The historical and social background of Anthony Trollope’s Phineas Finn and Phineas Redux


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Abstract

This thesis takes the form of an investigation into the amount and type of contemporary material which Trollope incorporated into two of the novels in the Parliamentary series: Phineas Finn and Phineas Redux. The connexion between the historical and political events of the mid-nineteenth century and the events in the novels is demonstrated, particularly with regard to the difficulties of forming governments. Trollope's awareness of the nature of political change and the effect this had on his contemporaries is noted. It is also shown that Trollope took two contemporary events - the passing of the Second Reform Bill of 1867 and the Disestablishment of the Irish Church - as the basic political material for the two novels, but that he adapted these events for his own purposes. Trollope's accurate observation of the political society of his time, the difficulties which an 'outsider' (in this case an Irishman) had in penetrating it, and of the role which it forced women to play is discussed. Finally, it is shown that Trollope did, on occasion, use certain characteristics of living politicians, particularly Disraeli, Gladstone and Bright, as the model for his own politicians.

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