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"Wholesome Lessons": Love as Tact between Matthew Arnold and Anthony Trollope

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The representation of love in Anthony Trollope's novels has elicited a variety of comments. Bradford Booth dismisses the subject out of hand: "the tragedy of Trollope's career is his capitulation to the stereotype of romantic love" (164). More generously, R. C. Terry maintains that love allows Trollope to create a blend of irony and illusion (102). Shirley Letwin agrees that Trollopian love is a feeling of "enchantment without illusion, a rational passion" (147), whereas A. O. J. Cockshut maintains that it is painful and destructive (114). Juliet McMaster, in turn, has shown that Trollope approaches love as an instrument of power, while Robert Polhemus believes that it expresses a character's psychological needs. Like shards, these different accounts are part of a whole. I want to present an overarching theory of love that might glue them together.

The key to Trollope's theory of love, I would suggest, is that it informs both his literary practice and his understanding of the political. Trollopian love bears out a particular form of liberalism, one that rests on the assumption that full knowledge of other people is impossible. In regulating social interaction, fixed formulas are therefore doomed to fall short of the mark. Instead, the subject should seek to pre-empt disagreement "by attempting to unsettle the oppositional relations of conflictual logics and to widen the possibilities of relation on offer" (Russell 19). Such a task requires a combination of reserve and surprise, which make it possible to attend to "the quality of the medium, to middle space, and not just to the quantity of shared information between people" (Russell 37–38). This kind of disposition does not set up a distance between self and other, but situates itself within the sphere of the tactile and the intimate. It can be called a form of tact, if tact is defined as a generous disposition rather than cold politeness. If the assumption of the ultimate unknowability of others may lead to a tragic-skeptical stance of distant and disenchanted observation in alternative ideologies (as in some of the

more sombre strands of Burkean conservatism), in Trollope's tactful or tactile liberalism it gives rise to a readiness to touch and be touched.¹

We witness an example of tact in Trollope's *Marion Fay* when Lord Hampstead invites Marion (and her father) and George Roden (and his mother) to Hendon Hall. During dinner, in a scene that Trollope recuperated from *The Duke's Children* (329), Zachary Fay censures the young lord's use of slang. This could give rise to conflict, but Hampstead turns it into an occasion for comedy:

"I suppose you found it awfully cold," [Hampstead] said.

"I do not know that we were awed, my lord," said the Quaker. "But the winter has certainly set in with some severity." . . .

"Everything is awful now," said Hampstead, laughing. "Of course the word is absurd, but one gets in the way of using it because other people do." (145)

Lord Hampstead does not take issue with Mr Fay's censure, but counters with laughter and evasion. His manners rely not on etiquette and politeness but on surprise and compromise. In addition, Hampstead has removed all visual signs of status and hierarchy: "If the Quaker [Mr Fay] himself expected much of that gilding of which he had spoken he was certainly disappointed" (145). Opening his mansion to two clerks and their mother or daughter, Hampstead is obviously at pains to establish a dialogue that is open to all and to extend "the play of the redistribution of experience through more social arenas, and among more people" (Russell 20). He is, in short, tactful.

According to David Russell, it is in the essays of Charles Lamb, Matthew Arnold, and Walter Pater that this modern form of tact received its most intricate conceptualization. These essayists encourage us to let our habits be guided by appreciation, intuition, feeling. Arnold, for instance, maintains that to "handle [poetry] properly there is needed a poise so perfect that the least overweight in any direction tends to destroy the balance. . . . The critic of poetry should have the finest tact" (1960: 174). I would suggest that what Arnold here calls tact, Trollope calls love. Trollope's *Autobiography* points us in this direction: "If the novelist therefore

¹ The last fifteen years have witnessed a resurgence in the study of Victorian liberalism and its many aspects: cosmopolitanism (Anderson), governmentality (Goodlad), lived experience (Hadley), perfection (Malachuk), imperialism (Mehta), class (Robbins), aestheticism (Thomas). For engagements with Trollope's liberalism in addition to those found in the above, see Earle and Gagnier. For reflections on this interdisciplinary nexus, see the two fora in *Victorian Studies* (48.1 [2005] and 53.2 [2011]).

can so *handle* [love] as to do good by his *handling*, as to teach wholesome lessons in regard to love, the good which he does will be very wide" (1999: 224–25; my emphasis). Trollope's repetition of this eminently tactile word, "handling," in combination with the language of pedagogy suggests a proximity between his writing and the ethos of Arnold's criticism. Indeed, I would argue that Trollope's novelistic portrayal of love mirrors Arnold's essayistic handling of poetry. This similarity operates both thematically and formally. Just as Arnold performs what he defines, Trollope's literary technique is a reflection of the characters whose conduct he describes: as Arnold is tactful in his definition of tact, so Trollope is tender in his descriptions of love. I shall focus on the thematic aspect and conclude with a consideration of the formal.

Trollope's theory of love as a form of tact can be found in many of his novels, but is most richly elaborated in *Marion Fay*. There are indications that Trollope may have come under Arnold's spell whilst conceiving his forty-fourth novel. Trollope began writing *Marion Fay* in the winter of 1878, the year that Arnold had reaffirmed his place in the English intellectual landscape with "Equality," a lecture which he first delivered at the Royal Institute in February 1878 and which was published as an essay in the *Fortnightly Review* a month later. It is likely that Trollope came across Arnold's text. Trollope and Arnold knew one another through their shared membership of clubs such as the Athenaeum and the Garrick, and organizations such as the Royal Literary Fund. They also shared friends — Sir Frederick Pollock, for instance — and participated in literary ventures such as, indeed, the *Fortnightly Review*. In addition, there is a good chance that Trollope was directed to "Equality" by his good friend and Arnold's brother-in-law, W. E. Forster. Forster may have been the inspiration for Trollope's portrayal of a Quaker family in *Marion Fay*, as he was the only man among Trollope's close acquaintances with a Quaker past.²

Unfortunately, the correspondence between Trollope and Forster has not survived, nor is there any hard evidence for a case of direct influence. Foster and Arnold, however, would have applauded the actions of the novel's protagonist, Lord Hampstead. This becomes even clearer when

² W. E. Forster grew up as a Quaker but was excommunicated in 1850 when he married Jane Arnold, one of Matthew Arnold's sisters. In "The Early Quakers and Quakerism," Forster presents his excommunication as inevitable in the climate of the times. He is better known for his advocacy of parliamentary reform and national education, and for his role as Chief Secretary for Ireland.

we turn to Trollope's depiction of love, which involves a number of concepts and phrases that are recognizably Arnoldian.

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When Trollope began writing *Marion Fay*, a first attempt was being made to illuminate the City with Jablochkoff candles. This fact makes its way into the novel when Lord Llwdydlw mentions "Mr Green's Bill for lighting London by electricity" (1985: 327). The electrical illumination of the City dovetailed with other urban developments such as the expansion of the suburbs in North London, where most of the novel is set. The novel's title character, Marion Fay, lives at 17 Paradise Row, Holloway. One of her neighbours is a Post Office clerk, George Roden, whose name is identical to a street in that area (J. H. Miller 88). Through a political debating society, Roden strikes up a friendship with the heir of the Marquis of Kingsbury, Lord Hampstead, who resides at Hendon Hall, his father's "lovely suburban seat" (4). When Hampstead visits Holloway, he falls in love with Marion Fay; when Roden visits Hendon, he falls in love with Hampstead's sister, Lady Frances. The suburbs are *loci amoeni*, it seems.

This poses a challenge, for the nature of the suburb was determined by a very different, procedural kind of liberalism, one that was founded on distance rather than intimacy. Chris Otter has demonstrated that electric lighting and the expansion of the suburbs were part of an agenda that sought to transform nineteenth-century London, poorly lit and mired in fog, into a city where sight could be "bidirectional, tacit, normative, and pervasive" (50). This change did not occur overnight. Bills such as the Municipal Corporations Act (1835) and Metropolitan Management Act (1855) created the conditions for easing the passage of legislation and cleared the way for the "appointment of municipal surveyors, engineers, and inspectors whose job it was to supervise and construct roads and buildings" (69). These new civil servants widened thoroughfares, found ways of abating smoke, laid gas mains, positioned street lamps, and assembled electricity networks. Technology was put in the service of a space where "one attentively looked and was available to be attentively seen" (50). Engineers thus sought to embed the liberal idea of an oligoptic space in the structure of the modern city. According to Bruno Latour, spaces such as these do not have

a central, dominant vantage point. This makes an oligoptic space an arena within which a small group of people observe each other: it is a place in which mutual oversight takes place. Moreover, looks, gazes, and glimpses are distributed relatively symmetrically; . . . in an oligoptic space the viewed can always return the glance because all are viewers and viewed, and, hence, one can always verify whether one is being watched. (Otter 74)

The suburb is a case in point. It was designed to redirect citizens' attention from their environment to one another: "Suburbia, in particular, is essentially a mammoth apparatus of distantiation, a crafted space of sweet smells, quiet streets, upturned noses, gardenesque views, upholstered softness, and tinkling pianos" (60).

One cannot ignore the possibility that *Paradise Row* is an oligoptic space such as the museum, the library, the zoo, the hospital, the park, the boulevard (as opposed to a panoptic institution such as the prison). Significantly, *Marion Fay* was the only novel (as far as we know) for which Trollope drew up a geographical sketch in his drafts.³ We might read this as a sign of his intention to envision a space in which self-control had been optimized: "Maps, along with street signs, house numbers, and streetlamps, allowed the individual, when alone in the city, to be secure, mobile and autonomous" (Otter 54).

Yet Trollope's representation of the suburbs questions rather than promotes this agenda. In *Paradise Row*, glances are not always returned, as some of the viewers hide behind glass. Having fallen in love with Marion Fay, Hampstead visits the street regularly and feels that his movements are being watched. Perversely, its inhabitants take advantage of their liberal surroundings and turn supervision into surveillance (e.g., 40, 121, 170). Behind their curtains, they are unwilling to be observed themselves: Mrs Demijohn, Clara Demijohn, and Mrs Duffer operate under the cover of anonymity. This is emphasized when Clara Demijohn sends an anonymous letter to the Marchioness of Kingsbury to snitch on Hampstead. Such parochialism is at odds with the liberal quality of self-criticism that the structure of the suburb ought to stimulate.⁴ Similarly, it is an ominous sign that these three faceless women are experts in the art of physiognomy. Nothing is known about George Roden's mother, for

³ Bodleian Library, Oxford, MSS. Don. c. 10, fol. 133. A transcription of Trollope's sketches can also be found in R. H. Super's superb edition (1985: xxi–xxiii).

⁴ On the subject of liberalism and anonymity, see Hadley (125–74) and Small.

example, but they successfully guess the identity and background of one of her friends, Mrs Vincent (33). This, too, casts a shadow on the tools of liberalism: physiognomy provided guidelines with which to interpret non-deliberate signs. Unlocking a knowledge that was “potentially open to all” (Otter 51), it created the possibility of a “democratisation of observation” (Hartley 41; quoted in Otter 51).⁵ Trollope shows that this knowledge did not necessarily foster liberal subjectivity.

Significantly, physiognomy is also at odds with love. Throughout Trollope’s fiction, love casts a veil over the other’s countenance, rendering it illegible. Hampstead, for instance, laments that Marion “did not know. She did not understand. . . . [T]he character of others she had not learned to read” (432–33). The novel’s setting in Holloway thus suggests that love is present in the suburbs despite — rather than because of — the distance that suburbs ought to promote. As Hampstead’s words indicate, furthermore, love creates a situation where one is faced with the limits of knowledge. This situation requires a kind of tact that has no place in the supervision liberalism described by Otter: “while the suburb, the library, and the boulevard were sites where visual command could be exercised, the slum, the court, and the alley were spaces where this command crumbled and gave way to something more tactile and intimate” (19). Trollope’s liberalism, like Arnold’s, does not share this fastidious vision; it favours close contact, not distance.

⁵ Scientific physiognomy began with Lavater’s *Physiognomische Fragmente* (1775–1778), translated into English as *Essays on Physiognomy* (1789–1793). For more on the development of this discourse in nineteenth-century British thinking, see Gray and Pearl. The most influential thesis about the subject, which Otter believes to be inaccurate, is arguably Walter Benjamin’s. Benjamin suggests that the French sketches known as the physiologies “eroded the reputation of [physiognomy’s] empiricism without adding anything of their own. They assured people that everyone could — unencumbered by any factual knowledge — make out the profession, character, background, and lifestyle of passers-by. The physiologies present this ability as a gift which a good fairy lays in the cradle of the big-city dweller” (2003: 20). When the fairies ran out of tricks, they moved into the literature of the masses, where physiognomic knowledge was recycled as a part of the flâneur’s pose as a detective: “the flâneur has made a study of the physiognomic appearance of people in order to discover their nationality and social station, character and destiny, from a perusal of their gait, build, and play of features. The interest in concealing the true motives of the flâneur must have been pressing indeed to have occasioned such a shabby thesis” (1999: 430). In the context of mid-Victorian Britain, it is Dickens rather than Trollope that one turns to for fairies and flâneurs, although Dickens, too, has reservations (see Zirker).

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In the passage from "On Translating Homer" that has already been quoted, Arnold argues that the critic's task is to interpret a subject that inspires an array of emotions without being overwhelmed:

To press to the sense of the thing itself with which one is dealing, not to go off on some collateral issue about the thing, is the hardest matter in the world. The "thing itself" with which one is here dealing, — the critical perception of poetic truth, — is of all things the most volatile, elusive, and evanescent; by even pressing too impetuously after it, one runs the risk of losing it. (1960: 174)

To be tactful is to hold back yet to press on. Poetic truth, "the thing itself," cannot be grasped by actively looking for it but must be felt intuitively, reflexively, unconsciously. As Russell argues, we might want to understand "the thing itself" psychoanalytically. Critical tact gives us an example of what Christopher Bollas has called object-relating (Russell 64n.99). Children relate to objects without the language or consciousness to know them: "While we do know something of the character of the object which affects us, we may not have thought it yet" (Bollas 3). These impressions leave their mark upon the ego. To "see the object as in itself it really is" (Arnold 1960: 140), then, means to look at the level of the relational, the pre-reflective level of knowledge at which relations are still being made up and objects still have a role to play. Such a form of tact demands that we look at a poem, an object, a word, a person, as if for the first time.

In such terms, Arnold's wish to "press to the sense of the thing itself" corresponds with Trollope's delineation of the recognition of love, as can be seen in the following scene from *Marion Fay*, in which Hampstead asks Marion to poke his fire:

"Coals were made to be poked. I feel sure of that. Do take the poker and give them one blow. That will make you at home in the house for ever, you know." Then he handed the implement to Marion. She could hardly do other than take it in her hand. She took it, blushed up to the roots of her hair, paused a moment, and then gave the one blow to the coals that had been required of her. "Thanks," said he, nodding at her as he still knelt at her feet and took the poker from her; "thanks. Now you are free of Hendon Hall for ever. I wouldn't have any one but a friend poke my fire." (147)

This scene is a variation upon a theme. When two characters in Trollope's fiction are reading, this is often a sign that their love is waning: what "in-

terests Trollope . . . isn't the relation between a person and a text so much as the relation, or lack thereof, that two persons can establish only in the presence of a printed party" (Price 60). In the passage above, the poker fulfils a function that is normally occupied by books. This adjustment draws the reader's attention to the tactile nature of this encounter. Indeed, Hampstead's request points towards the handling that tact is supposed to encourage. His surprise elicits a response that is unconscious and instinctive. Granting Hampstead's wish, Marion knows that a form of knowledge is about to unveil itself, but as yet she can only see its contours and not its substance. The event leaves a trace in her unconscious: "Not for a moment did her mind run away, as they were taken homewards, from the object of her unconscious idolatry" (155). One might therefore see the poker as what Bollas calls an unthought known, an object that creates a space for the play of thought in the realm of the unconscious. However, the scene is also clearly a joke. Marion does not know that she has been touched by love: "Of course it was a joke! but I wish I hadn't done it" (147). Her misgivings are not a mile off. It is not difficult to see why she should blush. Hampstead's joke allows him to imagine himself as, essentially, the spectator of an act of sexual aggression; his joke is one that Freud would categorize as obscene (2002: 94–99). More generally, however, Freud maintains that jokes originate in the play of words and ideas. Hampstead's words, indeed, are charged with *double entendre*. His joke is thus tactful insofar as it aims "to provide simply a frame, a space for the play of thought; [it] does not impose the content in advance" (Russell 146).

Not all characters appreciate Hampstead's jokes, however. Many regard them as breaking taboos. Their attitudes to Hampstead thus give the concept of tact that Trollope develops a negative correlative.

Like tact, the taboo draws its power from the traces that mark our unconscious. Etymologically, too, the taboo shares an important element with tact: touching. Nevertheless, the two are radically opposed. Whereas tact fosters play and association, the taboo nurtures neurosis and prohibition: "the principal prohibition, the nucleus of the neurosis, is against touching; and thence it is sometimes known as 'touching phobia' or '*dé-lire du touche*'" (Freud 1961: 27). In *Marion Fay*, Lady Kingsbury's neurotic behaviour exemplifies Freud's theory that in modern society the fascination with the gruesome and the taboo has been channelled into admissible forms. She is horrified when she sees Hampstead play with her children: "When I think of what he is, and to what he will reduce the whole family should he live, I cannot bear to see him touch them" (140).

Taken at face value, Lady Kingsbury's neurosis is a case of the "taboo against marriage between members of different classes" (J. H. Miller 88), but it can actually be traced back to two deeper obsessions. On the one hand, she believes that Hampstead is a degenerate, a half-caste. The son of an aristocrat and a commoner, his blood is impure (140). On the other hand, her response may have psycho-sexual roots. Being more than thirty years of age, she has had to settle for a position in which she is not "the mother of her husband's heir" (78). Her stepson, in contrast, embodies all that she would have wished for, but such union would be tinged with incest.

The presence of taboo enhances the general contours of the concept of tact through contrast, but Trollope introduces an even more important foil for the more specific theory of tact as love. This foil is the theory of love as a response to the sublime.

Enlarging on some of J. Hillis Miller's observations, Sigi Jöttkandt has argued that women in Trollope's fiction react to the sight of male beauty in a way that structurally resembles the recognition of the sublime.⁶ In particular, Trollope's portrayal of female love is marked by a number of characteristics of the sublime as Edmund Burke defines it in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Burke's empirical sublime is characterized by sensorial overkill: it is obscure, vast, incomprehensible. Intense darkness can produce this experience, but so can intense exposure to light, "such a light as that of the sun, immediately exerted on the eye, as it overpowers the sense" (Burke 45). For the viewer, the intense light of the sublime excites a sense of self-annihilation and self-forgetting: "we submit to what we admire" (55). It cannot be experienced consciously or felt in the moment, but only reflected upon afterwards. As a result, the sight of the sublime often causes writers to confront the nature of language itself. Only through language can they come to grips with their experience: "the writing of the sublime encounters its topic as something other and more than a mere topic, namely, as a kind of event in the very process of thinking and writing it" (Balfour 332). Writing about the sublime, in this view, is performative: it seeks to bring the sublime back to life.

⁶ Trollope thus subtly revises Burke's own revision of the sublime: in contrast to the classical tradition, Burke maintains that women are "incapable of discriminating among the beautiful and the sublime" (Jöttkandt 4). Coleridge follows this tradition in his famous anecdote of a woman who thought that a waterfall could be both. According to Jöttkandt, however, Trollope's women are capable of making this distinction. For more on the history of this gendered division, see Balfour.

In Trollope's fiction, Jöttkandt argues, the male object is in many ways similar to a manifestation of the sublime. In terms of this theory the interpretation of the poker scene would be different from the one given above. As we have seen, Marion does not realize what she has just experienced, trying to dismiss it as a joke. It is only on her way home that she can make sense of what she has felt. The scene thus exemplifies J. Hillis Miller's claim that in Trollope's novels love "seems always to have happened already, at some time anterior to whatever time anyone is aware of it" (Miller and Asensi 301). Furthermore, Hampstead seems to be surrounded by a halo. When Marion Fay is firm that marriage is out of the question, Hampstead reflects that all "lightness and brightness had gone from him" (400): she "had bade him retriack his beams and take the light and the splendour of his sun elsewhere" (438). One might object that this is rhetorical veneer — Trollope alludes to Milton's *Lycidas* (l. 170) — but more is at stake. Marion Fay initially refuses to acknowledge Hampstead's love. She submits to him and effaces herself: "To such a one as I am to sacrifice myself is all that I can do in the world" (192).⁷ When she finally does dare to look her sublime lover in the eye, she does so by means of a performative gesture: she declares that she loves him. It is this that brings love into being: "when a Trollopian heroine confesses her love for a man, she declares a truth that is of a different order than all of the rest of the novel's statements" (Jöttkandt). This explains why Trollope's women can only love once, which sometimes leads to tragedy, as there is nothing to prevent them from falling in love with scoundrels: Lily Dale becomes an old maid (*The Small House at Allington*), Emily Hotspur dies (*Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite*), and it is only when Ferdinand Lopez meets his Maker that Emily Wharton is released from his hold (*The Prime Minister*).⁸ Marion Fay's lover is worthy, but in her case, too, love eventually proves fatal.

The sublime theory of love can illuminate many aspects of Trollope's representation of love, but it runs up against some problems. In his copy

⁷ For more detailed discussions of self-sacrifice in Trollope's fiction, see Blumberg as well as Schramm (181–215).

⁸ Trollope's deployment of the motif of women knowing only one true love has been explained in a number of ways. Cockshut interprets it as a convenient gesture, both narratologically and ideologically, suggesting that Trollope "does not stress the idea that choice cannot be analysed; he simply leaves us to infer it from his silence. For him it is not mysterious, merely unknown" (112). R. C. Terry maintains that it is "a statement on the sacredness of love, however it may seem to us to reveal perversity or masochism in the heroine" (102). One might also understand it as a symptom of male authorship. Nancy K. Miller underscores that "in the politics of seduction, once proves generally to be enough. Thus the rule of female experience in male-authored fiction is the drama of a single misstep" (x).

of the *Enquiry*, which he read when he was eighteen, Trollope voices his disagreement with Burke's definition of the sublime quite regularly. "When Burke makes his famous connection between fear and the sublime and remarks majestically that even some small poisonous animals 'are capable of raising ideas of the sublime,'" for instance, "Trollope retorts: 'You cannot say a wasp has anything sublime about it'" (Humphreys 196). In a rare theoretical statement at the end of his career, furthermore, Trollope aligns the sublime with "romance" and "sensation" as opposed to "real life" (see 1879: 188–91). This briefly brings us to the issue of form. Sensation and romance in particular are synonymous with the sensation novel — one thinks of Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon — from which Trollope, as a realist, sought to distance himself (1999: 228–29). Importantly, the sensation novel was a domesticated version of the Gothic novel — here one thinks of Matthew Lewis or Ann Radcliffe — which was itself a literary reworking of the Burkean sublime (Hogle 14–15). *Marion Fay* is the very opposite of a sensation novel or Gothic novel, however, and satirizes their conventions. When Lady Frances declares that she is engaged to George Roden, the Marchioness takes her to a family property in Germany, Königsgraaf, reminiscing that there "was once a time, — a very good time, as Lady Kingsbury thought now, — in which a young lady could be locked up in a convent, or perhaps in a prison, or absolutely forced to marry some suitor whom her parents should find for her. But those comfortable days were past" (66). Unlike the heroines of Gothic novels, Lady Frances does not face revenants or dungeons; instead, she quietly bides her time until her father realizes the absurdity of the situation.

Trollope's portrayal of love as sublime, then, is a parody, a joke. This joke reveals that the sublime is imbricated with authority and respect: "Caricature, parody and travesty, just like their counterpart in real life, unmasking, are aimed at persons and things with a claim on authority and respect, and in some sense '*sublime*'" (Freud 2002: 195).⁹ Indeed, in

⁹Freud's theory draws repeatedly on nineteenth-century physiology and idealist aesthetics: "The sublime is something on a large scale in a metaphorical, transferred psychological sense, and I would like to make, or rather repeat, the hypothesis that this too, like that which is large somatically, is represented by an extra expenditure" of energy (2002: 195). Freud's footnote directs the reader to Alexander Bain's *The Emotions and the Will* (1859). Elsewhere (2002: 143) he also refers to Herbert Spencer's theory in "The Physiology of Laughter" (1860). Bain's and Spencer's understanding of psychical energy as a closed circuit influenced Victorian conceptions of the novel, as Nicholas Dames has shown. Trollope, in particular, was a close friend of G. H. Lewes, one of the most important figures in this nexus of physiology, aesthetics, and literature.

Burke's view, "while tyrants are sublime . . . , only the beautiful, with its commitment to companionable resemblance between humans, disguises the disequilibrium of power so effectively that we all, like Adam" — or like Marion Fay — "become accomplices in our own deaths" (Ferguson 53). Trollope has no truck with sublime tyrants, as his portrayal of the Marchioness indicates: the heavy-handedness of the interlingually doubled pun on the king's grave in her name leaves little to the imagination.

Whereas the theory of love as sublime is affiliated with inequality, the theory of love as tact serves the interests of equality. In "Equality," Arnold laments that the English propensity for the power of conduct has dwarfed the three other "elements in our humanisation" (1993b: 222): intellect and science, social life and manners, and beauty. This imbalance has produced a "religion of inequality" (215) that the Puritanism of the middle class is keeping alive. The Philistines are not the only candle-bearers of inequality, though. Arnold also devotes a small part of his essay to an attack on the aristocracy. His first move, indeed, is to take "the votes for and against equality" by comparing the mainstay of the British aristocracy, the law of bequest, to customs of other modern nations (1993b: 217). Clinging to the powers of entail and settlement, England is still in the clutches of feudalism, whereas elsewhere there is a "diseased appetite, as we must think it, for equality" (1993b: 217–18).

At first sight, Trollope seems to side against Arnold. In *Marion Fay*, Trollope diagnoses equality as a disease inasmuch as the novel gives Arnold's figure of speech a narrative elaboration. Hampstead's conquest of Marion's heart is described as an infection:

But, as it will sometimes be that a man shall in his flesh receive a fatal injury, of which he shall for a while think that only some bruise has pained him, some scratch annoyed him; that a little time, with ointment and a plaister, will give him back his body as sound as ever; but then after a short space it becomes known to him that a deadly gangrene is affecting his very life; so will it be with a girl's heart. (155)

This infection seems to spread from Hampstead's republicanism, "the ultra virus of his political convictions" (4). Similarly, the family virus takes its toll on the Marquis's mental health. Vexed by Lady Frances's willingness to marry a Post Office man, Lord Kingsbury, too, succumbs to a depression: "It is ill ministering to a mind diseased" (161).¹⁰

¹⁰ Arnold may have returned Trollope's compliments: his famous Rede lecture *Literature and Science* refers to this line from *Macbeth* (V.iii.40) to make a point about the ability

Actually, however, these ailments are caused by a desire for inequality, not equality. As Arnold would have it, this desire is motivated by religion. If Marion's wound is understood psychologically, it is caused by a religiously ingrained sense of inequality: "Because he has not seen the distance, shall I be blind to it?" (192). Likewise, what ails the Marquis is not his daughter's engagement but his separation from her (162), which is the doing of the family chaplain, whose "presence contributes largely to the Marquis's illness" (Durey 41), and of Lady Frances's stepmother, the Marchioness, for whom "aristocratic dogmas" are "a religion" (27). Lady Kingsbury's taboos, indeed, are backed by religion. Hampstead, she writes, does not know "how to live in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call him!" (79). The chaplain sanctions her beliefs, confirming that "the difference in rank and station which it has pleased the Lord to institute should be maintained with all their privileges and all their honours" (58). Such beliefs are the butt of Trollope's satire. Instigated by the Marchioness, Mr Greenwood warms to the idea of murdering Hampstead. This, obviously, is something that he, at least as a man of the cloth, ought to forbid.

In addition, the Marchioness represents what Arnold thinks of as a typically English lack of self-reflection: she considers it "a national misfortune that [Hampstead] should outlive his father" (239) and thinks that his death "would confer so great a benefit on the world at large" (80). Her opinion is not disinterested, though. What Lady Kingsbury really craves is to see her own son, Lord Frederic, installed as heir. In his depiction of the Marchioness, Trollope thus embroiders on Arnold's suggestion that the assumption that our signal inequality of classes and property is expedient for our civilization and welfare, "of which the distinguished personages who adopt it seem so sure that they think it needless to produce grounds for it, is just what we have to examine" (1993b: 220).

Hampstead, in contrast, represents what Arnold calls the "lovers of man's perfection" (1993b: 218): "He had gone through the years of his early life forming some Utopian ideas, — dreaming of some perfection in politics, in philanthropy, in social reform, and the like" (412). It is his love of perfection in politics that fuels his love for Marion. Marion's first objection to Hampstead's suit is their difference in social standing, a difference that Hampstead turns upon itself: "Let your opinion stand

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to produce a good paraphrase (1882: 228). Arnold's lecture took place on June 14, 1882, and was published two months later. Arnold could have read *Marion Fay* in the meantime (*Marion Fay* appeared in the *Graphic* from December 3, 1881, to June 3, 1882, and was published in book form in May 1882).

against mine, and neutralize it. Let mine stand against yours, and in that we shall be equal. Then after that let love be lord of all" (203). This calls into question R. C. Terry's remark that one "principle Trollope obviously valued was that like should mate with like, particularly in regard to social level" (111). Most of Trollope's novels, in fact, take Hampstead's part. Characters who are unwilling to cross class boundaries, such as Griselda Grantley and Lord Dumbello in *Framley Parsonage*, are trapped in cold, loveless marriages. Characters who do rebel against inequality, such as Lucy Robarts and Lord Lufton in the same novel, are destined for a bright future. This idea runs throughout Trollope's oeuvre. In *The Duke's Children*, to give a later example, Lord Silverbridge falls in love with a lovely American whose grandfather worked at the quays, and Lady Mary Palliser with the second son of a commoner. In these pairs the lovers are equals in the sense that they recognize each other's right to hold opinions of their own.

In the bulk of Trollope's writings this right can only be acquired by means of forgiveness. In *Is He Popenjoy?*, for instance, Lord George Germain and Mary Lovelace fall in love only when she finds out that Lord George almost had an affair. As the narrator explains,

I do not know whether a husband's comfort is ever perfect till some family peccadilloes have been conclusively proved against him. I am sure that a wife's temper to him is sweetened by such evidence of human imperfection. . . . She never feels that all the due privileges of her life have been accorded to her, till her husband shall have laid himself open to the caresses of a pardon. Then, and not till then, he is her equal; and equality is necessary for comfortable love. (1998: 255)

The narrator seems to believe in conversion. It is because a lover's sins can be expiated that he is proven worthy of love. Many of Trollope's heroes require forgiveness at some stage: Mark Robarts, Harry Clavering, Phineas Finn, Frank Greystock, Paul Montague, John Caldigate. Some of his heroines, too, go astray, the most obvious instance being Alice Vavasor in *Can You Forgive Her?*

Marion Fay emphasizes a complementary theory. It depicts equality not as a product of moral imperfection but as a product of perfection in beauty and intelligence, which is what Hampstead sees in Marion, who admits that his compliments are "sweet" to her (201). Arnold also famously argues that to make human nature perfect on all sides, conduct must be supplemented with "sweetness and light," or beauty and intelligence (*Culture and Anarchy* 67). "Sweetness and light" aptly describes

the dual nature of Trollopian love. Hampstead is attracted by sweetness and beauty: "To my eyes [Marion Fay] is the perfection of loveliness" (113). Marion Fay, in contrast, is attracted by light and intelligence. Hampstead's "smile to her was as a light specially sent from heaven" (332). Arnold's ideas provide this vocabulary with a more fitting subtext than Burke's sublime. The light that surrounds Hampstead's smile is Arnoldian insofar as smiling signifies intelligence and wit: as we have seen, it is a joke that lights the way to love.

Yet, in the end Hampstead is unsuccessful. Marion's declaration of love does not end in marital and sexual fulfilment. Her wilfulness is due to the fact that her recognition of Hampstead's love coincides with a recognition of her own mortality. Having seen her mother and sisters grow pale and spectre-thin, Marion knows that Hampstead's love has no future: "Then there came a pang from the wound, though it was not *as yet* a pang as of death" (155; my emphasis). Trollope might seem to be invoking the mediaeval principle of passion as a form of suffering or Plato's suggestion that we are wounded by our memory of a previous existence in the realm of ideas. However, Marion's renunciation has a payoff in this world. By acknowledging Hampstead's love whilst denying his right to possession, she finds that the world unveils itself: "Can you not take a joy in thinking that you have given an inexpressible brightness to your poor Marion's days; that you have thrown over her a heavenly light which would be all glorious to her if she did not see that you were covered by a cloud?" (392). Robert Musil defines this feeling as lovesickness: "true lovesickness is not a desire for possession but the world's gentle self-unveiling, for the sake of which one willingly renounces possession of the beloved" (129).¹¹ Defined as such, there is a close relation between lovesickness and consumption: if Marion's experience of the present is coloured by an awareness of her mortality, then the idea of being possessed by another is vain and futile.

In Arnold's work, this elegiac sentiment appears as dissatisfaction: "culture begets a dissatisfaction which is of the highest possible value in stemming the common tide of men's thoughts in a wealthy and industrial community, and which saves the future, as one may hope, from being vulgarized, even if it cannot save the present" (1993a: 65). One

¹¹ Both Musil and Trollope hark back to an older, baroque conceptualization of lovesickness as a form of melancholy; by the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, lovesickness had been redefined as erotomania, "a delusional disorder, characterised by the patients' fantasy that their desire for their love object was reciprocated" (Altbauer-Rudnik 87).

way to achieve this state is adoration. His objections to Puritanism notwithstanding, Arnold does not write off religion completely. Religion is a valuable example of the mode of relation that a common standard can create: "It does not help me to think a thing more clearly that thousands of other people are thinking the same; but it does help me to worship with more emotion that thousands of other people are worshipping with me" (1993a: 158). As such, adoration stems the common tide of men's thoughts because it offers "a connecting middle sentiment that seeks no possessive knowledge of others" (Russell 181).

It is here, however, that Hampstead fails. When Marion finally admits that she loves him and realizes through love the meaning of tact, he loses his sense of tact, for his love then begins to fuse worship with possessiveness:

To watch over her, to worship her, to hover round her, so that no wind should be allowed to blow too strongly on her, to teach her that she was the one treasure in the world that could be of real value to him, — but at the same time to make a property of her, so that she should be altogether his own, — that had been his idea of the bond which should unite him and Marion Fay together. (357–58)

It is this contradiction that might explain why Marion's death is necessary for the thematic structure of the novel. Up until the very end, Hampstead is deaf to her warnings: "Oh, dearest, do not kill me" (394). Hampstead and Marion exchange places like Chad Newsome and Lambert Strether in Henry James's *The Ambassadors*, E. M. Forster's example of an hour-glass-shaped plot: Marion finds love as tact while Hampstead loses his way. Only when Marion has died does Hampstead realize his mistake and renounce his possessiveness: "I do think that if, while I am here, I can tame the selfishness of self, I shall reach a step upwards in that world which shall come next after this" (411). Hampstead thus gives vent to what Arnold calls dissatisfaction, albeit in terms that are undeniably religious.

More precisely, one might say that Hampstead's epiphany is theological. According to Walter Benjamin, the writings of a later and not quite so elegant a Jeremiah, Karl Kraus, show that true tact takes not "bourgeois respectability" as its standard — this is the standard for tact as etiquette or politeness — but rather a "theological criterion" (2005: 436): true tact is "the capacity to treat social relationships, though not departing from them, as natural, even paradisaical, relationships, and so not only to approach the king as if he had been born with the crown on his brow,

but the lackey like an Adam in livery" (436–37). This criterion eventually finds its way into Hampstead's heart. His acceptance of the fact that Marion is dying is accompanied by a resolve to regard men not as social entities but as creatures:

He spoke to [Mrs Roden] often of his future life, always speaking of a life from which Marion would have been withdrawn by death, and did so with a cold, passionless assurance which showed her that he had almost resolved as to the future. He would see all lands that were to be seen, and converse with all people. The social condition of God's creatures at large should be his study. The task would be endless, and, as he said, an endless task hardly admits of absolute misery. (412)

Hampstead's decision to pay attention to creaturely life — his wish to explore a world that is not of our own making — is a tactful response to Marion's death. It shows that his desire for equality has acquired a deeper meaning. Initially, his advocacy of equality is still circumscribed by the existence of social differences. Wishing to break down class barriers, he takes for granted that these barriers matter. By the end of the novel, however, his intuition has ripened into contemplation. Marion has made him realize that looking at others as social constructs does nothing to reveal who they really are in themselves.

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This realization is, I have argued, a response to Arnold's call for tact: Trollope finds an expression for perfection in the experience of love. But would Arnold have approved of Trollope's borrowing? Puzzlingly, Arnold largely ignores the popular nineteenth-century novel. This may be a sign of a generic incompatibility. Indeed, David Russell claims that tact is the prerogative of the essayist. Whereas the essay is deliberately muddled, he maintains, the Victorian novel is all too knowing. The Victorian novel insists on tact in its conservative sense: it focuses on hierarchy rather than equality, etiquette rather than manners, thus teaching tact as a form of caution, not reserve; only with the introduction of focalization and narratorial reserve in the work of Henry James is the novel seen as becoming tactful.¹² This line of thinking dates back to D. A. Miller's

¹²James positioned himself against Trollope. His reviews from the 1860s are particularly harsh. Yet James's aggressive tone is partially the product of a turf war. On the level of plot, Trollope was clearly an inspiration, as Elsie Michie has shown in her comparison of Trollope's *The Prime Minister* and James's *The Portrait of a Lady*.

influential *The Novel and the Police* and is still very much alive (e.g., Adams 7). In the case of Trollope, however, the novel and the essay are not necessarily at odds. They may be, in fact, too close for comfort. Trollope does not anticipate James's formal innovations, but he does attain a measure of tactful reserve in other ways. Fittingly, the first person to comment upon this was a contemporary French essayist, Émile Montégut, who reviewed the first three Barchester novels for the prestigious *Revue des Deux Mondes*:

His novels are written in a very radical spirit [*un esprit très radical*], and yet it is almost touching to see with what affectionate reserve [*quelle affectueuse réserve*] he speaks of those very people he seems to like least. He feels inclined to excuse each of the faults which he wishes to condemn, and he ends by forgiving [*il arrive à pardonner*], he means of all kinds of ingenious reasonings, the errors which in his heart he reprobates. . . . He talks about his characters as one would talk about one's relatives and parents to an intimate friend, with a freedom full of reserve [*une liberté pleine de réserve*]. A smiling scepticism and a sly benevolence [*un scepticisme souriant et une bienveillance sournoise*] are the soul of these tales and inspire the writer's judgements on English society. Even if his opinions are radical, they are not bitter. His indulgence is lukewarm and without charity, yet his railleries are not malicious. (759–60; my translation)¹³

Montégut appreciates Trollope's criticism of the establishment (radical here being synonymous with democratic). At the same time, Montégut indicates that Trollope was careful not to cause offence. Trollope finds a middle ground: he is radical without being bitter, led to forgive what he wants to condemn. Montégut's very phrasing — “affectionate reserve” and “a freedom full of reserve” — emphasizes that Trollope's love for his characters falls within the remit of tact.

Taking my cue from Montégut's observations, I would suggest that Trollope attains this measure of reserve by embedding his representation of love within the framework of comedy. The spirit of comedy roams freely throughout Trollope's work. Christopher Herbert has explored the details of this formal element in depth, arguing that Trollope's comedies rely on imperfection, as a result of which love is desentimentalized: “Trollope persistently highlights the imperfection and incompleteness of the love unions he praises most” (95). Unfortunately, Herbert looks at

¹³This review was not included in Smalley's *The Critical Heritage*. Credit is due to Hugh Sykes Davies, who reads this little-known piece with a slightly different focus and translates the first half of the passage quoted here (Davies 82–85).

perfection and imperfection only from a moral point of view. This leads to a contradiction: he repeatedly refers to Matthew Arnold's advocacy of perfection as an instance of the age's moral idealization, exemplified by Puritanism and Evangelicalism (e.g., 154–55). As a result of this generalization, Herbert elides a complementary path in Victorian thinking. I mentioned that in Trollope's fiction equality can be fostered through forgiveness or through admiration for sweetness and light. The former rests on an idea of moral imperfection, the latter on an idea of perfection in beauty and intelligence. These two perspectives are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing.¹⁴ How, then, can perfection be the subject of comedy?

Arnold provides an answer, for though he may have reservations about the novel, comedy he does admire. He opens "Equality" by citing two dicta by Menander, the most important representative of the Athenian New Comedy (1993b: 212). His essay on Heinrich Heine is more precise. Heine is so effective a writer, Arnold writes, "because he unites so much wit with so much pathos" (1863: 238). Many of Heine's poems, indeed, rely on the pattern of caustic disenchantment or *Stimmungsbrechung*. This creates distance between the reader and the characters with whom he or she is invited to identify. George Meredith elaborates on this premise in his essay "On the Idea of Comedy," delivered as a lecture and published in 1877, a year before Arnold presented "Equality" and Trollope began *Marion Fay*. Pure comedy, Meredith argues, should be distinguished from the humor of farce and satire: resting on a "clear Hellenic perception of facts" (26) and originating in the "play of the intellect" (33), it gives voice to a laughter that "is impersonal and of unrivalled politeness, nearer a smile" (33). Just as Arnold locates culture in France and Greece, moreover, so Meredith believes that it is in those parts of the world that the comic spirit reigns: "Menander and Molière stand alone specially as comic poets of the feelings and the idea" (19).

Trollope has a penchant for this kind of comedy. His love for the more vulgar laughter aroused by Jacobean plays and Restoration drama is well-known, as Herbert indicates, but the world of Molière captivated him as well. He even helped his son Henry prepare an article on the subject (letter of January 6, 1875, 1983: 642; see also H. Trollope). Moreover, Trollope valued Meredith's judgment; they knew one another

¹⁴ While the second perspective is one of Matthew Arnold's trademarks, the first is typical of Arnold's Oxonian predecessor, John Henry Newman. For examinations of the presence of Newman in Arnold's writings, see DeLaura as well as de Graef and Gillett.

through their work for Chapman & Hall (1983: 583, 636). I would suggest that in *Marion Fay* Trollope puts Meredith's theory into practice by means of bathos, that is, an "anti-climax . . . by an unintentional lapse in mood from the sublime to the trivial or ridiculous" (Stevenson 139). Hampstead takes his love very seriously — perhaps even too seriously: "as Marion's death approaches, pathos becomes so overpowering that we almost forget the difference in rank between the two lovers" (Edwards 134). As in the poetry of Heine, these exalted feelings are often undercut. When Hampstead has bid Marion a final farewell and has returned home, for instance, he

walked straight into the drawing-room, and having carefully closed the door, he took the poker in his hand and held it clasped there as something precious. "It is the only thing of mine," he said, "that she has touched. Even then I swore to myself that this hearth should be her hearth; that here we would sit together, and be one flesh and one bone." Then surreptitiously he took the bit of iron away with him, and hid it among his treasures, — to the subsequent dismay of the housemaid. (433)

Reading about Hampstead's suffering, we are tempted to feel pity and sympathy. *In cauda*, however, Trollope takes a step back, and reminds us that the poker is, for others, just a poker. Through this reference towards the commonplace, we abruptly descend from the exalted to the banal. Many of Hampstead's encounters with Marion involve such a moment (e.g., 277, 415), often as a punch line at the end of a paragraph or chapter. These comic unions of wit and pathos give us the form of reserve that Henry James achieves by means of focalization.

This principle also operates on a macrostructural level. Hampstead and Marion's affair is only one plot-line out of four. The novel has three other heroes, who find themselves in similar predicaments. Their stories, like Hampstead's, reflect on the powerlessness of individuals in the face of forces that they cannot control. Roden's desire to see his beloved is persistently thwarted, just as Lord Llwdythlw's marriage is continually postponed, and Samuel Crocker's sanction for destroying Post Office documents repeatedly adjourned. Their problems are the matter of farce, however, not misery. Roden turns out to be a son of the Duca di Crinola ('Duke of Horsehair'), Llwdythlw is badgered into marriage, and Crocker gets off with a reprimand. If they resemble Hampstead, they do so with a difference: "The comic paralysis revealed in these sub-plots throws Hampstead's tragic frustration into sharper relief" (Nardin 349). This contrast between tragic frustration and comic paralysis is, I think,

similar to the contrast between the exalted and the commonplace on the level of Trollope's sentences. It certainly creates a kind of friction that leaves the reader shifting uncomfortably — a mark of pure comedy. As Meredith notes, the conception of the comic in Menander and Molière often "refines even to pain" (19), for "keen-edged intelligence . . . is by nature merciless" (26).

Pure comedy thus yields the emotional effect that is folded within Trollope's conceptualization of love. Believing that love should be guided by chance and intuition may be joyful; feeling the shock that the first touch of the other gives you may be exhilarating. Embracing the knowledge that we will never fully know our beloved, that we will never possess full empathy, however, is painful. When love is approached as a form of tact, it may stave off a divorce, but not dissatisfaction. This awareness is not necessarily bleak, though. The future is not closed off: regarding the present with tact can extend it into the kind of future we might love.

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