

**“What Should a Woman do with her Life?”:
Women and the Social Machinery in the Novels of Anthony Trollope**

by

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Graduate Department of English
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Trollope criticism tends to locate female characters within Trollope’s personal attitudes and cultural milieu. Adopting a different approach, this thesis examines depictions, in Anthony Trollope’s novels foregrounding women, of a constraining “social machinery” within which women characters negotiate what they “should” do with their lives.

The Victorian “separate spheres” ideology posited woman’s invisible and intangible moral function within the domestic sphere, and man’s visible and measurable functions in the public sphere. After brief historical and critical surveys, this thesis treats four major elements of the “social machinery”:

1. Chapter Two analyzes female abettor-figures. Successful abettors are agents and oracles of both the social machinery and the novel’s plot. Officially “invisible”, they are publicly efficient, shepherding stalled marriage-plots to socially and personally appropriate conclusions. Novels examined are *Rachel Ray*, *Miss Mackenzie*, *Can You Forgive Her?*, *Phineas Finn*, *Ralph the Heir*, *The Duke's Children*, *The Vicar of Bullhampton* , *An Eye for an Eye*.

2. Chapter Three describes ways successful female ambition is defined and achieved. Through conscious pre-marital negotiation with self, society and lover, a woman's initially vague ambition takes a concrete form harmonizing personal needs and social realities. Ultimate success involves achieving an official "invisibility" which permits covert use of public power. Novels examined are *Rachel Ray*, *Can You Forgive Her?*, *Ralph the Heir*, *Ayala's Angel*.

3. Chapter Four describes unsuccessful female ambition as a woman's failure to negotiate with her social context. Placing personal needs first, she sells herself imprudently into marriage. Her larger personal ambitions become inaccessible, as inevitable repression precludes all exercise of public power. Novels examined are *The Eustace Diamonds*, *He Knew He Was Right*, *Phineas Finn*, *Ralph the Heir*.

4. Chapter Five examines use of an arbitrary "line" to police female behaviour through externally and internally conferred labels. Female sexuality becomes a regulatory mechanism defining the individual woman, her personal and social identity, and her relationships. Novels examined are *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, *The Small House at Allington*, *An Eye for an Eye*.

The Conclusion treats how female characters must negotiate "moments of visibility" which determine what they *should*—and can—do with their lives.

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Chapter 1: “What Should a Woman Do with Her Life?”

I. From the Meaning of “Should” to the Social Machinery: An Overview of the Thesis

“What should a woman do with her life?” (*Can You* 11) The narrator of Anthony Trollope’s *Can You Forgive Her?* poses this question when the marriageable Alice Vavasor finds herself caught between two options. The first is marriage to a respectable man, the traditional choice of the matrons of society. The second is the option of “not marriage”, advocated by the progressive “learned ladies” of her society. The question, like that posed in the title “Can You Forgive Her?”, eludes precise definition. Does “should” imply obligation, in the sense of, “What is every woman or any woman *supposed* to do, according to societal strictures?” Or does “should” connote individual choice, meaning “What might, or what can a specific, individual woman *choose* to do, in the light of her particular circumstance?” The confusion—and the traffic--between these two possible interpretations is suggestive. It identifies the source of Alice’s indecision, and posits the idea that there is no easy answer. It also leads to a second question: can the second paraphrase, which postulates a woman’s independent and individual choice, even be *asked* (let alone answered) in the universe of the Trollope novel? It is this question which my thesis will explore.

In order to undertake this project, I will begin Chapter 1 by providing historical and critical contexts. An historical background seems essential to an analysis of women in Trollope’s fiction, though it must be recognized that Trollope’s novels almost never discuss explicitly the specific issues and protagonists of the Victorian “Woman Question” debate, and the

particular controversies and political reforms which served as its milestones. On the rare occasion when a novel does include a direct reference, such as Violet Effingham's comments about "knock[ing] under to [John Stuart] Mill" in *Phineas Finn*, the reference is usually ironic. Instead, positions in this historical debate come to be reflected implicitly in the plots and characters of the fictions. They are like something "in the air"--something felt or intuited, not unequivocally identified. Considering this ineffability, I provide this historical background for two reasons. First, I hope to underline aspects, protagonists, and positions of the Woman Question debate, and to show briefly how Trollope's fictions make implicit reference to these. Second, I will use this background to develop the vocabulary for my analysis of particular Trollope novels in Chapters 2 to 5. In particular, I will focus on perceptions of the social position of women as appropriately invisible and insubstantial—and how the victories of the nascent women's movement represent bids for increased visibility and acknowledgement. After outlining this essential background, I will survey Trollope criticism briefly, in order to examine how other critics have described Trollope's answers to the question, "What should a woman do with her life?"

Bearing in mind the historical and critical contexts—as well as the lack of explicit commentary on the Woman Question in Trollope's fiction—I will close Chapter 1 by briefly describing my approach, which is to examine the several ways in which questions of a woman's visibility and tangibility are framed in twelve of Trollope's fictions: *Rachel Ray* (1863), *The Small House at Allington* (1864), *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865), *Miss Mackenzie* (1865), *He Knew He Was Right* (1869), *Phineas Finn* (1869), *The Vicar of Bullhampton*

(1870), *Ralph the Heir* (1871), *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873), *An Eye for an Eye* (1879), *The Duke's Children* (1880), and *Ayala's Angel* (1881). My focus is the way Trollope's novels depict an invisible and pervasive social machinery, within which particular women characters work out specific answers to the question of what they "should" do with their lives. For each character, this process occurs at the nexus of social obligation and individual volition--the two possible interpretations of the question from *Can You Forgive Her?* I will analyze Trollope's presentation of the constraining social "machinery" with a view to deciding to what degree women in these fictions have—or can create--freedom to shape their own lives. I will suggest that, because of the inescapability of this social machinery, the question has few easy answers.

II. Historical Background I: Separate Spheres and Female Invisibility

In Trollope's England, the "Woman Question" is literally the question, "What is woman?"--and, consequently, "what is the acceptable and appropriate sphere of her activity?" And as traditional middle-class assumptions about a woman's volition, her permissible activities, and her role come into question, significant controversy surrounds issues such as female education and the legal definition and entrenchment of woman's rights. Feminists, anti-feminists and quasi-feminists all had to grapple with "the Woman Question"--a term the Victorians themselves coined (Helsingier xi)--in a struggle to decide what the position of woman in Victorian society should and could be. This debate is a significant--although rarely explicit--backdrop for Trollope's novels. This brief overview of its key concerns and texts, along with brief examples of how these may be reflected in the fictions, will help to

establish the terms for my detailed treatment of Trollope's women characters in Chapters 2 to 5.

The primary non-fictional texts which I will discuss fall within the timeframe of approximately 1839 to 1882, by which time most of the legal changes sought by reformers—with the exception of female enfranchisement—had been instituted. I will not present these texts in chronological order because the development of neither the ideology nor its reconfiguration was strictly linear. For example, the Woman Question debate escalating throughout this period is emphasized by the common vocabulary (i.e., "woman's sphere", "woman's mission", "woman's influence") invoked throughout the period. The ideology developed "unevenly", in Mary Poovey's words: it was "contested and always under construction; because it was always in the making, it was always open to revision, dispute, and the emergence of oppositional formulations" (3). And since fiction is itself a prism which refracts, exaggerates, and distorts both the real and the imaginary, "uneven development" would be even more likely to characterize manifestations of this debate in the fiction of the period, including Trollope's.

In addition, I will *not* be reading a specific moment or text from the Woman Question debate into a Trollope novel written around the same time—because to my mind, Trollope's fictions are not susceptible to this kind of absolute correlation. There is rarely a direct corollary between specific events in the Victorian women's movement and their depiction in Trollope's fiction—with the possible exception of *Phineas Finn* and *He Knew He Was Right*, both

published in the same year as Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, and which I discuss in Chapter 4. In the light of the "uneven" development of the ideology, I will discuss two things: 1) significant representative texts by figures like Sarah Lewis, Marion Reid, and William Acton that help to articulate the underpinnings of the debate; and 2) the specific historical events that became milestones of the woman's movement by changing the terms of the debate. What I hope the survey will evoke is the basis of the ideology of the period--after which I will move in Chapters 2 to 5 to the ways in which Trollope's novels seem to test its validity and its ability to satisfy the aspirations and needs of the female characters.

The "Woman Question" originates from the Victorian assumption of an *essential* difference in the mental and physical make-up of woman and man. The influence of Milton's *Paradise Lost* on the separate-spheres ideology is profound. Of particular relevance is Milton's embellishment of the Bible in distinguishing Adam from Eve: "He for God only, she for God in him" (IV: 299).¹ For many Victorians, this difference between male and female natures is

¹Pervasive references to *Paradise Lost* in Victorian literature suggest the poem's enduring popularity. One poetic example would be the prefatory sonnet "The Silence in Disturbance" in George Meredith's long poem "Modern Love", which contains several explicit allusions to *Paradise Lost*. Perhaps one of the most interesting and transgressive references in fiction is the anti-Miltonic depiction of nature and Eve in Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley* (1849). The title character suggests audaciously, "Milton was great; but was he good? His brain was right; how was his heart?...Milton tried to see the first woman, but, Cary, he saw her not". Shirley then describes to her friend Caroline her alternative conception of nature and the Miltonic concept of woman:

I would beg to remind [Milton] that the first men of the earth were Titans, and that Eve was their mother: from her sprang Saturn, Hyperion, Oceanus; she bore Prometheus....The first woman's breast that heaved with life on this world yielded the daring which could contend with Omnipotence: the strength which could bear a thousand years of bondage,--the vitality which could feed that vulture death through uncounted ages,--the unexhausted life and uncorrupted excellence, sisters to immortality, which, after millenniums of crimes, struggles, and woes, could conceive and bring forth a Messiah. (ch. 18)

Shirley encourages her friend to consider the life force embodied by this Titanic female deity as an alternative to the traditional patriarchal Christian image of woman as weak and inferior subordinate--to Shirley, more Adam's "cook" than helpmate: "I saw--I now see--a woman-Titan.... Her steady eyes I cannot picture; they are clear--they are deep as lakes--they are lifted and full of worship.... So kneeling, face to face she speaks with God. That

divinely ordained or “natural”, and thus would be ineradicable through mere legislative reform—or, in fact, any human effort. It thus provides a clear rationale for the conventional differentiation of male and female roles and spheres. As the ensuing survey demonstrates, the theory of separate natures and spheres was neither entirely consistent nor universally endorsed, but it was a starting point for the enduring debate over the Woman Question featuring figures such as John Ruskin, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, Caroline Norton, and, perhaps most prominently, John Stuart Mill.

Briefly, the “essential” difference between women and men is this: woman is physically weak, while man is stronger, and therefore suited to activity. Woman is spiritually placid, pious, and free of religious doubt, while man, his intellect speculative and diverse, is frequently troubled by a forgivable religious doubt. Morally, the woman is more self-sacrificing and sexually innocent, purer, and unexcitable--while man, “the coarser sex,” is driven by “ready, strong, and spontaneous” passions (Greg, “Prostitution” 457). As Dr. William Acton states in his *Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (1857), woman is “(happily for society)...not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind” (133).² By contrast, man, as seducer, seeks out the fulfilment of his powerful sexual desires--

Eve is Jehovah's daughter, as Adam was his son” (ch. 18). For further discussion of the influence of Milton's depiction of Adam and Eve in shaping attitudes toward women, especially in sermons, see Helsing 2:170-4.

²Acton insists on the innate and unchangeable nature of woman's purity. Even marriage and motherhood (clear evidence of sexual experience) do not increase her sexual appetite: “Many of the best mothers, wives, and managers of households, know little of or are careless about sexual indulgences. Love of home, of children, and of domestic duties are the only passions they feel” (134). William Rathbone Greg concurs: “If the passions of women were ready strong and spontaneous, in a degree even remotely approaching the form they assume in the coarser sex, there can be little doubt that sexual irregularities would reach a height, of which, at present, we have happily no conception” (“Prostitution” 457). It is interesting to note that both Acton and Greg, voices of the mid-Victorian period, obscure William Thompson's earlier claim *In Appeal of*

for which, once again, he can (and must) be forgiven. Cotton manufacturer William Rathbone Greg clearly articulates the ensuing double standard in his article "Prostitution", published in the *Westminster Review* in 1850: "the very same guilt which is held trivial and venial in him [is deemed] to be unpardonable and irreparable" in her (504).

This is an attitude espoused by some noted female apologists for men in Trollope's fiction. For instance, Lady Scroope in *An Eye for an Eye* implores her nephew Fred Neville to abandon his promise to marry his pregnant fiancée, Kate O'Hara. Lady Scroope "entertain[s] an idea that young men, such as Fred Neville, very commonly [make] such promises with very little thought of keeping them. She [does] not expect young men to be governed by principles such as those to which young ladies are bound to submit themselves" (9).³ Lily Dale in *The Small House at Allington* also endorses a separate standard for male transgression, one which mandates an almost automatic forgiveness. Even when jilted by her fiancé, Lily doggedly defies her own interests to insist that "These things are different with a man" (54)—and so, as Lady Scroope insists, men must not be held accountable by the same standards of decency.

Two equally distinct spheres of action and influence are the appropriate consequence of the particular natures of man and woman. For instance, as a consequence of his physical, moral

One-Half of the Human Race (1825) that a woman has the same sexual feelings as a man but, unlike him, "the gratification to her of these same desires is altogether prohibited" outside marriage (61).

³All references to Trollope's novels are to the Oxford UP edition. I cite chapter, rather than page numbers.

and spiritual “nature”, man’s sphere is that of public, visible, audible action. In Ruskin’s words, “man’s power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest” (Ruskin 135-6). In short, *all* spheres are his: man governs what is and contemplates its meaning. He decides what can be, and fights to create what will be. And he does so loudly, visibly, and publicly. As a consequence of her distinct physical, moral, and spiritual “nature”, woman’s sphere is that of private, invisible, inaudible—and in most cases undiscussable—*non-action*, circumscribed by the home. Even mentally, woman is said to be inoculated against speculation or mental activity, because she possesses an *instinctive* wisdom about personal relations: “that intuitive right judgment which is safe at first thought” (James Davies, quoted in Burstyn 37)—and which, non-rational, can be neither assailed nor discussed. She simply *knows* what is right and appropriate, and behaves accordingly, in her role as selfless servant and guardian of home. And the idea of home itself is no mere geographical location. It, too, has become an essential part of womanhood: “wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. . . .home is yet wherever she is” (Ruskin 137-8). In short, home is where the wife is—*wherever* the wife is.⁴

The orthodox view held that the functioning of society required and therefore valued both the public male and the private female or spheres: “Let each fulfil their separate spheres of usefulness, and there need be no detracting of worth on either part” (Leach 340). And the woman’s “usefulness” was to make of her home an island of physical, mental, and spiritual

⁴ In the midst of Ruskin’s discussion, the word “home” suddenly becomes capitalized. It is as if, in

tranquility which exactly reflected her nature, so that it was “the place of Peace; the shelter not only from all injury, but from terror, doubt, and division” (Ruskin 137), to which her warrior-husband could retreat for stillness and solace away from his activity in the world.⁵ Much of the vocabulary for articulating a woman’s duties within her “sphere of usefulness” originates from Sarah Lewis’ *Woman’s Mission*, published in 1839. Lewis had adapted Louis Aimé Martin’s *De l’éducation des mères de famille, ou la civilisation du genre humain par les femmes* (1834), and in her modified version venerated the idea of women as men’s moral superiors. Lewis first made popular terms such as “mission”, “sphere”, and “influence”, which were “invoked throughout the Victorian period to awaken women’s moral aspirations and to curtail their actual activities” (Helsing 1: 5).

Lewis sees the “uncompromising fidelity, the unselfish devotedness” of woman as the necessary supplement of conscience for man’s less discriminating but “large capacity [for learning]” (25). In fact, woman lays a much-needed moral “foundation” in the home:

By intrusting to woman such a revelation of himself, God has pointed out whom he intends for his missionaries upon earth,—the disseminators of his spirit, the diffusers of his word. Let men enjoy in peace and triumph the intellectual kingdom which doubtless was intended for them; let us participate

the course of describing the woman’s role of cultivating the home, the small “h” geographical location is transmogrified, in a prose crescendo, into the large “H” ideology of domesticity and “Home.”

⁵This depiction of the home as the woman’s proper sphere is a response to a number of specific historical conditions: a desire for domestic stability amidst unsettling change (Burstyn 3-5); increased emphasis on early childhood education (see Burstyn 73-5); and new methods of production which separated the workplace from the home, “taking men to the “time-discipline” of factories and shops, while leaving women the “task oriented” duties of child care and household management” (Helsing 1:8). For a discussion of Victorian attitudes to time-management, see Davidoff 33-5.

its privileges, without desiring to share its dominion. The moral world is ours.... (Lewis 124)

This is the trope of moral “high ground”, that traditional consolation of those without actual real estate to call their own. Lewis’s vision establishes the woman’s “mission” as dominion over an invisible, intangible moral universe. She should be happy about being “good”, “effective” and “right” in her home sphere—however *without* voice, action, or impact she may be in the realm of public events. In fact, “the renunciation of self”, the total abandonment of personal volition and desire to act, is to be her source of happiness and “the one quality on which woman’s value and influence depend” (Lewis 49). This is precisely the “abnegation of self” (*Can You* 3) which Alice Vavasor fears is an inevitability of marriage, and against which she struggles so hard in Trollope’s *Can You Forgive Her?*.

As a reaction to the wide circulation of Lewis’ *Woman’s Mission*, Marion Reid published *A Plea for Woman* in 1843, arguing “that social equality with man is necessary for the free growth and development of woman’s nature” (xii). One subversive notion here is the implication that woman’s “nature” is not fixed and limited, but, given scope, can—and indeed, *should be allowed to*—grow and change. Inverting traditional views that nature cannot be altered by mere legislative change, she suggests that social equality will effect a development and evolution in female nature. Defending a woman’s rights to self-development, Reid criticizes Lewis’ philosophy, and analyzes (often to reject) the terms that Lewis made popular. But Reid walks a careful line: despite arguing for equal rights, she upholds the centrality of marriage by making the importance of domestic responsibilities her

justification for expanded political and educational rights. Simply put, educated and active women will make *better* wives--but, in case men are worried, women's increased involvement in public affairs will be distinct from their home duties. Reid insists that a woman will not jeopardize domestic peace by disagreeing with her husband's political views. For the sake of peace, she will invariably concede: "Were she forced to choose, she would much rather, we believe, suffer a wrong than inflict one" (Reid 48). This curious final statement may be a sop thrown to the conservative reader: in effect, "give us near-equality in education and politics, but don't worry. There will be no *tangible* consequences because we promise always to give way". On the other hand, it may expose Reid's ostensible opposition as a mere renovation of Lewis. For Reid is staking another claim to the moral high ground: the soon-to-be-educated woman will continue to turn the other cheek, rather than exercise in the public sphere a volition and power for which her education might well give her the appetite.

For Lewis, by contrast, a woman's destiny is within the home, and so also must be her education:

What, then, is the true object of female education? The best answer to this question is, a statement of future duties. . . .The ordinary lot of woman is to marry. . . .The grand objects, then, in the education of women ought to be, the conscience, the heart, and the affections; the development of those moral qualities which Providence has so liberally bestowed upon them, doubtless with a wise and beneficent purpose. (61-3)

There is, of course, no real curriculum or book-learning for “the conscience, the heart, and the affections”—especially because “Providence” has happily supplied women with these very qualities in abundance. Thus, in what later becomes a common argument, Lewis sees neither need for nor benefit for women’s “rights”—or, more particularly, for women to leave the safety of their domestic sphere for education in issues and ideas outside their aptitudes.

As an unnamed writer later suggests in 1864, a girl's husband will not "be a happier man in his mind if he [is] mated with a 'being' who, instead of mending his clothes and getting his dinner cooked, [has] a taste for a literary career upon the subject of political economy" (“Feminine Wranglers” 112). Indeed, in this case, the notion of a woman with literary/political aspiration is apparently so alien--so unthinkable--that the anonymous writer cannot even introduce the word “woman” into this context. He or she instead substitutes the generic (and unwomanly) word “being”. Trollope’s fictions provide several examples of this unthinkable being with its disdain for the mundanity of daily domestic chores: these range from the political-minded Alice Vavasor (*Can You Forgive Her?*) and the would-be political strategist Lady Laura Kennedy (*Phineas Finn*), to the fanatically (but vapidly) idealistic Ayala Dormer (*Ayala’s Angel*).

According to Lewis and many after her, experience of almost any kind--the lesson learned inductively through action and result—is in a girl’s education undesirable and bad. By contrast, the standard, prescriptive proper education nurtured a girl's ignorance of sin (especially sexual sin). She would not, it was felt, benefit from experience in the way

considered acceptable for her brother. In an advice book for mothers, the female author wonders, "In the present state of our schools and our streets our boys must get to know evil. Hitherto it was possible to say that our girls *might* get to know evil, and between that 'must' and 'might' lay a great and perplexing chasmBut is this ideal possible any longer...?" (unnamed source, quoted in Gorham 92). Tellingly, the writer does not answer her own question, an omission which itself speaks about the obvious hazard in providing further details about the "evil" of female sexual knowledge.

A standard education was appropriate and necessary, since all women—whether daughters, wives, or mothers--were to perform the same functions within the home: domestic manager, agreeable companion, and moral example to other women. At best, a middle-class woman received a basic formal education from a governess or private school teacher who had herself enjoyed perhaps an equally rudimentary schooling. This schooling focused on basic academic subjects and traits for improving her marriageability. For example, the list of subjects offered by "The Misses Bronte's Establishment" in 1844 suggests a typical girl-school curriculum of 1) general academic lessons: "Writing, Arithmetic, History, Grammar, Geography, and Needle Work"; 2) languages: "French, German, Latin"; and 3) fine arts: "Music" and "Drawing" (Barker 122). In this early part of the Victorian era, true higher education--the universities--was still off-limits to women, as were the professions for which they educated men.

The middle-class woman's education was instead the cloistered, complacent daughter's

apprenticeship to her mother. This had three main components. First, in preparation for becoming a wife, a good daughter was trained to "[look] attentively after the holes in her father's gloves. She [was] a clever adept in preparing gruel...and the thousand little household delicacies of a sick room" ("The Model Daughter" 230). We see this in the Rachel Ray of the first half of the eponymous Trollope novel: the ideal daughter, she patches the carpet, mends the clothes, and stretches the meagre household budget to include impromptu "feasts" for her widowed mother (5). Second, to enhance her ability to create an idyllic, tranquil home, the middle-class daughter might also cultivate her artistic skills, such as music and painting. Finally, since a woman must provide her husband with amiable companionship, a daughter should learn just enough about subjects interesting to men to be a sympathetic, reactive listener. With this skill, she could encourage his discussion of pet topics without ever seeming to be a competing authority.⁶

Such training would qualify the daughter for her own seamless transition to equally cloistered (and, presumably, contented) wife and mother. The girl would simply help her mother at home until the moment of her sole significant life choice: that of a husband. This active-voice characterization of her "choice", however, ascribes to her an excess of volition: in the words of Dr. Edward Tilt in 1852, "The woman who is considered the most fortunate in life has never been independent, having been transferred"--note the *passive* voice—"from paternal

⁶ Ruskin, though hardly "typical" or even symptomatic of the women's rights debates touches on this notion in "Of Queens' Gardens". He suggests that women educate themselves only enough to be interesting to their husbands without superseding them: "speaking broadly, a man ought to know any language or science he learns, thoroughly--while a woman ought to know the same language, or science, only so far as may enable her to sympathise in her husband's pleasures, and in those of his best friends" (149). As the woman's realm is the invisible and intangible, her knowledge should be sufficient only to cue her timely (but ineffectual) murmurs of

care and authority to that of a husband" (15). Such extreme dependence finds satirical and disapproving expression in the portrait of Rachel's mother Mrs. Ray as a woman so in need of authority that she "creeps" instinctively towards any "prop" against which to "nail herself" for support (*Rachel* 1).

At mid-century, as women began to press for access to higher education and entry into the professions, their pleas sometimes adopted terms which implicitly endorsed the middle-class assumption of distinct male and female natures and spheres: "Many of those who accepted the need for women to obtain some form of higher education still believed in separate spheres for men and women. . . . Their reasoning seems to have been that the two spheres were, and should remain, distinct, but that women, within their own sphere, should be trained to competence" (Burstyn 27). As Jane Nardin points out, a frequent (though often insincere) strategy of reformers was the argument that social reform would not necessarily mean an end to the existing ideal of womanhood, but the development of a more satisfactory one (*He Knew She Was Right* 6). The effect is a potentially duplicitous argument: "Educate me, and I won't upset the way things are; I'll just be better educated and more able to act in the ways which you deem acceptable".

Within their sphere of invisibility, it was acceptable for women to "interfere in politics" (Lewis 50), but only through their influence "[a]s moral agents; as representatives of the moral principle; as champions of the right in preference to the expedient; by their endeavours

support, which maintain her husband's "pleasure" in her company and cast both in the best social light.

to instil into their relatives of the other sex the uncompromising sense of duty and self-devotion, which ought to be *their* ruling principles!" (Lewis 50-1). Again, the female "moral agent" is an agent without power in the public realm. The great paradox of the age is that Victorian England is presided over not by a king, but by a queen. The fact that the era bears Queen Victoria's name only emphasizes more the visible, active and public nature of her office. Yet generic woman is idealized as the invisible conduit of virtue and morality. Her role is suasion, not implementation: hers is soft speech, not decisive action. Part mouthpiece of morality and part oracle of the house (with the oracle's difficulty in being interpreted accurately), the woman is most "fit" in her "two-fold capacity of companion and early instructor, to teach men to prefer honour to gain, duty to ease, public to private interests, and God's work, to man's inventions" (Lewis 65). Or, better yet, her role is that of silent symbolic exemplar, not active, vocal participant. Thus, women inherit an invisible, intangible realm in which they can have only invisible, intangible effects--and they are told repeatedly that this is more appropriate than the measurable physical and mental impacts which are so carefully denied them.⁷

Should a woman attempt to exceed the permitted role of influence (like, say, an Emily Trevelyan in *He Knew He Was Right*, or a Lady Laura Kennedy in *Phineas Finn*), it is implied that her outspoken criticism or disagreement must make the home unpleasant. As a

⁷"The Angel in the House", one particular form which the female non-sphere takes repeatedly in Victorian fiction, is elaborated at length in Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (22-9). The "Angel in the House" takes her name from Coventry Patmore's poem about the courtship and marriage of Honoria, the ideal Victorian woman, who marries the poet-husband, dies, and then hovers over the home as absent maternal ideal, almost like an angel on earth. Her greatness lies not merely in her virtue for its own sake but that her virtue "makes her *man* great" (Gilbert and Gubar 22).

consequence, she will lose her invisible influence over the visible head of the family. Women should instead allow the example of their self-forgetfulness to argue the moral (and only the moral) values they wish to teach. A woman's realm is the implicit, which must be inferred from her relatively silent example. And should this not have the desired salutary effect, she has the equally implicit (and, of course, silent) consolation that she is morally in the right. Where the man does not respond as prescribed, the woman must nonetheless reclaim him by equally oblique feminine methods: in the words of Sarah Ellis in *The Daughters of England* (1843), her "highest duty is so often to suffer and be still" (73)—the type of edict which seems to underlie the way characters such as Lucy Morris in *The Eustace Diamonds* and Lily Dale in *The Small House at Allington* accept their mistreatment by men.

I am, of course, not suggesting that writings such as those of Lewis (1839), Reid (1843), and Ellis (1843) should be directly equated with moments in Trollope novels published from 1863 to 1881. Apart from the obvious disparity in chronology, as I have already suggested, Trollope's fictions clearly complicate further an ideology which is already under significant stress. Texts by Lewis, Reid, and Ellis, like those of Acton, Greg and Tilt in the 1850's, provide some of the terms of a debate still going on when Trollope writes his novels. These terms help to frame the behaviours and attitudes of some of Trollope's characters—and start sketching some of the limits of the answer to "What should a woman do with her life?" Significant changes in the legal status of women over this period provide more of these terms and limits.

III. Historical Background 2: The Changing Legal Status of Woman—A Gradual Increase in Visibility

At the start of the Victorian era, the legal system enshrined middle-class assumptions about woman's nature. For instance, the law did not regard a woman as an individual with rights of her own. Instead, assumptions about dependent and inferior female "nature" took the form of laws which subsumed a woman's interests beneath those of the father or husband who headed her family. In the words of Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon in 1854, it was simply understood that "a man and wife are one person in law; the wife loses all her rights as a single woman, and her existence is entirely absorbed in that of her husband.... [S]he lives under his protection or cover, and her condition is called coverture" ("Brief Summary" 25). In 1855, Caroline Norton concurred with Bodichon: "A married woman in England has *no legal existence*: her being is absorbed in that of her husband" ("A Letter" 8). Further, there was ostensibly no issue to discuss: why would a married woman need direct political representation or legal status in the public world, when the realm she knew and inhabited was one of influence, moral example and suasion? How can one—and why would one—seek to make visible and tangible that which is by its nature *invisible* and *intangible*?

This discussion of laws and rights does not mean that women of the period were universally unhappy and repressed. This is far from the case—and the happily married women that M. Jeanne Peterson discusses and those depicted frequently in fictions of the period, including Trollope's, help to provide a corrective to this view. But in this section, I am concerned with a woman's *legal status* and the way this status shapes—implicitly or explicitly—her ability to respond to the question "What should a woman do with her life?" And in such legal terms,

the husband alone was the agent of the visible, tangible world. As Caroline Norton indicates in "A Letter to the Queen", after a marriage, the husband—even if he deserted his wife— a) would own all her possessions: "her property was *his* property" (8); b) could confiscate income from property legally settled on her before marriage: "An English wife has no legal right even to her clothes or ornaments; her husband may take them and sell them if he pleases, even though they be the gifts of relatives or friends, or bought before marriage" (9); and c) could lay claim to any income she might earn: "Whether wages for manual labour, or payment for intellectual exertion, whether she weed potatoes, or keep a school, her salary is *the husband's*" (9).⁸ In legal terms, she was little more than an empty or invisible conduit for his public will. And in the case of the couple's separation, "the law [took] no cognisance of which [was] to blame" (Norton "A Letter" 13), but upheld the husband's status as the sole family member with a public existence. He would retain his right to the wife's property, and gain custody of the children.⁹ Thus, in *He Knew He Was Right*, the "hero" Louis Trevelyan

⁸The most notorious example of this is Norton herself, whose estranged husband sued successfully for the royalties from her publications which were written before and after their separation. As Bodichon's and Norton's explication of the laws concerning the legal rights of wives make clear, only with her husband's permission could a married woman make a will—and only as his agent could she enter into binding contracts. See Bodichon, "Brief Summary" (1854), 24-7 and Norton "Letter to the Queen" (1855) 8-16. For detailed discussions of Victorian laws concerning women and property, and which can provide a historical context for *He Knew He Was Right*, see Holcombe and Shanley.

⁹Initially, in the event of a separation, the mother retained limited power over infants alone. After Norton's plea in an 1836 pamphlet to Parliament, however, this power was extended to children under the age of seven, according to the Infants and Child Custody Bill passed in 1839. For a discussion of Norton's contribution to the reform of child custody laws, see Helsing 2:8-9. Paying particular attention to the "indirection of some of the rhetorical strategies of [Norton's] self-presentation", Mary Poovey discusses in detail Norton's pleas to change existing divorce laws in the pamphlets "English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century" and "A Letter to the Queen" (64-70). Poovey concludes:

The problem is that Norton's usurpation of the defender's role, her revelation of the role politics and money have played in her domestic woes, and her entry into political discourse have already collapsed the very differences she seems to support. It is this peculiar combination of reticence and audacity that simultaneously enabled Norton to influence legislators...and prevented her from formulating the more radical analysis that a few of her

insists on his legal rights as husband and in the face of his wife's "disobedience", banishes her, and so demonstrates the legal subordination of a wife by denying her property, income and even custody of their infant son, whom he kidnaps. And he does so simply because, as a husband, he can.

Nonetheless, as M. Jeanne Peterson recounts, there are many specific examples of nineteenth-century gentlewomen gaining financial freedom because of income generated from marriage settlements. For instance, when Harriet Grenville married James Morier in 1820, a special fund was created, out of property from father and fiancé, to provide her with "pin money" income of L200 a year. The agreement stipulated three things. First, Morier as husband was "enjoined from 'meddling'" (*Family 123*) in these financial arrangements. Second, he could not charge his debts to the account. Third and most important, no change could be made in the trust without the joint approval of husband and wife (*Family 123*). According to Peterson, such an arrangement suggests that "even before the married women's property acts began to lead to women's increased power over their money, such powers were the subject of private contract" (*Family 123*). This example points usefully to the financial independence possible for women in happy marriages, and is both a compelling counterpoint to the plights of the Caroline Nortons of Victorian society and a reminder that not every woman was repressed and controlled by a domineering husband. Thus, in *Phineas Finn*, the heiress Violet Effingham's cautious and independent nature obviates legal reforms such as those Mill advocates because she simply will not marry a man who would usurp her money or deny her

any privilege, financial or otherwise. She is one of the women Mary Shanley describes as "fortunate and wise enough to [form] love matches [and who will] not desire financial independence" (61). Violet will, the novel suggests, be one of the "empowered" gentlewomen that Peterson describes, one who will inhabit a "sphere of power, a realm of autonomous existence" (*Family* 131) and one for whom, as a consequence, "Mill" is a happy irrelevance (as Violet's flippant references to him imply).

However, a marriage agreement was private and local; *legally*, women were not entitled to enter into contracts with their husbands. And as Lee Holcombe points out, a contract between the two men who represented the bride, her father and her husband—a transaction in which the bride herself figures not as an agent, but as the beneficiary of a kind of male altruism—was an expedient way to bypass the law, in the eyes of which she did not exist (159-60). This circumvention itself, however, only re-emphasizes the gender bias of the law and uncovers the domestic ideal, where a woman's ostensible moral superiority leads inexorably to her economic dependence.¹⁰

¹⁰Poovey notes that a wealthy father's establishment of equity in the form of a separate estate for his daughter actually increased her economic dependence on men:

This principle [of separate estates] maintained that even a person who could not legally own property might have it held for her by a trustee. Under this equity law, a man (most usually the father) could settle property on a woman (most usually his daughter) in the form of a trust. The agent who oversaw this trust (who was frequently a male relative or the woman's husband) could raise money upon the property, sell or rent the title, and make contracts upon the property. (71)

A woman's relation to her own property was thus restricted and implicit: she could not act on her own behalf, but had to be represented by a man. Far from increasing a woman's property rights, this principle instead protected those of her father, and whatever man he later appointed to be her trustee. Poovey rightly suggests, "we can see the extent to which marriage could be considered a contest between two men over property; the woman was merely the representative or carrier of property, in this sense, and even her love for her husband imperiled her father's goods" (72). Shanley elaborates on a husband's potential interest in foregoing automatic entitlement to his wife's property, upon realizing that "such property would remain free from [his] own creditors and provide a cushion for the family should the husband suffer bankruptcy" (16). Shanley makes clear that

Only in particular circumstances did the married woman gain a provisional public status. For instance, a husband was permitted to restrain and chastise his wife physically—so long as he did not endanger her life. At the moment when her very existence was imperilled, it was as if the intangible woman first winked into visibility, gaining a concomitant public right to protection. She gained a similar implicit status in divorce proceedings. Before 1857, only an expensive Act of Parliament (available only to the very wealthy) would grant a divorce to a husband on grounds of his wife's infidelity. Such an Act was a tacit admission of both the woman's independent volition and her public reality—though notably, these were not entrenched as permanent attributes in a law but rather handled on this exceptional basis.

Women, by contrast, could not divorce husbands for adultery alone—presumably because in the words of Greg in 1850, man's "ready, strong, and spontaneous" ("Prostitution" 457) passions were simply his "nature". His infidelity might thus be as much the sign of *her* failure to instruct and influence him as they were his fault. This meant that it was extremely difficult for women to obtain even a legal separation. As Caroline Norton noted, "If the wife sue for separation for cruelty, it must be 'cruelty that endangers life or limb'" (Norton "A Letter" (1855) 10). Again, only when threatened with death did the intangible wife wink into public, legal existence. Further, "if she has once forgiven, or, in legal phrase, '*condoned*' his offences, she cannot plead them" (10).¹¹ Since "forgiveness" was in a woman's nature, once she

"[p]art of the impetus for creating the capacity for independent action by married women lay not in feminist ideas but in the shift of wealth from land to movable property and the uncertainties of nineteenth-century economic life" (16). For a detailed discussion of separate property, see Holcombe 186-91.

¹¹This legal notion of "condoning" did cut both ways, however, a fact rarely discussed. Author George Henry Lewes' wife Agnes Lewes (née Jervis) was unfaithful with Lewes' friend Thornton Hunt, and had four

implicitly or explicitly granted forgiveness, it was deemed irrevocable.

Legal issues have their foundation in measurable and quantifiable objects, entities and precedents. In this light, the Victorian Woman Question is the struggle of the denizen of an invisible, private sphere of non-activity to gain status within the visible, definable, public norms of male activity. By law and custom, in comparison to married women, single women had greater legal rights, although much-reduced social status. And during the mid-Victorian era, single women did not have the same opportunities as men to support themselves: there were very real limitations placed on what a woman *could* do with her life. When the census of 1851 quantified the very significant problem of "redundant"¹² women, several essays and pamphlets succeeded in forcing the reading public to acknowledge (and begin to remedy) the restricted options available to women. Subsequently, the Society for Promoting Employment of Women and an employment bureau were founded in 1859 by Barbara Leigh Smith (later Bodichon) and her friend Bessie Raynor Parkes at 19 Langham Place.¹³ The Society's new

children with him while still living with Lewes. Lewes' being registered on the birth certificates as father was deemed evidence of his "condoning" his wife's infidelity, and thus obviated his ability to obtain a divorce to marry George Eliot (Marian Evans) legally. In the article "Life and Opinions of Milton" (*Leader* 4 August 1855), Eliot sympathizes with Milton's inability to end his unhappy marriage, and compares Milton's to Caroline Norton's analogous plea for Divorce Law reform, two centuries later: "There is much unreasonable prejudice against this blending of personal interest with a general protest. If we waited for the impulse of abstract benevolence or justice, we fear that most reforms would be postponed to the Greek Kalends....[I]t is worth while to take up Milton's [plea], and consider what such a mind as his had to urge on the husband's side of this painful subject" (*Essays* 156-7). Lewes' biographer Rosemary Ashton indicates the timeliness of Eliot's essay, for "Mrs Caroline Norton was even then petitioning the Queen in the course of her long battle against both the existing divorce law and the bill being put before Parliament to amend it. Neither wives like Caroline Norton nor husbands like Lewes were to benefit from the limited Divorce Act which came into force [in 1857]" (162).

¹²Manufacturer W.R. Greg's article "Why Are Women Redundant?" (1862) is his notorious response to the national dilemma of whether single women are "superfluous" (63) in number because the disproportionate lack of men makes it difficult to marry—or because society restricts work for women.

¹³Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon founded and funded the *English Woman's Journal*, a vehicle for

“mission”, which by the 1880’s was meeting with considerable success, was to introduce female workers into the trades previously closed to them. Even as late as 1869, however, the physical fact that women outnumbered men (implying too few husbands, and therefore inadequate potential props for single women), was still being used to argue *against* admitting single women to the professions which might provide them with an income. In the words of Sarah Ellis in that year, “The very act of thrusting men out of employment would be the way to send them in greater numbers to the colonies...creating a still greater disproportion in our female population at home” (*Education of the Heart* 14). In the 1860’s, the subject of female enfranchisement and marriage was a topic of heated debate, of which Alice Vavasor’s dilemma in *Can You Forgive Her?* is a specimen. The “flock of learned ladies” (*Can You* 11) referred to here are likely the Victorian feminists of the Langham Place circle, who, through articles in the *English Woman’s Journal*, tried to convince women of alternatives to marriage.

This is a third example of how the tangibility of the female body (or in this case, a superfluity of female bodies)—more than any philosophical or legislative argumentation—was the most cogent impetus for increasing the public status and legal rights of women. With the help of sympathetic men like John Stuart Mill,¹⁴ women agitated not just for an increase in the range

feminist writings. Its offices at 19 Langham Place was also the administrative centre of the Society. Other women who participated in establishing “the Langham Place Group” include Jessie Boucherett, Frances Power Cobbe, Isa Craig, Emily Davies, Emily Faithfull and Maria Susan Rye. For a discussion of the establishment of the Langham Place Group, see Lacey, 1-14.

¹⁴ Mill’s public campaign for female enfranchisement made him a figurehead for the suffrage movement, although many of the women involved, like Barbara Bodichon, were arguably more important. Mill championed the movement in Parliament, and, so, became identified with the cause (hence Violet Effingham’s references to him in *Phineas Finn*, and Mr. Spalding’s in *He Knew He Was Right*, for example). It is important to keep his parliamentary activity separate from *The Subjection of Women* (1869), which, although written much earlier, he published only after his tenure as Member of Parliament. *The Subjection of*

of jobs and professions open to them, but for fundamental changes in the laws and customs defining their position in Victorian society. In particular, they wanted a measure of legal equality with men, in order to improve women's educational opportunities. Although most reformers did not engage in direct opposition upon conventional notions of gender (like the arguments for equality by outspoken reformers like Mill and Harriet Taylor), they criticized the inequities arising from those notions, articulated their dissatisfaction with their position in society, and altered the terms of the debate about women's "mission".

As a result, after 1848, a gradual improvement occurs in both the quality of education made available for would-be governesses, and the gradual availability of professional training and then university degrees.¹⁵ A few significant landmarks in the ongoing debate trace the gradual expansion of the woman's sphere in its public and legal "visibility" and its range of permissible activities:

Women is significant in the light of the public/private sphere ideology because, for Mill, the public sphere is the ideal world--the only "real" one, and one which is identified with male attributes. To many nineteenth-century antifeminists who criticize him, his egalitarianism translates to the very basic (and typically egalitarian) premise that "women should be [allowed to be] like men". However, Mill's suffrage platform as MP is distinct from his ideas in *The Subjection of Women* and seems intentionally much more moderate. Also important is that Mill's argument for sex equality centres on the unacceptable subjection of married Victorian women to their husbands. He does not discuss the plight of all women—only that of wives.

In "John Stuart Mill and the English Women's Movement", Barbara Caine criticizes Mill's political pusillanimity, while in "John Stuart Mill and the Woman Question in Parliament, 1865-68", Evelyn Pugh points out lucidly the political necessity of his moderation.

¹⁵Women attain their ambition for formal higher education in the founding, in 1848, of Queen's College, the first institution to offer professional training to women, and, six months later, Bedford College for Women. By mid-century, medical educations and licenses are being granted to women. In 1865, Elizabeth Garrett becomes the first licensed medical doctor. An experimental institution at Cambridge University, subsequently named Girton College, is established in 1869. Here, British women are permitted to take the same college courses as men. Although the University of London begins giving separate medical examinations for women in the 1860's, it is not until 1874 that they are permitted to take degrees. However, at a meeting on July 4, 1877, "the Senate [adopts] a motion...to obtain a new charter extending the power to grant degrees to women as already possessed in the faculty of medicine, to all other faculties" (Burstyn 157). For further discussions of higher education for women, see Stanton 31 and 67, and Burstyn 154-8.

1. In 1854, Barbara Bodichon, a feminist, publishes a pamphlet "A Brief Summary, in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women", anatomizing an English wife's lack of legal status. Twenty-six thousand sign a petition asking Parliament to guarantee a married woman's right to control her own property. The Married Women's Property Bill of 1857 is defeated, but, as Nardin also notes, the petition represents the first mass effort at public, visible feminist action (i.e., action within the political, male sphere) in England (*He Knew She Was Right* 8).
2. In 1857, Parliament passes the Divorce Act, which provides limited property rights to women who are separated, divorced, or abandoned.
3. In 1870, Parliament passes a Married Woman's Property Act, though the House of Lords restricts its provisions out of skepticism about an economically independent woman's desire or capacity to be a dutiful wife.

Significantly, the first two of these events coincide with the timing of Trollope's early fictions, and the last falls in the middle of the range of publication dates for the novels which I will examine in Chapters 2 through 5. Maria Grey, a supporter of the women's movement, proudly claims in 1882, just after the publication (1881) of *Ayala's Angel*, the last of the Trollope novels with which I am concerned, that "perhaps no movement of equal importance and involving such farreaching results ever developed so rapidly" (31). Throughout the period in which Trollope is active as a novelist, then, widespread discussion and debate surround all legislation which proposes changes in the status of women. And this time sees a gradual emergence of woman from the sphere of the invisible and intangible. There is a

general increase in female “visibility”—based in part on the ineluctable fact of the tangibility of the female body—which is capped by these three historical events, which are the visible milestones of a hotly contested but less tangible debate over the Woman Question during the period. Yet, considering that the “predominant form of Victorian writing about women was not pronouncement but debate” (Helsing xi), it is interesting that, while Trollope’s novels—in particular the twelve which I will analyse in Chapters 2 to 5—frequently focus on women, this pervasive debate and these seismic shifts remain in them almost always implicit, rather than explicit.¹⁶

IV. Critical Background: Women in Trollope’s Fictions

Despite the lack of overt commentary on the Woman Question in Trollope’s fictions, critics have long recognized in these novels a fruitful arena for analysis of the fictional depiction of women. Almost inevitably, it seems, a general analysis of Trollope, such as Henry James’ “Partial Portrait”, will become preoccupied—for a time—with female characters, situations, and readership.¹⁷ The abundance, prominence, variety, and complexity of female characters in Trollope’s novels help to explain this critical penchant for certain directions. A brief review of Trollope criticism on this specific subject recalls Helling’s apt assessment of “the exceptionally great swings of the pendulum of [Trollope’s] reputation” (7). I will now sketch

¹⁶ Two exceptions I have noted are *Phineas Finn* and *He Knew He Was Right*, in both of which John Stuart Mill and sex equality are mentioned specifically.

¹⁷For instance, James waxes eloquent about how “Trollope settled down to the English girl; he took possession of her, and turned her inside out . . . he bestowed upon her the most serious, the most patient, the most tender, the most copious consideration. He is evidently always more or less in love with her, and it is a wonder how under these circumstances he should make her so objective, plant her so well on her feet” (127). James goes on to praise the naturalness, tenderness, and freshness of Trollope’s women, and the “strong family likeness” (127) but unique characteristics which would make them “delightful cousins” (128).

briefly the dominant directions of this critical inquiry--not in order to assail them--but in order to differentiate, and help to explain, my own approach to this subject.

At one critical extreme lies Henry James' view of Trollope as a "safe" writer with conventional views ("Anthony Trollope" 100) or Michael Sadleir's eulogistic but staid "voice of an epoch".¹⁸ James' feminizing (not feminist) view of Trollope seems the most conservative. James endorses Alfred Austin's argument that Trollope is "a feminine novelist, writing for women in a womanly spirit and from a woman's point of view" (462). James plays down Trollope's achievement by describing his "inestimable merit" as "a complete appreciation of the usual"—that is, that female realm of the quotidian. James' Trollope derives his inspiration from the mere expansion of "a walk of literature in which the feminine mind"—*not* the active male artistic mind—"has laboured so fruitfully" (100-1). James' assessment clearly recalls the Victorian notion of women as passive "observers", content to "hold their noses close...to the texture of life" (101). Where men create, conscious of and implicated in their active creation, women "feel and perceive" tacitly, statically, and invisibly, and at most preserve "their observations...in a thousand delightful [read "trivial"] volumes" (101). The appreciation of the everyday which James finds so admirable in Austen's fiction merely increases the banality of Trollope's.¹⁹ James' Trollope is a kind of passive, feminine

¹⁸ Title of the introduction to *Trollope: A Commentary*.

¹⁹ Still more dismissive is James' assessment, couched in condescending praise, of Trollope's effect on his readers. James equivocates Trollope's inspiration: Trollope merely depicts, without comment or elaboration, "the pre-established round of English customs" (101). Trollope displays an unwearied--and unimaginative--contentment with "holding up a mirror", more barber than "artist": "Into this mirror the public, at first especially, grew very fond of looking--for it saw itself reflected in all the most credible and supposable ways, with that curiosity that people feel to know how they look when they are represented, 'just as they are,' by a painter who

conservative who defaults to the prevailing world view: "The striking thing to the critic was that [Trollope's] robust and patient mind had no particular bias, his imagination no light of its own" (102).

Some more recent criticism upholds a conservative view of Trollope but modifies the grounds for it. For instance, although Trollope begins to be seen as a masculine writer in the mid-twentieth century,²⁰ critics continue to base their readings of his fictions on him as a representative of his era, and one whose novels are, in effect, encyclopedias of the Victorian style of life. As an example, Robert Polhemus on the surface refutes James' assessment by arguing that Trollope's achievement lies in the very fact of his being able to recognize that "the lives of so-called 'ordinary' people"--referring to "ordinary" women as well as men—"are in fact extraordinarily interesting and important"(2). But though Polhemus champions Trollope's artistic accomplishment, he does so by endorsing the pre-existing critical commonplace of Trollope's conventionality: "No one shows us better than Trollope what it

does not desire to put them into an attitude, to drape them for effect, to arrange his light and his accessories" (101). Not only does James argue for Trollope's conservative aim to "paint" people "just as they are", but he elaborates at length the bland and deliberate artlessness of the brushstrokes.

²⁰For instance, in 1956, Patricia Thomson insists "it was on reading Trollope that Victorians must have felt their ideal of wifely submission was in its finest hour" (111). In 1968, A.O.J. Cockshut writes that Trollope's attitude to the "accepted truths which [*He Knew He Was Right*] questions was parallel to his view on feminism", and that "he is so confident of male supremacy that he can look benevolently on 'women's rights'" (178). In the 1970's, such views continue to be asserted. Charles Blinderman (1972) notes that "Trollope helps define the mode in which the Victorian woman was stereotyped by society and by literature" (55). George Levine (1974-5) describes Trollope's "complicated but thoroughly masculine perception of the difficulties of being a woman in so arbitrarily constructed a society" (10). Levine notes "that special angle from which Trollope sees with" an oxymoronic "cynical warmth", which reduces reality for any woman to "marrying and having two children and being honest with an honest husband" (15). P.D. Edwards'(1977) consideration of Alice Vavasor (*Can You Forgive Her?*) leads him to conclude that she is not a "militant feminist" because "a feminist heroine would have been intolerable to Trollope" (92). Finally, John Halperin's discussion of Alice (1978) leads him to identify Trollope's "distaste...for independent women" (*Trollope and Politics* 38).

was like and how it felt to be alive in the nineteenth century" (8). By writing faithfully and comprehensively "about his changing world" (244), Polhemus' Trollope "changed his world"—not through active proselytizing on behalf of a political agenda which he endorsed—but "by making it know itself better and by teaching his public the habits of sympathetic imagination" (245).

At the opposite extreme lies the view of Trollope as actively radical. In *Corrupt Relations*, Barickman, MacDonald and Stark endorse unequivocally Rebecca West's 1957 pronouncement: "Trollope was a feminist" (203)—a generalization that connotes some general sympathy Trollope felt towards the plight of women, but does little to clarify the "real" Trollope's more specific views on the details of the Woman Question. More recently, Nardin argues cogently in 1989 for Trollope's more restrained feminism, by suggesting that he holds advanced views towards women but can only convey these obliquely in the fictions.

In between rests the majority of critical opinion, which adopts the more elastic term "ambivalent", and suggests that Trollope cannot be pinned down as either conservative or liberal. For instance, James Kincaid insists that "[Trollope's] obvious modernity is combined with a resolute and equally obvious old-fashionedness, and we are . . . unlikely now to find secure and simple 'comfort' in the total effect of a Trollope novel . . ." (5). Kincaid formulates a flexible and intelligent formula: part of the complexity, he suggests, stems from Trollope's treatment of women characters with "sensitivity", with the result that "the easy answers of both male supremacists and feminists alike are seen to be irrelevant entirely to the dilemma

of the woman faced with no satisfying alternatives" (29). One expression of this ambivalence, Kincaid suggests, is Trollope's subversion of the predictable happy ending in many of his comic novels: this signals Trollope's distrust of the stereotypical equation of a woman's marriage with her guarantee of a secure life. "The victory is also seen as a trap" (28) in many of Trollope's novels, a cogent elucidation of the potential for nightmare within the idealized marriage dream.

Juliet McMaster's seminal thematic analysis of the Palliser novels identifies a more precise source for Trollope's ambivalence. Opinions expressed in nonfiction writing (like *North America*) lead McMaster to see Trollope as persistently anti-feminist, although she characterizes him as less and less "hostile" and "deflationary" (161) in his later years. She insists that "[Trollope's] anti-feminism notwithstanding" (166), his sensitive portrayal of female characters within the context of their social structure highlights, albeit implicitly rather than explicitly, their "separateness" (179), and so, "make[s] his novels, particularly the Palliser ones, prominent documents in the women's cause, if not propaganda for women's rights" (179). McMaster's nuanced contention is that the value of Trollope's detailed presentation of the plight of women outweighs the ostensible lack of sympathy in the way it is presented.²¹

In a chapter on Trollope, the examination of Victorian sexual relations by Barickman,

²¹McMaster contends that by virtue of depicting circumstances such as those in *Can You Forgive Her?*, Trollope demonstrates an increasing sympathy for women (despite the fundamentally antifeminist nature of the presentation), "so that by the completion of the Palliser series he [is] no longer a reactionary, although he never [becomes] a convert" (166).

MacDonald, and Stark dichotomizes Trollope's ambivalence into "two Trollopes--the seemingly hostile critic of the Victorian women's movement and the sympathetic sociological novelist capturing in fiction the tensions felt by upper class men and women of his day" (196). Their argument anticipates Jane Nardin's argument by suggesting that Trollope carefully calculated the subversive presentation of his basically liberal attitude toward women. The argument also endorses McMaster's logic of the novel's complex "'interior' arrangements" defying the author's "personal hostility to feminism" (198). Finally, they extend the metaphor of the social mirror to suggest that Trollope's novels, like those of other contemporary male writers, "reflect, or perhaps more accurately, refract the changing conceptions of women's roles that characterized Victorian England" (199). By doing so, they "draw attention to the processes of distortion" (199), in order to depict covertly the prevalent stereotypes, as well as the stereotyped attitudes.

Both Deborah Denenholz Morse's and Nardin's recent studies of women characters in Trollope's novels²² recast a simple unresolved ambivalence in the evolutionary terms of the gradual liberalization of Trollope's views on women. Morse argues that the growing ambivalence of contemporary society becomes Trollope's, so that uncertainty or debate about a particular feminist issue becomes almost osmotically reflected in his fiction. Nardin, by contrast, argues for a measurable, specific development in Trollope's attitude toward women

²²Morse's 1987 study is restricted to women in the Palliser novels, excluding *The Eustace Diamonds*. In her 1989 feminist examination of the independent woman in Trollope's novels written between 1855 to 1865, Nardin attempts to document the evolution of Trollope's feminist beliefs and to show that he encodes these deliberately, subversively into fictions that on the surface are conventional.

and their place in society, but hedges her assessment of his covert liberalism by suggesting that "[g]rowing sympathy does not necessarily mean complete sympathy" (11). Morse sees the depiction of "duality and conflict" as inherent in Trollope's vision of womanhood, and, so, deems it a deliberate novelistic strategy rooted in his "ambivalent relation toward the often contradictory ideals of Victorian womanhood which were at the heart of the 'Woman Question' controversy" (2). Morse concludes that Trollope's novels advocate individual reform, in the specific form of egalitarian marriage, which they implicitly recommend for improving the plight of Victorian women. Extending both Morse's conclusion and McMaster's argument that the novels as subversive propagandist fiction, Nardin proposes that Trollope--ambivalence and all--views his fiction as the potential catalyst for not revolutionary but "gradual social reform" (212). She concludes that despite his lack of total sympathy, perhaps Trollope "hoped that his sympathetic portrayals of independent women would contribute to the process of reform" (213).

Finally, in the most recently published study of Trollope and women, Margaret Marwick alludes to the "fluctuations of [Trollope's] ambivalence" (95), and states that though he occasionally strikes a "blow for women," he does so implicitly, "without direct comment" (200). In the end, her study reaches the Jamesian conclusion that Trollope was a conservative commentator both on and of his age: "He writes stories where women live their lives trying to conform to the expectations of their social milieu" (202). More blandly, "the voice on the page" (which she equates with the voice of Trollope the man) "is the persona of the age" (202), one who extols a sometimes-varying but fundamentally orthodox attitude toward

woman's position in Victorian society. Thus, despite Marwick's focus on Trollope's ambivalence, her conclusion is not dissimilar to that put forward in James' partial portrait of a conventional intuitive Trollope over a hundred years earlier.²³

Morse, Nardin and Marwick also all deal extensively and persuasively with specific details of Trollope's fictions while pursuing a common tendency to read Trollope the author. In other words, an ambivalence in the ways his fictional women are described and what fates they meet becomes of necessity a strategy—and a philosophy and view—of Trollope the *man*. And as we have seen in this critical survey, this is a tendency evident in most major criticism analyzing Trollope's depiction of women. This tricky task of trying, in effect, to read the man behind the narrators behind the stories takes three general forms:

1. Trollope is conservative, and with qualification, endorses traditional values, as James, Thomson, Polhemus, and Marwick suggest.
2. Trollope is progressive—even feminist—and endorses women's rights, however subversively, as asserted by West; Barickman, MacDonald, and Stark; and Nardin.
3. Trollope is deliberately ambivalent, and sees both sides of the woman question, as Kincaid, McMaster and Morse argue.²⁴

²³ Marwick may not propose overarching conclusions about Trollope's intention or achievement in his generally sympathetic portrayal of women; she may conclude only that "you can certainly learn a lot about how people lived their lives from the novels of Anthony Trollope" (203)—but this brings us back to where we started this survey: James.

²⁴In fact, Polhemus is among the first to suggest that Trollope is "ambivalent" (120) about the Victorian idealization of the love faith. Polhemus ascribes this ambivalence to two factors: Trollope himself questioning the validity of the ideal, and a growing objectivity and shifting attitudes towards the sexes during the 1860's.

If forced to stake out my own position, I would probably put myself somewhere between camps 2 and 3. But my goal is neither to put forward a reading of Trollope's views nor to quibble with the conclusions or premises of these studies. The primary issues being decided in all of these texts are in some form these: a) whether or not Trollope essentially endorses society's rules for women as he represents them; and b) whether Trollope agrees or disagrees with the judgements which society passes on them in his fictions. These are *not* the main issues which I wish to consider in this thesis: simply put, elucidating Trollope's developing thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards women is not my goal. I leave this realm to cogent analysts such as Polhemus, Nardin, McMaster, and Marwick. What are my main issues? I will sketch these in the final section of this chapter.

V. The Goal of the Thesis

Nardin's assertion in *He Knew She Was Right*, that "[c]onceptual tensions and expanded sympathies, not tidy resolutions and simplistic moral judgments, are to be expected of Trollope" (1), is in my view quite apt. But rather than ascribe intention anew to Trollope's complex depictions of female characters, my goal is to articulate the terms of some specific "conceptual tensions". I cannot escape the fact that the "Woman Question" debate, so heatedly argued—and so tangible in its impact on legal reforms—during the time Trollope is writing these novels, is explicitly referred to only rarely in the twelve Trollope novels I will examine—and this despite each novel's near-exclusive focus on female characters. If the substance of this debate impinges on these fictions (as the actual vocabulary and cultural references do not), it does so implicitly, in the depiction of the social conditions and

expectations surrounding the women protagonists. Tracy's assertion, that "individuals . . . are merely society's by-products" (11), seems to me appropriate, and so the choices available to the female protagonists of Trollope's fictions are in large measure shaped by the social machinery which has produced them.

Articulating the nature of this social machinery and the terms of its functioning as the novels present it is my goal. I will examine the depiction of conditions surrounding choices by prominent female characters of what they "should" do with their lives. This includes the degree of "visibility" which each woman possesses or attains (both socially and personally), and the extent to which she is constrained by her legal non-status—or finds ways to elude or exceed it. I will assess the framework within which these characters negotiate with the society around them in order to achieve personal goals within societal structures. And in this light, I will attempt to uncover what—given the novels' stubborn refusal to provide direct commentary on the "Woman Question"—we can conclude about the nature of the social (and fictional) machinery in which these female characters are embedded: is it inevitably negative and repressive, or something else entirely?

However, anyone who has embarked on a study of Trollope's novels faces the daunting prospect of limitless choice. With forty-seven novels from which to choose, Juliet McMaster's caveat "amidst such plenty, one must select" (1) seems an understatement.

Attempts to deduce "natural" limits or guidelines for selection take certain traditional shapes:

some critics limit their selection to either the Barsest or Palliser series.²⁵ Others restrict themselves to a particular period of Trollope's writing career.²⁶ My discussion requires the examination of the novels which not only centre on women and their circumstances but, more important, portray "choices" by women, and the interaction of their personal ambitions with specific social forces. The implications of a woman's negotiation with the English social machinery (or the consequences of refusing it) are depicted most intricately and fully in these novels which I will examine: *Rachel Ray* (1863), *The Small House at Allington* (1864), *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865), *Miss Mackenzie* (1865), *He Knew He Was Right* (1869), *Phineas Finn* (1869), *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1870), *Ralph the Heir* (1871), *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873), *An Eye for an Eye* (1879), *The Duke's Children* (1880), *Ayala's Angel* (1881). I do not assert the inevitability or comprehensiveness of these selections—only their richness for analysis.

The nature of my topic likewise means that, among the many aspects of these novels, "one must select" again. I will not discuss every woman in each novel selected—because the sheer number of female characters makes this impossible. Nor, given my focus on the representation of women who feel themselves subject to English social forces, will I treat specific American women appearing in *He Knew He Was Right* and *The Duke's Children*—though I would readily concede that these merit further study. Further, since several full-scale

²⁵For instance, Heil concentrates on the Barsestshire series, while Juliet McMaster, Morse, Halperin's *Trollope and Politics*, and Walton focus on the Palliser novels, and Polhemus discusses both.

²⁶For example, Nardin chooses to study the novels written in a ten year-span, 1855-65. Tracy examines the novels written in the later years of Trollope's career, beginning his study with *Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite* (1871) and ending with the posthumously published *The Landleaguers* (1883).

studies of the Palliser series contain detailed and persuasive analyses of Lady Glencora as first the ingenue and then heroine of the series,²⁷ and I am not examining all of the texts in which she appears, I will concentrate only on Glencora's interaction with and influence over other female characters as an abettor figure, a particular aspect of her portrayal which has not yet been the subject of study. Finally, I will focus in general on female characters (and the texts in which they appear) that have not yet received significant critical attention.

I divide my analysis into four chapters:

1. Chapter Two analyzes the presence of abettor-figures that fall into two categories: successful and unsuccessful abettors. The first type includes “invisible” greasers of the social wheels (i.e., Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie) and oracles of the social order (i.e., Lady Midlothian and Lady Glencora). Both are emissaries of a larger social order, generated almost spontaneously by the fiction--not necessarily in proof of the novel's validation of their agenda, but instead almost by organic necessity of the *social* fiction. The second category includes male abettors, whose direct, commercial approach, and whose ineptitude in the domestic sphere doom them to certain failure. Mercenary female abettors invariably fail also because, like Kate Vavasor, they lack sufficient domestic sway or, like Lady Scroope, they ignore communal good for personal goals. The portrayal of the abettors implies that society is a fiction, and Trollope's novels lay bare the cogs by which its plot-engine maintains itself in running order. The main novels under discussion here are *Rachel Ray*, *Miss Mackenzie*, *Can*

²⁷For commentaries on Lady Glencora's marriage and character development, see McMaster and Morse. Walton's Lacanian reading of the Palliser series sheds light on Glencora's subjective position. Walton's analysis of the Glencora plot in *The Prime Minister* suggests Glencora's ambition can be traced from her attempted rebellion against her arranged marriage in *Can You Forgive Her?* to her gradual acceptance of her

You Forgive Her?, Phineas Finn, Ralph the Heir, The Duke's Children, The Vicar of Bullhampton and An Eye for an Eye.

2. Chapter Three describes the way in which successful female ambition is defined and achieved through a woman's conscious act of negotiation: for instance, in the way Ayala Dormer comes to understand that Jonathan Stubbs of the ugly name and face is, nonetheless, her romanticized dream man. As a denizen of the "invisible" domestic sphere, the single woman's invisible and initially undefined, vague ambition must take a concrete, definite form which accounts for the larger social reality around it (this usually takes the form of marriage). This may entail a negotiation between her own desires for a life outside of marriage and the social dictates of her circumstance. It almost invariably includes some form of acceptance of the domestic sphere, though this is not a simple "concession" or "giving in". It is truly a harmonizing of personal and social desires, and a recognition that within a domestic framework, in most cases, the original ambition in some form *can* be achieved. The main novels under discussion here are *Rachel Ray, Can You Forgive Her?, Ralph the Heir,* and *Ayala's Angel.*

3. Chapter Four describes unsuccessful female ambition in terms of the way characters (such as Lizzie Eustace, Emily Trevelyan, Lady Laura Kennedy and the feminized Ralph Newton the heir) refuse to conduct the requisite negotiation with their context. Unsuccessful ambition takes the form of a transaction: despite the dictates of the social abettors, the woman sells

herself into marriage for financial or, she may hope, political gain. The fact of this barter, however, makes any larger personal ambitions inaccessible. Repression is the inevitable result, as the character ends up in a bad marriage or some other “invisible” domestic role that precludes the exercise of public power. The main novels examined are *The Eustace Diamonds*, *He Knew He Was Right*, *Phineas Finn* and *Ralph the Heir*.

4. Chapter Five examines a series of female characters who do not get married. In particular, it examines the use of an arbitrary “line” to regulate female sexuality through externally bestowed labels (for instance, “harlot”) and internally policed self-definitions (like the terms “widow” and “old maid” which Lily Dale uses in an attempt to erase retroactively her self-generated feelings of sexual guilt). Given Victorian veneration of the unmarried woman as sexless, should a woman in a Trollope novel be known to have exceeded the boundaries of sexual decorum, what happens to her? The societies of these novels demonstrate female sexuality as a potent regulatory mechanism governing both the individual woman and those to whom she is connected. A woman is defined first by what she *is known to have done*--a more sinister version of Sarah Ellis' claim that "the unpretending virtues of the female character force themselves upon our regard, so that the woman *herself* is nothing in comparison with her attributes" (*Women of England* 30). A woman is also defined by her relation to a man: she is daughter, wife, sister, or mother. Thus, once a woman is known to have transgressed, she not only becomes ineligible to perform such roles, but she loses all identity and definition, becoming an inhuman “thing” in the estimation of the community that defines her. The main novels under discussion are *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, *The Small*

House at Allington, and An Eye for an Eye.

Finally, in a brief Conclusion, I treat the ways in which female characters in Trollope's fiction must negotiate "moments of visibility" to determine what they *should*—and can—do with their lives.

Chapter 2: "Sundry Mighty Magnates": Agents and Oracles of the Social Machinery

I. Introduction

In Trollope's *Rachel Ray*, Mrs. Butler Cornbury is a minor character but a very influential personage. The specific source of this influence, as the narrator indicates in his first description of her, is her marriage: "Mrs. Butler Cornbury had, it is true, not been esteemed as holding any very high rank while shining as a beauty under the name of Patty Comfort; but she had taken kindly to her new honours [as the wife of Butler Cornbury, the squire's heir,] and was now reckoned as a considerable magnate in that part of the county" (*Rachel* 5). Indeed, after her marriage, so "considerable" a social "magnate" is Mrs. Cornbury that the brewer Tom Tappitt invites her to his family's house in the hope that her mere presence will elevate their small-town "little evening party" to the ranks of a "ball" (18).

During this "ball", Mrs. Cornbury does two personal services to Rachel, the novel's title character. First, by bringing Rachel, she elevates Rachel's position through their public association. In this case, she implicitly wields a social power accorded her through her marriage. Second, she actively rebuffs the advances of a persistent Mr. Griggs on Rachel's behalf. And this is not, it would seem, a mere one-time personal favour, for Mrs. Cornbury describes herself more generally as "[being] there to fight [Rachel's] battles for [her]".

Mrs. Cornbury maintains, "That's why married ladies go to balls. You were quite right not to dance with him. A girl should always avoid any intimacy with such men as that. It is not that he would have done you any harm; but they stand in the way of your satisfaction and contentment" (*Rachel* 8). According to Mrs. Cornbury, then, the "satisfaction and

contentment” of a single woman like Rachel are significant—and as a “married lady” of a specific class and function, Mrs. Cornbury can and must facilitate their attainment, regardless of the contrary will of any concerned male party.

"Married women" of Mrs. Cornbury's influence abound in Trollope's fiction. Like her, they tend to be minor characters; like her, they may also assume an importance—or even necessity—which far outstrips their stage time. On a larger scale, Trollope's novels suggest that the ability of a Mrs. Cornbury to articulate and to promote the carrying out of female volition, as in the case of Rachel, is critical to the individual woman, to her society, and to the fictional plot which reflects that society. An inevitability characterizes the machinations of these abettors, as I call them: during an impasse in the plot, they will appear from seemingly out of nowhere, as if the plot itself has generated them to bring about a conclusion. Perhaps claiming a distant relationship, they immediately begin enacting stratagems to ensure that the societal narrative ends at the "right" place, with the pairing of the "right" people.

Neither these essential characters nor the recurrent depiction of abetting in Trollope's novels has been the subject of scholarly study—an oversight, considering the prevalence of these figures.¹ An examination of those who manoeuvre appropriate marriages reveals their intercession to be a potent conduit of social forces. *Rachel Ray* (1863), *Miss*

¹One notable exception is Jane Nardin, whose *He Knew She Was Right* includes a discussion of Mrs. Cornbury. Nardin's account treats her in the light of the other female characters in *Rachel Ray*, rather than her unique plot function.

Mackenzie (1865), *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865), *Phineas Finn* (1869), *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1870), *Ralph the Heir* (1871), *An Eye for an Eye* (1879) and *The Duke's Children* (1880) present cogent examples of these abettors, and their conclusions imply the organic connection of these women's presence and function to the lives of the young women they help. The intercession of these engineers of marriages is a usually invisible but vital force. The abettors' existence also suggests that women's lives are not exclusively their own. While a man can make independent decisions about his life, the successful woman's life seems to require an equal consideration of the individual and the communal, and, more specifically, the precise and often successful intercessions of other women.

Conduct manuals for women were popular during Victorian times, as proven by multiple editions of texts such as Sarah Stickney Ellis' *Wives, Women, and Daughters of England*. These might be considered an example of feminine mediation in its stiffest, most inert form. By contrast, the wise, often intuitive and strategic intervention of abettor figures in Trollope's fiction seems to make them a living--and lively--embodiment of the complexity that results when precept meets individual circumstance. The expertise of these abettors is dual: authoritative knowledge of the invisible, intangible female domestic sphere, and an invisible facility in the public sphere. Armed with a veneration of proper domestic order, they stage-manage an intricate and particular juggling act: orchestrating both individual female happiness, of the kind which Mrs. Cornbury upholds for Rachel, and the perpetuation of the larger society. Their most identifiable function is as emissaries and oracles of the social machinery: their "prophecies" always come true, and their

machinations preserve or reinforce the social order--though official history elides their pivotal role, making them invisible and intangible.

Typically, abettors fall primarily into two main categories. First are the active abettors, the "married women" like Mrs. Butler Cornbury (*Rachel Ray*) and Mrs. Clara Mackenzie (*Miss Mackenzie*). Their domestic fortunes secure, they are also social "patronesses"² (*Miss Mackenzie* 27) who strive, for apparently altruistic (rather than merely mercenary or regulatory) reasons, to bring the protagonist of each novel to marriage with her lover of choice. The second type of abettor is the "sagacious head", who is socially influential and usually venerated. She explicitly enforces social discipline through a pervasive coercion: for example, by abetting a marriage that may seem to contribute less to the protection or happiness of the woman being married than to the simple perpetuation of the long-established social order. For instance, she makes an unruly woman consider social consequences, not just personal satisfaction, by a) telling her whom she will marry (as in the cases of Lady Glencora Palliser or Alice Vavasor), or b) telling her whom she is forbidden to marry (as in the cases of Lady Mary Palliser and Marie Max Goesler). Abettors of this second type, like Lady Midlothian, Lady Glencora, and Lady Cantrip, have ulterior social, rather than personal, motives for pursuing their missions. Part midwives to marriage, and part oracles of what should (and will) be, they act, often knowingly, more as a mouthpiece than an active agent of the social machinery. Their

²Victorian patronesses had a specific social utility in elevating people of the lower ranks of the middle class in the eyes and estimation of those higher up on the social ladder. For a discussion of this social sponsorship, see Davidoff 27-8.

"prophecies" are unerring, whether or not their machinations contribute directly to their fulfilment.

In sharp contrast to both types of abettors is a series of failed abettors: men who seek unsuccessfully to disguise purely individual goals as public duties, and, much more dangerous, women who can successfully camouflage ulterior motives as the inevitable workings of the social machinery—with tragic consequences.

II. "Why Married Women Go to Balls": Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie

Like Mrs. Cornbury's chaperoning of Rachel, Mrs. Clara Mackenzie's engineering of Margaret Mackenzie's marriage to John Ball (*Miss Mackenzie*) is a pure example of the first type of active abetting. Margaret Mackenzie's affluent cousin by marriage, Mrs. Mackenzie seeks out her unknown relative at her precise time of need (in Chapter 26 of a novel with thirty chapters): "I have come to find you out in your hermitage, and to claim cousinship, and all that sort of thing" (26). Despite not knowing Margaret, she is sent by her husband, Walter Mackenzie, to retrieve Margaret from the exile prompted by the Ball vs. Mackenzie legal investigation and the lion and lamb articles of the disreputable clergyman Mr. Maguire. In a trademark abettor's entrance, she first appears quite unexpectedly, at a moment when the marriage plot seems irretrievably stalled. Though she is initially ignorant of Margaret's engagement to John Ball (the cousin who turns out the rightful heir to the fortune that Margaret erroneously inherits), once Mrs. Mackenzie learns that the love affair is in limbo, she takes matters deftly in hand. The engine of both plot and

social necessity, she then manages the whole scheme to its novelistic and societal conclusion at the altar.

Mrs. Mackenzie's first speech to Margaret is a brief preamble which describes their relationship purely (and pithily) in terms of marriage: "My dear,...you don't know me ,I think;...I am your cousin, Mrs. Mackenzie--Clara Mackenzie. My husband is Walter Mackenzie, and his father is Sir Walter Mackenzie, of Incharrow. Now you will know all about me" (26). This is hardly "all about [her]"—and seems inadequate information to warrant allowing oneself to be whisked away by a complete stranger. Yet once the talisman of this patriarchal connection is invoked, there is never any doubt that Margaret will eventually accompany her cousin to Cavendish Square. Like Cinderella with her fairy godmother, she is "carried off by the handsome lady in the grand carriage" (26).³

This succinct speech suggests three crucial aspects of the abettor. First is Mrs. Mackenzie's effortless efficiency. She cannot fail because her mission, like that of many abettors in Trollope's fiction, is a seemingly irresistible imperative. In the next chapter, Margaret hesitates to accept Mrs. Mackenzie's gift of a dress and bonnet. Margaret protests, but Mrs. Mackenzie persists, and "the difficulty...[is] at last overcome" (27). The narrator provides no details, so *how* exactly the difficulty is overcome is unclear. But details are irrelevant because it is inevitable that Mrs. Mackenzie will prevail over any "difficulty". Mrs.

³ P.D. Edwards notes the similar "fairy-tale flavour of *Rachel Ray*" and plot need for Mrs. Cornbury, who "must play the part of a fairy godmother to Rachel's Cinderella, escorting her to the ball...where, to the chagrin of the spiteful sisters (the Tappitt girls), she claims her prince" (60).

Mackenzie—and other abettors such as Mrs. Cornbury and Lady Midlothian—inhabit a very specific location in the Trollope novel. Emissaries at once of the plot and society, they appear spontaneously to resolve “difficulties” large and small which are impeding the social placement of a heroine and the plot’s resolution. The frequent absence of detail about the *how* of Mrs. Mackenzie’s activities reinforces this special status. Because the outcome is never in doubt, the *how* is simply not important. Similarly, when Mrs. Cornbury escorts young Rachel Ray to the Tappits’, her first “ball”, Mrs. Cornbury proves herself much more than a nominal chaperone. Mrs. Cornbury demonstrates a supreme self-confidence in her ability to “[take] everything as a matter of course” (7), and when Rachel feels compelled to leave in order to evade Griggs, Mrs. Cornbury promises to “get [her] out of this scrape without running away” (8)—and does so both rapidly and forthrightly. She demonstrates a considerable—and effortless—suasion over all attendants, whether young, old, male or female.

Second, Mrs. Mackenzie describes herself specifically in relation to her husband and his family. She is “Mrs. Mackenzie” first, and “Clara Mackenzie” second, a self-definition which implies a public commitment and self-subordination to domestic values of husband and home. So, too, Mrs. Cornbury’s name, “Mrs. Butler Cornbury”, explicitly identifies her in terms of her husband, and seems to emphasize her “absorption” in marriage.⁴ And in

⁴She is never referred to as “Patty Cornbury”—which would be a blend of her own name and that of her husband. Instead, she is referred to briefly as “Patty Comfort”, the former unmarried daughter of the Reverend Comfort, and, most often, as “Mrs. Butler Cornbury” as if to emphasize a) the confluence of her identity and her husband’s, and b) her marital status as a direct catalyst for her heightened social standing. As her name suggests, according to the status of Victorian wives, she would be deemed to lack both an identity distinct from her husband’s and the “capacity for independent action” due to her “absorption” (Kaye 558).

accordance with this, Mrs. Cornbury's ostensible "ambition" serves patriarchy in its many forms: she accepts the Tappitts' party invitation "because it might serve her husband's [political] purposes". She takes on the duty of chaperone "because her father had asked her" (7). Finally, her "greatest ambition" (7) is not only to "improve the worldly position of the squires of Cornbury Grange" but also to "calculat[e]" (7) a future seat in Parliament for her son.

Third, Mrs. Mackenzie's conversation frequently foreshortens self-disclosure, and asserts an almost proverbial self-evidence in lieu of hard logic. She tells Margaret the minimum that Margaret needs to know in order to come with her, and curbs the possibility of further questions with a breezy "Now you will know all about me". In actuality, Margaret knows next to nothing, but this phrase is the first of many such to fall from Mrs. Mackenzie's mouth, like "to make a long story short" and "all that sort of thing" (26). Her diction itself suggests foreshortening, compression, and inevitability. Mrs. Mackenzie need never provide any details--the quintessential abettor, she has taken matters well in hand, and that is all Margaret needs to know. So, too, Mrs. Cornbury is no mere passive angel in (or out of) the house, as her deft management of both Rachel's romance and her husband's political campaign makes clear. And her talk with Rachel on their way home suggests a precise personal "theory" of how "married women" are to promote the fun of "young ladies" in their care: "Balls are given specially for young ladies; and it is my theory that they are to make themselves happy while they are there, and not sacrifice themselves to men whom

they don't wish to know. You can't always refuse when you're asked, but you can always get out of an engagement afterwards if you know what you're about" (*Rachel* 8). Not only does she announce that one role of married women is to clear a space for a girl's brief moment of consequence-free pleasure, but she lays bare how the source of her theory is no greater authority than her own beliefs. The theory depends only on a woman knowing "what [she's] about"—and this, in her breezy and self-sufficient view, is all the authorization which it needs.

The most obvious function of these abettor-figures is to coach their inexperienced female protégées, the title characters. Unconscious though Rachel seems of this process, Mrs. Cornbury grooms her, first and foremost by presenting a new kind of role model. The direct opposite of the negative example of her sister Mrs. Prime, Mrs. Cornbury's example teaches Rachel neither to "sacrifice herself to men" nor to let men "stand in the way of [her] satisfaction and contentment" (*Rachel* 8), but, instead, to acquire the skills necessary to become and remain a strong, visible wifely presence in the home. The hitherto repressed Rachel has yet to see any alternative to the extremes of "total abnegation of self" (*Can You* 3) displayed by her cloying, "self-less" mother and her intolerant, "self-full" sister, Mrs. Prime. Mrs. Cornbury's ability to manoeuvre a courteous but definite self-prescribed course is eye-opening enough to make Rachel marvel, "She chooses to have her own way; but then she is so good-humoured!" (8). One brief evening in Mrs. Cornbury's presence suggests to Rachel the hitherto undreamed-of possibility of being able to be assertive *and*

"good-humoured"—that is, to "[do] it all" (26) without compromising herself or being "absorbed" in marriage, even to a man as strong-willed as Luke Rowan. And as we will see, Mrs. Cornbury's "good humour" is critical, for it permits her to remain officially invisible, despite the measurable and often public impacts of her actions.

Mrs. Mackenzie is less Margaret's role model than her stage manager. Mrs. Mackenzie's late appearance in the novel leaves her one clear and significant task to resolve: the suspended engagement. In attacking this problem, Mrs. Mackenzie is hyper-efficient. The abstract difficulty to be resolved, rather than the people for whom she is trying to solve it, becomes her primary focus. She illustrates this when Margaret "[declares] her purpose" to wear "a certain black silk dress which had seen every party at Mrs. Stumfold's during Margaret's Littlebath season" (27) to the Negro Soldiers' Orphan Bazaar: "To this her cousin demurred, and from demurring proceeded to the enunciation of a positive order. The black silk dress in question should not be worn" (27). Mrs. Mackenzie's single-mindedness is grammatically reinforced by the shift from active to passive voice in the passage. In the first sentence, "Miss Mackenzie" is the subject, declaring "her purpose". Mrs. Mackenzie, "her cousin", replaces her as the subject of the next sentence, demurring and then issuing an order. In the third sentence, the passive voice makes this an edict without a source, an oracular inevitability. Margaret, the subject of the first sentence, has become the third sentence's invisible agent, her volition erased and her actions simply assumed by the disembodied decree. Typically and inevitably, the abettor gets her way, as Mrs. Mackenzie decides to purchase a suitable dress "without further speech to her cousin on the subject"

(27).

Mrs. Mackenzie's dilemma is simple: Margaret is passive, and Ball is a coward. Margaret erroneously thinks that "her destiny [is] in [John Ball's] hands" (26), but Mrs. Mackenzie's strategic intervention in the matters of Margaret's dress and manner shows the truth to be otherwise. Once Mrs. Mackenzie determines to marry Margaret to Ball, she becomes convinced that Margaret can attract her man if only her clothing exhibits her hitherto repressed girlish side. So Mrs. Mackenzie insists that Margaret abandon plans to wear her black silk dress in favour of the lighter muslin and the "gayest, lightest, jauntiest, falsest, most make-belief-mourning bonnet that ever sprang from the art of a designer in bonnets" (27). Though Margaret resists, Mrs. Mackenzie, a walking conduct-book like Mrs. Cornbury, overrules Margaret's protests with a matter-of-fact, seemingly well-known rule of female deportment: "young ladies who never have any money of their own at all always accept presents from all their relations. It is their special privilege" (27). Her object is to unite the two, so she dresses Margaret for her "Ball", convinced that once she exhibits Margaret to her full advantage, Ball will take the pretty lure that is dangled in front of his eyes.

Margaret, not the Negro Soldiers' Orphan Bazaar, is Mrs. Mackenzie's true charitable mission when she takes her stall. As a "woman of fashion", Mrs. Mackenzie calculates the benefit of the "distinction of having a part assigned to her at the great bazaar of the season" (27), and seizes the opportunity to promote Margaret where Margaret will profit most from

her association with great "lady patronesses" (27), and show her "goods" in order to procure a "sufficient purchaser" for her hand (*Duke's* 11). "Indeed the Mackenzie stall was got up very well; but then was it not known and understood that Mrs. Mackenzie did get up things very well? It was acknowledged on all sides that the Lamb, Griselda, was uncommonly well got up on this occasion" (27). Mrs. Mackenzie gets up things very well—and Margaret is one of the "things" in question. This is one role of the abettor in both society and novel: to manage appearances and get "things" up so that everything—including a young woman—finds its appropriate place in society.

Mrs. Mackenzie's "part" is thus that of a salesperson contriving a sale in the marriage bazaar, a method the Duke of Omnium will denounce in *The Duke's Children*.⁵ However, Mrs. Mackenzie knows that, in Margaret's case, the necessary and "sagacious" bargain has already been struck, only to be put on the shelf prior to the physical transaction. Like Mrs. Cornbury with Luke Rowan, she seeks not to negotiate, but, rather, to expedite matters invisibly so that the currently shelved product does not become stale. As an agent of plot and society, she subscribes (as she must) to the rule "take the goods the gods provide" (29), and this inspires her ploy of redisplaying the ware, in order to remind the customer of the wisdom of his choice. She thus quite literally stands the hitherto invisible Margaret at a stall in the bazaar, as a new and improved--and tangible--commodity "altered" (27) by her

⁵ The Duke prefers to arrange his only daughter Lady Mary's marriage by the "sagacious bargaining" to which he owed his own wife, because it is a less blatant and thus "better [means] than standing at a stall in the market till the sufficient purchaser should come" (11). Mrs. Mackenzie is obviously having immense fun. And neither the twinkle in her eye nor the outrageous comedy of the scene can be ignored. But for the more sinister implications of standing a woman in a stall for a sufficient purchaser, see my discussion of *The Duke's Children* in Section 4 of this chapter.

abettor's careful repackaging, and alerts Ball to see what awaits him.⁶

Mrs. Mackenzie provocatively calls Ball's attention to every aspect of Margaret's appearance: "Doesn't she look well in that bonnet?...It was my choice, and I absolutely made her wear it. If you knew the trouble I had!...And are you not very much obliged to me? I'm sure you ought to be, for nobody before has ever taken the trouble of finding out what becomes her most" (27). Entirely without the naive Margaret's knowledge, Mrs. Mackenzie has conducted Margaret's beautification with Ball in mind. And although Margaret freezes when instructed to "solicit" (27) John to buy something, Mrs. Mackenzie ably and speedily foists on him a suggestive—possibly phallic—"large, elaborate, and perhaps . . . unwieldy" paper-knife (27). Mrs. Mackenzie succeeds in priming Margaret to make Ball "buy something of her" (27), and once Ball "put[s] his hands into his pocket" (27), Mrs. Mackenzie knows the bargain is sealed. She can rest assured that not only the knife, but Margaret herself, has been well disposed of--and not just to a "sufficient", but rather to the highest and best purchaser.⁷ "As is", Ball's masculinity has been hitherto

⁶ This seems to me less a suggestion that all abettors "commodify" women, or make them "objects" in a crass transaction, than an emblem of how, to abet both the woman's individual desire and the larger social plan, the woman must both "look good" (in the external, public, male sphere) and *be* good (in the feminine, domestic sphere). If a woman must be a commodity, this is, it seems, a transitional and momentary strategy for satisfying the former requirement.

⁷The notion of buying a woman recurs in a more literal fashion in other Trollope novels. For instance, in *Ayala's Angel*, Tom attempts to "buy" his cousin Ayala with a L300 diamond necklace. He justifies the extravagant purchase by rationalizing that Ayala will not be able to resist the gift, and, therefore, will feel obliged to marry the giftgiver. His scheme, however, backfires when the plucky Ayala sneers at and refuses both. Mr. Neefit the breechesmaker in *Ralph the Heir* goes so far as to try to sell his daughter in marriage by offering L20,000 to the impecunious gentleman, Ralph Newton the heir, if he will marry her. Polly is tempted by the lure of social exaltation, but refuses him because (like her fictional soulmate Ayala), she is determined to await a lover worthy of being the hero of her hoped-for grand passion. For an extended

insufficient to make the “purchase”. But when it is symbolically handed to him (in the form of the knife) by the abettor Mrs. Mackenzie, he is at last able to exercise it.

Mrs. Cornbury is equally tactical in reuniting Rachel with her estranged fiancé Luke Rowan, who has quarrelled with Tappitt over who should have supremacy over brewing in Baslehurst. When Mrs. Tappitt steers the topic away from the election to Luke Rowan, thus eliciting Tappitt’s “evil eye’ (17) on Mrs. Cornbury, Mrs. Cornbury decides that her solidarity with Rachel takes priority over the assurance of Tappitt’s vote. “There are many things which such a woman will do to gain such an object”, the narrator muses: “She could have given up to them Luke Rowan,--if he had stood alone. But she could not give up the girl she had chaperoned.... She felt that a word said against Rowan would be a word said also against Rachel; and therefore, throwing her husband over for the nonce, she resolved to sacrifice the vote and stand up for her friend” (17). Mrs. Cornbury silently aligns herself with Rachel, even at the expense of her husband’s political victory. But even when she makes a conscious decision to enlist herself in this cause, she does so silently. She maintains her temper, and “she smile[s]”, and reminds herself that “Even when declaring that she intend[s] to take Rachel’s part open-mouthed, she ha[s] spoken in a half-drolling way which ha[s] divested her words of any tone of offence” (17). Even while actively using her influence in unconventional ways of “countermining Mr. and Mrs. Tappitt” (17) (by consciously but silently devoting herself to the cause of sisterhood), she never violates

discussion of Ayala and Polly, see my Chapter 3. For a more detailed discussion of Mr. Neefit as abettor, see below.

the social dictates of “feminine nicety” (17). She determines that “If the Tappitts in their jealousy [of Rowan] were striving to rob Rachel Ray of her husband by spreading false reports, she would encourage Rachel Ray in her love by spreading the truth” (17).

Abettors like Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie thus bridge a dual role. They both clear a space for the single woman’s individual fulfilment, and ensure a socially appropriate resolution. And the means to these ends seem to be irrelevant--just about anything goes, from making the woman briefly into a commodity (as Mrs. Mackenzie does at the bazaar), to subverting wifely loyalty to the cause of sisterhood (as Mrs. Cornbury does). The achievement of the appropriate ends—inevitable and always successful--is all that matters.

The most significant form of active abetting is direct discussion with the principal male. Whatever coaching Mrs. Mackenzie and Mrs. Cornbury give to their novels’ respective heroines, their most important communication in each novel is directly with the erstwhile hero. As we see at the Bazaar, Mrs. Mackenzie is adroit in managing the dithering, cowardly Ball. When he arrives at Cavendish Square, she seizes the opportunity to interrogate him about his intention towards his cousin. She coaches him to a resolution, and in discussing her attitude toward the infamous newspaper articles, articulates her faith in domestic values:

After all, what does it matter as long as one does nothing to be ashamed of oneself? . . . Upon my word I don't think I should care about it as long as

my husband stood by me As long as people are not made to believe that you have behaved badly, that you have been false or cruel, I can't see that it comes to much [Articles] can't break your bones, nor can they make the world think you dishonest (29)

Public opinion, that of "the world" (29), means less to her than the private opinion of "my husband".⁸ More significantly, Mrs. Mackenzie sees a woman's position in the public, male sphere as a function of her place in the private, domestic, female sphere. She argues that if one knows oneself and behaves well domestically, public opinion to the contrary is irrelevant because it will not endure. In another mouth, this assertion might be dismissed as naiveté. In the abettor Mrs. Mackenzie's, it is not just the impetus for Ball to reconsider his reliance on public opinion, but also a manifesto of the model woman's behaviour: take care of husband and home life, and you will by extension be enabled to take care of (and exert power over) the rest of the world. Her basis for contriving this match for Margaret stems from this same belief. Once Margaret has the good opinion of her husband-to-be, her public reputation will become merely incidental. Therefore, the most pressing obligation is to expedite the marriage and thereby secure Margaret's status as wife. And so long as Margaret's husband stands by her, and they two present domestic solidarity to the world, her reputation will be safe.

Significantly, Mrs. Mackenzie articulates this argument about the domestic sphere not to

⁸Part of the abettors' success exists in their apparent preference for private rather than public opinion. By contrast, women who rely only on what "the world" thinks of them face often tragic personal consequences. For a discussion of the consequences of a woman's desire for public renown and its

Miss Mackenzie but to Ball. Though she here upholds private domestic values, in the ultimate success of her plan, Mrs. Mackenzie shows herself to be a powerful agent of *public* social change. Her “sale” of Miss Mackenzie to Ball demonstrates her measurable power over the lives of others. The corollary of her argument, which she exemplifies, seems to be: once your husband stands by you domestically, you are enabled to begin exerting power over others in the public sphere. Because of her own security in Mr. Mackenzie’s eyes, she can work to deposit Margaret in the coveted position of wife. Margaret will marry the man she loves, and in a supreme twist of fate--or the abetting genius of either Mrs. Mackenzie or the social plot itself--be restored to the inheritance she was compelled to relinquish. Most significant, even after the celebrity of Maguire's articles, Margaret will have the social distinction of being a baronet's wife. With this certain view of "everything" necessary to seal Margaret's happiness, Mrs. Mackenzie leaves nothing to chance, hastening the marriage in a matter of weeks to its happy conclusion at the altar.

In a similar direct communication with Rachel’s betrothed, Luke Rowan, Mrs. Cornbury invites him to the Grange. She walks with him through Cornbury Cleaves, possibly the “prettiest spot in England”, according to the narrator, but one from which “there [is] no escape” (26)--a physical echo of Mrs. Cornbury’s insistence that she will “[unravel] the mystery” of his disrepute and his true intentions toward Rachel. Mrs. Cornbury deploys considerable persuasive skill but maintains her official invisibility: rather than sermonize in the offputting manner of a "female preacher" like Mrs. Prime, Mrs. Cornbury knows that

"the asking of questions"—an implicit rather than explicit means to disclosure—" [is] her easiest mode of saying what she ha[s] to say" to him (26). And this method of questioning leads Rowan to examine the root of his conflict. Although he does not reply to Mrs. Cornbury, he is clearly affected, for he later "escape[s] from his host" to return to the Cleeves, "desirous of answering [her questions] to himself" (26). His introspection prompts him to acknowledge that he has "deserved the rebuke which Mrs. Cornbury's words had conveyed to him" (26). Moreover, Mrs. Cornbury's covert but emphatically probing questions lead him to endorse the lesson which Mrs. Mackenzie teaches to John Ball: that public opinion, at the expense of domestic solidarity, means little. "'Spoken ill of me, have they', he says to himself, 'What an ass a man is to care for such things as that'" (26). Soon afterward, he goes to the Rays' cottage in Bragg's End, and renews his marriage proposal to Rachel. However oblique the fashion, much like Mrs. Mackenzie, Mrs. Cornbury succeeds in resolving the "mystery" and, by extension, engineering the plot to its happy resolution.

In her successful discussions with Rowan, Mrs. Cornbury expediently cultivates a covert approach which maintains the cover story of wifely submission and female invisibility. Indeed, so successful is it that Rowan sees his solitary contemplation, more than Mrs. Cornbury's "questions", as the source of his decision to end his separation from Rachel. This tacit sense of male superiority is shared by all the men at Cornbury Grange: "A woman so endowed [as Mrs. Cornbury] charms not only by the exercise of her own gifts, but she endows those who are near her with a sudden conviction that it is they whose

temper, health, talents, and appearance is doing so much for society” (26). Mrs. Cornbury exemplifies repeatedly the notion of implicit influence, not explicit persuasion or visible action: “The old squire was not found to be very dull. The young squire was thought to be rather clever. . . . And Mrs. Butler Cornbury did it all” (26)—quietly and invisibly. Her husband is aware of his wife’s domestic prowess, and has no scruple in announcing proudly that she is “general” (18) at the Grange. And when he declines to campaign at the brewery, she, whose “word passe[s] for much at Cornbury Grange” (17), acts as his designate, delivering her campaign speech so “naturally” as to suggest that “Mrs. Cornbury ha[s] been accustomed to speak on her legs for a quarter of a century” (17). Mrs. Cornbury is thus an exemplar of selfless “married women”. The narrator praises her unambiguously, saying that her greatest merit is her “air of homeliness”, for “her strongest feelings are home feelings” (7). Her veneration of the domestic order makes her the “soul and spirit” of Cornbury Grange (26) which, as in the case of Mrs. Mackenzie, becomes the basis of her facility in public suasion.

In *The Daughters of England*, Sarah Stickney Ellis advises her (presumably) unmarried and impressionable female readers “to be content to be inferior to men”. She admits that her purpose is “to assist” young women to cultivate “their steady feelings of benevolence and habits of industry, so blended with Christian meekness, that while affording pleasure to all who live within the sphere of their influence, they shall be *unconscious* of the charm by which they please” (10, emphasis added). Mrs. Cornbury is not Ellis’ daughter of England, unconscious of the pleasure which her virtuous example imparts to those around her. Rather,

she is a woman conscious of the effects she has--but studious to ensure that others remain *unconscious* of these. Of Mrs. Cornbury, the narrator says, "[m]arvellous is the power which can be exercised, *almost unconsciously*, over a company, or an individual, or even upon a crowd by one person gifted with good temper, good digestion, good intellects, and good looks" (26, emphasis added).⁹ Mrs. Cornbury not only takes care of husband and home, and is thereby enabled to manage affairs in the "real world"; her greatest merit is that, by virtue of her attractiveness, temperament, and energy, she can manage these "real-world" affairs *invisibly* to those around her. Her cause blends implicitly into its measurable effects, so that "she endows those who are near her with a sudden conviction that it is they whose temper, health, talents, and appearance is doing so much for society" (26). But the truth, the narrator underlines, is that Mrs. Butler Cornbury, marvel of management, "[does] it all" (26).

The best proof of Mrs. Cornbury's ability to affect others--unbeknownst to them--comes in Mr. Tappitt's dismissive comment, "Women don't know anything about it" (17). He blurts this out in her presence because, thanks to her effective speech, he momentarily "forget[s] that Mrs. Cornbury [is] a woman" (17). So successful and effective is Mrs. Cornbury in exercising real "power" invisibly, that others are unconscious that she does so, even in the very public--and typically male--arena of political speechmaking. Her speech does not so

⁹According to the narrator, this magnetic power can be exercised "unconsciously" by any "person"—which seems to suggest man or woman. This has far more significant strategic implications for a woman than a man, however, since, in the public arena, a woman can *only* affect unconsciously, as happens here.

much make Tappitt forget gender distinctions as hypnotize him into an unwitting exchange of gender definitions. Tappitt's mind substitutes—*unconsciously*— the category “man”, which seems appropriate given her virtuoso speech. The category “woman”, with its connotations of domestic invisibility, does not fit this public performance. He is not aware of doing this, and, save for his unfortunate gaffe, would never become aware. This is equal parts comedy at Tappitt's expense and demonstration of that general power which a woman may exercise, when she keeps her audience “unconscious” of it.

From Butler Cornbury's and especially Tappitt's assessments of Mrs. Cornbury, one might infer that Mrs. Cornbury lacks femininity.¹⁰ Tappitt's subsequent equation of Mr. and Mrs. Cornbury, “it was all the same to him which” (24), supports this masculinizing view.

However, the narrator's rhapsodic praises of “the sweetness of her womanhood” and “the loveliness of her personal charms” (7) cast her in a specifically feminine light. She manages affairs so efficiently from within the invisible domestic realm that the theory of woman's biological inferiority, articulated by the conduct books of Sarah Stickney Ellis, seems less a factual edict than a strategy for managing appearances so as to be permitted to get things done: “The first thing of importance is to be inferior to men—inferior in mental power, in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength” (*Daughters* 3). The first thing is to *seem* inferior, Mrs. Cornbury's behaviour argues, and to ensure that

¹⁰ Nardin, for instance, sees Tappitt's snub as a reflection of a larger communal tendency to “have trouble remembering to which sex she belongs” (*He Knew She Was Right* 124), and implies that Mrs. Cornbury is not a typically feminine woman. Nardin also suggests that Mrs. Cornbury's assertiveness is related both to her social position and “an unconventional marriage” (125) to an appreciative husband who bestows power “by allowing his wife to wear the pants” (124-5), and thus relinquishes his own.

others take automatic credit for ideas or actions which you have encouraged. And although she seems to foster the public image of woman-as-only-wife, her husband remains offstage for the bulk of the story. His absence seems to validate and emphasize her importance as both a central engine of the plot and of the society depicted within it.

Like Mr. Butler Cornbury, Mr. Mackenzie never appears in *Miss Mackenzie*. He is the agent of Mrs. Mackenzie's intercession: "he that sent me" (26) to help resolve the problem of Margaret's suspended engagement. Sending Mrs. Mackenzie is clearly the equivalent of resolving the situation, for he never involves himself further. Though there is little overt description of the success of their marriage, Mrs. Mackenzie's introduction in the novel implies that her self-definition is connected directly to her marital status--a point underscored by the narrator's designation of her and her self-description as "Mrs. Mackenzie", never "Clara". Like Mrs. Cornbury, she always defines herself as a wife, in a consistent demonstration that, to her at least, this information is sufficient to "know all about [her]" (26). Her later assertion to Ball of caring for her husband's opinion rather than "the world['s]" again indicates her belief that her social authority derives largely (if not entirely) from her marriage. It also shows her practising what she preaches is an implicit evidence of that sound domestic life which guarantees a sound reputation.

Her efficient arrangement of Margaret's marriage also demonstrates her understanding and endorsement of the narrator's axiom that "the truth of the matter is too clear. A woman's life is not perfect or whole till she has added herself to a husband" (11). Nor, Mrs.

Mackenzie might add, may she wield public power until she has first, through that husband, demonstrated her command of domestic power. In the narrator's words, "[a] desire to get married is the natural state of a woman at the age of--say from twenty-five to thirty-five"—and this desire is a useful and positive imperative for "women whose position in the world does not subject them to the necessity of earning their bread by the labour of their hands" (11). Unlike women of the working classes, middle- and upper-class women not only have much to gain by marrying well, but stand to lose what little status they have by marrying badly, or, worse, not marrying at all. But Mrs. Mackenzie's clout is considerable, as her invitation to the Bazaar with other "patronesses" of repute illustrates. Like Mrs. Cornbury's influence, it is the direct result of an expedient marriage—in her case, to the son of Sir Walter Mackenzie of Incharrow. Consequently, Mrs. Mackenzie knows that if Margaret becomes a nurse and takes lodgings, she will lose not only her fortune, but all chance at social power. A married woman, Mrs. Mackenzie has real power—however covert—and she knows that Margaret can acquire such power by marrying appropriately. Therefore, she exercises this power in the relentless pursuit of her scheme to give Margaret an expedient start with the right man from the right place, the home of established and prominent relatives. And much like Mrs. Cornbury, who prefers implication to direct arbitration, apart from her single conference with John Ball, Mrs. Mackenzie, as best seen in the Bazaar scene, works in the invisible realm of arrangement and display, not the public forum of negotiation.

Writing about the "nonexistence" of married women, in the *North British Review* (1855),

historian J.W. Kaye notes that “[Women] are born and educated as it were, for total absorption....Trained from the first to be dependent upon men, they pass through different stages of dependence....It cannot be said that they are educated for the proper discharge of the duties of wife and mother; but they are educated for the nonexistence which that condition involves” (558-9). Despite overt signs of such “absorption” in their names and public goals, in their capacity for meaningful “independent action”, Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie clearly defy Kaye’s observation, and, more important, demonstrate through the tangible results of their influence and the significant tasks in which they engage on behalf of their husbands, just how integral they are to the lives of those they affect—the girls and the husbands they abet.

Like Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie, Lady Glencora Palliser, to whom I will return in this chapter, is an active abettor—in this case, in the marriage of her daughter, Lady Mary, to the “beautiful” (2) but penniless Frank Tregear in *The Duke's Children*. Having herself been made to marry according to her elders’ rather than her own choice, Lady Glencora leaves a bequest for her daughter so that Mary’s marriage need not depend on her suitor’s financial position. Much of *The Duke's Children* concerns the Duke’s attempt to counter Glencora’s posthumous strategem, and to make Lady Mary marry according to his choice. However, the novel ends with Lady Mary’s wedding to Tregear—with her father’s blessing no less, implying the validity and potency of Lady Glencora’s abetting “legacy” (11), and implicitly but emphatically underscoring Glencora’s awareness of the confluence of her daughter’s personal needs and the gradually changing social order to which all must adapt.

Nor is there any doubt about the inevitability of the long-term success of both Mrs. Cornbury's and Mrs. Mackenzie's machinations, for the novels end with the success of the unions they have abetted. Indeed, *Miss Mackenzie* concludes at the precise moment when Miss Mackenzie becomes Lady Ball, wife of the "worthy baronet" (30). More significantly, it thus also ends when Mrs. Mackenzie has fulfilled her function. The last speech of the novel is hers, not Margaret's: it is a whispered articulation of her triumph, that seems less a display of pride than the oracular recognition that "[her] prophecy has come true" (30). The narrative design thus bears out the necessity of this abettor's role by stopping at the very point the abettor has worked to contrive. The strategic deployment of the skills of Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie suggests clearly that to achieve individual happiness and social good, a wife need not necessarily risk "the total abnegation of self" (*Can You* 3) that Alice Vavasor fears and must overcome before she can marry John Grey¹¹—though to assert power successfully without disrupting the "home feelings" of the domestic sphere, a wife may need to face frequent public *invisibility* of self.

III. "Sagacious Heads": The Oracles of Society in *Can You Forgive Her?*, *Phineas Finn* and *The Duke's Children*

Mrs. Mackenzie's critical role in enabling the plot of *Miss Mackenzie* to reach its conclusion (which is the moment when the title character is no longer "Miss Mackenzie") argues the almost *organic* need for such abetting. Powerful married women, it would seem, are essential to grease the wheels of the social machinery, bring marriage-plots to closure,

¹¹ For an extended discussion of Alice Vavasor, see my Chapter 3.

and perpetuate the society. But Mrs. Mackenzie does not seek out Margaret with the express (and possibly sinister) purpose of sending her into the clutches--and bed--of a man merely because the match seems desirable. Mrs. Mackenzie initially befriends Margaret with no other apparent motive than to provide emotional support during a difficult time. Only when she learns that Margaret's engagement is in a suspended state does she begin to "scheme". And as her final speech to Margaret states, her reward is simply to see Margaret walk out of a room before her, on the arm of the man she loves, with all the majesty and potential power that her newly attained social rank affords her.

Such ostensible purity of motive makes Mrs. Mackenzie and Mrs. Cornbury the benign messengers and active servants of a social machinery that propels the heroine into the arms of her lover and the plot to its inevitable conclusion. In contrast, *Can You Forgive Her?* depicts abettors whose methods bear little resemblance to these direct intercessions. In this novel, Lady Midlothian, with the help of her friend Lady Auld Reekie, seems to manoeuvre marriages for societal, rather than psychological or personal, expediency. And she does so indirectly, less as an agent than a mouthpiece of the social machinery, prophesying outcomes for the heroines that the narrative then bears out. Lady Midlothian's first appearance at a crucial moment of the narrative parallels Mrs. Mackenzie's sudden arrival. But rather than come in person, the spectre of Lady Midlothian is first invoked by her cousin Lady MacLeod for a specific disciplinary purpose: to thwart Alice Vavasor's attempt to break her engagement to the "worthy man" John Grey, to reunite with her former fiancé, the "wild man" George Vavasor. At Lady MacLeod's behest, Lady

Midlothian appears as a disembodied voice in a letter which reprimands Alice for jilting Grey. Thus, even before Lady Midlothian materializes, she is a regulator, the spokeswoman for a greater authority and the emissary of social discipline and management. From the start, her lack of direct intercession suggests her oracular function: her pronouncements about future plot events are as functional—and inevitably accurate—as the active abetting of a Mrs. Cornbury or Mrs. Mackenzie proves to be. But since Lady Midlothian does not intercede in any direct fashion in Alice's relationship, her type of abetting is still more "invisible" than the first type.

In this novel, the plot always bears out the abettors' prophecies of what the Alices of society "should do with [their] lives" (11). For instance, in the novel's second of eighty chapters, Lady MacLeod, a minor abettor figure, says confidently to Alice, "A young woman that is going to be married, as you are--". Alice interrupts tersely, "As I am,--perhaps." Lady MacLeod counters, "That's nonsense, Alice. Of course you are". And "of course" Alice *is* going to be married in fulfillment of Lady MacLeod's and Lady Midlothian's prophecies--but only after seventy-seven chapters of internal struggle. That Alice does what Lady MacLeod so early announces she will do--despite her initial strong inclinations to the contrary--suggests the ability of the social machinery to mediate individual goals according to an implicitly prescribed set of social rules.

Like Lady MacLeod, Lady Midlothian vehemently opposes Alice's desire to pass up John Grey. Lady Midlothian seems almost the physical embodiment of marital traditions based

upon class, social hierarchy, and wealth. Her recurring pronouncements about Alice's engagement to John Grey and Glencora's marriage to Palliser make her a spokesperson for these normative values. And she draws further support from her friend and silently abetting cohort, the Marchioness of Auld Reekie. Although the socially-superior Marchioness never appears physically, Lady Midlothian invokes her regularly, referring to her judgments as demonstrations of a solidarity of purpose and attitude. Lady Auld Reekie does not herself utter one word in the novel, an eloquent silence implying her formidable presence as the implacable figurehead of invisible, omnipresent social expectations.¹² Thus, Lady Midlothian and the Marchioness are less protectors and managers than they are arbiters of what must (and will) be—both for a naive young woman's own good and that of the greater society. The Marchioness' silent method of communication becomes an emblem of the tenacity of the machinery, which simply need not or perhaps *cannot* be discussed--because it is a universal, omnipresent norm.

Her silence suggests the inviolable and pervasive method of an invisible code of social discipline. For instance, at novel's end, Lady Glencora confides to Alice details of the fateful week during which Lady Midlothian and Lady Auld Reekie convinced Glencora to abandon Burgo Fitzgerald for Palliser: "the Marchioness [Auld Reekie] used to be sent for to look at me, for she never talks. She used to look at me, and groan, and hold up her hands till I hated her the worst of the two" (79). Silent reproof is clearly a worse--and more effective--tactic than anything that can be articulated, for the unspoken (and hence

¹²It is interesting to note the parallel of the Duke of Omnium who is almost, but not quite, as

intangible) simply cannot be countered.¹³ Resistance to them, for instance in the liberal outlook of a headstrong young woman like Alice Vavasor, is futile and beside the point, because they are the mere mouthpieces of a much larger, inexorable social system. And this system works, independently of any actions on their parts, to fulfill their prophecies by making the world's Alice Vavasors align themselves with their covert messages.

Though Lady Midlothian claims to interfere for Alice's good, her estrangement from her own "scrapegrace" husband (2) might imply that she is merely a creature of habit, raised in a time deficient in opportunities for the self-analysis from which modern young women like Alice cull their strong sense of freedom and independence. None of the ladies seem to see the benefit of a modified system of marriage, in which a woman would be encouraged to satisfy her need for sympathy and find an outlet for her personal ambition. Thus, Lady Midlothian deems Alice's behaviour "disgraceful to the family," while the dumbfounded Marchioness of Auld Reekie apparently "demand[s] to be told what it [is] the girl want[s]" (18). Alice's own unalleviated guilt internalizes Lady Midlothian's and Lady Auld Reekie's bafflement. Her near-endless introspections, constituting the bulk of the main plot, are her

removed in the novels in which he "appears".

¹³The oppressive swirl of such social expectations finds expression in many other Trollope novels. For instance, in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867), Lily Dale intuits the desire of Allington society for her to marry John Eames. A simple Christmas toast to Eames' health, begun by his friend Lady Julia de Guest, has pointed implications to Lily. Lily says to her mother, "how dreadful it is,—this being constantly told before one's family and friends that one ought to marry a certain young man" (16). As Mrs. Dale points out, Lady de Guest has not said this, but Lily knows that words to this effect are unnecessary, for "Of course everybody there understood what [Lady de Guest] meant" (16). Lily hears what Lady de Guest implies: her insistent but covert sanction of this match. Lily's frustration stems from Lady de Guest's refusal to articulate her desire. Says Lily, "I should much prefer that she should [state it], for then I could get up on my legs and answer her off the reel" (16). Like Alice, Lily wants a visible embodiment against which she can battle, and she chafes at the invisible and unstated, and therefore difficult-to-counter social machinery which she feels coercing her to marry the

agonizing struggle to reconcile personal and social needs, and to articulate for herself "what it is [she] want[s]". For instance, she finds it hard to "forgive [her]self" to the end because she has been a self-avowed "jilt" (74), a self-definition which indicates just how thoroughly she has internalized the potential consequences of violating the social code. If the abettors had no influence, it is doubtful that Alice would be so affected by what the Lady Midlothians of society say. However, she does care—indeed, she *must* care, because, as her prolonged self-flagellation suggests, the social machinery, which is both inside Alice and all around her, simply forces her to care.

Alice resents Lady Midlothian's opinion because of their different priorities. Alice, thinking of a marriage solely in personal terms, wants one that offers more than mere conventional domestic life. By contrast, the terms of Lady Midlothian's suasion are societal: marriage is a socially acceptable match to a "worthy" man (3), and, so, an institution where love is a bonus, not a necessity. To her, Alice's behaviour begs scandal, not to mention a potential lifetime of misery—a possibility which the unhappily married Lady Midlothian understands only too well. She never argues that George is a degenerate who would probably destroy Alice's happiness. Instead, Lady Midlothian's argument consists purely of public decorum and the social consequences of not doing the right thing. Her argument is about "things"—not individuals: "There are things," she writes in her letter to Alice, "in which a young lady has no right to change her mind after it has once been made up; and certainly when a young lady has accepted a gentleman, that is one of

"worthy" man. For a discussion of the reasons Lily resists Lady de Guest's scheme, see my Chapter 5.

them" (18). A failed relationship must never be traced to the woman. She must instead remain blameless, so "no one can say that [the causes of the failure] have resulted from her own fault" (2). Lady Midlothian bemoans the shame Alice would inflict on John Grey and her family, arguing that he has probably "furnished his house in consequence of his intended marriage," and worse, that, "he has of course told all his friends" (18). Grey's public embarrassment and tangible furniture are the main issues; Alice's private feelings and intangible self are never openly alluded to, an omission she feels keenly. Lady Midlothian does not once refer to the resentment that Alice might feel by remaining in a personally dissatisfying relationship--a tactic that makes her logic "wormwood" to Alice.

However, Alice's eventual wedding to Grey shows that Lady Midlothian's motives are not Machiavellian. Since Alice had engaged herself once to Grey, Lady Midlothian is hardly championing a union without basis. In the light of Alice's evident love for Grey and his obviously attractive attributes, Lady Midlothian sees no reason for Alice to break a perfectly viable engagement. And this is a conclusion which Alice herself eventually reaches, though only after futile attempts to resist Lady Midlothian's logic with protracted inaction--a method that Alice realizes is ultimately unproductive. Although Alice rejects the letter of Lady Midlothian's message, she cannot ignore its spirit, as her increasing pangs of conscience demonstrate. She ultimately does what is "right", after an intense and prolonged struggle to ensure that the social terms insisted on by Lady Midlothian can balance and complement her personal needs.

So, in the end, Alice does "submit"--though she represents this as "submission" to Grey, rather than to Lady Midlothian's covert oracle. She marries the socially appropriate and "worthy man", who also happens to be the man she loves, and thereby satisfies both her own needs and that of society. Not only does Alice satisfy the oracular abettors, but her direct discussion with Grey in the churchyard at the novel's end implies that, like Rachel Ray, she will be a visible, vital, and individual wifely presence in their home in Cambridgeshire, and so, not risk the "abnegation of self" she has fought so hard to prevent. Thus, Alice's ultimately happy reunion with John Grey, like Glencora's eventual contentment with Palliser, vindicates the abettors' views and justifies their presence in the society of the novel. The abettors recognize how society functions and, more significant, see what is best for these individual young women at times when they might not know what is best for themselves. In the end, what Alice initially sees as a forced submission of her personal volition to authority and social dictates is more a rite of passage during which the young woman reconciles personal and social requirements.

Alice's cousin Lady Glencora seems more malleable to the wish of her "great relations" that she marry Plantaganet Palliser, the reserved, industrious and aloof young politician, rather than the dashing Burgo Fitzgerald, the man she loves. Like Alice's, Glencora's husband turns out the "worthy man", and her life better than it would otherwise have been. However, the success of Glencora's marriage, unlike Alice's, seems due more to good fortune than to forethought. The marriage promises eventual contentment, in large part from his eventual willingness to moderate his initial, near-exclusive political (hence

public) focus, and at last devote time to home and wife. And this “good fortune” is the best endorsement of the need for abettors, who *do* know better —and not necessarily for immediately obvious, logical, rational reasons. “Luck” here is the way the social order and “what is right” are encoded into the narrative. Both Alice's and Glencora's successful marriages validate the existence of an unlocatable, unspecifiable but inexorably true force of which the abettors are emissaries and mouthpieces.

Glencora becomes engaged to Palliser, not through any conscious expectation of the long-term benefit of this arrangement, but because the abettors' "sagacious heads prevented" (18) an imprudent marriage to the beautiful but feckless and impecunious Burgo Fitzgerald. Glencora lacks Alice's cautious, analytical disposition. Impulsive, she falls hard for Fitzgerald, the first and most beautiful man she has ever met. She is too naive to detect the seamier side of his character, and too captivated by his physical beauty and rakish air to recognize him for the spendthrift and scrapegrace he is. The interference of Lady Midlothian and Lady Auld Reekie saves her from a fate worse than figurative, if not literal, death. If they had not intervened, she might metaphorically have faced the same end as the already spent horse whom the selfish Fitzgerald pushes so hard that "he [breaks] his heart" (17). The narrator's disdain for Burgo's relentlessness and selfish nature is all too clear. He wonders, "When did Burgo Fitzgerald know anything?" (17), a rhetorical question which suggests Burgo's naive and obstinate refusal to "know anything", or learn anything from experience. The narrator goes on to lament, "There are men who never know how little a horse can do,--or how much!" (17). Fitzgerald's treatment of the horse as a simple

extension or instrument of his brute will, and his concomitant disregard for its physical condition, stress the savagery at the core of his being. If he can treat an innocent animal so ruthlessly and thanklessly, no subservient creature, particularly a legally and physically subordinate wife, will be safe from his tyranny. Lady Glencora escapes a life of servitude and futility at his hands which might well, it is clear, take a shape like that of the brief, brutalized existence of the horse.

During the early tepid months of Glencora's marriage to Palliser, he concentrates solely on his ambition to become Chancellor of the Exchequer. Left to her own devices, Lady Glencora understandably questions the sagacity of those heads which have led her to this loveless marriage. Their single-minded intention was to spare Glencora from Burgo Fitzgerald's recklessness:

...sundry mighty magnates, driven almost to despair at the prospect of such a sacrifice, had sagaciously put their heads together, and the result had been that Lady Glencora had *heard reason*. She had listened,--with many haughty tossings indeed of her proud little head,¹⁴ with many throbbings of her passionate young heart; but in the end she listened and *heard reason*. She saw Burgo, for the last time, and told him that she was the promised bride of Plantagenet Palliser, nephew and heir of the Duke of Omnium. (18, emphasis added)

¹⁴ Her likeness to a horse is insisted upon here and suggests, implicitly but emphatically, that, unlike the horse which Burgo destroyed, Glencora will not be sacrificed to Burgo's selfishness.

The repetition of the phrase “heard reason” is telling. Reasonable the magnates’ words may be, but there is a familiar sense of the abettor’s inevitability, as if Glencora “heard reason” simply because she was given no other choice of tune. By contrast, Alice hears this tune as well as her own tune of the unmarried woman’s volition, and deliberates consciously in order to decide for herself what is “reason”. Lady Midlothian does not actively manoeuvre the desired ending for Alice; it occurs in spite of rather than because of her. Whereas Alice *constructs* her own reason, Glencora “hears” it in this preconstituted, explicit fashion from the literal mouthpieces of the social machinery.

Whereas Alice's resistance to Lady Midlothian's coercion forms the bulk of the novel, the one-paragraph description encapsulates Lady Midlothian's success with Glencora (18), recalling the inevitability implied in Mrs. Mackenzie's ability to resolve the matter of Miss Mackenzie's wardrobe at the Bazaar. Equally important is the conspicuous lack of details about the fateful meeting between Glencora and the "sundry mighty magnates" (18). All we know is that they do prevail, and that, at the end of the fateful week, Glencora tells Burgo about her betrothal to Palliser. Alice negotiates not with these women but with John Grey himself, a signal difference not only in her personality but in the very terms of the negotiation. She speaks directly with the man in question, and comes to accept him on her own terms. Glencora leaves the matter of negotiation to heads more "sagacious" than her own. Whatever the means, however, the result is precisely the same: the abettors' predictions come true—and the rectitude of these predictions is proven. Alice's and Glencora's stories conclude, like Miss Mackenzie's and Rachel's, with what seem likely to

be reasonably happy marriages to "worthy" men. The narrative thus bears out the "scheme" over which Lady Midlothian labours, and endorses the necessity of her presence as a messenger of the machinery. As in the case of Mrs. Mackenzie and Mrs. Cornbury, the *how* is beside the point; in the case of each girl, the end is accomplished--and the end is correct.

Lady Glencora is made to "[hear] reason" as the other "ladies" before her were made to do. By succumbing to the "reason" of her elders, it seems that she, like Lady Midlothian, is made to collaborate in her own victimization.¹⁵ Unlike the outspoken Alice, who strives to fend off Lady Midlothian's efforts to "jump upon" (79) her, the much younger Glencora submits to the attack, admitting later that she "had no power of helping [her]self" (79). Before her marriage to the ever-respectable Palliser, she has a barely audible voice, which is summarily silenced by the will of the socially "omnipotent" (74) in the name of "reason" and duty.¹⁶ And although she vehemently asserts that she "won't be persecuted" (43), she can make this emphatic claim only *after* she has married and so become part of the same "genus" (43) as the Ladies Auld Reekies, Midlothians, and MacLeods of society.

¹⁵Morse sees the conception and birth of the Palliser heir as Glencora's sole opportunity to "wield influence" while "strengthening the patriarchal society that oppresses her" (22). Nardin concurs, and suggests that the Palliser heir brings Glencora "some self-respect", but will, in the end, "perpetuate the social order that has victimized her" (*He Knew She Was Right* 141). I would suggest that the union of Glencora and Palliser, which initially seems like victimization, is actually the thwarting of marital disaster; and the birth of the heir, which results from Palliser moderating his compulsive work habits in order to devote more time to Glencora, is evidence of the marriage's success and the wisdom of the "sagacious heads".

¹⁶Glencora speaks from direct experience when, in *Miss Mackenzie*, she tells Mrs Mackenzie to force Margaret to attend the Negro Soldiers' Orphan Bazaar. Mrs. Mackenzie wonders how to persuade a reluctant Margaret, and Glencora flippantly asserts—using the familiar inevitability of the passive voice—"Griseldas are made to do anything...and of course she must come" (27). Glencora knows of what she speaks, having been made to be a Griselda herself, and having endured tests of pain and fortitude to finally

Once Glencora has conformed to her relatives' plan for her marriage, however, she quickly (if unconsciously, at first) becomes an active member of the circle that enlists and shapes her. Thus, when Alice reveals her anxiety about a "scene" (79) between her and Lady Midlothian, Glencora unselfconsciously suggests, "think what they did to me, and yet they are my dear friends now" (79). Glencora's abetting takes several forms: she becomes perhaps the consummate, most versatile abettor in her ability to adapt her style of abetting so perfectly to each set of circumstances. For instance, in *Phineas Finn*, Glencora is the active abettor, seeking aggressively to dissuade her husband's uncle, the Duke of Omnium, from marrying Madame Marie Max Goesler (a mistake that Glencora later repents). Glencora is intent on protecting her son's inheritance and, in particular, her own title and "degree", that great attraction to the marriage so deftly engineered by the "sagacious heads". The narrator sympathizes that "it requires much personal strength,--that standing alone against the well-armed batteries of all one's friends". Further, the narrator pointedly notes, "Lady Glencora had once tried such a battle on her own behalf, and had failed" (62). Glencora's powerlessness against such pressure is emphasised by the narrator's use of the passive voice in the elaboration: "She had been reduced, and kept in order, and made to run in a groove,--and was now, when she looked at her little boy with his bold face, almost inclined to think that the world was right, and that grooves were best" (62). Now that she "has been made" to seem "almost" content with the way things are ("almost", but not quite--implying some residual resentment), she will not be stripped of her biggest compensation for the arranged marriage: the promise of greater social power as Duchess of Omnium and

accept her arranged marriage to Plantagenet Palliser.

mother of the ducal heir.

The intricacy of this moment is striking. The “grooves” of the social machinery are laid bare in all their complexity: they are both outside Glencora (she has been made to run in them) and they are inside her (where the habit of running in them has become “almost” natural and right-seeming). And so she reasons, “if she had been controlled when she was young, so ought the Duke to be controlled, now that he was old. It is all very well for a man or woman to boast that he,--or she,--may do what he likes with his own,--or with her own. But there are circumstances in which such self-action is ruinous to so many that coercion from the outside becomes absolutely needed” (62). Glencora, the one-time unwilling abettor, is now an upholder of the occasional but absolute necessity of abettors. The narrator reasons, “Nobody had felt the injustice of such coercion when applied to herself more sharply than had Lady Glencora. But she had lived to acknowledge that such coercion might be proper, and was now prepared to use it in any shape in which it might be made available” (62). And given the omnipresence and sourcelessness of the social machinery, and the relative happiness which is eventually hers in her marriage to Palliser, it is an oversimplification to suggest that she has been brainwashed from her original “right” idea. Quite simply put, according to the views of the “sagacious heads” (which Glencora now purports to share) an irrational match justifies, or, rather, *requires* coercion. The “imprudence” they dread is the dual threat posed by a “bad” marriage to the existing social structure and to the individual’s possibility of happiness within that structure. This risk must be regulated by the older and wiser who fear being affected by the “ruinous”

"self-action" of the imprudent. Glencora was "reduced" into marrying prudently because she was too weak and had inadequate reasons to maintain herself against the abettors: "She had begun the world desiring one thing, and had missed it. She had suffered much, and had then reconciled herself to other hopes. If those other hopes were also to be cut away from her, the world would not be worth a pinch of snuff to her" (62). She refuses now to relinquish the coronet, an integral part of her marriage pact, and anticipates doing everything necessary to ensure that the Duke--old, impulsive, and, equally unlikely to withstand social pressure—will "run in a groove" as she was made to.

Ultimately, she sets out to prove that the Duke is no freer to choose his mate than she was. Her argument is the same as that used against her intended marriage to Fitzgerald: the social imprudence of the match. In the tradition of active abettors, like Mrs. Cornbury, Lady Glencora prepares to dissuade the Duke, in order to manipulate her "scheme". But the wily old Duke anticipates her "attack" (62), and flees town with his French valet, leaving her to try to convince not *him* but Madame Goesler of his familial obligation. She approaches Madame Goesler prepared to negotiate on the same social terms used by Lady Midlothian: the folly of the Duke's intention to marry her, a foreigner of dubious origin (probably a Jewess) sufficiently beneath him in "degree" to be detrimental to him and the whole ducal legacy. She schemes to persuade Madame Goesler to see the latter's mistake in even contemplating marriage to the high-born Duke, and says to her, that "an old man, over seventy, carrying the weight and burden of such rank as his, will degrade himself in the eyes of his fellows, if he marries a young woman without rank, let her be ever so clever,

ever so beautiful". With Midlothian-like aplomb, she finishes her argument with a plea to social responsibility: "A Duke of Omnium may not do as he pleases, as may another man" (61). In her rage, Glencora goes so far as to represent Madame Goesler's consideration of the Duke's proposal as a deliberate attempt "to rob him of all his friends, to embitter his future life, to degrade him among his peers" (61). "All this simply for a title" (61), Glencora claims. But this "title" is no simple matter, as both women know--hence Glencora's need to "use [coercion] in any shape in which it might be made available" (62) to prevent Madame Goesler from cutting out her family.

Madame Goesler's subsequent "triumph" stems from her ability both to resist the apparently irresistible ambition to "be blazoned forth to the world as Duchess of Omnium" and to "gain something in the very triumph of baffling the manoeuvres of so clever a woman [as Lady Glencora]" (60). Madame Goesler's feeling of success is rooted in her understanding that she prevents Lady Glencora from using her carefully prepared "batteries" and, so, robs her of the success that only a ruthless conquest can bring. But justify it as Madame Goesler might, the truth is that although Lady Glencora has not succeeded as an active abettor, she *has* succeeded as a "sagacious head" or oracle. Her title and the Palliser bloodline are safe, as she wanted, and only this end is significant, not the means or their emotional inflection. Like old Lady Midlothian before her, young Lady Glencora has succeeded in what she set out to do, and so long as this is the case, it does not matter a whit whether she directly manoeuvred the scheme to its conclusion. In terms of

the social machinery, Madame Goesler's personal "triumph" is irrelevant.¹⁷

By implication, Lady Glencora again performs both the roles of active abettor and "sagacious head" in *The Duke's Children*. Though she dies before the novel begins, she is a presence throughout, especially in the Duke's profound sense of his loss, and her attempt to sanction her daughter's engagement to Frank Tregear has active and significant consequences in the novel. Lady Glencora becomes an oblique but potent force (similar to the silent Lady Auld Reekie in *Can You Forgive Her?*), invoked at crucial moments by Lady Mary.¹⁸ For instance, when Lady Glencora's friend Mrs. Finn or the Duke try to argue against the proposed marriage, they are repeatedly "opposed by the girl's reference to her mother. 'Mamma knew it'" (2), Lady Mary insists. And Lady Mary's wedding to Frank at novel's end justifies the extent of Lady Glencora's "knowledge" in sanctioning a match which is bound to prevail, despite the Duke's futile attempts to insist otherwise. Lady Glencora's approval is rooted, moreover, in more than a desire to undo, through her daughter's happy marriage, the coercion applied to her.¹⁹ Though Frank is beautiful enough

¹⁷It is worth stating that once Glencora is convinced that her "other hopes" are safe, Glencora and Madame Goesler can become the "best of friends" (62). Glencora thus offers to befriend Madame Goesler in the same conditional manner that Lady Midlothian suggests to Alice in her letter--but only *after* Glencora is certain that "reason" has been heard, and understands that their self-interests are no longer a barrier.

¹⁸Similarly, for the Duke, the memory of Lady Midlothian represents the standard he upholds. He uses this memory in the same way as recovering alcoholics use the steadying chip in a moment of weakness to remind themselves of their goal to remain sober. When the Duke begins to question his method or purpose, he evokes the memory of Lady Midlothian and immediately recovers his position. His need to rely on her oblique presence implies that he intuitively feels that his abetting is doomed to eventual failure.

¹⁹For instance, Morse suggests that Glencora approves of the match and delays telling the Duke about it because "the Duchess wants time to savor the romance of this reblossoming of her hopes for passion, and she feels guilty about encouraging a lover who will be to her daughter what Burgo--not her husband--was for her: a great passion" (120). However, Glencora seems motivated by more than merely this selfish reason. She not only

to remind her of her lost love, Burgo Fitzgerald, she is mature enough to appreciate that Frank is "altogether different in mind and character" (3) from Burgo. Thus, prior to her death, Lady Glencora becomes her daughter's and Frank's confidante and, logically, "the one to bell the cat" (3) with the Duke. Glencora's sympathy for Mary's love for a poor but "worthy" man, and her tangible bequest to provide Mary with a secure income, indicate an innate flexibility and sensitivity to changing times—and her endorsement and active collaboration in what she sees to be an individually *and* a socially suitable match, and her insight into differences that the conventional-minded would assert are insignificant.

Her husband's uncle, the old Duke, observes that Glencora is clever largely because "she adapts herself" (*Phineas* 57), and this is clearly true of her flexible approach to abetting. However, after her death, her husband, the new Duke, is less able to "adapt" himself, and adheres tenaciously to an old and impractical ideal of rigid class purity. As Stephen Hill asserts, "the truth in human affairs can be reached only by observing process",²⁰ but the Duke neither reads accurately nor accounts for the inevitability of social "process". It does not occur to the Duke (a Liberal) to query the outmoded "rules as to birth and position" (*Duke's* 50) to which he subscribes in an altered world, and so, he enlists Lady Cantrip to procure for Mary a suitable husband, the impotent Lord Popplecourt. Lady Cantrip agrees grudgingly to abet him, protesting, Cassandra-like, what he refuses to see, that "his" world is no longer in effect. His insistence that "she must be made to obey like others" (24)

admires Tregear, but recognizes the potential appropriateness of this match where the private quality of love and the social quality of "degree" coexist.

makes Lady Cantrip cringe inwardly: "She could not bear to hear him say that the girl must be made to yield, with that spirit of despotic power under which women were restrained in years now passed" (24). She believes neither in the possibility of the Duke's ultimate success nor in the enduring possibility of wielding this no longer valid "despotic power". Despite her better judgment, she undertakes the matter of "sagacious bargaining" (11) he imposes on her, even though she anticipates--and quite accurately announces--its certain failure. The final outcome, which is Mary and Frank's wedding, and, more significant, "the hilarity of the Duke" (80) at the occasion bears out Lady Cantrip's prediction of events. This makes her not an active abettor of the Duke's agenda, but another oracular mouthpiece of a changing but always-working, ever-present social machinery.²¹

IV. "A Matter of Sagacious Bargaining: Unsuccessful Abettors

Would-be abettors who are unsuccessful in their goals furnish equally cogent insights into the functioning of the social machinery in Trollope's fiction. Their failure usually stems from their inability to consider both sides of the equation (the public, male sphere and the private, female sphere; the individual as well as social needs), or their lack of a position of sufficient authority in the female, domestic realm from which to speak. The first type is the male abettor, best seen in Neefit the breeches-maker in *Ralph the Heir*, and Planty Pall, the Duke of Omnium, in *The Duke's Children*. As males, they go about their abetting in an emphatically public, active fashion. In *Ralph the Heir*, Neefit seeks unsuccessfully to abet

²⁰See Hill's introduction to the Oxford edition of *The Last Chronicle*, xvii.

²¹And her "failure" makes the novel's point that the old despotism of power, as Mill called it, can no

the marriage of his daughter Polly. One cause of his failure seems to be some specifically male assumptions which he shares with the Duke, but Neefit goes further than the Duke by using no intermediary, and pushing the “sale” of his daughter Polly himself.

Neefit's shop is located, rather appropriately, on Conduit Street. With both wealth and good repute in business, all that remains for this tradesman is the achievement of his social ambition: Polly is his "conduit" to the upper class. With more money than he can spend, Neefit determines to invest in social mobility, achieving “his duty to make his daughter a lady” (5). As with the Duke, this public “duty” masks what is actually the imposition of Neefit’s private will, and becomes the justification for attempting to ignore his daughter’s wishes.²² Having decided on this "duty", he resolves on a strategy to

find some gentleman who would marry her, and then...give that gentleman all his money,--knowing as he did so that the gentleman would probably never speak to him again.....There was nothing else for him to do....Neefit had heard of many cases in which gentlemen of money had married the daughters of commercial men, and he knew that the thing was to be done.

(5)

longer be upheld—even by Liberals.

²²In his discussion of class in *Ralph the Heir*, Stephen Wall suggests that Neefit's financial success leads him to approach everything from the perspective of a purchaser content to "buy" happiness for those he loves: "He buys Alexandrina Cottage to please his wife, and would like to purchase Ralph to please his daughter" (316). Wall's interpretation would be more persuasive had Polly's opinion been a deciding factor in Neefit's endeavour. The novel suggests instead that Polly's pleasure has little to do with Neefit's "ambition". She is little more than an obstacle to be overcome in the interest of a socially expedient transaction to please him, not her. And he fails because he is, in the words of Geoffrey Harvey, "his own affliction" (28)—both cause and effect of his own "foiled ambition" (*Ralph* 53). At Neefit's level of society, women are hardly the essence of the matter in marriage.

Neefit's syntax indicates that he views this as a transaction between himself (versions of the word "he" appear three times) and some "gentleman" (repeated four times). The complete disappearance of Polly from this consideration of her future is telling, and anticipates the similar assumptions which underlie Palliser's decision to treat his daughter exactly as his wife was treated. Indeed, in the final clause, Polly ceases to be even a daughter, becoming instead a generic unnamed object, a "thing to be done" as Neefit's "duty" sees fit.

Neefit's rhetoric and actions suggest that he knows that a man's class is fixed from birth, but a woman, as the "conduit" for patrimony, is more socially mobile, and may elevate her status through marriage to a man superior in social rank. Consequently, he decides to abet a marriage between Polly and idle young Ralph Newton, a heavily indebted, dissipated future "heir" of the Newton estate, who is the perfect vehicle for Neefit's "high ambition" (5). Liking Ralph's looks, and sensing the young man's propensity for spending money, Neefit extends Ralph further credit and lends him money to pay his other debts. Neefit plans to seek repayment in social currency: through a "very ambitious proposition" (6) to pay Ralph to marry his daughter. He therefore invites Ralph home to Sunday dinner, and dangles his payment, to be disbursed in two instalments: "That girl'll have twenty thousand pounds down on the nail, the day she marries the man as I approves of....She will;--and there's no mistake about it. There'll be more money too, when I'm dead,--and the old woman" (6).

The narrator assesses the apparent wisdom of Neefit's approach in a delicately sardonic question:

It might be owned that such a speech from the father of a marriageable daughter to a young man who had hardly as yet shown himself to be enamoured was not delicate. But it may be a question whether it was not sensible. He had made up his mind, and therefore went at once at his object. And unless he did the business in this way, what chance was there that it would be done at all? (6)

For Neefit, this is a public transaction: he is “doing business”--nothing more or less. And so, “delicacy” cannot be an issue. The irony in the narrator’s voice suggests that the “business way” (*The Way We Live Now*) is not always the valid way. Faced with Ralph's financial desperation, Neefit hopes to lure him with the prospect of “ready money.” Moreover, he makes Polly a commodity, calling Ralph's attention, crudely and crassly, to the fine points of detailing in the merchandise:

She's as good as gold. And a well bred 'un too, though I say it as shouldn't. There's not a dirty drop in her. And she's that clever, she can do a'most anything. As for her looks, I'll say nothing about them. You've got eyes in your head. There ain't no mistake there, Mr. Newton; no paint; no Madame Rachel; no made beautiful for ever! It's human nature what you see there, Mr. Newton. (6)

His daughter’s unadorned features become quintessential “human nature”, as the consummate salesman turns a potential detriment into a rhetorical flourish. There are

surface similarities here to Mrs. Mackenzie's "display" of Miss Mackenzie at the Negro Soldiers' Orphan Bazaar, but the critical difference is that this crude hawking of Polly's wares in a cash exchange represents Neefit's entire—and predictably male--strategy. Mrs. Mackenzie has a vast array of tactics; we see just one when she seizes the opportunity of the bazaar to show off Miss Mackenzie to the specific "purchaser" who has agreed to "buy" but who needs a reminder to complete the transaction.

Neefit tries to sell Polly in marriage as he would his breeches, by highlighting the craftsmanship. But the even crasser implications of his sales pitch are clear. Polly may be "as good as gold," but the metaphorical becomes literal since his "gold," not her goodness or her unadorned "human nature", is the real temptation which Neefit dangles before the impecunious Ralph: "Now if you make up to her, there she is,--with twenty thousand pounds down" (6). Though Polly may be "a beauty and an heiress", she is a tradesman's daughter, and, so, a "hard sell" to a gentleman customer, particularly a future squire. And so that invisible, intangible domestic sphere in which Polly would be expected to live goes unconsidered in this discussion, as Neefit the salesman seeks to "close" an exclusively active, public transaction.

In discussing this transaction, however, Neefit makes an ironclad distinction between Polly's actual good character and the mere social status of being a "lady". He says to Ralph, "You are a gentleman, and I want that girl to be a lady. You can make her a lady.

You can't make her no better than she is. The best man in England can't do that. But you can make her a lady" (6). To Neefit, class status is nothing but a social construct.²³ It is a commodity which he prizes, and for which he is willing to pay handsomely. And this barter for personal motivations is a far cry from the serendipitous stage-managing of the active abettors, or the oracular pronouncements of the "sagacious heads", who both represent a social machinery larger and more encompassing than any mere individual desire.

Male abettors like Neefit and Palliser in *The Duke's Children* seem almost to sense that they are out of their league in the arena of abetting a marriage because their daughters exceed standard definitions. Neefit, for instance, anticipates the failure of his scheme. He knows that his only hope for success lies in Polly's approval of Ralph as a suitor, and her cooperation. To Neefit, Polly's word is law, and "were his girl once to tell him that she had set her heart upon the gasfitter, or upon Ontario Moggs, he would not have the power to contradict her" (6). This is the reverse of the convention of patriarchal "power", where an invisible daughter quietly obeys first her father, and then her husband. Neefit thus prods Ralph indelicately toward a fast proposal and engagement, in order to eliminate tradesmen such as Ontario Moggs from the transaction: "What I want you to do, Captain, is just to pop it, straight off, to my girl" (13).

But Neefit's desire, not Polly's, is the true motivation for this anxious appeal to Ralph: "I know she'd take you, because of her way of looking. Not, mind, that she ever said so. Oh,

²³ Later in the novel, Polly echoes this distinction--and goes further by suggesting her lack of need for

no. But the way to find out is just to ask the question" (13). In Neefit's words, this is about what "I want"; what she wants cannot be discussed because, as he admits, "she" has not said anything. But the passage suggests that he knows better. He opens with his certainty that Polly will accept Ralph. On second thought, Neefit then revises his claim, and admits that she has not confirmed this certainty. He next suggests to Ralph that the only way to know Polly's opinion is to ask her. His speech thus goes from total certainty to total uncertainty. However, eager to clinch the bargain, Neefit now generalizes about all women--as if to bolster an argument in which he has already lost faith: "They likes a man to be hot about it;--that's what they likes.... May be she mayn't be figged out fine, but you won't mind that. I'll go bail you'll find the flesh and blood all right" (13). He reduces women to the crassest level: they are the choice meat in a transaction, any notion of their volition erased. In this speech, then, Neefit tries first to speak for Polly, but is defeated by his awareness that he cannot do so, and subsequently must cover his ineptitude by evoking generalisations of women as silent, invisible, voiceless objects—generalizations which, he seems on some level to know, do not apply to his daughter.

He hounds Ralph, with the mantra-like refrain to "'pop' at once" (17) and warnings that he must act fast, or regret "when the plum's gone" (13), until Ralph is "nearly driven wild with the need of deciding" (17). Indeed, once Neefit makes up his mind to have Polly married to Ralph, he delusively regards their union as a certainty which he seeks to will into actuality. He coins the title of "Captain", as a "goodly familiar name, feeling no doubt,

that social status. For a discussion of Polly's notions of being a lady, see my Chapter 3.

that Mister was cold between father-in-law and son-in-law" (17)--as though this change in their relationship has already happened. And when Polly rejects Ralph's proposal, he refuses to accept it: "I've just one word to say about her. Stick to her" (22) All he can offer Ralph is faint hope that "she ain't nowise again you" (22), because Neefit is not certain that she is actually *for* him.

Like a male tradesman used to public activity—and specifically to doing for himself, Neefit tries to bull through this transaction despite Polly's coolness and Ralph's vacillation. If it were possible to succeed without their actual involvement, he clearly would. He thus approaches the danger of the old Squire's offer to buy out Ralph's inheritance²⁴ as a simple issue of money management, and formulates a "plan of action" (22) to resolve it. Neefit hits on a double tactic of dangling just enough "ready money" to keep Ralph afloat in the short time he has to decide on his uncle's offer, while nudging him toward a speedy engagement. In short, tradesman that he is, Neefit "take[s] upon himself the absolute management of all Ralph Newton's affairs" (22) for the expedient purpose of assuring Polly's future position as a lady. I will examine more specifically the reasons for the failure of Neefit's abetting in the next chapter's discussion of Polly's ambition, but it is important to see three things in Neefit's abetting. First is the exclusively male, public terms of his approach: the marriage is a financial, social transaction: woman and cash in exchange for title. Individual need or desire is not an issue, nor are the particulars of

²⁴ By obviating Ralph's need for ready cash, this would make it unnecessary for him to marry Polly. With the surrender of Ralph's title, moreover, the fixed social position which Neefit covets for Polly would also disappear.

Polly's circumstance. Second is the way Neefit clearly aims at a purely personal objective, under the disguise of a more general duty to his lineage. Third is his seeming awareness of the inadequacy of his rhetorical generalizations to explain the complexity of his daughter and her circumstance—and his anticipations of the failure of his abetting, as a result. We see versions of these three features in another failed male abettor, the Duke in *The Duke's Children*.

Palliser, now Duke of Omnium and recently widowed, is faced with the calamity of his daughter Lady Mary's "pernicious courtship" (5) and secret engagement to the beautiful but penniless Frank Tregear, whom he sees as an imitation of his wife's first love, Burgo Fitzgerald. When he learns that his wife Glencora sanctioned this alliance before her death, the Duke begins to wonder whether Glencora ever overcame her own "romantic folly" (5), and whether she was ever happy with her "respectable husband" (24) in their abetted marriage. The Duke cannot accept this seeming repetition of his wife's abortive love affair, and justifies his opposition by assuming that, since Glencora's obedience to Lady Midlothian saved her from ruin, a similar intervention is appropriate and will succeed for his daughter.

Palliser introduces every impediment he can to prevent this alliance. This includes using a delegate abettor, Lady Cantrip, in the Lady Midlothian role of putting forward an ostensibly suitable husband, the inept Lord Popplecourt. Palliser acknowledges that, in the end, "there might be suffering," but suffering often accompanies duty, and "the higher the

duties the keener the pangs!" (41). His abetting strikes relentless notes of service to the public, male sphere of activity: "If every foolish wish were indulged, all restraint would be lost, and there would be an end to those rules as to birth and position by which he thought his world was kept straight" (50). But as with Neefit's sense of his "duty" to his daughter, these serve as a cover story for ulterior motives stemming from his personal pain and reluctance to see any need to amend the old ways. He is no mouthpiece of the social machinery in the way that a Lady Midlothian or a Lady Auld Reekie is; instead, he uses the pretext of serving the social machinery, and keeping "his world . . . straight" to mask his attempts to resolve his self-doubt and personal torment over Glencora.

Lady Mary, as passionate as her mother, struggles against aristocracy, which she describes as "an abominable bondage" (28). She envies Isabel Boncassen, "the American beauty" (28) whom her brother Silverbridge eventually marries, because, as a woman raised in a nation without a class system, Isabel may behave as a woman, unconstrained by notions of duty and behaviour inherent in being a lady.²⁵ Lady Mary wishes to marry Tregear for personal, not societal, reasons: because he is a worthy man and because she loves him. But

²⁵Though she does not share Lady Mary's aristocratic status, the middle-class Margaret Mackenzie (*Miss Mackenzie*) also considers the dubious benefits of being a lady. Her friend Miss Baker is so repressed by her ideas of ladylike behaviour that Margaret wonders whether happiness should be sought by abandoning social station:

After all, what was the good of being a lady?...She recognized perfectly the delicacy and worth of the article....But, then, might it not also be very well not to be a lady; and might not the advantages of the one position be compensated with equal advantages in the other?...It is fine to be a princess; but a princess has a very limited choice of husbands. There was something about Miss Baker that was very nice; but even Miss Baker was very melancholy, and Miss Mackenzie could see that that melancholy had come from wasted niceness. Had she not been so much the lady, she might have been more the woman. (9)

Ultimately, Margaret need not choose between being a "lady" or a "woman". Her quandary is, like her social position, "settled for [her] externally" (MacDonald 112). She marries not only within her own class, but marries a baronet, and so, becomes Lady Ball—a "lady" in an even more socially significant sense.

the "limitations" (51) which seem unfairly prohibitive of her private concerns are to the Duke an ineluctable public heritage to be obeyed and venerated: "It was not by his own doing that he belonged to an aristocracy which, if all exclusiveness were banished from it, must cease to exist. But being what he was, having been born to such privileges and such limitations, was he not bound in duty to maintain a certain exclusiveness?" (51). Like Glencora, the Duke has become accustomed to running in specific "grooves" of the social machinery—in this case, both those of the aristocracy and those of his male focus on public social proprieties. Having devoted his life to upholding the "exclusiveness" of the aristocracy generally and the Pallisers particularly, he will maintain these by finding a nobleman with whom to divert his daughter's attention--just as Lady Midlothian diverted his wife with him.

But Lady Mary is not her mother: she is far more resistant to the wishes of others than Glencora, and their circumstances are patently different. Glencora submitted to Lady Midlothian in part because she did not know exactly what she could or should resist. In *Can You Forgive Her?*, the discipline and authority, of which the "sagacious heads" are the mouthpieces, stem from no single, identifiable source. They seem instead to originate from some pervasive, invisible continuity of the female sphere. Glencora yields because there is no visible enemy against which to focus any resistance. Unlike Alice, she does not know that there *can* be a choice other than to "submit to be guided by [her] elders" (*Can You* 15)—and indeed, as a part of the machinery herself (like them), she simply cannot resist its workings and their prophecies. Nor should she--as her eventual happy ending makes

abundantly clear.

Lady Mary's circumstance is different: rather than a sisterhood which speaks for something larger than themselves--the way things are and must be—it is her father and her father alone whom she resists. He is a clear, identifiable locus for her resistance, and this is why, even early in the novel, the narrator explains, "she had a strong idea that she would ultimately prevail" (11).²⁶ Palliser lacks this invisible sisterhood behind him, and the inevitability of the social machinery working through him. The only mouthpiece of the machinery, the only "prophet" in *The Duke's Children*, is Lady Cantrip, who proves correct in her assessment that the Duke's coercion will not work on his daughter.²⁷

As a woman, Lady Mary has little power; as a daughter, she has less still. Her brothers have the possibility of careers, titles, inheritance, and, in the case of Silverbridge, ducal revenues, but all she can aspire to is marriage. As a woman, she is entitled to a husband, and she refuses tenaciously to emulate her mother by divesting herself of this sole right. That she holds out successfully for the husband of her choice validates Lady Cantrip's last speech to the Duke that he, not Lady Mary "should yield" (50). Though Lady Cantrip never achieves this "object," the narrative, in similar fashion to the ending of *Miss Mackenzie*,

²⁶ Thus, early in the novel, Lady Mary can resist Lady Cantrip's invitation to visit. The only appeal which the Duke can make on Lady Cantrip's behalf is that she is "very good." Lady Mary, aware of her father's desire to replicate his own marriage, accurately invokes the parallel with her mother by countering, "That is what they used to say to mamma about Lady Midlothian" (2). Lady Mary understands that the advertised "very good" heart of Lady Midlothian had, in her view, the detrimental effect of forcing Glencora's submission to the socially acceptable—something Lady Mary resists.

ends with the fulfilment of her "prophecy" (*Miss Mackenzie* 30), which reinforces the integrity of her function (not the Duke's) as the voice of the social machinery. The fact that Palliser represents personal motivations, not social machinery, is why, unlike Glencora who was made to hear "reason", Lady Mary can resist the Duke's abetting, which takes the form of Lady Cantrip's "sweetly innocent phrases that in a certain rank of life young ladies [can] not always marry the gentlemen to whom their fancies might attach them, but must, not unfrequently, postpone their youthful inclinations to the will of their elders...that though they might love in one direction they must marry in another" (48).

Until Mrs. Finn's (formerly Madame Goesler) "attack" (66) on his position, the Duke's focus is so narrowly fixed on his daughter's duty to him and the good in the public sphere at which he ostensibly aims, that he is blind to his return obligation to her individual happiness. Mrs. Finn cautions him subtly to look not just at the surface similarities between Lady Mary's plight and the circumstances which prompted her mother's preventive alliance, but at the obvious differences between their individual characters:

Girls are so different! There are many who though they be genuinely in love, though their natures are sweet and affectionate, are not strong enough to support their own feelings in resistance to the will of those who have authority over them....They yield to that which seems to be inevitable, and allow themselves to be fashioned by the purposes of others. It is well for

²⁷ Lady Cantrip is echoed in her pronouncement by Mrs. Finn, who finally convinces the Duke of the reason his methods will not work with his daughter.

them often that they are so plastic. Whether it would be better for her that she should be so I will not say. (66)

Mrs. Finn posits a very simple rationale, which the Duke has thus far failed to consider: Mary is not Glencora, and Glencora was not Mary.²⁸ No two girls are alike, and, so, they cannot be expected to adhere absolutely to identical standards of behaviour. The Duke's contrary expectation of the sameness of female identity may have a natural enough source: in public terms, all women are invisible and intangible. They work in an unquantifiable realm of influence, not the measurable world of activity. Thus, when dealing with purportedly public, measurable matters, he starts from the default position, assuming a sameness and lack of individual identity. This is also a convenient adjunct to his personal need to validate his own marriage, by making Lady Mary "obey like others" (24).

In describing Glencora's particular plight, Mrs. Finn alludes to the way some women "allow themselves to be fashioned by the purposes of others". However, this is not, she makes clear, a character flaw: "it is well for them often that they are so plastic". "That which seems to be inevitable", to which they bow, *is* often inevitable—as we see in the successful machinations of active and serendipitous abettors like Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie, and in the accurate oracular pronouncements of mouthpieces like Lady Midlothian and Lady Auld Reekie. Glencora was not as "determined" as Lady Mary now is, and was more "plastic" to the will of the "sagacious heads"—because, caught in the larger social machinery which they represented, she was not allowed to be otherwise.

²⁸Juliet McMaster also discusses Mrs. Finn's acumen in this matter of individuality in her *Palliser*

Glencora had been imprudent in choosing Burgo for her lover, so she simply *had to* surrender and agree to marry according to the choice of her elders. Only this would save her from personal "heart-shipwreck" (3), serve the social good, and satisfy the needs of the fiction encoding her story. But none of these is the case with Glencora's daughter. Lady Mary has chosen prudently (a choice endorsed by Glencora before her death), and, rather than serve the combination of the social machinery and his daughter's individual needs, the Duke instead focuses on his own needs and parades his own prejudices. Specifically, he feeds his remorse and seeks to assuage doubts about the value of his relationship with the dead Glencora by recreating it for his daughter.

But the Duke finds the idea of "send[ing] his girl into the world in order that she might find a lover" to be "thoroughly distasteful" (11): he realizes that he is pandering his daughter (however indirectly through Lady Cantrip). He feels "that a woman should be sought for,--sought for and extracted, cunningly, as it were, from some hiding-place, and not sent out into a market to be exposed as for sale" (11)--though he is uncertain how to effect this "extraction". This vague theory of marriage-engineering recalls how, in his own marriage, "no such cunning extraction on his part had won him the woman to whose hands had been confided the strings of his heart. His wife had undergone that process of extraction before he had seen her, and his marriage with her had been a matter of sagacious bargaining" (11). He rationalizes his preference for a similar predetermined "sagacious bargain" for Lady Mary. The Duke's problem, however, is "How was this transfer of her love to be

effected?" (11). Lady Midlothian needed not to consider the "how", with irresistible social, individual, and fictional "reason" on her side. By contrast, Palliser is not the emissary of the social machinery, and his goal for Lady Mary is not a matter of "reason". As a consequence, the simple logistics of *how* to effect this surreptitious transfer become his necessary and tawdry concern.

He concludes that "Surely that method of bargaining to which he had owed his own wife would be better than" contriving occasions for her to bump into a likely male candidate. And in contemplating this bargaining, he indulges a male fantasy of the public, direct marriage transaction, which directly recalls Neefit's *actual* crass behaviour in proposing his daughter Polly to Ralph:

Let it be said,--only [the Duke] himself most certainly could not be the person to say it,--let it be said to some man of rank and means and fairly good character; "Here is a wife for you with so many thousand pounds, with beauty, as you can see for yourself, with rank and belongings of the highest; very good in every respect; only that as regards her heart she thinks she has given it to a young man named Tregear. No marriage there is possible; but perhaps the young lady might suit you?" (11)

As a male abettor, Palliser is attracted to the directness of this public negotiation-model, but unlike the middle-class tradesman Neefit, the aristocratic Duke is far too genteel—and squeamish-- to utter such a sales pitch in his own voice. He well realizes that "in such

bargaining for a wife, in such bargaining for a husband, there could be nothing of the tremulous delicacy of feminine romance" (11)—or of individual desire. But, given the choice of standing Lady Mary in "a stall in the [marriage] market till the sufficient purchaser" (11) arrives (if one ever does), or "bargaining for a wife" with a suitor of whom he himself approves, the Duke chooses the latter as the more expedient course, and the one endorsed by his own marriage experience. Under the guise of duty, he leaves his surrogate abettor Lady Cantrip (his designate to replay the role of old Lady Midlothian) to do what "he himself most certainly [can] not" (11): quench the spark of spontaneous love and individual happiness, and contrive not a "union of two lovers;--but simply a [*publicly*] prudent and perhaps splendid marriage" (34).

The Duke must recognize what the social machinery (and Lady Cantrip, as its designate) already does: that, despite their official invisibility and intangibility, as Mrs. Finn so aptly states, now "[g]irls are so different", and "of course [his children will] marry according to their wills" (65). The successful abettor does not seek to apply a single solution for all circumstances. Instead, she does one of two things. Like Mrs. Mackenzie or Mrs. Cornbury, she actively resolves a specific impediment keeping specific lovers apart. Or, like Lady Midlothian, Lady Auld Reekie, or Lady Cantrip, she supplies a perspective which supplements—but never seeks simply to replace--a woman's initially limited perspective; and subsequently, her abettor's expectations of the appropriate outcome come to pass. In both cases, the abettor considers both social and individual needs, as they come together in the particular—unique--circumstances of the girl in question. The Duke's

abetting simply must fail because a) like Neefit, he seeks to ignore his daughter's individual needs and desires in favour of imposing a general solution; and b) also like Neefit, his motivations are personal, though disguised beneath the rhetoric of the good of the male, public realm; and c) he has failed to observe the times changing around him.

The second type of unsuccessful abettor is a woman who abets a match without understanding or caring equally about both public and private needs. She insists exclusively on one or the other, and this unbalanced perspective inevitably leads to failure. Because of her greater subtlety and influence, however, her failed abetting has much more serious and damaging consequences than the more clumsy, obvious, and almost inevitably unsuccessful schemes of the male abettors. Janet Fenwick (*The Vicar of Bullhampton*) and both Lady Scroope and Mrs. O'Hara (*An Eye for an Eye*) are examples of this. Janet Fenwick, the Vicar's wife, looks exclusively at the social appropriateness of the match when she tries to persuade Mary Lowther to marry her husband's friend, the squire Harry Gilmore. Having relinquished Walter Marrable (the poor man whom she does love), Mary enters into an engagement with Gilmore (whom she does not love), because Gilmore loves her, and, because, unlike Marrable, he can provide for her. Mary feels instinctively that she must wait for a relationship not predicated exclusively on such socially-derived reasons, but based more on her individual feelings; however, the Fenwicks' endorsement of the match compels Mary to assume it is the "right" thing to do. Frank, the Vicar, insists that he has "made up his mind" (8) for her: "I want you to be [Harry's] wife" (8). He also endorses Janet's assertion: "I know it would be best for you" (4). Tellingly, Mary is not the subject

of either sentence, a syntactical echo of the reality of her plight: like Polly in Neefit's transaction-talk, she is not the initiator of this plan but its object. Janet seems, like a Lady Midlothian, to be the mouthpiece of a larger, irresistible inevitability, but Mary cannot, nonetheless, "bring herself to accept him" (4). In an echo of Alice Vavasor's guilt-ridden words to Grey, Mary says to Frank, "I want to beg your pardon, and to get you to forgive me" (8), and her diction belies her effort to convince the Fenwicks why she cannot do as they want her to. But Mary can resist only so long. She accepts Harry's proposal the second time he makes it, but only because, like the young Glencora, she can find no specific place to resist. Mary feels unable to counter what seems to be the larger social machinery as it works through the pervasive coercion of those who seem to know best.

In the end, however, Mary frustrates Janet's plans and breaks the unpalatable engagement, not only because Walter inherits a bequest substantial enough to support a wife (which obviates the principal public objection to his suit), but, more important, because she acknowledges her private need to be with a man she can love--a necessity which Janet, like Neefit and the Duke, has sought to ignore, subordinating it to the acquisition of social status. Had Janet successfully coerced her into the marriage bed of a man she did not love, Mary would resemble the novel's other protagonist, the cast-out prostitute Carry Brattle, who provides a subtle but emphatic counterpoint to Mary's plight. The narrator insists that Mary's ultimate success in balancing her private need for love with the social need to marry a man of means saves her from the emotional "shipwreck" that would invariably result were she to listen to Janet, and "[allow] herself to believe that it would be right for

her to marry a man whom she did not love" (71). Though she saves herself, her battle against the blind imposition of "one size fits all" social norms remains vivid: even when engaged to Walter, she remembers the "painful" name of "Mr. Gilmore" as "the great struggle of her life", and her rejection of him as an "evil" of which "she [cannot] acquit herself" (71). A woman, it seems, may be more easily mistaken for a "sagacious head" than a man like Neefit or Palliser—and as a result, the influence of her seemingly inevitable words may have much more lingering, traumatic consequences.

This is still more evident in the tragic outcome of *An Eye for an Eye*. Like Janet, Neefit and the Duke, both Lady Scroope and Mrs. O'Hara abet specific pairings from partial, rather than encompassing, motives. But unlike the male abettors, whose attempted transactions fail inevitably and without serious repercussions, when female abettors work from unsound motives, as denizens of that invisible, intangible sphere of influence, they can have serious effects. In particular, Lady Scroope insists on seeing only the social advantage of a good match between her nephew Fred Neville, the heir of Scroope, and Sophia Mellerby, an heiress worthy of being the "future Countess of Scroope" (*Eye* 3). Lady Scroope thus disapproves of Fred's relationship with Kate O'Hara, a Roman Catholic Irish girl of dubious parentage, who is, in Lady Scroope's eyes, "as formidable a danger as could come in the way of her husband's heir" (3).

With a diversionary strategy that recalls the Duke's, Lady Scroope seeks to distract Fred from Kate by dangling the preapproved and preselected lure of "An heiress...prepared for

him...ready for him at Christmas" (3). Lady Scroope publicly insists that "he might choose for himself" (3), but the truth is that he may choose from only specimens deemed socially appropriate by her. And "all Scroope" is at his disposal, she reasons, "if he [will] marry properly" (3). In an echo of the Duke's and Neefit's disguise of self-interest beneath ostensible duty, she seeks to bind Fred in a "bargain" (3) not to marry Kate, which she couches in indirect terms of his public duty to remember "how much a peer of England owe[s] to his country and to his order" (II, 5). And she insists on this "bargain" relentlessly--even after she learns that Kate has become pregnant.

Unlike a Lady Midlothian, who upholds a plan that is *both* personally and publicly best for a young woman, Lady Scroope focuses exclusively on veneration of the Scroope name—even above her nephew's happiness and a young woman's basic welfare. Lady Scroope pressures Neville to avoid marrying Kate, even though she sees the malice which she perpetrates in promoting something which she knows is both wrong and outside the bounds of human decency. She subscribes to the letter of the Victorian double standard that sees male sexuality as a biologically-derived impetus but female as unnatural licentiousness: "That which merit[s] instant...perpetual condemnation in a woman might in a man be very easily forgiven" (II, 7). And so, with an eye to consecrate the Scroope motto, "Sans Reproche" (II, 7), she exacts from him the promise never to marry the pregnant Kate under any circumstance. The narrator observes that Lady Scroope belongs to the group of women who "always think that the woman should be punished as the sinner and that the man should be assisted to escape" (II, 7): a perverse, vindictive version of the assumptions

about female invisibility demonstrated by the Duke and Neefit. He points out the lamentable "hardness of heart of such women" as "one of the marvels of our social system" (II 7).

The "catastrophe" (II, 12) at novel's end suggests the extent of Lady Scroope's gross and mercenary miscalculation in manipulating her nephew to do the wrong thing. By emphasizing solely the public good of the untainted family reputation, she unwittingly abets not a desired marriage but Neville's murder at the hands of Kate's mother. Unable to absolve herself of her guilt, she must remove herself from the main house, and, by extension, from the social norms which she has laboured to foster. Instead, she must live in self-imposed solitary confinement until death. From an exclusive concern with the social, she withdraws into a purely individual hell--an extremity which is an emblem of her failure to understand that the true social machinery is a pervasive melding of the public and individual within a specific circumstance. Her seclusion duplicates the social marginalization of Kate's mother because of her madness. Mrs. O'Hara is a compelling counterpoint to Lady Scroope because she fails in her similar attempt to promote her daughter's chance of an advantageous marriage—an attempt which may, the novel implies, extend so far as encouragement of premarital intimacy. Where Lady Scroope looks only at gaining public, social advantage, Mrs. O'Hara's motives are exclusively, myopically selfish--at the expense of the social, and they have equally tragic consequences.

Mrs. O'Hara is a poor single mother who allows Neville into the hitherto secluded life of

her daughter with disquieting ease. The narrator fleetingly alludes to the possibility that she herself is an unwed mother: "They called themselves mother and daughter, and they called themselves O'Haras--but there was no evidence of the truth even of these assertions" (5).

Mrs. O'Hara is afraid for Kate initially, and takes Neville for a typically predatory male: "Men so often are as ravenous wolves, merciless, rapacious, without hearts, full of greed, full of lust, looking on female beauty as prey, regarding the love of woman and her very life as a toy!" (5). Given Mrs. O'Hara's personal experience of being duped at age eighteen by Captain O'Hara, an "adventurer" (5) who clearly anticipates the adventurous Lieutenant Neville, her subsequent failure to protect her only daughter, who is the same age as Mrs. O'Hara was when seduced by Captain O'Hara, seems wilful naiveté at best.

Yet Mrs. O'Hara is beguiled by his manners, which seem far from "wolfish" (6). Either she thinks better of her instincts to guard her child like a "tigress" (8) protecting her cub, or she calculates that in order for Kate to improve her chances in life, she must "go forth" (5) and secure a husband by facing the "terrible dangers" (5) that accompany the marriage "scheme" (7 and 10).²⁹It is uncertain whether she consciously chooses to ignore the risk that her innocent daughter may be a "plaything" (II, 9) which Neville's rank will compel him to discard once the thrill of his new "toy" is gone, or she is simply as "imprudent" as Father Marty believes (II, 1). Regardless, she in effect abets a liaison by allowing Neville "to be at the cottage as much as he please[s], and the girl...to wander with him when[ever]

²⁹The recurrent use of the word "scheme" suggests that not only Mrs. O'Hara but each of the major characters has some kind of ulterior motive for Neville's relationship with Kate. For a further discussion of this unsuccessful relationship, see my Chapter 5.

she [wants] among the cliffs" (II, 1). And even after Father Marty urges her to encourage Kate to be aloof because "them sort of men like a girl a dale better when there's a little 'Stand Off' about her" (II, 1), she does not broach this subject with Kate, and, so, covertly serves her to Neville, quite possibly aware of the potential consequences of the gamble – even, perhaps, hoping for them as a trap which Neville cannot elude.

That Mrs. O'Hara blunders in the "scheme" she abets is an inevitability propelled by her single-minded adherence to personal motivations, with an utter disregard for social consequences or concerns. This is underscored by the rigid justice which she undertakes to mete out as—again—personal compensation for Kate's sacrifice. Her monolithic fixity is echoed in her chanting of the Old Testament verse, "an eye for an eye", a life for a life—her futile attempt to justify her taking matters into her own hands. Her blind adherence to a specific and anti-social plan leads to certain failure with tragic consequences, and her subsequent lunacy heralds her segregation from the society which she failed to consider, and within which she has shown herself incapable of existing. Her literal insanity seems a deliberate and forceful metaphor for the madness of a mercenary scheme that cannot work.

A dogged female focus on a desired personal prize often has dire outcomes. Such a myopic approach and its inevitable failure are unlike Neefit's and the Duke's, who, as men, simply have no danger of succeeding. The ending of *An Eye for an Eye* suggests that women, as the agents of the social machinery, also have the ability to poison or pollute it: personal and social consequences of their inappropriate abetting are much more dangerous. *Can You*

Forgive Her? offers, in Kate Vavasor, another example of a perverse sort of abettor whose deterministic mission to reunite her cousin Alice with her brother George, despite the impropriety of the match, has particularly tragic consequences for herself. Single and socially powerless, Kate is isolated from the domain of married women with a firm foothold in the domestic sphere. Not only does Kate fail in her mission, but, at novel's end, she has no purpose other than to repay the money Alice gives to George to finance his political campaign--an assumption of duty emblematic of a continuing solidarity, however tacit, with the ungrateful brother who uses, then abandons her. The implication of her choice to remain his go-between suggests her parasitic connection to him in order to feel useful.³⁰ She has become reduced to the "nothing--nothing--nothing" (6) she has earlier prophesied for herself. Unconventionally unfeminine, she lacks "much feminine taste for finery" (79). Further, her indifference to normative values of marriage and family suggests an aberrant trait which again excludes her from the feminine, domestic realm. In other words, one must belong to a club in order to make, enforce, or even bend its rules. Kate fails because her self-imposed exclusion further leads to her inability to influence social customs from which she has alienated herself and within which she is an irrelevance.

That Mary Lowther "saves herself" from a bad end depends entirely on her own ability, like Alice Vavasor's, to reconcile her needs with those of society. Although she is almost persuaded by Janet to make a socially beneficial match by marrying for status, Mary's

³⁰Kate's companionship to her widowed aunt Arabella Greenow also signals a need to live with--and for--someone other than herself. Her admission to Alice that, "I'm my aunt's, body and soul" (7) is a disturbing but astute assessment of her as a woman who is "nothing" except in connection to someone else.

better judgment prevents her from being manipulated to commit what can only be called marital suicide and legalized prostitution. However, Kate O'Hara and Fred Neville say and do nothing to oppose the obviously wrong advice of their elders. Both are manipulated and destroyed as a consequence. Kate O'Hara's father takes her away to live in seclusion, and Mrs. O'Hara pushes Neville off the edge of a cliff.

The cases of the failed abettors suggest that the ability to strike a balance between private and public concerns, and between individual and social ends, is essential to surviving in society. As successful (and unsuccessful) abettors always prove, a young woman must learn that one cannot live by personal needs alone. Kate O'Hara occludes this realization, whether knowingly or unknowingly, and is consequently sequestered. Neville deludes himself, as does Palliser initially, that he can live by upholding public values at the expense of wreckage (wrought by the Burgo style of loose living) in the domestic sphere. In a social environment, this is impossible, and, so, he is literally pushed away and eliminated.

V. Conclusion

The successful machinations of active female abettors and the successful prophecies of the "sagacious heads" suggest that their influence on both the "real world" and the decisions of individuals stems from their thorough understanding of both the domestic and the public realm. This awareness ensures the eventual (and invariable) accomplishment of their missions or their prophecies, and even gives them an air of inevitability. As a corollary, the

lack of success of the failed abettors is rooted in two sources: first, a singular focus on not a socially advantageous goal but a mercenary or individual goal (however skillfully disguised); and second, a disregard for the intricate blend of personal and social concerns in play, bringing dire, even tragic, consequences.

The existence of abettors in the societies of so many novels, and their necessary function in the plots of these novels suggest that the lives of the invisible women whom they abet are not exclusively their own. While a man can make independent decisions and take decisive actions about his own life, the successful woman's life requires an equal consideration of the individual and communal—and this takes the form of precise and often successful intercessions by other women. As I noted in my introduction to this chapter, the popular Victorian conduct manuals for women might be considered a static version of this specifically feminine mediation. The power of Trollope's living abettors, by contrast, as evidenced by their unerringly successful machinations and oracular pronouncements, negates the condescending, crippling, and sexist oversimplification of the "woman's sphere" ideology promoted by the conduct books. These would teach woman to accept her dependent position and invisible existence, and, moreover, convince her of the inherent virtue of self-denial.³¹ The intercessions of Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie also require invisibility—but only as a cover story. The inevitable, invariable public success of such

³¹ For example, as discussed earlier, in *The Daughters of England*, Sarah Stickney Ellis advises her female readers "to be content to be inferior to men", in order to exert influence "unconsciously" over those in her sphere. Ellis' veneration of the virtue of passivity makes the passive voice itself the reward to which a woman should aspire: "To love, is a woman's duty—to be beloved, is her reward" (12, emphasis added). It is telling indeed that a woman's "reward" can come only after "she" disappears or removes herself as the subject of that "love".

women is a far cry from the complete and automatic self-erasure of the conduct books. Thus, Mrs. Cornbury can exercise her authority, and be seen as "general" in her home (foremost by her husband), and in a reversal of conduct-book precept, Mr. Mackenzie may exist in the text only implicitly—as a mere extension of his efficient wife.

The happy outcomes generated by the abettors do not mean that the novels' heroines accept their fates at the altar with a blind eye to personal ambitions sacrificed for the social good. On the contrary, each young woman's relationship with her respective abettor exposes her to the imperative for a negotiation between her personal desire and an accommodation to social values. According her individual needs with the social machinery working around and through her is a necessity if she is to express her volition but not alienate herself from the society to which she must belong (and thereby risk a fate like that of Kate Vavasor or Kate O' Hara). This important process of negotiation--between a woman's ambition and the dictates of her social context--is crucial for both a woman's social well-being and a happy married life. In the chapter following, I will examine the young women whose marriages have been assisted by abettors, and consider how each woman acquires and deploys specific strategies to achieve her personal ambition, while accounting for the needs and dictates of her social context.

Chapter 3: Successful Female Ambition: The Achievement of “True Insight”

I. Introduction

As we see in the successful relationships engineered by the abettors, a woman in a Trollope novel may--and probably should--marry without necessarily relinquishing her personal desires, as Mrs. Mackenzie and Mrs. Cornbury's own successful marriages indicate most persuasively. The successful assistance of a female intercessor is not one-sided coercion which swallows the female protagonist's volition into the invisibility of the domestic sphere. Instead, by facilitating the marriage of a main character, an abettor acts as midwife to personal ambitions which are not completely formed--or completely possible--at the start of the novel. The nature of these ambitions and the process by which they are successfully negotiated are the focus of this chapter.

Female ambition in the stories of Rachel Ray (*Rachel Ray* (1863)), Alice Vavasor (*Can You Forgive Her?* (1864)), Polly Neeft (*Ralph the Heir* (1879)), and Ayala Dormer (*Ayala's Angel* (1881)) is, first of all, a response to an unwanted counter-ambition. The catalyst may be the absence of male ambition, as when Ralph Newton's lack of purpose repels Polly Neeft, or when John Grey's desire for a life of rural tranquillity leads Alice Vavasor to doubt their compatibility. Or it may be the misdirection of male ambition, as in the case of Neeft's "foiled ambition" (*Ralph* 53) to pander his daughter Polly to Ralph the heir, or the Reverend Mr. Comfort's misguided advice to Rachel Ray to reject her suitor. In an effort to avoid the personal disaster--and invisibility--that might result from blind obedience to the dictates of

her elders, each of these women must learn an effective means of expressing her alternative ambition--without violating the social codes of acceptable conduct.

Since female ambition is expressed in response to pressures which are pervasive in the social machinery, its initial expressions can be understandably abstract or hazy, incomplete or unformed. At the outset of each story, none of the women has an ambition *per se* to accomplish a precise, discrete objective. Instead, she has a negative ambition—an ambition *not* to do something—or an undefined conception or unrealistic fantasy. The story documents the gradual fleshing-out and evolution of this initial idealized or intangible notion, until a moment when the character can reconcile this to the circumstances in which she lives. In the case of Alice and Ayala, they see with new eyes the possible co-existence of an "undefined" ideal with the reality of the staid domestic sphere. As part of this process of realization, all four protagonists demonstrate how a woman's exercise of personal ambition is not a simple linear transaction, but rather an ongoing but publicly invisible negotiation--between her and her prospective husband, and between her personal and social circumstances. Her personal growth stems from the growing precision of her ambition, and its corresponding ability to satisfy the social dictates of its environment. Often through the help of an abettor, each masters specific lessons about when and how to express her volition, and about acceptable tactics for executing it.

II. The Pursuit of "A Woman's Right": Ambition in *Rachel Ray*

Rachel Ray depicts three variations of female ambition in the three Ray women, all of whom must bend to the dictates of circumstance. Mrs. Ray's absence of ambition and volition must

give way to awareness of contradiction and context, because it is inappropriate for a woman simply to cede all self in “marriage” to whomever is willing to oblige her. Conversely, Mrs. Prime's sole purpose is to maintain and flaunt her financial independence, and, consequently, her widowed status. Finally, Rachel wants the “right” (18) to express her own volition in all matters, especially in marriage to the ambitious Luke Rowan.

Rachel Ray opens with an unflattering description of dependent, self-erasing women who cannot exist without external support: “There are women who cannot grow alone as standard trees...who, in their growth, will bend and incline themselves towards some such prop for their life” (1). Such women are truly invisible, and the only active “inclination” that they demonstrate is to fulfil a peculiar (albeit comic) prophecy of marital absorption—a paradoxically inevitable and self-imposed inability to undertake independent action.¹ This is not just a rehash of Victorian gender roles, however, since the marriage-object does not necessarily take the form of a husband—or a man at all:

A woman in want of a wall against which to *nail herself* will swear conjugal obedience sometimes to her cook, sometimes to her grandchild, sometimes to her lawyer. Any standing corner, post or stump, strong enough to bear her weight will suffice; but to some standing corner, post, or stump, she will find her way and *attach herself*, and there *will she be married*. (1, emphasis added)

This image of parasitic dependence suggests an ambition not to fulfil the self, but, by attaching, to surrender it. This seemingly automatic, inevitable, and desperate need for a

¹Mrs. Ray's innate need for dependence recalls J.W. Kaye's discussion of the “nonexistence” of Victorian women, a claim which, as I suggest in the previous chapter, does not seem applicable to a woman like Mrs. Ray's neighbour Mrs. Cornbury. However, the narrator's depiction of absurdly suppliant women like Mrs.

“prop” is the ambition to reach a stage where one need have no further ambition or volition. And marriage becomes the vehicle for this “creeping” and unthinking inclination to attach to some—or rather, *any*—other “support and warmth”. This is the Victorian myth of female nature writ large and in its most extreme form, as a compulsive and *willful* desire for passivity and invisibility in marriage—in a context broader than the mere relationship of husband and wife.

“Such a woman was our Mrs. Ray” (1), the narrator explains, with tongue planted firmly in cheek, before illustrating her failures to “engage” herself actively. Perversely dependent, Mrs. Ray “had been like a young peach tree that, in its early days, is carefully taught to grow against a propitious southern wall” (1). Not only was she passively “taught to grow” in this specific way, but in equally passive fashion, “Her natural prop *had been found* for her”—in an echo of Edward Tilt’s description of the “most fortunate” woman as she who “has never been independent, having been transferred from paternal care and authority to that of a husband” (15). For Mrs. Ray, “all had been well.... [until] after ten years of wedded security, she had become a widow” (1). Thrust into sudden widowed insecurity, Mrs. Ray avoided the terror of volition in the most expedient manner: as Mrs. Ray’s cheerless and dutybound elder daughter, Mrs. Dorothea Prime, “took much after her father”, Mrs. Ray “immediately married herself to her eldest child. Dorothea became the prop against which she would henceforth grow” (1). “Nailing herself” to the first “post” willing to be her emotional and psychological brace, and so forgoing her self a second time to a willing “prop” and surrogate male figure, she made a “union” even more “unnatural” than the first (1).

Ray seems to parody the idea of socially fashioned female dependence that Kaye’s article describes.

Mrs. Ray has no recorded first name, an appropriate omission given her explicit divestiture of personal identity in marriages actual and figurative. Mrs. Ray's is an identity based exclusively on role and relationship rather than any birthright or independent desire, so her name implies a desire not to be regarded in her own right, but solely as wife (in her first marriage) and mother (in her second "marriage"). Instead of being a Mrs. Cornbury, who can deploy her marital status and domestic security covertly to serve individual and public goods, Mrs. Ray is "a woman all over" (1). The terms of this womanhood are an utter absence of ambition, in favour of self-erasure and cloying supplication: "She was a sweet-tempered, good-humoured, loving, timid woman, ever listening and believing and learning, with a certain aptitude for gentle mirth at her heart which, however, was always *being repressed and controlled* by the circumstances of her life" (1, emphasis added). While her masculine and masterful elder daughter Mrs. Prime exhibits a natural distrust of cheerfulness, in Mrs. Ray an innate cheerfulness is "*being repressed and controlled*" from outside, as if beyond her own control. The pervasive use of the passive voice in descriptions of Mrs. Ray reinforces the idea of the external source of her motivations and ambitions, like those, presumably of the ideal Victorian "woman", and unlike those of her self-contained and sturdy support, Mrs. Prime.

Indeed, the reactive Mrs. Ray is easily swayed by any authority with a plausible opinion, because "In truth she believed too much....It never occurred to her to question any word that was said to her" (1). Mrs. Ray cannot distinguish words from emotions, or ritual and dogma from genuine deeds. Without capacity or desire for analysis—the active thought process of the Victorian man "all over"—she accepts at face value everything that she is told, and makes

no attempt to separate theory from practice. Thus, she cannot understand why, on Sunday, her clergyman Reverend Comfort [sic] preaches against the vanity of attempts at worldly happiness, but on Monday asks after Mrs. Ray's "little worldly belongings" and delights in his grown children's prosperity in worldly matters: "Mrs. Ray *never questioned* the propriety of her clergyman's life, nor *taught herself* to see a discrepancy between his doctrine and his conduct" (1, emphasis added).² Questioning and self-teaching are active verbs; they are also mental activities which partake of the Victorian man's spirit of mental discovery and adventure. They are antithetical to the model of a woman's instinctive moral knowledge and certainty, and the suasion which she can thus exercise through influence, implication, and the passive (and frequently futile) modeling of appropriate behaviour. Mrs. Ray is a walking demonstration of what happens when a "woman all over" has not been blessed by the unambiguous transmission of this would-be instinctive female moral knowledge—and, because of education, acculturation, or nature, lacks the mentality to assimilate judiciously the contradictory ideas of the world. Although Mrs. Ray puts perfect, if momentary, stock in both "doctrine" and "conduct", she is nonetheless bedeviled by feeling "*unconsciously troubled* at having her beliefs so *varied*" (1, emphasis added). She has, it would seem, *been taught* to disregard any nascent awareness of the gap between words and acts and of the need for a woman to permit herself to question established practices.³ Consequently, despite inconsistencies from one moment to the next, what Mr. Comfort says is simply "all gospel to

² In some sense, the Reverend Comfort is a Trollopian symbol of the divided Victorian, who can judiciously distinguish public abstraction from private necessities--a more moderate Wemmick in a higher station.

³As Nardin indicates in her discussion of *Rachel Ray* in *He Knew She Was Right*, Mrs. Ray's corresponding refusal to allow herself to think for herself distinguishes her from other women in the novel, who tend to be independent thinkers with definite personal goals.

her" (1) in a blanket endorsement of smooth surfaces and an automatic suppression of contradictions.

But even Mrs. Ray's absence or refusal of ambition must ultimately accord with her social milieu and growing sensitivity to circumstantial needs. Her hitherto suppressed awareness of behavioural inconsistencies eventually gives way to an inarticulate but clear sense of what should happen when Mrs. Prime leaves the Ray home "in loud disapproval of Rachel's conduct", but returns when her "matrimonial arrangements" with Mr Prong break off: "[Mrs. Ray felt that] Mrs. Prime *should be welcomed back*, but her return *should be accompanied* by a withdrawal of her accusation against Rachel. Mrs. Ray did not know how to put her demands into words but her mind was clear on the subject" (25, emphasis added). The familiar passive voice with its uncertain agent is now motivated by the moral agency of the word "should". This is the prison of the myth of female invisibility: as intangible moral paragon, she sees what is appropriate--but the social machinery affords her no outlet for making this come to pass. At this point in the novel, she can only think helplessly that a certain appropriate behaviour *should* occur, but she, a victim of character rather than circumstance, cannot announce this or take action to ensure that it does occur.

Nonetheless, Mrs. Ray's silent thought, half-wish and half-indirect imperative, signals the clear penetration of the torpor of her role by the inconsistencies around her, and a concomitant desire for words and deeds to accord, a desire which she has hitherto "taught

herself" to disregard.⁴ And when at last she admits her complicity in blaming Rachel—something which she did because of Mrs. Prime's report—she demonstrates that she is willing to take responsibility for her actions, and hopes to see Mrs. Prime become equally accountable: "I won't say anymore;—only this. Your sister went away because she thought you weren't good enough for her to live with; and if she comes back again,—which I'm sure I hope she will,—I think she ought to say that she's been mistaken" (25). Gone is the passive voice, replaced now by what "I think she ought to" do. These are hardly "fighting words", but this is a dramatically different Mrs. Ray, who articulates for the first time a clear sense of how she feels her daughter should behave.⁵ Although Rachel ultimately settles the matter of Mrs. Prime's return to the cottage, Mrs. Ray catalyzes it and forces the moment to its resolution. Further, this attempt to reconcile "doctrine" and "conduct" suggests a budding desire to bridge the hitherto yawning gaps in her judgement, and in the conventional female role. This nascent, if inarticulate, faith in her own judgement marks a moment of significant character development, but one prompted by a larger social necessity. Simply put, the submersion of female identity in marriage and the passive acceptance of whatever occurs, which characterize her initial state, comprise an untenable notion of the female role. Mrs. Ray's growth sketches the inadequacy and inappropriateness of a female ambition which seeks to need neither ambition nor volition—and hence no voice or presence. Those who "will

⁴In *The Novels of Anthony Trollope*, Kincaid points out that *Rachel Ray* is "as much the story of [Mrs. Ray's] liberation as it is of her daughter's love and marriage" (84). Her release is as much from Mrs. Prime's masochism as her subsequent "initiat[ion] into the religion of Comfort" so that, at novel's end, she "acquires the sophistication whereby she can experience the full delight of life" (84).

⁵P.D. Edwards suggests that Mrs. Ray is typically "morally timorous and easily led, but steps out of her character completely when she is called upon to defend Rachel against the aspersions of Mrs. Prime...and of Luke's mother and Mrs. Tappitt" (59). As I discuss, the novel may, rather, suggest that Mrs. Ray comes to possess an embryonic awareness of justice, which must be developed gradually until she can express it with conviction.

bend and incline themselves towards some such prop for their life" (1)—even in so extreme a case as that of Mrs. Ray—cannot subsist solely on this "prop". They must in the end reconcile themselves to the needs and influence of the actual society, just as surely as must the independent-minded "flock of learned ladies" (*Can You* 11).

Unlike Mrs. Ray, who is "all woman" in her ambitions, Mrs. Prime is, in effect, "no" woman. Descriptions of the younger widow explicitly connote masculinity and hardness. For instance, she is compared to rigid, unyielding objects, like a "rock" and a "staff" (2), the latter being also decidedly phallic in connotation. These suggest that her Puritanical outlook and singleminded devotion to her "peculiar ideas of duty" (1) obviate any residual femininity. At nineteen, Dorothea Ray was not so much passively married to the clergyman Mr. Prime, as one who actively "joined her lot" to his, a description suggesting both a masculine agency and a lack of emotional involvement. And rather than cultivate her stunted feminine side, her brief marriage hardens her into a different person: "Mrs. Prime was a harder taskmaster than Dorothea Ray had been, and. . . the mother might have undergone a gentler ruling had the daughter never become a wife" (1). The use of Mrs. Prime's married name comes to suggest not a total absorption like Mrs. Ray's, but an insistence on being seen *not* as a related woman, but as a self-contained and self-supporting widow. While there is an obvious erasing of self in Mrs. Ray, there is *only* self in Mrs. Prime. The permanent and autocratic president of the charitable Dorcas Society, Mrs. Prime spends "her money in carrying on this institution in the manner most pleasing to herself" (1). "I fear", confides the narrator, "that Mrs. Prime liked to be more powerful at these charitable meetings than her sister labourers in the same vineyard, and that she achieved this power by the means of her money" (1). Though Mrs. Prime might

suggest the selflessness of her Dorcas charity, her consistent desire to flex her financial muscles publicly and impose her will on others--whether "sister labourers" in the society, or Rachel, her true "sister labourer" at the Ray home--reveals her to be a power-hungry "domestic tyrant" (23) who likes to exert power in public, tangible, abhorrent masculine terms.

And when Mrs. Prime the wife becomes Mrs. Prime the widow, not only is she unpleasant in her demands, she invests deliberate effort in becoming as physically imposing as possible: "It seemed as though Mrs. Prime. . .had resolved to repress all ideas of feminine softness,--as though she had sworn to herself, with a great oath, that man should never again look on her with gratified eyes" (1). Thus, when she returns to her mother's cottage after her husband's death, she is "not yet twenty years old, but she [is] rough with weeds" (1). In deliberate monotony, her "dress [is] always the same" (1). "By nature and education Mrs. Prime [is] a prim, tidy woman", but her "peculiar ideas of duty", a twisted ambition to be conspicuously and emphatically a widow, require "her to militate against her nature and education, at any rate in appearance" (1). The narrator is at pains to establish that Mrs. Prime could be deemed attractive if she wanted to be: "But she had no such wish. On the contrary, her desire had been to be ugly, forbidding, unattractive, almost repulsive; so that, in very truth, she might be known to be a widow indeed" (7).⁶ Mrs. Prime wants to be known a widow *literally* "in

⁶Mrs. Prime is the reverse of another widow, Mrs. Greenow in *Can You Forgive Her?*. Unlike Mrs. Prime, Arabella Greenow is a wealthy widow seeking to be deemed attractive and, therefore, sought after. She considers herself marriageable, and strives to use her widowhood to her best advantage to attract a new lover, and to achieve her ambition of a marriage based on love and attraction. And so successful is she that she has two eager men, Mr. Cheesacre and Captain Bellfield, at odds with each other to win her hand. In sharp contrast to Mrs. Greenow, whose vitality endears her to narrator and reader alike, Mrs. Prime's sole intention is not to attain such personal happiness, but, on the contrary, to maintain the static position of a self-sufficient autocrat with sole dominion over her "sister labourers" in the Dorcas vineyard. The novel makes it clear that Mrs. Prime's

deed", or in activity, and she equates her social role as "widow" and influential labourer of Dorcas charity with a necessarily unbecoming and unapproachable appearance. She expects that this appearance of widowhood will exhaust all expectations of her. This is not a negotiated contract between her personal ambition and the social context; rather, she is deliberately strong-arming public opinion, in hopes of controlling how she is seen.

Her elaborate impersonation of proud widowhood implies a self-indulgence that the narrator explicitly denounces as her "fault": "she had *taught herself* to believe that cheerfulness was a sin, and that the more she became morose, the nearer would she be to the fruition of those hopes of future happiness on which her heart was set" (1). He observes this attitude of self-denial with the unequivocal judgement that "In all her words and thoughts she was genuine; but, then, in so very many of them she was mistaken!" (1). In her concentrated bid for a happy afterlife, Mrs. Prime sacrifices all pleasure in her actual life to "the utmost rigour of self-denying propriety" (3), and, further, seeks to impose the same prescription on others so that she can satisfy her evangelical duty.⁷ And in the end, Mrs. Prime's ambition to remain a self-sufficient widow is successful: her story ends very much as it began. After Mr. Prong proposes marriage to her, he determines "never to yield on the money question" (24), for he will not surrender "that absolute headship and perfect mastery, which...should belong to the

style and philosophy of life are counterproductive and hence condemnable .

⁷A useful counterpoint is provided by the other widow in the house, her mother. Mrs. Ray wears mourning "weeds" and "heavy crapes" for a time, and gradually begins to dress like other middle-aged women—except when she is "driven...by her daughter to a degree of dinginess, not by any means rivalling that of the daughter herself, but which she would not have achieved had she been left to her own devices" (1). She cannot rival the daughter, the narrator insinuates, for two reasons: first, the drab morosity on which Mrs. Prime insists is alien to Mrs. Ray's natural "woman's prettiness" (1); and second, while Mrs. Ray may find herself now and again swept along in the eddies of Mrs. Prime's self-denial, she lacks her daughter's active, consistent ambition to cultivate this sense of active and public (and hence masculinized) self.

husband as husband" (24). Mrs. Prime comes to understand that his marital goal is mastery over her: "It is not that he wants my money for the money's sake," she tells her mother, "but that he chooses to dictate to me how I shall use it" (23). Equally insistent on "absolute headship" herself, Mrs. Prime thus relinquishes a husband over the crucial (and, in the "unabetted" case of these two extreme characters, the ostensibly irresolvable) matter of marital authority.

Mrs. Prime's "pet" temptation is thus her masculine "love of power" (1), and the narrator's observation that she "like[s] to be more powerful" than others suggests her inability, or, rather, disinclination to negotiate or compromise. Consequently, she preserves her life of Dorcas renunciation, complete with income, and significant power--albeit power confined to the so-called hierarchy of the socially insignificant "vineyard" with her "sister labourers". The unmarried Mrs. Prime is void of the power and influence that the very married Mrs. Cornbury possesses. Moreover, Mrs. Prime has adopted a course exactly opposite to that counselled by abettors such as Mrs. Cornbury or Mrs. Mackenzie. She is attempting unsuccessfully to use her limited power over the external, masculine world (her power over her Dorcas "sisters") as a base from which to exercise power inside the home. Wanting to rule everyone that she can, Mrs. Prime successfully maintains dominion in the Ray home until Rachel's refusal to heed her warnings about Rowan compels Mrs. Prime to leave. Her departure becomes, in effect, an emblem of the impossibility of controlling the domestic sphere by dictating a mode of life to others in this austere, Puritanical manner. Although Mrs. Ray fears and obeys Mrs. Prime, and considers her the "master" (2), Rachel feels that she

cannot accept her sister's pronouncements in blind faith, and declares to her mother resolutely that "[she] won't be ruled by her" (5).

The picture of how strong daughters and weak mothers live together is poignant and compelling. Rachel Ray is raised from the age of two by the combination of her passive, dependent mother and her overaggressive and opinionated sister, who exhibits an active and inflexible ambition to wield "absolute power" (5), both financial and moral. At the beginning of the novel, Rachel does not know exactly what she wants. Her sister's attempt to control her future and her mother's constant vacillation catalyze first a reactive need to express her individual judgement and not be ruled by the opinions of others. In contrast to her mother and sister, Rachel successfully mediates her personal desires and those of others around her, in order to create a life which can at once satisfy her own ambition and the notions of truth and duty prevalent in her social context.

Rachel Ray thus implies the possibility of a middle course, one combining aspects of her mother's "femininity" and her sister's inflexible resolve—and one negotiated with a clear eye on the dictates of her specific social context and the needs of others. The initial description of Rachel indicates that she is "very like her mother in all but this, that whereas about the mother's eyes there was always a look of weakness, there was a shadowing of coming strength of character round those of the daughter" (1). Her character is more substantial than Mrs. Ray's, but when the novel opens, Rachel's ambition is merely nascent, unlike, the narrator underlines, that of her masculine, and, hence, "masterful" sister: "On [Rachel's] brow there was written a capacity for sustained purpose which was wanting to Mrs. Ray. Not

that the reader is to suppose that she was masterful like her sister" (1). Poised between inadequate models of self-erasure (Mrs. Ray) and self-assertion (Mrs. Prime), Rachel faces in her own home the challenge of female ambition in miniature. She must learn to understand her own judgement and ambition, and how and when she may assert them. And Mrs. Butler Cornbury, Rachel's abettor, will provide the means for doing so. As we have seen, Mrs. Cornbury wields the most social influence of all the women in *Rachel Ray*, deftly manoeuvring matters personal, political and social. Rachel intuits her need to integrate herself within the social hierarchy, as Mrs. Cornbury has done to obvious advantage, and sees, by contrasting Mrs. Cornbury and her dour sister Mrs. Prime, that the most expedient way to "[do] it all"—wield social and domestic power—is through a good and happy marriage to a socially prominent man who appreciates her.

From the start, Rachel is a foil to Mrs. Prime "the female preacher" (1). For instance, Rachel has a strong, healthy appearance, and "walk[s] as though...the very act of walking [is] a pleasure" to her and "easy"(1). Rachel's walk suggests a natural inclination toward activity and even an innate enjoyment of basic movement from one place to another. This ease contrasts with Mrs. Prime's "trudge" (1), which connotes a difficulty, heaviness, and near-inertia which are emblematic of the rigidity of purpose and narrowness of attitude which she seeks to impose on all around her. Having "been brought up under Mrs. Prime's directions" but having "not, as yet, learned to rebel"(1), Rachel starts from a position like that which Mrs. Ray has grown into by mid-novel: an unarticulated but increasingly firm sense of disagreement with her domineering sister Mrs. Prime about what is right and what she wants: Rachel "had never declared that a walk into Baslehurst was better than a sermon. She had

never said out boldly that she liked the world and its wickednesses” (1). But Rachel's emerging but as yet undeclared convictions and ambitions are evident: “an observer of physiognomy, had such observer been there, might have seen that the days of such rebellion were coming” (1).

Like their ambitions, Rachel's and Mrs. Prime's actions suggest a desire to participate in different spheres. Mrs. Prime has an uncontrolled inheritance of L200 per year, and although she pays her "fair quota" towards the maintenance of the cottage, she “does not do more than this” (1). Her focus is not the home but the more public Dorcas meetings, which she attends with tireless zeal. Although Mrs. Ray has sufficient means to employ a maid and a gardener, the narrator doubts that they do "as much hard work as Rachel" (1). Mrs. Prime's monthly contribution is like a husband's allocation of a fixed allowance for domestic necessities--a stereotypically male notion of completing a tangible monetary transaction in order to satisfy a public obligation to maintain the private domicile. By contrast, much like a wife, Rachel does actual work within the home, and reconciles Mrs. Prime's subsidy to domestic needs. The narrator's endorsement of her "hard work" (1) implies that her active contribution of domestic tasks and time is more significant, if less visible, than Mrs. Prime's token monetary subsidy in making the Ray house a home.

Thus, unlike the ascetic preacher and do-gooder Mrs. Prime, who lives by the words and disbursements which are the currency of the masculine, public world, Rachel lives by deeds situated squarely in the conventionally feminine, domestic sphere. While Mrs. Prime concerns herself with the charitable work of the apparently selfless sewing circle that she

funds, Rachel demonstrates the Christian ideal that "charity begins at home" by sustaining their meagre household, which is exempt from Mrs. Prime's Dorcas charity for two reasons: first, the Rays are less poor than those on whom Mrs. Prime's attention is focused; and second, Mrs. Prime's masculine altruism needs to be visible, and so focuses on institutions, as a consequence attracting public recognition. Rachel's sense of duty, by contrast, is immediate, actual, and situated within the domestic sphere. She will toil over her mother's carpet, "patching it and piecing it" (1) to make it last, or she will identify and apply "needful aid to her mother's Sunday gown" (2)—however invisible these actions may be to an audience outside the house—rather than sew for strangers to placate her sister's abstract notion of charity.

While Rachel's constant work at the cottage means that "even Dorothea [can]not accuse her of idleness" (1), Mrs. Prime disdains Rachel's filial piety as merely womanish, when she "accuse[s Rachel] of profitless industry, because she [will] not attend more frequently at those Dorcas meetings" (1). Rachel's refusal to attend indicates to Mrs. Prime that Rachel is too wilful to be governed and regulated absolutely. One of several struggles between the two sisters is a battle over Rachel's future: Mrs. Prime strives "to impress upon her mother that Rachel *ought to be kept* in subordination,—in fact, that the power should not belong to Rachel of choosing whether she would or would not go to Dorcas meetings. In all such matters, according to Dorothea's view of the case, Rachel *should do as she was bidden*" (1, emphasis added). The narrator wonders about Rachel's obligation to obey indiscriminately, which Mrs. Prime's use of the passive voice implicitly stresses, and goes on to speculate about the methods of the would-be governor.

His understated generalization emphasizes that the logic of government is itself inherently faulty:

Obedience in this world depends as frequently on the weakness of *him* who is governed as on the strength of *him* who governs. That *man* who was going to the left is ordered by you with some voice of command to go to the right.

When *he* hesitates you put more command into your voice, more command into your eyes,—and then *he* obeys. *Mrs. Prime* had tried this, but *Rachel* had not turned to the right. (1, emphasis added)

The narrator's use of the masculine pronoun "he" is jarring because it interrupts not a general discussion but one specifically concerning "Rachel". While "that man" and "he" are universal, their use here—to articulate a general rule which the very specific Rachel immediately fails to exemplify—may be a tacit suggestion that Rachel embodies some female reality that this "he" may simply not encompass. The masculine premise of control in the external world, on which Mrs. Prime insists, does not apply to Rachel. This passage anticipates, first, Rachel's imminent refusal "to be made" passively into Mrs. Prime's puritanical image of prudish and dour self-denial; and, second, the insufficiency of Mrs. Prime's masculine approach and assumptions in dealing with Rachel. Mrs. Prime has so long succeeded in imposing her "doctrine" and "regime" on the household through basic dogma—by "tak[ing] simply the Dorcas view"—that she finds herself incapable of confronting the hitherto ignored complex "outer world" which Rachel's "vitality and instincts" force her to acknowledge (12).

Rachel sees this desire for her regular attendance at Dorcas meetings accurately, as her sister's naked attempt at controlling where and when she goes out--and clearly, Mrs. Prime intends these doses of "Dorcas discipline" to be "inflicted daily" (5). Rachel's refusal to attend "those nasty rag meetings" (2) stems from her awareness that, given the opportunity, Mrs. Prime will assume complete control, and overrule all expressions of Rachel's own volition, just as she has done with their mother. Thus, Rachel insists on accepting her invitation to the Tappitts' party, despite (and, in part, *because of*) Mrs. Prime's distrust of such frivolity. "I don't care a bit about the party,--as far as the party is concerned", she admits to her mother. "I don't intend to let her manage me in just the way she thinks right" (5). At this point, Rachel has only a negative ambition, an ambition *not* to do something--in this case, attend the Dorcas meetings and obey her sister. But as we will see, Trollope's fictions often depict successful female ambition as beginning from such inchoate opposition to an established and unreasonable or selfish path or expectation. The challenge for Rachel, as for the other characters discussed in this chapter, is to elaborate mere opposition into a complete and legitimate alternative, and to implement this self-defined ambition successfully within the specific imperatives of one's social circle.

We see the start of this process when Mrs. Prime pronounces the ultimatum that she will either guide Rachel with "absolute power" (6) or leave home. When Rachel solicits her mother's support in not bowing down to Mrs. Prime's threats or accepting her opinion absolutely, her ambition extends to exercising influence within her limited domestic sphere. And once authorized by her mother to pursue a relationship with Luke Rowan, Rachel pledges herself to him wholeheartedly, even when public and maternal opinion turn against

Luke. Consequently, when her mother asks her to sever contact with Luke, she rages against her mother's complicity in thwarting her now-focused ambition to retain her lover, who is "the only thing of her own winning that she had ever valued. He was her great triumph, the rich upshot of her own prowess" (19). Having attracted him, she intends to keep him, chiefly because "her female pride [tells] her that it [is] well for her to claim the right" (18) to do so.

Rachel is not necessarily sly, but is clever enough to know that, unlike the overtly adversarial Mrs. Prime, who is accustomed to public, visible and declamatory combats of will, she "is not inclined to fight, if fighting could be avoided" (5). Rachel's preferred method of combat is domestic indirection. When her mother finally yields to the opinion of Mr. Comfort and instructs Rachel directly to give up Luke, Rachel, well-schooled in the tiny local domestic hierarchy, feels obliged to obey.⁸ However, she rages inwardly at the unfairness of the order, feeling like one "imprisoned unjustly" and whose rights have been violated: "she was beginning to feel that obedience might become a hardship She had her rights; and . . . she knew that she would be wronged if those rights were withheld from her. The chief of those rights was the possession of her lover" (18). Rachel's developing but still unfocused ambition now seizes upon the legalistic concept of "rights". Though still an abstract and incomplete notion, this is the first time a goal is defined not simply by "not being" something

⁸The narrator's sympathy for Rachel's plight emphasizes the tension between meeting social expectation and satisfying personal desire. Rachel does nothing wrong, nor does she violate any code of acceptable feminine behaviour. Nonetheless, she is also unjustly punished not only by her mother's withdrawal of her sanction to accept Luke, but by public opinion, like that Augusta Tappitt expresses in the cutting remark, "That girl is a flirt after all" (3). This is a good indication of how the social machinery focuses its blame on the previously invisible woman who has suddenly become visible—whether through any effort of her own or not. Rachel's struggle to earn her right to a good marriage is constantly undermined by social opinions and attitudes. As Marwick remarks, "while such is the way the world thinks, the world is in this case the ass" (35). "Flirt" is a label used to regulate proper feminine behaviour. For a further discussion of the implications of "fast-ness", see my Chapter 4. For a discussion of labels, see my Chapter 5.

else. Her ambition now attaches to an active, specific good: her rights, particularly her right to the "possession of her lover". Rachel realizes that obedience, even to her mother, as demanded by the domestic sphere, is no longer a matter "pure and simple" (18), to be given without the complexity of fore- or afterthought—and this recognition signals a clear development in her "shadowing" of strength (1).

But Rachel is simultaneously aware that she cannot simply exercise these individual "rights" as though she inhabited a social vacuum. Although her first instinct is to rebel against the authority that she feels has robbed her of her lover, she douses this "spirit of rebellion" because she recognizes the dictates of her social milieu: the fact that her "right" to a husband co-exists with her need somehow to satisfy "her mother or her mother's advisers" (18), and the fact that "she is bound by her woman's lot to maintain her womanly purity" (20). When angered, Mrs. Prime makes direct accusations—however unfounded—to elicit an equally direct response. By contrast, Rachel "never upbraid[s] her [mother] with words" (23), but resolves upon the most non-combative, passive, invisible—and, ironically, womanly—strategy she can: silence. Rachel promises herself not to assert her defiance through "word or deed" (20); thus, where Rachel had previously been "everything to her mother", she now passive-aggressively torments her with silence and frowns. This turns their hitherto harmonious life into "an unspoken reproach" (23) which reminds the dependent Mrs. Ray continually of her betrayal. Rachel's oblique retaliation differs markedly from her "masterful" sister's direct, argumentative method of overt "spoken" reproach. Words are Mrs. Prime's way of creating a story of her control; thus, she papers over actions with her own or others' mitigating words.

But when her controlling narrative is not accepted, she has no further recourse: too headstrong to yield, she can only leave the house.

Rachel becomes so "unlike herself" (23) in the pursuit of this ambition that "it [is] wonderful to the mother that she should thus, in so short a time, have become wilful, masterful, and resolved in following out her own purposes" (21). The result is that "Mrs. Ray [becomes] afraid of her younger daughter,—almost more so than she had ever been afraid of the elder" (21). Rachel's behaviour demonstrates a canny understanding both of Mrs. Ray and of the way power works organically in the domestic sphere, from the "inside-out", not the "outside-in". For the good scion of the invisible domestic sphere, actions are all that matter. By saying nothing, Rachel asserts actively both her nascent "rights" and a domestic power she has never previously tested—and in her first try, shows herself more powerful than Mrs. Prime, because unlike Mrs. Prime's extrinsic or "outside-in" masculine power, Rachel's is rooted not in rhetoric but in action based on her specific domestic milieu and her corresponding knowledge of the personalities of its protagonists.

And when Mrs. Ray acknowledges her mistake and demands that Mrs. Prime admit her mistake in blaming Rachel for questionable conduct, Rachel again succeeds by shrewdly following her credo of actions not words. Faced with Mrs. Prime's refusal to recant, Rachel announces, "If Dolly comes back to live here, mamma, . . . I shall take that as an acknowledgement on her part that she thinks I am good enough to live with" (25). Rachel turns the apparent impasse to her advantage, by making Mrs. Prime's action of moving back, not any words she may utter, speak for her. In contrast to her mother's inability to bear

Rachel's silence, Rachel, in another successful assertion of her "rights" within her social milieu, does not accept Mrs. Prime's silence as tacit disapproval or a refusal to admit that "she's been mistaken" (25). Rachel controls the domestic agenda by putting the focus not on Mrs. Prime's reticence but on her action. And the narrator endorses her triumph: "Mrs. Prime at the moment said nothing; but when next she spoke her words showed her intention of having her things brought back to the cottage on the next day. I think *it must be felt* that Rachel had won the victory" (25, emphasis added). The narrator's passive phrasing seems to imply that Rachel's triumphant escape from *Dorcas* rule is transparent and evident to all, not only to a partial observer. Still more significant is the way Rachel's practical and strategic handling of the circumstance forever robs Mrs. Prime, the "preacher," of the words which are her regulatory currency and weapon: Rachel "felt it so herself, and was conscious that no further attempt would be made to carry her off to Dorcas meetings against her own will" (25).

In sum, Rachel is as quietly unrelenting in her "inward purpose and... resolve" (23) as Luke is in his more public silent chastisement of Rachel.⁹ As we see repeatedly in their arduous

⁹ In *He Knew She Was Right*, Nardin interprets Luke's behaviour, like Rachel's, as "inflexible, masterful, and harsh" (126), and sees their marriage as the result of Rachel's willing "deference to authority" (127). Kincaid, however, sees Luke as "a gentle version of the usual wild absolutist" (84). The novel's ending, Kincaid suggests, makes clear that Luke's talk of revolutionizing brewing is only that, and thus proves him to be "the mildest and least threatening of invaders" (*Novels of Anthony Trollope* 85). I would suggest, rather, that Luke shows himself, like Rachel, to be focused on actions over words—though his actions are appropriately public and masculine. Although he knows that Rachel responds to his letter in the manner dictated (almost literally) by her elders, still he remains aloof, so that she and her mother "should see him no more and hear of him no more till there should be no further room for doubt" (26)—that is, until the action of his triumphant return to Baslehurst as the new beer baron can speak for him. He realizes that his apparent indifference to Rachel compounds her misery, but, nonetheless, he puts this professional ambition for a rival brewery before his personal goal of marriage to Rachel. Until Mrs. Cornbury takes him aside at Cornbury Grange, and rebukes him for his "unspoken reproach" to Rachel, the "hardness of his pride" prevents him from "acknowledg[ing] to himself that he had thought more of his own feelings than of hers" (26). His pride is his downfall, and when the townspeople doubt his stability and honesty, he resolves selfishly to "punish them," knowing that the "punishment would fall on Rachel, whereas none of the sin would have been Rachel's sin; but he [will] not allow himself to be deterred by that consideration" (28). Even when he goes to Bragg's End to revive his suit, he

courtship, Luke "certainly [is] not a soft lover, nor by any means inclined to abate his own privileges" (28). Given the fact that Luke proves himself to be a man who "mean[s] to have everything quite his own way" (16), critical speculation about the potential disharmony of the marriage between "two such unyielding temperaments" may initially seem justified.¹⁰

However, although Rachel's silent protest allows her an appropriately "feminine" persona of apparent passivity and invisibility, it nonetheless proves a singularly effective guerrilla tactic for exerting her will in the domestic sphere and achieving her ambition. This suggests that in future contests of wills, she may prove to be more than his equal—something we see clearly in the scene where Luke arrives at Bragg's End. Luke intends to remain aloof until he exacts his desired "penance," but Rachel, equally "resolved" not to speak until he becomes more "tender" towards her (28), maintains her stance until he is compelled to break the silent standoff.

This need not, however, prophesy a lifetime of such impasses. Rachel does not believe that a "true wife" imposes her will over her husband's. Instead, in a paraphrase of Victorian dogma about the woman's sphere in marriage, she believes that a woman "strives the hardest to lighten the weight of his cares by the tenderness of her love!" (20). However, despite this belief in wifely obedience, Rachel has not asserted herself thus far only to surrender all will to her husband, like those "clinging" women described in the first quotation of the chapter. Her behaviour towards her mother shows Rachel's struggle to exercise personal judgement

resolves not to make immediate amends for his treatment of her but to "[exact] some positive assurance of her love as a penance for the fault committed by her letter" (28).

¹⁰ For instance, Nardin asserts "[b]y the end of the book, the reader realizes that a marriage between two such unyielding temperaments may not prove harmonious" (*He Knew She Was Right* 127).

and to assert her “rights” within her specific social context. Rachel seeks not to disobey or throw off authority, but to act in what she feels is an appropriate fashion, without becoming unthinkingly “soft and pliable” (20) to the wills of others, as her mother does. In this context, it seems likely that Rachel the wife will strive to lighten her husband’s cares in ways that *she* determines are appropriate, and thereby covertly ensure that he, no more than her mother, violates her “rights”. And she will not settle for less than the “tenderness of *his* love” in return. She has shown herself a skilled wielder of domestic power, with an understanding of her specific needs, the demands of her context, and a wife’s general “dutiful...obedience” (30). With her marriage to her “acknowledged and permitted lover” (29), Rachel achieves a two-fold “victory”: she exempts herself from her sister’s oppressive domination; and through her self-realization and Mrs. Cornbury’s abetting, she acquires tactical means of quietly achieving her own ambitions, within marriage or without.

Considering the way Rachel repeatedly prefers actions to words, the ending of the novel may not imply a lifetime of denial and stagnation, as some critical accounts have suggested. Rachel’s reaction to her winter honeymoon in Penzance accords with her propensity to concentrate on substance, rather than mere window-dressing. Luke and Rachel marry on New Year’s Day and make a “short marriage trip” to Penzance and Land’s End: “It was cold weather for pleasure-travelling, but snow and winds and rain affect young married people less, I think, than they do other folk. Rachel when she returned could not bear to be told that it had been cold. There was no winter, she said, at Penzance,—and so she continued to say ever afterwards” (30). At first glance, it may seem that Rachel is in deliberate denial about her honeymoon, and, further, that this refusal to acknowledge the cold climate indicates her

deeper denial of a frigid marital climate. For instance, in her analysis of the ending of *Rachel Ray*, Jane Nardin suggests that this sequence reveals how "Rachel affirms the conventional and ideal at the expense of ignoring reality" (*He Knew She Was Right* 128). However, to exemplify this contention, Nardin quotes only the first clause of the first sentence—"It was cold weather for pleasure-travelling"—and disregards the second: "but snow and winds and rain affect young married people less, I think, than they do other folk". This second clause seems critical, in that it tempers the absolute quality of the cold weather. Taken together, the entire sentence implies that Rachel, as one of the "young married people", is indeed less affected. Therefore, when told that it was cold, she asserts that "there was no winter"—not out of denial, but because, for her, there truly was none. The marriage, like the temperature, may seem cold from the outside, but no observer can know how the temperature feels to the individuals inside this particular circumstance. Rachel's "reality", internally rather than externally derived, is not faulty but self-determined, based on actions and social context, not mere weather, convention, or commonplace. As a consequence, this reality may be more vital than that of the "other folk" who are prisoners of purely conventional determinations—despite the ostensible cold. A still simpler explanation, which Nardin fails to acknowledge, is perhaps the most obvious one. that warm bedclothes can heat up any climate.

To impose the interpretation of these "other folk" on Rachel's marriage is to be a Mrs. Prime dogmatically and loudly seeking to cow her listeners into submission. And we must remember that it is not Mrs. Prime's masculine and ostentatious exercise of power from the "outside-in", but rather Rachel's quiet, active exercise of power from the "inside-out", abetted by Mrs. Cornbury, which achieves its ambitions in the domestic sphere. In public

terms, Rachel and her marriage may be deemed inscrutable or even disparaged, but at the novel's end, Rachel is cheerfully unconcerned with the words of others, in keeping with her behaviour throughout the novel. This is implicit evidence that she has—however invisibly to external observers—transformed a simple opposition into a focused, responsible ambition, which she has achieved successfully within both her private domestic sphere and the broader social milieu.

III. Defining an "Undefined Idea": Alice's Ambition in *Can You Forgive Her?*

Alice Vavasor's challenge, like Rachel's, is to turn a negative and initially abstract ambition into positive action which satisfies not only her needs but those of her distinct circumstances. Like Rachel, but more forcefully, Alice holds—and expresses—views which are at odds with those of her elders and peers. In exercising and expressing her will in a more masculine, public fashion, she gains an awareness of a woman's need to learn to fit into—but not submit to—her particular social context.

Alice must assume early responsibility for her own care and well-being, thanks to the combination of an indifferent father, who ships her off to her distant relatives after her mother's death in childbirth, and the equally indifferent relatives, who, in turn, ship her off to boarding-school in Aix-la-Chappelle for her formative teenage years. At the start of the novel, Alice is a mature twenty-four, with one broken engagement to her unfaithful and unreliable cousin George Vavasor behind her: "The mode of her life had perhaps given to her an appearance of more years than those which she really possessed. It was not that her face was old, but that there was nothing that was girlish in her manners. Her demeanour was as

staid, and her voice as self-possessed, as though she had already been ten years married" (1). Despite an appearance which suggests more traumatic domestic experience than many of her already-married peers might have, she is still, the narrator assures us, "a fine, handsome, high-spirited young woman" (1).

When we first encounter her, Alice is engaged to John Grey but possessed of a myriad of doubts-- less about her love for him than about the nature and importance of marriage in general. Alice is different because she analyzes the importance of marriage in the wider context of her life's ambition. Most women do not expend such energy questioning the merits of marriage because, as the narrator suggests in an understated endorsement of the social machinery, "the thing does not require quite so much thinking as some people say" (11). The narrator is inclined to believe that "Most men and women take their lots as they find them, marrying as the birds do by force of nature, and going on with their mates with a general though not perhaps an undisturbed satisfaction" (11). Older women, like many of Alice's own generation, have approached marriage with this complacent attitude: marriage is a natural part of the life cycle, an inevitability to be enjoyed--or endured--as "Providence" (11) allocates. It is something so essential and automatic that it simply brooks no question. In the narrator's terms, an over-thinking Alice nearly deprives herself of the "sunshine of love" by allowing the "clouds of doubt" (11) to obscure her judgement: "she had gone on thinking of the matter till her mind had become filled with some undefined idea of the importance to her of her own life" (11). Alice's problem is rooted less in simple thinking than in the fact that she has developed an ambition not for something specific, but for "some undefined idea". The central question which she poses is, "What should a woman do with her life?" (11). Indeed,

what *is* she to do with *her* life? "There had risen round her a flock of learned ladies asking that question, to whom it seems that the proper answer has never yet occurred" (11). The answer represented by one group of these ladies is *not* to marry, a negative ambition which is defined by its opposition to convention. By contrast, the narrator proposes a different answer, in a second quiet affirmation of the mechanisms of convention: "Fall in love, marry the man, have two children, and live happy ever afterwards. I maintain that answer has as much wisdom in it as any other that can be given;--or perhaps more" (11). If we ignore the complexity of Alice's dilemma, this passage may seem to be the narrator's blanket endorsement of the traditional and pat resolution of marriage.¹¹

The narrator also admits, however, "The advice contained in [his answer] cannot, perhaps, always be followed to the letter; but neither can the advice of the other kind, which is given by the flock of learned ladies who ask the question" (11). And this is Alice's problem. Alice is loath to follow the doctrine preached by either group--that is, "get married", or "don't"--because both are absolute prescriptions. Should she marry merely because marriage is the expected and acceptable--and therefore easiest--option for every young woman? Should she instead aspire exclusively to something outside the domestic sphere? And while the narrator might perceive the "wisdom" of marriage as the happiest of female lots, he indicates a woman's difficulty in following it blindly "to the letter" with any guarantee of absolute success. Alice's endless meditations on the subject reveal that her dilemma stems from a

¹¹At least one critic adopts just this interpretation. Overton reads this passage, like certain others in Trollope's fiction, as an unambiguous and "forthright pronouncement of Trollope the man" (6). He continues, "The message, as so often in his fiction, is that a woman accepting her place has her proper influence through home and husband" (6).

woman's limited dual choices and, more specifically, the lack of clearly defined answers: the learned ladies have posed the question but have yet to provide any adequate answer.

As a consequence, Alice becomes defiant of both the dogmas of the feminist ideologues and her narrator's own predilections. As if she were neither a pawn in the ideological games of others nor a character in a novel, she seeks her own path through life. Alice does not know what to do because she does not know what there is for her to do. Where Rachel starts from a negative ambition, Alice starts from an undefined, and therefore unrealizable, ambition. All she senses is that "there [is] a something to be done; a something over and beyond, or perhaps altogether beside that marrying and having two children;--if she only knew what it was" (11). However, she is unable to decide upon a satisfactory action because this "ambition" remains yet "undefined" (11). On the one hand, she doubts the conventional wisdom of marrying simply out of love for her fiancé. Other than love, her engagement has none of the other attractions it should possess: "she always admitted to herself that she had accepted [John Grey] *simply* because she loved him;--that she had given her quick assent to his proposal *simply* because he had won her heart" (2, emphasis added). Her disdain for this "simple" causality is evident in her constant introspections.¹² But on the other hand, she feels she is not sufficiently "advanced" (11) to pursue a concrete ambition in the "real world." She has political views, but the world is not much interested in the political views of a mere woman, so she thinks to live vicariously through her husband's political career.¹³ Without a husband,

¹²Juliet McMaster attributes Alice's endless ruminations to a "lonely brooding life [which] has made her almost two people" (*Palliser Novels* 25). McMaster suggests that Alice is so intent on proving her "theory" that she seeks to bend "to that theory the realities of the relative values of the two men, and of her own feelings for them" (25).

Alice sees that the only independence she can exercise is financial. Consequently, the only way Alice can "have her cause"--her "undefined ambition"--and live it in the external universe, is to marry a man with sympathetic views. Alice is thus torn between two prospects: love for a "worthy" man with no politics and, hence, no ability to help her realize vicariously her political spirit; and attraction to the Radical political views of a "wild" man, and immersion in a world of "ardent spirits" who might stoke the externally invisible "flame of political fire" (11) burning within her.

Marriage represents the sole--and so, the inevitable--means of satisfying both Alice's stunted ambition, her "second-hand political manoeuvring" (11), *and* her need for love. Given the restriction of her choices, she nonetheless agrees to marry the ever-constant John Grey. This is not because she abandons all her political hopes, but because she realizes that she must find a compromise between her "undefined ambitions" and her well-defined love for a man still devoted to her, though one whose moderate liberalism does not engage her political radicalism. In making this decision to do what is best for her, she shows herself to be personally and socially astute. On one level, her decision to marry Grey is an inevitability, given the inexorable grinding of the social machinery. This is the model choice made by the prudent woman, but it is also more. Alice's happy ending seems to suggest that life for a

¹³Juliet McMaster interprets the narrator's statement, "[Alice] had no cause" (*Can You* 11) to mean that "Alice is not really politically minded, even if she does dare to mention the Ballot at Mr. Palliser's dinner table. She craves a bit of excitement, but the political ambition that she thinks she has is all simply a fabrication, a theory that she must fulfil herself instead of burying herself as John Grey's wife" (*Palliser Novels* 28). The novel's ending may not quite bear out this view that Alice merely "delude[s] herself by thus believing in an entirely theoretical construct" (*Palliser Novels* 28), or that it is, in P. D. Edwards' words, "tepid" because "Trollope wishes it to appear so silly, so essentially unfeminine, that the reader will easily forgive it" (94). Alice's genuine enthusiasm for Grey's decision to enter politics may suggest that her political inclinations are not merely actual but enduring. For instance, Alice does not speak because she is afraid that she cannot do so without "some sign of exultation in her voice" (*Can You* 77). Her body betrays her delight, however, and she is

woman should be the function of a useful tension between that abstract, undefined something "more" or "other", and a concrete, specific relationship with a husband, with all its (and his) unique virtues and drawbacks. The narrator's sustained sympathy for Alice, and his *and* her endorsements of the decision to marry Grey, suggest that the achievement of female ambition is a process of negotiation based on integrity, the expression of personal judgement, and the social milieu--not simply, as P.D. Edwards suggests, "[Trollope's belief] that woman's proper place was in the home and that most women, with some reluctance, recognized this themselves" (93).

Grey's unobtrusive method of protecting Alice's fortune celebrates her strong will and endorses her ongoing arbitration between self and social expectations. Despite reservations about the wisdom of her plan to finance George Vavasor's dubious and illogical political career, he demonstrates a tacit solidarity with her independent spirit by supporting her, however grudgingly. As he tells her in the churchyard at novel's end, he never doubted her ability to behave responsibly: "I think you have been foolish, and misguided,--led away by a vain ambition, and that in the difficulty to which these things brought you, you endeavoured to constrain yourself to do an act, which, when it came near to you,--when the doing of it had to be more closely considered, you found to be contrary to your nature" (74). Their discussion reveals that he accepts her as she is, and understands her character better than she suspects. His speech describes the contrast (syntactically reinforced by the separating dashes) between a "vain" or vague ambition, and the tangible, concrete action of "doing". The

"conscious that her fingers trembled on his arm" (77).

eventual need for action forces a reckoning, in which the indistinct ambition must take the concrete form of an action in the "real world".

Moreover, despite her own refusal to forgive herself, he continues to see the best in her, demonstrating an unflagging confidence which only compounds her guilt. She claims that her hesitation to accept his second proposal stems from the shame of being a "jilt", a woman who has "promised herself to one man while she loved another" (74). Whether a character is male or female, unrelenting stubbornness brings upon his or her head the mockery of a Trollope narrator. The narrator's judgement of Alice's "obstinacy" (74), however, stresses that her abiding ambition for power remains the true source of contention. If she maintains her remorse at feeling like a "fallen creature" (74) unworthy of forgiveness, then she can at least, enjoy the satisfaction of a joyless tenacity in adhering to principle--however illogical and damaging that principle might be to her ultimate happiness. In the end, however, she is made to realize "she [has] no choice but to yield. He, possessed of power and force infinitely greater than hers, [has] left her no alternative but to be happy" (74). Forced into collision with reality, the once-indefinite or inconsistent female ambition must define itself--in a hurry. Inevitably, something is surrendered in the process of translation—but this is appropriate for something which, whatever its ending, has been a process not of imposition but negotiation.

As the spokesman for society and the marriage-option, the narrator clearly disapproves of Alice's proclivity for self-punishment. He reproves her "perverseness of obstinacy" but goes on to describe its cause and her gradual (though initially grudging) concession to Grey's logic:

And it may be that there was still left within her bosom some remnant of that feeling of rebellion which his masterful spirit had ever produced in her. He was so imperious in his tranquillity, he argued his question of such love with a manifest preponderance of right on his side, that she had always felt that to yield to him would be to confess the omnipotence of his power. She knew now that she must yield to him,—that his power over her was omnipotent. (74)

But Alice resists "yielding" to Grey for the same reason that she previously refused to yield to Lady Midlothian and her cohorts who favoured marriage. No matter how right the wishes of others might be, she regards compliance as submission, an act which will strip her of her right to an independent, indefinite "ambition". Alice flippantly but frankly admits this fear to Lady MacLeod: "People always do seem to think it so terrible that a girl should have her own way in anything. She mustn't like anyone at first; and then, when she does like someone, she must marry him directly she's bidden. I haven't much of my own way at present; but you see, when I'm married I shan't have it at all. You can't wonder that I shouldn't be in a hurry" (3).

Alice's hesitation is more than her acknowledgement of the legal subordination of a wife.

Like Rachel sticking to her "woman's right", Alice resists because this is the *only* right that she can assert. The act of resistance allows her to keep her illusion of "undefined ambition" in play at the same time that she exerts some real power in order to uphold it. Even if, again like Rachel, this is negative power, the power *not* to do something, it is attractive to her for a very simple reason. When she acts in any other way, no matter how happy the action might make her, she knows that the social machinery requires simultaneously that she surrender a part of her "ambition", and see the future limits of any "real" power she could have. Thus, Lady Glencora quite astutely assesses Alice's motivation for refusing Grey: "I know you want to be

his wife, and I know he wants to be your husband, and the only thing that keeps you apart is your obstinacy,—just because you have said you wouldn't have him. My belief is that if Lady Midlothian and the rest of us were to pat you on the back, and tell you how right you were, you'd ask him to take you, out of defiance" (74).

This negative ambition and stubborn pride eventually yield to a recognition and acceptance of the personal and social value of a union with Grey. Legal implications aside, marriage necessitates obligatory bonds of love: as a wife, no longer will Alice's behaviour have consequences only for herself—something that Lady Midlothian points out when she reprimands Alice for her apparent indifference to what Grey's friends might say of their broken engagement. When Alice considers her "subjugation" in this light, she comes to the conclusion that, despite her resistance, the social machinery is also working from *inside* her and her circumstance. Love brings with it social discipline and voluntary personal bonds—and these are neither negative nor positive. They simply are. And if by accepting Grey she precipitates her "submission", she does so willingly and wittingly because she loves him ("imperious" (74) though he might be), and because it is right.

Alice's formal acceptance of Grey in a church burying-ground might seem to imply a symbolic burial of her hopes for a life of more than conventional domesticity. Nardin sees Alice's consent in the "graveyard" as the inevitable outcome of the contest of wills between her and Grey, which he wins: "[Alice] had no chance of escape, because the alternative she sought just was not there" (*He Knew She Was Right* 141). And Morse interprets the setting to suggest that "an intrinsic part of this union must be death" (31). However, the setting is not

only a cemetery; it is a churchyard, which makes it a place not dedicated exclusively to the dead, but also to the continuation and renewal of life—in, for instance, the union of marriage. This makes it possible to see the scene of Grey's renewed proposal, as Marwick does, as a love scene, and one of explicit "romantic fulfilment" (89). To equate the churchyard setting to the symbolic death of Alice's hopes is to overlook the love in Grey's "plea" for her: "Will you come and be my one beautiful thing, my treasure, my joy, my comfort, my counsellor?" (*Can You* 74). Arguments that Alice's acceptance of Grey signals her automatic surrender to his mastery are difficult to accept in the light of the intense and unmistakable passion in the pathologically impassive Grey's admissions "Come to me Alice, for I want you sorely" (74), and "In winning you I have won everything" (74). Reading the scene as a symbol of Alice's entrapment in a place of moribund ideas seems oversimplified, especially in the light of the narrator's enthusiastic endorsement that "it is one of the prettiest spots in that land of beauty; and its charm is to my feeling enhanced by the sepulchral monuments" (74). Confronted by what she initially saw as a dead attitude ("marriage") and a non-viable one ("not-marriage"), Alice looks past the "sepulchral monuments" to the "blue water" (74). Not blindly committed to inflexible traditions upheld by the formidable Ladies and Countesses, or to family honour above her own needs, or to the vagaries preached by the learned ladies, Alice looks at the larger picture and chooses life—but only when this makes sense to her. Her acceptance of the man she "knew that she loved" (74) indicates her ability to discern a woman's condition in the abstract, and, given the restrictions, to reconcile at least some of her specific desires to the reality of her circumstances, and make the most sagacious choice for herself.

Alice knows that a married life in the "desolate calmness of Cambridgeshire" (11) would be more fruitful than a life without Grey. She realizes this, but still cannot speak the words—an ironic turn of events for a woman who has, until this point in the novel, adamantly refused to be hushed. Peter Garrett interprets Alice's silence to mean that "Alice can find no terms to express her dissent.... With both men she can define her individuality only in the negative terms of resistance, refusing the expected response" (186-7). Her silence is thus as much evidence of Grey's "omnipotence" as it is an emblem of how a woman must not have this wrong kind of voice—one which exists only in opposition to marriage, but does not stand for a clear, fully-considered alternative.¹⁴ Alice's reticence is on one level inevitable: her undefined "ambition by opposition" must ultimately be silenced.¹⁵ Despite her earlier vehement refusal to "give way an inch" (2), she not only forgoes her punishment in favour of marriage, but accepts the man of whom she and her relatives unanimously approve. However, she is unable to articulate her acceptance. She must imply through her silence—through an absence of speech—that she will "submit", because she has no real argument to counter Grey's own. Acknowledging his omnipotence might be one thing, but articulating it is quite another. Although she comes to realize that this is not a lost battle, as she would previously have considered it, still she cannot say it aloud without feeling that it exemplifies the "girlish

¹⁴Barickman, MacDonald and Stark suggest that Alice's "rebellion" consists of an "unconsciously creat[ed] drama" to "forc[e] George and John into active competition for her", and thereby create a "meaning and excitement" that her "constricted life" lacks (214). They go on to argue that by jilting Grey and "then perversely refusing to forgive herself", Alice "forces him into activity and into a pleading posture—both foreign to him" (214). This is an attractive suggestion, although the narrator's sympathetic and detailed portrayal of Alice's near-endless introspection seems to emphasize Alice's prudent cogitation, more than unknowing or compulsive mercenary actions. Her final acceptance of Grey seems likewise a conscious desire, carefully considered, and the result of an astute consideration of her needs.

¹⁵In *Ralph the Heir*, an undefined ambition becomes concrete in another way, when, like Alice, Polly Neeft refuses to be silenced. For my discussion of Polly's insistence on being acknowledged, see the next section of this chapter.

facility" (2) for which she had earlier rebuked herself. Just as her initial inchoate ambition for "something" (11) could take no tangible form in reality, neither can its surrender take explicit form in uttered words. It was only "not-marriage": it never existed, and could never exist. No words are necessary to surrender something which was never there.

Alice's silence is thus not a precognition of married life following an inevitable "act of self-annihilation" (Barickman 24). The exchange with Grey in the churchyard is the first time in the novel when Alice is able to talk with either of her fiancés. Prior to her silence, she talks, and talks directly, with the man with whom her future is inextricably bound. This seems to anticipate a marriage in which she, like Rachel Ray in hers, will be a visible, vocal and active participant. Earlier, although she agreed to renew her engagement to George, she was persistently unable to "speak to him soft winning words of love" or "be stirred to the expression of any word of affection" (35). And as they walk through the Louvre, Grey asks Alice about their future "mode of life", and "Alice [is] unable to hold her tongue longer, and [speaks] with more vehemence than discretion" (77). Although they do not agree (quite predictably), they listen to one other's viewpoints, leading Alice to think that "the only flaw in his character [is] in the process of being cured" (77). The exchange signals behavioural changes in both--an optimistic sign that, far from being silenced, Alice will make her presence known in her marriage.¹⁶

¹⁶In his discussion of rhetoric in *Can You Forgive Her?*, Randall Craig also concludes that Alice's "outspoken enthusiasm" (*Can You* 77) points to a "rhetorical/behavioural change" (225) in her. Craig suggests that the hitherto reticent Alice's "excitement leads to utterances...not typical but indicative of the extent to which Alice's voice will be heard after her marriage" (226).

Alice's acceptance of Grey results from her maturing and a deepening awareness of the need to express her desires by "thinking outside the box"--beyond the two restricted choices for women. Although she refuses to submit to the pressure applied by the socially powerful, she eventually sees that a love for Grey which makes conscious concessions is preferable to abuse at the hands of her cousin George. Her facility for self-examination, not the coercion of others, enables her to recognize Grey's worth and to see that a "milk diet" (5) life with him, though not ideal in the abstract, will bring more contentment than the "brandy" (5) diet she would be forced to endure as George's wife--or the amorphous nourishment she would gain by choosing "not-marriage" for its own sake. That Alice insists on maintaining her stand in the face of overwhelming social pressure suggests, not just the "obstinacy" (74) of which Lady Glencora accuses her, but a sense of self-worth and considerable mental strength. It also underlines pointedly the inadequacy of the two ill-defined terms a woman has for her ambition (i.e., "marriage" and "not-marriage"). "What is a woman to do with her life?" is, indeed, the question, and the narrator's sympathetic portrayal of Alice's plight and her growth to self-awareness delineates the unfairness of society's usual answers. As Alice learns, the wish to please oneself, perhaps in some form of "not-marriage", is at odds with the need to accommodate society, usually in marriage--and neither impulse, especially when it proceeds from a dogmatic generalization rather than a stable foundation in the circumstances themselves, is wholly and exclusively attainable.

As Alice sees firsthand, the power and the pressure applied by the Lady Midlothians of the world are considerable, and their approval is equally influential. The desire for this approval is often the cause of a woman's compliance, as Lady Midlothian's own marriage

demonstrates. On the public surface, Alice's eventual marriage generates widespread approval and is thus little different. Yet Alice's self-motivated acceptance of Grey indicates her sound personal judgement and the ability to learn from experience, and apply the lesson learned to practical considerations. A now-wiser Alice executes a defined purpose, instead of pining for an "undefined ambition", and re-channels her pride so that it is not an impediment to personal happiness and social machinery, but an acceptable and necessary instrument of domestic government. That Alice does not marry John Grey merely because she is urged to, and that her eventual marriage satisfies the dictates of both personal and social spheres, is as much an internal validation of her worth as Grey's constancy is an external validation in the social sphere. Alice's growth, like Rachel's, is the story of her successful negotiation of the complex transaction between abstract ambitions and a concrete social and personal reality. But unlike Rachel's, it is the result of surrendering a nebulous, headstrong sense of mere opposition, which Trollope's novels (for instance, in the odious demagogue Turnbull in *Phineas Finn*) always associate with mischief-making and mindless contrariness.

IV: Searching for a "Grand Passion": Polly's Ambition in *Ralph the Heir*

As is the case with Alice, Polly Neeft of *Ralph the Heir* must modify her initially imprecise ambition for a "grand passion" into a definite, pragmatic, and responsible alliance with a "worthy man". Like Alice's ambition, Polly's is at odds with that of a principal character: as I showed in Chapter 2, her tradesman father, Thomas Neeft, has a contrary, ill-conceived (and from Polly's perspective, undesirable) scheme for her social advancement. Willing "to shine only in his daughter" (5), Neeft seeks to buy a gentleman, Ralph, to marry Polly. The middle-class breechesmaker attempts to achieve this ambition in the appropriately masculine,

public terms of a business transaction: a swap of cash and Polly for marriage and status. In this transaction, as Neefit conceives it initially, Polly herself is just another form of currency. Invisible, she is to play no verbal or other role in what is, after all, a simple exchange between the two men.¹⁷ Neefit has made expedient use of Ralph's economic emergency (he is a spendthrift and a womanizing wastrel) to manipulate a marriage proposal, and, feeling desperate, Ralph makes not one but two proposals to Polly. Both he and Neefit claim to want the best for her, but, in appropriately masculine fashion, are looking primarily to the fulfilment of their own desires for the public sphere: Ralph wants the money he needs to live as he is accustomed, and Neefit covets the title of "lady" and the corresponding respect for rank for his daughter. In the pursuit of his own object, neither man considers Polly's own desires or ambition. In like fashion, unfortunately, recent critical studies of *Ralph the Heir* tend to focus on the title character, and do not typically extend to a consideration of Polly.¹⁸ This oversight echoes Neefit's assumptions about Polly's invisibility—and since these are disproven and discounted by novel's end, a critical reassessment of the value of Polly's ambition, which will be offered in this section, seems appropriate.

As Polly's confrontation with Neefit at novel's end makes abundantly clear, she and her personal ambitions simply will not be ignored. Having set her heart on a "grand passion" (5), she is too self-possessed to relinquish it for a proposal from the ne'er-do-well Ralph Newton.

¹⁷ Neefit's later plan to spread slander about Ralph is an extension of this original arrangement, foreshadowed in these formulations in which Polly has never been a factor.

¹⁸ Harvey's discussion of *Ralph the Heir* (26-9) concerns Trollope's adoption of Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term*, and is restricted to a consideration of Trollope's use of comic types in the characterizations of Ralph and Neefit. Both Edwards' and Wall's studies are limited to the male characters in the novel; the female characters are mentioned only in relation to the men they affect. See Edwards 73-6 and Wall 314-24. Herbert's consideration of comic form in *Ralph the Heir* focuses on Ralph and Sir Thomas (*Comic Pleasure* 117-23).

She will not be swayed by promises of aristocratic grandeur: "She meant herself to have a grand passion some day, but did not quite sympathise with her father's views about gentlemenShe had no idea of being patronised by anyone, and she was afraid of persons whom she called 'stuck-up' ladies and gentlemen" (5). Though she is romantic, and has read her fair share of love stories, she has a more realistic sense of courtship, marriage and social survival than do her parents, particularly her besotted father. Her mother has learned the hard way that pretensions to the upper class bring no satisfaction. Having failed at her own Alice-like or Mrs. Prime-like ambition to "shine in her own person", the wealthy but idle Mrs. Neefit is now unhappy because "she [has] no resource...except to nag at her husband" (5). Having seen firsthand her mother's dissatisfaction with a mock-aristocratic lifestyle, Polly from the start tempers her ambition with a profound awareness of her context.

For Polly, this novelistic "grand passion" is not the end in itself—it is the prerequisite to a domestic life consisting of "a snug house, half a dozen children, and a proper, church-going, roast-mutton, duty-doing manner of life" (5). Polly wants the traditional domestic sphere—but only if an initial melodramatic romance mellows into this respectable, day-to-day ordinariness. This model for Polly's ambition thus presupposes a kind of compromise—or at least a process of change—between two extremes. Unlike Alice's initial view, this is not a model of self against society, of personal desire vs. social expectation. She does not view her personal "grand passion" as a perpetual state; rather, it is the route to a socially traditional (and expected) existence. This continuum where excitement becomes the mundane, where personal adventure turns into "duty-doing", is a model which, from the start, shows Polly's

anticipation of the kind of responsible middle course to which Alice and Rachel eventually come.

Thus, though mildly tempted by the possibility of becoming a lady, when Ralph succumbs to the combined pressures of mounting debts and Neefit's badgering, Polly remains aloof. Far from leaping at Ralph's offer of marriage, she puts him off for "a year or so" to "see how it is then" (19).¹⁹ Comparing the addresses of her two suitors, Ralph and Ontario, the narrator states, somewhat coyly, that Polly is "perhaps" a little "particular" (19) about matters of courtship: "She had formed to herself, perhaps, some idea of a soft, insinuating, coaxing whisper, something that should at least be very gentle and very loving. Ontario was loving, but he was not gentle. Ralph Newton was gentle, but then she doubted whether he was loving" (19). Like Alice's "undefined idea", Polly's "some idea" needs to be worked out in detail. Specifically, Polly must discover the mechanics of the compromise between storybook "grand passion"—potentially represented by the false but "gentle" Ralph and his "most bewitching smile,"—and simple domesticity, represented by the "loving" Ontario. And, over time, Polly discovers Ralph to be the antithesis of her "grand passion", devoid of compassion, sympathy, and, most significantly, any ambition beyond his hunting schedule for the current week and his flirtations. By contrast, one reason she accepts Moggs' proposal is his attempt, however farfetched, to become a Member of Parliament—a lofty goal for any aspirant politician, and particularly so for a bootmaker's apprentice without the benefit of social class

¹⁹Polly's tactic is similar to her father's strategy of giving Ralph just enough money to keep going. This parallel strategy implicitly enforces the idea that she is her father's daughter, a fact that Neefit spends both time and money trying futilely to disprove.

or political clout.²⁰ Unlike the reactive and vacillating Ralph, Moggs, like Polly herself, aspires toward a specific ambition, and takes action in order to achieve it.

As part of the process of working this out, Polly takes after both her father and Victorian society in general, by approaching the question of marriage as a transaction. In *Marriage as a Trade* (1909), feminist, actress, writer and confirmed spinster Cicely Hamilton (1872-1952) argues that the Victorian domestic ideal denies a woman access to other "trades" in which to "earn her daily bread" (36). This, she suggests, makes marriage a female imperative, in which a woman "exchange[s], by the ordinary process of barter, possession of her person for the means of existence" (27). This straightforward "commercial or trade undertaking" (27) suggests how little alternative a woman has to participating in society's commodification of her. Polly, however, does not simply accept this "truth"; rather, she demonstrates that part of the negotiation between her personal ambitions and her social context concerns a woman's dual role as a public commodity *and* the private purchaser of the object of her own ambition.

If Polly is a commodity, she is a commodity that knows well her own value on the marriage market—and as a consequence, will make only a "prudent" sale: "Let her father be as indiscreet as he might, he could not greatly lower her, as long as she herself was prudent....She knew her own value, and was not afraid that she should ever lack a lover when she wanted to find a husband" (45). But Polly knows that she is not only a commodity; she places herself simultaneously in the active, masculine role of a buyer purchasing happiness,

²⁰ Moggs, incidentally, is another sympathetic Trollopian portrait of the new working-class arrivals in, or aspirants to, Parliament. By contrast, Sir Thomas Underwood (whose vain and futile ambition I discuss briefly in section 3 of my Chapter 4) is a ninny.

as she herself defines it: "She would like to be a lady . . . but she would not *buy* the privilege of being a lady at *too dear a price*. The *price* would be very high indeed were she to give herself to a man who did not love her, and perhaps despised her" (19, emphasis added).²¹ Valuing herself too much to be deluded by promises of social advancement, Polly, despite her father's eagerness, refuses to accept this man proposing at the point of acute financial desperation. She sees correctly that Ralph's only attraction is his status, a surface attribute that would make marrying him as chancy as "taking a husband out of a lottery" (19). The clear-eyed Polly wants, above all else, "as much love on one side as on the other...The man must take an absolute pleasure in her company, or the whole thing would be a failure" (19). In Trollope's fiction, Polly is, perhaps, the clearest image of the view that women buy love as much as submit to it. Certain of her own collateral value, she will purchase only what she wants—at the most advantageous price.

Despite Polly's failure to accede to Neeft's wishes, her refusal of Ralph is not a simple rejection of traditional patriarchal authority. It is a more general refusal of the invisibility of the passive voice. Polly does not say, "I'm not going to let my father give me away"—which would imply active disobedience. What Polly is refusing, as she explains to Ralph, is the implicit absence of volition and visibility accorded her by Neeft's passive-voice transaction: "I'm not going to *be given away* by father just as he pleases" (19, emphasis added). She will simply not allow "the thing...*to be done*" (5, emphasis added), in her father's words.

²¹ By contrast, as I will discuss more fully in Chapter 4, in a reversal of traditional gender roles, Ralph has earlier refused to "sell himself"—as if *he* were the commodity of the traditional feminine stereotype. Indeed, Ralph refers to himself repeatedly in decidedly feminine terms, as a commodity inevitably to be sold: his marriage is "the sacrifice . . . to be made", and "he might as well enjoy all that would come of the sacrifice" (19).

Although she is "inclined to obey her father rather than to disobey him" (13), she also asserts, "I'm grand enough to have a will of my own about that . . . I'm not *going to be made* to marry any man, I know" (45, emphasis added). The problem here is "being made" something—which is the traditional, passive fate of the Victorian woman who, ever defined from without and never defined in her own right, goes as commodity from daughter to wife. In perhaps the most succinct enunciation of this issue, Polly states, "If I can't be a lady *without being made one*, I won't be a lady at all" (45, emphasis added). Polly wants an active collaboration with her external, societal context; she will not simply—and passively—*be fashioned* into something from without.

This protofeminist assertiveness notwithstanding, Polly is a better servant of the social machinery than her father. Unlike Neefit, who tries to elevate Polly's social standing, and, so, to cross class boundaries, Polly has a very conservative approach to marriage. She states unequivocally that "like should marry like" (24), and her eventual insistence on marrying the bootmaker's son Ontario Moggs endorses established tradition and class stability. To Polly, ever-aware of social context, it is a significant achievement for a member of the lower class such as Moggs even to run for political office:

"I shouldn't think anything of Mr. Newton for being in Parliament.

Whether he was in Parliament or out would be all the same.... But if you were there--"

"I don't know what's the difference," said Moggs despondently.

"Because you're one of us." (45)

In Polly's view, such an achievement on Ralph's part would be "nothing" more than a static and automatic acquirement, worthy neither of remark nor respect. By contrast, her genuine delight in the political advancement of "one of us" emphasizes that she defines herself clearly in terms of working class and meritocracy, and underlines her affinity to those, like her father and Moggs, who earn money and respect by virtue of their own activity. Her sense of self is established firmly in her family and its working class roots. Thus, unlike Alice, she knows and takes into account her social context from the start of the novel, and can therefore resist her father's misguided abetting. Though confident of her ability to assimilate into an upper-class environment, she expects that she would not gain the respect of Ralph's servants, who would disparage her as a social climber: "[N]obody would despise her in [Moggs' home] because she was not grand enough for her place. She was by no means sure that a good deal of misery of that kind might not have fallen to her lot had she become the mistress of Newton Priory. 'When the beggar woman became a queen, how the servants must have snubbed her,' said Polly to herself" (48). The simple fact that Polly looks below stairs to speculate about the impression of the servants indicates her solidarity with the lower orders—and her clear-eyed knowledge of self and society. After she engages herself to Moggs, she feels understandably gratified to have chosen a man who will keep her in an environment to which she is accustomed.

Indeed, Polly's rejection of Ralph ultimately becomes proof not of discord, but of solidarity with her father. More significant than the possibility of the servants not respecting her, she will not tolerate Ralph's inevitable disdain for her father's vulgarity and ineptitude: "The truth is, you despise father, Mr. Newton But I won't go anywhere where folk is to be ashamed

of father I'm a young woman who knows who's been good to me. He's to give me pretty nigh everything. You wouldn't be taking me if it wasn't for that"(24). She has accurately read Ralph: the breeches-maker is so "distasteful" to him that he cannot bear to contradict her, even for twenty thousand pounds. This refusal of Ralph on the grounds of filial piety demonstrates her allegiance to traditional patriarchy in the most obvious sense. While Neeftit focuses his ambitions for Polly on the superficial, public classification of "lady", an external category determined at birth or acquired by marriage,²² Polly, by contrast, concerns herself from the start with the internal qualities of *being* a lady. She focuses on achieving her "grand passion" while behaving appropriately and scrupulously in a sense appropriate to her *local* surroundings: "There are different kinds of ladies, father. I want to be such a one as neither you nor mother shall ever have cause to say I didn't behave myself" (45).

When Neeftit argues that Polly has been "brought up better" than both he and his wife, she counters his argument with an assurance that again focuses on the local, familial context: she will "show [her] breeding, then, by being true to [Neeftit], and true to the man [she] love[s]" (53). At novel's end, when her father blames her for throwing away her chances of social advancement, she holds herself accountable willingly: "Yes;--[it is] my fault; that I wouldn't *be made* what you call a lady; *to be taken away*, so that I'd never see any more of you and

²²Conventionally, only women can gain status through marriage to a social superior. In the *Last Chronicle of Barset*, aspirant socialite Mrs. Dobbs Broughton exposes her middle-class roots when she allows Adolphus Crosbie, widower of an earl's daughter, to escort her to dinner, even though "there [is] a barrister in the room" (24). "[She] ought to have known better", insists the narrator. "As she professed to be guided in such matters by the rules laid down by the recognized authorities, she ought to have been aware that a man takes no rank from his wife" (24). The narrator wonders, with feigned ingenuousness, "amidst the intricacies of rank how is it possible for a woman to learn and to remember everything?" (24). He implies that Mrs. Broughton has not been raised in the class in which such knowledge of social etiquette is acquired intuitively, rather than memorized by rote and stored away for occasional use (or misuse, as the case may be).

mother!" (53, emphasis added). Again, she is refusing the invisibility of the passive voice, which would ignore her local circumstance in favour of a global social classification. And Polly will continue to uphold this blend of her personal ambition and social context: "Besides, I don't want to be a lady, . . . and I won't be a lady. I won't be better than you and mother" (53). All ambitions are limited to the confines of her self-definition by family and class.²³

The only response that Ralph can offer to Polly's display of loyalty is the effusive praise, "Polly, you're an angel!" (24). She is an "angel" because, by comparison to his reactive vacillation, such constancy is completely foreign and even unearthly. His only allegiance is to the Ralph of the current moment, and so bereft is he of such basic impulses as family loyalty and gratitude that he can only read her fidelity as superhuman. Ralph has grown up expecting the lifestyle that accompanies a vast inheritance, and has become accustomed to believing that he deserves a life without labour. Polly is, likewise, "an heiress", but she recognizes and appreciates the efforts expended by her father to amass her inheritance. To Polly, such filial respect is only logical. It makes her not an angel but a "young woman who knows who's been good to me" (24).

Polly knows she is right to reject him, but nonetheless thinks, "with a tear in her eye", that "[marriage to him] would have been nice. She could have loved him, and she felt the

²³Polly's idea that a workingman may be as good as a gentleman is one endorsed in several of Trollope's novels, where fine ideals are never mistaken as long as they are harnessed to industry and reality. For instance, Luke Rowan (*Rachel Ray*) is a gentleman by birth and lawyer by education but has no qualms about becoming a brewer and thus entering trade. By contrast, in *The Claverings*, Harry Clavering is forced to learn the hard way by nearly losing the girl that his highminded and fine ideals are all well, but in the

attraction, and the softness, and the sweet-smelling delicateness of gentle associations" (24). Significantly, however, her fantasy of marriage to Ralph consists only of feminizing, gauzy, and aromatic abstractions: as an ambition, it is a dead end which can never be translated from ethereal associations into concrete actions. A real life with Ralph simply cannot be imagined—beyond the (for Polly) ugly and impossible detail of no longer seeing her father: "the fact that it was so, shut for her the door of that Elysium. She knew that she could not be happy were she to be taken to such a mode of life as would force her to accuse herself of ingratitude to her father" (24). As a consequence, Polly rejects this daydream for a life of the hard-won, domestic, "duty-doing manner" (5) of Ontario Moggs. Polly achieves a form of her ambition by accepting Ontario, the man in whose "heart, and mind, and eyes...she possesse[s] a divinity which [makes] the ground she [stands] upon holy ground for him" (48). She realizes that a full-fledged "grand passion" of the novelistic kind is not possible with the awkward but sincere Ontario, who may have poetry in his soul but lacks the ability to express it in words. In his feelings for her, she can have a measure of the "grand passion", and in his devotion and constancy, she seems likely to get the "snug house" (5) and the rest of the domestic routine she desires. The difference is that Polly will get both at the same time. Predisposed by the dual aspect of her initial ambition to accept change, Polly judges that this is still an attractive purchase--with or without an accompanying fortune.

Though she is "specially ordered" by her father to have nothing to do with Ontario Moggs, she maintains the relationship, frustrating her father's anger with the flippant Neefit-like rejoinder, "handsome is as handsome does" (45). She can contradict her father--possibly

world they will fetch a meager price.

turning his own homily against him--because, "though she love[s] her father, and after a fashion respect[s] him, [she is] not afraid of him" (45). As we have seen, Polly objects specifically to her father's assumption of her invisibility: "Of course it was not a nice thing *to be thrown* at a man's head, as her father was constantly throwing her at the head of young Newton; but such a man as she would give herself to at last would understand all that" (45). To Polly, who knows well both her personal ambition and her social duties, what is decidedly "not nice" is being acted upon, in the passive voice.

Polly is not interested in "being thrown" but in giving *herself*--responsibly--to an understanding man. She thinks Moggs might be sympathetic enough to overlook her father's "ill-arranged ambition", on the proviso that she can "ever bring *herself* to accept Ontario". Like Rachel Ray, then, Polly exercises her woman's right to "accept" a suitable mate, but is not content to be given--or "thrown"--away by her father to a man of his choosing. As Polly declares to her father, she refuses Ralph "because I didn't choose [him]. I don't care enough for him; and it's all no use of you going on. I wouldn't have him if he came twenty times. I've made up my mind, so I tell you" (45). She will not be silenced, despite Neefit's wishes. Instead--actively and appropriately--she "engage[s] *herself*" (48, emphasis added) to Ontario. And this determination to maintain her power of choice is the "fund of feminine strength" which the narrator reveres as "quite [justifying] the devotion of Ontario Moggs" (45).

Further, Polly identifies the source of this "feminine strength" not in some self-sufficient feminine "obstinacy" (45), but in an "ideal father". Even while Polly explicitly disobeys the

letter of her father's desires, she argues that she does this *for* him. This is exemplary Victorian filial piety—one might argue the social machinery works almost *too* well, when the daughter claims to know better than the father how best she can serve him. In effect, Polly constructs an idealized father figure, who becomes a surrogate expression of her own will. This figure is the “spirit” of fatherhood—which she will obey—as opposed to the “letter” of her father’s specific desire that she marry Ralph, which she will overrule. In effect, Polly knows better than to obey her father’s misguided ambition, and so, through this singular strategy, disobeys him—all the while mouthing expressions of filial devotion.

Polly thus gets a suitable man—and her father’s and society’s blessing into the bargain. Her view of marriage evolves from the abstract “grand passion” to the more realistic “piece of business which ha[s] to be done someday” (48). In its blend of muted “grand passion” and domesticity, and in its class-consciousness, it implies a conservatism that would seem to preclude a “feminist” label, though the reader is never allowed to forget that Polly will be marrying a Radical working-class politician. However, Polly’s successful exercise of her own volition in behalf of her personal ambition—at once in rejection of parental authority and in service to familial and social context—is the ultimate triumph of a social machinery working from within and without.

She confronts Neefit in his bedroom, the most private locus of the domestic sphere, and convinces him that her marriage to Moggs is best and final. The physical setting highlights Polly’s “feminine strength”: the morally weaker Neefit reclines in bed, while Polly stands over him, in an emblem of her superiority. Neefit’s capitulation is easily anticipated, since,

despite his fantasies, he from the start has few illusions about Polly's sway over him.²⁴ Polly's success lies in her determination to be acknowledged, despite her father's attempt to eradicate her presence from his "transaction" between "the gentleman" Ralph and himself. Here, in the heart of the domestic sphere, she will make the invisible briefly "visible" and exact his assent in a suitably feminine fashion.²⁵ And when Neefit, faced with this superiority, grants his consent, we see the appropriate alignment of the elements of the social machinery: Polly's personal ambitions (marriage to a man she loves) are acknowledged to meet the needs of familial and social contexts. And Neefit's grudging acceptance of Polly's assertion that "my way [has] been your way, father" (53) signals the reconciliation of the ideal father, to whom she has maintained a fierce loyalty, and the actual father, whose specific commands she has felt compelled to oppose.

V: "Poetic Perfection" in Prosaic Form: Ayala's Ambition in *Ayala's Angel*

On the rare occasions when it is discussed, *Ayala's Angel* is usually the target of critical denigration. For instance, Robert Polhemus considers it the result of "an incoherent, tired

²⁴For instance, the narrator confirms early on that "she [is] the idol of her father's heart and the apple of his eye. If she had asked him to give up measuring, he might have yielded. But then his Polly was too wise for that" (5). Polly knows that "the fruition of life to him [is] in the completion of breeches" (5), that what he does is an integral aspect of his nature. Nonetheless, were she desirous of him abandoning even so fundamental and self-defining an activity, it is clear that he would capitulate. While she could simply assert her brute will and prevail, her obedience to her "ideal father", and the gentle bending of her actual father to see it, are instead an exemplary, ingenious, and quintessential act of Victorian filial piety. And this is even more remarkable because it does not require the abandonment of her own ambitions. See Chapter 2 for more discussion of the inevitability of Neefit giving way.

²⁵In *Rachel Ray*, Mrs. Tappitt deploys a similarly "feminine" strategy to persuade her husband to her point of view. She will serve his favourite meal, and then assert her opinion in a specifically domestic location, like the dining room or their bedroom. For example, she is too shrewd not to recognize that, "merely advis[ing] her husband, in proper conjugal phraseology, to relinquish his trade and to retire to Torquay...w[ill] have no weight" (27). And so, she sequesters her husband in the "feminine dominion" of their bedroom, resolving "never [to leave] his bedside till she ha[s] achieved] her purpose" (27). Only after he has "assented" does she allow his "escape from his prison amidst the blankets" (27).

imagination" (*Changing World* 219), and Robert Tracy sees it as a novel suitable for the indiscriminating reader "who seeks only to be charmed" (*Trollope's Later Novels* 251). However, the story of Ayala's self-realization makes it almost the prototype for Trollope's other stories of female ambition. Ayala Dormer's ambition is unambiguous: she will settle for no husband other than her ideal, impossible, heaven-sent "Angel of Light" (11). She achieves this ambition at the end of *Ayala's Angel*, when, "to her own intense satisfaction, Ayala [is] handed over to her Angel of Light" (64). The process by which Ayala passes from desire to attainment is much less simple than this description suggests. Ayala does not compromise her ambition, but, in a moment of enlightenment, sees that her fantasy husband has taken material form in Colonel Jonathan Stubbs, a physically unexceptional man with a (to her) ugly name, as well as an enormous mouth, and bright red hair. The plot of the novel documents her gradual awareness that ideal abstractions and an initially forbidding actuality may accord—though not in the form initially expected. The final image of Ayala's "own intense satisfaction" validates her ambition, but, as is the case with Rachel, Alice and Polly, reinforces the necessity of translating that ambition from ethereal ideal into prosaic actuality. The novel makes clear that a woman's fantasy, like any man's (for instance, the title characters Phineas Finn's, John Caldigate's or Sir Thomas Underwood's in *Ralph the Heir*) is destructive, unless integrated with recognizable, attainable aspects of the real world.²⁶

²⁶Ayala's hard-won attainment of her ambition calls into question Coral Lansbury's claim that Ayala's "place[ment of] her dream before all demands of society" leads her to be "defeated by society" (172-3). Important to note is that Ayala is perfectly able to withstand pressure from her wealthy aunt Tringle to marry her loutish cousin Tom—a refusal which results in Ayala's dismissal to her poor aunt Dosset in exchange for her (seemingly) less obstinate sister Lucy. Ayala's marriage to Stubbs is arguably an alignment of personal desires and social expectations, and one in which neither is compromised, let alone "defeated".

The plot depicts Ayala's growing awareness of the jostling of fantasy and reality. Her initial dreams—the product of a blend of immaturity and her sense of innate superiority—are an extreme but nonetheless familiar kind of abstract and unrealizable ambition. Having been raised by her artist father in the bohemian luxury of a South Kensington bijou, the orphaned "Ayala the romantic; Ayala the poetic" (1) craves not the "gold and silver and costly raiment" abundant in the opulent world of her "bullionaire" Tringle cousins, but "some intellectual charm in her life, some touch of art" (10).²⁷ At first, this "devotion to things beautiful" (10) makes the Shelleyan, pleasure-loving Ayala seem a silly, narcissistic girl who would ignore the real world for life in "the tower of the castle from which she could look down upon the inferior world below" (10).

She forever claims to scorn the commonplace.²⁸ At a typically monotonous meal with her Aunt Margaret and Uncle Reginald Dosset at Kingsbury Crescent, she declares eating to be "ignoble", and opines that nature "should have" better managed the mundanity of digestion if food were asthmatically "sucked . . . in from the atmosphere through our fingers and hairs, as the trees do by their leaves" (21). Ayala's apparent disdain for the ordinary, along with her willful Wildesque dreams of art's self-sufficiency and superiority to reality, seem to bear out

²⁷And the appeal of Ayala herself (in contrast to that of the novel as a whole) is commonly acknowledged. For instance, Marwick admits that Lucy's appeal is a far cry from the attractiveness of "her livelier sister" (28). In his study of Trollope's use of formal comic devices in *Ayala's Angel*, Christopher Herbert suggests that Ayala with her "peculiar look of childhood" (*Ayala's Angel* 8) is "the sexiest of all Trollope's heroines, and no doubt the sexiest one in Victorian fiction" (*Comic Pleasure* 199). Herbert attributes her charm to the "gift of effortless ease and fluency", which she possesses "to an almost preternatural degree" (199).

²⁸Ayala's ideals are, however, somewhat contradictory. Later, she rejects Stubbs' proposal and convinces herself that "as to his income she [thinks] nothing and care[s] nothing" (26). However, she cannot but admit her "devot[ion] to the society of rich and gay people" (27) and even "a pretty taste for diamonds" (32). But in the end, the need to work out this conflict of material existence and romantic ideal is taken out of her hands, when she accepts Stubbs, who is able to provide all the "pleasurable pursuits" (26) she craves.

the assessment of her friend the Marchessa Baldoni, that Ayala "is one of those human beings who seem to have been removed out of this world and brought up in another. Though she knows ever so much that nobody else knows, she is ignorant of ever so much that everybody ought to know" (20). But in the end, the Marchessa's observation is only partially accurate. Ayala is clearly naïve, inexperienced and prone to self-indulgence, but she is hardly extraordinary. Her fondness for pretty clothes, dancing, parties, and other common social activities shows her to be a recognizably ordinary girl with typical--albeit fantastically romantic--ideals of courtship. This ordinariness is what, at novel's end, will enable her to integrate her ambition with her milieu.

However, at the start of the novel, an ideal ambition is all that Ayala aspires to, and she sticks to it tenaciously, refusing to be side-tracked by earthly suitors who do not conform to her notion of an Angel of Light. She has no clear idea what form an actual mate might take, and so is bound for disappointment when confronted by potential lovers in predictably imperfect human form. The narrator describes the contradictory attitude of "Poor Ayala", who deems that the sculptor Isadore Hamel "[will] do" (6) for her sister Lucy, but for herself will settle for nothing less than a hero with "azure wings". She knows that "heroes with azure wings [are] not existent save in the imagination.... But for herself her imagination [is] too valuable then to allow her to put her foot upon earth" (6). The premium which Ayala places on her "valuable"—and unrealizable--"imagination" requires the cultivation of vagaries: instead of implementing a plan to make her ambition somehow attainable, Ayala waits passively and fruitlessly for her heavenly creature:

[I]t may be well to declare of her at once that her ideas at this moment about men,—or rather about a possible man,—were confined altogether to the abstract....But in her day-dreams this hero was almost celestial,—or, at least, aethereal....It was a concentration of poetic perfection to which there was not yet any appanage of apparel, of features, or of wealth. It was something out of heaven which should think it well to spend his whole time in adoring her and making her more blessed than had ever yet been a woman on earth. (6)

The "concentration of poetic perfection" which Ayala has "floating in her young mind" is an undefined "something" untainted by specificity of detail. Her ambition is not love with a man, but the ideal "beauty of love" (6). This vague aesthetic abstraction must, "of course", revolve around some prerequisite man—but only because without the pretext of a hero, there can be no "love", and, so, no "beauty." In short, Ayala inclines to "some devotion to things beautiful" (10), and one of these "things" is her suitor, an ungendered "*something* out of heaven" (6) to worship and exalt her. She maintains a steadfast "resolution to her dreams" (10) of "poetic", not real, "perfection".

Though her "castles in the air...[have] been the delight of her life to construct" (10), Ayala at no point advances sufficiently in her dream-creation to make specific the "something else [that] would come, something of which in her castle-building she had yet not developed the form, of which she did not yet know the bearing, or the manner of its beauty, or the music of its voice" (10). She knows only, in typically abstract terms, that "its form [will] be beautiful and its voice full of music" (10). In the narrator's words, "It can hardly be said that this something was the centre of her dreams, or the foundation of her castles. It was the extreme

point of perfection at which she would arrive at last, when her thoughts had become sublimated by the intensity of her thinking" (10). Unlike Alice, who wrestles from the start with how to translate her "undefined idea" into reality, Ayala need implement no plan for achieving her dream. As she conceives it, it is a temporal and logical inevitability, "at which she [will] arrive at last" (10). But the purpose of Ayala's dreaming is not to galvanize her to create and live an ordinary life on earth, but rather to "escape" earth altogether—and this, like a stage of evolution, will happen automatically, so long as she concentrates. Ayala's ambition thus recalls Alice Vavasor's "undefined idea" and Polly Neefit's "grand passion". But Ayala's ambition is to overshoot the world entirely, whereas Alice and Polly seek to live somewhere in this world, but resist the single path which others seek to force them into.²⁹ In all cases, though, the problem is similar: the need to see that, contrary to learned ladies or parents, a relationship with a specific earthly man need not mean the abandonment of ambition; it can be a means for its attainment.

In order to judge her actual suitors according to this abstract standard of "perfection", Ayala evaluates them less by what they are than by what they are not. She thus intuits that her desired "something" is "exactly the opposite" of her first admirer, her cousin Tom Tringle, Junior. Tom is the only son and heir to her millionaire uncle Sir Thomas, "senior partner in the great firm of Travers and Treason" (1). Even with his gift of a L300 diamond necklace and his alarmingly "persistent passion" (61), Tom fails to impress Ayala because he is physically and intellectually repulsive. Far from beautiful in form or voice, he is to her a

²⁹Ayala's dream is no different than other selfish vanities that other novels of Trollope make comic. One example, in *Ralph the Heir*, is Sir Thomas Underwood, who dedicates himself to the exclusive and futile task of writing a biography of Bacon at the expense of all other responsibilities, paternal and otherwise.

vulgar, sentimental, self-involved "lout" (8) who adorns himself in chains and baubles, in a mistaken belief that she will prefer an ostentatiously festooned lover. Tom with his extravagant outward show is the mirror image of the dreaming Ayala, who lives entirely inwardly and extravagantly so.

The narrator notes that Tom's greatest impediment to success is "not knowing himself"—and in this, he again resembles Ayala. In wooing Ayala, Tom "had been as might be a barn-door cock who had set his heart upon some azure-plumaged, high-soaring lady of the woods. The lady with the azure plumes had, too, her high-soaring tendencies, but she was enabled by true insight to find the male who would be fit for her" (64). Tom is here explicitly likened to Ayala, who seeks a hero with similarly "azure-plumaged" wings. Unlike Tom, however, she fulfils her ambition because of "true insight", which eventually permits the metamorphosis of the ethereally abstract azure-winged hero of her fancies into the earthly and imperfect Jonathan Stubbs. Where Ayala, thanks to an epiphany, tempers her "high-soaring tendencies", Tom revels in his, inflaming his romantic fancies to preposterously novelistic extremes. He is alternately a hot-headed lover initiating duels with his "rival", and a heartsick lover, languishing in his bed. Obstinate refusing to be deterred by her contempt, he maintains his belief that Ayala is "perfection" and, consequently, the only woman for him. "Every Jack has his Gill," he informs Lady Albury. "She is my Gill, and that's an end of it" (36). Where Ayala's ambition focuses on ethereal and non-existent vagary, and refuses to come down to earth, the reactive Tom makes the all-too-specific Ayala into his ideal, persistently ignoring mounting evidence of the impossibility of their earthly union. In the

end, Tom succeeds only in justifying Ayala's choice of the vigorous, earthly Jonathan Stubbs for her husband.

Ayala saves herself from the "purgation" that Tom is made to undergo because, though young and foolish, she matures sufficiently to see, like Rachel, Alice and Polly, that an abstract ideal can exist in a concrete but modified form. Up to that point, however, Ayala dwells on vague, apparently superior angelic traits with which actual human behaviour can never consistently accord, and seals herself hermetically within her imaginary ivory tower, away from the fallibility—and unpredictable spontaneity—of the real world. When she first meets Jonathan Stubbs at a party, she is captivated unwittingly by his very spontaneous sense of humour.³⁰ Although she considers him the "partner of the evening," she will not, however, acknowledge any attraction to a man "so hideously ugly" (16). Her romantic notions preclude consideration of a quality like humour, which seems at odds with her conception of an "Angel of Light [who] must have something tragic in his composition,—must verge, at any rate, on tragedy" (16). As Stubbs is the "Genius of Comedy" (16), he is generically incompatible with the imprecise but gloomy object of her ambition. But Ayala's response here seems less about purity of conception and tragic composition than it is about aesthetic conventions of beauty. Ayala is very concerned with surface attributes, such as a conventionally handsome appearance and a pleasant voice. Perhaps too specific and too vivifying, charm and wit do not figure in her angelic equation. As a result, Ayala does not

³⁰Herbert suggests that one reason for Ayala's and Stubbs' reciprocal attraction is their shared "dominant qualities" (*Comic Pleasure* 201). Like Ayala, Stubbs the "man of pleasure" (16) is agile, as evidenced by his dancing and equestrian skills, his "easy mode of talking" (16) and "a certain aptitude for drollery which pervade[s] him" (31).

acknowledge what others, including the old couple in the carriage to Stalham, intuit: that she loves Stubbs, and in denying it, is being merely "perverse" (46)—an accusation that the self-denying Alice also incurs from the narrator of *Can You Forgive Her?* for the self-excoriating denial of her attraction to John Grey.

Ayala's devotion to the tragic angel is little more than her own self-generated version of the idea fed to Alice by the learned ladies: namely, that nominal marriage can be the destruction of a woman. Expecting marriage to be beautiful but fatal, Ayala is suitably taken aback by Stubbs. This "hideous" (16) man is also delightful company—thus living up to *neither* of her preconceptions. Not yet a subscriber to Polly Neefit's motto "handsome is as handsome does" (*Ralph* 45), Ayala remains loyal to her angel despite her thoughts of Stubbs, by reasoning that "he [is] so ugly that she could not have forgotten him" (16). The narrator qualifies her rationalization with the telling rejoinder, "so at least she told herself" (16)—suggesting a budding, but unacknowledged, interest in this mere human who is so physically divergent from the undefined object of her otherworldly ambition.

Penniless though she might be, Ayala is yet too idealistic to see marriage as a tactical means of elevating her social and financial status.³¹ In this regard, she differs from women like

³¹The idea of shopping for a spouse recurs in *Ayala's Angel*. For example, gold-digger Frank Houston loves Imogene Docimer but courts Gertrude Tringle for her money. Fundamentally lazy, he wants the assurance of wealth in order to preserve his artistic pretensions rather than profit from industry. He advises his cousin of her duty to "purchase for herself a husband with her beauty" (28)—a phrase that recalls Cicely Hamilton's description of marriage as largely a commercial, not romantic, enterprise. Ayala's poor uncle Dossett, doomed to a life of genteel poverty with its attendant frugalities, acknowledges that "men are justified in seeking these good things by their energy, industry, and talents" (39), but that women cannot achieve them by the same means, and, so, are "justified in carrying [their] wares also into the market, and making the most of them" (39)—a recognition that Mrs. Mackenzie (*Miss Mackenzie*) also puts to literal test, when she stands Margaret in the stall at the charity bazaar to remind Ball of his "purchasing" agreement.

Rachel Ray who marry for love but, nonetheless, see clearly the material as well as emotional rewards for marrying a financially stable man. Consequently, Ayala pledges herself once more to her abstract "dream", refusing to be "untrue to her image" (15)—even at the expense of emotional and material comfort with Colonel Stubbs, whom she also loves. Ayala devises a way to be faithful to her dream without giving up the pleasure of his company by telling herself that she is most comfortable when Stubbs is merely friendly rather than loving. Not unlike Alice, who is caught between her ambition and the man before her, Ayala can see no way to face reality without also abandoning her ideal. Nor is she ready to heed the advice of her pragmatic Uncle Tom, who tries to impress upon "Ayala the Romantic" the logic that "romance... won't buy bread and butter" (15). A storybook heroine, Ayala will not compromise the ambition to marry her prince with the mere attraction of daily bread—and its necessary and ugly digestion. She is "The Beauty [who] has always been beloved by the Beast" (7), a different incarnation of which is represented by each suitor, to whom she refuses to "give herself" (15). For instance, Tom is to her "like Bottom with the ass's head, or the Newfoundland dog gambolling out of the water" (7). Stubbs is at first "some great tame dog" (16), and then a "bear who would always behave himself properly" (23). But though she can tolerate Tom only when he keeps his "dog-like gambols at a proper distance" (6), she eventually comes to see Jonathan as the Beast transformed. And like the fictional Beauty who discovers that, beneath the "hideous" surface, her Beast is also her prince, Ayala comes to see that the large-mouthed Stubbs and her Angel are likewise one.

One significant difference between the fairy tale and Ayala's story is that Ayala's Angel is under no spell, but, rather, has been born with unappealing features—a bigger curse in the

natural scheme of things because there can never be any hope of physical change. However, as Ayala and Jonathan's friendship deepens, so does her awareness of the transformation not of Jonathan but of her "image" (12)--for it is she who has insisted on being under the spell of a self-created illusion. Rachel, Alice and Polly are all engaged in negotiations with their suitors and other key characters, and these negotiations are a means of the eventual accordance of both personal and societal ambitions. But as we see here, Ayala's most productive negotiation is with herself. The people before her are less equal participants in arguments or discussions than they are occasions for her introspection. As a result of her thinking, Ayala, like Beauty, comes to recognize the greater and lasting value of inner qualities, and Jonathan's humour and good-nature supplant her previous emphasis on superficialities like euphonious names and conventionally pretty faces. Ayala's eventual "insight" is the same as Polly's: she learns that, in order to achieve her ambition, a woman must rise above and beyond storybook stereotypes, step down from the "castle in the air", and venture into the real world, to see where the object can be found and realized.

Before this can happen, Ayala twice refuses Stubbs' proposal. But even with the refusal on her lips, she recognizes the conflict of her emotions with the "spirit" of her undefined quest for "poetic perfection": "If she could only release part of herself from the other, then could she fly into his arms and tell him that that spirit which had troubled her had flown. But the spirit was too strong for her, and would not fly" (50). As Ayala's battle between head and heart rages, she begins to analyze her response to Stubbs. She wonders "how had it been that she had said, 'I cannot,' so often, when all her heart was set upon 'I can?'" (51). This starts the self-examination which spawns the insight that she not only loves him but that he embodies

her ideal fantasy. Ayala's story is thus like a stripped-down, fantasized version of the stories of Rachel, Alice, and Polly: the achievement of her ambition is a purely mental, internal journey towards self-understanding, and the requisite negotiation with the social environment is played out wholly in her head, as a negotiation with herself. Hence, when the Marchesa Baldoni writes to her from Rome to tell her of her "folly" in rejecting Stubbs, Ayala regards the rebuke as redundant. She knows of Stubbs' "great merit" without being told: "It was of him she had always dreamed even long before she had seen him. He was the man, perfect in all good things, who was to come and take her with him;—if ever man should come and take her" (52).

But even when she recognizes this earthly manifestation of her ideal Angel of Light, she manages to talk herself out of the relationship. Previously, she saw him as too physically ugly to match her ideal image. But once she realizes that he has the requisite angelic attributes, she convinces herself that her two-time refusal has made her "utterly unfit for the angel" (52). In a curious reversal, when the "angel" finally proposes the marriage for which she has been saving herself, Ayala, who thought herself reserved for an angelic union, now doubts her own worthiness: "even when she had not recognised him in time she had been driven by her madness to reject him. The kind of coyness which she had displayed had been the very infatuation of feminine imbecility. It was because nature had made her utterly unfit for such a destiny that she had been driven by coyness and feminine reserve to destroy herself!" (52). Ayala blames "nature"—and more specifically, feminine "coyness" and "reserve" as forces which have driven her to behave so perversely. Having done the unthinkable, she now convinces herself that "there [is] nothing she [can] do to amend her doom" (52). The highly

sensitive Ayala holds herself responsible, and prepares herself for the figurative annihilation of a life without the Angel. The passive voice ("she had been driven") which she uses to "thus...[converse] with herself" suggests her conviction that her "feminine" nature, replete with "imbecility", coyness", and "reserve", is utterly beyond her conscious control. First, the image of the angelic ideal loomed beyond her control; now, the locus of her lack of control is *herself*. And just as her ambition's object was self-generated (the result in part of her father's life and the Bohemianism of South Kensington), this impediment to its attainment is equally self-generated. These are the terms of the purely internal transaction, which Ayala must negotiate to achieve her ambition. She must consciously reconcile internal impulses and images, which she has been consistently inclined to deem unconscious and invisible--and thus, uncontrollable

Thus, only after refusing Stubbs does Ayala acknowledge that she loves him, and, further, that in a union with him, her "theory of life" (5) and its practice can accord. Once she "[tells] herself the truth" of her love for Colonel Stubbs, "the separation [takes] place between herself and the spirit which had haunted her" (51). Interestingly, in *Ayala's Angel*, we do not see the compromise or co-existence of two kinds of responsibility or ambition. Rather, we see the expunging of an abstract and inadequate "feminized" socialization, reminiscent of the vague ambition of Alice Vavasor. Both Ayala and Alice gain sufficient "insight" to see the need for an objective separation to examine this part of themselves from a distance, before re-integrating it. Only after exorcising the abstract, ethereal "spirit" can Ayala finally embark on an actual relationship with a flesh-and-blood man. And a "man" is very different from a "spirit," as Ayala realizes and confesses in a letter to her sister Lucy: "Is it not sweet to have a

man of one's own to love?" (56). The corresponding acknowledgement of her genuine delight in ponies, parties, hunting and other aspects of fashionable life—a delight demonstrated all along, though never understood—enables her to see that she wants not to escape worldly delights, but to "descend from the clouds and to walk the earth" (56).

In her examination of social contracts in *Ayala's Angel*, Coral Lansbury suggests that Ayala accepts Stubbs at last because "society conspires to make Ayala accept the contract of marriage", and that when she does so, "there is still the regret that she may have lost more than she has gained" (189). However, as the novel's ending makes clear, Ayala rids herself of the impediment of her longing for an ineffectual and unintegrated "spirit", but in no way abandons her ambition to marry according to her high standards. To the contrary, the fact that Ayala's satisfaction comes only *after* she recognizes her "Angel" in Jonathan Stubbs suggests the positive effect of female ambition—in this case, having a purpose (even one initially so self-destructive), and then ensuring that life fulfils it. Moreover, her ambition—specifically her self-knowledge and refusal to compromise her standards at the first opportunity—is what makes Ayala desirable to Stubbs. Rather than disparage her for twice refusing him, Colonel Stubbs admits to Lady Albury at Stalham that "I thoroughly respect Miss DormerShe knew her own mind when she told me at first that she could not accept the offer which I did myself the honour of making her, and now she sticks to her purpose. I think that a young lady who will do that will be respected" (51). Moreover, the narrator underlines the essential nature of her ambitions: himself a romantic, the Colonel values Ayala for her dreams,

because "the Ayala whom her lover had loved would not have been an Ayala to be loved by him, but for the dreams" (51).³²

Ayala's Angel makes abundantly clear that ambition, unrealized and indulged as a fantasy, is potentially harmful. To be meaningful, the fantasy must accord with reality, or, in Stephen Wall's term, "coalesce" (275). It must assume an identifiable shape and definition, and take on a socially relevant and tangible status--usually for women through marriage. The mere chimera must not obscure actuality; rather, it should point the way to the actual. As Ayala's happy ending indicates, fantasy can inform even the ordinary milieu of a good day's hunting, a walk in Gobblegoose Wood and a sparkling brook. That the less than mellifluous "Jonathan Stubbs" becomes synonymous with "the Angel of Light" (55) covertly but emphatically stresses the distance traversed by Ayala in achieving her long-awaited ambition. When she meditates on her happiness with Stubbs, she admits that "In the fullness of her dreams there had never been more than the conviction that such a being, and none other, could be worthy of her love Her dreams had been to her a barrier against love rather than an encouragement. But now he that she had in truth dreamed of had come for her....he was in truth the very 'Angel of Light'" (55). As Ayala "our pet heroine" (64) happily summarizes at novel's end, "I wonder whether there is anybody in all the world who has got so completely everything that she ever dreamed of wanting as I have" (64). Her ambition is achieved, she happily recognizes--but only, she admits, after she has learned how to temper "feminine" dreams and behaviours of "coyness" and "imbecility" with the dictates and realities of waking life. And "Poor Tom", like Felix Carbury, sets off on a foreign journey where he can

³² In Trollope's novels, dreams, so long as they are not vulgar, like Lady Carbury's, or ineffectual, like Ralph

nourish his unvanquished fantasies in the company of fawning bellmen, coachmen and restaurateurs.

VI. Conclusion

Seen in these terms, *Ayala's Angel* is a prototype for the other stories describing the need for women to make concrete and earthly their initially amorphous ambitions. Ayala's ambition paints this story in the archetypally "purest" strokes, as is appropriate, given its fairy-tale undertones. At the end of a novel devoted to unrealizable aesthetic beauty, Ayala accepts an ugly man. In a metaphor for the fate of all the women examined in this chapter, the ugly man remains physically ugly--but turns out to be what is necessary for the heroine and her requisite happy ending. At the end of a true fairy tale, the *physical* exterior would somehow be transformed. In the "real world", however, it is the *interior*--that is, an invisible attitude--that must be changed. Embedded in this novelistic variation on a fairy tale is the story of a seemingly unattractive public male world, and how current social education equips women ill for their interaction with it. The dreamy Ayala inhabits an utterly foreign world of male agency and ambition. In the absence of a practical program of concrete activities for accomplishing her goals, she must gain some intangible, even magical, "true insight" in order to be able to reconcile herself with it. While the four novels examined in this chapter depict similar worlds, each of the protagonists gains this "true insight" in a different fashion, though there is no standard way for achieving the final object.

the heir's, or debilitating, like Felix Carbury's, are rarely to be condemned.

Rachel Ray, *Can You Forgive Her?*, and *Ralph the Heir*, all novels of female self-realization, represent more complex variations on the same idea as *Ayala's Angel*. The narrator's comparison of Ayala's "true insight" to Tom's lack of it suggests less that she is "blessed" than that her "insight" is a function of some capacity and some effort at understanding that she exerts. Similarly, Rachel, Alice, and Polly expend the energy to know themselves, and find a way to balance their respective ambitions with the demands of their particular social contexts. This concurrence of self-knowledge among these very different women suggests that "true insight" symbolizes what is typically a hard-fought moment--when a woman sees clearly the intersection and coexistence of her ambition and her society. In Rachel's case, this comes when her negative ambition grows into a focused, responsible ambition, which she achieves successfully--in the "inward-out" manner of an abettor--within both her private domestic sphere and the broader social milieu. For Alice, it is her successful negotiation of the complex transaction between abstract and absolute ambitions ("marriage" or "not-marriage") and a concrete social and personal reality. For Polly, it comes when her "grand passion" becomes a "piece of business" which can serve her needs and those of both ideal and actual father—as she insists.

In all four novels, the final evidence of this "true insight" is the marriage of the protagonist. The happy unions which ensue after significant trauma suggest that successful female ambition is not static but is a process of negotiation with self and society. A woman does not simply and quietly accept an inevitable invisibility. She learns instead to understand herself and her needs, her society and its needs, and the dictates of her local circumstances. Most important of all, the result of her journey is her creation of a vital--but purely individual--way

of blending and serving all of these. There is no formula: Ayala dreaming her way to success is hardly a method to be emulated. And these models provide an optimistic contrast to male ambitions sketched out within the same novels, such as the sterile, often pathetic—and largely futile—aims of Ralph the heir, Mr. Neefit, and Mrs. Prime, who all pursue something wholly outside of the self—to satisfy a (usually) uncomprehended and unexamined need for social, *instead of* personal validation.

For Rachel, Alice, Polly and Ayala, personal validation comes in the form of hard-fought mutual love and commitment—that is, marriage as "life companionship" rather than "trade" (Hamilton 18) and a life as companion, not commodity. As Hamilton asserts in her Preface, "[t]he love of man and woman is, no doubt, a thing of infinite importance" (17)—and one which here justifies the pursuit and fulfilment of female ambitions. But what happens to female characters whose ambitions do *not* work from the domestic sphere outwards—who focus exclusively on masculine goals, such as public power, whether in the form of wealth or status? What happens to women who, to achieve their goals, strike a mercenary bargain, failing to see, as Polly so clearly does, that the woman is *both* commodity and purchaser? In the following chapter, I consider unsuccessful female ambition, and, more specifically, the effects of a woman deploying commercial strategies to "sell herself in marriage" in order to achieve her goals.

Chapter 4: "They Are Most Happy Who Have No Story to Tell": Unsuccessful Female Ambition

I. Introduction

As I show in Chapter 3, successful female ambition in Trollope's fiction is the process of translating an initially abstract or intangible desire into concrete reality through thoughtful, sometimes difficult--and often combative--negotiation. Trollope's novels endorse the often-stated view that "Love should be Lord of all" (*Eustace Diamonds* 13), and the successful achievement of a woman's ambition is usually an act of arbitration in service of this end. By wrestling with a particular permutation of "love", a woman can first gain mastery of the domestic sphere-- from where, it is typically implied, her ambition can then work its way into the "real" world outside the home.

A marriage without love implies the subordination of emotional to economic needs. And Trollope's novels suggest that by marrying a man she cares (or knows) little about, a woman forfeits the right to express her will within the marriage. When a woman enters marriage with a view of it as a necessary social transaction, she makes herself, as Cicely Hamilton argues, a mere object of "trade". This is the case with Lizzie Greystock (*The Eustace Diamonds* (1873)), Lady Laura Kennedy (*Phineas Finn* (1869)), Ralph Newton³¹ (*Ralph the Heir* (1871)) and Emily Trevelyan (*He Knew He Was Right* (1869)). All are, at some point, poor, and feel themselves compelled to marry for simple economic survival. Once an object is sold

³¹As I will show, Ralph Newton, the "heir" of the novel's title, is feminized to the point of being seen as a woman. And his final entrapment in marriage to the masculinized Gus [sic] Eardham only emphasizes his

at market--whether this object is a person or a thing makes little difference--the purchaser assumes that he (I use the masculine pronoun deliberately) is entitled to full rights of ownership. Thus, there are obvious consequences when these characters sell themselves into marriage through straightforward barter (cash for marriage)--foregoing entirely the kind of forthright negotiation undertaken by the characters featured in Chapter 3.

In this chapter, I examine the failure to negotiate honestly with either one's social context or husband-- and the price paid by one's ambitions for this willing (often wilful) collaboration in the commodification of self. All four novels under discussion suggest that unsuccessful ambitions are rooted in two things: the failure of an individual to impose or observe societal limitations, and the desire for external renown and "real" power without the prerequisite domestic base which entitles a Mrs. Cornbury or Mrs. Mackenzie to sally forth and exercise suasion in the public sphere. And the typical consequence, it seems, is the forfeiture of *all* "visibility": a woman may achieve her economic goals, but this happens at the expense of all other ambitions. The absorption of Lizzie, Laura, Ralph and Emily within their marriages at the end of these novels suggests that a woman's individual ambition must be a part of the negotiation of the marriage contract *prior* to the wedding. Otherwise, she consigns herself to the invisibility of the domestic sphere and the "self-annihilation" that Alice Vavasor and prudent women like her seek to--and manage--to evade.

II. The Pursuit of "Higher Ideas": Lizzie's Ambition in *The Eustace Diamonds*:

Lizzie Eustace is a character so unlike other women in Trollope's fiction (including the figures I have dealt with in Chapters 2 and 3) that critical studies examining women in Trollope rarely treat her as a central figure in her own right.² The mercenary protagonist of *The Eustace Diamonds* is the most notorious Trollopian example of a woman whose dominant ambition is the acquisition of social status, and whose means to this end is the calculated use of her "charms" to engineer advantageous liaisons. Lizzie is not an Alice or a Polly, with an unformed or ambiguous ambition which she must flesh out within her specific social milieu. Lizzie has quite precise and tangible ambitions from the start: first, to retain her acquisitions (a diamond necklace); and second, to find a husband ("husband" being simply another item on a long list of acquisitions). Lizzie's avarice, represented by her false claim on the Eustace diamonds, is single-minded. Her wish is solely--and simply--to keep what she has, whether this be a piece of jewellery or a human being-- and to keep it on her own terms. Whereas successful female ambition navigates a thoughtful alignment of private desires with public propriety, Lizzie's ambition is rooted in the disjuncture of her personal desires and social needs. But her eventual marriage to the socially dubious Mr. Emilius—an inevitably unhappy one, it would seem--is indirectly contrived by "the world" that she tries to bend to her needs. In the end, she is *forced*—at the expense of her own desires—to acknowledge society and account for her place within it.

²Deborah Denenholz Morse calls *The Eustace Diamonds* "that anomalous work" (2), and chooses to exclude it from her study, *Women in Trollope's Palliser Novels*. Nardin includes it in her examination of independent women in *He Knew She Was Right*, but focuses exclusively on Lucy Morris. Her consideration of *The Eustace Diamonds* in *Trollope and Victorian Moral Philosophy* includes a discussion of Lizzie, but within the larger concern of "the Lizzie-Lucy-Lucinda equation" (48) in the society depicted in the novel. However, Juliet McMaster's examination of the underlying theme of truth places an implicit focus on Lizzie, the novel's

Lizzie's pathological attachment, literal and figurative, to the diamonds associates her with them. Their marketability parallels Lizzie's own, and her declining value as a potential wife becomes analogous to the ebbing worth of the diamonds themselves. Most Trollope novels take their titles from names of people or places. *The Eustace Diamonds* is a rare exception where the title refers to an inanimate object. This implies the central importance of the diamonds, an importance which extends beyond their symbolic and monetary value and the fact that Lizzie attaches a greater importance to them than to herself. Lizzie orders an iron box in which to keep "her" diamonds safe, and "clings" to it with such a compulsive, perverse tenacity that it becomes difficult to dissociate owner from owned: "In her sobbing she felt the thing under her feet, and knew she could not get rid of it. She hated the box, and yet she must cling to it now. She was thoroughly ashamed of the box, and yet she must seem to take a pride in it. She was horribly afraid of the box, and yet she must keep it in her own very bed-room" (20). The necklace seems to assume a life of its own, until it presses on Lizzie like an unbearable but relentless "load upon her chest" (20). In his examination of sex scandal in *The Eustace Diamonds*, William A. Cohen sees the iron box as a metaphor for female genitalia, a "repository for patrilineal property, whose traditional purpose is to transfer property between men of different generations" (163). His Freudian substitutive logic is compelling, particularly in the light of Lizzie's insistence, during her trip to Portray Castle, on keeping the box under her skirt, and the key to it around her neck, under her bodice and next to her skin.

However, textual implications of the confluence of Lizzie's prospects with those of the necklace suggest that the purloined diamonds also represent Lizzie herself. This suggestion is made from the novel's first chapter when the narrator reveals that Lizzie's fondness for gems dates from childhood: "[she] went about everywhere with jewels on her fingers, and red gems hanging round her neck, and yellow gems pendent from her ears and white gems shining in her black hair" (1). As the child uses these jewels for almost compulsive self-adornment, so, too, does the adult: Lizzie promotes her "wares" openly by displaying her "various charms--the pawned jewels included" to snare a husband. The well-adorned Lizzie does not so much extract an offer of marriage from Sir Florian as "bring him to [it]" (1)--a phrase clearly connoting manipulation.³ And as the novel progresses, it is clear that Lizzie's matrimonial strategem is to enhance and dazzle with a diamond's "outward shows"--not to negotiate usefully the "inward facts" (14) of her ambitions.⁴

³Having obtained this offer, Lizzie has the pawnbroker, Mr. Benjamin, promptly forward Eustace the bill. In her discussion of the novel, Juliet McMaster compares Sir Florian's resulting distress with that of a "landed fish...if he received a bill for the bait" (*Palliser Novels* 97). Sir Florian falls prey to the trap of Lizzie's ambition, and makes good his escape only through his early and premature death, but not before "he [knows] what his wife [is]" (*Eustace* 1).

⁴By contrast to the desperate Lizzie, Mary Bonner, the orphaned and penniless niece of Sir Thomas Underwood in *Ralph the Heir*, approaches marriage as the fulfilment of her "ambition". For her, marriage is not a goal in itself, but a means through which she hopes consciously and deliberately "to win by her beauty" not merely a provider, but "some man whom she could love" (15). She knows that only through a marriage of love and mutual desire can she achieve "those good things of which she was so destitute" (15). "She d[oes] not lack ambition", the narrator explains, "and ha[s] her high hopes, grounded on the knowledge of her own charms" (15). Mary knows her attributes: "Her beauty, and a certain sufficiency of intellect" (15). But she also knows that "she must use them honestly, and when she ought to refrain from using them" (15). Mary's self-defined sense of restraint implies that the greatest potential for a woman's success resides in her ability--innate or eventual--to impose limits on herself, and more specifically, the ways in which she might use her "gifts". She well knows the potential of her "charms" for achieving her hopes, but intuits the "honest" or appropriate use of her "beauty" and "intellect", and governs herself according to this invisible network of social discipline. Paradoxically, these limits make the achievement of the ambition of a loving marriage possible for her. She knows that in order to attract such a lover, she "must" and "ought" to impose on herself principles of fairness and "honesty". By setting her own limits, she can remain confident both of the value of the charms on which her ambition is "grounded"--and of the corresponding probability of the complete attainment of her purpose of love and home. Thus armed, she can refuse the spurious claims of the unambitious and complacent heir who derives

The depreciation of the diamonds is paralleled by Lizzie's own in the marriage market. When Lizzie stakes her claim to the diamonds, she throws into question their value and legal status. Mr. Camperdown asserts and society believes that the piece is an "heirloom", a patriarchal vehicle of "primogeniture". The contrary Lizzie claims that it was a gift from her husband, and is thus a part of her personal property, legally termed "paraphernalia". Mr. Dove's opinion is sought to settle the matter, and he reveals that the necklace cannot be claimed as an heirloom because it cannot, with any certainty, "be maintained in its original form". He explains that the necklace is

not only alterable, but constantly altered, and cannot easily be traced....Heirlooms have become so, not that the future owners of them may be assured of so much wealth, whatever the value of the thing so settled may be,--but that the son or grandson or descendant may enjoy the satisfaction which is derived from saying, my father or my grandfather or my ancestor sat in that chair, or looked as he now looks in that picture, or was graced by wearing on his breast that very ornament which you now see lying beneath the glass. (28)

The value of an heirloom rests precisely in its inherently original, immutable state, which simultaneously deprives it of an easily determinable monetary value.⁴ It is in one sense

his sense of worth solely from his inherited wealth, to accept instead the thwarted heir, who, deprived of his inheritance, teaches himself to convert his disappointment by buying a modest farm and working on it to create a home. Unlike Mary, Lizzie's refusal to impose limits and her desire to defy society's expectations lead to her suppression at novel's end.

⁴In her consideration of the Palliser series as "proto roman fleuve", Lynette Felber points out the recurring motif of heirlooms in the series, beginning in *The Eustace Diamonds*. In *Phineas Redux*, Madame Goesler refuses the old Duke's legacy of pearls and diamonds, which pass instead to his niece Adelaide Palliser, and thus remain a family heirloom—a symbol of heritage and connection. In *The Duke's Children*, Palliser, now

invaluable, but in another *without value*, since it cannot be sold—which is the first reason that Lizzie, despite her insistence on the technicality of a £10,000 price, can never sell it to alleviate her debts. In short, as part of a family's history, an "heirloom" is out of circulation, a factor that only increases its worth.⁵ Because the necklace is mutable, however, Mr. Dove rules that it can be considered "paraphernalia belonging to her station" (25)—and a price can be attached to this. However, Mr. Dove also rules that Lizzie would find it impossible to sell the necklace: paradoxically, her insistence that the diamonds were a gift from her "dear husband" precludes their sale by ascribing to them a (fictitious) sentimental value which grants them the very status of heirloom that she has attempted to subvert.

In coveting the diamonds as an object, Lizzie makes herself into an object. Her original theft robs the diamonds of their status as priceless heirloom and reduces them to a mere necklace. In her similar singleminded quest to snare a husband, regardless of propriety,⁶ she objectifies

Duke of Omnium, welcomes Silverbridge's fiancée Isabel Boncassen into the family by giving her a diamond ring that belonged to Lady Glencora. The Duke's tribute is particularly touching because, as Felber says, it signifies "an acceptance won with difficulty only after she convinces him that she will not marry Silverbridge unless she is willingly received by the British aristocracy" (40). However, Mabel Grex's inept acceptance of the gift of a diamond ring from Silverbridge is an emblem of her likewise clumsy handling of his proposal: she leaves it on a bench after she exacts it from him. The novel suggests that her spinster fate and the crumbling Grex heritage are rooted in part in her ineffective handling of Silverbridge's suit, a "prize" she literally lets "[slip] from her through her own fault" (*Duke's* 77).

⁵Cohen discusses this idea of circulation in relation to Lizzie's "sexual property", the release of herself into the marriage market, and her ultimate doom as a result of overcirculation among too many "bidders" (169).

⁶In the world of the Trollope novel, a common standard of "morality" by which to judge the characters is typically established through some sort of tension, for example, between the two extremes that Kincaid terms "empiricism" and "moral purism" (*Novels* 14). Kincaid revises Ruth apRoberts' claim of Trollope's "flexible morality" or "Situation Ethics" (*Moral Trollope* 52) and suggests the moral code of Trollope's novels

rests on a belief in truth and the reflection of truth in behaviour, honesty.... While it cannot be denied that the novels act to make such assertions more complex, the absolute standard never disappears.... Trollope's method and morality, then, appear very much tied to situations, but only because situations test and make solid an ethical code that would otherwise remain abstract and superficial. The situations can diversify, even break, codes, but the codes derive

herself, stripping herself of the meaningful relationship to family and society--and the associated value--which she could gain through marriage. The association of Lizzie with the diamonds extends the woman-as-commodity idea in the novel.⁷

Lizzie's approach to marriage is her analogous—and equally unsuccessful—attempt to refashion a venerable institution along the "paraphernalia" model. The only time she wears the diamonds in public (at Lady Glencora's party), she does so to assert her claim to what she insists is her property--and she thinks of marriage as a similar vehicle for self-assertion. But marriage is a social institution, one governed by the "heirloom" codes of tradition and inheritance. The value of Lucy's devotion to Frank, which is "maintained in its original form" throughout the novel, is validated by their marriage at novel's end, a result that emphasizes the personal and social benefits of her integrity and that of the marriage-institution. The implications of Lizzie's constancy not to a man but a necklace, are likewise borne out by her loss of both necklace and lover of choice. Her claim to the Eustace diamonds as her personal

always from a civilized base independent of the situations. (14-6)

In Kincaid's view, "morality" in Trollope's novels is tied to "truth" and a character's adherence to it. In a related analysis, Cohen elaborates on Kincaid's argument to say,

Even if...truth is imagined as a mutable social construction dependent on opinion, for the purposes of the enclosing narrative, such truth is understood to be absolute and determinable. The novel, that is to say, accommodates two conflicting models of truth-construction, one roughly identified with the plot, the other with the narrative voice....[W]hile the plot locates truth in the market place of opinion, like paraphernalia, the guiding narrative consciousness registers it outside of exchange, in a realm of immutable value, like the heirloom. (185)

Both Kincaid's and Cohen's rationales find cogent expression in Lizzie's aversion to and revision of truth in *The Eustace Diamonds*. What I am demonstrating in this chapter is the way the social machinery compels Lizzie inexorably to account for her mercenary attempts to defy "truth".

⁷Cohen also discusses the "woman-as-jewel" (176) idea in the novel as a theme conveyed through the "correlation between women's sexuality and objects of material value" (175). I would like to expand on Cohen's premise, and suggest that the correlation is not limited to the depiction of female sexuality but extends to the Victorian feminine ideal through the subtle linking of precious gems and women: Lucy Morris is a "real stone" while Lizzie is "paste" (65). Lizzie is hostess to Mrs. "Carbuncle" and Mrs. "Garnett".

property ("They are my own", she asserts repeatedly) disconnects them from the Eustace estate--and this is a precise metaphor for the effects of marriage on her. Lizzie attempts to segregate herself from society (as her attempted isolation of herself with Romantic poetry implies), and live her life with consideration of only her own desires. And this selfishness and failure to negotiate mean that, instead of connecting her to tradition and inheritance, her final marriage to Emilius becomes a transaction that cuts her off from them.

And all of the implications of being paraphernalia attach to Lizzie as well.⁸ The eventual fate of the diamonds is instructive. As a result of their notoriety--as an heirloom "stolen" first by Lizzie "as a pickpocket steals a watch" (28), and second by actual thieves--the Eustace diamonds cannot be sold on the market as they are, but must be broken up and altered, their original form deleted. But even after the iron box is "stolen", the diamonds must remain in her custody, though, in order to deflect accusations of perjury, she must conceal them, never again to flaunt what is now deemed "stolen". Ironically, this necessary erasure is rooted in their release from fixed status (as the "Eustace diamonds", heirloom) into the unstable diamond market, transferred from Lizzie to her maid Patience Crabstick, to professional thieves (Smiler and Cann), and finally to the instigator, Mr. Benjamin the pawnbroker, who exports and re-cuts them for sale--and makes prophetic Lizzie's flippant claim, "[a]fter all, a necklace is only a necklace" (53). In her attempts to manipulate marriage for her own ends,

⁸Lizzie, like the necklace with its status as changeable "paraphernalia", is equally mutable. Lizzie, the narrator reveals in the second chapter, is characterized by her dexterity. She can assume the voice, manner and attitude necessary to showcase herself on any occasion. Moreover, the narrator calls attention to the "almost snake-like" quality to Lizzie "in her rapid bendings and the almost too easy gestures of her body" (2). Lizzie is not only mutable, but has made it her business to exercise her flexibility to gain optimal advantage. Lizzie's primary tool is the "bending" of herself to suit her audience.

Lizzie makes herself, like the diamonds-as-paraphernalia, subject to forced change from without. This is clearly suggested by her marriage to Emilius, a marriage which she sees as a “necessity” (79). Though she tells herself that “she might be sure, almost sure, of dictating her own terms as to settlement” (79), this does not happen. Lizzie herself never realizes the financial value of the broken-up diamonds, nor, it seems clear, will she gain access in her marriage to resources equal to her own “cash value”. Indeed, her final fate seems likely to resemble that of the diamonds: a complete disappearance into invisibility.

In a literal demonstration of marriage-as-transaction and woman-as-commodity,⁹ the initially-impoorished and orphaned Lizzie goes about marriage as the business of securing her financial future. But Lizzie is no Polly Neefit. Polly might refer to her engagement to Ontario as the completion of “a piece of business that ha[s] to be done someday” (*Ralph* 48), but Polly is an heiress with modest ambitions, who need not marry solely for economic survival. Polly’s “piece of business” is the thoughtful investment of her emotional welfare in the one man whom she loves, and her simultaneous refusal to be bartered by her father to someone else. Lizzie, on the other hand, sees love and marriage as different things which do not necessarily coincide. She approaches her first marriage from a more opportunistic and urgent standpoint. She needs financial security, and so deploys a variety of strategies to “seal the

⁹In *Women and Work* (1856), Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon defends everyone’s right to work, and attacks the patriarchal structure by stating, “Fathers have no right to cast the burden of support of their daughters on other men. It lowers the dignity of women; and tends to prostitution, whether legal or in the streets” (41). Victorian-born Cicely Hamilton agrees, claiming that a woman has no choice but to submit herself to the “commercialism imposed on her by her economic needs” and, moreover, “since by her wares she lives—she has a perfect right to cry those wares and seek to push them to the best advantage” (37). However, Lizzie’s fate suggests that a woman must not be blatant about touting her wares, but must do so implicitly. Lizzie attempts her self-promotion in the same crass, public manner as Mr. Neefit, and fails inevitably.

deal" with Sir Florian as quickly as possible.

Her plans for a second marriage do arise out of "some dream of being in love" (2): "She had a grand *idea*...of surrendering herself and all her possessions to a *great passion*. For Florian Eustace she had never cared....Now she desired to be so in love that she could surrender everything to her love" (5, emphasis added). This is an idea which reality fails to accommodate: "There was as yet nothing of such love in her bosom. She had seen no one who had so touched her. But she was alive to the romance of *the thing*, and was in love with the *idea* of being in love" (5, emphasis added). Lizzie's object is "the idea of being in love," not an object for her love, making her a direct contraction of the women in Chapter 3 each of whom comes to grips with specific "real men" and her precise social circumstances. Lizzie's desire, similar to that which Ayala Dormer, another Shelleyan high-born idealist, ultimately teaches herself to modify, is to surrender herself not to a great person, but a great "passion"--a purely theoretical concept.¹⁰ But even abstraction competes unsuccessfully with the more compelling and tangible reality of the necklace, and her desire to retain it.¹¹ Lizzie's inability

¹⁰While Ayala reconciles her abstraction with the real world through careful self-analysis, Lizzie attempts to force vagaries in her determination to make "something" out of nothing. In short, Lizzie does not reconcile her poetic dreams with the real world, but tries to use poetry to remove herself from society rather than attempt to work within it. Yet, her fierce attempts to retain control over her money indicate her awareness of worldly matters, and make her claims of poetic dreams, charming in Ayala, seem like mere posturing.

Further, Lizzie's ambition for a "great passion" is markedly different from a woman like Polly Neeft's ultimately successful aspiration. Polly is too self-assured to allow herself to fall victim to an "idea" solely for its own sake. For her, a "grand passion" must have the potential to develop into a real, mutually satisfying relationship in order for her even to consider it. But Lizzie's ambition devolves from an attempt at self-preservation, and, so, comes to preclude love, with tragic consequences for her.

¹¹ Lizzie is always more mercenary than poetical: this is the reason that Shelley's *Queen Mab* enraptures her, but Tennyson's moral poem *The Holy Grail* merely puzzles her. For a detailed discussion of the theme of "truth" and of literary allusions in the novel, see Juliet McMaster's *Palliser Novels* 78-102. McMaster also provides a close analysis of the novel's variation on the paired-heroine convention and the

to abandon her "plunder" demonstrates a miser mentality that carries over to her inability to surrender "herself".¹² Where Polly Neeft's "grand passion" modulates to include the domestic sphere, Lizzie simply revises her goal to someone—anyone-- who will be her ally in retaining the necklace. And in this goal, she pursues her "business" through the public display of her "charms". She eschews the manner of "cunning extraction" (11) that Planty Pall considers for his daughter in *The Duke's Children* for a calculated and voracious commercialism. Needing more a cohort than lover, Lizzie finds that she has a choice of two men for her hand. She engages herself to the impecunious Lord Fawn,¹³ who will give her respectability, but is attracted to her cousin and Lucy Morris' fiancé, Frank Greystock, who will satisfy her emotional needs.

In her efforts to be all-sufficient, Lizzie refuses both the example and the physical aid of abettors. The narrator describes Lizzie's success up to Sir Florian's death as that of a hitherto lucky gambler: "She had so far played her game well, and had won her stakes" (1). In the terms of Trollope's novels, such gambling would seem not a feminine, but a masculine activity--and a mean and ignoble one at that. Because of its uncertain outcome and generally public nature, it is at odds with the quiet accretion of power within the domestic sphere and the subsequent "invisible" exercise of power in the public sphere which are modelled by

ways in which Lizzie and Lucy are shaped by their literary prototypes, particularly Amelia and Becky (*Vanity Fair*), and Una and Duessa (*The Faerie Queene* I).

¹²The final irony of the plot is that Lizzie must surrender everything, herself included, to the marital authority of the Rev. Emilius, a probable Jew and loathsome pretender to clerical dignity who might have slithered out of *The Way We Live Now*.

¹³Though Lizzie considers Lord Fawn to be "as stupid as an owl" (8), she accepts his proposal--which she initiates--for the mercenary logic that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" (8).

heroines with successful ambitions, as well as by prominent abettors.¹⁴ Lizzie declines actively several offers of female mediation. For instance, she refuses her kindly aunt Mrs. Greystock's invitation to live with her family at Bobsborough,¹⁵ as well as "little efforts at friendship" (1) by her three cousins. Lizzie chooses instead to live with Lady Linlithgow, the aunt she hates, but whose house "in town" is more strategic for effecting Lizzie's "higher ideas" of settling herself (1). Her rejection of female intercession and friendship means that she never benefits from the prudence of a Mrs. Mackenzie, whose comic, benign and momentary "display" of Margaret Mackenzie in the Negro Soldiers' Orphan Bazaar differs radically from the crass Lizzie's hawking of her goods in the marriage marketplace in hopes of attracting the highest purchaser. Whereas Mrs. Mackenzie engineers for Margaret a strategic moment of visibility in a *literal* market--to remind Ball metaphorically to complete the "transaction" he has initiated--Lizzie, in a perversion of Mrs. Mackenzie's ingenious ploy, exhibits herself in a figurative stall for the consideration of several "buyers" (Fawn, Greystock, and Carruthers) over a prolonged period--and thereby devalues herself through

¹⁴In keeping with this, from the start the narrator persistently renders Lizzie's ambition in masculine terms. The narrator ponders Lizzie's reaction to her husband's death thus: "What regrets, what remorse she suffered when she knew that he was gone, who can say? *A man* is never strong enough to take unmixed delight in good, so may we presume also that *he* cannot be quite so weak as to find perfect satisfaction in evil" (1, emphasis added). When generalizing about those in Lizzie's circumstances, the narrator uses the words "a man" and "he", terms which are jarring in the discussion of this beautiful woman. The sudden--and seemingly unconscious--shift in genders from the feminine to the masculine seems to betray the narrator's perception of Lizzie as explicitly unfeminine and unwomanly. But this mistake is not the same as Mr. Tappitt's momentary (and comically inept) losing sight of Mrs. Cornbury's gender. Mrs. Cornbury is so efficient in successfully managing masculine public activities while maintaining a pretext of feminine invisibility that she blurs Tappitt's vision. Lizzie's ruthless ambition to secure her future seems so masculine that it is as if she *were* a man: the narrator does not so much change her gender in the midst of his musings as more accurately describe it. Thus, the narrator presents Lizzie as an object lesson of sorts for both the male and female genders.

¹⁵Ironically, Mrs. Greystock is also shown as plotting to "sell" her son to the highest bidder, a way of suggesting, perhaps, that while the Lizzies of the world behave in an egregious way, their notion of life is shared by those in the "respectable" classes.

overexposure.

References to trade and commerce abound in the novel, particularly the recurrent word "value". These suggest emphatically that Lizzie's fate is determined by her "value" in the public sphere as both a woman and a subject of notoriety. From the start, we see Lizzie described in terms of the social currency of stock and commodity. As the novel progresses, Lizzie's declining value in the marriage market is proportional to the increasing demand for her story in the newspapers. It is important that the diamonds are made famous by the notoriety of Lizzie's appropriation of them, rather than their beauty. The one time she wears them, "The diamonds [are] recognised by many before she [reaches] the drawing-room;--not that these very diamonds [are] known, or that there [is] a special memory for that necklace;--but the subject [has] been so generally discussed, that the blaze of the stones immediately [brings] it to the minds of men and women" (17). Like the diamonds, Lizzy assumes a public importance simply because she is "generally discussed", not because there is a "special memory" or value for her. The public exposure of Lizzie's private life is a clear violation of the rule that suasion must be rooted in the domestic sphere. Without a solid basis in the invisible sphere, it is of little surprise that Lizzie eventually loses the ability simply to be of interest (let alone to exert power over) the "real" world.

The diamonds are the basis for the bulk of the plot, but since they serve a greater figurative than literal function, spend most of their time appropriately offstage. The necklace itself is less significant than Lizzie's complicity in its disappearance, the rendering non-existent of

something which is substantial and integrated into an existing family structure. As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, the greatest accomplishment of a woman in Trollope's novels is her ability to make something out of nothing: most significant, a home and family, and from them, personal relationships that she shapes, supports, sustains and nurtures. This is the real power wielded by the socially revered Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie. However, Lizzie inverts the social equation: she takes something tangible and institutional, and turns it into nothing. And as a haphazard gambler, she pursues her repetitive relationships simultaneously, and loses each bet more quickly than the last. By contrast, Lucy Morris' progress with Frank might be slow to develop and even slower to flourish, but Lucy succeeds because she remains constant: "it [does] not occur to her that...she [is] doomed to fail. She [is] too strong-hearted for any such fear" (7). Lucy is characterized by "a reality and a truth which... [make] themselves known...as firm *rocks* which [can] not be shaken" (13, emphasis added).¹⁶ Consequently, the steadfast Lucy achieves her ambition of a life with Frank through a constant, "feminine tenderness", and unspoilt "simplicity" which are guarantors of her future effectiveness in the domestic sphere.

Like the changeable diamonds, Lizzie is not "firm". According to the Victorian feminine ideal, a woman is most attractive to a man if she is deemed pristine: both sexually and in

¹⁶Lucy's constancy is tested by Lizzie's attempt to buy Lucy's conspiracy with a hundred guinea brooch—a mercenary and mercantile gesture that results in Lucy's complete rejection of Lizzie. Cohen interprets Lizzie's attempted bribery as a bid to "infect Lucy with an imagination of both jewels and feminine wiles as commodities" (171). Another interpretation of the abortive bribery is Lizzie's attempt to increase her "stakes" in her gamble for a respectable marriage, an approach to life and love that differs radically from Lucy's. The penurious Lucy's ability to withstand the jewel, and thus the commercial tactics that Lizzie employs, emphasizes Lucy's reliance on the traditional domestic (and idealized) values that constitute her aspirations.

every other way. Unlike Lucy's, Lizzie's modesty is contrived, and revealed to be so when her indecorous behaviour comes to light. Victorian women were warned against the impropriety of "fastness", a phenomenon gaining in popularity in English society of the 1860's. According to Michael Mason's *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*, "fast-ness" most damaging to marriageable women includes being "uninhibited in talk", being "daringly intimate with slightly or casually known members of the other sex",¹⁷ and engaging in extreme flirtation which becomes a "kind of simulacrum of courtship ('half-courtship', 'playing at lovers')" (120). Lizzie is guilty on all counts, especially the last. That her scheme backfires demonstrates the tacit imperative that a young (and presumably sexually experienced) widow, if she wishes to (re)marry well, should subscribe to the same dictates of social propriety as an unmarried woman like Lucy.¹⁸

¹⁷One subtle insinuation of Lizzie's "fast-ness" is the popular use of her first name. According to Victorian social propriety, men and women would address one another by first name only when their relationship had ripened into an intimacy about to be consummated by a marriage proposal. Otherwise, the use of first name would imply inappropriate levels of familiarity. Thus, in *Rachel Ray*, Luke Rowan's easy and unconscious use of "Rachel" at their first meeting in the churchyard leaves Rachel feeling an almost sexual sensation "as painful as it was delicious" (3). And Phineas Finn feels immediately uneasy when the married Laura Kennedy once calls him "Phineas". He knows "she would [not] have done so now in her husband's presence" (*Phineas* 32). Here, the common use of "Lizzie"—not only a first name but a diminutive—rather than by her title "Lady Eustace," indicates a familiarity that is implicitly suspect, and provides tacit validation of rumours of Lizzie's transgressive nature: "'Lizzie' as she was not uncommonly called by people who had hardly ever seen her,—had something amiss with it all. 'I don't know where it is she's lame,' said that very clever man... 'but she don't go flat all round'" (17).

¹⁸In *Promises Broken: Courtship, Class, and Gender in Victorian England*, Ginger S. Frost points out that this sexual double standard was by no means consistent during the nineteenth century: "The insistence that women were responsible for their own chastity ...lessened steadily as the century wore on....This is not to say, of course, that purity in the female sex was not important; most of the attributes of womanliness were related to it. But manliness involved chastity, too" (45). Mrs. Hittaway relies on the stereotypical double standard to convince her mother, Lady Fawn, of Frank Greystock's impropriety with Lizzie: "There used to be a sort of feeling that if a man behaved badly something would be done to him; but that's all over now.... The men have to marry, and what one girl loses another girl gets" (60). Although Greystock is tempted by Lizzie, his eventual ability to pledge himself to the chaste Lucy is proof of a fundamentally virtuous (though fallible) character. The narrator's generalized address to the reader in chapter 35 also emphasizes this idea: "The true picture of life as it is, if it could be adequately painted, would show men what they are, and how they might rise, not, indeed, to perfection, but one step first, and then another on the ladder."

Jane Nardin suggests that Lizzie is "a product of the commodification to which all the novel's women are subjected".¹⁹ In Nardin's view, "To sell her beauty is Lizzie's only chance for success. But in order to sell it, she must pretend that she is giving it away" (*Victorian Moral Philosophy* 45). What is important to see is that Lizzie commodifies herself and does so flagrantly. While Lucy refuses to be devalued, Lizzie has no difficulty or hesitation living in a world of commodification. One overt tactic is Lizzie's reception "with no hesitation" (53) of Greystock and Emilius while she is in bed, wearing only "perhaps some pretty covering to her shoulders" (53). Her justification, "[w]hat [is] one man in her bedroom more than another?" (53), resembles closely the attitude which she expresses towards the Eustace diamonds in the same chapter: "a necklace is only a necklace" (53). The interchangeability of men—like the interchangeability of diamonds—underlines how, to Lizzie, the world is a market. All is commodity--subject to a price, and therefore capable of replacement by another item of similar price.

Having been left penniless at nineteen, Lizzie knows that marriage is an upper-class woman's only chance of economic survival because "[m]arried life is a woman's profession" (Warren 70).²⁰ Yet the dilemma is that a woman should actively seek marriage while seeming

¹⁹Of all the women in the novel, Lucinda Roanoke is paraded most literally in the marriage market, and her aunt Mrs. Carbuncle's attempt to exact sufficient "toll from the tax-payers of society" (65) demonstrates most emphatically the idea of female commodification. Mrs. Carbuncle "venture[s] to suggest in plain words that a cheque [is] the most convenient cadeau" (65), and solicits cash as "tribute" (65) for the bride-to-be. In the end, Lucinda's revulsion against her fiancé Sir Griffin is so acute that she goes insane, and refuses to marry him or anyone else, withdrawing herself from both the market and conventional society altogether.

²⁰ In *How I Managed My Children from Infancy to Marriage*, Eliza Warren advises young women never to "know from experience what flirting means. It is destruction to a girl. No man cares to marry a flirt, whose modesty has exhaled, and whose purity is smirched by levity of manner" (70). And yet a girl raised in a

indifferent to it. One way to facilitate such desires would be to accept female mediation by a socially respected abettor figure. Rejecting this, Lizzie commodifies herself: she is merchandise and visible self-promoter in one. By pursuing her "profession" in so blatant a fashion, Lizzie makes herself visible at the wrong time and to the wrong audience. The narrator points this out when Frank, repelled by Lizzie's overt gesture of love, is compelled to reject it:

It is inexpressably difficult for a man to refuse the tender of a woman's love. We may almost say that a man should do so as a matter of course,—that the thing so offered becomes absolutely valueless by the offer,—that the woman who can make it has put herself out of court by her own abandonment of the privileges due to her as a woman,—that stern rebuke and even expressed contempt are justified by such conduct,—and that the fairest beauty and most alluring charms of feminine grace should lose their attraction when thus tendered openly in the market. (53)

What makes a woman enticing is her apparent unattainability²¹: Lizzie's open offer in the "market" is all too explicit, making her all too attainable. And this is the case right to the novel's end, when Emilius courts Lizzie while reading poetry at her bedside (79). Mason

middle or upper class family knows that attracting a good man is essential to her economic and social wellbeing, for failure to find a suitable match also means ostracism, as Warren also indicates: "Married life is woman's profession: and to this her training—that of dependence—is modelled. Of course by not getting a husband, or losing him, she may find that she is without resources. All that can be said of her is, she has failed in business" (70). Lizzie's final fate bears out Warren's caveat: "People" call Lizzie a "flirt" (17), no desirable man cares to marry her, and her ultimate marriage to Emilius is, the narrator indicates, a certain "failure" in Lizzie's "business" prospects.

²¹Sir Griffin demonstrates this truism repeatedly; he becomes "determined" to marry Lucinda Roanoke only when he thinks she might elude him: "when the prize seem[s] to be lost, it again becomes valuable" (50). Only when Lucinda rejects him outright does he regain his determination to marry her.

states that "[f]ast behaviour" of the kind that Lizzie demonstrates can be "interpreted...as a kind of advertising for marriage" (121). The faithful Lucy's quiet adherence to a domestic ideal (her fidelity to Frank in the face of opposition and her undeviating belief in his integrity) and her maintenance of an impression of invisibility lead directly—albeit slowly—to her marriage to Frank. Lizzie defies this domestic ideal openly, and pays a clear price in her failure to achieve her ambitions.

The notion of fast behaviour as "advertising for marriage" is particularly pertinent to *The Eustace Diamonds* in the light of the series of newspaper articles about the robbery (and by extension Lizzie) which are central to the plot. *Matrimonial News*, the first periodical devoted to marriage advertisements, began a long publication history in 1870. Contemporary attitudes to advertising for a husband indicated that "just as the probity of the literal advertising was doubted ('do all these notices point to something which is not exactly marriage?'), so the [fast] behaviour...was compared to, and even attributed to, the example of prostitution and courtesanship" (Mason 121). The "process of matrimonial self-publicizing" (Mason 121) is particularly relevant to Lizzie, given the expedient use she makes of media representation of the effects of the robbery on her. Lizzie cares nothing about the domestic ideal Mrs. Mackenzie espouses to John Ball when he admits to his fear of public opinion prompted by Mr. Maguire's Lion and Lamb articles. Mrs. Mackenzie does not care what the world may think of her, so long as her husband's opinion never wavers. Lizzie reverses this hierarchy: she cares only about the public perception of her,²² and adjusts her self-image to align with it,

²²Louis Trevelyan demonstrates a similar focus in *He Knew He Was Right*. His desire to assert his

becoming "disposed to think as everybody thought" (62).

Thus, the impression created by the newspaper articles is the one that Lizzie compulsively adopts. For instance, when Lizzie tells her cousin Frank about the theft of the iron box, she "[tells] him the whole story;--not the true story, but the story as it [is] believed by all the world" (45). The "whole story" is the fiction, which, through the sanction of appearing in print, has assumed a substantial and supposedly comprehensive status. Lizzie the self-promoter is more comfortable with the promotional materials than the facts. In fact, compulsively re-telling the version of events that "the world" believes, Lizzie "[finds] it impossible to tell him the true story" (45).

In the novel, the social machinery of "the world" becomes embodied in the Palliser set, who discuss the novel's events in exquisite and tantalizing detail at Matching Priory during the course of the novel end. Acknowledging in *Gossip* that "detailed examination of how the gossip works [does not] shed much light on the novels as wholes", Patricia Meyer Spacks also notes that "Trollope's characters talk obsessively about one another's dubious behaviour: Lizzie Eustace keeps everyone busy and happy for years by her reprehensible conduct." (190) This is almost true, but reactions to Lizzie in conversation and correspondence are also momentary revelations of the social machinery. Gossip becomes the barometer through

manhood is limited to the public acknowledgement of his marital authority and his flawless reputation. When Lady Millborough advises him to take his wife Emily to Naples and away from Osborne, he argues that he cannot bear to live with a woman who has risked his reputation: "I may believe of her what I please; but, think what the world will believe! I cannot disgrace myself by living with a woman who persists in holding intercourse with a man whom the world speaks of as her lover" (27). Louis, like Lizzie, cares only what "the world" thinks. With no faith in Emily's ability to regulate her own behaviour, he hires Bozzle the ex-policeman

which the reader measures Lizzie's rapid decline. Lizzie is in the public eye for "only three months", as Lady Glencora clarifies on the novel's last page (not "years" as Spacks suggests). In this short time, Lizzie goes from "victim", when Lady Glencora "take[s] her up" (55); to being a charity of sorts, when Lizzie's prospects with Lord Fawn improve temporarily; to known perjurer; to, finally, a "fatiguing" (80) irrelevance.

Lizzie revels in the momentary attention she receives from the world, as personified by Lady Glencora. However, Lady Glencora's sympathy for Lizzie is not the same as Mrs. Cornbury's for Rachel Ray, Mrs. Mackenzie's for Miss Mackenzie, or even Glencora's for her own daughter in *The Duke's Children*. Rachel, Margaret and Lady Mary are all victims of external complications. Intercessions on their behalf by abettor figures are necessary to overturn mistaken views, reveal the truth, and restore each woman to her chosen lover. In Lizzie's case, the "truth" is already out: Lizzie has no claim to the diamonds (as the narrator's and the public's reference to the "Eustace diamonds" implies), nor does she have a fixed loyalty to a particular man. Lady Glencora herself is but another useful accoutrement, a woman whose friendship can be used to make "the world" believe that Lizzie is "a successful woman" (54). In a way, by thrusting herself so forcefully into the public sphere and consciousness, Lizzie becomes the victim of her own successful self-promotion. She becomes no more than the story being gossiped about or printed—and when this story turns sour or grows fatiguing, Lizzie, her definition exhausted by this external measure, has no position in the domestic sphere to fall back on.

to do it for her.

As a consequence, public exposure is both a tool in Lizzie's arsenal and her own deepest fear. For instance, when Lord Fawn begins to show doubts about his engagement to Lizzie, she "publishe[s]" it so that "it cannot be broken off without public scandal" (11). She relies on the knowledge that the impecunious Lord Fawn has nothing to his name but his respectability, which he is not willing to sacrifice. And because the guiding principle of his conduct is "to put himself right in the eye of the British public" (67), Lizzie succeeds in keeping him to their engagement for a time. But like other characters susceptible to the fear of public exposure, Lizzie, too, is regulated absolutely by what the "world" thinks of her. Thus, when the second robbery exposes her perjury in Carlisle, she is affected less by the theft than the realization that "[h]er secret [is] no longer quite her own" (52).²³ And Lizzie is eventually trapped in her engagement to Emilius by the same tactic she uses on Lord Fawn: "knowing that her betrothals had been made public to all the world, [she does] not dare recede from another" (79). D.A. Miller has pointed out in *The Novel and the Police* the "extensive and imposing principle of social control in what Trollope calls the 'world'" (14). That Lizzie is punished by society's gossip rather than the police demonstrates how this omnipresent social machinery is invariably more powerful and efficient than the efforts, no matter how inspired, of the

²³Lizzie demonstrates this fear of public exposure earlier in the novel when, prior to departing for Scotland, she is accosted by Mr. Camperdown in the street and questioned about the necklace. At the end of the episode (which the narrator indicates lasts less than ten minutes), Lizzie bursts into a "true convulsive agony of sobbing" (20) not because she is shaken by Mr. Camperdown's threat to search her house, but because "all the world of Mount Street, including her own servants, ha[s] heard the accusation against her" (20). In the end, two "secrets" come to light: her possession of the Eustace diamonds, and her sexual impropriety with Frank Greystock among the "rocks" at Portray Castle. Lord Fawn's sister Mrs. Hittaway procures, through Lizzie's gardener Andy Gowran, "evidence as to Lizzie's wicked doings in Scotland.... And that had been at first, as it were, added to the diamonds, as a supplementary weight thrown into the scale, so that Lizzie's iniquities might bring her absolutely to the ground" (59). Finally, Fawn rejects her, less because of the diamonds than her involvement with Greystock, and even Greystock comes to see Lizzie as "soiled" and "unclean" (76).

individual within it. Try as Lizzie might to manipulate this machinery for her own ends in the public sphere, she cannot elude paying a very public price in the end.

Early in the novel, the narrator indicates that Lizzie's acting ability is considerable, and that "[s]he might certainly have made her way as an actress" (2). Lizzie makes "the world" her stage--until there is no longer any call for her performances.²⁴ Her persistent efforts to live in the public male sphere make her susceptible to not only the same danger of a ruined reputation (a man's reputation can also be destroyed by public scandal), but the added peril of being judged as a transgressive woman asserting herself in a male world. She escapes legal prosecution and punishment, but once Lizzie's "secret" is out, her value plummets in every way. Her social value as a marriageable woman is "annihilated" (72) just as the diamonds are. Public prejudice against Lizzie gives each of her paramours the chance to escape, until she is reduced to marrying the socially dubious Mr. Emilius or not marrying at all. At the height of her notoriety, Lizzie thinks "that in the teeth of all her misfortunes she [can] do better with herself than marry Mr. Emilius" (66). However, the effect of "encounter[ing] a world accurately informed as to every detail" (71) of her private life is the rapid decline of Lizzie's stock--a point subtly delineated by the disclosure to herself that she has "already begun to consider whether, after all, Mr. Emilius--would do" (73). Mr. Emilius' calculations of his own

²⁴References to Lizzie's acting reinforce a sustained subtext of performance. The most emphatic of these is the name of Lizzie's Scottish property: "Portray Castle". When Madame Goesler suggests that the police will eventually unravel the "mystery" of the necklace, Lady Glencora responds, "I hope they won't do that. . . . The play is too good to come to an end so soon" (48). Lizzie's "last scheme" (64) to persuade Lucy Morris that Frank does not love the governess involves rehearsal of "the part she [is] to play with all possible care,--even to the words she [is] to use" (64). When her perjury is exposed, Lizzie reasons instinctively that "a little bit of acting might serve her tum" (71). Finally, her cousin Frank comes to acknowledge that "all those scenes which she ha[s] so successfully performed in his presence" (71) are shams.

marital prospects according to the price discrepancy between "fresh" and "stale" mackerel also emphasize the extent of Lizzie's depreciation from attractive, active, dangerous vixen to stale, static dead fish on display: "Mr. Emilius coveted fish, but was aware that his position did not justify him in expecting the best fish on the market" (66). Lizzie's marriage to Emilius, then, is more than the product of her beguilement by a mirror image. She has become both old news and "stale" stock, and so must be content to sell herself to the only buyer available: a hypocritical, mercenary man who will assume complete control of both her property and her person.²⁵

That Lucy Morris, the governess whose story is told alongside Lizzie's, marries Frank, and is assured of a "happy ending", reinforces how the domestic sphere is the medium of successful female ambition. Where Lizzie is likened to "paste" (65), and her vacillation among many lovers implies that she is only show,²⁶ Lucy is likened to a real diamond because of her constancy and a faith in Frank which never wavers, even during his neglect of her. Lucy

²⁵ Her marriage to Emilius is worse, the novel indicates, than "taking a husband out of a lottery" (*Ralph* 19). At least in the gamble of a lottery--a risk which prudent women like Polly Neeft still refuse--there is a chance of winning.

²⁶Lizzie has all the external trappings of beauty --save one. The narrator remarks that, beautiful as her features are, her "chin lack[s] a dimple, and *therefore* lack[s] feminine tenderness" (1, emphasis added). The word "therefore" signals an exact equivalence between "dimple" and "feminine tenderness": this absence is another reminder of Lizzie's lack of femininity. By contrast, the simple and steadfast Lucy Morris, externally unexceptional in almost every way, has a cheek and chin marked by "the daintiest little dimple" (3), an implicit and natural proof of her innate and enduring "feminine tenderness". Successful female ambition has the organic quality of this "little dimple": it is unostentatious and harmonious. The dimple may also represent an allusion to the difference between virgin and experienced: Lizzie's lack of a dimple symbolizes her sexual experience. The presence or absence of a dimple in a Trollopian heroine correlates with her sexual attractiveness and feminine allure. For example, Lily Dale's chin (*The Small House at Allington*), has, unlike her sister's, a dimple "which amply compensate[s] for any other deficiency in its beauty" (3). Mary Lowther (*The Vicar of Bullhampton*) has a "well-marked dimple in her chin, that soft couch in which one may always be sure, when one sees it, that some little imp of love lies hidden" (1). And Alice Vavasor (*Can You Forgive Her?*) has a

ensures that she establishes, through marriage to the man she loves, a strong domestic foundation. By contrast, Lizzie's eventual acceptance of Emilius, who she knows is a "scheming hypocrite, craving her money" (79), may inspire a dissatisfied, frustrated sigh from readers. For Nardin, "'unclean harpy' though she is, Lizzie never forfeits the reader's sympathy" (*Victorian Moral Philosophy* 45-6). Marwick concurs that "there is so much to cheer in the Lizzie camp" (63). And although the narrator claims an unambiguous dislike of Lizzie, his abiding interest in her and the admission that "she has been our heroine" (78) suggest an allegiance to this engaging and energetic presence on whom, not the relatively pallid Lucy, he has focused the bulk of the novel. Lizzie elicits pity as well as sympathy because, in addition to her considerable acting talents, as even her brother-in-law John Eustace admits, "[s]he is a very great woman...and, if the sex could have its rights, would make an excellent lawyer" (73). In a Trollope novel, "lawyer" is normally a way of stigmatizing someone, so this is not praise devoid of irony. Still, the times preclude any career but marriage for any woman, "great" or small. Lizzie's ambitions remain unachieved because, in pursuit of financial security, her idealized "great passion" (5) and public notoriety, she fails to understand the need to negotiate with her social context.

Thus, Lizzie misuses her "greatness" and wastes her cleverness, ingenuity and potential. An impulsive woman like Lady Glencora listens to "heads" more "sagacious" than her own, and benefits accordingly. Rachel Ray and Alice Vavasor learn to negotiate with society in order to achieve private ambitions without violating societal needs. But Lizzie neither heeds advice

chin "oval, dimpled, and finely chiselled" (1). For a discussion of "Trollope's decoding of 'dimple'", see Marwick 90-92.

(Lady Linlithgow, Greystock, Fawn and Lord George all tell her to return the necklace) nor considers the social circumstances. Unwilling to compromise or negotiate, Lizzie is almost pathological in her behaviour. She is unable to stop herself, even while she anticipates failure--as we see in her desperate attempts to retain lovers and diamonds. She pays the ultimate price when the social machinery exposes her, and she becomes a *femme couverte*: stripped of property and personal rights, and facing a future of suppression and absorption in every sense.

Power works from the inside-out: however invisible to the public sphere, a wife's firm grip in the domestic sphere is the base which may also entitle her to the covert use of power in that public sphere. The official invisibility of a woman may, as in the cases of Mrs. Cornbury or Mrs. Mackenzie, mask considerable achievement of private and public ambition. Lucy understands this dynamic. Thus, speaking to Lizzie, Lucy says that she feels no further need to "show" her love for Frank because "[h]e knows it. The only one in the world to whom I wish it to be known, knows it already well enough....if you tell him that I do not love him better than all the world, you will lie to him" (64). By preferring "Frank" to "the world", Lucy allies herself with the private over the public world and asserts the logic of the "inward-out" power that successful female ambition employs. Lizzie's self-promotion is her attempt to attain public power from a reverse "outward-in" principle.²⁷ Lizzie's emphatic assertion about the diamonds "they are my own" implies that "she knew they were hers"--an echo of the

²⁷The most obvious example of Lizzie's disregard for the domestic sphere is her abject neglect of her son, the Eustace heir, whom she "uses" as a prop in her performances: "She always made use of her child when troubles came" (15). Other than these expedient moments, she does not refer to her child--and the dangers of devotion to an inanimate object, rather than one's own child, are clear from her eventual sterile marriage to

public and masculine logic of self-evident power expressed in the title "He Knew He was Right." This kind of assertion backfires on Lizzie, as it does on Louis Trevelyan, who turns out not to be "right," in either his reasoning or his head. Trollope's novels seem to suggest that such public displays of masculine power are unacceptable, even for men. In contrast to her would-be control over the diamonds, her lovers, and her public image, Lizzie discovers that she is at the mercy of the machinery for all. And her disappearance from the headlines at novel's end means that her public power is, at best, that of temporary entertainment value: she is in demand only until "the world" tires of her, and then replaced by more captivating news.

In the opening chapter of the novel, Mr. Benjamin the pawnbroker thinks of Lizzie, "[o]f course she had nothing of her own, and never would have anything" (1). This reference is metaphorical as well as literal: the pawnbroker is speaking about her depleted cash flow (she has to pawn her jewellery to maintain her genteel social status); but it also applies to her self and sense of self. By the logic implied in the novel, she *can* never have anything in the real world. Her ambitions must fail, an unavoidable fact borne out by the ending of novel, where she has become nothing but outmoded fodder for the rumour mill. Lizzie, the subject of this intricate and lengthy eighty-chapter story, has in the end dwindled to the ephemerality of a drawing room anecdote for two distracted aristocratic men playing billiards: "All I can hear of her is that she has told a lot of lies and lost a necklace" (80). That her story can be so reduced enacts how the now-generic "she" has "nothing of her own"--no necklace, no

identity, and no social place. The second part of the anecdote, that she has "lost a necklace", points directly back to and exemplifies Mr. Benjamin's observation that "she would never have anything" (1). This off-the-cuff comment is the most basic reduction of a very complex story--and one that, by linking back to the opening chapter, creates a sinister circularity.

Lizzie, who believes herself to be the capable storyteller, is revealed, at both the start and the end of the novel, to be no more than a story itself. More specifically, without an anchor in the domestic sphere and utterly at the whim of the public sphere, Lizzie is a narrative told by men—first, the pawnbroker Benjamin, who sends the thieves that steal the diamonds, thus helping to achieve his prophecy—and last, the bored Lord Chiltern. By objectifying herself and refusing to negotiate, she makes herself into the subject of a social fiction and dooms her ambitions to failure.

Her story is, in the end, a story told by men for the amusement of men. The narrator observes midway through the novel, "it was admitted by them all [at Matching Priory] that the robbery had been a godsend in the way of amusing the duke" (47). But in the novel's final paragraph, the duke admits that he is "fatigued" by Lizzie. Like the lurid headline of a scandal sheet, Lizzie the story is captivating momentarily, but ultimately trivial and dispensable. So, like the diamonds divorced from their status and value, she winks out of existence--an ending made more pointed by her unerring collaboration in her own erasure.

III. "She Would Use the World as Men Use It": Laura's Ambition in *Phineas Finn*

While Lizzie is the most extreme example of the unsuccessful ambition of an overreaching

woman, other women sharing her sense of marriage as a commercial transaction suffer the same fate of social ostracism. For example, Lady Laura Kennedy *née* Standish (*Phineas Finn*) is a lesser version of Lizzie with emphatically masculine ambitions, and Laura's story demonstrates similarly adverse effects of the failure to articulate and balance individual and social needs. On the other hand, Violet Effingham and Madame Max of the same novel are prudent—and ultimately happy—negotiators with self and social circumstances alike.

Laura's physical appearance is described in specifically masculine terms. Her postures suggest that she is initially, as Stephen Wall describes it, "a figure of power and authority" (127): "[S]he would lean forward, when sitting, *as a man does*, and would use her arms in talking, and would put her hand over her face, and pass her fingers through her hair, *--after the fashion of men rather than women*; and she seemed to despise that soft quiescence of her sex in which are generally found so many charms" (4; emphasis added). Laura's masculine mannerisms are troublesome, all the more because they suggest her condescension to feminine "soft quiescence" (4). It is unclear whether this behaviour is learned or inherent, but what is clear is how her mannish behaviour is supplemented by a set of masculine assumptions about her right to self-determination and political aspirations.

Like the young Lizzie Greystock, Laura has no money, having given it all to finance her trivial brother Lord Chiltern's fledgling political career. In a conversation with Phineas early in the novel, Laura explains her justification for paying her brother's debts: "when I made up my mind to do it, I made up my mind also that I could not allow myself the same freedom of

choice which would otherwise have belonged to me" (15). Laura saw with a clear eye that helping her brother would leave her destitute, and made this choice consciously, knowing it would leave her no recourse but to marry a wealthy man. She thus accepted from this moment forward that she could not "allow" herself the "freedom of choice"—and therefore the opportunity to negotiate marriage-terms, which would otherwise have been available to her, as to Polly, Alice, and so many others.

This unsentimental acceptance is an example of her fabled self-control: "[t]hose who [know] her [say] that her heart [is] so fully under command that nothing [can] stir her blood to any sudden motion" (4). Like the equally self-willed Emily Trevelyan, Laura "seem[s] to have perfect power of doing what she please[s]" (4). The word "seems", however, is a telling reminder of the distinction between having power and merely appearing to. Laura's mistake is her belief that, though a woman, she does have "power of doing what she please[s]"—and that her self-control implies *real* control over her future. As we see repeatedly in Trollope's novels, woman is not self-contained—she is defined socially by her relationships to men, and is the object as well as a negotiator in the marriage-transaction.

Because of her mistaken beliefs, Laura marries for money the wealthy, fanatically religious, and highly conservative Robert Kennedy, a man she hardly knows, and whom she certainly does not love. Her marriage is a direct result of her inviolable self-command: it is an action which demonstrates her attempt to separate heart from head through sheer will. Most damningly, she disregards her love for Phineas in favour of financial security with Kennedy--

a bargain that makes this marriage as tawdry as Lizzie's to Sir Florian. From the "earliest years of girlish womanhood", Laura "had resolved that she would use the world as men use it, and not as women do" (39). This is one of the clearest demonstrations of this resolution in action. The clear-eyed and self-controlled Laura believes that (as might actually be the case for a male inhabitant of the public sphere) the decision to marry for money does not obviate her other ambitions or desires. *Phineas Finn* is in large measure the story of her growing appreciation of the error in this assumption.

Her conscious deference of love to money is a calculated betrayal of her emotional integrity, which is eventually the cause of her personal and social ruin. Unlike Lizzie, Laura has ambitions larger than simple economic survival. Specifically, Laura wants direct involvement in the world of politics. She has no interest in the conventional duties of a wife, and cannot bring herself to the life of sheer domesticity and religious rigidity on which her husband, for whom politics comes naturally and "religion" needs to be striven for, insists. Considering Laura's lack of interest in a domestic life, her acceptance of Kennedy means that her marriage is founded not on negotiation but on betrayal of both herself and her husband. Her real "ambition [is] to be brought as near to political action as [is] possible for a woman without surrendering any of the privileges of feminine inaction" (10). In other words, she wants her cake and she wants to eat it: direct involvement without actual participation--a confused, unrealistic and impossible aspiration. The premise of her marriage to Kennedy is dishonest by the standards of Trollope's novels, and relies on a masculine assumption of her automatic entitlement to involvement in the public sphere. She marries with the ambition to use

Kennedy's money to retain or obtain some political influence—and more particularly, to foster the political careers of men like Phineas Finn, a man whom she loves vitally but whose love she rejects because he is poor. As Susan Peck MacDonald points out, Laura thinks mistakenly that she can achieve her ambitions through men, and, further, becomes excessive in valuing the public over the private.²⁸ She fails to see that the social machinery will permit a woman only covert success in "the world"—and for even this moderate achievement, will first demand a measure of success in the domestic sphere.

Laura's ambition is logical to her because, unlike her progressive friend Violet Effingham or the outspoken Lady Glencora, she does not support women's reform in any real sense. Madame Goesler admits her support of the "ballot, manhood suffrage, womanhood suffrage" and the "education of everybody" (60). But Laura neither wants women to have the vote nor supports the Rights of Women—though she somehow aspires to be vicariously "politically powerful" (10). Where Alice comes to realize that "second-hand political maneuverings" (*Can You?* 11) are impossible, Laura's implausible ambition for active non-participation in an explicitly masculine sphere remains her unattainable goal. And by entering a loveless marriage knowingly, she subordinates her emotional needs to these muddled masculine aspirations—an error, since successful ambition in Trollope's novels seems to require, in Overton's words, a "full expression of the individual self"—and one which does not yield to "egoism unbridled" (88). This requires the veneration of a "link between identity and social role" (Overton 99) like the one Alice comes to feel. Laura does not appreciate the social

²⁸See MacDonald's *Anthony Trollope* 52.

consequences of her individual and social role as wife, and the denial of this necessary "link" leads inexorably to her self-ordained marital subjugation.

In this way, Laura resembles Alice Vavasor at the beginning of *Can You Forgive Her?*. Juliet McMaster observes that Laura, like the other women in the novel, contemplates in marriage a complete surrender of her individual identity, and regards married life as a condition of subjection.²⁹ But she is only fully aware of the implications of her "surrender" *after* she marries Kennedy.³⁰ Alice, by contrast, resolves the tension in her ambitions *before* she marries Grey, and so ensures that she does not trap herself in a marriage where her wishes will be subordinated to his. Aware of her ambition for a life that exceeds traditional domesticity, Alice negotiates with her circumstances and with her prospective husband to craft an acceptable kind of marriage. Laura, by contrast, does not look beyond Kennedy's finances before accepting him--and her failure to negotiate before the marriage effectively obviates negotiation after the marriage.

Laura's self-generated plight is contrasted with that of two marriageable women in the novel: Violet Effingham, a beauty and heiress, and the beautiful widow Madame Marie Max

²⁹See Juliet McMaster's *Trollope's Palliser Novels* 44.

³⁰Deborah Morse suggests that Laura's subjection is the result of the unworthiness of her suitors (41): for instance, more worldly than the inexperienced Phineas, Laura becomes the "female Mentor [who] love[s] her Telemachus" (14). She tells Phineas her opinion that "it is a man's duty to make his way into the House" (4), and laments how "a woman's life is only half a life, as she cannot have a seat in Parliament" (6). However, "half a life" or not, this is reality. Laura's naive belief that she can be married to Kennedy but live a vicarious political life through the political careers of men like Finn makes her marriage even more absurd and condemnable. According to Morse, the relative inferiority of Laura's lovers and the corresponding subversions of courtship convention make Laura's story a "tragic history" (43). But this "tragedy" is still greater because she effects her own subjection by errantly ignoring her social context--which includes that acceptance and appreciation of

Goesler, who manages her integration with the highest of London society "by her own resources" (61). Both women are as self-possessed and prudent as Laura is not. The narrator makes clear that Violet is not inwardly delicate, for he twice repeats that, "soft" or not, "she [is] no puppet" (10), and will not stand to be manipulated by anyone. But neither is she a Mrs. Prime, intent on publicly imposing a Dorcas-inspired superiority on sisters actual and assumed. Violet is an independent spirit with a healthy sense of self, but without guile or conceit. When Laura raises the topic of Violet marrying her violent brother Lord Chiltern, Violet's thoughtful answers reinforce that, indeed, she is no impulsive malleable "puppet" capable of being "tossed" (10) into something so serious without forethought to its consequences. Laura argues for Violet marrying her brother because "it would save him" (10). Violet responds pithily and accurately: "all your reasons are reasons why he should marry me;--not reasons why I should marry him" (10). Clear-eyed, Violet sees that marriage is a decision with monumental ramifications, one that does not lend itself to the temporary altruistic motive of "saving" another at the expense of herself: "I don't know that I have any special mission for saving young men. I sometimes think that I shall have quite enough to do to save myself" (10).

Violet undertakes the serious business of finding a husband with grave deliberation, and articulates a clear sense of the double standard which mandates female self-reliance--and careful negotiation prior to marriage: "a child and a man need not mind themselves. Let them do what they may, they can be set right again. Let them fall as they will, you can put them on

certain "home feelings" (*Rachel Ray 7*) acknowledged by successful female protagonists in Trollope's novels.

their feet. But a woman has to mind herself;—and very hard work it is" (10). Violet sees that society is far less forgiving of female transgression and transgressors. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, a single woman suspected of impropriety risks her reputation and subsequent chances of marriage. And if a married woman is known to have transgressed, she risks personal and public ostracism.³¹ Finally, because a woman, once married, disappears into an official (and legal) invisibility, she must assume much greater personal responsibility than a man for ensuring that she has found the right partner and negotiated the right terms. Given such high stakes, woman's obligation to "mind" herself is a dire imperative. It is also clear that Violet uses the term "mind herself" in the sense of "taking care of herself" or paying mind to her own needs and ambitions, something which Violet herself is careful never to neglect. By contrast, Laura is heedless of minding herself properly in both senses: after thoughtlessly ceding her emotional needs to a miserable marriage, she almost initiates an affair with Phineas.

Violet's eventual marriage to Chiltern comes only after considerable deliberation and vigorous negotiation. Violet is independent enough to resist the control of her guardian Lady Baldock, and sufficiently astute to secure Chiltern's satisfaction of her requirements before agreeing to his proposal.³² When they separate briefly over her accusations of his

³¹For instance, Lizzie sees firsthand how public perception of purity has a direct effect on her respectability. In *He Knew He Was Right*, which I discuss later in this chapter, Louis Trevelyan worries far less about what "the world" might say about his wife than the imagined effect of her supposed indiscretion on his own reputation. In his psychosis, he attempts to manipulate "the world" view, in order to assert that he is "right" in trying to prove her infidelity—although he knows that she is not guilty of any.

³²Much as Violet might joke about "knock[ing] under to Mr. Mill and go[ing] in for women's rights" (51), she well realizes that the true circumstances for women mean that she can no more stand for "some female borough" (51) than she can satisfy her urge to "go in for everything [she] ought to leave alone" (10). Further, the

"discreditable" life, the narrator explains that Violet regrets her severity, but will not "submit" (71) to "allow" him or any other man to be "master of her heart" (71). She knows herself well enough to realize that Chiltern's and her own similarly "headstrong" and "masterful" (71) personalities will inevitably clash. But she also knows (as Alice Vavasor comes to recognize) that, though she and her husband may disagree, they can work through their difficulties—and occasional disagreement is not necessarily bad. Part of the way a woman must "mind herself" is by not surrendering to love—as do Lily Dale and Kate O'Hara, whom I will discuss in Chapter 5—but rather ensuring that love is in service of her personal and social needs: "Love ha[s] not conquered her", the narrator explains, "but ha[s] been taken into her service" (71).

Thus, she and Chiltern negotiate the motivating principles of their future lives. For instance, Violet states to Chiltern unequivocally that in matters of discussion, she will consider only "any question that may concern yourself and myself. None that may concern other people" (73). They agree upon what Mrs. Mackenzie explains to John Ball: that what matters is their private opinion of each other. As long as they remain "creditable" in each other's eyes, the world's opinion need not matter. Only after this negotiation of their private life—and only after Chiltern has learned that wasting his life will certainly not be tolerated by his wife—do they proceed to the social step of marriage. And unlike the hasty Kennedy marriage, the novel's ending suggests that theirs will be a happy union, one based on love and "sympathy" (23).

independent Violet's references to Mill are ironic: Violet will no more "knock under to Mr. Mill" than she will to Chiltern. She is too cautious to jeopardize her future by surrendering herself to anyone. Thus, legal equality would, for her, be a redundancy—a technicality unnecessary in the prudent, loving relationship upon which she will insist. Neither a sympathetic male nor an oppressive male is acceptable to her as ruler of her whole being:

The captivating Madame Goesler is equally level-headed. She considers very carefully the old Duke of Omnium's marriage proposal in the light of her own needs. By marrying the Duke, the "highly ambitious" (57) Madame Goesler could "exalt" (61) her social status by becoming the Duchess of Omnium. Madame Goesler's motivation for eventually declining the Duke's offer is less her "duel" (60) with Lady Glencora over the title than her careful deliberation of all she might gain and lose by accepting it. However attractive the initial thrill of public advancement, she decides (as Polly Neefit does) that accepting a man on the basis of his rank alone is selling herself and relinquishing her freedom forever. Moreover, unlike Laura, who loves one man but marries another, Madame Goesler will not deny her love for Phineas for the sake of a title "without further aim or object" (61). She refuses the Duke in part for her proud realization that she can reject a "temptation as would have been irresistible to many" (62), and in part for the truth that their marriage "would be ill for both of [them]" (62). And recognizing the dissonance of private needs and public renown, she decides that "she would still be free,--Marie Max Goesler" (62).

By contrast to Violet's and Madame Goesler's (Madame Goesler marries Phineas in *Phineas Redux*), Laura's marriage cannot be a happy one because she foregoes negotiation, accepting Kennedy without understanding (or refuting) his expectations that a wife will concentrate on the domestic duties which she loathes. In her acceptance of Kennedy's proposal, she not only sells herself short, but, worse, like Lizzie Eustace, she *literally* sells herself for financial

she will "knock under" to no one.

security. That she has approached her marriage as a strict business deal is clear in the dispassionate way she announces her engagement. Instead of naming Kennedy, she defines him by his property: "I have accepted the owner of Loughlinter as my husband, because I verily believe that I shall thus do my duty in that sphere of life to which it has pleased God to call me" (15). Officially, Laura acknowledges that her gender designates her for the female, domestic, invisible "sphere of life", but she mistakenly assumes that without any prior negotiation, she can decide when to forego these domestic responsibilities for the more interesting public sphere. In both spheres, it is clear, Laura will never attain the stature of a Lady Glencora, a woman revered privately by her husband, and respected publicly by her family and society.

Like Polly Neefit, Laura approaches her marriage as "a piece of business...to be done someday" (*Ralph* 48), but unlike Polly, she allows herself to be seen as the purchased, by failing to argue for her rights as purchaser. Hence, the transaction yields a life of sterile suppression, of duties become "bonds" of monotonous "tyranny" (23): "Then the Sundays became very wearisome to Lady Laura. Going to church twice, she had learnt, would be a part of her duty....After all, the demand was not very severe, but yet she found that it operated injuriously upon her comfort. The Sundays were very wearisome to her, and made her feel that her lord and master was--her lord and master" (23) . The repetitive tone of the passage suggests that, in a surprise to Laura, what she had assumed would be her husband's merely nominal mastery now seems an awful lot like actual mastery. The narrator suggests that the problem is exacerbated by her "resolve" to "do her duty to him in all ways...and [she] ha[s]

been perhaps more punctilious in this respect than she might have been had she loved him heartily" (23). Inclined as she is to "obey" him, she must acknowledge her miscalculation in marrying a man only for "esteem" (23): "of all men in the world she esteemed Mr. Kennedy the most. She did not esteem him less now....But no person can live happily with another...simply upon esteem. All the virtues in the calendar, though they exist on each side, will not make a man and woman happy together, unless there be sympathy" (23). But without pre-marital negotiation, there is no sympathy, no understanding of personal needs, and no subsequent expression of individual volition. Verbal disagreements can be overcome in a resilient and sympathetic relationship between committed participants--as we see from Violet and Chiltern's last exchange or Alice and John Grey's conversation at the Louvre. By contrast, a fight with an adversary to whom one is not committed is just a release of pent-up energy. The truth is that Laura does not love Kennedy, and her "resolve", motivated by determined resignation and "esteem" rather than love, precludes meaningful negotiation or communication.

Laura has no grounds on which to argue her own needs since she has forfeited them to his money, but the truth is that "her greatest ambition [is] to help her husband" (23)--not as a wife in the domestic "sphere of life", but as a political advisor in the masculine, public sphere. She hopes to "meddle with high politics, to discuss reform bills, to assist in putting up Mr. This and in putting down my Lord That" (23). But despite her desire to "lead her husband" (23), he makes it clear to her that her political participation is not expected, desired, or allowed. And although she believes that "her intellect [is] brighter than his," she is also

forced to acknowledge that "he [is] a man who [knows] his own way, and who intend[s] to keep it" (23). Her marriage becomes a physical pain, in the form of frequent headaches, and her growing distress forecasts a predictable future of neurosis.³³ In Laura we see Mrs. Prime's need for visible, public suasion without a domestic base all over again--albeit on a higher social level. And in Trollope's novels, where the female self is unreconciled with social circumstances, ostracism--whether internally or externally imposed--is almost sure to follow.

Only in her maturity does Laura come to see the innate strength of "the world" and her relative powerlessness to subvert its practices for her own needs—despite her abiding transgressive desire to “use the world as men use it” (39). Her admission to her husband that “[t]here are moments . . . when even a married woman must be herself rather than her husband's wife” (39) is an accurate—but much-belated—realization, which should have been a part of the missed premarital negotiation. "You cannot make a woman subject to you as a dog is so", she argues. "You may have all the outside and as much of the inside as you can master. With a dog you may be sure of both" (39). By giving herself to Kennedy without discussing terms of ownership, she effectively made herself an object not unlike a pet. So if he assumes that possession of her “outside” implies automatic possession of her “inside”—without any need to consult her about her desires—he is only making a logical inference. This is the real danger of a female ambition which seeks money and power in the public sphere without considering the power in the domestic sphere which must be its prerequisite.

³³As MacDonald asserts, "By *Phineas Redux*, the undervalued private dimension has come to obsess her to the point that she is selfish and neurotic. She is unable to get beyond an obsessive concern with her own emotions and is, consequently, denied access to a more public social life or to the political world she once so loved" (52).

To say that Laura is to blame for her misfortunes and thwarted ambitions is in no way to condone Kennedy's tyranny. He is extreme in his demands upon her, and uses the legal status of his superiority as husband as a bludgeon.³⁴ However, it is inescapable that Laura, in her masculine certainty of self-control and self-determination, fails to negotiate explicitly with herself, her prospective husband, and their circumstances—and thereby misses her chance to enter the marriage on more appropriate terms—or not enter it at all. The ending of Laura's story in *Phineas Finn* implies the impossibility of a woman living her life on her own terms—whether in the public world of politics or in an insular and invisible space apart from her husband. Marriage is a social construction, as Violet and Madame Goesler see clearly. Laura's desire to achieve her personal ambitions while subverting this basic premise (like Lizzie—though in different ways and for different reasons) leads her to a bitter, lonely end.

At the close of the novel, the only alternative to domination by Kennedy is separation from him—and, by extension, "the world" of politics that initially so captivated her. Where the transgressive Lizzie becomes a male anecdote, Laura reverts to another male-defined social role—that of daughter, living with her father at Dresden. This patriarchal regression erases her ambitions as surely as did Kennedy's mastery—and leaves her invisible, impotent, and alone, though no longer tyrannized. This is efficiency: the woman who would exploit the

³⁴Louis Trevelyan (*He Knew He Was Right*) insists on an equally perverse legal confirmation of his status as husband. One significant difference between Kennedy and Trevelyan is that Kennedy seeks legal recourse to keep his marriage together, while Trevelyan uses the law as a weapon to force his wife Emily to acknowledge his "rights", and destroys his marriage in the process. Both men ultimately lose their minds (Kennedy's insanity is related in the sequel, *Phineas Redux*). This masculine insanity points to the consequence

social foundation of marriage to hold sway in the public sphere must in the end either remove herself—or be removed by the social machinery.

IV. The Feminization and Absence of Ambition in Ralph the Heir

Perhaps the most extreme version of woman-as-commodity, Ralph Newton seems the Trollopian through-the-looking-glass image of the impudent and feckless woman. His feminized characterization and its predictable consequence emphasize the extreme perversity of a man's commodification of self. Like Lizzie, Ralph vacillates between would-be-lovers and leads a life of aimless and sterile indecision. But unlike women such as Lizzie and Laura, who believe themselves too poor to have any alternative but marriage, Ralph squanders the considerable money he has, and then becomes heavily indebted. Rather than aspire to a career, he focuses on maintaining his fashionable style of life, consoling himself with the prospect of his eventual inheritance of the Newton estate from his uncle, Squire Newton.

Like Lizzie and Laura, Ralph approaches marriage not as a personal and social contract, but as a monetary transaction. As I discuss in Chapter 2, Neefit the breechesmaker seeks to exploit Ralph's financial needs in hopes of engineering a marriage to his daughter Polly. But when Ralph does propose, Polly, assured of her own worth, refuses him. Ralph's bewilderment at her rejection emphasizes his complete lack of interest in assessing her desires or needs—let alone negotiating the terms of a relationship with her. He has no idea that the thoughtful Polly values a level of commitment of which he is not capable, for unlike

of an unreasonable and antisocial desire to prove public mastery over a wife by perverting social norms for mercenary and selfish purposes.

the tenacious Ontario Moggs, whom Polly does accept, Ralph cannot take action and stick to anything. For instance, his earlier resolution not to "sell himself...for any amount of money" (6) quickly gives way to naming his price of L20, 000. More so than Laura's—and possibly more so than even Lizzie's first marriage—Ralph's hoped-for marriage to Polly is a mercenary transaction. Neefit's money is the only way "he [can] throw over his uncle and save the property" (19)—and since the myopic and self-centered Ralph sees no alternative, he also assumes there can be none for Polly. Thus, his preparation for the marriage-proposal is as far as possible from a resolution to negotiate meaningfully: he comes with "some small signs of an intention to be externally smart" (19). This intention is at three removes from reality: he prepares with 1) "some small signs"—not of a real emotion or commitment—but of 2) an "intention"—not to *be* smart but 3) to be *externally* smart, or smart in appearance only. For Ralph, life is the signs of insubstantial intentions to *seem*, not *be*. It is not a meaningful negotiation with self, society, and prospective wife, whom he treats with unspoken contempt: he "[tells] himself that it signific[s] nothing at all, that the girl [is] only a breeches-maker's daughter" (19). But Ralph's refusal to negotiate is not that of the arrogant, assertive male. Rather, to the self-feminizing Ralph, the prospective marriage is his "sacrifice," and, "as the sacrifice was to be made he might as well enjoy all that would come of the sacrifice" (19). Where Polly evinces a nuanced understanding of a woman's simultaneous roles as purchaser and purchased, Ralph adopts the simplistic vernacular of woman-as-commodity. He makes himself the misguided woman who forfeits negotiation to sell herself to a "sufficient purchaser" (*Duke's* 11)—and is not even successful in his self-styled feminine "sacrifice". Though entitled to what Lizzie and Laura crave—status and significance in the public sphere-

-Ralph is incapable of achieving it. And where they seek and are eventually denied because of the combination of their gender and methods, Ralph is far more pathetic because he only feigns seeking and denies *himself* through his persistent torpor. Ralph is so shallow and spoiled that he is without capacity for self-discipline or self-determination.³⁵ His intention inevitably begets inaction: for instance, Ralph may know that, "as a man of property, with many weighty matters on hand, [he] ha[s] of course, much to do. He desire[s] to inspect some agricultural implements, and a new carriage,--he ha[s] ever so many things to say to Carey, the lawyer, and want[s] to order new harnesses for the horses" (43). But the desiring to execute these "weighty matters" never becomes the doing, as the next sentence attests: "So he went to his club, and played whist all the afternoon" (43). As Herbert points out, the particular anxiety of his economic emergency is that it requires that Ralph *do* something: sell his claim on the Newton estate, marry Polly for her father's money, or curb his spending.³⁶ Once again, though he knows he has "much" to decide, he can only dither, rather than choose a single course from these disagreeable options.

Faced with the dilemma of finding an occupation, the young Ralph comes to the conclusion that raising sheep in Australia, cattle in South America, or corn in Canada would require "an amount of energy which he no longer possessed" (13) The truth, however, is that Ralph has

³⁵Ralph is incapable of purposeful movement. At best, he drifts self-indulgently from one aimless venture to another, as his various "love" affairs illustrate. The potential existential implications of Ralph's psychological inertia are echoed in the figure of Sir Thomas Underhill, who dooms himself to a reclusive life in his London chambers, ignoring his parental obligations and making no headway on his magnum opus, a biography of Bacon fated to remain forever unwritten: "For years past he had sat intending to work, purposing to achieve a great task which he had set for himself, and had done--almost nothing" (58). Like Ralph, Sir Thomas is fundamentally incapable of forming a "great task" let alone implementing it with success. The grey, spectre-like Sir Thomas represents the gloomy and barren life that Ralph risks adopting in future years—and that Ayala Dormer barely eludes.

never possessed this energy. He thinks, "he could ride...to hounds as well as any man. So much he could do, and *would seem in doing it to be full of life*. But as for selling the four horses, and changing altogether the mode of his life,—that was more than he had vitality left to perform" (13, emphasis added). Ralph busies himself with thoughts of how to *appear* energetic and engaged in activity, but tellingly, rather than engage in the activity or deal with reality, finds something else to do, such as go "to the club to play whist".

Herbert concludes that Ralph's "simulating a life of pleasure-seeking" means "Ralph therefore is not finally cast as a comic transgressor of a classic kind (the kind we irresistibly identify with despite moral disapproval) but rather, like Lizzie Eustace...a kind of hollow man whose outward activity is all a screen for abject inner nullity" (*Comic Pleasure* 122). Ralph can, indeed, be seen as a male counterpart to Lizzie, though crucial differences may inform the reader's sympathies. First, Ralph fritters away his money, and never demonstrates the desire to recover it through industry. As a man, he could earn a living in any number of ways, but simply cannot be bothered. Lizzie, on the other hand, sees herself with little choice but to marry, although her means of "bring[ing about] an offer" are corrupt. Second, Lizzie demonstrates a desire for affection—or at least the "idea" of affection—that is entirely absent in Ralph. That she is made to forfeit her hopes for a "great passion" may elicit some sympathy from the reader. Ralph, by contrast, is incapable of feeling anything: it simply "did not occur to him" (27), the narrator states, describing his failure to understand that he might hurt Clarissa by making her believe that he loves her. This fundamental apathy likely

³⁶See his discussion of Ralph's indecision in *Comic Pleasure* 120.

precludes him eliciting more than a derisive laugh from the reader when he is captured by Gus Eardham at novel's end.

Laura and Lizzie's marriages are straightforwardly mercenary. By contrast, Ralph's repeated proposals demonstrate a pathetic and tortured self-interest: they are the failed short-term solutions of a man who lacks the backbone to simply say "no". Ralph's sole motivation for successive proposals to Mary Bonner, the niece of his guardian Sir Thomas Underwood, and to Sir Thomas' younger daughter Clarissa is to escape Neefit's relentless insistence on another proposal to Polly. Thus, when he proposes to Mary, he does not remember his earlier "declaration of love" (3) to Clarissa on the lawn of her home: only "a dim idea of some feeling of disappointment on Clary's part [does] cross his brain" (27).

Though feminized, Ralph is simultaneously complacent in the social stereotypes of male privilege, or perhaps takes the notion of female "redundancy" at face value. Never once does he think that a woman might have an opinion about her marriage partners: "In these days men never expect to be refused. It has gone forth among young men as a doctrine worthy of perfect faith, that young ladies are all wanting to get married, --looking out for lovers with an absorbing anxiety, and that few can dare to refuse any man who is justified in proposing to them" (27). Even after Mary Bonner's rejection and Polly's second dismissal, Ralph learns nothing about the existence of "feminine strength." His final "purchase" by Gus Eardham and her mother is telling for his lack of volition: "It can hardly be said that he had made up his mind to offer to her before he started for Cookham,--though doubtless through all the

remaining years of his life he would think that his mind had been so fixed" (55). Still without ambition, the indecisive Ralph tells himself retroactive "truths" about the clarity of his ambition—and indeed, does so in the next chapter. Conceited despite repeated rejections, he tells his brother Gregory that his marriage to Gus Eardham stems from long and careful thought about the interests "of us all that I should marry into our own set" (56). However, the "truth" (56) of his judicious deliberation, on which Ralph insists, is undercut by his story of their mutual attraction at first sight: "she has just the style which, after all, does go so far....She attracted me from the first moment; and, by Jove, old fellow, I can assure you it was mutual" (56). The narrator drops in his unobtrusive observation that "[i]n all this, Ralph believed that he was speaking the simple truth" (56), stressing Ralph's incessant tendency to refashion reality to pacify himself.

At novel's end, after his marriage to Gus, Ralph finds himself in the place where Lizzie seems headed in her marriage to the Reverend Emilius, and from which Lady Laura has just escaped at the end of *Phineas Finn*. The predatory Eardhams strip from Ralph all identity but that of dispenser of money. Whether it be the erection of conservatories at Newton Priory or the arrangement of annuities from the Newton inheritance, all decisions are now referred not to Ralph, but to his father-in-law. And even before he marries, Ralph is made to be "obedient in all things to Eardham influences" (56). His wife's nickname "Gus", a more likely diminutive of Augustus than her given name Augusta, is very masculine—and in his total submission to her even prior to the wedding, the feminized Ralph is made more quickly and completely invisible than even Laura or Lizzie, who also sell themselves in marriage-transactions.

In a comic variation upon Laura Kennedy's comment likening women to dogs, Ralph "our hero" is in the end reduced to a domestic pet whose owner we see "caressing him in the solitude of her bedroom" (56), cajoling him to perform his sole function, which is "to give everything and to get nothing" (56). Acted upon in perpetuity, Ralph is trapped metaphorically in the passive voice used to describe the Victorian woman—absorbed into an extreme perversion of the overreaching woman's fate in marriage. The sinister implications of Ralph's feminization and his ultimate absorption in marriage find expression in the innate absurdity of his "purchase" by Gus. Men have no limit of available occupations—and men such as Ralph should need no recourse to the commodification to which a middle-class Victorian woman might feel herself reduced. It is unacceptable, the novel implies, for a man to squander Ralph's wealth of opportunities. And the extent to which Ralph wallows in idleness, like a lady of leisure, is condemned by his absorption into the role, not of husband, but of "wife", with its attendant public invisibility and intangibility. Since Ralph lacks all motivation and ambition, the residual possibility of a man's publicly active life is stripped from him, and a career in marriage is generated instead. He becomes a silent, passive, innocuous dispensary to his penurious "husband" Gus, who has made a bargain of which mercenary women can only dream: a secure income and complete marital authority over a man without either purpose or soul.

V. "We Can't Compare Ourselves to Men": Emily's Rights in *He Knew He Was Right*

He Knew He Was Right provides a final example of the unsuccessful ambition of a woman who marries for financial security. The novel centres on the disintegration of the marriage of Louis and Emily Trevelyan, because of their conflict over her desire to exercise personal volition in marriage. Central to the story is each character's love of power, particularly the assertion of personal "rights" and the "right" to exercise these without challenge. The novel was published in the same year as Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, and written during the height of the Parliamentary debates on the granting of property rights to wives, and may represent an implicit—though as usual with Trollope's novels, not an explicit—comment on these issues.³⁷ Critics who discuss the novel are nearly unanimous in painting Trevelyan as the single-handed and singleminded destroyer of the marriage (and his own mind).³⁸ And this seems right—the novel is pervaded by the oppressive atmosphere of Trevelyan's relentless demands to be publicly acknowledged as "right". But just as one person can destroy a marriage, it takes two to sustain a marriage. And the narrative suggests that Emily Trevelyan's ambition for freedom in her marriage is as assertive, unequivocal, and uncompromising as her husband's desire to be acknowledged as "right". The narrator sums up the deadlock thus: "[t]he truth [is] that each desired that the other should acknowledge a fault, and that neither of them would make that acknowledgement" (5).

³⁷Ruth apRoberts considers the effect of the property rights debates on the composition of the novel in "Emily and Nora and Dorothy and Priscilla and Jemima and Carry" (91-2). Wendy Jones provides a detailed social and historical context in her consideration of "male authority and women's rights within marriage" (410) in "Feminism, Fiction and Contract Theory: Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right*".

³⁸For an examination of madness in the novel, see David Oberhelman's "Trollope's Insanity Defense: Narrative Alienation in *He Knew He Was Right*" and Chris Wiesenthal's "The Body Melancholy: Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right*". For a discussion of Trevelyan's destruction of his marriage, see Christopher Herbert's "*He Knew He Was Right*, Mrs. Lynn Linton, and the Duplicities of Victorian Marriage", and Wendy Jones'

Most of Trollope's mainly comic novels end with marriage or the promise of marriage. Prior to this, several hundred pages detail the complex and often complicated processes through which the protagonists negotiate their ambitions prior to the marriage-vows. This darkly tragic novel begins where most of the comic novels end, and by condensing the Trevelyans' courtship to two pages in the first chapter, signals immediately that theirs is a different kind of story. Emily Rowley is the eldest of eight daughters of Sir Marmaduke Rowley, Governor of the Mandarin Islands. When the handsome and wealthy Trevelyan finds her during his travels, she can only assess the prospect of marriage as serendipitous. Trevelyan seems "a pearl among men" (1) as much for his attributes—he is a handsome Cambridge-educated published poet with a secure L3, 000 per year—as for the simple scarcity of eligible English bachelors in the tropics. "What a lover to fall suddenly from the heavens into such a dove-cote!" (1), the narrator observes, and Emily seems prudent to snap him up.

In a significant disclosure, Trevelyan's later sense of superiority seems rooted in his pocketbook. Sir Marmaduke admits to his proposed son-in-law that, with eight daughters, it is impossible for him to give a dowry. But Trevelyan reassures him, "[i]t is my idea that girls should not have fortunes At any rate, I am quite sure that men should never look for money. A man must be more comfortable, and, I think, is likely to be more affectionate, when the money has belonged to himself" (1). Sir Marmaduke, who has no money to give, "[can] not but admire the principles of his proposed son-in-law" (1), Trevelyan's magnanimity—on the surface a sensible distinction between the woman's person and the

economic value she might represent to him—is really a deliberate strategy of his smug and static theory of masculine dominance and control. The ominous subtext of his "idea" is that a bride's economic status (or, in this case, lack of status) determines her ability to negotiate or likelihood to resist. Trevelyan is more inclined to grant his "affection" magnanimously to one his inferior in every way, and this magnanimity is clearly a route to control. Thus, Emily is attractive to this man who "likes to have his own way" (1) precisely *because* she has nothing. She will be in a condition of complete dependence that, he believes, promises inviolable power for him.

Where young women like Alice Vavasor, Ayala Dormer, and Rachel Ray enter into marriage after a long, often difficult negotiation with self and prospective partner, Emily enters hastily into her mercenary marriage. Though Trevelyan seems to have every external qualification a husband should have, Emily takes no time to consider what she wants for herself in marriage—until she is already in it. She realizes quickly that she will be allowed her own way only when it corresponds with her husband's. And because she failed to negotiate *prior* to the marriage, the scope for her personal ambition after the marriage shrinks to an ignoble battle of wills with Louis. Emily's ambition is a stunted, sad thing, shaped by the claustrophobic limits of the marriage itself: in effect, she seeks to maintain her "right" to express her own volition. This is almost entirely a reactive goal, catalyzed by her belated retaliation against Louis' tyranny, rather than prudent forethought and negotiation. Having surrendered her freedom to a marriage of convenience, Emily discovers, like Laura Kennedy, that it is too late to assert independence after taking the vow "to obey" a tyrannical male.

Emily's aspiration to establish that she is "right" and possesses "rights" is persistently frustrated because Trevelyan is intransigent in his own ambition to act according to the "married man's code of laws" (27)--abstract and extreme externally derived standards that he assumes absolve him of accountability for his own behaviour. Trevelyan is "jealous of authority, fearful of slights, self-conscious, afraid of the world, and utterly ignorant of the nature of a woman's mind" (27)--in other words, unfit to be a good husband. He concentrates exclusively on the "privileges" (5) he will deny her if she refuses him the complete subjection to which he feels legally entitled. What "she" wants or might expect do not matter and are easily elided: "*he* [will] not live with her, *he* [will] not give her the privileges of *his* wife, if she refuse[s] to render to *him* the obedience which [is] *his* privilege" (5, emphasis added). By his masculine logic, "he [is] her master, and she must know that he [is] her master" (5). It occurs to him fleetingly that "Wives are bound to obey their husbands, but obedience cannot be exacted from wives, as it may from servants, by aid of law and with penalties, or as from a horse, by punishments and manger curtailments. A man should be master in his own house, but he should make his mastery palatable, equitable, smooth, soft to the touch, a thing almost unfelt" (5). Yet, though Louis knows instinctively that his wife is neither a slave nor a beast, he nonetheless treats her like a disobedient animal whom he feels compelled eventually to turn away. Even at the expense of the home and wife he claims to value, he ignores his impulse for compassion to satisfy externally established notions of what a "man should be", and so falls victim to "the world" and its crumbling codes.

Yet, while *He Knew He Was Right* condemns male highhandedness, it also questions female quixotry. Ruth apRoberts writes, "*He Knew He Was Right* is a demonstration of how trivialities can build into tragedy that is only too convincing" ("Emily and Nora" 90). Although Trevelyan exacerbates (and accelerates) the tragedy of his failed marriage, insanity and death, the instigator of these "trivialities" is actually Emily. Although the narrator sympathizes with Emily's plight, he suggests that she is as guilty as Trevelyan for her refusal to compromise. From the beginning of their struggle over autonomy, Emily, like Louis, tends to dwell on technicalities. When Louis opposes her desire to renew her acquaintance with the troublesome old bachelor Colonel Fredric Osborne, Emily argues that she has known Osborne since infancy (technically correct, since he last saw her when she was two) and that he is hardly a rival for Louis, being older than her father "by about a month" (1). Osborne might have a reputation of making trouble, the narrator intimates, but, though he likes to create a sensation, he is no "ravens wolf" (2). But irrational sexual jealousy makes Trevelyan disapprove of Emily's friendship with the "ancient Lothario" (1). The long-time Trevelyan family friend Lady Milborough tries to alert Emily to the dangers of Osborne's indiscretion, but Emily only becomes angry at the old woman's intrusion, and more determined than ever to vindicate herself—without anyone's advice or consultation.

The narrator states that, "In the matter of the quarrel, as it ha[s] hitherto progressed, the husband ha[s] perhaps been more in the wrong than his wife; but the wife, in spite of all her promises of perfect obedience, ha[s] proved herself to be a woman very hard to manage" (9). This is a cogent and understated reminder of the gap between Emily's "hard to manage"

behaviour and her marital promises, heedlessly proffered. Should “a woman” be “managed” at all? Quite probably not—but this is a matter to be determined through the pre-marital negotiation which Emily foregoes. After Trevelyan orders Emily to sever all contact with Osborne, we see the clearest example of this “behaviour”. She complies, but with a “cunning” and merely nominal obedience designed to deprive her husband of the “gratification which he ha[s] expected in her surrender” (5). In sum, she goads him so that he feels foolish and appears mean. For instance, when they encounter Osborne while on a walk in the park, Emily recoils, and asks to return home. When Trevelyan later reproves her for making a scene, she states, “[y]our suspicions have made it impossible for me to behave with propriety” (5). Louis is made to feel servile, and so changes his command. When, at Louis’ urging, Emily subsequently receives Osborne in their home, she does so with a graciousness that is deliberate and pointed. And Trevelyan is once more overcome with anger.

In the penultimate chapter of the novel, the narrator observes that “It may be that in the first days of their quarrel, she had not been regardful, as she should have been, of a husband’s will—that she might have escaped this tragedy by submitting herself to the man’s wishes, as she had always been ready to submit herself to his words” (98). But Emily “submits” to the letter of Louis’ order only to revel in thwarting its spirit, making her obedience as unbearable as the initial rebellion: “Had she been earnest in her desire to please her lord and master in this matter of Colonel Osborne’s visits,—to please him even after he had so vacillated in his own behests,—she might probably have so received the man as to have quelled all feeling of jealousy in her husband’s bosom” (9). But the desire to please her husband is subordinate to

the need to be seen as independent, and Emily tells herself that “as she was innocent, and as her innocence had been acknowledged, and as she had been specially instructed to receive this man whom she had before been specially instructed not to receive, she would now fall back exactly into her old manner with him” (9). She makes herself believe that by following her husband's commands technically, she absolves herself of all guilt for ignoring their spirit.

Emily's methods and motives are clearly questionable. Far from passive, she “obeys” in an active, visible, and aggressive fashion that recalls Mrs. Prime's autocracy. Her public sphere tactics and power-mongering are clearly counterproductive when deployed against her own husband in the domestic sphere. apRoberts points out Emily's considerable skill in “exploit[ing] obedience as a weapon It is a ploy, let it be noted, that can be used with effect by the underling against the ‘master’; the underling can thereby gain the upper hand, and make the tyrant look a fool, which is perhaps the most painful sort of punishment” (97). Emily tries futilely to coerce her husband's compliance, and, the horizons of her ambition reduced by the unnegotiated marriage-terms and Louis' tyranny, her sole solace is the petty enjoyments of one-upmanship. And instead of eliciting Louis' concession, these produce his growing psychotic insistence on his patriarchal right to complete wifely submission.

The novel's ending implies that a desire for absolute and publicly visible autonomy within marriage cannot be attained by a woman—particularly when, like Emily, she seeks it without prior pre-marital negotiation. Priscilla Stanbury, with whose family Emily and Nora are sent to live, is an instructive foil to Emily. Too fond of her own autonomy to ever consider

marriage, Priscilla understands that marriage requires a degree of compromise that she is both unable and unwilling to make: "I am not fit to marry," she says to Emily. "I am often cross, and I like my own way, and I have a distaste for men" (16). In an implicit refutation of the arguments of the economic necessity of marriage represented by the impoverished Emily, Lizzie Eustace and Laura Kennedy, Priscilla is very poor—but prudent and self-possessed enough to resist the compromise and acquiescence of marriage. She understands better than Emily what marriage is, but readily accepts an impoverished but autonomous life. By contrast, even after her separation from Louis, Emily maintains her stubborn pride, compelling Priscilla to say, "when a woman is married there is nothing to which she should not submit on behalf of her husband" (16). She disdains Emily's stubbornness, which she sees as a belated display of foolish, futile egotism: "All that is twopenny-halfpenny pride, which should be thrown to the winds. The more right you have been hitherto the better you can afford to go on being right" (16). The unmarried and never-to-be-married Priscilla sees what Emily refuses: that being acknowledged as "right" for its own sake means little if it poses a threat to the marriage itself.

John Stuart Mill, the most noted Victorian male proponent of sex equality, is mentioned once in the novel by the American minister Mr. Spalding to his niece's suitor, Mr. Glascock:

"Your John S. Mill is a great man," said the minister.

"They tell me so," said Mr. Glascock. "I don't read what he writes myself."

This acknowledgement seemed to the minister to be almost disgraceful, and yet he himself had never read a word of Mr. Mill's writings. (55)

Mill is here evoked as a talisman of the feminist movement. That he is invoked by a man ignorant of his writings (but who nonetheless feels competent to discuss Mill's "far-seeing" (55) humanism) is clearly ironic, and suggests the relative ease of looking at egalitarianism simply as an arbitrary set of rules that can be adjusted to fit social progress. The Trevelyans' marriage, however, suggests that theory and practice do not necessarily accord, and that no amount of legislation can help a woman if she refuses to understand that her avowed ambition, her actual ambition, and her social role must correspond. The reference to Mill emphasizes both the legal and social aspects of marriage, and, in view of the warring Trevelyans, implies that the law, something essentially static, is potent only when individuals recognize their dynamic and enduring responsibilities to one another. They must first implement justice within the home, the microcosm of society, for the law is futile if love and understanding are absent. It can help remedy a wrong, but by itself, it can initiate or create nothing.

Thus, the Trevelyans' quarrel is ultimately less about egalitarianism than one-upmanship--where husband and wife insist with perverse tenacity upon dogmatic generalizations about "right" and "wrong". Before their marriage ruptures, Emily imagines the prospect of losing custody of her son, and observes to her sister Nora, "It is a very poor thing to be a woman" (5). Nora replies, "It is perhaps better than being a dog,...but, of course, we can't compare ourselves to men" (5). As I have set out in the historical background in Chapter 1, Nora is in legal terms quite accurate: a woman lacks the discrete legal identity of a man. Emily finds herself, like Laura Kennedy in her marriage, treated like a dog which has no "right" but to do

as it is told. But a woman is not a dog, for she has a voice in deciding who her "master" may be. She is a commodity, in one sense, but she does not lack the ability to express an opinion of her value. And as so many of Trollope's novels make clear, she must assert this prior to marriage if she wishes a fate better than a dog's. Failing to realize this, Emily gave herself to the "highest purchaser," and, like Lizzie Eustace and Laura Kennedy (and, to a lesser extent, the oblivious Ralph Newton), feels the effects of her self-objectification. And so, when Trevelyan becomes unhappy with her, he turns her out of the house, in an action clearly recalling the comparison of woman and dog.

Trevelyan's wiser friend Hugh Stanbury comes to acknowledge what Alice, Ayala, and indeed anyone who aims to marry well, must accept: "some dim idea of self-abnegation,—that...the poetry of his life, [is], in fact, the capacity of caring more for other human beings than for himself" (25). But Emily ignores the fact that a concession to another's happiness—particularly in the context of a life-partnership—need not mean self-annihilation. Needing to be seen as "right" and to prove her husband wrong, she goads an already jealous and insecure man, and pushes him beyond his limits. And she compounds her error by making the private public. Like Lizzie, she makes herself visible to the wrong audience by exposing her demands publicly, so that Lady Millborough, Hugh Stanbury and his family, the Rowley and Outhouse families, Bozzy the ex-policeman and his family, and people across the classes become intimately acquainted with the Trevelyans' plight. In theory, the wife is the guardian of home and domestic sphere, and Emily's subversion of this basic social assumption is a reckless inducement of inevitable disaster. She has everything to lose, and does lose all when

Trevelyan insists on separation and, eventually, assumes his legal right to their son. The marriage has no chance of survival, and the remainder of the plot recounts its inevitable decline and Trevelyan's eventual death.

Only when Trevelyan succumbs physically and mentally, and Emily finds herself in the powerful position of needing and wanting to care for him, is "[a]ll feeling of anger . . . over with her" (93). This is perfect symmetry: in an echo of Trevelyan's egotistical magnanimity, which prefers for its object a penniless and therefore powerless bride; Emily's equally egotistical compassion is directed to Trevelyan only when he is helpless—and she is in control, deciding when and how much mercy to bestow: "There is nothing that a woman will not forgive a man, when he is weaker than she is herself" (93). On the way home from Italy, she kneels before him to ask that he "forgive [her]" (94) for her stubborn pride, which has now given way to pity. Because she is in the powerful position to give or deny him "mercy" (93), she allows some relief for his tortured mind. But even at the end, when Louis is on his deathbed, she insists on "one word" to acknowledge her innocence in the matter with Osborne . She cannot let the "maniac" (99) she has created die without some vindication of herself. Although he complies with her request, and, at her insistence, kisses her hand to signify that "the verdict . . . [is] in her favour" (98), he cannot articulate it: "He never spoke a word more either to annul it or to enforce it" (98). It is as if, once the pre-marital negotiation is missed, things can never quite be put right. However, Louis' death gives Emily the opportunity to choose what to believe: "He declared to me at last that he trusted me", she says to her sister Nora, "almost believing that real words had come from his lips to that

effect”(98). To the end, Emily insists on her exoneration—though now the private acknowledgement that she is "right" in deed, if not in word, matters more than the public one. She no longer "regard[s] what anybody may say" and asserts that "There are things in life worse even than a bad name" (95). With her husband dead, Emily learns *very* late the lesson which Mrs. Mackenzie teaches to John Ball before his marriage.

As Trevelyan's widow, Emily's only "retribution for such sufferings" is "money" and "liberty" (99). The solace "to make life worth having" is her child. The hard-fought vindication of her private and unspoken "acquittal" (99) has value to no one except herself. The man to whom it might have made a difference is dead, and her remaining "comfort" is merely "outward" (99). That her pursuit of independence has brought her to a life where she now exists only for her son is a sobering reminder of W.R. Greg's claim in *Why Are Women Redundant?* that a woman's "natural dut[y]" is "completing, sweetening, and embellishing the existence of others" (47). Emily's hard-won "liberty" saves her from her husband's mastery—only to channel that energy into selfless child-care. After her quixotic attempt to dislodge herself from the regular workings of the social machinery, it forces her to re-dedicate herself to the existence of another, and be absorbed anew—not by marriage but by motherhood. Emily is once again a literal extension of the patriarchy which she has so long resisted.

VI. Conclusion

The nature of successful female ambition in Trollope's fiction emphasizes the truth of

Dorothy Stanbury's comment, "They are most happy who have no story to tell" (*He Knew* 25). Efficient and powerful agents of the social machinery though they are, Mrs. Combury and Mrs. Mackenzie are living proof of this rule, since officially, they each have no *personal* "story". And at the end of their respective novels, Rachel, Alice, Polly and Ayala, it is strongly suggested, have arrived at a similar point beyond which there is no official "story to tell". Each seems to have negotiated, like the abettors themselves, a strong domestic base of official invisibility. On the surface, this looks a lot like living "happily ever after"—but because of the quality of the prior negotiations, it promises not just a happy and socially appropriate marriage, but also an outlet for each woman's personal ambitions and covert use of public power. Such is not the case for Lizzie, Laura, Ralph and Emily. Their ambitions, like their voices, are silenced by opinions stronger than their own in homes in which they have no real power.

In her discussion of *He Knew He Was Right*, Wendy Jones notes, "Like nearly all of Trollope's novels, *He Knew He Was Right* shows that for those fortunate enough to find love in the world, marriage is a joy as well as a duty, while marrying without love is a sin. . . . Characters who use marriage for economic or social advancement . . . come in for heavy punishment" (406). The nature of this inevitable punishment is marital absorption and social eradication. Lizzie, Laura, Ralph and Emily all learn the social consequences of marrying to satisfy a mercenary aim. These women (and the feminized Ralph falls into this category) fail to acknowledge what Rachel, Alice and Ayala intuit, and Polly realizes: woman is *both* commodity and purchaser. She must neither sell herself for cash, nor "buy [any] privilege at

too dear a price" (*Ralph* 9). Only when a woman realizes that she is not just one but both, can she enter the appropriate negotiations rather than sell herself in "the marriage trade". Lizzie, Laura, Ralph and Emily do not realize this (or ignore it). They sell themselves and their freedom as a consequence.

These stories of failed female ambition expose the fraud inherent in the Victorian domestic ideal. One might argue that Alice and Polly can afford to be selective because they have fortunes, and that the most powerful social machinery is the most basic: money. For indigent non-working-class women (with the interesting exception of Priscilla Stanbury), the only way to survive is marriage. The novelistic ideals of hearth, home and superior feminine influence are attainable only if one's means--and meals--are secure. Consequently, abstract ideals of angelic motherhood in the face of poverty can become, in Marwick's apt phrase, "a bitter irrelevance" (15) to those unsure of their future. Victorian society, by restricting women's opportunities to work, put the onus of entering the marriage trade squarely on female shoulders, and so shaped women's fates: socially, economically and psychologically. From this perspective, the need which Lizzie, Laura, and Emily feel to marry and live well is justifiable—even imperative. Consequently, Lizzie, Laura and Emily can be seen as trying, however unconsciously, to approach their economic reality in a fashion that is, at least on one level, honest and unhypocritical. However, Trollope's novels often query the methods, rather than the motives. And in the case of each of these unsuccessful ambitions, the method is unsound. Lizzie, Laura, Ralph and Emily make themselves objects by selling themselves into hasty or loveless marriages (or both), decisions which resemble a kind of "legal"

prostitution, the economic inevitability for poorer women decried by Bodichon, Hamilton and others.

Nonetheless, having no story to tell—being officially invisible—is the domestic ideal of happiness. Lizzie, by contrast, has a *great* story to tell—in fact, she *is* a story, which in the end dwindles to a mere anecdote. And the surplus of “story” is Lizzie’s problem, just as it is Emily’s and Laura’s. By contrast, if a woman hopes to achieve her ambitions, she needs to elude story by becoming invisible. To do this, she should create a moment of visibility *prior* to the love-marriage to her chosen man, and use this moment to negotiate terms for that marriage which are amenable to both her personal ambitions and social circumstances. Instead of creating this moment of visibility, Lizzie, Laura, Ralph, and Emily sell themselves for financial security. By doing so, they forfeit all claim to expressing or fulfilling their ambitions—and dooming themselves to an invisibility which is not merely official but actual. Their surplus of story will be quenched, not told.

Chapter 5 will consider a related kind of invisibility—that of the woman who crosses the “line” by surrendering her chastity before marriage. I will consider the social effects of female “impurity” on both the woman and her family, and the personal and social consequences of this other side of the marriage trade.

Chapter 5: "A Certain Line": Female Sexuality as Regulation

I: Introduction

It is as though a certain line were drawn to include all women,— a line, but, alas, little more than a line,—by overstepping which, or rather by being known to have overstepped it, a woman ceases to be a woman in the estimation of her own sex.

(An Eye for an Eye II, 7)

Describing Lady Scroope's attitude towards the unmarried but pregnant Kate O'Hara, the narrator of *An Eye for an Eye* delineates in these words the demarcation between pure and fallen women. Unobtrusive qualifications within his description suggest three important aspects of these social definitions. First, that this is "little more than a line" suggests the arbitrary and quixotic quality of the distinction. Second, a woman who crosses this "line" "ceases to be a woman". Last, and perhaps most significant, it is not the "overstepping" which leads to her ostracism, but the "being known to have overstepped". Social discipline, in this case, is less concerned with the crime than with the labels attached to the criminal.

The Vicar of Bullhampton (1870), *The Small House at Allington* (1864) and *An Eye for an Eye* (1870, pub. 1879) depict women who, in one form or another, cross this "line", and, known or thought to be unchaste, are consequently deemed unmarriageable. More particularly, these novels revolve around the nature of this "line", and the way social attitudes towards female sexuality create labels that place a woman on one side or the other of that

line. Recent critical studies by Watt, Mitchell and Nardin have considered the plights of the female protagonists of these novels in the light of contemporary sexual attitudes toward fallen women and the Victorian domestic ideal.¹ All of these studies, particularly Watt's and Nardin's, are thorough and persuasive, and obviate further elaboration on the fallen-woman question here.

However, instead of taking up this entire issue, I would like to turn to an aspect of the fallen-woman theme referred to only implicitly: the treatment of the "line" that separates the chaste or virtuous married woman from the iniquitous woman. Having dealt in Chapter 3 with marriage-negotiations that permit women to achieve their ambitions and gain power, and having dealt in Chapter 4 with marriage-transactions where women sell themselves for financial gain and so doom their ambitions to reduction and failure, I will deal now with circumstances in these three novels where women fall completely on the other side of the marriage line. In *The Novel and the Police*, D.A. Miller suggests that Trollope's novels "elaborat[e] a very extensive and imposing principle of social control . . . call[ed] the 'world'" (14). In this chapter, I will discuss the specific methods with which the "world" or the social machinery in these novels "polices", in Miller's term, this "certain line". In particular, I will

¹For example, in *The Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century English Novel*, George Watt devotes a detailed chapter to Carry Brattle (*The Vicar of Bullhampton*) and Kate O'Hara (*An Eye for an Eye*). Watt considers Trollope's treatment of these women in relation to a) prevalent social opinion of fallen women, and b) Trollope's variation on the theme relative to his contemporary novelists. Sally Mitchell's pithy examination of Carry Brattle in *The Fallen Angel* places Trollope's treatment within a larger context tracing the development of the fallen-woman theme in fiction from 1835-80. Both Watt and Mitchell provide an extensive cultural background which describes the real-world causal link between scarcity of employment for women and the dramatic rise of prostitution during Victorian times. Finally, Jane Nardin's discussion in *He Knew She Was Right of The Small House at Allington* focuses on Lily Dale's unquestioning acceptance of Victorian courtship conventions, and how this leads to her imprudent premarital sexual dalliances with the fiancé who later jilts her. Nardin argues that Lily's resultant feelings of "sexual guilt" make her feel impure,

focus on the use of labels, externally and internally imposed, as a means of regulating behaviour and requiring adherence to normative values. In the cases of Carry Brattle, Lily Dale, and Kate O'Hara, I will also treat how female sexuality is the site of a policing far more intrusive and insidious than that of the abettors.

II. "The Law of Custom": Carry and Mary in *The Vicar of Bullhampton*

The use of labels as social discipline finds emphatic expression in the communal and familial ostracism which marginalizes Carry Brattle. The town's fallen woman, Carry was cast away because of a sexual liaison with an anonymous army lieutenant. Carry is the "comeliest" of the Brattle women, and her beauty led to her misfortune before the start of the novel.

The narrator's first description of Carry emphasizes both her objectification and her family's feeling of shame about her: "Between [Sam] and Fanny there was,—perhaps it will be better to say there had been,—another daughter" (5). The correction of tenses, from "was" to "had been", is a syntactical reinforcement of the Brattle family's retroactive erasure of Carry's existence. Her fall has, to them, made her a non-person. Repeating this tense shift, the narrator describes her as "such a morsel of fruit as men do choose....Fair she *had been*, with laughing eyes and floating curls; strong in health, generous in temper....to her father she *had been* as bright and beautiful as the harvest moon. Now she *was a thing*, somewhere, *never to be mentioned!*" (5, emphasis added). The contrast between the precision and sensuality of the first description ("morsel of fruit") and the amorphous asexuality of the second ("a thing") is

so Lily must fashion a new identity as "widow" in order to "retain her self-respect" (112).

a clear emblem of the shift in attitudes which accompanies the shift in tenses. And this shift is enunciated first and foremost in sexual terms. Before falling, she was a definable, identifiable, luscious, *sensual* creature. She was the fruit which is the Edenic temptation itself. Now she is an unmentionable and sexless "thing, somewhere"--shapeless, formless, nameless--defying definition, let alone personification.

Carry's non-human status is reinforced repeatedly. When the Rev. Frank Fenwick first encounters her, he views her as a "poor, sickly-looking *thing*" (25, emphasis added). Frank's observation that Carry is now someone significantly altered from the woman she was before she fell has far less of the depersonalizing effect of Jacob's reliance on the same term.

However, his choice of the term "thing" is resonant nonetheless. Later in the novel, when Carry returns home to the mill, her erasure is made painfully clear by Jacob's unwillingness "to speak to her" nor "pronounce her name" (53). And before he can speak about her (and thus begin to acknowledge her existence), he continues to refer to her in non-human terms: "there is no *thing* so vile as a harlot" (53, emphasis added). Her compassionate sister Fanny refers to her as "a winsome *thing*...made to be loved" (53, emphasis added). And looking at the sleeping Carry, Fanny wonders how she can be "a *thing* said to be so foul that even a father [can] not endure to have her name mentioned in his ears" (53, emphasis added). Only when Jacob, taught by Frank to repent, speaks Carry's name in chapter 66 (of 71) does she feel reclaimed into the human race from which she was earlier banished. At the moment of her naming, she ceases to be a vague "thing" and becomes a person with a definite identity.

Paradoxically, though the feminine ideal suggests that women are ethereal, invisible "angels", the process of ostracizing Carry proves that she had substance in the first place. And before her "fall," Carry's sexuality was at the root of this "substance". As my quotations demonstrate, her sexuality is what defines her, pre-"fall", as both an appealing prospective mate and a beloved and beautiful daughter. Indulging her sexuality does more than simply disqualify her from either of these relationships; it removes her completely from visibility. As an unmarried but "fallen woman", then, Carry is akin to forbidden fruit, which, "picked" prematurely in the moment of transgression, loses both purity and sweetness immediately. Society deems Carry "rotten" and unfit to associate with decent people.

Though society disenfranchises and, in effect, discorporates Carry, her violation of female chastity affects much more than herself alone. A woman is always defined according to her social role; therefore, her transgression becomes a communal shame in which her entire family participates. First, like Eve, Carry is cast out by her father, Jacob Brattle. The social solution for the Brattle family then becomes a retroactive assertion of the non-existence of the culprit. Her father spurns the person that he claimed to love the most and forbids even the mention of her name. This punishment imbues Carry with feelings of guilt and shame, not unlike those which the virtuous Mary Lowther, the vicar's other "cause", endures from all those who disapprove of her potential marriage to Walter Marrable and her treatment of Harry Gilmore, to whom they prefer to see her married.

The Brattles, particularly Jacob, venerate social conventions, even at the cost of ostracizing a

loved one, because doing so is the only way "the Brattles ha[ve] ever held up their heads" (5). This novel, like other novels by Trollope, suggests that the underprivileged suffer most from the nebulous or meanspirited codes of society—often by internalizing them. Carry has crossed the "line"—or, more accurately, "is known to have overstepped it"—and this treatment by her own family demonstrates the power of society to enforce strict adherence to its definitions. Jacob does not believe that he has the option to "obey the instincts of [his] heart" (27) and forgive her, for, given Carry's well-known transgression, such forgiveness has a very public dimension. It is susceptible to interpretation as acceptance—even sanction—of immorality, which would be a breach of the strictest law of all, one whose inevitable consequence is a loss of social footing—a risk hardly worth taking for one who has almost no social footing.

Jacob's social conscience, which will not allow him to help his daughter, is "policing" of the most basic kind: "what will the neighbours think?" His sense of righteousness compels him to reject Carry for her iniquity. But "[he thinks] of her always" and assumes the guilt of her sin, like a "great lump, which he must bear to his grave" (5). This "lump", like the "thing" which Carry has become, is an imprecise term that underscores the suggestion that the socially unacceptable loses its precise form and definition. Those who are socially "correct" in the narrative, by contrast, have very precise definitions. In fact, their limits are sketched by those around them; they are suspended in a web of specific relationships to men and social structures (daughter, sister, wife, mother, church member, and so on) which hold them firmly in place. The loss of precise shape and definition which befalls Carry is socially the worst

thing that can happen to a woman: it dislodges her from the world. With the loss of relationship comes an automatic loss of definition. No longer daughter or sister, she is an uncircumscribed, disconnected “thing”, a ‘lump’ of errant flesh.

And Carry's sin is familial sin. All the Brattles must endure it--in particular, Jacob, who transfers the metaphorical weight from heart to back, like a physical load to be borne. His physical appearance so well reflects the burden of shame that he is soon "gray from head to foot" (37), depleted of colour and life, "thinking always of the evil things that had been done to him" (37). Most telling, perhaps, is the effect which Carry's sin has on his sense of his own masculinity. He admits to Frank late in the story, "I've been a man all my life, Muster Fenwick; and now I ain't a man no more" (63). Carry's one indiscretion is enough to emasculate him, Jacob implies. The sexual transgression of a daughter is so catastrophic that it causes the retroactive unmanning of the father--not unlike the way a wife's infidelity is often depicted as unmanning her husband. A woman's indulgence of her sexuality renders her a disconnected “thing”--but, like sexual dominoes, also topples the manhood of the man who previously held her “in place” through their social relationship. Indeed, so unmanned does Jacob feel that he cannot look at other men or their daughters without being reminded of Carry. The Vicar feels at a loss to help him but realizes that Jacob's pain is both personal and social, and since "he must bear his misery to the last,...he struggle[s] to make his back broad for the load" (63).

Whether or not Carry “sinned” knowingly is never disclosed. Indeed, no detail is provided

about the events that led her to be cast out. The absence of detail about the exact nature of her fall reinforces the greater importance of its effect rather than its cause. Any woman who is known to have transgressed the "line" is made into the same: a shapeless, undefined "thing" that must endure non-relationship as the penalty for violating "the law of custom" (29). Until Carry is forgiven by her father, she is seen as--and feels like--a criminal cast out from society's web of "decent" relationships. In society's view, Carry's "crime", the surrender of virginity before marriage, is the worst a woman can commit. Female chastity is a prize to be withheld until marriage: if a woman is known to have been indecorous, she is soiled,² a contagion that risks contaminating all who associate with her, and so must be purged.

The far-reaching implications of this social machinery are apparent not only in public displays of loathing for Carry, but in her own opinion that she deserves these. In addition to the stigma of her label, sensory detection is a means of policing in the novel. For instance, Carry hesitates to shake Frank's hand because she sees herself as not "fit for the likes of [him] to touch" (25). Nor does she believe him when he says that his wife loves her dearly: "The likes of her couldn't love the likes of me. She wouldn't speak to me. She wouldn't touch me" (25). The burden of conscience convinces her that she is without clear form or place, and, so, literally untouchable. Social judgement convinces her that her one mistake forever separates her from the normative "likes of [him]" and "likes of her". And despite Frank's dreams of her rejoining "the decencies of life" (27), Carry sees no such return as possible. Known to have

²Toward the end of *The Eustace Diamonds*, Frank Greystock sees Lizzie as "soiled" and "unclean" (76), two terms which seem to describe more her transgressive nature than her physical appearance—a recognition that only reinforces his decision to reject her.

crossed the "line", she is no longer fit to be touched, spoken to, or even present in the company of "respectable" people like the Fenwicks or her father. To "touch" someone, whether physically, or with a glance or verbal address, is an endorsement based usually upon decorum, which depends upon a set social definition. Without such definition, she quails at the thought of "stand[ing] before [her father's] eye....The sound of his voice would kill [her] straight" (25). No one need speak the statutes of feminine purity to Carry. She assumes a complete and self-regulating responsibility for what she has done. Having turned her father's wrath and society's excommunication inward, she punishes herself by taking full ownership of her own deficiency : "Nobody'll see, or speak to me", she says, "Because I am bad" (25). Carry sees herself as bad, and therefore invisible—even *unthinkable*. This ongoing collaboration in her own rejection is the most potent form of social discipline Carry endures. Society's ability to torment those who cross its many narrow and ill-defined lines is, in the world of Trollope's novels, one of its most debasing elements.

Disclosure of her iniquity means that she can no longer be married, certainly not within the decent circles of the Fenwicks and the Brattles. Consequently, she cannot attain the respectability that marriage brings. "The state of a married woman is honest at any rate", Fenwick says to her, "let her husband be who he may" (25). "My state is not honest", counters Carry. Referring to Burrows, who is keeping her at present, she explains, "I have the money he gave me, if you mean that" (25). But as with the original "crime", what is important here is not whether Carry is *being* "honest". What matters is being *known* to be honest. Fenwick knows that it matters little if Carry has taken Burrows' money: if Carry were

at least married to Burrows, however unsavoury he may be, she would bear the title "wife", rather than "harlot", and would consequently be allowed to re-enter society. The irony (which likely does not escape Fenwick) is that the expedient marriage which he favours would require that Carry grant the same obligatory sexual favours which she grants in her occupation as prostitute (though her conjugal duties would bring payment in other currencies). The only "honest" state left to Carry by society's ostracism of her for her "sin" is simply the "legal" prostitution of a "respectable" life—a formidable irony, given that middle-class Victorian society so esteems its own constrictive principles.

As Frank's wife Janet points out to him, marriage is not only the chief means for unmarried girls of the working class to attain respect in the eyes of society; it is often the sole means of ensuring basic economic survival. The single life possible for Lily Dale, whom I discuss later in this chapter, is inconceivable for working-class women such as Carry.³ So, with her whole livelihood at stake, an unsoiled reputation is even more critical to attaining status and securing a fixed social position. For "women of that class," the "law of custom" (39) is the law of economic and social survival of the fittest, a brutal Darwinism that revolts the narrator. Though Frank is still ignorant of the extent of this general truth, he gets a quick lesson upon his arrival at the ironically named inn the Three Honest Men, "as disreputable a house...as

³As Nardin indicates (*He Knew She Was Right* 122), Amelia Roper's desperate attempt to snare a husband in the subplot of *The Small House at Allington* suggests that the only way for a penurious woman to succeed in life is to marry well. Only Amelia recognizes in the "hobbledehoy" John the potential for a competent young man. Her declaration to John, "I didn't think ever to have cared for a man as I have cared for you" (49), is quite sincere. Her love for Johnny is genuine, and no less so because Johnny offers her a chance to escape the prospect of becoming the heir-apparent to her mother in the boardinghouse trade.

ever he had proposed to enter" (39). As soon as he inquires after Carry, the "uncomely woman at the bar" attacks him, for "[t]he mistress of the Three Honest Men was a married woman,--and as far as that went, respectable; whereas poor Carry was not married, and certainly not respectable" (39).⁴ The absurdity of this unnamed woman's claim to "respectability" is lost on neither Fenwick nor the reader. She is "respectable"--"as far as that [goes]" the narrator says pointedly--only because she is married--far from a substantial mitigator of her lack of other attributes. The placement of "certainly" suggests a causal link between Carry's not being married and (therefore) not being "respectable". Marriage equals respectability, the strongest base of social power, even if one is a slattern, running a dubious alehouse. Carry's lack of respectability, then, is the powerlessness of the non-human: Carry can be turned away like an unwanted dog because a "thing" has no place in "respectable" society. The obvious irony is that the "drunken" (39) landlady of a "disreputable" public house, is crass, dirty and violent--yet can assert a demeanour of "outraged virtue" (39) because she managed to preserve her virginity--or more accurately to preserve the reputation of virginity--long enough to get a husband. With this seal of "respectable" status, she maintains the social power that marriage accords her. Moreover, she will fight (with accusations and quart pots) to defend the value of her role as it is defined by this relationship and this "line".

The ironic consequence is that the cause of Carry's initial ostracism becomes her only means

⁴The landlady's anonymity implies an implicit subversion of the narrator's norms. In denying her a name while referring repeatedly to her function, he perhaps makes her into a "thing", or at least an abstract category, doing subtly to her what she and others do to fallen women in the novel.

of survival: the label “whore” forces her to become a whore. Carry’s circumstance clearly articulates society’s complicity in perpetuating a single sex trade. “The law of custom” (29) means that Carry and other “fallen women” are all but “dead” to their families. Parents think of protecting their daughters and ensuring their bright future—and one necessary precondition is reducing the Carrys of the world to abstract things and holding them at a safe distance. In short, socially enforced denial keeps iniquitous women invisible in an efficient strategy for discouraging sexual license.⁵ Meanwhile, the errant girl’s segregation forces her into further sin because no other means exists for her to survive. Her seclusion and disconnection from society mean that the prostitute loses not just respectability but credibility--rooted as this is in “who you are”—which is itself rooted in “who you are connected to”. Thus, Carry hesitates to provide an alibi to protect her brother from a murder charge because no one will take her seriously: “if I said as how he’d come to see his sister, it wouldn’t sound true...being what she is.” (25). Known once to have crossed the “line”, the fallen woman will always be “what she is”—criminal and invalid--because “the law of custom” (39) allows her no alternative.

⁵Carry’s brother George likens “young women as goes astray” to “any sick animal, as all the animals as ain’t comes and sets upon immediately” (41). There is a benevolence in the animals’ destruction of a pack member that likely would not survive in its “sick” state. They destroy one of their own for reasons far more compassionate—and humane—than George realizes. His act of “charity” in the form of money is a specimen of pack mentality, but is devoid of this sympathy. He is blind to the truth that his one-time payment is a contribution to Carry’s destruction. Carry cannot live in any decent establishment, and so must continue to prostitute herself. He neither questions the validity of this “social truth” (41), nor sees the disturbing parallel. He merely honours it as long as it serves his purpose: “They knows it beforehand, and it keeps ‘em straight” (41). His offer to contribute to Carry’s subsistence, then, is not concern for her welfare, but a payoff to appease his conscience. Once convinced that he has been charitable, he can put away both his wallet and all thoughts of this shapeless, status-less abstraction.

Although Frank, carried away by his zeal to save "this poor creature" (39), cannot yet understand the potency of this "law of custom", his wife Janet sees the social sanction for it: "Surely Frank you know the unforgiving nature of women of that class for such sin as poor Carry Brattle's?", she says. "It is permitted to them not to forgive that sin....you can't fight against it. At any rate, you can't ignore it till it has been fought against and conquered" (29). "It is permitted" makes this a sourceless edict, whose inviolability is syntactically reinforced by the passive voice. Janet understands the practicality of the standard that "keeps women from going astray" (29), and knows that repression and rejection are the means of regulation. If young girls once detect that their parents can not only forgive but support a castaway such as Carry, they may assume that they, too, could be forgiven "so small a sin" (29). For "women of that class" whose daughters' economic survival depends on marrying well, the danger of promiscuity is monumental. This economic fact disguised as a moral lesson makes "the law of custom" a more functional edict than any mere legal ordinance could be. Janet thus suggests that any reform must start with the class which implements this standard most forcefully, and with its education in rationality and compassion. From his vantage, Frank might save one "poor creature"--but countless others will continue to be spurned by the lower ranks of society.

Carry's sister-in-law Mrs. George's violent reaction to the mere suggestion of housing Carry confirms Janet's assessment of "the unforgiving nature of women of that class" (29). The horrified Mrs. George is incredulous at the idea of charity: "Take her in here?...I must tell you that I don't think it over decent of you, --a clergyman, and a young man, too in a way,--to

come talking of such a one in a house like this" (41). Here the world's "morality" confronts the morality—the charity—preached by the Christian church. She is in earnest: in her world view, there can be no room for Fenwick's kind of charity to "such a one"—unnameable, unthinkable, and without form. The code is too firmly in place--the "line" too absolutely drawn--for any flexibility. Like her father-in-law, Mrs. George is a parent and a "decent" member of society, and cannot have her house "polluted" (6) by a prostitute, without, she believes, condoning impropriety. She evades any consideration of Carry as an individual woman by jumping straight to the blanket code of social decency. Like the miller, she understands that a woman's sexuality is never discrete--that a woman's fall topples not just her, but male family members (father, brother, husband) closely associated with her. In a clear example of policing, Mrs. George thus makes *herself* the victim of Carry's fall. Mrs. George rejects Carry less for her "crime" than for its effect: the ways in which she and her family will themselves be ostracized unless they pursue the socially accepted course of rejecting and helping to erase Carry from society.

As a representative "woman of that class", Mrs. George's position is more extreme than that of her husband: she resents Carry as the source of genetic guilt-by-association: "What business had she to be sister to any honest man?", Mrs. George asks vaporously, suggesting that Carry's iniquity has victimized her brother. "Think of what she's been and done to my poor children, who wouldn't else have had nobody to be ashamed of. There wasn't one of the Hugginses who didn't behave herself;--that is of the women" (41).⁶ What Carry has "done" is

⁶Throughout the novel, numerous characters echo the belief that a man can commit no crime so

given Mrs. George's "poor children" a source of shame. Mrs. George clearly supports the sexual double standard that holds women alone accountable for sexual transgression. A man is a sexual being with a corresponding appetite, and, so, not to blame for indulging it. The fallen woman is a culprit twice: first, for having sexual desires considered unnatural for her sex and, second (and worse), for being known to have indulged them. The crime itself is elided; it exists only as the domino-like set of social consequences--in this case, shame for Mrs. George's family.

The narrator interpolates somewhat sarcastically Fenwick's realization of the way "the world" actually practises the charity that Christians like Mrs. George purport to inspire. Like Mr. Chamberlaine the prebendary, Mrs. George asserts that the only place for girls like Carry is prison—the place where the unnatural criminal is safely and invisibly cordoned off from "normal" people. But Mrs. George sees no way that prison can actually help fallen women: "Let 'em go there if they means repentance. But they never does,—never till there ain't nobody to notice 'em any longer; and by that time they're mostly thieves and pickpockets" (41). The fallen woman inevitably becomes the hardened criminal—which makes her still more unthinkable, and further justifies society's blanket dismissal of this type that "never does"

detrimental to the social well-being as a woman can by surrendering her chastity. This social reality is underscored by the juxtaposition of Carry's "crime" with her brother's murder charge. The miller believes "the Brattles had ever held up their heads. The women, at least, had always been decent" (5). His older son, George, concurs: "There wasn't one of us as wasn't respectable, till she come up;—and now there's Sam. But a boy as is bad ain't never so bad as a girl" (41). The elucidation of these "crimes" suggests that a single woman's primary duty is to safeguard her virginity, and ensure that she does not surrender it before marriage. All she can do is preserve her chastity—that is, *do* nothing with it but be passive. A man is active, public, and individualistic—and the taking a life is still a male activity, if a crime. As a consequence, murder by a man is deemed less transgressive of norms than the abandonment of her passivity by a woman and the active surrender of her chastity.

mean repentance. Degeneracy, rather than rehabilitation, is inevitable because "they" are deemed always to have gone collectively too far to *be* helped. The relegation of Carry to this category again emphasizes the invisibility of an individual woman submerged beneath an abstract category. Nominal (rather than actual) Christians, Mrs. George and Mr. Chamberlaine fail to consider the redemptive value of local human contact, preferring to get the Carrys of the world out of sight—whether through institutionalizing them, reviling them loudly, mouthing self-serving platitudes, or simply looking the other way.

The Vicar of Bullhampton documents at length society's complicity in Carry's erasure from beautiful woman and conversion into a "thing" devoid of humanity, identity, and normalcy. Further, the novel depicts graphically how labels and ostracism perpetuate the victimization of the fallen woman in two ways: first, by blaming only her for any sexual impropriety, and, second, by making her live down to a label by denying her a socially acceptable mode of life. The novel suggests that once a woman is known to cross the "line" and is made a nonhuman "thing", she loses all definition--and through this, the possibility of identity, purpose, and function. The eradication of those caught on the wrong side of the "line" serves the expedient purpose of ensuring few women will emulate them and risk a similar fate. Also clear is that the institution and regulation of these laws are inextricably bound to the patriarchal system that creates them.⁷ The man to whom a fallen woman is related (and by whom she is defined)

⁷In her Introduction to *The Fallen Angel*, Sally Mitchell explains the patriarchal legal basis for enforcing chastity: "Aside from their role as the channel through which property passed, women were also property. The father of an unmarried woman could sue her seducer for the loss of her services....For a woman to control her own body--to dispose of it or authorize its use as she saw fit--interfered with the property rights of her father or husband" (xi).

is he, in the cover story, who suffers worst because of her transgression. Consequently, he and he alone possesses the power and charity to restore her definition and her life. Carry is denied her existence by her father—and only her father can restore it, as he eventually does, thanks to Fenwick's and especially Fanny's mediation. Carry's identity at novel's end is once more that of a daughter, and it is clear that she can never be anything else: having once been a whore, she can never become a wife.

Carry's story is told alongside that of Mary Lowther, the Vicar's other "cause". Ironically, the Vicar cannot see that in his attempt to coerce Mary Lowther into a marriage with his friend Harry Gilmore, he might be deemed guilty of encouraging Mary into the same style of life from which he tries to save Carry—or, at least, imposing a role upon her as society has imposed one on Carry. Though Frank cannot see the similarities, the rhyming names of Mary and Carry are a cogent suggestion of the parallel in the women's plights. Intent on saving one woman, Frank is blind to the chance of destroying another by encouraging her into the bed of a man eager to "buy" her with marriage and "a magnificent set of rubies" (54). In this light, prostitution is not so discrete a notion as assumed by some characters in the novel—though the critical difference, *The Vicar of Bullhampton* underlines repeatedly, is the crucial importance of the label. A "wife" is not *known* to have crossed the "line"—a whore is. Though Mary and Carry never meet during the course of the narrative, their separation emphasizes the similarity of their ostensibly dissimilar lives. The spectre of the "line" is pervasive, shaping fates and lives across such different social strata and circumstances.

Whereas Carry is forced to assume labels imposed on her by society, Mary's challenge is to avoid labels, and to live her life--and choose her husband--on her own negotiated terms (in the terms I described in Chapter 3). Carry's beauty is the cause of her ruin, but Mary's, though considerable, is insufficient to attract potential lovers repelled by her apparent aloofness: "At Loring it was said that Mary Lowther was cold and repellent, and, on that account, one who might very probably descend to the shades as an old maid in spite of the beauty of which she was the acknowledged possessor. No enemy, no friend, had ever accused her of being a flirt" (1). Mary avoids being labelled a "flirt", but is at the risk of gaining another label, "old maid". The crux of her dilemma is this: she wants to marry, and so cannot resign herself to being a spinster. On the other hand, the men around her do not typically feel compelled to act without some encouragement, "some outward and visible sign of softness which may be taken as an indication that sighing will produce some result, however small" (1).⁸ Mary is so scrupulous about avoiding the term "coquette" (8), however, that she seems merely uninterested to any potentially interested party.

Unlike Lizzie Eustace, who flaunts her beauty flagrantly, Mary cultivates a deliberate repression in her outward demeanour to fend off prospective suitors--a tactic that implies her

⁸ She seems, in short, pure, chaste and unlikely to inflame desire—but early descriptions of Mary suggest a nascent sexuality that must be repressed behind her otherwise impassive exterior: "[i]t might have been said that there was a want of capability for passion in her face, had it not been for the well-marked dimple in her chin--that soft couch in which one may always be sure, when one sees it, that some little imp of love lies hidden" (1). Marwick analyzes this detail of Mary's dimple thus: "We are given every indicator that Mary's every feature denotes modesty and propriety, and with every feature we are fed a line showing how the very asexuality of its presentation is a turn-on; Trollope shows us the impossibility of the expectations given to girls and young women, that their desires should be denied, but that the evidence of them should be there. His 'soft couch' is positively erotic..." (43). The ideal of feminine propriety, however, precludes a man settling there on the wrong terms. Mary struggles with this detail until her love for Walter makes it clear to her who should stake a claim and who would be merely trespassing.

capitulation, however unconscious, to the socially-contrived female dilemma of wanting marriage but needing to appear not too eager for it:

When a girl asks herself that question,--what shall she do with her life? it is so natural that she should answer it saying that she will get married, and give her life to somebody else. It is a woman's one career--let women rebel against the edict as they may; and though there may be word-rebellion here and there, women learn the truth early in their lives....and the Saturday Reviewers and others blame them for their lack of modesty in doing so.⁹ (37)

Part of Mary's trouble is rooted in this forced assumption of detachment, a mere social "theory of the censors" that dictates tacitly the assumption of "a mock modesty. . . in which no human being can believe!" (37). In the words of the narrator, "Our daughters should be educated to be wives, but, forsooth, they should never wish to be wooed!" (37). Mary intuits the basic hypocrisy underlying this "theory" of the correlation between a woman's marketability and her feigned indifference to the whole goal of her "education". As far as she

⁹The particular Saturday Reviewer in question is Eliza Lynn Linton, whose notorious article "The Girl of the Period" appeared in the *Saturday Review* in March 1868, during the height of the feminist movement. The article deplored the modern girl who abandoned the modest ideal of English womanhood to promote herself in a fashion approximating the unmentionable "class of women whom we must not call by their proper--or improper--name" (175):

No one can say of the modern English girl she is tender, loving, retiring or domestic....Love indeed is the last thing she thinks of, and the least of the dangers besetting her....The legal barter of herself for so much money, representing so much dash, so much luxury and pleasure--that is her idea of marriage...For it is only the old-fashioned sort...that marry for love, or put the husband before the banker. (174)

The dual stories of Carry and Mary in *The Vicar of Bullhampton* respond to Linton's ideas by exposing the economic condition perpetuating the two types of prostitution to which Linton refers: legal and illegal. Mary must either marry or live a relatively impoverished life with her aunt. Carry cannot marry, and, without family to sustain her, must prostitute herself. Until a "new career for women" (37) is possible, a woman has no choice but to depend for her livelihood on a man's earnings. Consequently, the sham modesty often required to bring it about is, the novel suggests, hypocrisy at best.

can see, "female martyrdom" (37) is inevitable. If she gives up Walter, the impecunious soldier whom she loves, she sacrifices her happiness. If she marries Gilmore, the squire of Bullhampton whom she is told she ought to love, she sacrifices herself to someone else's concept of "duty".

"What *shall* she do with her life?" is the critical question indeed, resonant and oft-repeated in Trollope's novels. When Mary breaks her engagement to Walter to relieve him of financial worries, she "[finds] herself to be broken in pieces" (37). But once she has made up her mind to pursue woman's one vocation, she cannot resign herself to the label of spinster: "The life to which she had looked forward ha[s] been the life of a married woman; and now, as that was taken from her, she could be but a thing broken, a fragment of humanity, created for use, but never to be used" (37). Like Carry, who is made into a whore for her transgression, Mary, facing the label "old maid", is also made to feel like a "thing". As is the case with Carry, the potential label strips Mary not only of her intended social function, but with it of her identity and her sense of "wholeness" (37).¹⁰ The notion of marriage as a woman's sole means of attaining fulfilment finds full expression in Mary's profound loss in feeling qualified to do—

¹⁰Mary thinking of her unmarried self as a "thing" also suggests the validity of Cicely Hamilton's view, that a woman's identity depends upon the male perspective of her "usefulness" to him: "[man] draws the quite permissible conclusion that [woman] exists only for the purpose of attaining to completeness through him—and that where she does not attain to it, the unfortunate creature is, for practical purposes, non-existent" (21). Hamilton provides a compelling linguistic basis for her assumption:

To him womanhood is summed up in one of its attributes--wifhood, or its unlegalised equivalent. Language bears the stamp of the idea that woman is a wife, actually, or in embryo. To most men--perhaps to all--the girl is some man's wife that is to be; the married woman some man's wife that is; the widow some man's wife that was; the spinster some man's wife that should have been--a damaged article, unfit for use, unsuitable. Therefore, a negligible quantity. (21)

This argument, combined with the social reality of female training for wifhood, makes Mary's disinclination to live a spinster's invisible life--without the possibility of social function or influence--seem logical.

indeed, *be*--only one thing, yet being denied the opportunity to attain it. Her purposelessness and powerlessness recall Carry's, and the use of the term "thing" to describe both women explicitly equates womanhood (or society's sense of it) and marriageability. Although Mary is on the opposite side of the "line" from Carry, she is equally unmarried—and so feels just as non-human.

Mary's parallel to Carry does not end here. Despite her eventual capitulation to accepting Harry, Mary herself cannot help seeing it as a transaction to which she succumbs less out of economic necessity than coercion. Gilmore is, in Stephen Wall's very apt term, "another of those Trollopian men in whom constancy is the other side of obstinacy" (367). He and the Fenwicks are so persistent that Mary feels overwhelming "guilt" and "disgrace" (8) for refusing this man whom she cannot "bring herself to accept" (4). Having been "educated" to become a wife, she is hesitant to abandon her ambition outright because of Walter's financial troubles: "She had told herself very plainly that it was a good thing for a woman to be married; that she would live and die unsuccessfully if she lived and died a single woman; that she had desired to do better with herself than that. . . . Could she be right if she married a man without loving him?" (45). Trapped in this dilemma not of her making, she accepts Gilmore for a time but cannot articulate her acceptance—a clear sign that this is the wrong decision for her. Ultimately she resolves that marriage without the possibility of love "would be wrong" (45). And though the incompatibility of her decision and her friends' desires causes further despair, she cannot shake her resolve that to do anything else would be dishonest.

When Mary tries to make the Fenwicks understand her plight, she is accused of "insanity" (61). This label is perhaps the most cogent example of society's enforcement of female propriety through labels. Her initial refusal of Gilmore elicits accusations of misbehaviour and "obstinacy" (2), which torture Mary sufficiently that she confesses to Frank and asks his forgiveness. This second refusal prompts her to be marginalized as a lunatic for her seeming illogic in rejecting a man she cannot love. Insanity, like criminality and prostitution, is a label which cordons off the labelled absolutely from the rest of normal society. One can change the mind of even an obstinate person with rational discussion (or browbeating, as in Mary's case)--but one does not even begin a conversation with an insane person. The "insane" are simply cast aside as unreasonable, irrelevant, and unfathomable. And Harry applies the stigma of the prostitute to Mary, to push her even further out of society, when she tries to convince him that it would be wrong to marry him while loving another man. Harry himself will not take no for an answer and insults her by saying, "[i]f you were my sister, my ears would tingle with shame when your name was mentioned in my presence" (63).

This insult helps Mary sever contact with Harry, but after leaving Bullhampton she still feels the residual effects of his and the Fenwicks' coercion. Even when she has the only label she wants, "Mrs. Walter MARRABLE" (71), the struggle for her own acceptance of social approval continues: she remembers the "painful" name of "Mr. Gilmore" as "the great struggle of her life" and her behaviour as "evil" of which "she [cannot] acquit herself" (71). Mary's guilt is remarkably similar to Carry's--though Carry can name the specific instance of her undoing while Mary cannot. By relying on her better judgement to refuse a man to whom she feels no

attraction, Mary remains true to herself, but guilt continues to plague her because her wishes have not conformed to popular opinion. Because it resides in female sexuality, through which it enforces social discipline on women (and the men by whom they are defined), the amorphous "line" looms large—even in the life of this woman who, on the surface, never came close to crossing it. The narrator's sympathetic summary at novel's end endorses Mary, by suggesting that marriage without love is hardly different from the life from which Frank rescues Carry. Had Mary continued to stay in an unloving marriage, she would assume the same reality (if not the label) that Carry will likely never live down—but the narrator's approval, we have become very aware, is not one with the energies of the coercive society he has depicted.

III. "These things are different with a man": Lily's Reinvention of Self in *The Small House at Allington*

Unlike Carry and Mary, who must resist the imposition of external labels, Lily Dale polices herself through a variety of labels which she invents and enforces. Lily is a nineteen-year-old beauty who, at novel's end, refuses the proposal of her long-time suitor Johnny Eames, to enter a "monastic seclusion" (33), a state she decides upon because of her tenacious adherence to an idealized standard of feminine behaviour. On the surface, Lily's plight is largely self-made, though it is the product of a pervasive social discipline which she has internalized and implemented unthinkingly.

From the beginning of the novel, Lily demonstrates a steadfast allegiance to conventional "theories" (6) about love and courtship. Unlike Mary Lowther who consciously evades the

risked of being labelled a "flirt", Lily *is* a flirt—with such expertise that she flirts automatically, and often without any specific intention. For instance, at her sister Bell's wedding, she "flirt[s] with the old earl till he declare[s] that he would marry her himself" (60). In such safe company, with no danger of being taken seriously, she can be her charming best. When the ever-decorous Bell reproves Lily for talking slang, Lily retorts coquettishly, "Well, I'd like to be nice—if I knew how" (2). The narrator undermines Lily's implication that she is unfamiliar with niceness: "If she knew how! There is no knowing how, for a girl, in that matter. If nature and her mother have not done it for her, there is no hope for her. . . . I may say that nature and her mother had been sufficiently efficacious for Lilian Dale in this respect" (2). As Lily intuits, and Mary Lowther learns, a little coquetry can be charming and is even essential to attract lovers, if a woman wants to be wooed and wed.

Lily espouses a theory of feminine behaviour and propriety which is an extreme version of the Victorian conventions described in Chapter 1. She believes that just as "a girl should never show any preference for a man till circumstances should have fully entitled him to such a manifestation, so also should she make no drawback on her love, but pour it forth for his benefit with all her strength" (7) once she has granted it. Lily is a Trollopian incarnation of the evil done to women by their blind adherence to society's codes and stigmas—its "ethic". Consequently, as soon as Adolphus Crosbie proffers a proposal, Lily wastes no time in putting its theory into practice. She knows there is "a risk. He who was now everything to her might die...he might neglect her, desert her, or misuse her." (13) These three male actions pose risk, "but she had resolved to trust in everything" (13)—in other words, to be utterly

passive. Instead of mitigating the risk by negotiating socially and personally appropriate terms for a union, as do the successful Rachels, Pollys and Alices of the world, Lily will "pour forth her love"—in what is simply a more exquisite, encompassing form of passivity. In articulating these risks, the narrator not only anticipates "Apollo" Crosbie's imminent misbehaviour but underlines Lily's incipient and instinctive awareness of danger, to show that she is consciously striving to act out her beliefs, but already experiencing certain misgivings.¹¹ Lily is not stupid; she is simply unable to avoid becoming the victim of society's ethic.

During their brief engagement, Lily tries to convince herself that Crosbie's views brook no question. When he tells her that he plans to leave Allington, Lily is upset that he seems eager to return to London, but does not "allow herself to suppose that he could propose anything that was unkind" (12). Unable to anticipate his fickleness, she resents his ungracious behaviour, but, in what quickly becomes a pattern, reproaches herself for it: "I forget how much he is giving up for me; and then, when anything annoys him, I make it worse instead of comforting him" (7). As Lily soon discovers, the ideal role of woman as the angelic "comforter...in all things" (15) is a difficult one to live out with any consistency or satisfaction. It is the mirror image of the "whore" label attached to Carry Brattle and the accusation of insanity heaped upon Mary Lowther: a self-sustaining "loop" in which woman is both cause and solution of all problems and man has no responsibility for seeing himself as

¹¹Nardin also concludes that Lily is aware of imminent danger and does not stumble into it unwittingly. See Nardin's discussion of Lily's dependence on theories in *He Knew She Was Right* 108-14.

either.

When Crosbie's selfish side begins to surface, Lily is disturbed, but once again her "theories" help her to accept them as merely typical masculine conduct. Upset that Lily's uncle will not give her a fortune, Crosbie decides to postpone their marriage and continue with bachelor life in London. "He is ungenerous", says the narrator unambiguously (15), a fact to which Lily's eyes are opening--though she obstinately chooses not to acknowledge such a possibility. Yet when Crosbie asks, "[a]re you angry with me?" she again reminds herself of woman's nature to "suffer and be still" (Ellis, *Daughters* 73) and man's nature to be self-serving. So she says only, "Oh no! Adolphus; how can I be angry with you? And then she turn[s] to him and [gives] him her face to kiss almost before he ha[s] again asked for it. 'He shall not think that I am unkind to him...' she [says] to herself" (15). The way Lily volunteers her face so quickly makes Crosbie almost irrelevant here: she makes herself problem and solution, rapidly acting out the motions to validate her theory--while he thinks about something else.

Lily accepts Crosbie on the sole basis of characteristics she can see: "He [is] handsome, clever, self-confident, and always cheerful" (6); or perhaps, more accurately, her internalized responsibility for his failings makes her incapable of locating fault anywhere but within herself.¹² His image of success and style convinces her that she has made a superior match.

¹² Crosbie's shallowness and avarice are clear to the reader from the start. The narrator indicates his disdain for Crosbie's mercenary inclinations when he offhandedly notes that Crosbie's interest changes course from Bell to Lily: "It is almost sad to think that such a man might have had the love of either such girls....Apollo, in the plenitude of his power, soon changed his mind; and before the end of his visit, had transferred the distant homage which he was then paying from the elder to the younger sister" (6). The reader sees immediately what Lily is blind to, that "Apollo" is fickle and self-indulgent. Lily's blind eye to Crosbie's

Even after the very ungodlike Crosbie jilts her—in the most cowardly form, by letter—for the wealthy socialite Alexandrina de Courcy, Lily will not abandon her theories about the need for passive female acceptance.¹³ When her mother encourages Johnny Eames' suit, Lily explains its futility: "I was so proud of having [Crosbie], that I gave myself up to him all at once. . . . Who could expect that such an engagement should be lasting?" (44). She as much as admits her feelings of unworthiness for such a match as this. The relationship could never have worked because of her certainty that she is so unworthy, and he so much of a man—and therefore, a worthy and blameless creature.

Jane Nardin and Margaret Marwick both suggest (probably justly, considering the textual evidence) that Lily Dale surrenders her virginity to Crosbie, and that part of her inability to love Eames or any other man is rooted in her guilt over her untimely sexual dalliance.¹⁴ I would extend Nardin and Marwick's ideas to suggest that the technicality of actual

lack of emotional depth recalls Laura Kennedy's (*Phineas Finn*) similar singular focus on Robert Kennedy's money. Both women suffer at the hands of selfish men whom they neglect to know or understand before committing themselves—although it can be argued that Lily is less self-aware in her decision.

¹³J. Robert Polhemus calls Lily "Trollope's most famous devotee of unrequited love" and goes on to elaborate, "Trollope's fiction often shows how an excess of pointless abstract devotion can lead to fixation which hurts both the self and others and threatens a suicidal denial of social reality" ("Being in Love" 393). Juliet McMaster suggests more emphatically that Lily's fidelity to Crosbie implies a certain degree of masochism: "to some extent [Lily] loved [Crosbie] because he so ill-used her" (*Palliser Novels* 11). Further, McMaster notes that there is a strong suggestion of "emotional masturbation" in Lily's "chosen martyrdom" (11). I agree more with McMaster's sense of Lily luxuriating in her psychological trauma than in Lily's active masochism, because Lily's self-involved loop denies Crosbie a central role in her self-contained psychodrama.

¹⁴In *He Knew She Was Right*, Nardin writes, "[i]n several brief, but surprisingly frank, passages, Trollope suggests that in addition to giving Crosbie her mind, Lily gave him more of her body than most young ladies would have dared to....In her efforts to live up to her theories about generous love, she sinned against her equally orthodox theories of feminine purity, as she later comes to feel" (112). Marwick concurs: "the interpretation of 'I gave myself to him' and 'I cannot be the girl I was' (girl = not woman = virgin) ...is an open invitation to interpret Lily's words as meaning that she and Adolphus had consummated their relationship, and that she had found it fulfilling....We note too that she never felt herself to be 'wrong'" (85). I agree that "girl"

consummation is not so relevant as the feeling of impurity Lily indulges herself in. Whether or not she gives herself to Crosbie is less important than her own certainty that she is "fallen". Thus, she laments, "I cannot be the girl I was before he came here" (57). To deal with this fact, Lily must *extend* her theories so she can live with her feelings of being—if not downright impure--sexually altered.

Thus, for a time, Lily labels herself a kind of "almost-wife". When Eames finally proposes again, Lily refuses, saying, "I should be disgraced in mine own eyes if I admitted the love of another man, after--after-- It is to me almost as though I had married him" (54). And as an almost-wife, she leaps to Crosbie's defence immediately, in familiar fashion: "I am not blaming him remember. These things are different with a man" (54). This difference is the bottom line to which Lily perpetually returns: one that endorses hypocrisy, double standards and self-flagellation. Nardin speaks of Lily's inability to acknowledge that she "allowed an inferior man to use and discard her", making her feel "foolish and soiled" (*He Knew She Was Right* 113), and making her ignore that Crosbie is at least partially responsible for her trouble. But the "loop" precludes the inclusion of anyone else, let alone the sharing of blame. In her self-sustained romance, it is for Lily alone to lay blame or absolve guilt: "I have forgiven him altogether," Lily asserts to her mother, "and I think that he was right" (57). Lily's behaviour is an explicit demonstration of the way that society encodes self-regulation within female sexuality, making a woman responsible for her fate (and for that of the man by whom she is defined)--though the society around her may collaborate against her and leave her no choice.

connotes unconsecrated, ungiven, unvouchsafed, and unpromised—but I would argue that the novel suggests that above all, Lily, like Ayala, suffers in and through her mind, not body.

This is sad when we see it enacted implicitly in the mistreatment of Carry. It is odd, absurd—even demented—when we see it made explicit in Lily’s behaviour.

Lily develops her self-definition from “almost-wife” to “wife”, when she admits to her mother she cannot marry Eames because “I am married to that other man. I gave myself to him, and loved him, and rejoiced in his love. When he kissed me I kissed him again and I longed for his kisses. I seemed to live only that he might caress me. All that time I never felt myself to be wrong--because he was all in all to me. I was his own” (57). The novel makes the strong point that Lily is the victim of the Victorian convention of engagement, at which time a woman ceases to be her own person—a psychological concession decidedly more perverse than surrendering herself in body would be. Lady Midlothian makes the terms of this convention clear in *Can You Forgive Her?* when she admonishes Alice, “There are things in which a young lady has no right to change her mind after it has once been made up; and certainly when a young lady has accepted a gentlemen, that is one of them” (18). Here is Lily’s plight. Alice, too, feels like a “fallen creature” (74) when she jilts John Grey, but revises her opinion and so overcomes her self-imposed labels. Lily, on the other hand, accepts such terms at face value and so traps herself willingly within their metaphorical confines.

Lily’s self-abnegation is thus a more extreme version of that from which Alice Vavasor tries to protect herself (or that from which Mrs. Ray in *Rachel Ray* must strive to recover). Lily surrenders herself more to theories for which Crosbie is a pretext. He becomes the agent

through which her various ideas of love and feminine behaviour can be effected. That he was everything, "all in all", to her emphasizes the self-containedness of her passion where the "real" Crosbie was never truly a participant. Later, she reflects, "When he held me in his arms, I told myself it was right, because he was my husband" (57). But he was not, of course, and so, given her mislabelling of herself as "wife", she has little choice but to re-label herself, which she does: "I am as you are, Mamma, widowed" (57). Since she "[tells] herself it was right" to "give herself" in mind to Crosbie--and thereby violate a very important theory of female propriety--the onus to rectify it remains on her.¹⁵ So Lily reconciles her changed self-image to the new self-definition "widow", a term that connotes "former wife" and is thus adequate to assuage her feelings of iniquity (widows are presumably sexually experienced) without segregating her, like a Carry Brattle, from the respectable society of people like her mother. What makes matters worse for Lily is that she may not have given herself to Crosbie physically at all, yet has allowed herself to feel "widowed" by societal conventions of engagement and the monstrous idea, which the novel mocks, that the conventions of marriage are right to deprive a woman of selfhood.

But Lily's strategy has the effect of removing her from the marriage market altogether. She is "widowed" without ever becoming an actual wife--a perversity that escapes neither the narrator nor the reader. And Lily's self-policing tendencies later find a further elaboration in

¹⁵Nardin suggests that, "[o]nly by convincing herself that she is 'widowed' (57) can [Lily] retain her self-respect when she remembers her sexual involvement with Crosbie" (*He Knew She Was Right* 112). I would suggest that Lily's labelling of herself as a widow may demonstrate the desire to reinvent herself so that her self-respect and social respect can accord. Having convinced herself that she has given herself in (society's prim, prudish) fantasy to Crosbie, she sees herself as forever widowed—not released, as she should—by his infidelity.

The Last Chronicle of Barset, where the now merely twenty-four-year-old Lily dons a final label: "Old Maid". What is more, she laments that she cannot put the letters "O.M." after her name after the fashion of university degrees: "I don't see why it shouldn't be as good as B.A. for Bachelor of Arts", says Lily to Mrs. Arabin near novel's end. "It would mean a great deal more" (76). Lily's wish to proclaim her self-imposed "letters" as a qualification equal to a formal education suggests that the life lesson which she, as a woman, has learned is as significant as any a man could learn in university. The desire to publicize her status as an "Old Maid" also shows Lily's recognition that a woman's label can, for all intents and purposes, create the reality—something Carry Brattle and Mary Lowther are made to understand in *The Vicar*. It also represents the last step in Lily's wishful "devolution" back into the sexless single woman that W.R. Greg describes.¹⁶ By reinventing herself publicly as a spinster, Lily would be able to erase retroactively the experience of so-called "marriage" implied by the self-description "widow". With it would go all thoughts of Crosbie and her sexuality, for a confirmed spinster lacks a romantic history or any trace of sexuality. Thus, from almost-wife to wife, to widow to spinster, Lily Dale labels and re-labels herself in this sustained initiative to police herself—her only means of accommodating the social norms which she has internalized.

¹⁶In *Prostitution* (1850), Greg suggests that "[i]n men, in general, the sexual desire is inherent and spontaneous, and belongs to the condition of puberty. In the other sex, the desire is dormant, if not non-existent, till excited; always excited by undue familiarities....Nature has laid many heavy burdens on the delicate shoulders of the weaker sex: let us rejoice that this at least is spared them" (457). Greg here refers to unmarried women specifically. His article implies, as "medical popularizers" indicate, that "marriage was, in essence, sex" (Mason 219). Increased marriage rates during Victorian times were attributed to marriage being seen as a "locus for sexual fulfilment" (Mason 219)—specifically for young girls who could indulge their legitimated passions without censure. Accordingly, Lily's wish to be known as an "Old Maid" implies a rejection not just of marriage but of sexuality as a whole, and recalls Ayala with her cloud-striding Angel.

IV. "The plaything of an idle hour": Exploiting the "line" in *An Eye for an Eye*

Gertrude M. White's analysis of *An Eye for an Eye* urges a reevaluation of this hitherto neglected and misunderstood novel: "Minor as it may be it stands with the more important novels...as illustrative of the 'peculiar and disturbing' quality of Trollope's later fiction".¹⁷

While I do not share White's reading of the text as an anti-fantasy novel, I believe she rightly suggests that it shares themes and qualities with other Trollope novels, though in archetypally broader strokes. On the surface, *An Eye for an Eye* has an ending easily anticipated. A young heir to an earldom, a military man, negotiates one year in which to indulge his "spirit of adventure". In that year, he becomes "infatuated" (II, 1) with an Irish beauty, promises her marriage, impregnates and then jilts her, before being pushed off the cliffs by her avenging mother. Unlike *The Vicar of Bullhampton* and *The Small House at Allington*, which depict the ways labels are imposed to separate chaste from unchaste women, *An Eye for an Eye* describes the consequences of imposing the "line" to marginalize a woman for purely mercenary purposes.

Fred Neville, heir of Scroope, struggles between binary dictates of family duty and personal pleasure. He wants to inherit his uncle's earldom, though not at the expense of his passion for hunting. So he negotiates a year in which to indulge his insatiable "spirit of adventure" (2).

He is an army lieutenant posted in Ireland, and, while there, he meets the beautiful Kate

¹⁷"Truth or Consequences: The Real World of Trollope's Melodrama", *English Studies* 64 (December 83), 491. White contends that the novel's "real themes are the corrosive and destructive power of false pride and false romanticism" (493). In a similar vein, Robert Tracy argues that the novel presents a "stern indictment of romanticism, the romantic hero, and the romantic wish to live a life that is out of the ordinary.... Foolishly romantic dreams are at the heart of *An Eye for an Eye* (Trollope's *Later Novels* 129-30). The novel, one of

O'Hara who lives in a secluded cottage with her mother. Neville thinks he falls in love with her (he insists he can think of nothing else) and proposes marriage, a prospect at which the lonely young Kate leaps.

Whether Neville truly entertains any notion of marrying her is difficult to establish. A dedicated hunter who has explored English and Scottish territory, he determines to make strategic good use of his one-year station in Ireland because "he [has] an idea that Irish hunting is good" (2). The thrill of the pursuit, capture, and defeat of prey is a potent metaphor for a more general love of conquest on which he seems to thrive, and is probably a sardonic commentary on a part of the imperialist dream. His seduction of Kate seems rooted in this same desire for things fought and won through challenge. Early in the novel, Kate asks why he shoots seagulls, and he says: "Only because it is so difficult to get at them. . . . I believe there is no other reason--except that one must shoot something. . . . A man takes to shooting as a matter of course. It's a kind of institution. There ain't any tigers, and so we shoot birds" (6). Neville's matter-of-fact response argues that he pursues Kate for the same frank (and phallic) reason he shoots: "to justify [his] guns" (6) as "a matter of course". A virgin seems as irresistible a target as any gull, no less so because she is ostensibly more difficult to "get at". For the man who thrives on the hunt, what greater challenge is there than a girl's virginity, especially given the titillation of the chase? Hence, for Neville, "the adventure [is] very sweet" (8).

Kate's "devotedness" (10) inspires feelings of power and mastery similar to those Neville experiences shooting gulls. At least part of his sense of power stems from the fact that she is innocent and untouched and so "all his own" to initiate (12). The prospect of "such a love" as that of "dear, sweet, soft, innocent...Kate who...worshipped the very ground on which he trod" (12) is more exotic than the love of a more experienced woman. As his subsequent rejection of her makes clear, the sexual attraction and value reside in her purity. Once he has seduced her, she has crossed the "line", even for him, and so her attractiveness wanes:

Alas, alas; there came a day in which the pricelessness of the girl he loved sank to nothing, vanished away, and was as a thing utterly lost, even in his eyes. The poor, unfortunate one,--to whom beauty had been given...but to whom, alas, had not been given a protector strong enough to protect her softness, or guardian wise enough to guard her innocence!...She gave him all;-
-and her pricelessness in his eyes was gone forever. (II, 1)

Like Carry Brattle, Kate is soiled goods, no longer of any value as prospective wife or lover, and can be dismissed as another kind of abstract "thing", in this case, the mere "plaything of an idle hour" (II, 9). The seduction has an economic aspect from the start: Kate's unsoiled, innocent beauty is "priceless" to Neville, but this incalculable value is reduced to nothing through the simple fact of their liaison. The irony is that the despoiler can regard the thing despoiled as a nullity—as in several of the Irish novels the English, and sometimes the Anglo-Irish, regard Ireland.

George Watt suggests that Neville abandons Kate because he "is bound by the strict laws

which govern marriage. The fallen woman in the novel is created by these laws. If a young man cannot marry then he must make the object of his love a social outcast, with no legal rights and with the scorn of a whole community" (80). I suggest that Neville *himself*, rather than the laws, creates the fallen woman. In this novel, as in others by Trollope, laws are what people make and use: they have no independent existence. Before Neville rejects Kate publicly, she is only a woman who has lost her virginity, but after he makes that loss public knowledge, the label "unchaste" becomes associated with her. It is after Neville's rejection of Kate—rather than his seduction of her—that he labels Kate as "fallen" and makes this label stick in his persistent efforts to dispose of her as quickly as possible.

Neville's desperation to get himself out of his marriage agreement takes many forms. First, he insists that Kate's low parentage disqualifies him from any obligation to her. As I discuss in Chapter 2, Kate's legitimacy is a matter of speculation. It is implied that Mrs. O' Hara was seduced when she was the same age as Kate.¹⁸ As far as Neville is concerned, then, Kate is already damaged goods by virtue of her dubious birth. To bolster this retroactive concern, he insists that the "disreputable" (II, 2) behaviour of Kate's father precludes any marriage arrangement. The family friend and priest Father Marty, however, contests this automatic corollary, asserting, "[t]he daughter is not therefore disreputable. Her position is not changed" (II, 2). Since this line of argument does not work, Neville tries another, shifting the burden of responsibility from father to daughter. He tries to make her into a Lily Dale, the self-contained cause and effect of her own actions. Thus he insists that Kate is culpable for

¹⁸On a symbolic level, this can be seen as the novel's wry hint about the illegitimacy of even the

"trusting to him" and thus "[bringing] herself to this miserable pass" (II, 4). Of course, Kate's mistake may be less her "trust" than her miscalculation in granting the one commodity whose withholding might make marriage to him possible. He is also blind to the hypocrisy of deeming her father not to be a "gentleman" because "he ill-treated a woman" (II, 2). When Father Marty tells Neville about the "blag-guard" (II, 2) Captain and stops to give the young man a pointed look, "Fred [bears] the look fairly well". The narrator speculates, "Perhaps at the moment he did not understand its application" (II, 2). It is difficult to miss Neville's hypocrisy about--or wilful blindness to--his repetition of the O'Hara tragedy of the older generation.

Oblivious or not, Neville vacillates between thinking that he "might marry the girl" and talking himself out of his obligation, saying, "[t]hey could not make him marry her" (II 2). When Mrs. O'Hara accosts him at the army base at Ennis, he "resolve[s] that under no pressure would he marry the daughter of O'Hara the galley-slave" (II, 3). "I think I am resolved not to marry her," Neville informs his brother Jack. "But I will be true to her all the same" (II, 6)--which for Neville means revising his original plan of a "half-valid morganatic marriage" in favour of a "viler proposal" (II, 10) to maintain her as his mistress in "some sunny distant clime, in which adventures might still be sweet, and [he] would then devote to her--some portion of his time" (II, 10). Neville's new plan is the deliberate exploitation of the "line" across which he, in effect, pulled Kate. He intuits that "they [can] probably make him pay very dearly for" deserting Kate (II, 2), and he takes this tacit threat literally. He thus opts

to make a cash transaction with the O'Hara family to rid himself of their presence. The first day he meets Captain O'Hara he is so reviled by the older man that he does not hesitate to pay him two pounds in cash to leave--and Neville then arranges an annual two-hundred-pound stipend to keep the distasteful "galley-slave" permanently out of the way.

He tries the same approach with Kate: "he would still be tenderly loving, if she would accept his love without the name which he could not give her. . . .Every luxury which money could purchase he would lavish on her" (II, 4). Always in the background here is the claim of the English in Ireland that they really do care for Ireland and the Irish. His proposal of money as compensation for marriage--and the respectability that accompanies it—aims to prey upon the self-policing and self-loathing which result from a fallen woman's labelling, as seen in *The Vicar of Bullhampton* and *The Small House at Allington*. Neville knows that once a woman is made to feel like a whore, she cannot become a wife. Neville's brother Jack's "liberal...settlement" (II, 12) on Kate only emphasizes the pervasiveness of this plight. Ultimately, Kate is only redeemed when her child dies, and her father takes her away to a secluded life in France. Like Carry Brattle and Lily Dale, Kate can only live down her "fallen" woman label by regressing into the role (and label) of "daughter", when a man, her father, like Carry's, restores the father-daughter relationship and the self-definition it provides, and thereby erases her sexual history. But she also ceases to be an independent woman and her own.

Just as Neville creates the fallen woman in the novel, so, too, does he create a member of

another marginalized category: the insane woman. Where people dismiss and invalidate Mary Lowther's refusal of Harry Gilmore's suit by characterizing it as "insanity" (*Vicar* 61), Neville's rejection of her daughter makes Mrs. O'Hara *literally* insane. As I suggest in Chapter 2, Mrs. O'Hara is pushed towards madness equally by Neville's irresponsibility and her own permissiveness. She knows that Kate's only chance for a decent life will come from a good marriage. On the other hand, as a woman herself seduced at a young age, she is all too aware of the risk involved. Further, she knows what Neville tries to exploit: that if an unmarried woman's loss of virginity is disclosed--if she is "known to have overstepped" the "line"--she effectively loses everything from self-definition to social identity. To Neville and society at large, the public knowledge of his taking of Kate's virginity is the occasion for expedient and appropriate social discipline. In Mrs. O'Hara's eyes, however, it is a "murder" which she feels compelled to avenge. So the "insane" woman exacts lucid—if biblical--justice by taking Neville's physical life for Kate's ruined one. The novel throws up the question, on which side of the "line" is insanity supposed to be?

Like his aunt Lady Scroope, Neville thinks only of himself--though he seeks to wrap his self-interest in terms of family honour. The novel's ending, where the mad Mrs. O' Hara pushes Neville off a cliff, like Frankenstein's monster taking its revenge on its creator, possesses a certain lurid and melodramatic satisfaction. More significantly, it may also symbolize the consequences of exploitation of the "line" for personal good, without due regard for the common good. Simply put, through his actions, Neville creates both a "fallen" and an insane woman—and seeks to use these categories to evade his responsibility by ignoring them

completely. On one level, the push off the cliff is the histrionic suggestion that the social machinery will inexorably punish such evasions of responsibility. But the novel makes the same point in a quieter—and more substantive—way. Neville is made to pay financially for his irresponsibility—even after his death. His arrangement to pay Captain O'Hara's pension and, after his death, the settlement on Kate and Mrs. O'Hara's asylum care, paid by his brother, the new earl of Scroope, also signifies a union of the two families in the most basic social currency: money.

And behind the simple argument that the social machinery works efficiently may lie a still more simple and powerful suggestion. No matter how efficient the system of labels by which society disposes of and disenfranchises certain women, there is within these women a surplus of energy which exceeds the labels. Eventually, *An Eye for an Eye* suggests, this pent-up energy may simply erupt—wreaking public and visible havoc on any who have exploited these labels.

V. Conclusion

The Vicar of Bullhampton, *The Small House at Allington* and *An Eye for an Eye* describe the ways in which female sexuality is both the locus and the means of regulating women. *The Vicar of Bullhampton* delineates the specific use of labels to enforce the "certain line" between virtue and vice, and, through the parallel plots of Carry and Mary, demonstrates how socially-imposed definitions shape—or remove—a woman's purpose, value, and identity, in both personal and social terms. By contrast, Lily Dale assumes the burden of self-definition,

along with responsibility for both the cause and effects of her self-created feelings of transformation. Lily's need to reinvent herself suggests again the power of labels to confer-- or obliterate--a person's sense of self-worth. Finally, *An Eye for an Eye* presents, in the portrait of Fred Neville, a cautionary tale of the potential social consequences of a man's selfish and relentless exploitation of "the line" and the labels through which it functions.

The societies of these novels demonstrate frequent societal perversions of female sexuality into a potent regulatory mechanism governing both the individual woman and those to whom she is connected. Aberrant behaviour has individual, but also collective, repercussions, as we see in the Brattle family's sense of shame, the miller's enduring sense of emasculation, and Mrs. O' Hara's murderous impulses. A woman is defined first by what she *is known to have done*-- a more sinister version of Sarah Ellis' claim that "the unpretending virtues of the female character force themselves upon our regard, so that the woman *herself* is nothing in comparison with her attributes" (*Women* 30). A woman is also defined fundamentally, and in a way that always threatens to negate her individuality, by her relation to a man: she is daughter, wife, sister, or mother. And this relationship transmits, like an electrical circuit, any positive or negative knowledge of her sexuality. Once a woman is known to have transgressed, she not only becomes ineligible to perform any of these roles but loses all identity and definition. She becomes a "thing", ceasing entirely to "be a woman" (*Eye* II, 7) in the estimation of the community that defines her.

All three novels suggest that only through regression and redefinition in relation to a man--as

"daughter" in the cases of Carry and Kate, and as "widow" and "old maid" in Lily's case--can a woman overcome the public knowledge of a sexual transgression. Only thus can she assume new "attributes" that enable an existence back on the "right" side of the "certain line." But this is a much-diminished existence usually, and one enjoyed only or largely at the pleasure of male-oriented, mercantile, middle-class society, and in subservience to its norms, which subjugate women to a place in its pattern.

Conclusion: What a Woman *Should* Do with Her life

I. Summary: Elements of the Social Machinery

As I show in Chapter 1, the Victorian separate-spheres ideology sought to confine woman, as the conveyor of virtue and morality, to an official invisibility. Woman was the genius of the home. Possessing an instinctive moral compass and untroubled by sexual desire, she was the role model whose passive (and automatic) “renunciation of self” (Lewis 49) best argued for the moral high ground—and public impotence—she represented. Hers was the invisible suasion of the “moral agent”, while direct action with tangible outcomes was the purview of man. Limited education—and very limited experience—was appropriate and natural, since her destiny was to pass through a series of roles which defined her by her relationship to an active male. In Cicely Hamilton’s words, “To most men--perhaps to all--the girl is some man's wife that is to be; the married woman some man's wife that is; the widow some man's wife that was; the spinster some man's wife that should have been--a damaged article, unfit for use, unsuitable.” (21) And while woman was consigned to identity based on male relationships and functions circumscribed by the domestic realm of the intangible, invisible, and unreal, man was by contrast ceaselessly active in defining, creating and governing all aspects of the public sphere. In short, *all* spheres belonged to man, in Ruskin’s words “the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender”.

The separate-spheres ideology was under significant stress and was debated endlessly throughout the Victorian era. The wealth of writing on the subject is evidence of this vital “Woman Question” debate, and the gradual achievements of reformers, such as legal changes

to women's property laws and higher education for women, were milestones in a gradual increase in woman's official "visibility". Throughout the era, significant shifts occurred in attitudes toward women—probably the most important of which was that for the first time, woman gained a nascent legal status. The successes of the reformers and the struggles through which they effected these changes are rarely mentioned directly in Trollope's novels, but they form the backdrop of these fictional worlds. Without this social context, it is difficult to appreciate (often even to recognize) subtle references to the prevalent issues of the time. Thus, we may miss a detail such as the fact that the "flock of learned ladies" (11) referred to in *Can You Forgive Her?* are the feminists of the Langham Place circle, who, through articles in the *English Woman's Journal*, tried to convince women of alternatives to marriage.

But more significant than such subtle allusions is the larger framework which this historical background provides. Given that Trollope's novels make so few of these indirect allusions (and even fewer direct references), we need the vocabulary of visibility, invisibility, domestic and public spheres to articulate a frame within which these novels are written, and to provide a way to anatomize the social machinery that governs each. By assessing the influence of the omnipresent, constraining social machinery on the women in the novels, and the ways in which these characters shape their lives, we can sketch a multi-part answer to the resonant question posed by the narrator of *Can You Forgive Her?*: "What should a woman do with her life?".

As I show in Chapter 2, Trollope's fictions present a variety of female abettor figures, whose function is to help other women make sound decisions about "what to do with their lives".

These figures, generated almost spontaneously by the plot, represent a kind of engine which keeps the fictional society—and the societal fiction—running. Simply put, by appearing and acting at fortuitous moments, abettors shepherd appropriate matches to the marriage altar. There are two types of successful abettors. The first group is agents or invisible “greasers of the social wheels”, who intercede directly in the lives of the women they abet. This is the role of Mrs. Cornbury (*Rachel Ray*) and Mrs. Mackenzie (*Miss Mackenzie*) in bringing about the happy unions of Rachel Ray and Margaret Mackenzie. The second group is the unerring oracles of the social order, who are less active but who prophesy conclusions to the marriage plots—and are inevitably proven correct. These figures include Lady Cantrip (*The Duke's Children*)—who accurately predicts to the Duke that Lady Mary will marry the man of her, not her father's, choice—and Lady Midlothian (*Can You Forgive Her?*), who forecasts Alice Vavasor's ultimately happy reunion with John Grey, the “worthy man” whom Alice resists for too much of the story. In this vein, Lady Glencora's ultimate contentment with the marriage arranged by Lady Midlothian and Lady Auld Reekie implies again that the abettors know what a young woman does not: who the “worthy man” is and how he, not the dashing “wild” lover, will make the best husband.

Understanding the way the society operates, the abettors make possible the simultaneous achievement of a woman's personal ambition and the social good. This desirable end validates and vindicates their involvement: thus, in the end, we see the necessity of Lady Midlothian's unsolicited interference in Alice's life. Their effectiveness is rooted in their secure power in the private, domestic realm—an official invisibility which they use to cloak activities with measurable effects in the public sphere. By contrast, would-be male abettors

like Neefit and the Duke, accustomed to moving in the active, public arena, approach their abetting in the crass mode of a commercial transaction. Their abetting inevitably fails because, lacking understanding of the private, domestic sphere, they are unable or unwilling to consider the woman's personal ambitions.

As I show in Chapter 3, the successful abettor's orchestration makes it possible for a young woman to achieve her ambitions (most usually marriage)—on terms agreeable to both her and society. The abettor facilitates a more general process in which the young woman's ambition, initially vague and uncertain, becomes more clearly defined. As a member of the "invisible" domestic sphere, a woman must take care to ensure balance in this definition: her ambition must encompass personal volition and social good. The means of rendering her ambition "real" is careful and strategic negotiation: with another person—usually a husband-to-be or a relative bent on an inappropriate match—but also with herself. And the net effect is her articulation of the specific terms of her ambition and her understanding of the way she might achieve it. For instance, at the start of *Can You Forgive Her?*, Alice Vavasor covets an "undefined ambition" and finds herself caught between two absolute—but abstract—choices: marriage and "not-marriage". During a process of self-negotiation throughout the novel, she defines her ambition, and decides that accepting the socially respected but not greatly ambitious John Grey is not the concession she had convinced herself it was. She acknowledges her attraction to him, and, after their conversation, accepts that marriage will of necessity include a domestic—but hardly a repressive—component.

Like Alice, other characters such as Rachel Ray, Ayala Dormer and Polly Neefit revise

initially vague ambitions, whether for an "Angel of Light" or a novelistic "grand passion", until it seems possible for each to attain happiness in marriage to a man who understands her needs. But each woman accepts her lover only after vigorous negotiations culminating in frank conversations which define—and establish—the terms of a happy and successful marriage-partnership. After these successful negotiations, they face the prospect of becoming officially invisible—but covertly powerful—wives like the socially venerable Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie.

By contrast, as I describe in Chapter 4, when a woman fails to negotiate or refuses to seek a negotiation prior to marriage, she loses all ability to achieve her ambitions within marriage. She may sell herself into marriage for financial gain; she may flout all social expectations in an exclusive pursuit of personal goals. The inevitable result is not only the failure of her ambition, but a loss of status and probably absorption by the marital union. The most notorious example of a woman who destroys her prospects and eventually her happiness is Lizzie Eustace (*The Eustace Diamonds*). Lizzie's largely self-generated predicament is not unlike that of such other women as Laura Kennedy (*Phineas Finn*), Emily Trevelyan (*He Knew He Was Right*), and the feminized Ralph Newton (*Ralph the Heir*). Although none of Laura's, Ralph's or Emily's ambitions are so monstrous as Lizzie's, or their means so selfish, like her they forego premarital negotiation. And as a consequence, they suffer the forced repression of absorption into the roles of daughter, mother and "wife" respectively, roles which bar them from significant participation in the public sphere. All commodify themselves, and sell themselves into mercenary marriages without first discussing the terms of their ambitions—dooming themselves to an invisibility (and inaudibility) which is not

merely official, but actual and permanent. As the Duke of Omnium understates it in the last speech of *The Eustace Diamonds*, "I'm afraid, you know, that [Lady Eustace] hasn't what I call a good time before her. . ." (80). And such, clearly, is to be the case for all.

Finally, as I show in Chapter 5, if a woman becomes visible for the wrong reason, she may find herself redefined and placed outside society itself. Carry Brattle (*The Vicar of Bullhampton*), Lily Dale (*The Small House at Allington*) and Kate O'Hara (*An Eye for an Eye*) do not "negotiate" with their paramours. Carry and Kate surrender themselves in body, and Lily "gives herself" in mind. Thus, each crosses the arbitrary "line" dividing chaste from fallen, Lily and Kate by simply leaving themselves at the mercy of men whom they "trust". But crossing the line is only half the problem; the second half is being *known* to have crossed this line. When this happens to a woman, she is far beyond the world of negotiation, in a world of labels which define her as unwomanly, inhuman, outcast. She is stripped of all identity in her own right: a "whore" is non-human, a "thing". She is also stripped of all those relationships (daughter, sister, wife, mother) which define her and assign her a place inside the social machinery. And family members become the mechanism of retributive social discipline: they suffer the guilt of her transgression and the need to enforce social discipline by rejecting her. As a consequence, she is both ejected from the domestic sphere and denied the public sphere since, because she is labelled irrevocably as fallen, "decent folks" will have nothing to do with her.

She is nowhere and no one: the "line" creates a deeper, more total invisibility which defines her as irredeemably other. For her, it is a pernicious perplexity: society defines and creates

her problem—and then ignores her because that definition requires it. Once a woman is known to have crossed “the line”, she can by herself find no way to revert to the other side. For instance, Carry and Kate must rely on the only significant men in their lives, their fathers, to re-cast them in the role of “daughter”, re-creating artificially their former domestic invisibility. Lily’s slavish service to a tenuous value system convinces her of her own deviant behaviour. Her self-generated plight spawns a self-created solution: she re-labels herself several times, eventually turning from “widow” to “old maid”, in a self-made devolution into the ideal sexless state of the Victorian woman. She thereby eradicates her feelings of having sinned, but, like Carry and Kate, disqualifies herself from all future “negotiations”.

II. Moments of Visibility

Cicely Hamilton claims that when a woman enters the marriage market, “[b]argaining to the best advantage, permitted as a matter of course to every other worker, is denied to her” (37). The social machinery governing the world of Trollope’s novels—from the nature of the “line” to the conditions surrounding the success or failure of women’s ambitions—suggests that this claim is not entirely accurate. Each of the female characters I describe in Chapter 3 achieves both a personally and socially acceptable ambition in marriage, and this outcome is the function of very specific kinds of “bargaining”. In fact, marriages in each of the twelve novels treated in this thesis suggest that, to attain happiness in married life, a woman *must* negotiate. For instance, Rachel Ray’s conversation with Luke Rowan at the end of *Rachel Ray*, Alice’s with Grey in the churchyard (*Can You Forgive Her?*) Ayala’s with Stubbs in Gobblegoose Wood (*Ayala’s Angel*) and Violet Effingham’s quarrel and subsequent reconciliation with Lord Chiltern (*Phineas Finn*) all point to this same idea: only before

marriage can a woman negotiate acceptable terms for the marital relationship.

It is less that she can than that she *must* negotiate this moment of visibility. In this one instant, she can emerge briefly from the traditional invisibility of the domestic sphere to become fully and meaningfully “visible”—and audible—to the prospective husband or coercive relative. In this brief time and space, she must “bargain” to her best advantage for a species of marriage in which she can achieve personal ambitions and needs, while satisfying the larger needs of the social machinery. Without this negotiation, terms for a marriage are never set—and the marriage-participants instead pursue what they insist are their inherent “rights” while resisting the views of the other—whether actively, as Lizzie, Laura, and Emily do—or passively, like Ralph in his oblivion. But this is only a *moment* of visibility—and a woman’s timing must be perfect. If this opportunity is missed, it cannot usually be redeemed.¹ The case of Polly Neefit, who must meticulously calculate the precise and most expedient moment in which to make herself visible, is representative. Polly does not confront her father until she is certain that he is ready to listen to her point of view. She waits out the inevitable failure of his outrageous stratagems for selling her to Ralph, before facing him in his most private environment, his own bedroom—the seat of domestic power, and the place where as an “invisible woman”, she is most at advantage. And in this setting, at the opportune time, she makes him hear her for the first time, acknowledge her desires, and become a convert to the prudent logic of her ambitions.

¹ Glencora is one interesting exception: she has her moment of visibility with Palliser not before their marriage, but after a moment of crisis during it. The outcome of this moment is Palliser’s declaration of love, his moderating his work habits, and his subsequent declining of a prestigious political position in order to take Glencora on a pleasure trip to Europe, where she becomes pregnant. Of course, this moment and their eventual happiness bear out the correctness of the oracular “sagacious heads” in advocating the marriage.

As abettors, Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie not only reunite their charges with their lovers but help to engineer these all-important moments of visibility. For instance, Mrs. Mackenzie deftly stage-manages a moment when Margaret is literally visible—on display in the stall of the charity bazaar—so that John Grey is reminded of his promise and his obligation to fulfil it or lose Margaret. And Mrs. Cornbury cleverly masterminds the critical discussion between Rachel Ray and Luke Rowan, though she does this so effectively that he believes it is his own idea. Would-be abettors such as Palliser, the Duke of Omnium (*The Duke's Children*) and Neefit the breechesmaker (*Ralph the Heir*), convince themselves that what they undertake is best for Lady Mary and Polly. But they focus exclusively on the social good of maintaining or increasing rank, and seek to make themselves visible, not their daughters' true ambitions. In the end, however, Mary and Polly negotiate their own moments of visibility to combat their parents' ill-conceived aims.

Mary Lowther's narrow escape from a loveless marriage to the Squire again emphasizes the need for a woman to choose the appropriate audience and create her own moment of visibility. Only by speaking directly and forcefully to him does Mary learn that Squire Gilmore is interested in hearing neither her views nor her desires. He, along with the Fenwicks, has forced her initial agreement to the marriage simply because he wants it. During their brief conversation, Mary learns that what she wants and what is best for her are much less important to him than getting his way. As a consequence, she rejects him in good conscience in favour of a loving, sympathetic man who will, the novel implies, encourage her to express her mind and be an active partner in their marriage, rather than an attractive

embellishment.

However, the social machinery does not permit a woman to be “visible” in perpetuity. If a woman creates this moment and makes optimal use of it, she follows Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie to a future of official invisibility masking the covert use of public power. If her ambition is to *remain* “visible”, as is the case with Lizzie Eustace (*The Eustace Diamonds*), she only makes herself the subject of the male narrative of the public sphere. Lizzie is a transgressive and fascinating figure—but only for a time. She refuses all negotiation because her goal is to defy, not accord with, societal expectations. In the end, she loses all: she must literally and figuratively surrender the necklace, be absorbed in a repressive marriage, and be trivialized into the worst form of male narrative—an anecdote that is shortly discounted and discarded. In brief, she is consumed by a social machinery which has neither use nor patience for her.

Thus, the moment of visibility entails the negotiation of ways to avoid becoming the subject of male narrative or labelling. The choices for a woman are clear: official invisibility with its license for unofficial and “undisciplined” activities, or being the subject of male narrative. The social fiction itself is a male narrative—and either a woman abets it, in exchange for covert power, like those emissaries of plot Mrs. Mackenzie and Mrs. Cornbury, or she loses all control over self-determination, and has her life, like Lizzie’s or Carry Brattle’s, reduced to an off-the-cuff generality—spoken and then forgotten, by someone with as little interest in her as the bored billiard player at the end of *The Eustace Diamonds*. Her success depends on her calculation and use of a moment of visibility. Once this has been forfeited, whether

willingly (as in Lily Dale's case) or unwillingly (as with Carry Brattle and Kate O' Hara), she can never regain it. As Jacob Brattle's reclamation of Carry demonstrates, redemption is possible, but the form this redemption takes—redefinition by her father—is a clear reminder that, like Lizzie, she has hardly, even in redemption, become more than a male narrative. The chance to “bargain” her future on her own terms has been forever lost.

Lynette Felber has said that the “virtual disappearance from the rest of the [Palliser] series” of Alice Grey (*née* Vavasor) dramatizes the fate of the compliant Victorian woman” (53). I would offer an alternative interpretation based on my analysis of the social machinery in Trollope’s novels. As I show in Chapter 3, Alice is far from a mere “compliant” woman. Moreover, her “disappearance” is not total, but “virtual”, as Felber suggests, for Alice is at the least mentioned in each of the Palliser novels after *Can You Forgive Her?*. That she says little and plays no significant public role need not automatically indicate marital suppression. Indeed, Alice’s official silence, I would argue, dramatizes her successful achievement of the socially necessary cover story of domestic invisibility—the terms of which, the ending of *Can You Forgive Her?* implies, permit her covert achievement of her other ambitions and exercise of public power. Having negotiated to her best advantage during her “moment of visibility”, Alice achieves happiness in her love-match. And by sticking to the agreed-upon cover story, she avoids all risk of becoming the subject of male narrative. The Chilterns’ marriage is also portrayed as successful, and Violet, upon reappearing in other Palliser novels, also says relatively little. This again, I would argue, suggests her success in bargaining to her best advantage.

If there is an “unhappily compliant Victorian woman”, it is more likely Lizzie. The fact that “Lady Eustace” features prominently, though never principally, in *Phineas Redux* and *The Prime Minister*, only re-emphasizes her failure to exit male narrative for domestic tranquillity, the proper and tactical basis for covert female power. “They are most happy who have no story to tell” indeed—and the success of Alice and Violet is their ability to engineer the domestic invisibility where they officially have “no story to tell”, but within which they may know more than the usual measure of human happiness, and from which, like Mrs. Cornbury and Mrs. Mackenzie, they may sally forth to exercise power in the public sphere. I read their mostly silent presence in later novels as evidence not of absorption, but of a happiness which eludes representation in what is, after all, just another male narrative.

In *The Duke's Children*, the venerable Liberal politician Sir Timothy Beeswax somehow manages a great truth: “Fear acknowledges a superior. Love desires an equal” (21). Yet successful marriages in Trollope's fictions seem to posit that whatever “love desires”, equality is far from automatic. A woman (or man) should not leave this matter of “equality” to chance—as do Lily Dale or Kate O’Hara, for, in truth, “Love cannot do all” (*Duke's* 21). Love is merely the starting point for careful and balanced negotiation between equally “visible” partners—and this negotiation is the only means to establish a personally and socially responsible definition of “equality”.

I began my thesis with the question, “What should a woman do with her life?”. In answer to this question, the narrator of *Can You Forgive Her?* flippantly offers what seems like a straightforward endorsement of the invisibility of woman in the domestic sphere: “Fall in

love, marry the man, have two children, and live happy ever afterwards. I maintain that answer has as much wisdom in it as any other that can be given;—or perhaps more" (11). So long as the marriage is neither mercenary nor nominal, the social machinery of Trollope's novels validates this "wisdom"—but with very specific conditions. A woman "should" indeed fall in love, marry the man, have two children, and live a life mainly of official happiness and public invisibility—but she should do this with her life only after reconciling her individual ambitions with social expectations, and defining—with her husband-to be, in a negotiated moment of visibility—the terms of their particular equality.

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