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Anthony Trollope's Palliser Novels and Anti-Irish Prejudice
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It is by now taken as axiomatic that representations of Irish characters in Victorian literature were generally negative. However, as Roy Foster shows, they were not universally so; we find one example of a positive treatment of Ireland and the Irish in Victorian writing in Anthony Trollope's "Palliser series" of six political novels, which appeared between 1864 and 1880. In addition to having an Irishman as the hero of its second and fourth titles, *Phineas Finn* (1869) and *Phineas Redux* (1873), the series also anatomizes one of the most important periods in Irish political history, stretching roughly from Disestablishment in 1869 to the founding of the Land League in 1879. The most significant aspect of the Palliser series, though, may be its careful analysis of anti-Irish prejudice and stereotyping, carried out as part of the six books' consideration of prejudicial representations of those who do not conform to Victorian norms. The theme of prejudice dominates the Palliser series. Having lived in Ireland from 1841 to 1859 and having published three books on Irish themes before he began the Palliser novels, Trollope was well aware of how the Irish suffered such prejudice. The Palliser series can thus be seen as an attempt to challenge Irish stereotypes in general, while offering a distinctive treatment of two of the most common images of Irishness: the Stage Irishman and the presentation of Ireland as a feminized victim.

In 1853, Charles Dickens encapsulated Victorian attitudes to Otherness. "I have not the least interest in the Noble Savage," he wrote:

I consider him a prodigious nuisance, and an enormous superstition. His calling rum fire-water, and me a pale face, will never reconcile me to him. I don't care what he calls me. I call him a savage, and I call a savage something highly desirable to have civilised off the face of the earth. I think a mere gent (which I take to be the lowest form of civilisation) better than a howling, whistling, clucking, stamping, jumping, tearing savage. . . . [H]e is a savageâ€”cruel, false, thievish, murderous; addicted more or less to grease, entrails, and beastly customs; a wild animal with the questionable gift of boasting; a conceited, tiresome, bloodthirsty, monotonous, humbug.

Trollope was never slow to point out the differences between himself and Dickens. One large dissimilarity was the extent to which Trollope sought, in his writings, to address the prevalence of stereotyping and prejudice in Victorian culture—of which Dickens's remark is an excellent, if tongue-in-cheek, example.
"One of the most remarkable Insularities" of English society, Dickens wrote elsewhere, "is a tendency to be firmly persuaded that what is not English is not natural." Thus, the actions of an individual were judged on the basis of the social or racial group to which he or she belonged, rather than on the character of that individual. Trollope analyzes this tendency extensively in the Palliser novels, from the prejudice Phineas Finn and his wife Marie meet throughout the series, to that suffered by Emilius in *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873) and *Phineas Redux* (1874) and Lopez in *The Prime Minister* (1876). The final novel in the series "The Duke's Children* (1880) dedicates itself to examining this theme as it explores Palliser's refusal to allow his children to marry "beneath themselves" for love: Silverbridge wishes to marry the American Isabel Boncassen, and Mary Palliser the penniless commoner Frank Tregear. Trollope consistently shows that prejudice causes harm to both its victims and its perpetrators.

Trollope's treatments of anti-Semitism and gender have been debated frequently but, with some notable exceptions, few scholars have considered the Irish elements of the Palliser series. This derives largely from the influence of a statement Trollope made in *An Autobiography* (1880) about the series' principal Irish character, Phineas Finn. Writing about the creation of Finn, Trollope confessed that although he had made his hero interesting, it was a blunder to take him from Ireland, into which I was led by the circumstance that I created the scheme of the book during a visit to Ireland. There was nothing to be gained by the peculiarity, and there was an added difficulty in obtaining sympathy and affection for a politician belonging to a nationality whose politics are not respected in England.

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Many critics of the Palliser series cite this passage to argue that Irishness is not a serious issue in the novels. This is unfortunate: Trollope may have been frank about his views on Phineas in *An Autobiography*, but this does not mean that his views should necessarily be regarded as honest, or critically accurate. After all, in the same passage Trollope claimed that Irish stories were not popular with booksellers and readers—a clearly mistaken judgement, as of all his novels only 1864's *Can You Forgive Her?* was a greater financial success than *Phineas Finn*.8

In fact, the problem that early reviewers had with Phineas was not his nationality, but his personality. "A common complaint of contemporary critics," writes John Halperin, "was that the novel was superficial, shallow. We never see any 'deep moral struggle' going on in anyone . . . though we are told that it is there; and Phineas himself is the shallowest of the shallow." In this respect, Phineas resembles most of Trollope's other leading characters, who were generally less popular than his supporting cast.
Henry James, for example, wrote of Alice Vavasour—"the heroine of *Can You Forgive Her?"—that not only could he forgive her, but forget her as well.\textsuperscript{10}

An exception to this antipathy toward Phineas appears in an 1869 article on Trollope's Irish novels in the *Dublin Magazine*. The reviewer was sufficiently impressed with Trollope's decision not to caricature the Irish to suggest that "some Irish constituency should do itself the honour of gratifying Mr Trollope's unaccountable desire to enter parliament."\textsuperscript{11} Of course, these remarks praise Trollope more for what he does not do than for any particular achievement in *Phineas Finn*—"but it nonetheless is notable that the most positive treatment of the novel came from an Irish magazine, and that it specifically praises Trollope for his treatment of Irish characters.

It is useful to consider how Trollope deals with the issue of prejudice throughout the Palliser series. The theme features prominently in his presentation of Jewish characters, of which there are three—Lopez in *The Prime Minister*, Emilius in *Phineas Redux* and *The Eustace Diamonds*, and Marie Goesler, [End Page 118] who appears throughout the series. Two of these characters are villains, which has led some commentators to accuse Trollope of anti-Semitism.\textsuperscript{12} Trollope, however, carefully points out in both of these cases that the prevailing anti-Semitism in Victorian Britain actually makes the villainy of these characters possible.

Lopez in *The Prime Minister* is a case in point. In this novel, Mr. Wharton refuses to allow Lopez to marry his daughter Emily, saying "I shall never willingly give my daughter to any one who is not the son of an English gentleman. It may be a prejudice, but that is my feeling."\textsuperscript{13} In fact, Wharton's prejudices against Lopez do not prevent, but instead, facilitate the marriage. By objecting to him on the basis of ethnicity, Wharton must capitulate when Lopez "proves himself" by saving the life of his son Everett. Had the objection been on financial grounds alone, this capitulation would have been unnecessary. It is not Lopez's lack of integrity that causes the disastrous marriage. Rather, it is Wharton's recourse to prejudice rather than common sense.

Trollope also shows prejudice as a method by which British public evades its social responsibilities. When Emilius is convicted for the murder of Mr. Bonteen in *Phineas Redux*, Trollope tells us that this charge had "subjected him to the peculiar ill-will of the British public. He [was] a foreigner and a Jew, by name Yosef Mealyus,â€”as every one was now very careful to call him."\textsuperscript{14} The public now refers to Emilius by his "real" name, as if a crime committed by a "Yosef" is more easily understood than one committed by a "Joseph." In doing so, they evade the question of how Emilius could have duped so many people; his foreign and Jewish background suffice to explain his actions.
Madame Max or Marie Goesler/Finn, though generally treated as an accepted member of British society, is aware that her background will lead people to assume that her motives for action are always of the worst kind. In *The Eustace Diamonds* and *Phineas Redux*, she comes under suspicion because of her relationship with the Duke of Omnium, while in *The Duke's Children* she is accused of encouraging Mary Palliser's engagement to Frank Tregear. These glib accusations have nothing to do with her character—she has at least as much integrity as anyone else in the series—but are due instead to her European and probable Jewish origins. One particularly striking example of how she is treated as Other occurs in *Phineas Redux*. When Laura Kennedy learns that Phineas and Madame Max are to be married, she does not assume that Phineas loves his fiancée, but that he has been bewitched by "This strange female, this Moabatish woman":

How she hated this strange woman, and remembered all the evil things that had been said of the intruder! She told herself over and over again that had it been anyone else than this half-foreigner, this German Jewess, this intriguing unfeminine upstart, she could have borne it. . . . Had it not always been declared of her that she was a pushing, dangerous, scheming creature? And then she was old enough to be [Phineas's] mother, but by some Medean tricks known to such women she was able to postpone,—not the ravages of age,—but the manifestation of them to the eyes of the world.

(*PR* II, 225)

Trollope's rendition intensifies the tragedy of Lady Laura in this, her final appearance in the series: she can only explain Phineas's love for Madame Max as being the result of "intriguing" and "scheming," of "Medean" trickery by this "Moabatish" "half-foreigner." This recourse to prejudice represents Laura's final degradation, and shows the extent to which she has changed as a result of her own disastrous marriage. "In all of the charges poor Lady Laura wronged her rival fouly," writes Trollope, underlining this point (*PR* II, 225).

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. Two such practices are especially apposite here: the characters' use of animal imagery to describe Phineas, and the manner in which they assume that the Irish are prone to violence.

Characterizations of the Irish as animal-like abounded in Victorian culture. As Roy Foster notes,
The image of the Irishman was "simianised" by Victorian caricaturists, with a deliberate intent to portray him as subhuman, and therefore a candidate for oppression in the debased pseudo-Darwinian science of racial superiority . . . [the image] appeared to be a long-established historical habit of rationalizing British treatment of the Irish as an inferior race given to animal-like bursts of violence and amenable only to coercion.15

When someone in the Palliser novels uses an animal image to describe Phineas, he or she is not necessarily formulating the matter in the above terms. The speakers are not even necessarily denigrating Phineas, as Victorians commonly associated nationalities with specific animals: the English were like bulldogs, the French like foxes, and so on. But the particular kinds of animal images used to describe Phineas warrant scrutiny. In Phineas Finn, Violet describes him as a cat who prefers to play with his food rather than eat it, while Mr. Bonteen uses considerably more offensive imagery:

"The fact is, Finn," said Bonteen, "you are made of clay too fine for office. I've always found it has been 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."16

Irish readers might find these remarks irritating, and would be forgiven for recalling the Duke of Wellington's comment that being born in a stable does not make one a horse. Nevertheless, the animals used to describe Phineas reveal an interesting conception of the Irish: if they are comparable to cats and horses, then they are also thought of in terms of potentially wild but attractive animals that need to be domesticated. At no stage does Phineas suffer as a direct result of this stereotyping; rather, such discrimination proves to be a laziness of thought that leads to negative results for the British characters who view the Irish in this way. For example, Bonteen's assumption that Phineas's political rebellion is based on an inherently Irish temperament rather than on political principle causes him to hasten, rather than prevent, Phineas's resignation from office.

These representations become harmful with the persistent association of Phineas with a potential for violence which, as Foster's remarks imply, is related to the use of animal imagery. This occurs at all stages of Phineas's career. In Phineas Finn an amusing misunderstanding crops up between Lord Fawn and Bonteen. Fawn says, "The man [Lord Chiltern] is a drunkard, and I don't believe he is any more reconciled to his father than you are."

"Perhaps [the rumor is] an invention of Finn's altogether," said Mr Bonteen. "Those Irish fellows are just the men for that kind of thing."
"A man, you know, so violent that nobody can hold him," said Lord Fawn, thinking of Chiltern.

"And so absurdly conceited", said Mr Bonteen, thinking of Phineas.\(^{17}\)

\((PF\ II, 142)\) [End Page 121]

It might be argued that such commentary on Phineas is understandable because as a young politician, he has yet to develop a reputation. Yet, even in *The Duke's Children*, when Phineas is securely lodged in the British political establishment, he suffers from this form of prejudice: his criticism of Sir Timothy Beeswax is dismissed as the "onslaught" of a "bellicose Irishman," suggesting again that an Irishman is angry by temperament rather than because of political conviction.\(^{18}\)

The belief that the Irish are temperamentally unsuited to govern appears in Trollope's treatment of Phineas's quarrel with Mr. Bonteen in *Phineas Redux*. Their dispute could be characterized as a clash between a man who is impetuous because young (Phineas), and a man who is arrogant and unlikable because of undeserved success (Bonteen). However, when news of this quarrel is discussed in circles "further removed from the House of Commons and the Universe Club," the view is that "the Irishman had struck the Englishman, and the Englishman had given the Irishman a good thrashing" (*PR* II, 20). This seems initially to be a relatively harmless misunderstanding of the situation. But a comparison of this passage with the following dialogue between Plantagenet Palliser and Lady Glencora in *The Prime Minister* offers a useful perspective on this theme. Palliser tells Glencora that:

"Mr. Finn is to go to Ireland . . ."

"That is promotion and I am glad! Poor Phineas! I hope they won't murder him, or anything of that kind. They do murder people, you know, sometimes."

"He's an Irishman himself."

"That's just the reason why they should. He must put up with that of course."

\((PM\ I, 71â€“72)\)

These passages display the prevailing view that the Irish are prone to acts of irrational violence. When Phineas strikes the Englishman in *Phineas Redux*, the act that deserves no further explanation than his nationality. The Englishman then gives Phineas a "good thrashing," a phrase often used to describe discipline in a boarding school environment. This view of English violence as almost beneficial to its victim
echoes Glencora's characterization of the Irish, who murder people "sometimes," but not always.  

All of this seems relatively harmless to Phineas until, in the second half of *Phineas Redux*, he is charged with the murder of Mr. Bonteen. Throughout his imprisonment, Phineas insists that those who know him ought to realize that he is incapable of murder; yet those who assume he is guilty, such as Lord Fawn, have already formed an opinion of his character based largely on his nationality. Just as Emilius will later be called by his original name when he is revealed as the culprit, so can Phineas's imprisonment be seen in the context of the prejudice he experiences during his political career. This is a reciprocal process: Trollope states that Phineas's sisters are "sure that he was innocent, as was every one, they said, throughout the length and breadth of Ireland" (*PR II*, 132). Everyone here relies on national stereotypes, from the British citizens who look no further than Phineas's nationality to decide his guilt, to the Irish who assume that an Irishman in an English prison must be innocent. Trollope shows that prejudice, wherever it occurs, always interferes with clear thinking. He does not leave the matter there; he also considers the most common representation of the Irishman, the Stage Irishman, in the character of Laurence Fitzgibbon.

The Palliser novels repeatedly consider the extent to which the British political system rewards loyalty to party and "usefulness," rather than a capacity for governance. In the first half of the series, Trollope uses an Irish character, Laurence Fitzgibbon, to demonstrate his view that "individual free-thinking was incompatible with the position of a member of the Government" (*PF II*, 47). In the discrepancy between Fitzgibbon's actual venality and the image he portrays of himself as a hapless, harmless Irishman, Trollope shows that the British political system can be manipulated by cynical opportunists concerned only with self-advancement. Our first introduction to Fitzgibbon shows us a lazy, but not unlikable, Irishman:

Laurence Fitzgibbon had sat in the house for the last fifteen years, and was yet well-nigh as young a man as any in it . . . [He] could always get the ear of the House if he chose to speak, and his friends declared that he might have been high up in office long since if he would have taken the trouble to work. He was a welcome guest at the houses of the very best people, and was a friend of whom one could be proud. (*PF I*, 24)

This is a typical presentation of an Irish character in a Victorian novel: Fitzgibbon speaks well, is friendly, and is a bit indolent. He is particularly associated with a youthful quality—he is "as young as any man" in the house, despite having spent fifteen years there—which implies an inability to mature. He is a guest of the "very
best people," though he appears not to be included in this grouping himself. He also seems to be remarkably cynical, and does much to dent the enthusiasm—or the naiveté—of the newly elected Phineas:

Mr Fitzgibbon seemed to care very little about [politics], and went so far as to declare that those things were accidents which fell out sometimes one way and sometimes another, and were altogether independent of any merit or demerit on the part of the candidate himself.

(*PF I, 25* [End Page 123]

This statement essentially summarizes Fitzgibbon's political doctrine. Readers may suspect that integrity is not one of Fitzgibbon's strongest qualities, a view that will be confirmed as the plot develops. Early in *Phineas Finn*, Fitzgibbon jeopardizes Phineas's reputation and career by asking him to endorse a loan that neither man can repay. Fitzgibbon considers this action permissible because a member of parliament could not be convicted for the failure to repay a debt; he is interested in politics only insofar as he can take advantage of it. The problem of this debt will eventually be solved not by one of the two men but by Aspasia Fitzgibbon, Laurence's sister. Here, the Irishmen are party to an unusual reversal of gender roles, as they are rescued from irresponsibility by a financially independent woman.

Fitzgibbon has shown himself to be manipulative, irresponsible, and opportunistic. Despite these failings, his party colleagues promote him instead of punishing him, in circumstances described in a letter to Phineas from Lord Brentford:

"Mr Mildmay has spoken to me on the subject," continued the letter, "and informs me that he has offered the place at the colonies to his old supporter, Mr. Laurence Fitzgibbon [â€”] I am inclined to think he could not have done better, as Mr. Fitzgibbon has shown great zeal for his party."

(*PF II, 43â€“44*)

Fitzgibbon's promotion stems not from talent, but from his "zeal" for his party. This appearance of enthusiasm is carefully cultivated, as the reader knows that Fitzgibbon's view of politics is much more cynical than Brentford realizes. In *Phineas Redux*, Trollope pays further attention to Fitzgibbon's way of cultivating appearances. Speaking about Phineas, Barrington Erle states that "He's the best Irishman we ever got hold ofâ€”present company always excepted, Laurence." Fitzgibbon replies:

"Bedad, you needn't except me, Barrington. I know what a man's made of, and what a man can do. And I know what he can't do. I'm not bad at the outside skirmishing. I'm
worth me salt. I say that with a just reliance on me own powers. But Phinny is a
different sort of a man. Phinny can stick to a desk from twelve to seven, and wish to
come back again after dinner."

(PR I, 6)

Fitzgibbon here presents himself as a stereotypical Irishman. He uses such predictable
Hiberno-English as "Bedad," or the excessively rhetorical "just reliance on me own
powers"—an hyperbolic manner notably absent from his dialogue with Phineas. He
emphasizes the qualities that an Irishman is expected to have: he is "good at the
outside skirmishing," playing to the English stereotype about Irish violence; and he
considers himself different from Phineas because he is unwilling to work for more
than seven hours in one day. In fact, Fitzgibbons's appearance of childlike good
humor, characterized by the use of nonstandard English and his self-
deprecation, is a carefully performed role, contradicted by his actions in Phineas Finn.

But this Stage Irishman—unlike the inept prototype of the character—is successful.
Fitzgibbon, appointed first to the treasury and then to the colonies office, uses his
Stage Irishness to make him seem harmless and pliable, and therefore suitable for
promotion to those offices that require occupation but little responsibility. This is one
of the clearest examples of Trollope's dislike for the success of such politicians.
Fitzgibbon is unlikable because he is opportunistic and loyal only to people or things
that he can use to his advantage. The "Irish" qualities he presents to his political
superiors make him seem suitable for promotion. He is not simply an unscrupulous
politician, nor merely an incompetent one, but is, instead, to be read as a "Mick on the
Make," to use Roy Foster's term. By including a Stage Irishman to exemplify one of
his concerns with the British political system, Trollope demonstrates that this
 stereotype works as much to the detriment of those who use it as it does those to
whom it is applied.

Foster examines the figure of the Stage Irishman in Victorian culture at length in the
1993 Paddy and Mr. Punch. There, he puts forward the claim that this degraded
image of the Irishman was matched by an idealized opposite: Hibernia. This was
Britannia's "Cinderella sister," commonly described in terms of being a victim,
whether of famine, Fenianism, or of the Irish themselves. The analogy in this
symbolism carries a significant corollary, Foster suggests: if Hibernia is Britannia’s
Cinderella sister, then "Britannia was therefore Hibernia's Ugly Sister, exploiting her
at home and keeping her from the ball." 20

Thus, in England, to represent Ireland as a victim was also to imply that an equal
relationship between the countries was impossible. The Union was justified by a sense
that England was obliged to help Ireland because it was a "most distressful country."
And to extend the argument, if Ireland as a victim became "cured," then the basis of the Union would be removed and no further relationship between the countries would be necessary.

Those who supported the Union would naturally reject such a representation of Ireland, as it rested on a metaphor that meant that Ireland must either remain permanently inferior because perpetually in need, or eventually become independent. There would be little scope in this symbolism for the Union to be continued if Ireland were to reach a stage of economic, demographic, and political stability comparable to England's. Trollope, however, was one such supporter of the Union; his characterization of Mary Flood Jones reveals the problems caused by presenting Irishness as an inferior.

The character of Mary Flood Jones often seems to embarrass critics. Many feel that her presence in *Phineas Finn* is the occasion of an awkward and unconvincing plot mechanism on Trollope's part, which he outlines in *An Autobiography*:

As I fully intended to bring my hero again into the world, I was wrong to marry him to a simple pretty Irish girl, who could only be felt as an encumbrance on such return. When he did return I had no alternative but to kill the pretty simple Irish girl which was an awkward and unpleasant necessity.21

Awkward and unpleasant as this mechanism might have been, it is not entirely unsuccessful. If *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* are to be thought of as two parts of the one story, as Trollope wished, then Phineas's character develops over a number of years: certainly, the Phineas presented by Trollope after Mary's death has matured. Juliet McMaster concedes that "there are signs that he [Trollope] was embarrassed about Mary, and would fain have his reader forget she existed." Nevertheless, she writes, "Trollope has made more out of that sad little episode than perhaps he meant to. He is cursory about the facts of the short marriage, but still the reader is aware that something has happened to Phineas. 'I feel to be changed in everything,' he had said."22

Trollope's embarrassment about Mary, like his embarrassment about Phineas's Irishness, has led most critics to pass over her character without comment. But as McMaster points out, embarrassment does not mean that Trollope was casual about how he characterized her. She deserves closer attention than has been given her to date. Trollope introduces Mary early in *Phineas Finn* as "A little girl about twenty years of age with the softest hair in the world, of a colour varying between brown and auburn,â€”for sometimes you would swear it was one and sometimes the other; and she was pretty as ever she could be" (*PF* I, 18â€“19). The description starts with
abstractions. Mary has the softest hair "in the world," and is as pretty "as ever she
could be"—a common enough description of a Victorian heroine, similar to that of
Lucy Morris in The Eustace Diamonds as a woman "whose presence in the house was
ever felt to be like sunshine."23 But in addition to these abstractions, Trollope assigns
Mary three substantial qualities that mark her as different from her English
counterparts. The first is her passivity, the second her Catholicism, and the third her
construction as a sacrificial object. All three are particularly associated with Mary's
nationality.

Throughout Phineas Finn, Mary appears to be an exceptionally passive individual.
Her response to Phineas's proposal to her exemplifies this well: [End Page 126]

When she essayed to speak she found she was dumb. She could not get her voice to
give her the assistance of a single word. She did not cry, but there was a motion as of
sobbing in her throat which impeded all utterance. She was as happy as earth,â€”as
heaven could make her; but she did not know how to tell him that she was happy. And
yet she longed to tell it, that he might know how thankful she was to him for her
goodness.

(PF II, 267)

Mary's response to Phineas's proposal contrasts to Marie Goesler's proposal to
Phineas:

"I will be called friend by you no more", she said, "You must call me Marie, your own
Marie, or you must never call me by any name again. Which shall it be, sir?" He
paused a moment, holding her hand, and she let it lie there for an instant while she
listened. But still she did not look on him. "Speak to me! Tell me! Which shall it be?"
Still he paused. "Speak to me! Tell me!" she said again.

(PF II, 320)

Here, Trollope again reverses gender roles. Phineas is the one proposed to, and is
speechless before this woman's assertiveness, showing the contrast between the
speechless Mary and the demonstrative Marie Goesler. If we compare Mary's
speechlessness to Lady Laura's response to Phineas's proposal (PF I, 138)â€”or,
indeed, to any of the many other proposals of marriage in the Palliser seriesâ€”we find
that Mary's inability to find the words to thank Phineas for his "goodness" is an
example of passivity paralleled by no other female character in the novels.

Mary's Catholicism also deserves attention. In his other Irish novels, Trollope shows
some sympathy for the Catholicism of the Irish, as his treatment of Father McGrath
in *The MacDermotts of Ballycloran* and Father Marty in *An Eye for an Eye* demonstrates; this did not prevent him from simultaneously viewing Catholicism as somewhat childish. As Victoria Glendinning has noted, this did not prevent him from simultaneously viewing Catholicism as somewhat childish:

The people he knew well in Ireland, and the priests who had become his friends, had made bigotry impossible for him. . . . Nevertheless, there was in his last book *The Landleaguers* an explicit judgement that Catholicism was not a religion for "gentlemen"—i.e., that there was something vulgar and unsophisticated about it. [Yet] he wrote in *North America* . . . "I love their religion. There is something beautiful and almost divine in the faith and obedience of a true son of the Holy Mother. I sometimes fancy that I would fain be a Roman Catholic, if I could; as also I would often wish to be still a child, if that were still possible."[24](#)

For Trollope, the Catholicism of Ireland was an example of a charming and, indeed, appealing childishness. He repeatedly renders Mary's Catholicism is as a naive and almost superstitious worship of the Virgin Mary. Discussing Phineas's treatment of her with his sister Barbara, Mary says,

"I know he is good, Barbara: and as for truth, there is no question about it, because he has never said a word to me that he might not say to any girl â€” He never has, as sure as the blessed Virgin watches over us;â€”only you don't believe she does."

"Never mind about the Virgin now, Mary"

"But he never has."

(*PF* I, 18)

Mary demonstrates this further by her reaction to Phineas's treatment of her: Mary "went up to her room" writes Trollope, "and swore before a figure of the Virgin that she would be true to Phineas for ever and ever, in spite of her mother, in spite of all the world,â€”in spite, should it be necessary, even of himself" (*PF* I, 146). Mary's Catholicism, like her passivity, makes it impossible for her to live in British society. There was an authorial reason why she needed to be killed off between the two Phineas novels. Trollope realized that she simply would not fit into the society of which Phineas is a part. And she would not fit in precisely because of her particularly "Irish" traits.

Was this decision to make Phineas love a woman he could not marry without leaving British politics another Trollopian "blunder"? To an extent it was; yet, as James R.
Kincaid points out, Trollope's earliest description of Mary suggests that she was "presented from the start as a sacrificial object." Trollope writes that, "She was one of those girls, so common in Ireland, whom men, with tastes that way given, feel inclined to take up and devour on the spur of the moment; and when she liked her lion, she had a look about her which seemed to ask to be devoured" (PF I, 19). Trollope's decision to kill her off may have been an unfortunate necessity—yet something in this presentation of her as a victim also makes her death an inevitability.

Mary, then, is helpless. Her particular kind of Catholicism is a form of immaturity which, added to her excessive passivity, underlines her status as victim. Not only can this victim play no part in British society; she also cannot survive beyond that representation. After she marries Phineas, Mary can no longer be spoken of as a victim, and, thus cannot be spoken of at all: she has no other substantial qualities. [End Page 128]

This, in turn, suggests the Hibernia figure. Both Hibernia and Mary are rendered as helpless victims, as children in need of the assistance of an adult. Mary's status as victim means that once she ceases to fill that role she must die—just as once Hibernia ceases to be a victim, the Union becomes unjustifiable. Considered this way, Trollope's "murder" of the pretty, simple Irish girl between the two Phineas novels is not simply an awkward plot mechanism: it also comments on the tendency to render Ireland in terms of victimhood.

Trollope's Irish novels show a steady and pervasive understanding of the dangers of prejudice, and as such, they are useful in refuting the often suggested view that Trollope was anti-Semitic. The Palliser novels ask us to consider how Ireland, and the Irish, were represented in Victorian culture. Although Trollope may have had good reasons for retrospectively declaring Phineas Finn's Irishness a blunder, there is no reason for scholars to ignore the Irish elements of the series. On the contrary, Phineas Finn and Phineas Redux are sympathetic, if occasionally flawed, treatments of Ireland that deserve closer attention from scholars of Irish literature.

Footnotes

1. Two definitive examinations of this topic are L. Perry Curtis, Apes and Angels (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, rev. ed. 1996), and Roy F. Foster, Paddy and Mr. Punch (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993).

2. The Palliser series comprises six novels: Can You Forgive Her? (1864); Phineas Finn (1869); The Eustace Diamonds (1873); Phineas Redux (1874); The Prime Minister (1876); and The Duke's Children (1880).
3. These were *The MacDermotts of Ballycloran* (1847), *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (1848), and *Castle Richmond* (1860). Later Irish novels are *An Eye for An Eye* (1879) and *The Landleaguers* (1883).


12. The fact that Emilius is Jewish is sometimes used to suggest that Trollope was anti-Semitic. The discussion of Trollope's treatment of the theme of prejudice here might refute or complicate this view. Certainly, many of Trollope's characters display anti-Semitic tendencies, particularly in his non-Irish novels, but Emilius is presented as a villain who is Jewish, and perhaps is a satirical portrayal of Disraeli in some respects. For an excellent treatment of the theme of anti-Semitism in Trollope, see N. John Hall, *Anthony Trollope: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 287â€“89.


15. Foster, p. 171.


17. Edwards points out that Chiltern is a very Irish Englishman—"not for his propensity to violence or his physical characteristics, but for his loyalty to Phineas. "Anthony Trollope, the Irish Writer," 16â€“17.


19. Glencora's remarks are both prejudicial and prophetic, as they eerily anticipate the Phoenix Park murders of 1882.


24. Victoria Glendinning, *Trollope* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), p. 479. The "explicit judgement" in *The Landleaguers* (1883) that Catholicism is not a religion for gentlemen is not necessarily an accurate representation of Trollope's view on the matter before the Land War, which led him to alter his views on Ireland.