Social Minds in the Novel

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MIDDLEMARCH MIND

One of the most important characters in Middlemarch is the town of Middlemarch itself. I call the intermental functioning of the inhabitants of the town the Middlemarch mind. I go much further than simply suggesting that the town provides a social context within which individual characters operate, and argue that, just as in the case of Santa Dulcina delle Rocce in the previous chapter, the town literally and not just metaphorically has a mind of its own. The Middlemarch mind is complex, interesting, clearly visible to a close reader of the text, and vitally important to an understanding of the novel because it explains a good deal of the motivation behind the actions of the other main characters. In discussing the construction of the Middlemarch mind in the opening few pages of the novel, I aim to show that these pages are saturated with this group mind, and that the initial descriptions by the narrator of the three individual minds of Dorothea, Celia, and Mr Brooke are focalized through it.

Here is an edited, unformatted version of the opening section of the novel:

... [Dorothea Brooke] was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more trimmings; and it was only to close
observers that her dress differed from her sister’s, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements; for Miss Brooke’s plain dressing was due to mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared. The pride of being ladies had something to do with it: the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably “good”: if you inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers—anything lower than an admiral or clergyman . . . Young women of such birth, living in a quiet country-house, and attending a village church hardly larger than a parlour, naturally regarded frippery as the ambition of a huckster’s daughter. Then there was well-bred economy, which in those days made show in dress the first item to be deducted from, when any margin was required for expenses more distinctive of rank . . .

[Dorothea’s] mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there . . . Certainly such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided according to custom, by good looks, vanity, and merely canine affection . . .

It was hardly a year since [Dorothea and Celia] had come to live at Tipton Grange with their uncle, a man nearly sixty, of acquiescent temper, miscellaneous opinions, and uncertain vote. He had travelled in his younger years, and was held in this part of the county to have contracted a too rambling habit of mind. Mr Brooke’s conclusions were as difficult to predict as the weather: it was only safe to say that he would act with benevolent intentions, and that he would spend as little money as possible in carrying them out . . . [Dorothea] was regarded as an heiress, for not only had the sisters seven hundred a year each from their parents, but if Dorothea married and had a son, that son would inherit Mr Brooke’s estate, presumably worth about three thousand a year—a rental which seemed wealth to provincial families . . .

And how should Dorothea not marry?—a girl so handsome and with such prospects? Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistence on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man to hesitate before he made her an offer, or even might lead her at last to refuse all offers . . . A man would naturally think twice before he risked himself in such fellowship. Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did,
so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them.

The rural opinion about the new young ladies, even among the cottagers, was generally in favour of Celia, as being so amiable and innocent-looking, while Miss Brooke's large eyes seemed, like her religion, too unusual and striking . . . Yet those who approached Dorothea, though prejudiced against her by this alarming hearsay, found that she had a charm unaccountably reconcilable with it. Most men thought her bewitching when she was on horseback . . .

These peculiarities of Dorothea's character caused Mr Brooke to be all the more blamed in neighboring families for not securing some middle-aged lady as guide and companion to his nieces. But he himself dreaded so much the sort of superior woman likely to be available for such a position, that he allowed himself to be dissuaded by Dorothea's objections, and was in this case brave enough to defy the world—that is to say, Mrs Cadwallader the Rector's wife, and the small group of gentry with whom he visited in the north-east corner of Loamshire. So Miss Brooke presided in her uncle's household, and did not at all dislike her new authority, with the homage that belonged to it. (1–4)

Let us look at this passage first from an internalist perspective. I would guess that it would strike most casual readers simply as a description of the intramental minds of three characters—Dorothea, her sister Celia, and her uncle Mr Brooke—in a straightforward piece of omniscient characterization. So, within this perspective, is there much here for the classical narrative approaches to sink their teeth into?

I will start with the representation of consciousness in the text. First, there is no intramental free indirect thought. (I put it like this because, as I mention below, the passage contains some *intermental* free indirect thought, but you have to have acquired the concept of intermental thought in order to be able to see it.) Obviously, given the time of writing, there is no stream of consciousness or interior monologue either. In fact, there is no directly quoted thought at all. The passage consists almost entirely of authorial thought report of general descriptions of consciousness. So that does not tell us much. Is characterization theory any more informative? The initial cognitive frames that can be put in place immediately reveal quite a lot about the characters of Dorothea, Celia, and Mr Brooke. As there are two sisters, one studious and the other (relatively) flighty, looked after by a vague, dilettante bachelor uncle, there is certainly potential there for analysis in terms of cultural and literary stereotypes. And we learn a lot about initial instabilities within the storyworld, especially the one resulting from Dorothea's
yearning for a lofty conception of the world, despite her current condition. Focalization can be revealing too. The internal focalization from Dorothea's perspective highlights the instabilities just referred to. The same is true of Mr. Brooke's mind: “he himself dreaded” et cetera. Finally, will story analysis help? Not so much. We are looking at the first three pages of an eight-hundred-page novel, and so the respective roles of the three actants are as yet unclear. Celia and Mr Brooke may turn out to be helpers or obstacles, for example, but we will not know which for quite a while.

However, here is a reformatted version of the same passage, edited as before:

[Dorothea Brooke] was usually spoken of (1) as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more trimmings; and it was only to close observers (2) that her dress differed from her sister’s, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements; for Miss Brooke's plain dressing was due to mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared. The pride of being ladies had something to do with it: the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably (3) “good”: if you (4) inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers—anything lower than an admiral or clergyman. . . . Young women of such birth, living in a quiet country-house, and attending a village church hardly larger than a parlour, naturally (5) regarded frippery as the ambition of a huckster’s daughter. Then there was well-bred economy, which in those days (6) made show in dress the first item to be deducted from, when any margin was required for expenses more distinctive of rank . . .

[Dorothea's] mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton (7) and her own rule of conduct there. . . . Certainly such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided according to custom (8), by good looks, vanity, and merely canine affection. . . .

It was hardly a year since [Dorothea and Celia] had come to live at Tipton Grange with their uncle, a man nearly sixty, of acquiescent temper, miscellaneous opinions, and uncertain vote. He had travelled in his younger years, and was held in this part of the county (9) to have contracted a too rambling habit of mind. Mr Brooke's conclusions were as difficult to predict (10) as the weather: it was only safe to say (11) that he would act with benevolent intentions, and that he would spend as little money
as possible in carrying them out. . . . [Dorothea] was regarded as (12) an heiress, for not only had the sisters seven hundred a year each from their parents, but if Dorothea married and had a son, that son would inherit Mr Brooke's estate, presumably worth about three thousand a year—a rental which seemed wealth to provincial families (13) . . .

And how should Dorothea not marry?—a girl so handsome and with such prospects? (14) Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistence on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man (15) to hesitate before he made her an offer, or even might lead her at last to refuse all offers. . . . A man would naturally (16) think twice before he risked himself in such fellowship. Women were expected (17) to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did (18) what their neighbours did (19), so that if any lunatics (20) were at large, one (21) might know and avoid them.

The rural opinion about the new young ladies, even among the cottagers (22), was generally in favour of Celia, as being so amiable and innocent-looking, while Miss Brooke's large eyes seemed, like her religion, too unusual and striking. . . . Yet those who (23) approached Dorothea, though prejudiced against her by this alarming hearsay (24), found that she had a charm unaccountably reconcilable with it. Most men (25) thought her bewitching when she was on horseback . . .

These peculiarities of Dorothea's character caused Mr Brooke to be all the more blamed in neighbouring families (26) for not securing some middle-aged lady as guide and companion to his nieces. But he himself dreaded so much the sort of superior woman likely to be available for such a position, that he allowed himself to be dissuaded by Dorothea's objections, and was in this case brave enough to defy the world—that is to say, Mrs Cadwallader the Rector's wife, and the small group of gentry with whom he visited in the north-east corner of Loamshire (27). So Miss Brooke presided in her uncle's household, and did not at all dislike her new authority, with the homage that belonged to it. (1–4)

I hope that you found that, seen from the externalist perspective, much of the passage now reads very differently. The formatting in bold type transforms the text into a much more complex and interesting discourse by drawing attention to the intermental functioning of the group of people who form the consensus opinion of the town and surrounding area. In particular, the formatting shows that the descriptions by the narrator of the three
individual minds of Dorothea, Celia, and Mr Brooke are presented through the intermental Middlemarch mind by means of the various cues that I will analyze presently. In other words, the point of view is that of the Middlemarch mind, and the passage is primarily focalized through it. The annotated passage shows that there is a good deal of evidence for the existence of the Middlemarch mind: twenty-six references in sixty-one lines (plus the hypothetical lunatics, a separate group, in item 20) is a substantial number. For aesthetic reasons, I have put in bold only the linguistic markers of its presence. If I had included all of the content of its views, almost the whole passage would have been in bold. I have used boldface type for the references to the agents responsible for intermental activity where these agents are explicitly mentioned, and, where they are not, I have used boldface for references to the intermental activities themselves. The following paragraphs will make this point clearer. I will now discuss in more detail how the Middlemarch mind has been constructed by asking these questions in turn: Who? How? What? Why?

The first question then is: Who? Who are the individuals who make up the intermental Middlemarch mind? At this stage, in the first few pages of a long novel, the narrator is not able to reflect the complexities of the various intermental minds in the town that are examined later in this chapter (for example, the landed gentry, the middle classes including the professionals, and the working classes). The emphasis in the passage is almost exclusively on the first of these groups, the landed gentry. This group is explicitly named in examples (9) and (22), while the clearest reference to it is in the final example (27): “the world—that is to say, Mrs Cadwallader the Rector’s wife, and the small group of gentry with whom [Mr. Brooke] visited in the north-east corner of Loamshire.” With a few exceptions, all of the numbered references are to this powerful, norm-establishing core group. Exceptions include some neutral or nonspecific groups (“close observers” [2] and “those who approached Dorothea” [23]). The only transgressive or norm-threatening group, apart from the hypothetical lunatics constructed by the Middlemarch mind (20), is the group of men who find Dorothea attractive on horseback despite being told not to (25). This is an example, indicated early in the novel, of the kind of sexual energy that is traditionally seen as a threat to well-established social norms, and which often results in the sort of norm-disrupting events that are so common in nineteenth-century novels: elopements, secret engagements, unintended pregnancies, and so on.

The second question is: How? How are the views of this group conveyed? In particular, it may not be apparent in all cases precisely how the bold passages indicate the presence of intermental thought. You may be puzzled as to why such items as “unquestionably” (3) and “naturally” (5) have been
included as examples of references to the Middlemarch mind. So, a small typology is required. I have identified four types of the means of expression of the views of the Middlemarch mind and I will list them now in order of degree of directness.

The first is explicit reference to the main landed gentry group. This group is referred to either in geographical terms (“the parish of Tipton” [7] and “part of this county” [9]); or in social terms (“provincial families” [13]); or in both geographical and social terms (“neighbouring families” [26], “rural opinion” including the cottagers [22], “the world” et cetera [27]). In fact, the two categories of geographical and social are closely interrelated and difficult to disentangle, and so are best thought of as a spectrum. However, even the areas referred to in simply geographical terms (such as the parish of Tipton [7]) have to be included in this survey because the social implications of naming them, albeit implicit, are potent. The second means of expression is reference to a hypothetical group in order to make a particular rhetorical point. For example, “close observers” (2); “those who approached Dorothea” (23); “men” (15 and 16); and “sane people,” “neighbours,” “lunatics,” and “one” (18–21). Apart from the lunatics, these hypothetical groups tend to be norm-reinforcing: the “close observers” in (2) feel like landed-gentry close observers; the men who might be reluctant to marry Dorothea if she continues to be willful must also belong to the gentry.

The third is the use of the passive voice. There are five examples: “was spoken of” (1); “being decided” (8); “was held” (11); “was regarded” (12); and “were expected” (17). In every case, it is the Middlemarch mind that is doing the speaking, deciding, holding, regarding, and expecting. The fourth and final means of expression is also the most oblique. It is the use of presupposition. Again, there are five examples: “unquestionably” (3); “naturally” (5); “in those days” (6); “And how should Dorothea not marry?” (14); and “hearsay” (24). The use of these phrases by the narrator presupposes some person or group who holds these views, who thinks that the statements are unquestionably or naturally so and who would ask such a loaded question as: “And how should Dorothea not marry?” In Bakhtinian terms, they are examples of double-voiced discourse. More specifically, (3), (5), and (14) feature intermental free indirect thought. The narrator expresses a view that, it soon becomes apparent from the context, is the view of the townspeople. The important point is that, with a few exceptions, the last three means of expression (hypothetical groups, the passive voice, and presupposition) are all different sorts of rhetorical devices for referring, however indirectly, to the controlling social group that expresses the Middlemarch mind. These devices add to the sense that the Middlemarch mind is omnipresent and pervades the whole fabric of the society, and so explicit reference to it is
unnecessary.

The following passage from later in the novel neatly illustrates all of the four linguistic techniques:

(1) Doctor Sprague (a) was more than suspected of having no religion, but somehow (b) Middlemarch tolerated this deficiency in him . . . it was perhaps this negation in the doctor which made (c) his neighbours call him hard-headed and dry-witted . . . At all events, it is certain that if any medical man had come to Middlemarch with (d) the reputation of having very definite religious views . . . (e) there would have been a general presumption against his medical skill. (125)

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

The next question is: What? What are these examples of intermental functioning about, and what are the different types of judgments that are being made? Only one judgment appears to be factual, the one concerning the extent of Dorothea’s wealth (12). Some of the intermental functioning relates to action. There are decisions regarding marriage that are made “according to custom” (8) and behavior such as doing as neighbors do and avoiding lunatics (18–21). Next, there is some mind reading involved in judgments on characters’ dispositions. Dorothea has a clever mind although Celia has common sense (1), while Mr Brooke’s mind is too rambling and unpredictable (9–11). This mind reading involves predictions regarding intramental minds and actions: What will Mr Brooke think next (10)? Will Dorothea marry (14)? Many of the judgments relate to various aspects of social class. They concern the social standing of individuals and groups, including their connections (3–6); their wealth (12 and 13); etiquette, such as the need for a governess (26 and 27); and manners, such as the need for women to have weak opinions (17). There is also a strong emphasis on aesthetic judgments. There are references to dress sense such as the coquetry in Celia’s appearance (2) and frippery (5 and 6); and references to Dorothea’s looks and charm (22–25).

Underpinning all of these judgments is a strong moral and ethical impulse. Individuals ought to think predictably, behave in a socially responsible way, marry well, and look aesthetically pleasing because these are all the right thing to do. Common sense is more important than cleverness; weak,
predictable, and conforming opinions are desirable; good connections and background are important; young women should ensure that they marry well; and they should have the guidance that is necessary to ensure that they do. The types of judgments made by the Middlemarch mind are closely interconnected and all relate to the moral and political necessity for a closely confined consensus within clearly defined social and aesthetic norms. Class and morality in particular, but also aesthetics and mind reading, are closely linked. It may appear that aesthetic or social or moral elements predominate at any one time, but as soon as you start to pull at a single thread, all of the others unravel with it. The underlying logic is that individuals should behave in certain, well-specified ways and not in other ways, so that social relations will be stable and will continue to benefit those who benefit from them at present.

The last question is: Why? The answer is that the novel consists of an exploration of the pressures that the Middlemarch mind exerts on the individual minds and actions of just about all of the characters in the novel, and especially those who want to do something more than conform to the town’s norms and values. In particular, the workings of the Middlemarch mind have a profound effect on the lives of the two main characters, Dorothea and Lydgate, and so on the plot of the novel. The book would be unrecognizable without its presence. For example, the three individuals, Dorothea, Celia, and Mr. Brooke, are subject to a continual interrogation by the Middlemarch mind. Are they sufficiently deferential, orthodox in their opinions, and reliable in their social behavior? They, in turn, cast a continual and uneasy “word with a sideways glance” (1984, 32), to use Mikhail Bakhtin’s phrase, at the potential approval or disapproval of the town. Dorothea’s defiance, Celia’s compliance, and Mr. Brooke’s unpredictability are, in effect, dialogues with the norms of the large intermental unit. Dorothea’s disposition is to defy those norms; Celia’s is to comply with them; Mr. Brooke’s behavior is unpredictable when measured against them. Even within this opening passage of a long novel, it is obvious that conflicts will arise between Dorothea’s intelligence and “lofty conception of the world” on the one hand and, on the other, her sense of duty to her neighbors and her consideration for the feelings of her family. Her mind is a dialogue between her own inclinations and her responses to the various intermental pressures on her.

A number of narrative theorists, in particular Menakhem Perry (1979), have drawn attention to the notion of the primacy effect. This suggests that the cognitive frames that are set up by readers at the beginning of a narrative are tenacious and long-lasting, and are abandoned only when there is enough compelling evidence for readers to want to adopt other frames. As I hope to have shown, the primacy effect of the cognitive frame set up by the
frequent references to the Middlemarch mind in the opening few pages of the novel is very strong. And, as I will demonstrate later, the rest of the text betrays a fascination with the intermental process: its complexity; how units form, maintain, and modify themselves; their causes and their effects; the dialogical relationships between the units and the individuals they comprise; and, finally, how units fracture and disintegrate.

As stated in the opening paragraph of this chapter, the claim that I am making regarding the role of the town of Middlemarch is a strong one. It should be distinguished from two much weaker arguments. First, I am certainly not simply saying that the town has an important role in providing a social context within which individual characters operate and is thereby a pervasive influence on their intramental thought. Who would disagree with such an anodyne claim? Second, I am not referring to this mind in any metaphorical sense. I am going much further than these two positions in saying that, within the Middlemarch storyworld, the town actually and literally does have a mind of its own.

You may still be unconvinced by my arguments so far and so be wondering: What is he talking about? Within a novel, thinking is what individual characters do! It is what happens inside the skull. It is what goes on in free indirect thought, stream of consciousness, and interior monologue. It is this sort of thing, for example—a straightforward piece of thought report about a character’s inner thought processes: “Rosamond, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably.” However, there is a simple way to demonstrate that, as readers, we do all know what intermental functioning is and that we unthinkingly accept it as perfectly natural when we are presented with it. The proof is this. I cheated with that quote. The actual words in the text are these: “Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably” (105). We understand very easily what that sentence means when we encounter it in the context of the surrounding narrative. I doubt whether anybody has ever read it and decided that it has no meaning. So, just as with the town of Santa Dulcina delle Rocce, we know perfectly well what it is to ascribe mental functioning to a whole town. You may now be thinking—well, all right, that was very clever with the made-up quote just then, but any thinking that a town does must surely be different from the thinking that an individual does. But of course! It would be silly to disagree. I am not saying that intermental and intramental minds are the same. I am saying that they are similar in some ways, different in others, but they are both still minds. Just different kinds of minds.

As the Middlemarch mind is not completely monolithic and can be soft or fuzzy round the edges, it follows that some of the minds that go to make
up the intermental mind or that would normally acquiesce in its findings can depart from the common view under certain circumstances. Most men, when they come into contact with Dorothea, enjoy the experience, despite the intermental prejudice against her. There is also intramental dissent involved in Dorothea’s reluctance to get married. Dorothea and Mr Brooke form a small unit in defiance of the larger one when they agree together that a companion is not necessary. (Celia’s views are not mentioned, I notice.) These are small examples of the various intramental and intermental relationships that, as I will now explain, become extremely complex later in the novel. I am therefore using the phrase the Middlemarch mind as a convenient shorthand. It is misleading if it suggests that there is only ever one mind that the town possesses. In fact, as the novel progresses, the reader becomes aware that there are several different Middlemarch minds. Disputes frequently occur. There is usually a variety of different opinions on any one subject. Sometimes the town appears to be of one mind, but more often there are references to differences of view between the various social, geographical, and professional groups. So, the town can be in two or more minds at any one time (just as individuals can be, come to think of it).

Studying the Middlemarch mind is like looking at a painting by Turner, Seurat, or Cezanne. Close up, all you see is a mass of apparently incoherent brushstrokes; move away, and you are aware of shapes emerging and the subject of the whole picture materializes. Close up, the individuals that compose this large intermental unit are unique and all have slightly different perspectives on their storyworld. The thought of them collectively swallowing Lydgate makes no sense at all. Move away, however, and the consensus emerges, and it then feels absolutely right to say that Middlemarch intends to swallow Lydgate whole.

**MIDDLEMARCH MINDS**

I wish now to try to convey the subtlety of the fine shades of intermental thought and the complexity of the relationships between intermental and intramental thought in the rest of the novel. First, I will discuss the various ways in which, over the course of the whole text, readers are able to identify a number of distinct, separate Middlemarch minds within the single unit that is initially constructed. After saying a little about the techniques used for the constructions of these various minds, I suggest that an analysis of the class structure of the town reveals the existence of separate and well-defined upper-class, middle-class, and working-class minds. I then refer to the complexity and fluidity of the myriad other units that occur at various
points in the text and introduce a tentative typology for the sorts of intermental focalization to be found in the novel. The rest of this section then turns to the roles played by individuals: not only those inside the large units who act as spokespeople or mouthpieces for their views but also those who, like Lydgate, Dorothea, and Ladislaw, find themselves outside of them and become the object of their judgments.

As with the opening passage, in the longer, indented quotes that follow, I will put all examples of intermental thought in bold. I do this for ease of reference, but also to emphasize in visual form their sheer number. I sometimes continue to refer to the Middlemarch mind to denote the large intermental unit of the whole town; I will also refer to a Middlemarch mind when a subgroup of the whole town mind is being discussed. This chapter is primarily about large and medium-sized units and much less about small units such as marriages, friendships, and families (with the exception of Lydgate and Rosamond). It is no exaggeration to say that a short book could be written about all of the intermental functioning in Middlemarch. The only problem with such a book would be the difficulty, I imagine, in getting it published.

A close study of Middlemarch reveals that George Eliot was obviously fascinated by the intermental process: its complexity, its causes and effects, its relationship with individuals. Thought in general and intermental thought in particular are frequently discussed. Many different cognitive terms are used to describe intermental activity in the novel: knowing, thinking, considering, believing, noticing, conjecturing, implying, suspecting, tolerating, hating, opposing, liking, and wanting. These and the many other examples that are to be found throughout the rest of this chapter are verbs of thought and of consciousness. The whole novel is saturated with clear evidence of the variety of communal thought. As with Little Dorrit and Persuasion, the evidence that is presented in this chapter composes only a small proportion of the total. Much of the language used in Middlemarch explicitly invites the sort of cognitive reading that is a feature of this book. It refers several times to “other minds” (401, 504, and 530) and also to “other people’s states of mind” (536), “mental action” (546), “social action” (124), “the boundaries of social intercourse” (64), and “consciousness of interdependence” (64). In addition, the language regularly anticipates Bakhtin’s already-mentioned notion of the word with a sideways glance: “The vicar’s frankness seemed not of the repulsive sort that comes from an uneasy consciousness seeking to forestall the judgment of others” (119); and: “an uneasy consciousness heareth innuendoes” (206).

Other examples of George Eliot’s fondness for openly acknowledging the cognitive element in her novel, particularly as it applies to social minds, include “civic mind” (65), “public mind” (99 and 246), “the unrefomed pro-
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At other times, general terms are used such as “that part of the world” (151), “midland-bred souls” (71), “mortals generally” (105), “the company” (to refer to a party) (107), “vulgar people” (114), “all people young and old” (16), it was “sure to strike others” (17), and “public feeling required” (16). The most obvious names for the intermental groups in the town relate to the town itself. There are a number of variations: “the Middlemarchers” (106 and 114), “good Middlemarch society” (108), “Middlemarch company” (463); “the town” (112), “the respectable townsfolk” (105), et cetera. References to Middlemarch can also be more specific when related to a particular context. During a discussion of the political situation, the text mentions “buyers of the Middlemarch newspapers” (246). During consideration of Bulstrode’s possible hypocrisy in example (18) below, there is an ironical reference to “the publicans and sinners in Middlemarch” (83). A description of Rosamond’s popularity talks about “all Middlemarch admirers.”

Sometimes the descriptions are neutral: “his neighbours” (96) and “the town’s talk” (204). At other times they are rather arch constructions that are characteristic of the distinctive voice of the narrator: “the public belief” (527), “all the world round Tipton” (32), “in various quarters” (314), “family party” (240), “in Middlemarch phraseology” (511), and “the laity” (306). Some of the constructions betray the bitterness and frustration of the individual who is on the receiving end of the consensus: “the petty medium of Middlemarch” (129) and “Middlemarch gossip” (240). In addition, as already mentioned, the Middlemarch mind is sometimes presented in intermental free indirect thought: “It was clear that Lydgate . . . intended to cast imputations on his equals” (126), when this thought would be clear only to the Middlemarch mind and no one else. I referred earlier to a particularly striking form of words that identifies Middlemarch as a group mind: “Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably” (105). This sentence beautifully frames the relationship between Lydgate and Middlemarch for the remainder of the novel. Middlemarch has a double cognitive narrative of Lydgate as the idealistic young doctor who comes to the town and wishes to mould it into conformity with his wishes. However, he will be taught a lesson, and will discover that it is he who has to change.

Some of the general and vague descriptions of the workings of the Middlemarch mind involve oblique references to speech. These include “gossip” (344), “the air seemed to be filled with gossip” (344), “the conversation seemed to imply” (124), “general conversation in Middlemarch” (181), and “It’s openly said” (72). The reporting of this speech may be focalized through an individual: Mr Featherstone “had it from most undeniable authority, and
not one, but many” (73), Lydgate “heard it discussed” (106), and (an example of what David Herman [1994] calls hypothetical focalization) “If Will Ladislaw could have overheard some of the talk at Freshitt that morning…” (433). Later, the reader is told what he would have heard being said:

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

I refer below to the use made of multiparty talk to convey this sort of gossip.

The three locations mentioned in example (2) deserve further attention. Although we can only know what happens in a storyworld if we follow the mental functioning of its inhabitants, it is also essential to have a certain amount of knowledge, however rudimentary, of its geography (see Moretti 1998). In this case, we need to have a rough idea in our heads of the fact that Middlemarch is a town surrounded by large country houses with accompanying parishes or villages. These include Tipton (home of Mr. Brooke, and also Dorothea and Celia before they marry), Freshitt (the home of Sir James Chettam and then Celia after they marry), and Lowick (the home of Casaubon and then Dorothea after they marry). However, as this list shows, a knowledge of the geographical storyworld is closely linked to a knowledge of the mental and social storyworld. Tipton, Freshitt, and Lowick are important only because they are the homes of the members of the gentry or upper classes who are leading characters in the story. This is demonstrated by the fact that references to the upper classes are couched in geographical terms, as in example (2), as well as in more obviously social terms. In other words, these place names function as metonymies for the upper classes or the gentry. References to the town of Middlemarch itself sometimes act in the same way for the middle classes, as the Tankard pub does for the working classes.

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

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

“All classes” can be subdivided into upper (Lowick Parsonage and Tipton Grange), middle (the Vincy family and Mrs Bulstrode’s friends), and lower (Dollop’s pub).

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

A The dinner party at which Lydgate is introduced to Middlemarch society (60–63)
B The public meeting at which the vote on the chaplaincy takes place (126–29)
C Sir James Chettam, the Cadwalladers, and Mr Brooke talk about politics (261–67)
D Hackbutt, Toller, and Hawley discuss Lydgate (308–9)
E The Chettams, the Cadwalladers, Dorothea, and Celia have a discussion about widowhood (378–79)
F The Bulstrode scandal breaks and comes to a climax at the public meeting (494–505)
G The Chettams, the Cadwalladers, and Mr Brooke exchange views on Dorothea’s second marriage (560–65)

There are two sorts of multiparty talk here. C, E, and G are conversations between members of the gentry that establish a set of characteristically
upper-class views on Dorothea’s marriages and on politics. By contrast, B, D, and F are the town or middle-class views on Lydgate and Bulstrode (together with the addition of a working-class view in F). A is, as the text states, an uneasy mixture of both the upper and middle classes. In most cases, but particularly in F, there is a mixture of direct speech in the form of dialogue and multiparty talk, and intermental thought report. The hypothetical book devoted to social minds in Middlemarch alone that I referred to earlier would allow space for a detailed analysis of the endlessly fascinating ways in which the intricately shifting dynamics of the various group minds are traced in passages such as these.

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

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

Every word spoken by Mr Brooke is informed by the need for intermental approval. It is apparent that all of the thoughts of both men are dominated by what must be the four most dreaded words in the English language: What will people think?

**Subgroups and the Discursive Rhythm**

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

As was apparent in the reference in the opening passage to “the world—that is to say, Mrs Cadwallader the Rector’s wife” et cetera, the narrator can sometimes be self-knowingly ironic about the imprecision that is required when discussing intermental thought:

(5) At Middlemarch in those times a large sale was regarded as a kind of festival . . . The second day, when the best furniture was to be sold, “everybody” was there . . . “Everybody” that day did not include Mr Bulstrode. (415)

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

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

Intermental units have a double existence that is both solid and subtle. On the one hand, the Middlemarch minds are collections of completely dif-
different individuals, all with slightly different perspectives on the social issues affecting the town: they are subtle. On the other hand, and at the same time, these groups come together with a collective force, particularly as it appears to an individual, that is far greater than the sums of their parts: they become solid.

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

One example of this complex combination of intramental and intermental functioning takes place at a dinner party at the Vincy household. The various members of the middle classes who are present discuss the chaplaincy. Individual views are expressed and they are often in disagreement with each other. People are thinking intramentally. Then: “Lydgate’s remark, however, did not meet the sense of the company” (107). What happens here is that the individuals who were previously expressing conflicting views coalesce and close ranks in the presence of an outsider, as families tend to do. The presence of a “company” with a common view is explicitly acknowledged. The party is no longer a random collection of intramental perspectives; it becomes an intermental unit. From a literary studies standpoint, Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth (1998) has shown how the dominant authorial perspective in classical realism subsumes divergent voices and intramental dissent, as in this case, into a consensus narrative that constructs a social, embodied, engaged, and specific mind.

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

Note this discursive rhythm as illustrated in the following two passages—in particular, the careful balancing of different intermental perspectives, all trained on a single intramental mind:

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

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

In both (7) and (8), a large group is split into subgroups in what might be called a “many people thought . . . some said . . . others considered . . .” rhythm. (7) is an excellent example because it starts with the whole Middlemarch mind, “general conversation in Middlemarch,” and then refers to three subgroups: some, others, and many people. The relationship between these three groups is unclear. Are they mutually exclusive, or is there an overlap in membership? We cannot be sure. Example (8) concerns an implicit subgroup, patients, instead of the whole Middlemarch mind, but is otherwise similar in shape. Again, it would be difficult indeed to establish the precise relationship between the various sub-subgroups of patients: those willing to change to Lydgate for different reasons and those who are not. It would be tempting to try to express the relationships between these groups as Venn diagrams, but, as in many cases in this particular novel, I do not think it would be possible.

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

**Intermental Focalization**

The point about the narrator being scrupulous in reflecting shades of opinion can be restated in terms of the concept of focalization. In what follows, I wish to propose the following three binary distinctions within the umbrella term *focalization* that, I think, go some way toward reflecting the complexity of the passages quoted in this chapter:

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

The difference between *intramental* and *intermental* focalization refers to the distinction between mental activity by one (intramental) and by more than one (intermental) consciousness. Single focalization occurs when there is one focalizer. The term *multiple* focalization refers to the presence of two or more focalizers of the same object. These multiple focalizers may be intramental individuals, or intermental groups, or a combination of the two. However, a further distinction is required. In the case of *homogeneous* focalization, the two focalizers have the same perspective, views, beliefs, and so on relating to the object. By contrast, *heterogeneous* focalization reflects the fact that the focalizers’ views differ, and their perspectives conflict with one another. For more on this issue of multiperspectivalism, see Nünning (2000).

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

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

 Individuals Inside Intermental Units

I will now focus on the relationships between groups and individuals. First
I will say a little about how the leaders or spokespeople of each of the three
social groups are used to present the results of their class-based mental func-
tioning. I will then discuss those individuals who are outside of the social
groups in the sense that they are the objects of their intermental cognitive
activity.

Both Mrs Cadwallader and Sir James Chettam act as powerful mouth-
pieces for the upper-class mind. Here is a dramatic illustration of this func-
tion:

(9) But Sir James was a power in a way unguessed by himself. Entering
at that moment [as Ladislaw is saying goodbye to Dorothea], he was
an incorporation of the strongest reasons through which Will’s pride
became a repellent force, keeping him asunder from Dorothea. (377)
Chapter 3

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

The middle-class mind has several mouthpieces: they include at various times Sprague, Minchin, Toller, Chicheley, and Standish. They regard “themselves as Middlemarch institutions” (126). The following quote gives a useful insight into the dynamics of this particular group mind:

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

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

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

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

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

The use of a representative voice and a supporting chorus is a notable characteristic of both passages. Regarding (11), the term sanctioned is revealing of Mrs Dollop’s power. The group-defining force of the phrase outer world is also worth noting. There is an occurrence toward the end of (12) of intermental free indirect discourse. It is obvious from some of the phrases in this sentence (“Mrs Dollop wishes to know what was”; “as had well been seen in Burke and Hare with their pitch-plaisters”; and “such a hanging business as that was not wanted in Middlemarch”) that the narrator is making use of the distinctive speech and thought patterns of Mrs Dollop and her customers.

 Individuals Outside Intermental Units

Having examined the role of the mouthpieces of the three class-based units, I will now scrutinize the ways in which the text presents the judgments of those units on individuals who are outside of them. Both Dorothea's and also Lydgate's character and behavior are, at various times, focalized through a variety of Middlemarch minds. The relentlessly judgmental quality of intermental thought in the novel remains fairly constant in relation to them both. However, focalization can work in the opposite direction, and intermental units can be focalized through intramental cognitive functioning, too. Within Lydgate's free indirect discourse, there are references to “Middlemarch gossip” (240) and to “the circles of Middlemarchers” (299). Dorothea
is critical of the “society around her” (23). Sometimes the two directions are at work simultaneously. In a good example of a reciprocal intermental/intramental relationship, Lydgate comments that “I have made up my mind to take Middlemarch as it comes, and shall be much obliged if the town will take me in the same way” (112). Lydgate talks here of Middlemarch in the way that the narrator does in the final sentence of (19), as a sentient being that is capable of independent thought. In (13), the presentation of power relations in the town is focalized through Lydgate:

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

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

The term cognitive narrative, you will remember, designates a character’s whole perceptual, cognitive, ethical, and ideological viewpoint on the story-world of the novel and is intended to be an inclusive term that conveys the fact that each character’s mental functioning is a narrative that is embedded within the whole narrative of the novel. Double cognitive narratives are versions of characters’ minds that exist within the minds of other characters. So, one way to describe the relationships that I am discussing is to say that Middlemarch minds regularly form double cognitive narratives of individuals, especially Dorothea and Lydgate. Equally, these narratives can work in the reverse direction. As Lydgate’s wish that the town take him as it finds him shows, some individuals form their own double cognitive narratives for the Middlemarch mind.

Theory of mind is usually thought to work in novels on the intramental level. In Persuasion, when Wentworth is snubbed by Anne Elliot’s father and sister, Anne knows that he feels contempt and anger, Wentworth knows that Anne knows what he feels, Anne knows that Wentworth knows that she knows, and so on. Theory of mind is operating here solely in relation to individuals. However, as we saw in the case of Santa Dulcina delle Rocce, groups use theory of mind too and, in addition, can be the subject of individuals’ theory of mind. Various sorts of different attributions can be made by
intermental minds regarding the supposed workings of intramental minds. Throughout the novel, Middlemarch groups judge individuals and place them accordingly. “Most of those who saw Fred . . . thought that young Vincy was pleasure-seeking as usual” (163). So Fred is constructed as a pleasure seeker. In example (1), Sprague is defined as “hard-headed and dry-witted.”

Attributions by large units also have a profound effect on smaller units such as marriages: “In Middlemarch a wife could not long remain ignorant that the town held a bad opinion of her husband” (511).

When Lydgate takes Bulstrode out of the public meeting in which he, Bulstrode, has been humiliated,

(14) [i]t seemed to him [Lydgate] as if he were putting his sign-manual to that association of himself with Bulstrode, of which he now saw the full meaning as it must have presented itself to other minds. [And then, within Lydgate’s free indirect discourse.] The inferences were closely linked enough: the town knew of the loan, believed it to be a bribe, and believed that he took it as a bribe. (504)

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

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

Note that, as with the Men at Arms passage, this cognitive chain involves intermental (item B) as well as intramental reasoning.

All this inter- and intramental complexity has a powerful teleological role in the development of the various plots in the novel. The two most important examples are the Lydgate and Bulstrode crisis and the Dorothea and Ladislaw relationship. Example (9) demonstrated that it is the upper-class mind that keeps Dorothea and Ladislaw apart through her and especially his uneasy awareness of its workings.

(15) Will was in a defiant mood, his consciousness being deeply stung with the thought that the people who looked at him probably knew a fact tantamount to an accusation against him as a fellow with low designs which were to be frustrated by a disposal of property. (417)
It is striking how many examples can be found in this novel of Bakhtin’s word with a sideways glance, the nervous and uneasy anticipation of the view of another. It was also apparent in example (4). The end result for Dorothea and Ladislaw is that they are kept apart for some time:

(16) His position [in Middlemarch] was threatening to divide him from her with those barriers of habitual sentiment which are more fatal to the persistence of mutual interest than all the distance between Rome and Britain. (300)

Intermental units construct socially situated identities for individual characters:

(17) There was a general impression, however, that Lydgate was not altogether a common country doctor, and in Middlemarch at that time such an impression was significant of great things being expected from him. (96–97)

Lydgate is considered to be a gentleman doctor. His intramental identity emerges from the intermental consensus. In particular, group minds make use of the past lives of individuals. While cognitive narratives are being constructed for individuals, their origins are carefully examined for any clues relating to their identities. Here, Bulstrode’s lack of known social origins is held to be deeply suspicious:

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

The establishment of a single, stable, assured social identity for poor Bulstrode is not going to be possible. All of these groups (loud men, those persons who thought themselves worth hearing, others, the publicans and sinners in Middlemarch, some, others, the less superficial reasoners among them) have their own conflicting, colliding, contradictory perspectives on him.

This interest in the past is even more obvious in the next example, which is revealing about the ways in which intermental constructions of intramental cognitive narratives require individuals’ pasts to be filled out:
(19) No one in Middlemarch was likely to have such a notion of Lydgate’s past as has here been faintly shadowed, and indeed the respectable townsfolk there were not more given than mortals generally to any eager attempt at exactness in the representation to themselves of what did not come under their own senses. Not only young virgins of that town, but grey-bearded men also, were often in haste to conjecture how a new acquaintance might be wrought into their purposes, contented with very vague knowledge as to the way in which life has been shaping him for that instrumentality. Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably. (105)

The passage starts by saying, reasonably enough, that the Middlemarch mind does not know what happened to Lydgate before he arrived in the town. But it then goes on to say that the hypothetical construction of his cognitive narrative (in the absence of real evidence) will owe more to the Middlemarch mind’s own needs (“wrought into their purposes”) than any disinterested pursuit of the actual truth of his real history. The previously discussed final sentence emphasizes the point. It will make use of Lydgate as it wishes. The need is to create a “Middlemarch Lydgate” who can be comfortably swallowed and easily assimilated. That “Lydgate” need only have a tenuous relationship with the “real” Lydgate (whatever and whoever that is). This line of thinking regarding the creation of different Lydgates is pursued further in the next section on the Lydgate storyworld.

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

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

This is a general assessment by the narrator of a certain type of intermental thought. Although it is related to the workings of the Middlemarch mind, it appears to have a wider application. The narrator seems to be suggesting that this is how intermental systems in general work. It is heavily ironic and rather jaundiced. It makes the obvious point that the investigations of the Middlemarch mind are not aimed at a pure disinterested pursuit of the objective truth. The driving force in this case is not the discovery of fact but, rather, the enjoyment of mystery. The facts might result in an uninteresting narrative for Bulstrode and Lydgate. Also, the result might not suit the purposes or interests of those people who are hostile to the two men. Even the “more definite” facts are warped to fit into a more satisfying story. A cognitive narrative that fits the needs of the group is created. As I said, this modification of reality is almost mythic in direction.

In the next passage, the narrator warns the reader against the distortions in the construction of individual identity that are inherent in the myth-making process:

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

The mythmaking process continues even after death. The following passage occurs at the end of the book:

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

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

THE LYDGATE STORYWORLD

The Lydgate storyworld is the whole of Lydgate's mind in action. When we attempt to follow his mental functioning, we experience the whole Middlemarch storyworld from his perceptual, cognitive, and ethical viewpoint. In analyzing the presentation of his consciousness, we need to study not just the passages of text that present his inner speech in the speech modes of direct thought, free indirect thought, and thought report; not just whether he is a flat or round character or which of the various intertextual stereotypes readers will apply to him; not just his position as an actant or function within the structure of the story; and not just his role as a focalizer. All of those things are important and will contribute to an understanding of how Lydgate's mind works. But, as Lydgate's identity is, in part, socially distributed or situated among the minds of the other inhabitants of the town, much more is needed.

Reading Lydgate's narrative within the context of the whole text is an extremely “gappy” experience: he is referred to in a number of passages that, added together, amount to less than a third of the total novel. (I am talking here about the gaps in the narrative's attention to the character, and not gaps in reader understanding.) To demonstrate how gappiness can be measured, I have set out below a schedule of all the passages in the text that relate to Lydgate. It includes not only the occasions when he is physically “on stage,” but also, and most importantly, those occasions when he is being talked about by other characters. Although the schedule is a little impressionistic and could be presented in slightly different ways, it nevertheless gives a fairly accurate picture of Lydgate's presence in the novel. (The passage totals may not correspond exactly with the page references—in the first example, an eight-page passage within the nine pages 61 to 69—either because the passage begins toward the end of the first page or ends toward the beginning of the last page, or because I have rounded the totals up or down to whole numbers.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Total Pages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passage 1 (61–69):</td>
<td>8 pages (then a 9-page gap)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage 2 (78–86):</td>
<td>8 pages (10-page gap)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage 3 (96–130):</td>
<td>34 pages (49-page gap)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Passage 4 (179–88): 9 pages (8-page gap)
Passage 5 (196–209): 13 pages (27-page gap)
Passage 6 (236–45): 9 pages (46-page gap)
Passage 7 (291–93): 2 pages (27-page gap)
Passage 8 (299–316): 17 pages (4-page gap)
Passage 9 (320–23): 3 pages (17-page gap)
Passage 10 (340–44): 4 pages (57-page gap)
Passage 11 (401–15): 14 pages (26-page gap)
Passage 12 (441–73): 32 pages (9-page gap)
Passage 13 (482–531): 49 pages (8-page gap)
Passage 14 (539–40): 2 pages (5-page gap)
Passage 15 (545–52): 7 pages (23-page gap)
Passage 16 (575): 1 page
Total: 212 out of 578 pages (a little over a third of the total)

It is worth making a number of points about this schedule. First, the passages featuring Lydgate tend to be shorter in length than the gaps between those passages. Only three of the sixteen passages are above seventeen pages in length. (These three compose half of Lydgate’s total narrative.) Ten of the other passages are under ten pages in length. By contrast, seven of the gaps are over twenty pages long and three are over forty-five pages long. As I say, reading Lydgate’s narrative within the context of the whole text is an extremely gappy experience. During these gaps, the reader has to continue to apply the continuing-consciousness frame. That is, we have to be aware that Lydgate continues to exist within the reality of the storyworld and will have on his mind such important issues as the hospital chaplaincy affair, his relationship with Rosamond, his money troubles, and the receding prospects of further medical research. Following Clennam’s cognitive narrative in *Little Dorrit* is an equally gappy experience; Anne Elliot’s is less so because she is the main character-focalizer in *Persuasion*, but the rarely focalized Wentworth’s is more so. Lydgate’s gappiness is especially notable when one considers that, with Dorothea, he is the main character in the novel. Less important characters will obviously be even gappier in nature. I am not contrasting him with other important characters in similar texts of the same sort of size: for example, Rogozhin in *The Idiot* or Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind*. In fact, it seems to me quite likely that similarly significant characters are equally gappy. To find out whether this is the case would be an interesting exercise to undertake, but is beyond the scope of this study.

Second, because the Lydgate storyworld is aspectual in that it views the whole *Middlemarch* storyworld only from Lydgate’s subjective point of view,
a good deal of the whole storyworld is missing from his own. It is plausible to speculate that Lydgate has no or limited knowledge of the following important areas of the novel: Dorothea’s relationships with Casaubon, Ladislaw, her sister Celia, and Sir James Chettam; the relationships between Mary Garth, the Garth family, Fred Vincy, and Farebrother; Mr Featherstone; Raffles and the precise nature of Bulstrode’s secret; and the extent of the relationship between Rosamond and Ladislaw, and Dorothea’s discovery of them in a compromising situation. This general point emerges powerfully from the film of *Little Dorrit* that was made by Christine Edzard in 1987. Part one of the film presents the storyworld from Clennam’s limited point of view; part two from Little Dorrit’s. The effects can be surprising. For example, the financial crash occurs with no warning, without the buildup related to Merdle’s fragile state of mind and eventual suicide that is featured in the novel, because, of course, Clennam would have been unaware of all of that.

Third, it is an artificial exercise to try to examine Lydgate’s mind in isolation from the other minds in the storyworld. Lydgate’s narrative is deeply embedded within the whole novel. To say that it composes a third of the whole novel is misleading. This third consists not only of his narrative, but also of large portions of the narratives of Rosamond (obviously), Farebrother, Bulstrode, Dorothea, Casaubon, and Ladislaw. All of these characters have versions of his mind, or double cognitive narratives, contained within their own minds. A consequence of this exercise is that their narratives have been aspectually adjusted, and these characters are now seen mainly from his cognitive and ethical viewpoint.

Fourth, notwithstanding the third point, these passages, embedded though they are within the larger *Middlemarch* narrative, add up to a coherent and continuous narrative in their own right. They would require the addition of only a little explanatory material to make an excellent short novel (rather, I imagine, like the one that was originally planned by George Eliot).

Finally, it is striking how Lydgate’s narrative is dominated both by conversations with others in which he takes part and also by discussions about him by others when he is not present. His mind is actively engaged with its social context. Within his narrative, there are only five passages of private thought, totaling fourteen pages. However, this label, “private,” is rather misleading because these passages are also profoundly social and are informed by his mind’s dialogic relationships with other minds. Also, they frequently refer to his engagement with the social world in the form of action, both past (“He had quitted the party early” [63]) and future (“He had come to Middlemarch bent on doing many things” [64]). Many of these actions and plans for action relate to his assumptions about the workings of other minds. In the first and second passages of private thought (64) and (112–15), he is deciding
not to marry and is planning his future research. In the third (122–24), he is wondering how to vote on the chaplaincy question. In the fourth (404–8), he is trying to work out what to do about his growing money troubles and his inability to get Rosamond to understand them. In the final passage (509–11), he is thinking over past actions such as his marriage and his acceptance of a loan from Bulstrode, the joint actions of others (“The general black-balling had begun” [511]), and his own actions in response (“And yet how was he to set about vindicating himself?” [509]).

The presentation of Lydgate’s mind in the discourse is dominated in these and other ways by the concept of action. His mind is generally described in terms of what he does. As Gilbert Ryle says, when we talk about the mind, we talk about the doing and undergoing of things in the ordinary world. The presentation of his actions is dominated by the narrative’s purpose of creating a cognitive character frame for the reader that highlights the contrast between Lydgate’s lofty aims and his rather less elevated maneuverings. His actions and also his reasons for them can be interpreted within this framework. The story of his slide into mediocrity then has even greater impact.

The reader is able to see Lydgate’s mind in action, among other ways, in his medical work and specifically in his diagnoses of illness. It is also visible during the various conversations in which he takes part. In our first encounter with him he is “listening gravely” (60) while nonsense is being talked to him. This is dramaturgical action: evoking in a public audience a certain image or impression. A good deal of thought report is what I refer to as contextual: the short unobtrusive clauses, phrases, or even single words describing a character’s thought processes that are often combined with descriptions of actions. Much of the contextual thought report that refers to Lydgate’s mind is used to explain the purpose of his actions. These actions are often the speech acts that occur during conversations. This combination of a description of an action and the reason for it in the form of contextual thought report is common: “Lydgate, not willing to let slip an opportunity of furthering a favourite purpose, ventured to say . . .” (302). Also: “Lydgate’s ear had caught eagerly her mention of the living, and as soon as he could, he reopened the subject, seeing here a possibility of making amends for the casting-vote he had once given with an ill-satisfied conscience” (342). Here is a more complex example: “He sat looking at her, and did not rise to pay her any compliments, leaving that to others, now that his admiration was deepened” (110). Here, an action (looking), a nonaction (not complimenting her), the decision that is the specific reason for the nonaction (leaving it to others), and the general state of mind that is the basic reason for all three of these (admiration) are combined in a sentence that causally links action and consciousness together. I say more about action in the next chapter.
As I said in chapter 1, the concept of fictional minds is intended to encompass the issue of characterization as well as that of the representation of consciousness. Consider this example: Rosamond’s refinement is “beyond what Lydgate had expected” (109). It would be reasonable to infer from this statement a single mental event: say, Lydgate realizes in a self-conscious flash of intuition that this is how he feels about Rosamond. It is also his settled belief that this is so, and his belief is a state of mind that will exist over time, and will be true of his mind whether or not he is thinking about Rosamond at any given moment. It is also a reflection of the dispositions that are characteristic of his character or personality: his tendency to be arrogant, to be class-conscious, and to be attracted to women. These short-, medium-, and long-term elements of his mind relate to both consciousness and characterization and cannot be separated. Here is another, among countless examples in the novel: “Lydgate had often been satirical on this gratuitous prediction, and he meant now to be guarded” (199). Again, there is a complex balance here between characterization and dispositions (the past), current mental events and states (the present), and the kind of functional, purposive, problem-solving mental functioning that is oriented toward the future.

Lydgate’s Relationship with Middlemarch

Lydgate’s relationship with Middlemarch is negotiated in terms of the double cognitive narratives they have of each other. His relationship with Rosamond fails to become an intermental unit because the double cognitive narratives they have of each other differ so widely from their own internal narratives. These are the most important relationships in his life, and I will now analyze them in turn. (Some of the quotes that have been used already will be repeated during this discussion because they will now be interpreted from Lydgate’s, rather than the town’s, perspective. There will also be a similarly small amount of repetition in the next chapter for the same sort of reason.)

Lydgate is introduced within an intermental frame. His identity is socially situated before we meet him, and there are a number of discussions of him throughout the novel that continue the town’s exploration of his identity. It is striking that the early part of the novel contains far more information on the “Lydgates” that exist in the minds of other characters than it does on the “Lydgate” that emerges from direct access to his own mind. It is worth examining the beginning of this process in a little detail. The reader begins the initial, tentative, and hypothetical construction of Lydgate’s cognitive narrative by making use of the double cognitive narratives of other characters. We first hear of him indirectly, while Lady Chettam and Mrs Cadwallader are discussing him. “Tell me about this new young surgeon, Mr Lydgate. I
am told he is wonderfully clever: he certainly looks it—a fine brow indeed” (61). Mrs Cadwallader replies that “He is a gentleman . . . He talks well” (61). Lady Chettam agrees that he is “really well connected . . . One does not expect it in a practitioner of that kind” (62). Mrs Cadwallader then notices that Dorothea Brooke “is talking cottages and hospitals with him . . . I believe he is a sort of philanthropist” (62). So, we find out before we actually meet him that he is apparently young, clever, good-looking, a well-connected gentleman, someone who talks well, a sort of philanthropist, and innovative and successful. These few words on the page are now transformed by the reader into an already pre-existing imaginary individual with a past that is part of the Middlemarch storyworld. His cognitive narrative started twenty-five-odd years ago, and the reader is now engaged in reconstructing it.

The conversation between Mrs Cadwallader and Lady Chettam is largely a consideration of Lydgate’s mind. Some features are obviously related to his mental life: being clever, philanthropic, and successfully innovative. Others are slightly more indirect: “talking well” is a description of behavior that implies a series of mental attributes such as cleverness, confidence, awareness of others, and so on. Being a gentleman is yet more indirect, but presumably has implications for the way the mind works. In addition, it is also part of the competence of the reader to construct, this time by indirect means, some aspects of Lydgate’s mental life that are implicit in what we have been told. Let us say, for example: having the above qualities makes it likely that he is not only self-confident and ambitious, but also altruistic, imaginative, and idealistic. The reader is using material on Lydgate’s social and publicly available mind that has been refracted through the conflicting worldviews of Mrs Cadwallader and Lady Chettam. A version of his mind exists within their minds. Their minds are interacting with, conflicting with, and interrogating the constructions that others have formed of his mind. They disapprove of his being both a gentleman and a doctor and also of the fact that he is a doctor with ideas about the advancement of medicine. Although the characters do not openly speculate about the causal network behind Lydgate’s behavior, there is an implicit puzzlement over the motives that a gentleman would have for wanting to become a doctor. Lydgate’s own motivation becomes more explicit during the direct access to his mind later in the passage. Future events appear to show that the views of the two characters on his mind were fairly accurate. To use a familiar but revealing phrase, there are some respects in which he may not “know his own mind.” In the next chapter of the novel Lydgate is scornful about the possibility of losing his balance through thinking himself to be falling in love, and we find out later that this is precisely what he does do.

Scenes recur throughout the novel in which various groups of townspeople discuss Lydgate’s mind. An intermental consensus emerges from a
variety of intramental perspectives and a joint double cognitive narrative is constructed. These scenes result in an interesting dual perspective on the town mind. Seen from one perspective, although these conversations create a consensus, they also contain intramental dissent. People disagree over the precise extent of Lydgate's guilt in the matter of the bribe. But seen from the point of view of Lydgate's mind, the Middlemarch mind is fully shared, uniform, and monolithic. And in a sense he is not necessarily wrong. Once the consensus has emerged it becomes extremely powerful, and the reservations of some individuals around the edges do not count for much.

The town's views are sometimes related simply to the facts of the case and, interestingly, the speculation that Lydgate's windfall is a loan from Bulstrode turns out to be factually correct. More often, though, Middlemarch is concerned with the attribution of motives. “The inferences were closely linked enough: the town knew of the loan, believed it to be a bribe, and believed that he took it as a bribe” (504). The Middlemarch mind is always inclined to attribute unworthy reasons to Lydgate's actions: “After this, it came to be held in various quarters that Lydgate played even with respectable constitutions for his own purposes” (314). The cognitive operations involved in the attribution of motives can become quite complex: “Thus it happened that on this occasion, Bulstrode became identified with Lydgate and Lydgate with Tyke; and owing to this variety of interchangeable names for the chaplaincy question, diverse minds were enabled to form the same judgment concerning it” (126). A fully fledged narrative for Lydgate emerges from the network of attribution: “There was hardly ever so much unanimity among them as in the opinion that Lydgate was an arrogant young fellow and yet ready for the sake of ultimately predominating to show a crawling subservience to Bulstrode” (312). At other times the consensus consists simply of abuse: “they agreed that Lydgate was a jackanapes” (126).

Throughout the novel, a dialogical relationship exists between the intramental Lydgate and the intermental Middlemarch. He is concerned with anticipating, reconstructing, arguing against the common view of the workings of his mind. His mind is in a conflicted dialogue with the minds of the various groups and individuals concerned with the question of the chaplaincy of the hospital. Sometimes this relationship is expressed in general terms: “For the first time Lydgate was feeling the hampering threadlike pressure of small social conditions, and their frustrating complexity” (124). This specific issue brings home to Lydgate the power of the intermental mind: “The affair of the chaplaincy remained a sore point in his memory as a case in which the petty medium of Middlemarch had been too strong for him” (129). Much of the conflict occurs within the context of his medical work: “He was impatient of the foolish expectations amidst which all work must be
carried on” (181). This “feud between him and the other medical men” (188) is regularly explained in terms of mind-reading difficulties. On occasions, Lydgate is unable to develop a double cognitive narrative that is sufficiently sophisticated to make his social relations easier. This can sometimes relate to the group mind: “Lydgate’s remark did not meet the sense of the company” (107); and: “But Lydgate had not been experienced enough to foresee that his new course would be even more offensive to the laity” (306). At other times, it is focused on an individual: “Lydgate had really lost sight of the fact that Mr Chichely was his Majesty’s coroner” (108).

The novel contains a balanced picture of Lydgate’s double cognitive narrative of Middlemarch. In some ways, he performs quite well. There is plenty of evidence to show that, despite his undoubted arrogance, he does at least make some effort to reconstruct other minds and is quite successful in doing so. For example: “But would the end really be his own convenience? Other people would say so, and would allege that he was currying favour with Bulstrode” (124). Later, he hopes that Dorothea’s actions can “clear [him] in a few other minds” (530). He can also be quite sensitive in his constructions of individual double cognitive narratives: “For Lydgate was acute enough to indulge him with a little technical talk” (311); “That there might be an awkward affair with Wrench, Lydgate saw at once” (180); and, “Lydgate was conscious of having shown himself something better than an everyday doctor, though here too it was an equivocal advantage” (311). He is being quite flexible here and not overtly confrontational. When things become more serious during the Bulstrode loan crisis, he becomes extremely sensitive. He notices “a peculiar interchange of glances when he and Bulstrode took their seats” (502); and, while he helps Bulstrode out of the room after he is accused, “It seemed as if he were putting his sign-manual to that association of himself with Bulstrode, of which he now saw the full meaning as it must have presented itself to other minds” (504).

On the other hand, he feels “some zest for the growing though half-suppressed feud” (188). When he makes a successful diagnosis and another doctor does not, “Lydgate did not make the affair a ground for valuing himself or (very particularly) despising Minchin” (311). The parenthetical phrase reveals that he does despise Minchin to some degree. “We see that he was bearing enmity and silly misconception with much spirit, aware that they were partly created by his good share of success” (314). “Enmity and silly misconception,” on a free indirect discourse reading, are his terms, and he is obviously rather self-satisfied with his ability to bear them with “much spirit” in light of his success. The undertones in these quotes reveal that he underestimates the Middlemarch mind. His tendency to arrogance will have an important role in the narrative progression as a contributory factor in his eventual downfall.
Before going on to discuss Lydgate's relationship with Rosamond it may be useful, as a contrast, to describe briefly Lydgate's friendship with Farebrother, an inhabitant of the town who is not part of the Middlemarch mind. Lydgate has a fairly full and accurate double cognitive narrative of Farebrother. As their friendship develops, difficulties arise when Farebrother tries to help Lydgate. Initially, “Lydgate took Mr Farebrother's hints very cordially, though he would hardly have borne them from another man” (315). (This sentence, by the way, is a good example of the inseparability of consciousness and characterization that I referred to earlier: it consists of mental events [cordial taking of hints], states of mind [feelings for Farebrother], and character [general unwillingness to take hints].) Later, Farebrother offers more specific help. First, this is how it appears to Lydgate: “He knew as distinctly as possible that this was an offer of help to himself from Mr Farebrother, and he could not bear it” (446). Next, this is how it appears to Farebrother: “Could this too be a proud rejection of sympathy and help? Never mind; the sympathy and help should be offered” (492). What is significant here is that the empathy or mind reading between the two men is accurate. Lydgate knows that Farebrother knows that Lydgate knows et cetera that the offer of help is embarrassing but must be made. The mutual attribution of motives and states of mind is far more successful in this case than, as shown now, between Lydgate and his wife.

**Lydgate’s Relationship with Rosamond**

Both Lydgate and Rosamond have deeply developed double cognitive narratives of each other that are very different indeed from their actual narratives, and so, as a result, there is no evidence at all of any genuinely intermental thinking. In contrast, in Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies*, the precise opposite is the case. Within a social group called the “Bright Young Things” who are active in London in the 1920s, there is a good deal of intermental thought, but no double cognitive narratives. They act together, but have no interest in each other’s inner lives. Lydgate and Rosamond are interested: it is just that they are completely wrong about each other.

The narrator remarks that Lydgate and Rosamond “lived in a world of which the other knew nothing, it had not occurred to Lydgate that he had been a subject of eager meditation to Rosamond . . . In Rosamond’s romance, it was not necessary to imagine much about the inward life of the hero, or of his serious business in the world” (114). Reading the engagement scene (208) carefully, it is apparent that it comes about through a series of misunderstandings about what the other is thinking. Rosamond was “keenly hurt by Lydgate’s manner,” which was simply the result of embarrassment. The
long-term result is predictable: “Between him and her indeed there was that total missing of each other’s mental track, which is too evidently possible even between persons who are continually thinking of each other” (405). As his money troubles grow, Lydgate decides to try to make their relationship intermental, to bring about a meeting of minds, and he fails. “Perhaps Lydgate and she had never felt so far off each other before” (409). He refers to the possibility of making the marriage an intermental unit, when he suggests that “there are things which husband and wife must think of together” (410). But this never happens. During the crisis, “He did not speak to her on the subject, and of course she could not speak to him” (522). The narrator concludes, “The beginning of mutual understanding and resolve seemed as far off as ever; nay it seemed blocked out by the sense of unsuccessful effort” (524).

It does not help the accuracy of Lydgate’s double cognitive narrative of Rosamond that she is so adept at dramaturgical action. Even at an early stage in their relationship she calculates well what kind of behavior will attract him. “In two minutes he was in the room, and Rosamond went out, after waiting just long enough to show a pretty anxiety conflicting with her sense of what was becoming” (180). Later, she is still careful to control Lydgate’s image of her: “Rosamond, however, was on her side much occupied with conjectures, though her quick, imitative perception warned her against betraying them too crudely” (244). During the crisis, her private impression management becomes rather more perfunctory: “She received his kiss and returned it faintly, and in this way an appearance of accord was recovered for the time” (413). However, her public impression management is studied and elaborate. During a party, “Rosamond was perfectly graceful and calm, and only a subtle observation . . . would have perceived the total absence of that interest in her husband’s presence which a loving wife is sure to betray, even if etiquette keeps her aloof from him . . . In reality, however, she was intensely aware of Lydgate’s voice and movements; and her pretty good-tempered air of unconsciousness was a studied negation by which she satisfied her inward opposition to him without compromise of propriety” (443).

Rosamond constructs a double cognitive narrative of Lydgate that owes far more to the emotional needs of her mind than to the actual workings of his. They meet and she is attracted: “Yet this result, which she took to be a mutual impression, called falling in love, was just what Rosamond had contemplated beforehand” (80). “Rosamond, in fact, was entirely occupied not exactly with Tertius Lydgate as he was in himself, but with his relation to her” (115). Later, looking back, and making explicit the existence of different Lydges, the narrator comments that “the Lydgate with whom she had been in love had been a group of airy conditions for her” (457). When the problems arise, her reaction is predictable: “The thought in her mind was that if
she had known how Lydgate would behave, she would never have married him” (412). “In her secret soul she was utterly aloof from him” (448). “Open-minded as she was [about the bribe allegation], she nevertheless shrank from the words which would have expressed their mutual consciousness, as she would have shrunk from flakes of fire” (518). “Even this trouble, like the rest, she seemed to regard as if it were hers alone. He was always to her a being apart, doing what she objected to” (523). Her solipsism even extends to the class implications of having Lydgate as a husband: “She was so intensely conscious of having a cousin who was a baronet’s son staying in the house, that she imagined the knowledge of what was implied by his presence to be diffused through all other minds” (401). To summarize, the narrator comments that “she had been little used to imagining other people’s states of mind except as a material cut into shape by her own wishes” (536). “It seemed that she had no more identified herself with him than if they had been creatures of different species and opposing interests” (412).

The narrator is kinder to Lydgate and acknowledges that he makes an effort to understand Rosamond’s mind. But there are difficulties: “Perhaps it was not possible for Lydgate, under the double stress of outward material difficulty and of his own proud resistance to humiliating consequences, to imagine fully what this sudden trial was to a young creature who had known nothing but indulgence” (411). Nevertheless, “he had made many efforts to draw her into sympathy with him about possible measures for narrowing their expenses” (448). He suggests that “We two can do with only one servant” (448). Lydgate then acknowledges the distance between their narratives: “To many women the look Lydgate cast at her would have been more terrible than one of anger: it had in it a despairing acceptance of the distance she was placing between them” (412). Regarding the relationship between Dorothea and Ladislaw, “It was significant of the separateness between Lydgate’s mind and Rosamond’s that he had no impulse to speak to her on the subject; indeed, he did not quite trust her reticence toward Will. And he was right there; though he had no vision of the way in which her mind would act in urging her to speak” (414). The attribution is interesting here. He correctly assumes that she will speak to Ladislaw, but does not know about the thought processes that will lead her to do so.

In the end, he renounces thoughts of an “ideal wife” and begins to plan the adjustments necessary for living with his real one. He has to ensure that his double cognitive narrative will correspond more closely in the future to her actual narrative. As if to compensate, he fantasizes about a virtual intermental unit: “he was beginning now to imagine how two creatures who loved each other, and had a stock of thoughts in common, might laugh over their shabby furniture, and their calculations how far they could afford butter and
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eggs” (484). It is a poignant and rather moving fact about the novel that the only references that I can find to Lydgate's and Rosamond's joint actions are these hypothetical or imaginary situations regarding making do with one servant, laughing over their furniture, and calculating what they could afford. This married couple shares no actual joint actions within the reality of their storyworld.

CONCLUSION

I would like to end with a reminder that I am not saying that the minds that compose a particular intermental unit necessarily fuse completely and become totally available to each other. Toward the end of the novel, Dorothea realizes that she and Rosamond “could never be together again with the same thrilling consciousness of yesterday within them both. She felt the relation between them to be peculiar enough to give her a peculiar influence, though she had no conception that the way in which her own feelings were involved was fully known to Mrs Lydgate” (549). There was an intermental moment between them, but it was not a complete fusion. They now have different understandings of the event. The three statesmen mentioned in the example from Vile Bodies that was used in the previous chapter are hiding together, but they may be doing so for different reasons, and may even have misunderstood the reasons of the others for wanting to hide. Intermental units are fuzzy.