

# Week 2 Outline - ENGL 111: Victorian Novels Research Seminar

Anna and Yumi

**February 3: canonical realisms 1** some topics: realism overview; social networks; city and country; news and newspapers

- Anthony Trollope, *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*, continued
- Georg Lukacs, “Narrate or Describe”\*
- Ian Watt, from *The Rise of the Novel*
- Roland Barthes, “The Reality Effect”\*
- Fredric Jameson, “The Realist Floor-plan”\*
- George Levine, from “The Realistic Imagination”
- Mary Poovey on the Barsetshire series
- Franco Moretti, “Operationalizing”
- complete before class: [Dennis Tenen and Grant Wythoff’s plain-text authoring tutorial](#)
- complete before class: brief post to our Known about plain-text authoring
- create a [Github](#) account
- in class workshop: close reading criticism
- in class workshop: concepts of version control (git, Github)
- in class workshop: data viz discussion with PJ: visualizing the Barsetshire Series 3:45 PJ

discussion and outline: Yumi, Anna; close reading: Luke, RJ; criticism summary: Anna(Barthes), Lanie(Jameson), Adriana(Levine); seminar paper: ; break: Nithya, Gaby

**1. *We hope to use the criticism as a way into the novels, as we will attempt to go to the text as often as possible in our discussion.***

## REALISM

**1:15 - 2:35** (watch clock and check on this)

Close read: Passage 1, page 37 in *The Warden*

Close reading the novel (handout)

Question: How might each critic read this passage? (We expect that we will not move in a linear fashion through each critic, but hope to cover each of the

questions below with regards to each piece and to ensure we have discussed all pieces before moving on.)

Questions to answer for realism- related criticism (Lukacs, Watt, Barthes, Jameson, Levine, Moretti):

- What is realism?
- How does the critic feel about it?
- What is “the real”? How can we access it?
- How does the critic treat the idea of daily or ordinary life?
- What ideological work (if any) does realism do?
- What distinguishes realism/the realist novel for the critic?
- How does the critic discuss narration? (Bonus question: what would the critic say about moments of authorial intrusion in Trollope? See p. 126 in Barchester Towers.)
- How does the critic discuss characterization?
- What other media or disciplines does the critic refer to to explain their theory of literature (e.g. references to visual art, computing, biology, etc.)?
- How can we put this critic in conversations with the others?
- Do you see pitfalls/fallacies in this argument? (After we’ve summarized the basic thrust of the piece and addressed its contributions/applications to the Trollope)

#### **Lukacs (1936) - Nithya can help guide us**

- How does Trollope balance narration and description, as described by Lukacs? Would you add additional terms to describe his novels, or critique the ones Lukacs uses?
- Does Lukacs’ model of what distinguishes the realist novel fit with your understanding of these novels? Did you find yourself, as Lukacs argues, absorbed in the events, environments, etc. of Barset County?
- What is the significance of research for Lukacs (see p. 136)? What might he say about Trollope’s research practices?
- What might be the significance of moments that do not get narrated?

### **Watt (1956) - Adriana is our Virgil**

- Where do we see formal realism in Trollope?
- Where do we NOT see formal realism? Does Trollope ever employ modes of description associated with other genres?
- What might be the significance of breakdowns in formal realism

— Trollope's refusal to describe the Bishop's and the Warden's goodbye in *The Warden*, or the death of John Bold as a passing reference rather than a detailed scene?

- What about moments where Trollope goes overboard with details (perhaps the Archbishop's breakfast or study in *The Warden*?)

### **Barthes (1968) - Anna summarized**

- What does Barthes mean by "the great mythical opposition between the true- to- life (the living) and the intelligible" (14)? By his claim that "the signified is expelled from the sign" in realism (16)?
- What kinds of details from Trollope would Barthes see as signifying only the real? Is Barthes' breakdown of the significance of these details useful here?
- What does it mean for our reading of Trollope that the details signify not their referents but the idea of the real? Does this seem like the "standard aesthetic" of this work?
- What do the details in Trollope do to our understanding of not only the world of each individual novel and its *vraisemblance* but that of the whole world of *Barset County*/the novels as a whole?

### **Jameson (1985) — Lanie :)**

- What does Jameson mean by "the virtual production of the referent or of daily life" (375)?
- How does this theory relate to Barthes'?
- What details from Trollope might Jameson see as significant? Look at the Archbishop's breakfast scene, study description in *The Warden*, or maybe the conversation about the Bishop's new digs that takes place at the beginning of *Barchester Towers*
- Compare/contrast Jameson's discussion of desacralization with Lukacs' claim that "Narration establishes proportions, description merely levels" (127).

### Levine (2000)

- Does Levine's argument call any of the other theories of realism into question?
- How would Levine read Trollope's references to his own novels' fictionality?
- "The quest for unmediated experience becomes central to the dramatic tensions of most realistic fiction, even where the rhetorical strategy is to establish several layers of mediation" (620)

### Poovey (2011) (We have lots of questions here, because there are lots of interesting applications to Trollope and which tie together all of our discussion of realism)

- How does Poovey attempt to account for the group of novels as a whole rather than one or two individual novels? Is her method successful and what do we gain from this broader approach? How does her use of close-reading strategies and of literary reviews of the series function in this argument?
- What does Poovey have to say about the historical context in which series arose? Does she see these as mutually constitutive, or one as producing the other? How so?
- How/why is Poovey's argument that the novels constitute a unified whole convincing to you (or not)?
- Poovey's argument centers on authorial intrusion — how does she configure this with respect to the series? To moralizing passages in the series? To narration?
- What does Poovey argue constitutes or troubles ideas of realism in the novels individually and as a series? What does this have to do with "craft"/artistic practice/"aesthetic self-consciousness"?
- What does Poovey say about the changes in Trollope's artistic practice that can be mapped across the series?
- What role does the form of narration — Poovey mentions free indirect discourse — play in the novels/Poovey's argument?
- What, if anything, does Poovey have to say about readers'/reviewers' investment in Barthes' "vraisemblance"?
- How do you evaluate Poovey's claim that Trollope's characters seem as though they could exist outside of the pages of the novels and that their lives go on even when unnarrated? That is to say, how does she establish/argue for this and does it seem to hold up? (39- 40) Rather, if we accept that reviewers felt this way at the time of publication, does this still feel true? Are our investments in the effacement of craft and lack of authorial intrusion the same or different now (in your own reading experience)?

- What does Poovey make of reviewers' use of drama to evaluate Trollope's realism? Can we connect this to any discourses within or around the novels about other forms of artistic representation? How does she adapt this aesthetic standard to think through Trollope's use of mostly unnarrated dialogue in the last novel of the series?
- Related: what does it mean that we see two separate marriage plots involving Eleanor across the two novels?
- Here is the ending of the Last Chronicle of Barset for reference:

And now, if the reader will allow me to seize him affectionately by the arm, we will together take our last farewell of Barset and of the towers of Barchester. I may not venture to say to him that, in this country, he and I together have wandered often through the country lanes, and have ridden together over the too- well wooded fields, or have stood together in the cathedral nave listening to the peals of the organ, or have together sat at good men's tables, or have confronted together the angry pride of men who were not good. I may not boast that any beside myself have so realized the place, and the people, and the facts, as to make such reminiscences possible as those which I should attempt to evoke by an appeal to perfect fellowship. But to me Barset has been a real county, and its city a real city, and the spires and towers have been before my eyes, and the voices of the people are known to my ears, and the pavement of the city ways are familiar to my footsteps. To them all I now say farewell. That I have been induced to wander among them too long by my love of old friendships, and by the sweetness of old faces, is a fault for which I may perhaps be more readily forgiven, when I repeat, with some solemnity of assurance, the promise made in my title, that this shall be the last chronicle of Barset.

Possible realism wrap- up question: Why is it so important that there is one particular distinguishing characteristic of the realist novel, and that novels feel real? (This might be impossible to answer or not that useful of a question but to Anna it seems interesting, and somewhat counter- intuitive?)

*2. We hope to ask everyone to consider these questions in light of our discussion of the criticism and use them as a framework, as we find and close- read as many of the passages below for the rest of the time we have together.*

## TROLLOPE

- What was your general reading experience of these novels, especially with regards to the realist details within? Look at the footnotes and endnotes

in our editions of Trollope — what do the editors assume needs to be explained?

- What does all of this have to do with how Trollope seems to have done his research? What can we say about the relationship between research and realism in these novels?

### Passages

- Where can we find and what do we make of moments of authorial intrusion into narration? What happens when the “I” of Trollope or a narrator comes into these novels? (See Luke’s reading of *The Warden*; pp. 126- 8, 384- 5, 481- 2 in *Barchester Towers*.)
- Where can we find and what do we make of Trollope’s references to print culture at the time? (We are thinking specifically of Trollope’s lengthy, exultant description of *The Jupiter* in *The Warden*, and the effects of *The Jupiter* articles that ripple through the novels more widely. See chapters 7 and 14 in *The Warden*.)
- Where else does Trollope engage with print culture, such as referring to the early novel and other literature? What is going on in the text at these moments and what do we make of this?
- How do we see Trollope engaging various genres — epic, satire, romance, anything you might come up with and be familiar with — throughout the novels?
- What can we make of moments when Trollope refers to the material form of the texts? Do these passages read differently when reproduced in our modern editions? (see pp. 415, 481- 2 in *Barchester Towers*.)
- How would you characterize these novels’ politics (for example, around modernity, class, reform, gender, nationality, the church?) Subversive? Conservative? Something else? Are there differences between the two books? Can we use Poovey’s configuration of Trollope’s moralizing in the first five novels to triangulate these questions?
- Following on that question, let’s look at RJ’s reading of the absence of theology and his argument about orthopraxy. He writes:

The wording of her response reinforces her point particularly well. The final sentence, “I will think no preaching sincere that is not recommended by the practice of the preacher,” can be rearranged as, “I will think no preaching sincere that the practice of the preacher does not recommend.” I rearrange this clause to emphasize “the practice” as an agent performing the verb. When the practice recommends, the practice is personified. Personification of one’s orthopraxy gives it the

authority of the orthodoxy. This should be understood as the inverse of what is generally expected: the preacher's duty is to recommend practice, but the signora expects the practice to recommend the preaching. Her insistence on a firm orthopraxy allows Trollope to characterize the orthodoxy of the Victorian Church of England as inflated and hypocritical.

- Do you see Trollope's artistic practice evolving across these books (perhaps thinking specifically of realism, research, narration, characterization, and detail as metrics by which to measure a possible change)? Are there computational ways in which we might be able to get a different perspective on this change?

### **Moretti (2013)**

- Which of the theories of realism we read for this week can be operationalized? What does that tell us about them, or about Moretti?
- Poovey?
- Other research topics or questions that we might think about operationalizing?
- Based on this, what are the advantages and disadvantages of operationalization as a standard?

### **Visualizing**

- As we discuss specific passages, are there digitizations or visualizations you can imagine that might help elaborate some of the questions you have and assist us in thinking through the research- realism- Trollope relationship?

<http://rachelsagnerburma.org/Barsetshire/topics.html>

### **345 PM Visualizing the Barsetshire Chronicles with PJ: first discussion**

#### **4:15 PM follow up on plain-text authoring via Known posts**

- And note this timely #DHANNOTATES Programming Historian project - do we want to join?

**4:20 in class workshop: concepts of version control (git, Github) with Nabil**

**4:40 PM end of seminar (last early ending this semester)**

**Next week**

**February 8: optional but recommended version control open lab, LPAC 201, 1-4 pm**

**February 10: canonical realisms 2** some topics: serials and series (what happens when we try to imagine all six Barsetshire novels as part of a single world?); roman fleuve; religion and the clergy; marriage; travel

- Trollope, *An Autobiography*
- E. S. Dallas review of *Barchester Towers*
- Michel Foucault, from *Discipline and Punish* (background to Miller)
- D.A. Miller, Barchester Towers chapter from *The Novel and the Police*
- Ramsay, from *Reading Machines*
- workshop: not reading The Chronicles of Barsetshire (inspired by Paul Fyfe's How To Not Read a Victorian Novel)
- complete before class: brief post to our Known about version control
- -in class workshop: source management, and bibliometrics with Zotero and Paper Machines

discussion and outline: Lanie, Nithya; close reading: Gaby, Corey, Adrianna; criticism summary: Anna (Ramsay); seminar paper: Yumi, RJ; break: Yumi