

THE WORLD'S CLASSICS



OXFORD

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

HE KNEW HE WAS RIGHT



THE WORLD'S CLASSICS



ANTHONY TROLLOPE

He Knew He Was Right



Edited with an Introduction by
JOHN SUTHERLAND

Oxford New York
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1985

Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

London New York Toronto

Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi

Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo

Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town

Melbourne Auckland

and associated companies in

Beirut Berlin Ibadan Mexico City Nicosia

Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press

Introduction, Note on the Text, Select Bibliography, and

Explanatory Notes © John Sutherland 1985

Chronology © W. J. McCormack 1982

First published in one volume 1869

First issued as a World's Classics paperback 1985

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise, without
the prior permission of Oxford University Press*

*This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way
of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired or otherwise circulated
without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover
other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition
including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser*

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Trollope, Anthony

He knew he was right. —(The World's classics)

I. Title II. Sutherland, John, 1903–

823'.8[F] PR5684.H4

ISBN 0-19-281692-6

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Trollope, Anthony, 1815–1882.

He knew he was right.

(The World's classics)

I. Sutherland, John, 1903– . II. Title.

PR5684.H5 1985 823'.8 84–27203

ISBN 0-19-281692-6 (pbk.)

Printed in Great Britain by

Hazell Watson & Viney Limited

Aylesbury, Bucks

INTRODUCTION

I

He Knew He Was Right is a work—some claim the masterwork—of Trollope's maturity. Written from winter 1867 to summer 1868, and published serially from October 1868 to May 1869, it was his twenty-first full-length novel. In sheer quantity of writing, Trollope was by now a commanding presence in English literature. The late 1860s had also seen a number of formative changes of life and career for him. The year 1867, in particular, was pivotal. In September, two months before beginning *He Knew He Was Right*, he resigned his senior post in the Post Office. In July of the same year, he had terminated his 'Barchester' sequence of comic-rural-ecclesiastical fiction with the publication of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. In 1867, he assumed the editorship of the newly launched (and largely political) *St. Paul's Magazine*, as part of his preparation for a career (as he fondly hoped) in Parliament as a Liberal MP. (Trollope in fact failed to win a seat at Beverley, in 1868; the contest was very dirty and shattered his political ambitions.) By the late 1860s, Trollope ranked among the most popular and esteemed of British writers; heir to Thackeray and rival to Dickens. His work had branched into appropriately new, and ambitious areas. Two innovations were notably fruitful. With *Phineas Finn* (serialized in *St. Paul's*, from October 1867) he inaugurated a series of 'parliamentary' novels. *He Knew He Was Right* marks a parallel interest in psychological complexity, and dark areas of the mind.

Reading publics tend to be conservative where favourite authors are concerned. Trollope's new departures in fiction (of which there are many) were not always well received by his contemporaries, who wanted the author to keep his place. *He Knew He Was Right* was coolly reviewed. Critics found it too sombre. The melancholy ending was an affront to 'conventional optimism'¹ (as Henry James called it). But, as Sadleir correctly

¹ From Henry James's obituary essay on Trollope (1883), reprinted in *The House of Fiction*, ed. Leon Edel (New York, 1962), p. 110.

observes, Trollope was in advance of the taste of his time.² In this century, particularly since the Trollope revival of the 1960s, *He Knew He Was Right* has increasingly been judged the finest of Trollope's novels of character.

There is no doubt that the novelist himself put great efforts into the work, conceiving it a design on the Shakespearian scale. *He Knew He Was Right* draws fully on the impressive resources of Trollope's knowledge of the world. In the service of the Post Office, he had travelled to the West Indies and knew the colonial types represented in *He Knew He Was Right* by the Rowleys. As a senior civil servant (and prospectively an MP), he knew Whitehall, Westminster, and the upper social tiers of English society. Unlike many Victorian novelists, Trollope had observed lords and ladies at first hand. (His clubs, in 1867, were the Garrick, the Athenaeum and the Cosmopolitan.) He was as familiar with squires and with clergymen. (His *Clergymen of the Church of England* was published in 1866; of his many novels dealing with the English squirearchy, *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, which he began to write in June 1868, is a good example.) Years of pleasurable fox-hunting and dutiful riding over postal routes had furnished him with an intimate knowledge of the countryside and county towns of England—here principally represented in the Exeter sub-plot. While writing *He Knew He Was Right*, Trollope was dispatched on high level post office negotiations to the USA. His depiction of the Americans in the novel (notably the Spalding family) draws on personal observation of the country's administrators and diplomats. His brother, Thomas Adolphus Trollope, with whom Anthony was close, had been resident in Florence since the 1840s, and frequent visits supplied the European setting for *He Knew He Was Right*. (His most recent visit had been in October 1866, to celebrate Thomas's second marriage; this evidently inspired the romantic Tuscan interlude in the novel.) All of which is to say that *He Knew He Was Right* is the mature work of a novelist who could legitimately claim to be a man of the world.

Like all Trollope's major fiction, *He Knew He Was Right* offers

² Michael Sadleir, *Trollope: A Commentary* (London, 1928; repr. Oxford, 1962), p. 393.

a profusion of intertwining and parallel-running plots in a variety of national and international settings. But, as the title indicates (and as the original title 'Mr. Trevelyan' indicates even more), the core of the novel is one man's wretched obsession. Louis Trevelyan, rich, and in the world's eyes the most fortunate of men, wrongly suspects that his wife has betrayed her wifely duty to him by encouraging the attentions of Colonel Osborne. She has, in fact, innocently conspired with the other man (who wields backbench influence in Parliament) to have her father helped to a free trip back to England from the Mandarin Islands, which he governs. Emily Trevelyan is justly incensed by her husband's suspicions. The Colonel is an older man than her father, an MP and a family friend. She stands on her rights, as a respectable married woman (other 'women's rights'—politically topical—are invoked). Trevelyan stands on his patriarchal rights, as lord and master in his own house. He invokes the uncompromising terminology of the marriage ceremony: 'Had not his wife sworn to obey him?' Words are exchanged. One awful word in particular (Trollope studiously avoids specifying it, but it is probably 'harlot'—see p. 927) affronts Mrs Trevelyan. The rift deepens. Convinced of his rectitude, Trevelyan finally leaves home. To the dismay of his friends, his indignation intensifies into morbid monomania (as Trollope labels it). 'That his wife was innocent he was quite sure. But nevertheless, he was himself so much affected by some feeling which pervaded him in reference to [Osborne], that all his energy was destroyed, and his powers of mind and body were paralysed' (p. 17).

Driven by this unnatural 'feeling', Trevelyan hires a seedy private detective; abducts his son; drives his wife from the marital home; and finally takes refuge in a Sienese wilderness, whither his distraught (but still on her part self-righteous) partner follows him. Trevelyan declines further into dementia, and finally into an irreversible physical breakdown. To humour his full-blown madness, his wife falsely brands herself an adulteress ('Do none confess but the guilty?' she asks her indignant sister). Trevelyan dies, 'acquitting' her with a death-bed kiss—but still evidently deluded that all along he has been

'right'. He 'knows' it. Trevelyan's self-destruction is extravagant and absurd. And finally Trollope denies his hero even that sympathy one might feel for a dying dog. 'At last the maniac was dead,' he concludes; with the grudging concession, 'and in his last moments he had made such reparation as was in his power for the evil that he had done' (p. 928). It is a brutal obituary. But, as Henry James approvingly observed, the 'logic' of the progression from tiny provocation to massive consequence is perfect: 'touch is added to touch, one small, stupid, fatal aggravation to another; and as we gaze into the widening breach we wonder at the vulgar materials of which tragedy sometimes composes itself'.³

The vulgar material in the Trevelyan's tragedy is cast-iron Victorian propriety. There is no question that Emily has actually been unfaithful (Trollope left such melodramatic delinquency to the despised 'sensation novelist'). The most that ever happens is that Osborne—an obtuse, middle-aged dandy who likes making mischief—presumes on family connection to drop titles, and visit Emily unattended in her private apartments. Strict etiquette is infringed, nothing more. As with *Othello*, the real issue is 'reputation,'—the husband's exaggerated self-esteem—not any actual misdemeanour. As the marriage falls apart, Trollope neutrally represents the stifling forms of proper behaviour in the mid-Victorian bourgeois household whose punctilios strike the modern reader as bizarrely as the rituals of Papuan tribesmen. Trevelyan is affronted when Colonel Osborne (who has known her since birth) takes the liberty of addressing his wife as 'Emily'. He communicates his displeasure to the lady (who resides under the same roof) by letter. A 'reconciliation' is negotiated by 'ambassadors'. But it is fragile; Emily (who in the tropics has missed the tutelary disciplines of an English lady's education) particularly chafes at the prohibition that she shall have no 'secret' communication with Osborne:

While they were sitting at dinner on the next day, a Saturday, there came another note from Colonel Osborne. The servant brought it to

³ Henry James, *op. cit.*

his mistress, and she, when she had looked at it, put it down by her plate. Trevelyan knew immediately from whom the letter had come, and understood how impossible it was for his wife to give it up in the servant's presence. The letter lay there till the man was out of the room, and then she handed it to Nora [her sister]. 'Will you give that to Louis?' she said. 'It comes from the man whom he supposes to be my lover.'

'Emily!' said he, jumping from his seat, 'how can you allow words so horrible and so untrue to fall from your mouth?'

'If it be not so, why am I to be placed in such a position as this? The servant knows, of course, from whom the letter comes, and sees that I have been forbidden to open it.' Then the man returned to the room, and the remainder of the dinner passed off almost in silence. (pp. 48-9)

So proper are the Trevelyan, that their own dining-room has become an inhibitingly public place. Even to save their marriage they cannot talk as man to woman, and clear up the misunderstanding which will from this point on inexorably destroy both their lives. It would not, they feel, be 'right' to speak out in front of the servant. In playing their public roles of master and mistress, they lose the closer relationship of wife and husband. How, one wonders, did this pair perform the act that produced little Louis? (This is a frequent area of speculation in Victorian fiction, and a main curiosity that one brings to the recently opened archives of the age's pornography.) The Trevelyan are victims of a society corseted in correctness to the point of strangulation. They go to their doom with their class motto, *Bourgeoisie Oblige*. (Aristocrats manage these things better, Trollope implies. See Chapter 81, 'Mr Glascock is Master', where the future Lord Peterborough effortlessly subdues his spirited American fiancée.)

Trevelyan, like other Trollope heroes, might possibly have found salvation in work—that never-failing remedy for Victorian malaise. As it is, he is the incarnation of comfortable, middle-class idleness. He is a man whose only occupation (until he begins furiously to investigate his wife's imaginary infidelities) is that of being a gentleman. He reads a magazine article on sound waves and meditates a reply (he has a good, well-educated mind); he visits his club, and dabbles in politics

(he might be a Conservative). But he works at nothing. Like his income (£3,000 p.a. from secure investments) his marriage has been comfortably and effortlessly arranged. (It is, incidentally, a rule of the Trollopian world that marriage only works if the man is obliged to propose at least three times, and if the way to the altar is strewn with difficulties.) Emily is imported for Trevelyan as so much deadweight sexual cargo:

Emily Rowley, when she was brought home from the Mandarin Islands to be the wife of Louis Trevelyan, was a very handsome young woman, tall, with a bust rather full for her age, with dark eyes—eyes that looked to be dark because her eye-brows and eye-lashes were nearly black, but which were in truth so varying in colour that you could not tell their hue. Her brown hair was very dark and very soft; and the tint of her complexion was brown also, though the colour of her cheeks was often so bright as to induce her enemies to say falsely of her that she painted them. And she was very strong, as are some girls who come from the tropics. (pp. 6–7)

Her strength (which carries the distinct hint that she has what Trollope would have called a touch of the tarbrush in her) promises to mix uneasily with the nerveless good breeding and gentlemanly inactivity of Trevelyan.

Readers often feel the weakness of *He Knew He Was Right* is that the Trevelyans are such a graceless and unlikeable couple. In his *Autobiography*, Trollope concedes the point. He could not, he feels, make the reader *like* Louis; indeed, one never thinks of him as other than 'Mr. Trevelyan'. This is not necessarily a damaging fault in the book. The Trevelyans are the bearers of much that is distasteful in their society. What one dislikes about them is what one dislikes about Victorian England (and those parts of its social code which have persisted to the present). This personal antipathy need not diminish one's respect for the novel, and its ambitious theme. Every age rewrites Shakespeare and *He Knew He Was Right* is quite clearly a Victorian version of *Othello*. Trollope intended it to be. There are numerous signalling references to Shakespeare's tragedy (and a central episode rather too allusively set in Venice). Like *Othello*, Trevelyan lacks occupation. Like *Othello*, he has a wife from an alien world (the Caribbean), voluptuous in ways he cannot

understand: 'he thought that he could remember to have heard it said in early days, long before he himself had had an idea of marrying, that no man should look for a wife from among the tropics, that women educated amidst the languors of those sunny climes rarely came to possess those high ideas of conjugal duty and feminine truth which a man should regard as the first requisites of a good wife' (pp. 41-2). Like Othello, he is morbidly concerned about his reputation among his fellows. (His most painful suffering translates itself into a feeling that he would rather be shot than be seen in his club, or in Piccadilly, in daylight.) Like the Moor, Trevelyan is irrationally jealous, to the point of madness, without cause. And like Othello, he dies deluded that he has loved not wisely, but too well. Trollope revered Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and handles allusion to it deftly. In the episode of Trevelyan *in extremis* at Casalunga, the narrative cross-alludes to Lear, with the Sieneese wasteland standing in for the maddened hero's heath (see note to p. 868 for Trollope's cueing reference to the other Shakespearian tragedy). We see this melancholy exile of Trevelyan through the eyes of the common-sense hero, Hugh Stanbury:

Before ten in the morning, Stanbury was walking up the hill to the house, and wondering at the dreary, hot, hopeless desolation of the spot. It seemed to him that no one could live alone in such a place, in such weather, without being driven to madness. The soil was parched and dusty, as though no drop of rain had fallen there for months. The lizards, glancing in and out of the broken walls, added to the appearance of heat. The vegetation itself was of a faded yellowish green, as though the glare of the sun had taken the fresh colour out of it. There was a noise of grasshoppers and a hum of flies in the air, hardly audible, but all giving evidence of the heat. Not a human voice was to be heard, nor the sound of a human foot, and there was no shelter; but the sun blazed down full upon everything. He took off his hat, and rubbed his head with his handkerchief as he struck the door with his stick. Oh God, to what misery had a little folly brought two human beings who had every blessing that the world could give within their reach!

Some critics have denied that Trollope could reach the Shakespearian pitch of tragedy; that indeed he may deliberately have intended to diminish Trevelyan's suffering, by draping its

pygmy proportions in Othello's, or Lear's, majestic robes. This is too ingenious an interpretation in my view. The Casalunga scenes in *He Knew He Was Right* are among the most intense to be found in mid-Victorian fiction ('worthy of Balzac,' was Henry James's supreme compliment). If not tragic by the canons of Aristotelian poetics, they are surely grand in a way that few other Victorian novelists achieved.

II

'Of course the man was mad,' observes Trollope, with that plain-man's bluntness that he from time to time assumes for its tactical shock effect. But what kind of mad? We do Trollope no favour by claiming *He Knew He Was Right* as a great psychological work, in our understanding of the word. The psycho-pathology of *He Knew He Was Right* is as mid-Victorian as its creator. We gain nothing by retrojecting Freudian or Laingian notions into the narrative as some critics have, thinking Trollope the greater in proportion to his being atypical of his time. Trollope's anatomy of jealousy is conditioned by his age's notion of what constituted madness. And the model for Trevelyan's madness is taken quite evidently, I would suggest, from the psychological theories of Jean Etienne Esquirol.

Esquirol is a pioneer whose work in clinical psychiatry has been overshadowed by the late nineteenth-century giants, Charcot and Freud. In his great study of madness (translated into English in 1845) Esquirol divides the general disorder into four categories: 'monomania' (a term which he invented, and which Trollope significantly uses) predominates. It indicates a condition in which the subject is mad on one subject only. (See p. 361: 'Trevelyan was, in truth, mad on the subject of his wife's infidelity.') Esquirol's theory drew strongly on the traditional symptomatology of melancholy. Especially pertinent to *He Knew He Was Right* is his anatomy of 'lypemia', which Esquirol saw as a disease of modern civilization, marked by a morbid tendency to introspection and extreme mournfulness. The influence of Esquirol's psychology is evident in the novel's stress on the physical symptoms that accompany Trevelyan's

monomania: sleeplessness, sweating in the extremities, anorexia, delusions of grandeur ('folie'), and finally his physical wasting away, to die of organic exhaustion.

Trollope was evidently interested in lunacy (see, for instance, his digression on the subject—with apparent reference to the Macnaughton case—on p. 361). In 1869, a would-be contributor to *St. Paul's* sent him an article which drew on contemporary psychological theory to analyse Trevelyan at length. Regrettably, we may think, Trollope turned down the piece as unsuitable to appear in a journal edited by him (see *Letters*, II.1011).⁴

III

One of the features that time has tended to obscure in Trollope's fiction is its topicality. *He Knew He Was Right* is topical both in incidental reference and in its social implications. On a number of occasions, for instance, Trollope points with quiet pride to the industrial, technological and communications achievements of his age. (Note how often the speed of postal delivery or rail transport are recorded in the narrative.) The reader alert to current events will pick up references to such things as the 1867 Reform Bill, America's 'Alabama' claims, the Colenso scandal, and much else (see the notes to this edition, *passim*). *He Knew He Was Right* also engages itself centrally in the 1860s debate on the drastic change in English middle-class life brought about by the Divorce Bill of 1857. Since 1858, judicial divorce in special courts was available to the moderately well-off British citizen. As recently as 1854, when Dickens wrote *Hard Times*, Bounderby might discourage Stephen Blackpool with the impossibility of divorce for someone with less than a fortune to spend on it:

'But it's not for you at all. It costs money. It costs a mint of money.'

'How much might that be?' Stephen calmly asked.

'Why, you'd have to go to Doctors' Commons with a suit, and you'd have to go to a court of Common Law with a suit, and you'd have to

⁴ *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*, ed. N. John Hall (Stanford: California, 1983).

go to the House of Lords with a suit, and you'd have to get an Act of Parliament to enable you to marry again, and it would cost you (if it was a case of very plain sailing), I suppose from a thousand to fifteen hundred pound . . . Perhaps twice the money.' (Chapter 11)

Ten years later, Bounderby—the middle-class husband—was in a happier position, though Stephen—the working-class man—would still be imprisoned in his marriage, however justifiable his motives for divorce. The other main unfairness of the Divorce Bill of 1857 was its distinct favouritism towards the aggrieved husband. Geoffrey Best gives a succinct summary of the law's bias:

To a modern mind the act itself seems no masterpiece of humanity and morality, since it carefully made it much more difficult for a woman to divorce a man than vice versa. 'In a husband's petition,' writes the historian of *Divorce in England*, 'simple adultery sufficed; a wife was required to prove not only adultery but the additional aggravation of desertion, cruelty, incest, rape, sodomy or bestiality.'⁵

Paradoxically, Emily Trevelyan's lot would be happier if her husband were (as he is not) brutal, drunken and sexually perverted. She has no case against a spouse who is merely monomaniacal about her gentleman callers. And the partisanship of the law for the husband who might merely imagine himself cuckolded made available a new refinement of persecution by lawsuit. As the *Spectator* observed (10 March 1866), 'The wife, it may be a flighty girl given to admiration, excites her husband's jealousy and he brings a suit for divorce.' It was just this possibility under the new legal dispensation that seems to have given Trollope the idea for *He Knew He Was Right*'s main plot.

In 1867, the new divorce law was still as recent—and as generally interesting to the English population—as the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 is as I write now (1984). Its momentous consequences for middle-class mores of the time were still sinking in. It is instructive to read *He Knew He Was Right* alongside *The Times* for 1867, whose columns are full of reports from the new divorce courts. (The bulk of such reports is in itself

⁵ Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain: 1851–1875* (London, 1973), p. 303.

telling: in the January–March 1856 run of *The Times* there are three divorce cases reported. For the same three-month period, in 1867, there are 52.) Other less fastidious newspapers came to specialize salaciously in the sordid details of marital breakdown, opening one of the least admirable chapters of British popular journalism.

The main ground for divorce under the 1857 statute was the wife's adultery. But such misconduct, as the law books tell us, can rarely be witnessed. The husband was typically obliged to reconstruct his wife's infidelity from circumstantial evidence and from his own often inflamed suspicions. The new divorce industry led to the establishment of the private detective, usually recruited (like Trollope's in *He Knew He Was Right*) from the ranks of the police. As the *Saturday Review* pointed out, in an article entitled 'Detectives in Fiction and in Real Life' (11 June 1864), these keyhole peepers were very different from the detectives celebrated in the sensation novels of Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade and their followers:

When a man is unlucky enough to get into the Divorce Court he will almost always employ detectives, and it is marvellous to see how little good he gets by it if the persons whom he employs go one step beyond the commonest possible exertions.

Trollope's detective in *He Knew He Was Right* is called Bozzle. The improbable name is an amalgam of blue-bottle and the noise the fly makes. (Note how Trollope repeats Bozzle's name on, for instance, p. 363, until the text itself seems to buzz.) Bozzle is a blowfly, a filthy thing. He soils all that is holy and private in Trevelyan's life. Some of the finest—and most painful—episodes in the novel are those describing Trevelyan's maddened employment of vulgar Bozzle to torment him, by bringing back 'evidence' of his own cuckolding. The necessity of proving his own disgrace, in a way that will 'stand up in court', mortifies Trevelyan and fans his crotchets into full-blown madness. One of the things that tips him over, one suspects, is his inability to face the ordeal in court. After 1857, divorce Victorian style may have been legally easier; but for the man of feeling it could be as morally anguishing as any marriage,

however unhappy. And historically, one senses that the bungling, dirty-minded Bozzle is a truer representation of the private detectives who multiplied after 1858 than the enterprising crime-busters of *The Woman In White*, or *No Name*.

The Divorce Bill of 1857, like subsequent legislation on marriage, was conceived by its framers as a 'liberal' measure. Other liberations were in the air in the reforming 1860s, and of keen interest to Trollope. He deals with the extension of male suffrage in *Phineas Finn* (which he finished writing in May 1867). *He Knew He Was Right*, with its stress on psychology and the private world of sexual relationships, contains a number of significant references to John Stuart Mill and his 1860s campaign to emancipate women from the 'subjection' of marriage and bring them into the man's world. (Even into Parliament; Mill introduced an amendment to the Representation of the People Act in 1867, with this end in view.) Although they seem to have met only once (an uneasy occasion; see *Letters*, II.598) the philosopher and the novelist are on record as admiring each other's work. Trollope must have known Mill's thinking on social questions, through their joint connection with the advanced Liberal periodical, the *Fortnightly Review*. Mill's *The Subjection of Women* was not, in fact, published until 1869—the same year as *He Knew He Was Right*. Yet the text of Mill's essay was written as early as 1861, and Trollope was obviously familiar with its arguments. It is likely that he picked them up in conversation with his fellow *Fortnightly* contributors.

Trollope's opinions on 1860s feminism are informed, but not immediately easy to fathom. He was certainly not a full-blooded convert to Millite radicalism on the question of the other sex's rights. As A. O. J. Cockshut puts it, Trollope tends to 'shadow box' with the issue. But it evidently fascinated him and he introduces it into *He Knew He Was Right* primarily in relation to the marriage prospects of the young girls who figure in the narrative. At least half this numerous band are what demographers of the age called 'surplus'. The 1861 census had shown a gross imbalance between the sexes in England. In a militantly feminist piece for *Fraser's Magazine* (November, 1862) entitled 'What shall we do with our Old Maids?' Francis Power

Cobbe estimated that 30 per cent of Victorian women were destined to die unmarried. Trollope makes the odds against the nubile female rather longer in *He Knew He Was Right*. There are four pairs of sisters: the Stanburys, the Spaldings, the Frenches and the Rowleys. In three of these pairs, one girl gets her man and the other is left on the shelf. (The Rowley girls are the exception: but Nora comes very close to self-inflicted spinsterhood, when she turns away Charles Glascock; and Emily would clearly have thought herself lucky never to have been to the altar.) These statistics give historical urgency to the otherwise farcical squabbles of the French sisters over their luckless and inert prey, the Rev. Mr. Gibson. After her brief sexual charms have waned, the unmarried woman, as Dorothy observes, is of less worth than a dog. Priscilla and Olivia accept their doom of spinsterhood in better part than Camilla (who has the added aggravation of rivalry with her most unpleasant sister, Arabella). But for them the painful question remains: what can an unchosen woman do with herself? Priscilla ponders her destiny interestingly. She would like to write for the papers, as does her radical brother. But there is no easy way for a girl to follow the bohemian, tobacco-smoking, free-thinking way of life that Hugh has adopted without sacrificing maidenly decency: and Priscilla will never do that. She might—conceivably—do some kind of charitable work. But since she is likely to be poorer than most of the objects of her middle-class philanthropy, there is not much future in that direction. Probably her main occupation, like most ‘dependent’ but unmarried women, will be to provide companionship for an aged parent with the prospect of an eventual lonely old age for herself. With these bleak expectations, the course Priscilla decides on is that of heroic self-effacement. Like the farmer’s horse, she will learn to live on less and less until eventually she can survive on a straw a day. Her final speeches in the novel are permeated with a dignity that I find more moving in its quiet, suicidal way than Trevelyan’s death-bed histrionics:

‘Not to have a hole of my own would be intolerable to me. But, as I was saying, I shall not be unhappy. To enjoy life, as you [she is talking to Dorothy] do, is I suppose out of the question for me. But I have a

satisfaction when I get to the end of the quarter and find that there is not half-a-crown due to any one. Things get dearer and dearer, but I have a comfort even in that. I have a feeling that I should like to bring myself to the straw a day.' (p. 914)

And then, presumably, like the farmer's horse reduced to this perfectly economic diet, she will die, her life's achievement having been not to have been noticed. There are, she tells Nora, only two things in which women excel men: 'Men can't suckle babies and they can't forget themselves.' Priscilla will never give suck. But she will obliterate herself, as if she had never been; and this will be her victory over the male sex. (George Eliot knew and read Trollope. I cannot help suspecting that something of Priscilla fed into the conception of Dorothea Brooke, and her eventual self-negation in *Middlemarch*. See also the note to p. 153.)

We can tell that Trollope admires Priscilla's self-effacement. He has no admiration for the wild-eyed, self-advertising feminism of Wallachia Petrie—the first of many caricatures of militant women in his later fiction. Trollope evidently liked to think of feminism as a foreign aberration imported into his country. 'We in England,' he complacently observes, 'are not usually favourably disposed to women who take a pride in a certain antagonism to men in general.' The narrator of *He Knew He Was Right* is certainly not favourably disposed to the American Wallachia. She is presented as something wholly ludicrous, with her republican airs, her ostentatious contempt for the male sex, and above all her lack of any sexual attractiveness (that 'sheen' which Trollope so reveres in his beautiful, submissive women). What man would have her anyway? is the Trollopiean jeer hanging over Wallachia's every appearance in the novel. Aunt Jemima Stanbury is scarcely less ridiculous, with her busybodying and her automatic distrust of everything modern (particularly devices like the chignon, 'designed to enhance women in men's eyes'). In *He Knew He Was Right* the celibate radical feminist, and the maiden Tory lady, are both comic and obnoxious; the only difference being that Miss Jemima's wealth (which is possibly ill-gotten) renders her