**Anthony Trollope**

Anthony Trollope (April 24, 1815 – December 6, 1882) became one of the most successful, prolific and respected English novelists of the Victorian era. Some of Trollope's best-loved works, known as the Chronicles of Barsetshire, revolve around the imaginary county of Barsetshire; he also wrote penetrating novels on political, social, and gender issues and conflicts of his day.

Trollope has always been a popular novelist. Noted fans have included Sir Alec Guinness (who never travelled without a Trollope novel), former British Prime Ministers Harold Macmillan and Sir John Major, economist John Kenneth Galbraith, American novelists Sue Grafton and Dominick Dunne and soap opera writer Harding Lemay. Trollope's literary reputation dipped somewhat during the last years of his life, but he regained the esteem of critics by the mid-twentieth century.

"Of all novelists in any country, Trollope best understands the role of money. Compared with him even Balzac is a romantic." — W. H. Auden

**Biography**

Anthony Trollope's father, Thomas Anthony Trollope, worked as a barrister. Thomas Trollope, though a clever and well-educated man and a Fellow of New College, Oxford, failed at the bar due to his bad temper. In addition, his ventures into farming proved unprofitable and he lost an expected inheritance when an elderly uncle married and had children. Nonetheless, he came from a genteel background, with connections to the landed gentry, and so wished to educate his sons as gentlemen and for them to attend Oxford or Cambridge. The disparity between his family's social background and its poverty would be the cause of much misery to Anthony Trollope during his boyhood.

Born in London, Anthony attended Harrow School as a day-boy for three years from the age of seven, as his father's farm lay in that neighbourhood. After a spell at a private school, he followed his father and two older brothers to Winchester College, where he remained for three years. He returned to Harrow as a day-boy to reduce the cost of his education. Trollope had some very miserable experiences at these two public schools. They ranked as two of the most élite schools in England, but Trollope had no money and no friends, and was bullied a great deal. At the age of twelve, he fantasized about suicide. However, he also daydreamed, constructing elaborate imaginary worlds.

In 1827, his mother Frances Trollope moved to America with Trollope's three younger siblings, where she opened a bazaar in Cincinnati, which proved unsuccessful. Thomas Trollope joined them for a short time before returning to the farm at Harrow, but Anthony stayed in England throughout. His mother returned in 1831 and rapidly made a name for herself as a writer, soon earning a good income. His father's affairs, however, went from bad to worse. He gave up his legal practice entirely and failed to make enough income from farming to pay rents to his landlord Lord Northwick. In 1834 he fled to Belgium to avoid arrest for debt. The whole family moved to a house near Bruges, where they lived entirely on Frances's earnings. In 1835, Thomas Trollope died.

While living in Belgium, Anthony worked as a Classics usher (a junior or assistant teacher) in a school with a view to learning French and German, so that he could take up a promised commission in an Austrian cavalry regiment, which had to be cut short at six weeks. He then obtained a position as a civil servant in the British Post Office through one of his mother's family connections, and returned to London on his own. This provided a respectable, gentlemanly occupation, but not a well-paid one.

**Time in Ireland**

Trollope lived in boarding houses and remained socially awkward; he referred to this as his "hobbledehoyhood". He made little progress in his career until the Post Office sent him to Ireland in 1841. He married an Englishwoman named Rose Heseltine in 1844. They lived in Ireland until 1859 when they moved back to England.[1]

Despite the calamity of the famine in Ireland, Trollope wrote of his time in Ireland in his autobiography:

"It was altogether a very jolly life that I led in Ireland. The Irish people did not murder me, nor did they even break my head. I soon found them to be good-humoured, clever - the working classes very much more intelligent than those of England - economical and hospitable."[2]

His professional role as a post-office surveyor brought him into contact with Irish people.[3] Trollope began writing on the numerous long train trips around Ireland he had to take to carry out his postal duties. Setting very firm goals about how much he would write each day, he eventually became one of the most prolific writers of all time. He wrote his earliest novels while working as a Post Office inspector, occasionally dipping into the "lost-letter" box for ideas.[4]

Significantly, many of his earliest novels have Ireland as their setting — natural enough given his background, but unlikely to enjoy warm critical reception, given the contemporary English attitudes towards Ireland.[5] It has been pointed out by critics that Trollope's view of Ireland separates him from many of the other Victorian novelists.[6] Some critics claim that Ireland did not influence Trollope as much as his experience in England, and that the society in Ireland harmed him as a writer, especially since Ireland was experiencing the potato famine during his time there.[7] Such critics were dismissed as holding bigoted opinions against Ireland and did not reflect Trollope's true attachment to the island.[8][9]

There were three novels written about Ireland, and two were written during the famine while the third deals with the famine as a theme (The Macdermots of Ballycloran, The Landleaguers and Castle Richmond respectively).[10] Two short stories deal with Ireland ("The O'Conors of Castle Conor, County Mayo"[11] and "Father Giles of Ballymoy" [12]).[13] It has been argued by some critics that these works seek to unify an Irish and British identity, instead of view the two as distinct.[14] Even as an Englishman in Ireland, he was still able to attain what was seen as essential to being an "Irish writer": possessed, obsessed, and "mauled" by Ireland.[15][16]

The reception of the Irish works left much to be desired. Henry Colburn wrote to Trollope to say, "It is evident that readers do not like novels on Irish subjects as well as on others".[17] In particular, magazines such as New Monthly Magazine wrote reviews that attacked the Irish for their actions during the famine were representative of the dismissal by English readers to any work written about the Irish.[18][19]

As such, Trollope wrote, about Phineas Finn as an Irishman:

"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. But in spite of this Phineas succeeded."[20]

**Return to England**

By the mid-1860s, Trollope had reached a fairly senior position within the Post Office hierarchy. Postal history credits him with introducing the pillar box (the ubiquitous bright red mail-box) in the United Kingdom. He had by this time also started to earn a substantial income from his novels. He had overcome the awkwardness of his youth, made good friends in literary circles, and hunted enthusiastically.

He left the Post Office in 1867 to run for Parliament as a Liberal candidate in 1868. After he lost, he concentrated entirely on his literary career. While continuing to produce novels rapidly, he also edited the St Paul's Magazine, which published several of his novels in serial form.

His first major success came with The Warden (1855) — the first of six novels set in the fictional county of "Barsetshire" (often collectively referred to as the Chronicles of Barsetshire), usually dealing with the clergy. The comic masterpiece Barchester Towers (1857) has probably become the best-known of these. Trollope's other major series, the Palliser novels, concerned itself with politics, with the wealthy, industrious Plantagenet Palliser and his delightfully spontaneous, even richer wife Lady Glencora usually featuring prominently (although, as with the Barsetshire series, many other well-developed characters populated each novel).

Trollope's popularity and critical success diminished in his later years, but he continued to write prolifically, and some of his later novels have acquired a good reputation. In particular, critics generally acknowledge the sweeping satire The Way We Live Now (1875) as his masterpiece. In all, Trollope wrote forty-seven novels, as well as dozens of short stories and a few books on travel.

Anthony Trollope died in London in 1882. His grave stands in Kensal Green Cemetery, near that of his contemporary Wilkie Collins. C. P. Snow wrote a biography of Trollope, published in 1975, called Trollope: His Life and Art.