CHAPTER 1

Cognitive Approaches

It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.

—Oscar Wilde

IN MARIA EDGEWORTH’S novel Helen (1837), the eponymous heroine attends a dinner party given by the family that she is staying with (General Davenant, Lady Davenant, and their daughter Cecilia):

One day at dinner, Helen was seated between the general and a fine young guardsman, who . . . had made some demonstrations of a desire to attract her. He was piqued when . . . he observed that her attention was distracted by a gentleman opposite . . . Helen looked first at Cecilia, who, as she saw, heard what was said [about the death of a former lover] with perfect composure; and then [looked] at Lady Davenant, who had meantime glanced imperceptibly at her daughter [i.e., Cecilia], and then upon Helen, whose eyes she met—and Helen coloured merely from association . . . Helen had left the guardsman in the midst of his sentence, discomforted, and his eyes were now upon her; and in confusion she turned from him, and there were the general’s eyes . . . The general now exerted himself to occupy the guardsman in a conversation about promotion, and drew all observation from Helen. Yet not the slightest indication of having seen, heard, or understood, appeared in his countenance . . . Of one point Helen was however intuitively certain, that
he had noticed that confusion which he had so ably, so coolly covered. One ingenuous look from her thanked him, and his look in return was most gratifying; she could not tell how it was, but it appeared more as if he understood and liked her than any look she had ever seen from him before. They were both more at their ease. (33)

Notice how much of the cognitive functioning described in this passage is being shared between these characters without the use of words. Although people are, in fact, speaking, it is only social chitchat. As the emboldened phrases show, the real communication is going on by means of looks, body language, and gestures. Five characters—Helen, the guardsman, Cecilia, Lady Davenant, and the general—are all engaging in the most complex and subtle mind reading, and all without saying a single word. These are social minds in action because they are public, embodied, and so available to each other without the need for speech. Helen's mind is visible: the guardsman can see that she is distracted and the general can see that she is discomforted. In turn, Helen can see the workings of Cecilia's and Lady Davenant's minds: Cecilia's determination not to show her emotions and Lady Davenant's concern for her daughter. In particular, Helen acquires a lot of knowledge of the general's mind: she knows that he knows that she needs help; and she also knows that he understands and likes her.

It is a cliché of literary studies that, whereas novels can give us direct access to the minds of characters, by contrast, in reality, we can never really know what other people are thinking. This is the sort of thing that sounds true while it is being said within that context, but, in other contexts, can sound like complete nonsense. To believe it requires a considerable degree of cognitive dissonance in order to contradict the weight of evidence of our everyday experience. All of us, every day, know for a lot of the time what other people are thinking. This is especially true of our loved ones, close friends, family, and work colleagues. It is also true of our encounters with total strangers. How could it be possible for two people to hold a coherent conversation without at least some knowledge of the other person's thought processes? I am not saying that we always know all of what other people are thinking. That would be as silly as the cliché that we can never really know. Sometimes, as in the quote with which I began, we know what other people are thinking without them having to say anything; at other times we do not know what they are thinking even though they are trying to tell us. Sometimes we have secret thoughts that no one else will ever know about; at other times, other people, especially those close to us, will know better than we do what we are thinking.

The passage just quoted is an example of the externalist perspective. For
a contrasting illustration of the *internalist perspective* (the theoretical background to both of these terms is explained at the beginning of chapter 2), consider the scene in Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814) in which Waverley is interviewed by a local laird, together with a clergyman, about his supposed Jacobite activities.

When Waverley retired, the laird and clergyman sat down in silence to their evening meal . . . Each mused over the particulars of the examination, and each viewed it through the medium of his own feelings . . . The wide difference of their habit and education often occasioned a great discrepancy in their respective deductions from admitted premises. (250–51)

As a presentation of mental functioning, what is striking about this passage is its emphasis on the differences between the two minds. It presents characters who have completely opposed ways of thinking and so widely divergent views on another mind: Waverley's. The ensuing discussion makes it clear that the laird is of a dour and suspicious cast of mind and so sees the young man as a violent and dangerous rebel; the clergyman is more trusting and optimistic by nature and so regards him (more accurately, as it turns out) as a decent young innocent abroad. In effect, they are constructing utterly different minds for the same character. Significantly, the two men have great difficulty in understanding each other's thought processes. There is no meeting of minds. This is a picture of consciousness as private, solitary, and inaccessible to others. The emphasis is on the gaps between people, the difficulties that we all sometimes experience in understanding the thought processes of others, the barriers that make it difficult for people to think together or in cooperation with each other.

To take us back to the externalist perspective, have a look now at these three examples. In Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857), the villain, Blandois, arrives one evening at a French inn. As he walks in, the narrator remarks, “There had been that momentary interruption of the talk about the stove, and that temporary inattention to and distraction from one another, which is usually inseparable in such a company from the arrival of a stranger” (167–68). Later in the same novel, Mr Meagles admits to Arthur Clennam that “we do, in families, magnify our troubles and make mountains of our molehills in a way that is calculated to be rather trying to people who look on—to mere outsiders” (370). Mr Meagles also explains that “There is one of those odd impressions in my house, which do mysteriously get into houses sometimes, which nobody seems to have picked up in a distinct form from anybody, and yet which everybody seems to have got hold of loosely from
somebody and let go again, that she [Miss Wade] lives, or was living [near Park Lane]” (373).

Like the passage from Helen, these three statements are examples of the workings of social minds in the novel. Specifically, they describe intermental thought, which is joint, group, shared, or collective thought, as opposed to intramental, or private, individual thought. (Again, more background on this concept is given in the next chapter.) The minds of the group of people in the inn share a sense of intrusion. And, as the narrator points out, this shared sense of discomfort at the arrival of a stranger is common in such situations. Mr Meagles makes a general point about how families typically behave (making mountains out of molehills) that is also true of his family. Mr Meagles, again, describes the intermental functioning of his family (a shared knowledge of Miss Wade’s whereabouts but no knowledge of how this information was acquired) and points out that this sort of thought is typical of families. In all three cases, minds are working in the same way, and the thought being described here is, to some extent, collective. There is one important difference between, on the one hand, the Helen quote and the quote about the French inn, and, on the other hand, the two statements about the Meagles family. The first two are descriptions of social minds by heterodiegetic (or third-person) narrators. The other two are claims by a particular character, Mr Meagles, about the group mind of which he is a part.

This last-mentioned relationship—the one between intra- and intermental activity, between social minds and individual minds, between the internalist and the externalist perspectives—is a complex and fascinating one. It is central to narrative fiction, and it is the subject of this book. My purpose is to put statements such as those discussed above, and the many other examples presented in later chapters, at the heart of narrative theory. Fictional social minds are not of marginal interest; they are central to our understanding of fictional storyworlds. This is because real social minds are central to our understanding of, and ability to operate in, the actual world. My thesis is that social minds are possible because much of our thought is visible, which is why Oscar Wilde said that it is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances, and that the true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.

A fierce debate took place within the nineteenth-century novel in particular on the nature of social minds. It had two sides. One was epistemological: To what extent is it possible to have knowledge of the workings of other minds? The other side of the debate was ethical: To what purposes should our knowledge of other minds be put? The epistemological dispute was surprisingly explicit; narrators and characters frequently refer to it. The
ethical side was also ever present; there are many occasions on which sharp and painful moral dilemmas arise from the control that characters try to exercise over other minds. In literary studies it is usually unwise to specify the precise point at which a historical phenomenon begins. Your readers will then feel challenged to find earlier examples and you are left looking rather underread. Nevertheless, in the interests of scholarship, I am going to take that risk and propose that this debate began in 1816 on Box Hill, the famous beauty spot in Surrey that is the site of the picnic outing in Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816). You may remember that the expedition party never quite gels. “There seemed a principle of separation” (361) and “a want of union” (361). In order to rouse the party and provoke some witty repartee, to reduce the separation and increase the union, Frank Churchill exclaims, “I am ordered by Miss Woodhouse . . . to say, that she desires to know what you are all thinking of” (363). Mr Knightley sees that she is playing with fire and cautions her by asking, “Is Miss Woodhouse sure that she would like to hear what we are all thinking of?” (363). Emma ignores the warning, plows on with her conceit, inadvertently humiliates Miss Bates, and later incurs Mr Knightley's stinging rebuke. She is made to feel painfully aware of the emotional consequences of the pursuit of knowledge about other minds.

First, though, before going into more detail about social minds in the next chapter, I would like to say a little about the context within which this book has been written. This is the cognitive turn in the humanities, or, more specifically, what has come to be known as *cognitive approaches to literature.* I will then recap on some of the concepts that were introduced in my first book, *Fictional Minds* (2004), because they recur throughout this one, before explaining the ways in which the two books differ from, but are also complementary to, each other. Next, I will briefly introduce the concept of *attribution theory.* After discussing the issue of characterization theory and, in particular, the key notion of *dispositions,* this chapter ends with a brief outline of the structure of the rest of the book.

**COGNITIVE APPROACHES**

The background to this study is the widespread cognitive turn in literature studies in the 1990s that followed the linguistic turn of the 1960s and 1970s. (I cannot guess what the next turn will be, but, as part of the cognitive turn myself, I am in no hurry for it.) As I see it, there are three important new developments in research in my field: *cognitive narratology, cognitive approaches to literature,* and *cognitive poetics.* At one point, there seemed to be a danger that a researcher in one of these areas might not be aware
of similar work being done by people in the others. However, thanks to the invaluable efforts of scholars such as Monika Fludernik, David Herman, and Lisa Zunshine, this danger has been averted. Many lines of communication are now open. The barriers are now breaking down to the extent that the boundaries between the three areas are becoming rather blurred. Nevertheless, their outlines can still be discerned.

The first, cognitive narratology, has applied the findings of the various cognitive sciences, for example the insights of philosophers of mind, psychologists, and cognitive scientists such as Antonio Damasio, Daniel Dennett, and Steven Pinker, to a number of different aspects of the narrative comprehension process. Notable examples of the success of this approach include *Towards a “Natural” Narratology* (1996) by Monika Fludernik, David Herman’s *Story Logic* (2002), and Marie-Laure Ryan’s *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (1991). In fact, David Herman (2003b) argues that, as narrative is a key cognitive tool and a central and indispensable way of making sense of the world, the discipline of narratology itself should be considered as one of the cognitive sciences. As Herman’s claim implies, cognitive narratology takes narrative in general as its object of study—it is as interested in film as in print, as interested in nonfiction as in fiction—but most of its work up to this point has focused on novels and short stories. The second new development, cognitive approaches to literature, differs from the first in that it has emerged from literary criticism generally, rather than from narrative theory, and has drama and poetry as its subject matter too. One of its particular areas of interest is the analysis of metaphor. Important works in this field include *Dreaming by the Book* (1999) by Elaine Scarry, Mark Turner’s *Reading Minds* (1991), and Lisa Zunshine’s *Why We Read Fiction* (2006). The third field, cognitive poetics, is a type of applied linguistics that, like the previous area, is concerned with poetry and drama as well as the novel and also with the role of metaphor. It differs from the other two in its use of specifically linguistic tools for the analysis of texts. Leading works in this field include Catherine Emmott’s *Narrative Comprehension* (1997), Elena Semino’s *Metaphor in Discourse* (2008), and Peter Stockwell’s *Cognitive Poetics* (2002).

All three of these approaches have made a number of important contributions to our understanding of the reading process. In particular, their illuminating research findings have great heuristic and pedagogical value. Although I am not a teacher myself, I have noticed that this work is gradually filtering down into teaching courses at both the postgraduate and undergraduate levels. Cognitive approaches can initially sound intimidating to students, but it is perfectly possible to make the subject highly accessible to, and surprisingly enjoyable for, those who are new to it. Of particular benefit
is the potential versatility of this new subject area. To talk of a cognitive approach to literature can be rather misleading if it gives the impression that it is simply one alternative among a range of others: historical and cultural, Marxist, feminist, rhetorical and ethical criticism, and so on. I do not see it like that. In my view, the cognitive approach is the basis of all the others. It does not stand alongside them; it sits underneath them. It is the means by which critics gather the evidence that allows them to make their various judgments. It follows then that the cognitive approach is not necessarily an end in itself and so its analyses will naturally tend to drift into these other fields. Significantly, a recent collection of essays edited by Lisa Zunshine is titled *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies* (2010), and it applies cognitive insights to a range of historical, social, and cultural concerns.

As my interest is in the fictional minds of characters in novels, it seems to me to make sense to explore the various cognitive sciences concerned with the study of real minds such as the philosophy of mind; social, cognitive, and discursive psychology; neuroscience; and psycholinguistics. My cognitive approach is a pragmatic, undogmatic, and unideological one. If these real-mind disciplines can assist our study of fictional minds, then that is fine; if they cannot, then there is no reason to use them. However, it has been my experience that we understand fictional minds much better when we apply to them some of the work done on real minds by psychologists, philosophers, and cognitive scientists. In fact, I would go further and argue that, from my perspective, all serious students of literature are cognitivists, whether they like it or not. We all study the workings of fictional minds and think of novels in terms of the mental functioning of characters. So the divide is not between cognitivists and noncognitivists; it is between those who explicitly see themselves as cognitivists and make use of real-mind discourses to study literary texts, and those who do not. I can understand the concerns of what may be termed implicit cognitivists who are skeptical about the value of explicitly cognitive approaches to literature. They may suspect, for example, that these approaches erect a huge and unwieldy conceptual apparatus with disappointing results, that they are unconvincing, that they simply tell us what we already know, and that they tell us only a small part of the story because they divorce mental functioning from its social and physical context.

I hope that this book may help a little to allay these concerns by showing that, with the minimum of theoretical scaffolding, original, illuminating, and convincing results can be obtained. The cognitive conceptual apparatus in this book is intended both to call attention to overlooked phenomena in novels and to offer some new ways of talking about them. I am interested in particular in the last of the concerns listed in the previous paragraph (that
the social context is left out of account) because it is also felt by many psychologists, philosophers, and scientists in relation to the study of real minds. I want to stress emphatically that an interest in the mind does not necessarily entail a lack of interest in the social mind. My own experience has been the precise opposite. Fictional mental functioning should not be divorced from the social and physical context of the storyworld within which it occurs. In the view of the philosopher Brian Cantwell Smith (1999, 769), the classical (or internalist) view of the mind sees it as individual, abstract, detached, and general, while the new (or externalist) view sees it as social, embodied, engaged, and specific. It is this new cognitive perspective that underpins this book. I have found it disappointing that, although many literary theorists have made good use of what may be termed the “hard” cognitive sciences such as neuroscience, much less use has been made of the “soft” sciences such as social psychology, discursive psychology, sociolinguistics, and anthropology. Some scholars have studied the workings of fictional minds within their social and physical context by making illuminating use of these soft sciences, for example David Herman (2007b) and the literary critic John V. Knapp (1996), but there is still much more to do.

FICTIONAL MINDS

There has always been a good deal of interest within traditional narratology in the presentation of consciousness in the novel. See especially Transparent Minds by Dorrit Cohn (1978), and also the excellent studies by Mieke Bal (1997), Seymour Chatman (1978), Monika Fludernik (1993), David Lodge (2002), and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983). Fictional Minds was, in part, a critique of this tradition. In it, I argued that these writers provide only a partial and misleading picture of fictional minds because they tended to limit the scope of their analyses to the part of the mind known as inner speech. I therefore proposed a much fuller, more holistic, and more informative view of the subject. The book was based on the following five basic arguments (some of which have already been mentioned).

1. Classical methodologies such as the speech category approach (the discourse analysis of thought presentation that employs such concepts as free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness, interior monologue, and so on), story analysis (the study of characters as actants, functions, et cetera), the concept of focalization or point of view, and the study of characterization do not add up to a complete and coherent study of all aspects of the minds of characters in novels.
2. Traditional narratology neglected the whole minds of fictional characters in action by giving undue emphasis to private, passive, solitary, and highly verbalized inner thought at the expense of all the other types of mental functioning.

3. In studying fictional minds, we should make use of what I called the parallel discourses on real minds, such as neuroscience (Antonio Damasio [2000]), psycholinguistics (Steven Pinker [1994, 1997]), psychology (Edwin Hutchins [1995] and James Wertsch [1991]), and the philosophy of mind (Daniel Dennett [1991, 1996] and John Searle [1992]), to study the whole of the mind in action in the novel. They are parallel discourses because they contain a different kind of picture of consciousness from the one that is characteristic of classical narratology and so can provide explanations that are fuller than those that are currently available as to how readers are able to reassemble fictional minds from narrative texts.

4. The constructions of the minds of fictional characters by narrators and readers are central to our understanding of how novels work, because readers enter storyworlds primarily by attempting to follow the workings of the fictional minds contained in them. Fictional narrative is, in essence, the presentation of mental functioning. The term plot is generally defined as a chain of causally connected events in a story. (For a very helpful analysis of the various usages for this difficult term, see Abbott [2008, 240]. For illuminating work on narrative causality generally, see Kafalenos [2006] and Richardson [1997].) But what are these causal connections in practice? Generally, events in the storyworld are of little importance unless they become the experiences of characters. Events can occur independently of characters, but they will, on the whole, have a significance for the narrative only because of their effect on those characters’ minds. Descriptions of novels by actual readers tend to focus less on events themselves than on characters’ reactions to those events, what they were thinking and feeling, their beliefs and desires, and so on. These descriptions will usually include actions but, typically, will also refer to the mental network behind them—the intentions, purposes, motives, and reasons for the actions. A plot summary is often of the following form: character A performed action B because of their belief C and their desire D. This is a causal network because action B was caused by the mental events C and D. We follow the plot by following the workings of fictional minds. These beliefs, desires, and other thought processes to a great extent compose the plot. To put the point another way, a description of a plot is an exercise in attribution. There is more on this in the later section of this chapter on attribution theory.
To say this is not to conflate thought and action, or to privilege thought over action. It is simply to say that the concept of action necessarily requires the presence of thought. Neither is it to flatten out the undeniable differences between novels, or to make impossible any worthwhile distinctions between them. To say that the reader can follow the actions of the characters in Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749) only by following the thought processes behind those actions is certainly not to say that it is the same sort of novel as James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922). Of course the two are different. Fielding gives us much less of the workings of characters’ minds than does Joyce, and so events are more central to the plot of the former’s novel and thoughts more central to the plot of the latter’s. The two novels are at very different points on the thought-action spectrum, but my point is simply that it is a spectrum. There is no unbridgeable dichotomy between events/actions and thoughts/feelings. I say more about what I call the “thought-action continuum” in the discussion of action in *Little Dorrit* in chapter 4.

5. When the traditional narratological approaches referred to in point 1 above are brought together within a new theoretical perspective, the study of fictional minds can then be established as a clearly defined and discrete subject area in its own right within the discipline of narratology. *Fictional Minds* was intended to give an indication of what this new subject area might look like.

I will now provide brief explanations of three of the concepts that were introduced in that book because they recur throughout this one. These are the continuing-consciousness frame, what I referred to then as “embedded narratives,” and situated identity.

Readers are able to follow the workings of characters’ minds by applying what I call the *continuing-consciousness frame*: the ability to take a reference to a character in the text and attach to it a presumed consciousness that exists continuously within the storyworld between the various, more or less intermittent references to that character. To make sense of a text, the reader has to collect together all of the isolated references to a specific proper name and construct a consciousness that continues in the spaces between all of the mentions of the character with that name. The reader strategy is to join up the dots. In particular, the reading process is creative in constructing coherent and continuous fictional consciousnesses from what is often a bare minimum of information. We frequently finish novels with a strong sense of the individual personality of a particular character. If, however, we were to take the trouble to count up the specific references to that character, we might be surprised at how little there is in the text from which we derive
our vivid impressions. When I reread George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1872) a while ago, I was surprised to find that the famous scene in which Lydgate finds himself unexpectedly engaged to Rosamond occupies less than one page (208) in the Norton edition. It is the continuing-consciousness frame that enables readers to generate so much information from so little source material.

The reader uses existing or prestored knowledge of other minds in the *actual* world in order to process the emergent knowledge that is supplied by fictional-mind presentations. The everyday work we put into constructing other real minds prepares us, as readers, for the work of constructing fictional minds from the text. Because fictional beings are necessarily incomplete, cognitive frames such as the continuing-consciousness frame are required to supply the defaults that fill the gaps in the storyworld and provide the presuppositions that enable the reader to construct continually conscious minds from the text. One key default setting is the assumption that a consciousness will continue throughout the text until interrupted, as in life, by death or absence. Another is that characters will think and act in certain fundamental respects like real people. I will say more about cognitive frames when I discuss characterization theory below. A number of narrative theorists have referred to aspects of the continuing-consciousness frame from within their own theoretical frameworks. Monika Fludernik (1996) puts the notion of *experientiality* at the center of her perspective on narrative. Mieke Bal explains the difference between the two editions of her book *Narratology* (1985) and (1997) in terms of a new and growing emphasis on subjectivity: “This attention paid to subjectivity is, indeed, the basic tenet of the theory presented in this book” (1997, 11).

Another key tool for the study of fictional minds is Marie-Laure Ryan’s notion of embedded narratives (1991), which I extended in *Fictional Minds* to mean the whole of a character’s mind in action: the total perceptual and cognitive viewpoint, ideological worldview, memories of the past, and the set of beliefs, desires, intentions, motives, and plans for the future of each character in the story as presented in the discourse. My use of the term was intended to convey that, when we examine these embedded narratives, we see storyworlds from the limited and aspectual viewpoints of their inhabitants. The results of an analysis of a single fictional mind can then be enmeshed with those of the other minds in the storyworld, with their own embedded narratives, their own motives, intentions, and plans. The combination of all of these forms the plot of the novel. A complete picture of an aspectual, subjectively experienced storyworld results. (This requires skill on the part of the novelist. As the narrator of Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier* [1915] remarks of the narratorial role, “It is so difficult to keep all these people
going” [200]). The storyworld is aspectual in the sense that its characters can only ever experience it from a particular perceptual and cognitive aspect at any one time. As John Searle explains, “Whenever we perceive anything or think about anything, we always do it under some aspects and not others” (1992, 156–57). Aspectuality is another concept that will crop up regularly in the pages to come.

My use of the term *embedded narrative* was, in a sense, simply a label for an approach that has always been used by literary critics in practice, but which has not yet been sufficiently theorized. Some, but only some, of the material that is covered by the term has been categorized separately within narratology under the various headings I mentioned earlier: consciousness representation, story analysis, focalization, and characterization. The usefulness of the label is that it encourages a detailed, precise, functional, and inclusive approach toward the whole of a fictional mind in its social and physical context. It clarifies the process by which the reader constructs a series of encounters with a particular fictional mind into a narrative that is coherent and continuous. At the time, I thought that it was the best term available to convey the fact that fictional minds are, literally, narratives. As I aim to show in chapter 3, Lydgate’s mind, like the minds of all the other characters in *Middlemarch*, is a narrative that is embedded within the whole text. However, the disadvantage in using the term is that it already has a meaning: it is usually used to describe the narratives that are embedded in so-called *frame narratives*. The tales that Scheherazade tells in *The Arabian Nights* are embedded narratives that occur within the frame narrative of her attempts to escape execution. Nelly Dean’s story in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1848) is embedded within Lockwood’s frame narrative. I thought that the context would always make clear which meaning was being employed, but narratological colleagues have persuaded me that this is not the case and that there is too much room for confusion. I have therefore abandoned the term and will, in this book, use the label *cognitive narratives* instead.

The relationship between the continuing-consciousness frame and the notion of cognitive narratives is this: the former is the means by which we are able to construct fictional minds; the latter is the result of that construction. Cognitive narratives are the product of the application of the continuing-consciousness frame to the discourse. I will use the term *double cognitive narratives* to refer to the versions of characters’ minds that exist in the minds of other characters, the presence of one person’s mind within the mind of another, or, in my terms, the construction of a double cognitive narrative for one character within another character’s cognitive narrative.

It is important that I distinguish my use of the new term *cognitive narrative* to describe a character’s mind from the much wider debates about the
nature of consciousness and, in particular, whether people in real life regard their lives as narratives. Daniel Dennett stresses the essential “gappiness” and discontinuity of the various “multiple drafts” of consciousness. According to him, it is an illusion that we experience a full, unified, and uninterrupted stream of consciousness: “Consciousness is gappy and sparse, and doesn’t contain half of what people think is there!” (1991, 366). Dennett criticizes the view of Gerald Edelman that “One of the most striking features of consciousness is its continuity” (1989, 119; quoted in 1991, 356). Dennett’s typically robust response is that “This is utterly wrong. One of the most striking features of consciousness is its discontinuity” (1991, 356). He reinforces the point and relates it to the question of identity by commenting that “while consciousness appears to be continuous, in fact it is gappy. A self could be just as gappy . . . Are you the very person whose kindergarten adventures you sketchily recall (sometimes vividly, sometimes dimly)? . . . Is (was) that child you?” (1991, 423). Dennett comments that his multiple-drafts model of consciousness is “initially deeply counterintuitive” (1991, 17). According to the science writer Susan Blackmore, "Every time I seem to exist, this is just a temporary fiction and not the same ‘me’ who seemed to exist a moment before, or last week, or last year. This is tough, but I think it gets easier with practice” (2005, 81). It may well be that part of the required practice that Blackmore refers to is the reading of postmodern novels.

The philosopher Galen Strawson (1997, 2004) has a similarly “gappy” view of consciousness and, in addition, resists attempts to bind the notion of the self together by means of the concept of narrative. Strawson criticizes in refreshingly blunt terms what he calls the psychological Narrativity thesis and the ethical Narrativity thesis. The former is the “widespread agreement that human beings typically see or experience their lives as a narrative or story of some sort, or at least as a collection of stories” (2004, 428). It is associated with such thinkers as the psychologist Jerome Bruner (1986). The latter is the connected view that “experiencing or conceiving one's life as a narrative is a good thing; a richly Narrative outlook is essential to a well-lived life, to true or full personhood” (2004, 428). A well-known advocate of this position is the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1981). In Strawson's opinion, both these arguments are wrong. They hinder human self-understanding, close down important avenues of thought, impoverish our grasp of ethical possibilities, needlessly and wrongly distress those who do not fit their model, and are potentially destructive in psychotherapeutic contexts (2004, 429). In Strawson's view, we would do better to accept the gappy nature of consciousness and the transitory, ephemeral, and nonnarrative nature of the self.

In his perceptive commentary in the Editor's Column of the journal Narrative (October 2005), James Phelan welcomes Strawson's intervention
in this debate, despite having some reservations (which I share) about his position. Phelan then discusses what he calls narrative imperialism—“the impulse by students of narrative to claim more and more territory, more and more power for our object of study, and our ways of studying it” (2005, 206). He argues that “now that so many disciplines have made the narrative turn, now that narrative and narrative theory are so firmly established as important objects of study, the accompanying overreaching, unsustainable, and extravagant claims may be more harmful to our field than the misplaced humility accompanying overly modest ones” (2005, 210). Strawson’s position is a provocative and bracing onslaught on what has become a rather stifling orthodoxy. If his relentless probing forces people to say precisely what they mean by statements such as “our lives are narratives,” then that can only be a good thing. I am skeptical about some aspects of Strawson’s arguments (are there really people who do not see their lives as narratives, at all, in any way, ever?), but I think that the more important point is that he is right that much of the “life is a narrative” rhetoric of present-day cultural studies is unthinkingly flabby. In saying so, I am acutely conscious of potential charges of inconsistency, given the fact that I refer to fictional minds as cognitive narratives. My defense is that I am talking about fictional, not real minds, and these sorts of minds are narratives in a literal sense. Calling fictional minds narratives does not have any relevance to the entirely separate point about whether or not real minds can be regarded as narratives.

When I refer to fictional minds, I mean those of characters. The enmeshing of the workings of these minds is often framed within a larger perspective: that of the narrator, and also, especially in novels with unreliable narration, that of the implied author. Obviously, the readers’ awareness of the workings of characters’ minds is determined, or at the least heavily influenced, by their presentations by narrators and implied authors. It might be a plausible next step, therefore, to refer to the narrators of novels such as Helen and Little Dorrit as having social minds because of their sensitivity to the presence of minds of this sort within the storyworlds they have created. This is, however, for me, a step too far. The most urgent need is to establish the existence of social minds within storyworlds. I do not wish to get drawn into the fascinating and intricate disputes that surround the status of narrators and implied authors by referring to their minds. It seems to me to be better, therefore, to make characters’ minds the main focus of this book. I will, of course, refer to narrators and implied authors where appropriate; it is just that I will not talk about them as having minds.

Analyses of concepts such as identity, self, and subjectivity sometimes focus in restrictive and unhelpful ways on individuals divorced from their social context. My term situated identity, by contrast, is intended to convey
a balance between the perceptions of individuals regarding themselves and
the perceptions of others regarding those individuals. If an aspect of our
identity is under consideration, how is it to be determined? Which is more
reliable: our own first-person attribution of various qualities to ourselves,
or the third-person attributions of others? Where is our identity situated?
If you want to find out about an aspect of someone’s mind and make an
attribution to them of a particular disposition, say selfishness, whom do you
ask? Certainly not just them, because you know that you cannot be sure that
you will get a complete answer. Selfish people may not admit to being selfish.
For reasons of this sort, we are all reluctant to take somebody’s word for
the workings of their own mind, and this seems to me to be a tacit admis-
sion that there is a strong sense in which our mind is distributed among
those other people who have an image of us in their minds. How else can
we say that someone is selfish when there is no representation of selfishness
in their mind? This image is contained in the minds of others but we are
attributing it to this particular mind. Surely, then, our identity is situated
among the minds of others. Furthermore, we behave in different ways with
different people. Someone seeing you in an unfamiliar context might easily
say, “You’ve become a different person!” As Walt Whitman said, we “contain
multitudes.” And the situating of identity between individuals and others
requires endless negotiation. As the wife says to her husband in the New
Yorker cartoon as they go into a dinner party, “Remember—just don’t be
yourself!”

Lisa Zunshine approaches this issue from a different direction in her
discussion of the concept of metarepresentation (the representation of a rep-
resentation) in Why We Read Fiction. She points out that many of the state-
ments to be found in fictional texts must be taken “under advisement,” as
U.S. lawyers say. A character proclaiming that she is a generous person and
that another character is selfish does not, of itself, guarantee the truth of
either statement. Zunshine makes brilliant use of a literary example of meta-
representation that has great relevance to the subject of this book. Everyone
knows the famous first sentence of Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice (1813):
“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a
fortune, must be in want of a wife” (5). Quoted in isolation as a flat asser-
tion, it does not look like a very promising example of metarepresentation.
However, as Zunshine explains, it is transformed when viewed in the context
of the overlooked second sentence: “However little known the feelings or
views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth
is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered
as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters” (quoted in
Zunshine 2006, 62; her emphasis). The italicized phrase points out that this
is no universally acknowledged truth at all, merely a collective belief held by a specific group of people. The reader will have to take the initial statement under advisement while following the rest of the narrative. There is a striking similarity between the language used here and that to be found in the first few pages of Middlemarch. For example, the Austen sentence is a statement of the views of “surrounding families” while the passage from the Eliot novel that is analyzed at the beginning of chapter 3 is about the attitudes of “neighbouring families” (4).

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO BOOKS**

I would now like to say a little about the relationship between this book and Fictional Minds and also about some of the reactions to the earlier book that are relevant to this one.

As I have said, Fictional Minds used the real-mind discourses of philosophy, psychology, psycholinguistics, and the other cognitive sciences to construct a theoretical framework for the study of characters’ minds. The purpose of this book is to put that framework into practice. This time, therefore, the primary focus is on fictional-mind rather than real-mind texts. This study will be more “literary” than the first one and will consist of sustained close readings of a small group of novels. From chapter 3 onwards, there will be few explicit references to such figures as Antonio Damasio, Daniel Dennett, and John Searle. The same is true of the great Russian narrative theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, another all-pervasive influence on everything that follows. The rather paradoxical reason is that the only alternative is to refer to them continuously, and so the relative absence of their names and the names of other, similar theorists should be regarded as a kind of backhanded compliment to them. However, I should stress that Social Minds in the Novel is completely self-contained, and an understanding of it does not depend in any way on a prior knowledge of Fictional Minds. In her review of that work in the journal Anglia, the narratologist Jarmila Mildorf suggested that “the question arises to what extent this new approach is applicable in actual analyses of narrative texts” (2006, 776). This book is intended to provide an answer to that question. She also expressed a concern that my approach “involves the danger of making narrative analysis fuzzier and perhaps less reliable” (2006, 776) than traditional narrative approaches. I hope that the chapters that follow will meet this concern by displaying a precision and reliability that is equal to, albeit very different from, traditional narrative theory.

I now have a confession to make. I said at the end of Fictional Minds that it was the first of a pair. The second book would look at the historical
development of constructions of fictional minds over a long period of time and a wide range of narratives in order to see what similarities and differences could be found between these various constructions. As you can see from a glance at the contents page of this book, I have broken my promise. My excuse is that, on reflection, I regretted being so headstrong, and decided that the original intention was wildly overambitious. I had missed a stage, and another book was required first. What was needed initially was a study that would focus specifically on social minds in the novel. Only then, I now think, would it be the right time to implement a fully historicized approach. In any event, luckily for me, a book is now available that is precisely what I had in mind. Indeed, it is a far more comprehensive treatment of the subject than I could have produced. It is David Herman’s excellent edited collection *The Emergence of Mind: Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English* (2010), which covers the period 700 to the present day.

Now for the reactions to *Fictional Minds*. I have been asked whether fictional minds form part of the story level (the content plane, the narrated, the “what,” the *fabula*) or the discourse level (the expression plane, the narrating, the “how,” the *sjužet*). The answer is that the detailed discussions in the chapters that follow will consider two separate but related issues. One is the story-level issue of the nature of the fictional minds constructed by the texts, the *what* that is the content of those minds. The other is the discourse-level issue of the techniques used to represent consciousness in narrative, *how* minds are presented in the discourse. It will, however, soon become apparent that it is difficult in practice to maintain a distinction between the two. I will focus primarily on the first issue, the *what*, but it is impossible to talk about the *what* without detailed consideration of the *how*. To describe the contents of fictional minds is to focus on how those minds are presented in the text. Also, the techniques that are used for fictional-mind presentations will determine, to a certain extent, what thoughts are described. The workings of minds in nineteenth-century novels, for example, are shaped, colored, and limited by the heterodiegetic narration in which many of them are presented.

Another question that has been asked is this one: Am I saying that the process of following characters’ fictional mental functioning is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for narrative comprehension? This is not an easy question to answer in those terms. My preferred formulation would be to say that it is the fundamental and principal way by which we understand narrative. In the terms of the question, my feeling is that it is too weak to say that it is necessary and certainly too strong to say that it is sufficient, because there are several other features that are also necessary for narrative comprehension. These include a good understanding of the physical makeup of a
storyworld and the events that occur in it, and a sensitive appreciation of the thematic component of narrative. On the other hand, I do not wish to compromise on the claim that the ability to follow fictional mental functioning is *always* necessary for narrative comprehension. I would concede too much by saying, for example, that it is only *typically* necessary. As I said earlier, an understanding of characters’ thought processes is as necessary for *Tom Jones* as it is for *Ulysses*. I cannot find any way of retreating from the universality of my claim. Equally, I do not see any way in which this claim is a refusal to acknowledge the astonishing and endless variety of narrative. To say so would be like suggesting that I am trying to flatten out fictional variation by pointing out that *Ulysses* and Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* use exactly the same 26 letters of the alphabet.

Am I talking about how readers in fact read novels, or am I attempting to advance a radically new way of reading? The answer is the former—I aim to show how readers make sense of fiction, to explain the processes that we all engage in, to make explicit what we all intuitively do in practice. In addition, though, I hope to offer a radically new way of studying novels. These two aims are not as contradictory as may at first appear. The reason why they are consistent with each other is that, in my view, narrative theory has in this respect taken insufficient account of the practice of actual readers.

One question that I ask myself occasionally, and I am surprised that no one else has, is this one: Can the approach that I have outlined above be described as *behaviorist*? The unsurprising and rather dull answer is: It depends on what you mean. If you mean what may be called *strong behaviorism*—the discredited doctrine of early behaviorist psychologists such as B. F. Skinner who appeared to argue that there are no mental processes, there is no consciousness, there are only dispositions to behave in certain ways—the answer is: Of course not. If, however, you are referring to what may be termed *weak behaviorism*—the argument that a surprisingly large number of statements about minds are, in fact, statements about dispositions and behavior—the answer is: Yes. (Incidentally, this discussion is an illustration of a widespread problem with “isms” such as behaviorism and poststructuralism. They often take two forms: a strong form that is heavily counterintuitive and unsustainable, and a weak form that is simply a restatement of the obvious. Confusion reigns when proponents and opponents argue over different forms without realizing it. This frequently happens because proponents start with the strong form and then retreat to the weak one under pressure, but without telling their opponents that they have done so.)

The next question (“Am I saying that fictional minds are the same as real minds?”) is so important that I am going to put my answer to it in italics: *I*
am not saying that fictional minds are the same as real minds. I am saying that fictional minds are similar to real minds in some ways and different from them in other ways. We will not understand fictional minds unless we understand both of these aspects: both their similarities to, and their differences from, real minds.

My first book focused on the similarities for two reasons: one was that they had been neglected by traditional narrative theory; the other was that I am particularly interested in them. This emphasis may have given the unfortunate impression that I was arguing that fictional minds are the same as real minds. I emphatically do not believe this. Indeed, I believe that to say so makes no sense. It seems obvious to me that fictional minds are similar to real minds in some ways but profoundly different from them in other ways. Equally, though, to go to the other extreme and argue that fictional minds are semiotic constructs and are therefore utterly and unbridgeably different from real minds does not work either. Fictional minds are certainly semiotic constructs, but many of the semiotic operations that are necessary to recover meaning from them involve their similarity to real minds. Some of these operations are the subject of this book. It is, however, true to say that, when examining challenging and experimental postmodern novels (as well as other “unnatural narratives,” as Brian Richardson [2006], Jan Alber [2009], and others term them), the emphasis will change. The stress will probably then be more on the differences. I welcome the challenge provided by texts that defamiliarize, question, modify, complicate, distort, subvert, or contradict our default assumptions about the similarities between fictional minds and real minds. We find out more about the semiotics of fictional minds by taking up, rather than avoiding, this challenge. These narratives derive their power to shock precisely from their attempts to withhold what we take for granted in the presentation of consciousness in fiction. But the norms have to exist, and they have to apply to the majority of novels, and they have to be well studied and well understood, for the transgressions to have any impact.

In a famous essay, “The Hedgehog and the Fox” (1953), Isaiah Berlin muses on the remark of the Greek poet Archilochus that while the fox knows many things, the hedgehog knows one big thing. More recently, Stephen Jay Gould wrote a book called The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister’s Pox (2003). The remark is gnomic enough to be capable of different interpretations. What it suggests to me is a continuum in which, at the fox end of the scale, can be found those scholars who, within a particular field such as narratology, are able to turn their hands to a number of different issues and achieve a broad mastery over the whole area. At the hedgehog end are those who are content to plow a deep furrow, and pursue a single issue. It is then possible to discern a logic or a thread that ties together all of the work
of hedgehog scholars and gives their books and essays a satisfying sense of coherence. Most people, of course, are in the middle of the spectrum, combining particular interests with a broad knowledge. On the evidence of the previous few paragraphs, it seems to me that I must be a hedgehog.

**ATTRIBUTION THEORY**

A key tool for analyzing the process of recovering and reassembling fictional storyworlds is the application of *attribution theory*: the study of how we ascribe states of mind to others and also to ourselves (Heider 1958, Kelley 1973, Wilson 2002). In relation to real minds, when we are coming to a view on why someone acted as he or she did in a particular situation, we ask ourselves such questions as: Would other people have acted in the same way in this situation? Did this individual act in the way that they would normally do in similar situations? Would this person have acted in the same way if some of the circumstances had been different? Attribution theory can be used to formulate tentative answers to questions such as these: How do readers attribute states of mind such as emotions, dispositions, and reasons for action to characters? What, in precise terms, do readers do with the explicit evidence that is made available to them in texts, together with any implicit or inferential evidence that they might have on characters’ patterns of behavior? How do heterodiegetic narrators attribute states of mind to their characters? By what means do homodiegetic (or first-person) narrators attribute states of mind to themselves and also to other characters? How do characters attribute mental states to themselves and to other characters? With regard to the issue of characterization, how does an attribution of a mental state help to build up in the reader a sense of the whole personality of that character? And, finally, a question that forms the subject matter of this book: How do readers, narrators, and individual characters attribute mental functioning to groups?

Attribution theory rests on the concept of *theory of mind*, the term used by philosophers and psychologists to describe our awareness of the existence of other minds, our knowledge of how to interpret our own and other people’s thought processes, our ability to make sense of other people’s actions by understanding the reasons for those actions. (Philosophers and psychologists also use the terms *folk psychology* and *intersubjectivity* to refer to this ability.) We are able to attribute states of mind to others because we have a theory of mind. Readers of novels have to use their theory of mind in order to try to follow the workings of characters’ minds by attributing
states of minds to them. In particular, readers have to follow the attempts that characters make to read other characters’ minds. Anyone who has a condition such as autism or Asperger syndrome, and who therefore suffers from what is called mind blindness, will find it difficult to understand a novel. Novel reading is mind reading. (However, it should be borne in mind that there are different sorts of autism spectrum disorders and the degree of difficulty with theory of mind will vary greatly between disorders.) There is now a lot of interest in narratives about autism and Asperger syndrome. Mark Haddon’s novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) is a well-known example. (For more on theory of mind and the novel, see the compelling accounts by Lisa Zunshine [2006, 2008]).

The philosopher Peter Carruthers has put theory of mind into a historical context by emphasizing the importance of the tracking function in the evolution of human consciousness. He points out that the “early hominids [who] engaged in hunting and gathering . . . would have needed to keep track of the movements and properties of a great many individuals—both human and non-human—updating their representations accordingly” (2000, 272). He then links this tracking argument to the development of a theory of mind. “The central task of the mind-reading faculty is to work out and remember who perceives what, who thinks what, who wants what, who feels what, and how different people are likely to reason and respond in a wide variety of circumstances” (2000, 273). I mention his argument because it seems to me that it also works perfectly as a description of the reading process. We comprehend narrative by working out and remembering which character perceives, thinks, wants, and feels what, and how the different characters are likely to reason and respond to the circumstances of the storyworld in which they find themselves.

Theory of mind is as relevant to first-person as to third-person attribution, and first-person attribution plays an important role in the philosophical concept of action. (There is more on this in chapter 4.) We sometimes find it difficult to know exactly why we have acted in the way we have. We ask ourselves, “What made me do that?!?” In other words, our first-person theory of mind is not as efficient as we often assume it to be. Nevertheless, a certain minimal level of reading of one’s own mind is necessary for us to take responsibility for our actions. A valuable perspective on this issue has been provided by the well-known American socialite Paris Hilton. In a characteristically oblique intervention in debates in the philosophy of action, she once remarked, “In the future, I plan on taking more of an active role in the decisions I make.” There is much food for thought there, I think you will agree. However, this rich and subtle reference to the mental network of causes,
reasons, motives, and intentions that lies behind our actions (provocatively hinting, even, at the possibility of the absence of this network in this case) cannot be pursued further here. Within Zen Buddhism, a kōan is a story, question, or statement that is inaccessible to rational understanding but may be accessible to intuition. The one that everyone knows is “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” To me, Hilton’s statement has some of the quality of a kōan. Whenever I think that I have fully grasped its meaning, I find that it eludes me still.

There are two rival explanations for our theory of mind: the oddly termed theory-theory holds that we all have a theory of sorts about the nature of behavior, albeit not a full-fledged scientific one. The simulation theory, by contrast, maintains that we simply simulate the thinking of others by trying to imagine what it would be like to be them in particular circumstances. However, some philosophers and psychologists have recently made a commendable effort to go beyond the theory-theory/simulation theory debate. In fact, some use the term intersubjectivity in preference to theory of mind because they feel that the latter term is misleading. A summary of the latest thinking on the subject can be found in The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity, edited by Jordan Zlatev et al. (2008). The philosopher Daniel Hutto, in Folk Psychological Narratives (2008), suggests that, for most of the time, when we understand the actions of others we are not employing a theory of mind at all. Nor are we mind reading. And both the standard explanations of our ability to understand others (theory-theory and simulation theory) are, he thinks, misconceived. Hutto argues that our capacity to understand the actions of others in terms of their reasons has a sociocultural basis. Because many of the social roles and rules governing our routine encounters are well-established in standard narrative patterns of human behavior, folk psychology, theory of mind, and mind reading are usually unnecessary. We have many other, more basic and embodied means than mentalistic predictions or explanations. We generally do not need to speculate on the innermost thoughts of others because their behavior is immediately explicable by means of the expectations and scripts that are provided by cultural practices.

Hutto thinks that children develop their interpretative skills not by means of a theory, but by being exposed to and engaging in stories about persons who act for reasons. These narratives serve as exemplars and teaching tools. In their guided encounters with stories, children come to understand the relations that hold between beliefs, desires, reasons, and actions. As a result, children acquire not the set of abstract rules implied by the term theory of mind, but an appreciation of how actions actually occur in sociocultural contexts. He calls this argument the narrative practice hypothesis.
According to this view, use of a theory of mind is a supplementary method that only comes into play on those comparatively rare occasions when the actions of others do require explanation and we do not have direct and reliable access to their narratives, for example by asking them. In those cases, we construct narratives for others. Hutto calls these folk psychological narratives. Folk psychology, for Hutto, is essentially a distinctive kind of narrative practice.

Hutto is certainly to be commended for his radical and challenging thesis. Die-hard cognitivists may not be totally convinced, of course, and may insist that all he has done is to show that narratives play a key role in the acquisition of a theory of mind. Hutto meets this objection head on, but I suspect that his book is not the last word. For example, a significant issue here is the quantity and quality of narrative that children are actually exposed to. Some people may not be as sanguine as Hutto is that children typically get sufficient acting-for-reasons roughage in their narrative diet. As Hutto is a philosopher and not a narratologist he does not explore the implications of his work for the study of literary narratives. However, he defines the narratives told to children as stories about people who act for reasons, and this sounds to me like a good definition of adult novels too.

Hutto is unusual in drawing attention to the importance of what people say as a source of information about what they think. He stresses that these second-person explanations are at least as common as the third-person kind and may be more reliable. In Anthony Trollope’s *The Warden* (1855), Mr Harding quotes an old proverb: “Every one knows where his own shoe pinches!” (175). This is an internalist motto because it is a vivid way of expressing the apparent truth that we cannot know what another person is experiencing. But suppose that you are out walking with someone and you notice that they are hobbling. They stop, take their shoe off and inspect it, rub their foot in a particular place, put a plaster on it, and so on. That is fairly close to knowing where their shoe is pinching, is it not? In addition, as Hutto says, information can be obtained directly from the other person. Your companion might simply tell you where their shoe is pinching. This perspective on mental functioning raises issues of authority and reliability that go to the heart of our experience of reading novels. You may say that people lie, just as characters do. Well, they do, sometimes. Or that they are unreliable, just as narrators can be. Well, they are, sometimes. But how likely is that, in this case? Obviously, you can make up scenarios based on pretence, perhaps caused by a reluctance to walk any further, but would you not be likely to spot subterfuges of that sort? People often tell the truth about what they are thinking, just as characters do, and it is often perfectly possible to know when they are not doing so. We should not apply standards to
second- and third-person knowledge about mental states that are unreasonably and inconsistently higher than the standards we require for other areas of knowledge.

Although I find Hutto’s approach completely convincing, I intend to continue to use the term *theory of mind* for three reasons. First, it is here to stay, especially now in literary studies, and to avoid it would cause unnecessary confusion. Next, he appears to use the term in a fairly narrow sense by tying it closely to the two rival explanations for it (theory-theory and simulation). That is, in asserting that we rarely need to use our theory of mind, he often seems simply to be rejecting the two rival explanations. I see no harm, then, in continuing to use the term, but in a more general sense, as a kind of umbrella or generic label for our ability to understand others. Used in this way, it would not necessarily commit us to either of the previous rival explanations, and would leave open the possibility of adopting Hutto’s alternative sociocultural and narrative approach. However, anyone employing this inclusive use of the word *theory* should make every attempt not to give the mistaken impression that we are self-consciously employing a fully worked-out theoretical position whenever we try to work out what someone else is thinking. Finally, as Hutto admits, we do use our theory of mind (in the narrow or restrictive sense) for particularly puzzling examples of behavior that are not amenable to fast, easy explanations by means of sociocultural scripts. This is just the sort of behavior that is characteristic of people in novels. Fictional mind-reading tends to involve characters, often in moments of crisis, who are self-consciously using complex theory of mind to try to interpret the opaque intentions and motives of another.

CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization theory is based on the insight that a reader’s construction of a character in a novel is a process that is both frame-driven (top-down in direction) and data-driven (bottom-up). As is now well known, frames or schemas are cognitive structures or mental templates that represent generic concepts stored in our memory (Schank and Abelson 1977). They are arrangements of knowledge about objects, people, or situations that are used to predict and classify new data. We use frames to simplify reality, organize our knowledge, assist recall, make sense of our current experiences, guide our everyday behavior, and predict likely happenings in the future. By capturing the essence of stereotypical situations such as being in a living room or going out for dinner, frames allow us to use default assumptions about what is likely to happen in those situations. That way, it is only when our
assumptions are proved wrong that we have to improvise. Frames are hierarchical arrangements that have slots for variables. Once the most appropriate frame (say, a cat) has been activated, some slots are filled with compulsory values (a cat is an animal), or with default values (a cat has four legs), or are empty until filled with values from the current situation (the cat is black). Frame processing is top-down, in that it guides a selective search for data relevant to the expectations set up by the frame, and also bottom-up, because the data contained in an actual situation will often lead to the modification of the frame, or even the generation of a new frame. The concept of homeostasis, as used in the social sciences, has marked similarities. It refers to the predictable and expected patterns of behavior to be found in, for example, restaurants and theaters, and also to the maintenance of the specific roles assigned to individuals in families and other social groups.

Narrative theorists such as Monika Fludernik (1996), David Herman (1997), and Manfred Jahn (1997) have used frame theory to illuminate precisely how readers are able to follow narrative texts. They have shown that story frames are sets of expectations about the internal structure of stories that enable readers to recognize a text as a narrative. Comprehension of a story means building a representation of the text by using the prototypical structural patterns that are stored in memory. We acquire the textual frames relating to our knowledge of genre and other narrative conventions primarily by reading a wide range of stories, and our resulting awareness of the appropriate genre prefocusses our understanding of, and response to, a particular text. During the reading process, events in the story are marked as salient and acquire significance because of the expectations that are defined by frames. In particular, we use frames as part of our literary competence and performance to reconstruct from fictional narratives the storyworlds that are described in those narratives. Frames allow readers to fill in the gaps in storyworlds because the appropriate ingredients for extracting the meaning of a sentence in a narrative are often nowhere to be found within that sentence. This sort of gap-filling helps readers to track the movements of characters and objects through storyworld time and space. (For more detail on tracking of this sort, see Emmott 1997.)

Frame theory evaluates how incoming data are put into the relevant slots, the order in which slots are filled, the classification of the information contained in the slots (into, say, rules, events, and characters), how stories can be broken down into component parts, the types of causal relations that connect these components, and, importantly, how we repair unfounded assumptions about the direction of the story. As with our use of real-life frames, this is both a top-down and a bottom-up process. It is also dynamic in that when a reader fills a new slot, changes to existing slots may be required.
A reader's attention does not spread equally and evenly throughout a text, but continually works forwards and backwards to make adjustments to frames. Novels often challenge readers' expectations and thereby force them to abandon established frames in favor of new, refreshed ones. Specifically, cognitive frames are essential to the construction of fictional minds. As discussed earlier, when a reader meets or hears of a character for the first time, a continuing-consciousness frame is established (top-down) which is then fed (bottom-up) by specific information about the character from the text, and so on. These initial character frames usually involve stereotypes: either those that are based on real-world knowledge, or those that are to be found in various literary genres, or a combination of the two. As more bottom-up information on a particular character is processed, frame refreshment or subcategorization may take place. More radically, frame disruption, decategorization, invalidation of previous inferences, or even a focused search for a new, more adequate character category might occur. (For an illuminating application of this sort of approach to drama, see Jonathan Culpeper's book Language and Characterisation: People in Plays and Other Texts [2001]).

It seems to me that this characterization process has been interpreted up until now in a rather constrained and limiting way. In particular, it has been generally assumed that the character frames that are used in the ways described above consist only of the cultural and literary stereotypes that relate to individual types such as the rake, the fallen woman, and the braggart. I will try to extend in some new and possibly unexpected directions our understanding of character theory by examining some of the different sorts of cognitive frames that are also used by the reader in the construction of character. This can be done by making use of the insights relating to the social nature of cognition that have emerged from the soft cognitive sciences of social and discursive psychology, philosophy of mind, and theoretical anthropology.

The aim of deepening and widening characterization theory in order to provide a richer and fuller account of how readers actually construct characters can be achieved in two stages. The first stage (the subject of the next chapter) is to recognize that the minds belonging to characters in novels do not function in a vacuum. As with real minds, fictional minds are only partially understood if only an internalist perspective is applied to them. Characterization theory will always be incomplete until it also takes account of the externalist aspects of the character construction process. Fictional minds, like real minds, form part of extended cognitive networks. We will never understand how individual minds work if we cut them off from the larger, collective units to which they belong. To adapt the title of Edwin Hutchins's important book Cognition in the Wild (1995), we need to study
fictional cognition in the wild. The study of the presentation of consciousness in fiction should take place not only within individual characters but also in the spaces between them.

The second stage is to recognize that there is a deep fault line within narratology between the theories relating to characterization and the theories relating to the representation of consciousness, and that the existence of this fault line has seriously distorted our understanding of fictional mental functioning. The theory of social minds presented in this book is intended to be a contribution as much to characterization theory as to the theory on the representation of consciousness. The gap that currently exists between the analyses of characterization and consciousness is particularly difficult to understand since a good deal of fictional discourse is, in my experience, situated precisely within this theoretical hole. Future chapters will analyze the process of characterization by discussing the representation of the consciousnesses of Tertius Lydgate in Middlemarch, Anne Elliot in Jane Austen’s Persuasion (1818), and Joe and Clarissa in Ian McEwan’s Enduring Love (1997). There are several strategies, it seems to me, for bringing characterization and consciousness together. In this book, I shall discuss three: dispositions (that is, a person’s abilities and inclinations to act in certain ways), action, and emotions. Action is investigated in chapter 4 (using a passage from Little Dorrit as an example text) and emotions in chapter 5 (looking at chapter 23 of Persuasion). Dispositions are the subject of the following section.

DISPOSITIONS

A good deal of illuminating work has been done on characterization by narratologists and literary theorists such as Mieke Bal (1997), Jonathan Culler (1975), Umberto Eco (1981), Uri Margolin (1995, 1996a), and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983). However, despite the first-rate quality of this research, a serious concern remains. It is the fault line mentioned just now that has developed within narrative theory between the study of characterization and the study of the presentation of consciousness. It is my contention that the introduction into narratology of the concept of dispositions will help to some extent to mend this fault line.

Consider this sentence from Henry James’s The Portrait of a Lady (1882): “Isabel felt some emotion, for she had always thought highly of her grandmother’s house” (81). Is this not the sort of sentence that readers frequently encounter in fictional texts? It reports a single mental event—Isabel feeling emotion—but, at the same time, it puts this single event into the
context of Isabel's personality, her character, her self. As readers, we accept this sentence as a whole, as a gestalt, as a coherent explanation of a single aspect of Isabel's whole mind. We do not think to ourselves, “That's a strange sentence—yoking together two completely separate classes of statements!” However, look at any of the excellent introductions to narrative, new and old. Narratology is well served by having several, really first-class introductory teaching texts by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983), Mieke Bal (1997), Jacob Lothe (2000), Suzanne Keen (2003), Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck (2005), Porter Abbott (2008), and Monika Fludernik (2009). Unfortunately, though, I have been unable to find any evidence that they have anything to say about that sentence as a whole. They typically contain a chapter about the representation of speech and consciousness, and a completely separate chapter about characterization. As a result, what you find, in effect, is that the first half of the sentence is classified under one category, as the representation of consciousness, while the second half is classified under another, as characterization. And, to make the division even deeper, the chapters that are devoted to characterization will rarely refer to consciousness, and the chapters on consciousness have almost nothing to say about characterization. This wholly artificial and arbitrary division completely fails to capture the readers’ experience of that completely typical sentence about Isabel.

This seems strange. Narrative texts are full of statements such as the one just quoted that present an episode of immediate consciousness within the context of the character’s dispositions. These statements often fulfill a pivotal role in guiding the direction of the narrative by showing that a particular mental event is a manifestation of a disposition and that the disposition is a causal factor in the event. The event and the disposition are linked together. It is by interpreting episodes of consciousness within a context of dispositions that the reader builds up a convincing and coherent sense of character. It is through the central, linking concept of dispositions that characterization and thought presentation can be seen as different aspects of the same phenomenon. However, within narrative theory, character traits belong to the subject area of characterization, and mental events belong to the subject area of thought presentation. The absence of a holistic approach makes a recognition of the whole fictional mind difficult to achieve.

In making this criticism, I need to stress emphatically that I am not talking about the practice of nonintroductory narratology texts, such as those on the representation of consciousness (Dorrit Cohn’s *Transparent Minds* [1978]) and those about character (James Phelan’s *Reading People, Reading Plots* [1989] and Alex Woloch’s *The One vs. the Many* [2003]). For example, although Phelan’s book is about characterization and does not explicitly address the relationship between that topic and the representation of con-
sciousness, it does sometimes draw on representations of characters’ minds in its discussions of their mimetic functions. My argument is that there is a problem with the standard introductions to narratology. This problem is less obvious in other work in the field because, in practice, it is not possible to draw a coherent distinction between character and consciousness. However, the distinction is still being made in the introductory theory.

Now let us look at the solution—dispositions—from a number of different angles: real minds, theories about real minds, actual fictional narratives, and theories about fictional narrative. I will then go on to a brief discussion of some of the statements about dispositions to be found in a chapter from The Portrait of a Lady.

First, our experience of real minds, both our own and others’. Appeals to introspection are always dangerous because people’s minds work in different ways, but I will take the risk anyway. When you become self-consciously aware of having had a particular mental event—a thought, sensation, emotion, or feeling—do you find that you often tend to link it to your character traits, your habits of thought, your dispositions? You may experience a single feeling of irritation with someone and then think, “he really does annoy me when he starts talking like that!” You notice a recurring pattern there regarding your reactions to his behavior. Or you have a memory of an embarrassing moment and think, “I really do wish I could stop remembering things like that and think more positively!” In other words, are you inclined to locate your current thought processes within the context of your whole mind? Here is another question: Do you do the same to other people? That is, when you are engaged in third-person, rather than first-person attribution? A colleague suggests moving a meeting from Friday afternoon to earlier in the week and you think, “That’s only because he likes to get away early on Fridays to have a long weekend!” You are linking the assumed mental event behind his action to an assumed disposition to act in a certain way.

The answers that I am hoping for, by the way, are “yes” in every case. And assuming they really are yes, the conclusion that we can draw is that a person’s dispositions are important to the workings of their mind. They form the links between the aspects that endure over time—their beliefs and attitudes, their personality, their character, their self—and the immediate mental events of their consciousness. Most mental events—admittedly not all, but most—are manifestations of a person’s dispositions. And a person’s actions and behavior, how they interact with their physical and social environment, will also arise out of their dispositions. Let us look again at the notion of the self in this context. What tools should we use to measure the self that is located between the individual and others? On the one hand, individual mental events are too small-scale. We need a concept to link indi-
vidual mental events together. On the other hand, the concepts of character or personality are too large-scale and too contestable to do the job either. As I said earlier when introducing the concept of situated identity, think how much disagreement there often is over someone’s personality. What is most help, I suggest, is the medium-sized area in the middle—dispositions.

Now to turn to formal theories about real minds. That dispositions play such a central role in considerations of a person’s whole mind is the reason why they are so important in both philosophy and psychology. In chapter 5 of his *Principles of Psychology*, the psychologist William James (the brother of Henry) called them bundles of habits (1983, 109). In a particularly evocative phrase, the philosopher Daniel Dennett terms them mind-ruts (1991, 300). The concept has great explanatory power within the behaviorist perspective of such philosophers as Gilbert Ryle and Ludwig Wittgenstein. According to Ryle, “to talk of a person’s mind is . . . to talk of the person’s abilities, liabilities, and inclinations to do and undergo certain sorts of things, and of the doing and undergoing of these things in the ordinary world” (1963, 190). He also suggested that a “number of the words which we commonly use to describe and explain people’s behavior signify dispositions and not episodes” (1963, 112). The philosopher Stephen Priest explains that, for Ryle, “it is a mistake to think of a belief as any kind of occurrence at all. Beliefs are dispositions. According to Ryle’s account, a person has a disposition if he or she has a tendency or propensity to behave in a particular way” (1991, 48). This emphasis by philosophers and psychologists on the importance of dispositions is shared by scholars in other disciplines. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz maintains that “the term mind denotes a class of skills, propensities, capacities, tendencies, habits” (1993, 58)—another list of dispositions. Antonio Damasio believes that “What we usually describe as a ‘personality’ depends on multiple contributions . . . anything from trivial preferences to ethical principles” (2000, 222). In the first book on cognitive science that I read after drafting this passage (Merlin Donald’s *A Mind So Rare* [2002]) I had to wait until only the second page before coming across a reference to dispositions. I may have been lucky, but I do not think so.

All these theorists are saying that when we talk about a mind, we are talking in the main about dispositions. They argue that our emphasis should not be on specific mental occurrences such as single thoughts, but on states of mind that exist over time. We often think that we are talking about mental events when what we are really talking about is mental states. You may find some of this implausible, but it is salutary at the very least, I think, to be aware of a discourse about minds that is so different from what we are used to as narrative theorists.
So, dispositions are as important in theories about real minds as they are in our folk psychological beliefs about ourselves and others. Are they important in fictional narrative too? Surely they are. As I have already suggested, narrative texts are full of statements that present an episode of immediate consciousness within the context of a character’s dispositions. Consider again the example that I used earlier (“Isabel felt some emotion, for she had always thought highly of her grandmother’s house”) in the light of my comments on real minds. This statement places the single mental event of Isabel feeling emotion within the context of Isabel’s disposition to think highly of her grandmother’s house. The second half of the sentence is given as an explanation for the first. The mental event occurs, in part, because of the disposition. That is the force of the word “for” in that sentence. It is by means of frequently encountered sentences such as these that we are able to build up a sense of Isabel’s whole mind—her consciousness, her emotions, her beliefs, her personality, her self, her character.

But what happens when we leave behind the real minds of both folk and academic psychology and the fictional minds of narratives and turn to narrative theory? Well, in my experience, a strange thing happens: dispositions disappear. It is rare indeed for works of narrative theory even to mention the word. Obviously, discussions of character traits arise within the passages of practical criticism that are contained in theoretically oriented works, but the notion of dispositions has, as far as I am aware, never been explicitly theorized, either in relation to characterization or to the representation of consciousness. But if dispositions are so important to the theory and practice of real minds and to the actual constructions of fictional minds, why are they so neglected when it comes to theories of fictional minds? My guess is that it is because characterization theory began life as a semiotic study, a specific area of inquiry with a conceptual apparatus of intertextual stereotypes, actants, functions, and so on. Meanwhile, the representation of consciousness developed along parallel lines as a linguistic study, a completely separate subject area with a different conceptual apparatus of free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness, interior monologue, et cetera. As neither semiotics nor linguistics is comfortable with the concept of dispositions, what is needed is a cognitive study of fictional minds that is.

John V. Knapp is absolutely right to say that “the application of dispositional research to literary study . . . will in its own right open new and, I hope, fertile ground for literary criticism and the teaching of literature” (1996, 16). To show what the study of fictional dispositions might look like, I have listed below some of the statements about them that are to be found in chapter 3 of The Portrait of a Lady. Although this is a short chapter, I
Chapter 1

found in it so much material that I was obliged to use only a selection. There is a gloss for each disposition-description that explains its function. Many of the sentences describe actions too and are also presentations of social minds.

Being a high-tempered man he had requested her to mind her own business. (80)
The disposition (being high-tempered) is given as the reason for the action (the request).

Mrs Touchett’s behavior was, as usual, perfectly deliberate. (80)
The phrase “as usual” shows that her deliberate behavior on this occasion arises from her disposition to behave in this way.

To say [Isabel] was so occupied is to say that her solitude did not press upon her; for her love of knowledge had a fertilising quality and her imagination was strong. (76)
The two dispositions (love of knowledge and strong imagination) are the reasons for her current state of mind (solitary occupation). The word “for” establishes the connection.

There was no need of writing, for she should attach no importance to any account of them she should elicit by letter: she believed, always, in seeing for one’s self. (80)
Mrs Touchett’s general background disposition (wanting to see for oneself) explains a current, hypothetical one (attaching no importance to accounts of others). The causal connection is made clear, very concisely, by a colon.

She was not fond of the English style of life, and had three or four reasons for it to which she currently alluded; they bore upon minor points of that ancient order, but for Mrs Touchett they amply justified non-residence. (76)
The statement presents a character’s self-conscious awareness of her own motive (disposition to dislike the English way of life) for her action (non-residence).

The opportunity of listening to the conversation of one’s elders (which [for] Isabel was a highly-valued pleasure) [was] almost unbounded. (77)
Even as a child she thought her grandmother’s home romantic. (77)
These two descriptions explain the background to the workings of Isabel’s mind by describing her childhood dispositions.
Isabel felt some emotion, for she had always thought highly of her grandmother’s house. But the emotion was of a kind which led her to say: “I should like very much to go to Florence.” (81)

As discussed earlier, the first sentence relates a specific and current mental event (feeling emotion) to the background disposition (thinking highly). Then the disposition and the mental event are used to explain the action (making a statement). Again, the word “for” has an explanatory role.

She was as eccentric as Isabel had always supposed; and hitherto, whenever the girl had heard people described as eccentric, she had thought of them as offensive or alarming . . . But her aunt made it a matter of high but easy irony . . . (82)

This illustrates Isobel’s evolving character and personality as she finds that her previous disposition (to find eccentric people offensive) was mistaken. The development of dispositions has a role in the explanation of character change.

[Mrs Touchett] was virtually separated from her husband. . . . This arrangement greatly pleased her; it was so felicitously definite. It struck her husband in the same light, in a foggy square in London, where it was at times the most definite fact he discerned; but he would have preferred that such unnatural things should have a greater vagueness. (75–76)

This is the background to the characters’ joint disposition to live apart. It also explains the different attitudes of Mr and Mrs Touchett toward their shared decision.

She had her own way of doing all that she did, and this is the simplest description of a character which, although by no means without liberal motions, rarely succeeded in giving an impression of suavity. Mrs Touchett might do a good deal of good, but she never pleased. (75)

This statement describes other characters’ perceptions of Mrs Touchett’s dispositions.

She was usually prepared to explain [her motives]—when the explanation was asked as a favor; and in such a case they proved totally different from those that had been attributed to her. (75)

Mrs Touchett’s disposition to explain her motives makes clear the substantial differences between her constructions of her own mind and other characters’ constructions of it.
Mrs Touchett was certainly a person of many oddities, of which her behavior on returning to her husband’s house after many months was a noticeable specimen. (75)

*A specific action (returning home) is put in the context of her “odd” dispositions.*

It had lately occurred to her that her mind was a good deal of a vagabond, and she had spent much ingenuity in training it to a military step and teaching it to advance, to halt, to retreat, to perform even more complicated maneuvers. (79)

*This sentence illustrates Isabel’s highly self-conscious awareness of her habits of thought.*

Despite, I hope, finding this exercise of interest, you may be thinking that the notion of dispositions will be of less value when it comes to the study of the modernist novel, where there is an intense focus on the individual mental events that make up the stream of consciousness. In *Ulysses*, for example, Leopold Bloom’s consciousness is directly presented as a stream of thought. Well, up to a point. Recall the famous introduction to Bloom: “Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liver slices fried with breadcrumbs. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine” (45). This is a description of a disposition.

I have been talking so far only about *explicit* disposition sentences. I have not mentioned yet the fact that readers are predisposed (note my use of the term) to infer dispositions from statements about individual mental events. The alert reader will quickly notice from the two streams of consciousness that make up the bulk of some, but only some, of the eighteen episodes in *Ulysses* that, despite the fact that it is not openly stated, Bloom has a disposition to think scientifically while Stephen’s is to think philosophically.

**STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK**

The next chapter provides the theoretical context for the detailed work on social minds that will occupy the rest of the book. It goes into more detail on such concepts as the internalist and the externalist perspectives, intermental and intramental thought, and intermental units. The chapter then presents a short taxonomy of intermentality before attempting to justify this potentially unfamiliar way of thinking to any literary scholars who may have reserva-
tions about it. To conclude it, I present a case study—a passage from Evelyn Waugh’s _Men at Arms_ (1952)—in order to give an initial indication of what an analysis of social minds in the novel might look like. This one focuses specifically on the notion of unconscious thought.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 consist of discussions of the social minds to be found in those magnificent canonical warhorses _Middlemarch, Little Dorrit,_ and _Persuasion._ As your heart may well be sinking at the thought of yet more readings of these great, but undeniably well-studied, novels, I think I should explain my choice of texts. I wish to show that cognitive analyses really can reveal fresh insights, even into apparently overanalyzed novels such as these. My aim is to ensure that the next time you read these three novels with which you thought you were completely familiar, you will read them differently.

In chapter 3, I argue that _Middlemarch_ is a mosaic of intermentality. The various intermental units portrayed in it are so integral to the plot of the novel that it would not be possible for a reader to follow that plot without an understanding of them. The chapter is divided into three parts: the initial construction of the Middlemarch mind (in the singular), the subsequent development of (plural) Middlemarch minds, and the Lydgate storyworld. This arrangement is, I think, true to the actual experience of reading _Middlemarch._ The existence of the apparently monolithic, single, large intermental unit that I call the _Middlemarch mind_ is established in the first few pages of the novel before it becomes apparent that what appears at first to be a single mind consists in fact of several different Middlemarch minds. In the final section I describe the construction of an individual character, Lydgate, and analyze the most important small intermental unit to which he belongs: his marriage to Rosamond. This section explains how the reader brings together attributions from various sources in order to construct a single, easily identifiable fictional mind. This section is placed last because I think that the individual characters and small units in the novel are best understood within the wider intermental context that is established by the first two sections of this chapter.

The discussion of _Little Dorrit_ in chapter 4 starts with some general issues such as the importance of the externalist perspective on private thought and the concept of physically distributed cognition. It then looks at three of the ways in which the social minds in the novel communicate with each other: the face, nonverbal communication, and the look. I go on to scrutinize the workings of some large, medium, and small intermental units, the last-named starting with the Dorrit family and including some of its individuals (such as Mr Dorrit and Fanny) as well as its subunits (for example, Little Dorrit and Mr Dorrit, and Little Dorrit and Fanny). Next, I look at the most important intermental pairing in the novel—the relationship between Little
Dorrit and Clennam—first from the point of view of Clennam’s knowledge of Little Dorrit’s mind and then of her knowledge of his. This is followed by a discussion of some other small units such as Clennam and Mrs Clennam, Mrs Clennam and Flintwinch, and Little Dorrit and Pet. The chapter then makes use of attribution theory in relation to a key element of narrative fiction, action, by analyzing a short passage from the novel. I aim to show how the presentations of actions contained in novels are extremely informative about the mental functioning of fictional characters. In particular, I will discuss what discursive purposes are served by these presentations. By looking at an apparently internalist issue such as action within an externalist context, I reveal that some of the actions described in this passage are undertaken by groups and that Clennam’s actions can best be understood as a response to their intermental behavior.

Chapter 5 consists of four parts, the first two of which relate to Persuasion. In the first, I focus on Anne Elliot’s social mind by examining some of the small intermental units to which she belongs, in particular her relationship with Wentworth. In its second part, the chapter will follow the same pattern as the two previous ones in placing an apparently internalist narrative feature after the analysis of social minds. In this case it is emotions. I argue that much of the mental functioning in novels consists of emotions and feelings. Emotions drive narratives. A novel with all of the emotions and feelings taken out would not make much sense. Then, after commenting briefly in the third part of the chapter on some other nineteenth-century novels such as Charlotte Brontë’s Shirley (1849), Elizabeth Gaskell’s Wives and Daughters (1865), and The Warden in order to widen the perspective a little, I return in the fourth part to the three main texts in order to summarize some of the similarities and differences in the social minds contained in them.

Chapter 6, the final chapter, is again divided into four parts. In the first, I discuss the need for a rigorously diachronic approach to the study of social minds in the novel and comment briefly on some of the issues that would arise from the writing of such a history. The second part consists of an analysis of the intermental thought to be found in Enduring Love (together with a brief mention of another of Ian McEwan’s novels, Atonement [2001]). This discussion is placed at this point in the chapter in order to give a brief indication of what a social-minds perspective on the modern novel might look like. The book is undeniably “nineteenth-century-centric” and I even thought about making this bias explicit by calling it Social Minds in the Nineteenth-Century Novel. However, on reflection, I decided to stay with the more general title. Although my sort of approach is particularly suited to the
novels of that century (as well as the eighteenth century), I believe that it can also be productively applied to the twentieth- and twenty-first-century novel too, the experimental as well as the formally conservative kind. The discussion of fractured, dislocated intermentality in *Enduring Love* is an attempt to "moderate [this book's] implicit nineteenth-century-novel-centric vision of the 'natural' narrative transaction" (I owe this splendid formulation to Porter Abbott [personal communication]). In the third section of this chapter I discuss possible future developments in the study of social minds in other narrative media such as film. The fourth and final section is a rhetorical flourish.

As you will see from a glance at the contents page, this book is not systematically chronological. It is not possible for a single study to be exhaustive in its analyses of the workings of social minds in even a few case studies. The subject is simply too big. What I do, therefore, in chapters 3 to 5 is to highlight different aspects of the three texts under discussion. The decisions as to which aspects to highlight in which novels were evidence-led rather than theory-imposed, bottom-up rather than top-down. In each case, the evidence took me in directions that differed markedly from those indicated by the other two novels. Every text established its own, distinctive intermental personality. However, it would not be true to say that the aspects of social minds that are highlighted in one text never occur in another. Quite the contrary. This is why, at the end of chapter 5, I summarize some of the shared features of the three texts.

I start with *Middlemarch* because it is the best way into the subject of social minds in the nineteenth-century novel. It is the fulcrum around which the subject turns. In particular, an analysis of its opening few pages is an excellent introduction to the study of social minds in practice. It is also a good place to begin because its language is more obviously cognitive than any other novel of the period. Finally, it is an opportunity to show how the identity of an individual character (my example is Lydgate) is constructed in terms of a socially situated and distributed network of other minds. Individual characters and small units are investigated in this chapter within the context of the large unit of the whole Middlemarch mind and the medium-sized units of the various town minds. The emphasis in the analysis of *Little Dorrit* is rather different. There, I focus much more on the mechanics of small intermental units such as the look, facial expressions, and bodily movement. The chapter also goes into some detail on the dynamics of several small intermental units such as the Dorrit family and the relationship between Clennam and Little Dorrit. I then go back in time to *Persuasion* to return to the key issue of how a character (Anne Elliot being the example in this case) is necessarily embedded within networks of social minds. The treatment of Anne differs, though, from
that of Lydgate. With Anne, I focus less on the basics of character construction and more on the role that this kind of approach to character plays in our overall understanding of the whole novel.

To implement the externalist perspective fully, it is necessary to examine within it not only obviously external topics such as social minds and inter- mental thought but also some apparently more internalist issues. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to establish the externalist perspective first. In Fic- tional Minds, I adopted the usual order of internalist first and externalist second. For this book, I have made a conscious decision to work in the reverse direction. This is why chapters 3 to 5 start with social minds before going on to three concepts that are generally thought of as belonging more naturally within the internalist perspective: the construction of character in Middlemarch, action in Little Dorrit, and emotions in Persuasion. My aim is to show, in every case, that these issues benefit greatly from being seen from within an externalist perspective.

I have been told that this kind of analysis is “infectious.” In other words, after you finish this book you will find social minds at work in whatever novel you next read. I was pleased to hear this and hope that it is always the case. (This process has already begun for me. My holiday reading during a well-earned break from the final revisions for this book included a novel by the excellent Irish writer John McGahern called Amongst Women [1991]. I found the following description of three sisters on page two: “Apart, they could be breathtakingly sharp on the others’ shortcomings but together their individual selves gathered into something very close to a single presence” [2]). On the face of it, the infectious nature of the analysis might sound like an argument for going easy on the amount of evidence to be presented in this book. I have, however, not done so. I was reluctant to prune the quotations in chapters 3 to 5 and, as a result, a substantial amount of evidence has been assembled in them. The danger is that you may start to think, “OK! We’ve got the picture, now!” But my intention in quoting so frequently from the texts is to show that social minds are woven into the fabric of their discourses. I hope that the weight of evidence presented in them is sufficient to demonstrate the point. In fact, the following chapters contain only a sample; there was insufficient room to use it all. I would like this book to represent a paradigm shift. I want readers to say of it, “Wow! There was so much of this stuff going on and we never saw it!”