

Week 8: Hard Cash by Charles Reade

Lanie & RJ

Indexing, Notes, Classifying

Anna's seminar paper

- “Hard Cash here hardly follows Watt's model of obscuring its formality but instead draws attention to its constructed nature, its intentionality, and, in its reference to another print publication, calls forth Reade's research”
- How does Reade's note-taking influence our opinion of this as ‘literature’? How does this compare to the effect of Dickens' note-taking?

Classifying

Adriana's critical summary

- “I am also interested in the distinction Foucault gets to at the end between the study of ‘life’ and its classification in natural history, especially as it relates to the theories of formal realism that we have encountered.”
- “I think the way they initially classify Alfred can be thought of as a use of the ‘System’ strategy – they pick out a set of variables (insomnia, aggressiveness) through which they assign him a status.”

“‘One diagnostic preliminary sign of abnormal cerebral action is Kephalaria, or true cerebral headache; I mean persistent headache not accompanied by a furred tongue, or other indicia significant of abdominal or renal disorder as its origin’” (Ch. XXV)

Wheatley

On The General Index: [People may object] 2. That the General Index is an impossibility, and that to attempt its preparation is a waste of time. Those who hold this opinion have not sufficient faith in the simplicity and usefulness of the alphabet. Every one has notes and references of some kind, which are useless if kept unarranged, but if sorted into alphabetical order become valuable. The object of the General Index is just this, that anything, however disconnected, can be placed there, and much that would otherwise be lost will there find a resting place. Always growing and never pretending to be complete, the Index will be useful to all, and its consulters will be sure to find something worth their trouble if not all they may require.” (40)

Prof. Buurma's presentation (15min)

- Reade's research practices
- Transcription of notes

Institutional v. Personal Standards of Notetaking

Blair

“From the Middle Ages, working papers on parchment could well have endured down to the present. But it is more difficult in a world of manuscripts than in the era of printing to evaluate what constitutes a note – that is, a piece of writing not meant for circulation but for private use, say, as prepatory toward a finished work.” (67)

“Scholars have noted a general trend toward an increased emphasis on personal reflections in note-taking starting especially in the eighteenth century.” (72)

Medicine, Madness

Medical profession

- Ethical codes, Percival’s code (1803) – emphasizes individual morality; no sworn oath
- Incompetence, lack of consistency throughout field, medicine was not objective
- Surgeons as lesser, incompetent diagnostic physicians
- Incompetent pharmacists

“‘Ah! I’ve heard you are a scholar,” said Dick, “but you won’t make out this; there’s some new preparation of mercury, and there’s musk, and there’s horehound, and there’s a neutral salt: and dal his old head that wrote it!’” (Ch. IV)

- False authority, use of Latin
- Sampson as rebel, always right

Mental health

- Fainting spells (“brain fever”); lack of psychosomatic diagnoses

“‘Then the cause is mintil,’ said Sampson, ‘unless he got a blow on the hid in bein’ wrecked’” (Ch. XXI).

- Asylums

“This way of ordering torture, and then coolly going, irritated Alfred beyond endurance. Though he knew he should soon be powerless, he showed fight; made his mark as usual on a couple of his zealous attendants; but not having room to work in was soon overpowered, hobbled, and handcuffed: then they cut off his hair, and put a large blister on the top of his head.” (Ch. XXXII)

- What do we learn about the role of mental health in Victorian England through Alfred's suffering?
- Gaby's seminar paper

Realism

Poovey

- Corey - Reade's reliance on reader response in tension with the Literati's anti-populist movement
- Lanie - Realism vs. Idealism
- Fiction as art? journalism? Reade's intention/opinion?
- Does Reade's emphasis on factuality overshadow his artistic flourishes? Some of his descriptive language is highly stylized, but it is infrequent and easily overlooked:

"The subsiding sea was now a liquid Paradise: its great pellucid braes and hillocks shone with the sparkle and the hues of all the jewels in an emperor's crown. Imagine—after three days of inky sea, and pitchy sky, and Death's deep jaws snapping and barely missing—ten thousand great slopes of emerald, aquamarine, amethyst and topaz, liquid, alive, and dancing jocundly beneath a gorgeous sun: and you will have a faint idea of what met the eyes and hearts of the rescued looking out of that battered, jagged ship, upon ocean smiling back to smiling Heaven" (Ch. XIII).

Consider Lukacs, Jameson and Barthes

- Lukacs: Description vs. narration
- Lukacs: Research as superfluous
- Barthes: Does Reade use facts as his own reality effect?
- Jameson

Break?

Narrative style

Luke's seminar paper

- Narrator directly addresses the reader in moments of transition
- "Reade's narrative contrasts with his first-person introductions of characters and plot devices, which remove the reader from the action. However, this descriptive tool serves as a foil for the narrated passages, as it grounds the characters in reality and invests the reader more fully in the plot."

- “Such loves, somewhat rare in Nature, have lately become so very rare in Fiction that I have ventured, with many misgivings, to detail the peculiarities of its rise and progress” (Ch. V)

Violence and vulgarity

- Poovey - censorship by circulating libraries
- Is the violence of *Hard Cash* culpable for its removal from the literary canon?
- How differently do you imagine modern and victorian readers react to the novel’s violence?

Racism, Foreignness

Adriana’s close reading

- “The fact remains that the heroic athleticism of black bodies has also been a trope in racist depictions of black characters, and is intimately related to the history of slavery.”
- Patriotism (several references to John Bull)
- “China being a place as hard to get into as Heaven, and to get out of as—Chancery” (Ch. XII)
- Mrs. Beresford, racist converted
- Vespasian’s portrayal, how he glamorizes white skin “He could not keep his hands off a dusty white” (Ch. XI)
- Ch. XI African Theory (two branches)

“1. That the races of men started equal; but accident upon accident had walked some tribes up a ladder of civilisation, and kicked others down it, and left others, standing at the foot. 2. That the good work of centuries could be done, at a pinch, in a few generations, by artificial condensation of the favourable circumstances.”

4:00 PM PJ

Language, Heteroglossia

Nithya’s close reading

- “Both translations differ substantially – as readers, we have to assume that the narrator is offering us an accurate English transcription whereas Mr. Tickell is paraphrasing considerably.”
- “Reade’s inclusion of heteroglossia does allow Ramgolam’s words to (presumably) retain their intended meaning – but it is often this very inclusion that solidifies his status as Other.”

RJ’s close reading

- Alfred and allusions to Samson
- How does the idea of allusion and allegory on a spectrum effect the way we understand realism?
- Classical allusions, greek text, latin (legal language, authority)

Morality

- Trollope v. Dickens v. Reade
- Social problem novel indicting institutions
- Julia/Alfred happy endings
- Money corrupting
- Gender politics