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Alice Vavasor cannot decide whether to marry her ambitious but violent cousin George or the upright and gentlemanly John Grey - and finds herself accepting and rejecting each of them in turn.

Increasingly confused about her own feelings and unable to forgive herself for such vacillation, her situation is contrasted with that of her friend Lady Glencora - forced to marry the rising politician Plantagenet Palliser in order to prevent the worthless Burgo Fitzgerald from wasting her vast fortune.

In asking his readers to pardon Alice for her transgression of the Victorian moral code, Trollope created a telling and wide-ranging account of the social world of his day.

Can You Forgive Her? Details

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From Reader Review Can You Forgive Her? for online ebook

Rebecca says

This is the second Trollope book I read, after a one-off of the Basset books, and I was astounded. I was 35 years old, newly married and with a child on the way, and the question, what must a woman do with her life was so pertinent. I was stunned at how Alice's questions of how she could act in the world and satisfy herself were so fresh. Today we have many more opportunities, but frankly, when you choose to be a wife and mother, and to make that your priority, you are left, today, with the same predicament as Alice. 150 years later! Shocking! I loved the respect and care that Trollope took with Alice. Also shocking from a Victorian man! Of course, as I read on in Trollope, I always find that his female characters (the ones he likes) are always his most rich and honored and beloved characters. The men are less likely to be funny, less likely to be honest, less likely to be truly worthy of respect. Well, Plantagenet Palliser, I suppose, is without true fault, except for dullness, and his true love for Lady Glen dissolves that fault for me.

A book I wish I could unread so I could read it again for the first time.

Issicratea says

In an interesting New Yorker piece, marking the bicentenary of Trollope's birth in 2015, Adam Gopnik describes him as not a "sentence-by-sentence writer" or a "scene-by-scene writer," but rather a "character-by-character writer."

I found that helpful as I read *Can You Forgive Her?*, which Trollope published around his half-century, in 1864-65. At the sentence-by-sentence level, Trollope's writing is no more than workaday. His words do not spring off the page or fall into glowing cadences; and I found that off-putting at first, being something of a "sentence-by-sentence" reader myself. The novel does have a slow-burn, incremental power, though; so that, from around half-way through, I was thoroughly gripped by it. I think it's true that this power derives from the characterization, which is notably subtle and credible and well observed.

CYFH is a very unified and well-structured novel (not a given for Trollope, as I gather from the introduction to my edition.) The dilemma of the heroine, Alice Vavasor—the "her" whom we are being asked to forgive in the title—is reflected in that of two other female figures in the novel, Lady Glencora Palliser and Alice's aunt, Arabella Greenow. The three are, respectively, unmarried girl, married woman, and widow; and the three plots are carefully matched, as well, in terms of tone and register. Alice's is potentially tragic; "Aunt Greenow"'s is comic; and Glencora's wavers interestingly between the two.

All these women find themselves torn between two competing suitors (or a husband and a potential lover in the case of Glencora); and the relation between the male rivals is plotted in all three cases on some kind of "sense vs sensibility" or "head vs heart" spectrum. The rivals in Alice's case are a highly eligible Cambridgeshire country gentleman, John Grey, and her rakish and impecunious cousin, George Vavasor. Glencora's two rivals are her stiff, politically obsessed husband, Plantagenet Palliser, and her handsome, penniless old flame, Burgo Fitzgerald. Mrs Greenow's "loves," which act as a parodic counterpoint throughout, are smug Norfolk farmer Mr Cheesacre and debt-ridden ne'er-do-well Captain Bellfield.

This may all sound very schematic, but Trollope sets up these binaries meticulously in the first half of the novel only to break them down in the second (at least in the case of the two “serious” plots.) On the evidence of this novel, Trollope seems as suspicious as Jane Austen of romanticism and the forms of self-delusion it can breed. He uses geography ingeniously in pursuit of this theme. At several points in the novel, we are led into landscapes that are clichés of the romantic imaginary: a ruined medieval priory by moonlight; the wild moors of Cumbria; a balcony overlooking the Rhine. True to the tradition of pathetic fallacy, these sentimental spaces tend to be associated with moments of passion and reckless decisions, with the urge to overthrow the rational and calculating and socially expected; yet the course of the novel lead us to question the association of strong feeling with truth on which much romantic cliché depends.

Around half-way through the novel, summing up her reasons for preferring the dashing spendthrift Captain Bellfield to the solid, and stolid, Mr Cheeseacre, Mrs Greenow invokes the importance of “the rocks and the valleys” in matrimonial choices, for those with the financial freedom to choose. Her nieces, understandably, find this phrase hilarious as shorthand for romance and sexual attraction; yet Trollope is quite serious in his investigation of the ways in which the human desire for “the rocks and the valleys” may be accommodated within a society in which marriages are largely conceived of as business transactions.

This isn't by any means a perfect novel. The tension slackens off towards the ending (I gather from the introduction that this is something of a problem with Trollope generally.) Worse, Trollope's real-life love of fox hunting led him to include a full chapter of blow-by-blow hunt narrative at one point that I can only compare in its stultifying tedium to Paul Auster's descriptions of baseball games in 4 3 2 1. True, the chapter serves to introduce the character of Burgo Fitzgerald, but that doesn't seem any real excuse.

A piece of advice to anyone thinking of reading this: don't buy the ebook Penguin Classics edition! It has the air of having been digitized by an illiterate drunk. There are errors on almost every page, some of which merely make you laugh ("She is Mr cousin," said Alice"; "Tray for him tonight") but others of which render the text genuinely unintelligible. "I'll bring her to you in my room, if you bin it" quite defeated me, as did "unless it was to her tire woman." Trollope may not be a sentence-to-sentence writer, but he deserves a little better than this.

Mary Ronan Drew says

All Trollope aficionados are periodically asked The Big Question: Which of Trollope's books should a newcomer read first? With 47 novels to choose from it's difficult to answer that question. I think you have to have read all of Trollope and be re-reading him before you truly appreciate his books. But of course you have to start somewhere.

Can You Forgive Her? should be the place to start. It has everything that makes Trollope so beloved. There's a love story in which a young woman has to choose between marrying the man she loves or the man her family wants her to marry. In fact, there are two such love stories, with very different women making very different decisions. There's a hunting scene, one which is exciting to read and which throws light on one of the love plots and on two of the characters involved therein. There is an election story, where the candidate we are following must put a lot of money into the hands of questionable lawyers and innkeepers in order to bribe the voters.

There is not one but two trips to Switzerland. Trollope liked to send his characters abroad to places he had recently visited and use the scenes and atmosphere of those places to enhance his stories. There's a wonderful inheritance plot, always interesting and important in Trollope novels. There's political negotiating for important jobs in a new government, if there is to be a new government. And there are house parties where

the characters get to like one another - or in some cases to loathe one another.

Most important in *Can You Forgive Her?* the reader is introduced to one of literature's most scintillating characters, Lady Glencora Palliser, the richest woman in Britain aside from the Queen, who is in love with one man but must marry another because she is too young to fight the countesses and marquesses who are her guardians. What she makes of that marriage and how is, in my opinion, one of the finest stories in Victorian literature.

What about the title? Whom are we being asked to forgive and for what? Ostensibly we are judging Alice Vavasor, who breaks her engagement (a serious sin in itself) with the man she loves and becomes engaged to her cousin because she can't face the boring life she would lead with her beloved in Cambridgeshire, a place Trollope apparently felt was the most cheerless in England. By accepting her cousin's proposal she feels she can be part of his political campaign and have some interest in life aside from housekeeping and babies. And those dreary fens.

But we are also asked to judge Lady Glencora who marries a man she doesn't love, the worst sin in Trollope. She then obsesses on the possibility of running away with the man she really loves. This is almost beyond possibility in Trollope as in most Victorian novels. Whether she elopes with this other man or not, can the reader ever really forgive her for even thinking of it?

All of these delights make *Can You Forgive Her?* the ideal Trollope novel for a beginner except for one thing. It is about 1,000 pages long. Perhaps 50 years ago you could hand this to a reader inexperienced in the 19th century novel. But today could you seriously expect someone with no feel for the measured language and slow pace of the book to enjoy it - or even to finish it? Do you think they would forgive you for recommending it?

Most recently read in January and again in Sept 2012. This July 2016 reading is my ninth reading of the novel. It's my favorite Trollope novel.

Roger Brunyate says

Men of Property; Women of Independence

She knew now that she must follow his guidance. She had found her master, as we sometimes say, and laughed at herself with a little inward laughter as she confessed that it was so. [...] She had assumed the command of the ship, and had thrown it upon the rocks, and she felt that she never ought to take the captain's place again.

The above passage is to be found on page 774 of the 830-page novel. Hardly a spoiler; all Victorian novels end with at least one marriage, and I am not naming any names. I quote it because of that word "master." When a successful Victorian suitor says "Dearest, you are mine," he means it not just romantically but literally; the wife is the husband's property.

Nonetheless, in many respects, this is a feminist book. Intentionally or not, Trollope creates female characters in it who are consistently more interesting than their male counterparts. Three of them, in fact: Alice Vavasor, who cannot decide whether to marry a solid suitor of some standing or her rapsallion cousin; Lady Glencora Palliser, who has been persuaded into marrying the rising politician Plantagenet Palliser (this novel is the first of the Palliser series) but still yearns for her first love; and the wealthy widow Mrs. Greenow, who mirrors a similar dilemma in a more comic key. Alice can be a bit infuriating, but the fiercely

independent Lady Glencora is surely one of the most attractive characters in Victorian fiction to modern eyes, and Alice's cousin Kate is also engaging. Compared to them, the men in the story tend to lack a dimension, especially in Book One, where they are painted in one of two tints: stolid or romantic. Things get a bit more interesting in Book Two, but you sense Trollope manipulating his reader by suddenly pushing them further in the given direction: the upright characters reveal surprising depths of understanding, and the others are revealed as cads or wastrels, even to the point of melodrama.

Historically, the novel is interesting as showing a number of women of independent means and even more independent feelings testing the space allowed them by society to assert their independence. Two cheers for feminism. But not three; in the end, society wins—and Trollope does not fight that verdict. The question in the title, *Can You Forgive Her?*, is asked of Alice, and it is shocking to hear it asked at all. For what is her crime? To break off an engagement (all right, to do so twice). And why not, we say; it is a woman's right. But in a society that treats marriage as transfer of property, it is like signing a contract with a kited check. Sympathetic though Alice is at the beginning of this overlong novel, she loses stature towards the end of it—fatally, I think—because she comes also to despise herself:

"I shall never cease to reproach myself. I have done that which no woman can do and honour herself afterwards. I have been — a jilt."

With that little pause, you would almost going to think she would say "cheat," or even "whore." It's hardly surprising that the word "jilt" has passed out of our language as a noun, although we still keep it as a verb. So while I admire Trollope for opening out the woman's point of view, I do regret that he should retreat at the end to the conventions of his time. I certainly came close to losing patience with what I saw as his artificial extension of a 500-page novel into an 800-page tome. And his failure to reconcile the claims of feminine independence and masculine property leads to one of the strangest love scenes that I can think of in a Victorian novel, one that sits very uncomfortably in this age of #MeToo:

She knew now that she must yield to him, — that his power over her was omnipotent. She was pressed by him as in some countries the prisoner is pressed by the judge, — so pressed that she acknowledged to herself silently that any further antagonism to him was impossible. Nevertheless, the word which she had to speak still remained unspoken, and he stood over her, waiting for her answer. Then slowly he sat down beside her, and gradually he put his arm round her waist. She shrank from him, back against the stonework of the embrasure, but she could not shrink away from his grasp. She put up her hand to impede his, but his hand, like his character and his words, was full of power. It would not be impeded. 'Alice,' he said, as he pressed her close with his arm, 'the battle is over now, and I have won it.'

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FOOTNOTE. Three times, characters in the novel stay in the Hotel of the Three Kings overlooking the Rhine at Basle (Basel); it seems the thing to do. Indeed Trollope remarks, "Who has ever been through Basle, and not stood in one of [those bedrooms], looking down upon the father of waters?", which says a lot about his assumptions about his readers. As it happens, my own first visits to Switzerland were with my parents just after the War, when big hotels like this were offering deep discounts to middle-class bus tours like ours, but my taste of 19th-century luxury at a young age was not easily to be repeated. All the same, I have enjoyed looking up old prints of this Basle hotel, the church in Lucerne near which the questionably romantic climax quoted above takes place, and Hawsewater in the Eastern Lake District, near the Vavasor family home.

Jane says

I am so pleased to say that I have finally discovered why so many readers love Anthony Trollope. In fact, if it isn't wrong to say so after reading just the one book, I am now one of them. I'd picked up one or two books over the years and they hadn't quite worked. It wasn't that I didn't like them but I didn't love them, they weren't the right books; I had to find the right place to start, the right book at the right time at the right time, and this book was that book.

I found that I loved the way Trollope wrote, taking such trouble to introduce his characters, making me understand why he was telling their story and guiding me so carefully through it, being present without ever being intrusive.

He cared, and he made me care.

The 'Her' of the title is Alice Vavasor. She was engaged to Mr John Grey, who was wise, thoughtful, wealthy and handsome. He was genuinely good man, and a very fine catch. But Alice had doubts. It wasn't that she didn't love him; her doubts were about the life they would live together, a life that she feared she would find dreadfully dull.

Kate Vasnovour, Alice's cousin and dearest friend, hoped that Alice would marry her brother, George. They had been engaged, George and Alice, but Alice had broken off the engagement, on account of something that George did. But Kate continued to promote the match, because she loved George, she loved Alice, and she was quite sure that they would be happy.

Alice did break her engagement to Mr Grey. She thought she was doing the right thing, that she should honour her earlier engagement, but her family were appalled.

Kate thought it wise to go away for a little while, and so she went to stay with her Aunt Greenow, in the country. Mrs Greenow had married an very elderly, very wealthy husband, and he had died shortly afterwards, leaving her a young, wealthy and very eligible widow. Two very different men were rivals for her hand: Mr Cheesacre, a portly but prosperous farmer, eager to show what a fine husband he would make; and Captain Bellfield, a handsome, poor, unemployed soldier, who was maybe playing things a little more cleverly. Mrs Greenow was having a lovely time, enjoying the trappings of a grieving widow, and loving being the centre of attention.

That was the light relief, and it was wonderfully entertaining.

George proposed to Alice and, though she was still worried that she had behaved badly to Mr Grey, she accepted. Because she had decided that the best thing she could do was to try to curb George's worst excesses, try to help him to make something of his life. George's wanted to get into parliament, but he lacked the necessary means; Alice did have the means and she promised that she would use her fortune to support his political career. She kept her promise, but success brought out the worst in George. Alice soon realised that she had made a terrible mistake, but she wanted to do the right thing she wanted to keep her promises.

Alice retreated to the country, to stay with another cousin, Lady Glencora Palliser. Glencora was the richest heiress in England, she was young, she was pretty, she was vivacious, and she was the new wife of Plantagenet Palliser, one of the most promising young politicians in the country. But she wasn't happy. Her family had steered her very firmly away from the handsome, charming and dissolute Burgo Fitzgerald,

and towards an eminently suitable marriage. But Glencora found Plantagenet stiff and boring, and he seemed to find her frivolous and silly. She told herself that she was still in love with Burgo, and she dreamed of running away with him.

Trollope brings together these stories, stories of three very different women, beautifully. Their situations have similarities and they have differences, and they all have to make decisions about the future, about which path they will take; decisions made difficult by conflicts between family duty, social acceptance, personal principles and their own happiness.

He managed every element of the plot, he attended to every detail. My only, minor, criticism would be that there were moments when he overplayed the comedy.

It was fascinating to watch the characters become clearer, as I spent more time with them and as circumstances showed different sides of them. The story grew, it became deeper, and I was pulled further and further in.

I loved the contrasts: the comic relief against the serious drama; the steady Alice against the high-spirited Glencora; the good men, Mr Grey and Palliser against the bad men, George Vasnavour and Burgo Fitzgerald. And though I use the words 'good' and 'bad' because I can't find better adjectives, but Trollope was much more subtle than that; all four men were fallible human beings, with different strengths and weaknesses.

And I could forgive Alice; though I didn't feel it was my place to judge her, because she was simply a young woman without a mother to guide her, and she tried to do the right thing but she struggled to know what the right thing was.

I was involved. I cared. Sometimes I knew what would happen, but often I was surprised. I felt so many emotions. And I knew that I would miss this world and these people when the story was over.

There were country houses, there were London streets, there were foreign tours, there was a disputed will, and in the end there would be marriage

And Trollope breathed life into it all, into every single thing in this book.

It's a big book but it didn't feel like a big book, and I'm already reading another big book, the next book in the series.

Bonnie says

Can You Forgive Her?

The author addresses us directly before we even begin reading. Forgive whom and for what? There is an unspoken suggestion in the question that you ought to forgive her. I've always been vaguely intrigued by the title of this novel. Why did I wait so long to read it? It's delightful, a sort of cross between Dickens and Jane Austen.

There's an Alice Munro story called "Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage". It could be the title of this book too. Or a plot outline. The main characters, three woman and six men, do not add up - there

will be some hateship from those left standing before this musical chairs of a courtship is resolved.

This book is written in the third person, but the writer comes in every now and then and has a remark for us,

I am not going to describe the Vavasors' Swiss tour. It would not be fair on my readers. "Six Weeks in the Bernese Oberland, by party of three," would have but very small chance of success in the literary world at present, and I should consider myself to be dishonest if I attempt to palm off such matter on the public in the pages of a novel. It is true that I have just returned from Switzerland, and should find such a course of writing very convenient. But I dismiss the temptation, strong as it is. Retro age, Satanus.

Can you Forgive Her? is the first of the six novels in "the Palliser cycle". The BBC made it into a mini series. I've watched several episodes and, like most BBC dramas, it's very good - but not nearly as good as the book.

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=...>

My pretty dress is binding!

No, I do NOT hunt vampires.

Yoga adjustments are so difficult in these clothes!

But darling, I tell you Bob Ross did not paint those mountains!

Can You Forgive Her? was first published in monthly installments in 1864-1865 and then in book form in two volumes. These were illustrated by Phiz and another lesser known artist, E. Taylor.

Here are a few of the illustrations:

I'm as round as your hat and as square as your elbow I am

Baker you must put Dandy in the bar

The most self-willed young woman I ever met in my life

Burgo Fitzgerald

Friendships will not come by ordering said Lady Glencora

Alice

Oh George, she said, you won't do that

Trollope's writing method really bugged his contemporaries. He revealed in his autobiography that he wrote 1000 words an hour, on a strict schedule. What a money grubber, thought Henry James.

Can you forgive him?

Chris says

The one thing that Trollope has over Dickens, and it is a huge thing, is that Trollope writes believable, sympathetic, intelligent women. Trollope cares more about women than Dickens ever did. While Dickens focuses on the major social crusades, Trollope spends time on how society can affect individuals in marriage. Here is, he is examining how an arranged marriage would affect the parties involved, especially the woman. Trollope's focus on the upper class or the more education is no less important than Dickens's focus on the working conditions.

It is near impossible to dislike a book that describes a character thusly, "He was a great buyer of pictures, which, perhaps, he did not understand, and a great collector of books, which certainly he never read. The entire world respected him, and he was a man to whom the respect of the entire world was as the breath of his nostrils" (Vol 1, 309).

The main problem in this book about love and forgiveness is that the two wronged men are far too saint-like. Perhaps this was intentional, not to show that men are better than women; but to show men what the correct reaction is. (Dickens would go with the first option, but Trollope is far more sympathetic to his female characters).

I would have liked more of exploration of the character of Alice; does she do what she does because she has no choice? Is Trollope trying to show the reader the limits of a woman in terms of choice? Regardless, Dickens might have focused on the poor, but Trollope does offer a far more detailed look at the women of the time.

Greg says

Can you Forgive Her? is the story of a young woman who is engaged to be married to a very respectable gentleman. She has some doubts and starts to wonder if she should have been with the less than respectable paramour of her younger days. Along with a few other intermingling story lines, 800 pages later the little love story is wrapped up and the reader is asked to answer the titular question.

Before you dismiss the plot as drivel that no one would be interested in reading 800 pages think that Proust can be summed up in a similarly pithy manner. (view spoiler).

I'm going to come back to the book and write about a lot of other things, too. This review will be about a lot

of things.

Q1: Why did I decide to try reading Trollope?

I blame Jacques Roubaud and his descriptions of the joys he gets from reading Trollope. I'm fairly certain there was a passage in *The Great Fire of London* that said something like, even when he was bored with what Trollope was writing about, the style he wrote in never ceased to give him pleasure. I think this is a fair description for my own feelings towards this book. It's possible that after I read *The Great Fire of London* I came across another writer I enjoyed also praising Trollope and with those two praises I felt it necessary to pick up some very inexpensive mass-market editions of his books when I was home recently. I can't remember who this second author is though. I might be mis-remembering more than one thing in this paragraph.

P1: There is no book that is universally loved.

and it follows:

P2: Every book has detractors

with

P2(e): There being some books that are either so mediocre and/or unread / never seen that it would be hard to find anyone that has any passionate feelings about them (obviously).

For example, as of 12:34 pm EST on Saturday August 25, 2012 two thousand three hundred and seventy eight people have rated *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare with one star here on goodreads. T.S. Eliot called the play an, "artistic failure".

Some people feel the same way about Eliot's poetry.

What does it mean when we don't like a book?

Is this a binary situation where either me as the reader is infallible, which leads to the possible conclusion that anyone who doesn't agree with me is flawed in some way ie., stupid, ideologically tainted, a fool; or I have failed as a reader if there are others who love the book and I hated it. Is every failing as a reader his or her own fault if it can be established that the book lives up to a minimum level of coherence and skill? Is the person who doesn't enjoy the current best-selling thriller that tons of people are enjoying correct in saying, this is stupid, all those people are dupes. They are just engaging in some collective psychosis? Or is it more proper to say I failed to find anything entertaining in this book. Or I wanted this book to be more about something it wasn't. I failed in selecting a book that matched my desires to the thing that would satisfy those desires. In light of the millions of books available to read could I have made a better choice?

An example. If I read *Fifty Shades of Grey* I'm sure I wouldn't like it. There is nothing about that book that signals to me that this is a book I would have an interest in reading. I could read it and then write a scathing review about how stupid it is, how poorly written certain passages are, how everyone is just buying into some stupid trend but the truth is that I'm not the audience for the book, it's not going to speak to me. The fact that so many people have found the book to have personal resonance to them means that it is succeeding as a book, as something that speaks to people, that communicates. If I choose to read it the failing would be mine, not the book. The book never made any promises to me that it would be something for me.

But what about *Hamlet* and T.S. Eliot? I don't know. If I was going to guess I'd think that Eliot wanted something out of the play that wasn't there. Should what we want in a work of art be there?

It's a little disturbing to me that I seem to be advocating here that every time you don't like a book it is your own fault. What I am assuming is that I'm talking about books of a certain level, even if that level is as low

as say something like a James Patterson novel. What about lesser works by great writers? Or the books by literary giants that you know were written either on their sharp decline or were just cobbled together to make some cash and even the writer would say that it is a piece of junk? I don't have any answers. I only have some half-baked thoughts and questions. But should all those people who hold *Hamlet* up as one of the pinnacles of Western Literature suddenly say, I guess we were wrong, Eliot found it was a failure.

I don't know how you would establish the 'minimum baseline' that would be necessary to say that the failing is mine as the reader. Because there are really crappy books out there. There are failures. More likely, if we aren't digging into the ditches of self-published muck we are reading books that can be successful as a book, maybe just not to us. But failings on our part aren't necessarily bad things. Maybe we just don't fall for the big twist because we're sophisticated enough in our cultural consumption that we caught all the signs and saw it coming, this could be argued either way, maybe it was a crappy story, or maybe we failed because we gave it too much attention. I have no answers. I'm just trying to work out in my head why some books work and some don't work for me, and why those same books don't work the same way for other people. And really fucking annoyed (even though I'm sure I'm guilty of it, too) at the idea that people who don't agree with ones opinion of a book should be insulted.

I'm sure that the millions of people throughout the last four hundred and something years that have loved *Hamlet* were all just stupid dupes by Eliot. And yeah, I'll give that he's probably much smarter than I'll ever be.

What this has to do with this book?

I wouldn't have liked this book if I read it say fifteen years ago. I really liked it now though. I could enjoy the wit and the slow pacing. I could find the text a pleasure to read even if the messages / or plot weren't exactly anything that I'm necessarily interested in. When I was in my early twenties, I would have probably been annoyed at this book. I would have found the capitalism in it off-putting. The pragmatic way of looking at love and marriage I would have been up in arms about, but what about true love freed from the shackles of economic tyranny? What do I care about the dealings of mid-19th century English Parliamentary intrigues when across the channel there had been barricades and the sounds of revolution were in the air? Where is Marx in all of this? Up Bakunin and destruction being a creative act! I would have thought this is the kind of reactionary Victorian rubbish that we need to move beyond.

This book would have been a painful chore for me to get through because I would have been wanting the book to be something it wasn't (not that I would have been explicitly expecting the book to be anything, but I would have been wanting to be reading a book that dealt with different topics, or that handled the themes in the book in a different manner). Books are wonderfully open artifacts that the reader can open up (as in the text, but obviously the book would have had to been opened literally to do this) and make all kinds of dialogues with, many of which the author probably never would have imagined possible, but a book is also a static object that can only come to the reader as it is. With enough Derrida maybe any text can be made to say anything you want, but for mere-mortals we will run into limits of what a book can do, even in the most difficult and open book ever written (taking into account 'mis-readings' it's possible to say that a book could be almost anything, someone with a strong enough aversion to cognitive dissonance could theoretically make every book fit their own personal desires, although it then can be argued if they are reading the book, or just reading themselves with the book as a prop, a further question can be asked about a person who reads in this way is if they just want themselves to be the hero, the protagonist, the anti-hero, the villain (or whatever role they see themselves occupying in life) in every book they read, and when they can't fit themselves in, can't identify closely enough with anyone in the book they feel the book is a total failure. If this is something, which it might not be, is this alien (to me) egoism towards books sort of paradoxically also a renunciation of the the self as an autonomous being? Huh? Well, first because they look to other things are only relating to themselves, and see their own self as a stand in for the universal, and because they negate the autonomy of

others, say the author of a book, be declaring a failure anything that doesn't speak to them personally, doesn't answer their questions, doesn't live up to their expectations. Unless one takes a solipistic view of the world, the demanding of the other to comply with ones own wishes and desires this denies the other the right to be an individual that has it's own autonomy. Fuzzy thinking? I've got tons of it, this sort of worked in my head, but I think I just fucked it up really good here).

Am I trying to say that I'm a more mature reader now than I was then? That I'm smarter? No. My expectations have just changed.

Sometimes I think about how I rate books, or more specifically the enjoyment I feel from books. I see that I rate most of what I read with three or four stars. Or to put it another way, I enjoy most of the books I read. I worry that I'm just easily amused sometimes. I really enjoyed reading this summer's must-read thriller *Gone Girl*, I thought it was well-paced, and it kept me engaged throughout the book. It didn't make me think about any of the big important questions of life, but I wasn't expecting it to. I read it to be entertained, and it succeeded. Was it a better book than George Saunders new collection of stories? Probably not, writing wise Saunders is probably better. The stories in Saunders collection were more what my personal liking were (I'd wouldn't necessarily say a story about a missing wife is one of the things I go looking for in a story, on the other hand Saunders writes about the sorts of things I generally would think I'm looking for in a story). My expectations were dashed by Saunders though, I wanted more than was in the book. I rated it accordingly, I know people who are going to like it a lot more than I did, and I feel kind of envious that they will have a better experience than I did. But that is going off topic a bit. I don't think I'm a good reviewer of 'popular fiction' the sorts of books that fall into my all-time favorites are generally not plot-driven. They aren't the sort of books that have blurbs that say, "a real-page turner", or "call in sick tomorrow because you're going to be up all night reading to the final twist". Instead when I do read these books I usually have one of two reactions. My critical faculties usually drop when I read a book like this and unless the writing is awful I'm usually fairly entertained. It's sort of the same way that I watch movies these days. I see them so infrequently that I'm easily caught up in the whole 'spectacle' of them. Blow some shit up and I'm kind of happy these days in the three or four times a year that I sit down and watch a movie.

But am I really this easily amused? Or after about twenty years of being a fairly serious reader who took literature classes, worked in a library for a couple of years, interned for almost a year with a publisher and then worked for the past eleven years in one of the biggest fiction sections in the country (I'm not trying to brag, I'm just trying to get the idea that I've spent a lot of time around books in the past two decades) I've just gotten fairly good at picking out what books to read?

I wouldn't have picked out this book though. If it hadn't been for Roubaud I would haven't have read Trollope (I was going to say ever, but that is stupid to say, who knows what would have happened, what I would have read that would have pointed me towards him, which is something you never really do know once you start reading, and especially when you happen to pick up a book by someone who really loves reading and gives you names and titles and pointers towards other writers you might have never thought of or heard of. This is one of my favorite things to find in a book, it is the same geeky great feeling I used to have as a teenager reading through linear notes for records/cassettes/cds and reading interviews with musicians, when other bands would get mentioned. Some band I never heard of was thanked or mentioned as an influence, and sometimes that would lead to a new favorite or sometimes it would lead to a band I'd be mystified about why they were thought highly of, but it is one of the pre-internet ways that my musical repertoire grew).

When I was twenty four I believed I had read all the novels that mattered. I thought literature was dead. I figured there were maybe a few odds and ends of authors I'd already read that I should still read, but mostly I figured I'd seen it all.

I was wrong.

Should you read Trollope?

I have no idea. I'm not going to try to sell him on you. If you want to be sold on him and you have the inclination to read Roubaud's labyrinthine prose then I'd recommend letting him sell you on it. I really enjoyed my week I spent with Trollope, and I'm planning on spending more time with him in the near future.

Is this the review you meant to write? Isn't this just another of your long-winded why I read reviews?

No. I meant for this to be more involved with other topics. I meant to do more propositions. I wrote those a couple of weeks ago, everything after them I wrote today. I wanted to write about love: conditional, unconditional, passion and pragmatic. I wanted to create a Roubaud-esque review where I swung the topics around, weaved in and out of them and maybe answered nothing but constructed something nevertheless. Then this was going to be the last review I ever wrote for this site (or second to last depending on if I had written this before or after the one other review that I feel obliged to still write, which I haven't written yet). It wasn't going to be stated that it was the last review, it wasn't going to be a grand fuck-you or anything. I just planned on not writing anymore, or if I did write reviews not send them to the feed, just let them be reminders to me of what I thought at particular times, sometimes about the book I just read and sometimes about other things. Instead I'll probably keep writing these things, which are more of a public diary than reviews anyway. But yeah, this is just yet another of my why I read / why I rate books like I do / why I write reviews sort of review. One day maybe I'll figure out the answers to these questions and then I can get to the serious business of writing book reports.

Tiffany Reisz says

Reader, I forgave her.

Buck says

George Costanza excepted, I know less about women than anyone in the world, but I'd imagine that even liberated, post-feminist women could relate to the three feisty chicks at the centre of *Can You Forgive Her?* Pushed willy-nilly onto the marriage market, these wealthy Victorian ladies are faced with that eternal dilemma: how come all the hot, interesting guys are total dicks, and all the nice, bankable ones are kind of...blah? I'm vulgarizing shamelessly, but in fact each of these characters has to choose between a sexy bad-boy type and a dependable doofus. More to the point, maybe: each has to work out for herself a solution to another familiar dilemma, summed up by the novel's heroine: 'What should a woman do with her life?'

Trollope, needless to say, was no feminist. He tried hard to disguise himself as a typical Victorian gentleman, and his official views on the 'woman question' are an unappealing mishmash of genial male chauvinism and courtly condescension. But here's the thing: Trollope was so far from being a misogynist that, on some fundamental level, he completely got women, sympathizing with them in ways he never did with men. That may be why, in *Can You Forgive Her?*, it's the female characters who are fully developed moral agents, and the men who are stock figures out of Victorian central casting. (In this respect, Trollope is the inverse of Dickens, whose women are all Protestant Madonnas full of mercy and tears; personally, the only one I could believe for a second was Esther Summerson, and that's because she was human enough to get smallpox).

But apart from this rough-and-ready philogyny, what knocks me out about Trollope is his wisdom, which breathes through his books with something of the same quasi-divine calm that you sense in Tolstoy (who was

a big fan of Trollope's, by the way). Whatever they were like as individuals – and I know Tolstoy, at least, could be a prize idiot at times – as novelists, their default mode is wry omniscience. Both have the rare and generous capacity to honour a character's singularity, to stay true to it even when their own moral or philosophical principles are all engaged on the opposite side. Lady Glencora, one of Trollope's most fascinating creations, is a good example of this. In *Can You Forgive Her?*, he shows her seriously contemplating adultery, a crime for which the Victorians had a special horror. We see her lusting after a beautiful cad who - she is well aware - would probably end up gambling away her fortune and tossing her aside. She openly admits that she'd rather be beaten by such a man than endure a respectable life with her perfectly decent husband. All this is, of course, very, very bad. Trollope feels it to be bad. He disapproves. And yet he loves Glencora more than a little; he understands her right down to her smallest whim – and he wants us to love and understand her, too.

God, there's just so much life here, clumps of the stuff. Who would have thought that an 800-page triple decker about the endlessly prolonged romantic vacillations of a frigid, upper-class maiden would be not only great fun, but moving and profound? I'm not overlooking its flaws, either, the most obvious being that it's morbidly, spectacularly obese. I repeat: Eight. Hundred. Freaking. Pages. If this book were a person, it would be a blubbery shut-in lolling in its own feces, waiting for the work crew to knock down the wall and bring in the special Sea World harness.

More damaging than the sheer bulk, however, is the generic inconsistency: you have the almost Jamesian melodrama of the twinned central plot, which is then parodically duplicated in scenes of provincial clownishness involving an amorous widow. To my mind, this last subplot owes something to the older, 18th century comic novelists, while a few of the disreputable urban characters seem to have strolled over from a Dickens novel for a cameo (they even come with Dickensian names like Grimes, Tombe and Pinkle). Yet by some mysterious insufflation, Trollope manages to keep this immense, wayward monster alive and (fitfully) kicking.

For all my enthusiasm, I don't know anyone I would recommend the book to unreservedly. I can see how even the most willing reader might be turned off by the novel's flab and by the slight gaminess of the prose (which might grow on you, though, as it did on me). Then too, I think you need a certain amount of 'life experience' to really appreciate Trollope's shrewdness. I first read him at twenty or so and decided he was nothing special. Now, like Twain with his old man, I'm amazed at how smart he's gotten all of a sudden.

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

I'm probably being generous with the stars, but I hit a point where I couldn't put it down - must be worth something.

Trollope's dialogue is rather stiff and formal and his prose isn't as good as Dickens, for instance, but his characterizations are ever so much better. Dickens *might* give you one or two fully fleshed characters and the rest caricatures. Some of you might quibble that Trollope does more telling than showing, but I think there is both. Sometimes he can help you to see two characters at once.

Alice was proud to a fault. She had nursed her pride till it was very faulty. All her troubles and sorrows in life had come from an overfed craving for independence. Why, then, should she submit to be treated with open want of courtesy by any man; but, of all men, why should she submit to it from such a one as Mr. Palliser, -- the heir of a ducal house, rolling in wealth, and magnificent with all the magnificence of British pomp and pride?

Trollope talks to his readers. It's as if the two of you are watching the drama together.

... and there was a fixed propriety of position of every hair of his whiskers, which indicated very plainly that he had been at a hairdresser's shop since he left the market. Nor do I believe that he had worn that coat when he came to the door earlier in the morning. If I were to say that he had called at his tailor's also, I do not think that I should be wrong.

I don't usually like romance, and, while this certainly is not strictly romance, the whole object is the telling of the vacillation of Alice Vavasar between two men who both want to marry her. Additionally, there is the conflicting feelings of love for Lady Glencora Palliser for her husband, and a rather comedic rich widow Mrs. Greenow. As to the later, Trollope gives us this of one who is on bended knee:

"...don't make a fool of yourself. Get up," said she.
"Never, till you have told me that you will be mine!"
"Then you'll remain there for ever, which will be inconvenient."

This is the first installment in the six volume Palliser series. It is my understanding that the books can be read independently without reading the entire series. Having not yet read the others - but I will - I still cannot imagine reading the others without having some of the background and foundation provided in this one.

David says

This is a long, long book, and the first in the *Palliser* series, though I understand that they mostly stand alone so you don't really have to read them in order. It centers around three women: one married, one single, and one widowed, and for each of them, the central question is the same: do I choose Mr. Dull and Dependable, or Mr. Good Looks Who Will Spend All My Money and Ruin Me?

It might have been a more exciting book if Trollope was a more radical author, but I'm not spoiling too much to say that Trollope was actually very conservative. Everyone ultimately Does the Right Thing in a very Victorian way, but not before flirting with impropriety enough to raise the question asked by the title: Can You Forgive Her?

Besides jilted suitors and gentleman wastrels, there is a bit of Parliamentary politics in this book which I believe assumes greater importance in the future volumes.

Anthony Trollope had the gift of narrative and character development, so if your only exposure to Victorian social drama is Charles Dickens, then give Trollope a try. That said, I would probably start with *The Way We Live Now*, which I thought was a better book with a more engaging story. I will certainly read more Trollope, but I might not hurry on to the next Palliser novel.

Jim says

There are few writers whom whom I am so comfortable as Anthony Trollope: I can read and re-read his novels, and each reading makes me just admire him the more. **Can You Forgive Her?** is the first of the six Palliser novels dealing with parliamentary politics. And yet it is about far more. On one hand, it is about a wealthy and powerful young couple whose marriage is in danger -- because the wife, Lady Glencora Palliser, wants to run away from her politically absorbed husband Plantagenet, who is something of a stick, and take up with her old love, the ne'er-do-well Burgo Fitzgerald.

The title, however, refers to the troubled loves of Alice Vavasor, who is distantly related to lady Glencora. When we first see her, she is engaged to a Mr John Grey of Nethercoats after having broken her engagement with the troubled George Vavasor, a cousin of hers. Then she takes up with George again until he becomes too abusive. The influence of the Pallisers, who have taken up her cause, finally prevails; and she makes a happy marriage. In the end, she muses:

She had found her master, as we sometimes say, and laughed to herself with a little inward laughter as she confessed that it was so. She was from henceforth altogether in his hands. If he chose to tell her that they were to be married at Michaelmas, or at Christmas, or on Lady Day, they would, of course, be married accordingly. She had taken her fling at having her own will, and she and all her friends had seen what had come of it. She had assumed the command of the ship, and had thrown it upon the rocks, and she felt that she never ought to take the captain's place again. It was well for her that he who was to be captain was one whom she respected as thoroughly as she loved him.

As with Trollope's other novels, the author delights in setting complicated problems for his large cast of characters, which, at the end, he wraps up in a rush of events that leaves the reader breathless. There is a term in chess -- *reculer pour mieux sauter* -- to retreat in order to gain more running room to jump forward -- which describes why he is more comfortable writing long novels (this one is 848 pages, but doesn't seem half so long) than short stories or novelettes.

Can You Forgive Her? is not a bad place to start reading Trollope. It shows him at his most typical and at his best. (In fact, out of his forty-seven novels, about a dozen of them are not bad places to start reading him.)

Paul says

This is an excellent, if long, read. Trollope tells a good story and I think his female characters are stronger, better developed and more believable than any other male Victorian novelist. He is still conventional (apart from the novel *Marion Fay* perhaps) but he has a strong empathy with his female characters and they tend to be better drawn and have more depth than his male characters.

The novel revolves around the romantic adventures of three women; Alice Vavasor, her cousin Kate and Lady Glencora Palliser. Alice has to choose between dull, reliable and loving in the form of John Grey and exciting, dangerous and unscrupulous in the form of George Vavasor. Her choices cause problems, hence the title. Lady Glencora, my favourite character, is torn between a seemingly loveless marriage and a handsome previous suitor who wants to run off with her. She is very tempted to do so. The minor characters are marvelous with some wonderful comic creations; the love triangle of Mr Cheeseacre, Captain Bellfield and Aunt Greenow. Trollope works it all out in the end.

Tolstoy rated Trollope very highly and the more I read of him the more I understand why. Incidentally, a clergyman wrote to Trollope to complain that he had been forced to stop his daughters reading this novel; what better recommendation could you have!!

Cphe says

Trollope has been one of those authors that I've circled around for years. Have always meant to read

"something" but never quite sure where to start. This was an excellent book to start with and I have to say that it was surprisingly readable. No point in rehashing the synopsis but this lengthy novel has a bit of everything - romance, politics, humor and pathos.

Anastasia Fitzgerald-Beaumont says

I mentioned on my Ana the Imp blog that I decided that this year was to be my Trollope period; that I was determined to chase this eminent Victorian down the highways of his fictions. Church or politics was to be the point of departure; the Chronicles of Barsetshire or the Palliser series. In the end politics and Palliser won out!

I've now vaulted my first fence, just having finished – literally some twenty minutes ago – *Can You Forgive Her?*, the first of the six Palliser tomes. That word, the word 'tome', carries such negative overtones - at least I feel it does - , suggesting something weighty and just a tad tedious. *Can You Forgive Her?* is certainly weighty, weighing in at over eight hundred pages, though I did not find it in the least tiresome.

The person one is supposed to forgive, the focus of the book, is Alice Vavasor, who finds it difficult to decide exactly whom she will marry: the worthy but dull John Grey (Trollope's intention here is given away in his choice of name) or her cousin George, colourful and ambitious but ever so slightly disreputable.

There is actually a supplementary question, closely related to the main one: namely, what is a woman to do with her life? Remember this is mid-Victorian England; there are few opportunities for people like Alice, who is far too well-connected to consider any ordinary occupation, while having the main routes for ambition closed to her by her sex.

She is expected to marry well; her relatives (some of them have the most absurdly comic aristocratic titles I have ever come across!) expect her to marry well, which is to marry Grey, but for Alice love and duty are not enough; she needs a positive outlet; she needs to live vicariously through the success of her partner. In other words, she wants to be a politician's wife!

The whole novel is structured around choices and the implication that these choices carry. It's also one of relationship triangles; the central one between Alice, John Grey and George Vavasor; the comic relief brought by Alice's coquettish Aunt Greenow, a merry widow and her two suitors, Captain Bellfield and Mister Cheeseacre; and that between Plantagenet Palliser, a rising politician, his young wife, Lady Glencora, and her erstwhile suitor, Burgo Fitzgerald.

Glencora, what can I say about Glencora? Devilish, impish, effervescent and vivacious, she was my favourite character by far. I never really warmed that much to Alice, who seems to be perversely committed to the wrong course. Oh, not just because she jilts the wholesome John Grey in favour, as it turns out, of the completely unwholesome George Vavasor, but because I found it difficult to determine exactly what her motives were. There is also something stiff about her character, something rather humourless.

Glencora eclipses her completely. She has been presented with choices also; or rather she has had choices made for her, a rich heiress married for duty rather than love. One feels that Plantagenet and Alice would have been far better suited (Glencora's humorous remarks and the statistical-mindedness of the pair are

priceless), allowing Glencora to be swept away by the beautiful but feckless Burgo.

But this is a morality tale, one of high Victorian morals, which the author clearly intends to promote, where money, property and a proper sense of place should never be allowed to drift too far apart. The likeable rakes and the despicable cads, the Burgos and the Georges, lose the game or disappear from it altogether. Well, there is the single exception of Captain Bellfield, rake rather than cad, who wins out over the worthy Cheeseacre, but one simply knows that the Widow Greenow is going to keep him reined well in!

In the end, like all good morality tales, everything falls into place. Plantagenet decides that for a time his political ambitions must take second place to cultivating and nurturing his wife, with the result hoped for by all concerned. Alice realises that her decision to reject Grey in favour of George was so ill-judged that she finds it most difficult to forgive herself. Yes, she accepts Grey and they marry - though it seems in the end to be as a kind of penance – but only after she is most horribly patronised by him and by members of her extended family!

At least she has one small success: Grey, with the help of Palliser, decides to enter Parliament, so Alice may have a political salon after all, rather than sink into a tedious routine of more mundane wifely duties. In the end I found myself sidestepping Trollope's central question. Although I might have come closer to understanding her, I had absolutely no interest in forgiving her, or in condemning her, for that matter. All I will say in way of reproach is that she should have known her mind and her men better. I would.

Trollope has a crisp and engaging style, much more disciplined than Dickens, his contemporary, must less panoramic and comically exuberant, better, in many ways, in creating more humanly rounded characters. He combines this with a tendency to intrude overmuch as the moralising narrator for my taste, with little homilies to the reader. That's a small quibble because I found *Can You Forgive Her?* an immensely enjoyable novel of Victorian people and attitudes, though my reading is not necessarily the one the author would have wished. I'm a modern miss, you see, with few preconceived moral expectations, expectations about the proper place of women in the world. :-)

So, on I go: *Phineas Finn* here I come.

Chrissie says

ETA: Cecily read my review and didn't understand why I only gave it three stars. I think her question is absolutely legitimate; I don't explain that very well. I had trouble understanding one of the prime protagonists - Alice. Please see messages 5, 6, 7 and 8 below. I explain in more detail there. Also I think the author could have done more in describing Baden, Germany, and both Basel and Lucerne, Switzerland.

I definitely enjoyed this book and I am utterly amazed. My track record with Victorian novels is poor; they always fail me. This is the first one that I really did enjoy. Why?

The characters are not caricatures; they are multi-dimensional. These are real people that you will recognize still today. This is a book of character studies. BUT, you don't read it for plot; if you read it for plot the story is way too simple. Who will marry whom?

What I really, really enjoyed were the lines. Funny, funny humorous lines. Satirical, humor that is not nasty. Humor that keeps you on your toes because if you don't pay attention you will miss the joke. Subtle humor. The whole point of this novel has to be its humor, at least that is how it was for me. It has a message. It is all about women and their place in society. It is also about conjugal relationships. I was amazed at how modern that message could be. It was written in serial format in 1864 and 1865. Don't think it is difficult to read because it was written so long ago; it is not in the least. It is not just a satire on English aristocracy and social norms; it is also about different kinds of people. There is the flamboyant, the cautious, the rascal, the steadfast and yet at the same time they are nuanced so you understand why they behave as they do. What I think is special is that characters, even those very different from myself, I came to understand. It felt like, for them to be true to themselves, they had to behave as they did.

So what did the book teach me? Well, I think I understand better, more intimately what it may have been like to live back then in a society so socially restrictive. You look at different people, with different personalities and of different social classes and you watch what they do and say. And you smile at every other sentence. So very much is said through humor. I liked that.

The audiobook narration by Timothy West was totally fantastic. He just expressed himself so perfectly, capturing the identity of each character. He knows when to pause to give the lines the proper effect. This is one of those times when the narrator is the icing on a delicious cake.

This is the first Victorian novel that I really did enjoy.

After about 1/3:

What a huge surprise. I am totally loving this.

This book will bore you if you read it to find out what happens, if you read it for plot! If you read it to find out who will marry whom.

I am reading it for the hours spent with it. I am reading it for the lines. I am reading it for the care that is taken in drawing the characters. I am reading it for the dialog and for watching each step the characters make in their indecision. Time has to be taken to accurately describe each step along the way. It is the path that is important, more than where you end up.

The characters are complicated. They do one thing one day and the opposite the next; they are just like real people. Their ambivalence and indecision is what makes them genuine. This is a book for readers who enjoy character studies. Real, complicated people, not caricatures.

It is a book for those who enjoy subtle humor. Satire definitely, but still sweet.

I thought I knew how this would end; I no longer do.

Laurel Hicks says

I'm planning to read all of Trollope's Palliser series and decided to get a headstart with the first book. I

finished today. What a wonderful read! It amazes me how Trollope can weave the stories of so many delightful and terrible people together and make most of them turn out well in the end. Now I can enjoy some of these characters for five more books.

Here are the books in Trollope's Palliser series:

1. Can You Forgive Her?
2. Phineas Finn
3. The Eustace Diamonds
4. Phineas Redux
5. The Prime Minister
6. The Duke's Children

6/25/2012

Okay, so I didn't get them all read in 2010, so now I'm starting over by reading the first book again, and then on to the others, with my troop of Trollopes.

I love this book! In it Trollope keeps three love/marriage stories (not always both love and marriage together) going; gives us a glimpse of how elections are bought and sold; contrasts two kinds of losers, one charming and evil and the other charming and rootless; and introduces us to two of my favorite Trollope characters, Plantagenet Palliser and Lady Glencora. Planty Pall's reaction to his wife's unhappiness is, in my view, one of the most finely crafted chapters in literature.

1/4/2018

Another attempt to read them all. This first book is a lovely and treacherous waltz.

Vanessa Wu says

I recommend the Kindle version of this for two reasons.

1. It's free.
2. You won't realise how long it is until you start reading, after which it won't matter because you'll be hooked. Although the little percent sign at the bottom of the page will stay in demoralisingly low single figures for so long that you might think your device is broken.

There's a third reason for recommending it. It's awesome!

It's not erotic but, on the other hand, it's hardly decent. At least, it doesn't seem decent to me that a middle-aged Victorian gentleman (he was just the right side of 50 when he wrote it) should be able to get so effortlessly into the heart and mind of an excitable young maiden in the first flush of youth and dissect her vacillating intentions with the precision of a modern micro surgeon.

How dare he! Yes, and make us love her! And love him too for his audacious charm!

Trollope is sometimes looked down on by arbiters of quality in Victorian fiction. I often hear people

apologising for liking him. The trouble with Trollope, you see, is that his books are so hugely enjoyable; and they are without a scar or a blemish so there is nothing for the critics to critique.

Sometimes his works are not even looked on as fiction but as social history. Why? Because his plots are not fanciful. They are robust. And his characters are intensely alive. So when you read him, it is like looking at real life.

Except it isn't. Everything is much simpler and clearer and funnier than real life because Trollope is so sharp, so witty, so light. He has the driest sense of humour of any Englishman I've met and, believe me, I've met some very dry Englishmen in my time. Yet you take in every word and nothing is above your head. It just falls into place beautifully.

And there I should end because the book is quite long enough; you don't want to delay starting it a moment longer.

Agnes says

Non sono molto brava nelle recensioni, come invece tanti altri amici qui su GR, ma farò un piccolo commento , anche per mio ricordo personale della lettura. E' un romanzo lungo, vittoriano, di Trollope : o piace il genere o non piace, ma, superato questo, è delizioso. Si chiama ciclo politico anche se in realtà prevale sempre l'intreccio amoroso e , ovviamente, il lieto fine. Bravo sempre Trollope nell'ambientazione : questa volta siamo a Londra e nell'ambiente politico (anziché quello clericale del ciclo dei Basset), con scene anche nella campagna inglese e qualche puntata in Svizzera e in Germania. Se si ha la pazienza di leggerlo non troppo affrettatamente lo si gusta appieno e si passano delle ore veramente piacevoli (oltre a conoscere qualcosa dell'ambiente politico vittoriano).

Unico neo qualche raro refuso nella punteggiatura (io ho l'ebook, più comodo da leggere) dovuto all'edizione elettronica o alla traduzione, non lo so, ma non abbastanza importante da sconsigliarne la lettura, anzi !
