Intermental thought is joint, group, shared or collective thought, as opposed to intramental, or individual or private thought. It is also known as socially distributed, situated, or extended cognition, and also as intersubjectivity. Intermental thought is a crucially important component of fictional narrative because much of the mental functioning that occurs in novels is done by large organizations, small groups, work colleagues, friends, families, couples and other intermental units. It could plausibly be argued that a large amount of the subject matter of novels is the formation, development and breakdown of these intermental systems.¹ However, this aspect of narrative has been neglected by traditional theoretical approaches such as focalization, characterization, story analysis and the representation of speech and thought. Intermental thought in the novel has been invisible to traditional narrative approaches and the many examples of intermental thought that follow would not even count as examples of thought and consciousness within these approaches. Nevertheless, this type of thought becomes clearly evident within a cognitive approach to literature that is informed by findings in cognitive, social and discursive psychology and the philosophy of mind. This philosophical and psychological background to the concept of intermental thought is contained in chapter five of my book Fictional Minds (2004) and so I will not repeat it here.

¹. For an excellent analysis of the small intermental unit of a marriage in a Virginia Woolf short story, see Semino (2006).
I have explored the issue of intermental functioning in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* in two previous essays. In “The Lydgate Storyworld” (2005a) I discussed some small intermental units in the novel: chiefly the marriage of Lydgate and Rosamond and the friendship between Lydgate and Farebrother. In “Intermental Thought in the Novel: The Middlemarch Mind” (2005b), I argued that one of the most important characters in the novel is the town of Middlemarch itself. I called the intermental functioning of the inhabitants of the town “the Middlemarch mind.” I went much further than simply suggesting that the town of Middlemarch provides a social context within which individual characters operate, maintaining instead that the town literally and not just metaphorically has a mind of its own. To illustrate, I discussed the construction of the Middlemarch mind in the opening few pages of the novel and attempted to show that the initial descriptions by the heterodiegetic narrator of the three individual minds of Dorothea, Celia and Mr. Brooke were focalized through it.

This essay is my third and final one on the subject of intermental thought in *Middlemarch*. Its purpose is to build on the work done previously and take the analysis a stage further. I wish now to try to convey the subtlety of the fine shades of intermental thought in the novel and the complexity of the relationships between intermental and intramental thought in the novel. First, I discuss the various ways in which, over the course of the whole text, readers are able to identify a number of distinct, separate Middlemarch minds within the single intermental unit that is constructed at the beginning of the novel. After saying a little about the techniques used for the constructions of these various minds, I suggest that an analysis of the class structure of the town reveals the existence of separate and well-defined upper class, middle class and working class minds. I then refer to the complexity and fluidity of the myriad other intermental units that occur at various points in the text and introduce a tentative typology for the various forms of intermental focalization that are present in the novel. The essay then turns to the roles played by individuals: not only those inside the large intermental units who act as spokespeople or mouthpieces for their views, but also those who, like Lydgate, Dorothea and Ladislaw, find themselves outside these units and become the object of their intermental judgments. These various intramental/intermental relationships have a substantial impact on the plot of the novel.

A close study of *Middlemarch* reveals that George Eliot was fascinated by the intermental process: its complexity, its causes and effects, its relationship with individuals and so on. Thought in general and intermental thought in particular are discussed frequently and explicitly. Group minds are capable of great sophistication and of a wide range of cognitive functioning and they
cannot be understood in purely social terms. A very wide range of cognitive terms are used to describe intermental activity in the novel: knowing, thinking, considering, believing, noticing, conjecturing, implying, suspecting, tolerating, hating, opposing, liking, wanting, and so on. These and the many other examples that are to be found in the rest of this essay are verbs of thought and of consciousness. The whole novel is saturated with clear evidence of a variety of this intermental thought. The selection of this evidence that is presented in this essay comprises only a very small proportion of the total; ruthless pruning was required in order to present my argument in a manageable form.

In the longer, indented quotes that follow, I will put all references to large intermental units in italics. I do this for ease of reference, but also to emphasize in visual form the sheer number of these phrases in the text. I sometimes refer to the Middlemarch mind when it is clear from the context that I am talking about the large intermental unit of the whole town; I will also refer to a Middlemarch mind when it is clear that a subgroup of the whole town mind is being discussed. This essay is about large intermental units and I will not therefore be considering small units such as marriages, friendships and families. It is no exaggeration to say that a short book could be written about all of the intermental units in Middlemarch, both large and small.

Fictional minds form part of the storyworld or diegetic universe of the novel. Put another way, they occur within the story, as opposed to the discourse, level. As I explained in chapter three of Fictional Minds, in studying the mental functioning of characters that takes place in the storyworlds of novels, I go beyond the information provided directly to the reader within the categories of direct thought, free indirect thought, and thought report (or psychonarration) that are the basis of the study of thought representation. I go beyond them because I also take into account the information that is made available to the reader by, for example, presentations of characters’ speech and behavior.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF INTERMENTAL MINDS

In my earlier essay on the Middlemarch mind (2005b), I identified four linguistic techniques that are used in its construction. In order of degree of directness, they are: explicit reference to an actual group, reference to a hypothetical group in order to make a particular rhetorical point, use of the passive voice, and presupposition. The following passage neatly illustrates all of these:
(1) Doctor Sprague [a] was more than suspected of having no religion, but somehow [b] *Middlemarch* tolerated this deficiency in him . . . it was perhaps this negation in the doctor which made [c] *his neighbours* call him hard-headed and dry-witted. . . . At all events, it is certain that if any medical man had come to *Middlemarch* with [d] the reputation of having very definite religious views . . . [e] *there would have been a general presumption* against his medical skill. (125; emphasis added)

The passage marked (a) is the passive voice: it is the *Middlemarch* mind that is doing the suspecting. The letters (b) and (c) indicate explicit references, and (d) presupposition: a *Middlemarch* mind is presupposed because it is that that would create Sprague’s reputation. Although (e) is also an example of presupposition (a group would do the presuming), it is there to make a specific rhetorical point about intermental views on medicine and religion.

I will say a little more here about the first category: explicit references to the names of a variety of intermental groups in the town. The most obvious names relate to the town itself. There are a number of variations: “the *Middlemarchers*” (106) and (114), “good *Middlemarch* society” (108), “*Middlemarch* company” (463) and so on. Another group of terms refers to “the *town*” (112), “the respectable *townsfolk*” (105), etc. References to *Middlemarch* can also be more specific when related to a particular context. For example, during a discussion of the political situation, the text refers to “buyers of the *Middlemarch* newspapers” (246). During consideration of Bulstrode’s possible hypocrisy in example (18) below, there is an ironical reference to “the *publicans and sinners in Middlemarch*” (83). Finally, a description of Rosamond’s popularity refers to “all *Middlemarch* admirers” (114).

The *Middlemarch* narrator, as I mentioned earlier, is fond of explicitly acknowledging the cognitive element in the book, particularly as it applies to intermental cognition. Some of the many examples include “civic mind” (65), “public mind” (99) and (246), “the unreformed provincial mind” (424) and “many crass minds in *Middlemarch*” (106). There are other sightings in the examples used below. At other times, very general terms are used such as: “that part of the world” (151), “midland-bred souls” (71), “mortals generally” (105), “the company” at a party (107), “vulgar people” (114), “all people young and old” (16), “public feeling required” (16), it was “sure to strike others” (17) and so on. Some of the general and vague descriptions of the workings of the *Middlemarch* mind involve oblique references to speech: “gossip” (344), “the air seemed to be filled with gossip” (344), “the conver-
sation seemed to imply” (124), “general conversation in Middlemarch” (181) and “It’s openly said” (72). Sometimes the reporting of the speech is focalized through an individual: Mr. Featherstone “had it from most undeniable authority, and not one, but many” (73), Lydgate “heard it discussed” (106) and (an example of what David Herman [1994] calls hypothetical focalization) “If Will Ladislaw could have overheard some of the talk at Freshitt that morning . . . ” (433). Later, it is made clear what he would have heard being said:

(2) “Young Ladislaw the grandson of a thieving Jew pawnbroker” was a phrase which had entered emphatically into the dialogues about the Bulstrode business at Lowick, Tipton and Freshitt. (533; emphasis added)

The three locations mentioned in example (2) deserve further attention. We can only follow what happens in a storyworld if we follow the mental functioning of the people in that storyworld. However, it is also essential to have a certain amount of knowledge, however rudimentary, of the geographical or material aspects of storyworlds. In the case of Middlemarch, we have to have a rough idea in our heads of the fact that Middlemarch is a town surrounded by a number of large country houses with accompanying parishes or villages. These include Tipton (home of Mr. Brooke, and also Dorothea and Celia before they marry), Freshitt (the home of Sir James Chettam, and Celia after she marries), and Lowick (the home of Casaubon, and also of Dorothea after she marries him). However, as this list shows, knowledge of the geographical storyworld is closely linked with knowledge of the mental and social storyworld. Tipton, Freshitt and Lowick are important only because they are the homes of these particular members of the gentry or upper classes who are leading characters in the story. This is demonstrated by the fact that references to the upper classes are couched in geographical terms, as in example (2), as well as in more obviously social terms. In other words, these place names function as metonymies for the upper classes or the gentry. Similarly, references to the town of Middlemarch itself sometimes act in the same way for the middle classes (as the Tankard pub does for the working classes).

As this discussion shows, the three social classes are amongst the most prominent of the subgroups of the Middlemarch mind. The upper classes consist primarily of the Brookes, the Chettams, the Cadwalladers and the other members of the local landed gentry. The middle classes comprise the professional classes and, in particular, the various medical men. The working classes are much less well represented and are confined mainly to Mrs. Dollop’s
pub, the Tankard. Sometimes the text refers to the upper classes as the “Middlemarch gentry” (186), the “county” (4) or “the county people who looked down on the Middlemarchers” (114). At other times, as in example (2), there are more specific references to the place names: “all Tipton and its neighbourhood” (151), “no persons then living—certainly none in the neighbourhood of Tipton” (17), “the unfriendly mediums of Tipton and Freshitt” (24), “all the world around Tipton” (32) and “opinion in the neighbourhood of Freshitt and Tipton” (58). Very occasionally, it is made clear that these place names describe the middle or working classes who live in them, as in “both the farmers and labourers in the parishes of Freshitt and Tipton” (34).

There are several passages that illustrate the class structure behind the intermental functioning in the town. Here is one example:

(3) The heads of this discussion at “Dollop’s” had been the common theme among all classes in the town, had been carried to Lowick Parsonage on one side and to Tipton Grange on the other, had come fully to the ears of the Vincy family, and had been discussed with sad reference to “poor Harriet” by all Mrs Bulstrode’s friends, before Lydgate knew distinctly why people were looking strangely at him, and before Bulstrode himself suspected the betrayal of his secrets. (500; emphasis added)

This single sentence contains references to the whole social spectrum. “All classes” can be subdivided into upper (Lowick Parsonage and Tipton Grange), middle (the Vincy family and Mrs. Bulstrode’s friends) and lower (Dollop’s pub).

At several points in the discourse the views of the Middlemarch mind are arrived at through what Bronwen Thomas calls “multiparty talk” (2002) (that is, conversations between more than two people). A surprisingly large number of conversations, at least twenty I would say, feature three or more people. Scenes of this sort in which Middlemarch minds are clearly at work include the following:

A The dinner party at which Lydgate is introduced to Middlemarch society (60–63)
B The public meeting at which the vote on the chaplaincy takes place (126–29)
C Sir James Chettam, the Cadwalladers and Mr Brooke talk about politics (261–67)
D Hackbutt, Toller and Hawley discuss Lydgate (308–9)
E The Chettams, the Cadwalladers, Dorothea and Celia have a discussion about widowhood (378–79)

F The Bulstrode scandal breaks and comes to a climax at the public meeting (494–505)

G The Chettams, the Cadwalladers and Mr. Brooke exchange views on Dorothea’s second marriage (560–65)

There are two sorts of multiparty talk here. C, E and G are conversations between members of the gentry that establish a set of characteristically upper-class views on Dorothea’s marriages and on politics. By contrast, B, D and F are the town or middle class views on Lydgate and Bulstrode (together with the working class view in F). A is, as the text explicitly states, an uneasy mixture of the upper and middle classes. In most cases, but particularly in F, there is a mixture of direct speech in the form of dialogue and multiparty talk, and intermental thought report. The hypothetical book on intermental thought in *Middlemarch* that I referred to earlier would allow space for a detailed analysis of the endlessly fascinating ways in which the intricately shifting dynamics of the various group minds are traced in these passages. Unfortunately, there is not enough space in this paper for such an analysis.

In addition to these big set pieces there are many short passages, often only a paragraph in length, in which intermental views are presented. These paragraphs act as a kind of low-level, continuous intermental commentary on events in between the big set pieces. Several of these paragraphs are used for illustrative purposes during the rest of this essay. In addition, there are several dialogues that make it clear that intermental norms have been internalized to such an extent that they have a subtle and indirect, though still profound and pervasive, influence on intramental thought processes. This point is particularly true of concerns about reputation or honor. To take just one example, there is an important discussion between Sir James Chettam and Mr. Brooke on the codicil to Casaubon’s will in which Mr. Brooke says:

(4) “As to gossip, you know, sending [Ladislaw] away won’t hinder gossip. People say what they like to say, not what they have chapter and verse for [. . . .] In fact, if it were possible to pack him off . . . it would look all the worse for Dorothea.” (336–37; emphasis added)

Every word spoken by Mr. Brooke is informed by concern for intermental approval. All their thoughts are dominated by these four, dreaded words: what will people think?
SUBGROUPS AND THE DISCURSIVE RHYTHM

Although the most common of the intermental minds at work in the town are divided along class lines, such a distinction comes nowhere near reflecting the complexity of intermental thought in the novel. A large number of other ephemeral, localized, contextually specific groups can be identified. In a number of the examples given in this essay, there is a bewilderingly complex variety of perspectives, usually comprising the whole Middlemarch mind together with some of its subgroups. Sometimes the subgroups appear to be in agreement and therefore form the Middlemarch mind. They may be separate from each other but have an overlap in membership; they may be distinct from and even opposed to each other; sometimes sub-subgroups of a particular subgroup are featured. With the exception of the social classes, it is rare for subgroups to be referred to more than once in different parts of the novel. In the discussions that follow, it will be apparent that many of these groups are mentioned in a particular context in order to provide a very specific perspective on a particular issue and then vanish. I was originally tempted to try to create a kind of taxonomy or map of intermental thought in the novel by listing all the groups mentioned and analyzing their relations with each other. However, it took only a quick look at the large amount of evidence of intermental thought in Middlemarch to see that such a task would be impossible. The complexity would simply be overwhelming. In any event, little would be achieved because of the contextual nature of many of the references to subgroups.

The narrator can sometimes be self-knowingly ironic about the imprecision that is required when discussing these intermental units:

(5) At Middlemarch in those times a large sale was regarded as a kind of festival. . . . The second day, when the best furniture was to be sold, “everybody” was there. . . . “Everybody” that day did not include Mr Bulstrode.

(415; emphasis added)

The reader is alerted to the fact that locutions such as “everybody” and “all Middlemarch” must not be taken literally. It is difficult to be precise about the membership of large intermental units. Generalizations are required even thought they may not be strictly accurate. To pursue this line of thought, the narrator sometimes uses a particular example of intermental thought, as in the discussion on prejudice in (6), to muse on the nature of intermentality generally and the imprecision of descriptions of it in particular:
Palmer, “Large Intermental Units in Middlemarch” 91

(6) *Prejudices* about rank and status were easy enough to defy in the form of a tyrannical letter from Mr Casaubon; but *prejudices*, like odorous bodies, have a double existence both solid and subtle. (300; emphasis added)

The narrator repeatedly points out that intermental units have a double existence which is both solid and subtle. On the one hand, the Middlemarch minds are collections of very different individuals, all with slightly different perspectives on the social issues affecting the town: they are subtle. On the other hand, and at the same time, these large units come together with a collective force, particularly as it appears to an individual, which is far greater than the sum of their parts: they become solid.

It is obviously too simplistic to suggest that intermental units are so fixed and clearly bounded that individuals are either inside or outside of them. The situation is more complex than that. Some people occupy ill-defined positions with regard to any intermental consensus. The vicar, Farebrother, is one who is on the fringes of the consensus. He regrets the common view on the Bulstrode/Lydgate affair because he likes Lydgate and, although he dislikes Bulstrode, he does not like to see him hounded. His case is made explicit because he is a major character and his views of the matter add to the complexity of the whole situation. However, the reader will know that other characters will have their own, individual views even if the precise nature of these views is not articulated. It is an important part of the capacity of readers to comprehend fictional narrative that they appreciate that, when intermental thinking takes place, significant intramental variations will always occur within it.

One example of this complex combination of intramental and intermental functioning takes place at a dinner party at the Vincey’s household. The various members of the middle classes that are present discuss the chaplaincy. Individual views are expressed and they are often in disagreement with each other. People are thinking intramentally. Then: “Lydgate’s remark, however, did not meet the sense of the company” (107). What happens here is that the individuals who were previously expressing conflicting views coalesce and close ranks in the presence of an outsider, as families tend to do. The presence of a “company” with a common view is explicitly acknowledged. The party is no longer a random collection of intramental perspectives; it becomes an intermental unit.

The attention paid in the text of the novel to the bewildering variety of the intricately interlocking subgroups results in the presence of a characteristic discursive rhythm. This highly distinctive rhythm is sometimes there in single sentences, sometimes in a group of two or three sentences, sometimes
in a whole paragraph. Once it has been noticed, it is difficult to understand how it could have been overlooked. The tone of this rhythm is often ironic and even playful. The narrator regularly seems to backtrack on earlier statements and qualify generalizations. The language seems to meditate on the difficulty of pinning down precisely how these fluid and protean minds are initially and temporarily constituted, then dissolve, reform and dissolve again and so on. Example (1) gives a flavor of this rhythm. Other examples include (18), (19) and (20). Note the prose rhythms contained in the following two passages, and the careful balancing of different intermental perspectives, all trained on a single intramental mind:

(7) However, Lydgate was installed as medical attendant on the Vincys, and the event was a subject of general conversation in Middlemarch. Some said, that the Vincys had behaved scandalously. . . . Others were of the opinion that Mr Lydgate’s passing by was providential. . . . Many people believed that Lydgate’s coming to the town at all was really due to Bulstrode; and Mrs Taft . . . had got it into her head that Mr Lydgate was a natural son of Mr Bulstrode’s. . . . (181–82; emphasis added)

(8) Patients who had chronic diseases . . . had been at once inclined to try him; also, many who did not like paying their doctor’s bills, thought agreeably of opening an account with a new doctor . . . and all persons thus inclined to employ Lydgate held it likely that he was clever. Some considered that he might do more than others “where there was liver.” . . . But these were people of minor importance. Good Middlemarch families were of course not going to change their doctor without reason shown. (305–6; emphasis added)

In both (7) and (8), a view is attributed to a large group and then modified or expanded by subgroups in what might be called a “many people thought . . . some said . . . others considered . . . ” rhythm. Example (7) is particularly illustrative because it starts with the whole Middlemarch mind, “general conversation in Middlemarch,” and then refers to three subgroups: some, others, and many people. The relationship between these three groups is unclear. Are they mutually exclusive or is there an overlap in membership? We cannot be sure. Example (8) concerns an implicit subgroup, patients, instead of the whole Middlemarch mind, but is otherwise similar in shape. Again, it would be very difficult indeed to establish the precise relationship between the various sub-subgroups of patients: those willing to change to Lydgate for very different reasons and those who are not. Some readers of
this essay may be familiar with the mathematical tool of Venn diagrams, in which circles are used to express the relationships between classes of objects. Some of the examples in this essay could, I think, be expressed very usefully in this diagrammatic form, but in other cases insufficient evidence is available for their use.

The illustrated rhythm is characteristic of descriptions of intermental thinking because it is an acknowledgment of the messiness or complexity of this kind of mental functioning. It is invariably inaccurate and uninteresting to claim that everybody in an intermental unit thinks in exactly the same way for exactly the same reasons. Within the Middlemarch minds, the strength of view on the Bulstrode/Lydgate case will vary. Some people will be convinced of their guilt; others will be less so; some will care very much; others will not; some will be pleased at the general view because they dislike Bulstrode and/or Lydgate or because a loss of their status will benefit them; others will regret it because they like one or both of them or have moral objections. The narrator is invariably scrupulous in reflecting these fine shades of opinion. The delicate balance between intramental and intermental thought is always maintained.

**INTERMENTAL FOCALIZATION**

The points made in the previous section about the narrator reflecting fine shades of intermental opinion can be restated in terms of the concept of focalization. In what follows, I wish to propose the following three binary distinctions within the umbrella term *focalization* that, I think, go some way to reflecting the complexity of the passages quoted in this essay:

- intramental and intermental;
- single and multiple; and
- homogeneous and heterogeneous

The difference between *intramental* and *intermental* focalization refers to the distinction between mental activity by one (intramental) and by more than one (intermental) consciousness. *Single focalization* occurs when there is one focalizer. The term *multiple focalization* refers to the presence of two or more focalizers of the same object. These multiple focalizers may be intramental individuals or intermental groups or a combination of the two. However, a further distinction is required. In the case of *homogeneous focalization*, the two focalizers have the same perspective, views, beliefs and so on relating to
the object. By contrast, heterogeneous focalization reflects the fact that the focalizers’ views differ, and their perspectives conflict one with another.

If focalization is single, then it can be either intramental (one individual) or intermental (one single group), but it will be homogeneous and not heterogeneous unless an individual or group has conflicting views on an issue. One example of single focalization is (1), where all of the italicized phrases look superficially as though they are references to different groups, but in fact are simply different means of naming the Middlemarch mind. Other examples are (5) and (14). However, two points should be made. First, the majority of the examples quoted in this essay show multiple points of view. Most display a balance of distinct and distinctive collective views and fine shades of subtly differing judgments. Second, a succession of single focalizations will become multiple in a Bakhtinian effect on the reader when aggregated over the course of a novel.

If focalization is multiple, then it can involve different individuals, or different groups, or a combination of both; and, completely independently, it can be homogeneous or heterogeneous. Obviously, a fairly large number of possible combinations can be derived from these variables. I have not conducted an exhaustive analysis of the Middlemarch text to find out, but my guess is that most combinations are contained in this novel. Of the various examples of multiple intermental focalizations used in this essay, some are homogeneous and some are heterogeneous. Multiple intermental heterogeneous focalization is featured in examples (7), (8), (11), (13) and (18). In all these cases, the various intermental units mentioned have different views on the object of their cognitive functioning. To be strictly accurate, examples (7) and (11) have an intramental element as well and so are, in fact, examples of multiple intermental and intramental heterogeneous focalization. Multiple intermental homogeneous focalization is present in examples (2), (3), (10), (12), (16), (19) and (22). Again, examples (12) and (22) also have an intramental element.2

INDIVIDUALS INSIDE INTERMENTAL UNITS

This section and the following one focus on the relationships between groups and individuals. This one will say a little about how the leaders or spokespeople of each of the three classes are used to present the results of the class-based mental functioning. The next section will consider those individuals

2. For more on multiperspectivism, see Nünning (2000).
who are outside the social groups in the sense that they are the objects of their intermental cognitive activity.

Both Mrs. Cadwallader and Sir James Chettam act as powerful mouthpieces for the upper class mind. Here is a very dramatic illustration of this function:

(9) But Sir James was a power in a way unguessed by himself. Entering at that moment [as Ladislaw is saying goodbye to Dorothea], he was an incorporation of the strongest reasons through which Will’s pride became a repellant force, keeping him asunder from Dorothea. (377)

Chettam embodies or represents—or, to use the word chosen in the passage, “incorporates”—the upper class Middlemarch mind. It is stressed that he, thinking of himself as an individual, is not aware of this power and this may make his role even more powerful. His mouthpiece role is also clearly evident in example (22). Mrs. Cadwallader has a similar role. Two whole pages are devoted to an explanation of it (39–40): “She was the diplomatist of Tipton and Freshitt, and for anything to happen in spite of her was an offensive irregularity” (40). When something does happen in spite of her (the reference is to Dorothea’s engagement to Casaubon instead of Chettam), “It followed that Mrs Cadwallader must decide on another match for Sir James” (40). This is intramental thought and action in the sense that it relates to a single individual, but her power to take this action results from her ability to represent the intermental consensus. Her intentionality is much more clearly foregrounded than with the Sir James quote. “It followed” implies that it followed for Mrs. Cadwallader in her capacity as a mouthpiece for the Middlemarch mind and, in addition, to her as an individual agent. Example (9) is different in that Sir James does not actually do, say or even think anything. He simply has a representative role in Ladislaw’s uneasy consciousness. At that moment, for Ladislaw, Sir James is less an individual and more the incorporation of the town’s collective view.

The middle-class mind has several mouthpieces: they include at various times Sprague, Minchin, Toller, Chicheley, and Standish. It is made explicit that they regard “themselves as Middlemarch institutions” (126). The following quote gives a useful insight into the dynamics or mechanics of the middle-class Middlemarch mind:

(10) What they [Sprague and Minchin] disliked was [Lydgate’s] arrogance, which nobody felt to be altogether deniable. They implied that he was insolent, pretentious, and given to that reckless innovation for the sake of noise
and show which was the essence of the charlatan. The word charlatan once thrown on the air could not be let drop. (313; emphasis added)

Here we have a balance between a small intermental unit (the pair formed by Sprague and Minchin) and the much larger middle class mind. The wider group acquiesces in the views of the pair. The final sentence makes use of the passive voice and presupposition to give a very accurate indication of how views spread. People seize on an idea or a word and hang onto it. It is in this way that the use of the term charlatan becomes attached to Lydgate. However, in keeping the intramental/intermental balance referred to above, it is important to look out for individual characteristics. Fred’s illness “had given to Mr Wrench’s enmity towards Lydgate more definite personal ground” (312). Despite the fact that Mr. Wrench is a mouthpiece for a large intermental unit, his thinking here has conscious intramental shading.

Mrs. Dollop is the acknowledged leader of working class opinion. This is a group that is based in the Tankard pub. (The middle class pub is the Green Dragon.) As the passages describing the working classes are amongst the weakest in the book and, to be honest, make for quite painful reading, I will only briefly describe this topic here. Here are two passages that illustrate the workings of the working class mind and the leadership role of Mrs. Dollop:

(11) This was the tone of thought chiefly sanctioned by Mrs Dollop, the spirited landlady of the Tankard in Slaughter Lane, who had often to resist the shallow pragmatism of customers disposed to think that their reports from the outer world were of equal force with what had “come up” in her mind. (498; emphasis added)

(12) If that was not reason, Mrs Dollop wishes to know what was; but there was a prevalent feeling in her audience that her opinion was a bulwark, and that if it were overthrown there would be no limits to the cutting-up of bodies, as had well been seen in Burke and Hare with their pitch-plaisters—such a hanging business as that was not wanted in Middlemarch. (305; emphasis added)

The use of a representative voice and a supporting chorus is a notable characteristic of both passages. Regarding (11), the term sanctioned is revealing of Mrs. Dollop’s power. The group-defining force of the phrase “outer world” is also worth noting. This “outer mind” stands in clear contrast to Middlemarch conceived as a homogeneous unit of familiarity and home-like
interiority. Finally, I would like to draw the reader’s attention to the occurrence towards the end of (12) of intermental free indirect discourse. It is clear from some of the phrases in this sentence (“Mrs Dollop wishes to know what was”; “as had well been seen in Burke and Hare with their pitch-plaisters”; and “such a hanging business as that was not wanted in Middlemarch”) that the narrator is making use of the distinctive speech and thought patterns that are characteristic of Mrs. Dollop and her customers. I have also found examples of this phenomenon in Evelyn Waugh’s *Vile Bodies* (Palmer 2004, 208–9). It seems to me that this type of free indirect thought merits further attention.

Having examined the role of the mouthpieces of the three class-based intermental units, I will now consider the ways in which the text presents the judgments of units such as these on individuals who are outside of them.

**INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE INTERMENTAL UNITS**

There are a number of different ways to describe the cognitive relationships that exist in the novel between intermental units and the individuals who are outside them. I will refer here briefly to four. The first two (focalization, and what I call *cognitive narratives*) are narratological terms; the other two (theory of mind and attribution theory) are cognitive theories.

**Focalization**

As I explained above, individuals are frequently focalized through an intermental mind. For example, both Dorothea’s and also Lydgate’s character and behavior are, at various times, focalized through a variety of Middlemarch minds. The relentlessly judgmental quality of intermental thought in the novel remains fairly constant in relation to both of them. However, intermental units can also be focalized through intramental cognitive functioning. For example, within Lydgate’s free indirect discourse, there are references to “Middlemarch gossip” (240) and to “the circles of Middlemarchers” (299). Dorothea is critical of the “society around her” (23). Sometimes the two directions are at work simultaneously. In a very good example of a reciprocal intermental/intramental relationship, Lydgate comments that “I have made up my mind to take Middlemarch as it comes, and shall be much obliged if the town will take me in the same way” (112). It is clear that Lydgate talks here of Middlemarch in the way that the narrator does in the final sentence of
(19), as a sentient being that is capable of mental thought. In (13), the presentation of power relations in the town is focalized through Lydgate:

(13) The question whether Mr Tyke should be appointed as salaried chaplain to the hospital was an exciting topic to the Middlemarchers; and Lydgate heard it discussed in a way that threw much light on the power exercised in the town by Mr Bulstrode. The banker was evidently a ruler, but there was an opposition party, and even among his supporters, there were some who allowed it to be seen that their support was a compromise. . . . (106; emphasis added)

Lydgate is aware that, on this question, the whole intermental mind (“Middlemarchers”) is subdivided into support for Bulstrode and opposition to him (and perhaps those who have no strong opinion?). The support is then further subdivided into strong and weak or “compromise” support.

Cognitive narratives

This term designates a character’s whole perceptual, cognitive, ethical and ideological viewpoint on the storyworld of the novel. It is intended to be an inclusive term that conveys the fact that each character’s mental functioning is a narrative that is embedded within the whole narrative of the novel. In “The Lydgate Storyworld” (note the title), I argued that Lydgate’s mind in action is the Middlemarch storyworld as seen from his viewpoint. Double cognitive narratives are versions of characters’ minds that exist in the minds of other characters. So, one way to describe this cognitive relationship is to say that Middlemarch minds regularly form double cognitive narratives of individuals. Equally, double cognitive narratives can be reversed. As Lydgate’s wish that the town take him as it finds him shows, some individuals form their own double cognitive narratives for the Middlemarch mind.

Theory of mind

This is the term used by philosophers and psychologists to describe our awareness of the existence of other minds, our knowledge of how to interpret other people’s thought processes, our mind-reading abilities in the real world. This mind reading involves readers in trying to follow characters’ attempts
to read other characters’ minds. Theory of mind is usually considered to work in the novel on the intramental level. For example, in *Persuasion*, when Wentworth is snubbed by Anne’s father and sister, Anne knows that he feels contempt and anger; Wentworth knows that Anne knows what he feels; Anne knows that Wentworth knows that she knows, and so on. There are other points in the novel at which Anne and Wentworth use their theory of mind on each other. However, it is part of the purpose of this essay to show that groups can also use their theory of mind and, in addition, be the subject of individuals’ theory of mind.

For example, when Lydgate takes Bulstrode out of the public meeting in which he, Bulstrode, has been humiliated:

(14) It seemed to him [Lydgate] as if he were putting his sign-manual to that *association* of himself with Bulstrode, of which he now saw the full meaning as it must have presented itself to *other minds*. [And then, within Lydgate’s free indirect discourse:] The *inferences* were closely linked enough: the *town* knew of the loan, believed it to be a bribe, and believed that he took it as a bribe. (504; emphasis added)

In theory of mind terms, the passage can be decoded as follows:

A Lydgate believes  
B that the Middlemarch mind believes  
C that Bulstrode believed  
D that Lydgate was bribable  
E and that Bulstrode intended to bribe him  
F and that Lydgate knew of Bulstrode’s intention  
G and that Lydgate did accept Bulstrode’s bribe

Note that this cognitive chain involves intermental (item B) as well as intramental reasoning.

**Attribution theory**

An alternative approach is to use the language of attribution theory and say that a wide range of different attributions are made by intermental minds

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3. For more on theory of mind, see Palmer (2005b) and Zunshine (2006).
regarding the supposed workings of intramental minds.\textsuperscript{4} Throughout the novel, Middlemarch minds are focused on the construction of their views on individuals in order to judge them and to place them. “Most of those who saw Fred . . . thought that young Vincey was pleasure-seeking as usual” (163). So Fred is constructed as a pleasure seeker. In example (1), Sprague is defined as “hard-headed and dry-witted.” Attributions by large intermental units also have a profound effect on smaller units such as marriages: “In Middlemarch a wife could not long remain ignorant that the town held a bad opinion of her husband” (511).

All this inter- and intramental complexity is a vital element in the development of the various plots in the novel. The two most important examples are the Lydgate and Bulstrode crisis and the Dorothea and Ladislaw relationship. Example (9) shows very clearly that intermental units play a very powerful teleological role in the plot of the novel. The point is made explicit there in the reference to the upper class mind keeping Dorothea and Ladislaw apart, mainly through their, and especially his, uneasy awareness of its workings. For example:

\begin{quote}
(15) Will was in a defiant mood, his consciousness being deeply stung with the thought that the people who looked at him probably knew a fact tantamount to an accusation against him as a fellow with low designs which were to be frustrated by a disposal of property. (417; emphasis added)
\end{quote}

This is an example of what Bakhtin calls the \textit{word with a sideways glance}: the nervous and uneasy anticipation of the view of another. It was also apparent in example (4). The end result for Dorothea and Ladislaw is that they are kept apart for some time:

\begin{quote}
(16) His position [in Middlemarch] was threatening to divide him from her with those \textit{barriers of habitual sentiment} which are more fatal to the persistence of mutual interest than all the distance between Rome and Britain. (300; emphasis added)
\end{quote}

The focus of intermental units on intramental thinking raises important questions regarding the construction of identity:

\begin{quote}
(17) There was a \textit{general impression}, however, that Lydgate was not altogether a common country doctor, and in Middlemarch at that time such an
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{4} For more on attribution theory, see Palmer (2007).
impression was significant of great things being expected from him. (96–97; emphasis added)

Lydgate is considered to be a gentleman doctor. That is the intramental identity that is constructed by the intermental consensus. It is clear that George Eliot was very interested in how these socially situated identities are constructed. For example, the narrator emphasizes in the following quote that intermental minds tend to pay a good deal of attention to the past lives of individuals. While a cognitive narrative is being constructed for these individuals, their origins are carefully examined for any clues relating to their identities. Here, Bulstrode’s lack of known social origins is held to be deeply suspicious:

(18) Hence Mr Bulstrode’s close attention was not agreeable to the publicans and sinners in Middlemarch; it was attributed by some to his being a Pharisee, and by others to his being Evangelical. Less superficial reasoners among them wished to know who his father and grandfather were, observing that five-and-twenty years ago nobody had ever heard of a Bulstrode in Middlemarch. (83; emphasis added)

Obviously, talk of a single, stable, assured social identity is misleading. All of these groups (loud men; those persons who thought themselves worth hearing; others; the publicans and sinners in Middlemarch; some; others; less superficial reasoners among them) have their own conflicting, colliding, contradictory perspectives on poor Bulstrode.

This interest in the past is even more explicit in the next example, which is very revealing about the ways in which intermental constructions of intramental cognitive narratives require individuals’ pasts to be filled out:

(19) No one in Middlemarch was likely to have such a notion of Lydgate’s past as has here been faintly shadowed, and indeed the respectable townsfolk there were not more given than mortals generally to any eager attempt at exactness in the representation to themselves of what did not come under their own senses. Not only young virgins of that town, but grey-bearded men also, were often in haste to conjecture how a new acquaintance might be wrought into their purposes, contented with very vague knowledge as to the way in which life has been shaping him for that instrumentality. Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably. (105; emphasis added)
The passage starts by saying, reasonably enough, that the Middlemarch mind is not going to know what had actually happened to Lydgate before he arrives in the town. But it then goes on to say that the hypothetical construction of his cognitive narrative (in the absence of real evidence) will owe more to the Middlemarch mind’s own needs (“wrought into their purposes”) than any disinterested pursuit of the truth of his history. The final sentence emphasizes the point. It will make use of Lydgate as it wishes. The need is to create a “Middlemarch Lydgate” who can be comfortably “swallowed” and easily assimilated. This “Lydgate” need only have a tenuous relationship with the “real” Lydgate (whatever and whoever that is).

In example (19) above, and also in examples (20) and (22), there is a strong emphasis on the almost mythic power of especially intermental but also intramental minds to modify reality to their own requirements. This is especially true, as can be seen above, of the construction of Lydgate’s cognitive narrative. The intricate and messy detail of a life as actually lived by a particular individual is smoothed and flattened out into a simple story, a narrative that is molded according to the intermental desire for a simple moral to the tale. In (20) the narrator again uses the opportunity of some complex intermental views of an individual, this time Bulstrode, for some general musings on how intermental minds construct intramental embedded narratives:

(20) But *this vague conviction* of interminable guilt, which was enough to keep up much head-shaking and biting innuendo even among *substantial professional seniors*, had for the general mind all the superior power of mystery over fact. *Everybody* liked better to conjecture how the thing was, than simply to know it; for *conjecture* soon became more confident than knowledge, and had a more liberal allowance for the incompatible. Even the more definite *scandal* concerning Bulstrode’s earlier life was, for *some minds*, melted into the mass of mystery, as so much lively metal to be poured out in dialogue, and to take such fantastic shapes as heaven pleased. (498; emphasis added)

This is a general assessment by the narrator of a certain type of intermental thought. Although it is related to the workings of the Middlemarch mind, it appears to have a wider application. The narrator seems to be suggesting that this is how intermental systems generally work. It is heavily ironic and rather jaundiced. It makes the obvious point that the cognitive investigations of the Middlemarch mind are not aimed at a pure disinterested pursuit of the objective truth. Rather, in this case, the driving force is the enjoyment of
mystery, as opposed to the discovery of fact. This is because fact might result in an uninteresting narrative being constructed for the two individuals, Bulstrode and Lydgate. Also, the resulting narrative might not suit the purposes or interests of those people who are hostile to the two. Even the “more definite” facts are warped to fit into a more satisfying narrative. There is then a reference to “some minds” going further “even” than the majority in modifying the known facts to construct a satisfying narrative. A cognitive narrative that fits the needs of the group is created.

In fact, in a typically explicit passage, the narrator muses on the question of identity and warns the reader against the distortions in the construction of intramental identity inherent in the myth-making process:

(21) For surely all must admit that a man may be puffed and belauded, envied, ridiculed, counted upon as a tool and fallen in love with, or at least selected as a future husband, and yet remain virtually unknown—known merely as a cluster of signs for his neighbours’ false suppositions. (96; emphasis added)

The myth-making process continues even after death. The following passage occurs at the very end of the book:

(22) Sir James never ceased to regard Dorothea’s second marriage as a mistake; and indeed this remained the tradition concerning it in Middlemarch, where she was spoken of to a younger generation as a fine girl who married a sickly clergyman, old enough to be her father, and in little more than a year after his death gave up her estate to marry his cousin—young enough to have been his son, with no property, and not well-born. Those who had not seen anything of Dorothea usually observed that she could not have been “a nice woman,” else she would not have married either the one or the other. (577; emphasis added)

Dorothea is focalized though the Middlemarch mind for ever. Her life exists now only as a double cognitive narrative that is constructed by the Middlemarch mind. In its reductive simplicity and naivety, this narrative is completely different from the warm, sympathetic, complex one that is presented by the narrator over the course of the novel. It is a very long way indeed from the woman described in the final paragraph, the one whose “finely-touched spirit had still its fine issues,” “who lived faithfully a hidden life” and who rests in an unvisited tomb (578).
CONCLUSION

I have tried in this essay to describe the various ways in which the narrator of Middlemarch organizes the mosaic of intermentality that makes up the text of the novel. I hope to have shown that the various intermental units are so integral to the plot of the novel that it would be difficult for a reader to follow the plot without an understanding of them. Now that the existence of this fundamentally important aspect of the novel has been established, the resulting lines of inquiry could go in a number of different directions. One would be to consider in more detail the different purposes that are served by the depictions of these units, in particular the creation of various ironic effects. Another would be to find out how the representations of intermental units in this novel both differ from, and are similar to, the representations in texts written by other novelists of the same period, as well as those from different periods.

REFERENCES