

Title: Victorian Research Seminar Week 3 Outline

Author: Emma Pernudi-Moon

Date: 6 February 2018

Outline Week 3

Miller

Art's summary:

Miller traces how the police (broadly defined as the state enforcement of social order) is not present in Barchester towers. Instead, the society of Barchester towers has “absorbed all structures of the state into everyday life” (Davis, 1). Barchester is a fantasy of a society that needs no policing because its social order cannot be transgressed, even when characters act inappropriately or seem in danger of rupturing the social order.

Ex: lower-class characters like the Greenacres and Lookalofts can physically transgress the bounds of the Ullathorne's party, but they cannot become unmarked or blend in with the other characters at the party.

This positions the whole society as a web that is both flexible and fragile: some changes are absorbed into the framework, but the whole system is so complicated that it can't totally be said what the result of a potential reform might be (therefore, better avoid it).

Is police the right analogy? How can we describe the kind of power(s) that the citizens of The Warden and Barchester Towers have over each other?

Willa's paper:

It is possible to read Trollope's theory of the novel as entirely in line with Miller's argument as celebrating the novel as a form of eminently digestible social control, so pleasant as to be unnoticeable. . . . However, one can take the obverse approach and read Trollope's insistence on the novel as a tool for social instruction as disguising his anxiety about his dependence on the market, or perhaps by extension, anxiety about the ways in which achieving economic security can be the only possible goal in a life under capitalism. (Glickman, 1)

In Miller's reading, Trollope constructs Barchester as that fantasy society by emphasizing tolerance and moderation, and in particular the “moderate schism.”

The “moderate schism” is everywhere in Trollope and serves to maintain the dominant social order by preventing the outbreak of real conflict, thereby disallowing the possibility of real change.

Characteristics of the “moderate schism” in Trollope

- within institutions (high church - low church)
- within characters (“mixed motivations”)
- shifts between situations (Harding is sometimes, but not always, aligned with Grantly)
- potentially always theoretically at risk, but never actually in danger. All actors are invested in not worsening the situation by allowing something totally outside of the social bounds (which would be a disaster)
- Example: Eleanor can’t marry Slope or Bertie, Slope can’t become the Dean. -Is this what’s going on or is it something other than stability vs fragility? -Trollope as a popular novelist promotes a comfortable (lazy?) acceptance of the status quo This is visible in Trollope’s autobiography in his own construction of himself as a popular novelist and his criticisms of other novelists (in particular Dickens). -Willa’s argument: Trollope is also anxious about his dependence on the market: he sees all novels as social control, and in order to make money, he must write something popular. His interest in conveying values in his work (as well as the specific values he’s chosen) are a response to his position within capitalism. -So is he writing values he believes, or is he writing values to fit himself into Victorian society that he may or may not believe? Does it matter?

Trollope’s Autobiography

Trollope is constantly enumerating his income, particularly the income he’s made from writing.

What function does this serve? Is it an expression of anxiety? Proof that he’s successful?

Is it anything like the emphasis on finances in *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* or does it work differently? What do labor and economy look like in the novels?

Is it (or some of the other detail he includes) the reality effect in a work of non-fiction (if that’s possible– or have we been artificially dividing the fictional from the nonfictional)?

Tristan’s close reading

Ask Tristan to highlight what we should get out of it?

Does this metaphor suggest that Trollope is insecure about his position as a novelist (potentially bolstering Willa's claim? Or is it a different kind of insecurity? both?)

Alexandra's close reading

Ask Alexandra to highlight what we should get out of it?

Trollope seems to be operating on a "moderate schism" paradigm himself here, which is interesting because he has a way he would prefer it to be (and since this is published posthumously, wouldn't impact him financially)

Break

Sexism, gender, sexuality

It is irrelevant what a man's views are as long as he is honest about them, and *a woman should have limited views* (Glickman, 2)

Ana: "It's impossible to separate the sexism from the air!"

Where did you notice sexism (and other kinds of social biases) in the autobiography? How does that make us feel about the same things in his novels?

We might consider Trollope's self-professed constant introduction of romance into his plots in conversation with Miller, as well as his theories of writing.

Any other observations about Trollope's autobiography?

Passage of time: he returns to events having already narrated them (his mother's death); compare to narration of time in the novels?

Poovey

Charts the formation of the Chronicles of Barsetshire as a series, particularly in the eyes of critics, by describing the interventions made in *The Last Chronicle of Barset*.

Katie's summary

Use of chapter titles, free & indirect discourse, scenes with dialogue, repeating earlier scenes with revisions, and networks of judgement between characters. In Poovey's opinion, the interventions were successful in effacing the craft of writing, thereby meeting Henry James' standard of the novel as art.

Why did contemporary reviewers seem to consistently interpret Trollope's narratorial asides as being Trollope himself and an intrusion from outside the novel? Last class we tried to pin down who the narrator was and how his ignorance seemed to create a more realistic effect (unlike the opinions of the reviewers that Poovey discusses).

Poovey even seems unwilling to take on their perspective, always carefully referring to "the narrator." What does that say about how our critical practices have changed?

What differences/similarities do we notice between the reviews we read for today and what we might expect from something written today?

Since this is based in critical sensibilities, is this relevant to how readers (in particular, popular, circulating-library-style readers, like Trollope characterizes his audience) read the Chronicles of Barsetshire? How might we imagine these readers worked?

What might be the social function of a novel as a self-effacing art? Does this connect to Miller?

Ana's seminar paper

Some of the mechanisms that Poovey describes which link *The Last Chronicle of Barset* to the rest of (what became) the series are already at work between *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*, at least with Trollope's use of Bunce.

However, since Bold won't fit in *Barchester Towers*, Trollope has to operate more intrusively to get to his place (or rather non-place) in the narrative, including his narrational style.

Ana's paper situates Trollope as not only a person who changes over time, but that learns and develops skills over time.

Does Bold not fit because he might act too much like the police?

Do any other characters work like this between these two novels? What do the reviews say?

Ramsey

Why read this piece in this week? What connections to do people see to Miller or the autobiography in particular?

Is this a good/helpful solution to the problem of "scientific" criticism?

Are there objections to tone?

Is there anything in this that's helpful for our reading and criticism practices if we're not making these kinds of tools? If so, what?

Thoughts on Barsetshire without borders? Did people find it helpful/interesting and how? What would we change or add to if we could?