



Hardly a Blunder: Trollope's Creation of Phineas Finn and Representations of Irishness to English Readers

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Hardly a Blunder:
Trollope's Creation of Phineas Finn and Representations of Irishness to English Readers

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A Thesis in the Field of English
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

Anthony Trollope wrote in his autobiography that it had been a blunder to present an Irish character as a dominant figure in two of the six books which comprised his Palliser or Parliamentary novels. Given that the books, *Phineas Finn* (1869) and *Phineas Redux* (1874), were among his most popular and financially remunerative works, why would he have said that? This thesis will examine the often negative perceptions the English had of Ireland and the Irish and demonstrate how Trollope's invention of Finn was not a blunder, but a challenge he threw down to himself knowing full well that such a character went against the grain of English sensibility. A common English belief at the time, for example, was that the Irish were racially different from and inferior to Anglo-Saxons. In creating and placing this character at the highest levels of British politics and society, Trollope was able to write a book which engaged with race, class, and to some degree gender, and in so doing created an enduring work of literature which transcended the quotidian matters of Victorian life. An analysis of the historical background, examples from the texts, and the evolving critical opinion over the decades will show Trollope, by such a daring strategy, to be a more artful writer than the Victorian glance acknowledged and with a currency which makes him readable and relevant in the modern age.

Author's Biographical Sketch

Thomas Filbin was born in Boston in 1947. He attended St. Peter's School and Boston College High School, both in Dorchester. He graduated from Suffolk University and Suffolk University Law School and later did graduate work at the University of Oxford.

In addition to a practical career in banking and law, he has been a book critic, essayist, and fiction writer, as well as a writing tutor. His reviews have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Boston Sunday Globe*, and *The Hudson Review*.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Avery Casper-Filbin, for her love and encouragement in this later-life educational journey at Harvard. I also recognize my parents, John T. Filbin (1914-1991) and Alice M. (Burke) Filbin (1913-2000), for their hard work and wise counsel, making the higher education they never enjoyed a possibility for me. My brother, Gerald J. Filbin, PhD, has always brought encouragement and good humor, as well as inducing some humility as only a younger sibling can.

Lastly, I give thanks to all the teachers in my life who have made a difference and in particular the Jesuits and lay teachers at Boston College High School from 1960-1964 for instilling in me the love of learning and appreciation for things of the mind, even as I was then too young to fully appreciate them. An education is a treasure that neither time nor the vicissitudes of life can diminish. Although my intellectual path more followed other Jesuit educated skeptics like Voltaire and Diderot rather than St. Ignatius, “The memory of the righteous is a blessing” (Proverbs:10).

Note on the Texts

There are two principal editions of the novels treated here generally available to Trollope readers, one by Penguin from the first bound copy and another by Oxford World Classics from the serial versions. I have chosen the Penguin edition for the readability of the typeface. The Penguin and Oxford texts have only slight variations from each other as the bound volume was a corrected version after the serial publication. R. W. Chapman in *The Times Literary Supplement* of March 25, 1944 wrote a correction in some forty emendations from what he thought was the “original” of *Phineas Finn*, noting Trollope’s careless hand and faulty proofreading. These after-the-fact corrections are largely about verb tenses and demonstratives and did not create any authoritative version. No material difference in the two commonly available editions exists for my purposes in this thesis.

Note on Citations

For brevity, quotations from *Phineas Finn* will be cited as *PF* followed by page numbers and *Phineas Redux* as *PR* followed by page numbers.

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Chapter I:

Introduction

Anthony Trollope wrote in his autobiography that it had been a blunder to make a principal fictional character an Irishman. He observed that there was nothing to be gained and only difficulty in “obtaining sympathy and affection for a politician belonging to a nationality whose politics are not respected in England” (*An Autobiography* 196). In the nineteenth century to be Irish meant an inferiority that could not be diminished by being part of the British empire. “John Bull’s Other Island,” in the words of the title of a G.B. Shaw play, was in English estimation a place filled with ignorant, uncivilized brutes, capable only of physical labor. They drank, were unintelligent and untrustworthy, rebellious by nature, and violent. If all that were not enough to render them un-English, they were Roman Catholic as well.

In this thesis I will examine why Trollope’s choice was not a blunder, but an inspired creation which allowed two of his Palliser or Parliamentary novels, *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux*, to transcend the ordinariness of a typical bildungsroman, political novel, or novel of manners. Instead, they provided a much larger canvas for Trollope to express his acquired opinion of the Irish from having lived there as a civil servant from 1841-1859 and visit the issues of the day, specifically those we aggregate as the “The Irish Question.” Instead of a superficial entertainment focused only on the lives of a few aristocrats in Parliament, the choice enabled Trollope to write a serious work of literature which addressed issues of race, class, and to some degree, gender. Patrick Lonergan has noted that because Trollope said it was a blunder to use an Irish character so prominently, critics took him too literally and ignored the implications and fertility of the invention

("The Representation of Phineas Finn" 147). The two novels were tepidly received critically but popular and among Trollope's most financially remunerative, and so I will show his statement of blundering was not an utterance as to fact, but rather that writing these books was a challenge he threw down to himself knowing how much Irishness was contrary to English sensibilities. Acknowledging in his autobiography that it was likely a strategic error by the same token invites us to see it as a choice, an option to work outside of customary English characters and accomplish something socially as well as artistically. Trollope biographer Victoria Glendinning wrote that Trollope once said it was pure chance that he had made Phineas an Irishman as he happened to be on holiday in Ireland when thinking the book out (385), but examining Trollope's nearly two decades of residence in Ireland and other novels he had written earlier will show that a much longer period of fermentation, even subconsciously, must have occurred.

I will use three avenues to study what Trollope has accomplished and why emphatically Phineas Finn was no error of judgement. We will look at the historical background of the unhappy union of Ireland and England, delve into the texts themselves for examples of Trollope's representations of Irishness, and lastly examine the critical heritage of Trollope's work as it has evolved over time to appreciate him as more than a mere journeyman entertainer. The use of an Irishman on the rise was the vehicle for Trollope to engage with matters such as Irish tenant rights, the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland (Anglican), and Home Rule. On a more personal basis, Trollope, the would-be MP, created a counter-life to engage in politics by other means: through fiction which aimed at observation and revelation.

As far as the nineteenth century English governing class was concerned, if the Irish were a different and inferior race, it justified English rule. The concepts of “alterity”, “the other”, and “othering” have been explored by thinkers including, but not limited to, Lacan, Foucault, Baudrillard, Levinas, Chakravorty Spivak, and Said to name but a few, and social structuring by those in power and aimed at those subject to their power is a byproduct of such concepts and language aimed, consciously or unconsciously, at that outcome (Thomas-Olalde and Velho 27-29). In post-colonial and race theory, conceptualizing a group into a “they” as opposed to “we” by its nature has the effect of making them fundamentally different in negative aspects and delegitimizes them into a position of inferiority. Colonialism in the nineteenth century manifested this attitude to the colonized. It is interesting that we sometimes think the literary treatment of race, class, and gender is a contemporary phenomenon, but the nineteenth century was overflowing with literature which reckoned with these categories. Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* might appear to be about romantic love, but it is about class. George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* is themed on class, power, and change, while Thackeray and Dickens were social satirists who freely trafficked in the accidental vagaries of the British class system, poverty, and ill fortune.

In the matter of English-Irish relations, Ireland lost what little autonomy it had when its own parliament was abolished after its unification with England into the United Kingdom in 1801. The notion that this was a marriage of equals was a delusion and Ferdinand Mount cites it as a problem for Ireland from the very beginning:

The British-Irish union of 1801, for example, was notoriously undermined by George III’s stubborn refusal to countenance the removal of political restrictions on Catholics – the single most disastrous royal intervention since the 1680s – even though Pitt and Castlereagh were convinced that

greater toleration was essential to make the Union work. This open sore was aggravated by the unequal representation of the Irish in the new UK House of Commons: they had one MP per 52,000 inhabitants, whereas in England and Wales the figure was one per 17,000. The Scots did little better; they had one MP for every 36,000. Thus the overwhelming weight of the English was further exaggerated. (15)

Instead of granting Ireland parity by creating constituencies for it in the parliament at Westminster, it disempowered Irish votes by making them a subservient minority. Rather than a marriage of equals, Ireland became a colony, a dependency, and a plantation. Roy Foster wrote, “A broad view of Irish history in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries necessarily leads to well-worn generalizations: themes of dispossession, poverty, and the dominance of a landed elite underlie rebellion, constitutional union, Catholic revanche, famine, and the rise of popular nationalism” (*The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland* 161). This state of being in an involuntary union had the same effects as a bad marriage, with blame, conflict, and unhappiness marring any chance for a true connection.

There is ample documentation that a common English perception of the Irish at that time was that they were racially different from Anglo-Saxons. L. Perry Curtis, Jr. in his book *Apes and Angels; the Irishman in Victorian Caricature* examines numerous and frequent portraits of the Irish in publications such as *Punch*, picturing them as having prognathous jaws, pug noses, prominent teeth, and hairy bodies, sometimes in apposition with actual apes. Curtis cites an article in *The Times* of London dated September 18, 1880 written by Belgian economist and essayist Gustav de Molinari (1819-1912) which stated that England’s largest newspapers “allow no occasion to escape them of treating the Irish as an inferior race – a kind of white negroes – and a glance at *Punch* is sufficient to show the difference between the plump and robust personification of John Bull and the

wretched figure of lean and bony Pat” (*Apes and Angels* 1). In the same book, Curtis notes that this process of simianizing Paddy’s features in illustrations took place after 1840 (29), and so Trollope would have been acquainted with such depictions.

In the nineteenth century the matters of contention between the Irish and the English occupied much of the public consciousness. In Curtis’s earlier study of the issue, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts*, he cites the interest in Irish matters was always as a “problem,” which socially, politically, economically, and religiously was referred to as “The Irish Question,” an apparently unanswerable query. Curtis writes:

Those Englishmen who did pay attention to the seemingly interminable discussions of Irish affairs in Parliament, the press, and other ephemeral literature, or at the dinner tables in Mayfair and Belgravia, shared in common some degree of scepticism about the capacity of the ‘average’ Irishman to control himself, let alone manage any considerable number of his fellow countrymen. In numerous ways...eminent Victorians gave vent to their conviction that the ‘native Irish’ were simply unfit to manage their affairs either on a local or national level. (*Anglo-Saxons and Celts* 4)

In my thesis I will include this race prejudice as a general backdrop for Trollope’s creation of Phineas Finn as a character placed in the middle of the highest levels of British political and social life. In going against the tide of English tastes and opinions, I will show that Trollope’s creation of Finn and his success at the project allowed him to write two novels of singular merit which engaged bravely with contemporary social issues.

Both of Trollope’s Phineas novels examined the matter of social ascent: in a society where wealth and status were largely inherited, how does an aspiring entrant break through? Is ascent by an Irishman in English society a form of impropriety to be condemned, or a normal human impulse? The books considered here attempted to normalize the Irish, a great act of countering the prejudice of the English. Could we say

for Trollope's long residence in Ireland and interest in Irish subjects that he became "an Irish writer," despite being English?

Phineas Finn as a character allowed Trollope the chance to explore relations between the two tribes, the nature of the English aristocracy, and the social position of the Irish. The Irishman as an alien and interloper in the eyes of Trollope's English characters is well dramatized. For an outsider to break in by fame, luck, politics, or marriage has never been impossible in England, but disdain was still applied if the entrant seemed too transparent in his ambitions. Although both novels viewed together seem to be a bildungsroman wrapped around a political tale, in some senses they could also be autofiction as Trollope might have imagined himself in the House of Commons, having written that "It is the highest and most legitimate pride of an Englishman to have the letters M.P. written after his name" (*Can You Forgive Her?* 480). He once stood for office from Beverley, in West Riding, Yorkshire and was soundly defeated, suggesting in some ways that the character Phineas Finn was an alter ego for Trollope, using him to substitute for his own ambitions and to dramatize his views. Like Flaubert who supposedly once uttered, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi," Phineas Finn was perhaps Trollope's imagined self, a wish fulfilled in literature which could not be so in real life.

J. Hillis Miller observed that "Like George Eliot's fiction, Trollope's novels reveal the covert structure of society by the indirect means of exploring individual quests for self-fulfillment" (128). Some novelists are philosophers, others are psychologists, but Trollope when all is said and done is a sociologist at heart and Phineas Finn, the Irish member, is someone, no one, anyone, and everyone.

Chapter II:

The Irish Question as the Irish Problem

The Irish Question occupied much of the political discourse in nineteenth century Britain, so much so that it was difficult to define what exactly it was or was not. Social, economic, cultural, and religious divisions separating England and Ireland made for a variety of attempts to codify it. Benjamin Disraeli's speech to the House of Commons on February 16, 1844 offered one definition:

I want to see a public man come forward and say what the Irish question is. One says it is a physical question, another a spiritual. Now it is the absence of the Aristocracy. Now it is the absence of railways. It is the Pope one day and potatoes the next. A dense population inhabit an island where there is an established church which is not their church, and a territorial aristocracy, the richest of whom live in a distant capital. Thus they have a starving population, an alien church, and in addition the weakest executive in the world. (Jenkins 279n)

What Ireland is in relation to England is a centuries old matter which even to this day is unresolved. "The British Isles" is a geographic term which does nothing to explain how the islands differ, only that they exist in the same body of water. The Norman conquest of Ireland took place a century after that of England, and medieval governance of Ireland created a Hiberno-Norman ruling class. By the reign of the Tudors, the power and control of England over Ireland became more significant. Henry VIII formalized his rule and Oliver Cromwell was the scourge applied to a disobedient child. The Irish came to favor the Stuart kings due to their Catholic leanings, but with the Glorious Revolution and the ascension of William and Mary to the throne of England, Ireland became a piece to a puzzle which never fit. Roy Foster has written that the period of Protestant

Ascendancy came into being after that and “the characteristics of the Irish eighteenth century began in the 1690s and continued well into the nineteenth century” (*The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland* 161). Protestant owners gobbled up land and the Irish population was reduced to peasantry while the Catholic religion suffered persecution but was never fully suppressed.

When Ireland was incorporated into full political union with England, it was as a bargain with the Ascendants. Oliver MacDonagh wrote that the surrender of valuable privileges was done as an exchange for securing for the Ascendancy their Protestant religion, property, and social domination (13). Eve Walsh Stoddard has drawn a comparison between British colonization of the Caribbean and its occupation of Ireland, writing that in the context of sixteenth and seventeenth century Ireland, the placing of Protestants in Ireland displacing the native population was considered justifiable because of the underlying notion that an island occupied only by savages was barren and a waste land (5). Once again, the implied racial inferiority of the Irish translated itself into an argument for English control. Michael Malouf has also noted this similarity to colonialism beyond Europe and that Trollope in his travel writing saw an analogy between Ireland and the West Indies (26). That the Irish believed themselves to have been colonized contributed to a narrative that extended to the twentieth century and was only partly resolved by Irish independence. Luz Mar Gonzalez Arias has noted that “the position of Ireland within postcolonial studies has been peripheral until recently, when an invigorating and growing body of texts had begun to readdress the relationship between Irish Studies and postcolonial thinking” (110).

The mid-nineteenth century for Ireland was a time of hardship that culminated in the Great Famine (1845-52) which saw millions leave the country. Little sympathy existed in England and Thomas Carlyle acknowledged English responsibility to a point while seeming to hold that the situation was beyond remedy. He wrote:

England is guilty towards Ireland; and reaps at last, in full measure, the fruit of fifteen generations of wrong-doing....Crowds of miserable Irish darken our towns....The uncivilized Irishman, not by his strength, but by the opposite of strength, drives out the Saxon native, takes possession of his room. There abides he, in his squalor and unreason, in his falsity and drunken violence, as the ready-made nucleus of degradation and disorder. (27-28)

The perception of racial difference between Celts and Anglo-Saxons was aggravated by the Famine. The number of Irish migrating to England was a force of social disruption of great magnitude which shaped English attitudes for generations. Maeve Tynan writes:

As these immigrants were usually malnourished and diseased, the identification of the Irish as a 'diseased stock,' a 'degenerate' or 'doomed' race was thus established. The changing characterization of the Celt represents a move away from environmentalist theories that held Celts and Anglo-Saxons to be fundamentally alike. In this period, pathologies of racial otherness represented Celtic immigrants as parasitical invaders, who ought to be kept in check. Political events such as frequent rebellions and chronic agrarian unrest in Ireland fed the notion that the Irish Celts were a people whose natures were antithetical to English norms of thought and behaviour. (5)

It is noteworthy that economic and cultural events promoted theories of racial differences where once inhabitants of the British Isles were thought to enjoy kinship. Even before the Famine, the growth of employment in the industrial midlands of England brought many Irish seeking work which, as David Fitzpatrick notes, led many to believe the influx of labor could only lower English wages and living standards, "posing a moral, religious, and political menace to the host society" (624). When added to the derogatory depictions cited by Curtis (*supra*), these attitudes cast a shadow from which Irish equality would

find it nearly impossible to emerge. Fitzpatrick takes exception to Curtis and holds that the simian illustrations were not as common as Curtis portrays, but Fitzpatrick concedes that English attitudes towards the Irish varied depending on the politics of the moment and the degree of Irish rebellion in years such as 1848 and 1867, oscillating between “grudging condescension and bullish vituperation” (624). Although politically united, it was plain there was no love lost between the two islands.

Life for Catholics in the nineteenth century was a time of practical exclusion from political life. The rise of Daniel O’Connell and Catholic activism brought emancipation in 1829, including allowing Catholics to take seats in Parliament. That this was only forty years before the publication of *Phineas Finn* speaks to the immediacy and timeliness of the novel. Some of the matters which continued to raise their heads in the nineteenth century were the question of Home Rule and the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, the Anglican affiliate. Both these issues figured in Trollope’s series of books.

The Anglo-Irish aristocracy in Ireland, although not starving, suffered a reduction of their circumstances in the nineteenth century. Many fled to England, much less wealthy as their estates had produced little income and unrest was constant. Murder, terrorism, house burnings, cattle-maiming, and boycotts plagued them (Ensor 399). To the Ascendancy, the problem in Ireland was the Irish.

The eternally underlying point of conflict between the Irish and the English was in what sense “Ireland” was a place separate and apart from England, and in what ways would the English prefer to consider the British Isles as a unity. For governance and occupation, England took the view that the two islands belonged together. The Irish, because of difference of language, religion, and culture, saw Ireland as a distinct place.

Trollope's own misgivings about choosing an Irishman as a hero according to John McCourt were due to his later disillusion that reform was not sufficient to placate Irish nationalists. What Trollope preferred was an English Ireland while the Irish had a different desire. The English political position of favoring a United Kingdom was inconsistent with their cultural attitudes which considered the Irish as unequal in intelligence, habits, and even "physiognomy," that word itself alluding to the theory that facial features show qualities of mind or character by their configuration or expression. Physiognomy was considered a science of sorts in ancient and medieval times as well as to the Victorians whose attempts to study, measure, and categorize facial and skull dimensions had the weight of authority in drawing conclusions about intelligence and character. That the Irish looked different confirmed them to be different, perception becoming reality. Looking again to L. Perry Curtis, Jr. in his study of the Irish as seen in the Victorian English imagination, *Apes and Angels: the Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, he gives numerous examples of how popular culture offered a racist view of the Irish, writing that "in the case of the Irish there were many slurs and aspersions on the tips of British tongues in the Victorian era, all of which reflected the conviction that Englishmen and Irishmen were separated from one another by irreconcilable differences not only of religion and culture, but above all, of temperament" (*Apes and Angels* 1). Curtis continues that in Anglo-Saxon eyes, the representative Irishman was to all appearances an anthropoid ape (*Apes and Angels* 2). The depictions of Paddy in *Punch* cartoons sometimes morphed in a sequence into caricatures of men as apes. Similar facial features could be observed in some Africans, and so the link was established that Paddy was the Negro of Europe.

This English opinion that the Irish were primitive, intellectually inferior, lazy, violent, alcoholic, untrustworthy, and superstitious (i.e., Catholic) framed the so called “Irish Question” in ways that always found the answer to be continued English rule. That the Irish were dissatisfied with their condition which included limited property and voting rights, social discrimination, and forced tithes to support the Church of Ireland (Anglican) even though most Irish were Catholic, was of no consequence. The English had a “white man’s burden” explanation of the need to continue British rule in Ireland. Lawrence J. McCaffrey summarized the situation well when he wrote:

From 1800 to 1922 the Irish played a role in the British mindset similar to blacks in America. They had a useful economic function doing the menial work other people were too weak or too proud to do; they entertained (the happy, shiftless stage Irishman with the rich and comic brogue); they frightened (they were brutal, wild, lawless, uncivilized); and they were convenient targets for the release of inferiority complexes and sadistic tendencies. (7)

Thus, no amount of Irish complaint about a second-class citizenship would ever persuade the English that Irish independence was in anyone’s interest, even that of the Irish.

In the early eighteenth century Catholics, about 75% of the population, owned only 14% of the land. The situation was not much changed in the nineteenth century and so the typical Irish Catholic was a tenant farmer, having all the risk of crop failure with none of the rights of ownership (Foster, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland* 165). Cecil Woodham-Smith, in writing about the Great Famine, put it succinctly by saying, “All this wretchedness and misery could, almost without exception, be traced to a single source - the system under which land had come to be occupied and owned in Ireland, a system produced by centuries of successive conquests, rebellions, confiscations and punitive legislation” (20). To the English there seemed no desirable solution to the problem because all proposed reforms lessened English control of the Emerald Isle.

Phineas Finn was written contemporaneously with reform initiatives proposed by the Liberal Party. In 1868 a motion to de-establish the Church of Ireland carried by fifty-six votes causing Disraeli to resign and call an election, which Gladstone and the Liberals won. The matter of land reform was also a continual debate and Gladstone recognized the sharp division between those who worked the land and those who owned it, saying the best cure was that the same man be the cultivator and the proprietor (Boyce 30). A disenfranchised populace who could not easily own land in the place of their birth could never be content with the system as it then existed.

The Irish Question or the Irish problem was: what is to be done? The main outcome for centuries had been to do nothing, but three issues emerged in Trollope's time: Home Rule, Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, and tenant rights. All of these would be taken up in the two *Phineas Finn* novels, both as great issues of the day and as a means of having the principal protagonist act on his beliefs, and in so doing reveal his character. The tortured relationship of England and Ireland was the backdrop of the books without Trollope having to enumerate the aspects of the problem at every turn. Lawrence McCaffrey offered a succinct summary of the matter as it might have been defined in Trollope's time when he wrote, "Although the Crown and the Tory party endorsed Protestant Ascendancy, the Catholic majority in Ireland refused to accept an apartheid policy that would condemn it to a permanent inferiority" (3).

Despite the long history of interdenominational conflict, at the time Trollope wrote his Parliamentary novels, relations between Catholics and Protestants were not always hostile. Mark Bence-Jones has noted that "the general run of Protestants mixed easily with those of their class who were Catholics... (and) Catholic clerics of sound

political views were in fact received at Protestant country houses as well as Catholic ones ...” (56), indicating tolerance existed at least at some level. In the beginning of *Phineas Finn* we find that Phineas has a seat in the House of Commons fall his way when the local aristocrat, Lord Tulla, has a falling out with the sitting member for his pocket borough, his own brother, and offers no objection to Phineas, the Catholic son of Tulla’s physician, seeking the seat. Phineas enjoys excellent relations with the English aristocrats whose circle he becomes part of as a Liberal MP, although for some, including the old Duke of Omnium in the film adaptation of the saga to be discussed later, his Irishness will always be a stain.

The class divide, accentuated by the religious division, exacerbated the differences between Ascendants and those who considered themselves of ancient Irish lineage. Bence-Jones notes the problem of workers and servants resenting their position, as upper servants like butlers tended to be English, while gamekeepers and grooms were Irish (59). The need for servants at the great houses bred discontent and this carried over even past Irish independence as is portrayed in John McGahern’s screenplay set in the Republic of Ireland in the 1950s, “The Rockingham Shoot”. The nationalist schoolteacher Reilly tries to prevent his students from working as servers at a pheasant hunt on the local estate in honor of the British ambassador, and the next day beat the hands bloody of those who were absent from school, he says for not doing their homework, but in truth it was because of their complicity with their own submission. When the police investigate, Reilly says, “You’ll all dance to Sir Cecil’s tune anyhow” (236). Despite Irish independence, a form of manorialism still existed as land and wealth did not automatically change hands.

The Famine in Ireland oddly enough seemed not to touch English opinion in terms of land reform, tenant right, or poor relief. Lawrence McCaffrey writes that “Ireland had a population explosion that began midway through the eighteenth century and lasted until the early nineteenth. In 1781 the estimated population was 4,0948,000; in 1841 the census recorded it at 8,175,000” (19). He goes on to note Irish men and women married young and produced large families which triumphed over infant mortality, sickness, and subsistence sized agricultural plots. The average rural Irishman’s diet consisted mostly of potatoes with a little milk, and this dependence on the potato, easy to cultivate even in bad soil, set the groundwork for starvation due to the blight caused by fungus and aggravated by bad weather (19). Michael McConville writes that official estimates of population growth between 1779 and 1841 were almost certainly underestimated. “By 1841 a small island with an unbalanced economic and social structure was supporting a population of over eight million people. The outcome was catastrophic” (203). The English casually pointed the finger of moral blame at the Irish for having numerous children, while living in mud cabins with dirt floors and vermin infested thatched roofs. People forced to live like animals soon grew to be regarded as such. The Famine changed Irish life forever, with two million deaths and over three million emigrating, mostly to America. The English reaction to the Famine was that it was an act of God, or the unavoidable consequence of Irish overpopulation, another example of the attitude that the Irish were more animal than human. The Irishman as an inferior form of humanity was the prevailing trope in Victorian England when Trollope began his *Phineas Finn*.

Chapter III:

Trollope, Ireland, and Phineas Finn

There was nothing in Anthony Trollope's early life to suggest a future interest in or affection for Ireland or the Irish. Born in London in 1815 to a solidly upper middle-class family which could trace its origins to the fourteenth century, his grandfather was a younger son of a baronet. His father, Thomas Anthony Trollope, was educated at Winchester and Oxford and practiced law. Biographer N. John Hall describes him as intelligent and hard-working but possessed of "a fierce temper that manifested itself in an unwillingness to suffer gladly anyone he considered a fool" (4). This disputatious tendency was and is not uncommon to lawyers everywhere, but "the world differed from him in the opinion that being... (right) gave him the right of rolling his antagonist in the dust and executing an intellectual dance of triumph on his prostrate form" (4). Thomas's law practice eventually failed as he received fewer and fewer cases referred from solicitors, due no doubt to his temper but also his inability to work regularly because of headaches and other infirmities. Money was a constant problem and educating children according to family traditions became impossible. Anthony started at Harrow and moved on to Winchester, where he stayed for three unhappy years and mostly identified school with boredom and beatings.

Frances (Fanny) Trollope, his mother, who had gone for an extended stay in America with the older children leaving Anthony with his father, discovered success writing novels and when she returned was able to provide some family income. In the

normal course, Anthony and his brothers would have followed their father to Oxford to be groomed as lawyers or clergymen, but Anthony was disinterested in academic pursuits and, without any other options at age nineteen, Fanny through a friend had him appointed to a junior clerkship with the Post Office in London with a modest (but princely by his standards) salary of ninety pounds a year. Life as a lowly civil servant was not disagreeable, but time serving did not measure up to his ambitions. His mother's success at authorship perhaps put the germ in his head. He kept a journal of his thoughts and aspirations, but "he also decided that he had not the talent for poetry or drama, nor the erudition for history or biography" (Hall 68). Writing novels seemed a default proposition and writing gave him a sense of worth he had not experienced as a young man. A.O.J. Cockshut described Trollope's youth "as a period of suffering, self-reproach, and daydreaming" (131), but an artist is born in conflict, not contentment.

After seven years at the Post Office, and not always pleasing to his supervisors, he applied for a clerkship in the newly created positions of postal surveyor in Ireland and was appointed. Hall wrote:

His fellow clerks thought the move foolish. Rumour had it that surveyors' clerks were being made errand boys...and to leave the capital for Ireland, of all places, seemed especially foolhardy...But Trollope, 26, in debt...with deepening dissatisfaction and self-pity, still nursing grievances at the world in general, saw allurements in any kind of change. (77)

Trollope settled into his new duties, which included travel over much of Ireland, and this change of habitat and the opportunity to see a new geography and culture expanded him. If there was a theme to Trollope's personality it was curiosity about people, places, and institutions. Although capable of being a homebody reading in his library, foreign travel and connecting with the persons he met was the nourishing milk of his inspiration. Beyond the usual European destinations of Paris, Prague, and Vienna, in his lifetime,

including late middle age, he visited America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Iceland.

Trollope was able to rise in the Irish service, earn a good living, and had the ease to live as a gentleman and even pursue fox hunting. His preconceptions of Ireland as a place of fun, whisky, and brawls with broken heads were dispelled as he became more acquainted with the Irish (*An Autobiography* 44). He found them an industrious and agreeable people, and although the character Phineas Finn was years from invention, these firsthand experiences without a doubt formed his thoughts, moving him away from English stereotypes. T.H.S. Escott observed that “once in Ireland, he had no sooner looked around him than he fancied he could see a resemblance between the condition of the country and his own state and prospects. That inspired him with a kind of sympathetic affection for the Irish people” (40). It is surely a virtue to be able to transcend one’s preconceived ideas after seeing their inaccuracies.

That Trollope lived in Ireland at the time of the Famine would suggest he had much to write about. John Sutherland notes that Trollope originally had thought of titling his novel *Castle Richmond* (1860) as *A Tale of the Famine Year* (but) “the famine was something England worked hard to forget and Ireland did not need novelists as English as Mr. Anthony Trollope to tell them all about what they had suffered” (*The Secret Trollope* 120). John Cronin has observed that Trollope’s early Irish novels were more engaged with the problems of Ireland than the Phineas novels. In discussing *The MacDermots of Ballycloran* (1847) he wrote, “This fine novel abounds in genuine insights into the dreadful state of the Irish poor and is throughout informed by a feeling for the root causes of Ireland’s troubled state” (22). Cronin affirms Trollope’s sense that Irish themes would

not win admirers and wrote that “Trollope... would, one feels, have been unlikely to fail to sense the English public’s growing distaste for Irish novels of a certain kind. It is clear that, by the 1840’s, people were weary of reading about Ireland’s tedious and apparently incurable woes” (23). It seems then that it was not a lack of concern that caused Trollope to bypass the Famine as a subject, but a realistic assessment that there was little he could say about it that anyone would care to read.

Trollope’s general opinion of Ireland was in many ways conflicted; he felt great warmth toward the Irish and eventually rejected the English attitudes he no doubt grew up with, but never imagined nor desired an Ireland not part of the United Kingdom. The new land became a home to him as an extension of England. Three years after arriving, Trollope married and felt happy in his work and life, and while fearful that he lacked the talent to write a novel, nonetheless began what was to be his true passion. In 1847, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* was published, followed a year later by *The Kellys and the O’Kellys*. Neither was financially successful and he turned to more English subjects like clerical life and ambition in *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*. Institutions and their dynamics fascinated Trollope, whether it was the civil service, the Anglican Church, or Parliament. Trollope spent eighteen years in Ireland until an appointment became available in England and he moved back. Writing eventually gave him an income sufficient that he could leave the Post Office in 1867 after thirty-three years, the happiest of which had been in Ireland.

The character Phineas Finn would become a notable creation of Trollope’s, although most of Phineas’s story did not take place in Ireland, but in England where he served in Parliament and became connected with the Pallisers, a noble family who in turn

were the foundational actors in a connected group of novels written over sixteen years. The first of these, although Trollope had no plan then that this would be a series, *Can You Forgive Her?* was published in 1864. Other unrelated books with different plots intervened, but five more involving some of the same characters were: *Phineas Finn* (1869), *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873), *Phineas Redux* (1874), *The Prime Minister* (1876), and *The Duke's Children* (1880). All first appeared in serialized versions with sufficient readership to find their way into bound form. Of all Trollope's novels, only four were originally published as books. The Victorian era was the age of serial publication of fiction, and his habit of writing concise and measured chapters derived from publication in periodicals, often in fortnightly installments. There was a literary benefit to this form as a precision of style and continuity creates readable work. Trollope would find no praise in being thought abstruse and inaccessible; he wrote to be read and enjoyed. Somerset Maugham maintained that the work of novels is to entertain and to enlighten, with which Trollope would certainly concur.

The Palliser novels covered decades with the dramas of intertwining lives. Plantagenet Palliser, high born nephew of the Duke of Omnium and his heir, was a career politician when that meant the aristocracy governing out of both patriotism and self-interest, two impulses it was easy for them to conflate. What was good for the nobility was good for the kingdom and all in it. Palliser and his wife Glencora had been married as a match of money and title, as aristocratic marriages were with the purpose of sustaining and expanding family position, and only later did theirs come to be a love affair. The later novels find Palliser rising to Chancellor of the Exchequer and eventually Prime Minister, although his own children challenged the patriarchal order with one, his

heir Lord Silverbridge, choosing to become a Conservative for a time and both Silverbridge and his sister marrying outside the norm, an American and a non-aristocrat respectively, causing their father anger and grief initially, but ultimately with his coming to acceptance. Plantagenet recognized that the world had changed and parental dictates were not guarantees of happiness, duty by itself being a lonely path.

The various other figures in the Pallisers' political and social circles formed the basis for plots and their integration into a cohesive master story. Trollope's politicians have often been assumed to be stand-ins for real persons. P. D. Edwards wrote that ever since the novels were published, speculation ran rampant as to who the fictional characters were meant to be in actual parliamentary existence: "Daubeney has been identified with Disraeli, Gresham with Gladstone...Palliser with Lord John Russell...and Phineas Finn with John Pope Hennessy (140). James Pope Hennessy, grandson of John, notes that when *Phineas Finn* appeared in book form in March of 1869, the *Daily Telegraph* "accused its author of ungentlemanly conduct in drawing pen-portraits of living politicians such as Disraeli, Gladstone, Lord Derby, Lord John Russell and John Bright" (280-281). To this charge Trollope replied that his political characters were not in any way related to any actual statesman of the day, but he later privately admitted that Disraeli and Gladstone were models for Daubeney and Gresham in a general fashion, and P. D. Edwards opines that "no reader, however, could fail to detect likenesses of political style as well" (140). A novelist's raw material, of course, is always subject to interpretation and alteration to fit literary purposes. A whole panoply of other figures in the novels represented the great variety of species in the Victorian world, including politicians like Barrington Erle, himself a former prime minister's nephew; idle, errant,

aristocratic sons such as Lord Chiltern; a shady financier, Fernando Lopez, who despite having an English mother was held to be a foreigner; Quintus Slide, a tabloid newspaper muckraker; and Marie Goesler, a wealthy Viennese widow, possibly Jewish, now living in London who conquers society with her charm, kindness, and disinterest in parlaying her position.

Phineas Finn, an Irish parvenu without a pedigree, became a counterweight to Palliser in the dramatic unfolding of events. Palliser was rational, elevated, the voice of reason and tradition, and an icon of an unchangeable England. Finn was of the new age, passionate, sometimes incautious, and prone to misfortunes of his own making. Phineas's political life was more complicated than he imagined it would be, as his idealism is continually shocked by the endless compromises demanded. James Kincaid observed that being in government by its nature challenges a man's conscience. He wrote, "Phineas discovers the great risks entailed by a man in office who tries to have opinions and a selfhood of his own" (*The Novels of Anthony Trollope* 179). Trollope certainly knew the pains of conscience required of legislators to get along and go along and presents Phineas as sincere but whose integrity is always at risk of being a collateral casualty of the law-making process. Elaine Hadley in examining liberalism in Mid-Victorian Britain observes that Phineas's conscience demands he resign his seat when holding it runs counter to his beliefs, and in this "*Phineas Finn* is a novel that tells the story of a man in terms of an occupational crisis that resolves itself when Finn sacrifices his career for a piece of legislation that addresses these very occupants of Irish farms" (233). That Trollope makes Phineas subject to temptation but in the end incorruptible presented a new sort of Irishman to English readers, one he no doubt observed in his daily Irish life.

These six novels reflected the issues of the day such as foreign trade, the position of the empire and its colonies, church and state, and the eternal problem of Ireland. The creation of Phineas Finn as a character was the perfect vehicle to engage with current events and paint a portrait of social Britain. Finn was an outsider, not wealthy, not connected and high born, and yet he succeeded in ascending. The invention of Finn was both a gamble and a stroke of genius. Hostility from the English to the Irish then was palpable in everyday life. Why, Trollope must have wondered, would English readers care about an Irishman, perhaps a social climber and a fortune hunter? Only if he could be made endearing somehow might have been Trollope's answer, and that the things Finn craved were perhaps no different from anyone else: a place in the world, work of importance to do, a comfortable life.

Politics was the great game for an English gentleman; the issues debated in Parliament were reported in the papers and parliamentary debates were the news events of the day. The Palliser novels, although connected by much the same *dramatis personae*, visit a variety of topics. On one level they are political, on other levels personal, and overall social. William Cohen wrote, "The Palliser series establishes a reciprocal relationship between stories of public and private life – stories that might more suggestively be termed the political and the psychological...showing the two realms mutually to allegorize, as well as substantially interact with, each other" (45). My focus here is on *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux*, which Trollope considered two parts of the same story. In them the matter of Irishness is explored and the cultural differences of the two islands and their people. Finn is a bridge between the two, half Catholic and half Protestant in parentage; he loves Ireland but England is the wider world. He is not

wealthy but falls in with wealth and hopes to marry into at least a higher station than he was born. James Pope Hennessy writes that “the fact that Phineas is the son of a small-town Irish doctor gives him in London political society the role of a born outsider whose charm and good looks can overcome prejudices as to his poverty and his undistinguished birth” (280). That Trollope allows Phineas in the end to succeed at his ambitions offers the chance for believing nineteenth century Britain could at least sometimes be a meritocracy.

Hugh Walpole struck a different note, calling Phineas “a hollow drum. Trollope beats upon him constantly, a fine noise is produced, but we are always aware that there is nothing inside” (107-108). Hennessy rebuts, stating, “In reality Phineas Finn is neither tame nor hollow; he belongs to that gigantic category of passive persons with little volition to whom things merely happen” (282). In the matter of Phineas’s romantic inclinations, when his first choice, Laura Standish, becomes engaged to another man, Phineas fancies Violet Effingham. “All of his flirtations seem quite sincere to Phineas himself, who does not pause to wonder why he should have fallen suddenly out of love with Lady Laura, and, just as suddenly, into love with Miss Violet Effingham” (Hennessy 282). In making Phineas fickle, Trollope makes him human.

Trollope wrote other novels before and after the Palliser series, and investigated character, love, wealth, the church, and politics, but perhaps at bottom he was interested in how humans behave communally, in families, societies, and institutions. John Halperin wrote that of all the characters he had created, the Pallisers were his favorites (“Fiction that is True: Trollope and Politics” 179), no doubt because they allowed Trollope to imagine numerous interactions of a large cast. He grasped the nature of our behavior in

social, economic, and political settings. Desires for promotion and advancement, soliciting the good opinion of others, and self-regard, all occur in his novels generally but perhaps nowhere as succinctly as in the Palliser series and *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* in particular.

How then did Trollope choose to bring Phineas Finn into the world? Trollope falls clearly in the school of Victorian realism, and the authorial presence is noticeably there as an unnamed narrator describes events and persons, referring to Finn as “our hero” numerous times. It was the style then and we need to accept it as the orthodoxy of the times, even if it seems archaic by today’s fictional dogmas of “show, don’t tell” and that reading fiction should be like viewing the world through the lens of a camera; we see only what is visible and tangible with no omniscient voice to function as interlocutor and interpreter. On his style generally, Juliet McMaster observes, “His paragraphs are generally models of lucidity, beginning with a sentence that introduces a proposition or a problem, proceeding with an elaboration of its intricacies, ending with a summary or at least an overview of ground covered” (207). If Trollope is considered too direct to be sophisticated, his directness aims for a different target: comprehension. He used the structure and style of his contemporaries, with plot, setting, characters, and ideas being the building materials, but his own twist of what characters desired and mused about gave his work, especially these two books under consideration here, a charm of its own.

If the nineteenth century was the great age of the novel it was because its novelists aimed to embrace many aspects of human existence at once. Trollope may not have aimed as high as *War and Peace*, but he wished to examine human connections and their consequences as fitting subjects for literature’s lens. Louis James wrote that:

Trollope was mainly interested in the eccentricities of human nature and the moral complexity of social interaction. He paid relatively little attention to the outward appearance of his characters, and his plots, in which he professed little interest, were often conventional and peremptory. But he aimed to portray lives with which his readers could identify. (142)

Trollope in his own words said, “A novel should give a picture of common life enlivened by humour and sweetened by pathos,” going on to add that a plot is only a vehicle that is nothing without passengers (*Autobiography* 83). The human comedies in plain sight gave Trollope enough material without needing to plumb the depths of psychology.

Roy Foster opined that Trollope’s claim in his autobiography that an Irish character was a mistake was a sincere statement, but that “Trollope eventually repudiated the importance of Finn’s being Irish... reflecting on his feeling that the new politics of Parnellite Ireland had rejected him” (*Paddy and Mr Punch* 145). This seems an overreach of interpretation and we should take Trollope’s words to mean what he explicitly stated: that he knew an Irish hero was not a sensible or practical choice at the time of its creation, but one which was made for reasons of artistic purpose. If Irish politics later made Trollope cynical about Ireland’s being an amicable partner with England, do not the vast troubles of Ireland at the time make this understandable? Trollope believed in the union of Ireland and England, and Foster further suggests that the choice to create Phineas Finn was an “implicit message that the Irish could be insiders, too” (*Paddy and Mr Punch* 145). In the end, this discussion can never come to a complete resolution of the question as to what exactly the relationship of Ireland to England is: brothers and sisters, distant cousins, unwilling neighbors, or sworn eternal enemies.

As to how the characters Trollope created were received, an unsigned review in *Spectator* at the time of *Phineas Finn*’s publication observed that Trollope’s “Creations are too like real life for literature – that what one really wants in literature are men and

women not so much *representative* of average men and women, as *typical* of them”

Smalley 310). Trollope would strongly disagree with that, finding no difference between “typical” and “representative,” believing you found the latter embedded in the former.

The otherness of Trollope’s Irish hero stands out as the prevailing theme of the two Phineas novels, and as Trollope so artfully painted Phineas as an Irishman of a new dispensation to challenge Victorian attitudes, so a fictional invention became an act of serious literature.

Chapter IV:

“The best Irishman we ever got hold of...”

Having examined the historical context of the books, we now turn to a textual consideration of how Trollope presented Phineas Finn and whether he succeeded in his quest to write an Irishman who would be acceptable, and even liked, by an English audience.

Mary Edith Kelley, in writing about Irish characters in nineteenth century English fiction observed, “When we think of the Irish rogue in English fiction, the character that is likely to come to our minds is Thackeray’s fortune-hunting adventurer and swaggering braggart, Barry Lyndon” (170). She implies that an Irish scoundrel with the emphasis on his deceit, vulgarity, and heartless selfishness, while not intrinsically Irish, was a portrait easily accepted by the English. Thomas Carlyle wrote that the Irish character was degraded, disordered, violent, and mendacious and that the Saxon, even though ignorant, “has not sunk from decent manhood to squalid apehood” (28). He added an old anecdote about the Irish that “a finer people never lived, only they have two faults, they do generally lie and steal” (26). It was difficult for the English to think of the Irish in some other way than reprehensible, respectability being considered by definition to be an English attribute. Phineas Finn, on the other hand, was drawn by Trollope in *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* as a rebuttal to those popular notions, offering a different perspective which pushed the reader to transcend stereotype. Trollope wrote, “Phineas Finn had sundry gifts, a powerful and pleasant voice, which he had learned to modulate, a handsome presence, and a certain natural mixture of modesty and self-reliance, which would certainly protect him from the faults of arrogance and pomposity” (*PF* 276). An

educated, civil, and congenial Irishman such as Phineas was presented to English readers as a peace offering, an invitation to open-mindedness and to abandon preconceived notions.

The most noticeable fact about the two novels is that Trollope considered them one novel in two parts (*An Autobiography* 198). After *Phineas Finn* was published and saw success, Trollope regretted packing him off to Ireland and five years later returned him to London and politics in *Phineas Redux*. Situating Phineas Finn in the Palliser novels sometimes might appear problematic since the Palliser family seem the central figures in the books. John Sutherland in his introduction to the Penguin edition asks, “Is not *Phineas Finn* a huge digression, an overblown subplot to the Palliser story? To understand that it is not, one must first appreciate that Phineas and Palliser are significantly alternate in character.” (Introduction, *PF* 18). If one reads all the books of the series, it will become clear that the Phineas saga is a story in itself and also a component necessary to understanding the project as a whole.

Phineas Finn begins with background: Phineas’s father, Dr. Malachi Finn of Killaloe, County Clare, a fairly prosperous physician, sends his son to Trinity in Dublin and when he graduates, gives him an allowance to go to London and study law with the plan to be admitted to the English bar, not the Irish. Dr. Finn, a Roman Catholic, is married to a Protestant, and his son follows the father’s religion, while his five sisters were Protestant like their mother, a practice the two sects followed as “a common folk stratagem to avoid any great social change” (Bowen 143). Trollope relates that Dr. Finn has Protestant friends he dines with and his religion is “not of the bitter kind in which we in England are apt to suppose that all the Irish Roman Catholics indulge...” (PF45), a

very direct rebuttal of assumed papist bigotry. Trollope has thus opened his story with an invitation to open-mindedness on the part of his readers as he depicts his Irish characters as rational beings, not blind ideologues.

When Phineas is admitted to the bar, he finds the practice of law difficult to succeed at without capital or connections, and he remains dependent upon his father's allowance. He has made some political friends through membership in the Reform Club and has prospects but no concrete employment. A bolt of luck falls his way, however, when an Irish peer, the Earl of Tulla, a patient of Dr. Finn, has a falling out with his own brother who has represented the pocket borough of Loughshane in nearby County Galway. Tulla is favorably disposed to Phineas and parliamentary friends urge his candidacy. With such support thrown his way, Phineas wins the seat. The full title of the novel originally was "*Phineas Finn, the Irish Member*" and Trollope plainly intends that Irishness be a very central theme of the book.

Finn's desire to be in Parliament is part ambition, part principle. "If I go into Parliament, I shall go there as a sound Liberal – not to support a party but to do the best I can for the country," he states (*PF* 57). Trollope thus makes him an idealist, all the more likely to be daunted, discouraged, and distressed by the realpolitik he will face in the House of Commons. When Phineas returns to London after campaigning in Ireland, he is welcomed by Barrington Erle, one of the senior men in the party. After congratulating Phineas on his victory, which was mostly the accident of being in the right place at the right time, Erle says privately, "I never heard of a fellow with such a run of luck. It's just one of those flukes that occur once in a dozen elections" (*PF* 70). Trollope seems to be referencing the old saying, "the luck of the Irish" to explain Phineas's rise.

As members of Parliament received no compensation at that time, Phineas is beset by still being a financial obligation upon his father. Unable to afford a flat of his own, he continues to lodge with a couple named Bunce in Great Marlborough Street. Bunce, a law stationer, thought Phineas once elected would have moved on from those rooms and exclaims, “Well, I never thought to have a member of Parliament in ‘em” (*PF* 71).

Phineas feels the sting of his situation, calculating how to make his stipend from Ireland pay for the expected lifestyle of an MP with a club membership, dining out, a tailor, and a bootmaker, and everything else required of a “gentleman” in his position. Here Trollope shows the class distinction which exists, as well as Phineas’s attempts to climb the social ladder and be considered an insider, even though the anxiety over money dampens his initial success. One feels Phineas now identifies more with the English version of an MP and perhaps less as an Irishman. Social ascent has the inherent problem of first being one thing, then transcending it, and finally, for some, denying it was ever the case in the first place. Mingling with the aristocracy seems to give Phineas an elevated sense of himself, while at the same time he is conscious of being the foreigner, the other, the Irishman in England.

Having been seated in Parliament, doors were open to him, and Phineas next considers matrimony. He becomes friends with Lady Laura Standish, daughter of the Earl of Brentford, and one day called on her unannounced at her father’s house in Portman Square. Once there, he is suddenly overcome by the temerity of his actions, being an Irishman without means, presuming to be treated as an equal. “I have inherited nothing...not a penny; and I never shall,” he laments (*PF* 75). He was beginning to realize an unpaid seat in Parliament might not be his making, but quite likely his ruin.

Lady Laura, however, was kindness personified and over time he began to think perhaps she would accept him as a suitor. The Standishes were related to everyone of importance, and Phineas was tempted to propose marriage to Laura, but was repelled by the notion that he might be doing it for material advantage alone. Here Trollope is making the character of Finn subject to temptations of insincerity to advance himself, but at the same time showing him to be morally conscious of what his motives might be. Before he can pursue her further, Laura accepts a proposal from a wealthy Scottish landowner and parliamentarian, Robert Kennedy. Daunted by this, Phineas feels more acutely that his place in English society is not what he wished, notwithstanding the MP after his name. Trollope's portrait of Finn as a man capable of ethical conflict is the beginning of his apparent plan to paint a man in full, one with virtues as well as the wish to climb the greasy pole.

Phineas now must decide whether to continue with his legal career. He is in need of a higher income, but parliamentary duties leave little time for other activities. He realizes seats in Parliament are all very well and good for those who have already earned or inherited wealth, but not for newcomers seeking to rise. Phineas had been the pupil of a Mr. Low who was quite angry that, after completing his qualifications, Phineas did not intend to take a place in chambers and practice. His interest in politics was all consuming and now he had little time or interest in the law. "But he is weak and blind, and flies like a moth to the candle; one pities the poor moth," Mr. Low exclaims to his wife (*PF* 103). Finished thus in the eyes of his English tutor, Finn appears just a flimsy, shallow seeker after place without taking the care to consider his general situation. Indeed, a somewhat

superficial, haphazard scheme of life is attributed to Phineas, a quality perhaps thought to be Irish rather than English,

When Phineas next sets his sights on Violet Effingham, he is considered unworthy by her dragon of a guardian, Lady Baldock, whose purpose in life is to marry Violet off to someone suitable, which one would presume to mean titled and wealthy. Phineas was not in that category even without being Irish, and financial misfortune soon came knocking at his door in the form of a fellow Irish MP, Laurence Fitzgibbon. Fitzgibbon needed to borrow money which required a cosigner on a promissory note for two hundred fifty pounds. Phineas balked, knowing he could never pay such a sum, but out of friendship and perhaps a wish not to appear a social inferior, signed it, which would spell trouble soon enough when the debt fell due. After being hounded relentlessly by the note holder, Phineas is saved from bankruptcy when another strong woman, Fitzgibbon's sister, comes to the rescue and pays the debt.

The whole matter of wealth or lack of it permeates the two Finn novels. Phineas is neither rich nor poor by birth, as his father has money to educate him and continue an allowance, but he is so far below the means of the Pallisers and their set that he feels anxious and even humiliated by his lack of disposable income. He belongs to several clubs and buys himself a horse to ride in the parks of London, but this is not a sign of his wealth but rather a down payment, the initiation fee, to getting in with people who can give him advantages. The fact that he pursues heiresses can be taken two ways: either as a character defect or a realism principle that a man, especially an MP living in London, needs a certain amount of money. Nancy Henry notes that "*Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* are remarkable for the degree to which women's money underwrites the careers of

men” (306). Phineas is not comfortable with the idea of living off the wealth of a woman, but he is less comfortable being a lowly nobody.

His attempts to court Violet were mainly obstructed by the fact that she seemed in love with his friend, Lady Laura’s brother, Oswald, Lord Chiltern, a self-destructive, angry wastrel. Robert Kennedy, Lady Laura’s husband, now invites Phineas to his estate at Loughlinter where the guests would be other important figures in the Liberal Party. Phineas once again felt out of place, but turned on his agreeable Irish charm, being neither haughty nor subservient. Trollope dismisses the notion of the wild Irish madman unable to function in polite company and summarizes the group impression of Phineas:

It soon came to be admitted by all who knew Phineas that he had a peculiar power of making himself agreeable which no one knew how to analyze or define. ‘I think it is because he listens so well,’ said one man. ‘But the women would not like him for that,’ said another. ‘He has studied when to listen and when to talk,’ said a third. The truth, however, was, that Phineas Finn made no study in the matter at all. It was simply his nature to be pleasant. (*PF* 155)

Phineas’s interest in Violet causes consternation (*PF* 414) as it puts him into conflict with Lord Chiltern, with whom he had formed a bond. When Chiltern warned him off his pursuit of Violet, a quarrel erupted and a duel ensued, both parties having gone off in secret to Belgium where they could not be prosecuted. Here Trollope brings up the temper that rises quickly to anger, as if it is an inherently Irish trait. Phineas is wounded in the arm, but he and Chiltern make amends when it is plain that Violet prefers Chiltern. Once again, Phineas sees himself as the inevitable outsider.

In politics and the actual business of the House, Phineas takes interest, but the matter of his maiden speech disturbs his tranquility. He is keen to make the speech at first, but then anxiety derails him when it is his chance; he speaks randomly and nervously, then sits down thinking he has made a failed and laughable debut (*PF* 277) .

Phineas's character is to be suddenly bold and just as quickly daunted. After leaving the House in despair he is approached by an older member, Mr. Monk, who senses Phineas's embarrassment and walks with him arm in arm to Pall Mall. Phineas confesses to Monk that he has made an ass of himself. Monk sympathizes with Phineas's inexperience and consoles him, saying, "I do not care to flatter you, and... I will tell you the truth. Your speech, which was certainly nothing great, was about on a par with other maiden speeches in the House of Commons. You have done yourself neither good nor harm... But do not suppose you have made an ass of yourself, - that is in any special degree" (*PF* 278). Monk's appeal to Phineas's Irish sense of wit leaves him somewhat buoyed up and able to think he has a future. Here Trollope offers us the stereotype of the Celt who can be both sorrowful and laugh at his sorrows a moment later.

The matter of reform challenges Phineas's conscience. As a Liberal he is sworn to move for progressive action, but in matters like the secret ballot, expanding the franchise, disestablishing the Church of Ireland (the Anglican, not the Roman Catholic), and Irish Home Rule, he is counseled by the senior party leaders to move not in haste. The good Liberals show themselves all for reform in the abstract, but not always in the particulars. Later, on a different issue, Phineas exclaims to Barrington Erle, "But what is a man to do, Barrington? He can't smother his convictions." Erle replies with dismay, "Convictions! There is nothing on earth I'm so much afraid of in a young member of Parliament as convictions" (*PF* 638).

When Parliament is dissolved and a new election called, Lord Tulla reconciles with his brother which requires Phineas to find a new constituency. This posed a problem: the pocket borough and privilege. In theory Phineas and the Liberals were

opposed to such things, but finding another seat through another patron would allow Phineas to remain in parliament and work for the reform matters he supported. Life was now a muddle for Phineas who began to think his political aspirations were only fanciful daydreams. He reflects that “Since he had been in Parliament, he had frequently regretted that he had left the shades of the Inns of Court for the glare of Westminster...But now, when the moment came ...when there would no longer be a choice, the seat in Parliament was dearer to him than ever” (*PF* 313-314). A conflict of conscience troubles Phineas; how can he justify staying in office under an unreformed electoral system (*PF* 422), but how would he exist without a seat having grown accustomed to it, as well as holding a junior cabinet post he had been given? Trollope writes:

But as he went up to London he told himself that the air of the House of Commons was now the very breath of his nostrils, Life to him without it would be no life. To have come within the reach of the good things of political life, to have made his mark so as to have almost insured future success – and then have to sink down into the miserable platitudes of private life, to undergo daily attendance in law-courts without a brief, to listen to men who had come to be much below him in estimation and social intercourse, to sit in a wretched chamber up three pairs of stairs at Lincoln’s Inn, whereas he was now at this moment provided with a gorgeous apartment looking out into the park from the Colonial Office in Downing Street, to be attended by a mongrel between a clerk and an errand boy at 17s 5d a week instead of by a private secretary who was the son of an earl’s sister, and was petted by countesses’ daughters innumerable – all this would surely break his heart. (*PF* 473)

Phineas’s dilemma thus appeals to a reader’s sense of fairness; how can one expect a man who has had a taste of a higher rung on the ladder be content to retreat from it? In making Phineas subject to ordinary desires for a place in the world, Trollope gives him an aspect of Englishness, ambitions for office not being a defect.

Phineas's internal debate about marrying for money also pits ambition against conscience; to marry for money seems no better than to beg, borrow, or steal it. Trollope reveals Phineas's ruminations:

Robson could do as he liked because he had married a woman with money. Phineas told himself that game was also open to him. He, too, might marry for money – quite enough to be independent...But he told himself he would sooner go back to the Bar as the lowest pupil, sooner clean boots for barristers – so he told himself – than marry a woman simply because she had money. (*PF* 598)

Trollope presents Phineas's ambitions as always being clouded by ethical conflict, and in so doing presents this Irish outsider as not very different than any other Victorian gentleman with a desire to ascend in the world while at the same time not be or appear to be venal and unprincipled.

Noting Phineas's independence from party discipline, his parliamentary rival Bonteen observes, "The fact is, Finn...you are made of clay too fine for office. I have always found it to be so with men from your country. You are the grandest horses in the world to look at out on a prairie, but you don't like the slavery of harness" (*PF* 660). The fact that Bonteen refers to Ireland as "your country" once again strikes the note of otherness, a foreigner neither to be respected nor trusted. Patrick Lonergan has identified these interactions of the English with the Irish as a conscious strategy in the novels. "Trollope investigates the prejudices of British society through his characterization of the Irish, particularly in the case of Phineas Finn. Trollope is careful to show that virtually all of his English characters use stereotypical representations of the Irish to understand or explain Phineas's actions" ("Anthony Trollope's *Palliser Novels*" 120). Somewhat to the contrary, Ellen Wittig has written that if Trollope uses stereotypes at all, it is with his English characters (116). Beyond his ethnicity, Phineas's continual problem is the

reconciliation of principle and pragmatism. Juliet McMaster wrote, “Phineas, with his noise about convictions...makes his gesture and declares his independence and displays his conscience in the matter of tenant right; but the gesture is an expensive one that costs him his job and, as far as he knows, his career” (43). Phineas resigns his seat as he cannot support the party’s position any longer. Trollope has perhaps struck a note that a reader in any walk of life can relate to when self-interest collides with sense of moral obligation.

Contrary to Phineas’s plans to marry an heiress was the fact that he had long been admired by and had affection for an Irish colleen, Mary Flood, and while there was never a formal proposal, in her mind at least she felt Phineas would eventually forget his London ambitions and come home to her. Although never mentioned specifically, we assume Mary Flood is pregnant, and Phineas leaves London and returns to Ireland to marry her with a government post with a decent salary thanks to his well-connected friends. Thus ends *Phineas Finn*, but Trollope had reservations almost immediately about finishing off such an interesting and complex character. He liked Phineas, perhaps as a reflection of himself, the outsider trying to break into the inner sanctum, despite lacking pedigree and money.

The novel was so successful that circumstances were invented to bring Phineas back on stage. Mary and her newborn die in childbirth and Phineas longs for the political career he had but a first taste of and wanted again. Five years later *Phineas Redux* appeared to resume the story. The themes remained the same: a foreigner looking to assimilate, the Irishman seeking acceptance rather than scorn. “His very soul had sighed for the lost glories of Westminster and Downing Street,” (*PR* 13) Trollope wrote, seeing no harm in making his character want worldly honors and status.

When Phineas wishes to return to England, his old friends are pleased; Barrington Erle says, “He’s the best Irishman we ever got hold of ...” (*PR* 12), but Phineas can never escape the feeling that the establishment does not fully regard him as one of their own. He himself has doubts about his own Irishness, so married was he was to his political life in London. He identifies now as much with his English colleagues and friends, and this is once again the irony of assimilation that in assuming a new identity, how does one not feel he has betrayed his original self? But the pull of political life is overwhelming and Phineas’s friends in the party propose to run him for Parliament again. Trollope writes:

When Phineas Finn found himself discharging in Dublin the routine duties of his office – as to which there was no public comment – he became sick at heart and discontented. Like the warhorse out at grass he remembered the heat of battle and the noise of trumpets. After five years spent in the heat and excitement of London society, life in Ireland was tame to him, and cold, and dull. (*PR* 13)

His English friends know that the work of the world is what motivates Phineas. Violet, now Lady Chiltern, in discussion with Phineas, observes that engaging with practical matters is more important than most allow. “We all profess to believe when we are told that this world should be used merely as a preparation for the next; and yet there is something cold and comfortless in the theory...I fancy your people have more real belief in it than ours” (*PR* 26). She refers, of course, to his Catholicism, which never seems far from anyone’s consideration of Phineas. That he is Catholic always hovers over the conversation.

Once again Phineas needs to find another constituency to reenter Parliament. He was twice elected from the Irish borough of Loughshane, and then once thanks to Lord Brentford, from the English borough of Loughton. The party now has found a possible seat for Phineas in Tankerville, a poor coal town. One election issue is the

disestablishment of the Church of England in Ireland making it not a dependency on the treasury as an official denomination, but the problem has arisen that the Conservatives have embraced the idea, stealing the Liberal thunder. Phineas needs to observe the political commandment that all controversial issues must be postponed, supported in theory, but muted by inaction. Once again, he finds his commitment to principle tested but rationalizes that more good can be done from the inside than as a voice of protest crying in the wilderness.

Phineas taking a position on disestablishment while campaigning brought the wrath of the Liberal party on him by Barrington Erle and the Duke of St. Bungay, the real power behind the throne of the leader Gresham. “ ‘After all, that man is an ass,’ ” muttered Erle in exasperation, (but adds) ‘he has many good gifts. He is clever, good tempered, and one of the pleasanter fellows that ever lived. The women all like him...but he is not what I call loyal. He cannot keep himself from running after strange gods’ ” (*PR* 41). Phineas resists being a party man at the same time realizing it is the only vehicle to accomplish anything. Being out of office gives him no power to effect the changes he wishes in the Irish situation. He sees the dilemma holding office causes; the party puts you in office and then you must accept party discipline and toe the line. Phineas, however, in Trollope’s construction, is an honest man of independent mind.

Phineas takes his new seat in the House of Commons, but Trollope puts him immediately in more trouble. Robert Kennedy, Lady Laura’s husband, turns out to be a suspicious man with an unbalanced mind and decides his wife’s friendship with Phineas is adulterous. He writes a letter to a scurrilous scandal sheet, *The People’s Banner*, edited by Quintus Slide, claiming Finn has alienated the affections of his wife. Fearing his

reputation will be irrevocably damaged, he protests and calls on Kennedy to assure him his relations with Laura are honorable. The man is quite mad now, draws a pistol on him and shoots but misses. Rumors of the incident circulate and once again Phineas wears the label of a quarrelsome Irishman who must have done something to provoke the attack. Although Phineas has obtained an injunction against Slide publishing Kennedy's letter, the editor swears he will find a way to attack Phineas's reputation, saying "We go in for morals and purity of life" (*PR* 182), although salacious lead stories are plainly his motive. In Phineas's mind, Slide's attitude is clearly driven by his feelings of moral superiority over an Irishman.

When his sometime rival Bonteen is murdered, Phineas, with whom he had argued, is accused. On top of all the rest of his troubles, he was now to be tried for murder. The general notion of an Irishman having a vengeful temper seemed to be in the air and in the press. Trollope paints the tabloids even then as in the headline business, facts be damned. Madame Max Goesler leads Phineas's defense and uncovers key evidence that will exonerate him. When he is acquitted and returns to Parliament, Trollope describes it as welcoming, inferring that the general opinion of Finn was positive and they regarded his misfortunes without prejudice.

In creating the character of Finn, Trollope took a chance not only on that book but on the series; to have invented a central character who might meet with distaste could jeopardize the whole project, but while endowing Phineas with virtues, he did not draw him as a saint. He was flawed, ambitious at times, unsure of himself at other times. In short, he created a credible character which would induce interest and empathy. In presenting Phineas's Irishness, he did so in a way that made him identifiably mortal to the

English, with virtues and failings common to everyone, and thus made him acceptable, not an unworthy outsider, and perhaps no longer “the other” in English perception.

No word on Trollope’s Phineas novels themselves would be sufficient without mention of the 1974 BBC adaptation of the six Palliser books into a twenty-six-part television series of one-hour episodes written by Simon Raven (1927-2001). Attempts to convert novels into films often fall into the problem of translation of works: to be faithful or to be beautiful. Strict literal transference often yields works that lose the flavor of authorial intent. It speaks well of Trollope’s prose style that Raven at times weaves Trollope’s own phrasing into the screenplay’s dialogues. Raven’s writing has perfectly captured the matter of Finn’s Irishness and how that is perceived by the English. In so doing, the film version affirms the integrity and accomplishments of Trollope’s intent to frame the Irish-English divide as an issue that could not be ignored. Finn is often referred to as “the Irishman,” usually in a tone that wanders between mildly disapproving to disparaging. Trollope’s sub title *the Irish Member* was very clear about his subject. Finn was not coincidentally or en passant an Irishman but rather of the category English minds would automatically use as the default setting for his identity. This screen version of the six novels does not shy away from the class divide that existed in England in the Victorian era; not all the Palliser books deal with nobles and their quest to remain the power elite. Phineas’s landlord Bunce is something of a radical, perhaps even a socialist, and warns Phineas when he takes his seat in Parliament that the elite may easily co-opt him as he tries to become one of them. “Stand up for the poor and humble,” he tells Phineas (*The Pallisers*, Part Six). Personality traits thought to be Irish ones are also examined. Phineas is depicted as volatile, easily enthused but just as easily defeated.

When his political standing with other Liberal party members has not accelerated as quickly as he would have liked, Lady Laura Standish counsels patience and observes his tendency to fall into self-pity and sulk (*The Pallisers*, Part Six). She sympathizes but sees his Irish temperament as one that needs modulating with a dose of English rationality.

Nowhere does Raven capture Trollope's theme better than in the attitudes of the old Duke of Omnium, Plantagenet Palliser's uncle, played by Roland Culver, who was well cast as the sublimely elevated and disdainful duke. Culver wrote in his memoir that he spent the eight weeks before filming devouring all of Trollope's novels, which speaks to the merit of the books in forming the actor's consciousness of the role (181). The duke, one of the wealthiest men in England, of the highest order of nobility from an ancient family, is a prisoner of his prejudices. An idle nobleman more interested in his status and the lifelong pursuit of women (he is a childless bachelor, thus making his brother's son Plantagenet his heir), he is dismissive and contemptuous of Finn from first meeting, a barely chilly acknowledgment of his existence. Finn is an upstart, a man whose social aspirations contravene all that the duke stands for; privilege and status are inherited, not acquired. Madame Max Goesler who will eventually marry Finn, is the object of desire of the duke. She observes drily to Phineas, who dislikes the duke as much as the duke dislikes him, that being an idle man is exactly what dukes are about; to exist to do nothing but be who they are.

Omnium coldly regards Phineas without apology; he practically spits the word "Irishman" with withering contempt. The duke's role is also a tool for injecting some levity into the seriousness of the political and personal trials of the other characters. He is an old man who has isolated himself from the world with his position and wealth and

finds out to his rue that it means dying almost alone. When he is on his death bed, an old love, Lady Hartletop, appears wanting to see him. He refuses to have her admitted to his chamber in what seems a cruel and callous act. Madame Max pleads for her, asking him to consider her feelings, but he waves her away saying that Lady Hartletop had no feelings: “She was only interested in food, drink, and the other thing” (*The Pallisers*, Part 18). What would have pleased him in his youth and indeed how he lived his life now is not of interest. He approaches death with some stoicism but also an implied sense of unfairness, as if death were only something suitable for commoners. Trollope subtly presents the lives of the nobility as not as enviable as they appear; every life has moments of emptiness that wealth does not immunize against. In all of this, a viewer would rather have the life of Phineas than the Duke, if for no other reason than to have lived with a sense of purpose.

The film portrayal of Plantagenet also expands on Trollope’s portrait. A man of severity and devotion to duty, he is hard pressed to understand the worlds of passionate attachment and emotional states. In many ways he is a counter-weight to Phineas, lineage versus talent, status-born rather than status-seeking. He is always courteous to Phineas and after Phineas’s marriage to Madame Max, Lady Glencora’s intimate ally, Plantagenet allows him entrance to his home at any time and considers him a friend, but yet there is a chasm and both men realize that this cannot be bridged by congeniality or affection.

One successful aspect of the adaptation is the use of the character Adolph “Dolly” Longestaffe, a figure borrowed from a different Trollope novel, *The Way We Live Now*. Dolly is a charming snob who performs the role of Greek chorus, offering a running

commentary on people and social situations as a tool to keep the viewer informed on relevant details. Catty comments and witty gossip are his stock in trade and excite our curiosity about how the plot will unfold. Ireland and the Irish are not his favorites and he is often amused by the troubles that beset Phineas. That Trollope's novels could be adapted so interestingly for film only speaks well of the dramatic construct and character authenticity that is Trollope's hallmark.

Beyond race and class, gender in the Palliser novels is considered and the place of women in society is not ignored. Although Phineas mourned the loss of his chance with Lady Laura, he continued in friendship with her as she was a woman he was attracted to for her intellect and passion for politics. The matter of gender imposes itself here as the question of a male-only parliament makes Lady Laura's position in life striking for what it cannot be. She can only be a handmaiden, not a participant in the great game of governing a nation. Trollope did not favor women's suffrage nor women serving in Parliament and yet the women he populates his Palliser novels with are all strong, informed individuals eager to have influence. Lady Laura Standish says to Phineas, "I do envy you men your clubs more than I do the House – though I feel a woman's life is only half a life, as she cannot have a seat in Parliament" (*PF* 98). What we today call feminist issues are never explicitly examined in Trollope's novels, but they continually lurk in the background as Trollope's female characters are seldom shrinking violets but women of strong individuality. Trollope was aware of the emerging relevance of women in the age in which he lived. Personally, he was fond of women of intelligence and in the Phineas novels has created female characters who have personal strength and vitality and both suffer from and resist societal pressures to minimize and marginalize them. Jane Nardin

in her book *He Knew She Was Right: The Independent Woman in the Novels of Anthony Trollope* is quite affirmative that Trollope's women are not cosseted creatures looking for a fainting couch. In *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* the female characters are portrayed as having their own minds and are willing to challenge Victorian patriarchy. Nardin cites the romance between Phineas and Madame Max Goesler as a portrait of feminist revision of the genre of romantic comedy. Madame Max is aggressive, not to be stifled in her opinions, and courageous (193). She even proposes to Phineas when she sees a wife with power and money would enable him to rise to the level of his abilities. Deborah Denenholz Morse describes Madame Max as a woman "whose strength, integrity and wisdom define a new model of femininity" (*Women in Trollope's Palliser Novels* 69).

While Trollope could not be called a proto-feminist as he was in many ways a traditional Victorian male, the women in his Palliser novels are all thoughtful, partisan about the issues of the day, and forceful and forthcoming in attempting to influence opinion in their circles. In a very modern take (2020) on Trollope and his women, Linda C. McClain holds that despite Trollope's traditionalism, there is "an evident tension between such views and the rich portraiture of Trollope's female characters – including in the Palliser series – (which) suggests an intriguing dialectic between espousing and subverting Victorian ideals about womanhood" (1861). One can imagine that had Trollope lived in the present age, he would have cheered female emancipation if for no other reason than he found women possessed of ideas to be interesting. Deborah Denenholz Morse summarizes current thinking about Trollope and women when she writes:

In progressive explorations of Trollope's views on women's character, psychology, and rights, most scholars have come to think that Trollope

was not only intensely interested in Victorian women but increasingly aware of the gendered strictures of his society, and often critical of these limitations. Critics writing today tend to believe that Trollope was responsive to the agitation for women's rights, although they differ in their conclusions as to the degree of that response. ("Trollope the Feminist" 60)

The creation of vibrant female characters is consistent with Trollope's overall philosophy of free will and the power of people to transcend the conditions and confinements of their birth.

As regards the Irish, Trollope's personal experience clearly allowed him to form his own judgments and present Irish persons and their Irishness in a candid and sympathetic fashion. That the book was written for English readers speaks to Trollope's intent to offer a foreign character who would be admirable without being perfect and require the English to confront their reflexive prejudice against the Irish. The examples we have visited from the two texts reveal an imagination more subtle and a plot more complex than Trollope's early critics allowed. The creation of Phineas Finn, his character and dilemmas, show a currency which has kept Trollope still readable in the modern age.

Chapter V:

Critical Opinion Then and Now

For a writer who never aspired to lie near Chaucer in a corner of Westminster Abbey, Trollope nonetheless is a major English author who has been the object of readership and study since his novels were published. To say he was popular in his time might be damning him with faint praise, as popularity often demands little beyond entertaining readers, and no blush would come over Trollope to be thought of as such. The decades after Trollope's death have seen inquiries into aspects of his work that reveal deeper purpose, including a vision that extends beyond ordinary novels of manners. The two Phineas Finn books reveal Trollope's ambition and success at writing fiction which engages with serious matters of the human experience. James Kincaid has written of a tragic aspect to the life of Phineas Finn in that so much of what happens to him is caused by extraneous events outside of his control. It drew Kincaid to say that although he had previously believed "that Trollope worked within the broad tradition of the low-mimetic comedy of manners," he no longer did as he reflected on Finn and classic notions of tragedy ("Trollope's Tragedy" 137). This personal alteration of opinion is symbolic of the sea change in the critical evaluation of Trollope that has taken place in recent decades, and here I shall discuss Trollope criticism in general and its modern renaissance with particular reference to *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* as they represented Irishness to English readers.

In the overall view, Trollope falls within the realm of mid-Victorian realism with George Eliot and William Makepeace Thackeray for contemporaries. Charles Dickens is contemporaneous, but in style and subjects is so *sui generis* that comparisons are

difficult. Trollope is sometimes considered a minor Eliot, as Thackeray is a minor Dickens. Rankings of various writers ebb and flow, perhaps due to evolving tastes, but also to the politics of literary reputation. For a writer conservative by temperament, being read in a liberal age is a disadvantage. Trollope was not against political reform or Irish rights, but supported them in moderate, measured ways. To blame him for not being a frothing-at-the-mouth Fenian is to miss the point; Trollope's empathy for the Irish grew as he did and perhaps the creation of Phineas Finn was his leap forward into presenting true Irishness to the English in a form that would be accepted, not rejected out of hand for reasons of prejudice.

The nineteenth century was a golden age for the classical aspects of the novel, which would include an assortment of principal and supporting characters, a plot, and engagement with worldly issues of the day, (an example being Eliot's *Middlemarch* and social change due to the coming of the railroad). Victorian novels were lengthy as they were often serialized, and reading was a principal activity of the upper classes as they had the time, while the lower socio-economic classes were often barely literate and worked at exhausting occupations. The social realism and naturalism of the later nineteenth century had not yet arrived; Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) or Somerset Maugham's *Liza of Lambeth* (1897) were far removed from the world of aristocrats, professional men, and their wives and daughters who were the models for characters in much of earlier Victorian fiction. Writing novels was a venture in trying to establish causes and effects, inner motivations, and the consequences of social interaction. We were who we associated with as a rule. The Lord Chancellor would not ever be in the company of a bootblack, lamplighter, or laundress. An unnamed reliable narrator's voice

was often present, perhaps seeming like an intrusion to modern ears, but to Victorian audiences this was not a distraction as they assumed there was an identifiable narrator embedded in the events related. Geoffrey Harvey comments on the authorial voice by saying writers in the Victorian period “saw themselves primarily as storytellers for whom the use of the authorial voice was particularly important” (8). This “voice over” narration added validation to what was being told, as if it were testimony under oath. Authorial decisions as to what to include and what to omit in a story had to maintain a verisimilitude to life as it was understood in the times. Someone once described a good novel as “Like life, but without the boring parts.”

Trollope’s novels were well discussed in newspapers and literary journals upon their publication. *Saturday Review*, *Spectator*, *The Times*, *Nation*, and *Westminster Review* covered his latest work for almost three decades. In Ireland at least, Trollope was lauded for not descending into caricature (Halperin, *Trollope and Politics* 70). The critics had some reservations, but the books’ financial success proved the old wisdom that there is no such thing as bad publicity. Novels featuring an Irish central figure were a deviation from the mainstream, but in this instance Trollope’s gamble nonetheless succeeded.

A review of *Phineas Finn* in *Spectator* on March 20, 1867 said the novel contained some of his best work but felt “the run of the story is a little tame” (Smalley 309). *Saturday Review* on March 27 of the same year praised the novel for its character creation, but felt politics was its main topic and would not be remembered for much beyond that (Smalley 318). Henry James wrote a serious and detailed assessment after Trollope’s death in his book *Partial Portraits* (1888) which praised Trollope but also offered qualification, writing that Trollope “had no ‘views’ on the subject of novel

writing” (100). Trollope’s fault according to The Master was being possessed of no abstract theory of the novel, but James allowed that Trollope’s virtue was an “instinctive perception of human varieties” (104). These contemporaries then had arrived at a judgment of modest praise that Trollope was a capable writer even if lacking a grand vision of what novels in general could and should be. They opined that although he succeeded at drawing room comedies of manners set against political events, there was no immortality to be foreseen in them. Walter M. Kendrick counters James’s opinion that the neglect of theory was the greatest sin for a novelist, noting that all the Victorian realists including George Eliot suffered from the same deficiency if such be so judged (2). For James, literature was a contemplative occupation, while for Trollope it was action painting. Kendrick adds that Trollope believed a realistic novel was never static, but rather dynamic: “a process rather than an object” (4). Elaine Freedgood has summarized James’s position:

James makes a set of moves that will become familiar in criticism for the next century: he condescends to the Victorian novel as having no theory or consciousness of itself, he ignores the existence of Victorian criticism, he damns the intrusive Victorian author, and he argues that morality... is too much of an issue in Anglo-American letters: the timidity of the English novel is its “moral” problem. (7-8)

These modern rebuttals of James’s critics are bold, but apt. Perhaps one theory of novel writing might be the abjuring of theories. Like scientists explaining phenomena with paradigms, criticism must be taken as an attempt to illuminate, not a substitute for the literary work itself.

It is no surprise that Trollope fell into semi-obscurity after 1900, favored by a certain sort of reader but not much discussed anymore nor included in the pantheon of great Victorian novelists. Michael Sadleir, writing in 1927 to assess this decline in

Trollope's literary reputation, ascribed it to the author's modesty. "Trollope's judgment of his own work was, of course, absurdly – even mischievously – harsh" (345). Louise Weinberg notes that Trollope is sadly considered a second-rate Dickens and perhaps "skewered his own reputation in his autobiography. Those orderly work habits! Those recorded earnings, down to the shillings and pence. To the Victorians he made himself seem like a Grub Street hack" (447). Perhaps if Trollope had a present day film star's ego and indulged in shameless self-promotion, he would have done better with the critics, but he is a writer content to have let his work speak for itself.

The renaissance in Trollope studies in the past four decades, however, has applied new standards of criticism to his work, including how he represented issues of race, class, and gender. Three scholarly compendiums of essays have appeared in recent years which examine major aspects of Trollope's work. *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), *The Routledge Research Companion to Anthony Trollope* (Routledge, 2017), and *The Edinburgh Companion to Anthony Trollope* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019) provide a wide range of articles which give a much broader and deeper analysis of Trollope than the critics who were his contemporaries. Evolving standards of literary theory and more considered historical understanding have elevated Trollope studies beyond their origins. Modern eyes have been opened to the fact that there was more of substance to Trollope than met the Victorian glance. Very importantly, Trollope has been recognized as possessing a worldview of human nature which shaped his fiction to mirror life as he observed it. Geoffrey Harvey wrote in 1980 that Trollope endeavored to "modify the mode of realism...to articulate...(a) more tragic philosophy of life" (73), while John Reed somewhat to the contrary in 1989 identified

Trollope's work as favoring free will, excluding notions of fate, providence, and destiny from the novels (305-306). Tragedy implies forces outside a character's control which would negate free will, and yet are not most representations of human lives in literature an intertwined braid of both factors?

The matter of whether Trollope possessed moral or philosophical gravity has been addressed by Jonathan Farina who wrote, "Commonplace, ordinary, everyday: affirmations of a remarkable realism have been a perfunctory refrain in Trollope criticism since it began... If critics have routinely found Trollope's novels pleasurable, they have done so even as they have denied them style, depth, and originality" (142). That pattern in criticism seems unfortunately to reduce itself to "We find Trollope likeable but cannot say why," making it analogous to liking ice cream or not, a taste neither possible nor necessary to define. In discussing what might be called "commonplace" about Trollope's work, John Reed asserted that:

Trollope's fictional world is a world taken for granted. It deals with what is "common" and "traits of character which are known." Notions of fate, providence, and destiny do not intrude because our perception of the human condition rarely rises above the collision of individual characters. Trollope's world is plotless because his characters are hypothetically free to alter the story at any moment. (305-306)

Geoffrey Harvey, however, disagrees with that contention about free will. He writes that fictions like *Phineas Finn* are "... short, intense, bleakly deterministic novels (which) represent ... Trollope's endeavour ... to articulate once more the tragic philosophy of life which dominates his earliest novel, *The MacDermots of Ballycloran* " (73). That critics have such opposing views of the same author perhaps speaks to the fact that the books are more complex than often assumed. Only an artless writer would be so monolithic that

critics could find no contrarywise impulses in the work. If writing seems sometimes to represent contradictions and polarities, does not life itself do the same?

One view of Trollope is that he wrote too much. Does being prolific militate against being first rate? Stephen Wall defends Trollope from the claim that he did not sufficiently respect the nature of his medium and accepted too complacently the limitations of his material saying that a charge of complacency and overproducing was never applied to Balzac (4). Kate Osborne observes that nineteenth century novels were a commodity and writers produced prolifically to support themselves. She argues that critics should contextualize Trollope's literary output rather than pathologizing it (308). Overproduction seems very much to be in the eye of the beholder, not the creator.

In reviewing the renewed attention paid to Trollope, Deborah Denenholz Morse noted that:

The critical stance that dismissed Trollope's novels as artlessly constructed has been coupled since the 1970s with the scholarly view characterized by Left-leaning, politically engaged scholars, such as Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton that his work lacked not only the moral seriousness Leavis found wanting but also the social critique and political relevance of the Great Victorian novelists – of Eliot, Dickens, the Brontes, or Hardy, even of the not yet quite canonical 'Mrs.' Gaskell. (*Reforming Trollope* 2)

Notwithstanding appeals to modernist ideology to dismiss Trollope, other critics cited here have taken a more expansionist view of his work as never having intended to import or validate philosophical dogmas, but rather to paint on as large a canvas as Trollope could find a portrait of the world as we all know it.

Turning to Ireland and the Irish, Trollope's invention of Phineas Finn was an inspired creation which would allow Trollope to plunge into contemporary social issues, as well as play out in fiction the contemporary social relations he considered interesting.

One cannot help but think Trollope's years in Ireland produced some seminal form of characters such as Finn which came to the surface later as Trollope's writing matured. The critical response to Trollope, Finn, and the matter of Ireland substantiates that the Irishness of the two books is neither incidental nor coincidental, but of the essence of what Trollope's authorial intent was: to create a credible and enjoyable character who would confront English prejudices.

John McCourt's recent magisterial *Writing the Frontier: Anthony Trollope between Britain and Ireland* (2015) establishes the place of Trollope in nineteenth century fiction to the point of arguing that he could even be considered in some fashion an "Irish" writer. McCourt opines that "Trollope's Irish writings perform the mediatory role he felt uniquely equipped to fill: that is, to describe and explain the country for the English reader with a steady hand and with a sense of fairness" (53). The early novels *The MacDermots of Ballycloran* (1847) and *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (1848) established Trollope's credibility to write of the Irish and laid a foundation for the creation of Phineas Finn. Geoffrey Baker observed that the two Phineas novels came into being at a critical time:

Candidly acknowledging the common stereotypes of and antipathy toward the Irish – for Trollope both deliberately reproduces and carefully avoids them in *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* – Trollope envisions the Phineas novels at a point of transition in English history, in the development of the English novel, and in the emerging global economy. (93)

Phineas Finn as a character embodies opposites and contradictions. He is bold while at the same time reticent, self-analyzing and spontaneous, ambitious and yet often filled with self-doubt. It is to Trollope's credit that his principal character in the two books does not grant to the reader the right to take virtues or defects for granted. He is the sum of most human qualities. Jane Elizabeth Dougherty makes an interesting argument in that:

Phineas is a successful and sympathetic character, and yet it may well have been a blunder on Trollope's part to make him Irish. Phineas's Irishness is and is not evident in the text; it is both crucial and incidental to Phineas's characterization; the narrative trajectory of the Phineas novels is at once enabled and disabled by the ethnicity of their eponymous hero. ("An Angel in the House"133)

She further notes that "The text takes pains to inform readers that Phineas is neither lazy, nor improvident, nor dishonest, nor a drunkard, nor anything more than a nominal Roman Catholic" ("A Man of the House" 161). Phineas admires much about Englishness, and one could argue here that in Phineas's Anglophilia, Trollope thus makes a redemptive absolution of Phineas for sins he has never committed. Phineas does have his flaws, however, and Trollope's use of them makes Phineas like other mortals and in this less "other" as an Irishman. Arnold Fox makes note of the irony Trollope embedded in the book when Phineas has the chance to remain in Parliament, but only by standing in the pocket borough of Lord Brentford, something a reform minded Liberal should be against. He writes, "But Phineas cannot resist the force of self-interest" (215). In making Phineas a creature of ambition as much as idealism, Trollope offers us an understandable hero even if he is less than perfect.

Dudley Owen Edwards has identified Trollope as an Irish writer (4), both as to his chosen subject matter and his sympathies. More than any other British writer of the nineteenth century, he observes, Trollope saw Ireland as an insider, living there during part of the famine. Mary Edith Kelley, however, dissented from that view saying, "Despite its title, *Phineas Finn, the Irish Member*, cannot be considered a novel of Irish life, for although the hero is born in County Clare and educated at Trinity College, he is elected a Member of Parliament at the age of twenty-four and goes to London, in which city events of the story transpire" (28). As factually accurate as Kelley's statement is, it

implies that Phineas somehow could have left his Irishness behind, something none of the English characters hold to be true. He is, first, last, and always, an Irishman. Roy Foster, however, has offered a different take, saying that “Trollope eventually repudiated the importance of Finn’s being Irish...reflecting his own feeling that the new politics of Parnellian Ireland had rejected him” (*Paddy and Mr Punch* 145). I feel this is a misinterpretation of Trollope’s statement in his autobiography which was written only a handful of years before his death. He might have had later misgivings about Irish politics, but the creation of Phineas and the illustrations above from the texts show a conviction about redeeming Irishness from English misjudgment. Why have spent so much time with English people’s assertions and comments on Finn’s Irishness or subtitle the book “the Irish Member” had this not be material to the plot? Phineas Finn was too great a character created in Trollope’s career to be dismissed as a mistake. Notwithstanding any change of view on Trollope’s part toward the Irish Question, believing as he did that the best fate for Ireland was to remain in the union, the genius of creating Phineas Finn as a character and the execution of authorial intent into a work of literary genius defeats any claim of blundering. Although creating an Irish character may have invited scorn or at least indifference, going against a cultural tide was an opening for a brave reconsideration. Literary history records other novels which ran counter to majoritarian views; Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* became an icon of the abolition movement and Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* was an indictment of the militarism of the First World War which would be replicated in the run up to the Second World War. Neither would have written these novels had placating readers with comfort food of the mind been their motive. In modern day parlance,

Trollope might have written, “Call me crazy, but...” to call attention to his artistic purpose being not at all a stroke of madness.

Foster has gone further in rejecting the “otherness” of being Irish, saying there was an implicit message in the novels “that the Irish could be insiders, too” (*Paddy and Mr Punch* 145), but he also seems to contradict himself when he adds that “Phineas’s Irishness remains a vital dimension of his politics, particularly regarding tenant right and the moral test imposed by giving a correct vote on the issue” (145). The measure of Irishness does not lie solely in Phineas’s domain; the continual racial characterization of him by the English reaffirms his ethnicity at every turn. Cathrine O. Frank takes note that secondary characters like Bonteen pile on when Phineas is down when she writes, “Bonteen’s vitriol against Finn nearly always emphasizes his Irish-ness and imputes an Irish separatist agenda to him” (33). Trollope has built a prison of sorts for Phineas, his Irishness being a delimiting factor at every turn.

McCourt elsewhere analyzed Trollope’s Irish leanings as similar to marrying outside of one’s culture, race, or religion: a going “offside” as an English writer and that many of his early critics saw this preference for Irish themes as a sort of betrayal (“Trollope’s adulterous Irish-English texts” 172). Trollope’s affection for the Irish based upon first-hand experience gave him an accurate view of how even the best of Irish persons suffered from the continual identification with the land of their birth rather than any accomplishments. Phyllis Rose observed that Phineas’s reception in English society is continually tainted by a demurrer. “People are saying of him that he is smart (for an Irishman) and hardworking (for an Irishman)” (7). The identification with the “other” island was almost impossible to erase, even in the light of one’s achievements. R.C.

Terry, however, observed that the general view of Trollope in Ireland was that he took no sides in Irish matters and represented Irish life truthfully (176). Although Trollope was as English in his style as beef and beer, one cannot help but think he would have taken “Irish novelist” as a compliment.

The character Phineas has drawn the attention of many critics. Robert Tracy has written of him that he is a strategic instrument:

As a character, Phineas Finn is developed less fully than the Pallisers. He is, in fact, not really a character at all. His function is that of a stranger in the world of the Pallisers, enabling us to see that world as it appears to an absorbed outsider. His inexperience makes it believable that explanations should be made to him about the customs and organization of this world. Through him, we learn objectively about the social level on which the Pallisers live. (*Trollope's Later Novels* 26)

In the matter of Irishness, Tracy has further noted that “In a sense, Ireland made Trollope. He is perhaps the only nineteenth century Englishman – perhaps one of the very few Englishmen in history – to have benefitted from an involvement in what Conor Cruise O’Brien likes to call ‘the Irish predicament’” (Tracy, “The Unnatural Ruin” 359). Perhaps in the end Irishness is less a nationality as much as a state of mind, both for the Irish themselves and those who engage with them.

The Palliser novels are sometimes categorized as political, and it is true that politics fascinated Trollope and led him to study it intensely. He would go to the visitor’s gallery in the House of Commons and hear the speeches and watch the demeanor of the participants. He knew the rhythm and rhyme of the parliamentary system, and yet one critic, Frederik van Dam wrote, “If Trollope’s imagination of politics can be regarded as being too fictional, it is precisely meant to be so in a qualified sense: his rhetoric shows a clear investment in alternative ways of constructing subjectivity and imagining the evolving society he had to live in” (106). In Trollope’s own mind he was being both

literal and imaginative and did not regard those attributes as inconsistent. In any event, politics is the setting not the substance of the six books, the substance rather being the social and personal interchanges of the players.

Julian Wolfreys asks whether Trollope's Palliser novels are heavily traced by crises of identity (304). All throughout the novels the issue of achieving or maintaining social class permeates. Phineas's attempts to land a wife better off financially than he is, Lord Fawn's attempt to find a wife at all to continue his line, and the Pallisers endlessly concerned with whether politics maintains or reduces their status all assert that no one is content as he or she is. The novels are just as much about class as race, and the lines in Victorian England were clearly drawn, although a beautiful wife from a different class or a fortune made in commerce could then, as well as always and everywhere, transcend boundaries. Irishness constantly imposes itself in considering Phineas, but can sometimes be muted and David Womble writes that:

Unlike earlier Irish assimilation narratives, *Phineas Finn* allows stereotypically Irish traits to serve a productive rather than a problematic role. Maria Edgeworth, for instance, shows Irish immigrants either hanging on to their Irishness and getting turned into caricatures as a result or else taming those tendencies with English self-discipline and thus becoming three-dimensional characters. (28)

Finn's Irishness, sometimes explicitly mentioned and other times unmentioned, but like an elephant in the room no one speaks of, dominates our understandings of what the book is about. It is the story of an outsider, a person who is "other" to the English politicians and nobles who make up the cast. The critical heritage concerning Trollope has rendered a favorable verdict but with reservations. In some things he may not have succeeded, but it is clear that his portrait of Phineas Finn is authentic and engaging. Once again, Trollope the sociological novelist, produces a character who is not a corporation

sole: “For Trollope, each man or woman depends on others, who depend in turn on others, in an endless round of encounters forming a constant interplay of wills...The individual will, for Trollope, is the ground of everything else in society” (Miller 137).

Trollope on his own without the critics followed a strategy of writing from experience, writing in concise fashion, and narrating stories which resonated with readers. Politicians, clergymen, journalists, men and women in the marriage market, the joys and disappointments in one’s children, all enticed him to create fictional people to stand in for humanity in general as he saw it. Had Trollope lived a century later, might he have been an experimentalist or a modernist, relying less on narrative and more on metaphors and symbols, telling less rather than more? We, of course, cannot say, but in his moment he was apt and in a manner which went beyond it, and perhaps this is all a writer could ever be.

Chapter VI:

Conclusion

The creation of Phineas Finn was based upon circumstances both external and internal to Trollope. His time in Ireland gave him a perspective on the lives of persons whose culture and attitudes were different from what he had experienced in England, but an internal change also took place when a young man in a new land re-invented himself. Aspects of his own persona came into maturity and many of his aspirations, doubts, and desires were manifested in the character of Phineas Finn. His biographer Victoria Glendinning noted that before his time in Ireland, Trollope was withdrawn and shy, but the outgoing nature of the Irish and their wit gave him the courage to be bluff and boisterous with a loud laugh (120). Elaine Freedgood wrote that Trollope had this in common with Dickens, Eliot, Hardy, and Meredith: an early sense of isolation, loneliness, and social failure (17). A lonely person has both the time and disposition to consider how he or she does not fit in, and the writing life is often the outgrowth of that condition.

Trollope's representations of Irishness to the English reading public did not fall on deaf ears. He notes in his *Autobiography* that the two novels earned 5700 pounds, with *Phineas Finn* being the most profitable book he wrote. Trollope was not an author embarrassed by money earned; he regarded it as an affirmation by readers as to writing's worth. The matter of the artistic value of the novels has proven to be in accord with their financial success. That the reading public warmed to an Irish character must have encouraged him, but surely after writing six novels with the same principal cast, he felt the pride of accomplishment in a great undertaking. The Palliser novels are a saga in the

best sense of having continuity and consistency. Trollope loved his invented cast of characters, and even the less virtuous of them were estimable because they were true to life even when not likeable. The individuals were original, but the types were recognizable to readers and in this Trollope succeeded as he set out to do, painting individuals as they composed the larger organism: society.

Trollope noted in his autobiography that since his first arrival in Ireland, the situation had progressed, both socially and economically and put the lie to the idea that Ireland was a hopeless case, a well of despond that could never pull itself out of poverty, ignorance, and prejudice. He wrote, “I have sometimes wondered at the obduracy with which people have spoken of the permanent ill condition of the country” (*Autobiography* 50). His own experience rebutted the prejudices of his English upbringing and he imported this experience into his work.

The risk that Trollope took was a challenge he set down for himself, but I believe knowing it had a chance of success was based upon his actual experience living and working in Ireland which let him venture forth with enthusiasm tempered by practical concerns. While the two novels could not be said to have shaken the pillars of the establishment, it is because Phineas was not a character who detested the establishment, but earnestly wished to be part of it. This is the paradox of social ascent; those on the outside wish to be inside, but the price is often a metamorphosis into what you both envy and dislike. To ascend socially is in part a renunciation of what you are. To achieve assimilation means leaving some of yourself behind, and this is the lovely contradiction Trollope endowed Phineas with; to become is to be something different. In some senses these novels of Trollope represent the marriage of England and Ireland, a mixed marriage

of faith and culture, but one which was preferable to warfare. That history eventually saw a separate and independent Ireland does not diminish the noteworthiness of Trollope's accomplishment. After divorce, former spouses sometimes finally recognize the validity and value of each other individually rather than as a conjoined duet.

David Heddendorf cites an opinion held by A.O.J. Cockshut that when Trollope fell out of fashion, he did not cease being read, only discussed (408), and that Henry James, for all attempts to offer praise, nonetheless considered him "an endearing hack" (409). Heddendorf dismisses James's snobbery and defends Trollope for his invention of characters which "in their mimetic power we find reason to enjoy reading Trollope, and in their mundane recognitions and momentous choices we find analogies to our own not so very different lives" (418). In 1928, a mere forty-six years after Trollope's death, W. S. Moore writing in *The Irish Monthly* said he became a popular novelist by sheer hard work and "in many ways he was the most notable and original minor novelist of the Victorian Age and had ideas about fiction writing which were shocking to his contemporaries" (74). While he has been criticized as sometimes no more than mundane in his plots and characterizations, he struck a chord with English readers, even when writing about subjects such as the Irish that were not of intrinsic interest.

The criticism that has emerged in the past forty years has found much that was overlooked in Trollope's work that directly or indirectly took up race, class, and gender. That Trollope thought himself a "conservative liberal" shows a mind capable of holding separate impulses at the same time, unwilling to dogmatically include or exclude any notion without examination. Edward Mendelson expressed well Trollope's world view: "Trollope was divided between his personal liking for everything he found comfortable

and appealing in the traditional past and his moral understanding that much of what he enjoyed was built on social and economic inequity and injustice” (xviii).

In his creation of Phineas Finn, neither a mistake nor a haphazard choice, and placing him at center stage of this extended drama, Trollope has shown an imagination more subtle and a plot more complex than his early critics allowed. His representations of Irishness to English readers, forcing them to consider and acknowledge their prejudices, was a great leap forward in a literary way that was sociological in the best sense: expanding awareness of how we live with others seemingly unlike ourselves and come to realize they are actually not so very much unlike ourselves. The “blunder” he referred to was only one by the standards of practicality of the times. Risking failure by aiming for a new measure of success is often the hallmark of great works of literature. Modern criticism willing to examine social structures and human biases has revealed a more sophisticated aspect to Trollope’s work than his early critics granted. This analysis of the historical background, examples from the text, and a survey of critical opinion have demonstrated that the invention of such an Irish protagonist to be put forward to English readers as a man in full, with virtues and shortcomings, has allowed a currency to adhere to the character and his dilemmas which makes him still readable and significant in the modern age.

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