Chapter Three

Barchester Towers

Barchester Towers is Anthony Trollope’s second Barset novel. It was written in 1857, two years after The Warden and is still his best selling work. Barchester Towers is a continuation of The Warden with greater variety of persons and interests, and a little more of novel story. That, however, is not much, and mainly consists in the marriage of Eleanor Bold, now a widow. The large part and perhaps the greater interest of the book, turns upon clerical characters and their ideas and doings, respecting which Low Church comes in for some hard hits; for the romantic action involves the struggles, exposure, and defeat of the new Bishop of Barchester’s Low Church Chaplain, the Reverend Mr Slope. This worthy is not exactly painted with anger, for indignation is not Trollope’s vein; but the pen that delineates him is ever dipped in gall.¹

The novel contains very significant themes and an important one is that of personal ambition. The novel begins with the death of Bishop
Grantley and his son, Archdeacon Grantley is ambitious to become Bishop after his father’s death.

You cannot but rejoice that it is over," said Mr. Harding, still consoling his friend. The archdeacon's mind, however, had already travelled from the death chamber to the closet of the prime minister. He had brought himself to pray for his father's life, but now that life was done, minutes were too precious to be lost. It was now useless to dally with the fact of the bishop's death--useless to lose perhaps everything for the pretence of a foolish sentiment… in answer to Mr. Harding’s further consolation, the archdeacon suggested that a telegraph message should be immediately sent off to London…Mr. Harding, who had really been somewhat surprised to find Dr. Grantly, as he thought, so much affected, was rather taken aback, but he made no objection. He knew that the archdeacon had some hope of succeeding to his father's place, though he by no means knew how highly rose that hope had been.²

Though the Archdeacon Grantley is anxious to become the next Bishop, unfortunately the new government in London appoints Dr Proudie as the new Bishop. And we see also Mr Slope, the chaplain of Bishop in the novel who is very ambitious to have control over the power and patronage of the diocese of Barchester.
Mr Slope soon comforted himself with the reflexion that, as he had been selected as chaplain to the bishop, it would probably be in his power to get the good things in the bishop's gift without troubling himself with the bishop's daughter, and he found himself able to endure the pangs of rejected love. As he sat himself down in the railway carriage, confronting the bishop and Mrs Proudie as they started on their first journey to Barchester, he began to form in his own mind a plan of his future life. He knew well his patron's strong points, but he knew the weak ones as well. He understood correctly enough to what attempts the new bishop's high spirit would soar, and he rightly guessed that public life would better suit the great man's taste than the small details of diocesan duty.3

The novel presents the corrupting and spoiling nature of ambition, and of the quest for power. The nature of friendship is another important theme. The novel shows the difference between true and false friendship. For example as Mr. Slope learns about Eleanor’s wealth, tries to win Eleanor by telling her that he is concerned about her father, and by trying to persuade the Bishop to unconditionally offer the wardenship to Mr Harding. But he is really interested only in his own pursuit of wealth and power.
He commenced his acquaintance with Eleanor by praising her father. He had, he said, become aware that he had unfortunately offended the feelings of a man of whom he could not speak too highly; he would not now allude to a subject which was probably too serious for drawing-room conversation, but he would say that it had been very far from him to utter a word in disparagement of a man of whom all the world, at least the clerical world, spoke so highly as it did of Mr Harding. And so he went on, unsaying a great deal of his sermon, expressing his highest admiration for the precentor's musical talents, eulogizing the father and the daughter and the sister-in-law, speaking in that low silky whisper which he always had specially prepared for feminine ears, and, ultimately, gaining his object.4

The friendship between Charlotte Stanhope and Eleanor is another example of false friendship in the novel. Charlotte has realized that her younger brother Bertie will never be able to support himself, and she decides that Bertie should marry Eleanor. Charlotte tries to persuade Bertie to court Eleanor, and to marry her for her money.

She knew well how to play her game and played it without mercy; she knew none so well, what was her brother's
character, and she would have handed over to him the young widow, and the young widow’s money, and the money of the widow’s child, without remorse. With her pretended friendship and warm cordiality, she strove to connect Eleanor so closely with her brother as to make it impossible that she should go back even if she wished it.  

However, Mr Harding shows the nature of true and real friendship. At the end of the novel, Mr Harding is a true friend to Mr Quiverful by introducing him to his new duties at the Hospital.

Arm in arm they walked into the inner quadrangle of the building, and there the five old men met them. Mr Harding shook hands with them all, and then Mr Quiverful did the same. With Bunce Mr Harding shook hands twice, and Mr Quiverful was about to repeat the same ceremony, but the old man gave him no encouragement."I am very glad to know that at last you have a new warden," said Mr Harding in a very cheery voice.

Mr. Harding shows kindness and concern toward Mr Quiverful by helping him to begin duties as Warden of the Hospital. The novel ends by showing that Mr Harding’s sincerity and humility makes him different from the other clergymen in Barchester. The novel shows that true friendship is generous and unselfish, and that false friendship is selfish and calculating.
Much of the delight of reading Trollope is the result of his tone: there is a relaxing quality to his pacing, a likeable combination of sentiment, good sense, and sympathetic alertness to his voice, and a sense that the narrator understands human weakness and transforms the worst to humour through tender irony. To be sure Trollope prizes this sociability with his readers: “our doctrine,” says the narrator of *Barchester Towers*, confiding his method and seeming to practise it, “is that the author and reader should move along together in full confidence with each other”. The point of this comment is that in Trollope’s idea we are all human, whether reader or author. He refuses the particular territory of his fiction to surprise.

Trollope claims in *An Autobiography* that “he makes himself pleasant, that he charms his readers, though his readers will probably not know they have been charmed”, and “every sentence, every word … should tend to the telling of the story” Trollope believes that;

The novelist has other aims than the elucidation of his plot. He desires to make his readers so intimately acquainted with his characters that the creations of his brain should be to them speaking, moving, and living human creatures. This he can never do unless he knows those fictitious personages himself, and he can never know
them well unless he can live with them in the full reality of
established intimacy. They must be with him as he lies
down to sleep and as he wakes from his dreams. He must
learn to hate them and to love them.\footnote{9}

Therefore Trollope has lived with his characters, he knows them well.
He knows the tone of their voice and the colour of their hair and the clothes
they wear. Therefore he is successful in his works.

Even in \textit{Barchester Towers}, when we start the book, we see Trollope
shows us the characters, their situation in which some of them are already
known to us in \textit{The Warden} such as Mr Harding and his two daughters
Eleanor and Mrs Gantly and Archdeacon Grantly as well and through the
chapters we get to know that Eleanor Harding is a widow now and a mother
but Mr Harding is still the same and also he introduces us to some new
characters such as new bishop Dr Proudie and his wife Mrs Proudies and Mr
Obedian Slope who is the centre of the story in \textit{Barchester Towers}.

In the very opening chapters we learn that Dr Proudie has become the
Bishop and is described as:

\begin{quote}
A good looking man; spruce and dapper and very tidy, he is
somewhat below middle height, being about five feet four;
but he makes up for the inches which he wants by the dignity
\end{quote}
with which he carries those which he has. It is no fault of his own if he has not a commanding eye, for he studies hard to assume it. His features are well formed, though perhaps the sharpness of his nose may give to his face in the eyes of some people an air of insignificance, if so, it is greatly redeemed by his mouth and chain, of which he is justly proud.¹⁰

Trollope depicts his character in a comic way and the narrator says that Dr Proudie is a man who cares about forms and dignity of others although he is weak before his wife and prefers to accept her opinion rather than to argue with her. Mrs Proudie is authoritarian with all. As it is mentioned in chapter III:

she allows herself to be often guided by that eloquent preacher, the Revd Mr Slope, and as Dr Proudie is guided by his wife, it necessarily follows that the eminent man we have named has obtained a good deal of control over Dr Proudie in matters concerning religion.¹¹

In *An Autobiography* Trollope expresses his delight in writing about Mrs Proudie:

It was not only that she was a tyrant, a bully, a would be priestess, a very vulgar woman, and one who would send
headlong to nethermost pit all who disagreed with her; but that at the same time she was conscientious, by no means a hypocrite, really believing a brimstone which she threatened and anxious to save the souls around her from its horrors. And as her tyranny increased so did the bitterness of the moments of her repentance increase in that she knew herself to be a tyrant—till that bitterness killed her.\textsuperscript{12}

Mrs Proudie is portrayed a strong—minded person determined to get her way. She is as real as the women who are living at the present time. The world is full of strong and weak minded persons and Mrs Proudie does not just give us a satirical portrait of a certain type of person, but shows the fact that such people do exist, and their act and motivations may be as real as those of the characters we consider in the novel. Perhaps common life is not exactly the same as that Trollope narrates in his book but he provides us the characters with satirical basis to be judged by the reader.

Trollope mentions in \textit{An Autobiography} that:

\begin{quote}
The depth and breath and the narrowness and the shallowness of each should be clear to him [the novelist]. And as here in our outer world, we know that men and women change, become worse or better as temptation and conscience may guide them, so should these creatures of his change, and every change should be noted by him.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}
Therefore, Trollope attributed his success as a novelist mainly to his ability to create “real” characters, to his acute portrayal of the different sides of their personalities, to his living with them for long time and getting to know them intimately.\textsuperscript{14}

As we know, irony is never far away from Trollope’s novel and it is one of the reasons of his success in his novels. There is an eminent character in the novel that is characterized outstandingly by Trollope. He is Mr. Slope who is the domestic chaplain to Bishop Proudie at Barchester.

At first he is a follower of the Bishop's wife, but later becomes her enemy when he tries to take the control of the diocese from her hands. In \textit{BarchesterTowers}, Trollope writes about Mr Slope:

His hair is lank, and of a dull, pale, reddish hue. It is always formed into three straight lumpy masses, each brushed with admirable precision, and cemented with much grease...He wears no whiskers, and is always punctiliously shaven. His face is nearly of the same colour as his hair, though perhaps a little redder: it is not unlike beef-beef, however, one would say, of a bad quality. His forehead is capacious and high, but square and heavy, and unpleasantly shining. His mouth is large, though his lips are thin and bloodless and his big prominent, pale brown
eyes inspire anything but confidence. His nose, however, is his redeeming feature; it is pronounced straight and well formed; though I myself should have liked it better did it not possess a somewhat spongy, porous appearance, as though it had been cleverly formed out of a red colored cork.15

Trollope’s major technique in the novel is that of comic irony, therefore here Trollope by using irony in portraying Mr Slope tries to make the reader to dislike this character. It can be an indication to tyrant conscience of Mr Slope who misuses his profession as a clergyman to get to higher position.

He tries to attract people especially women to himself by his sermons apparently but his actual intent is completely different. So Trollope shows him as a hypocrite and spiritual tyrant and that his religion is a means for him to accuse and control and thus become master of other people.

Percy Lubbock16 declared that the art of fiction did not begin until the novelist thought his story "a matter to be shown" rather than told. For the most part contemporary critics and authors agreed with Lubbock. The most memorable character in Trollope's novels was often the narrator, who, in Booth's words, never hesitated "to intrude a comment, to interpret the characters, or to write an essay on cabbages and kings."17
Trollope uses his narrator even to disrupt conventional uses of suspense by building it up and then taking it away by the use of narrative revelations that are unexpected as the more conventional climax to suspense might be. It can be clarified by an example, when the narrator suddenly informs the reader that Eleanor will not marry either Slope or Bertie, destroying some suspense, while still preserving that which surrounds the question whom she will or will not marry.

It is not destined that Eleanor shall marry Mr Slope or Bertie Stanhope. And here perhaps it may be allowed to the novelist to explain his views on a very important point in the art of telling tales. He ventures to reprobate that system which goes so far to violate all proper confidence between the author and his readers by maintaining nearly to the end of the third volume a mystery as to the fate of their favourite personage\(^{18}\)

Trollope does not even allow the reader the tension of worrying who will win Eleanor Bold. Indeed, His narrator can move from third person narrative to an internal viewpoint of a protagonist or to external commentary or description.
Barchester Towers is also told from the third person omniscient point of view. The author can see everything that the characters do as well as discuss their motives and feelings. Many times during the story, the author specifically addresses the reader to explain why he has chosen to show some event or to elaborate on the feelings of the characters.

Trollope puts himself in the story as if he is a person in it; we can imagine him a character and shows the characters as real people. The narrator transforms the social facts through irony and humour.

I never could endure to shake hands with Mr Slope. A cold, clammy perspiration always exudes from him, the small drops are ever to be seen standing on his brow, and his friendly grasp is unpleasant. ¹⁹

James objects to Trollope’s open description of himself as narrator or storyteller, and of his novels as narratives, stories, and novels.

Trollope likes to pretend this is not a book as if the reader really forgets he is reading a book and imagines him or herself in Barchester for real. But Trollope says in his An Autobiography that “No novel is anything, for purposes either of comedy or tragedy, unless the reader can sympathize with the characters whose names he finds upon pages. Let an author so tell his tale as to touch his reader’s heart and draw his tears and has, so far, done his work well” ²⁰
Trollope stresses character and narration over plot and in *Ralph the Heir* Trollope says the reader of the novel would lay the book down “did he suspect that instruction, like a snake-in-the-grass, like physic beneath sugar, was to be imposed upon him”\(^{21}\)

In Trollope's comedy, however, setting has complete dramatic relevance. It is not the rhetorical scene-setting of Dickens, but there is nevertheless a covert and joyful collaboration between setting and character in *Barchester Towers*. After the archdeacon's first introduction to the new bishop, his wife, and his chaplain Mr Harding mildly exclaims that he will not find it possible to like Mr Slope:

Like him! roared the archdeacon, standing still for a moment to give more force to his voice; "like him!" All the ravens of the close cawed their assent. The old bells of the tower, in chiming the hour, echoed the words; and the swallows flying out from their nests mutely expressed a similar opinion. Like Mr Slope! Why no, it was not very probable that any Barchester-bred living thing should like Mr Slope! "Nor Mrs Proudie either," said Mr Harding. The archdeacon hereupon forgot himself. I will not follow his example, nor shock my readers by transcribing the term in which he expressed his feeling as to the lady who had been
named. The ravens and the last lingering notes of the clock
bells were less scrupulous, and repeated in corresponding
echoes the very improper exclamation\textsuperscript{22}

Here we can claim that Trollope uses characters and events to present his
own opinion about many novelistic conventions. In Chapter XIX,
"Barchester by Moonlight," Trollope achieves a counterpoint of mood by
means of a functional, dramatic use of the time of day. Eleanor Bold, Mr
Slope, and the Stanhopes taking a walk on a summer night discover that the
old city, by day so normal has undergone a breathtaking transformation and
its beauty stills their quarrelsome natures. The scene creates a temporary sign
of harmony which suggests the possibility of beauty and order in a world of
disequilibrium and ferment. It heightens by contrast the ensuing scenes of
battle, for although Barchester people are capable of appreciating such things
they are ironically incapable of achieving them in the social world.\textsuperscript{23}

In \textit{Barchester Towers}, Trollope stops the action out of fear that
“every well bred reader of these pages will lay down the book with
disgust”, equating the reader’s time with time in the novel, imagining his
readers’ reactions much as if they were characters, a status he confers in
\textit{Barchester Towers} by including them among Eleanor’s friends: “you, O
Reader, and I and Eleanor’s friends”.\textsuperscript{24} For James, such instructions were
Trollope’s “suicide” way of “reminding the reader that the story he was
telling was only, after all, make believe” 25. But technically that is
Trollope’s art that drops his readers in the stream of his story and makes
them to replace themselves on behalf of the characters in novel. He tries to
make his readers so intimately acquainted with his characters.

Another characteristic of Trollope’s work is giving detailed
information of his characters. Trollope provides full information about new
characters, so that readers would be able to understand the events of the
novel.

In *Barchester Towers* he devotes a full chapter to introduce the
Reverend Mr Arabin, ending the lengthy introduction with, “Such was Mr
Arabin the new vicar of St Ewald, who is going to stay with the Grantlys, at
Plumstead Episcopi.”26

Again and again we read after the introduction of a new personality;
“such was_____.” In other words, Trollope wants the reader not to forget the
clues which he gave about the gentlemen or lady introduced.

Mr Arabin is “The favored disciple of the great Dr
Gwynne, a high churchman… a poet and also a
polemical writer …an eloquent clergyman, a droll, odd,
humorous, energetic, conscientious man... a thorough gentleman. ... He was above the middle height, well made, and very active. His hair which had been jet black was now tinged with gray, but his face bore no signs of years.... The cheek bones were rather too high for beauty and the formation of the forehead too massive and heavy; but the eyes, nose and mouth were perfect. There was a continual play of lambent fire about his eyes, which gave promise of either pathos or humour whenever he essayed to speak, and that promise was rarely broken. There was a gentle play about his mouth which declared that his wit never descended to sarcasm, and that there was no ill-nature in his repartee.27

The narrator tries to make a decent portrait of Mr Arabin before his readers’ eyes unlike that of Mr Slope. Mr Arabin is somewhat different from Mr Slope; he was a pleasant and pragmatic man. We like him as Trollope leads us inside his mind deeply to feel him.

He never tries to get something from others. In other words his behaviour never comes from a desire for victory over other people but in fact his behaviour has come from a desire to think about religious faith and how to live in the proper way and to do right and accurate things.
There is a conflict between both characters as clergymen Mr Slope and Mr Arabin; that one is worldly and does anything to promote his position and the other is exactly the opposite who is unworldly and always intends to love and behave as a wise clergyman. Trollope shows to the reader that both the characters are famous and respected clergymen apparently and people trust them but their inner conscience and their intentions are so different. We know that Mr Slope tries to marry Mrs Bold just for her wealth but in vain.

When Mr Arabin is preparing to read himself in at St Edward’s, the narrator reflects with deceptively genial irony on the fact “it often surprises us that very young man can muster courage to preach for the first time to a strong congregation” he again goes on in mock wonder at how those “who have never yet passed ten thoughtful days” “are not stricken dumb by the new and awful solemnity of their position”

After a few paragraphs, the irony becomes much sharper, though, as the reader is led to the very un-genial reflection that perhaps the process of the ordination “banishes the natural modesty of youth.” we are thus urged to relax into positions which are finally very aggressive and specialized.
Madelin Neroni the younger daughter of the Rev. Dr Vesey Stanhope is another significant lady character in *Barchester Towers*:

The beauty of her face was uninjured, and that beauty was of a peculiar kind. Her copious rich brown hair was worn in Grecian bandeaux round her head, displaying as much as possible of her forehead and cheeks. Her forehead, though rather low, was very beautiful from its perfect contour and pearly whiteness. Her eyes were long and large, and marvelously bright.... The eyelashes were long and perfect.... Her nose and mouth and teeth and chin and neck and bust were perfect.\(^{31}\)

Madeline had married a dissolute Italian, been cruelly treated by him and returned to her father's house, a cripple, and with a daughter. The narrator has described the character and praised her as a charming and attractive girl who any man would like to accompany and though she has lost eight inches of her height because of ill-used manner of her husband but still she stays strong and her facial beauty is uninjured.

The description of her crippled state which follows is, however, almost clinically accurate:
She had fallen, she said, in ascending a ruin, and had fatally injured the sinews of her knee; so fatally that when she stood she lost eight inches of her accustomed height; so fatally that when she essayed to move, she could only drag herself painfully along, with protruded hip and extended foot, in a manner less graceful than that of a hunchback. \(^{32}\)

Trollope draws a picture of a strong lady who has suffered a lot in her life but still has a strong will and makes up her mind that she cannot walk properly anymore and has to drag herself. And the narrator tells us that although her great beauty attracted many suitors:

> As is so often the case, she married the very worst of those who sought her hand. Why she had chosen Paulo Neroni, a man of no birth and no property, a mere captain the Pope's guard, one who had come up to Milan either simply as an adventurer or else as a spy, a man of harsh temper and oily manners, mean in figure, swarthy in face, and so false in words to be hourly detected, need not now be told. When the moment for doing so came, she probably had no alternative. . . Six months afterward she arrived at her father's house a cripple, and a mother. \(^{33}\)
Signora Neroni also has admirers; indeed almost every man like Mr Slope in the novel is drawn to her almost irresistibly, though she seemingly has neither an interest in re-marriage nor the ability to re-marry. She has retreated to her parental home for the seeming social and financial security it offers; however as readers we know that her presence there is only one more destabilizing influence in a family in imminent danger of disintegration.

In *Barchester Towers*, Signora is shown as a crippled girl who doesn’t have successful matrimonial life, so it would be possible that the narrator intends to show the domestic violence in his character’s life which is absolutely visible in real social life and although she is self-centred and ruthless in her demands for attention from all male admirers, she is introduced to the reader, a talented lady in writing a letter and according to its subject the letter would be written full of wit, love, mischief, satire. She is good in poetry and literature too. She provides a little bitter realism, which adds force and depth to the final solution “Marriage means tyranny on one side and deceit on other. I say that a man is a fool to sacrifice his interests for such a bargain.
A woman, too generally, has no other way of living” 34 her cynicism is not explicitly supported, but since she does so much to ensure the solidity of the final approved society, the weight of her powerful experience and courage is assimilated into it. It is, ironically, this crippled woman who is the most powerful. She manages not only to expose the hypocrisy and unprincipled ambition of Mr. Slope and force Arabian to recognize that the “good thing of this world” is constant with his religion but actually hands him over to Eleanor, thereby arranging almost single-handedly the final disposition of the novel. For all the spider imagery associated with her, Signora Neroni has an absolutely sure moral instinct.35

In the last chapter of Barchester Towers Trollope states that; “The end of a novel, like the end of a children's dinner party, must be made up of sweetmeats and sugar -plums.”36 James describes this in Partial Portraits as an admission by Trollope that “he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best”37 ; but, as Wayne Booth has pointed out, the effect is in fact to emphasize the characters' inviolability38.

There is a famous scene between Eleanor and Mr Arabian which offended James’s scene of aesthetic integrity by making the character’s behave in ways not expected by readers, Trollope says that he is trying to save his novel. The scene and the comment are so interesting that they can bear the risk of repetition.
Had she given way and sobbed aloud, as in such cases a woman should do, he would have melted at once, implored her pardon, perhaps knelt at her feet and declared his love. Everything would have been explained, and Eleanor would have gone back to Barchester with a contented mind --- But then where would have been my novel? She did not cry and Mr Arabian did not melt.39

Far from destroying the integrity of the novel as James alleges, the celebrated question “where my novel would be?” can be said to anticipate self reflexivity of post modernist texts. Relying on the relationship already established with his reader, Trollope appeals to a verisimilitude of 'actuality', which contrasts his thorough knowledge of his particular creature with any superficial fictional stereotype of what 'a woman should do'. He can afford to risk drawing attention to his own fiction exactly because, as readers, we are convinced of its close similarity to 'life'; any momentary shock is minimized by this further evidence of Trollope's thorough knowledge of Eleanor-and by our pleasurable anticipation of watching more 'life-like' complications unfold instead of being fobbed off with a conventional happy ending.40
In *The Art of Fiction* James is defending the seriousness of the mimetic novel against the naive but persistent claim that it is "after all only a "make believe"", but that claim could be simply not true and the way Trollope directs his novels is the result of perfect confidence in his form and his narrative with the reader. He intends to make a direct connection with his reader in which the reader can feel and express his sympathy with persona.

As Trollope believes that a novel in style should be easy and lucid and grammatical, we can say the same about *Barchester Towers*, which is written in easy and lucid and highly readable style. And that accounts for its continuing popularity.
Notes & References

3. Ibid. 22
4. Ibid. 50
5. Ibid. 269
6. Ibid. 430
9. Ibid. 149-150
10. Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, 66
11. Ibid. 21
13. Ibid. 150


18. *Barchester Towers*.112

19. Ibid.25

20. *An Autobiography*.147


22. *Barchester Towers*.42

23. G. M. Harvey , Trollope as a Dramatic Novelist Author, *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, Vol. 16, No. 4.1976

24. *Barchester Towers*,241-384


26. *Barchester Towers*, 151

27. Ibid.150
28. Ibid.178

29. Ibid.179


31. *Barchester Towers*, 60

32. Ibid. 66

33. Ibid.66

34. Ibid.112


36. *Barchester Towers*.431


39. Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, chapter 12,32


41. Henry James, *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays*.59

42. James and Trollope.293