

Title: Victorian Research Seminar Week 9 Outline Author: Willa Glickman
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Readings

- Charles Reade, *Hard Cash*, second half
- Michel Foucault, “Classifying” from *Too Much to Know*
- Ronald Day, from *Indexing it All*
- Reade’s notes, ed. Douglas Bankson
- criticism summary: Emma (Foucault)
-

seminar paper: Emma

Week 9 Outline

Logistics

+Seminar dinner date +Sarah Allison

Overview

- Having finished the novel, is its structure any clearer?
- Did you ‘adjust’ to Reade’s style/ the style of this kind of novel?
- Any other large-scale thoughts or observations?

Reade’s Notes

Rachel discusses Reade’s research practices

Bankson’s compilation of the notes

Let’s share some of our observations from perusing the notes

How can we compare Reade’s organizational system with the form of classification described by Foucault or the organizational information systems described by Day? + One example of Reade’s attitude towards information gathering: “In periodicals Reade could find authoritative as well as contemporaneous facts. As

he once told the author, M.E. Braddon, ‘You should read the papers, and leave the books alone’ ” (Bankson v).

Hard Cash as a “matter-of-fact romance”: “Hard Cash is reformist, overwhelmingly dramatic, filled with incident odd and violent, and dependent on contemporary and verifiable fact” (Bankson 11). + Is there anything today that we can recognize as belonging to this idiosyncratic genre? Why is the mixture of sensation and fact so surprising? (Or is it surprising?)

Foucault – the science of classifying

Emma’s summary

“In addition to restricting general kinds of observation (no smell, no hearsay), structure functions to indicate what parts of an object are worthy of observation and create a framework for comparing it to other objects. In his words, “By limiting and filtering the visible, structure enables it to be transcribed into language” (Foucault 135),” (Pernudi-Moon 1)

- What is Foucault’s investment in this observation? What are the consequences of transforming objects/phenomena into standardized and reproducible language?

Due to systems of classification, “Somewhat arbitrary groups of characteristics will become categories by which we evaluate the world” (Pernudi-Moon 2)

- Now “natural history” is largely obsolete and taxonomy is a disappearing science, what do we find Foucault’s argument to be most relevant to today? What does it describe or not describe?
- Is it possible for there to be a truly “natural system” of classification?

Science in *Hard Cash*

How can we characterize the model of medical science (and scientific inquiry/observation) on display in *Hard Cash*? Does Reade depict intrinsic flaws in scientific methods, or simply a misapplication of them? To put it another way, is there too much science, or too little?

- An example of medical observation by Dr. Wycherley: “He whipped out, and entered the condition of the new patient’s body with jealous minuteness in the case-book. As for his mind, he made no inquiry into that: indeed he was little qualified for researches of the kind” (380).

Do we see systems of scientific/medical classification in *Hard Cash* that feel modern? How might we describe the difference in guiding principles between the “restraint” and “non-restraint” asylums Alfred is imprisoned in in Foucauldian terms?

- The non-restraint asylum: “The house was on the non-restraint system. He soon found this system was as bad for him as it was good for the insane. Non-restraint implied a great many attendants, and constant vigilance” (380).
- On classifying language: “Why, Mrs. Archbold had signed Baker’s name and Dr. Bailey’s more than a hundred several times. . . venting the conventional terms, “Aberration,” “Exaltation,” “Depression,” “Debility,” “Paralysis,” “Excitable,” “Abnormal,” as boldly and blindly as any male starling in the flock.

Can we return for a moment to Sampson’s chronothermal theory? What do we make of Reade’s repeated descriptions of characters as “burning” or turning hot and cold in moments of emotional intensity? What are the implications for the book’s understanding of science or of bodies? (See also Samuel Dickson, the model for Sampson, and his *The principles of the chrono-thermal system of medicine*

- One of many examples: “In her lifetime she had her ups and downs of religious fervor; was not without feverish heats, and cold misgivings and depression. . .” (409)
- From the notes: “Man, then, is a chronometer. . . he is a self regulator, i.e. possesses a power of correcting his own wrong movements. . . with the distinction that, unlike a clock, he is subject to changes of temperature as well as time; and these changes are mutually and inseparably connected. . . The chronothermal practice is to regulate simultaneously, and by means adapted to both ends, the time & the temperature of the living machine” (Bankson 6).

Day – the normativizing power of information systems

Can we connect Day’s argument about the ability of libraries and information systems to limit/standardize our access to knowledge with Foucault’s discussion of the standardizing power of the languages of classification? Are there significant differences between the two?

Do you agree that information systems (and systems that situate people as information or data) reduce the importance of the individual?

Doesn’t any library/ information system necessarily provide bounds to what information is available? Can we imagine ways to transcend such limitations?

BREAK

Gender and Desire

As Emma points out, *Hard Cash* has numerous female characters, many in positions of power, both institutionally and in private relationships. The book also gives us insight into women's spaces, most notably that shared by Mrs. Dodd and Julia:

After a few minutes well spent in deploring the fall of her Oxonian, and gently denouncing his motto, and his century, its ways, and above all its words, Mrs. Dodd took Julia to her bedroom, and unlocked drawers and doors in her wardrobe; and straightway Sarah, who was hurriedly flogging the chairs with a duster, relaxed, and began to work on a cheval-glass as slowly as if she was drawing Nelson's lions at a thousand pounds the tail. Mrs. Dodd opened a drawer and took out three pieces of worked Indian muslin, a little discoloured by hoarding: "There, that must be bleached and make you some wrappers for the honeymoon, if the weather is at all fine; and petticoats to match;" next an envelope consisting of two foolscap sheets tacked: this, carefully undone upon the bed revealed a Brussels lace flounce and a veil: "It was my own," said Mrs. Dodd softly. "I saved it for you; see here is your name written on it seventeen years ago. I thought 'this dear little toddler will have wings some day, and then she will leave me.' But now I am almost afraid to let you wear it; it might bring you misfortune: suppose after years of wedded love you should be bereaved of——" Mrs. Dodd choked, and Julia's arms were round her neck in a moment.

Does this book seem like it was intended to be read primarily by men, women, or both? How does the intended audience affect its presentation of gender?

How does *Hard Cash* characterize the ideal man? Ideal woman?

How do characters with ambiguous genders such as the muscular Nurse Hannah (366) or the "softy" Frank Beverly (451) disrupt or not disrupt the book's depiction of gender roles?

Sexual desire is most evident in women – it seems to be alternately condoned (in coded terms) in characters like Julia and condemned in others like Peggy and Mrs. Archbold. What is the novel's overall position on sexual desire in general and women's desire in particular?

As Emma notes, "Mrs Archbold displays "a simultaneous understanding of herself as powerful (she can act against inmates, Alfred in particular, and employees, as well as present herself desirably), and disempowered (she is a woman, she is unable to control her attraction to Alfred)" (Pernudi-Mood 2). Does sexual desire ever give women in the novel power, or does it only make them vulnerable?

Emma's paper

Let's hear from Emma about her essay

Women are both empowered and disempowered, often using power to inflict harm on other women + Do we see positive models of feminine power? In who?

Different vocabularies used to describe the women of the asylum at different times – the language of seduction and desirability, animal language, language of institutional power (jailer vs servant), which “operate to create a simultaneously powerful/disempowered group of women” (Pernudi-Moon 3) + Does the world of the asylum seem like a break with the outside world, or a microcosm of it? How about in terms of gender relations? + What are the implications of Reade's depiction of women in power?

Texts and Rhetoric

There are numerous documents in this novel that persuade and enact states of affairs: sometimes damagingly, as in the certificates of insanity that prevent on-lookers from judging Alfred's condition for themselves, and sometimes positively, in the case of the many written and rhetorical appeals that Alfred makes to win over officials or servants in the asylum.

- For example: “Alfred thus encouraged his story with forced calmness, and without a word too much. Indeed, so clear and telling was the narrative, and the logic so close, that incoherent patients one or two stole up and listened with wonder and a certain dreamy complacency; the bulk, however, held aloof apathetic: inextricably wrapped up in fictitious Autobiography” (361).
- We are given numerous false definitions of sanity and insanity by those in charge of the asylums – what does the novel seem to be positing as the primary characteristic (or marker) of sanity? + Alfred's letters and speeches are often ineffective (or are they?) – what does the novel seem to be saying about the power of clarity and rhetoric? + Anything we want to say about his increasingly inventive/desperate attempts to find writing materials (ink scraped off of a jacket, blackcurrant jam, blood)?

Contrast Alfred's clarity with the jargon of doctors, which Reade also emphasizes (in the book and the notes)

***Hard Cash* as a social problem novel**

Is it one? Why or why not? Do examining Reade's notes change your opinion about this? Does Reade seem to be conceiving of his novel as a tool to effect social/political change?

How does the relative silence of the narrator fit into this question? (Or to slow down, how would we characterize the prominence of Reade's narrator compared to Trollope's or Dickens'?)

Religion

Does there seem to be genuine spiritual feeling in this novel? (Consider Reade's extensive note-taking on religion)

What does it mean that religious sentiment seems to primarily belong to women?

Ending (and the beginning)

Returning to questions of novelistic form - our current ideas in relation to Reade's novel - how do the beginning and ending of HC express Reade's sense of this novel's boundedness and completeness - or or the opposite?

Close read the ending?

Double ending - both the last sentences of the novel, and the Appendix and Notice as forms.