

## LITERATURE AND ETHICS

*Truth and Lie in Framley Parsonage*

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ranjan Ghosh and I have agreed to center our last pair of essays on ethics in relation to his *sahitya* and to my *literature*. The reader should remember that these two key words are synonyms. *Sahitya*, Ghosh tells me in an e-mail, is “a Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi word and simply means what we in the West call literature.” Literature, for me, means primarily printed poems, plays, novels, and short stories, as in the term *Victorian literature*, so I assume *sahitya* means the same. Using the word *literature*, as we in the West do, is a relatively recent event. The word gets its modern sense only with the full shift to a print culture in the eighteenth-century. Neither Sophocles nor Shakespeare would have said they were writing literature, in the modern sense of the word. The term originally meant anything written in letters. Our present-day meaning is more restricted.

What the two of us mean by *ethics* in relation to *sahitya* or to literature differs to some degree from one to the other of us. Ghosh means by the ethics of *sahitya*, to oversimplify quite a bit, *sahitya*’s insatiable “hunger” (his word) for a relation to the other as manifested in *sahitya*. *Hunger* is a key word in Ghosh’s chapter 9. As he tells me in that same e-mail, “I meant the hunger that is inherent in *Sahitya*. Hunger is desire, motivation, intention, and dynamicity. *Sahitya* is impregnated with hunger and functions, sometimes, independent of the readerly hermeneutics.” *Sahitya* is here said to have independent hunger. It is hungry on its own, without any intervention by the reader, for example, any attempt to understand a given example of *sahitya*. Ghosh calls that attempt to understand “hermeneutics.” The word *hunger* is surely, at least obscurely, a personification, as is “impregnated.” A given poem or novel has a life of its own. The reader must carefully follow Ghosh’s argument in his chapter 9 to get an answer to the obvious question, “What is *sahitya* hungry for?” Its hunger is clearly, in

any case, an outward orientation that Ghosh names “desire, motivation, intention, and dynamicity.”

I mean by “the ethics of literature” a version of what the word *ethics* has meant in the West since Aristotle, that is, the issue of how to act or choose rightly. For me, the ethical dimensions of a given literary work involve a work’s ethical authority over me, that is, its ability to influence my ethical acts and judgments. The ethics of a work include the author’s ethical responsibility to his readers. Writing a novel or poem is, among other things, an ethical act. Moreover, the ethics of a work involve the narrator’s or the poem’s speaker’s ethical obligations to her or his or “its” imagined characters and to the projected readers the narrator or speaker of the poem addresses. In a novel, this is the narrator’s obligation to tell the truth about the imaginary characters in the story. My reading later in this chapter of Anthony Trollope’s *Framley Parsonage* will elaborate this issue further. Finally the representation, within the work, of the characters’ ethical choices or acts constitutes a work’s internal ethical dimension. Is, for example, Lucy Robarts’s lie to Lord Lufton, in *Framley Parsonage* (“I cannot love you.”) ethically defensible? My concept of the ethical dimension of literature is, you can see, somewhat different from Ghosh’s “ethics of reading sahitya,” as I shall now go on to specify.

I can only indicate a few features of Ghosh’s chapter 9 here. I shall especially stress the way Ghosh’s procedures differ considerably from mine, in an attempt to fulfill our contract to be “dialogical.” Though Ghosh is not against close reading or the establishment of context, historical, biographical, or otherwise, for him sahitya carries its own authority and is to a considerable degree independent of any originating contexts.

Ghosh’s references and citations are wide-ranging, including as they do many Western essays and books, among them a relevant section on books by Georges Bataille, but also including references to Hindu and Sanskrit sources that may especially interest Western readers of this book. He gathers these sources together, into a complex “transcultural poetics of meaning and understanding.”

I would stress, in a way somewhat different from Ghosh’s synthesizing propensities, the profusion of different ideas about the ethics of literature in the West. Each work, for me, is unique. Each has a different idea of the ethics of literature from the ones that preside over each of the other works. No single concept of the ethics of literature dominates, for example, even in something so relatively circumscribed and homogeneous as Victorian English literature. Works in that group may nevertheless have

what Ludwig Wittgenstein called a “family resemblance.” Still, you must learn to read each work carefully for itself and expect it to be *sui generis*. You must derive its ideas about ethics, that is, correct and incorrect conduct, from the work itself. I shall try to do that later on in this chapter for Trollope’s *Framley Parsonage*.

It follows naturally from our somewhat different premises that our interpretative procedures differ greatly. My conclusions aim to be based on a careful and more or less comprehensive close reading of whatever work I am discussing. This reading includes formal or rhetorical features as well as thematic statements, as you will see in my reading of *Framley Parsonage*. Ghosh, on the contrary, abstracts details from the literary works he cites to support the transcultural poetics of meaning and understanding that he has been developing for years and that he calls the (in)fusion approach. I feel my way inductively toward any generalizations I make, whereas Ghosh’s style is full of formulations like the following: “So the ‘spark’ can fall as revelation of truth that might teach the Victorians the precepts of dharma, help them to reach the heart of the matter, establish the supreme necessity of invocation, grow an awareness of the ‘inner being,’ and emphasize the means of purification of the soul.”

Ghosh here appropriates Arnold’s line about “waiting for the spark from heaven to fall,” from his long poem “The Scholar-Gypsy,” as an example of the poetics of *sahitya*. He makes this appropriation on the basis of an article he cites by V. S. Seturaman that focuses on something most Arnold scholars will have noticed, namely that Arnold knew and was influenced by oriental scriptures like the *Bhagavad Gita*. He was especially taken by the *Gita*’s development of “the principles of ‘dwandwas’” [a musical debate] and the *Gita*’s advocacy of “a state of consciousness which transcends all dualism,” for example, the oppositions of *dwandwas*. In my view, by the way, Arnold did to some degree wish he could believe in the *Gita*, but was unable quite to do so. More central to Arnold’s thinking, in my judgment, are the famous assertions at the beginning of “The Study of Poetry” (1880):

There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything: the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact. The stron-

gest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry. . . . More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us.<sup>1</sup>

If we had world enough and time, I'd dearly like to engage in a serious dialogue with Ranjan Ghosh about how he reads this passage, especially the opposition between "fact" and "idea," in the context of the rest of Arnold's essay, not to speak of the rest of Arnold's voluminous work. For me, Arnold meant by *idea* something akin to "imaginary fiction" or "literary fiction." Ghosh has responded in a dialogic entry in his chapter 9 to what I say here about Arnold, with an assertion of his more positive way of reading Arnold's writing as an example of *sahitya*.

What does it mean to believe, choose, or act "on the ethical authority of literature?" Where does a text said to be literature get its ethical authority? What is that authority's source, ground, or guarantee? Who or what validates it or authenticates it, signs off on it, takes responsibility for it? The author? The reader? Some divine or supernatural power? The circumambient society? The work's sources or influences? Some preexisting reality the work accurately copies, imitates, or represents? Can a work perhaps be self-authorizing? Just what would that mean, "self-authorizing?" All these ways of ascribing authority to literary works have had valence in the Western tradition, often at the same time, in incoherent profusion, down to the present day. An essay I have already published, "On the Authority of Literature," discusses, with some help from Henry James, Proust, and many others, the permutations in the West of answers to the questions I have just posed.<sup>2</sup> My exploration in that essay of the various ways authority has been claimed for literature culminates in a recognition that this authority derives from a performative use of language artfully begetting in the reader, as James puts it, a disposition to take on trust the virtual reality the reader enters when he or she reads a given work. That certainly happens. It happened to me, for example, when I read *The Swiss Family Robinson* as a child. Since my "On the Authority of Literature" is easily available, I shall not repeat its arguments here, but turn straight to Anthony Trollope's *Framley Parsonage* in order to investigate the way it exemplifies my various categories of the ethics of literature.

Anthony Trollope's *Framley Parsonage* (1861) is the fourth of the six so-called Barchinshire novels. These novels are about an extended community of clergymen and their families in an imaginary English shire. The same characters return from novel to novel in this sequence, but the focus in

each is on one or two family stories among the members of that imaginary community. *Framley Parsonage* was first published serially in the *Cornhill Magazine* (a coup for Trollope and a turning point in his writing career) from January 1860 through April 1861, and in book form (three volumes) by the publisher Smith, Elder, in 1861. It was his first conspicuous success as a novelist. Both the serial edition and the three-decker book edition had six admirable illustrations by a distinguished artist of the pre-Raphaelite school, John Everett Millais. I have cited the standard, modern Oxford World's Classics edition,<sup>3</sup> since it has pagination, but it does not include the illustrations. The original edition with the illustrations included is available as a Gutenberg e-text, to be read for free on your computer. I mention these details to put the novel in its historical context of Trollope's writing and in the context of the history of the book. All forty-seven of Trollope's novels, plus his nonfiction books, seventy-seven books all told, are available as Gutenberg e-texts for free.

Earlier in this chapter, I identified four ethical dimensions of a given literary work. The first dimension is the work's ethical authority over the reader, its power to determine the reader's ethical acts and judgments. That is certainly the case for me with *Framley Parsonage*. When I read it, a vivid imaginary world opens up for me. Just what is that imaginary world like? It is different for each work and no doubt for each reader or for each reading by the same reader. What my inner imaginary world is like when I read *Framley Parsonage* is a complex question. It is also one not much talked about, even in recent research in cognitive science about what happens in reading. Cognitive science tends to measure what parts of my brain light up when I read such and such a work, rather than trying to study subjective sensory images as the reader reports them: "Now I am seeing my idea of a long drawing room with many fashionably dressed people standing or sitting in it." Pedagogical theories about how best to teach people to be good readers tend to assume that reading is primarily a matter of making sense of the words, a matter of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax.

My imaginary space for *Framley Parsonage*, it happens, is relatively rich in visual images. I make up in my mind the topography of Bassetshire and the décor of rooms in the houses on the basis of the sparse details Trollope gives. He claims to have had the topography of the whole imaginary shire vividly in his mind and to have made a map of it. My mental images are also influenced by the map of Bassetshire devised by Mgr. Ronald Knox and available at the beginning of the relatively new illustrated paperback

edition of *The Warden* (1952) and in the reissued Oxford World's Classics edition (1991). *The Warden* was originally published in 1855. In spite of that help, my subjective image of the space between Framley Parsonage and Lady Lufton's mansion is quite different from Knox's schematic map, with dots for villages and lines for roads. I imagine trees, fields, fences, hedges, and roadbeds, to a considerable degree on the basis of my experience of rural England. My subjective images are also to some degree influenced by the admirable Millais illustrations. Here is the one showing a meeting between Lord Lufton and Lucy Robarts early in the novel, followed by the one showing the memorable meeting at Miss Dunstable's reception between Lady Lufton and her great enemy, the Duke of Omnium, with the hostess Miss Dunstable between them:

Much as I admire the Millais illustrations and believe they accurately show period costume and Victorian hairstyles and fashion, they do not agree with my mental images of those characters, perhaps because I read the novel long before I saw the original illustrations. Trollope, in *An Autobiography*, praises them for their accurate rendition of what he had in mind. Millais and Trollope had their mental images. I have mine. The difference is that Millais was a genius at turning his interior visions into graphic representations, whereas my visions mostly remain secret, private, uncommunicated. This is because of my inability to do what Millais did in drawing, or what Trollope did with words. My interior visual images, in any case, exceed the data. I have my own mental images of what the characters look like, for example, images of Lucy Robarts, or of her brother Mark, or of Lady Lufton. These images are aided by clues in the narrator's discourse, for example, the narrator's report that Lucy was "brown," "short," and had wonderfully flashing eyes. I am also constantly aware, at least subliminally, that I am free at any time to reenter that mental space, either in memory or by rereading the novel. It remains available at any time, in an odd sort of perdurability.

To an unusual degree, however, my subjective experience when reading *Framley Parsonage* is auditory rather than visual. I hear the almost continuous voice of the narrator, who is very much present as a speaker throughout and who speaks, strangely enough, in my own voice, as though I were reading the novel out loud to myself. Moreover, I enter into the characters' interiorities by way of the narrator's masterful use of indirect discourse. I hear what they are thinking, feel what they are feeling, as though their consciousnesses had a miraculous ability to turn themselves into eloquent language. That language seems to have been spoken within their minds



**Figure 10.1** Millais's illustration of meeting between Lord Lufton and Lucy Robarts in *Framley Parsonage* (1861).



**Figure 10.2** Millais's illustration of meeting between Lady Lufton and her enemy, the Duke of Omnium, in *Framley Parsonage* (1861).

in the first-person present tense and then reported by the clairvoyant or telepathic narrator in the third-person past tense by way of that remarkable kind of language that linguists and narratologists call free indirect discourse. These interiorities are then reduplicated in my own mind and feelings. As a result, in reading *Framley Parsonage* I come to feel that I know the characters even better than I do my own family and friends, since I have no direct access to the interiorities of the real people around me such as the narrator of *Framley Parsonage* provides me for the characters in the novel. By way of this wholly imaginary intimacy with characters who exist only as words on the page, I come to care a lot about what happens to them.

The novel, moreover, by way of the stories Trollope's narrator tells about these entirely imaginary Victorian personages, Mark Robarts, Lucy Robarts, Lady Lufton, Mr. Sowerby, and so on, certainly influences my ideas about correct or incorrect ethical behavior. That happens even if I try to place these characters back in another country and an earlier time that, some would claim, since it is historically conditioned, has relatively little relevance to my own ethical actions and decisions.

The second dimension I listed is the author's ethical responsibility to his readers. Trollope himself writes eloquently about this in *An Autobiography*, as I have demonstrated in more detail in previous essays, though never in relation to *Framley Parsonage*. I have never written anything about that novel before now. In *An Autobiography*, written in 1875–76, though published posthumously, Trollope tells how, as a poor day student, he was treated as a pariah at those fashionable public schools, Harrow and Winchester. In compensation, and in striking confirmation of Freud's theory of art as expressed in a wonderful passage at the end of the twenty-second of his *Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Trollope developed a habit that lasted many years of daydreaming long continuous narratives. These were carried on from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year. He bound himself down, as he says, "to certain proportions and proprieties and unities."<sup>4</sup> He was, he says, "his own hero": "I was a very clever person, and beautiful young women used to be fond of me. I strove to be kind of heart and open of hand and noble in thought, despising mean things and altogether a much better fellow than I have ever succeeded in being since."<sup>5</sup> Trollope's imaginary self-image was, in short, a highly ethical person.

Trollope, in accordance with what many parents would still tell their children, goes on to say, "There can, I imagine, hardly be a more dangerous mental practice."<sup>6</sup> Daydreaming is dangerous, I suppose, because, like novel-reading, daydreams are a means of escaping from the real world

and its duties. Nevertheless, continues Trollope, “I have often doubted whether, had it not been my practice, I should ever have written a novel. I learned in this way to maintain an interest in a fictitious story, to dwell on a work created by my own imagination, and to live in a world altogether outside the world of my own material life. In after years I have done the same,—with this difference, that I have discarded the hero of my early dreams, and have been able to lay my own identity aside.”<sup>7</sup> One might argue, contra Trollope, that something very like his own identity is present in his narrators, conspicuously, for example, in the narrator of *Framley Parsonage*.

The passage I have cited is, in any case, striking evidence that in Trollope’s case, his novel-writing was a displacement of his penchant for guilty daydreams. His novels, moreover, had their origin in a wish to be ethically good. A later passage in *An Autobiography* gives an amazing description of the way Trollope dwelt within the fictitious worlds created by his own imagination. The novels proper were the writing down as words on paper of a rendition of what was initially solitary, secret, and subjective. His best work has been done, he says, “at some quiet spot among the mountains,—where there has been no society, no hunting, no whist, no ordinary household duties.” He concludes, “And I am sure that the work so done has had in it the best truth and the highest spirit that I have been able to produce. At such times I have been able to imbue myself thoroughly with the characters I have had in hand. I have wandered alone among the rocks and woods crying at their grief, laughing at their absurdities, and thoroughly enjoying their joy. I have been impregnated with my own creations till it has been my only excitement to sit with the pen in my hand and drive my team before me at as quick a pace as I could make them travel.”<sup>8</sup>

I have elsewhere discussed the purport of the not-all-that-obscure sexual imagery in this passage. The reader will note, for my purposes here, however, Trollope’s insistence on his responsibility for “the best truth” in his novel-writing. This ethical obligation to make his novels improve his readers’ morals is made explicit in the last citation I shall make from *An Autobiography*. In this case, Trollope is writing explicitly about *Framley Parsonage*. Here the image of self-impregnation is turned into an image of impregnating his readers with ethical goodness. Speaking of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s praise of Trollope’s novels as hewing a lump out of the real earth and following the people on that lump of earth as they go about their daily lives, Trollope says:

I have always desired to “hew out some lump of earth,” and to make men and women walk upon it just as they do walk here among us,—with not more of excellence, nor with exaggerated baseness,—so that my readers might recognize human beings like to themselves, and not feel themselves carried away by gods or demons. If I could do this, then, I thought, I might succeed in impregnating the mind of the novel reader with a feeling that honesty is the best policy, that truth prevails while falsehood fails; that a girl will be loved as she is pure and sweet and unselfish;—that a man will be honored as he is true and honest and brave of heart; that things meaning done are ugly and odious, and things nobly done beautiful and gracious. . . .

There are many who would laugh at the idea of a novelist teaching either virtue or nobility,—those, for instance, who regard the reading of novels as a sin, and those who think it to be simply an idle pastime. They look upon the tellers of stories as among the tribe of those who pander to the wicked pleasures of a wicked world. I have regarded my art from so different a point of view that I have ever thought of myself as a preacher of sermons, and my pulpit as one which I could make both salutary and agreeable to my audience. I do believe that no girl has risen from the reading of my pages less modest than she was before, and that some may have learned from them that modesty is a charm well worth preserving. I think that no youth has been taught that in falseness and flashiness is to be found the road to manliness; but some may perhaps have learned from me that it is to be found in truth and a high but gentle spirit. Such are the lessons I have striven to teach, and I have thought that it might best be done by representing to my readers characters like themselves,—or to which they might liken themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Well, there you have it! I know no other passage that expresses so well the Victorian ideology of realistic fiction and so eloquently praises its power to teach ethical principles and conduct to its readers. Trollope also pays his respects to those Victorians who thought reading novels was sinful or a waste of time. My readers will notice the unabashed sexism of what Trollope says. Girls should be modest and do their best to wait passively for some eligible man to fall in love with them. An example is (apparently) Lucy Robarts in *Framley Parsonage*. Trollope says of her in *An Autobiography*: “I think myself that Lucy Robarts is perhaps the most natural English girl that I ever drew,—the most natural at any rate of those who have been good girls.”<sup>10</sup>

Youths, as opposed to girls, should be true and have a high but gentle spirit. Lord Lufton is the example of that in *Framley Parsonage*. I might also mention at this point Trollope's unashamed and deplorable anti-Semitism, as in the dishonest and lying moneylenders, the Tozers, in *Framley Parsonage*. It is all very well to say that such anti-Semitism was an essential part of Victorian ideology, as in Dickens's Fagin in *Oliver Twist*. That it was more or less universal in that time, place, and culture does not make it any the less reprehensible and dangerous. Hitler capitalized on the habitual anti-Semitism of some German people to lead them to condone the Holocaust.

That Trollope wanted his novels to inculcate ethics is clear enough. The question now is whether he succeeded and, if so, by way of what thematic and narratological devices. That takes me to the final two dimensions of literature and ethics as they are exemplified in *Framley Parsonage*. These are, you will remember, the narrator's ethical obligations to her, or his, or its characters and to the projected readers the speaker addresses. In a novel, this is the narrator's obligation to tell the truth about the characters. The final ethical dimension is the representation, within the work, of ethical choices or acts by the characters.

First, the narrator of *Framley Parsonage*: it is all too easy to assume that the narrator is Anthony Trollope himself. The narrator speaks of himself as an "I." He uses the same "voice" and style as does, for example, the writer of *An Autobiography* when Trollope is narrating the misery of his childhood experiences. To put this the other way, reading *An Autobiography* sometimes seems like reading yet another novel by Trollope. Many of the same narrative devices are used and the same self-irony is present. Autobiographies, we know, are always to some degree fictional reconstructions.

A little reflection, however, will lead one to recognize that Anthony Trollope and the narrator of *Framley Parsonage* are quite different. Trollope's life experiences really happened in the real world and are therefore capable of being judged as true or false by a process of comparison with external evidence. Nothing of the sort is possible for *Framley Parsonage* because the whole thing is a made-up fiction. No Barsetshire ever existed, no Lord Lufton, no Lucy Robarts, none of the events and choices the novel records. The narrator of the novel, however, speaks in the first person as if they all existed and happened. Trollope, the author, could have made it up in any way he liked. The narrator, on the contrary, speaks as if bound

to tell the truth about real historical events and personages, as when he says about one event, "I here declare, on the faith of an historian, that the rumor spread abroad . . . was not founded on fact."<sup>11</sup> That seems really weird, when you think of it, as when the narrator says of some dingy law chambers, "I once heard this room spoken of by an old friend of mine, one Mr. Gresham of Greshambury."<sup>12</sup> Here the narrator speaks as if he were a real person in the fictional world of the novel, as real as Lucy Robarts or Lord Lufton. I conclude that the narrator of *Framley Parsonage* is best thought of as one of the fictitious characters in this work of fiction. He is perhaps even the most important one, since the reader is entirely dependent on the narrator's telepathic powers for her or his knowledge of the (fictitious) events and persons of the novel.

The narrator's ethical responsibilities go in two directions, toward the reader and toward the characters. In both orientations the primary obligation is truth-telling. *Magna est veritas*, "great is truth," is the title of chapter twenty-four. The phrase is echoed several times in the text. In one place, the narrator says: "Being desirous, too, of telling the truth in this matter, I must confess that Lucy did speculate with some regret on what it would have been to be Lady Lufton."<sup>13</sup> The narrator has an ethical obligation to tell the whole truth about the characters to the reader. He also has an obligation to the characters to be scrupulously accurate in reporting their speech, thoughts, feelings, and actions. This truth-telling, please remember, all takes place within the imaginary world in which the characters are taken as real people. In one sense, everything the narrator says is a lie, since it asserts as historical fact what was no such thing.

Just what storytelling devices or forms of discourse does the narrator employ to fulfill that double ethical responsibility? I identify four. Of course, they overlap. More than one is often used in the same paragraph. Other modes are also used, for example, the verbatim printing of private letters. Letters sent by post were the Victorian version of our e-mail, telephone, and other means of private communication at a distance. As everyone knows who has read *An Autobiography*, Trollope worked for the British Post Office for many years. These four salient methods of storytelling are by no means unique to Trollope among Victorian novelists or among novelists in general, but Trollope has brilliant mastery of them. He uses them in ways and with a power that are unique to him. Given a citation in any of his modes, an adept reader would likely be able to tell whether or not it was by Trollope.

Here are the four most common narrative modes Trollope uses. Each is pervaded in one way or another by an ironic tinge that is a particular feature of Trollope's style.

Much of the *Framley Parsonage* is made up of dialogue. This give and take usually has little commentary beyond some variant of "he said" or "she said." Most often, but not always, the dialogue is between just two of the characters. Such dialogue is a chief means of getting the story told.

The narrator of *Framley Parsonage* presents a good bit of descriptive or ruminating discourse here and there along the way. You could call it "sermonizing." These narrative interventions are about many topics, for example, parliamentary politics in the England of Trollope's time. Trollope's narrator is by no means impersonal or detached.

Much of the stylistic texture of *Framley Parsonage* is made up of that peculiar form of language called by linguists free indirect discourse. Trollope is a great master of this common Victorian narrative form. In free indirect discourse the narrator enters into the mind, feelings, interior monologue, and bodily sensations of one or another of the characters. The narrator speaks in the third-person past tense of what was for the characters either altogether unworded or a secret interior speech in the first-person present tense. It is a basic and entirely "unrealistic" assumption in *Framley Parsonage* that the narrator has full "telepathic" knowledge of what is going on in the interiorities of almost all the characters. It is "unrealistic" because such direct insight into the minds and feelings of others in my judgment happens only in fictions, not in real life. I borrow Nicholas Royle's wise suggestion that "telepathic narrator" is a better term than "omniscient narrator." "Omniscient" has irrelevant and misleading theological implications. The characters, on the contrary, have only a partial and imperfect insight into what the other characters are thinking and feeling. No total clairvoyance of others for them.

Trollope, finally, often presents explicit ethical analysis by the narrator of a character's nature, behavior, and choices. Did he or she choose and act rightly? What was the process whereby choice and act came to happen in a given case? Trollope's narrator in *Framley Parsonage* does not hesitate to pass ethical judgment on what the characters think and do.

In order to keep this chapter to reasonable length, I shall concentrate on the love story between Lucy Robarts and Lord Lufton for my examples. That story is, moreover, the most interesting from my chosen perspective of ethics and literature. Trollope initially intended the story of the reverend Mark Robarts' disastrous entanglement in moneylenders to be

the central story. He planned the novel to be “a morsel of the biography of an English clergyman who should not be a bad man but one led into temptation by his own youth and by the unclerical accidents of the life around him.”<sup>14</sup> Trollope asserts in *An Autobiography* that Lucy’s story gradually became the main plot: “Out of these slight elements I fabricated a hodge-podge in which the real plot consisted at last simply of a girl refusing to marry the man she loved till the man’s friends agreed to accept her lovingly.”<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, the reader should remember that *Framley Parsonage*, like almost all of Trollope’s novels and like most Victorian novels, is a multi-plotted concoction or hodge-podge of somewhat analogous stories. It was also originally published, as I have said, in parts in the *Cornhill Magazine*, so it is an example of that common Victorian genre, the serial novel. The first readers encountered the novel in installments, with time breaks between each segment. The story of Lucy’s love is interwoven with a whole set of other stories that in one way or another are entangled with it. This set includes not only the Mark Robarts story, but the story of Mr. Nathaniel Sowerby’s loss of his ancestral estate, Chaldicotes, and the large fortune that goes with it, as well as his seat in parliament, through his spendthrift ways. This plot has attendant political stories of other MPs, prime ministers, and England’s imperial possessions. The reader learns much about the power of Tom Towers and the great newspaper, *The Jupiter* (read the *London Times*), for which Tom writes “leaders.” A moving subplot is the story of Miss Dunstable. She has inherited an enormous fortune from her father’s (and then her own) sales of a quack medicine, the “Oil of Lebanon.” In the end she comes to marry a poor country doctor, Dr. Thorne. Intertwined with the courtship of Lord Lufton and Lucy Robarts is the story of Lady Lufton’s unsuccessful attempt to get her son, Lord Lufton, to marry the statuesque but empty-headed Griselda Grantly, the daughter of Archdeacon and Mrs. Grantly. Griselda’s actual marriage to Lord Dumbello, whose name fits his nature (what a pair!), is a separate story. Lord Dumbello is the next in line in the Hartlepton family and will be a Marquis. Griselda will become a Marchioness, much higher in the social scale than Lucy as the wife of Lord Lufton, a mere Baron. Trollope, finally, includes in *Framley Parsonage* episodes about the life of the miserably impoverished Mr. Crawley and his wretchedly underfed and barely clothed family. Crawley is the perpetual curate of the small parish church at Hoggstock. He is the central figure in a later Barsetshire novel by Trollope, *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867).

All those plots make a hodge-podge all right, but thematic and figurative resonances or analogies bind all these stories together. This is generally the function of multiple plots in a work of fiction, especially Victorian fiction, but it is also the case with the multiple marriage plots of Shakespeare's plays, such as *As You Like It*.

In the course of reading *Framley Parsonage*, the reader learns by way of Trollope's often ironic transposition of the real Victorian social context into an imaginary fiction all sorts of things about the Church of England in the mid-nineteenth century. The reader also learns about the immense complexities of the British class structure, especially in its relation to money. Miss Dunstable, for example, is enormously wealthy, but she is below the extremely poor Reverend Crawley in the social scale, as well as below the man she marries, Dr. Thorne. Crawley has gone to Harrow and Cambridge. He knows Greek and Latin, while Miss Dunstable is the daughter of a seller of quack medicine. The reader also learns about British imperialism at that stage of it (1860). He or she also learns about the bewildering complications of England's mode of parliamentary and monarchical governance. *Framley Parsonage*, finally, shows in action the crucial Victorian assumption that falling in love was an absolute and permanent change in a person.

One might sum up much of this context by saying that Victorian fiction most commonly centered on love stories because what interested Victorians most was the question of who would marry this or that marriageable maiden and so rearrange, at least to some degree, the present distribution of rank and money. Lucy Robarts, the daughter of a country physician and the sister of a mere parish clergyman, becomes Lady Lufton, a Baroness. Her first son will inherit Lord Lufton's barony. The large Lufton fortune will pass on to the next generation, Lucy's children, either in part as dowries, if they are girls, or through outright inheritance by the first son. This will happen by the strange English law of primogeniture. At least it seems strange to an American reader like me. Primogeniture leaves second or third sons penniless, forced to enter the army or to become clergymen. If money and rank mattered most to the Victorians, primarily of the middle class and the upper class, who read novels, it is easy to see why the marriage plot so fascinated Victorian readers, and why the ethical issues involved in courtship and marriage were so important to them. Lucy has to prove herself worthy to become the next Lady Lufton. She must do that in the context of all those assumptions about class and money I have specified.

Lucy's marriage, as is often the case with courtship and marriage in Victorian novels, takes place against the vigorous opposition of parents, of guardians, of all those responsible for Lucy's care as a maiden of marriageable age. Her marriage is a species of exogamy, almost like the marriage to an Israelite of the Moabite Ruth, in the Book of Ruth, in the Old Testament. Lucy's socially forbidden union, however, is necessary to the constant renewal of the community that marriage brings about. The marriage of the insipid Griselda Grantly to the vapid Lord Dumbello simply perpetuates a feeble aristocracy.

All of this concern for class and rank is exceedingly difficult for an American reader to understand, since our class structure is so different. For example, we have no aristocracy. A lack of money is not a big obstacle to marriage. Divorce is easy. Parental approval for a marriage is by no means so universally required. An American student reading *Framley Parsonage* is likely to say, "What's the problem? If they are in love with one another, why don't they get on with it?"

The story of Lucy's and Lord Lufton's love for one another is told in a series of discrete episodes presented at intervals interleaved with episodes from the other plots. To single these out and make a direct sequence of them is greatly to falsify the way Victorian (and modern day) readers encountered and now encounter that story. *Magna est veritas*, but I can only hope that my readers will forgive my unforgetably untrue truncation. It allows me to focus on the major example of truth-telling and lying as ethical events in *Framley Parsonage*. A full and detailed account of the way the novel works might take hundreds of pages.

I identify eleven stages or episodes in the Lucy Robarts story as Trollope tells it. The first comes when Lucy goes with her brother and sister-in-law, Mark and Fanny Robarts, to a dinner party at Lady Lufton's grand house, Framley Court. Lady Lufton is Mark's rich patroness, who has given him his living as the vicar of the church at Framley. Lucy feels completely out of place. She wishes she had never come. I cite part of a sequence that occurs in the drawing room after dinner as the guests talk and listen to Fanny Robarts play and sing, Griselda Grantly play, and Lord Lufton sing. The episode goes on for a couple of pages. I cite it in part because it is an admirable example of Trollope's remarkable ability to interweave with ease all the modes of narration I identified above. Just try to do it yourself, dear reader, and you'll see what amazing skill it hides in its apparent informality. Its subtlety is beguilingly simple in appearance, but difficult to analyze. It is also difficult to describe in words the scene of two characters

in dialogue that forms itself in my mind as I read. That imaginary scene is no doubt different for each reader.

There she sat, still and motionless, afraid to take up a book, and thinking in her heart how much happier she would have been at home in the parsonage. She was not made for society; she felt sure of that; and another time she would let Mark and Fanny come to Framley Court by themselves. . . . Lucy sat alone, turning over the leaves of a book of pictures. She made up her mind fully, then and there, that she was quite unfitted by disposition for such work as this. She cared for no one, and no one cared for her. Well, she must go through with it now; but another time she would know better. With her own book and a fireside she never felt herself to be miserable as she was now. She had turned her back to the music for she was sick of seeing Lord Lufton watch the artistic motion of Miss Grantly's fingers, and was sitting at a small table as far away from the piano as a long room would permit, when she was suddenly roused from a reverie of self-reproach by a voice close behind her: "Miss Robarts," said the voice, "why have you cut us all?" and Lucy felt that, though she heard the words plainly, nobody else did. Lord Lufton was now speaking to her as he had before spoken to Miss Grantly.

"I don't play, my lord," said Lucy, "nor yet sing."

"That would have made your company so much more valuable to us, for we are terribly badly off for listeners. Perhaps you don't like music?"

"I do like it,—sometimes very much."

"And when are the sometimes? But we shall find it all out in time. We shall have unraveled all your mysteries, and read all your riddles by—when shall I say?—by the end of the winter. Shall we not?"

"I do not know that I have got any mysteries."

"Oh, but you have! It is very mysterious in you to come and sit here—with your back to us all—"

"Oh, Lord Lufton; if I have done wrong—!" and poor Lucy almost started from her chair, and a deep flush came across her dark cheek.

"No—no; you have done no wrong. I was only joking. It is we who have done wrong in leaving you to yourself—you who are the greatest stranger among us."

"I have been very well, thank you. I don't care about being left alone. I have always been used to it."

“Ah! but we must break you of the habit. We won’t allow you to make a hermit of yourself. But the truth is, Miss Robarts, you don’t know us yet, and therefore you are not quite happy among us.”

“Oh! yes, I am; you are all very good to me.”

“You must let us be good to you. At any rate, you must let me be so. You know, don’t you, that Mark and I have been dear friends since we were seven years old. His wife has been my sister’s dearest friend almost as long; and now that you are with them, you must be a dear friend too. You won’t refuse the offer, will you?”

“Oh, no,” she said, quite in a whisper, fearing that tears would fall from her tell-tale eyes.<sup>16</sup>

By the time I reach this passage in my reading, I have a mental image of Lady Lufton’s long drawing room at Framley Court, even though the details Trollope provides are pretty sparse. We know there is a sofa, a piano, a table where Lucy sits “as far away from the piano as a long room would permit,” but I am left to my own imagination to provide the rest. The passage begins with an example of the narrator’s descriptive mode: “There she sat.” It rapidly modulates into an example of the narrator’s extraordinary ability to enter into the imaginary subjectivities of most of the characters: “Thinking in her heart how much happier she would have been at home in the parsonage.” “Thinking in her heart” seems to be the narrator’s locution for unworded thinking. That modulates quickly again to an example of indirect discourse, in which, as I have said, the narrator transposes the character’s interior monologue into third-person past tense. “She was not made for society; she felt sure of that; and another time she would let Mark and Fanny come to Framley Court by themselves,” is a transposition of “I am not made for society; I feel sure of that; and another time I will let Mark and Fanny come to Framley Court by themselves.” In indirect discourse, the reader gets two minds superimposed, that of the character and that of the narrator. The latter has telepathic knowledge of what the character is saying to herself or to himself. Indirect discourse generates, always, to some degree, however slight, an ironic distance from the character. Lucy, that distance leads the reader to think, is being a bit silly in denigrating herself, however much we are meant to admire her maidenly modesty, her reticence, and her sense of being of a lower class than the other guests. The irony in the indirect discourse indirectly tells the reader all that. It gives the reader an outside perspective on Lucy’s interiority. The effect would be quite different if

Lucy's thoughts were given as interior monologue, like Molly Bloom's soliloquy in *Ulysses*.

The indirect discourse for Lucy is picked up on the next page, when I start my citation again after a break: "She made up her mind fully, then and there, that she was quite unfitted by disposition for such work as this. She cared for no one, and no one cared for her.<sup>17</sup> Well, she must go through it now; but another time she would know better."

Lucy's bitter meditation is interrupted by Lord Lufton's speaking quietly to her from behind her as she sits alone turning the leaves of a book of pictures with her back to the room: "'Miss Robarts,' said the voice, 'why have you cut us all?'" What follows is a characteristic example of Trollope's brilliant use of what the Greeks called "stichomythic" dialogue, the rapid give and take of dialogue, often brief questions and answers. No careful reader can fail to note that what begins as apparently just polite conversation soon becomes something almost approaching lovemaking, or at least serious flirtation, on Lord Lufton's part: "'His [Mark Robarts's] wife has been my sister's dearest friend almost as long; and now that you are with them, you must be a dear friend too. You won't refuse the offer, will you?' 'Oh, no,' she said, quite in a whisper."

The passage I have cited is a good synecdochic sample of the mixture of narrative discourses that characterizes *Framley Parsonage* in general, and the rendition of the love story between Lucy Robarts and Lord Lufton in particular. It is atypical in having only one brief example at the beginning of the frequent short or sometimes quite long interpolations of description, or of ethical interpretation and judgment, or of ruminative digression by the narrator's speaking for himself in his own voice, in direct address to the reader. Here is one example: "That girls should not marry for money we are all agreed. A lady who can sell herself for a title or an estate, for an income or a set of family diamonds, treats herself as a farmer treats his sheep and oxen—makes hardly more of herself, of her own inner self, in which are comprised a mind and soul, than the poor wretch of her own sex who earns her bread in the lowest stage of degradation [that is, becomes a prostitute]."<sup>18</sup>

Trollope's quite distinctively brilliant use of the major forms of Victorian narrative techniques continues throughout the various episodes telling Lucy's story. These episodes are distributed at uneven intervals through the novel.

In the next episode in the series after Lucy and Lord Lufton first meet, Lady Lufton warns Fanny Robarts that her son Lord Lufton may be spend-

ing too much time talking intimately to Lucy. This is followed in the same chapter by Fanny's warning to Lucy against "flirting" with Lord Lufton<sup>19</sup> (ch. 13, "Delicate Hints"). Then comes chapter 16 in which Lord Lufton makes his first proposal to Lucy and she tells her lie in refusing him, since she is deeply in love with him: "'Lord Lufton,' she said, 'I cannot love you'"<sup>20</sup> ("Mrs. Podgens' Baby").

Five chapters later comes the episode in which Lucy flogs the pony Puck (a significant Shakespearean name) when she is driving the pony carriage with Fanny. She does this in exasperation at hearing that Lord Lufton is probably to marry Griselda Grantly, thereby giving away to Fanny that she is secretly in love with him (ch. 21, "Why Puck, the Pony, Was Beaten"). The next episode in the series shows Lucy confessing in a self-mocking irony ("It was his title that killed me.")<sup>21</sup> her love for Lord Lufton to her sister-in-law Fanny Robarts and confessing also that she lied to him: "I told him a lie"<sup>22</sup> (ch. 26, "Impulsive"). Five chapters later Lord Lufton tells Lucy's brother Mark that he loves Lucy and intends to come the next day to propose to her again, a visit Lucy refuses (ch. 31, "Salmon Fishing in Norway").

In chapter 34, "Lady Lufton Is Taken By Surprise," Lord Lufton tells his mother that he means to make Lucy his wife. In just the next chapter, "The Story of King Cophetua," Lucy out-smarts Lady Lufton and tells her that though she is deeply in love with Lord Lufton and he with her, she will only agree to marry him when Lady Lufton asks her to do so. In chapter 41, "Don Quixote," Trollope shows Fanny Robarts defending Lucy to Lady Lufton: "I have not given any advice; nor is it needed. I know no one more able than Lucy to see clearly, by her own judgment, what course she ought to pursue. I should be afraid to advise one whose mind is so strong, and who, of her own nature, is so self-denying as she is."<sup>23</sup> Chapter 43, "Is She Not Insignificant?" tells how Lady Lufton tried unsuccessfully to persuade her son, Lord Lufton, that Lucy is too "insignificant" to be his wife. In chapter 46, "Lady Lufton's Request," Lady Lufton gives in and asks Lucy to marry Lord Lufton: "And now I have come here, Lucy, to ask you to be his wife." Lucy sends by Lady Lufton a one word message to him, "simply yes."<sup>24</sup>

Chapter 48, "How They Were All Married, Had Two Children, and Lived Happy Ever After," tells how Lucy, shortly before her marriage, refuses to admit to Lord Lufton that she lied to him when she told him she could not love him: "'Ludovic, some conjuror must have told you that.' She was standing as she spoke, and, laughing at him, she held up her hands and

shook her head. But she was now in his power, and he had his revenge [presumably an embrace and kiss]—his revenge for her past falsehood and her present joke.”<sup>25</sup>

This recapitulation is no substitute for reading the novel, but it will give my readers some sense of the way the course of this true love does not run smooth, but has a happy ending nevertheless. Readers will also see from the chapter numbers that the episodes telling the story of how Lucy came to marry Lord Lufton are distributed throughout the novel at intervals of about five chapters. These episodes are interspersed with many chapters about the other plots. They are, moreover, included in different serial sections. The initial Victorian readers would have received Lucy’s story with two different kinds of interruption along the way.

Lucy’s story turns on several different kinds of speech acts or performative utterances.<sup>26</sup> I shall now conclude this chapter with a brief commentary on these. Each would merit a lengthy analysis and elucidation. Each performative in Trollope’s telling of Lucy’s story works differently. Lord Lufton’s iterated proposals to Lucy are speech acts. They force her to respond in some way, even if only by silence. Lucy’s lie to Lord Lufton is a speech act, as, in a different way, is her confession to Fanny that she loves Lord Lufton dearly and has lied to him. Lucy’s “verdict” that she will marry her suitor only if Lady Lufton asks her to do so is a performative utterance that forms a turning point in the story. Any utterance that can be called a “verdict” is a speech act, a use of words to make something happen, in this case to put the ball in Lady Lufton’s court, so to speak. Lady Lufton’s ultimate request to Lucy, followed by Lucy’s ratifying “simply yes” are two more speech acts. Lucy’s refusal to confess her lie to Lord Lufton is, in a somewhat strange way, yet another performative. As J. L. Austin recognized, speech acts take many different forms, sometimes quite peculiar ones that may masquerade as apparently statements of fact, “constatives.”

A lie, a confession, a proposal of marriage, a “verdict” or decision, a request, a “yes,” with its implicit, “I promise to do that,” a refusal to confess: each of these is a different way of doing things with words, not a constative assertion. Each differs from the others in its mode of working, but each demands some kind of answering response from the person to whom it is spoken. For example, Lord Lufton goes away in deep disappointment and dejection when Lucy says, “I cannot love you.” Her lie works as an efficacious speech act. It makes something happen.

Lucy’s love story, as you can see, proceeds through a cascade of performative utterances that make salient the ethical issues her story raises.

These issues are made explicit in the novel, either by the narrator or by one or another of the characters. Most obviously Lucy's story turns on the question of whether or not a lie is ever justified, as well as on the performative force of her assertion that she will only consent to marry Lord Lufton if his mother asks her to accept him: "Tell him, that if his mother asks me I will—consent."<sup>27</sup> This is a speech act in the sense that it forces Lady Lufton to respond in one way or another. Lady Lufton must either accept or refuse. Doing nothing is a virtual speech act in response. *Magna est veritas*. The novel repeatedly, in the various plots, stresses the importance of strict truth-telling and the perfidy of lying. Mr. Sowerby, for example, is a congenital liar. He is punished as a consequence: "It is roguish to lie, and he had been a great liar."<sup>28</sup>

J. L. Austin affirms, truthfully enough, that all performative statements have a constative dimension, and vice versa. A true statement is a classic example of a constative utterance, since it is in correspondence with an extraverbal state of affairs. Its performative dimension is minimal. A lie is a peculiar form of speech act. Its constative value is nil, since it does not correspond to a true state of affairs. Its performative force, however, can be decisive if it is believed. When Lucy replies to Lord Lufton's proposal with her "I cannot love you," her lie is an efficacious speech act because he believes her and goes away disappointed and, as he says, "wretched." She is motivated by "pride," which forbids her to endure Lady Lufton's violent disapproval and her inevitable belief that Lucy has entrapped Lord Lufton, that she is, as she thinks to herself, a "horrid, sly, detestable, underhand girl."<sup>29</sup> The whole Lucy Robarts love story turns on the consequences of her lie and on the question of whether a lie is ever justified. This is the chief ethical question her story forcefully dramatizes.

After uttering her lie to Lord Lufton, Lucy goes to her room, throws herself on her bed, and asks herself, in another example of the indirect discourse so pervasive in the novel: "Why—oh! why had she told such a falsehood? Could anything justify her in a lie? Was it not a lie—knowing as she did that she loved him with all her loving heart? But, then, his mother! and the sneers of the world, which would have declared that she had set her trap, and caught the foolish young lord! Her pride would not have submitted to that. Strong as her love was, yet her pride was, perhaps, stronger—stronger at any rate during that interview. But how was she to forgive herself the falsehood she had told?"<sup>30</sup> Later on she says to herself, "And now she had thrown all that aside because she could not endure that Lady Lufton should call her a scheming, artful girl! Actuated by that fear

she had repulsed him with a falsehood, though the matter was one on which it was so terribly important that she should tell the truth.”<sup>31</sup>

This ethical dilemma comes up explicitly again later on in the novel, when Lucy tells all her story up to then to Fanny, with a mixture of solemnity and self-deprecating irony:

“I lied to him, and told him that I did not love him.”

“You refused him?”

“Yes; I refused a live lord. There is some satisfaction in having that to think of, is there not? Fanny, was I wicked to tell that falsehood?”

...

“I know that it is better as it is; but tell me—is a falsehood always wrong, or can it be possible that the end should justify the means? Ought I to have told him the truth, and to have let him know that I could almost kiss the ground on which he stood?”

That was a question for the doctors [meaning Doctors of the Church, theologians, or, by analogy, interpreters of the ethical dimensions of literature, like me] which Mrs. Robarts would not take it upon herself to answer. She would not make that falsehood matter of accusation, but neither would she pronounce for it any absolution. In that matter Lucy must regulate her own conscience.<sup>32</sup>

That is the question, all right: Is a lie ever justified? Fanny’s appeal to Lucy’s conscience is not sufficient. At least it does not satisfy me. Kant’s famous example is about the person who, according to Kant, should not lie when asked whether a fugitive has taken shelter in his house, even though telling the truth will likely lead to the capture or death of the fugitive. For Kant a lie is never justified.<sup>33</sup> And yet Lucy’s falsehood was uttered for the most high-minded and self-denying of reasons.

I think in the end that Trollope, or Trollope’s narrator, leaves it to the reader to decide this ethical question. That question presides over the whole of the Lucy Robarts’s plotline. It arises for Mark Robarts when he learns that Lord Lufton has proposed to Lucy and has been refused, but intends to ask her again: “And then, he would have said, Lord Lufton would have been the last to fall in love with such a girl as his sister. And now, what was he to say or do? What views was he bound to hold? In what direction should he act?”<sup>34</sup>

To tell the truth, I’m not sure what my own judgment is about Lucy’s lie. It is a question for the doctors to decide. But a return in conclusion to

Lucy's other determining speech act may help me reach a decision, or at any rate may clarify to some degree what is at stake.

Lucy's "Tell him, that if his mother asks me I will—consent" can be seen in at least two ways, as can her story as a whole. What she says is characterized by the narrator in the formal language of a courtroom decision. It is a "verdict," that is, etymologically, "true speech," or "saying the truth": "Such was her verdict, and so confident were they both [Mark and Fanny Robarts] of her firmness—of her obstinacy Mark would have called it on any other occasion,—that neither of them sought to make her alter it."<sup>35</sup> A little earlier, the narrator says of Lucy, "She had still, in some perversely obstinate manner, made up her mind against that result [becoming the next Lady Lufton]."<sup>36</sup> On the one hand, Lucy believes, or thinks she believes, that Lady Lufton will never consent. Her verdict is an example of the meek self-denial and modesty that we commonly associate with Victorian heroines. On the other hand, it can be seen as a brilliant ploy by the highly intelligent and strong-willed Lucy Robarts to fulfill her love and marry Lord Lufton. Lufton knows that his mother, who loves him inordinately, will eventually give in and welcome Lucy as his daughter-in-law. Lucy, the reader is encouraged to imagine, may have known Lady Lufton well enough to have foreseen somewhere "in her heart of hearts" that outcome. Her verdict certainly works as a "felicitous speech act," in Austin's phrase, to produce that result.

Lucy's whole story is double in that way. On the one hand, it is a prime example of the typical Victorian, fictional love story in which the modest, self-denying maiden keeps her love secret, but nevertheless in the end marries her beloved and above her class origins. She thereby, through her children, participates in the reassignment of money and class that was the way Victorian society renewed itself. On the other hand, many hints and details indicate that Trollope is actually critical of the ideological assumptions of that standard plot. The satirical parallels with such models as Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* and, more explicitly, the ballad of "King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid." The latter is used as the title of the chapter in which Lucy confronts Lady Lufton and wins the battle of wills with her by invoking once more her verdict.<sup>37</sup> Trollope's narrator uses to some degree in telling Lucy's story the ironic distancing that, as I have said, is intrinsic to indirect discourse. That distancing is also present in the conspicuous irony that is constantly used by Lucy herself in telling her story, especially in the way she tells it to Fanny:

“What you tell me so surprises me, that I hardly as yet know how to speak about it,” said Mrs. Robarts.

“It was amazing, was it not? He must have been insane at the time; there can be no other excuse made for him. I wonder whether there is anything of that sort in the family?”

“What; madness?” said Mrs. Robarts, quite in earnest.

“Well, don’t you think he must have been mad when such an idea came into his head? But you don’t believe it; I can see that. And yet it is as true as heaven. . . .”

. . .

“And what shall I do next?” said Lucy, still speaking in a tone that was half tragic and half jeering.

“Do?” said Mrs. Robarts.

“Yes, something must be done. If I were a man I should go to Switzerland, of course; or, as the case is a bad one, perhaps as far as Hungary. What is it that girls do? they don’t die nowadays, I believe [as Lucy Ashton does, melodramatically, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*].”<sup>38</sup>

The Lucy story in *Framley Parsonage* is two stories in one: the first is a straightforward version of the typical Victorian love plot. The other, present in the irony of language and in the ironic allusions to famous previous examples of such stories, deconstructs, if I may dare to use that word, by way of its rhetoric, the “straight” story. It puts the solemnity of that story radically in question. It does so subtly but unmistakably, if the reader follows the clues given by the “poetics” of *Framley Parsonage*, that is, the way things are said. Poetics are opposed to “hermeneutics,” that is, the identification of what things are said by way of overt thematic statements. The novel’s poetics reveals it to be a devastatingly comic parody of the conventional sentimental love plot, as well as a brilliant rendition of it. Lucy’s story in *Framley Parsonage* superimposes and interweaves two different narratives. It is, to use the vernacular, a “twofer,” two for one.

That duplicity is exposed in the double meanings of Lucy’s word “conjurer.” The happy marriage of Lord Lufton and Lucy Robarts is based on a lie kept secret by Lucy from her husband to be. It is a permanent secret between the two. The happy ending is founded on a falsehood that Lucy refuses to confess that she has uttered. The figure of speech she uses in making that refusal seems extremely odd, if you think a little about it: “‘Ludovic, some conjurer must have told you that.’ She was standing as she spoke, and, laughing at him, she held up her hands and shook her head.”

Lucy's word "conjurer" is only used jestingly. The narrator calls it a "joke." It is a lighthearted figure of speech. I know of no evidence that Trollope believed words could, as Shakespeare's Hotspur puts it, "call spirits from the vasty deep." Nevertheless, Lucy's use of the word is highly suggestive. Speech acts are, after all, like a conjurer's sleight-of-hand tricks. They make something happen with words, by an "abracadabra!" or an "open sesame!"

*Conjurer*, as well as meaning "magician," which everyone knows is someone adept at misleading prestidigitations, also means someone who invokes spirits by magic spells or incantations. The Latin *con* or *com*, "with," plus *jure*, "swear" means "to swear with." The word also means, as early as the 1580s, when used in the phrase "conjure up," "cause to appear in the mind as if by magic, by invocation, or spell."<sup>39</sup> Lucy's "conjurer" will have revealed her secret lie, by conjuring it up within Lord Lufton's mind. Lord Lufton will then be able to read the magician's words or can read what is betrayed in Lucy's holding up her hands and shaking her head, in an act of conjuration or perhaps of banishment, exorcism: "Now you see it, now you don't." And of course the narrator as conjurer or spirit medium has conjured up for the readers, with words used as invocations, all the characters, events, and settings of the novel. "I hereby invoke Lucy Robarts." In particular, the narrator has told Lucy's secret to the reader by way of reporting his magical, telepathic knowledge that she has confessed her lie to herself in interior monologue and in overt speech to Fanny Robarts.

I claim to have shown in a salient example how the ethics of literature works in my interpretation of it. Have I fulfilled my ethical obligation to tell the truth about *Framley Parsonage*? This I can never know for sure, as is the case in all realms of ethical responsibility, decision, and action. I can only say truthfully that I have done my conscientious best.

My version of the relation between ethics and literature, as this chapter shows, is different from Ranjan Ghosh's "The Ethics of Reading Sahitya," though resonances exist. Our book's final pair of chapters constitutes a concluding demonstration of two ways to think literature across continents.