

Title: Victorian Research Seminar Week 7 Outline

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Texts and Assignments

- Charles Reade, *Hard Cash*, first half (through V2, chapter XIV)
- Ann Blair, “Note-taking as Information Management” from *Too Much to Know*
- Mary Poovey, “Forgotten Writers, Neglected Histories”
- Henry Wheatley, from What is an Index? (skim)
- description of fictional novelist-researcher Rolfe from *A Terrible Temptation*
- discussion and outline: Katie
- close reading: Leila, Katie, Willa
- criticism summary: Art (Poovey)
- seminar paper: Tristan, Aly
- break: Willa

Week 7 Outline

***Hard Cash* in context**

Why does Reade’s novel feel different?

Consider: setting (the ship at sea, almost an adventure novel), style (at once less flowery than Dickens but occasionally more technical), mission (social justice/activism; compare w Trollope and Dickens), etc.

Other ideas?

How different is *Hard Cash* really?

Mary Poovey: “Forgotten Writers, Neglected Histories: Charles Reade and the Nineteenth-Century Transformation of the British Literary Field”

Art’s summary

“In the early nineteenth century, the literary scene by no means favored the author” (Davis 1)

Debate over who determines whether a piece of literature is “good” (critics or the public/sales or publishers/circulating libraries)

Idealism vs. realism

Novels are “art” and thus should “do more than reflect the world in which they were produced. They should induce the reader to think and imagine” (Davis 2).

Reade’s contention: thorough and careful note-taking and fact-finding practices make realism valuable

Brief resurgence of Reade’s practice in the 1930s and 1940s. (Rebecca: My recollection is that there was scholarship on Reade’s sources and use of facts in this period under an old-historicist framework, but this aspect of the field was ultimately drowned out by the rise of New Criticism mid-century? (Poovey 449-50))

More questions about Poovey, HC, and systems of power/political implications

The debate over who determines the worth of literature in many ways reflects larger political systems of power. The argument against sales being the determinant closely resembles the argument for the existence of the Electoral College. Interestingly, however, art and literature is often valued for its revolutionary or uncorruptible nature (or, at least, this is the Humanities’ argument in every Bathtub Debate). What is the relationship between art and systems of power as we see it reflected in Reade’s work (or in the work of Trollope, Dickens, or others)?

Reimagining D.A. Miller and Foucault: the critics take control of the Panopticon?

Systems of power within the text: does the external context in which *Hard Cash* was written and received transform our understanding of its characters? Where do we see the power systems of the publishing world reflected inside Reade’s novel? Does the power system aboard the ship provide an alternate or similar order of governance?

Willa’s close reading

”his Theory, which dub we THE AFRICAN THEORY, had 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. For instance, secure this worker in Ebony 150 years’ life, and he would sign a penal

bond to produce Negroes of the fourth descent equal in mind to the best contemporary white. “You can breed Brains,” said he, “under any skin, as inevitably as Fat. It takes time and the right crosses; but so does Fat—or rather it did; for Fat is an institution now.” And here our Republican must have a slap at thrones. “Compare,” said he, “the opportunities of these distinguished Gentlemen and Ladies with their acts. Their seats have been high, but their minds low, I swan. They have been breeders for ages, and known the two rudiments of the science; have crossed and crossed for grenadiers, racehorses, poultry, and prize-bullocks; and bred in and in for fools; but which of them has ever aspired to breed a Newton, a Pascal, a Shakespeare, a Solon, a Raphael? Yet all these were results to be obtained by the right crosses, as surely as a swift horse or a circular sow. Now fancy breeding shorthorns when you might breed long heads.” So Vespasian was to engender Young Africa; he was to be first elevated morally and intellectually as high as he would go, and then set to breed; his partner, of course, to be elected by Fullalove. . .” (Reade Vol. 1 Chapter XI)

Racial hierarchy as a power system in *Hard Cash*?

Rebecca: Could we talk about white supremacy and colonialism in relation to the novel/fiction/literariness in this period? Does ethno-nationalism play a role in literary ideology, genre, writing and reading practices?

Leila: I’d love also to think about something willa’s paper brought up for me but which she didn’t address: what is the moral or message of vespasian, a black man who is treated to a “superior” environment, and ends loyal and caring, but with a subservient, non-intellectual bent? It seems to be confirming that the role of the black man is to aid the white man, and that while at worst he can be a savage, at best he can be an uncle tom. Do others have conflicting or similar readings?

Other powers: doctors

Leila’s close reading

Scene: Alfred’s diagnosis

“Reade criticizes the pseudo-intellectual institutions of education and notes the total inefficacy and dishonesty inherent even in their language, from terminology to literal meaning” (Selchaif 2)

Katie’s close reading

“And so the virginal instinct of self-defence carried her off swiftly and cleverly. But none too soon; for, on entering the house, that external composure her two mothers Mesdames Dodd and Nature had taught her, fell from her like a veil, and she fluttered up the stairs to her own

room with hot cheeks, and panted there like some wild thing that has been grasped at and grazed. She felt young Hardie's lips upon the palm of her hand plainly; they seemed to linger there still; it was like light but live velvet. This, and the ardent look he had poured into her eyes, set the young creature quivering. Nobody had looked at her so before, and no young gentleman had imprinted living velvet on her hand. She was alarmed, ashamed, and uneasy." (Reade 49-50)

Reade highlights the subjectivity of medical diagnoses

Emma: there seems to be a performative aspect to how medicine is working– as well as in Julia's statement that leads to the kiss (and therefore all the business of diagnosis). do we make anything of this?

Other thoughts about doctors in *Hard Cash*?

Reade's realism

According to Poovey, Reade's work was too realistic to fit the evolving canon

Art: question of evolving reception of Reade?

Aly's seminar paper

Returning to Watt: "Ian Watt claims in *The Rise of the Novel* that the early dichotomy between the terms of "realism" and "idealism" reflected the "prehistory of the novel form," and its eye to "low," immoral behavior; the realism of early novels by Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding was closely tied to the "facts" that their characters were thieves, hypocrites, and fornicators (Watt 10-11). Such stories were realistic because they depicted lowly economic or carnal motives as truths of human behavior" (Ye 3).

But Watt continues: "if a novel is realistic "merely because it saw life from the seamy side, it would only be an inverted romance" (Watt 11). Formal realism requires a "full and authentic report of human experience" (Watt 32).

Aly describes *Hard Cash* as "sensational" (Ye 2), specifically analyzing the railway digression in Chapter VIII

Ultimately, "is *Hard Cash* realistic, or is it more of an 'inverted romance?'" (Ye 3). Are the complaints cited in Poovey's essay accurate?

Other thoughts about Reade and realism?

Break

Reade's writer-historicist-activist model

Tristan's seminar paper

Footnotes and footnoted quotations as commentary, as speech. Tristan describes Reade as "indexing reality" (Beiter 2)

The railway footnote signals that "this event was researched by Reade, not invented" (Beiter 3)

"I would like to propose that Reade's very insistence that the events of the novel are drawn from literal fact, his indexing of reality, contributes directly to the feeling that his novel is unrealistic" (Beiter 3)

This is interesting. Barthes ("The Reality Effect") might suggest that opposite: that these often random details contribute to the reality. However, Barthes doesn't differentiate between texts and footnotes. Thoughts? Did others find the footnoted facts as intrusive as Tristan did?

See this post by Sierra Eckert on footnotes in Reade (from the 2013 seminar).

Aly: Barthes connects the emergence of realism to the "reign of 'objective' history," in which the reportage of facts is "real" enough to negate the need for independent justification (Barthes 15)—this seems to go along w/ Reade's facts, except Reade does have to repeatedly justify those facts in his footnotes/preface. Barthes argues that structural analysis isn't enough because it either prioritizes narrative over details, or incorporates details only for atmosphere/characterization—but is this enough for hard cash? Also, do Reade's facts disrupt "the tripartite nature of the sign" as Barthes's words/details in the reality effect?

Rachel's presentation on Reade's research practices

Ann M. Blair: from *Too Much to Know*

Basically, Victorians were WILD. They took notes on EVERYTHING. They indexed ALL OF THE KNOWLEDGE.

Will: Are there differences between how Victorians took notes and how early modern writers/ writers of antiquity conceived of notetaking (either practices or its ideological function)?

What did you find most interesting?

Do we see any of this sort of note-taking/indexing today? (We can also consider Wheatley here—I'm not including a separate section on him because everyone has different interpretations of "skim")

See the archive of the 2013 Victorian Novel Research Seminar

Returning to Underwood, Bamman, and Lee from last week: how does technology change how we research, index, record knowledge?

Reading practices: we've explored a few different reading practices over the course of the semester (Latour, Moretti's distant reading). Now, we have note-taking reading. How does this practice affect what we get out of texts? Opinions on which form of reading is the best way to accumulate information?

Other thoughts on Blair?

***Hard Cash* Miscellany**

Is there anything we haven't discussed that you want to? Characters that stood out, specific scenes, etc?

Rebecca: If we have time, could we discuss the "Hard Cash" itself, and how this novel compares to Trollope and OMF in its degree of interest in money?

Seminar paper sign-ups

Thursday March 8

12

12:30

1

1:30

2

2:30

3

3:30

4

4:30

5

Friday March 9