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The Organization of Organizations: Bureaucratic Administration and Domestic Comfort in the Victorian Sequence Novel

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The Organization of Organizations:

Bureaucratic Administration and Domestic Comfort

in the Victorian Sequence Novel

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Matthew Andre Dubord

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Organization of Organizations:

Bureaucratic Administration and Domestic Comfort

in the Victorian Sequence Novel

by

Matthew Andre Dubord

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Jonathan Hamilton Grossman, Chair

Victorian bureaucracy had its own brand of fiction. In this dissertation I argue that the
long novel sequences of Anthony Trollope and Margaret Oliphant describe the development of
modern systems of administrative and domestic organization. In mid-century England, writing
about organization and administrative bureaucracy gained in importance in the wake of the
Northcote-Trevelyan report as a cluster of sequence novels sprang up and explored the links
between fiction and organization. By 1890, however, the sequence novel returned to obscurity as
the art-object novel of Henry James began its ascent.

Sequence novels are novels connected in sequence. They contain hundreds of characters
and chronicle social processes that persist for years. The dissertation treats them as single works

whose disparate narratives provide a coherent engagement with organization. Sequence novels show that novels and social institutions alike manufacture both intimacy and organization.

The dissertation begins with Trollope's Barsetshire novels and his descriptions of administrative ecologies—Church, civil service, legal system—and the people who inhabit them. From decisions, to the clerks and clerics who make them, and finally to the environments that house them, this chapter shows how individual decisions translate into the bureaucratic organization characteristic of large administrative institutions.

When translated into the domestic sphere, organization produces comfort. Oliphant's Carlingford Chronicles popularized a modern form of domestic organization that requires women to direct their attentions toward producing comfort. In this form of organization, women work in the medium of form (sewing and socializing, redecorating and relating, according to pattern) and produce a domestic world that is not so much a haven from the official world as a copy of it.

From novelistic worlds replete with institutions, the final chapter turns away from official organization and the sprawling sequence novel to the individual novel with the individual at its center. Henry James's *The Tragic Muse* sketches a late-Victorian world of "little systems," constituted by and around the individual. This is a world without administrative decision, without comfort, but not therefore without organization. James substitutes for the ubiquitous organization of Trollope and Oliphant a ubiquitous network of personal interactions and individuals deciding.

The dissertation of Matthew Andre Dubord is approved.

Jonathan Furner

Mark I. Seltzer

Jonathan Hamilton Grossman, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

Dedicated to my parents, for insisting that I push pencils for a living,

and to my children for letting me read to them

"Is Piglet organdized too?"

"We all are," said Rabbit, and off he went.

A. A. Milne, *The House at Pooh Corner*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VITA

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The Organization of Organizations:

Bureaucratic Administration and Domestic Comfort

in the Victorian Sequence Novel

"Not unlike modern armies, literature was dependent on the organization of the means of communication…."

-Bernhard Siegert, *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System*

"In fact it is probably not too much to say that of the average novel of the third quarter of the century—in a more than average but not of an extraordinary, transcendental, or quintessential condition—Anthony Trollope is about as good a representative as can be found. His talent is individual enough, but not too individual: system and writer may each have the credit due to them allotted without difficulty."

–George Saintsbury

In the wake of Parliamentary inquiry into reform of the permanent Civil Service in the mid-1850s to the subsequent order in council implementing competitive examinations in 1870, bureaucratic organization emerged as an important topic in Victorian fiction. During a twenty-five-year period, from the mid 1850s through the 1870s, a small cluster of sequence novels sprang up and identified a special connection between novels and bureaucracy, revealing both as social institutions that manufacture organization. But its limited reign was brief. By the 1890s,

the sequence was all but over even though its defining theme—organization—still retained its foothold in the novel. In this dissertation, I examine this comparatively rare but nonetheless important novelistic form and the vast narrative worlds it creates—worlds with a scale unparalleled even in comparison with the already capacious Victorian novel. My argument is that these unwieldy sequences, which contain hundreds or even thousands of characters, and which chronicle social processes in narratives that stretch across decades or centuries and across multiple novels, matter because they describe an ecology of bureaucratic organization—one that includes the domestic not in opposition to, but as part of the same phenomenon, the rise of organization These sequences trace the relationship of organization to the world that it makes up and the traits that each form of organization shares. More than the content of any of the historical institutions they depict, the organization of those organizations form their topic.[1] These novels, structured by depictions of British bureaucracy and administration, need to be re-understood as proliferating a wide range of organized social relations not only in the administrative and professional spheres but in the domestic sphere as well. If domestic and bureaucratic organization seem two incompatible concepts, it is because we have been mistaking the interchangeability of interpersonal relations in bureaucratic organizations for some defining feature of administration itself, missing how domestic management redomesticates the systems of organization that have hitherto appeared to belong only to the professional world. Once we instead begin to see how the domestic and professional worlds depicted in these sequence novels are related, we can, I contend, also analyze how organization of bureaucracy and domestic management manufacture both administration and intimacy.

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[1] Other terms for "sequence novel" are *roman fleuve* and, following Laurie Langbauer, "the series novel." My usage here follows the entry "Sequence Novel" in Sutherland, John. 1989. *The Stanford Companion to Victorian fiction*. Stanford: Stanford UP.

In this dissertation, the Church of England in Anthony Trollope's Barsetshire Chronicles and the Dissenting Church in Margaret Oliphant's Chronicles of Carlingford will be described as environments constituted by organizations that shape and are shaped by professional and domestic lives. What these sequence novels make visible is how the environment of an organization makes possible patterns of communications between people, places, and things. But more than that, organizational structures and processes are reinforced by these patterns of communication that in turn give coherence and structure to an environment. Trollope and Oliphant's series of novels stage again and again the numerous temporary and impersonal communications that arise between office workers engaged in the business of bureaucracy. This patterned bureaucratic communication is not only a reflection on the reflexive organization of people and things native to both bureaucracy and novels, but is also part of the novel's own manufactured and reflexive (that is, media-generated) participation in a social world characterized by manufactured communication. Like everything else in the *sui generis* society—the society that generates itself from its own self-descriptions—novels too are products of and self-descriptions of the society that generates them. This dissertation will work out the consequences of that claim for both individuals and institutions after 1855. An end-chapter then reverses the critical line of sight. It shows how a single novel, Henry James's *The Tragic Muse* (1889–90), presents the organization of the art system itself so as to star individuals—and not organizations or their self-reproduction. In James's reconstruction of the "novel-as-art-object"— to borrow Mark McGurl's moniker—the source of the decisions and communicative acts that constitute the novel become explicitly constituted around the individual.[2] James thereby makes explicit and visible for us a conventional mode of reading novels that perhaps partly hides from

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[2] McGurl, Mark. *The Novel Art: Elevations of American Fiction after Henry James*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2001, p. 28.

our view the historical role of the sequence novel.

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In the wake of the Northcote-Trevelyan report of 1854, *On the Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service*, Victorian England witnessed an unprecedented swelling of the professional ranks, which necessitated and further expanded the codification of rules for professional certification, the formation of new professional societies, and the rapid expansion of the civil service.[3] Taken together, these factors herald the rise of a new form of organization between professionals—a new regime of conduct in professional relationships between men of business—that was driven by what has come to be called the rational organization of people and things native to bureaucracy and the administration of state institutions.[4] As I began to suggest above, the emergence of this distinctly modern form of organization cannot be understood fully without reference to the emergence in the literary field of the two novel sequences mentioned by Trollope and Oliphant, both of which fall within this twenty-five year period, from 1855 to 1880.

Sequence novels have gone nearly unnoticed by literary historians. There are just two full-length studies of the genre. In Laurie Langbauer's *Novels of Everyday Life*, she focuses on the minutiae—what she terms the "everyday"—of these lengthy sequences. For Langbauer, the

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[3] See Great Britain Civil Service Committee, Stafford Henry Northcote Iddesleigh, Charles E. Trevelyan, and Benjamin Jowett, *Papers on the Re-Organisation of the Civil Service. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty*. London: Printed by G.E. Eyre and W. Spottiswoode, for H.M. Stationery Off., 1855; Goodlad, Lauren M. E. *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003; Philpotts, Trey. "Trevelyan, Treasury, and Circumlocution." *Dickens Studies Annual: Essays on Victorian Fiction* 22 (1993): 22.

[4] My use of rational organization follows Max Weber's account of bureaucracy in *Economy and Society*, and in *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*. See Weber, Max, Peter Baehr, and Gordon C. Wells. *The Protestant Ethic and The "Spirit" Of Capitalism and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin, 2002; and Weber, Max, Guenther Roth, and Claus Wittich. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. 2 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1978. It should be noted that I want to distance myself from the idea that "rationality" accounts for bureaucratic organization. I will elaborate on this idea below.

sequence novel focuses on daily routine and restores importance to the "seemingly banal repetitions that make up the world."[5] We might call Langbauer's approach to sequence novels a re-storying of minimalism and "minor" fiction. Her attention to the banal is of necessity about what is minor, unimportant and unremarkable: "One argument contemporary reviewers made about Oliphant's and Yonge's novels (as well as about Trollope's, and also those of the score of that period's other novelists whom we barely remember) is that, although enormously popular, they must be by definition minor because they took as their subject the banalities of everyday life. One definition of the domestic realism practiced by most women writers of the time (as well as by most male writers, however) is simply its attention to the everyday" (49). Langbauer's is thus a story of the ethics of literary realism: not only how realist novels articulate their principle of selection, but how the principle of selection exercised by the realist author reflects back on the status of the author. That is, she is interested in how these novels choose what to include and what to exclude, and how those choices give readers a sense of where the author fits in and where he or she (usually) does not. But in a strange way the "everyday" she identifies as the constitutive feature of sequence seems to fall into the trap that D. A. Miller identified in *The Novel and the Police* (1989) as the peculiar failure of scholarly criticism of Trollope: "so one falls into the usual appreciation of his appreciation of the usual, and into the paired assumptions on which it is based: 'Life is like this,' and 'Novels are like this, too'."[6] That is, Langbauer seems to be arguing that sequence novels offer more realistic realism because they take the

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[5] Langbauer, Laurie. *Novels of Everyday Life: The Series in English Fiction, 1850-1930*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1999, 49.

[6] Miller, D. A. *The Novel and the Police*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988, p. 107. Miller's comment hearkens back to Henry James's comment that "His great, his inestimable merit was a complete appreciation of the usual" (*Partial Portraits*, 100-101). It may be important to note that this phrase gets revised from the original essay on Trollope published in July 1883 in *The Century Magazine*. In that version, the phrase is "His great, his inestimable merit was a complete appreciation of reality" (386).

technology of realism and extend it (with what might be a typical form of poststructuralist hyperbole) infinitely.

Despite this problem, Langbauer's thoughtful book stands nearly alone in the field, and it is strange to remark that the pickings of sequence fiction scholarship are surprisingly slim given the amount of scholarly work published on the writings of Trollope and Oliphant. There are a few scattered chapters in an edited collection on sequels, punningly titled *Part Two*, which means to put sequels (often considered lesser siblings) on equal footing with their original counterparts. Marjorie Garber offers a few thoughts on sequels in *It*, while responding rather savagely to *Part Two*. The work of Marxist and other scholars on serial publication focuses on an issue that stands proximate to the sequencing of novels, i.e. the interconnections of parts or numbers through plot devices, although this vein of scholarship entirely avoids discussing the logic of connecting what appear to be discrete novels together.[7] There is also Lynette Felber's book which attempts to determine the generic features of the *roman fleuve* (for the curious reader who wants to know, its defining feature is its gendered form, i.e. it is feminine, a precursor—and inheritor?—of the "feminine sentence" in novel form). But all of these topics are minimal determinants of the form of repetition in sequence novels: sequence novels contain sequels, but sequels do not a sequence make; they deal with gender, but not to the extent that they lose sight of other topics; and though they are sometimes published serially, and although their stories

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[7] For Marxist scholarship on serial publication, see N. N. Feltes, *Literary Capital and the Late Victorian Novel*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1993, and his earlier *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986. The standard work on serialization in the Victorian novel is Hughes, Linda K., and Michael Lund. *The Victorian Serial*. Charlottesville, VA: UP of Virginia, 1991. Besides this work, the philosophical tradition has its own history of thought on seriality: see Deleuze, Gilles. 1994. *Difference and Repetition*. New York: Columbia University Press.

sometimes happen in serial order, it is not exclusively so.[8]

Such scant scholarly attention to this phenomenon in Victorian fiction might seem justified since there are so few examples of novel sequences in the period from 1830 to 1900 (John Sutherland counts less than a dozen). But this undervalued form deserves further study for several reasons. First, its depictions of the interactions between people and bureaucratic organizations have not been adequately understood in relation to the narrative form of the novel. The Victorian novel's traditional focus on *a* character or *a* group of characters, or the basic topology of its plots (whether marriage, inheritance, detective, or otherwise), appears as an extremely limited way of conceiving of these narrative categories when set against the *longue durée* of the novel sequence.[9] In a sequence over which characters proliferate, the singularity of individual characters slowly fades away, as interesting and even central characters die or disappear into the background of the long temporality of the sequence. And it is just so with plot: what emerges in reading sequence novels in sequence—and not simply as standalone novels—is an awareness that bureaucratic organizations transform into the plot of the sequence, since both plots and bureaucracies have to do with the organization of people and things. From a narratological point of view, we might say that sequence novels stage the competition between the plots of each individual novel (and its subplots) and the plot of the sequence.

Second, and beyond its reconfigurations of basic categories of narrative, if the representations of British bureaucracy and administration that structure these sequences allow

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[8] Note here the spectacular trouble that "writing to the number" of *Framley Parsonage* (1860) caused Trollope. I would like to suggest that Trollope's perceived problems producing quality work in his most famous foray into serialization demonstrates decisively the epistemological and formal discontinuity between serial form and sequence novels.

[9] See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. 2 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995. The term *longue durée* has long been identified with the *Annale* school of history, inaugurated by Braudel and his peers.

them to carry their stories across multiple novels, they are also crucial in differentiating sequence novels from the norms of domestic and professional fiction that dominate our current portrait of the Victorian novel. We still hear today echoes of the naive "complaint … that novels [make] love and marriage seem the main business of life," which is another way of registering the claustrophobia of a small universe of characters that intermarry, such as is common to the marriage plots of domestic Victorian fiction.[10] Against and alongside the domestic fiction that focuses on domestic matters, then, sequence novels demonstrate that decision-processing organizations offer parallel but different frameworks for conceiving of human relationships.

Third, by shifting the focus away from plots that unfold within a few years of a human lifetime, sequence novels give us a longer view of human affairs and call into question some very basic assumptions common to the Victorian period, not to mention our own time, about the meaningfulness of relationships.[11] As this last point implies, we often think of domestic relationships as our most meaningful, but the scale of state institutions in these novels which form the backdrop for these relationships, and the immense stretch of time during which these institutions persist (and over which these sequences were written) over and against the relatively short shelf-life of many novelistic romances, can show us just how unremarkable a single intimate moment between two individuals at the center of a novel is. As I suggest above, what we are looking at when we examine these sequence novels is the story of a new form of organization between professionals and families, occasioned by the business of large institutions and the business of small ones, like the home. It is not business and home as we have come to

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[10] Tillotson, Kathleen. *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1954, p.122.

[11] The attentive reader will at once recognize that this argument distances me from Langbauer's position. Whereas she is interested in defamiliarizing the banal to make it appear new and interesting, I am most interested in the way that institutions dwarf the apparently meaningful, and make the drama of human affairs look unimportant in comparison.

understand the terms—as the public and impersonal environment against a personal and intimate one—but rather a new understanding of the myriad ways that two apparently different environments exercise and embody the same forms of organization.

In fact, the manner in which sequence novels diminish the more familiar forms of domesticity and professional cares, through the time and scale of institutions, bring us closer to what Wai Chee Dimock calls "deep time." As Dimock writes, "some historical phenomena need large-scale analysis. They need hundreds, thousands, or even billions of years to be recognized for what they are: phenomena constituted by their temporal extension, with a genealogy much longer than the life span of any biological individual, and interesting for just that reason."[12] Although Dimock's concept of deep time helps her to dismantle the boundaries within which literary historians frame American literature—she uses the terms of *longue durée* and (following Fernand Braudel) "scale enlargement" to transcend the boundaries of the nation state and to consider American literature as reaching out to literatures of different times and geographical locations—deep time helps us to think about the way that institutions develop over long periods of time, and how the bureaucratic organizations of a novel sequence can help to re-frame even the major plot events (or even entire subplots) in a novel. These descriptions of the sequence novels of this period may already make them feel like unfamiliar ground to Victorianists. The peculiarity of long sequences of novels about institutional and bureaucratic deep time in turn provides the key to my principle of selection: not only are these novels tightly clustered between 1855 and 1880, they are all centered upon institutions that run through each novel of the sequence, forming the backdrop against which the ultimately minor melodramas of individual human lives unfold. The legacy of these novels, from Trollope's chronicles to Oliphants'—

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[12] Wai-chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2006), p. 5.

which are deeply enmeshed in what reads as a 25-year continuous present about the politics of the state Church, institutions that are hundreds or thousands of years old—is an altogether unique view of the *time* and scale of institutions in Victorian affairs that has hitherto been ignored. Like historians looking at what Braudel condemned as the "surface events" of history, scholars have tended to treat each novel of each sequence as single events, and have thereby missed the larger, tectonic trends that shape the landscape of the sequences.

Fourth and finally, Victorian sequence novels demonstrate how organization mediates communication between professionals and families alike, and therefore show that paying close attention to various forms of communication in the novels can help us to analyze and explain institutional environments. In many cases of professional administration, the organization is what forms the connective tissue between professionals. This "in-betweenness" of organizations gives insight into the relationships of professionals to their environment, but also reveals hidden congruities with the domestic world that it is supposed to be separated from. Both bureaucracy and the home are social systems of vastly different scale, but because they are social systems, they are also and therefore communication systems whose communications can be analyzed for patterns of organization. I wish to reserve the full discussion of organization and communication for a separate section below, but suffice it to say for now that organizations are communication channels and the products of communication because they are part of the content communicated.

In a sense then, this dissertation oscillates between the micro- and macroscopic views of sequence novels in order to understand how they reveal organization's organization as expressed in their communications or media, propagating at each level. In the next section, I look at the literature on media and organizational theory and elaborate on bureaucracy as a media of communication. The final sections of the introduction outline the chapters of the dissertation.

Organization and Sequence

A young Henry James reviewing Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865), the novel that inaugurated Trollope's Parliamentary sequence, complained bitterly about the novel's "thousand pages of small talk": "Take any one of his former tales, change the names of half the characters, leave the others standing, and transpose the incidents, and you will have 'Can You Forgive Her?'"[13] Since James there has been a strong strain in Trollope criticism similarly fascinated (and horrified) by the author's fascination with stereotypical situations and dilemmas.[14] Stephen Wall identifies this trope in his book *Trollope and Character* as the determinant feature of Trollope's prose style: "being in a dilemma is perhaps the most important recurring situation in Trollope's fiction."[15] Wall's assessment follows developments from the 1970's, which tried to find a way of recovering the aesthetics and moral tenor of his fiction's apparently formless form. Most influentially, there was Ruth apRoberts's *The Moral Trollope*. And through apRoberts's methods, scholars in the late Twentieth Century have attempted to recover, as Nicholas Dames wishes to do, authorial and professional vocational ambitions in "the humblest of his style's habits," and also to give to the fiction of "stupid Trollope"—in Richard Dellamora's phrase[16]—

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[13] See Henry James's 1865 review of 'Can You Forgive Her?" reprinted in Smalley, Donald Arthur, ed. *Trollope: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969, pp. 253.

[14] Of the three authors I look at here, the scholarship is the most developed for James's work, nevertheless this dissertation mostly frames the scholarly debates in terms of what has developed around Trollope's fiction. Where possible, I will indicate points of convergence or departure from work on Trollope in the scholarship on James and Oliphant.

[15] Wall, Stephen. *Trollope and Character*. London: Faber, 1988.

[16] Dellamora, Richard. "Stupid Trollope," *The Victorian Newsletter* 100 (2001), p.22-25. In "Stupid Trollope," Dellamora argues that Trollope's "guilty knowledge of such doings [i.e. schoolboy sex] impels his representation of male networks, both negatively, so that in his fiction he represents them in metaphorically sodomitic terms, and positively, so that he was equally motivated by the need to find a respectable male homosocial conviviality in which he could be a welcome player." The "stupid Trollope" of the article's title is the "slow boy" of the autobiography, a self-identified "babe," if not rube, who innocently and stupidly defends the system of sexual subjection that turns

"a thought," as D. A. Miller might put it.[17] Partly, Trollope himself created the conditions for this trend. In one famous passage of his *Autobiography*, Trollope extols the virtues of clear writing: "the language should be so pellucid that the meaning should be rendered without an effort of the reader."[18] And thus next to the problem of recurring characters and situations Trollope added this questionable virtue of a prose so transparent, so un-freighted of meaning that it required no interpretation. In a sense, these are the problems that have prevented scholars from analyzing Trollope's sequence fictions and the bureaucratic processes that structure them because they have hitherto seemed nothing more than the transparent application of empirical realism to the workplace. To alter the tone of the critical conversation we have to recognize, as Friedrich Kittler noted, that aesthetics "begins as 'pattern recognition.'"[19] In this section, I want to begin to lay out my argument that the transparently recurring patterns of work and domesticity can actually help us to analyze both professional administration and the production of comfort as related forms of organization. To do this, I will place Trollope's (along with Oliphant's and James's) bureaucratic organizations in the context of some recent organizational theory.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Bureaucratic organizations are what social systems theorists call operationally closed systems, and this notion can help us to make sense of the channels of communication in bureaucratic administration but also in the home. Operational closure means that although a

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boys into "new men." Needless to say, Dellamora reads in a sexualization of bureaucratic relations not much evident in the text. See also, Nicholas Dames, "Trollope and the Career: Vocational Trajectories and the Management of Ambition," *Victorian Studies*, 45.2 (2003), 247-278.

[17] Miller, D. A. The Novel and the Police. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988, p. 107.

[18] Trollope, Anthony. An Autobiography. 2 vols Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1883, Ch. 12.

[19] From "The World of the Symbolic—A World of the Machine," in Kittler, Friedrich A., and John Johnston, Trans. *Literature, Media, Information Systems: Essays, Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Culture*. Amsterdam: GB Arts International, 1997, p. 130.

system's operations may be influenced by outside pressures or irritations, its structures and processes cannot be altered meaningfully by those outside influences. Nonetheless, unless the system can respond to these influences and maintain its equilibrium, these irritations threaten to crash a system or send it into disequilibrium such that it fails in self-reproduction. Its responses take the form of self-correction through what Norbert Wiener calls a "negative feedback mechanism" (or feedback loop) to produce *homeostasis*. In *The Organizational Complex*, Reinhold Martin rephrases Weiner's theorem in order to highlight how information about an organization *itself* becomes feedback. That is, feedback is nothing more than the system's communications to itself about its organizational state:

> The second law of thermodynamics holds that the overall level of entropy, or disorder, tends probabilistically to increase in any closed system. Wiener proposes that like energy, the amount of information, or 'negentropy,' within a system is subject to a similar process of breaking down and leveling off, also measurable as entropy…. Conversely, the degree of antientropic, informational *organization* in cybernetic systems is regulated through feedback, a continuous cycling of information (obtained by artificial 'sense organs') back into a system to correct its course, consolidate its form, or modify its output.[20]

Surprisingly, Wiener elaborates the relationship between an organized system, such as a human organism, and its homeostasis as the preservation of *pattern*, which he explains in terms of communications: "It is the pattern maintained by this homeostasis, which is the touchstone of our personal identity.…We are not stuff that abides, but patterns that perpetuate themselves.… A

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[20]   Martin, Rheinhold. *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media and Corporate Space*, Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003, p. 21.

pattern is a message, and may be transmitted as a message."[21] Urie Bronfenbrenner commented on just this tendency of social systems to self-perpetuate and replicate according to pattern when he puzzled, "it is as if within each society or subculture there existed a blueprint for organization of every type of setting."[22] For bureaucracies, these patterns are how organizations tell themselves how they organize themselves.

This insight gives new meaning to Wall's claim that dilemmas are the most important recurring situations in Trollope's fiction. Trollope's undecidable situations often take the form of initially impossible choices about whom to marry, with whom to associate, and so on. In these novels, domestic situations present characters with these dilemmas which often threaten to disrupt bureaucratic work. For instance, after Adolphus Crosbie jilts Lily Dale in *The Small House at Allington*, John Eames thrashes Crosbie and gives him a black eye. Thrashings for jilting are common enough in Trollope's novels (a thrashing with nearly identical circumstances also happens in *Doctor Thorne*), but this one in particular stands out for the way it irritates bureaucratic structures. The board of directors of the railway (where the incident happened) reports it to the higher-ups at the Income-tax Office, where Eames works, while the Board of the General Committee Office, where Crosbie works, reads about it in the newspaper. It is instructive to see how the event of the row gets turned into communication events: a letter from the railway board of directors and a newspaper report. In other words, they become *information* about bureaucrats, and thus turn into what Martin (above) called "negentropy" for the Income-tax Office and General Committee Office. In both cases, the clerks are reprimanded for the impact their row might have on the reputation of the office (one way of maintaining

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21   Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1988). Kindle edition.
22   Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1979, p. 4.

homeostasis), but crucially, it also becomes the occasion for each of the bureaucratic organizations to redouble its own bureaucratic operations: in the case of Eames, he earns a promotion from clerk to private secretary *during* the meeting of reprimand; and Crosbie's encounter ends when he refuses to discuss it: "if you please, we won't say anything more about it." This refusal leaves Crosbie's superior with only one response: "'H-m, ha, well; we'll go to business now, if you please,' he said, as though reserving to himself the right of returning to the secretary's black eye when the more usual business of the Board should be completed. But when the more usual business of the Board had been completed, the secretary left the room without any further reference to his eye" (*The Small House At Allington*, Ch. 16). Generated by domestic concerns outside of professional work, the row is the occasion for bureaucracy to reinforce its bureaucratic patterns. Luhmann notes in "Organization" that decision processing organizations seek after these types of irritations, as it allows them to make decisions or to produce the conditions that allow them to make decisions (41).[23]

I want to put the case more strongly than Wall and James did: the *types* of situations that recur in Trollope are stereotypes of situations, organized and organizational patterns of dilemmas that represent negentropy for bureaucratic systems. But unlike James and others, I do not want to decry Trollope's apparent over-reliance on pattern. Rather, I want to suggest that patterns dominate in these sequence fictions because they dominate in the maintenance of homeostasis in novels' bureaucratic organizations. As those organizations attempt to control their own negentropy, they give matter (and thus mass) to these massive narratives. In other words, what looks like event or coincidence in any one of these single novels gains the force of system through its stereotyped repetition. These systemic repetitions come then to look like evolutionary

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[23] Luhmann, Niklas. "Organization". In *Autopoietic Organization Theory. Drawing on Niklas Luhmann's Social Systems Perspective*, edited by Tore Bakken and Tor Hernes, 31-52. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press, 2003..

adaptations to the world as environment—hence my use of "ecologies" to describe the organization of organizations. In one important respect, the row between Eames and Crosbie make visible how sequence fictions register the medial character of institutions and institutional work: through the responses of bureaucratic organizations to negentropy, readers of these novels can see a direct connection between the manufactured intimacy of bureaucracy and the manufactured intimacies of the novel's standard plots.

For Trollope and Oliphant, the "in-between" of their sequence novels are bureaucratic organizations that bring people, places and things into closer and more intimate contact. But this in-between-ness is not quite enough to allow us to characterize the mediality of bureaucratic organizations. To do that, we must keep in mind the following: "The critical point of the historical analysis of media is not to be found in what a medium makes visible, tangible, audible, readable or perceptible; it is not so much located in the aesthetic of the data and in-formation provided by a medium but rather in the anesthetic side of a media process."[24] Aesthetic here means sense perception, the way that things appeal to the sense. Anesthetic means, then, what is not perceived, or what is not sensible, what is invisible and imperceptible, the trace of which structures the media process. For Vogl, what media make visible is the *invisibility* of all those things previously *not perceived* by the senses, but which media make it possible to conceive of, know about, and search for (i.e. anterior to a media process that suddenly made them visible). That is, what media make visible is the *difference* between the visible and the invisible. Vogl's comment thus gives a sense of the direction that this dissertation will take in reference to media. It will analyze how novels about bureaucracy make suddenly visible the *difference* precipitated by bureaucratic organization.

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[24] Vogl, Joseph. "Becoming-Media: Galileo's Telescope." *Grey Room* 29 (Winter 2008), 20.

Chapter Summaries

To this point, I have described in a general way the forms that organization takes in domestic management and administrative bureaucracy in British sequence novels of the period 1855 to 1880. In the first two of the three chapters that follow, I focus on two different novel sequences and the institutions they depict. In doing so, however, I will not be focusing on the differences between these institutions. That is, this dissertation is not about how different Parliament or the Post Office was from the Church of England, but on the contrary how similar they are. I will suggest that what we get by examining each of these different institutions is deeper and deeper insight into the organization of organizations.

The first chapter of this project analyzes the ways in which decision structures bureaucracy in Trollope's Chronicles of Barsetshire. Briefly, this sequence of novels looks at the professional clergy of the Church of England in the cathedral city of Barchester, at the decisions they make, and at the environments that house them. I contend that Trollope sees in the Church's clergy a bureaucratic organization that, in its outlines, approximates the structure and function of the Post Office. Nominally, the six novels of the sequence—*The Warden* (1855), *Barchester Towers* (1857), *Doctor Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), *The Small House at Allington* (1864), and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867)—take Barchester Cathedral through a series of crises in Church leadership. The first two novels of the sequence, along with *Framley Parsonage* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, focus explicitly on moments of transition in both the local Church and in the Church as a state institution: in *The Warden* we see Parliamentary reform of sinecures; in *Barchester Towers*, the High-Church bishop dies and is replaced by a Low-Church one; *Framley Parsonage* looks at a clergyman caught up in the schemes of an MP who floats bills of credit; and finally, *The Last Chronicle of Barset* concerns the way that the Church

bureaucracy deals with a clergyman wrongly accused of stealing a check for £20. *The Small House at Allington*, although it does not concern the Church explicitly, advances the lines established in *Framley Parsonage* by reaching out to London and civil service bureaucracy through the characters John Eames, a clerk and later private secretary in the Income-Tax Office, and Adolphus Crosbie, secretary to the board of the General Committee Office. These storylines are the major reason that critics have claimed that although "ecclesiastical in [their] interest," the Barsetshire novels, in general, focus not on faith or religion, but rather on questions of Church administration.[25] Rebecca West claimed that the sequence is "really … about the Civil Service, furnished with an ecclesiastical background and trappings," while John Sutherland contended that Trollope "shifts these questions [about civil service reform] to the Church of England."In light of these claims, it is thus not hard to see how T. H. S. Escott could argue that "it was the Post Office servant who made the novelist."[26] Outside of novel writing, Trollope's most lasting legacy was his work in the Post Office. He won fame by simplifying and consolidating rural mail delivery routes throughout England and Ireland, and introduced the pillar post box to simplify the mail collection. Escott made his claim based on Trollope's ability to write about the clergy with considerable insight and authority despite claiming that he had no familiarity with Church bureaucracy. This chapter will analyze how the Post Office made its mark on the world of Barchester through an overly-literal analogy between postal system and Church. This analogy is nowhere more explicit than in the following scene in *Barchester Towers*, when Archdeacon Grantly writes a telegram (for Septimus Harding to send) to a sitting cabinet minister to inform

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[25] From its earliest reviews, the novel attracts this claim, versions of which will doggedly follow the sequences not only of Trollope but also Oliphant (see below). See unsigned review from the *Saturday Review* of *Barchester Towers* in Smalley, p. 47.

[26] T. H. S. Escott, *Anthony Trollope, His Work, Associates and Literary Originals* , (London: John Lane, 1913), p. 113.

him that the Archdeacon's father, Bishop Grantly, is dead:

> 'By Electric Telegraph.
>
> 'For the Earl of ——, Downing Street, or elsewhere.
>
> '"The Bishop of Barchester is dead."
>
> 'Message sent by the Rev. Septimus Harding.' (*Barchester Towers*, Ch. 1)[27]

The telegraphed report of the Bishop's death becomes the postal equivalent of a religious process: the soul delivered up, as it were, to a bureaucratic functionary who dispatches it through electric wires to the higher-ups. But the Archdeacon's belief in the efficacy of this communication and his faith in the bureaucratic and administrative structures through which he channels his prayer points to a related belief in the post. If he hopes that the return telegram will communicate his promotion to a higher position in the bureaucratic structure, it is because he also analogizes post and prayer. This passage thus allows us to see the other side of postal religious faith: belief in communication gets transformed into belief in the bureaucratic structure of the Church, in that prayers, like letters, escalate up the chain of command.[28] When informed that Parliament has been dissolved and new elections mandated, his disappointment anticipates and follows the telegraph: "The archdeacon's mind, however, had already travelled from the death chamber to the closet of the prime minister" (*Barchester Towers*, Ch. 1). And we find merely that the telegram is passed on, ending in the dead letter office of the Prime Minister. It is

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[27] Where possible, citations to Trollope's and Oliphant's novels will refer to the first edition printed in volume form, except in the case of *Framley Parsonage*, when I will refer to the serialized form in *The Cornhill Magazine*—which David Skilton and Peter Miles have shown to be the definitive text for that novel. But since there is no readily available standard edition of either of these authors' works, and since individual novels from each sequence continuously cycle in and out of print, citations will be by chapter only. For a compelling explanation of why this is necessary, see the introduction to Trollope, Anthony, and Simon Dentith. *Doctor Thorne*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[28] Since the Anglican Church is the *established* or state-supported Church of England, the Church is tightly integrated into the state's political structure, including the civil service.

through these postal metaphors, I contend, that we can analyze the novel's descriptions of the Church of England's organization, and explore its ramifications for the "spiritual" and social life of the inhabitants of Barchester. On the one hand, we can see the telegram putting the Church bureaucracy into contact with other administrative structures like Parliament, opening a channel between one organizational complex and another. But more crucially, the Church bureaucracy puts Low and High Church partisans into intimate contact and thus gives rise to the battle that plays out through the majority of the sequence. The Low Church clergy are those who give "a relatively 'low' place to the claims of the episcopate, priesthood, and sacraments, and approximates in its beliefs to those of Protestant Nonconformists," whereas the High Church clergy are sometimes described as "Anglo-Catholic" because their views on the episcopate, priesthood and sacraments are the exact opposite from the Low Churchmen.[29] *Barchester Towers* begins with the death of the old, High Church bishop. When the new bishop, Dr. Proudie, and his wife, the *real* Bishop of Barchester, are sent from London, Archdeacon Grantly's hopes are finally crushed and the rest of the novel (and indeed the sequence) turns into "war, war, internecine war"(*Barchester Towers*, Ch. 6). And yet this "war" does nothing but bring people together on the business of the Church. One example from *The Last Chronicle of Barset* will suffice to demonstrate this logic. After the curate Mr. Crawley is accused of stealing a check for £20, he is "committed" (i.e. indicted) for trial at the next assizes. Mrs. Proudie demands of her husband the Bishop that he remove the offending curate from office. Bishop Proudie, knowing that he cannot legally do so, sends Mr. Thumble to see if he can cow Mr. Crawley into relinquishing the curacy of his own accord. If Crawley submits to be ruled by the Bishop, then Thumble will have charge of the curacy until such time as Crawley should be proven innocent. But Crawley will not relent, and certainly will not allow Thumble to assume charge of his "cure

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[29] *Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. "Low Church," and "High Churchman."

of souls":

> "I intended not to hint anything personally objectionable to yourself. I will regard you as one of the angels of the church." Mr Thumble, when he heard this, began to be sure that Mr. Crawley was mad; he knew of no angels that could ride about the Barsetshire lanes on grey ponies. "And as such I will respect you; but I cannot discuss with you the matter of the bishop's message."
>
> "Oh, very well. I will tell his lordship."
>
> "I will pray you to do so." (*The Last Chronicle of Barset*, Ch. 13)

It could not be clearer that this scene is the analogue of the telegram scene: the Bishop sends Thumble as one sends a messenger, and Crawley sends him back with another message. The new Bishop's message fulfills the second function of the telegram (the first is that it is the old Bishop's soul, transformed) in that it attempts something of a job promotion for Thumble. But Crawley converts this function into a disembodied metaphor (turning messenger into angel), and thus Crawley's office (nothing more than a desk in the poor curate's house) becomes the analogue of the Prime Minister's dead letter office, just much lower down on the chain of command. Thumble as messenger even approximates Proudie's installation as Bishop: the Low Church Thumble is to replace the High Church Crawley. Strangely enough this metaphor also refers to the invisible hierarchy in which the clergy participates: angels are the metaphoric forms that people like clergy are supposed to get turned into after death. As these two examples suggest, Trollope analogizes bureacratic patterns of post and church. Seeing this, this chapter makes visible the formal bureacratic patterning of professional organization capable of structuring either.

In the next and second chapter, I turn to Margaret Oliphant's Chronicles of Carlingford

for two reasons: first, it gives us an explicitly remediated version of Trollope's Chronicles of Barsetshire, but second, and more importantly, it shows how domestic comfort is produced according to similar organizational principles. The internal division within the Church of England that we saw in Chronicles of Barchester transforms into an external division between two competing bureaucratic organizations in the Dissenting Church and the Church of England. But alongside these institutions, the home emerges not as a haven from the official world, but rather a striking version of it.

For the reader unfamiliar with Oliphant's sequence, it begins with the short story, "The Executor," published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1861. It was followed in the same year and same magazine by "The Rector" and the novella *The Doctor's Family*. All three were combined into one volume and published in 1863. After these stories came *Salem Chapel* in 1862, published anonymously (it was originally attributed to George Eliot). In 1864, Oliphant published *The Perpetual Curate*, and in 1866 followed with her most famous novel *Miss Marjoribanks* (in print today through Penguin Classics). A decade later, in 1876, she published *Phoebe Junior* (in print through Broadview Press). Like Trollope's Barsetshire sequence, this is also a lengthy sequence that covers a provincial town, Carlingford, in this case, whose main outward difference from Barchester is that it has both a parish church and a Dissenting chapel.

To demonstrate the logic of organizational compatibility in the Carlingford sequence, I will turn to a passage from Oliphant's *Phoebe, Junior*. In the description below, Oliphant highlights the similarities and differences between Salem Chapel and Bethesda (two dissenting churches), and the leading Dissenting Chapel in London, Crescent Chapel, as it compares to a Church of England parish church in a wealthy parish. She also demonstrates how these churches model themselves on one another:

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The little Salems and Bethesdas, with their humble flocks, could not be supposed

to belong to the same species [as Crescent Chapel]; and the difference was almost

equally marked between such a place of worship as the Crescent Chapel and the

parish churches, which are like the nets in the Gospel, and take in all kinds of fish,

bad and good. (*Phoebe Junior*, Ch. 1)

Salem/Bathesda, Crescent/parish churches, each pairing of Church of England/Dissenting demonstrates their interchangeability. So indistinguishable is Crescent Chapel from a Church of England parish church that Phoebe Beecham (the Phoebe, Junior of the title) is unaware of the stigma attached to her belonging to a Dissenting Church. Attendance at her chapel is no bar to London Society for Dissenters, unlike the working-class taint of Salem Chapel in Carlingford which is attended by "none above the rank of a greengrocer or milkman" ("The Rector," Ch. 1). And this interchangeability is remarkable for the way that each Church suits itself to (and even doubles) its Other. Far from worrying the ecclesiastical split which would seem to constitute the content of her sequence, Oliphant teaches her readers, I will argue, to redouble the formal bureaucratic process we uncover in Trollope and apply it across bureaucracies but also to see its double in the home.

My final chapter focuses on a single novel, Henry James's *The Tragic Muse* (1890). The story of the novel is easy to summarize: both Nick Dormer, a would-be artist and politician, and Miriam Rooth, an actress, must decide whether to become artists or to become the "accessory" of someone else and essentially become politicians. Here "big" systems like politics and the art world give way to "little systems" (to use the phrase of one of the characters in the novel) of interaction rituals through the lens of personal decision, or "choice" as it is called in the novel. On the one hand, personal choice recalls Trollope's central theme of administrative decision and

how it shaped bureaucratic organization. And on the other, these little systems seem to evoke the smaller world of domestic life of Oliphant. But in *The Tragic Muse*, both are administration and domesticity are dispensed with as topics, and we see instead what decision looks like to an individual consciousness and what individual choices mean to the local social world in which they are made.

Chapter 1

Decisions, Dog Collars, and Sainted Enclosures:

The Organizations of Anthony Trollope's Barsetshire

"[H]ow difficult it is to give Trollope's fiction, so to speak, another thought: a thought, I mean, that is not wholly determined by the successful operation of the effects of his own novelistic project or that does not simply continue to familiarize us with what is already a highly developed system of familiarizations."

–D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, 107

"When contemporary society calls itself 'modern,' it identifies itself with the help of a differentiation from the past. It identifies itself in a temporal dimension. This is nothing particularly special at first glance. All autopoeitic systems, even, for example, the consciousness of the self, can only construct identity with constant allusions to their own past. This means that self-reference and external reference must be differentiated. This retrospection is achieved not through identification but rather through disidentification, through difference. Whether we like it or not, we are no longer what we were, and we will not be what we are now."

–Niklas Luhmann, *Observations on Modernity*, 3.

Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is "dehumanized," the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation.

–Max Weber, "Bureaucracy," in *Economy and Society*, 975.

Introduction

Victorian bureaucracies had their own brand of fiction. Administration and its discontents, oddly enough, is a common topic in the Victorian novel, alongside the scandals of illegitimacy, inheritance, and fraud, or the travails of class, the aristocracy, poverty and Reform. It is thus one of the most important themes of the condition of England novel. As I have already begun to lay out in the introduction to this dissertation, Anthony Trollope found a home for Victorian administrative complexes in one particular subgenre of the Victorian novel. There are many names for this subgenre, but the most convenient for my purposes is "sequence novel." This term reflects both the unity of the sequence and the important differences of its individual novels. In part, I argue that this play on unity and difference—which informs Barsetshire's fictional version of the established Church—is the formal consequence of the sequence's focus on an administrative organization which persists beyond the boundaries of a single novel. And as that statement suggests, the organization itself is related to my larger argument for this chapter: that the ecological thinking of Trollope's first novel sequence (and indeed of the novel sequences of the 1850s to 1880s), its insistent focus on system/environment distinctions announces the arrival of systems that self-organize around such system/environment distinctions. This is nowhere more clear than in *The Warden*, the novel that heads the sequence: as he struggles to understand overlapping forms of authority (in Church, Parliament, the legal system, and the mass media), no longer is the Reverend Septimus Harding merely a clergyman. Instead he is a

clergyman-turned-bureaucrat caught up in a complex world of interpenetrating systems. Through Harding we see what Barchester Cathedral, the Church of England, and indeed all of Barsetshire looks like to someone whose professional life began before the widespread systematization of administrative organization. But we also see—in his inability to halt the lawsuit against the Church or to prevent the articles being written about him in the media—that these systems signal the increasingly manufactured complexity of the world, a complexity that is unmanageable for the single individual alone. As this example already begins to suggest, this chapter will be concerned with the relationship of Barsetshire Cathedral not only to the Church of England, but also with the relationship of the Church itself to larger administrative and social structures in England.

As is well known to readers of Victorian fiction, Trollope's two long novel sequences are somewhat unusual for this period.[30] The first of these two sequences did not begin as a sequence, as Trollope was fond of relating, and Trollope even declared that the sequence consisted only of five novels (leaving out *The Small House at Allington*) and not the six that tradition has decided. On the whole, this chapter is less interested in how the sequence came to be a sequence than it is in the organizational logics connecting the distinct novels into one whole. (This is one reason why *The Small House at Allington* is added back into the sequence.) As I argue, the deep understanding of Victorian civil service that Trollope gained during his time in the post office accounts for the sequence's pervasive, if thinly spread, attention to organizations. It will be important to re-describe the novels and their organizations in terms of Trollope's postal service, including his time spent on rail and horseback traveling the rural mail routes. I argue that what

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[30] Laurie Langbauer claims that, "By the 1850s … it seemed that, except for George Eliot, almost every (supposedly) major English novelist—Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens…—had tried his or her hand at the series" (*Novels of Everyday Life*, 3). The hesitations here are revealing: "seemed," "almost," and "supposedly" belie her claim that major novelists are associated with this genre. As I argue, the importance of the sequence novel—or "series fiction" as Langbauer calls it—lies precisely in its poor fit with the usual topics of the Victorian novel.

makes Trollope's novel sequence different from other novels of the period is that Trollope's ecological writing focuses on recent human developments as opposed to those of the natural world. That is, Trollope's novel sequence describes the development of the modern environmentalization of the world alongside the development of modern organizations.As these evocations of the environmentalization of the world begin to indicate, in this chapter I want to re-describe Trollope's Barsetshire sequence as an ecology of administrative and bureaucratic organizations, of systems as environments. What I mean by the term "ecology" may not at first be clear, and it is perhaps less so when coupled with the term the decidedly unnatural terms "administrative and bureaucratic organizations."[31] It is most certainly not connected with recent discussions about eco-poetics and eco-criticism, the so-called "environmentalist" strain of literary criticism, even if Trollope's endless descriptions of walks, fox-hunting, hedge maintenance, drainage, and horse riding might make him the poster-child for the Victorian great

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[31] To add to this confusion is the penchant, especially in the field of media theory after Marshall McLuhan, to describe media in terms of "media ecology." Here is what the Media Ecology Association's first newsletter offers as a definition and description of media ecology: "What is media ecology? It is the study of media environments, the idea that technology and techniques, modes of information, and codes of communication play a leading role in human affairs. Media ecology is the Toronto School, and the New York School. It is technological determinism, hard and soft, and technological evolution. It is media logic, medium theory, mediology. It is McLuhan Studies, orality-literacy studies, American cultural studies. It is grammar and rhetoric, semiotics and systems theory, the history and the philosophy of technology. It is the postindustrial and the postmodern, and the preliterate and prehistoric. Media ecology is all of these things, and quite a bit more." Although highly suggestive, impressionistic (and Futuristic?), one does not come away with a clearer understanding of either media or ecology. More recently, Timothy Morton has argued that the idea of nature itself has caused current ecological crisis, and *not* the development of technology. The limitation of this arguments is that it fails to make distinctions between "environments" and "the environment." A system can be an environment for other subsystems. Part of what goes unrecognized in some recent general ecological thinking is exactly what constitutes an environment, and this study will take seriously recursive phrasing like ecology of ecologies. The other subtle error in general ecological thinking is to separate out, say media ecology, from any larger "natural" ecology. This is the debunking of the idea of nature, without substituting anything for it, as if media ecology stands separate and apart from all other environments. See Morton, Timothy. *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2007.

outdoors.[32] Instead, what I mean to describe under the umbrella of this term are interaction patterns between characters and environments, the organizations and environments that house them, and the media forms that facilitate and sometimes hinder their linking. I mean also to describe the links between organizations and other "organizational ecologies" such as the family, class, and religion. It is a twentieth century development to describe the family as either/both an organization and/or an ecology, and so it may seem anachronistic to say that Trollope describes families as "ecologies." But how else should we describe the medium of family relations that shapes and directs the social growth of an individual?

Trollope's sequence is also situated squarely in the midst of debates about reform. Trollope's characters are nostalgic for an unreformed world, and Trollope himself objected strongly to administrative reform in the form of civil service examinations. I will look at this topic in more detail below, but I want to suggest here that perhaps Trollope's objection to civil service examinations stems partly from his "gradualism." I would like to re-describe this term as an early version of emergence. I argue that the world Trollope describes is not one of rational organization, but one of emergent order: of interaction and communication patterns that necessitate their doubling, their recording, their further communication and intensification. On this view, Trollope is perhaps the great novelist of emergence in the 19th century. Whereas for someone like Charles Dickens—whose novels also famously describe emergence as it relates to problems of epistemology (in the form of coincidence)—emergence is partly providential and partly the effect of new systems of transport and the standardization of time, for Trollope there is a gradual accumulation of irritations and interactions that give rise to ongoing contemporary

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[32] According to Jackson Trotter, there is very little work connecting fox hunting to "English social order." Trotter, Jackson. "Foxhunting and the English Social Order in Trollope's the American Senator." *Studies in the Novel* 24, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 227-41.

social activity.[33] Here are some concrete examples: the daily articles about his "sinecure" in *The Jupiter*, the newspaper at the center of *The Warden*, force Septimus Harding to resign his position; Adolphus Crosbie's inconstancy, his jilting of Lily Dale, begins to threaten his career and he suffers a slow decline; Josiah Crawley nearly goes mad as bit by bit he comes to doubt his memory of how he came into possession of an apparently stolen cheque. Or, an example from real life: Trollope argues in *An Autobiography* and elsewhere that the fitness of a candidate for the civil service emerges from the candidate's time in service, from his constant testing. As is well known, Trollope lived this example.

These are somewhat familiar notions for Trollope readers. But they are linked and subordinated to what I take to be the guiding logic of Trollope's first sequence of novels. An analysis such as this one, which is concerned with what I call post-rationalist descriptions of bureaucracy may sound odd to readers of Trollope. It will no doubt short-circuit many of the usual ways of describing and thinking about Trollope; in large part this is the case because rationalist accounts of bureaucracy do not describe the organizations that we find in the real world or in novels (more on this below). In the first part of this chapter, I will re-describe Trollope's first sequence of novels with an eye to its interest in social systems. In the rest of the chapter, I trace the consequences of this systems thinking. More broadly, and as I have already stated above, I seek to understand the novel sequence in terms of its ecologies of organization(s). In the 1980s and 1990s, Gillian Beer and George Levine, among others, were unfolding the overlapping layers of fictional form and the forms of the organization of the living in the Victorian novel. In contrast to that trend, I want to suggest at the outset that this study will test

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[33] Nicholas Dames also comments on the "gradualism" of Trollope. The reason for the shift in terminology here is simple: what we call Trollope's gradualism more resembles a "tipping point." That is, "gradualism" seems to indicate nothing more than a series of adjustments. But in Trollope, irritations result in both adjustments, and then a marked shift in the narrative.

out the links between Trollope's sequence novels, administrative reform and writing about environments. Trollope's novel sequence represents something like a test case of the kinds of environmental pressures on and within organizations articulated most forcefully by Darwin, but as is well known Trollope claimed to know nothing about Darwin's work. That is, against Levine, Trollope might be what natural history writing looks like if it is shifted onto a different track. This helps us to answer the question, why Barsetshire? Why such a sprawling environment, why such a sprawling institution as the Church, and why does this sequence go on at such length? In my reading, Barsetshire is "an ecology of systems with no supersystem coordinating them all."[34] When one begins to attend to the ecology of its organizations, the environments of Church and home, one begins to see that the Barsetshire sequence is much more attuned to the interactions of systems than it might at first appear. For these reasons, this chapter lays the groundwork for this dissertation.

One objection that Trollope scholars might raise here at the outset is that Trollope himself claims that his first sequence does not focus on the professional work of the clergy. But I think we should be skeptical of this claim; it is misleading. There is far more here of bureaucratic work than Trollope would lead us to believe, even if its presence is only registered in metaphors, in interactions and meetings, in environment and communication, or in the domestic sphere as parties and polite conversation. The student of Trollope's work will no doubt be able to recall instances of work explicitly invading the narrative and these are rare. But if one doubts for a moment that even domestic social gatherings are about professional matters, one only need recall examples like the ones below from *Barchester Towers*. Following a two-month absence in London, the Proudies decide to have a reception and invite all of the local clergy and gentry to a reception at the Bishop's palace. After having received invitations to the Proudies' reception,

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[34] Baecker, Dirk. "The Form of the Firm." *Organization* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 2006 2006): 118.

there arose considerable agitation among the Grantlyites [i.e. the Archdeacon, the dean and chapter] whether or no they would attend the episcopal bidding. The first feeling with them all was to send the briefest excuses both for themselves and their wives and daughters. But by degrees policy prevailed over passion. The archdeacon perceived that he would be making a false step if he allowed the cathedral clergy to give the bishop just ground of umbrage. They all met in conclave, and agreed to go. (*Barchester Towers*, Ch. 10)

There is no "outside" of work here; or, rather, there is no such thing as a separation of spheres, and Mrs. Proudie—the novel's "other" bishop—famously proves that. Accordingly, the work of arranging the reception seems indistinguishable from other duties: regarding its organization and planning, we learn that it is Mr. Slope, the Bishop's chaplain, who is "managing everything" (*Barchester Towers*, Ch. 10). "Everything" here means both the party and his professional duties, since in addition to the planning for the reception, Slope, in the Bishop's absence,

preached once or twice in a distant church in the suburbs of the city, but made no allusion to the cathedral service. He commenced the establishment of two 'Bishop's Barchester Sabbath-day Schools', gave notice of a proposed 'Bishop's Barchester Young Men's Sabbath Evening Lecture Room' – and wrote three or four letters to the manager of the Barchester branch railway, informing him how anxious the bishop was that the Sunday trains should be discontinued. (*Barchester Towers*, Ch. 10)

A chaplain, clerk, and private secretary: Slope's religious duties begin look like those of all the other civil service bureaucrats who handle the correspondence. The invitations are addressed from London where the Bishop has retreated to avoid the fallout from Slope's ill-advised sermon

at the Cathedral, on the pretense that his absence from London would be "inconvenient to the government." The invitations are addressed and relayed in a "huge brown paper parcel" to Slope for distribution. This is not merely the rerouting of social life through the organizational channels of the Church; rather, as the reception itself shows, the channels flow both ways.

If Trollope was fond of declaring a party a "bore" in his novels, the guest list of Mrs Proudie's reception begins to hint at why. Alongside the roster of the Barchester diocese are all five of its country doctors, attorneys, a chancellor from Oxford, an apothecary, and other professional types. Then there is this scene from the party itself:

> Dr Proudie tripped out into the adjoining room, in which were congregated a crowd of Grantlyite clergymen, among whom the archdeacon was standing pre-eminent, while the old dean was sitting nearly buried in a huge armchair by the fireplace. The bishop was very anxious to be gracious, and, if possible, to diminish the bitterness which his chaplain had occasioned. Let Mr Slope do the *fortiter in re*, he himself would pour in the *suaviter in modo*. (*Barchester Towers*, Ch. 10)

And what follows is a discussion of ecclesiastical and Parliamentary reform at Oxford Univeristy. But even in the maintenance of gentleness (with its indications of gentility)—this *suaviter in modo*—we recognize how civility begins to look like the performance of work. If Christian charity here (and everywhere in Trollope) takes a social form, it is because its connection to the labor involved in maintaining professional relationships indicates how the "work" of the Church is everywhere. This logic takes its most perverse form in Slope's courtship of Eleanor Bold, in which the open position of Warden of Hiram's Hospital is exploited by Slope to win Eleanor's hand.

In their positing of a world replete with institutions and their work, Trollope's novels are one of the most forceful mid-Victorian recapitulations of the idea that there are systems.[35] The entire sequence is molded by organizations large and small and by bureaucratic and administrative interventions into everyday life. It is in this sense that Laurie Langbauer has it partly right: yes, sequence novels record the "dailyness" of everyday life. But to stop there would be too one-sided an analysis of the sequence novel. Everywhere in its pages such dailyness is represented alongside the institutions that administer the routine separation of and connections between home and office. These routine separations, what other scholars have termed the "separate spheres" of Victorian fiction, are made possible by the way systems maintain their separation and sequestration through the decisions that make them up. In the sections that follow, my analysis will address itself to scale of different orders of magnitude in the narrative(s). The first section will discuss the "micro" scale, what decisions look like, how decisions "make up" an organization, and how this line of analysis can be turned into a critique of rationalist accounts of organization. I will then turn my attention to the types of people who make decisions in Trollope's novels, the clergy, clerks, civil servants, and gentlemen who populate his version of the Church. And, finally I will look to the organizations and environments that house both decisions and people, arguing that the shape of an environment is related to the types of interaction and decision processing that are possible within it. Accordingly, in my discussion of environments and organizations, it will be important to relate these topics to the media-driven spatial and temporal logic of Trollope's Post Office. In the final section, I will examine the way that systems maintain asymmetries between themselves and their environments. This line of argument is important because it shows us how to connect organizations (which function as

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[35] Luhmann's *Social Systems* begins with the observation that "there are systems." Luhmann, Niklas. *Social Systems*. Translated by John Bednarz with Dirk Baecker. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995.

environments for characters) to even larger social and "natural" environments.

Decisions, or Transforming Contingency

To begin with, the Barsetshire sequence begins with a decision. Or, more precisely, *The Warden*, the novel that inaugurates the sequence, starts with a momentary hesitation followed by what appears to be a rational and calculated decision: "The Rev. Septimus Harding was, a few years since, a beneficed clergyman residing in the cathedral town of —; let us call it Barchester. Were we to name Wells or Salisbury, Exeter, Hereford, or Gloucester, it might be presumed that something personal was intended…" (1). Faced with so many alternatives, opting here for the certainty of a name—even an entirely fictional one—seemingly goes against the grain of Trollope's usual mode, his fiction's characteristic ambivalence. But those other real-world names specifically excluded by the name Barchester still somehow manage to be present with and referred to by it.[36] That is, Barchester now means not only the town in the fictional county of Barsetshire, but also "Wells or Salisbury, Exeter, Hereford, or Gloucester." This now freighted and paradoxically more ambivalent name is not merely another instance of post-structuralism before the letter, a sign of the condition of meaning in the province of the written—the abyssal business-as-usual of ambiguity in language and fiction—to which literary scholars have become accustomed since the New Critics. It is, as I will show, business-as-usual for the sequence novels of the 1850s to 1880s, in that it instances the secondary logic of organization that drives and sustains the organizations that in turn drive and sustain these sequence novels.

Despite, then, what appears to be an innocuous, if explicit, hesitation about what to call the cathedral town on which *The Warden* will be centered, that hesitation is immediately gotten

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[36] Indeed, several commentators on the novel have decided that the name Barchester should be read as Salisbury, but also Winchester and Exeter.

over and translated into the finality of a decision. What comes next appears to explain the rationale of the choice. It is important, however, not to overlook the retroactive attribution of intention: the constraints and considerations that drove the decision are only identified after the decision is made (that is, when it is already irrevocable). This sequence of events, from hesitation to sudden decisiveness to the identification of intentions (or causes) is explained in terms of problems of reference and problems of meaning: as soon as the horizon of possibilities is reduced (choosing Barchester instead of one from the number of all those alternatives), the novel becomes open to interpretation. We need to attend to the paradoxicality of this point: because it is unambiguous, any other name (say Salisbury) provides for more interpretive options. Any name for this town that corresponds to a real-world alternative means that what appears to be a simply fictional and thereby ambiguous account, actually means "something personal" and singular: its intended meaning and the attendant horizon of probabilities expands. The problem that the decision has introduced here is that it has, in the words of Niklas Luhmann, transformed the contingency of before into the contingency of after. Everything has been decided but nothing has changed.

This little scene of decision processing and the consequences that will follow from it are my topics here. For, this novel and the ones that follow—in sequence—repeatedly stage dilemmas, decision-making and decision-processing not only as a dramatization of dealing with contingency in modern life, but also as the modern condition of living and working in—and through—different forms of organization. This mode of thinking—about decisions and their consequences, about systems, organizations and their horizons—enters directly into the idiom of Trollope's fiction. It is one reason why his novels are populated by larger-scale decision processing organizations and institutions like the Church of England. But even in its descriptions

of more intimate (face-to-face) interactions, decision processing is copied into those moral and social dilemmas for which Trollope's fiction is known and celebrated. That is, Trollope's sequence novels stage the processes through which decision translates into the social forms of professional organizations and family. What Trollope's sequence novels show us is that such minor decisions propagate into enormous and far-reaching consequences.*The Warden* stands out in the Barsetshire sequence because, in addition to the decision that inaugurates it, it foregrounds a historical moment as the origin of the novel's events. The historical movement of the first chapter of *The Warden* oscillates between present and past. These two terms, the terms under which much of the high-cultural life of the Victorian era was conducted, translate roughly as "life" and "the context for life." After having settled on the name Barchester, *The Warden* turns its attention to Harding's past, and to the mid-sixteenth-century beginnings of the hospital he oversees as Warden. The historical context for the novel's main action, the lawsuit against the Church, concerns the inequitable dispensation of funds from the estate of John Hiram to infirm and elderly inmates of Hiram's Hospital. These embedded and mutually imbricated rituals of contextualization are what distinguish the sequence novel as a genre. (This is why, for instance, the uncertain state of the hospital's stewardship and Harding's employment will remain a topic or theme throughout the sequence, even as Harding himself becomes less central.)

In its 400-year sweep, the historicizing (and chronicling) impulse that drives *The Warden*'s opening chapter (and indeed the entire sequence) models the mid- to late-Victorian concern with historiography and history. In the scholarship on its literature and culture, the Victorian era has often been called the "age of reform," the "age of progress," "the age of faith and doubt," even "the age of the Spirit of the Age,"—this last phrase appropriately translates all the others as something like "the age of the age of ages." (That is, the Victorian period is

amenable to periodization because it is a period of self-periodization.) As Trollope's sequence novels attest, this is an age of (at least) two ages happening in parallel, one modernizing and one traditional*izing*. It is an age of reflexive social evolution which appears alongside a traditional culture that refuses both reflexivity and evolution. By 1850, Victorian England is beginning to traditionalize reflexively, to think of its traditions as disappearing and therefore in need of protection. This is one reason that John Bold and the novel's legal system are so anxious to recover the original intention of Hiram's will: the characters of the novel hope to set the world to rights by appealing to history. But if the Warden's sinecure position means that he receives the lion's share of the distribution of funds, the resolution of this problem by Parliamentary fiat in *Barchester Towers* cannot mean that the world is restored to some earlier state of innocence and virtue. Their anxiety about money, wills, and intentions, not to mention the solution imposed on the Church (the religious system) by the political system shows that these characters inhabit a world already irrevocably different from its past. With these thoughts in mind we can see that *The Warden* does in small scale what British culture was beginning to do on a large scale.

I want to suggest then that in its momentary hesitation, the decision recorded in the novel's opening sentences dramatize for us the organizational impulse that drives and sustains and organizes organizations. And it also shows us how that impulse contextualizes its narrative of events. Its contexts derive from and are made possible by its decisions. This impulse will also, perhaps not surprisingly, drive and sustain and organize the novel sequence. That the novel inaugurates itself in this way—by hesitating on a number of alternatives, then deciding on one of them, then explaining that decision after the fact—means that the novel provides its own context for itself, its own history. In this way, this novel, like the social world of which it is also a part, stages in miniature the process by which society generates itself from itself.

This is what Karl Weick means when he says that much of what organizations do "consists of reconstructing plausible histories after-the-fact to explain where they are now, even though no such history actually got them to precisely this place."[37] (*Social Psychology of Organizing*, 5). Although we might be tempted to see the substitution of a fictional name for a real one as a moment of decontextualization, an erasure of the novel's reference to the real world, or a reinforcing of the boundary between real world and fictional one, it is in fact the self-establishment of context, an auto-contextualization in that the decision contextualizes and conditions all decisions that follow. What the novel copies into itself here is the logic of organization which is also its subject, the logic of system formation as it relates to organizing.

Indeed, it is in the context of Trollope's novels that we begin to encounter the limitations of Weber's theorization of bureaucracy as rational. Weber's account of the charismatic leader explains very little about the church administration in Barchester, not least because the organization of the Barchester diocese is not rational. The internecine "merry war" points to its highly irrational, highly personal institutional politics. In fact, this is the type of organization that often confounds organization theorists: it is contradictory, managers and workers work against each other, against the goals of the organization, and even against their own interests. It is for these reasons that we need a theory of organization like the one laid out by systems theorist Niklas Luhmann, whose research on the topic seeks "an organization concept devoid of rationality."[38] His research indicates that organizations are made up of nothing but decisions. Decision is the process of transforming the contingency of before into the contingency of after, and that this fundamental process of transformation is at the core of what organizations do. For

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[37] Weick, Karl E. *The Social Psychology of Organizing. Topics in Social Psychology*. 2d ed. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979, p. 5.

[38] Luhmann, "Organization," p. 31.

Luhmann, "organized social systems can be understood as systems made up of decisions, and capable of completing the decisions that make them up, through the decisions that make them up" (32). A characterization in this vein of the Church of England as it is represented in the novels should feel familiar to readers of the sequence: the Church is made up of decisions and decision processing. This is why *Barchester Towers*, for example, spends its first several chapters on the uncertainty around the name of the new bishop. Luhmann's analysis shows us that the contingency that makes up organizations, of the before and after, is not mitigated by decisions but is rather a structural condition of organization itself.

This is why decisions carry with them, like the example about the name of Barchester above, not only the finality and authority of the decision itself but also the possibility of other ways of being, of the decision's irreducible and irremediable contingency. As much of the recent literature on this topic demonstrates, this kind of contingency is a structural condition of administrative decision processing and forms of professional organization. Dominated as they are by depictions and descriptions of such organizations, this condition lends to the entire Barsetshire sequence the sense that it might have been otherwise.[39] Although I am primarily concerned here with contingency as the province of organizations and their decisions, it is worth remarking that it is also the ground zero of domestic affairs as well. After all, as the repeatedly spurned John Eames remarks to Lily Dale, "one word often does make a change": if only the name "Eleanor" had been more present to the mind of John Bold before initiating his lawsuit against the Church, or if Archdeacon Grantly had been the cleric named Bishop of Barchester, or if Mark Robarts had more firmly said "no" instead of "yes," or, to return to the example that

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[39] ßThis notion complicates what has long been associated with Trollope: his capturing of a world gone by. As Paul Fussell has written, Trollope's novels were popular during World War II because they "offered an oasis of reasonableness and normality, a place one could crawl into for a few moments' respite from the sights, sounds and smells of the twentieth century"

heads this list, if only Lily would say "yes" to John Eames. Instead, she pointedly writes two words in her diary, "old maid," and the novel is at pains to record the finality of her decision. This "otherwise" is, not surprisingly, the logic that guides and shapes the final novel in the sequence, *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, a novel that may be described as the account of an unaccountable sum of money that is cleared up by one word. When a cheque for £20 is reported lost and is subsequently changed by Reverend Josiah Crawley, poor curate of Hogglestock, he is suspected of having stolen the cheque and is held to account for how it came into his possession. The unaccountable sum has, already at the novel's outset, been immediately translated into legal inquiries, assize and church tribunals, meetings, decisions, letters, and papers; in short, in the administrative world of Trollope's Barsetshire sequence, the misaddressed cheque is translated into the media and forms of organization and its communications. This novel takes up decision processing not only by representing the work of the organizational forms charged with deciding the guilt or innocence of the Crawley, but also by endlessly registering the ubiquitous (in Trollope) channels of gossip and hearsay.[40] On this view, we can describe *The Last Chronicle of Barset* as the story of an accounting problem that allows for the telling of the story of the organizational procedures and protocols for accounting for it.

In a novel that features a trip to "the Holy Land" and its shadowing, the Barchester Assizes and its ecclesiastical double (more on this in a moment), the novel's "two Bishops" in the figures of Mr. and Mrs. Proudie, this is a world that presupposes the necessity of such doublings, of official and contingent forms that presume their observation as their "backup." Call this "modernity v1.5": poised between the first dawn of modernity (date it how you will but

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[40] Trollope's narrative style may be characterized by the heavy use of free indirect discourse. But as I will argue below in Chapter 3, Trollope's style can be understood as the formalization of the possibilities for consensus and its usually invisible (that is, uncommunicated) other, what Jacques Ranciere has called "dissensus."

sometime after, say, 1600 for England), and what scholars have come to call "the second modernity" of the mid- to late-twentieth century, these are the nineteenth-century precursors of the "official world"—what scholars have come to label reflexive modernity, which "consists in itself plus its registration."[41] This is one way that organizations preserve, if not mitigate, their contingent state of affairs. And if novels and organizations are both social forms that manufacture intimacy and organization, then this redoubling is how the novel buttresses itself against this contingency as well. This is the meaning of the novel's two "courts," the assize court and the ecclesiastical Court of Arches, both of which are preceded by strikingly similar preliminary hearings.

But they do not merely double one another, they overlap both ideologically and structurally, as Mark Robarts holds a position on both councils: "And there was a double interest attached to the commission in the parish of Framley by the fact that Mr Robarts, the vicar, had been invited by Dr Tempest to be one of the clergymen who were to assist in making the inquiry" (*The Last Chronicle of Barset*, Ch. 50). But, of course, this administrative doubling does not simply represent, in the terms proposed in the novel, Crawley's "double prosecution" (*The Last Chronicle of Barset*, Ch. 54). Rather, this is what official (office) work looks like to the sequence novel: decisions about and observations of other people's decisions and observations make up the bulk of their work. The clerical commission copies the outcome of the magistrates' meeting into itself as its own decision; it has recorded a decision to wait for the decision of the other. That both tribunals decide different things—the magistrates decide to have Crawley "committed" (indicted in US English), the clerical commission to do nothing until the assize court has ruled on his guilt—is not as important as the fact that one organization copies the work

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[41] Seltzer, Mark. "The Official World." Critical Inquiry 37, no. 4 (2011): 724-53.

of another as its own work. Its mission—and it is important to note that all of this happens at the first meeting of the ecclesiastical commission—appears to be nothing more than instituting a whole set of procedures for observing the decisions of other organizations.

Insofar as the novels of the Barsetshire sequence are the stories of men of letters, of people of the book, what often passes for drama is this kind of professional labor and its observation. This state of affairs is not surprising when we look at how these novels describe modern forms of work. In *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, in one scene between the Reverend Josiah Crawley and Mr Thumble, the Bishop's messenger and appointed replacement for Crawley, Thumble delivers a letter from the Bishop, and then watches as Crawley composes a reply. Bishop Proudie sits for days over a letter of resignation that remains unwritten, and his wife

> …found him on this occasion sitting at his desk with papers before him, with a pen in his hand; and she could see at a glance that nothing had been written on the paper. What would she have thought had she known that when he placed the sheet before him he was proposing to consult the archbishop as to the propriety of his resignation! He had not, however, progressed so far as to write even the date of his letter. (*The Last Chronicle of Barset*, Ch. 66)

A major event early in *Barchester Towers* is Slope's sermon, and the novel is at pains to record the sermon's observation by the cathedral's other clerics, their reactions to it, and their discussion of it at a meeting afterward. Perhaps this form of observation is what Trollope means when he claims that

> I have written much of clergymen, but in doing so I have endeavoured to portray them as they bear on our social life rather than to describe the mode and working

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of their professional careers. Had I done the latter I could hardly have steered

clear of subjects on which it has not been my intention to pronounce an opinion,

and I should either have laden my fiction with sermons or I should have degraded

my sermons into fiction. (*Framley Parsonage*, Ch. 42)

This is to say that by the 1850s, there is no form of professional work apart from "social life."

This is in part because this is a society of redoubled operations, of work that radiates out from

the desk (or pulpit) into the world, and which becomes a topic of conversation in society

everywhere.

We can see this, for instance, in *Doctor Thorne*, in which the medical professionalism of

Dr. Thorne becomes a theme among the country doctors when he sets up shop in Greshamsbury.

Thorne's great sin among his medical brethren is posting a sign with his fees spelled out, not to

mention ostentatiously mixing his own medicines in plain view (typically an apothecary's job

and beneath the distinction of a doctor). But more to the point here, much of his medical work is

communication itself: Lady Arabella does not suffer from a disease, but rather "the *complaint* of

which the Lady Arabella was afraid, was cancer," and her discussions with the doctor are

described as "medical *secrets*" (Ch. 14, emphasis added). If Trollope is guilty of the sin of, as

James argued in his review of *Can You Forgive Her*, writing novels that consist in nothing but

"one thousand pages of small talk," it is because professional work and participation in polite

society look very much alike.[42] That is, what we see is the professionalization of talk inside all

this talk of professionalization.

This is not to say that the administrative and organizational forms that convene

themselves here do so only in order to reinforce small talk, paperwork or their own operations.

That is part of it. Rather, what they describe in miniature is how the novel's organizations

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[42] See James's review above.

operate in the realm of the decidable: that is, administrative organizations, like all social systems, find their meaning in processing the difference between the actual and the possible. Guilty or innocent? The question is what justice looks like in a systematizing world: a world of decidable propositions looked into by official inquiries generating questions, answers and reports. And it is what *Barchester Towers* looks like when the dean and chapter decide not to allow Slope access to the pulpit again; or what *Framley Parsonage* looks like when Mark Robarts feels guilty for deciding to accept an invitation to stay with the Duke of Omnium and deciding again to hide that fact from his patron, Lady Lufton; or what *The Small House at Allington* looks like "'if you … learn that the word Admiralty begins with A and not with S" and file letters accordingly. Decisions decide; and organizations process those decisions, translating them into the organizational forms that populate these novels.[43]

John Eames' courting of Lily Dale in both *The Small House at Allington* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* is one of the domestic versions of decision processing in the novel sequence. We are familiar by now with some of the more obviously institutional forms of decision processing in the Barsetshire sequence, but less obvious is its persistent migration from the secretary desk to the divan and dining room, and everywhere in Trollope we see love and courtship and even family life itself as decisions recast into the idiom of domesticity.[44] This is why Trollope need not spend much time on professional work itself. In one scene, Mrs Crawley is present at a discussion between her husband and the Bishop's appointed messenger. While Crawley composes a reply to the Bishop's letter, Thumble and Mrs. Crawley briefly discuss "certified" teachers, after which Mrs Crawley leaves the room. It is as if, at the discussion of

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[43] The phrase "decisions decide" is from Luhmann, "Organization."

[44] The divan that Senora Neroni reclines on and invites the clergymen of Barchester to share with her is one persistent example of this phenomenon.

teaching and certification, what we observe when she leaves the room is the transformation of the space from home to office.

But as if to emphasize the bidrectionality of the channel, of the transitiveness of home and office, in *The Small House at Allington*, exactly the reverse happens and we have two career civil servants named "Kissing" and "Love." As these terms recall romance and marriage, we call to mind another trope of the domestic novel that Trollope puts alongside its organizational counterpart: women saying "yes" or "no" to offers of marriage. But these "decisions" operate differently than decisions in an organization, in that feminine refusals are merely delayed decisions (affirmations). Two civil servants named Kissing and Love are what intimacy looks like when it is turned inside out, or turned out of the home. It is not, as Weber would have it, administration and bureaucracy purified and cleansed of "love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation," as I have quoted in the epigraph above. Rather, Kissing and Love, characters that formerly determined what the inside of domesticity looked like, now personified in professional roles, battle over the meaning of categorization as work, over what the civil service is and does. This is another way of saying that novels about organization share a problem with organizations: namely, how to organize the human relationships that are predicated on the decisions that make them up. In the next section, we will see how the civil servant and gentlemen are related to decisions and their processing.

Clerks and Clerics, Gentlemen and Civil Servants

"It is no accident," writes Robin Gilmour in *The Idea of the Gentleman*, "that most of the famous Victorian definitions of the gentleman occur in the 1850s and the early 1860s, for this is the period when the spirit of middle-class reform was making its challenge felt within the aristocratic framework of English institutions" (92). In part, this reforming tendency is registered

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in a marked shift at about this time in the definitions of civil servant and gentleman, when they become partly overlapping concepts. In the next few pages I will retrace how it came to be that way. At the same time, however, I want to indicate points of contact between the gentleman/civil servant and the larger historical and evolutionary contours of organization that Trollope's first novel sequence describes. In doing so, I will be concerned with the way that the concepts of the gentleman and civil servant intertwine with the development of organizations.

In what follows, then, it will be important to re-describe Trollope's Barsetshire sequence in terms of his ideas about gentlemen in general but also as they relate in particular to the Northcote-Trevelyan report. This report proposed competitive examinations for entry into the civil service but its real importance lies in the links it retraces between middle-class reform and organizational reform. I concede that this is not exactly new ground for a study of Trollope, but it is necessary to re-examine these connections as I argue that competitive examinations have not been correctly understood either in relation to this sequence, or to Trollope's oeuvre as a whole. I want to suggest that in the idiom of civil service reform, in Trollope's novels, and indeed in what I am calling organizational culture at large, examinations are a way of transforming an individual's history into a decision by an organization, a referendum on that individual's past: his upbringing, family, and education. But the examination, as a decision on a candidate's fitness for service, appears to be a decision made by the test taker himself, before he even takes the examination. And this is my point here: examinations are decisions made by organizations recast into the idiom of a bildung. That is, examinations turn candidates into decidable propositions (fit/unfit for service) decided by candidates themselves. The consequences of this fact are far reaching, because through it organizations become the decision processing units that abide by and elaborate on decisions encoded in examinations.

What was most troubling for Trollope in all of this is what civil service examinations signify about the relationship between institutions. For Trollope, at least, examinations represent the uncontained spread of a troubling new development: training for institutional (civil) service inside another institution (university). Put in this way, this begins to look like the *mise en abîme* of modern institutional life—what Erving Goffmann identified as the special form of American "indoor social life"—and Trollope's argument is that only service itself can indicate whether or not someone is a fit candidate for service.[45] As Trollope claimed, "There are places in life which can hardly be well filled except by 'Gentlemen.'" Although by "life" Trollope means "office," we may understand that there is something like a botanical analogy for the gentry at the center of his understanding: the hardy stock of the Anglo-Saxon gentry, connected to the land and indeed arising from it, rises equally well from any soil, once transplanted.

This inherent hardiness cannot be revealed by *an* examination, *viva voce* or otherwise, because gentility, in order to prove itself as gentility, must be subject to constant testing. This is how one knows the difference, say, between Frank Gresham and Mr Moffat, or between Adolphus Crosbie and John Eames. A single sitting of a civil service exam cannot show candidates to be gentlemen; only the "real life" exams of Trollope's fiction can do that. The problem is that civil service examinations, because they re-describe an individual's performance in terms of pedagogical goals, emphasize the temporal disjunction between the time before the examination and the time after it. That is, they shorten the time of examining, unhinge it from the candidate's *bildung*, and institute the examination as a temporal break: before the examination one was a baccalaureate and then somewhat mysteriously one became a civil servant. Because of these misplaced emphases, Trollope dismisses the position espoused by advocates of

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[45] Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York N.Y.: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1990.p. 244.

examinations, namely that successful examinees would spring fully-formed into the service, their examination indicating that they have developed all of the skills needed for service.

Trollope, by contrast, wants to shift the time of development to service, to recast it as a *bildung*, or rather to suggest that with gentlemen, there is no discontinuity: civil service is merely the continuity of the examination of one's gentility. (This is not surprising since Trollope himself lived this narrative. *An Autobiography'*s account of Trollope's examination at the Post Office and his subsequent career provides the main justification for his argument against examinations. As is well known, Trollope succeeded in service despite a poor showing at his initial examination and managed to become a generally well-remembered footnote in the history of the modernization of the Post Office.) In Trollope's world, the problem that examinations are supposed to help solve—the evils of patronage—can be dealt with by other means. That is because, for Trollope at least, English society already provides mechanisms for dealing with this kind of problem.

This is nowhere more clear than in the manifold assessments that populate the pages of Trollope's Barsetshire sequence: they take the form of unremitting sorting-out of the gentlemen from those who are not, the difficulties of attaining professional distinction, endless moral dilemmas and the fine discriminations they express, even the problems of the redistribution of wealth from the common stock to the gentry. The shameless self-interest of those who are gentlemen in appearance only (such as Slope, Moffat, Crosbie, etc.), are the doppelgangers of the gentleman; the Barsetshire sequence's moral universe selects for what we might begin to think of as the self-correcting gentleman. All of these assessments, tests and selections, describe a society made up almost entirely of self-comparisons, and of its reorganization through such self-comparison. Rank, class, orders, holy orders, organization, *taxis*: Trollope's Barsetshire world is

one vast taxonomy of organizational orderings, and despite protestations to the contrary, the sequence is much less a chronicle than a natural history of discriminations, of an order among things. Examinations, I posit, are the formalization of this self-describing and self-comparing logic, the evolutionary link between what the gentleman was and what the civil servant would become.

Of course Trollope never put the case in these terms or put it quite so explicitly. In fact, Trollope's real reticence about civil service examinations comes to light only in *An Autobiography*, published after his death. But if this reticence is left unstated by Trollope, it is because it goes without saying. And we know that it goes without saying, paradoxically enough, because this is Trollope's *modus operandi* in regard to the idea of the gentleman (and indeed to everything else he ever wrote). Trollope's *An Autobiography* makes this point:

> As what I now write will certainly never be read till I am dead, I may dare to say what no one now does dare to say in print,—though some of us whisper it occasionally into our friends' ears. There are places in life which can hardly be well filled except by "Gentlemen." The word is one the use of which almost subjects one to ignominy. If I say that a judge should be a gentleman, or a bishop, I am met with a scornful allusion to "Nature's Gentlemen." Were I to make such an assertion with reference to the House of Commons, nothing that I ever said again would receive the slightest attention. A man in public life could not do himself a greater injury than by saying in public that the commissions in the army or navy, or berths in the Civil Service, should be given exclusively to gentlemen. He would be defied to define the term,—and would fail should he attempt to do so. But he would know what he meant, and so very probably would they who

defied him.

If the gentleman is so difficult to define, it is not just because it is a complex of ideas, but rather because it is a horizon of possibilities and expectations.[46] This is why both the popular and professional arguments regarding Crawley's having stolen the cheque describe the possibility in terms of probability and belief: "I can never bring myself to believe it, John,' said Mary Walker, the pretty daughter of Mr George Walker, attorney of Silverbridge" (*The Last Chronicle of Barset,* Ch. 1). If, as I have indicated in the introduction to this dissertation, the patronage system aims at converting social and familial relationships into professional ones, Trollope also wants to argue that some of the value of familial and social relationship transfers to the service. One knows what to expect from a gentleman because of his family, social ties, breeding, manners and morals, but of the merely university trained, or worse, "crammed," one can expect only uncertainty. That is, for Trollope, those identified by examinations as exemplary candidates are really nobodies substituting a mark for a name.

And yet, examinations as such—like the police—are nearly absent from the Barsetshire sequence, except perhaps in what D. A. Miller calls "the exotic space of metaphor."[47] In *Barchester Towers*, civil service examinations are invoked in jest when they are mentioned at all, and usually only in the context of domestic affairs. For instance, regarding the "Honourable George" de Courcy's drunken speech at the Thorne's *fête champêtre*, the narrator opines that one of two arrangements should certainly be made in these days:

> either let all speech-making on festive occasions be utterly tabooed and made as it
> were impossible; or else let those who are to exercise the privilege be first

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[46] Luhmann, Niklas. The Reality of the Mass Media. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000, p. 82, and Luhmann, Niklas. Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy. Cambridge: Polity, 1986, p. 24.

[47] Miller, 107.

subjected to a competing examination before the civil service examining commissioners. As it is now, the Honourable Georges do but little honour to our exertions in favour of British education. (*Barchester Towers,* Ch. 5).

Another example concerns the absolute necessity of Mr. Quiverfull's ascension to the position of Warden at Hiram's Hospital—because of "the fourteen" children whom he cannot feed on his present income: "As long as promotion cometh from any human source, whether north or south, east or west, will not such a claim as this hold good, in spite of all our examination tests, *detur digniori's*, and optimist tendencies?" (*Barchester Towers*, Ch. 43). For Trollope, the application of examinations to domestic concerns highlights the absurdity of examinations in the civil service. They are as incongruous at the desk as they are at the dining table.

But as I have already begun to suggest above, in the world established by Trollope's first sequence—which mirrors larger trends in Victorian fiction—gentlemen are constantly tested, given the opportunity to recapitulate their gentility. This is why Trollope's gentlemen insistently wander into error. In Trollope's Barsetshire Chronicle, the traps are legion and they arise because of a change in the nature of professional work. If Jonathan Grossman has it right, at about the same time that Jane Austen was publishing her novels, the professional class began to recognize the work involved in the production of leisure.[48] This is, of course, part of a larger shift in the meaning of work as over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries professional work comes to look like the production of leisure. As Grossman argues, in Austen's *Emma*, the "business as usual for Highbury's leisure class" is the maintenance of polite manners, which comes to look like "downright labour" to Mr. John Knightley, lawyer and brother of George Knightley of Donwell Abbey (143; 152).

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[48] Grossman, Jonathan H. "The Labor of the Leisured in Emma: Class, Manners, and Austen." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 54, no. 2 (1999): 143-64.

This is why, for instance, John Eames, in *Small House at Allington*, is suspected of secreting away a novel in the drawer of his desk when he is supposed to be engaged on company business; or Archdeacon Grantly in *Barchester Towers*, who on entering his study, "opened the paper case on which he was wont to compose his favourite sermons, and spread on it a fair sheet of paper and one partly written on," then locked himself in ostensibly to work, but in reality to read a "volume of Rabelais" (Ch. 8). This is a world in which the boundaries between labor and leisure are not entirely being erased, but one in which there is substantial transitiveness between both. If professional labor brings a new sense of leisure to the rising classes, it does so paradoxically because their work is no longer laborious, except in its tedium. As Trollope's novels seem to argue, only gentlemen are armed with the natures to handle the pressure of constant idle time that comes with a job like clerking. This type of professional idleness provides opportunities for the sequence's alternative to examinations: the endless series of professions on and elaborations of character through those traps that most plagued Trollope's hobbledehoys and even his younger married men. I am thinking here of John Eames, his friend Cradell, and the "designing" Amelia Roper, or Mark Robarts and Mr Sowerby whose debts nearly ruin Robarts's life and professional prospects. But the point not to be missed is that these traps that plague the young clerks exist so that true gentlemen can exercise their self-correcting ways.

If the traps are varied and ubiquitous, it is only to demonstrate that the kinds of dilemma faced by Trollope's clerks and parsons require an exceedingly sensitive moral compass, one trained to small variations and fine discriminations. And such self-correcting gentlemen, as one might expect, are the best subjects to lead Her Majesty's civil service. In *Framley Parsonage*, the worry is that Mark Robarts is in danger of becoming "a hunting parson, and rid[ing] with a happy mind among blasphemers and mocking devils" (Ch. 15). Of course, a "hunting parson" is

not fit to be a shepherd, and Lady Lufton finds it distasteful that "early in the winter [Robarts] had gone to Chaldicotes and to Gatherum Castle, consorting with gamblers, Whigs, atheists, men of loose pleasure, and Proudieites. That she had condoned; and now he was turning out a hunting parson on her hands" (*Framley Parsonage*, Ch. 14). Comparing Robarts to Crawley, who chastises Robarts for becoming a "hunting parson," is how one knows, for instance, that Crawley, despite his abject poverty, "worn shoes and a ragged shirt," is a gentleman (*Framley Parsonage*, Ch. 36). And through such self-comparison, Robarts learns to reform himself.

Crawley acts with a high-minded righteousness that does not obscure his former (and future) gentility. Accordingly, at the end of *Last Chronicle of Barset*, to show that Crawley has been fully rehabilitated—and that his wrongs have been 'redressed'—he dons a new suit of clothes: "Mr Crawley found himself to be the perplexed possessor of a black dress coat, in addition to the long frock, coming nearly to his feet, which was provided for his daily wear" (Ch. 83).[49] And to show that he is once more admitted to the order of the men of letters, to the people of the book, Archdeacon Grantly makes him the gift of a book of Bishop Grantly's (i.e. the Archdeacon's father's) sermons. This is not so much a case of "the clothes make the man," the nineteenth-century version of working stiff identified by and through his "suit," but rather that Crawley donning his very becoming uniform registers what self-correcting gentlemen actually look like, for here is a gentleman who fills out the form. Nor is it merely the Christianization of gentility. Crawley's re-inhabiting of the "habit" of established Church gentility reflects the process by which the concept of the gentleman itself was—from the late eighteenth century on—

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[49] Curious readers wishing to reconstruct the distant relationship between the "rehabilitation" and dress are directed to the OED etymologies for "Habilitate," "Ability," "Able," and "Habit."

becoming realized in the pages of novels and society alike as the middle class in person.[50]

As this and other novels of this period attest, the gentleman (and thus the middle class itself) was more and more coming to resemble professional men—clerks, civil servants—who were able to look and act the part. Robin Gilmour contends that "the modern gentleman is born in the pages of the *Spectator*, not explicitly formulated as such, but implied in its treatment of contemporary manners."[51] Not only that, but as he details in his book, the idea of the gentleman is progressively refined throughout the century in the fiction of Thackeray, Dickens and then Trollope, such that by century's end, "a liberal education at a reputable [Victorian] public school" became the *de facto* standard of gentility, and that "this had the effect of removing some of the ambiguities [in the definition of the term gentleman], but at the cost of standardising of the product…" (8).[52] As readers familiar with Trollope's work will recognize, the heirs of the *Spectator*'s modern gentleman are not only Trollope's country squires but the civil servants— born within the walls of modern institutions—who threaten to replace them. Accordingly, Trollope's sequence is in part populated by legions of new civil servants alongside generations of "the last old English gentlemen" (Gilmour, 34). For Gilmour as for Trollope, gentility is almost an environmental condition: Trollope's rural squirearchy lives in small houses, their smallness a sign not only of their diminished wealth, but also a mark of their Anglo-Saxon hardiness, their

[50] This formulation borrows the form of Mark Seltzer's notion of the serial killer as "the mass in person," where there maladies of over-identification and self-difference translate into serial violence. See Seltzer, Mark. "The Crime System." *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (2004): 557-83.

[51] Gilmour, Robin. *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*. London & Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1981, p. 27.

[52] We are familiar by now with scholarly accounts of the rise of the novel, especially as it relates to the rise (in parallel?) of attendant social processes. Unsurprisingly then, as Gilmour outlines, "historically the idea of the gentleman is bound up with the whole evolution of the modern novel of manners out of the courtesy book and the polite essay" (*The Idea of the Gentleman*, 9). The problem here, though, is that Gilmour makes it seem as if the development of the term gentleman is a conscious project of novelists and novels.

connection to the land. Many of these men, unmarried, husbands only in an etymological sense, are the social counterpoint to the new and university trained professional man.[53]

Along the lines, then of the shape that middle class reform would take—reform made possible by the industrialization that created masses of middle-classed people clamoring for the respectability that even a non-aristocratic term could provide—this late century institutionalization of the gentleman is as close as English society of the nineteenth century could come to a factory model of gentility.[54] In Trollope's work, the overriding anxiety is that the gentleman whose connection to the land, religion, or the professions, or those who formerly proliferated in the houses of country squires, would be replaced by the freshly-minted and scrupulously-examined civil-service bureaucrat.[55] This is why it is important that when Frank Gresham gets married and settles into his estate he can be replaced in the narrative structure by someone like John Eames, the "mere clerk" whose friendship and connection to Earl de Guest ensures his gentility (*The Small House at Allington*, Ch. 1). This is nowhere more obvious than in Trollope's attempts at defining the gentleman as I have indicated above, and in his assessments of the futility of civil service examinations on the model of Northcote-Trevelyan. As is well known, Trollope's oeuvre is preoccupied with gentility, but I want to point out here

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[53] The *OED*'s etymology for the word "husband" is instructive here: "Late Old English *húsbonda* , *-bunda* , < *hús* house + late Old English ? *bónda* , *bonda* , *bunda* , < Old Norse *bóndi* , peasant owning his own house and land, freeholder, franklin, yeoman; earlier *búandi* , *bóandi* , originally present participle of *búa* , *bóa* to dwell, have a household; but the Old English use answered immediately to Old Norse *húsbóndi* , a man of this rank in his capacity as head or master of the household."

[54] Mason, Philip. *The English Gentleman : The Rise and Fall of an Ideal*. 1st ed. New York: Morrow, 1982. Mason goes so far as to call the public schools "factories for gentleman" (13). See also for an elaboration of the term, chapter 12, "Factories for Gentlemen," pp. 161-174.

[55] See *The Idea of the Gentleman* where Gilmour remarks that "Trollope need not have feared that open competition in the Civil Service would lead to the exclusion of gentlemen; as Gladstone accurately predicted in 1854, the change would confer 'an immense superiority [upon] all those who may be called gentlemen by birth and training'", especially 92-94.

that—in the sequences especially—this deep suspicion of examinations reveals that his work should be characterized by its concern with the relationship of modern institutions to gentility.

For that reason, we should not forget that the established Church here is a decidedly modern version of the Church. Part of the reason we know that is because the professional work and organizational affiliations chronicled in the Barsetshire series troubles the usually sharp line dividing the professions of clerk and cleric. It does this by reviving a familial, and what's more important, an institutional, relationship between these terms. Under the *OED*'s etymology for clerk we find: "As the scholarship of the Middle Ages was practically limited to the clergy, and these performed all the writing, notarial, and secretarial work of the time, the name 'clerk' came to be equivalent to 'scholar', and specially applicable to a notary, secretary, recorder, accountant, or penman." This is one reason why, for instance, John Sutherland can claim of Trollope's clerics that they are "Civil Servants in dog collars."[56] And if, in the hands of Cardinal Newman the idea of the gentleman would become a kind of religion, the "religion of the gentleman," as Gilmour puts it, in Trollope's Barsetshire novels we can begin to see the outlines of a religion of the civil servant (90).[57] This is what Trollope means when he says that "[n]othing but perfection will suffice for such men as Sir Stafford Northcote…; and no scheme for the improvement of the civil service could hope for [his] aid, unless it were so contrived as to create a class of clerks who should be altogether angelic, if not absolutely divine."[58]

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[56] The term 'dog collar' is another name in British English for white collars worn by clergy in some religions. See *OED*, "dog collar," 2a. See also "Sequence Novel" in Sutherland.

[57] Mason is more circumspect in his assessment of the gentleman, writing that it was "almost a religion." See chapter 11 in *The English Gentleman*.

[58] Trollope, Anthony. "The Civil Service." Dublin University Magazine 46, no. 274 (Oct. 1855), p. 410. This article was published and republished by Trollope in various forms over the course of six years including, at one point, as a chapter to his 1858 novel, *The Three Clerks*.

It is important to recognize, however, that Trollope's ideal clergymen are not merely those university trained men who, like Slope, are sizars. University training, to be sure, was to be desired (though not necessary). It is, rather, that modern university training cannot make one a gentleman, as its certifications and credentials bear signs of their recentness, of their undeniable modernity. As we have already seen in the comparison between Slope and John Eames, whose relationship with Lord de Guest makes his career, when set against a testimonial from a tested and (testimonied) family connection, the university-stamped documentary evidences of gentility are not worth the paper they are printed on.

These are large concerns and in the next section, I want to explore the connections between these ideas about gentlemen as civil servants and the environments that house them. Trollope's postal career will be the main focus in the first part because it is one profession that explicitly unites a modern form of reflexive labor and its environment. Following that, I will analyze the relationship between reflexive labor and the types of processing available to civil servants. As I begin to expand upon these notions, I will describe how such decision processing opens onto its environment: both in the office and in the wider world.

Observing Systems, or All In a Day's Work

At Framley Cross, the village at the center of *Framley Parsonage* (1860), we find among other stereotypical English country-village types a very incongruous one: "the shoemaker, who kept the post-office" (Chapter 2). The shoemaker is, as readers of *An Autobiography* (1883) and

other works[59] by Trollope will remember, the figure Trollope uses to describe the relationship between an author and his novels:

> I had long since convinced myself that in such work as mine the great secret consisted in acknowledging myself to be bound to rules of labour similar to those which an artisan or a mechanic is forced to obey. A shoemaker when he has finished one pair of shoes does not sit down and contemplate his work in idle satisfaction….The shoemaker who so indulged himself would be without wages half his time. It is the same with a professional writer of books…. Having thought much of all this, and having made up my mind that I could be really happy only when I was at work, I had now quite accustomed myself to begin a second pair as soon as the first was out of my hands. (*An Autobiography*, Chapter 17)

As is well-known, Trollope is not overstating things. Having finished *Doctor Thorne* on one day, he commenced *The Bertrams* "on the following day" (*An Autobiography*, Ch. 7). But how are we to read this comparison between shoemakers and novelists? And more generally, how are we to read it in light of Trollope's other career in the Post Office? And more general still: how does it square with the media and organizational ecologies that frame the narratives of Trollope's sequences? There is, to begin with, the obvious internal friction in the comparison of authors and shoemakers (and, as it turns out, postal workers). This kind of comparison is Trollope's métier: the breezy candor and unapologetic straightforwardness matches up with a plain intolerance of anything done for show. But this does not resolve the incommensurability of the comparison. Where a mechanic or artisan is forced to obey a set of rules of labor, the professional author

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[59] Readers will also find the metaphor in Trollope, Anthony, N. John Hall, and Nina Burgis. *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*. 2 vols Stanford: Stanford UP, 1983. See the note to volume 1, p. 100, "To Mrs. Catherine Gould" for a discussion of the appearances of the metaphor in Trollope's work.

voluntarily "acknowledges [him]self to be bound by rules" that are merely similar.[60] The pun, in the pairing of shoe-making and professional labor, comically overemphasizes the lack of fit between modern forms of professional work and that practiced by traditional "artisan[s] and mechanic[s]."[61]

But more importantly, if the making of shoes can translate the production of novels here, it is because shoe-making represents work that must—if it is successful—refuse what professional labor by its very nature is composed of, i.e. self-observation and contemplation. And yet, paradoxically, Trollope's comments on novel writing already mark the moment of transition from a traditional world of craft and artisanship to a world of professional work: *An Autobiography* can indicate the difference between shoemaking and novel writing only because "the professional writer of books" him- or herself represents his work inside his work itself—that is, in miniature form the process of professional labor differentiating itself from traditional manual labor and the skilled labor of crafts. Or, to put it another way, as disarmingly simple as it might at first appear, the difference between shoemakers and writers is reflexively and unremittingly copied into books as it cannot be copied into shoes.[62] If most work on the professional writer reflexively points back to the scholar and critic (as scholars and critics never tire of pointing out), that is because professional labor is already reflexive labor: it observes as

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[60] As readers will recall, Miller argues that metaphor is the "exotic space" where police reside in *Barchester Towers*. Similarity is not exactly its opposite, but something close to that, in that similarity domesticates professionalism in the homely figure of the shoemaker.

[61] Trollope will take this pun to extremes as in *The Warden*, when Septimus Harding justifies his intention to resign his post at Hiram's Hospital with the proverbial expression "Everyone knows where his own shoe pinches!" (Ch. 13).

[62] Luhmann puts it this way: "there are limits to what a shoemaker does as a shoemaker." Luhmann, Niklas, and André Kieserling. *A Systems Theory of Religion. Cultural Memory in the Present.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 2013, p. 166.

part of its work and then registers that observation in its work. That is what novelists do, and it is also, it turns out, what professionals do.

Trollope's novels are struck (but obviously not dumbstruck) by this. What has often been wrongly taken as the unadorned quality of Trollope's prose—here it demotes novel writing from professional pursuit to artisanal craft—is instead a highly attuned sensitivity to what systems theorist Niklas Luhmann called the paradoxy of observing systems.[63] Luhmann's explanation of this concept is enlightening when we compare it to Trollope's own account of his novel writing. As is well-known, Trollop's prose style routinizes the concealment of complexity and contingency, because it makes its descriptions "appear as natural and necessary [to one observer], whereas when seen from the outside they may appear artificial and contingent. The world thus variously observed remains, nevertheless, the same world, and therefore we have a paradox" (37-8). Trollope's straightforward, "pellucid" fiction presents the world through a naturalized vision.[64] If on the surface, his writing appears oblivious to systems, to the exchange between systems and their environments, it is in part because it eschews reflexivity and paradox—that which has come to be taken as intellectual sophistication.[65] In the case of

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[63] Luhmann, Niklas. "The Paradoxy of Observing Systems." *Cultural Critique*, no. 31 (1995): 37-55.

[64] Compare Vogl, p.16: "Media make things readable, audible, visible, perceptible, but in doing so they also have a tendency to erase themselves and their constitutive sensory function, making themselves imperceptible and 'anesthetic.' This is another way of saying, as Dirk Baecker says in "The Reality of Motion Pictures," "it is the communication of a reality that seems to be bare of communication" (p. 566). That is, what often passes for pellucidity—the communication of reality—in Trollope is precisely its *mediation*. This should not be taken as a description of what might in other theoretical paradigms be called "ideology," not least because this description describes how systems maintain their boundaries and their reality through what Luhmann has called "coding." For a detailed analysis of coding in Luhmann, see *Social Systems*, 444-447. See Baecker, Dirk, "The Reality of Motion Pictures." Modern Language Notes 111 (Fall 1996): 560-77.

[65] Compare Mark McGurl, *The Program Era : Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UPs, 2009. "[A]n aura of intellectual sophistication … attaches itself to overtly reflexive (that is, reflexively reflexive)" work (48).

Trollope, the novel is the recalcitrant (because self-reflexive) opposite of overtly reflexive work: Trollope stages his realist project as "life," but it closely resembles "the style of official writing" that he practiced in the Post Office (*An Autobiography*, Ch. 7). There, pellucidity takes on a different valence: that "they who read [official Post Office reports] should know what it was that I meant them to understand."[66] What remains unremarked in Trollope studies are the links between pellucidity in fiction and the official report of the Post Office.

Novels and official reports: these are the forms of work that make up the workday, the workaday world of modern professions and the organizations that house them. They are each of them equally all in a day's work. This is why Trollope can say without irony: "There was no day on which it was my positive duty to write for the publishers, as it was my duty to write reports for the Post Office" (*An Autobiography*, Ch. 7). But the work itself demanded that he do so and therefore he wrote. This odd comparison of shoemakers and novelists from *An Autobiography* is merely one in a long line of visitations to the idea that also happens in his letters and novels. The two forms of labor appear in the quotation above from *Framley Parsonage*: opposite shoemaking, novel writing lines up with the Post Office as yet another incompatible mixture of

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[66] Quotations are from *Autobiography*, Ch. 8. This point eludes Trollope scholars who insist on making the case for something resembling the "really real" realism of Trollope's fiction. Scholars today are unable to move beyond the descriptions of Trollope's work from the early twentieth century to the 1980s, so that we still get the recycled claim that "Most readers and critics of fiction would probably agree that of all the major nineteenth-century English novelists, Trollope is the most 'realistic.'" K. M. Newton, "Anthony Trollope and 'Classic Realism'" in Baker, William, and Kenneth Womack. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002. Trollope's realism should be viewed differently. For Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, realism emerges as consensus within a text. This makes possible the "realistic" treatment of alien consciousness, for instance, within novels. Trollope's novels, on the other hand, are much more anxious about their reference to the real world than even Ermarth's theory would allow for. We might call this the *ecological anxiety* of Trollope's fiction which refers endlessly to the world outside itself. Trollope's fiction also exposes the illusion of reality by repeatedly puncturing it, indicating from within his fiction that he is writing fiction. These two moves—the "really real" description and the "frame breaking" narratorial comment—coupled together indicate the unity of the difference between the real world and the fictional one, which, as Mark Seltzer has noted, is a move that has been with fiction since the beginning. "Real life" is first distinguished in a novel. See Ermarth, Elizabeth Deeds. *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983, and Seltzer, *True Crime*, p. 57.

artisanal work and modern profession. The apocryphal stories from Trollope's *An Autobiography* and other sources about how he was admitted to a position at the Post Office indicate how novel-writing and clerking are linked professions, versions not of each other but rather of some larger social transformation in the nature of work.

Trollope admits readily that he was not skilled in handwriting (or even the basics of arithmetic): "I was asked to copy some lines from the Times newspaper with an old quill pen, and at once made a series of blots and false spellings." (*An Autobiography*, Ch. 3). As R. H. Super has commented, "Handwriting was indeed the one accomplishment a junior clerk needed: day after day he was set to work copying—copying letters in to the letter book, minutes into the minute book. It was no doubt to be hoped that by copying the correspondence the brighter clerks would learn the business."[67] Elsewhere, Super ably retells one (apocryphal?) story from Trollope's 1855 essay "The Civil Service": "one junior clerk [was] called before his superior and confronted with copies of letters he had entered in the minute book the preceding day. 'If you can read *one line* of this, I shan't dismiss you,' said the superior. Alas, the unfortunate lad could not—he had merely scrawled on the page in pretense of copying, and so he was dismissed." (Super, *Chronicler of Barsetshire*, 33).[68]

Maintaining the pretense of writing is something like realizing in real life the pretenses of fiction writing, of copying fictionality itself into one's work as one's work. This is the process that the writings of Trollope's two professions observe and reflect on. That professional work

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[67] Super, R. H. *Trollope in the Post Office*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1981, p. 2.

[68] The original account of this incident by Trollope contains less style and dramatic flair than Super's: "We remember a case in which the head of an office, a strict disciplinarian for an official man, called a junior clerk to him, and exhibiting a page of a letter-book, in which the youngster had copied, or pretended to copy, certain letters on the preceding day, assured him, that bad as the page appeared, he would not dismiss him, if he, the clerk himself, could read any one line of his own writing. This the lad could not do, and so was dismissed. In fact, the book had been scrawled over with a pen, and no words had been written" ("The Civil Service," p. 421).

could, for a time at least, be made up of something like the appearance of work is one of the paradoxes of modern professional work. As quaintly old-fashioned as this type of work seems now in the age of computers and electronic office machinery, it already bears the signs of its modernity in the unremitting reflexivity of the formulation laid out by Super: clerks learn the business through learning by rote what they have copied (what, inevitably, someone else has written).[69] That is, these examples already demonstrate that the reality of modern office work is not simply copying, but learning through copying, and copying that. In light of these remarks, it is no accident that Trollope learned both to write and to write novels at the Post Office. It is not just that novels insist on the proximity of office work and novel reading, or even of their similarity as forms of professional labor—as so much recent criticism on professional writing and professionalism in the Victorian period is at pains to demonstrate.[70] Nor is it just that forms of professional work are easily translatable into other forms (unlike, say shoemaking and novel writing). It is rather that office work and novel writing/reading accomplish (or rather produce), as Mark Seltzer has put it, "the incorporation of the representation and observation of the work

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[69] At this point I might indicate the body machine complex: the clerk is something like the save/print button of the nineteenth century office, and indeed, those exact functions in the computer are modeled on human behaviors, but translated into machine language. The clerk today is not absent from our offices (and even our home offices): his functions have merely been distributed across the work environment as he has been translated into printer, disk, and the software interface of word processors and spreadsheets. The person who was a "ghostly figure" of the nineteenth century novel has become the ghost in the machine of modern office equipment. This technology exactly reverses the process identified by the term secretary, calculator or computer: first it was the name of the person who operated the thing, and then it became the name for the thing itself. These reversals merely indicate the two-way street that links workers and the technologies that make them work. For more on the "ghostly" and nearly absent figure of the clerk in literature of the nineteenth century, see Wild, Jonathan. *The Rise of the Office Clerk in Literary Culture*, 1880-1939. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

[70] Ruth, Jennifer, ed. *Novel Professions: Interested Disinterest and the Making of the Professional in the Victorian Novel*, Victorian Critical Interventions: Victorian Critical Interventions. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006.

process *as the work process itself.*"[71] That novels copy this process inside themselves testifies to the unremitting reflexivity of both professional organization and the novel writing that describes it. We should not be surprised, then, that Trollope's novel writing habits come to resemble professional work: Trollope wrote his novels from the inside of the very transport technology that enabled his postal work, while he was engaged in postal work.

> It was while I was engaged on Barchester Towers that I adopted a system of writing which, for some years afterwards, I found to be very serviceable to me. My time was greatly occupied in travelling, and the nature of my travelling was now changed. I could not any longer do it on horseback. Railroads afforded me my means of conveyance, and I found that I passed in railway-carriages very many hours of my existence. Like others, I used to read,—though Carlyle has since told me that a man when travelling should not read, but "sit still and label his thoughts." But if I intended to make a profitable business out of my writing, and, at the same time, to do my best for the Post Office, I must turn these hours to more account than I could do even by reading. I made for myself therefore a little tablet, and found after a few days' exercise that I could write as quickly in a railway-carriage as I could at my desk. I worked with a pencil, and what I wrote my wife copied afterwards. In this way was composed the greater part of Barchester Towers and of the novel which succeeded it, and much also of others subsequent to them. My only objection to the practice came from the appearance of literary ostentation, to which I felt myself to be subject when going to work before four or five fellow-passengers. But I got used to it, as I had done to the

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[71] Seltzer, *True Crime*, p. 13.

amazement of the west country farmers' wives when asking them after their

letters. (*An Autobiography,* Ch. 6)

What Trollope passes off as "amazement" and the embarrassment of the "appearance of literary

ostentation" indicate not just the typical Trollopian refusal—and exposure—of forms of

reflexivity, but rather the "installation" of reflexivity in his writing and his observation of it.[72] It

is registered, characteristically enough, inside writing. One "g[ets] used to it" because the self-

observation of one's ostentation is one of the conditions of modern forms of professional labor;

modern work is impossible without such self-observation. Of course, Trollope's example of the

shoemaker is probably partly intended as a regressive counterpoint to his novels' representations

of the processes and processing of reflexivity as work.[73] Even more importantly, though, in

Framley Parsonage, once he is mentioned, the shoemaker/postal worker never returns in the

novel. That the shoemaker/postal worker, as a transitional figure of both burgeoning

professionalism and the transformation from a hierarchical society to a functional one,

disappears into the background of the novel is a sign of the degree to which the organizational

world and its professions are still becoming (or have become) naturalized parts of the

environment.

This change to work is part of a systemic shift, the "great transformation" in Karl

Polanyi's words, in the meaning of work and culture that begins in the Eighteenth Century but is

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[72] For more on how this phenomenon works, see Seltzer, *True Crime*, especially p. 18 and note 22 on pages 28-29.

[73] For Trollope, such reflexive reflexivity is, as I have outlined above, counterproductive. Trollope's desire *not* to be read as *literary* is part and parcel of his project in *An Autobiography* to deny anything like method, artistry, form. Trollope's work is, however, overdetermined by forms of this reflexive reflexivity: transportation and communication networks are not just media forms inside his novels; rather they determine the conditions of production of the novels themselves.

not yet complete by the time that the Barsetshire sequence is written.[74] It is also a sign of the degree to which professionalism cuts across traditional class and cultural boundaries. It is the sign of an uncontained professionalism, of an organizational culture insinuating itself everywhere. Not only workers but their places of employment disappear into the background: as the novel sequence progresses the Church of England moves progressively out of the spotlight, but its presence is continually marked by the novels. This putting side-by-side (or folding inside) of organizations/professions and family/aristocracy is one way of marking the transition from a feudal aristocratic society to a systematized one. The kind of work outlined here is work that is made up of nothing but reflections on work, of work that goes on copying and makes necessary its copying by its very existence. It is work that, like the Post Office, mobilizes and organizes itself at the point of contact with the written word.

These are the terms by which Trollope's sequence operates: these novels auto-contextualize, they are the model of a society that generates itself from itself. There is no question here about where stories come from. They come from themselves. Just as a clerk and a letter will generate copies of that letter, a novelist and a sequence will generate further novels in the sequence. This is where the logic of postal organization comes to bear on the writing of novels. Just as this process goes on—like those endless "volume[s] of Rabelais" that the Archdeacon reads from inside a novel sequence, that goes on—novel writing, organizational writing, and the post are responsible for the persistence of the institutions that house these forms of writing (*The Warden*, Ch. 8).

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[74] Polanyi's account of the rise of market society forms the backdrop for Larsen's analysis of the market conditions that lead to the development of professionalism. See Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1957. See also Larson, Magali Sarfatti. *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*. Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1977.

The Great Indoors, or Patterns of Asymmetry Across the Sequence

This language naturalizing the civil service professions by domesticating them in the figure of the shoemaker as a "typical" figure of the British countryside is one way of indicating the relationship of the civil service professions to their environment. On that view, Trollope's Barsetshire series is as much about the ecology (*avant la lettre*, as it were) of organizations, institutions, and civil service professions as it is about the professions themselves. In one recent article, Nicholas Dames has argued quite rightly that sequence novels feature the "aesthetics of slow accumulation," and argues that the form is overdetermined by its focus on the career. In Dames's view, the "career-narrative presents a sequence of tutelary examples whose full meaning can only be known once the entire sequence has been consumed and all the examples are present to compare to one another."[75] The career itself thus demands "a wholly new size: the series." To relate the scale of sequence fiction to the lengthy career narrative, Dames is recasting sequence novels in terms we are already familiar with. On this view, it becomes nothing more than a very long *bildungsroman*.

But we know that these novels both are and are not *bildungs*: as some careers progress, some like those of John Bold and Bishop Grantly terminate unceremoniously between novels or at their beginnings. I want to suggest that if we take as our focus just the careers of Phineas Finn or John Eames then we lose sight of the larger context in which those careers take shape. That is, what we cannot see if we attend only to the career is the scale of the fiction that is supposed to be the result of its attentions to the career. For Dames, Trollope's (sequence) fiction displays "a concern with 'making one's way,' with progressing toward a goal, about the value of which one remains, nonetheless, unsure—in plainer words, a concern with a *career*." Dames draws the phrase "making one's way" from R. H. Hutton, who, in reviewing the anonymously published

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[75]   See Dames, p. 253-4.

Nina Balatka (1866), surmised that it was in fact written by Trollope: "The critic said to himself, 'if it is written by Mr. Trollope, I shall soon meet with the phrase, 'made his way,' as applied to walking where there is no physical difficulty or embarrassment, but only a certain moral hesitation as to the end and aim of the walking in question,' and behold within a page at which the silent remark was made, came the very phrase in the peculiar sense indicated."[76]

As I have begun to suggest above, what Hutton identifies is not simply "walking where there is no physical difficulty or embarrassment," nor can its full meaning be found in Dames's insightful interpretation of it as a metaphor for the career. A somewhat wider scope is necessary here because making one's way is only a part of a larger phenomenon, the full meaning of which cannot be appreciated in the singleness of *Nina Balatka* or even in any figure or any other novel by itself. The sprawl of the sequence demands a shift in attention from individuals and their careers to the systems and organizations that they inhabit. It concerns a shift to the larger tectonics of organization. I want to suggest that "making one's way" indicates not only the way that individuals shuttle back and forth from one environment to another. Rather, it traces the relays between systems, the way that systems relate to other systems and to their environments. In short, it marks out the systemic interdependence that is the sign and condition of a systematizing world. This means that these systems operate and presume to operate in a systematizing world, each forming a part of the other's (and its own) *a priori*. An attention to systems means observing how the sequence of novels registers backgrounds and environments, and how they manage what I want to mark out as the asymmetrical distribution of people and things between systems and environments.[77]

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[76] Smalley, *Trollope: The Critical Heritage*, p. 268.

[77] The term asymmetry refers to the contingency of the original distinction that enables the autopoeisis and differentiation of a system. Systems depend upon asymmetry as the founding distinction that enables their

In these novels environments are often most obviously literalized in outdoor spaces, during endless hunts, strolls, and other outdoor scenes. Environment is a little less obviously, but no less insistently, figured in architecture and other artifacts of the built world: houses and other buildings, spaces, parks, but also roads, and interior rooms, etc. It is also invisibly present in the structural constraints of society and social interaction, governing what characters can say and when they can say it. If ecology is, etymologically, a later nineteenth-century term (οἶκος (*oikos-*) [house, dwelling] and *–logie*, imported first from German biologists), it is nonetheless an apt description of the way that Trollope's sequence fictions endlessly register the relationships between individuals and their environments.[78] As the term itself denotes, it is a way of speaking about interiors and environments. Its introduction into English contemporaneously with sequence novels signals what the idiom of Trollope everywhere already relentlessly points to: a coming to terms with the relationship of people to their environments. That is to say that if we attend only to the career we lose the structural and environmental aspects of the sequence and its institutions, their consequences for what we might call the social formalisms of the sequence, of architecture as the outlines of the social forms that inhabit them.

In the next few pages, I will survey the novels of the Barsetshire sequence for examples of both of these aspects, the structural and organizational figures that characterize the idiom of Trollope's sequence. If, as Kate Marshall argues, the hallways and corridors shot through later 20th century American fiction—as media literalized, the manifestation in fiction of the communication networks which novels themselves participate in—stage the mediality of organizations and novels themselves, they also make explicit the way that modern organizations

autopoeisis, and they do so in part by borrowing and building upon the asymmetry of those systems of which they are a part. More on this below.

[78] *OED*, "ecology."

reflexively connect themselves to themselves through communication networks.[79] It is not surprising that Victorian novels are not quite so explicitly concerned with either the mediality or topos of infrastructure that Marshall identifies as a hallmark of post-WWII American fiction. In the absence of corridors, hallways, sewers and other marks of what she calls "infrastructural modernity," Trollope's sequence novels sketch out a transitional stage of what will become the "fully administered world"[80] of later nineteenth century England, when the ranks of professional and commercial clerks would swell from a few tens of thousands at mid-century to many hundreds of thousands by the *fin de siècle*.[81]

What this stage looks like in Trollope's sequence novels is often a loose collection of rooms, houses, and other spaces whose "perfect continence" makes possible connections and communications between them.[82] Sometimes this is literal, as in *Barchester Towers*, in which "a library or reading-room connect[s] the cathedral with the dean's house" and thus the organizational world of the church is connected to the institution of the family through the house of literature itself. But often it is more figurative as in *The Last Chronicle of Barset,* as pictured in Figure 1.

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[79] Kate Marshall makes the argument that "novels enact and encode their medial processes in the concrete structures of American modernity - its infrastructural systems, contagious institutional spaces, its corridors - in order to demonstrate that the consequences for this recursive movement between novels, spatial structures, and media extend to modern individuals and the interiors that house them." Marshall, Katie Elizabeth. C*orridor Media Architectures in American Fiction*. 2009. http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1932209641&sid=1&Fmt=2&clientId=1564&RQT=309&VName=PQD, p.1.

[80] Adorno, Theodor W., Gretel Adorno, Rolf Tiedemann, and Robert Hullot-Kentor. *Aesthetic Theory*. Continuum Impacts. London & New York: Continuum, 2004, p. 160.

[81] Anderson, Gregory. *Victorian Clerks*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1976, p., 2.

[82] The phrase in quotation marks is borrowed from George Spencer-Brown's *Laws of Form*. This work outlines a mathematical-logical calculus of form. Its first postulate is: "Distinction is perfect continence." Spencer-Brown, G. *Laws of Form*. 1st American ed. New York: Julian Press, 1972.
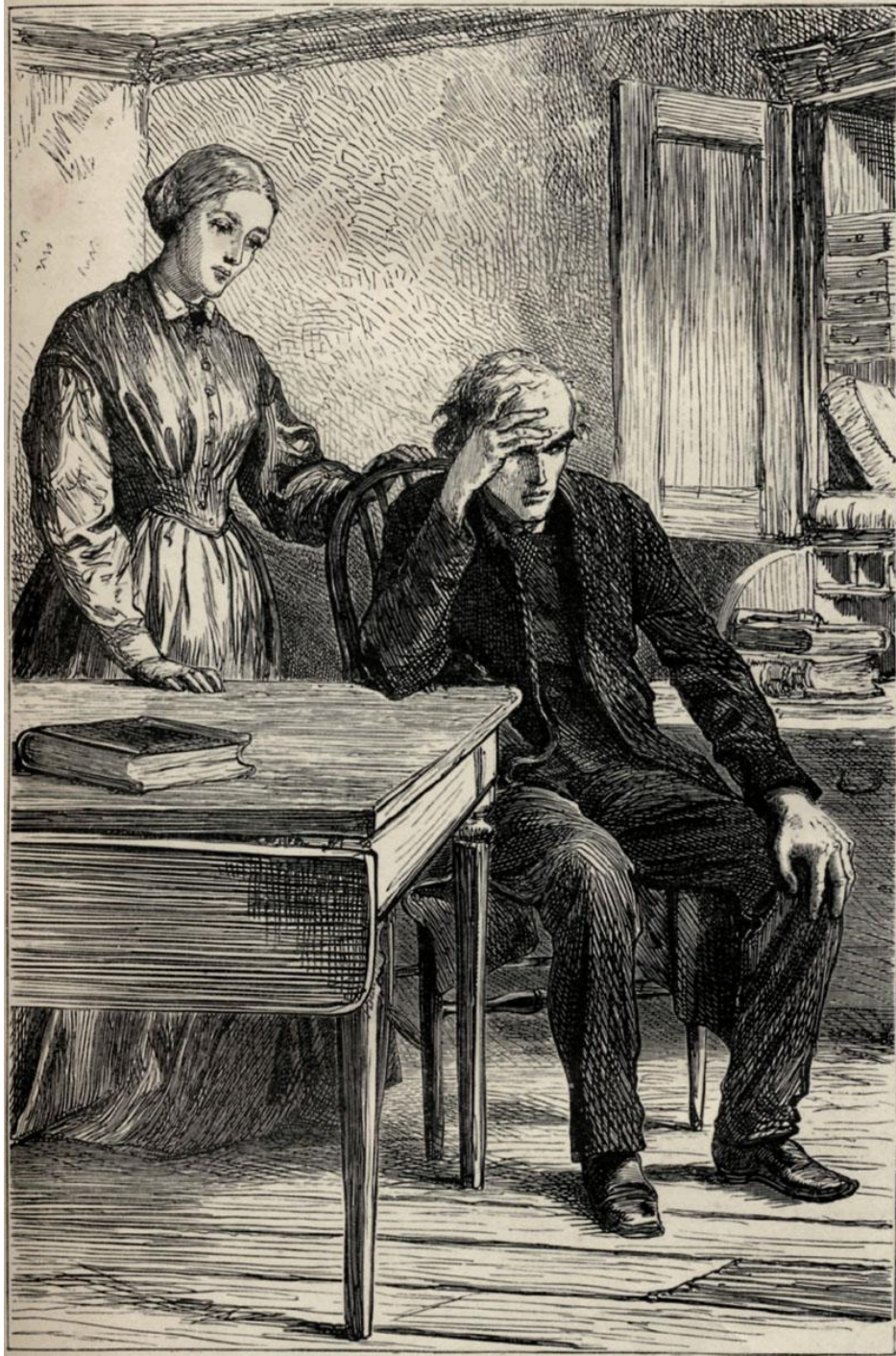
Figure 1.

Here, Crawley appears to be poised between secretary desk and table as he appears to be poised between Church and family: he has one foot in the domestic space, and one in the professional one. The open secretary, its books spilling over onto the table, the hanging leaf of

the table: these are the partial acknowledgements and indications of separate spheres. But what actually separates them is more subtle and difficult to describe. The wife's comfort here is domestic; the troubles have to do with work. But more than that, this little scene points to another, more pervasive concern that I have begun to outline here: what is a family or organization but the shape of its living and working arrangements and the pattern of its communications? The point to emphasize though is how this illustration puts both into proximity, and thus indicates the recursive shaping of each by their patterned arrangements of communication and organization. This is one form of the persistent doubling and redoubling, mirroring and re-mirroring of architectural and organizational forms that populate Trollope's fiction. That is, what we see outlined here is how organization becomes the pattern it communicates. Call it mimesis come to life, or, better, mimesis with a life of its own: in this burgeoning organizational world, there are no hallways, only rooms in which one room or side reflects and translates the other. More to the point, alongside these architectural forms are the attendant social forms that mirror, recall and recapitulate other social forms. One need only return to the endless parties, dinner parties, "evenings," fêtes, and celebrations that take place in every novel of the sequence to realize that these parties are the counterpart to and translation of other social organizations like the established Church, Parliament, and Civil Service. And these in turn indicate at every point the domestic architectures and interiors (whose names take the form of their function in "Gatherum Castle" and "Matching Priory") that makes them possible.

Sequence novels in particular record and hold visible these literalized forms of reflection and in so doing trace out their consequences for organization. As Bruno Latour has written, doors are a technique for maintaining asymmetries between a system and its environment: "The reversible door is the only way to irreversibly trap inside a differential accumulation of warm

sociologists, knowledge, papers, and also, alas, paperwork; the hinged door allows a selection of what gets in and what gets out so as to locally increase order or information. If you let the drafts get inside, the drafts will never get outside to the publishers."[83] This is one way of saying that organization, and indeed bureaucracy itself, is where the doors are.[84] If any reader doubts the possibility that the Barsetshire sequence is quite literally about the placement of its doors, one only needs to look at the beginning of *The Warden* to find the narrative conflict literalized in the asymmetries that the doors themselves maintain. The "ponderous gateway" to Hiram's Hospital leads to an interior passage flanked by six doors and the "slight iron screen" which leads to "the Elysium of Mr Harding's dwelling" (Ch. 1). Elysium operates here like a synonym for equilibrium: what else other than homeostasis is maintained by the ponderous gateway, the six doors and the slight screen? The crisis of the novel resides there in those doors themselves, in what we might call the maintenance of organizational and system boundaries. These doors mark out quite literally the novel's conflicts as they mark out and separate overlapping forms of authority in Church, Parliament, legal system, and family.

This is yet one more way of saying that the organizational culture of the novel constantly observes the asymmetry and its discontents that organizational culture itself creates. That is, the novels' narratives feature the progressive translations of the organizational problem that arose at the sequence's inauguration: the asymmetrical dispensation of funds in *The Warden* becomes a lopsided and two-headed bishop in *Barchester Towers* (Bishop Proudie and his wife) and the internal split of the Church, high and low, which in turn becomes the disparity of size and influence of Lufton Court and Framley Parsonage; then in *Doctor Thorne* it is the transfer of

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[83] Jim Johnson (aka, Bruno Latour), "Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer," *Social Problems,* Vol. 35, No. 3 (Jun., 1988), p. 299.

[84] Thanks to Mark Seltzer for this formulation.

wife and wealth to the only son of a poor country squire, from the rich mason (who, incidentally, becomes rich constructing roads, bridges, and presumably walls); and then becomes the small house and great house, with two civil servants vying for the hand of Lily Dale in *The Small House at Allington*. And even in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, what is at first an epistemological problem (Crawley's guilt) becomes an organizational and ecological problem (who should be preaching from Hogglestock pulpit, and which commission has jurisdiction over this question). The key to that mystery, it turns out, involves a trip to the Holy Land, which suggests, as all of these asymmetries do, that knowledge is somewhere "out there," and that it is itself an ecological condition.

As the sequence progressively develops its assymetries, they grow and evolve and spread out even across the landscape itself, so that by *Doctor Thorne* we learn that

> Barsetshire, however, is not now so essentially one whole as it was before the Reform Bill divided it. There is in these days an East Barsetshire, and there is a West Barsetshire; and people conversant with Barsetshire doings declare that they can already decipher some difference of feeling, some division of interests. The eastern moiety of the county is more purely Conservative than the western; there is, or was, a taint of Peelism in the latter; and then too, the residence of two such great Whig magnates as the Duke of Omnium and the Earl de Courcy in that locality in some degree overshadows and renders less influential the gentlemen who live near them. (Ch.1)

These asymmetries are recorded both on the large scale and on small scale, especially in the spaces that give shape to the characters of the sequence. Consider Ullathorne Court, in *Barchester Towers*:

"the house itself formed two sides of a quadrangle, which was completed on the other two sides by a wall about twenty feet high…. Entrance into the court was had through a pair of iron gates, so massive that no one could comfortably open or close them, consequently they were rarely disturbed. From the gateway two paths led obliquely across the court; that to the left reaching the hall door, which was in the corner made by the angle of the house, and that to the right leading to the back entrance, which was at the further end of the longer portion of the building." (Ch. 22)

And the interior of the house maintains no pretense of a foyer or corridor to signal to the visitor that he is entering: one enters directly into the dining hall, which also doubles as a family room. That is, one enters into the spaces that define the family itself. On the other hand we have Archdeacon Grantly's bedroom: "within that sacred recess formed by the clerical bedcurtains at Plumstead Episcopi. How much sweet solace, how much valued counsel has our archdeacon received within that sainted enclosure" (*Barchester Towers*, Ch. 2).

Doors, gates, passages, screens, rooms and houses: these are the figures in which Trollope's sequence of novels record and encode the operations of the Church (and by extension, the civil service), and they are why it is possible to "make one's way" to begin with. These are the outlines of a world of asymmetrical symmetries, of a differential accumulation of church professionals, families, and aristocrats in the novels of the Barsetshire sequence. And accumulate they do. In novel after novel, the self-making world of Barsetshire continuously remakes itself in its own image through architecture, landscape, the outdoors, offices, houses, rooms, and other environments.[85] In *Framley Parsonage*, the seat of Lady Lufton's aristocratic privilege sits

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[85] The famous phrase "wheels within wheels" from *Barchester Towers* might be the closest approach to the reflexively reflexive that Trollope's fiction is able to articulate outside of architecture and the structural forms that

opposite the church: "Framley church … stood immediately opposite to the chief entrance to Framley Court" (Ch.2). In *The Small House at Allington*, again, the novel begins by laying out the idiom of the sequence: "Of course there was a Great House at Allington. How otherwise should there have been a Small House?" (Ch. 1). This distinction might underwrite a reading that articulates something like a shift in the class consciousness of Trollope's realism.[86] But to argue this would be to miss the meaning of the environments that characterize the idiom of Trollope's sequence fiction and the functions such figures serve in the narrative of an organizational ecology. Each room or building is an environment that maintains the asymmetry that it encloses. In *The Small House at Allington*, this original distinction Great House/Small House is repeated and progressively refined throughout the novel, as it is over the entire sequence: the Income-tax Office translates and is translated by the General Committee Office; it becomes—inside the Income-tax Office itself—the distinction between the inner and outer offices, which separate private secretaries and "mere clerk[s]" (*The Small House at Allington*, Ch. 2). Compare the description of the "bear-garden" of the outer office to the description of the inner in *The Small House at Allington*:

> [John Eames] would be removed by such a change as this from the large uncarpeted room in which he at present sat; occupying the same desk with another man to whom he had felt himself to be ignominiously bound, as dogs must feel when they are coupled. This room had been the bear-garden of the office. Twelve or fourteen men sat in it. Large pewter pots were brought into it daily at one

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characterize society in his novels.

[86] In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams, for instance, critiques Trollope's realism on the grounds that it is: "at ease with schemes of inheritance, with the interaction of classes and interests, with the lucky discovery and the successful propertied marriage," that is interested only "in how it all happens," and on the basis of its "even, easy narrative tone, with a minimum of searching analysis …." See Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 174-5.

o'clock, giving it an air that was not aristocratic. (Ch. 6)

Against this description is the description of the inner office, John Eames's "perfect Elysium": "the cosy little room, all carpeted, with a leathern arm-chair and a separate washing-stand, which in such case would be devoted to his use, and remembered also that he would be put into receipt of an additional hundred a year, and would stand in the way of still better promotion, he was overjoyed" (*The Small House at Allington*, Ch. 6). In the outer room, Eames eats "biscuit[s] dipped in ink," but one imagines that in this world of professional clerics and religious professionals, in which Elysium is imagined to be an office, they would be transformed (transubstantiated) into something more satisfying (*The Small House at Allington*, Ch. 33). And continuing the metaphor, those biscuits are accompanied by the sharing—among the elect—of the "good news": "[w]e take a [news]paper among twenty of us for half the day" (Ch. 33). That is, these asymmetries mean that the types of relationships that are possible and the types of information processing that are possible are intimately connected with their environment.

Along the lines of these descriptions, the organization of the larger world outside the home and office in Trollope's sequence often looks like those "all but death-like single streets" that the narrator of *Doctor Thorne* finds in "west England" (Ch. 1) or the arrangement of gentry and commoner at Miss Thorne's *fête champêtre* at Ullathorne, the classes separated by the ingeniously designed ha-ha in *Barchester Towers*. The ha-ha, or trench, visible only from one side and designed to prevent sheep from overgrazing on the grounds also separates the guests of the party. If the members of all classes are brought together at the *fête*, are allowed through the open gate that Plomacy, the Thornes' steward, cannot keep shut, they are nonetheless separated by a barrier that becomes the literalization of class differences. That is, the organizing world of Trollope's sequence novels resides in communication channels that do not yet completely

connect to other communication channels to form a networked society.

In the fully networked and systematized world of the late Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries, what Reinhard Martin has called the "organizational complex," systems connect to systems, but also to themselves.[87] Streets and roads in the sequence novels of Trollope are, by contrast, disconnected and they literalize a society that is everywhere still showing signs of its asymmetrical, traditional, feudal order as a sequestered coterie, of a world apart from the world it nonetheless inhabits. Thus, also from *Doctor Thorne*: Greshamsbury House "may perhaps best [be] describe[d] … by saying that the village of Greshamsbury consisted of one long, straggling street, a mile in length, which in the centre turned sharp round, so that one half of the street lay directly at right angles to the other. In this angle stood Greshamsbury House, and the gardens and grounds around it filled up the space so made" (Ch. 1).[88] Given all this, it is unsurprising that roads are one figure Trollope chooses for the organization of people and things in part because they are so obviously central to the postalization of Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales.

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[87] As Martin outlines, the concentric ring roads—styled by Norbert Weiner "life belts"—of post-war urban planning is an example of this self-connecting system: the life belts work because they allow the smooth functioning of communication and transport systems in the face of nuclear missile attacks directed at urban centers. And as so many natural disasters make clear, the broken link in the form of the unpassable road or down telephone connection is one of the greatest threats to human life. This suggests that human life itself is connected to the maintenance of these connections. Martin, Reinhold. *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2003.

[88] These angles that make up "the space so made" describe how Trollope's peculiarly comic vision of English manor houses takes shape and become one version of a house divided against itself. In *Barchester Towers,* for instance, Ullathorne's orthogonal structure becomes a literal indication of the shift from tradition to modernity. The anachronistic Thornes of Ullathorne are proud of their Anglo-Saxon heritage, trace their "own ancestors to some period long antecedent to the Conquest," quote no author more recent than Samuel Johnson, and both seem to feel, as does Mr Thorne, that "[h]e had within him something of the feeling of Cato, who gloried that he could kill himself because Romans were no longer worthy of their name" (Ch. 3). And yet, the Thornes are noted also for their full participation in modernity, as Mr Thorne's use of modern farming techniques and fertilizers ("guano"), makes clear. Thorne is, as Gilmour outlines, one prominent example of the "several generations of 'last English gentlemen' in the English novel" (*Idea of the Gentleman*, 34). His conscious effort to foster this image of himself is one particularly striking example of the reflexive traditionalization that I have described above.

As is well known, Trollope's two careers developed in parallel. I have already begun to suggest above how that was possible by remarking on the transport technology that enabled both careers to develop in the first place. When Trollope was promoted to surveyor in Ireland, part of his job became reforming traditional postal routes, making them more efficient. As Trollope outlines in *An Autobiography*, the existing postal routes were an artifact of tradition: "A country letter-carrier would be sent in one direction in which there were but few letters to be delivered, the arrangement having originated probably at the request of some influential person, while in another direction there was no letter-carrier because no influential person had exerted himself" (Ch. 5). As a surveyor for the Post Office, after having reorganized the rural posts in his Irish district, Trollope claims to have visited on horseback all of "every nook in [Devonshire], in Cornwall, Somersetshire, the greater part of Dorsetshire, the Channel Islands, part of Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Monmouthshire, and the six southern Welsh counties…. [I]n this manner I saw almost every house—I think I may say every house of importance—in this large district" (*An Autobiography,* Ch. 5).[89]

The image of Trollope on horseback nearly singlehandedly rerouting large sections of the postal system is an image of transition from a traditional order to the organizational complex. Like the newspaper that torments *The Warden*'s Septimus Harding, or the Archdeacon's letter announcing the death of the bishop and reiterates the connections between Church and State, Trollope's retracing of the postal system is yet another version of the on-time arrival of modernity, in person. The image's doubleness resides in the method of modernization of the postal routes, which takes place by the mode of transport (the horse) that enabled "posting" postal routes to begin with. Beyond that, there is the modernizing Trollope who until this point in

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[89] Super outlines how Trollope saw a great pay increase from the travel associated with his surveyorship in Ireland. He was reimbursed for travel at the same rate as his peers in England, where travel was much more expensive. Through this method he nearly doubled his salary at this time.

his career appears to have been something other than a model employee. But upon the transfer to Ireland, Trollope suddenly reformed both the post office and himself, becoming more professional, which entailed both becoming a professional postal employee and a novelist at the same time. It is thus an image that looks forward and backward simultaneously.

In the preceding analyses I have attempted to draw out the connections between Trollope's service in the post office and his depiction of the Church of England in Barsetshire. And I have also emphasized the distinctly modernizing character of Trollope's portrayal of professional clergy, its decision processing, and the spaces that it inhabits. But Trollope's Church in Barsetshire only incidentally tells the story of the postal service as one among many organizations of similar type. Trollope's ecological study of British administration is, from the perspective of modernity theorists, a study of the "genre forms of … society," to use Mark Seltzer's phrase.[90] Trollope's novel sequence is thus a recognition of a much broader and trans-organizational and trans-institutional phenomenon happening from about 1850 onwards—of the intentional organization of organizations.

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[90] Seltzer, Mark. "Parlor Games: The Apriorization of the Media." *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 1 (2009): 100-33.

Chapter 2

The Coffee and the Curate:

The Comforts of Organization in Margaret Oliphant's Carlingford

"And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord."

-1 Corinthians 12:5

"St. Paul says there is one God, he confirms that, but he says, 'There is one God, and many administrations.' I understand that to mean you can wander out of one universe and into another just by pointing your feet and forward march. I mean you can come to a land where the fate of human beings is completely different from what you understood it to be. And this utterly different universe is administered through the earth itself. Up through the dirt, goddamn it."

-Denis Johnson, *Tree of Smoke*

Introduction

The comforts afforded by newly renovated domestic spaces are one of the most prominent themes of Margaret Oliphant's Carlingford sequence. And yet the Chronicles of Carlingford are not all home and hearth. Scholars have been quick to notice the parallels between the social and professional worlds described in Oliphant's Carlingford and Anthony Trollope's Barshetshire. They have also overlooked several important differences between them. If Trollope found a home for Victorian bureaucracy in the sequence novel, Oliphant found administrative organization's double in the home. In this chapter I analyze the domestic forms of organization that are mostly invisible in Trollope but insistently foregrounded in Oliphant: the forms of organization found in the home that complement and translate those found in the professions. The key point is this: even as competing religious institutions and their fight for dominance

impinges upon the lives of Carlingford's inhabitants, comfort is nonetheless produced by forms of domestic organization and management that correlate to institutional ones. To put this in the context of larger trends in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction, Oliphant's sequence shows that what have long appeared to be the separate spheres of home and office are actually governed by the same organizational impulse.[91] The Chronicles of Carlingford, then, are about forms of religious organization but also about how domestic management (as organization) is involved in the production of comfort.

As it relates to domestic matters, Oliphant's sequence stands among a proliferation of mid- to late-century books on household management. The introduction in 1852 of *The English Woman's Domestic Magazine* by Samuel Beeton (husband of the still famous Mrs. Beeton) began a trend in publishing that documented the spread—and shaped the definition—of household management. The arrival in 1861—the same year that the "The Executor," the first story in the Carlingford Chronicles, was serialized—of *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* shows that the organizational impulse was already beginning to be found in the homes of the middle classes. The full title of the book gives some idea of its contents but also hints at the relationship of organization to the structure of the (ideal) middle-class home: *The Book of Household Management, comprising information for the Mistress, Housekeeper, Cook, Kitchen-Maid, Butler, Footman, Coachman, Valet, Upper and Under House-Maids, Lady's-Maid, Maid-of-all-Work, Laundry-Maid, Nurse and Nurse-Maid, Monthly Wet and Sick Nurses, etc. etc.—also Sanitary, Medical, & Legal Memoranda: with a History of the Origin, Properties,*

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[91] The reader may already anticipate the connections between my argument and Nancy Armstrong's book on domestic fiction which I discuss below. Suffice it to say for now that Armstrong's work imagines a separation between the separate spheres that I wish to counter.

and Uses of all Things Connected with Home Life and Comfort.[92] After Mrs. Beeton's book, cookbooks and manuals of domestic management soon became best-sellers but her book maintained such an influence that by the 1890s, Mrs. Beeton—who died at 28 in 1865—was herself an institution.[93]

In retrospect, the success and extraordinary long life of Mrs. Beeton's book (and the many derivative manuals and cookbooks its publishers spawned) belies the novelty of the mid-century innovation of putting together comfort and organization. Although Mrs. Beeton's book has been accused of being derivative, copying from sources dating back to the Restoration, it transferred from book to home the idea that organization was not only confined to the systematizing professional world. In the modern domestic ecology she documented, organization was equally at home in the home.If Oliphant's Carlingford Chronicles do not take up Mrs. Beeton explicitly, the imprint of a larger trend symbolized by Beeton's brand of domestic care is nonetheless felt in each of the novels. *Miss Marjoribanks* expliclitly thematizes local domestic organization as a means to effect larger social change: "As she stepped into the steamboat at Dover which was to convey her to scenes so new, Lucilla felt more and more that she who held the reorganisation of society in Carlingford in her hands was a woman with a mission" (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 2). "The Executor" concerns the disarray that results from family papers (a will) that contradict the presumed heirs' expectations. In this story, a faithful yet somewhat scheming servant is wrongfully accused of having influenced the decision to leave the estate to a long-forgotten (and ultimately impossible to find) daughter. Ultimately, the estate ends up in the

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[92]   Beeton, and Nicola Humble. *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*. Oxford World's Classics. Abridged ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2000.

[93] Under the entry for "Mrs." the *OED* contains an entry for "Mrs. Beeton" which it defines as "an authority on cooking and domestic subjects." That is, in the decades following Mrs. Beeton's cookbook one could become a *Mrs. Beeton* by becoming an acknowledged expert in a special subfield of domestic management. See also, http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2012/08/the-language-of-cooking-from-forme-of-cury-to-pukka-tucker/.

hands of the lawyer charged with finding the heir. These are the kind of household concerns that Beeton's book catalogues and enumerates remedies for as it imagines an almost totally ordered domestic sphere (as the title above shows, it contains chapters on legal memoranda such as wills). What Oliphant's sequence documents, by contrast, are the points of contact between domestic management and professional organization and the shared logic that guides them. Oliphant constantly reminds readers that the professional sphere so ably documented by Trollope has its counterpart in the home, and that the characters of Carlingford are "at home" in both.

Oliphant's novels are notable for recognizing what constitutes the work of organization in the home. In Trollope's Barsetshire, as I argued in chapter one, professional work often takes the form of observation of work and the registration of decisions made by oneself and others. The domestic world of Carlingford—characterized by work baskets, church social events, and the dining rooms of butter men—is not as different from Trollope's descriptions as this catalog might suggest. Trollope's novels have their fair share of these themes too. What is different about Oliphant's sequence is how she frames observation in the domestic sphere as against observation in the professional. Consider the following scene from *Salem Chapel*. It comes on the heels of a family crisis. Mr. Vincent, the Rector of Dissenting Salem Chapel, sits with his mother who has visited him after her daughter (the Rector's sister) has been mysteriously abducted:

> On the table the smoky lamp blazed into the dim air, unregulated by the chimney, which Mrs Vincent was nervously rubbing with her handkerchief before she put it on. The little maid, with her round eyes, set down the tray upon the table with an answering thrill of excitement and curiosity. There was "somethink to do" with the minister and his unexpected visitor. Vincent himself took no notice of the girl;

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but his mother, with feminine instinct, proceeded to disarm this possible observer. Mrs Vincent knew well, by long experience, that when the landlady happens to be one of the flock, it is as well that the pastor should keep the little shocks and crises of his existence studiously to himself.

"Does it always smoke?" said the gentle Jesuit, addressing the little maid.

(Ch. 12)

Mrs. Vincent's intervention here shifts the attention of the maid from Vincent back onto the management of her environment—the household—in order to insulate his "flock" from "the little shocks and crises of *his* existence" [emphasis mine]. Even Wentworth's interior psychic states are observable. The designing women of the congregation—the marrigeable young ladies of the flock and their mothers who wish nothing more than for their daughters to raise their stature in society by marrying such a well-bred and talented young minister—become upset with him for his attentions to Lady Western, a staunch adherent of the Church of England. The butterman, Tozer, attempts to put him on the right path:

"If a minister ain't a servant, we pays him his salary at the least, and expects him to please us," said Tozer, sulkily. "If it weren't for that, I don't give a sixpence for the Dissenting connection. Them as likes to please themselves would be far better in a State Church, where it wouldn't disappoint nobody; not meaning to be hard on you as has given great satisfaction, them's my views; but if the Chapel folks is a little particular, it's no more nor a pastor's duty to bear with them, and return a soft answer. I don't say as I'm dead again' you, like the women," added the butterman, softening; "they're jealous, that's what they are; but I couldn't find it in my heart, not for my own part, to be hard on a man as was led away after a

beautiful creature like that. But there can't no good come of it, Mr. Vincent; take my advice, sir, as have seen a deal of the world—there can't no good come of it. A man as goes dining with Lady Western, and thinking as she means to make a friend of him, ain't the man for Salem. We're different sort of folks, and we can't go on together. Old Mr. Tufton will tell you just the same, as has gone through it all—and that's why I said both him and me had a deal to say to you, as are a young man, and should take good advice." (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 15)

In *Salem Chapel*, which is representative of the entire sequence, disarray in domestic matters always threatens the authority of administrators just as disarray in administration causes strife in the home. What happens in Wentworth's rooms with the lamp, and in Tozer's advice to Wentworth, is not a reinscription of power so much as a marking out the proper sphere of observation. Organization in the household is not a series of decisions as we saw in Trollope but rather a way of directing attentions and activity to domestic concerns. It is as much about the arrangement of observations as it is about the harmonious arrangement of things. Domestic management then is a way of anticipating what others will observe and take comfort in; it is being vigilant to the slightest—even unconscious—expression of need by people in the home. In this way, comfort is produced as the anticipation and erasure of need.

Under the regime of the modern organizational culture of Trollope and Oliphant, where comparable forms of organization proliferate, it is not so hard to imagine marriage and romance in organizational terms: "But so far as this narrator knows, nothing calling for special record has since appeared in the history of the doctor's family, thus reorganised under happier auspices, and discharging its duties, social and otherwise, though not exactly in society, to the satisfaction and approval of the observant population of Carlingford" (*The Doctor's Family*, Ch. 17). If marriage

is understood in terms of the family reorganized, it is because modern families and professions are subject to and evidence of the same systematizing impulse. This is why Miss Wodehouse can say that "[a] professional man never marries till he has a position" (*The Doctor's Family*, Ch. 5).

In the Carlingford sequence, the lines of professional and romantic duty cross as a matter of course. At the urging of the leading members of his congregation Vincent visits Mrs. Hillyard, the mysterious recluse who lives in rooms above a back street, behind Salem Chapel. The buttermen and green grocers of Salem Chapel find her troubling: she is curiously well-educated and articulate, but poor and reduced to needlework to earn a living. She attends Salem Chapel, but keeps to herself and does not participate in other social activities. She also has an unexplained connection to Lady Western who visits her at her shabby apartment in Back Grove Street. It is after his first visit to Mrs. Hillyard that Vincent sees and falls instantly in love with Lady Western: he steps aside as her carriage passes, then helps her down from her carriage and into the staircase leading to the apartment of the impoverished Mrs. Hillyard. As if to confirm Miss Wodehouse's pronouncement about professional men, marriage, and their positions, at the point where a professional visit intersects with a domestic one, Vincent's "grave thoughts of Salem Chapel" are immediately transformed to thoughts of love. When Vincent later in the novel attends a party at Lady Western's, the hostess is polite to him but doles out her attention equally to all her guests. Vincent's romantic aspirations are crushed and his disappointment motivates a renewed vigor in religious duty.

> Indeed, the date of the young minister's fame—fame which, as everybody acquainted with that town must be aware, was widely diffused beyond Carlingford itself, and even reached the metropolis, and gladdened his Alma Mater at Homerton—might almost be fixed by a reference to Lady Western's

housekeeping book, if she kept any, and the date of her last summer-party. That

event threw the young Nonconformist into just the state of mind which was

wanted to quicken all the prejudices of his education, and give individual force to

all the hereditary limits of thought in which he had been born.

Vincent's mortification at Lady Western's neglect of his attentions "was precisely the same thing

in private life which [repeal of the Toleration Act or reinstatement of a test of Anglican faith]

would have been in public," as if they come in pairs—wife and life's work—and go together

(*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 8). That is, these novels are not just about the difference between domestic

organization and professional administration, but about all the marriages and positions that go

together. It is not just that eligible bachelors and young ladies pair off, but also that organizations

and people pair off.

As the preceding paragraphs indicate, organization in the Carlingford novels is very

different from its depiction in Trollope's sequence—where it took the form of decision

processing. Oliphant's sequence contains more of the local social scene and much more of

domestic matters than the Barsetshire Chronicles do. Despite that, her work also takes up

religious institutions and decision processing, if in a different way than in Trollope's work.

Barchester had one church denomination. Decisions emanating from Barchester Cathedral and

the Bishop's Palace radiated through the organization from within. In Oliphant, there are several

church denominations (both Anglican and Dissenting chapels) and they help show how decisions

made by one organization are handled by other organizations. Despite what has been taken for

the two sequences' many similarities, even on the official side there are important differences

between these two representations of organization. In Carlingford, decisions in one church are

treated by other churches (and even different denominations of the same church) as undecided

propositions. This has far-reaching consequences for the congregation and officials of a church since every decision by one church denomination must be re-decided by the others. It is not just questions of salvation but also more mundane problems of jurisdiction as in *The Perpetual Curate* and *Salem Chapel*: who is in charge of the spiritual care of dock workers, rector or perpetual curate? and who decides the spiritual direction of the populist Dissenting church, pastor or flock? The struggles of religious institutions with overlapping authority dominates the sequence's study of official organization, and bleeds into the portrayal of domestic management that Oliphant compares to official organization.[94]

This chapter focuses on the structural comparability of comfort and decision. This issue is directly addressed in Oliphant's masterpiece, *Miss Marjoribanks*, the fifth novel in the Carlingford sequence. The refrain of the titular character is "to be a comfort to poor, dear Papa" after the death of the matriarch, but where she got the idea that he must be in need of comfort is unclear: "for Dr Marjoribanks was not a man who had any great need of sympathy by nature, or who was at all addicted to demonstrations of feeling" (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 1). The origin of her idea of her father's being in need of comfort comes, naturally, from literature: "for, in such a case as hers, it was evidently the duty of an only child to devote herself to her father's comfort, and become the sunshine of his life, as so many young persons of her age have been known to become in literature" (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 1). But being a comfort is strangely tied up in Lucilla's mind with political economy: "but, dear Miss Martha, you will let me learn all about political economy and things, to help me manage everything; for now that dear mamma is gone, there is nobody but me to be a comfort to papa" (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 1). I will have more to say on this in a moment, but for now, if the household can be managed according to the principles for managing the state, it is both because British ideas of domestic organization scale

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[94] It is important to note that all of the churches in Trollope's sequence are Church of England.

up and down but also because there is considerable overlap in the form and structure of both.

As these remarks indicate, in this chapter I am less interested in particular decisions or particular manifestations of comfort than in the way that organizations—including households—respond to other organizations. Carlingford's claustrophobic attention to little rooms and walled-in gardens is one of the consequences of the turn to systematic environmentalization both of and by large organizations described in such detail in Trollope's Barsetshire sequence. Part of my argument here is that Oliphant addresses herself to organization differently and at different scales. That is, her sequence of novels addresses both organization and organizations. In Oliphant's novels, organization is a local and domestic phenomenon that is tied to larger institutional practices. As officialdom takes up the decisions that make it up, it reveals the pressures of competition that guide and shape institutions. What is surprising in Oliphant is the way that decisions from official organization cross over into the domestic management and life of the family. The household too organizes itself in response to decisions by organizations but does not allow itself to be completely determined by them. But this chapter is about more than the mere points of contact or cross-over between domestic and administrative organization. Rather, I want to suggest that domestic organization is another of the genre forms of modernity, to which I alluded at the end of the last chapter. It examines the organizational logics of Margaret Oliphant's Chronicles of Carlingford, which stages domestic organization as the correlating of enclosures, visits and gatherings, and specifies where women's work fits within the framework of larger organizational orderings of religion. As in Chapter 1, this chapter will begin on the micro scale, taking up doubling and form in women's work (pens and needles, wicks and work-baskets), the world it makes possible, and the moral and religious systems that attempts to give it all meaning.

The Female Trollope

Oliphant criticism has never much admired Oliphant. Perhaps this is why she is called the "female Trollope," especially by critics who see her most famous work as an almost vulgar derivative of Trollope's Barsetshire Chronicles.[95] Even Elisabeth Jay, the author of Oliphant's definitive biography and Oliphant's only great champion since Q. D. Leavis, claimed that the Carlingford Chronicles "ruthlessly exploited the popularity of Trollope's Barsetshire format."[96] Less often accused of such "ruthless" exploitation is Trollope himself, whose second sequence— the Palliser novels—branch out from and extend a minor storyline from his first. The double standard has always been part of Oliphant's critical fate (more on this in a moment), but in this chapter at least, I propose to take seriously Oliphant's copying of Trollope's sequence and look closely at the ramifications of these redoubled doublings. As I have already begun to suggest, if Trollope's later sequence consciously patterns itself on his earlier one, then Oliphant's work doubles down on this phenomenon and patterns itself on Trollope's patterning. She is crafting an artwork about copying.

The extent of the similarities and parallels between the Barsetshire and Carlingford Chronicles have proven an embarrassment both to the critics writing contemporaneously with the novels and to the scholars who came later. When they have not ignored her, even Oliphant's most astute readers have spilled much too much ink trying to differentiate her sequence from Trollope's. John Sutherland attempted to distinguish between Oliphant's Chronicles and Trollope's on the basis of their differing attitudes toward church and doctrine: "Oliphant's Carlingford dramas were less ambitious in their social scope, and more theological in their

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[95] Peterson, Linda H. *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography : The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing*. Charlottesville, VA & London: UP of Virginia, 1999, p. 172.

[96] Jay, Elisabeth. *Mrs Oliphant: "A Fiction to Herself": A Literary Life*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995, p. 198.

content with a nagging preoccupation with religious vocation. (For Trollope, clergymen tended to be Civil Servants in dog-collars.)"[97] But, in the introduction to the most recently published edition of Oliphant's *Phoebe Junior*, the last of the Chronicles of Carlingford, Elizabeth Langland makes just the opposite point, saying that "Oliphant's Chronicles are distinctive within the genre of religious novels in that they place less emphasis on doctrinal issues and theological differences than they do on the relationships between religious institutions and the breadth of Victorian cultural life" (25). These disparate conclusions point to the central observation of Oliphant's sequence. In the course of its shifting attentions to the town's religious organizations—the Dissenting Salem Chapel, St. Roque's and the parish church—and the clergy and parishioners who make them up, questions of doctrine regularly come up. But when the novels focus on doctrine, they do so in one of two ways: either by reflecting on the material incarnations of doctrine, or by reflecting on the difference between domestic and professional work. These material metaphors may be arguments about the theoretical aspects of religious belief, but Oliphant is more concerned with how particular codifications and material incarnations of belief contribute to the organization and structure of a church.

For example, although one pervasive theme of the Carlingford novels is the degree to which any clergyman is "high" (ritualistic, conservative, with a demonstrated preference for form) or "low" (reformist, evangelical), the signs of these ideological positions are material, outward, and figured in ornament: "[a]bove the communion-table, with all its sacred vessels, the carved oaken cross of the reredos was wreathed tenderly with white fragrant festoons of spring lilies" in *The Perpetual Curate* (Ch. 3). The wreath—and what it signifies about Frank Wentworth's high church leanings—displeases his aunts, Low-Church, evangelical Anglicans who make no scruple of attending the Dissenting Salem Chapel to show their dissatisfaction with

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[97] See "Oliphant" in Sutherland, *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction.*

Frank's service. The wreath itself might seem like a minor issue but to the aunts it has major consequences: the Wentworth aunts threaten to withhold from him the family living at Skelmersdale. Wentworth's prospects for a respectable income that will allow him to marry Lucy Wodehouse depend upon a better position than perpetual curate of St. Roque's. He therefore nearly repents his choice to allow the decoration of the church. He also momentarily regrets the rubric to which he is "so faithful," the sisterhood he institutes to minister to the sick and poor, his intoning the service, and his white-robed choristers: "it suddenly flashed over him that, after all, a wreath of spring flowers or a chorister's surplice was scarcely worth suffering martyrdom for" (Ch. 8; Ch. 3). If he decides ultimately that he has done nothing wrong and sacrifices Skelmersdale (later to be redeemed as the Rector of the parish church of Carlingford), he can comfort himself in his continuing and principled application of (the material metaphors of) doctrine. This is the novel turning doctrine into interior decoration, literalizing in the furnishings of the church building—the *media* of religious belief—a structuring principle that codified belief implies.

For these reasons scholars have overestimated Oliphant's concern with the particulars of doctrine, rather than attending to how lectures, "coorses" and sermons invite us analyze the implicit comparative logic of her novels. Rather, I suggest that the sequence's attention to doctrine in its various forms is related to the obvious similarity of the Carlingford novels to the Barsetshire novels. The three denominations and the sequence's obvious concern with doublings within and outside the church raise an important question: how can we disparage Oliphant's sequence for copying Trollope's if Oliphant's novels obviously take such comparisons for granted and make them all the time themselves? Attentive readers will recognize in the question an implicit argument, that despite their focus on churches and church officials, doctrinal

questions are not the main business of these novels. Rather, when they expound upon and catalogue these differences, the novels also implicitly compare religious organizations. But even more broadly, and more importantly for Oliphant's sequence, the comparative logic makes it possible to begin to see the larger contours of organization itself in society, and thus to compare religious organizations to domestic ones.

Along these lines, embedded in Oliphant's novels is a take on the doubling that the larger sequence itself performs, a repetition on a smaller scale of her sequence's doubling of Trollope's expansive universe. The following list contains just a few examples of doubling but gives a sense of its pervasiveness and its structural importance to the sequence. In terms of characters alone, there are many—too many—doublings: Fred Rider, of *The Doctor's Family*, is the pre-figuration of both Jack Wentworth and Tom Wodehouse, who appear together in *The Perpetual Curate* as copies of each other. Reverend Wentworth is a copy of Arthur Vincent and also a copy of his brother Gerald. The Wentworth/Vincent dyad is repeated in Anglican Reginald May and Dissenting minister Horace Northcote of *Phoebe Junior*: "a pair of natural enemies" who are nonetheless "at one … without knowing it" (Ch. 27). Lucy Wodehouse and Lady Western, the two great beauties of Grange Lane, are mirrored in Rosa Elsworthy and Rose Lake of Grove St. The logic of these character doublings is taken to the extreme in the mimic Mrs. Woodburn of *Miss Marjoribanks*, who copies everyone to the extent that she is rarely "in full possession of her own identity" (Ch. 16).

But it is not merely the characters alone that are doubled. As the characters make their way from place to place, we begin to notice doubled environments: Grove Street mirrors Grange Lane, whose names hearken back to domesticated versions of the natural environment. Oliphant's two churches—Established and Dissenting—show the novels making comparisons

between these two large organizations. If in Trollope's Barsetshire Chronicles we saw the inner workings of the Church of England as the internecine, "merry" war between clergymen, here we can analyze organization across institutions. As opposed as the Church of England and the Dissenting Church are (the Dissenting minister of Oliphant's *Salem Chapel* considers Church Establishment as "a profoundly rotten institution"), Oliphant's novel sequence shows us that there is no competition between systems without similarity—or near identity—between those systems. The constant, conscious emulation of each organization by the other reflects on the process by which each church puts its power of interpretation to work, undermining decisions of the other church by reinterpreting and reprocessing them.

The churches, like the parallel Grove Street and Grange Lane, run in parallel organizational and social grooves. This is nowhere more clear than in *Phoebe Junior* in which two clergymen court the same woman. At the dinner parties of Lady Western, where there is an official of one church (Arthur Vincent), the reader can expect to find an official of the other (Frank Wentworth). At the organizational level, work in one overlaps with work in the other, but more importantly, the work of marriage suggests that work in organizations overlaps with the production of domestic harmony. And this begins to suggest that religious organizations are more like the domestic ones than the traditional analysis of separate spheres has suggested.

In addition to the similarities between Oliphant's and Trollope's novel sequences are the multifarious internal doublings (similarities and symmetries of various kinds) that enable and reflect on such comparison to begin with. In *Salem Chapel*, we read that "there were various points of resemblance between" the Nonconformist rector and the perpetual curate of St. Roque's (Ch. 2). This could easily be a meta-fictional description of the Barsetshire and Carlingford sequences themselves. I have already quoted Elizabeth Jay, who wrote that Oliphant's

Chronicles of Carlingford "ruthlessly exploited the popularity of Trollope's Barsetshire format." And I have suggested the function of copying inside Trollope's work and the relationship it had to his postal work. The narratives and structures of Oliphant's novels will feel familiar to Trollope readers. *Phoebe Junior* reads in part like Trollope's *The Last Chronicle of Barset* translated into the Nonconformist domain, but with key differences: instead of a misaddressed check, we have a forged one. That is, one document (a novel?) signed in the name of another.

Oliphant was a publishing machine, more so even than the prolific Trollope, the so-called "novel machine."[98] Both Oliphant and Trollope wrote novels of great length at an incomparable rate, but Oliphant's corpus more than doubles that written by Trollope. Much has been written about Victorian publishing practices and about the relationship between the buying public and Victorian publishers, libraries, and authors, and how regularly doled-out fiction constructed its audience. The copying of Barsetshire into Carlingford becomes something like the reproduction of the regular novelty of Trollope's regular novelty.

This is why disparaging Oliphant for copying Barsetshire does not make sense. If Carlingford's self-descriptions mirror Barchester's self-descriptions, such similarities belie the one important difference between them. In Carlingford, modern organizations are everywhere remediated by other organizations, and most importantly by the home. These differences are also copied into the Carlingford novels themselves. When the freshly minted Dissenting minister arrives in *Salem Chapel*, after his first visit with his congregation, and a mortifying visit from the butterman's blooming daughter, he runs into the Rev. Wentworth:

> They looked at each other, in fact, being much of an age, and not unsimilar in
> worldly means just at the present moment. There were various points of

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[98] Kendrick, Walter M. *The Novel-Machine: The Theory and Fiction of Anthony Trollope*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980.

resemblance between them. Mr Vincent, too, wore an Anglican coat, and assumed a high clerical aspect—sumptuary laws forbidding such presumption being clearly impracticable in England; and the Dissenter was as fully endowed with natural good looks as the young priest. How was it, then, that so vast a world of difference and separation lay between them? For one compensating moment Mr. Vincent decided that it was because of his more enlightened faith, and felt himself persecuted. But even that pretence did not serve the purpose. He began to divine faintly, and with a certain soreness, that external circumstances do stand for something, if not in the great realities of a man's career, at least in the comforts of his life. A poor widow's son, educated at Homerton, and an English squire's son, public school and university bred, cannot begin on the same level. To compensate that disadvantage requires something more than a talent for preaching. (Ch. 2)

As they observe each other on the street, both men's thoughts are swept up into the narrator's description of them. And crucially, the narrator's description contradicts Vincent's later assertion that he and Wentworth cannot "begin on the same level": both men separately comparing themselves to one another are yoked together under the pronoun "they." If at first the meeting hinges on the outward forms, it soon turns into a negotiation of their respective positions (grammatically and socially). Oliphant negotiates the social meaning of difference by putting it into a linguistic and therefore communicative context. Two doctrines, two doubles, self-comparing and implicitly critiquing the other on the basis of their similarity: this meeting between two churchmen highlights the social forms of doctrine, how religious communications divide up religious work.

Oliphant's careful attention to the linguistic and communicative aspects of religious work shows how the *profess*ion of religious belief and doctrine, its communication and dissemination, make up official religious duty.[99] This type of work is obviously made possible by elaborating on the subtle philosophical and doctrinal differences between churches; that is, it is the work of difference itself. But more importantly, as a distinctly modernizing form of work, religious communication entails elaborating the differences between one's decisions and the decision-processing of others. Religious work boils down to re-deciding (endlessly) the question, Is such-and-such sacred or profane? The communications of one church are sacred to its adherents, but profane to all others, and the meat of religious work lies here. In its oscillations between different forms of religious communication means Oliphant appears to be caught up in the doctrinal debates she so meticulously records, but it is not so. Oliphant's intent is to describe the material and social organizations of religion that result from the different incarnations of doctrine.

This scene and its concerns repeat in *Phoebe Junior*, the sequence's final novel, but with more emphasis on the connection between communication and the material metaphors of doctrine. In a chapter entitled "A Pair of Natural Enemies," the curate Reginald May meets his nemesis, the Dissenting minister Horace Northcote. May, who has been given a sinecure overseeing the College—an almshouse for the old and infirm men of Carlingford, an institution not unlike Hiram's Hospital in Trollope's *Barchester Towers*—magnanimously invites Northcote to tour the College. Northcote had a few nights previous to this encounter delivered a stinging rebuke of May and the Church in a speech to his Dissenting congregation. May feels he has the upper hand at first, showing to Northcote the old church attached to the College, the benevolent work and industry of the old men in its care, but later humbly admits that his position

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[99] One sees this even in the structure of the Bible itself: if the old testament is the oral tradition written down, the new testament is a series of letters addressed to no one in particular.

is a sinecure when the Rector commands him to attend to some of the sick and dying at the local hospital. The Rector proclaims before Northcote that he must call upon his lawyer in London about the question of an ornamental screen—a *reredos*—placed behind the altar. Such materialistic—iconographic—displays were forbidden in the Church after an 1874 law excluded certain ritualistic and ornamental displays attached to High Anglicanism (and modeled on Catholic practices). The Rector's assertion that "the reredos question is of the first importance" rings hollow in May's ears standing as he is next to Northcote:

> There is nothing more effectual in show us the weakness of any habitual fallacy or assumption that to hear it sympathetically, through the ears, as it were, of a sceptic [sic]. Reginald, seeing Northcote's keen eyes gleam at the sound of the Rector's voice, instinctively fell into sympathy with him, and heard the speech through him; and though he himself felt the importance of the reredos, yet he saw in a moment how such a question would take shape in the opinion of the young Dissenter, in whom he clearly saw certain resemblances to himself (*Phoebe Junior*, Ch. 12).

But what have these professional and communicative matters to do with the production of comfort in the domestic sphere? It is not just that the form of professional work singled out here—housing, light work, and tending for the elderly—for special attention gives spiritual and physical comfort. Rather, professional organization is everywhere in these novels immediately associated with domestic matters, as when later in the same scene above, May walks with Northcote to do the Rector's bidding at the hospital: "Suddenly, somehow, by a strange law of association, there came into [Northcote's] mind the innocent talk he had overheard between the two girls, who were, he was aware, May's sisters. A certain romantic curiosity about the family

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came into his mind." The terms "suddenly" and "somehow" make the mechanics of the association unclear, but other novels in the sequence lay bare the inner connections between these different forms of organization.

In *Salem Chapel*, in one of the most notable events from the early part of the novel, there is a series of lectures by Arthur Vincent, the Nonconformist minister, who rails against the evils of the Established Church. The lectures, which stage the communication of religious doctrine, are well-attended by members of both the Dissenting and Anglican churches. Vincent's good breeding and eloquence surprises the more genteel Anglicans, but his message of Church corruption surprises these listeners as it delights the Dissenters. During one of the lectures, Rose Lake, the drawing master's daughter becomes distraught listening to Vincent's characterization of the Established Church and tells her father her concerns. But her father "laughed, and told her to attend to her needlework.... Her needlework!" (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 8.).

This exchange neatly lays out the notion of separate spheres but does so in Oliphant's characteristically "gentl[y] subversive" way.[100] Although the boundary between women's work and men's is insisted upon here, Rose's father also marks out the organizational impulse that *connects* what we have long called the "separate spheres" of domestic and professional work. Along the lines I have been arguing, I want to suggest that these spheres are more like than not. They are both comprised of similar operations of sorting out and specifying domains of observation, but what Oliphant's novels reveal is that the specification of these domains *is* organization. That is, just as the lecture marks out the domain of professional religion, needlework marks out a field of domestic observation and records—in the fabric itself—the set of attentions that distinguish the domestic sphere from professional work. As Rose's father

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[100] Trela, D. J. *Margaret Oliphant : Critical Essays on a Gentle Subversive*. Selinsgrove PA & London: Susquehanna UP; Associated University Presses, 1995

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responds to her interruption, he re-interrupts her observation of the lecture, in his diverted attention diverting her from the lecture and back onto her work. Women's work is rather what observation should disappear into: her observation, all the activities of mind and body, should be consumed by domestic occupations.

In Oliphant's telling, there are more parallels between domestic and professional work than Mr. Lake would like to admit. And despite the parallels between Oliphant's and Trollope's sequences, the clergy here are not merely a simple copy of Trollope's bureaucrats in "dog collars." Rather, these clergy produce comfort through professional rather than domestic work. As I have already suggested, this links clerical and domestic work, and also explains why Rose Lake's attention can so easily pass from her lace work to the lecture, and why Mrs. Hilyard, whose room "looked out upon no more lively view than the back of Salem Chapel itself" can be absorbed in her work as she is absorbed in the goings-on at the chapel. Rose's indignation ("Her needlework!") at being told to attend to her needlework suggests not only that her father does not understand how similar the operations of attending to the lecture and attending to needlework are. Rather, what Mr. Lake is blind to is that the two forms of work are, if not interchangeable, both different forms of the same phenomenon. Both the lecture and the lace organize and structure one's relationship to others: decisions are for other people to process while comfort is for others to enjoy.

As Nancy Armstrong first described, the modern individual was "first and foremost a woman" and developed her interiority by translating the "rooms within rooms" of domestic space into "undiscovered territories within the self."[101] Many Victorian novels attest to the strategies by which women produce comfort for others but not for themselves. The production of domestic

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[101] The quotation comes from page 207, but as Armstrong argues earlier in that seminal work, "written representations of the self allowed the modern individual to become an economic and psychological reality" (8).

organization and comfort derives from their vigilant attention to others through scrupulous self-denial, or from the constant self-reflection that others in the household are in need of comfort. But as Armstrong's argument already suggests, this other-directed attention helps prevent their self- and other-observations from becoming an *ouroboros*. This line of thought is articulated in *Miss Marjoribanks*:

> [W]hen a woman has an active mind, and still does not care for parish work, it is a little hard for her to find a "sphere." And Lucilla, though she said nothing about a sphere, was still more or less in that condition of mind which has been so often and so fully described to the British public—when the ripe female intelligence, not having the natural resource of a nursery and a husband to manage, turns inwards, and begins to "make a protest" against the existing order of society, and to call the world to account for giving it no due occupation—and to consume itself. (Ch. 42)

The haven for a woman consumed by too much reflection is in organizing her environment: in establishing relationships between the people and things that make up a household, she produces comfort. This is why in *Miss Marjoribanks* the great work of the novel turns out to be the renovation—the re-papering and refurnishing—of the drawing-room. The green wallpaper and furnishings do not merely complement Miss Marjoribanks's green dress and ribbons. Although she disappears into this backdrop and becomes part of the world she organized for "the comfort of dear papa," instead of her reflective mind consuming itself, the room consumes her. Her disappearance into this backdrop makes it possible to bring others together for their diversion and entertainment. The renovation of the room facilitates the renovation of the neighborhood and Carlingford society. The arrangement and organization of the living has its

counterpart in the organization and arrangement of the living room. The renovation of the drawing room re-suits it to its new purpose as social manufactury.

Armstrong argues that it was women readers who first internalized and emulated the models of interiority they read about in fiction (and conduct literature) and "established modern domesticity as the only haven from the trials of a heartless economic world" (8). But reading the quotation from *Miss Marjoribanks* above suggests that this is only partly right. Oliphant shows that the logic of separate spheres fails to account for the high degree of correlation between the organized professional sphere and the equally organized domestic one. The apparent gulf between them is in fact bridged by the type of work that goes into making up both translate each other: observation and its recording. This suggests also that there is no such thing as "professional" domesticity, despite recent claims to the contrary. (Equally suspect is its double, domesticated professionalism.) These points invite us to reconsider the notion that the comfort experienced in the home is an escape from economic activity and heartless business as Armstrong suggests. The organizations and institutions of the sequence novel are not solely capitalist structures, but rather systems of very different composition that nonetheless invite comparison. To leave the domain of professional organization and step into the domestic one is to exchange forms of organization, one for the other. This is why Oliphant's many characters are at home in both.

Particular Little World

Evaluative comparisons—to Trollope, to George Eliot, to hack writers—have become part of Oliphant's critical fate.[102] Oliphant herself is not immune to reflecting on the comparisons

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[102] Consider Trela's *Margaret Oliphant: A Gentle Subversive*, in which he argues in that "her actual work subverts the scholarly impression of it" (12).

she read about herself, or even of indulging in comparing herself to other Victorian novelists. This is perhaps one reason for the odd characterization of her novels in her autobiography, which reads as both self-critique and self-defense: "They are my work, which I like in the doing, which is my natural way of occupying myself which are never so good as I meant them to be." A few sentences after she wrote the preceding remark, she speculated that had she been kept in a "mental greenhouse" like George Eliot, she might have produced better work, or at least might have received the same remuneration from half the number of published novels. But as the name *Mrs.* Oliphant reminds us—the name printed on the title pages of her novels—her domestic situation is indelibly imprinted on her written work in a way that Eliot's made-up name is not. Oliphant's domestic troubles have been well-documented: the early deaths of her seven children, and the death of her ne'er-do-well husband after seven years of marriage, the intrusion of her alcoholic brothers whom she cared for, and the demands of nieces for whom she provided. Given these factors, it was not possible for Oliphant to write less than she did because her only source of income came from writing. That is to say, instead of a greenhouse, Oliphant was kept inside her drawing room writing in the midst of a constantly expanding family and there produced a constantly expanding corpus of novels, stories, articles, and critical essays.

The impress of this arrangement can be felt not only in the fecundity of her genius, but in the extreme localism—what Oliphant calls the "local world" and the "particular little world"—of the Carlingford Chronicles (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 8; *The Rector*, Ch. 1). Local and particular, concentrated and restricted: in Oliphant these words go together as Trollope and "the gentleman" do. The renovation of the drawing room in *Miss Marjoribanks* is merely one of the more memorable realizations in print of Oliphant's "mental greenhouse." Lucilla Marjoribanks, the "large and blooming young woman" wearing all green and almost totally absorbed by the

entirely green room, seems to be a partly comic description of Oliphant herself. As we drill down through the nested enclosures of Oliphant's Carlingford, we find a novelistic environment that self-constricts, that responds to the pressures of giving attention to an expanding cast of characters by carving out small spaces and particularizing them by re-decorating them, so that character and space are exactly suited to one another. In the organizational ecology of Oliphant's Carlingford, the mental greenhouse translates into the nested interiors of the psyche and the soul itself: "Perhaps the labours of a sisterhood of mercy required a special organisation even of the kind female soul" (*The Doctor's Family*, Ch. 13).

Oliphant's "The Rector" begins by examining two forms of the "mental greenhouse," a garden—a particular little world featuring overlapping forms of nature and cultivation—and a woman sitting in it whose interiority has attained the required "special organisation." The description in this novella triangulates three important themes that I will focus on in the rest of this chapter, the garden, women's work, and mental activity.

> Though she was verging upon forty, leisurely, pious, and unmarried, that good Miss Wodehouse was not polemical. She had 'her own opinions,' but few people knew much about them. She was seated on a green garden-bench which surrounded the great May-tree in that large, warm well-furnished garden. The high brick walls, all clothed with fruit-trees, shut in an enclosure of which not a morsel except this velvet grass, with its nests of daisies, was not under the highest and most careful cultivation.

Miss Wodehouse's well-honed private opinions immediately translate into the well-furnished and carefully cultivated garden. That is to say that, like the mental greenhouse, a woman's private thoughts are not mere reflections of her surrounding and environment. Rather, her

thoughts are consumed by and disappear into the order and arrangement of her environment. They are thus intimately related to environmental conditions, translated here and elsewhere in the Carlingford Chronicles by private gardens, stuffed-full rooms, and walled-in streets. Carlingford does not feature the stormy, wide open spaces of other mid-century novels such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) or Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) in which interior states are copied into descriptions of the weather and vice versa; rather, this is an extended network of small, almost fully enclosed environments that connect to and are connected by the people who inhabit them. In a strange form of coevolution, or epigenetic development, the "angel of the house" becomes one of the "things" of the household, an ornament with the power to organize.

Oliphant's correlation of greenhouse, psyche, and novel form indicates that environments, fictions, and their observation can be cultivated to produce refined forms of comfort. This is why Oliphant imagines psychic states in terms of local enclosures and ecosystems: characters take pleasure in or are irritated by their environment. As I have already hinted, *Miss Marjoribanks* bears this out. It is a drawing-room world whose "reorganisation" is possible through forms of mental and social cultivation: Lucilla Marjoribanks studies political economy, "calculate[s] upon everybody," and succeeds in renovating Carlingford society through introducing small, calculated changes into regular social gatherings. The most notable change is her "Thursdays," evening gatherings that make "so entire a revolution in the taste and ideas of Carlingford":

> "Don't expect any regular invitation," Miss Marjoribanks said. "I hope you will all
> come, or as many of you as can. Papa has always some men to dinner with him
> that day, you know, and it is so dreadfully slow for me with a heap of men. That
> is why I fixed on Thursday. I want you to come every week, so it would be absurd

to send an invitation; and remember it is not a party, only an Evening," said

Lucilla. (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 10)

The renovation of the day of the week takes material form in the renovation of her drawing room. Before she launches upon her mission to reorganize Carlingford society, Lucilla worries that people will attend the first Thursday gathering out of simple curiosity, to see the room's new furnishings. But as she knows, furnishings can only provide so much comfort. The continuing attraction is in part the regular novelty of reconnecting the disparate elements of Grange Lane society. But more importantly, Lucilla cultivates her domestic genius by weekly innovations on the original idea of her Thursdays. As good society wants to see and be seen, Lucilla conceives of new ways for society to observe and comment upon itself: her singing companion Barbara Lake, her "useful" flirting men. This society knows it is not the equal of Society in London or Paris; it is almost entirely inward looking. Lucilla's drawing room is where good society makes and remakes itself, after the fashion of its hostess who remakes her environment. In the crucible of her drawing room, the "raw material[s]" of Grove Street and Grange Lane become good society (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 11, Ch. 17).

It is on one of her Thursday gatherings that Lucilla first has the idea of retiring from the drawing room to the walled-in garden. The movement *en masse* of the gathered from enclosed to walled-in (that is, also enclosed) space, realizes exactly the translation of mental greenhouse, of the migration of internal thought to environmental condition. And it happens not once but repeatedly in the novel: Lucilla renovates the garden for Mrs. Mortimer who in turn renovates herself, "grown younger by ten years," and in the garden meets her past lover and future husband Archdeacon Beverly (*Miss Marjoribanks,* Ch. 22) The relationship between the greenhouse as a constructed environment—which is to say one whose relationship to the "natural" is already

under pressure—and the naturalizing forms of the living that it houses, reminds us that the production of life and art are not merely contingent, nor even just linked, but dependent on the production of organization itself and the maintenance of homeostasis in environments.

On this view, Oliphant's fecundity is a consequence of her imbrication in the family fabric and family space. The dissimilarity between greenhouse and drawing room belies their comparability. The greenhouse is an architectural form devoid of the impress of human relations. Moreover, its transparency, which enables the proliferation and cultivation of the forms of the living, suggests both its continuity with its environment and separation from it. Similarly, the mental greenhouse, like the novel as Oliphant's novels suggest, is a place where human relationships are cultivated and depends upon a carefully constructed environment. This suggests that women's work is both engine behind the constructedness of the environment in which it finds itself and naturalized component of it.

If these novels double down on the similarity of Carlingford to Barsetshire, it is through intensifying its particularity and disconnection from the outside world but also by showing how internal elements fit together and how they relate to their environment. In *The Doctor's Family*, for instance, a lodging house called St. Roque's cottage stands next to the picturesque St. Roque's cathedral. The proprietor of the lodging house wishes to put up a wall between the lodging house and cathedral, along a line of willows growing beside a brook, but the perpetual curate of St. Roque's insists that their separation by a wall is not necessary, not least because it would block the view from the church garden. The proprietor of the lodging house settles for a "wooden paling" which makes the church and brook on the other side of it "invisible," but which is still porous enough that "poking into the invisible brook through the paling, was the eldest boy, silent from sheer delight in the unexpected pleasure of coating himself with mud without

remark" (*The Doctor's Family*, Ch. 5).

Such minor forms of disconnection are reflected in descriptions of Carlingford itself. It is "a considerable town, it is true, nowadays, but then there are no alien activities to disturb the place—no manufactures, and not much trade. And there is a very respectable amount of very good society at Carlingford. To begin with, it is a pretty place—mild, sheltered, not far from town…" ("The Rector," Ch. 1). When alien characters turn up in Carlingford, their fit with the environment is the theme of their existence. For instance, when in *The Doctor's Family* Nettie says that in Australia "things are so different," it describes the remoteness of Carlingford itself more than it does the colony so far away (*The Doctor's Family*, Ch. 14). Carlingford is one stop in a world of branches, branch lines and outposts; it is a series of "little worlds." In *Salem Chapel*, the Anglican bookstore is "a branch of the London Masters" where the Dissenting minister Arthur Vincent re-encounters in miniature the town of Carlingford: his "intrusion" among the patricians of Grange Lane, experiences the mortification of being ignored, sees Lady Western, the widow with whom he is infatuated, and stands off to the side while the bookseller's attendants wait upon her (Ch. 6).

Later in *Salem Chapel*, on Vincent's trip out of a railway station and into the bustling streets of London, he is confronted with a disorienting ebb and flow of people entering and leaving the train platform. It returns to a more comfortable peace and quiet only after the train sets all those bodies in motion. If Carlingford is only minimally connected to London and the rest of the empire, it demonstrates the degree to which the self-evident organization of the world makes self-orientation possible: when Vincent gets off the train (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 24), "it was some minutes before he could collect himself, and understand where he was." The ability to orient oneself on unfamiliar train platforms testifies to a familiarity-effect generated by modern

transport technology, even though each platform resembles the one that began the journey. As the German saying goes, "*ich verstehe nur Bahnhof*."[103] This is because, wherever they are going, the modern world rides on the same rails, always arriving just ahead of its fellow passengers.

The disconnection which gives Carlingford its feeling of privacy and exclusive society is thus linked to the branching of the modern transportation system. Intentional provincialism and disconnection from the trends of larger British society characterize the social life of Carlingford: if it is "not far from town," London is nonetheless not the center of this "particular little world." Carlingford is instead defined by an extreme localism that centers on its religious outposts, which reflect and reflect on their distance from the "centers" of English institutional life: London, Oxford University, and even Homerton College, the dissenting academy where Nonconformist ministers are trained. Carlingford's churches seem to connect it to the larger religious life of the nation, but in reality the town's society is almost entirely centered upon itself (and this fact seems in turn to be the cause of its reputation for good society): "It is the boast of the place that it has no particular interest—not even a public school: for no reason in the world but because they like it, have so many nice people collected together in those pretty houses in Grange Lane—which is, of course, a very much higher tribute to the town than if any special inducement had led them there" (*The Perpetual Curate*, Ch. 1). That is, the interests, troubles, and turmoil of the rest of the world is neither here nor there. But as if to enforce its disconnection from from London, there is no single center but rather a number of centers. On the one hand, in *The Perpetual Curate*, Oliphant's narrator claims that if there is a "centre" to town life, it is the clergy:

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[103] Literally, "I'm standing on the train platform," but its idiomatic translation in English would be "it's all Greek to me."

But in every community some centre of life is necessary. This point, round which

everything circles, is, in Carlingford, found in the clergy. They are the

administrators of the commonwealth, the only people who have defined and

compulsory duties to give a sharp outline to life. Somehow this touch of necessity

and business seems needful even in the most refined society: a man who is

obliged to be somewhere at a certain hour, to do something at a certain time, and

whose public duties are not volunteer proceedings, but indispensable work, has a

certain position of command among a leisurely and unoccupied community, not to

say that it is a public boon to have some one whom everybody knows and can talk

of. (*The Perpetual Curate*, Ch. 1)

The term "commonwealth" indicates both the interests of the state but more importantly the local

and communal cares of the town and its environs. The Church and Dissenting church manage the

spiritual care of the nation, but the business of the local clergy is to administer and minister to

local society.

As business, the "sharp outline" that defines religious duty also gives sharp outline to

domestic social activities. The Carlingford sequence is very concerned with the boundaries

between official and domestic organization. in the Dissenting church, these questions can be

taken up by lay-people just as they can by the appointed minister. Not surprisingly, Carlingford

doubles down once more, emphasizing the parallels between domestic and business life. Because

its society is so inward looking, its social centers are made from the interior spaces of domestic

life. Miss Marjoribanks's drawing room is thus another center of town life:

Affairs were in an utterly chaotic state at the period when this record commences.

There was nothing which could be properly called a centre in the entire town. To

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be sure, Grange Lane was inhabited, as at present, by the best families in Carlingford; but then, without organisation, what good does it do to have a number of people together? (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 3)

The opening sentences of this paragraph plainly contradict the previous quotation above, but this is less an indictment of Oliphant as a less-than-careful novelist than it is a recognition of the way that local society connects to the institutions of larger society but also makes its own from itself. If the "proper" center of town life is the clergy, elite society adds to it another "proper" center, made from its own self-constructed environment.

Just as Oliphant's novel sequence doubles down on the parallels and symmetries that connect it to Barsetshire, the novels use these centers to multiply the parallels (and hence disconnections) between different "societies," both high and low. This is why even though the calculus of social relations are the constant focus of Lucilla, who "pay[s] great attention and stud[ies] the combinations," it is very clear that certain combinations do not add up (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 8). Both the social compression and segregation of Carlingford society is intimately related to the descriptions of the built-up Carlingford environment.

If the engines of this sequence are the two streets—the parallel grooves of Grange Lane and Grove Street—that contain and channel both polite and vulgar society in Carlingford, they are also socially worlds apart and are almost totally closed in on themselves: when Mr. Wentworth exits from the Wodehouse's Grange Lane house through little "green door," he emerges into a "dusty, straight street" walled in on both sides, the ends of which are not in sight ("The Rector," Ch. 1). And not surprisingly, one exits from Lady Western's garden through a "green door" to stand "in Grange Lane between the two blank lines of garden-wall" (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 7). Here we find what we might call the religion of society in Carlingford, "the

magic circle of Grange Lane": its garden-walls give "a far-withdrawing perspective of gentility and aristocratic seclusion," for they mark the "regions of the blest" (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 13; *Salem Chapel*, Ch. 9; *Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 10). On the other side of those walls, inside the society so enclosed, it is "a world of heterogeneous elements," where through a species of alchemy and social experimentation, the "chaotic elements of society in Carlingford [becomes] one grand unity" (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 10; Ch. 18). Indeed, one finds at the center of Grange Lane another of those "centre[s] of Carlingford," the green-papered drawing room of Dr. Marjoribanks, where Grange Lane society is received: "[e]verything was as calm and cheerful and agreeable as if Carlingford had been a social paradise, and Miss Marjoribanks's drawing-room the seventh heaven of terrestrial harmony" (*Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 26; Ch. 16).

In obvious ways, Carlingford's other lesser "heavens" of social life are less cheerful and agreeable buildings and social groups. In addition to the High and Low Anglican church buildings and congregations, Grove Street is home to the even "lower" Dissenting chapel—a "preaching shop" that dispenses salvation (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 4). Grove Street, in contrast to Grange Lane, is "contracted," "real and solid," and there is no "separatin', like heathens, when all's of one connection" (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 1). If Grange Lane has its exclusive green doors and quiet gardens, Grove Street has both public shop entrances and private doors leading to overfull rooms. Grange Lane's comparative Edenic calm throws into relief the bustling, vulgar markets of Grove Street. Here both shop and home are not merely connected, but rather one grand space. In the Tozer's house, "happy privacy was in a little parlour, which, being on the same floor with the butter-shop, naturally was not without a reminiscence of the near vicinity of all those hams and cheeses —a room nearly blocked up by the large family-table, at which, to the disgust of Phoebe, the apprentices sat at meal-times along with the family" (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 4). There is almost

no separation of the domestic and commercial aspects of these overlapping organizations, the cheese shop and the family that runs it. Rather, one finds in its domestic spaces an overcompensation of domesticity, an uncomfortable and undomestic room "choke-full" and "nearly blocked up by the large family-table;" and on the other side a similar overabundance of commerce, so that "whenever the door was opened, the odours of bacon and cheese from the shop came in [to the dining room] like a musty shadow of the boiled ham and hot sausages within" (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 8; Ch. 4).

Grove Street is populated by tradesmen and their families, and this class makes up the congregation of Dissenters and Nonconformists at Salem Chapel: it is the "[g]reengrocers, dealers in cheese and bacon, milkmen, with some dressmakers of inferior pretensions, and teachers of day-schools of similar humble character, [who] formed the élite of the congregation" of Salem Chapel (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 1.). Grange Lane, on the other hand is full of "exclusive houses … where the aristocracy of Carlingford lived retired within their garden walls" (*The Doctor's Family*, Ch. 1). Not all of the differences between these two classes are so easy to measure in part because these societies develop in parallel and model themselves on one another: "the grim pews of Salem Chapel blushed with bright colours, and contained both dresses and faces on the summer Sundays which the Church itself could scarcely have surpassed" (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 1). Their differences are the basis for comparison and distinctions: the "aristocracy of Carlingford live retired within their garden walls" while the dissenters' names are "known to society only as appearing, in gold letters, upon the backs of those mystic tradesmen's books which were deposited every Monday in little heaps at every house in Grange Lane" (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 1). That is, for the inhabitants of each street, the inhabitants of the other are characters they have heard tell of. But what have streets and gardens to do with domestic (i.e.

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women's) work? These are the "heterogeneous elements" out of which society is made. In the next section, I will look at how these things are bound up with women's work and how they produce domestic organization and comfort.

Pens and Needles, Carpets and Laces, or the Medium of Form

One of the consequences of reinterpreting Oliphant's work in terms of enclosures suggested by the mental greenhouse is a renewed focus on domestic organization. Women's work—especially needlework—features prominently in each of these novels. It is represented alongside the social relationships that it reflects on, and we often see the novels making associations between, for example, knitting and the so-called "social" fabric. To return to the garden (above) in which Miss Wodehouse sits with her private thoughts while observing two flirting young lovers, her sister Lucy Wodehouse and Rev. Wentworth, we learn that the elder "Miss Wodehouse was knitting" ("The Rector", Ch. 1). This is one literalization of the relationship of women's work to the social fabric. Or when Vincent brings his mother to visit Mrs. Hillyard, he feels himself trapped in "the meshes of fate," as Mrs Hillyard sews the "coarse blue stuff," while she converses with his mother (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 14; Ch. 11). Women's needlework translates the forms and patterns of social reproduction. Any illustration in a women's sewing guide from the nineteenth century shows various images of things to be made by needlework: in addition to clothes and baby clothes, there are patterns for bonnets, draperies and linen for baby cribs and other furniture, etc. This conscious patterning of needlework is not merely busywork, work designed to fill allotted time, nor is it just that women's needlework is purely functional, keeping a family in clothes or work designed to assist the poor.

Those things are true of needlework, but as Talia Schaffer points out, reading and sewing are linked activities for nineteenth-century women (and perhaps especially for women authors).

Elizabeth Gaskell "taught her daughter to sew and read together, one word and six stitches a day" (*Novel Craft*, 63). Word counts and stitch counts, needles and pens, these instruments and their output make up society in much the same way: novel writing is what women's work looks like when it is translated into the realm of letters. It is no wonder that novelistic patterns reflect and reflect on needlework and its patterns. Needlework is partly social and partly communicative and like novels reflects on the forms that society can take.

I have already mentioned Rose Lake's Honiton lace, which she was instructed to attend to instead of listening to Arthur Vincent's lectures on the evils of church establishment. Rose's lace is not the only needlework in the sequence. The other prominent example is as I have already mentioned, the occupations of Mrs. Hillyard attest in *Salem Chapel*. Rose's lace and Mrs. Hillyard's sewing are domestic work that happens alongside but not in concert with the intellectual and religious pursuits. As she sits in her rooms, which "looked out upon no more lively view than the back of Salem Chapel," and sews the "course blue stuff" which stains her hands, her life appears to be nothing more than sewing and observing what goes on in Salem Chapel: "As for me, I interest myself in what is going on close by, Mr Vincent. I am quite absorbed in the chapel" (*Salem Chapel*, Ch. 2; Ch. 5). Here domestic work becomes so transparent to Hillyard that she sees through it to the intellectual engagement and religious comfort that the Church's operations provide. In this way the performance of these occupations are how the novels imagine religious and moral ideals in a state of becoming, but in other forms. Women and clergy produce the outlines of a future life of comfort and ease that will be lived by others.

In *Miss Marjoribanks* we learn that Rose's lacework won a prize at an art exhibition. Rose's lace links utility and art, comfort and beauty. Her family's artistic talents, of which

Rose's talent with the needle is one, transforms them into a "rank" or "class" of their own, as she repeatedly asserts. As residents of Grove Street, they are closer in wealth to tradesmen and the working class, but their education and artistic talents—Mr. Lake is a painter, Barbara a talented singer—make it possible for them to associate with the elite of Grange Lane. This is what, in another world, Oliphant's novels were supposed to have done for her family. If it is not socially productive in the same way as domestic needlework that produces clothes for family or for the poor, it at least offers the family a way to compare itself to the wealthier class. That is, artistic needlework does not produce the forms of clothing to be filled out by future generations or future selves (growing children)—Rose's lacework meticulously copies forms (leaves, flowers) from the natural world into the repeating patterns of lacework. It is domestic work in another sense, in that it too offers comforts and compensations, contributing to the intellectual (and religious) life of the community.

The repeating patterns of Rose Lake's lacework have their corollary in the repeating carpet patterns of the Rector's house in *The Perpetual Curate*. The carpet, which was installed by the previous Rector—the bachelor Morley Proctor who has a bachelor's taste in furnishings—displeases Mrs. Morgan, the wife of the new Rector. When Proctor pays a visit to the Rector and his wife,

> Mr Proctor's chair was placed on the top of one of the big bouquets, which expanded its large foliage round him with more than Eastern prodigality—but he was so little conscious of any culpability of his own in the matter, that he had referred his indignant hostess to one of the leaves as an illustration of the kind of diaper introduced into the new window which had lately been put up in the chapel of All-Souls. (Ch. 31)

The bouquets on the carpet are a "grievance" to her, and the "first idea which usually suggested itself on the entrance of visitors—...was, what could they possibly think of her if they supposed the carpet, &c., to be her own choice?" (*The Perpetual Curate*, Ch. 1; Ch. 5). The carpet "had been the first cross of her married life" and it is only when we consider Miss Marjoribanks's "beautiful new carpet" which is the counterpoint to Mrs. Morgan's "objectionable" one that we see its relationship to domestic organization (*The Perpetual Curate*, Ch. 1; *Miss Marjoribanks*, Ch. 12). The distinction between Miss Marjoribanks's carefully chosen carpet as the medium most conducive to her project stands in sharp relief against the inherited carpet of Mrs. Morgan. Mrs. Morgan can command little in the way of respect as the Rector's wife because her guests might object to the carpet, might notice it. What Lucilla Marjoribanks is able to realize but Mrs Morgan is not, is that to be effective as a medium for social intercourse, the carpet (indeed the entire environment) must be attractive enough to convey a sense of comfort and ease to guests, but must above all remain *beneath* notice. As soon as the environment demands attention by itself, the spell of polite society is broken, and a dignified social engagement can quickly devolve into an awkward and mortifying situation.

What these situations look like and what they amount to are not so hard to define because Oliphant gives many examples. I have already mentioned the disarray caused in "The Executor" because of an irregularity regarding a will. Oliphant's domestic comfort confronts professional decision when three clergymen meet at the house of Frank Wentworth, the titular character in *The Perpetual Curate*. The purpose of the meeting is to convince Wentworth's brother Gerald to abandon his plan to leave the clergy of the Church of England to become a Catholic priest. Gerald's crisis of faith comes after struggling to reconcile his high Anglican beliefs with the Church of England. The situation is awkward not just because he is a priest of the Established

Church defecting to the Catholic Church. Gerald is also married and has children (and has not yet realized that he cannot therefore become a Catholic priest), and is unable to see the ruin that awaits his wife and family if he abandons his living.

Wentworth, after many appeals from his sister-in-law, has invited Mr. Proctor, the former Rector of the Parish church, to assist him in the task of turning Gerald back to the Church. But in the middle of the meal, after several awkward attempts by the Rector to convince Gerald of his error, and several even more awkward refusals and rebuffs by Gerald, the case proves hopeless. Just at this moment Wentworth is abruptly called away from the table and into his study. There he learns that a girl who has been missing has been seen by his aunt. Wentworth has wrongly been suspected of having had sex with the girl and hiding her to preserve his position at St. Roque's. In fact the girl has eloped with another man of dishonest intentions. Upon hearing his aunt's account of having just seen the girl, Wentworth leaves suddenly without saying goodbye to his guests or notifying his servants. Meanwhile, Gerald and Mr. Proctor sit silently at table, and wait patiently for Wentworth's return:

> They had now been sitting for more than two hours over that bottle of Lafitte, many thoughts having in the mean time crossed Mr Proctor's mind concerning the coffee and the Curate. Where could he have gone? and why was there not somebody in the house with sense enough to clear away the remains of dessert, and refresh the wearied interlocutors with the black and fragrant cup which cheers all students? Both of the gentlemen had become seriously uneasy by this time; the late Rector got up from the table when he could bear it no longer. "Your brother must have been called away by something important," said Mr Proctor, stiffly. "Perhaps you will kindly make my excuses. Mr Morgan keeps very regular hours,

and I should not like to be late—" (*The Perpetual Curate*, Ch. 35)

Between the arrival of the coffee and/or the return of the curate: Wentworth's guests are perched on the event horizon of domestic organization between the orderly progression of the meal and disorder and despair. Their distress goes unobserved and unremarked in the household, except by them. This situation is the exact opposite of Lucilla Marjoribanks's evenings, in which not only every movement, word, dish, and entertainment was designed with the sole purpose of delighting her guests, but the guests themselves were invited because their peculiar social talents were exactly suited to the kind of evening Lucilla wished to provide them. Wentworth's inattention both to his selection of guests and to how they should get on without him destroys what little chance there was of a good society between the men.

Alongside the daily work of these men of business there is another form of organization necessary here, but they are unable to see how to manage it, or even how to commence upon that work. Rather than rouse the servants, Mr. Proctor and Gerald sit and wonder where those servants are. In its smooth operation, refined domestic organization is, like the carpet in Lucilla's drawing room, invisible. If Gerald wishes to throw over one church institution for another, he is utterly unconscious and uncaring of the difficulties it will cause his wife and children. Wentworth—who is all duty—ignores the needs of his guests. It is as if they expect that domestic order somehow merely happens. Lucilla Marjoribanks especially, and the cast of housewives, sisterhoods, and domestic servants in general of Carlingford, show that the domestic sphere is a highly structured production whose deity is comfort. In Oliphant's world as in ours, organization is everywhere and must be maintained with something like religious conviction (if not sacrifice). But they also show that the two apparently unrelated forms of organization—that

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of home and office—that each make up half of the "separate spheres" nonetheless belong to the same family.

Chapter 3

The Anti-Sequence Novel: Henry James's *The Tragic Muse* and

the Systematic Production of Individual Choice

"Art makes visible only the inevitability of order as such."

–Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*

Introduction

From the so-called "middle period" of Henry James's career, few James novels are subject to a lower critical and popular estimation than is *The Tragic Muse* (1889–90). Critics and readers alike have long agreed with James that the novel is problematic, not least because it does not exhibit the single dramatized "center of consciousness" for which James is known. This narratological shorthand is best understood as the focalizing of a third-person story through the psychological perspective of a character with minimal explicit intervention from a narrator, and *The Tragic Muse* famously departs from this "ideal" Jamesian narrative form because it divides (or doubles) its focus between at least three main characters, two of which function as "centers." The scholarship on the novel almost universally sees this multiplication of main characters as James himself did when he expressed his "horror" at the novel's "two portraits in one."

In the novel, the "two portraits" divide the story between a "political case" and an "aesthetic life," while the plot accordingly oscillates between art and politics for both

protagonists Nick Dormer and Miriam Rooth. In the critical discussion of this novel, we have, seemingly almost inevitably, focused on questions about "representation" in art and politics. This chapter attempts to move beyond this debate and to turn the conversation away from the status of representation in *The Tragic Muse*. Because this story relates how not one, but two main characters opt for a life of art over politics, we might instead begin again by assuming that this novel is less about how art or politics represent than it is a meditation on how its characters choose between art and politics.

In *Henry James and the Art of Power* (1984), Mark Seltzer has suggested that the "entanglement" of art and politics is on display in this novel (155), but, as we will see, both characters and systems of *The Tragic Muse* in fact aggressively resist their entanglement.[104] The artist Miriam's repeated rejection of the politician Peter Sherringham's offers of marriage must mean at least that entanglement is the wrong word, just as the artist Nick's ambivalence about Julia Darrow and politics makes the choice for art more attractive. It is perhaps the overlap of so many themes and characters that invites the assessment that politics and art are entangled. But ultimately the baroque symmetries and yet sequestration of its two plots, not to mention the elliptically laid out reversals, repetitions, and mirrorings, emphasize not their entanglement but the autonomy of each system. We are left instead with a second-order sense of the structural parallels and differences between art and politics as systems. But where Trollope and Oliphant traced such organization of organizations across their sequences, James compresses, as it were, the monstrous sequence structure into a single novel. The upshot—most obviously found in the story's constraint to charting its two characters and their careers—is that the form of the single novel comes into focus as about the systematic production of individual choice, here captured through a twinning of that Jamesian pole star, the forever-undecided consciousness in the midst

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[104] Seltzer, Mark. Henry James & the Art of Power. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984.

of its decisions.

Criticism on the *The Tragic Muse* has avoided both choice and its role in the reproduction of systems. As James's so-called most theatrical fictional work, it is has also recently been called a "confrontation of issues and situations that mattered profoundly to James: art, the theater, sex, power, and the various uses of 'representation'."[105] This sums up the issues and situations that matter profoundly to critics of this James novel as well. Not surprisingly, representation is the expected link between art and politics, especially since several passages foreground representation as a theme. It is worth revisiting what Mark Seltzer wrote in 1984 about James scholarship to understand the degree of the resistances involved here: "Criticism of James has always been Jamesian, and this is the case not merely because James, in his own criticism and especially in his prefaces … has so comprehensively set the terms for his own evaluation but also because Anglo-American criticism of the novel … has proceeded along the lines that James has so clearly drawn" (14).

Looking instead at these strange "little systems" affords an opportunity to resist the commonplaces of Jamesian criticism and the givenness of representation as the logic that "explains" the presence of art and politics in James. But even beyond allowing us to step outside the Jamesian critical cosmos, little systems help us understand how, on the threshold of the twentieth century, the larger art system manufactured its autonomy. Richard Menke's *Telegraphic Realism* (2008) and Mark Goble's *Beautiful Circuits* (2010) offer sophisticated analyses of the media and communicative networks that populate James's later fiction. Menke outlines the degree to which the communication networks James's fiction stages are also forms

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[105] Brooks, Peter. *Henry James Goes to Paris*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2007, p. 80.

of "social practice."[106] These works show how the language of communication and systems makes it possible to describe the conjoint emergence of modern professions and modern individuals, and how both are linked to modern concepts of choice.

The Tragic Muse is the story of two families as much as it is the story of the modern renovation of two social systems. On one side are the Dormers, a family of minor aristocracy and fading wealth headed by the widow Lady Agnes. Her husband, a former MP, leaves her and their children rather poorly off after his death, as the estate winds up in the hands of an aloof son who takes little care to provide for his mother, sisters and brother. Lady Agnes's daughters, Biddy and Grace, share her hope that Nick will reclaim the family's mantle in politics by marrying his cousin, the widow Julia Dallow. Julia's wealth and ambition make her an effective antidote to the family's reduced position. Julia's brother, Peter Sherringham, holds a minor ambassadorial post in Paris, and forms the bridge between the two plots. His romantic and professional political interests in the characters on the other side of the multi-plot structure are centered in Miriam Rooth. Miriam and her mother, destitute after the death of Mr. Rooth, a Jewish pawnbroker, look to Miriam's training in theater to provide them with a sufficient income to live. In the deaths of both Mr. Rooth and Sir Nicholas Dormer crucial elements of partriarchal logic and control are swept away. The feudal logic of politics and class are on the decline, as is the impotence of Mr Rooth's capitalism. Family, patriarchy here are replaced by the purer functionalism of systems. This is why at the end of the novel Miriam marries not Peter and not for love but rather her manager and for the art system.

Early reviews remarked upon the absence of any content to the narrative. One critic claimed that "the issues and interests at stake … are slight, not to say trivial, in essence, or

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[106] Menke, Richard. Telegraphic Realism : Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2008, p. 192.

postponed and attenuated to the merest nothingness" (Gard 1968, 195).[107] Another anonymous

reviewer in the September 1890 issue of *The Spectator* overstates the case by arguing that "were

the narrative summarized, it would be seen that Mr. James has all but realized that noble but

perhaps unattainable idea,—a novel without any story at all" (204).[108] Not merely aspiring to the

condition of music, these attenuations and postponements and the near absence of story deflect

focus from the *bildung* of artists or politicians, turning it instead to communicative and social

process of art and politics. Caught between alternative careers, the characters oscillate between

identity and difference, self-recognition and self-alienation, as they meditate on a world of

either/or choices. Although binary choices suggest a reduced and possibly managed contingency,

they are actually a sign of the modern world's irremediable contingency. These choices almost

entirely make up the plot as social interaction and psychic interiority are consumed by the

dilemma of choosing between careers.Grasping this structuring principle one can better

understand the mistake made by scholars who have attempted to work out the connections

between artistic representation and political representation in the novel, the most important being

Robert Weimann's article on the "sociology of representation."[109] Weimann argues that the

novel "represents the crisis of its own representativeness" through the artist Nick Dormer's

isolation from society following his rejection of politics. If artists are unable to appropriate the

world and make it theirs, he argues, they withdraw and make their own worlds.   Their

withdrawal reveals the "deep gulf between the verbal representations and the social

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[107] Unsigned review of *The Tragic Muse*, *Athenaeum*, July 1890, reprinted in Gard, Roger, ed. Henry James: *The Critical Heritage*, London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1968, p. 195.

[108] Unsigned review of *The Tragic Muse*, *Spectator*, September 1890, reprinted in Gard 1968, p. 205. A version of this argument exists in today's criticism as a focus upon the 'immanent' in James, or upon "theatricality" instead of "theater" as in Joseph Litvak's *Caught in the Act* (1992), or as in the supposed marginality and ambiguity of his sexual orientation, in short, as the anti-materialist strain of modern criticism.

[109]   Weimann, Robert. "Text, Author-Function, and Appropriation in Modern Narrative: Toward a Sociology of Representation." *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. 3 (1988): 431-47.

representativity of the poet," and moreover necessitates changes in the representational form of the novel:

> the erosion of representativeness itself is represented in its most immediate individual and psychological form: in the fiction and the figure of the artist himself, in his loss of social integration and bourgeois respectability, and in the diminishing range of his own participation in the moral and political consensus. The crisis of representativeness is turned into a theme, into a novelistic representation itself, and its most consistently mimetic form is, of course, the biographical *Darstellung* of characters, such as … Nick Dormer…. (438-9)

James's novels, argues Weimann, are symptoms of the turn to the representation of character psychology and interiority as art and the artist becomes less representative. While Weimann is correct that *The Tragic Muse* centers upon Nick's isolation as a problem, his argument only superficially accounts for the conflict between the political set and the artists. Nick's disavowal of politics is only a problem for half of the characters of the novel. Indeed, the other artists understand and applaud the choice. Even if Nick is the poster boy for the "loss of social integration and bourgeois respectability" because of his self-asserted exceptionality and self-exemption from politics, Weimann only has it half-right: Nick may not be integrated into the political set, but he *is* integrated into the artistic set. The artists are no less a society—and their society is no less social—than that of the political set.

The main problem with Weimann's claim is that the crisis of representation and representativeness eventually fades from the novel as Miriam and Nick gain success. Along with fame, Miriam gains the trappings of bourgeois respectability and a large social circle, while the novel hints that Julia will indeed find a way to reintegrate Nick into her political project. These

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notions trouble Weimann's assertion that the motivating factor behind Nick's decision to reject politics for art centers on the problem of authority: "Authority, in other words … is not to be found in the public sphere of power and politics" (440). Art, in this novel, has no authority either. If Nick's half-finished paintings of Miriam Rooth and Gabriel Nash make a statement about representation, it must be the (by now) banal point that representations are always partial, imperfect and inadequate.

In the mid-1990s, Julie Rivkin took a more sustained look at these same kinds of mimetic and deconstructive aporias of representation in James in her book *False Positions* (1996). Rivkin's work looks beyond the purely linguistic dimensions of James to the social and cultural ramifications of the representational impasses that James so often lamented plagued his fiction. For Rivkin, James's "tales of writers and artists are, without fail, allegories of representation."[110] In her first chapter, Rivkin rehearses Jacques Derrida's notion of representation as supplementarity in order to contrast it with the "traditional" theory of mimesis from Plato, in which "there is an Ideal Truth existing prior to and independent of any act of representation" (3-4). The deconstructive notion of the supplement points to a structural incompleteness of the original: it lacks something that the supplement provides. Most importantly, however, the supplement provides a fuller expression of the 'original' than it alone is capable of. For Rivkin, the forms of representation (supplementation, here) that James was most interested in lead him to what he called "false positions": the "inconsistencies, discrepancies, and incompatibilities in everything from the selection of metaphors to the construction of gender" (4). As Rivkin surveys the artistic forms that supplementarity takes in James, she discusses only mimetic forms of representation and mostly avoids the political aspects of representation.

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[110] Rivkin, Julie. False Positions : The Representational Logics of Henry James's Fiction. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1996, p. 16.

James was adept at making politics appear apolitical, as Seltzer argued in *Henry James and the Art of Power*, so it is odd that Rivkin does not explicitly connect artistic to political representation, especially since she spends considerable time discussing delegation in *The Ambassadors* and other tales. Delegation, in Rivkin's discussion, is a form of personal supplementation: a delegate is one who stands in for (represents) someone else. Peter Sherringham, an ambassador by profession, unites delegation and politics even as he tries to unite politics and art. It is also odd that for a deconstructive account of representation, the book's descriptions of it are so uniformly similar that they elide whatever difference deconstruction's *différance* was supposed to indicate between mimesis and delegation. It is hard to see how delegation can be a "supplementary process" that produces "endless chain[s]" of substitutes and supplements because it sounds less like a process and more like the static reproduction of the same difference.

In my reading, the artist's problem with representation and representativeness is itself part of the internal reality of the art world, its perspective on the larger world, and its way of interpreting everything so that it makes sense to those individuals who ratify their individuality through art. As I already began to suggest, James's novel is most interested in the *systems* of art and politics, their organization, their processes and content, and not the *authority* (and perhaps authenticity) of their representational practices. Most conspicuously, the novel is full of artists and politicians, but as the attentive reader of *The Tragic Muse* knows, there is actually very little of the products of the professions of art or politics in its pages. Nor does the theater occupy much of the reader's time, despite claims that this is James's most theatrical novel.[111]   As we

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[111] This claim has become a commonplace way of characterizing the novel. See, for instance, W. Storm, "Henry James's Conscious Muse: Design for a 'Theatrical Case'" in *The Tragic Muse*. *Henry James Review* (2000)**:** 133-150.; J. Litvak "Actress, Monster, Novelist: '*The Tragic Muse*' as a Novel of Theatricality," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* (1987).

previously saw, early reviewers commented often upon the apparent absence of content in the novel. I want to suggest, then, that the novel's attenuations and postponements, its seeming absence of story, signal nothing more than its focus on the processes by which art and politics self-reproduce through individuals. As artists and politicians populate the novel's pages, *The Tragic Muse* is committed to exploring the institutions of politics and art from the perspective of characters *inside* the professions, as the daily material of lived experience rather than as an abstract and philosophical consideration of the meaning of art or politics. This problem with the "inside" of art and politics may explain what Weimann identifies as the "loss of social integration," another form of what James calls, in the preface to the New York edition of the novel, the "willingness to pass mainly for an ass." In his preface, James asserted that the main complication he faced in writing *The Tragic Muse* was Nick Dormer's transformation from would-be politician to would-be artist. The problem, in James's view, is that if Nick appears to be making a choice to throw over a life of politics for the life of the artist, then that choice appears unbelievable: "I dare say it glimmered upon me even then that the very sharpest difficulty of the victim of the conflict I should seek to represent, and the very highest interest of his predicament, dwell deep in the fact that his repudiation of the great obvious, great moral or functional or useful character, shall just have to consent to resemble a surrender for absolutely nothing" (*TM* 3). In one sense, this means appearing to choose just to be contrary to popular opinion, which is another way of saying, choosing for choosing's sake. Such a choice looks like nothing more than the expression of individual will for the sake of expressing it. We can imagine the difficulty an author faces in trying to evoke sympathy for someone who wants to be

contrary, and thus for James Nick's "willingness to pass mainly for an ass" undermines the believability of his initial run at politics (*TM* 3).

But Nick's willingness to throw over politics for art, James implies, means that believability is not finally the measure of Nick's choice. That Nick's choice would have to "consent to *resemble*" a choice for nothing means that a choice for art is *not* a choice for nothing. It just looks that way. The point is that art is not different from politics or any other pursuit, but it appears to be so because of the way it asserts its difference from all other careers. This insistence upon difference explains the novel's main preoccupation with the choice between art and politics, a choice premised on the novel's juxtaposition of the two career paths. [112] But the juxtaposition and thus the choice do not rest upon simple similarities (or even simple differences) between art and politics, as R. P. Blackmur would have it: "This is a novel where the theater and the studio are set against the British Foreign Service and the House of Commons. The two sets of institutions have in common only that each is consciously histrionic."[113] This view of things oversimplifies the distinction between art and politics by making politics simply another version of the theater. Blackmur's statement would seem to be confirmed by the character Peter Sherringham, a foreign service careerist, who takes precisely this view in the novel when he offers Miriam the choice between being his wife and a life on the stage: "I mean I'll give you a larger life than the largest you can get in any other way. The stage is great, no doubt, but the world's greater. It's a bigger theatre than any of those places in the Strand. We'll go in for realities instead of fables, and you'll do them far better than you do the fables" (*TM* 432). We

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[112] The juxtaposition of art and politics runs counter to our expectations of art's more conventional "opposites," business and commerce. The alignment of art with politics hinges upon the novel's many puns on artistic and political representation, of which a few are noted below. The final section of this paper will treat the topic of representation more fully.

[113] Blackmur, R. P. *Studies in Henry James*. New York: New Directions, 1983, p. 202.

should resist this interpretation if for no other reason than that Blackmur's argument takes Peter at his word. Where Blackmur is right at all, it is in the way that Peter presents his offer, in that the proposal represents politics as theater without the playing; or, in other words, he asserts that they are the same but different. From Peter's perspective, politics is invested with a significance that is absent from a career on the stage.

More importantly, Peter's proposal reminds us that everything in the novel's social world is organized through the rhetoric of choice, a rhetoric that insists upon difference. The reality of the novel, however, as I have begun to suggest, insinuates that those differences are not as meaningful as they appear. In the marriage proposal already quoted above ("I mean I'll give you a larger life than the largest you can get in any other way"), Peter's offer to Miriam can readily be read as a choice not between himself and another man but rather between two social systems, art and politics. The meaning of Miriam's choice (and by extension, all the major choices in the novel) can be found in the different way that art and politics construct meaning around individual choice.

Consider the following quotation in which Nick reflects upon his experience of the meaningfulness of his own choice: "Since then, little by little, it has been working within me; vaguely, covertly, insensibly at first, but during the last year or two with violence, pertinacity, cruelty. I've resorted to every antidote in life; but it's no use—I'm stricken. *C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée*—putting Venus for 'art.' It tears me to pieces as I may say" (*TM* 122). Nick's choice (and as we shall see, Miriam's), appears to be motivated by private and mysterious internal processes, while Peter's choices appear to be public and performative. Nick's language, a recognizably conventional romanticization of art, shows how the artist represents himself to himself and to the world as being hopelessly "stricken." In both Miriam and Nick, the choice of

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art over politics is referred to a hidden and inscrutable motive, as art exerts a claim made in the depths of an unassailable and inexplicable interiority. The novel's terminology describing the artist's "apostasy" consistently reveals the "unaccountable" nature of the choice to live the life of the artist.

But if the meaning of the choice for art is understood by the novel's artists as a subconscious and irresistible calling that provokes a conscious choice, to the political set (i.e. Peter, Julia Dallow, and Lady Agnes) such a choice appears meaningless, a mere selfish indulgence. In the system of politics, disinterested action governs the rhetoric of choice. But again, the reality of the novel is that the characters of the political set act with what we might call disinterested self-interest, in which the self-interest of a character is also inextricably tied up with the self-interests of others. Lady Agnes sounds the battle-cry of disinterested self-interest when she remarks that "Nick can do something for himself" in response to Julia's offer to finance Nick's political campaign at what is effectively her pocket borough, Harsh (*TM* 42). The ambiguousness of Lady Agnes's phrase "do something for" becomes something of a refrain in the novel, continually marking out the special utility of the disinterested individual within the political order as both an agent and instrument of ambition (both of one's own and that of other people). For instance, Peter remarks to himself that, "Yes, there were things he could do for [Miriam]," in response to Madame Carré's injunction, "make her an ambassadress; she'll look very well" (*TM* 110; 95). Julia has "the simple idea that one ought to do something or other for one's country" (*TM* 78). Although these examples seem to demonstrate real disinterest on the part of the political set of characters, the reader must be careful to disentangle the multiple threads of interest and disinterest running through even the most apparently benevolent action. When we first learn that Peter wishes to help Miriam become an actress, we are told that it is a

purely disinterested endeavor, that he assists her for the love of art. Peter "flatter[s] himself [that what] he was trying to do for [Miriam] … was precisely to lift [her gift], make it rare, keep it in the region of distinction and breadth" (*TM* 147). Only a few pages later, however, we find out that all of his motivations to help her stem from his being "in love with her" (*TM* 151). On this view politics and the political order are not governed by a bald-faced ambition for prestige and power, but rather by the adoption of an interest not reducible to disinterest or self-interest.

In juxtaposition to the irresistible call of art are the equally irresistible obligations faced by the political set. These other, perhaps more practical, characters find themselves in a world in which they can achieve nothing without the help of others, and in which their own success and ambition credits not only themselves, but those around them. Although Nick asserts that Julia "has done everything" in getting him elected, Lady Agnes asserts that "*we*'ve done something" (that is, Lady Agnes and Nick's father), but that Julia can do more for Nick and his family by marrying him: "That's what you'll do for us—that *she*'ll do everything" (*TM* 158; 165, emphasis unaltered). Nick's political success coupled with a marriage to Julia entails for Lady Agnes "a lift into brighter air, …a regilding of his sisters possibilities" (*TM* 164). But more than just a vague fancy, Nick's success in politics is hopelessly entangled with the family's material well being, at least according to Lady Agnes's vision:

> "You'll have everything the world can give."
>
> "That's exactly what was just passing in my own mind. It's too much," Nick reasoned.
>
> "Don't be selfish!"
>
> "Selfish?" he echoed.
>
> "Unselfish then. You'll share it with us."
>
> "And with Julia a little, I hope," he said.

"God bless you!" cried his mother, looking up at him. (*TM* 165)

Lady Agnes unburdens Nick of a wished-for excess material wealth, status, and prestige—the "too much" that the world can give—by burdening him with the practical responsibility of supporting her. Likewise, Mr. Carteret, a wealthy political benefactor who wishes to support Nick financially, repeatedly reminds Nick of what an inheritance can "do for" him. There are, as we should expect, strings attached, and Mr. Carteret informs Nick of the expectation that in the event of an inheritance, Nick will "repay" him by getting elected to Parliament (*TM* 197; 195). This appearance of disinterestedness contrasts directly with the appearance of self-interest on the part of the novel's artists. In other words, what the "apostasy" of "passing for an ass" means is not so much forsaking others as it is forsaking the political beings who couple disinterest with clear self-interest.

These differences between art and politics mean that when artists and the political set come together consensus and shared understanding is impossible. When Lady Agnes declares that Nick could join the House of Lords "the day [he] determine[s] to get there," his response displays a characteristic distance between him and his mother: "This futile remark made Nick laugh afresh, and not only laugh, but kiss her, which was always an intenser form of mystification for poor Lady Agnes and apparently the one he liked best to inflict…" (*TM* 160). And later, when Julia and Nick discuss the dwindling prospects for their marriage, they dwell upon their differences. The dissolution of their courtship begins after Julia abruptly terminates her first and only visit to Nick's studio. After barging in, she finds him painting Miriam Rooth, the actress "so divested of visiting-gear that she looked half-undressed" (*TM* 270). From a cursory reading of that passage, we might assume, as Nick does, that Julia's hasty exit has something to do with "jealousy" (276). When Julia later accuses Nick of being an artist ("You're

an artist: you are, you are!"), she discloses that her behavior in the studio was occasioned by the recognition of a disturbing similarity between Nick and her deceased husband: "I had my ideas. It's all right for you, but it won't do for me: I'm different altogether. Why should it always be put upon me when I hate it? What have I done? I was drenched with it before" (280). These words reveal to Nick "the uncalculated betrayal of an old irritation, an old shame almost—her late husband's flat, inglorious taste for pretty things," with the implication that Nick's artistic leanings make him another version of her ex-husband (280).

The similarities between Nick and Julia's husband, signified by that objectless preposition "before," is what makes Nick and Julia recognize their differences. That Nick's interest in portraiture evokes comparisons to George Dallow's "flat, inglorious taste for pretty things" indicates not merely the similarity between the aesthetic tastes of the two men, but rather hints at a more pervasive problem for Julia, the dangerous doubling of those attracted to "pretty things." In fact, it is not just the apparent exceptionality of these men of art, their solipsistic disaffection and estrangement from politics to which Julia objects, but rather the endless repetitions of men "like" George and Nick (a point that explains her aversion to Gabriel Nash as well). The novel figures this doubling in various ways, but the most telling examples are Nick's studio and the island temple restored by George Dallow on his estate, a place that becomes the site of Nick's proposal of marriage to Julia.

For Julia, the "mistress of Harsh," these places have meaning only as spaces of a strange species of individuation, spaces that enable the dangerous doubling of artists. Nick's studio, located "in an out-of-the-way district, [one of] the indistinguishable parts of South Kensington," is a metaphor for his artistic eccentricity because its isolation represents the rather conventional idea of the artist's alienation from the world. The studio is an "incongruous" and "absurd place"

for Nick as a potential MP "to see his constituents unless he wanted to paint their portraits, a kind of 'representation' with which they would scarce have been satisfied" (*TM* 64). The temple, on the other hand, "a small ornamental structure" is a "reminiscence of the small ruined rotunda which stands on the bank of the Tiber and is pronounced by *ciceroni* once sacred by Vesta. It was circular, roofed with old tiles, surrounded by white columns and considerably dilapidated. George Dallow had taken an interest in it—it reminded him not in the least of Rome, but of other things he liked—and had amused himself with restoring it" (174). In this *fin de siècle* novel, what links the studio to the temple are those "other things," which ambiguously suggest in George Dallow an unsettling attitude linked to Aestheticism, just as they indicate a similarly vague fascination with Italy and its reputation as a European mecca of art. These obscurer associations depoliticize "the temple," foregrounding it as the foundry not only of the sacred and the aesthetic—a figuration that returns when we learn that Nick is constantly "shut up in his little temple with his altar and his divinity," and again when Miriam penetrates Madame Voisin's dressing room, described in pure hyperbole as the "holy of holies"—but also as the foundry of artistic taste (411; 222). Consensus between Julia, the "incarnation of politics," and Nick (or even George for that matter) is impossible when all the artists want to do is think of themselves as having tastes that make them incompatible with the tastes of general (and political) society.

If the temple and the studio seem to say that no man is an island *except* an artist, then the borough of Harsh is its mirror image and opposite for Julia and the political set. The aestheticized solitude and vaguely occult associations of the temple and the studio stand in stark contrast to the multitude of "burgesses" in the mundane Harsh. Julia's affinity for Harsh is anticipated early in the novel in Nash's lament, "Ah, what a place to represent! How can you—how can you?" which he utters in response to Nick's announcement that he will "stand for"

Harsh (*TM* 47). This outcry from Nash—the consummate do-nothing artist—sums up the attitudes of both the political and artistic set toward place and political representation, in that political representation means standing for a place and not for the people in it. Place, for the political set, must remain dissociated from all of those traits that mark out artistic individuals, such as solipsism, introspection, and solitude. In other words, place must be populated in order for it to escape the danger of doubling characteristic of artistic individualism. Julia lives this precept: when she remarks to Nick after his election to Parliament that "I've lived here for months without a creature," we find out that that the remark is not quite true. During her life at the Dallow estate—called simply, but significantly, "the Place"—she is usually attended by Mrs. Gresham, Julia's professional companion. If Julia has a fantasy of solitude, it includes others.

So when Nick laments that Julia "must … *always* live in public" and claims that the temple is a "capital place to give up everything in," it appears to Julia that he has been inhabited by the spirit of George (175). This doubling of George and Nick gives new meaning to Nick's remark to Biddy at the Salon that "all art is one" and reveals why artists can be so much alike (and yet so different) and why they cannot achieve consensus with the political set (*TM* 23). Nick's claim has already received some critical attention—the phrase "all art is one" even adorns the title of one article on the novel—but in my reading it acquires a new meaning. For that article's author, Judith Funston, Nick's remark unveils the logic behind James's narrator who "functions in a distinctly painterly manner" because James felt that "art and life should be one."[114] But in order for that claim to be true, it would be necessary to collapse all distinction between the arts, and more problematically to collapse the distinction between life and art. After all, we would do well to remember that the phrase is *not* "all art is life."

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[114] Funston, Judith. "'All Art Is One': Narrative Techniques in Henry James's Tragic Muse." *Studies in the Novel* 15, no. 4 (1983): 12.

Beyond this specious collapsing of the difference between the arts, however, Nick's phrase simultaneously suggests two things: most obviously, as Funston grasps, a relationship between the various arts, and less obviously but crucially, a relationship between art and *individuals*— "one" (read in its pronominal form). In the first of these suggestions, rather than collapsing the difference between the arts, the phrase "all art is one" highlights a set of common properties or forms common to the arts, but preserves the particularity and specificity of each branch of art. This abstraction enables us to see not only how individual arts remain both different and "the same," but also how the distinction between them maintains and enables the systematic repetition of that difference. The upshot of the phrase "all art is one" is that this systematic repetition is repeated not only at the level of social structures, but in and through the individual as well: when Nick says "all art is *one*," he's also tracing out the connection between the individual and art.

The textbook case of this process of systematic repetition—a process that might more correctly be called reduplication—is in the cultivation of artistic genius in Miriam Rooth. When the initiate Miriam accompanies Peter to the theater to observe and be introduced to the "celebrated Madamoiselle Voisin," the conversation between the fledgling actress and the celebrity begins with a rather innocuous statement by Voisin, addressed to Miriam: "I acted for you to-night—I did my best" (*TM* 222; 230). Only later does the remark take on a greater meaning, when Miriam repeats it, almost verbatim to Nash and Nick, "I'm acting for you to-night," and finally to her mother, this time in reference to Nick, "I'll act for him" (*TM* 269; 422). More than just a simple anomaly or coincidental repetition of phrasing, the persistence of the phrasing, always addressed to other artists, suggests that the contact between artists reveals the real product of artists: artists produce not more art, but more artists. The shift from Voisin's use

of the singular "you" to Miriam's use of the plural demonstrates a process of accretion, as does Miriam's "I'll act for him," linking artistic production to flirtation and finally to sexual reproduction. The phrase "all art is one" undergoes similar forms of repetition, accretion and transformation. "There's only one kind—it's all the same thing," Peter declares to Biddy, a sentiment he repeats a few pages later, "They're all artists; it's the same general sort of thing" (*TM* 407; 409). Not simply metaphors for the systematic production of art, the metamorphoses of Nick's and Voisin's statements are a literalization in linguistic form of the process of copying and redoubled reduplication. And thus true art metamorphoses into its communications.

This description of the process by which the art system self-reproduces through artists might sound like artistic determinism, but it is important to realize that the process of self-replication is also the process of autonomization (i.e. all art is, again, *one*). Nick and Miriam demonstrate how artists (mutually) self-constitute as singular, individuated artists in several scenes in Nick's studio. Miriam gives Nick "an idea" that facilitates the choice for art over politics. In return, Nick's studio provides the "quiet" that Miriam sees in Voisin's acting, a trait that resurfaces later in descriptions of her acting. Indeed, Miriams' art is nothing more than self-reproduction itself: "Miriam's performance was a thing alive, with a power to change, to grow, to develop, to beget new forms of the same life" (*TM* 315). When Peter later reflects upon Miriam's talent in conversation with Nash, it is clear that he too is alive to her power of self-reproduction, as the following narratorial summary of his ideas demonstrates: "[a]ll the machinery was ready, the platform laid; the facilities, the wires and bells and trumpets, the roaring deafening newspaperism of the period—its most distinctive sign—were waiting for her, their predestined mistress, to press her foot on the spring and set them all in motion" (352). In this example, Miriam re-embodies the meaning of Nick's observation "all art is one" because she

is both the one predestined to operate the machine or system of art (which produces more autonomous machines), but also the autonomous force driving it.

This machinic self-reproduction or doubling has been explained in another way, rather unproblematically in terms of James's connection to the French naturalists and literary naturalism.[115] Miriam's talent for the stage, for instance, has been attributed to her Jewish ancestry, with her theatrical aptitude somehow vaguely descended from her pawnbroker father's pecuniary interest in art objects.[116] But Nick is unable to find a motivating cause for his artistic leanings in his own ancestry:

> From where the devil then has the seed been dropped? I look back from generation to generation; I scour our annals without finding the least little sketching grandmother, any sign of a building or versifying or collecting or even tulip-raising ancestor. They were all as blind as bats, and none the less happy for that. I'm a wanton variation, an unaccountable monster. (*TM* 122)

This description reveals that Nick represents a familiar version of artistic genius that we have come to believe in; that is, an artistic genius both innate and inexplicable, without an apparent motivating force or cause. And so we are not surprised to learn that his searches into the origins of his artistic talent yield nothing. Miriam's artistic talent, on the other hand, has a clear origin, though genetics cannot be pressed into service to locate it. Rather, Miriam is *made* into a genius. The cultivation of Nick's talent may be buried in the past *before* the novel commences, but that does not mean that he was not made into a genius. Nick's portfolio of half-completed paintings testifies not only to the aborted process of his training as a painter, but indeed to the

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[115] Powers, Lyall Harris. *Henry James and the Naturalist Movement.* East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1971.

[116] Sonstegard, Adam. "Painting, Photography, and Fidelity in the Tragic Muse." *Henry James Review* 24, no. 1 (January 2003): 27-44.

process of cultivating artistic genius. Naturalism cannot provide the explanation of their genius for the simple reason that it over-attributes agency to genetics in the determination of genius, and because it preempts both agency and process in the cultivation of genius.

The notion of genius as originating from mysterious origins but also somehow as a natural ability has been articulated before, notably by M. H. Abrams in his 1953 work *The Mirror and the Lamp*, and more recently in both Penelope Murray's edited collection of essays *Genius: The History of an Idea* (1989) and Bob Perelman's *The Trouble with Genius* (1994). The first two works seek to historicize the concept of genius and to differentiate it from the idea of talent. In one of the central chapters of his book, Abrams looks at the rhetoric describing genius as it arose in the eighteenth century, at the "momentous historical shift from the view that the making of a work of art is a supremely purposeful activity to the view that its coming-into-being is, basically a spontaneous process independent of intention, precept or even consciousness" (187). Similarly, the essays in Murray's collection look at the historical development and transformation of the classical notion of *genius loci*, the genius of place, into the more familiar form of the individual of exceptional ability. Bob Perelman, on the other hand, rehearses another version of Weimann's argument, in the idea of the self-exceptionalizing Modernist writers who lost authority as they tried to channel "writing [that] floated down from a higher world of order that was fully accessible only to the genius writer" (14). In fairly obvious ways, these ideas manifest themselves in *The Tragic Muse*. The idea of the *genius loci* reminds us of Julia's suspicion of the places of art, of the connection between place and artistic individualism, and Nick's unexplained penchant for art reminds us of the mystery of artistic genius. What *The Tragic Muse* offers, however, is genius produced by art and not, as we would expect, art produced by (or channeled through) genius.

But if Miriam and Nick are made into geniuses through and by art, why does the novel structure itself around choice, especially if that choice is made according to inscrutable motives? Miriam's relationship with Peter might seem to provide an answer. She, like Nick, attempts to represent her choice to be an actress in terms that make literary naturalism an attractive framework for explaining it; that is, she discusses her talent in terms of "instinct" (*T*, 136). But her "instinct" proves to be non-existent, and as she gains success *only* through training, the term loses any explanatory power. In fact, when Miriam refers her talent to instinct, she is referring it to inexplicable and mysterious interiority, as Nick does. These "instincts" also appear at moments when there is a question of her survival (as an artist and human being), which again undermines her agency in choosing by making the choice to act a necessity. The bitter prospect of extreme poverty for Miriam and her mother—hinted at by Miriam's feeling "faint" after her "exhibition" in front of Peter and his circle suggests to Peter that "she had been truly in want of a meal"—can be rectified by success in art, but also by marrying Peter (*TM* 107; 100). But Miriam is an "ass" both because her goal is success itself (she wants to be "the English Rachel") rather than wealth, *and* because she rejects the only choice remaining to her as a woman: the ugly equivalent of the "great obvious, great moral or functional or useful character," i.e. to marry and become "the appendage" of Peter (*TM* 134). Nick's class privilege may make his choice seem the more vexed and more consequential decision at the beginning of the novel, but by the end neither choice seems really to have been a choice *for* anything at all except as an assertion of will. The paradox is that their choices cannot be an expression of will because both Nick and Miriam are simultaneously "stricken" and motivated by factors that leave them no choice.

If these factors make the genius "stricken" by art incompatible with the idea of *choosing* art, the novel's narrative form reinforces the appearance of choice both through the problem of

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the two centers and through the two competing systems of art and politics. As I note above, James divides the novel into Peter's "political case" and Nick's "aesthetic life," subordinating Miriam Rooth's "theatrical case" to Peter's political one. Although James claims in the preface to the novel that he doesn't "go behind" or focalize Miriam, her thoughts are narrated several times. The question for us is, what do these rare glimpses of Miriam's consciousness tell us about the choice to focalize Peter and Nick, and not, as we might expect, *Miriam* and Nick? James's explanation of the story implies a not entirely convincing argument that the choice between the two systems is being represented metonymically at the level of narrative. In other words, "art and the world" becomes "Nick and Peter." James's "mortal horror of two stories, two pictures, in one" is probably more convincingly explained by reference to the kinds of repetition produced by the art system: Miriam's choice, which at first appears so different from Nick's ends up becoming so similar that it threatens to be a simple repetition of it, and the appearance of her exceptionality will disappear (*TM* 4). Peter's focalization, on the other hand, centers half of the novel upon politics and the political aspects of his choice, thereby splitting the novel fairly equally between perspectives on art and politics. In fact, without Peter, the novel cannot represent the difference between art and politics at all, since he represents politics from the "inside," thereby enabling the appearance of a choice for Miriam between two systems. And that fact allows us to see why, structurally, the choice for Nick is not a real choice between two systems: his focalization represents the inside of art. If he appears to play the game of politics for a while, all he can do as an artist is betray it.

The second (doubling) of the two major proposal scenes between Miriam and Peter literalizes the logic of Peter's focalization, and also helps us see how the proposal cannot be a choice for Miriam. In order for the marriage to succeed, both characters realize that either Peter

or Miriam must choose to become the prosthetic "appendage" of the other, but neither character can do that (*TM* 434). In this scene near the end of the novel, Peter asks Miriam to marry him by proxy, through a boy who relays their messages back and forth ("Nick marveled a moment. 'You've proposed through *him*?'") (*TM* 427). When the boy returns with Miriam's answer, Peter expects her to return "some object—a bracelet, a glove or a flower … as a sign that she has received it," but the boy explains that "she has given [him] nothing" (*TM* 427). It is perhaps indicative of the way that the novel imagines the separation of art from politics that Peter, the career diplomat, cannot go backstage to ask the question himself, and that he poses his question for the final time without directly communicating with Miriam: a sign that he is not only romantically distant from her, but ideologically distant as well. As if to reinforce the point of distance, after he receives her answer he drives away, missing the rest of her performance and making the metaphorical distance real. On another level, however, Peter's boy messenger literalizes the logic of the political set: the boy embodies what I identify above as the "special utility" of other characters "doing for" the characters of the political set, of being used by others for their ends. To put it simply, the boy "does for" Peter what he will not or cannot "do for" himself. When Miriam returns the message through the boy, it is for Peter a sign that she has embraced his worldview.

But, it cannot be. Later, when Miriam meets with Peter to disabuse him of his marital aspirations, she reveals to him why she cannot choose to marry him: he "admires [her] as an artist and therefore want[s] to put [her] into a box in which the artist will breathe her last" (*TM* 431). The danger to which Julia is so alive resurfaces here, as Peter's experience of his love for Miriam comes to resemble Nick or Miriam's experience of their choice for art: the simple act of loving an artist makes one dangerously like an artist. Even though Peter asserts that the "grand

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romance" of suffering for art is past, the narrative invites us to believe that his courting of Miriam becomes the complement to Nick's romanticization of art (*TM* 397). And when she repeatedly rejects him, this courtship (if one can call it that) becomes Peter's grand romance, for which he suffers. Only after he finds out that she has real talent does he realize that he is in love with her. In the following exchange, he inquires of Madame Carré the state of Miriam's "genius":

> "She *has* something then—?"
>
> "She has most things. She'll go far. It's the first time in my life of my beginning with a mistake. But don't tell her so. I don't flatter her. She'll be too puffed up." (*TM* 150)

The language describing Peter's revelation reminds us once again of the description of Nick's attraction to art: "Now that he had left the girl a subversive unpremeditated heart-beat told him—it made him hold his breath a minute in the carriage—that he had after all not escaped. He *was* in love with her: he had been in love with her from the first hour" (151). The description of this "unpremeditated heart-beat" recalls the unaccountability of Nick's choice for art, repeated again in Miriam's choice for art. In Peter's case, however, the "unpremeditated heart-beat" never gets channeled through art (as it would for Miriam or Nick), but instead gets conflated with romantic desire and gendered domestic aspirations, whose political history as depoliticization we all know (and know to be the special purview of the novel thanks to Nancy Armstrong). Miriam never has this moment with Peter, never recognizes the call to love him, and therefore never has to make the same choice. This is how the novel represents choice: as a desire for something that one cannot choose because one has instead been chosen. In Peter's case, his choice ends up being inflected through politics. His choice *is* premeditated despite the protestation that it is not,

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because he falls in love with Miriam's talent and desires to use it. The desire of the political set for the artistic set is a desire to instrumentalize others, to use the artist's individualism and artistic genius for other ends. Peter's desire for Miriam, structured something like an attraction to those attracted to art, reveals both the political set's attraction to the political potential of the systematic doubling of art (creating machinically untold millions who would act and think alike), and a repudiation of all those qualities that make art antagonistic to politics (artists all act like they think differently from one another).

What really separates Peter and Miriam, then, is not a choice, but rather that which separates art and politics as systems that reproduce their own differences, which are then reinforced by individuals who reproduce the system in making a choice: i.e. the choice is nothing more than art's insistence on its difference from politics and vice versa. And this twinning of systems around individual choice represents an achievement of James's solo novel as viewed from the perspective of the sequence novel (which showed decision to be an element of institutions as they reproduce themselves, not individuals).

In *The French Actress and her English Audience* John Stokes thus has it only partly right when he discusses doubling and self-reproduction in the novel in terms of the artists. He contends that "in *The Tragic Muse*, then, James has Carré listen for a repeat of herself in Miriam, much as her real life model, Madame Plessy, had echoed, though imperfectly, Mlle Mars. Yet the lesson of the novel overall will be that even if the past can occasionally be ventriloquised, usually inadequately, it can never be fully re-embodied."[117] Social systems theorist Niklas Luhmann notes that reproduction is always the reproduction of difference, and it is in this sense that Stokes is partly right. We might be tempted to take Stokes's explanation at face value when, for instance, Miriam goes backstage to talk to Voisin and stands looking at *La Tragédie* (1859),

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[117] Stokes, John. The French Actress and Her English Audience. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005, p. 68.

"Gérôme's fine portrait of the pale Rachel invested with the antique attributes of tragedy," only to see herself in it: "'I wonder if that's what your cousin had in mind'" when "'he offered to paint my portrait'" (*TM* 229). But in the sense that the figure of the Tragic Muse persists not just through repetition but through systematic reproduction, it becomes clear that the meaning of these proliferating Tragic Muses (Carré, Voisin, and Miriam, not to mention the real life Sarah Siddons and Rachel) is that the Tragic Muse is itself the figure for the systematic reproduction of artists and not the idealized vision of the individual artist who exists as a repudiation of systematic production.

In this novel, the backstage is where one finds the real content of art and politics, and it is also where we encounter the "little" systems of this chapter's title at work. At Madamoiselle Voisin's performance, Peter and Miriam enter Voisin's dressing-room "temple" and rather than a description of the performance, we are treated to an elaborate description of the room, its furnishings, even the "opening, on the right, from which, by a short flight of steps, there was a descent to one of the wings of the stage' (*TM* 224). Such proximity to the stage only emphasizes that we are not reading a description of what happens on it. Peter's meeting with his superior, the only contact the reader has with official politics, occupies a mere paragraph and all other "political" discussions happen in domestic or public spaces (for example, Nick's conversations with Carteret). Similarly, each description of Nick's studio discloses not art, but rather the socializing of artists. In fact, we are so consistently presented with the backstage that we never realize we are in it. Even when Peter finally steals a look at Nick's portrait of Miriam and the reader expects finally to encounter an artwork in a studio, what we read instead is a description of a series of observations of observations. The following is a description of the scene's climax: "Biddy abstained from looking round the corner of the canvas as she held it; she only watched, in

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Peter's eyes, for this gentleman's impression of it. That she easily caught, and he measured her impression—her impression of his impression—when he went after a few minutes to relieve her" (303). The transference of the observation from observer to observer originates with the observation of the portrait and proceeds in a feedback loop, from character to character, as the content of the canvas disappears into their observations. These back and forth transfers of observation are the process of the reproduction of art as a system: as characters watch other characters watch, they learn how to watch, how to appear to observe which is the special province of the art system. That is, art systematizes the observation of observation (what systems and cybernetics theory call second-order observation) *as* art. As these characters internalize this logic, they come to think of their observations as separate and distinct from everyone else's, and the backstage thus becomes a kind of factory in which they produce their relations to each other, to themselves, and to the world through art. This is why this novel is not finally about paintings or theater or politics or even representation, but rather about the systems that produce individual choice and ultimately the kinds individuals who ratify their individuality through such choices. Art houses and displays individuality at work, but it does so, paradoxically, in media which is decidedly outside of the individual.

To underscore the point, Nick's portrait of Nash makes explicit the link between *individuality* and art, as it also turns the conventional notion of individuality on its head.[118] Nick works at the portrait during a few sessions with Nash, but before the painting is finished Nash disappears for the final time. After Nash's exit the portrait itself strangely begins to disappear, exhibiting an "odd tendency to fade" (*TM* 476). This double disappearance at the end of the

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[118] The portrait of Nash remains one of the most popular objects of analysis in the scholarship on the novel. See, for instance, J. Hillis Miller's recent article, "Oscar in *The Tragic Muse*," *Arizona* Quarterly 62:3 (Autumn 2006). Robert S. Baker provides an overview of the criticism on this topic up to 1973 in "Gabriel Nash's 'House of Strange Idols': Aestheticism in the Tragic Muse," *Texas studies in literature and language,* (1973)**:** 149-66.

novel would seem to contradict Nash's assertion that his "persistence is systematic" (*TM* 116). Nash's métier ("I work in life!") might appear to suffice as an explanation of the portrait's "odd tendency," in that life as art disappears into daily, lived experience (*TM* 105; 476). But such an "odd tendency" would seem to be the opposite of persistence. What is "systematic" about this persistence, and why does only Nash consider his art in terms of a system? Here we encounter an unresolved tension of the novel. If the "grand romance" of art is no longer available to Nick, Biddy and Miriam, they are not prepared to accept Nash's view that their artistry is the product of a system. The mantra of Madame Carré, "work—work!" indicates the limits of what they will accept: at the very least a systematic application to practice, reluctantly recognized by all as the repugnant yet necessary condition of superior artistic production. But Nash militates against Carré's refrain when he attacks Nick for his "incureable [sic] superstition of 'doing'" (*TM* 96; 475). At first glance, we might assume that Nash says this because he appears to fit the stereotype of the eccentric and idle artist, the careless individualist, who cultivates a harmless and self-sustaining egotism. But the reality of Nash is in his descriptions of his "art" as a system, as when he explains to Nick that his "little system" is to be "the same to everyone" (*TM* 116). It is in fact the persistence of this 'sameness,' culminating in Biddy's recognition of Nash in the portrait that exposes the systematicity of art. Nash persists through a kind of self-replication, a way of being "the same to everyone." This means that, for Nash, the kinds of reduplication that the art system enables between individuals, also occurs *within* individuals as well.In my reading, Nash is the figure who recognizes that art does not merely express the artist's unique perspective on the world; rather, Nash asserts that art is part of a larger social phenomenon—the art system—that finds its expression in the work of art. The pivotal paradox of the art system in *The Tragic Muse* is that works of art hold up the mystery of artistic genius as the model of

individuality. Nash is the novel's 'living' contradiction to this model of individuality because he exposes to the world a systematically produced self as a *work of art*. Nash foreshortens the distance between the world and his artistic genius by presenting himself as the work of art. Thus, while the world considers Nash disingenuous and suspects that he is only "try[ing] to be" an artist, even Nick fails to recognize Nash's "art" as art (*TM* 105). He chooses instead to diminish it by saying that Nash has only "a real genius for playing with ideas" (*TM* 61). Nash cannot be a genius, they reason, because without the mediation and distancing enabled by the art work they cannot perceive the genius of the artist.

When other characters refer to Nick's talent, by contrast (and they do so repeatedly), it should be read not only as a commentary upon the uniqueness of Nick's artistic vision, but also as an admission that Nick's talent effects a barrier between him and them. And this is the lesson of the artwork: in Nick's portraits, Nash's life, and Miriam's performances, others see an individual genius that they do not possess and do not understand. If the work of art presents artistic genius as unattainable to the viewer, it quickly becomes clear that even other artists perceive artistic genius as something they cannot possess. For Nick, real art is always "a thousand miles away" from him, a lesson he learns while reading a note from Miriam that makes him realize that "her aesthetic faith [was] so much stronger and simpler than his own" (*TM* 280; 392). But for Miriam, just the opposite is true, and artistic genius resides only in Nick: "You're the real thing and the rare bird. I haven't lived with you this way without seeing that: you're the sincere artist so much more than I" (*TM* 464). For artists to insist upon the distance between themselves and the genius of other artists suggests that the rest of the world perceives an even larger distance.

On this view, genius becomes something more than just an abstract locus of artistic creation; it becomes rather the foundation for an individuality conceived through art. Mark Seltzer has written helpfully here about the place of novels in the mass-mediated process through which individuals come to understand their individuality:

> On this logic, the novel acclimatizes individuals (that is, readers) to the social demands of reflexivity. But the point not to be missed is that readers in the novel and readers of the novel understand this demand exactly in reverse: as the precipitation of a self-reflexivity and a self-consciousness—a training in individualization—that sets individuals directly at odds with social demands. ("The Crime System," 569-70)

On the one hand, artworks perform the same function, in that they model individuality through artistic genius and give it the appearance of being beyond systematic production. On the other hand, artistic individuality is elsewhere, what everyone else has. Thus even though art in this novel is concerned with the reproduction of artistic genius, like this individuality which finds itself "directly at odds" with the "social demands of reflexivity," genius is experienced by the characters in this novel as something intrinsic to certain individuals, but lacking in everyone else. The paradox of individuality modeled on artistic genius is that it is both unattainable and yet other artists seem to have it.

Nick finally learns this lesson through his painting of Nash. When Nick paints Nash, the aesthete's exceptionality vanishes: Nash goes "from being outside of the universe [to being] suddenly brought into it" (474). The transformation of artist into cipher underwrites Nick's later suspicion that the painting is fading. Although not explicitly a suspicion about his artistic genius, the fading painting interrupts the link between his artistic vision and the perception of his

genius. The problem is not just that the portrait fails to capture Nash's originality, but that the painting foregrounds Nash's lack of difference from other artists. Thus, when Biddy asks Nick why he hasn't finished the portrait, he remarks that Nash "has melted back into the elements— he's part of the great air of the world" (*TM* 480). If the portrait attempts to image what an artist's position *outside* society looks like, Nick comes to realize that the project is finally impossible. Ultimately, what unsettles Nick—and perhaps us as well as we come to see James's point in *The Tragic Muse*—is that the gradually disappearing image of the artist reveals the model individual fading into the background of a systematized individuality, stand-alone novels repeating over and over the reproduction of systematized individuality, there being—critically and popularly speaking—no awareness of the sequence novel to countermine their regnant narrative logic.

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