

# Week 2 Victorian Literature Seminar Outline

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Shaoni and Nicole

February 10 2020

Week 3, February 10: selfhood, autobiography, precarity, writing, free indirect discourse

some topics: publishing, precarity, autobiography; novel theory; realism overview; social networks; city and country; print circulation; news and gossip; series and seriality; status and class;

- Trollope, *An Autobiography*; follow-up *Last Chronicle*
- Lauren Goodlad, "Bigger Love"
- Rosemarie Bodenheimer, "Free Indirect Discourse"
- Trev Lynn Broughton, "Life Writing" in *The Routledge Companion to Victorian Literature*
- follow-up Shoshanna Zubach, from *Surveillance Capitalism*, Introduction
- CopyrightX Week 3
- discussion and outline: Shaoni, Nicole
- close reading: Nicole
- criticism summary: Shaoni
- seminar paper: Maya
- break: Rachel

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## Free Indirect Discourse

1. Let's find one or two examples in *Last Chronicle*. Does it or does it not involve some of the features Rosemarie Bodenheimer claims often surround instances of free indirect discourse? What are the consequences of those features? Those features include:
  - "Some jolt or threat to a worldview, which s/he is struggling to accommodate or deny" (707)
  - Temporal ambiguity
  - Unusual visual elements on the page
2. "There has long been a debate about whether an instance of [free indirect discourse] represents thought, inner speech, or something else... The imitation of thought can only go so far to capture the flux of neural connections that goes on, consciously and not, in human brains" (707). Considerations of interiority and prose become especially complicated in relation to *The Last Chronicle*. What can we say about the interiority of Mr.

Crawley? Grace?

### 3. Nicole's close reading

## Serialization and financialization; Lauren M. E. Goodlad, "Bigger Love"

1. Summary (Shaoni)
  - Shaoni summarizes the summary
  - The double sense of real property (fungible and tied to person); the double sense of autobiography (as commodity and as narrative of self); the double sense of intellectual property theory justification of IP (fairness personality)
2. Temporality
  - How does digital, "24/7 temporality" affect our lives now? Contrast with newspaper time (705).
  - How might a serialized narrative such as an HBO serial or a serialized Victorian novel disrupt their audiences' standard temporal rhythms and consumer habits?
3. Public fiction, collective anticipation: discuss how the relationship between Victorian fiction and Victorian society is affected by the nature of serialization.
4. How can we understand *The Last Chronicle* as a reaction to the Victorian economy and as a commodity within it?

## *An Autobiography* by Anthony Trollope

1. Maya's seminar paper
2. What are some recurrent patterns/themes Trollope focuses on
  - Precision of money/transactions (anticipate Broughton)
  - Insistence on showing the practical/non-glamorous side of his life
  - Addressing specific critics
3. Intersections
  - Are there any similarities in style between Trollope's writing of his own life and his fiction writing?
  - How do we view his retelling/narrativizing of his mother and father's story in the context of his fiction writing?
  - Trollope makes a point by indicating when and in what circumstances he is inspired to write specific characters or novels. How does he characterize these circumstances? How much can we believe in them? What are some other effects of his specific stylization?
  - i. Autobiography in relation to ideas of poverty, precarity, and property; look at key moments of this (childhood and early adult (looking ahead to next section))

## Trev Lynn Broughton, "Life Writing"

1. Political positioning of Trollope: In her essay, Broughton discusses how Martineau's sense of social responsibility and boundaries translate into how she writes her autobiography. Does Trollope exhibit a similar sense of "Citizen self?"
  - Offer one's own life (as an eminent presence in society) for public information; avoid egoism (71, 73)
  - Privacy of personal correspondence (72)
  - Life writing as a speech act (72)
2. Trollope's embodied self. Martineau's understanding of her developing self and body exhibits, according to Broughton, her "ability to remember herself from the inside" (73). Though her efforts of writing her embodied self and her bodily struggles often defied the condescending diagnoses the doctors contemporary to her time offer her, Broughton emphasizes how Martineau's choice of disclosing or not disclosing her bodily condition displays a heightened awareness of how her body is/has become an object of public consumption. "Martineau was unusual in aiming explicitly to demystify (or 'desacralize') her experiences of bodily suffering" and placed "her own experiences of invalidism in the service of the public, often exposing what she regarded as the mistakes made in the diagnosis and treatment" (74). Although as far as we know Trollope's body was not put on trial the way Martineau's was, are there similar moments in Trollope where he offers a part of his private (embodied) self to the public sphere as a corrective?
3. Life-Writing as Commodity: This is perhaps the most easily recognizable overlap between Martineau and Trollope. Expanding the question posed by Broughton towards the end of this section: how do we view Trollope's construction of selfhood in the context of life-story as commodifiable personal property? How does his commodified personhood push back "against the commodification of identity" (76)?
4. Periodical Selves: Life-Writing, Journalism, and Print Culture—competing genres within Trollope's autobiography
  - How does Trollope position his selfhood in comparison/contrast to the popular practice of periodicals of extrapolating patterns from life-writing into self-help models.
  - What general image of himself in society and as an author is he trying to project?
  - Does Trollope attempt to maintain a personal/impersonal voice? Is there a clear split between his life-writing and his fiction writing?

## CopyrightX & Shoshana Zuboff - Surveillance capitalism

Both the Fairness and Personality theories underlying copyright law rely foundationally upon the idea of private property. Perhaps the most influential theory under the "Personality theory" umbrella holds that "property rights are crucial to self-realization as an individual, not as a social being. By owning and thus controlling objects, a person is able to assert his or her will, and thereby, to be recognized as a free agent by others." Could we understand the prevalence of this theory in relation to oft-intangible objects (i.e. stories) as a reaction to the circumstances of surveillance capitalism and the inescapable presence of the behavioral modification futures market?