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FEMINISM IN FRANCES TROLLOPE'S *DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS*, *THE VICAR OF WREXHILL*, *THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF JONATHAN JEFFERSON WHITLAW* AND *JESSIE PHILLIPS*

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of English

by
Jessica S. Boulard
B. A., University of New Hampshire, 2003
May 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Elsie B. Michie for her guidance, encouragement and above all, her patience.

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ABSTRACT

In *The Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), the travelogue that launched Trollope's career as a literary figure, she accounts the four years spent living in America with the majority of her children and *without* her husband. *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* (1836), published fifteen years before *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, is the first anti-slavery novel written in English. Other novels, like *The Vicar of Wrexhill* (1834) and *Jessie Phillips* (1844) discuss legal matters. A common thread connects much of Trollope's work. That thread is feminism, which places her in the company of (and somewhere in between) Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf.

In the first chapter, I discuss Trollope's travelogue, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) and her novel, *The Vicar of Wrexhill* (1837) in relation to traditional feminine virtues. I argue that Trollope challenges these virtues, suggesting that they are subject to perversion, which endangers women and the societies in which they live. Instead, Trollope sets forth another idea of femininity, supplementing these virtues with education, occupation, self-sufficiency and friendship. In America, Trollope recognizes the danger in the possession of the four virtues alone, and in her novel, set in England, she shows that the addition of education and occupation avert danger and maintain a stable society.

In the second chapter, I discuss two of Trollope's protest novels, *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* (1836) and *Jessie Phillips* (1844). Both of these novels protest the laws that Trollope felt were unjust. In *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, she discusses the wrongs of slavery in America. *Jessie Phillips* protests the

New Poor Law of 1834 and is also largely concerned with the bastardy clause, seduction and infanticide. I argue that Trollope is interested in challenging the laws of society. She proposes changes in societal laws that govern the relationships between male and female, rich and poor, white and black, and master and slave. Her solution involves a cooperation and coexistence between all of these binaries, with an emphasis on the role of the female. In these novels, Trollope suggests that the morality women possess can aid in the stability in society if the women take an active role.

INTRODUCTION

FRANCES TROLLOPE: TRIUMPHANT FEMINIST

Frances Trollope was not the stereotypically prudish and proper Englishwoman. Instead, “she was too outspoken, learned, and bold mannered, walking unaccompanied, even at night and in rough weather [...] her housekeeping was untidy and sporadic, [and] her children ran free.”¹ Her audacious nature emerges in her literature. In *The Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), the travelogue that launched her career as a literary figure, Trollope accounts the four years spent living in America with the majority of her children and *without* her husband. *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* (1836), published fifteen years before *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, is the first anti-slavery novel written in English. Other novels, like *The Vicar of Wrexhill* (1834) and *Jessie Phillips* (1844) discuss subjects in a frank manner that were construed as vulgar by her contemporaries. Though she was somewhat eccentric, her work is extremely valuable because of her keen knack for interpreting society’s idiosyncrasies. A common thread connects much of Trollope’s work. That thread is feminism, which places her in the company of (and somewhere in between) Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf.

¹ See Helen Heineman’s *Restless Angels: The Friendship of Six Victorian Women*. 187.

Trollope's work evokes that of Mary Wollstonecraft in that the two share a "maternal feminism,"² which is classified by the idea that women are moral because they are maternal. Trollope takes this a bit further, believing that women's morality and "goodness" give them the ability to influence the public as well as the private sphere. Her female characters are evidence of her feminist beliefs. The women she sets as examples, as models her readers are meant to emulate, are domestic, educated, religious and pure. These qualities enable Trollope's heroines to become active in the public sphere as well as in the home. They enforce justice, discuss legal issues, and generally protect their communities. These are not "proper ladies;"³ they are not wilting flowers. In her heroines, Trollope proposes hope for a future society that includes women's active participation.

Frances Trollope is one of these unconventional, yet admirable women. Her social circle was intelligent and cultured. Often described as enthusiastic and energetic, she sought social interaction that was both challenging and pleasant. In her biography, *Mrs. Trollope: The Triumphant Feminine in the Nineteenth Century*, Helen Heineman characterizes Trollope's social behavior throughout her life, saying

The young Frances, brought up in the freedom of the late eighteenth century and accustomed to enjoy the company of men, would many times run afoul of the feminine proprieties during her long writing career that extended well into the reign of Queen Victoria. (6)

² See Ann-Barbara Graff's "'Fair, Fat and Forty': Social Redress and Fanny Trollope's Literary Activism." p. 55.

³ See Mary Poovey's discussion of the proper lady in *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen*.

In Thomas Anthony Trollope, whom she met in London, Trollope apparently found many attractive qualities. The two carried on a lively and intellectual correspondence during their courtship. In her letters to Thomas Anthony, Trollope is witty and does not use the overly emotional language of love. In a letter written well before the two were married, Thomas Anthony writes for the express purpose of asking Fanny's opinion about a job offer. Even during the period preceding their marriage, Thomas Anthony relies on Fanny for advice regarding matters outside of the domestic sphere. After their marriage, her duties were not simply domestic; Trollope had a great deal of agency within the marital relationship.

This fact becomes clear in her purposes for setting sail to America. With the decline of her husband's health and income, Trollope and most of her family fled to America in the hopes of both saving and making money. She made several attempts at earning a living during her stay abroad, yet none were sufficiently successful. The Trollopes lived very simply, sometimes aided financially by Frances Wright, the friend who convinced Trollope to venture with her to the New World. Beginning with the publication of *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, Trollope became her family's principle breadwinner and sustained her husband and children through her literary work for the rest of her life.

The friendship that lured Trollope away from England and away from her husband was an important part of her life. Fanny Wright, as well as many other women, influenced her greatly. Her close female friends were just as important as her family. The importance of intimacy between women is another element of Trollope's feminist attitude. It evokes Woolf's discussion regarding female friendships in *A Room of One's*

Own. The friendship between Chloe and Olivia, who “have other interests besides the perennial interests of domesticity,” seems like new, uncharted territory to Woolf (83). Stranger, still, is that fact that Chloe and Olivia *work* together. They share a laboratory, which suggests that they are active in the public, masculine sphere, rather than being limited to the domestic. However, Trollope lived and wrote about this connection between women based on mutual interests a century before *A Room of One’s Own*. Before Chloe and Olivia, there was Fanny Trollope and Fanny Wright, and the fictional Helen and Rosalind (in *The Vicar of Wrexhill*) and Martha and Ellen (in *Jessie Phillips*). Helen and Rosalind’s efforts save their family from financial ruin and rid their village of an evil, predatory man. Martha and Ellen enforce justice on a murderer. The friendships in Trollope’s novels are progressive in that her women come together, not only to sew and gossip, but to share information and provoke change in their communities.

In her article, “Frances Trollope’s “Modern” Influence: Creating New Fictions, New Readers, a New World,” Susan Kissel Adams acknowledges Trollope’s contribution to English literature, and particularly, the novel of social change, stating,

Frances Trollope possessed a clear vision and deep moral concern for humanity. Hers was a modernizing and progressive influence, enlightening her audience during a time of rapid change, enabling them to “read” their society more discerningly. At the same time, she was never an advocate of change for change’s sake, working, instead, for change for humanity’s betterment. Witty, compassionate, and wise— her voice proved worth listening to. (180)

The novels that I discuss in this thesis all deal with social change. They reflect what Trollope saw as flaws in society, and they also propose solutions to repair those flaws.

Trollope's female characters play vital roles in the changes that are suggested. They are often protagonists of change, taking active position inside and outside of the domestic sphere.

In the first chapter, I discuss Trollope's travelogue, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) and her novel, *The Vicar of Wrexhill* (1837) in relation to the traditional feminine virtues, purity, piety, domesticity and submissiveness, that Barbara Welter distinguishes in her article, "The Cult of True Womanhood." I argue that Trollope challenges these virtues, suggesting that they are subject to perversion, which endangers women and the societies in which they live. Instead, Trollope sets forth another idea of femininity, supplementing these virtues with education, occupation, self-sufficiency and friendship. In America, Trollope recognizes the danger in the possession of the four virtues alone, and in her novel, set in England, she shows that the addition of education and occupation avert danger and maintain a stable society.

In the second chapter, I discuss two of Trollope's protest novels, *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* (1836) and *Jessie Phillips* (1844). Both of these novels protest the issues and laws that Trollope felt were unjust. In *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, she discusses the wrongs of slavery in America. *Jessie Phillips* protests the New Poor Law of 1834 and is also largely concerned with the bastardy clause, seduction and infanticide. However, Trollope is not only concerned with civic laws, but she is also interested in challenging the laws of society. She proposes changes in societal laws that govern the relationships between male and female, rich and poor, white and black, and master and slave. Her solution involves a cooperation and coexistence between all of these binaries, with an emphasis on the role of the female. As

mothers and wives, women form the hearts of Trollope's communities. In these novels, Trollope suggests that the morality women possess can aid in the stability in society if the women take an active role.

CHAPTER ONE

TROLLOPE'S "TRUE WOMANHOOD" IN *DOMESTIC MANNERS OF THE AMERICANS* AND *THE VICAR OF WREXHILL*

In "The Cult of True Womanhood," Barbara Welter examines the duties of women in the early nineteenth century by surveying magazines for women published between 1820 and 1860. Welter concludes that the nineteenth century woman was expected to possess four qualities above all: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. These qualities combine to form the "True Woman." Frances Trollope challenges the notion that each woman must possess all of these virtues in order to be considered proper. In her travelogue, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) and her novel, *The Vicar of Wrexhill* (1837), Trollope suggests that the four virtues are not enough, that women must, above all, be educated, active and self-sufficient. She shows that, while the traditional feminine virtues are valuable, they can be perverted, rendering women improper and endangering society. Education, and occupation prevent the other virtues from mutating and harming women. Trollope also shows that education of females comes in many forms, including through a communicative friendship. Kinship between both males and females allows for the sharing of information that aids in the stability of society.

In both *Domestic Manners of the Americans* and *The Vicar of Wrexhill*, Trollope sets out to show that women can and should be both proper and active. For Trollope, activity is not limited to the male sphere. In these two works, Trollope supports a

meshing of the two gendered spheres that she finds rapidly unraveling at the beginning of the nineteenth-century. She appeals to her readers by explaining that the most serious of dangers to society will be the result of separation and idleness of the English women. That danger, of course, is a staining of feminine purity, which would thus compromise all of English society. As a solution to this imminent danger, Trollope calls to provide women with more complete educations that will allow them to join into intellectual dialogue with their male companions. She argues that both sexes would benefit from such education and discourse, and that society will ultimately be saved from imminent doom.

In *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, Trollope demonstrates how domesticity serves to separate women from the public, and sequester them within the home. However, Trollope does not view this domesticity positively. In America, men and women are divided in every aspect of life. Women's acceptance of their domestic role is dictated by the virtue of submissiveness. Their submissiveness guarantees that women will strive to maintain the other female virtues.

In a lengthy description of one young middle-class married woman's typical day, Trollope shows that even within the bond of marriage, interaction between men and women is commonly reduced to two daily meetings: One at breakfast, in which, "she eats her fried ham and her salt fish, and drinks her coffee in silence, while her husband reads one newspaper, and puts another under his elbow," and another at dinner, when, "he comes, shakes hands with her, spits, and dines. The conversation is not much, and ten minutes suffices for the dinner" (218-9). This account displays a lack of physical or emotional connection between the sexes. American men show very little regard for their

wives and daughters and there certainly does not exist any companionship between man and woman. Instead, men leave the home and head into the public realm seeking companionship with other men. Left to themselves, women have nothing outside of domestic duties to occupy them. In her discussion of domesticity and the seclusion of women within the home, Trollope suggests that their position is dangerous because when women are isolated and idle, their uneducated minds may wander where they like. She suggests that this hazardous situation could be averted if women's minds were trained, and could be occupied by some productive pursuit.

More than anything, Trollope is bothered by the lack of intellectual occupation for women of all classes. Women are not encouraged into intellectual pursuits. Many of the more affluent ladies, such as the one described above, have hired help to perform domestic duties such as cooking and cleaning. Thus, the affluent women have no duties with which to fill their days. In families of the lower classes, women must attend to household chores, but are not encouraged to take themselves beyond domestic matters. One account of lower class females likens them to slaves and demonstrates the impossibility of education:

But if the condition of the labourer be not superior to that of the English peasant, that of his wife and daughters is incomparably worse. It is they who are indeed the slaves of the soil. One has but to look at the wife of the American cottager, and ask her age, to be convinced that the life she leads is one of hardship, privation, and labour. It is rare to see a woman in this station who has reached the age of thirty, without losing every trace of youth and beauty. You continually see women with infants on their knee,

that you feel sure are their grand-children, till some convincing proof of the contrary is displayed. Even the young girls, though often with lovely features, look pale, thin, and haggard. I do not remember to have seen in any single instance among the poor, a specimen of the plump, rosy, laughing physiognomy so common among our cottage girls. The horror of domestic service, which the reality of slavery, and the fable of equality, have generated, excludes the young women from that sure and comfortable resource of decent English girls; and the consequence is, that with a most irreverend freedom of manner to the parents, the daughters are, to the full extent of the word, domestic slaves. This condition, which no periodical merry-making, no village *fête*, ever occurs to cheer, is only changed for the still sadder burdens of a teeming wife. They marry very young; in fact, in no rank of life do you meet with young women in that delightful period of existence between childhood and marriage, wherein, if only tolerably well spent, *so much useful information is gained*, and the character takes a sufficient degree of firmness to support with dignity the more important parts of wife and mother. The slender, childish thing, without vigour of mind or body, is made to stem a sea of troubles that dims her young eye and makes her cheek grow pale, even before nature has given it the last beautiful finish of the full-grown woman. (93, emphasis added)

In America, however, education is not a priority. Very few men, including those of the highest classes, attend school past the age of sixteen because they value “money-making”

over education. If men do not value their own educations, they certainly will not consider the importance of educating their daughters. By comparing young American women to English girls of the same age, Trollope admits the intellectual potential that these women possess if only they were given the opportunity to study.

Not only are they without any serious occupation of mind or body, American women are utterly without amusement. Trollope notes,

In America, with the exception of dancing, which is almost wholly confined to the unmarried of both sexes, all the enjoyments of the men are found in the absence of women. They dine, they play cards, they have musical meetings, they have suppers, all in large parties, but all without women. (118)

The minds of men are constantly occupied. They must provide an income to support their families, but aside from their financial obligations, they are free to amuse themselves in countless ways. All of this occupation and amusement, though Trollope finds most of it particularly vulgar, affords men with some knowledge of the world around them. Women, however, do not have this opportunity for the advancement of their characters and their minds.

While living in Cincinnati, Trollope notices the lack of theater-going with astonishment: “Ladies are rarely seen there, and by far the larger proportion of females deem it an offence against religion to witness the representation of a play” (59). Plays and other public methods of amusement threaten female purity. At a ball, women and men do not eat together. Men gather together around a jolly table to enjoy their feast, while the women “[sit] down on a row of chairs placed round the walls, and each making a table of

her knees, [begins] eating” (117). The deficiency of social interaction for females is quite serious, as Trollope finds,

The hours of enjoyment are important to human beings everywhere, and we everywhere find them preparing to make the most of them. Those who enjoy themselves only in society, whether intellectual or convivial, prepare themselves for it, and such make but a poor figure when forced to be content with the sweets of solitude... Wherever the highest enjoyment is found by both sexes in scenes where they meet each other, both will prepare themselves to appear with advantage there. The men will not indulge in the luxury of chewing tobacco, or even of spitting, and the women will contrive to be capable of holding a higher post than that of unwearied tea-makers. (117-8)

Trollope shows that, especially in America, living as others expect and dictate is of the utmost importance. Women’s duties and limited occupations are strictly observed.

Domesticity in *Domestic Manners of the Americans* is closely linked to purity. Women are sheltered from the public because exposure to the public threatens their purity.

However, Trollope doubts the danger of the public sphere to the purity of women. She suggests that the spheres of public and private life be connected. This can be achieved through education of both men and women. Trollope argues that if men and women engaged each other in society, both sexes would benefit from the interaction. Men would learn to carry themselves in a more dignified and less vulgar manner; women would be something more significant both to themselves and to their male friends. If women had other more pressing concerns than preparing tea, they could be found very interesting companions.

Piety, another feminine virtue, is considered the most vital in women. They must exhibit a deep religious nature and “young men looking for a mate were cautioned to search first for piety, for if that were there, all else would follow” (Welter 44). Cautioned that they must present themselves as pious and virtuous, women dedicate themselves to worship and little else. However, Trollope shows that piety in women can endanger their purity. Religious worship is a woman’s only agency, the only time when she takes control and leads men. Piety is the only virtue that allows women some agency in society. Without an understanding of society, this agency can be harmful to women, as Trollope witnesses in American churches.

Going to church becomes the female’s only fulfillment for social interaction. Mary Poovey’s book, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* closely relates to Welter’s work, in that it takes into consideration the makings and qualities of “The Proper Lady.” Poovey acknowledges that the agency women have through religion is somewhat positive, as it provides “a constructive vehicle for their talents and, in return, a heightened sense of their ability and self-worth” (9). Yet a woman is also expected to be submissive, “perhaps the most feminine virtue expected of women. Men were supposed to be religious, although they rarely had time for it, and supposed to be pure, although it came awfully hard to them, but men were the movers, the doers, the actors. Women were the passive, submissive responders” (Welter 50-1). The message is confusing here. A woman should provide a pious example to the men in her life, yet she must still submit to them. This leadership is not effective; if a woman has no authority to lead, what sort of example is she?

What is interesting in *The Cult of True Womanhood* in connection to Trollope's travelogue is that Welter states, "religion [is] a kind of tranquilizer for the many undefined longings which swept even the most pious young girl, and about which it was better to pray than to think" (45). It seems to be common knowledge, and a common fear, that women possess a "passion" that must be repressed, and that religion is the best tool with which to achieve the desired effect because religious work does not effect the other feminine virtues. Poovey describes the sexual desire of female subjects as paradoxical. In terms of reproduction, the female is a sexual being. Her body exists for sexual and reproductive purposes. Yet, "all definitions of female virtue allude to— and try to control— sexuality" (Poovey 19). The idea that feminine desire must be controlled is key. The steps taken to guard feminine desire leave a woman with "no vanity, no passion, no assertive self" (21). In her introduction to *Suffer and Be Still*, Martha Vicinus finds that "young ladies were trained to have no opinions lest they seem too formed and too definite for a young man's taste, and thereby unmarketable as a commodity" (x). The negation of the self that is required for females to maintain their modesty is the problem that Trollope finds. She portrays uneducated and inactive women as sad and unappealing, empty shells ready to submit to their masters without a thought for themselves. Trollope acknowledges an innate sexual desire in women by explaining, "it is from the clergy *only* that the women of America receive that sort of attention which is so dearly valued by every female heart throughout the world" (60; my emphasis). Poovey acknowledges that many women are kept chaste by the promise that after marriage, their desires will be satisfied. Yet, the women Trollope describes have not achieved this fulfillment through marriage. They are forced to search elsewhere for sexual and

emotional satisfaction, and their search often ends at church, which is a woman's only source of pleasure and amusement.

Trollope's description of worship at a revival camp meeting is more vivid than almost anything else she relates in the travelogue. These scenes are of a sexual and primal nature and relate how American women display their religious faith through excessive emotion and bodily movement, reminiscent of sexual ecstasy, and encouraged by the bodily contact of their clergymen. Trollope witnesses "young creatures, with features pale and distorted, [who] fell on their knees on the pavement, and soon sunk forward on their faces; the most violent cries and shrieks followed, while from time to time a voice was heard in convulsive accents...[the preacher's] insidious lips approach the cheeks of the unhappy girls...breathing into their ears consolations that tinged the pale cheek with red" (131). Similarly, Trollope observes with disgust: "hysterical women who had distinguished themselves on that occasion, above a hundred persons, nearly all females, came forward, uttering howlings and groans, so terrible that [she] shall never cease to shudder when [she] recall[s] them" (130). In response, the clergymen provide prayers "extravagantly vehement, and offensively familiar in expression" (62). The preacher is the only man with whom many women have the opportunity to come into close contact. He provides leadership in much the same way a husband should.

Here, the virtues of piety and submission become difficult to maintain. During worship, submission takes precedence over piety when women come into contact with the male preacher. Women are expected to submit to male authority, which includes a religious leader. If that leader encourages or initiates a familiar and sexual relationship, the woman in question can either submit to his wishes, as she has been trained, or act

against her feminine virtue and refuse his advances. Here, the preacher takes on the role of the husband, who is so often absent from female life. In some cases, Trollope learns of clergymen who took on the physical role of lover and quasi-husband with young women, engaging in sexual intercourse with them, which resulted in pregnancy. The sexual nature of the relationship between clergymen and women, though not always literal, is signified by the passionate manner in which the women worship. Trollope clearly believes this sort of religious hysteria to be dangerous because it may lead to sexual predation.⁴

Amariah Brigham deals with religious hysteria in his book, *Observations on the Influence of Religion upon the Health and Physical Welfare of Mankind* (1835). His ideas are similar to Frances Trollope's in that both of the authors argue that religion is dangerous to women. Brigham believes that intense religious worship can lead to insanity, disease and death, and stresses the importance of maintaining a relaxed demeanor at all times. An excess of stimulation could bring a person to insanity and other mental derangements. He notes the particular excitement religious fervor can incite, which, in his experience, can lead to "instant death...produced from the rupture of a blood vessel in the brain." (270) Brigham points out that there is no danger if religious practice is pure and not "abused," for, "the religion of Christ condemns that excitement, terror and fanaticism which leads to such effects" (285). Abused religion is particularly dangerous to females because they have little else to occupy their minds. Brigham's main concern for women is that he feels they may become addicted to and acquire a "passionate love" for the excitement they experience during rigorous worship.

⁴ See Douglas Murray's article, "A 'Serious Epidemic': Frances Trollope and the Evangelical Movement."

He stresses that this passion within females is the result of a desire for mental stimulation. Here, Brigham calls into question any exercise of mental power in women, allowing the reader to deduce that mental activity in women is dangerous to their health. That women could take pleasure in any intellectual endeavors is not only of no consequence, but is an even greater sign of ensuing danger. Though he does not overtly discuss a connection between religion and sexuality, Brigham does acknowledge an innate sexual desire that exists within women.⁵ He worries that women will seek out the pleasure they feel from passionately worshipping, explaining one congregation in France:

They experienced so great delight during their agitations, that they exceedingly desired a return of them. Mademoiselle Fourcroy, whose convulsions were very severe, expressed herself after them, as enjoying the most intense delight; that during their continuance there was poured into her soul rivers of delight, which filled her with a sensible and indescribable happiness. (293)

The women Brigham speaks of experience sexual pleasure akin to the orgasm during worship, as do the American women Trollope describes.

Through Brigham's work, we understand the discomfort with religious fervor. Brigham warns that it may cause insanity or death. If this is true, Trollope's women are certainly in danger, for their faces are deeply flushed, a sign of rushing blood to the head. They speak insensibly and communicate through erratic gestures of the body, a sign of mental derangement. Yet, while Trollope expresses a concern for the women's

⁵ Vicinus explicitly relates sexuality to religious worship, stating, "religious fervor was often an unconscious form of sexual sublimation, whereby the most enthusiastic religious women found a suitable outlet for their passions" (xi).

wellbeing, she is not worried about the possibility of their immediate death due to over-activity. Brigham's warning to curb fiery religious outbursts in women exhibits a fear of feminine sexuality and its possibilities. Instead of trying to negate feminine sexuality, Trollope encourages intellectual stimulation that would counter religious fervor.

Upon her return to England, and with the success of her travelogue, Trollope did not give up her purpose of showing the importance of better educating women in society. The celebrity and financial salvation she enjoyed as the result of *Domestic Manners* allowed and encouraged her to write novels with confidence that her message would reach the minds of her readers. Her novel, *The Vicar of Wrexhill* (1837), picks up where *Domestic Manners* leaves off. Trollope depicts a community, mostly consisting of widowed and unmarried women, threatened by a vicar who bears close resemblance to the clergymen she witnessed in the United States. The vicar appeals to these women's sense of vanity and threatens their sexual purity. Trollope pits the vicar against three young women whose close friendship protects them from his wrongdoings and ultimately brings him to ruin, saving what is left of their vulnerable community. The friendship between the three women is based on the distribution of education between themselves, and then the use of their newly acquired knowledge to benefit their community. Trollope's young friends are upstanding, pure and pious, yet they have agency within society because of their educations.

In *The Vicar of Wrexhill*, Trollope draws from her experiences of American religion and all of its flaws to create a novel in which all of the nightmarish rumors she heard in America come true on English soil. Mr. Cartwright, the newly appointed vicar, bears a resemblance to the clergymen that Trollope encountered in America. He

threatens to destroy the purity of the women by using his vulgar brand of worship as a means to win their otherwise wasted affections. His intentions are

to touch, to influence, to lead, to rule, to tyrannise over the hearts and souls of all he approaches...He would willingly do this in the hearts of men, - but for the most part he has found them tough; and he now...seems to rest all his hopes of fame, wealth, and station on the power he can obtain over women. (103)

Mr. Cartwright begins his awful campaign in the home of the Mowbrays', the most respected and prosperous family in the village, and continues outward into the community. He privately engages in worship with women, including the beautiful and pure Fanny Mowbray. Their meetings include the same affectionate quality that Trollope describes during the camp meetings in America. Mr. Cartwright whispers personal confessions of his affections to each of his female parishioners, playing to corrupt their innate piety along with their loneliness and sexual desire. When each woman is alone with Mr. Cartwright, these whispers are accompanied by caresses and, in the case of Mrs. Simpson, who becomes pregnant by the vicar, sexual intercourse. Mr. Cartwright enters the female sphere and threatens to stain his female worshippers' purity. He achieves his goal with Mrs. Simpson, and this fact shows that his actions are a danger to society, for Mrs. Simpson is forced to leave Wrexhill and live the remainder of her life in seclusion.

The scenes Trollope describes in *Domestic Americans* become more urgently perilous when set on English soil. Religious fervor in England appears vulgar to native readers. The sermons preached by Mr. Cartwright and accepted by his followers are

repulsive. One disgusted reviewer⁶ of the novel states, “We shall give no extracts from Mrs. Trollope’s book, nor should we have noticed it at all, for it is dangerous, vulgar, and unjust, but that it is withal singularly clever.” William Thackeray equates her with Mr. Cartwright, and questions her feminine virtue, saying,

with all her rage for morality, had not the fair accuser have better left the matter alone? That torrent of slang and oaths [...] falls ill from thy lips, which should never open but for a soft word or a smile: that accurate description of vice, sweet orator [...] only shews that thou thyself art but too well acquainted with scenes which thy pure eyes should never have beheld. (81)

The scathing reviews of her novel reflect Trollope’s success, insofar as she was able to grasp the attentions of her readers and instill some sense of emotion within them, just as Mr. Cartwright does with his disciples, yet with better motivation.

As we have seen, Trollope shows that the religiously fervent women were left vulnerable to the sexual advances of clergymen because their husbands and fathers were socially, emotionally, and often physically, present. In her novel, Trollope takes this idea one step further. As we are introduced to the small village of Wrexhill, we learn that the vicar has just passed away, leaving a new and unfamiliar one in his stead. In the second chapter, the patriarch of the Mowbray family is found dead in his bed. At Mr. Mowbray’s funeral, the parish clerk declares, “Death seemed to have taken a spite against the village of Wrexhill, for within one short month he has mowed down and swept away the two best and *most powerful* men in the parish” (25). The only men left in the novel

⁶ “The Vicar of Wrexhill.—by Mrs. Trollope.” *London Times*, 25 October 1837.

are either powerless or absent. They include Charles Mowbray, the only son of the recently deceased, who is more often than not at Oxford, Major Dalrymple, a bachelor who keeps to himself with the exception of his neighbors, Sir Gilbert Harrington, a thoroughly masculine Englishman who lives close to Wrexhill and was a close friend of the Mowbray family before the death and reading of the ill-advised will of Mr. Mowbray, and the predatory, social-climbing vicar, Mr. Cartwright. The women of Wrexhill, and particularly the Mowbray women are physically left to themselves.

In response to her newly found solitude, Mrs. Mowbray meekly submits to the advances of Mr. Cartwright and accepts his advice regarding nearly every aspect of her life. Slowly, Mr. Cartwright uses Mrs. Mowbray's unconditional submissiveness to gain influence over her, until he eventually convinces Mrs. Mowbray to marry him. Most importantly, Trollope explains Mrs. Mowbray's character as possessing,

...a weakness that induced her to seize gladly and gratefully any hand extended to her, and which, while it make her distrust herself, gave most sovereign away and masterdom to any one ready and willing to supply the strength and decision of purpose which she wanted. Many female philippics have been penned, I believe, against that manly passion for superiority which leads our masters to covet in a companion chosen for life the temper of mind here described; but I am tempted to think that this longing to possess a being that wants protection, far from demonstrating a disposition prone to tyranny, shows a nature disposed to love and to cherish, in a manner perfectly accordant to the most perfect *beau idéal* of married life. But, on the other hand, there may perhaps be more of

fondness than judgment in those who make such malleability of mind their first requisite in a choice so awfully important. (24)

Here, Trollope's critique of uneducated and unoccupied women in *Domestic Manners of the Americans* connects with *The Vicar of Wrexhill*. Mrs. Mowbray is clearly governed by unconditional submission. Therefore, she is one the most dangerous people in the Wrexhill community, more dangerous than the new vicar because without her submission, he would not be able to operate as he does. Mrs. Mowbray's first marriage was perfectly harmonious because her first husband truly loved and respected her. As his will states, he did not marry her for financial gain, but from a feeling of love and companionship. He respects and trusts her sufficiently, as he leaves his estate in her sole possession. Her relationship with Mr. Cartwright is deeply flawed because he does not love and respect her. He aims to take sexual and financial advantage of her and her family. However, Mrs. Mowbray's virtue is like an open door to his ill-will. In portraying Mrs. Mowbray's feminine virtue as a weakness, Trollope highlights the importance of pairing that virtue with education and experience.

Education plays an important role in the novel. After their father's death, the members of the Mowbray family, which consists of Charles Mowbray, his two sisters, Helen and Fanny, and Mrs. Mowbray's ward, Rosalind Torrington, take up their previous daily habits. Helen Mowbray "resumed all her former occupations, and added to them the far from unpleasing task of imparting to Rosalind much that has either been ill taught or altogether neglected in her early education. This, as well as their daily-increasing affection for each other kept them much together" (25). Helen, though "dependent upon her affections" was educated by a governess who left the family when Fanny was only

fourteen years old and “the consequence was, that the cadette of the family had a mind less well and steadily regulated than it might have been, had her good governess been spared to her a few years longer” (24). All of the advantages of education went solely to Helen, leaving Fanny with an untrained and unrestrained imagination. She reads poetry, but without proper education, the poetry has dangerous effect on her. In her article, “Figuring age and Race: Frances Trollope’s *Matronalia*”, Mary Wilson Carpenter finds that Trollope’s, “text strongly implies the superiority of prose—perhaps especially prose fiction—over poetry” while discussing the fact that many of her more “poetically inclined” women are weak and subject to danger (111). Fanny’s devotion “to solitary study, and to speculations too poetical and sublime to be shared by any one less romantic and imaginative than herself” leaves her in a perilous position that her elder sister, Helen, does not share due to her formal education.

Fanny’s lack of education and poetical inclination is a threat to purity. She finds Mr. Cartwright’s emotional manner of worship exciting and is deeply flattered by his attentions toward her. Although Fanny is a beautiful girl, Mr. Cartwright does not play to her physical vanity. Instead, he admires Fanny’s “accomplished” skill at writing tracts and other religious literature. He alters her appearance, suggesting that she straighten her curly hair and wear plain clothing. Fanny becomes his pupil because of the void that her lack of education leaves. The two become intimately involved and their manner of “study” is physical, though not necessarily and explicitly sexual. The reader fears for Fanny’s purity, sure that she will be cataloged among the many fallen women in English Literature. However, Fanny’s eyes are opened to Mr. Cartwright’s true nature and her relationship with him serves to educate her. She realizes the gravity of her mistakes,

repents them and her purity is left untainted. Here, a supplemented education saves and restores feminine virtue.

Rosalind Torrington describes herself with regards to her education, plainly stating, “I am little more than seventeen years old, and have always been considered less instructed, and therefore sillier of course than was to be expected even from my age and sex.” While lacking a formal education, Rosalind proves to be a sharp-witted person, often relying on a womanly ‘intuition.’ Her status as an outsider living within the Mowbray home allows Rosalind to read their situation more clearly than those inside the family, who are blinded by their close, familial relationships. In fact, at the time we are introduced to Rosalind, she has only lived with the family for a short time, though long enough to establish a close friendship to Helen and the beginnings of a romance with Charles. The two women unite in a friendship that is strengthened by the imparting of knowledge from one to the other and then effectively passing the gathered information into the community, thus initiating change in Wrexhill.

While female friendship takes precedence in the novel, both Helen and Rosalind later marry men who they have already established close friendships with. These marriages are closely modeled after the relationship between Sir Gilbert and Lady Harrington. The couple represents conservative, Anglican England, yet Lady Harrington is far from subservient to Sir Gilbert. The Harringtons clearly love and respect one another. Sir Gilbert is represented as a “tiger,” yet his demeanor softens after a few words from his wife. Lady Harrington is often in her own study or in her greenhouse, fully occupied to her own pleasure. At the end of the novel, Rosalind marries Charles Mowbray. The two have a relationship that is based on friendship and mutual respect.

Long before any thought of a connection exists between them, Rosalind becomes Charles' informant, sharing information and warning him of dangers regarding Mr. Cartwright. It is Rosalind that calls Charles back to Wrexhill to witness the changes in his family. Like Rosalind, Helen also marries a close and respected friend. She unites with Captain Harrington after years of acquaintance and after his becoming her confidant regarding the relationship between their families. These marriages also allow the two women to remain in close contact with one another, and with other valued female friends, such as Mrs. Richards, for the rest of their lives, promising the continuation of a female community for some time.

In her book, *Woman to Woman: Female Friendship in Victorian Fiction*, Tess Cosslett finds that female friendships in fiction often "lead to assimilation in traditional womanly roles," and therefore reinforce the marriage plot that is prevalent in most Victorian novels, "reflect[ing] the social assumption that marriage was the only desirable goal for women" (2-5). A woman should be on the lookout for a male partner rather than wasting her time cultivating relationship with another female. Friendship between women, therefore, has no benefits within the patriarchal society⁷. Yet, Trollope goes against the grain and allows her young women to benefit from their intimacy (as she benefited from her intimacy with Wright), which is closely wrapped up in education, both of the formal and personal nature.

Many considered it perilous for young women to become intimate, especially in an educational setting. In her book, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction*, Nina

⁷ For contemporary and other critical work on female friendships see Dinah Muloch Craik's *A Woman's Thoughts on Women*, Tess Cosslett's *Woman to Woman: Female Friendship in Victorian England* and Carroll Smith Rosenberg's *The Female World of Love and Ritual*.

Auerbach discusses the female friendship in regards to education. She finds that many people were wary of educating girls together (which would daily put girls in close contact with one another), admitting the prevalent fear of women becoming intimately involved with each other in both mind and body, therefore becoming sexualized beings. The fear that Auerbach recognizes is even present in Mary Wollstonecraft's work. Wollstonecraft objects to women being educated together "because their minds are not cultivated, [and] have recourse very often to what [she] familiarly term bodily wit: and their intimacies are of the same kind. In short, with respect to both mind and body, they are too intimate."⁸ The essential idea that both Auerbach and Wollstonecraft identify is that education is dangerous to women's sexuality. Ultimately, Auerbach states,

In conventional Victorian opinion, a girl educated with boys runs the risk of becoming "unsexed"; yet according to such antagonists as the writer for the *Imperial Review*, such a mutilation is trivial compared to the unwholesome lesson she will learn if she goes to school with other girls. The human and shared nature of the educational process only drives the young girl between the Scylla of asexuality and the Charybdis of sexual immersion. (16-17)

Sarah Stickney Ellis provides a counter to this nightmarish picture of female intimacy, which provides a link with Trollope's community of women. Ellis, who was a contemporary of Trollope, writes of a feminine utopia in which women could live in a community without vanity. If only they could set aside any rivalry and become "accustomed to consider their time not as their own, but lent them solely for the purpose

⁸ *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

of benefiting their fellow-creatures.”⁹ She admits that this experiment has not been tried, although Trollope’s female friendships closely resemble Ellis’ definition of the perfect community of women. Helen and Rosalind and Rosalind and Henrietta set aside vanity and live only to benefit each other. This is evident when Rosalind does not take the opportunity to change legal guardians and leave the gloomy confines of the former Mowbray home. Helen only leaves Rosalind behind after she is in danger of being physically and sexually molested by Mr. Corbold. Little by little, Henrietta reveals her father’s flaws and determinations to Rosalind, in the hopes that the young woman might have the power to hinder his actions. There is no rivalry between the three women, only a near-perfect understanding that develops throughout the novel and does not pose a threat to the innocence of the women, whose sexualities remain perfectly in check until the close of the novel.

A relationship based on sharing information also exists between Henrietta and Rosalind. Slowly, Rosalind gains Henrietta’s trust and the two enter into a friendship while teaching each other based on their individual points of view. As the daughter of Mr. Cartwright, Henrietta instructs Rosalind on the subject of Mr. Cartwright’s nature and purposes. She opens Rosalind’s previously innocent eyes to the extent of Mr. Cartwright’s evil abilities so that she might pass this information on to Helen, and then into the community. While this aspect of their friendship is crucial to the plot of the novel, the education that Rosalind imparts on Henrietta is far more important. After years of witnessing her father’s counterfeit piety, Henrietta independently comes to the conclusion that it is better to be an atheist than to worship in the manner of her father.

⁹ Sarah Stickney Ellis. *The Women of England, Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits*. p. 71.

Rosalind sets out to pass her own religious education, learned from her father, a clergyman, on to Henrietta, who is not immediately a willing pupil. Rosalind, the only person who has ever given Henrietta unconditional affection, is persistent and eventually succeeds to open Henrietta's mind and heart to God before the sickly girl passes away. The information that passes between these two young women allows them to evolve, and in turn, changes the community of Wrexhill. Once Henrietta accepts religion as taught by Rosalind, she becomes a Christ-like figure. Calling the family to her deathbed, she makes all of Mr. Cartwright's sins known to all, and then quietly passes from the world in prayer, as if mortally wounded by the life she has led in the presence of Mr. Cartwright, she dies for the sins of Wrexhill and of her father.

Neither of the friendships in the novel is threatening to the moral fabric of the women involved. There is not a shred of sexual corruption between the women and their sexualities are left untouched and unsullied. Trollope's female community benefits from the knowledge of each member without endangering those involved. Contrary to the fears of Wollstonecraft and others, Trollope shows that the women's piety and purity are protected, rather than spoiled by their relationship with one another. Helen, who learns feminine boldness from Rosalind, remains unstained by Mr. Corbold's physical and sexual advances. These friendships do lead, as Cosslett predicts, to the marriages of Helen and Rosalind, yet the novel is not consumed by a marriage plot. Instead, the plot is driven by the relationship between the young women, and change occurs because of the education they receive from one another, resulting in the saving of the Mowbray fortune from the hands of Mr. Cartwright and the extraction of his putrid influence from Wrexhill.

In both her novel and the travelogue, Trollope leaves her readers with hope for the future, stating in *Domestic Manners*, “Should the women of America ever discover what their power might be, and compare it with what it is, much improvement might be hoped for” (217). This improvement hoped for in *Domestic Manners* and found in *Vicar* is not possible, however, without the aid of the male sphere. Trollope encourages men to open themselves to interaction with the women in their lives. Her strongest example of this is in Sir Gilbert, the most thoroughly and respectably Englishman, who leaves off his brutish brooding and preconceived ideas and allows himself to listen to the information imparted to him by Helen and Rosalind. After allowing himself to be influenced by the two young women, Sir Gilbert is able to help set the village of Wrexhill to rights. This is the sort of interaction that Trollope is clearly hopeful of. More encouraging are the marriages of Helen and Rosalind to men who are friends as well as lovers. These women have overcome the Evangelical vicar’s invasion of their community by establishing a strong female alliance that would not submit to his influence. They entered the public sphere and actively fought against Mr. Cartwright and, impressively, they retained their femininity. Yet, Trollope suggests that this alliance does not necessarily exclude men. She displays a hope that men and women can aid each other through a valued and mutual companionship.

CHAPTER TWO

MORALITY AND LEGALITY IN *THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF JONATHAN JEFFERSON WHITLAW* AND *JESSIE PHILLIPS*

In the previous chapter, I discussed Trollope's use of the travelogue and novel as a forum through which she argues for women's education and occupation, much in the tradition of Mary Wollstonecraft. In this chapter, I focus on her protest novels. Following Trollope's successful entry into the literary world with the publication of *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, she published *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* (1836) and *Jessie Phillips* (1844). Both of these novels are clearly and purposefully written with the intent to protest the issues and laws that Trollope felt were unjust. In *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*, she discusses the wrongs of slavery in America. *Jessie Phillips* protests the New Poor Law of 1834 and is also largely concerned with the bastardy clause, seduction and infanticide. Ann-Barbara Graff recognizes Trollope's contribution to the tradition of the protest novel, stating,

In her work, Trollope disrupts the convenient binarisms of private/public, domestic/political, virtue/vice, female/male, mass fiction/social criticism; however, she is not an iconoclast. What Trollope found shocking and distressing was immorality whether it existed in the closeted sexual practices in Deepbrook or in the [practice of slavery in America]. Her critics attacked her on the basis of her gender and on a presumption that

she violated a code of decorum that prevented women from engaging in political discussions, but, as for most reformers in this period, her religious faith provided a context and an underpinning for her activism; her goal is clearly to contribute to the restructuring of society on moral principles. However, by submerging her moral vision into the texture of life, vividly imagined and dramatically presented, Trollope helped to define an important tradition in English fiction, the popular novel infused with social protest. (69)

Trollope's contributions to this literary tradition are skillfully carried out, and, though she was criticized, her work paved the way for similar and more popular novels in this vein, such as, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), *Ruth* (1853), *Adam Bede* (1859) and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). Her novels are interesting in that she does not simply call for specific alterations to law. She is, as Graff affirms, also deeply concerned with matters of morality, demonstrating that strict adherence to law without consideration of morals often ends up endangering the citizens that laws are meant to protect.

In *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* Trollope begins to explore legal issues, specifically the issue of slavery, as they relate to morality. Her travels to America influenced her exploration of slavery and morality. Personal experience and a knack for mimicking "accents inflections, and vagaries of vocabulary and phraseology" informs and infuses the novel with a sense of authenticity (Heineman 80). The majority of her American characters, citizens of Natchez and New Orleans, Louisiana, lack a basic sense of charity that thrives in the European characters. Throughout the novel, Trollope's disdain for Americans, their lifestyles and laws dictates her final resolution. She offers

what she believes is the only means of avoiding the evils of American slavery and immorality: a return to Europe. Later, Trollope brings her concerns home to England and continues to address legality and its connection to morality in *Jessie Phillips*, which is set in Deepbrook, a village like any other in England. In this novel, she proposes a solution to political and societal problems that are not contained to the ever-flawed America: uniting and infusing the legal with moral consideration will lead to a more stable society.

In both of these novels, Trollope links law to the male sphere. It is men, worldly and experienced, who take part in forming and enforcing laws, and therefore have a complete knowledge of the legal system. Her men are active in the legal and political world, which informs most of their actions. Men in both novels are constantly concerned with the laws of their respective countries as these concerns are necessary for the decisions they daily face. In Deepbrook, the New Poor Law is enforced by many of the male citizens acting as administrators of the law. In Natchez, white male slave owners are in constant consideration of their legal right to rule over their property, while their property never forgets that they have no rights. Among the men, most decisions are made after careful consideration of laws rather than careful consideration of what is morally just.

In *Jessie Phillips*, the weakness of law is highlighted in the character of Mr. Mortimer, the New Poor Law commissioner, who, at the beginning of the novel, is a newcomer in Deepbrook. Mr. Mortimer is a stranger to the village and to its inhabitants, and those inhabitants are just as unsure about him as they are about the New Poor Law. His job is, essentially, to ensure that the laws are understood and enforced correctly, and thus, he comes to symbolize the New Poor Laws in human form. During a dinner given

in his honor and for the purpose of learning his position and beliefs on the enforcement of the newly established laws, Mr. Mortimer proves to be extremely evasive. He slips out of every conversation meant to gauge his effectiveness as commissioner and never provides an opinion until he is sure of where everyone else stands. The administrators take his evasiveness to mean that he cares little for his position, stating,

we have nothing to do but to interpose him between ourselves and any poor people that may happen to be starving near us, in order to prevent our feeling the slightest inconvenience from their vicinity. Depend upon it, our best chance of escaping the mischief he is empowered to do us is by soothing him into the belief that his nice little revenue is a pension, and not a salary, and that he had much better employ himself in fishing for trout than in teaching the local guardians of the poor how to perform a duty of which they know much, and of which he knows nothing. Let us hope the best from his placid and gentlemanlike exterior, —let us hope that he will let us alone. (55)

Later, this hope is realized, and Mr. Mortimer is a completely ineffective commissioner, as he does nothing to aid in the interpretation and enforcement of the law. He cares nothing for the poor who seek help, as his only concern is the advancement of his career. Due to his complete negligence, the men in Deepbrook are left to make what they will of the New Poor Law.

Not all of Trollope's men are completely without some degree of morality when pondering legal matters. Mr. Dalton, the squire, is moderately liberal in his beliefs about the enforcement of the laws because, as a landlord, he comes in close contact with many

citizens.. Mr. Rimmington, the vicar, closely shares Mr. Dalton's beliefs that the laws should be enforced, but perhaps in some situations, not quite to the letter. Captain Maxwell is vehemently opposed to the New Poor Laws, which he feels harm, rather than help the poor. During discussions in Deepbrook, the New Poor Law's administrators' opinions as to how the laws should be upheld vary greatly. When the commission is considering the case of Mrs. Greenhill, a well-respected widow whose son is thrown in jail for his enormous debt, the administrators of the law have a difficult time deciding what type of aid she should be granted. Mrs. Greenhill is by far a worthless person. She receives a yearly income from the only aristocrat in the village, the Duke of Rochdale, and has a good reputation throughout the community. The only aid she requires is a bit of food and a trifling sum of money. These provisions will keep her son's family alive until her daughter-in-law, who has just given birth, can return to the work that is sufficient for their support. Though this temporary aid seems simple enough to grant, the New Poor Laws do not allow for outside relief. If Mrs. Greenhill needs help, she and her family must enter the workhouse, where they will be separated and put to work in extreme discomfort. Those who know and respect Mrs. Greenhill cannot immediately commit to sending her to the workhouse. They recognize a moral obligation to show charity to a member of their community who has been a palpable and vital human being to them. An emotional connection to the person in question renders them willing to explore other options rather than following the letter of the law. Others who either do not know or care about Mrs. Greenhill oppose seeking means of assistance outside of the set laws. Other men, including Mr. Rimmington, Capt. Maxwell and Mr. Dalton are admirable men because of their larger portion of moral consideration.

In Natchez, only a handful of free men concern themselves with moral issues. Mr. Steinmark is the first of these. He is a German immigrant living on an extensive, prosperous and secluded estate with his English wife, his three sons, and his daughter, Lotte. The Steinmark family owns no slaves whatsoever and are, as Mary Wilson Carpenter describes them in her article, "Figuring Age and Race: Frances Trollope's Matronalia": "surely one of the dullest families in the pages of British literature" (106). Another morally concerned man is Edward Bligh, who has traveled to Natchez with the belief that his calling is to provide slaves with religious leadership that will help to ease their worldly suffering. Edward and the Steinmarks are intelligent men and possess a complete understanding of the laws of their country. Yet, because they are morally opposed to slavery, these men ignore law almost completely and are guided by a keen sense of right and wrong. They take it upon themselves to aid in the education and even the freedom of some slaves in their immediate area. Other men in Natchez, including Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw and his boss, Colonel George Washington Dart, relish the power that slavery affords them. Slaves are without voices in *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*. Caesar is the only male slave that is named and granted a limited dialogue in the novel. As a class of people, slaves are completely without legal rights. However, in the characters of Phebe, Caesar and Juno, Trollope strives to portray them as valid human beings rather than the cattle they are viewed as in America. These three, though born into slavery, are more educated and observant of Christianity than free men. They are wonderfully human when compared to Jonathan and Colonel Dart, who are consumed by their hatred of the slaves and by their quest for absolute power.

In both of these novels, the men who do not take into account both legal and moral considerations provoke disgust from the reader because their decisions ultimately prevail in most situations, though Trollope leads us to believe that such outcomes are less than desirable. Jonathan, Colonel Dart, and Frederic Dalton, the squire's son, bring about dangerous situations because they care little for how their actions affect people, as long as those actions are legal. Others inspire confidence due to their consideration of morality, such as Mr. Dalton, Captain Maxwell, Edward Bligh and Mr. Steinmark. These men provide a sense of safety because in considering both law and morality, they encourage legal decisions that are more desirable, both to the reader and to their community at large.

Morality, for Trollope, is a feminine domain. If women can claim one area of expertise, it is religion and thus, morality. As I noted in chapter one, the most crucial duty of a woman is to set an example of piety that will guide her male counterpart, who is so easily led astray¹⁰. However, Trollope's male characters cannot often be found discussing or seeking moral guidance from women in terms of legal and political issues. In Deepbrook, the men gather together after the women have left the dinner table, moving closer to each other, closing in the spaces left vacant by their wives and daughters in order to discuss such issues. Male citizens of Natchez conduct meetings away from home and their conclusions are often kept secret. Our attention to the negation of women during these important discussions is heightened by the realization that the writer describing them is, in fact, a woman. Trollope audaciously pushes her way into the privacy and secrecy of the male sphere, creates male characters and discussions of male

¹⁰ See Barbara Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood."

topics with great skill and accuracy. These novels do not keep to the marriage plot, but are concerned with larger issues. She saves herself from being completely discredited as unfeminine by concerning herself with feminine morality and suggesting that if these men united with women, their supposed moral guides, if they met at home and filled all the empty chairs, the gaps in their discussion would also be filled with morality that women would inevitably bring into the mix, and their communities would live unmolested.

Carol Gilligan articulates the psychoanalytic basis of Trollope's gendering of legality and morality in *In a Different Voice* (1982). Gilligan finds that from a young age, males are encouraged to engage in the minute details of law, beginning with strict adherence to the rules of playground games, and continuing throughout life. From a young age, females are encouraged to feel rather than to reason. Law alone does not determine right and wrong, but a system of learned moral standards must also be deliberated. Thus, Gilligan shows that women are more likely to consider morality when discussing legal matters:

the qualities necessary for adulthood—the capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision-making, and responsible action—are those associated with masculinity and considered undesirable as attributes of the feminine self. The stereotypes suggest a splitting of love and work that relegates expressive capacities to women while placing instrumental abilities in the masculine domain. Yet looked at from a different perspective, these stereotypes reflect a conception of adulthood that is itself out of balance, favoring the separateness of the individual self over

connection to others, and leaning more toward an autonomous life of work than toward the interdependence of love and care. (Gilligan 17)

Gilligan's call to a life of interdependence reflects Trollope's proposed solution to unite the male/female and rich/poor spheres in order to alleviate social crisis that arises in *Jessie Phillips*.

The character of clever Martha Maxwell is set forth as a prime example of the melding of spheres. Miss Maxwell is "a very odd girl" because she is "a mixture of kindness, wisdom, and strength— a balance not found in any other character. Martha, then, can be viewed as an ideal character, a character to be held up as an example to emulate, even if not overtly marked as such" (Alexander 90). These admirable qualities are displayed during an odd visit from Frederic Dalton. The vain young man comes to Martha's home and proposes marriage to her, but cunningly suggests that they elope. She is not aware that Frederic's only motive for a quick marriage is because his affair with Jessie Phillips, a low-class seamstress, is discovered. Martha, though she is as enamored of Frederic as all the other girls in Deepbrook, retains her reason, stalling and asking him for a written proposal. Fortunately, Martha's hesitation saves her and her family a great deal of discomfort. Her father's influence effects Martha's character greatly. He is most willing to discuss affairs of a more masculine nature, such as law and politics, with her. Their unconventional relationship foreshadows her relationship with her future husband. Later, Martha remains devoted to Jessie Phillips after her fall at the hands of her seducer, the very same Frederic Dalton, and during Jessie's subsequent pregnancy. Moral obligation combines with Martha's acute ability to reason as she searches for a legal mode through which Jessie can be saved from ruin in the workhouse despite "great

difficulties [that] lie in the way of [her] obtaining any thing like justice” (171). She lacks a sophisticated legal understanding, shown in her contemplation of turning Frederic’s written marriage promise against him. The plot is thrown aside after Martha consults the young lawyer Henry Mortimer. The two enter into a friendship that consists of mutual admiration, and consideration for the other’s opinion. They discuss Jessie’s complicated and embarrassing situation with ease, Henry lending his legal expertise and Martha providing a moral standpoint. By the end of the novel, they are married in a symbolic unification of the public/private, legal/moral, male/female binaries that Trollope sees as an ideal situation. Martha will never leave a gap at Henry’s table because he values her conversation and her opinion as much as she values his.

Legality and morality in these two novels are governed by class position as well as being gendered. Distance between the rich and the poor in *Jessie Phillips* and the free and the slaves in *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* is at the foreground of each novel. The upper- and middle-class men are most concerned with legal matters. Their level and quality of education allow them to be active in the establishment and enforcement of the laws. As the leaders of their communities, they are most likely to have the time and reason to read and discuss laws as they are passed. As we have seen, Trollope’s most affluent men in *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* and *Jessie Phillips* are constantly engaged in legal discussion. While moral consideration does exist to varying degrees among the male characters, the law is taken into account first in order to determine what is just. In *Jessie Phillips*, the low, working-class male population is completely silenced. The only destitute males specifically named do not appear firsthand, but are either in the

workhouse or in jail because they could not pay their debts. We are only aware of their existence because the women who grieve their absence remember them.

The separation of the rights and treatment of the classes in this novel is further highlighted in the juxtaposition between the destitute men in the workhouse and the Duke of Rochdale. After previous generations have squandered his fortune, the Duke must redeem his funds through the practice of strict financial prudence, which is achieved by leaving his manor in Deepbrook for a humbler life on the continent. In a letter to the Mr. Dalton, he admits his financial troubles:

I need not point out to you that the strict, I might say, the severe economy, which I was called upon to practise in order to clear the demands made by many creditors on the already crippled property of my family, was more painful in my station than it might have been to one of inferior rank. In truth, my whole life has been a struggle. (222)

It is doubtful that the Duke of Rochdale has suffered equally to, much less worse than those forced into the prison that is the workhouse. He has not been separated from his wife and son so that he can perform hours of hard labor in exchange for a dinner consisting of gruel and a place to sleep that does nothing but protect him from the elements. This sort of aid is not an option, and need not be, because of his social status. His relief can be achieved through other, less demeaning avenues. The law in England, both of government and society in general, is without fail more lenient on those with either fortune or blood.

Deepbrook's poor men and Natchez's slaves are not corrupt, but are only guilty of great misfortune that could be eased by a small amount of charity that would lessen their

suffering. At the time *Jessie Phillips* is set, ten years prior to its publication, such charity is nowhere to be found. The newly enacted New Poor Law of 1834 does not contain a shred of charity as, “there is nothing inherently modern or Enlightened...instead, it is a monument to expediency: it conceals the poor behind the walls of the workhouse and attempts to obliterate them from communal memory, but fails to address the underlying causes of poverty or recognize the common humanity of people” (Graff 65). In America, laws exist to ensure the continuation of slavery. Legally, Caesar, Phebe and other slaves cannot receive a formal or religious education and do not even have ownership of their own bodies, much less the opportunity to take part in legal and political proceedings. The lowest of the classes of men have the weakest connection to the legal system that should protect them. They do, however, fare better than the lowest of the classes of women.

Trollope’s upper- and middle-class women grasp a general knowledge of legality, yet, the higher their class, the more likely that they do not need to concern themselves in matters of law. Ellen Dalton, the squire’s oldest and favorite daughter, shows no concern for the New Poor Laws as she has the financial power to circumvent them. She saves Mrs. Greenhill from the workhouse by donating a personal legacy of about £5000, which she is not likely to miss. Her “generosity, an example of an older tradition of giving, challenges the value, inevitability, and modernity of the new public and bureaucratic system, which provides little comfort and exacts great punishment” and is informed by morality alone (Graff 61). Social status and ready money allow Ellen to act in a purely moral style, untouched by the dirty hands of the law. Lotte Steinmark also need not confront issues of legality because her father is rich enough in dollars as well as morals to

shelter his German/English family from the cruel practices and influences of slavery by housing them on a large and isolated estate.

Other women are not so lucky. As in the cases of Jessie Phillips, Mrs. Greenhill and Phebe, lower-class women are endangered by laws while upper- and middle-class women's financial stability shelters them from dealing with matters of legality. Trollope does not provide a plan to revamp the existing laws. However, Mr. Rimmington's comment regarding the classes gives a clue to her intent. While discussing the New Poor Laws, he laments, "The cruel part of the business is the having cut the tie that, throughout the whole country, bound the rich and the poor together by interests that were reciprocal, and which could not be loosened on either side without injury to both" (55). Rimmington wishes to unite the classes just as Trollope wishes to unite the sexes to form a circular system that is mutually advantageous. Laws put in place, first in America, and in *Jessie Phillips*, at home in England, threaten to destroy the unification that Trollope and Rimmington seek.

These foreboding laws are personified in the two protagonists of the novels, Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw and Frederic Dalton. Both men carry a great amount of hatred for the people around them. In his book, *Hatred and Civility: The Antisocial Life in Victorian England*, Christopher Lane links misanthropy with "fascinating links between satisfaction and sociability...In probing how individuals' impulses and satisfactions clash violently with the sanctioned expression of...feelings in society, these authors encourage a book-length analysis of related philosophical claims about pleasure and sociability, including the pleasure of shunning—or retaliating against— other people" (4, 14-5). This idea is a key factor in the cases of both Jonathan and Frederic.

The two men seek pleasure and self-satisfaction, which is easily and *legally* achieved. Neither man cares for the wellbeing of others. Their actions bring about the destruction of the people they set themselves upon, yet legal judgment can hardly be made upon them. Jonathan and Frederic are easily identified as dangerous because “individuals have a complex, unpredictable relationship to society and themselves, and...the Victorians often stigmatized the ensuing difference and self-strangeness because both jeopardize fellowship and citizenship, probing the foundations on which they rest” (Lane 5). By enforcing their hatred for others with the law, both men ensure a sense of sociability because the law is there to back up their wrong doings. As long as their actions are perfectly legal, they care not if the same actions are immoral.

Trollope is not only concerned with the immoral nature of slavery, but in her protest novel, there is an underlying idea that the evils of the institution threaten to spread and infect Europeans, the English in particular. This infectious disease of law comes in the form of Jonathan, who grows up on a riverbank in Louisiana. Even Jonathan’s name equates him with law, as Carpenter finds, stating,

Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw’s mouthful of a name has a number of significant contemporary resonances: “Jonathan” derives from “Brother Jonathan,” the cartoon figure used by British cartoonists to personify America; “Jefferson,” of course, refers to the famous American president whose notorious sexual relations with his female slaves and pleasure in his own children’s “slavish” service Trollope had described in her *Domestic Manners*; and “Whitlaw” not only suggests someone who does not care a

whit about the law (and can be synonymous with the term “felon”), but lacks only one letter to spell out WHITE LAW. (104-5)

His early education consists of nothing more than learning how to earn money, thus he craves wealth and power, believing that he may one day enter the Senate or even become President. Jonathan begins his quest for power by lording over the slaves of Colonel Dart, the man he works for. Along with most other men in Natchez, he enjoys his right to witness the beatings of slaves, the tearing of human flesh. Phebe, one of Colonel Dart’s newly acquired slaves attracts Jonathan. He imposes himself upon her sexually. When she refuses to submit to his sexual advances, he attempts to take his pleasure in another physical outlet, by whipping her. (However, Juno, an old and witch-like slave woman thwarts his efforts, calling him away from Phebe and appealing to his fears and superstitions.) The pleasure that Jonathan takes in the physical and sexual abuse of slaves is perfectly acceptable by American law and by most of American society.

Trollope highlights the danger of the American legal system, regarding slavery in particular, on the English people through Jonathan’s wish to marry both Selina Croft, an English girl visiting New Orleans with her father, and to destroy the Steinmark family, who are of mixed German and English descent. His hatred for these two European families stems from a deep longing to belong to them, to be like them, coupled with a wish to achieve sexual satisfaction with women who are his social betters.

The Steinmarks possess a great deal of land and a great deal of money, yet they own no slaves. Though Jonathan outwardly despises them, he expresses a wish to become part of their family, to be associated with their heritage, by marrying their beautiful daughter, Lotte. Thwarted, he again tries to latch onto a wealthy English family

by asking for Selina Croft's hand in marriage. In his proposal, he states his qualifications, saying,

I'm a right-down good American, that's a fact: nevertheless, I would be no ways particular as to accompanying my wife to England for a spell...Whenever my wife and I goes over to the old country, I never will suffer nor permit any of my niggers to go across with us, for I know from good authority what comes of it: they gets free as soon as they touches that queer old place, and devil a bit should I ever get 'em back again to Louisiana (224).

This proposal is, of course, not accepted, yet it exhibits the ease with which American law and American thinking can spill over into England. Jonathan's further attempts to win Selina show his complete disregard for morals. Relentless in his chase for his goal, he contrives to visit her in private, though he is constantly turned away. Regardless of the wishes of the Crofts, Jonathan nearly achieves his goal of possessing Selina through legal and thus socially acceptable channels.

Finally, Jonathan gains admittance to Selina when he learns that she coincidentally descends from the coupling of an Englishman and a slave woman, Juno, who is her grandmother. Neither Selina nor her father is aware of her lineage, nor does it matter to them because they are English, and by law, Selina is free in her native country. However, as they learn the truth about Selina's heritage, they realize that America is hostile territory for those of mixed blood, regardless of Selina's English descent. By law, her lineage overrules her freedom, and Jonathan now threatens to take her for his slave/mistress. Once Selina's class/race classification is clarified and she is no longer

upper-class, she becomes vulnerable to the law. Only her suicide prevents Jonathan from carrying out the hateful task.

Later, Jonathan sets his sights on the Steinmarks. Manipulating the law to his benefit, Jonathan sets a mob on the Steinmark home. His claim that the family is harboring Edward Bligh, who has been found preaching to slaves, is enough to incite a riot. Trollope highlights the fact that American law is easily shaped to fit personal preferences and therefore extremely dangerous. One of Jonathan's confidantes explains American's regard for their country's laws:

It's all very well to speak of State-law when needs must, and to make a talkification in Congress about our respect for the laws, and our reverence for the laws, and our obedience to the constitution, and all that. Not that they seem over particular about the matter there either; but at any rate, trust me that out here, the nearer we can get to having the law and the gospel too in our own hands, the better it will be for us. (275)

In Trollope's America, laws are made only to be disregarded. Furthermore, by seeking "the gospel too" Jonathan and his cohorts express a wish to manipulate moral standards to fit their own needs. This manipulation comes in the form of the lynch law and mob rule, which Jonathan sets against the Steinmark family. Though he comes close to achieving his goals of destruction, Jonathan falls short of success, and the Europeans are saved from his threats. Trollope's conclusion in *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* is that "Europe was the soil for Europeans, and that there was some comfort in living in a land in which, let a man sing what he will about 'home,' there is no danger that on looking round they should see tears standing in every eye" (365). Nothing can be done to save the

Steinmarks on American soil and salvation comes in the return to Europe and to a European system of law and morality.

The Europeans flee the country, but the slaves have no place to go. Instead, Trollope offers a different solution; she proposes the abolition of slavery, symbolized in Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw's death. Justice is achieved by Juno, an unlikely hero. Juno is a fifty-year-old slave woman who looks like a witch. Beneath the surface, she represents a mother-figure to all the slaves in Louisiana. Trollope describes Juno's sexual experience as frankly as she describes her maternal instinct. She has mothered many slaves, but has only cared for one, Selina's mother, who was taken from her to England by Juno's white lover. The separation from her baby nearly destroys Juno, but she lives to an old age, nurturing others. Early in the novel, Juno makes her entrance. She saves Phebe from a whipping, and is thus immediately identified as a protective character. Juno, despite her age, is impressively mobile. She moves around Natchez freely, and even travels to New Orleans whenever she wishes. Her movements mirror those of Jonathan. The two visit New Orleans at the same time, suggesting that, though she is a slave, Juno is similar to her white male overseer. This freedom within the confines of slavery allows Juno to gather information, which she uses to manipulate circumstances to her favor, or to the favor of other slaves and friends. In the end of the novel, Juno oversees the murder of Jonathan. She lures him to a field, questions him about his heinous behavior, and finding him deserving of death, calls to some hiding slaves, who beat Jonathan to death. Juno, an old slave woman, banishes slavery (embodied by Jonathan) and is Trollope's representation of justice. Though unlikely, Juno possesses all

the qualities of an ideal woman. She is moral, intelligent and her actions nurture and protect her community.

In *Jessie Phillips*, Trollope finds that the European legal and moral system is also flawed. Her young hero, Frederic, comes to embody all that is terrible in the New Poor Law, as Jonathan represented slavery. One key factor in this embodiment is his hatred toward women, which begins with his ten sisters. An only son among ten daughters who stand to inherit the entirety of their father's fortune if he dies, Frederic "gloried in being an only SON...and he fretted under the knowledge that, however improbably, it was just possible, one or other of these contemptible sisters might succeed to his honored and highly valued place of supremacy" (12). The young man understands and makes use of the power his sex affords him, yet he is constantly concerned with the thought of being usurped by his sisters. His insecurities lead him to misuse his power, as England does by instating the New Poor Laws, focusing his malice on those he could legally get the better of: lower-class women. Frederic "never saw a penniless pretty girl, especially if in the lower ranks of life, without falling violently in love, as he called it, with her; while, on the other hand, every woman possessed of money, let her be as charming as she might, always created in him what he called a matrimonial distaste" (13). He turns his attentions to Jessie, a girl who cannot get the better of him, as he feels his sisters can. She exists only for his pleasure, and after he is finished using her to gratify his sexual longings, he has no legal obligation to her whatsoever. These actions are detestable, yet Frederic justifies them in legal terms, setting morality aside. According to the newly instated bastardy clause, unmarried women who give birth cannot demand support from the father of the child. The clause was enacted to protect men from being taken advantage of by

poor (and supposedly morally corrupt) women. Because he cannot be found guilty of breaking any written laws, Frederic finds nothing wrong with his seduction of Jessie. His literal interpretations of the bastardy clause and the New Poor Law exhibit his grave danger to the community in which he lives as a respected man. Later, he comes to symbolize the danger of the destruction of a future generation.

Women of the lowest classes are also in the most dangerous position regarding laws, which tend to overlook and defeat them. Throughout *Jessie Phillips*, Trollope's use of Jessie's ambiguous social status is a means through which the upper- and middle-class reader can identify with a lower-class woman. Jessie, similar to the female characters in *Adam Bede*, *Ruth* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, is a working-class girl who adds to her mother's income by taking in sewing and mending for the ladies in Deepbrook.

Trollope's description of Jessie's many accomplishments shows a keen admiration for the girl:

It is true, indeed, that she was a most expert needlewoman, and from the construction of a nightcap to the embroidery of a lady's collar, few Englishwomen could surpass her. It is true, also, that when she quitted the village-school, she read infinitely better than any girl she left in it, and that at church her sweet voice might be distinguished in the psalms amidst those of all the singing part of the congregation. But on one of these accomplishments, nor all of them put together, could have gone so far towards winning all hearts, as did her lovely, gentle, innocent face, and her light, flexible, active figure. (33)

Jessie possesses some everything that a young lady of her station should and much more. Her education and talent relates her to the higher-class characters in the novel because they are similarly educated and possess similar talents.

Lynn M. Alexander explores the working-class woman in her book, *Women, Work, and Representation: Needlewomen in Victorian Art and Literature*, and pays specific notice to seamstresses. She recognizes the purpose of injecting a needlewoman into a novel of social protest, stating,

Regardless of their social class, all women in Victorian England were taught to sew. Thus people encountering a woman sewing in literature or in art could identify with the character—either as women who sewed or as men whose mothers, wives, and sisters sewed. It is not surprising, then, that an important aspect of the seamstress for reformers was the ease with which she could be tied to traditional images of the home. (9)

Jessie is easily identified and sympathized with because, though she is working-class, she is quite accomplished¹¹. Her class does not affect her accomplishments or her amazing beauty, which captivates every man, woman and child of Deepbrook. The upper- and middle-class women dote on Jessie and most everyone in the village has a high regard for the girl. Though the young ladies of the upper-class do not treat her as an equal, she is invited to leave her mother's humble home and partake in the company of the Dalton

¹¹ In *The Flesh Made Word*, Helena Michie argues that female work, including sewing, has sexual connotations because it is associated with the body. She claims that sewing takes the place of sexual activity in the absence of a lover. In *Jessie Phillips*, after Jessie is seduced by Frederic Dalton, she falls behind in her work, symbolizing sexual activity. Although it is not clear how people learn of her affair with Frederic, her customers stop giving her mending jobs, suggesting that her inactivity is a signal to the community that she is sexually active.

sisters and their friends, the Lewis sisters, who are the lawyer's daughters. Jessie is a sort of play-thing for the upper-class girls because she is pretty and accomplished, yet below them in terms of class. They play with her and throw her away when they become bored. Later, we see their behavior toward Jessie reflected by Frederic Dalton, who seduces her with promises of love and marriage. A marriage between the two is impossible (as Ellen's devastated reaction after witnessing the couple kissing indicates), though Jessie does not recognize the fact. She falls victim to Frederic's promises and tender caresses and engages in a sexual and emotional relationship without considering the affair from a moral standpoint. Nor does she realize that Frederic's verbal and physical promises are not binding. He is not obligated to marry her because they engaged in sexual intercourse or to claim responsibility for her infant once she inevitably becomes pregnant. After the affair begins and ends horribly, Jessie is banned from the drawing rooms she was once freely and enthusiastically admitted to, and even worse, her regular customers stop their work orders, with the exception of her indefatigable friend, Martha. Impending pregnancy and the death of her mother force Jessie to seek the only means of refuge available to her by entering the workhouse. Her low-class status, coupled with her sex, renders her extremely vulnerable. According to Graff, "The New Poor Law affects women disproportionately: Women have fewer legitimate sources of income than men, women are more dependent on others for their physical and financial security, women are primarily responsible for the care of children, yet the law is blind to these realities" (60). Rather than protecting this poor girl, a diamond in the rough of Deepbrook, whose sex and class render her most defenseless, the citizens turn their backs on the girl and usher in her destruction.

Readers of every class may have been able to identify with Jessie, and, as they suddenly witness her downfall, they could also see the possibility that they could easily be in her position. This is the point in which Jessie ceases to be a mere character and becomes a “symbol of a larger group” (Alexander 58). Jessie comes to represent a class of women who are neglected and punished. Trollope purposefully illustrates the perils of leaving these women in their current vulnerable situation, best exemplified in Captain Maxwell’s lengthy speech (which is notably made in the presence of his daughter):

Setting aside the obvious and horrible injustice of thus making one responsible for a fault committed by both, let us look...at the wisdom, justice and humanity of the choice which has selected the woman as a sacrifice. Did any man ever commit this offence, being beguiled thereto by the promise of the woman to marry him? Did any man, having committed it, find himself excluded thereby from the possibility of earning by his labour the same wages that he had earned before? But how is it with the wretched woman? Alas, poor wretch! She is the victim of her lover, the victim of the virtuous abhorrence of her fault in those who once employed her, but will employ her no more — the victim of the short-sighted policy of her country, which, while hoping (vainly) to save a few yearly shillings from the poor-rates, has decreed that a weak woman (that is to say a weak *poor* woman) who has committed this sin shall atone for it by being trampled in the dust, imprisoned in a workhouse with her wretched offspring till driven from it to seek food for both by labour, that the most respectable part of her own sex refuse her upon principle! What

is the obvious refuge of such a wretch as this? What, but the hiding herself among a class who know not shame, and cannot, as she approaches, drop the awful veil which divides the woman protected by law from her who is its branded victim? And how fares it the while with the privileged seducer? Why, he, being of the sex which make the laws, is so snugly sheltered by them that there is no earthly reason whatsoever why he should not go on in the course he has begun, and thank the gods that he is not a woman. (204)

Captain Maxwell's speech highlights Trollope's main concerns about the New Poor Laws and their effects on society.

Because of the laws, women are driven lower and lower until they reach a state of desperation from which there is no return. Jessie arrives at such a destination after entering the workhouse a pregnant woman. With Martha's guidance, she finally understands the moral implications of her sexual affair with Frederic. Yet, her new moral understanding also sheds light on the injustice of her situation; Frederic took equal part in the affair and should support the child he fathered. In order to achieve justice for her unborn child, Jessie seeks solace in the law, foreign territory for a woman, let alone for a woman of her position. She flies from the workhouse to Frederic, believing that she might be able to reason with him in order to make him see the unethical nature of his abandonment of her and her child. Of course, this reasoning does not succeed and there is nothing left for her to try but the law. She seeks the advice of a lawyer, and finds her fears realized. Nothing can be done to alleviate her situation. As she listens to the lawyer, Jessie felt that "not all her attention, nor yet the perfect sanity of her mind at the

moment, could enable her to comprehend the meaning of what was said” (255). The two, lawyer and poor fallen woman, cannot effectively communicate with one another because they speak different languages. Jessie, the representation of poor women, cannot take part in a legal discourse. She has no voice with which to speak, no manner of comprehending the fact that there is no help but only hindrance for her well-being.

Once again, Jessie must retreat from the community that once nourished her to a prison-like place. She gives birth in a shed and is taken back to the workhouse without her child. Later, Frederic finds the baby and stomps the life out of it. As before, the reader easily sympathizes with Jessie, and Trollope’s message hits home. The New Poor Laws endangers not only poor faceless women, but women who are vital members of society. Furthermore, Jessie’s baby comes to represent a future generation in danger of being snuffed out by the laws that should protect them. The survival of generation is imperative because it also represents the unification of the upper- and lower-class in harmony. Lionel Rose cites the argument against the bastardy clause: “infanticide was male-instigated, and women, left to their own devices, would never kill their child from poverty alone” (26). Though Jessie is accused of her child’s murder, it is Frederic (and the law that governs his actions) that killed the baby. Jessie is nearly wrecked by the accusation, and the entire community takes part in a discourse regarding her justice. Many of the citizens visit and talk with her before her trial, believing that they can read her speech and mannerisms and find guilt there.¹² In truth, the only people who are able to read guilt are Ellen Dalton and Martha Maxwell. Ellen witnesses her brother’s strange actions when hearing that the body of the child is found, and immediately understands his

¹² See Frances Gray’s *Women, Crime and Language* for discussion on “reading” the accused woman’s actions, and speech, etc.

guilt. By reading his frightened reaction as a moral one, she is able to make a moral connection to his legal status as a murderer. Ellen confronts her brother, telling him that, because he has committed infanticide, he must leave the country. Frederic dies as a result of his sister's moral judgment, running off in a fit and falling/throwing himself over the side of a ravine and Ellen (along with her confidant, Martha Maxwell) come to represent justice, just as Juno does in *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw*. Trollope's justice is achieved through feminine, moral channels. Her women are empowered by their moral beliefs to actively engage in legal matters.

In both of Trollope's protest novels, she demonstrates the lack of morality in legal matters beginning in a foreign country, America, and then at home in England. The people who act with legal advisory only are characters that neither Trollope nor the reader can sympathize with because they are governed by hatred which allows them to twist the law to their satisfaction and to disregard any ideas of morality. Trollope is unable to find a plausible solution to the problem in America because the American legal system is corrupt to the point of no return for its own citizens. The only hope she finds is a return to the comforts of European justice. However, this system proves to be imperfect. The enactment of the New Poor Laws of 1834 poses a threat to society by preying on the women of the lower class and weakening the possibilities of a future generation of social stability and unification between the classes and sexes. Yet, in the end, Trollope expresses a sense of hope signified by the death of Frederic and the marriage of Martha Maxwell to Henry Mortimer. Trollope proposes a return to a time when collaboration between the binaries provided for stability and happiness in England.

AFTERWORD

THE ACTIVE MOTHER

The theme of motherhood runs throughout all of the works I have discussed. In her novels, Trollope consistently maintains a matriarchal system that triumphs over the obstacles that face the family. Mothers are the center of their families, providing guidance in terms of education, morality, and religion. The relationship between mothers and daughter's is important to Trollope because they lead by example and shape their daughter's future as both wives, mothers and overall, citizens of their community. Her mothers either are vital members of their communities, or have the possibility of achieving such a status. In *The Vicar of Wrexhill*, Trollope explains the importance of a family unit centered around a strong and honest mother:

without this easy, natural, spontaneous confidence, the family union is like a rope of sand, that will fall to pieces and disappear at the first touch of anything that can attract and draw off its loose and unbound particles. But if it be important as a general family habit, it is ten thousand times more so in the intercourse between a mother and her daughters. Let no parent believe that affection can be perfect without it; and let no mother fancy that the heart of her girl can be open to her if it find not an open heart in return. Mothers! if you value the precious deposit of your dear girls' inmost thoughts, peril not the treasure by chilling them with any mystery

of your own! It is not in the nature of things that confidence should exist on one side only: it must be mutual. (67)

Trollope stresses the importance of communication between family members. In her novels, the mothers who maintain strong relationships with their children, their daughters in particular, serve to protect the family from sources of danger that threaten to invade. Other mothers, who lack open lines of communication with their children provide a channel through which dangerous elements can leak into and corrupt the family. Perhaps this idea of motherhood is derived from Trollope's own experience with marriage and motherhood.

Born Frances Milton in 1779 to a clergyman and his wife, and dying in 1863, Fanny Trollope straddled two distinctly different eras. Her mother died in 1784, leaving Fanny and her two siblings in the sole care of their father. Following the death of her mother, Trollope joins a long list of motherless nineteenth-century female writers, including Mary Shelley. Left to raise the young children on his own, William Milton allowed for the cultivation of his daughter's intelligence, rather than solely promoting her domestic qualities. Under her father's encouragement, Fanny's studies included literature and poetry in English as well as in Italian and French. Her intellectual accomplishments were impressive, considering her father's relatively low income. Because she is a motherless child, Trollope draws from her experiences with and encouragement from her father. She takes on the qualities that he exhibited as both mother and father to his children, and becomes an active and integral member of her family and of society.

Characteristic to her life in general, "Mrs. Trollope rejected this limiting concept [that women were merely domestic creatures]. She cared about women who had to run

households, bear children, and still find time and energy to become fully developed human beings” (Heineman 88). Taking an active role in her family was of the greatest importance. Motherhood, as two of her biographers, Heineman and Neville-Sington find, is a delightful role, rather than a burden for Trollope. In her biography, *Frances Trollope: Her Life and Literary Work*, Frances Eleanor Trollope, Frances Trollope’s daughter-in-law describes her mother-in-law’s relationship to her children, saying,

Frances Trollope’s nature was one that welcomed every ray of sunshine, and diffused it again liberally around her. To her children, no holiday treat was preferable to a *tête-à-tête* with her. Her rare talents, combined with this cordial cheerfulness of disposition, made her popular with her neighbors. It is not too much to say that the most distinguished for character and intellect among those who lived near her, valued and sought her society. (47)

Trollope is as agreeable to her children as she is to her friends. The description of Trollope’s qualities as a mother, and as a person in general suggest that motherhood transcends the private home and spills over into the public sphere. The family can be considered a model for society. Trollope and her fictional mothers are at the center of their families, providing stability and guidance. A mother, therefore, is a public figure who is the center of society. The “proper lady” that she finds developing during the early nineteenth century does not fit into her sensibility. Trollope advocates educated, active women such as Rosalind in *The Vicar of Wrexhill*, Juno in *The Life and Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* and Ellen in *Jessie Phillips*.

While the active woman is held in high regard, Trollope's weak and incommunicative mothers serve as a caution for women to become more active in order to protect their families from harm. This sort of mother is most aptly represented in *The Vicar of Wrexhill*'s Mrs. Mowbray. After her husband's death, Mrs. Mowbray enters into a relationship with the newly appointed vicar. Upon his request, she severs lines of communication with her daughters and son, becoming secretive and isolated. Her submissiveness allows the vicar to infiltrate and control her family and by continuing to submit to his wishes, she puts her children's futures at risk. For the remainder of her life, Mrs. Mowbray is completely inactive. She is often sequestered in her bedroom, laying on a couch. As the novel wears on, Mrs. Mowbray begins to wither in her newly formed marriage. After giving birth to a baby who does not live past its first few days, she dies as well. She is no longer capable of being a mother because she has invited a source of danger into her home. Mrs. Mowbray's submission and inactivity render her dangerous to society because she gives up her position of authority as a mother to an outsider and is no longer at the center of her family.

On the other end of the spectrum, Juno, in *Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw* is represented as a superior and effective mother. She is an odd choice to be put forth as an example for other women to follow because she is a fifty-year-old slave woman. Yet, Trollope's exemplification of Juno's nearly perfect motherhood in the protest novel conveys the idea that slaves are human, sometimes more so than their owners. As Trollope writes Juno's history, she explains the slave's many commendable qualities. Juno, a devout Christian, received an education from her former owner. She shows an enthusiasm for her studies, and continues to read after she is sold to an Englishman in

New Orleans. This new owner takes Juno as his mistress, and Trollope does not shy away from detailing the sexual nature of their relationship. Juno enjoys sex with this man and is delighted when she gives birth to a baby girl. The pleasure she takes from sex stems from a feeling of love and intimacy that she shares with the Englishman and therefore, her sexuality is natural and admirable. Sexuality and motherhood are united in the character of Juno, as they are in all women.

After giving birth, Juno's master takes their baby to England and gives Juno to his friend. Juno never recovers from this insult, and though she has sex with other men and gives birth to other children, she never feels any maternal connection to her other children. Her other children are sold away from her and she is repeatedly sold to the highest bidder. She moves around, giving birth here and there, until we are introduced to her in her old age. Juno's influence on the whites and her ability to move about freely puts her at the center of Natchez society in that she knows every bit of information there is to know. Her knowledge and experience allow her to protect slaves and free whites alike. Thus, Juno symbolizes a mother to all races, sexes and classes.

In her depictions of motherhood, Trollope recommends the activity of women in both the public and private spheres. Her definition of the ideal motherhood does not include a strict adherence to domesticity, but it shows that women have agency both within and without the home. Her portrayal of a black slave woman as the ideal mother, Mother Nature, suggests that this agency is available to all women regardless of their social status. This message is extremely progressive and is only one many qualities of Trollope's work that provoke further study of her literary contributions.

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