3. Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Women of England* (1838), Indiana University Victorian Women Writers' Project, https://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/vwwp/welcome.do;jsessionid=DE6159B41E8EC05F43256581BDC7745F, 14.
4. Paul Fussell, *Class: A Guide through the American Status System* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 24; Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, 16.
5. Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Women and Society in Victorian England* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 45; quoted in Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 34.
6. Carolyn Steedman, "True Romances," in Raphael Samuel, *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity* (London: Routledge, 1989), 30–31.
7. A. A. Milne, *When We Were Very Young* (London: Methuen, 1924), 81. Milne was not a middle child, but he was the youngest of three.

Data

KAREN BOURRIER

DATA was not a word that the Victorians used regularly. The British English corpus of the Google NGram viewer, which visualizes word frequency across the corpus of books scanned by Google as of 2012, shows a slow increase in the use of the word "data" in the nineteenth century, with a dramatic spike around 1990 (see fig. 1). The *Oxford English Dictionary* ties the rise of "data" specifically to the rise of computing and computers in the mid-twentieth century. Data is collective. Now typically used as a mass noun, data signifies related bits of information, usually numbers, considered collectively. Informally, data means any sort of digital information.

In this essay, I use digital humanities methods to collect data about the Victorian novel. Concentrating on Anthony Trollope's third Chronicle of Barsetshire, *Doctor Thorne*, I examine what social media traces on *Goodreads*, a popular social cataloguing site where users review and recommend books to friends, can tell us about the way we read Victorian literature now. In doing so, I hope to uncover information about a collective everyday Victorianism. While previous work in reader response theory suffered from the difficulty of obtaining data on how people read, for the first

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Univ of Michigan Law Library, on 25 Sep 2018 at 20:41:20, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150318000438

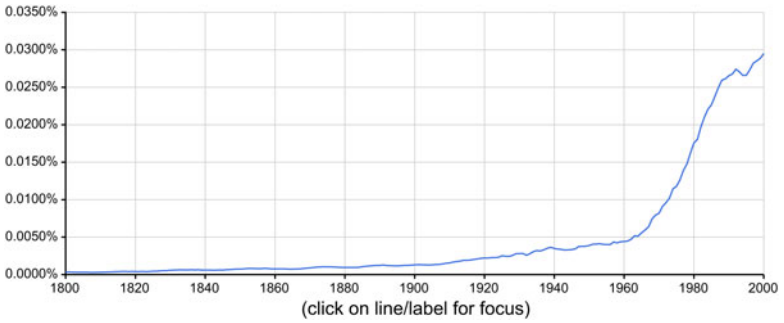

Figure 1. Frequency of the word "data" in British English literature from 1800 to 2000. Graph created using Google NGram viewer, Google Books Ngram Viewer: http://books.google.com/ngrams.

time, *Goodreads* offers us "a large-scale network of serious readers and their readings with the attendant metadata" in James English's words.[1] Lisa Nakamura remarks that "scholars looking to study reading culture 'in the wild' will be rewarded by a close study of *Goodreads*."[2]

Doctor Thorne is an interesting case study at this cultural moment because Julian Fellowes chose to dramatize Trollope's novel in the wake of his enormously popular period drama, *Downton Abbey*. Fellowes's announcement that he would adapt *Doctor Thorne* provoked an immediate spike in tweets about Trollope in May 2015.[3] However, it was not until *Doctor Thorne* actually aired, in March 2016 on ITV in the U. K. and on Amazon Prime in May 2016 in the U. S., that *Goodreads* saw an increased number of users reviewing the novel.[4] Eighty of the top 300 reviews of *Doctor Thorne* appeared in 2016, as opposed to 23 to 25 reviews per year each of the previous three years. Those who read *Doctor Thorne* generally liked it, of 4,095 users who rated the novel, 76% gave it four or five stars out of a possible five, while only 4% gave it two stars or less.[5]

For a general audience, Trollope, with his focus on marriage and money and his smooth prose style, seems to be a natural successor to Jane Austen, who has been endlessly adapted in the past 25 years. Austen was by far the author that reviewers most frequently compared Trollope to; she is mentioned 49 times in the top 300 reviews, followed by Charles Dickens at 26 mentions, and George Eliot at 9. Users also included *Doctor Thorne* on lists devoted to "What to Read After You've Finished Jane Austen" and "More for the Jane Austen Purist," where they collaboratively ranked Trollope's novel as 157 out of 334 books and 47 out of 98 books respectively.[6] As one reviewer put it: "How am I almost 35 and just experienced the wry fun of a Trollope novel? Seriously, next time you see a nerdy thirteen-year-old clutching Austen and Dickens, be sure to put some Trollope in her hands as well."[7]

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Univ of Michigan Law Library, on 25 Sep 2018 at 20:41:20, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150318000438

Despite the strong connection between Austen, Trollope, and adaptation, it would be a mistake to presume that general readers are only in it for the costume drama. Although the 2016 miniseries seems to have prompted many to read the novel, this was not what they focused on in their reviews. Only forty-one, or 13.67%, of the top 300 written reviews mentioned the adaptation. By contrast, 151, or 50.33%, of reviewers expressed familiarity with Trollope's oeuvre in general, either intimating ("I do really enjoy Trollope; there is something quite soothing and stimulating both in watching his novels march along to their ordered ending") or directly stating that they had read or were at least familiar with some of Trollope's other novels ("I've read 99 percent of the trollopes, even the obscure ones, and this one is my absolute favorite").[8]

Love (of Trollope, of his characters, or of the book in general) was the main theme that came up in written reviews. Yet, reviewers were actually about as likely to mention Trollope's style (which they compared to "butter" and "silk") as love of his characters (the "marvellously irreverent" Miss Dunstable, mentioned 29 times, was universally liked).[9] Delving deeper into Trollopian style, many readers found Trollope amusing, with 65 of 300 reviewers mentioning enjoying his humour. By contrast, the narrator alternately amused and infuriated readers. As one reader put it, "even with all his Victorian mansplaining, Trollope and I might be friends after all."[10] And of, course, many readers found Trollope dull, though not everyone thought this was a bad thing: "The plot is like taking a familiar train ride: one knows where one is going to wind up, and one knows where all the stops are going to be. The pleasure is in watching the scenery (i.e., the characters) go by."[11]

Some scholars have theorized that literature which enters the canon becomes depoliticized over time, appreciated for its aesthetic qualities rather than its political commentary.[12] This is not so with *Doctor Thorne*, which many read as a form of social critique. Eighty-nine reviews mentioned Trollope's skewering of the British class system, money, and marriage; many of these readers wondered whether Mary's inheritance undermined Trollope's criticism of the class system, others were disturbed that Scatcherd's downfall seemed to be a punishment for his social ascendancy. Fewer readers made a direct connection to the present day, but it seems that Trollope functioned equally well as an escape from and a critique on the 2016 U. S. election. Readers commented that "it was the perfect escape from post-inauguration depression."[13] One reviewer wrote that rereading the novel "provides great insight into the carnival of politics today";[14] another compared Sir Roger Scatcherd, "a boorish construction

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Univ of Michigan Law Library, on 25 Sep 2018 at 20:41:20, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150318000438

tycoon who uses his new wealth to buy a seat in Parliament,"[15] to Donald Trump shortly after he announced his candidacy for president.

Reading Trollope by the numbers, a mode the highly regimented novelist surely would have appreciated, reveals an appreciation amongst general readers of not only the marriage plot and his characters, but also of his style and his social commentary. Numbers may be on the upswing as evidence in literary studies; Andrew Goldstone and Ted Underwood point out that after a century of decline in mentions of number words in scholarly articles, there appears to be an upturn in the use of numbers.[16] Social media data has the potential to transform the way we read Victorian literature now, illuminating the way our objects of study are read outside the classroom.

Notes

1. James English, "Prestige, Pleasure, and the Data of Cultural Preference," *Western Humanities Review* 70, no. 3 (2016): 119–39, 137. English argues that *Goodreads* was a valuable purchase for Amazon, which acquired the company in 2013, because reviews of books on Amazon were scant and influenced fewer than 10% of readers on their next book purchase. See English, 131–33.
2. Lisa Nakamura, "'Words with Friends': Socially Networked Reading on *Goodreads*," *PMLA* 128, no. 1 (2013): 238–43, 241.
3. Karen Bourrier, "Victorian Memes," *Victorian Studies* 58, no. 2 (2016): 272–82, 276.
4. Data on exactly how many *Goodreads* users read *Doctor Thorne* in 2016 would be preferable here and is in theory collected by *Goodreads*. However, this data is not available to the general public through the API at this time. In this article, I work with the top 300 (of a possible 381) written reviews on *Doctor Thorne*, available to the public and collected on 27 October 2017. *Goodreads* allows users to add books, which can result in several different editions in the database (though the general policy is for all editions, including translations, e-books and audiobooks, to have one entry). Here, I consider the most popular edition, which had 4,095 ratings as opposed to the next most popular at 37, as of 27 November 2017. Using the software NVivo, I coded the top 300 reviews by hand for mentions of familiarity with the author, social critique, love (of the author and of characters), medium of consumption, and writing style. I used NVivo's automated word frequency search in these reviews to determine the other authors that reviewers

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Univ of Michigan Law Library, on 25 Sep 2018 at 20:41:20, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150318000438

compared Trollope to, and mentions of particular characters. I am grateful to Paul Pival, special and numeric data services specialist in Libraries and Cultural Resources at the University of Calgary, who scraped the reviews and introduced me to NVivo.

5. *Goodreads*, November 27, 2017, https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/29151142-doctor-thorne?from_search=true.
6. "*Doctor Thorne* > Lists," *Goodreads*, November 27, 2017, https://www.goodreads.com/list/book/29151142.
7. Cassandra, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, November 10, 2013; and Kelly, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, Decmber 3, 2016.
8. Cynthia, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, February 25, 2008.
9. Douglas Dalrymple, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, May 21, 2015; Carol Apple, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, February 26, 2015; Margaret, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, October 26, 2010.
10. Christen, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, July 19, 2016.
11. Spiros, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, July 5, 2009.
12. For a summary of this position, see Deidre Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 28.
13. Meg, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, February 7, 2017.
14. Margaret O'Connor-Hurst, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, December 29, 2015.
15. Sharon, "Review of *Doctor Thorne*," *Goodreads*, July 2, 2015.
16. Andrew Goldstone and Ted Underwood, "The Quiet Transformations of Literary Studies: What Thirteen Thousand Scholars Could Tell Us," *New Literary History* 45, no. 3 (2014): 359–361.

Decadence

KRISTIN MAHONEY

Though our thoughts turn ever Doomwards,
Though our sun is well-nigh set,
Though our Century totters tombwards,
We may laugh a little yet.

—John Davidson, *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender*[1]

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Univ of Michigan Law Library, on 25 Sep 2018 at 20:41:20, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150318000438