a good and decent character, and moreover follows the advice of the virtuous Mrs Orme, she voluntarily renounces the unjust material prosperity the acquittal offers, so that, by Trollope's standards, right prevails but justice is merciful in its operation. The standards which should operate in the world are made clear: personal integrity, good usage, taste, culture, and compassion—in fact those qualities that make a gentleman in Trollope's world. These standards are internalized in the good characters as what the narrator calls 'good taste and good feeling' (II, 293), as opposed to the commercialism of paid advocacy of a cause because and only because of the fee to be received.

Mr Moulder's family and his circle of commercial travellers are integral to the debate on legal morality. As in all Victorian multi-plot novels this additional set of characters exists partly in order to broaden the fictional picture, and, as always in Trollope, they provide for a wider awareness on the part of the fictional world (from county society to the urban lower middle class) of the central events of the novel. There is no doubt in *Orley Farm* as to which is the main stream of the story, and Trollope gives us extra action, such as the Kenneby-Smiley courtship, to keep these secondary characters alive, and not *vice versa*, because they serve such

a vital purpose. Once the world of the 'commercial gentlemen' has been set up, with its own rules, conventions and morality, it can be used for comparison with the legal world. The standards of commercialism, which the ideal Trollopian reader and most of the well-to-do characters in the novel must regard as 'vulgar', are subsequently seen to underline the practice of advocacy as well. Felix Graham has a high-principled struggle with his conscience about defending a client whom he cannot believe to be innocent, but the whole matter is brought down to earth by Moulder's commercial fellow-feeling with the professional advocate. It is the barrister's duty, he maintains, to make witnesses tell the story his client requires, regardless of the truth:

'They're paid for it; it's their duties; just as it's my duty to sell Hubbles and Grease's sugar. It's not for me to say the sugar's bad, or the samples not equal to the last. My duty is to sell, and I sell;—and it's their duty to get a verdict.'. . .

'But it aint justice,' said Mrs. Smiley.

'Why not? I say it is justice. You can have it if you choose to pay for it, and so can I. If I buy a greatcoat against the winter, and you go out at night without having one, is it injustice because you're perished by the cold while I'm as warm as toast. I say it's a grand thing to live in a country where one can buy a greatcoat.' (II, 213)

With approval in such terms, advocacy is severely beset, and the narrator's judgement on Mr Chaffanbrass, the most successful criminal advocate of his day, comes as no surprise:

Considering the lights with which he had been lightened, there was a species of honesty about Mr. Chaffanbrass which certainly deserved praise. He was always true to the man whose money he had taken, and gave to his customer, with all the power at his command, that assistance which he had professed to sell. But we may give the same praise to the hired bravo who goes through with truth and courage the task which he has undertaken. I knew an assassin in Ireland who professed that during twelve years of practice in Tipperary he had never failed when he had once engaged himself. For truth and

honesty to their customers . . . I would bracket that man and Mr. Chaffanbrass together. (II, 359)

The final result of the Great Orley Farm Case shows the evils of the system of advocacy, even though a group of right-minded characters see to it that the correct thing is done in the end. The law fails, but the novel sees justice done.

Felix Graham, who plays an important part in the debate on legal morality, also exemplifies one of the subjects that receives a lot of attention in Trollope's greatest fiction: the conscious choice of a mode of life, in terms of a profession, a marriage partner or a standard of gentlemanly (or other) behaviour. Someone who does not choose but merely drifts is, in Victorian terms, in severe moral danger, while Trollope shows that a man may not even safely 'allow himself to be governed by the united wisdom of others around him' (II, 352) if, as among criminal lawyers, that 'wisdom' is corrupt. Only the standards of a gentleman coupled with conscientious effort are sufficient. The former prompt a man to act in accordance with conscious integrity with regard to himself and a considered recognition of the needs of others, while the latter, whether in one's profession, one's interpersonal relations, one's art or one's sport, provides not only a safeguard but a fulfilment. 'There is no human bliss,' the narrator tells us, 'equal to twelve hours of work with only six hours in which to do it' (II, 87). The subject of life choices dominates some of Trollope's best novels of the 1860s, such as *Framley Parsonage*, where Mark Robarts has problems in behaving like a clergyman, or *Phineas Finn*, in which the hero must try to reconcile political life and personal integrity. *Can You Forgive Her?*, which was written soon after *Orley Farm*, looks at the same set of choices from a woman's point of view, and having (to our modern disappointment) rejected professional life and political emancipation, examines the scope for action, the hopes, and the disillusion offered by marriage as the only career choice available.

Orley Farm gives an original twist to the old subject of a

man's marriage choice, in Felix Graham's attempt to train a girl up on rational principles as an ideal wife. The Mary Snow episodes, however, say less about love and marriage than about the inadequacy of theory unsupported by practice and experience. Felix is also attracted by abstract notions of justice and by idealist German theories of jurisprudence, while Lucius Mason's costly attempts at modern land management provide further instances of theory in difficulties when faced with the complexities of the real world. German thought—one of the major intellectual factors in Britain in the 1860s—looms large in this novel, as do German universities, already mentioned by Trollope a few years before in *Barchester Towers* (1857) as remarkable in having professors who taught. Lucius has studied chemistry, physical anthropology and philology in Germany, while Oxford and Cambridge have only just started to undergo the heavings destined eventually to convert them from tutorial cramming of a traditional classical and mathematical syllabus to something recognizable today as education in a whole range of disciplines, some modern and some even capable of application in the world. In *Orley Farm*, unlike an earlier Trollope novel such as *Doctor Thorne*, the bluff, honest, hunting Englishman such as young Peregrine Orme, untouched by theory, does not win. He, unfitted to intellectual analysis, is a decent enough fellow, but a lesser man than the thinking man whose notions have been tempered in the fire of worldly experience. By the latter half of the novel Felix has learnt sufficient from experience to regret that he 'had gone so far out of the regular course, thinking to be wiser than other men, but being in truth much more silly' (II, 67). Having intellect and practical feeling at his command, he is set to become a mature and balanced man in the world. Near the end of the story, Augustus Staveley, a very green young man, lectures him roundly:

'A man, as I take it, must through life allow himself to be governed by the united wisdom of others around him. He cannot take upon himself to judge as to every step by his own

lights. If he does, he will be dead before he has made up his mind as to the preliminaries.' And in this way Augustus Staveley from the depth of his life's experience spoke words of worldly wisdom to his future brother-in-law. (II, 352)

The irony at young Staveley's expense is important. His sort of naïve common sense is woefully inadequate beside up-to-date thought checked by worldly sense.

With this emphasis on maturity, it is not surprising that Trollope enjoys writing about the middle-aged and the elderly. Lady Mason is an excellent example of how a woman of experience offers a novelist far greater possibilities than the insipid young Victorian girl heroine, who by definition must have had no life at all if she is to fill her role. Sir Peregrine Orme is another case. His pathetic flashes of hope amidst his bereavement at the loss of his loved one give him an eminent place in the catalogue of characters who harbour dreams and what the narrator calls 'poetry' in their secret lives. Both Mr and Mrs Furnival, quite separately, without communication (this is their sorrow), have such fantasy within them, and even Mrs Moulder is 'not without a touch of poetry' (I, 242). Von Bauhr is an obvious case of a dreamer of pipe-dreams, but even his are much more interesting than the conventional young dreams of Mary Snow. Albert Fitzallen's disappointment when the path of love insists on running smooth is held up to ridicule by an apt comparison with that classic of sentimental folly, Sheridan's Lydia Languish.

The dominant note in most of the novel is sadness and stoicism in the face of loss. There is something startlingly everyday about mental suffering in Trollope. For example, when Mrs Orme goes to Lucius Mason on the morning after his mother's guilt has been revealed to him, he is presented as undergoing severe but perfectly ordinary anguish: 'He had not been undressed that night, and his clothes hung on him as they always do hang on a man who has passed a sleepless night in them' (II, 353). He has just learnt that his mother committed a serious crime twenty years before, that

he has been living off the proceeds ever since, and that he will shortly be penniless, and yet his suffering is made to seem somehow routine. His vigil is something that must be shared by all of us at some time in our lives.

The novel celebrates the ability to endure life's blows and to learn by experience how to negotiate the dangers of the world. The narrator tells us firmly that happiness does not derive from wealth or social position as such, but is to be found in work and struggle. The most that can be achieved is a certain contentment in early middle age, before the problems of age threaten to overwhelm one (II, 190–1). The story as a whole takes an unromantic look at life and its problems. No idealistic attempt to reform the world and its institutions will succeed overnight, but the attempt is always worthwhile. *Orley Farm* is the clearest embodiment of the balance between idealism and experience which Trollope saw as necessary for a successful life in his world.

DAVID SKILTON

NOTE ON THE TEXT

Orley Farm originally appeared in twenty monthly parts, from March 1861 to October 1862, and was published in two volumes dated 1862, volume one issued on 3 December 1861, and volume two on 25 September 1862.

The present edition reproduces with very few changes the text of the 1950 World's Classics edition, which was a reissue in one volume of the two-volume World's Classics edition of 1935. The 1935 pagination in two volumes is retained. The 1935 text was taken from the original text of 1861–2, which seems to have been either a single printing for both part issue and volume issue, or to have been reprinted from stereotypes, in which it was set very early (see *Letters*, ed. N. J. Hall, 1983, pp. 340–1). In either case, part issue and the first book edition appear to be textually identical. The editions of 1935 and 1950, and hence also the present text, follow 1861–2 in all its inconsistencies, such as 'Leatheram' (I, 384) and 'Leatherham' (II, 186, 238, 280 ff), and 'chymist' (I, 107) and 'chemist' (I, 128). Two mistakes in the 1950 text have been corrected, and the first edition readings of I, 200, line 5, and II, 326, line 3, restored. Two apparent mistakes in the first edition text, copied in 1935 and 1950, have been conjecturally emended for the sake of clarity, by replacing question marks on I, 383, line 17, and II, 384, line 18, by a full stop and an exclamation mark respectively. (Trollope's rendering of punctuation marks in his manuscripts is often far from clear.) Volume II, 90, line 5, presents an unresolved problem, which is mentioned in the explanatory notes at the end of the volume. No attempt has been made in 1935 or since to regularize the usage of capitals in such words as 'judge', 'court', etc., and unusual but recognized spellings from 1861–2, such as 'caldron' and 'stanch', have been retained.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF ANTHONY TROLLOPE

1815	Born at 6 Keppel Street, Bloomsbury, 24 April.
1822	Sent to Harrow as a day-boy.
1825	Attends private school at Sunbury.
1827	Sent to Winchester College.
1830	Removed from Winchester and sent again to Harrow.
1834	Leaves Harrow, serves six weeks as classics teacher in a Brussels school. Accepts junior clerkship in General Post Office; settles in London.
1841	Becomes Deputy Postal Surveyor at Banagher, in Ireland.
1844	Marries Rose Heseltine, in June. Transferred to Clonmel, in Ireland.
1845	Promoted to Surveyor in the Post Office and moves to Mallow, in Ireland.
1847	*The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, his first novel, is published (3 vols., T. C. Newby).
1848	*The Kellys and the O'Kellys; or Landlords and Tenants* (3 vols., Henry Colburn). Rebellion in Ireland.
1850	*La Vendée: An Historical Romance* (3 vols., Henry Colburn). Writes *The Noble Jilt* (play; published 1923).
1851	Postal duties in western England.
1853	Returns to Ireland, settles in Belfast.
1854	Leaves Belfast and settles at Donnybrook, near Dublin.
1855	*The Warden* (1 vol., Longman).
1857	*Barchester Towers* (3 vols., Longman). *The Three Clerks* (3 vols., Richard Bentley).
1858	Postal mission to Egypt; visits Palestine; postal mission to the West Indies; visits Malta, Gibraltar and Spain.

Doctor Thorne (3 vols., Chapman & Hall).

1859 Returns to Ireland; moves to England, and settles at Waltham Cross, in Hertfordshire.
The Bertrams (3 vols., Chapman & Hall).
The West Indies and the Spanish Main (travel; 1 vol., Chapman & Hall).

1860 Visits Florence
Tales of All Countries serialized in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and *Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper*, May–October.
Castle Richmond (3 vols., Chapman & Hall).

1860–1 *Framley Parsonage* serialized in the *Cornhill Magazine*, January 1860–April 1861; its huge success establishes his reputation as a novelist.

1861 *Framley Parsonage* (3 vols., Smith, Elder).
Tales of All Countries (1 vol., Chapman & Hall).
Election to the Garrick Club.
Tales of All Countries: Second Series, serialized in *Public Opinion*, the *London Review*, and *The Illustrated London News*, January–December.

1861–2 *Orley Farm* published in twenty monthly parts, March 1861–October 1862, by Chapman & Hall.
Visits the United States (August 1861–May 1862).
The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson: by One of the Firm, serialized in the *Cornhill Magazine*, August 1861–March 1862.

1862 *Orley Farm* (2 vols., Chapman & Hall).
North America (travel; 2 vols., Chapman & Hall).
The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson (1 vol., New York: Harper; first English edition published 1870).
Rachel Ray (2 vols., Chapman & Hall).

1862–4 *The Small House at Allington*, serialized in the *Cornhill Magazine*, September 1862–April 1864.

1863 *Tales of All Countries: Second Series* (1 vol., Chapman & Hall).
Death of his mother, Frances Trollope.

1864 Election to the Athenaeum.
The Small House at Allington (2 vols., Smith, Elder).
Can You Forgive Her? (2 vols., Chapman & Hall).