

Kurnick

- Luke's critical summary

"Kurnick's first major claim is to establish Dorothea as a potentially failed heroine: he argues that her eventual mating with Will Ladislaw betrays her intellectual ability and relegates her to a stereotypical Victorian female role. Her fulfillment of sexual desire identifies her 'willingness to forsake her intellectual ambitions' and prevents her from carrying historical merit (584)." + Who is really arguing this?

- Dorothea as "an erotically impelled researcher"

"Kurnick describes Dorothea as attempting to ascend from a position of a novelistic character into that of a novelistic reader"

Kurnick's final point addresses the readers of Eliot's novels themselves, zooming the scope of his argument out. He describes novel readers as "serial monogamists" who are committed to a story arc until the end, and draws a parallel to Dorothea's eroticism and "hunger for resolution." (597-8) In a circular move, Kurnick describes Dorothea as attempting to ascend from a position of a novelistic character into that of a novelistic reader; Eliot implies this "meta" attribution to point out the arbitrary nature of reading the end of a novel as most important. Rather, much like Dorothea "longs to return to the middle" of the story, he asserts that a reading of a novel should not necessarily treat the ending as the most important (599).

- Nithya's paper

"Lydgate tries, to the best of his ability, to use the knowledge he has internalized to further his understanding of the world around him, an endeavour that becomes especially evident through his employment of medical metaphors to describe people,"

"In their interpretation of books and other repositories of knowledge, however, Casaubon and Lydgate remain curiously limited, unable to fully escape their intellectual framework to imagine complexly, forced to think about the world around them through the metaphor of their vocation."

- Eliot's medical research from the Quarry

"Science" / Time + History / "Natural History"

- Is Eliot a scientific novelist? How does this manifest? Can we distinguish between science and natural history? How do Middlemarch's aims differ from Mill on the Floss? Where do we see classifications arise?

- “Objectivity” and seeing past oneself - narrator’s and reader’s bird’s-eye views
- Subtitle: “A Study of Provincial Life” > “and must not we, being impartial, feel with him a little?” (375) > One morning, some weeks after her arrival at Lowick, Dorothea—but why always Dorothea? Was her point of view the only possible one with regard to this marriage? I protest against all our interest, all our effort at understanding being given to the young skins that look blooming in spite of trouble; for these too will get faded, and will know the older and more eating griefs which we are helping to neglect. (278)
- Types / classification
- Corey’s Paper
- Kurnick on Dorothea’s turning “her small allowance of knowledge into principles” - reminiscent of Eliot’s deductive practices?
- Rosamond’s “playing parts”

“‘If I loved, I should love at once and without change,’ said Rosamond, with a great sense of being a romantic heroine, and playing the part prettily.” (297)
- History and scale
- Prelude

“I at least have so much to do in unraveling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe.” (141) “whatever has been or is to be narrated by me about low people, may be ennobled by being considered a parable; so that if any bad habits and ugly consequences are brought into view, the reader may have the relief of regarding them as not more than figuratively ungenteel, and may feel himself virtually in company with persons of some style. Thus while I tell the truth about loobies, my reader’s imagination need not be entirely excluded from an occupation with lords; and the petty sums which any bankrupt of high standing would be sorry to retire upon, may be lifted to the level of high commercial transactions by the inexpensive addition of proportional ciphers.” (341)
- 393-394
- [Natural History of German Life?] (https://github.com/vic-sem-2016/outlines/blob/master/week_12_outline.md#social-classes-and-class-mobility) Difference from Mill on the Floss? Why did Eliot wait until now to use such an instance?

- Microscopic / telescopic vision

“Even with a microscope directed on a water-drop we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse; for whereas under a weak lens you may seem to see a creature exhibiting an active voracity into which other smaller creatures actively play as if they were so many animated tax-pennies, a stronger lens reveals to you certain tiniest hairlets which make vortices for these victims while the swallower waits passively at his receipt of custom. In this way, metaphorically speaking, a strong lens applied to Mrs. Cadwallader’s match-making will show a play of minute causes producing what may be called thought and speech vortices to bring her the sort of food she needed.” (59-60)

- Rome episode:

“Ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence; the dimmer but yet eager Titanic life gazing and struggling on walls and ceilings; the long vistas of white forms whose marble eyes seemed to hold the monotonous light of an alien world: all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion.” (193)

C: “Rome is an unsettling graveyard of broken forms and ruined structures, an uneven grid of knowledge and the bleached proof of exhausted organization that provides the perfect setting (significantly removed from Middlemarch) for her disillusion.”

- Kurnick 591-592

Realism

- Psychological realism
- We previously studied “The Natural History of German Life” in the context of *The Mill and the Floss*. Is it also applicable to *Middlemarch*? How so? Differently than *The Mill on the Floss*?
- “The Natural History of German Life” Statement of purpose by Eliot - most novels do not depict the lower classes as psychologically complex. This includes novels whose stated goals are social reform. However, that won’t work unless you depict the working classes as psychologically whole. Novels that try to impose an idealized version of the “peasantry” rather than acknowledging the reality of what they are will accomplish little.

“It had now entered Dorothea’s mind that Mr. Casaubon might wish to make her his wife, and the idea that he would do so touched her with a sort of reverential gratitude. How good of him—nay, it would be almost as if a winged messenger had suddenly stood beside her path and held out his hand towards her! For a long while she had been oppressed by the indefiniteness which hung in her mind, like a thick summer haze, over all her desire to make her life greatly effective. What could she do, what ought she to do?—she, hardly more than a budding woman, but yet with an active conscience and a great mental need, not to be satisfied by a girlish instruction comparable to the nibblings and judgments of a discursive mouse.” What parts of this passage are psychonarration? What parts are free indirect discourse? What is the effect of these alternating modes of narration?

“An eminent philosopher among my friends, who can dignify even your ugly furniture by lifting it into the serene light of science, has shown me this pregnant little fact. Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent—of Miss Vincy, for example.”

- Realistic depiction of a community?
- “Middlemarch” / Middlemarch
- subtitle: “A Study of Provincial Life”
- Why study “provincial” life? What’s the significance of the particular town Middlemarch? Middlemarch’s peripheral relationship to London
- Middlemarch opinions

Corey: “Hence the title is the same as the town, Middlemarch, the coinciding place where ‘events have their point of origin and their primary locus of application, not in the living species themselves, but in the space in which those spaces reside (Foucault, 148)”
- Eliot’s Notes Manuscript quarry, Edited quarry
- Field physiognomy

Surveillance

- What is being surveilled, how is it done, and by whom?
- Dorothea + Casaubon

“And this cruel outward accuser was there in the shape of a wife - nay, of a young bride, who, instead of observing his abundant pen scratches and amplitude of paper with the uncritical awe of an elegant-minded canary-bird, seemed to present herself as a spy watching everything with a malign power of inference.” (200)

“And just as clearly in the miserable light she saw her own and her husband’s solitude - how they walked apart so that she was obliged to survey him. If he had drawn her towards him, she would never have surveyed him” (426)
- Featherstone funeral

“In fact there was a general sense running in the Featherstone blood that everybody must watch everybody else, and that it would be well for everybody else to reflect that the Almighty was watching him.” (304)

Literacy, Language, Representation + relationship to knowledge

- Kusnick on Dorothea’s knowledge
- Mary’s reading practices

“Let me see,” said Mary, the corners of her mouth curling archly; “I must go back on my experience. There is Juliet—she seems an example of what you say. But then Ophelia had probably known Hamlet a long while; and Brenda Troil—she had known Mordaunt Merton ever since they were children; but then he seems to have been an estimable young man; and Minna was still more deeply in love with Cleveland, who was a stranger. Waverley was new to Flora MacIvor; but then she did not fall in love with him. And there are Olivia and Sophia Primrose, and Corinne—they may be said to have fallen in love with new men. Altogether, my experience is rather mixed.” (138)
- Plymdale’s *Keepsake for 1829* - not the one Ned Plymdale brings to Rosamond (which would have been the 1830 keepsake, published in late 1829)?

“He had brought the last”Keepsake," the gorgeous watered-silk publication which marked modern progress at that time. ... Ned was satisfied that he had the very best thing in art and literature as a

medium for “paying addresses”—the very thing to please a nice girl.” (269)

- RJ’s close reading

“This closer look at the personhood/personification of non-humans in Middlemarch should encourage a discussion about Eliot’s use of figurative language, especially when contemplating her reputation as one of the first “Literary” novelists as well as considering how her narrators can delegate the responsibility of figurative language to characters.”

“Dorothea expresses through her sympathy for the dog her own desire for personal fulfillment and frustration with the status quo.”

- Relationship to Kurnick’s argument?
- On Lydgate

“Or 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 neighbors’ false suppositions.” (142)

“How can one describe a man? I can give you an inventory: heavy eyebrows, dark eyes, a straight nose, thick dark hair, large solid white hands—and—let me see—oh, an exquisite cambric pocket-handkerchief. But you will see him. You know this is about the time of his visits.” (114)

“Dockiments” and Knowledge Organization

- What roles do documents play? Their materiality?
- Eliot’s notes
- “Quarry”
- Fred’s attempt to prove his innocence to Featherstone
 - “‘Nonsense! You must bring dockiments. It comes from authority.’” (110)
- Ultimate failure of the letter to act as evidence
- Featherstone’s will
- Casaubon’s notes?
- Failure of the pigeonhole system :(
 - > “Yes,” said Mr. Brooke, with an easy smile, “but I have documents. I began a long while ago to collect documents. They want arranging, but

when a question has struck me, I have written to somebody and got an answer. I have documents at my back. But now, how do you arrange your documents?" "In pigeon-holes partly," said Mr. Casaubon, with rather a startled air of effort. "Ah, pigeon-holes will not do. I have tried pigeon-holes, but everything gets mixed in pigeon-holes: I never know whether a paper is in A or Z." "I wish you would let me sort your papers for you, uncle," said Dorothea. "I would letter them all, and then make a list of subjects under each letter." [...] [a] remark lay in his mind as lightly as the broken wing of an insect among all the other fragments there, and a chance current had sent it alighting on her. (19-20)

- Keeping Blair and the Week 10 outline in mind

Reviews / quotations / intertextuality

- Yumi's Summary of Price

"Style was emphasized over other elements of the work and seen as a more inherent quality of a text, as it was assumed that plot and information could be summarized, while style could only be reproduced in excerpt form."

"Is the idea that too many instructive passages get in the way of narrative, and the novel is meant to provide a smooth and satisfying narrative? That they disrupt the novel's illusion of reality in some way? That they disrupt its aesthetic unity? Or is the issue something else?"

"While reviewers wished to claim that they were producing original content and writing in their own voices, they also worried that their work was merely "mechanical" (145), like copying passages into a commonplace book. The reliance of reviewing on excerpts also raised the question of how accurately works could be represented by individual passages excerpted from them: "on what grounds could a short text claim to stand for a long one?" (144). This, Price writes, is a problem in more contemporary literary criticism as well—bringing to mind Ramsay's argument about criticism as algorithmic, and Blair's history of note-taking practices related to excerpting."

- Thinking about Ramsay
- Proverbial voice
- Quotability, or does it contribute to the scientific effect of arguing from principles?
- Eliot's notes towards her mottoes
- Eliot's own intertextual practices

- Excerpts, cont.

“The conventions of the review shaped Victorian assumptions not only about how to read, but about the structure of literary texts. By alternating excerpts with plot summaries, they encouraged readers and writers alike to think of texts as accumulations of freestanding beauties strung together by longer stretches of narrative padding.” Does this describe *Middlemarch*?
- Epigraphs

“A phrase, quotation, or poem that is set at the beginning of a document or component.” - Wikipedia
- This is the first novel we’ve encountered that uses these consistently. Why might it do this? What’s the effect? What does this say about the intended reader for the novel?
- Gentleman 1 & Gentleman 2
- Gaby’s close reading - the Don Quixote quotation at the beginning of Chapter 2 sets the reader’s expectations for what’s about to happen.
- Reade’s notetaking

Gender/class

- The prologue
- Why does the novel open with a narrative about St. Theresa, a Catholic Saint?

“Here and there a cygnet is reared uneasily among the ducklings in the brown pond, and never finds the living stream in fellowship with its own oary-footed kind. Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centring in some long-recognizable deed.” (4) The novel starts off with a description of an unfulfilled feminine condition. What does this set up, and how does it transition into the main narrative?
- What is the effect of the Prologue? What is the function of prologues generally? Of Eliot’s Prologue specifically?
- How does Eliot characterize women? What is she saying about their condition via characters like Dorothea, Rosamund, Mary Garth, etc.
- Gaby’s critical reading - how do husbands and wives relate to one another?

