CHAPTER 7

Creative Trollope

Linda Austin

In the *Private Papers* of 1903, Henry Ryecroft, a spokesperson for his creator, George Gissing, lamented the bygone age of literary genius, when Thackeray, Dickens, and George Eliot had been able to work unconstrained by market pressures. The "big, blusterous, genial brute" Anthony Trollope belonged to this generation as well but constituted an exception, Ryecroft thought, because his voluminous writings suggested that he could have withstood the stresses of the advanced technological era in publishing.[1] He was the professional writer before his time: somewhere between a "mere cosmic force," as another of Gissing's spokespersons, Jasper Milvain, described genius, and its opposite, a "skilful tradesman."[2] As readers of Victorian fiction know, the pathos of *New Grub Street* reflects a commonplace of the late nineteenth century: the gap between activity that was mental and, therefore, quintessentially human, and motor movements that were automatic and approximated the inhuman rate of production set by mechanical models. None but a hack writer, a kind of human automaton, could approach such a standard, the novel suggests. Trollope's accomplishments (forty-seven novels, in addition to many short stories and other works of prose) supported this view, it seemed, for just months after the writer's death in 1882, *An Autobiography* (1883) presented a kind of caricature of efficiency: a "man with a watch before his eyes, penning exactly so many words every quarter of an hour," as Ryecroft describes him.[3] Trollope's name suffered a writer's condign punishment for these disclosures. The author "did himself no good with the public or the critics by the quaint frankness of his avowals in his Autobiography," remarked George Saintsbury in 1895. His work is "everyday, commonplace, and even not infrequently vulgar (three things that great art never is)."[4]

An Autobiography's disclosures continued to trouble Trollope's reputation in the twentieth century when, during the ascendancy of literary modernisms, critics questioned his creativity, focusing on two traits that

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undermined the prevailing idea of the artist as an originator of prestige products. The first I have already introduced: Based on the author's own descriptions of his writing habits, Trollope was viewed as inordinately prolific and indefatigable, functioning primarily not through a creative consciousness but through motor automatisms. This behavioral trait was confirmed by a second one: the quality of the work itself, namely its padding. The novels were notorious for a particular kind of verbosity marked by repeated exposition and slowly paced plots. Of course, this feature had hardly been idiosyncratic in the age of serialization and multivolume works marketed for the circulating libraries, and one might declare that Victorian prolixity had simply fallen out of fashion by the early twentieth century and leave it at that. But my point is that as a result of disclosures in *An Autobiography*, productivity was linked to padding; that is, a behavioral feature was seen as a contributing cause of a literary one. The latter, as a result, assumed a psychological dimension.

With this in mind, and in light of the features that discouraged the view of Trollope as creative in an honorific sense, I show in the pages ahead how professional readers into the mid-twentieth century implicitly evaluated the writer against two invidious distinctions that informed the seemingly separate domain of behavioral psychology. The first of the two was introspection versus habit; the second was of remote versus relatively inhibited association. The first term of each pair was linked to creativity – and was implicitly mentalistic – while the second was seen as somatic, an automatism approaching the mechanical.

Indefatigable Trollope

Even before *An Autobiography* appeared, Trollope's rate of production had aroused suspicions in his readers. Trollope "writes too much to be always at his best," declared Margaret Oliphant, in an overview of his work in 1867 for *Blackwood's Magazine*.[5] In a similar retrospective for the *Edinburgh Review* a decade later, Alexander Innes Shand speculated, "[T]here must obviously be a good deal of the mechanical about his assiduous literary toils, since he has been in the habit of delivering a regular supply of his work with the most methodical precision."[6] Trollope was frequently compared with other novelists whose work had nothing in common with his other than its quantity and regular appearance. In his unsigned essay, Shand comments that Sir Walter Scott wrote *The Antiquary* "with the ease of a clerk or a copying machine."[7] As these comments indicate, writing too much could also mean writing too regularly, and energetic writers

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often turned out products with what seemed the continuous precision of mechanical devices.

Some of the most withering criticism in this vein came from the pen of the young Henry James in the July 1883 issue of *Century Magazine*. Dwelling there on the author's astonishing output, he concludes that Trollope "published too much; the writing of novels had ended by becoming, with him, a perceptibly mechanical process."[8] Unlike the novels of Dickens and Thackeray, his showed no "periods of gestation." Instead, "[h]e sat down to his theme in a serious, business-like way, with his elbows on the table and his eye occasionally wandering to the clock."[9] James had personal knowledge of Trollope's habits: They once traveled together on a "pitching Cunarder" where Trollope "was able to shut his eyes and ears to the outside" and work daily.[10] This detachment is not depicted as pure mental abstraction, but as a constant calibration of writing to official time, so that words and clocks become synchronized instruments. To James, Trollope is always writing; his novels do not begin in ideas; ideas emerge with – and seem submerged in – production. James could not have read *An Autobiography* at this point, as it only appeared two months later. All the same, his reaction to Trollope's productivity is excessive in its revulsion: He brags of not having read all of the novelist's work. "There came a moment in his vigorous career … a good many years ago … when I renounced the effort to 'keep up' with him."[11] He makes this personal confession of flagging energy a declaration of his own humanness: One cannot follow Trollope without reaching mental exhaustion. Trollope's continuous activity renders attentive reading, which should be an ethical responsibility, null and void: "It ceased to seem obligatory to have read his last story; it ceased soon to be very possible to know which was his last."[12]

James implies in addition here that writing characterized primarily as motor activity calls for a very different sort of reader than the cerebral kind he exemplifies. As Nicholas Dames has argued in his study of the century's changing reading practices, the "modern dynamics of continual speed-rate increases" usually associated with the railway and the telegraph also induced a cultural demand for "compositional practice[s] geared toward skimming readers." In terms of the physiology of optics, the eye became a motor, the reader a reading machine.[13] Accordingly Trollope, in *An Autobiography*, imagines the reader as the receptacle complementing his production. Although he frequently worries about producing too much (the specter of a "terrible author" who overwhelmed Paternoster Row with work haunts him), he does not fear being unremembered, for he conjures a reader who runs through his novels just as quickly and in

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much the same way as he writes them.[14] "As I have myself forgotten what the heroine [of the *Vicar of Bullhampton*] does and says – except that she tumbles into a ditch – I cannot expect that anyone else should remember her."[15] The Palliser series will probably not be read "consecutively," he supposes;[16] and even if it is, readers will not recall the characters from the previous books: "When I remember how many novels I have written, I know that I have no right to expect that above a few of them shall endure even to the second year beyond publication."[17] The man who never thought much about work until he was doing it did not expect his readers to behave differently, and Trollope's own reading corresponds in crucial ways to his writing practices. It is as thoughtless and breakneck: "Could I have remembered, as some men do, what I read, I should have been able to call myself an educated man. But that power I have never possessed."[18] The author's oblivion, Trollope implies, is the natural outcome of the pace of reading that his writing anticipates. Motor activity emulating a mechanical standard overwhelms and vitiates mental faculties like memory. Henry James could not, and in pride would not, keep up.

In the comments of both James and Trollope, the inverse relation between an (over)active physical capacity – writing – and a frail cerebral capacity – remembering – reveals the extent to which the popular understanding of artistic creativity depended on an antimaterialistic view of thinking, one that eschewed physiology and relied instead on classical tropes of genius as an exclusively mental endowment. On some level, Trollope accepted these assumptions. "I have been told that such appliances [attention to word counts, rates of composition, deadlines, terms of sale] are beneath the notice of a man of genius," Trollope writes defiantly in *An Autobiography*. "I have never fancied myself to be [one]."[19] Still, the most productive decade of his extraordinarily active career coincided with early research on genius that defined the concept in terms very favorable to him. In *Hereditary Genius* (1869), the first psychometric study of what had generally been considered a mental and often mystical condition, he made the cut based on sustained achievement leading to eminence. In the volume, which collected articles written four years earlier in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Francis Galton presents a cohort that had "decidedly eminent relations" – blood relatives – who had distinguished themselves "pretty frequently."[20] As an "eminent writer," Trollope thus appears as a legacy, an "S" (son through the male line) of Frances Trollope, the main entry.[21] He is the prolific son of his prolific mother. "Those qualities of intellect … which urge and qualify a man to perform acts that lead to reputation"[22] – Milvain's "cosmic force" – were not by themselves sufficient indicators of

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genius. Natural intellectual abilities had to be harnessed to the capacity or the will to surmount all obstacles, to transcend economic and social conditions that would hinder most others. Genius required, Galton wrote in an influential phrase, a "concrete triple event, of ability combined with zeal and with capacity for hard labour."[23] So while, according to Trollope (and James), his rate of production guaranteed the obsolescence of his work, to Galton his status as an "eminent" writer and genius rested precisely on these exceptional factors.

Although he evaded defining genius as either mental or physiological, Galton did shift the discussion of it from metaphysics to biology and early development (differences that remain entangled). Moreover (and more pertinent to my argument), Galton conflated the idea of genius with the concept of creativity; the latter had yet to emerge in psychometrics as a distinct behavioral trait.[24] Genius could only be proved by "eminence," that is, a sustained record of generation that – one presumed – was creative. In this light, the absence of any accounts of inspiration in *An Autobiography* is telling; the narrative explains the author's eminence without describing periods or moments of creativity. In this work, then, Trollope tacitly accepted the Galtonian concept of genius without entertaining any belief or interest in creativity/inspiration.

In periodic metafictional turns occurring in the novels, however, the author depicted creativity (so to speak, anachronistically) as the epistemological event of genius by using its traditional poetic trope, the invocation to the muse. For example, well into *Orley Farm* (1862), the narrator pauses for assistance in describing the physical charms of one of the novel's marriageable heroines, Madeline Staveley: "[T]hat the muses may assist me in my endeavour, teaching my rough hands to draw with some accuracy the delicate lines of female beauty, I now make to them my humble but earnest prayer."[25] An invocation to the muse like this one alluded to the ancient notion of genius as a retractable gift, rather than as the result of sustained activity.[26] On a psychological level, it introduced the "period of gestation" that James thought so crucial to creativity; or it signaled the surfacing of unconscious forces already at work. Whether the invocation marked the beginning of consciousness or the end of instinct, it suggested that inspiration was not quite within the writer's control. As the passage from *Orley Farm* shows, Trollope did understand the hold that the idea of the individual creative act exerted over the idea of the writer of genius. Predictably, though, his tone is waggish. On this topic, the writers for *Macmillans* are blunt: "That a novel writer should be unable to write as much or as well on some days as others, and above all that he should be

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dependent on some word or force called 'inspiration' – for this theory of his art Trollope had nothing but scorn."[27]

Gissing's "Ryecroft" thought that *An Autobiography* had changed the perception of the literary writer and the writing process, for "readers have [since] grown accustomed to revelations of 'literary' method, and nothing in that kind can shock them."[28] Offended at first by *An Autobiography*, Saintsbury reassessed Trollope in the 1920s and, echoing Ryecroft, admitted that once he had become more exposed to the "prolific and professional novelist[s]" of the present era, he could set him alongside other older and equally steady producers like Dickens, Balzac, and George Sand.[29] In other words, Saintsbury was able eventually to interpret genius as eminence and thereby affirm the Galtonian view of Trollope. There had always existed assiduous writers, as Saintsbury came to realize. Still, they had not usually published a record of their routines *in lieu of* a description of their sources of inspiration. For this reason, his use of the category of the professional to rehabilitate the writer had little effect on the scions of James, who associated indefatigability with mental vacancy. *An Autobiography* thus remained somewhat of a scandal not only because it showed no sign of the *furor poeticus* described in Plato's *Ion* – "the most influential account of the poetic process which has come down to us from antiquity," observes Penelope Murray[30] – but because it omitted describing the writer's mental process. In 1901 Leslie Stephen's bland remark captures the general reaction to the writer's business-like approach: "[I]f inspiration be a daring word, some time must at least be allowed for ideas to ripen and harmonise, and … it may be well to await some overmastering mood, that will not come regularly when an old groom calls you at 5:30 a.m."[31]

Yet Stephen suspected that the author "was not quite so black as he painted himself" and in his essay poses a crucial question: "What stores … had Trollope to draw upon? He must … like all of us, have had an 'inner life.'"[32] Shortly afterwards he answers his own query by citing *An Autobiography*'s picture of its author creating his characters while wandering "'about among the rocks and woods … crying at their grief and laughing at their absurdities.'"[33] "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," Trollope declares in the same passage.[34] Stephen was one of several reviewers to paraphrase or quote these statements and mention both the author's "castle-building" and an "inner life passed in [the] company" of his characters over the span of years.[35] Because they separate the inception of the novels from their inscription, the quotations have proved

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useful to critics, for they have confirmed creativity as a mental activity distinct from the act of writing highlighted in *An Autobiography*. Yet apart from the passage on "castle-building" and living with his characters, Trollope did not supply ample evidence for a radical division between the inspired formation of character and the continuous composition of his plots. Rather, he hinted at a more simultaneous and systemic process. "I have never found myself thinking much about the work that I had to do till I was doing it," he discloses in *An Autobiography*. "I have indeed for many years almost abandoned the effort to think, trusting myself, with the narrowest thread of a plot, to work the matter out when the pen is in my hand."[36] The image of an unthinking author moving pen across paper appeared mechanical – and, to some Victorians, repellently modern.[37] In his Preface to the first edition of *Poems* (1853), Matthew Arnold cites with approval the response of the dramatist Menander who, when asked about the progress of his latest comedy, replied that "he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind." In contrast, a "modern" critic would have directed the ancient to focus on "the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along." Arnold was lamenting the current neglect of *architectonicé*; but, significantly, he connected its absence to the "modern" way of writing while, and inseparable from, conceiving. Obviously, Arnold was reacting here to the current professionalization of writing: "modern" seems synonymous with journalism or hack work. Thus the creative behavior of Trollope continued to bewilder subsequent generations of readers. Like so many of their Victorian predecessors, and now under the aura of high modernism, they begrudged him honorific literary status because he had represented his illumination as predictable, continuous, and inextricable from the act of writing. To Walter Kendrick (whose book of 1981 about Trollope bears the apt title, *The Novel-Machine*), *An Autobiography* reads "like the confessions of an unabashed hack, who ground out fiction by the shelf-full and bragged obnoxiously about how much money he made from it."[38] In the first half of the twentieth century, Trollope's brand was an embarrassment, remarked James Kincaid in 1977.[39] Those who granted Trollope some cerebral involvement still kept his thinking and writing separate, reverting to the premodern model evoked by Arnold. According to David Skilton in 1972, the "two stages of composition for Trollope … are the setting up of a set of characters in a mental world, where they become to him as friends, and the almost mechanical writing-down of the story which springs from his consideration of the characters."[40] Once he establishes a "mental model … Trollope sets off writing at high speed,

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using his characters as the basis of action, and relying very little on a preconceived plot."[41] To Kendrick as well, Trollope begins with his imagination and a strong feeling about his creations before he writes; it seems that in writing there is no thought, only transcribing.[42] "Trollope's theory locates all the novelist's art and all his joy in a time before any writing is done."[43] Highlighting the contemplative phrase of the writer's process, he continues: "Before he begins to write, Trollope is very artistic. While writing, however, he is less artistic than any shoemaker."[44] Indeed, "when he sits down to write, the novelist becomes his own amanuensis."[45] Likewise, J. Hillis Miller notes the "strange thoughtlessness" of Trollope's method and stresses its pervasive uncertainty.[46] With yet another sentence in mind from the *Autobiography*'s Chapter X – "I have rushed at the work as a rider rushes at a fence which he does not see" – he concludes that writing a novel was for Trollope a "desperate act," a "skilled manipulation of the pen that has become *so habitual* that the pen no longer has to be consciously directed by the mind."[47]

Miller's use of "habitual" in reference to a writer's creativity would have gratified James and all those who had been suspicious of the rate of Trollope's composition and the quantitative and physical terms in which the author discussed it in *An Autobiography*. Generally linked to "custom" in the views of Romantic writers like Coleridge and Wordsworth, habit reputedly distorted and dulled the senses and the imagination.[48] Theory in the nascent domain of psychology seemed to confirm this view. To Alexander Bain, in *The Emotions and the Will* (1859), habit was the physiological infrastructure of learning, the end result of a process classed as "secondarily automatic."[49] The "remarkable narrowing of the sphere of influence of a sensational or active stimulus" enables us to execute many daily tasks without thinking about them. For this reason, Bain declares, "the comparison between the routine and the reflex operations seems most just and accurate."[50] Bain's work as a whole represented an arm of contemporary psychological science that was dethroning the mind as both the initiator and controller of thought and exploring instead the ways in which mind and body worked in concert. These theories informed representations of mental life in both fiction and poetry, as studies by Anne Stiles and Gregory Tate have shown. They illuminate Trollope's creative behavior too, eliciting the systemic operation behind Miller's comments: Trollope could compose quickly because writing had become an acquired experience, a secondary automatism.

Yet this line of thinking also suggests that habit had become entwined with cognitive development. In this light, Trollope's routine illustrates the

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mind's diminishing role in repeated executions and as Bain argues, "the indispensable and perennial character of the [*sic*] corporeity, in *giving origin to moving power*."[51] Still, in 1883, the year *An Autobiography* reached readers, to conceive of habit not as the polar opposite of creativity, but as integral to creative processes ungoverned by purely mentalistic (i.e., conscious) paradigms of behavior contravened the Romantic cult of genius, a vestige of older religious notions of inspiration.[52] And as I have just shown, twentieth-century critics continued to cling to abstract notions of creativity – as a completely mental, even metaphysical, event. Just as some Victorians believed that Trollope's plots involved no thinking, many later readers like Kendrick and Skilton assumed that the invention of characters involved no writing.

The unsubtle separation of mental and physiological activity, of thoughtfulness from habit maintained by Skilton and Kendrick – and even by Miller in his description of thoughtlessness as "strange" – did not reflect more complex views about motor automatisms advanced decades before. Whereas Bain only suggests a link between habit and mental development, in a two-part article published in 1900, Théodule Ribot explores the "profounder elements" underlying conscious invention: "elements of impulsion and inhibition, that is to say, motor elements, since it is in movements that we are seeking the origin of creative imagination."[53] But in their cerebralization of the unconscious, the literary community largely ignored not just the work of psychologists like Ribot, but the roots of Freudian theory in physiology. They would have found support in an essay Trollope published three years after finishing the manuscript of his life story, one that presents a view of creativity reflecting popular Romantic – that is, mentalistic – conventions. Called "A Walk in a Wood" (1879), and first entitled "How We Write our Books," it describes the writing process as leisurely and unencumbered, and it hinges the creative moment on the possibility of an escape into nature: "The most difficult thing that a man has to do is to think…. My purpose here is to describe how this operation, always so difficult, often so repugnant to us, becomes easier out among the woods … than in the seclusion of any closet."[54] For such a process to function unhindered, "There must be a confirmed assurance in your mind that you have got out of the conventional into the natural" – away from ploughed ground and built landscape.[55] The ideal forests for meditation, he recommends, are those with the most umbrageous trees, in the Black Forest of Switzerland.

The context of this exception is worth amplifying in order for us to understand why it occurred. The prominent role of the woods and of

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thinking in the article can be partly explained by Trollope's assumption that the piece would be a part of a series in the periodical *Good Words* called "Half-Hours in the Fresh Air," and partly by an awkward patch in his relationship with the magazine's editor, Norman MacLeod, some years before. In 1863 *Rachel Ray*, which was to run from July to December, was pulled by MacLeod after an attack on Trollope as a "sensation writer" from the dogmatic evangelical periodical, the *Record*. Having envisioned his publication as a mild alternative to extremist organs like the *Record*, Macleod denied that the latter's criticism of Trollope had affected his decision to stop *Rachel Ray*.[56] "Please take a kind meaning out of [the spirit of my rejection] and don't give a Recordite meaning to it," Macleod implored.[57] Evidently Trollope took the rejection graciously, but after the fiasco with *Rachel Ray* he no doubt understood that a piece on the writer's process could not record his practices in the way of the autobiography that he was currently revising, or in any way that would undermine dominant ideas of genius and creativity. "A Walk in a Wood" would have to highlight the mind in a vaguely spiritual way and promote the salubrious effects of meditation outdoors. As a result, the piece brings Romantic and mentalistic clichés to the market for Christian literature. "I have always found it impossible to utilize railroads for delicate thinking," Trollope recalls for the readers of *Good Words*.[58] (In *An Autobiography*, he recalls writing the allotted pages per day of *Doctor Thorne* in a railway carriage from France to Marseilles and in a ship's cabin from Marseilles to Alexandria. He wrote *Lady Anna* at sea.[59] *An Autobiography* may not be absolutely authoritative, but Trollope's extraordinary ability to work aboard a pitching ship does have the testimony of Henry James.) In contrast to his coming life story, Trollope here portrays creative genius as a meditative operation that occurs prior to writing and that requires solitude in verdant surroundings.

With "A Walk in a Wood," Trollope conceded to the commanding Romantic profile of genius and inspiration, one that has not entirely disappeared. If "introversion and intensity is [*sic*] the essence [of the creative personality]," remarked the psychometric researcher R. B. Cattell in his report of 1971, "it is easy to see why a committedly extravert, impulsive and casual society has had to begin frantically chasing – and vulgarizing – creativity over the last decade.... Einstein remote in the patent office library, Darwin taking his solitary walks in the woods at Down – these are the epitome of the way of life of the creative person."[60] In "A Walk in a Wood," Trollope added to this anecdotal stock much earlier than Cattell imagined.

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By prescribing a systematic, albeit retrograde, way to achieve creativity, however, the essay also anticipated a *corpus* of self-help literature that signaled a shift in terms: For by the middle of the last century, genius was reconceived in psychometric circles as "continuous with lesser talents and not qualitatively differentiated" from them.[61] In this light, "creativity" began to override "genius" as a meaningful concept in behavioral psychology. In *Genius Unmasked* (2013), for example, Roberta Ness treats creativity as a *method* for developing one's acumen for business and potential for leadership; she offers ways for "almost anyone" to "improve innovation."[62] James's image of Trollope as a philistine focused exclusively on action and productivity could now be redrawn as a portrait of Trollope the steadily creative entrepreneur. Even when he looked backward, then, as in "A Walk," Trollope could not help but look forward.

Verbose Trollope

Ignoring the bland and unrevealing descriptions of inspiration supplied by Trollope in "A Walk," most twentieth-century readers treated *An Autobiography* as the portal to his opaque "inner life," searching its early chapters covering childhood for the unhappy origins of the adult's extraordinary drive. In doing so, they relied on the Freudian discourse that has continued to pervade biographical studies (and has been deployed, most notably, in W. J. Bate's *Samuel Johnson* [1977]). But depth psychology has not been particularly illuminating about Trollope's writing process. Freud's famous essay, "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming" (1908) treats fiction-writing as a male author's heroic fantasies; it does not tell us what occurs systemically during the act of writing. Furthermore, because any speculation about motive in the Freudian vein has presumed an unconscious that, in Hans Eysenck's caricature, is "hot and wet, seething with lust and anger" rather than one "more cold and dry … more reality bound," Trollope's fanatically regular routine, when viewed through the first lens, has raised the specter of an angry, compensating subject when in fact the author's creative behavior suggests the workings of a "rational" mental process (Eysenck's word).[63] Admittedly, following this "cold" unconscious – on the surface, so to speak, of his writing – might leave intact the image of Trollope as the son mindlessly following his mother's frenetic composition – a kind of automaton. Yet this approach, derived from behaviorism, the psychological model contemporaneous with depth psychology, has the potential to modify the reputation of a Trollope whose methods seemed so unintrospective, so uncreative.

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In this regard, behavioral research focused on unconscious cognitive processes has pursued two systemic operations that should be of interest to those seeking a new analytics of creativity, one that avoids ostracizing and stigmatizing Trollope, respectively, through Romantic and mechanistic clichés. First, the kind of blind speed in thinking for which the writer was notorious – a speed often regarded by those requiring some evidence of mental involvement as purely physiological and, therefore, automatic – has been explored and reclassified as the functioning of intuition. In his influential study of 1968, Malcolm Westcott elaborated on Bain's work and emphasized that intuition reaches "*conclusions on the basis of little information which are ordinarily reached on the basis of significantly more information*."[64] Although intuition is unchartable (by deductive or empirical means) and "rarely has any observable or communicable consequences," it bypasses logic to arrive at the same end as logic.[65] Summarizing decades of research on the faculty, Eysenck defined it in 1995 as "the process of rapid classification of a stimulus event, and the equally rapid attribution of the characteristics of its class to that event."[66] Intuition, in other words, is characterized by speed; it is faster than conscious thinking. The descriptions here are readily applicable to the seeming lack of preconception that bothered Trollope's critics. Westcott's theory in particular sheds light on the much-lamented "modern" technique (according to Arnold) of omitting conscious planning by casting intuition as a form of conditioning that lies on a continuum with habit – between the thresholds of cognition and behavior.[67] Intuition can evade consciousness because, according to Westcott, it results from a "transfer of training." An acquired faculty, it coalesces from operations that when repeated over time have become "unconscious and automatic."[68] Thus, Trollope's experience in composing multiplot novels created an intuitive shortcut around their mindful construction.

The psychological concept of intuition holds a potential justification not only for the case of Trollope the indefatigable writer but, surprisingly, for the trope of literary inspiration that he mocked. For even as it substantiates the physiological interpretation of productivity that his contemporaries found mechanistic, it embeds the hackneyed metaphor of Romantic inspiration – often represented as a flash of insight – in a theory of overtraining. The Muse, to adopt the language of behavioral science, is an embodiment of a stimulus event in which a conditional probability is strong enough to rise to consciousness as a symbol.[69] When invoked by the iconoclastic Trollope in *Orley Farm* – because supposedly, the task facing him at this crucial moment, a description of female beauty, requires

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a power greater than his own – she signals the threshold of cognition, a portentous pause in an otherwise rapid process. Through the Muse, he invests with literary authority a verbal feat expanding on *an operation that he has already executed numerous times*. In this way, the behavioral concept of intuition offers a reconciliation between the vulgar Romanticism of the inspired genius and the equally vulgar philistinism of the sedulous professional writer.

Mid-twentieth-century literary critics like Skilton and Kendrick most likely would have balked at (in their view) such a compromised idea. Indeed, by another behavioral gauge of creativity, Trollope did not fare as well. This measure was focused on style rather than composition and was devised decades after the writer's death, when biography and heredity were not so much discounted as folded into a "nomothetic" standard: one that supposedly surmounted social, racial, and ethnic particularities to describe a universal of human behavior that could be isolated through measurable exercises.[70] Of special interest here among the technologies devised to determine creativity were various kinds of word association tests (WATs) that privileged a certain cognitive style as a marker of talent, its chief feature being uncommon or even hermetic syntactical combinations. In their thought patterns (when reduced to strings of words), creative persons exhibited "overinclusiveness," a term coined by Sarnoff and Martha Mednick in the 1940s. Defined as "an inclination not to limit one's associations to *relevant* ideas, memories, images, etc.," overinclusiveness (also called "looseness" or "flat association") contrasted with "steep" association, or the tendency to string together ideas that were "limited and rigidly interlinked."[71] Eysenck thought the theory of overinclusiveness worth attention. Creative minds demonstrate a "tendency to have shallow [or flat] rather than a steep associative gradient, i.e., to admit more unusual associations, ideas, memories, and images than is customary."[72] His adherence to a nomothetic standard of intelligence stirred much controversy (provoking accusations of racism); but in her recent summary of research on genius, Ness also finds this measure credible enough to represent it in detail. "Fido" and "bark" from "dog" exemplify, she explains, a pattern of steep association while "collar," "hair," and "trainer," from the same prompt, "dog," indicate the remote bent of flat association.[73] Among creative personalities, such a cognitive style has been designated "psychoticism" – or the "P" factor, a label that preserves the ancient and popular connection between the creative and the pathological personality.[74]

Cognitive researchers have recognized, of course, that the associational patterns of such psychosotics (derived from "psychoticism") are less

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extreme than the "incomprehensible word salad of the chronic schizophrenic" and for this reason have assumed that creativity with a high P factor must have an inhibitor to disregard the remote associations typical of psychotic thinking.[75] Searching for this inhibitor through experiments on persons deemed creative by other criteria (e.g., by school performance), they have recorded subjects blocking information presented to them earlier when it is reintroduced in a setting that has rendered it irrelevant. The subjects' "failure" to recognize what should be familiar associations has indicated to scientists the importance of cognitive inhibition in normal thought processes. Without it, crowded and outlying associations would result in the associative disturbances typical of psychotic thinking.[76] In short, too much cognitive inhibition suppresses all remote association and tends to produce uncreative or "steep" verbal performances. On the other hand, overinclusive associations, with an inhibitor, signal creativity – psychoticism in the absence of psychosis.

Whereas intuition embeds the kind of physiological repetition for which Trollope was notorious but in doing so melds mechanical and creative behavior, according to psychologists like Westcott, psychosotic word association emphasizes verbal novelty and thereby adds a literary patina to the rational unconscious. Indeed, the remote associations deemed "creative" by test-scorers in the middle of the last century bore a telling similarity to the high modernist poetry then in vogue, as I have discussed elsewhere. The verbal ingenuity of James Joyce and Ezra Pound, the analogistic narratives of Marcel Proust, and the revaluation of the metaphysical poets by T. S. Eliot all indicate an alignment of taste between cognitive and literary skills. Such a standard inevitably sidelines Trollope, for it reflects modernist and Romantic literary models antipathetic to his style and authorial profile.

To amplify this point, and to demonstrate just why Trollope's work *stylistically* contravened new psychological definitions of verbal creativity (and therefore confirmed the impression of the writer at work as a kind of automaton), I mount an experiment of my own, one in close reading, by reprinting below a sample of Trollope's writing to "test" it for the presence or absence of remote associations. Of course, the sequence of words and phrases in a narrative, even in a manageable sample of one, cannot replicate the format of a WAT. Still, through a traditional "surface" (rather than deep) reading focused on syntagmatic relations, I can search for any signs of looseness or of its inhibition in Trollope's style. My subject consists of two samples, many pages apart, from Trollope's *The Small House at Allington* (1864). The first comes from Chapter XIX and refers to

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Christopher Dale, the Squire of Allingham. Within this field – comprising the narrator's commentary (in the first passage) and free indirect discourse (in the second passage) – I have marked the words, phrases, and clauses that form three sets circling around three ideas: that the Squire is constant (italics), reserved (underlining), and always thwarted (bold):

> He was a *constant man*; urgent in carrying out his own plans, but **not sanguine** in doing so, and **by no means apt to expect that all things would go smooth with him**. He had *made up his mind* that his nephew and his niece should be married, and **should he ultimately fail in this, such failure** would probably embitter his future life; – but it was not in the nature of the man to be angry in the meantime, or to fume and scold **because he met with opposition**.… He was a *constant*, undemonstrative man, given rather to brooding than to thinking … above all, he was *a man who having once desired a thing would desire it always*.[77]

The second, from Chapter XLIX, concerns the Squire in another situation:

> He was very vexed, and yet he was not angry with her. **Everybody lately had opposed him in everything**. All his intended family arrangements had gone wrong. But yet he was seldom angry respecting them. **He was so accustomed to be thwarted that he hardly expected success** … in this, as in all his own schemes, **he was met at once by opposition and failure**.[78]

Readers familiar with this novel know that constancy is one of its themes and a virtue shared by many of the sympathetic characters – John Eames and Lily Dale, as well as the Squire. For this reason, it is appropriately emphasized in the first passage. But I am not reading part against thematic whole, although this is the usual tactic of a traditional close reading. Rather, I confine myself to this very small field in order to pinpoint the features of the style resulting, some assumed, from the compositional behavior that proved so detrimental to Trollope's reputation, at least in the short run. For to one of Trollope's contemporary detractors, no doubt these collocations would display the integument of the novel's padding, which was the consequence of the author's word-counting and commitment to routine.

Although padding was a necessity for the mid-century novelist writing triple-deckers or issuing installments, Trollope's seemed excessive to many, as I have related, and linked insidiously to his productivity. Displaying the verbal constituents of this padding, the passages cited suggest, furthermore, a recursive direction in Trollope's associative chains. The repetition of words ("constant") or of very similar clauses ("it was not in the nature of the man to be angry," "he was not angry," "he was seldom angry"), often

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very close to each other, displays Trollope's tendency as he composes to rehearse an idea through phrases that differ slightly but convey the same meaning. Through these rehearsals, we glimpse a writer whose range of thought over a brief span of time was conceptually "steep," that is, kept from remote linkages. Rather than associative looseness, Trollope's style reveals a conservative tendency to linger on the same thoughts amid a steady flow of words. The narratives are loquacious, but they are also ideationally confined. The cognitive pattern that emerges in these two small samples indicates a strong inhibiting force and a style incompatible with that suggested by measures of high P.

I have suggested that the aesthetic link between the behavioral testing of creativity and contemporary literary standards has been obscured in part because Trollope's critics have focused instead on creative *content* traceable to biographical details. Although I have also shown that a stylistic analysis in behavioral terms does not guarantee a flattering judgment of Trollope's writing, the exercise does underscore that the picture of Trollope as an uncreative novelist was at bottom a historical one, in both literary and psychological terms. Because the creativity of a particular style is dependent on cultural standards that are hardly universal or timeless, any test of a verbal performance is, one of its practitioners admits, "only a projection of the test constructor's personal view about what creativity is."[79] Nonetheless, the theories of psychological intuition and associative looseness offer frameworks for viewing Trollope at work – and for contextualizing the assessments of Trollope's work through the mid-twentieth century. Studies of psychological intuition have repositioned habit as a component of, rather than an impediment to, creativity. They have rehabilitated indefatigability by dissociating it from the mechanistic behavior that James derided during an era in which psychological materialism seemed unable to account for creative activity. Intuition gives a name to the faculty that Trollope acquired through steady labor, the faculty that enabled him to become an eminently productive writer, thinking and writing simultaneously. Measurements of high P, although seeming to exclude Trollope from a creative cohort, employ a dynamic between looseness and inhibition that opens his compositional process to analysis and highlights the role of repetition in anchoring his associative flow. In this light, *An Autobiography* represents and even anticipates a psychological shift in the approach to creativity, one that (according to Arnold and James, respectively) modernizes and vulgarizes inspiration by connecting it to practice and conditioning. But Trollope probably would have been untroubled by these complaints.

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