

Phineas Redux

Anthony Trollope

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After the death of his Irish wife, Phineas Finn returns to London and to the House of Commons. But though drawn back apparently irresistibly, he never approaches politics with the zest of earlier days. What Trollope describes, in some of his most powerful writing, is a sad, at times almost sombre, progress towards maturity and self-wisdom.

Phineas Redux Details

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From Reader Review Phineas Redux for online ebook

Susan in NC says

Phew - well that took forever...I started this book months ago to check back in with the Palliser series, which I am slowly working my way through. I have found this series much slower than the Barsetshire novels, which were much more Austenesque as a wise book friend observed, partly due to all the parliamentary politics - being an American I'm not terribly familiar with that system, but heck even our system is as clear as mud (and getting weirder by the day). I also managed to forget the book at the beach, so I switched between the Audible recording and the e-book - both were excellent, and I can highly recommend Timothy West as a reader. He makes the pages fly by and is delightful for very long drives and while knitting!

What really irked me with this series is the minutiae of this law or that law and the subsequent debates around the issues; they may have been hot topics back in the Victorian age, and I know these books were serialised so had to be timely for a contemporary audience (and hence the heft and page count!) but tough to grasp the importance of now - and of course with Trollope you always wonder is he serious about the importance of the issue or using his dry, gentle humor to chide his characters for their breathless preoccupation with a less than monumental issue - like our beloved Plantagenet and his lifelong quest to resolve the decimal coinage.

Trollope also wastes his time with a superfluous love triangle that while very entertaining (frankly more so than all the time spent in the House of Commons, and much more reminiscent of the Barsetshire novels with their meditations on love, money and property and their vital role in Victorian marriages), really does nothing to forward the adventures and fortunes of our hero Phineas, as he is only peripherally even familiar with the three star-crossed lovers. I can only assume Trollope was inevitably drawn back to the English country setting of hunting and good families and matchmaking that served him so well, and he portrays flawlessly with gentle yet perceptively sharp humor.

Reading the POVs of Adelaide Palliser, the hapless and bumbling Mr. Spooner and the pretty-faced empty suit Gerard Maule as they navigate the choppy waters of courtship with money and property vs. none, I was truly entranced with Trollope's brilliant portrayals of each character, so witty, so nuanced, picking apart their foibles mercilessly but with benevolent understanding of their motives and desires - the thud back to earth as the next chapter started back in the House or with the hijinx of the truly scurrilous newspaper editor Quintus Slide was harsh indeed! So as much as I enjoyed their romance, it truly was superfluous to Phineas's story and a cruel distraction.

There, those are my frustrations - now for what I loved about this novel. Up to halfway through this novel, I still wasn't really sure how I felt about Phineas; I felt slightly ridiculous having spent so much time with him! But I was fascinated by the women who play such a major role in his life, women who Trollope writes so well - Madam Max Goesler, Lady Laura Kennedy, Lady Violet Chiltern and of course the incomparable Lady Glencora Palliser. Madam Max and Violet are portrayed most sympathetically (or should I say, favorably), as women to admire and emulate - the first, strong, charming, beautiful and wise, the second beautiful, loving friend, devoted and idealized wife and sister-in-law. Lady Laura becomes gradually unhinged from her miserable marriage, the loneliness of isolation from the society she loves due to her separation from her overly religious, rigid and unloving husband, and bitterness over her loss of Phineas' love. Glencora is played almost totally for comic relief with her boundless energy and desire to interfere and tidy up the lives of all the lesser mortals who come within her orbit - a truly delightful character! I can't wait to further my acquaintance with her (and her husband, an increasingly fascinating character emerging there).

As for Phineas, he and Lady Laura are the two characters most altered; she for the reasons stated above, and

he for his unjust arrest and trial for a murder he didn't commit (which also drags on waaaaay too long). Trollope writes very touchingly about the emotional and mental effect of Finn's incarceration and the humiliation of standing in the dock, day after day, stared at like an animal in a cage, wondering which of the friends who come to support him really believe in his innocence. Our hero is forced to question all that he thought he held dear and desired - wealth, position in society, power in government; his breakdown is truly heartbreaking to read, and his emergence at the end of this long, dark night of the soul and "choosing freedom" as Madam Max so eloquently calls it, is redemptive.

Altogether a wonderful, delightful, enthralling read providing brilliant insight into Victorian upperclass society and power politics, as all of his books I've read have been - even the ones that could be shaved of a couple of hundred pages - but oh, the supplementary characters and storylines he stuffs into those superfluous pages - pure gold!

Caroline says

Now look here, Trollope, you gave me your word that there would be less fox-hunting in this novel and instead I find just the opposite to be the case. As your publisher I am compelled to tell you that you are sure to lose sales unless you cut some of it out. There are characters nattering on about cover and vixens on almost every page.

Some of the vixens are human, .

The devil they are. Lizzie Eustace was in the last book, but surely you don't expect me to consider Lady Laura a vixen? Or Madame Goestler? And that Adelaide Palliser is just a wan nothing of a girl, she can't hold a candle to Lady Glencora.

The Duchess of Omnium.

Oh, bother, Duchess then. Now you've got capital new men here, Gerard Maule is a great twit, and Squire Spooner is a marvelous buffoon. But the scenes with the dogs, and the letters to the Duke about his obligations as a landowner, and the spinnies and the ditches, they just won't do. At least we're back in Parliament. That's wonderful stuff about the Dobney double-cross of proposing to disestablish the Church of England so the Tories can stay in power during the debate over the bill. Great sly versions of the speeches, I must say.

At least they'll never disestablish fox hunting.

And if we're talking about revisions, does Lady Laura really have to behave with such complete disregard of propriety when she goes into hysterics and makes her love for Finneas so plain? Makes me want to leave the room, it really does.

One can't make you happy. You said people wanted women with more backbone.

Well, yes, but spirited women, women who give one a laugh at the same time. I don't think Lady Laura has made me laugh once in all these Palliser books. Now Madame Goestler, there's a woman who knows how to back her man and slip in a dig at a pompous suitor in the same scene. We need more Madame Goestler.

But the contrast between Lady Laura and Madame Goestler is the whole point. I have to make Lady Laura

pathetic and annoying to drive Finneas into Madame Max's arms.

Surely there's a less annoying way to make a woman annoying. You made the reader laugh in scenes with Lady Eustace while hoping she got her come-uppance. All right, Lady Laura can stay, but I do insist, Trollope, less hunting.

Well, you know, some days I have a post-office scheme on my mind, so when I sit down at 4 am to write for the day I just can't come up with anything. You want copy, so I just go on for a few pages describing what happened over the weekend down in the country.

Well, give it up for the day then.

Sorry old chap. Part of my reputation is going to rest on writing for three hours every day before work for forty years, no matter what. You're just going to have to put up with a few hounds.

Better that they should celebrate you for the great insights into the human soul that make Lady Laura persist so selfishly in creating disaster on every side, and Robert Kennedy ignore his own or anyone else's humanity in his rigidity, and Phineas suffer so when his sensitive nature is assaulted by press and prejudice.

[sigh]

Very well then. At any rate, you've said that the next book is all about the Duke as Prime Minister, and as he doesn't hunt and the Trumperton Wood controversy has been settled, I venture to say we won't have this conversation again. He won't even have time to fret about decimal coinage—he'll have much bigger matters flying at him from all directions, eh?

Oh, he certainly won't be able to indulge himself with 14 hours a day on that question. I think we can safely say, my friend, that farthings and shillings will be safe as long as there's an England.

Audrey says

The fourth installment of the Palliser series sees the return of Phineas Finn, the protagonist of the second novel in the series. The first half is taken up with Phineas' return to London, and the wrangling to get back into a seat in Parliament. This accomplished, there are various social difficulties to navigate, as well as Parliamentary matters into which to delve. Trollope knows how to keep this light and fun, with a love story that's only tangentially related, and many appearances by the inimitable Duchess of Omnium (formerly Glencora Palliser). This is key for me, because the truth is, I don't love Phineas. Sure, I know his good points: he's good-looking, manful and gentlemanly at the same time — in short, all the ladies love him. But I can't help but feel he's so touchy and fickle that he's tiresome. And mawkish Lady Laura Kennedy is the *worst*!! (If only I could have a Trollope novel with only Plantagenet, Glencora, Mme. Max, and Lord Chiltern.)

When you don't like the protagonist, the novel drags a bit. Perhaps Trollope thought so too, because halfway in, he throws in a murder! Things pick up after that, since there's nothing Trollope loves more than writing a trial, and everything ends just as it should. I can only hope this hustles Phineas into a secondary role for the rest of the series. The titles of the last two lead me to believe it will feature Planty Pall and Glencora more prominently. Seeing them become a team after their rocky start in the first novel of the series (*Can You Forgive Her?*) has been an absolute delight. I love the contrast of the starchy, reticent, but very noble and devoted Plantagenet to Glencora's impulsive, headlong enthusiasm. Trollope is a masterful portraitist, and sees deeply into their thoughts, emotions, temperament, and motivations. He captures every shade! For this, and for the larger story of the series, I'm glad I read it, but it'll never be my favorite.

Buck says

A guest on some podcast I was half-listening to the other day brought me up short with this arresting prophecy: “I feel like 2016 is that moment just before an earthquake when dogs are barking like crazy, rats are fleeing the cities and gerbils are eating their young.” I may be paraphrasing slightly, but that was the gist of it. As a rule, I’m morally allergic to such talk: unless you’re St John or Yeats—and even then—the apocalyptic mode comes off as overwrought. Worse, it’s almost always wrong. “It’s closing time in the gardens of the West,” Cyril Connolly famously said. “Bollocks,” said the West, less famously.

But lately my sunny, Whiggish outlook has soured into a shitty buzz. And yes, it’s partly the fact that the GOP has bodied forth the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man and sent him stomping his way across the American political landscape. But it’s also Orlando, Nice, Istanbul, Dallas, Dhaka... a decade’s worth of bad news packed into one tweaky summer. On top of everything else, they say the new *Suicide Squad* movie sucks balls, but then what were you expecting? *Autumn Sonata*?

So plunging into a Trollope novel at a time like this has to be seen as a more or less desperate evasion of reality. And I accept that. Millions of people are now using *Pokemon Go* for similar purposes; others have TM or rough sex or *Magic: The Gathering* to fall back on. No judgment here. We’re all guilty in the eyes of God. Spark one up.

Trollope’s books have always appealed to scared fuddy-duddies like me because they seem to project an ideal, unchanging universe of curates and duchesses and stately country houses. But this view depends on a slight misreading of Trollope and a massive misreading of the 19th century. If you think about it, Victorian England really isn’t the place for a nice, nostalgic wallow. That pose of unflappable sanity maintained by Trollope and his peers had to outface slums, dead babies, disenfranchisement, venereal disease and the stench of excrement pretty much everywhere. Trollope is too much of a gentleman to mention most of these horrors by name, but you can’t help sensing them at the back of things, and you sort of have to keep them in mind if you want to read him with any intelligence.

Even on its own terms, though, *Phineas Redux* is a total downer. True, the hero gets married off to a rich and sexy lady at the end, but along the way the meandering plot touches on madness, murder and shady politics. It also includes a sympathetic portrait of a woman stuck, hopelessly and tragically, in what we’d now call the friend zone, and this subplot has an almost unbearable emotional realism that affects the whole tone of the book. In general, Trollope is pretty smart about sex, even if he’s never explicit about it: his men and women are constantly circling each other, wary but fascinated, and when they finally pair off, the luckier couples find their way to a grim Clintonian accomodation. The rest are simply doomed. Which seems about right.

Phineas Redux isn’t a great novel. It isn’t even one of the better novels in the Palliser series. As usual with Trollope, there’s too much fox-hunting, too much sitting around in drawing rooms and too many damn letters. Maybe the most debilitating flaw is a dull and superfluous romance between two supporting characters, both of whom deserved to slip under the wheels of a hansom cab and die like the pretentious poodles they are. But I’ll save that for my fan fic.

Still, you go on reading somehow, getting caught up in this misshapen old triple-decker banged out by a long-dead postal worker. The gentle irony seeps into your soul, and for a while you can almost ignore the vast Gathering of the Juggalos that is going on out there, somewhere far away and mostly on Twitter.

Carol Apple says

Reading Anthony Trollope's Palliser series is a long-term project. I guess I began *Can You Forgive Her?* about a year ago, and I find, in general, I am liking each novel more than the previous one. Perhaps familiarity has something to do with it: you tend to care about people more as you get to know them better, and what people can you ever know better than those that populate a hefty well-crafted Victorian novel?

I was a tiny bit hesitant to embark on *Phineas Redux* within mere days of finishing *The Eustace Diamonds*. I remembered that my feeling about *Phineas Finn*, the second novel in the series, were on the lukewarm side. Not that the book was not good enough to stick with it. Anything by Trollope is well worth the effort. But, I thought, am I really ready to read another long book about the same shallow fortune-hunting protagonist? So much Parliament – the bills, the speeches – and so much fox-hunting. Parliament and fox hunts are difficult for me to relate to especially when it is already a stretch to relate to these Victorian aristocrats.

Our world seems to be spinning further and further away from that quaint society with its ways and manners. (I often wonder if it is noticeably more difficult for the younger generation – millennials they call them – to relate to 19th century literature. But that's another article....) Ultimately part of the charm of reading Trollope is that it becomes so apparent that even with the distance of years and leap of technology, Victorian aristocrats turn out to be more like me than not. Trollope was writing about the exact same species of creature that I interact with every day. I realize just how superficial an overlay technology really is. What counts is our common humanity.

I need not have hesitated for a moment to read *Phineas Redux*, fox-hunting and Parliament notwithstanding. As the story begins, few years have passed and Phineas is older and wiser. At the end of *Phineas Finn* our hero who had made a success for himself in the government makes the decision to leave the high-society life, turning down the opportunity to marry the wealthy and beautiful widow, Madame Max Goesler; instead he goes home to Ireland to marry his hometown sweetheart and practice his trade as a small town barrister. In *Phineas Redux* we find that his young wife has died in the first year of their marriage trying to give birth to her first child. When some of his old friends in high places call on him to stand again for Parliament Phineas risks his small life savings to return to life among the rich and famous. Lucky Phineas wins a seat as member for Tankerville because his opponent is called out for voter fraud, but his reappearance on the scene rekindles a few flames in some of the broken hearts he left in his wake. Trouble ensues.

Upon returning to London, Phineas innocently accepts a few invitations from old friends, one of whom is Lady Laura Kennedy. Lady Laura has made the scandalous decision to separate from her tyrannical husband Robert Kennedy and is living the life of an outcast in Dresden with her old father. Out of pure friendship, Phineas offers to comfort and help her in any way he can but the society world can't leave it alone, especially when a hostile newspaper editor, Quintus Slide of the "People's Banner", makes it his mission in life to spread malicious rumors about Phineas and Lady Laura. Then the spurned husband, Robert Kennedy, a religious fanatic on the edge of madness, attempts to shoot Phineas in the head. All the bad press makes it unlikely Phineas is going to get a paying job in the cabinet, something he desperately needs to stay in Parliament.

Just when you think it can't get worse for poor Phineas, it gets worse. Phineas is put through the trial of his life, one which strips all the gloss off his life and enables him to clearly discern hypocrites from true friends. Among his true friends is the woman he rejected in the past, Madame Max Goesler, a character we get to know better in this novel. I liked her a lot and also enjoyed the reappearance of Glencora and Plantagenet Palliser. There is also a fun sub-plot involving the romance of a distant Palliser cousin, the stubborn Adelaide

Palliser, her clueless ne'er-do-well lover Gerard Maule, and her hapless suitor, Mr. Spooner. Oswald and Violet Chiltern round out Phineas' small group of friends, providing both comedy and backbone to the events of the story.

The thing I liked most about this book is how Phineas is changed by the experience, how, no longer dazzled by the glamour of high political society, he is able to see the world as it really is. If I had not done so before, I now number Trollope among my collection of the wisest authors, those who view the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, a term I learned from reading Albert Jay Nock. It means seeing things from an eternal perspective.

David says

This is the fourth novel in Trollope's Palliser series. At the end of *Phineas Finn*, Phineas was back in Ireland, his political career apparently at an end. But Trollope brings him back here.

Between the time he wrote *Phineas Finn* and the time he wrote *Phineas Redux*, Trollope had himself run (I suppose I should say "stood") for a Parliamentary seat, and lost. In his campaign, Trollope witnessed firsthand voter indifference and bribery and other political corruption. That experience informs his depiction of politics, and the political world Trollope describes has changed markedly since he wrote *Phineas Finn*.

Phineas no longer leads the more or less charmed life he lived in *Phineas Finn*. Instead he is accused of adultery, both by the injured husband and by an unscrupulous newspaper writer. (Pretty much every one of Trollope's newspaper writers is unscrupulous.)

But worse, Phineas is charged with the murder of a rival MP. Standing between Phineas and the noose is one of Trollope's best lawyers, Chaffanbrass.

Mark says

The fourth novel in Anthony Trollope's Palliser series returns the reader to the lucky Irishman Phineas Finn. Newly widowed, he decides to plunge back into politics by accepting an offer to run for a seat in the House of Commons. Yet Finn's luck soon deserts him, as his re entry is not rewarded with office and the income he needs to survive. Moreover, he suffers from the attacks of two new enemies --and he soon finds himself on trial for the most heinous of crimes.

One of Trollope's great strengths as a writer is his ability to build a world consisting of a diverse array of characters, and that strength is on display here. Nearly the full cast from his previous novels in the series makes an appearance, even if a couple of them feel shoehorned in. Yet Trollope's effort to derive some drama from putting his central character on trial doesn't work as well as it should. Perhaps aware of his limitations, he avoids any real mystery as to the perpetrator of the crime for which his central character stands trial, and it's resolution seems more melodramatic than earned. Still, for all its faults and the padding of the last hundred pages it is still an enjoyable novel, one that offers more of the continuing events of Trollope's cast of political adventurers and social butterflies.

Anastasia Fitzgerald-Beaumont says

Here I am at the top of another mountain, having climbed *Phineas Redux*, the fourth in Anthony Trollope's Palliser series. It's really the sequel to *Phineas Finn*, the second in the set, though it follows on from *The Eustace Diamonds*, its immediate predecessor.

It was suggested that I read the Phineas novels back to back. But, closely related as they are, I preferred to follow the author's own footsteps. I'm glad that I did because there is a reasonably important overlap with *The Eustace Diamonds*, one arising from the disreputable love life of Lizzie Eustace, which has a fairly significant impact on the fate of Finn!

The further I travel the more I warm to Trollope. I've come quite a way now from *Can You Forgive Her?*, the first in the set, where the author came across to me as something of an obsessive eccentric, particularly concerning the question of electoral reform. The ballot, oh the ballot, how tired I was of the ballot! With each step he seems to me to have become progressively more relaxed, less intrusive, more inclined to allow his characters to work out their own destiny in their own way, characters that have become ever more fully rounded.

And what characters they are. What a wonderful schemer Glencora Palliser is, generous to her friends but cat-like in the defence of her own interests, in the interests of her family and the inheritance rights of her son. Yes, *Phineas Redux* is a political novel, far more so than its predecessor, but it's increasingly obvious to me that the politics of power and the politics of property, essentially the main theme of *The Eustace Diamonds*, are intimately related in Trollope's mind, as they were intimately related in the mind of the Victorian upper classes. Wealth, political power, love, marriage, property and ambition are all dimensions of a complicated game of social advancement.

So, act two: enter Phineas, stage left. That is to say he has returned from Ireland, where his inconvenient wife has conveniently died. Sorry, that sounds a little more cynical than I had intended. 'Our hero', as the author refers somewhat irritatingly to his character, though not as much as the first time around, is suitably sobered, and matured, by the experience. The young man in a hurry is no longer in quite such a hurry.

Altogether he is more sober, more reflective, than he was in *Phineas Finn*, though to begin with no less ambitious. In the course of the novel he is destined to become more reflective still, being caught up in a personal crisis that brings a significant shift in his perceptions of political advancement.

I'm being cryptic but I think the point of a review is to whet the appetite of a potential reader rather than précis the plot! Let me just say that 'our hero' finds a way back into political life at a time when politics was money. Finn has no money but he has charm, he has good looks, he has intelligence and, most important of all, he has connections, particularly with the most politically influential people in the novel – the women! Most important of all there is Lady Glencora, now the Duchess of Omnium, and her circle, which includes the talented and enigmatic Madame Max Goesler.

In climbing the greasy pole one can scarcely avoid attracting enemies along the way, those who wish to climb faster. Finn's enemy, and his potential nemesis, is Mister Bonteen, notwithstanding the fact that they both belong to the Liberal Party. Actually I think that it's a general truism in politics: one's opponents are on the other side; one's enemies are on the same side. Rivalry, after all, rather than principle, makes for a deadlier hatred. Finn's rivalry with Bonteen has the effect of frustrating his desire for office, undermined by a whispering campaign over his 'soundness'. It was to be potentially even more deadly when Bonteen is found murdered and Finn finds himself in the dock of the Old Bailey on trial for his life.

It is not just 'our hero' who is brought back in *Phineas Redux*; all of the characters familiar from Phineas

Finn are there. Apart from Glencora and Madame Max there is the Lord Chiltern, now married to Violet Effingham, once the subject of Finn's own amorous interest; Lady Laura Kennedy, living apart from Robert, her morbidly religious husband, an archetype dour Scot, who descends steadily into madness and death as the novel proceeds; and Quintus Slide, the slimy editor of *The People's Banner*, who attempts to destroy Finn with a series of insinuations about his relationship with Lady Laura.

The bond between Laura and Phineas, strong and stronger, on the one side, weak and weakening on the other, is one of the central tensions of the novel. He once loved her; he once proposed to her, a proposal that was rejected, though she loved him, in favour of wealth, wealth that was to be accompanied by misery. But just as Finn has outgrown her she has not outgrown him, descending into morbid forms of attraction, a contrast in every way with the practical Madame Max, who performs an invaluable service for him in his hour of greatest need.

I enjoyed this novel tremendously; I enjoyed the political and personal nuances and the interplay between them both. Trollope is a master of words, of character, of simple descriptive power, which shows in all sorts of ways, even so far as his treatment of the hunting themes, in which he excels. Come to think of it that's another way of reading this book, as kind of fox hunt, with Phineas Finn at one point as the bigger quarry. He makes it safely to the covert - I don't think I'm giving too much away in saying that - safe in the arms, and the wealth, of Madame Max.

So, yes, another literary Munro bagged; two more to go – *The Prime Minister* and *The Duke's Children*. Beyond that range I can detect *The Chronicles of Barssetshire* in the distance, another dimension of Trollope's *oeuvre* and another dimension of Victorian politics.

But I'm going to take time out. I have a trip to Egypt coming up, so all of my extra mural reading is shifting in that direction. From a serial by Anthony Trollope I'm now beginning a serial by Naguib Mahfouz, taking me from nineteenth century England to twentieth century Egypt in one swift step. The road goes ever on. :-)

Inder says

Only Anthony Trollope could make British parliamentary politics and fox hunting (two topics that I had barely considered before reading these books) so interesting, so full of personal intrigue, and so deliciously page-turning. I have enjoyed each volume of the Palliser series (which is themed around, you guessed it, politics and hunting) immensely, each in its own right, and as a series. Friends: If you love Victorian novels, but you have not yet tasted Trollope, you are in for a rare treat. I suggest *The Way We Live Now* as a starting point if the idea of a series is too intimidating.

Especially, Anthony Trollope's women are exquisitely complex and believable. They are also surprisingly (given the era) strong and independent thinkers. They plot and scheme; they manipulate the people around them; they stand up for themselves and what they believe in; they manage their own property and spend their own fortunes; they come to the rescue of the men they love. In short, they are, by Victorian standards, totally bad-ass.

(And you can tell that Trollope just despises men who try to brow-beat their lovely, spirited wives into submission. They *always* get their comeuppance.)

Warning: Some very mild spoilers follow. Nothing that you wouldn't find on the dust jacket, but if you would like to approach this book with an absolutely clean slate, stop reading now.

While delightful, this, the fourth volume of six, was not my favorite so far. Phineas Finn started to bug me a bit here. His character is so fickle and changeable - he is constantly falling in and out of love, and flirting with all of his lovely women friends. He is prone to fits of self-indulgent depression. He is dense as a rock (and about as self-aware). I got a little sick of his self-righteous whining and his uncompromising political values, blah blah blah. (Don't get me wrong, I *love* Trollope's portrayal of parliamentary politics, lawyers, courts, etc. Delightful and hilarious. But Phineas puts himself on a bit of a high horse.)

His women friends, on the other hand, are generally steadfast and loyal. But they are not allowed to be changeable, and if rejected, like poor Lady Laura, must resign themselves to a lonely old maid's life. I don't see why Phineas gets to flit from one woman to another (and yet, still be the hero of the novel), while his girlfriends are given one chance at love - basically, if you screw it up, you die alone. Victorian gender politics!

Also, antisemitic themes repeatedly crop up. Sad to say, there is nothing here that is out of the ordinary in Victorian fiction, where "the Jew" is pretty much synonymous with "the villain," but I found these references to be very unfortunate and distracting, to say the least. I simply did not enjoy the book as much, once I found out that "the Jew" (a converted pastor Jew, no less!) was "the villain." It was a minor part of the plot, but still. Not good. I'm making a mental note to bump George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (supposedly a rare example of a pro-Jewish Victorian novel) up on my reading list.

But while this was not my favorite of the series, I still enjoyed it a lot, and I am looking forward to tackling the next volume in 2010.

Sarah Magdalene says

Phineas Redux - Anthony Trollope

Ahhhh Phineaaaasss!!!

He suffers much more this time. But it's good for him. He wakes up out of his dream as a result. This was a really subtle piece of emotional manipulation. I cried when the crusty old lawyer fell for his lovely client (well, the keyword here is subtle), I cried when all his friends stood up for him in court. But it's been raining non stop, and somehow Phineas' trial seem to mirror my own trial.

Its a classic piece on scapegoating and jealousy. Phineas is a man whose feminine qualities make him (too) beloved of women. He is kind and gracious to all, but here he realizes the hard way that only a few people will return that favour in his darkest hour. He learns that it is only the few who can judge character accurately, and those few are mostly women. I don't think most men even register each other as individuals...you know what I mean? They lack the feminine skills Phineas is gifted with of sensitivity and observation. This is really why women love him, well, that and him being gorgeous :) But gorgeous on the outside is not enough, and Phineas is both.

There are some men who do realize though, and that is the most powerful thing emotionally...like the crusty old lawyer.

I suppose it's obvious I loved this book?

Cphe says

The "weakest" link in The Palliser series to date. The delivery of the story is marred by a lot of repetition from the previous novels, Phineas Finn and The Eustace Diamonds.

However it is the female characters who again take centre stage and shine through. There is the well intentioned Lady Glencora Palliser through to the delightfully notorious Lizzie Eustace, each are scene stealers and the main character Phineas is bland in comparison.

As you can tell, not a favourite in what has been up to now a sterling series that has kept me coming back for more.

David says

You shouldn't read Trollope for suspense. But with the other books I enjoyed being as concerned as the characters about the silly bullshit of their privileged lives. Will Phineas be made an Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office? Will Madame Max marry the Duke of Palliser? Who is Lizzie Eustace shagging next? It's not important, very predictable, but fun!

The second half of 'Phineas Redux' is a murder trial, and I don't think it works with the "not important, very predictable, but fun!" formula. If Phineas had been a bit darker and there was a chance that he might be guilty... But he's boring in his innocence. And the trial then changes Phineas so that he no longer cares for a life on the Treasury bench! What is the point of Phineas Finn if he isn't grasping for office?

The subplots are ok. Adelaide Palliser is a bit boring, but I like her snubbing Mr Spooner. It all ends happily for Adelaide and Gerard when ... the Duchess of Palliser gets them lots of lovely money. Not a very sophisticated resolution, but effective. Armfuls of cash bringing happiness to all, even Gerard's father is delighted. This is what I want from Trollope! Not people sobbing about nearly being hanged.

I love Lady Laura. She needs an orgasm or a hobby, STAT. She spends her time dry-humping Phineas and panting things like "I'm your elder sister. Treat me like an elder sister." Poor old, mad old cow.

I liked all the hunting in the other books, but in 'Redux' the focus is Lord Chiltern wanting something done about the foxes in Trumpeton Woods. This would be the dullest thing in the book but for the Parliamentary debates on the disestablishment of the Church of England.

In summary, not enough froth and too much angst about being hanged for murder.

Lady Glencora on proposals:

"Any man who is privileged to sit down to table with you is privileged to ask,"

"The grace and beauty of life will be gone when we all become useful men."

Madame Max knows the score:

"What a pleasure! To hear a man speak for two hours and a half about the Church of England."

"What there is of him comes chiefly from the tailor."

"There is nothing that a man should fear so much as some twist in his convictions arising from a personal accident to himself."

Susan says

I'm slowly rereading Trollope's political novels and just finished #4, Phineas Redux. In the first Phineas book the likeable (maybe one of Trollope's most likeable characters) Irishman wins a seat in Parliament and makes his way quickly into the homes and political circles of the Liberal Party. He falls in love--almost immediately--with Laura Standish who's the daughter of an Earl. She should have been male--she's that interested in politics and undertakes to make Phineas' career, but she marries an elderly rich man, Robert Kennedy (a calculated move because she didn't love him). Phineas is heart-broken but immediately finds another woman to love (who also marries someone else). He gets involved in a political issue, though, where he has to act on his conscience which means he has to leave the government and he can't afford to be only an MP (no salary). So he goes back to Ireland and marries his childhood sweetheart who rather quickly dies in childbirth.

Phineas Redux is about his second foray into politics. Likeable as ever, he still have limited means and, though, elected to Parliament, has to have a government post to make enough money to survive. But the gods are against him. Laura Kennedy has left her husband--who's tormenting her with his extreme religious practices--and he blames Phineas Finn whom Laura has discovered she really loves. Phineas is over that but kind and compassionate and meets her whenever she requests to give the support and advice of a friend. But the salacious press gets wind of the story when Robert Kennedy makes public his efforts to "get his wife back" and blames Phineas Finn for her leaving, implying an affair. Laura has to leave the country with her father to avoid the law compelling her to go back to her husband. Phineas, the good friend as ever, acts as go between and is attacked by friend and foe, even to the extent that the leaders of the Party avoid picking him for government office.

The political insights in this book, apart from the somewhat dated prose, could be written by today's political pundits. It's both amusing and horrifying to realize that very little has changed.... Amusing too that Plantagenet Palliser (sort of the central character--well his wife is maybe more central) is angling all the time to convince Parliament to adopt a decimal currency--Trollope never knew it would ever be accomplished--in fact the first time I went to London counted out 10 pennies for some tourist attraction that cost a shilling, the ticket taker just glared at me and held out his hand until I sheepishly remembered there were 12 pennies in a shilling.....

Phineas quarrels with one of the party hacks who's most critical (on moral grounds) of his supposed affair with Lady Laura and the next thing we know Phineas is in Newgate accused of murder and in danger of being hung with only circumstantial evidence against him. (Very frustrating--one wants finger prints, blood types, DNA....) And I haven't even mentioned Madam Goesler (rich, dark-haired, young and somewhat mysterious Viennese widow) who's taken up by Glencora Palliser and becomes a fixture in Liberal political circles...who is Phineas' friend and had even proposed to him in the first book, though he'd refused, not wanting to be seen as a poor man angling for a rich wife.

Trollope's world is simple compared to ours but his analysis is far from simple. It's psychologically convincing. His political insights are perfect. And Phineas is a most delightful character.

Paul says

The fourth of the six Palliser novels revisits Phineas Finn and looks at the political stage in Victorian England. It is wide ranging and Trollope is at his best. He had recently stood for Parliament (unsuccessfully) and his disenchantment with politics shines through. There is a level of cynicism here not present in the first outing of Phineas Finn. Trollope dwells on the intricacies of elections and the party system and the towering political figure, Daubeney is clearly based on Disraeli.

Our hero goes through the mill a bit, with a trial for murder, the death of his wife at the very beginning and two women in love with him. There are some wonderful hunting types and well crafted sub plots to divert and entertain. Trollope ties up the loose ends neatly, well almost. As one reviewer points out one character dissents from the general happiness (like Festse and Malvolio in Twelfth Night). Trollope at his best; if you like him you'll love this.

Laurel Hicks says

Phineas Finn, Phineas Finn! What would you do without a bevy of beauties to guide you and love you? In the end, you made up your own mind, though.

Douglas says

My third reading of Phineas Finn and Phineas Redux confirms my belief that these novels show Trollope to be at the height of his craft.

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

I continue to thoroughly enjoy this series. In this case, thoroughly excludes the several pages devoted to the debate in the House of Commons having to do with the disestablishment of the Church of England. (One character remarked to her friend, who was a Member of Parliament: *What a pleasure! To hear a man speak for two hours and a half about the Church of England. One must be very hard driven for amusement!*) Fortunately, that section is only about 10 pages long, although leading up to it takes a few more.

As you see, Trollope retained his sense of humor. Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall stands out. I assume spooning has meant the same for decades, and Mr. Spooner definitely had a love interest. Mr. Chassanbrass was a defense lawyer. Trollope continues his excellent job of characterization - I thought as well in this as in any I have read so far - even while he has the obvious caricatures.

There is lots of plot - many sub-plots and intertwining/overlapping stories. At one point I thought to myself that there are things that happen that are completely unexpected, there are things you know will happen but haven't an idea how Trollope will pull it off, and then there are things you hope will happen, but despair that Trollope will not allow them to be.

Other than the the Church disestablishment part (would he have benefited from a good editor?), this was a page turner. This could be read as a stand alone novel because Trollope provides as much backstory as you need to understand the current events. However, you will be disappointed if you read this before either

Phineas Finn or The Eustace Diamonds as it contains numerous spoilers from those two novels.

Jane says

I really didn't mean to read Phineas Redux quite yet, I intended to give some other classic authors some time, after spending so much time with Trollope this year, but my fondness for Phineas and my curiosity to know what was happening in an a world full of so many characters I have come to love

I just had to know!

The story begins a few years after 'Phineas Finn' and a few months after 'The Eustace Diamonds'. I've seen suggestions that you could read the two Phineas novels back to back, but if you did that there are things that you might not appreciate in this book, because it picks up a few threads and a few characters from 'The Eustace Diamonds'.

Phineas Finn is living in Dublin, alone, since his wife has died, and though he has a good job and a healthy income he is bored. He misses parliament, he misses his London life, and so, when he sees a chance to return, he decides to risk everything , hoping that he will be able to pick up the threads of his old life.

He's still the same Phineas, as charming, as straightforward as ever, but time and experience has made his just a little jaded.

He finds that some things have changed and some things are still the same.

Madam Max had turned down a proposal from the Duke of Omnium; she had hoped to win Phineas, not knowing that he had already decided that his future lay with Mary Flood-Jones. She remained a good friend to the Duke, whose health was failing, and whose death would bring her a bequest that she was not prepared to accept. And she proved to be the best of friends to Phineas.

That death meant that Plantagenet Palliser was the new Duke of Omnium. Lady Glencora was in her element; I love that was so passionate about her causes, and her friendship with Madame Max is a delight. Her husband, on the other hand, was concerned that he would be ineligible to be chancellor of the exchequer again, and that he may not be able to see his work to reform the currency through to the end.

Lord Chilton and Violet Effingham had married and were happily settled. They had house-guests, and that set off a subplot – a love triangle that had echoes of one from an earlier book and yet was quite different. Trollope does see to have lots of variants on the love triangle, and I have to say that he does them very well. It was a little strange, moving from characters I knew so well to brand new characters, but I understood why they were there. One of the reasons was to keep the Chilterns in the story – as he still refused to have anything to do with politics – I loved that Lord Chiltern had grown from an angry young man into a comfortable curmudgeon, that Violet had found her niche as a wife and mother, and that the two of the understood each other so well.

Lady Laura Kennedy had fled to the continent, to escape her cold, unsympathetic husband. Her situation was dreadful, because, if she returned to England her husband could compel her return to him, as she had no grounds for divorce. The shift in her relationship with Phineas was interesting – in the first book he wanted more of her than she would give, and in this book that reversed. The arc of her story was inevitable and it

was heart-breaking;

Of course Phineas became part of all of their lives again, and he regained his seat in parliament.

But it wasn't all plain sailing. Robert Kennedy objected to Phineas visiting his wife, and it became horrible clear that he was beginning to lose his reason. And Mr Bonteen, his greatest political foe, and maybe the next chancellor of the exchequer, is determined that Phineas will be kept from high office.

The consequence of all of this is that Phineas must fight, first against a terrible slander, and then against a charge of murder.

There's a great deal going on, and inevitably there are highs and lows. There's quite a bit of politics to wade through at the beginning of the book, there are quiet spells between that great dramas, and it has to be said that Trollope is not a great crime writer.

But the two great dramas, and the human dramas that spin around them, are wonderful.

It works so well because – I think – Trollope was what my mother would call a people person.

He understood his characters, how their relationships worked, how life and events would change them.

He understood how their world worked; he may or may not of liked that, but he presented it, clear-sightedly, as it was.

He cared and he made me care; it's as simple as that.

Bill Tress says

Trollope's writing style is easy to read with a flow that keeps the reader turning pages, and this is important because his writing is prolific. Phineas Redux is over 700 pages long, yet, it is a page turner because of the well-developed characters and his smooth polished style.

This book is the final in the Palliser series, so there was plenty of time to develop characters, scenes of romance, drama and politics. It occurred to this reviewer at one point that Trollope probably invented the modern-day soap opera. There are many issues developed among many characters. They rang from love stories, political intrigue and of course, the Fox Hunt and issues surrounding the hunt like horses, fox, land use, poachers, etc. Trollope keeps you running back and forth, like the soap operas developing each character and scenario with great skill over long stretches.

The hero of this tale is Phineas Finn, and a case can be made that Mr. Finn is the alter ego of Anthony Trollope. Both were barristers, both stood for a Parliamentary seat, both were from the landed gentry, yet, monetarily poor. There are many other things about this fiction that could be considered biographical. This reviewer believes that the knowledge of the law, the British political system and fox hunting are products of Trollope's background, the biography ends, and the fiction begins in the description of Phineas Finn, as a tall dark handsome man, liked by all and a magnate to the ladies. Of course, Mr. Finn wins the hand of a fair maiden in the end and she is wealthy and willing to keep him in the style that he has become accustomed to, so he pitches away his political ambition and rides away towards the sunset, a rich man with a beautiful wife, every man's dream!

An interesting feature is Trollope's depiction the female characters, the older married woman of Phineas Redux exhibit deep insight and sensitivity. They contrive among themselves and know the strengths and

weaknesses of all the male's characters and are willing to share their views in verbal combat with little trepidation. They dominate their husbands no matter how high the husbands station in life. It seems that these ladies run the country, by way of influence on their husbands, whether Duke or Cabinet minister all are subject to the manipulation of their spouse. In Trollope's portrayal the husband would rather capitulate than fight over the desires of the spouse and in nineteenth century England this is an interesting manifestation. In Phineas Redux, the discussion of money is always "front row center" and this was true in Trollope life. Trollope once admitted that he wrote for money; and that may explain why he was so prolific, at the same time, he called the disdain of money false and foolish. the female character's in Phineas Redux control the wealth, either through inheritance, marriage or divorce. This allows them to control the action in this narrative, in the end, the female characters save Finn from a conviction of murder. The characters of Madame Goesler, Lady Laura and Lady Chiltern dominate husbands, find the evidence exonerating Finn and support him emotionally while Phineas Finn moves from one catastrophe to another, our hero! Trollope was a great nineteenth century writer and ranks among the best of British writers. Phineas Redux ranks high among all of Trollope's successes and if you like this genus, you will like this book.

Hilary says

I have only read two of the Pallisers series and not in order. The books are quite stand-alone though by the time I came to the end of Redux I realised that I had been better reading the series straight through as there were more and more references back to previous characters with whom I had not been acquainted.
