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DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

William Eugene Unger, Jr., B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1974

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This is a study of the techniques employed by four major Victorian novelists as they attempted to create readers who would fully share the values advocated by the novels themselves. I will be concentrating not on the historical authors and their historical readers but on implied authors and implied readers and on the narrators who are such a prominent feature of Victorian novels. To some extent I will focus in this first chapter on the narrator to the exclusion of implied author and implied reader, because the narrator and the historical author have traditionally received more attention. Emphasis on the implied author and the implied reader is a relatively recent phenomenon. The reader, however, should conceive of the implied author, the implied reader, and the narrator as three sides of a triangle, none more important than the others.

This study received its basic impetus from Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), which struck a powerful blow
against a critical theory that had been hardening into dogma for nearly a century: the view that the (presumably omniscient) narrator in a novel can—and even should—be equated with the novel's author, who is seen as gratuitously obtruding his personality into the story; and that the method of telling a story which uses such a narrator is inherently inferior to a dramatic telling from which the author-narrator has, ideally, entirely disappeared. This theory can be traced back to the middle of the Victorian period, but it was codified through the criticism of Henry James and became dogma through James' disciples and popularizers, particularly Percy Lubbock, who in 1926 described the increasing sophistication of fiction thus: "The simple story-teller begins by addressing himself openly to the reader, and then exchanges this method for another and another, and with each modification he reaches the reader from a further remove. The more circuitous procedure on the part of the author produces a straighter effect for the reader; that is why, other things being equal, the more dramatic way is better than the less."  

1 The Craft of Fiction (New York, 1957), pp. 149-50, italics added.
Lubbock's belief that the author should efface himself often led him to extremes in his attacks on the Victorian narrators. He was especially prone to equate the narrators and the historical authors, as when he remarks that "the author becomes a personal entity, about whom we may begin to ask questions. Thackeray cannot be the nameless abstraction that the dramatist (whether in the drama of the stage or that of the novel) is naturally" (The Craft of Fiction, p. 114). Lubbock's advocacy of the views that identified the narrator with the author and that stressed the dramatic nature of the novel helped them to gain wide acceptance, both in practice and in theory\(^2\) so that throughout most of the twentieth century the narrative methods employed by the

\(^2\) So much so that by the middle of this century such a major popularizing critic as Bernard DeVoto could write without hesitation or qualification that "between Fielding's time and ours the art of fiction has developed a sentiment or convention which holds: that an essay is one kind of thing and a novel another kind of thing, that a mixture of kinds is improper (to be understood as ineffective), and especially that the interposition of the novelist in person is discordant. Certainly the sentiment is not universal. . . . But as a psychological rather than an aesthetic principle it is binding on most readers and most novelists. We may say that it is one of the determining principles of modern fiction and one of the refinements, or purifications, that fiction has achieved on the way to its implicit methods" ("The Invisible Novelist," Pacific Spectator, 4 [1950], 31-2).
great novelists of the mid-Victorian period have been in widespread disuse and disrepute. 

Wayne Booth's achievement was to point out to us that "the author's voice is never really silenced, ... is, in

3 Some critics, such as Kathleen Tillotson, writing just two years before Booth, perceived what had happened and understood the implications: "The mode I speak of has ... fallen out of use, as I can quickly show by noting something that is lacking in all modern novels. One character is always missing: the narrator in person. There is no one there who stands outside the story and says 'I', who explains how he knows what he is telling us, who addresses the reader, who discourses, confides, cajoles, and exhorts. We are unbidden guests, there is no welcome, no hospitality—the social context embracing us as readers has gone. I speak in terms of the loss; the average reader is probably not aware of it, for behind this rejection of the teller there lies, I believe, the unconscious assumption of our time that drama is the dominant form, other modes aspiring towards its condition, whereby narrative as such loses its status. When the critic objects that the author's voice 'destroys the illusion', it is surely dramatic rather than narrative illusion that he has in mind ([The Tale and the Teller [London, 1959]], pp. 10-11).

4 Of course, Booth has not convinced everyone. Gerald Warner Brace (himself the author of several novels) writes in The Stuff of Fiction (New York, 1969) that "the chief fault of the omniscient method is that it tells readers too much. The pleasure of fiction, or any dramatic art, is that it allows us to see and hear, and then to draw our own conclusions. ... The outcome may actually be rigged, but meanwhile suspense, uncertainty, many unknown possibilities, keep us in a state of eager curiosity. That, at least, is the basic principle of dramatic fiction" (pp. 89-90).
fact, one of the things we read fiction for" and to examine rigorously and systematically for the first time the difficulties raised by the Lubbockian approach. Interestingly, Booth was anticipated in his discussion by a Victorian critic, Edward Dowden, who, writing of George Eliot, tried to draw a distinction similar to Booth's general thesis: "When we have passed in review the works of that great writer who calls herself George Eliot ... what form ... remains the chief centre of interest for the imagination? The form ... of one who, if not the real George Eliot, is that 'second self' who writes her books, and lives and speaks through them. Such a second self of an author is perhaps more substantial than any mere human personality encumbered with the accidents of flesh and blood and daily living. It stands at some distance from the primary self, and differs considerably from its fellow."6

Dowden, though, was neither rigorous nor systematic, never developing his apercu into a critical concept; and it appears not to have influenced the subsequent course of

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criticism. Similarly, Leslie Stephen's inferential acceptance of the concept of implied reader (a concept I will discuss in more detail later) seems to have produced little effect: "I have insisted more . . . upon the underlying sentiment everywhere implied than upon the characteristics of the literary art by which that sentiment is interpreted. A criticism which should deal with the last alone might be more interesting for many purposes, but would often fail to reveal to us the causes of our sympathy with or alienation from the author. We may read [novels] simply for amusement or to admire their technical skill; but we shall make them part of the permanent domain of our fancy in proportion as we feel ourselves in harmony with their implicit teaching."  

Wayne Booth's work, however, has exerted a notable influence in its as yet short life; and though the distinctions he deals with are difficult, they are crucial.

The major distinction, the one Dowden was groping towards, is that between the historical figure whose name is printed below a novel's title and that "implied author" or "second self" who pervades the novel itself. They cannot be

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equated, for the real author, be he Thackeray, George Eliot, or some unknown, is a full human being with all the strengths, weaknesses, and eccentricities that fact implies; the implied author is quite likely to be derived from a limited aspect of the real author, an aspect that may either be idealized or consciously distorted. Angus Wilson, a modern novelist (and a distinguished critic in his own right), shows his awareness of these issues in some remarks on the subject of "the author and the narrator," by which he means "a division of personality—the narrating part of the author and the rest of him." Wilson implicitly accepts Wayne Booth's argument when he says of his own experience that "the sensation of division between the narrator in me and every other aspect of myself during the time that I am constructing and writing a novel is a very real one; and... a very valuable one. . . . I have found in the course of ten years' writing that three personalities or separate wills exist during the making of a book—the narrator, the craftsman, and the residue. The residue is, of course, overwhelmingly larger, but only a small part of that residue is conscious of being an author or willing to be so." 8

Booth pinpoints a real blind spot in novel theory when he notes that "we have no terms either for this created 'second self' or for our relationship with him... 'Persona,' 'mask,' and 'narrator' are sometimes used, but they more commonly refer to the speaker in the work who is after all only one of the elements created by the implied author and who may be separated from him by large ironies. 'Narrator' is usually taken to mean the 'I' of a work, but the 'I' is seldom if ever identical with the implied image of the artist" (p. 73). I think we can safely say that the implied author is synonymous with the creative intelligence we become aware of in a novel, particularly if that creative intelligence is separated from the narrator by large or small ironies. We must pay attention to Booth's distinction, for, as he says, "the 'implied author' chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices. It is only by distinguishing between the author and his implied image that we can avoid pointless and unverifiable talk about such qualities as

9 "Creative intelligence" is clearly an unsatisfactory term, in that it is not really descriptive and eludes definition; yet I can find no better alternative.
'sincerity' or 'seriousness' in the author" (pp. 74-5), an argument which cuts the ground from under a good deal of nineteenth- and twentieth-century criticism.

It follows, then, that we cannot automatically equate the narrator of a novel with either the real or the implied author, and that the narrator should probably be seen as a consciously created character unless or until proven otherwise. Booth has noted how we too easily and habitually talk as though the narrator were the author, forgetting how hard and deliberately the author may have worked to create that particular narrator and to distance him. And he emphasizes that what he said above about distinguishing between the values of the historical author and those supported by his second self applies equally to talk about the author's engagement with the story or his distance from it: "A great artist can create an implied author who is either detached or involved, depending on the needs of the work in hand" (p. 83). As Booth implies here, and as he explicitly emphasizes elsewhere, the implied author and the reader he creates probably—perhaps must—change from novel to novel. This is a fact that will become increasingly important as I get into the main body of my study and begin to examine specific authors.
Booth's primary influence so far has been on studies of the narrator. Such comments of his as "we react to all narrators as persons. We find their accounts credible or incredible, their opinions wise or foolish, their judgments just or unjust" (p. 273) have opened up a whole new critical goldmine. Boothian articles, books, and—especially—dissertations that examine the narrator(s) of a novel, several novels, or of a novelist's oeuvre are proliferating. Many of these studies deal with the narrator's personality and the reader's hypothetical reaction to it or with the reader's evaluation of the narrator's accounts, opinions, and judgments.

Partly as a result of Booth's influence, there also is increasing interest in what is termed, often loosely, the relationship between author—or narrator—and reader. I say "loosely" because, despite Booth, a good deal of confusion still exists, and finds its way into print, over the equation of authors and narrators. However, we do encounter more frequently such statements as "with most novelists, especially those of the nineteenth century, two of the most profitable things to consider are the relationship between
the author and his reader, and the author and his material;"¹⁰ "Bleak House is intensely interesting from the point of view of the author-reader relationship, because it has two separate narrators;"¹¹ and "Victorian fiction relies on an exceptionally close interaction between reader, characters, and implied author."¹² Unfortunately, I have found no study which either adequately defines such concepts as "author-reader relationship" or brings to fruition through close analysis the premise inherent in their use. Nor have I discovered any critics who follow up on what seems to me one of the most stimulating suggestions that Wayne Booth offers, the idea that implied authors create implied readers in the course of their novels.

One of Booth's major purposes was to criticize the numerous rules about novels and novel-writing that have become codified in this century. Early in The Rhetoric of Fiction he remarks that


rules about realistic works and about objective authors lead naturally to the third kind, prescriptions about readers. It is not, after all, only an image of himself that the author creates. Every stroke implying his second self will help to mold the reader into the kind of person suited to appreciate such a character and the book he is writing. But this act of communication, fundamental to the very existence of literature, has in modern criticism often been ignored, lamented, or denied. True artists, we have been told again and again, take no thought of their readers. They write for themselves. (p. 89)

Further on, Booth amplifies this notion: "It is only as I read that I become the self whose beliefs must coincide with the author's. . . . The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement" (p. 138).  

In his concluding pages Booth returns to the same subject, stating that "the ultimate problem in the rhetoric of

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13 Curiously, Percy Lubbock himself seems to have been groping towards the same concept. He writes that "the reader of a novel—by which I mean the critical reader—is himself a novelist; he is the maker of a book which may or may not please his taste when it is finished, but of a book for which he must take his own share of the responsibility. . . . The reader must therefore become, for his part, a novelist, never permitting himself to suppose that the creation of the book is solely the affair of the author" (The Craft of Fiction, p. 17).
fiction is, then, that of deciding for whom the author should write." Having already disposed of the answer that he writes only for himself, Booth also argues that it is incorrect to say he writes for his peers, since "no one is ever the peer of any author in the sense of needing no help in viewing the author's world. If the novelist waits passively on his pedestal for the occasional peer whose perceptions are already in harmony with his own, then it is hard to see why he should not leave everything to such readers. Why bother to write at all? If the reader were really the artist's peer in this sense, he would not need the book" (p. 396). As Booth states in the last paragraph of his book, "the author makes his readers. If he makes them badly—that is, if he simply waits, in all purity, for the occasional reader whose perceptions and norms happen to match his own, then his conception must be lofty indeed if we are to forgive him for his bad craftsmanship. But if he makes them well—that is, makes them see what they have never seen before, moves them into a new order of perception and experience altogether—he finds his reward in the peers he has created" (pp. 397-8). The insight may be commonplace—it underlies centuries of criticism—but it gains new force when contrasted with the extreme Lubbockian view that
the Victorian method was, on the face of it, bad art.

Booth's argument contains exciting possibilities, especially for the study of novels in which the implied author (the historical figure's "second self") creates his readers through the use of an explicit narrator. But none of the several recent narrator studies that I know of has used this particular perspective. Nor have critics attempted what seems to me an equally fruitful approach: a comparative study of the second selves and narrators of those major mid-Victorians, Thackeray, Trollope, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot. That the "intrusive author" (not further described) was a standard Victorian convention has stood too long as an unexamined critical truism, particularly now that Booth has given us a new perspective and a new methodology with which to view the convention. Combining the concepts of narrator, implied author, and the implied reader involved in the process of the novel opens up new ways of looking at novels; it also exposes considerable difficulties that critics have for too long either avoided or been unaware of.

14 I omit Dickens for one reason only: important as he is, and interesting as it would be to study him from this perspective, including him would mean at least doubling what is going to be a long study in any case.
To understand the whys and wherefores of this avoidance and ignorance, we need to look where they began: Victorian criticism itself.

Outside of the inferential and speculative evidence provided by the novels themselves, the major body of historical and documentable evidence bearing on the kinds of relationships and readers created by Victorian fiction lies in the non-fictional writings of the novelists and in the work of the professional critics. As regards the novelists, however, one fact seems indisputably clear: they were not theorists. In fact, the "theory of the novel" was scarcely in existence at the time they wrote. All the novelists this study will examine used the convention of narrative participation and used it in sophisticated though different ways for different ends. But none of them discussed it, in terms either of what they did or of why they did it, despite the fact that they were constantly being attacked (and occasionally defended) for intruding themselves too much into their novels.

When we come to the critics—some identified, many still anonymous—who regularly wrote for the periodicals, though
we can find much that is interesting, in many respects the situation does not change for the better. It is frustrating but true that those readers best equipped to respond sensitively and analytically to the problems I will deal with in this study did not concern themselves with some of the questions we find most challenging today, and that they also held quite different assumptions from ours about various aspects of fiction. 15

In addition to the extremely useful Critical Heritage volumes dealing with Victorian novelists (especially George Eliot, Thackeray, and Trollope), two modern scholars have studied and compiled extracts from large numbers of Victorian reviews and have discussed, in that connection, the question of narrative conventions. Richard Stang writes that "there was no extensive discussion of the position of the novelist in his books until the 1850's when

15 I am aware, of course, from reading novels such as Thackeray's Pendennis, collected letters of the novelists, and other sources, of the often sordid state of Victorian reviewing: the hurried hack work, the political and personal vendettas, and the rivalries between periodicals, all of which often led to less than fair or accurate reviewing. That is another subject, however, and here I will stick with the ideal.
the subject became one of the most important points in the criticism of fiction."^{16} Kenneth Graham remarks that "authorial intrusion, a Victorian convention scorned as primitive by later theorists, was surprisingly controversial in its own time" and that "the convention of the self-revealing author was no favourite of Victorian critics, who show far more awareness of its dangers than its advantages. By the end of the century, its outmodedness was taken as self-evident in many quarters, and it received little fresh discussion."^{17}

As Stang and Graham indicate, and as their compilations prove, from the middle of the century to the end there were consistent, sometimes savage, attacks on the commenting or intrusive convention as practiced by novelists both known


^{17}English Criticism of the Novel 1865-1900 (Oxford, 1965), pp. 122, 127. Graham also highlights the crudity of Victorian theory by pointing out that "for the most part, Victorian critics visualize only three categories of narrative-method: that of the omniscient author, who writes predominantly in the third person, perhaps with some first-person commentary of his own; the directly autobiographical method; and the epistolary method. This triad is traditional . . . but it is rare to find a full and explicit description of it" (p. 121).
and unknown. We would be mistaken, however, to dignify most of these attacks by implying, as I think Stang and Graham do, that they involved rational debate or intelligent theorizing. On the contrary, they were largely made up of the sort of unexamined premises that contributed to what we have come to identify as Victorian dogmatism. In an 1854 review of the no doubt deservedly-forgotten Heartsease, or, the Brother's Wife we read that "though the author may perhaps sometimes make her favourites sermonize a little too much, she avoids the error of giving running commentaries upon them." A year later we find that "there can be no doubt that the interest is the more intense, where the tale does not in any way introduce the writer's thoughts or comments upon it." Thirty years later, in 1885, we discover that "it was not in Reade's nature to remember at his desk that the story-teller should never obtrude himself.

18 Cf. Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, Chapt. 6, "Dogmatism."
19 Fraser's Magazine, 50 (1854), 491.
20 "Novels by the Authoress of 'John Halifax,'" North British Review, 29 (1855), 469.
Charles Reade was far from being a perfect novelist." And in 1896 Arnold Bennett writes in his journal of a certain Miss Symonds that she "lamented the decadence of the novel since Thackeray and George Eliot, and I retorted that in future years the present would be regarded as a golden age of fiction. She regretted the lapse of that custom which made it lawful for authors to intersperse their narratives by personal reflections, opinions, moralizings. In the case of a great author, she said, these constituted for her frequently the chief charm of a novel. Which shows that sensible people are capable of holding the most bizarre views." 

Throughout the century, however, side by side with these disapproving views, appear approving ones. A critic writing of Trollope notes that "the dramatist who describes his characters, instead of making them reveal themselves, fails in the principal object of his art. But the novelist is tied down by no such rigorous rules. It is his privilege to describe, if he is so minded, what a play-writer would be bound to represent. And as long as he can do so

21"Novels of the Week," Athenaeum (Jan.–June, 1885), p. 438.

without becoming tedious, we know no other reason why he should not be permitted to explain, in his own language, whatever he may find it troublesome to make his characters themselves express." Leslie Stephen, a major defender of authorial intrusion, writes of Fielding, whom he has already explicitly linked to Thackeray, that "Fielding will not efface himself; he is always present as chorus; he tells us what moral we ought to draw; he overflows with shrewd remarks, given in their most downright shape, instead of obliquely suggested through the medium of anecdote; he likes to stop us as we pass through his portrait-gallery; to take us by the button-hole and expound his views of life and his criticisms on things in general. His remarks are often so admirable that we prefer the interpolations to the main current of narrative." Even more explicitly, forcefully, and intelligently, Stephen writes in an essay on George Eliot that we are indeed told dogmatically that a novelist should never indulge in little asides to the reader. Why not? One main advantage of a novel,

23 "Mr. Trollope's Novels," North British Review, 40 (1864), 374.

as it seems to me, is precisely that it leaves room for a freedom in such matters which is incompatible with the requirements, for example, of dramatic writing. . . . I like to read about Tom Jones or Colonel Newcome; but I am also very glad when Fielding or Thackeray puts his puppets aside for the moment and talks to me in his own person. A child, it is true, dislikes to have the illusion broken, and is angry if you try to persuade him that Giant Despair was not a real personage like his favourite Blunder-bore. But the attempt to produce such illusions is really unworthy of work intended for full-grown readers. 25

By the close of the century the attackers of the convention had clearly gained the upper hand, and defenders were responding with angry shrillness or heavy sarcasm. William Watson, writing on the decline of George Eliot's fame, asks, "will these wonderful critical gentlemen . . . kindly explain by what authoritative canon of taste it has ever been decided that a novelist may not legitimately pause here and there to give us his private comments--may not step aside, when he chooses, and play the part of chorus to his own drama--at least if his comments are masterly and

his chorus a noble strain?” Mr. Gissing has hitherto been the ablest, as Mr. George Moore is perhaps the most prominent, exponent of what we may perhaps term the "colourless" theory of fiction. Let your characters tell their own story, make no comment, write a novel as you would write a play. So we are robbed of the personality of the author, in order that we may get an enhanced impression of reality. . . . So widely is this view accepted that the mere fact of a digression condemns a novel to many a respectable young critic. It is an antiquated device, say these stripling moderns, worthy only of the rude untutored minds of Sterne or Thackeray.

Some may feel that these comments have little value beyond illustrating that dogmatism can affect both the just and the unjust, but they are interesting and even illuminating of the murky and often contentious history of novel theory. To further cloud the issue, however, we may note that Victorian critics who supposedly adhered to the same

26 "Fiction—Plethoric and Anaemic," National Review, 14 (1889-90), 168. This critic is Sir John William Watson (1858–1935), a writer of lyrical and political poetry; he is said to have been twice considered for the laureateship, after the deaths of Tennyson and Alfred Austin.

critical precepts could arrive at opposing views of an individual artist. Witness two reviews from the same year near the end of the nineteenth century: D. F. Hannigan informs us that "sound criticism will uphold the idea that the artist should not obtrude his personality on the reader. If he portrays himself he should do so without egoism, dramatically—in fact, as if he were dealing with a separate individual. . . . The greatest artists have acted on the same principle. The English dramatist whose name is the most famous in our literature, and the queen of English fiction, George Eliot, are purely impersonal artists. To them irresponsible gush all about the 'ego' was impossible."28 But simultaneously Ernest Newman (not the noted music critic) bluntly states that "an inartistic novelist like George Eliot, who is continually obtruding herself among her characters, may annoy us by the obvious clumsiness of her method, but she at least saves every man the trouble of being his own artist."29

28 "Gustave Flaubert," Westminster Review, 144 (1895), 390. According to the Wellesley Index II, Hannigan was an "Irish miscellaneous writer."

The problems that Victorian criticism encountered with the period's major novelistic convention and its failure to come to grips with them in any systematic or analytic way can, I think, be traced to three basic assumptions held, but unexamined, by most of the period's critics. The first, which I have already mentioned and will discuss more fully later, is that a novel's author is literally identical with its narrator. The second, held both by critics who favored and by those who opposed narrative commentary, is that the novel has an inherent dramatic quality, or is in fact a kind of drama, or can be analogically related to the drama. That the Victorian critics held such an assumption is not surprising, since they found it supported in the novelists themselves. A third of the way through Thackeray's *The Newcomes*, for example, we find the remark that "our tale, such as it has hitherto been arranged, has passed in leisurely scenes wherein the present tense is perforce adopted; the writer acting as chorus to the drama, and occasionally explaining, by hints or more open statements, what has occurred during the intervals of the acts; and how it happens that the performers are in such or such a posture."  

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30 London, 1926, Ch. 25, p. 270.
The result of this analogy is an abundance of remarks by critics on the supposed author-narrator as chorus to his own hypothetical drama, remarks leading nowhere and illuminating little. This underlying assumption also, I think, reinforces the dogmatism with which many critics deliver their strictures, since its corollary would seem to be that rules can easily be laid down for the novel, as they were by Aristotle for the drama. Of course, the assumption was adopted unquestioningly by Percy Lubbock and thus has influenced a good deal of twentieth-century novel criticism.

The third assumption that appears repeatedly in Victorian criticism is that the novel has something to do with "illusion," a favorite critical word. Unfortunately, the concept of "illusion" lends itself so readily to a variety of meanings that the failure to concretize it leads most critics to sound as though they do not really know what they are talking about. Usually, however, they are referring not to a particular illusion created by a particular author-narrator-novel but to something more elevated, a Platonic illusion that should be generated by all novels. Thus Mrs. Oliphant can lecture Thackeray that "it is not good taste of Mr Pendennis to appear so frequently before
the curtain, and remind us unpleasantly that it is fiction we are attending to, and not reality;" but John Daniel can turn the tables on Mrs. Oliphant and accuse her of the same sin: "Too fond also is [Mrs. Oliphant] of writing of her characters as if she stood apart from them and was criticizing their motives, a defect which is also conspicuous in Mr. Trollope. When the reader is absorbed in a story, the obtrusion of the author's comments destroys something of the illusion." And yet another representative critic theorizes that "the novelist should, no doubt, as it were, enter into his puppets, and work them from the inside, but it should seem to the spectators as if they worked themselves. In fact, illusion, not reality, is . . . the true aim and end of the novelist." When contemplating all such

31 "Mr. Thackeray and His Novels," Blackwood's Magazine, 77 (1855), 94-5.


33 Note the hidden assumption about drama and the novel here. Perceiving the novel as drama and the reader as spectator completely negates, of course, any possibility of the implied-reader concept.

observations, the student of Victorian criticism may well ask in exasperation, "Illusion of what?"

Of these three major critical assumptions, the first is clearly the most significant for my interests, and, as we have seen, the equation of authors and narrators was, in fact, a widely held assumption of Victorian critics. And though today we realize that it is a false assumption, we should not forget that they held it quite logically—indeed, it would be surprising had they not held it. That is, not only did some of the authors themselves seem to make this assumption, but in their novels they often gave the reader every reason for making it too. Thus, for instance, we find Charlotte Brontë writing to W. S. Williams in 1848 about *Ranthorpe*, a now-forgotten novel by G. H. Lewes, that "the author's character is seen in every page, which makes the book interesting—far more interesting than any story could do; but it is what the writer himself says that attracts, far more than what he puts into the mouths of his characters. G. H. Lewes is, to my perception, decidedly the most original character in the book." After

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such talk, it would not have been remarkable if Williams, at least, had in turn found Charlotte Brontë the most interesting character in her books and if he had found her there in the easiest manner possible—by equating her with her narrators. We cannot know if he did, but a reviewer of *Jane Eyre* took exactly that tack:

> We have before intimated our belief, that in *Jane Eyre*, the heroine of the piece, we have, in some measure, a portrait of the writer. If not, it is a most skilful imitation of autobiography. The character embodied in it is precisely the same as that which pervades the whole book, and breaks out most signally in the Preface—a temper naturally harsh, made harsher by ill usage, and visiting both its defect and its wrongs upon the world—an understanding disturbed and perverted by cynicism, but still strong and penetrating—fierce love and fiercer hate—all this viewed from within and coloured by self-love. We only wish we could carry our hypothesis a step further, and suppose that the triumph which the loving and loveable element finally obtains over the unloving and unloveable in the fictitious character had also its parallel in the true. But we fear that few readers will rise from the book with that impression.\(^{36}\)

The autobiographical assumption was then—as it has continued to be—a staple of inadequate Brontë criticism.

More interesting yet is the case of Thackeray. That the creator of the magnificently elusive narrator of *Vanity Fair* could have spoken in the same vein as Charlotte Brontë seems strange, and yet he did so, and more copiously. Writing in 1852 to Mary Holmes concerning *Jane Eyre*, Thackeray says that "I don't know anything about C. B but from her book--and all that I can remember out of books generally is the impression I get of the Author. And if Currer Bell has not her cross in life to bear, I'm very much mistaken." A year later he writes to Lucy Baxter about *Villette* that it amuses me to read the author's naïve confession of being in love with 2 men at the same time; and her readiness to fall in love at any time. The poor little woman of genius! the fiery little eager brave tremulous homely-faced creature! I can read a great deal of her life as I fancy in her book, and see that rather than have fame, rather than any other earthly good or mayhap heavenly one she wants some Tomkins or another to love her and be in love with. But you see she is a little bit of a creature without a penny worth of good looks, thirty years old I should think, buried in the country, and eating up her own heart there, and no Tomkins will come. (Letters . . . . , III, 237)

If Thackeray could think like this about the work of another novelist, it is only to be expected that so many

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critics should have equated him exactly with the narrative voice of all his novels. He positively begged them to do so, and may even have done so himself. To his friends Mrs. Elliot and Kate Perry he writes that "Mr. Pendennis is the author [i.e., narrator] of the book [The Newcomes], and he has taken a great weight off my mind, for under that mask and acting, as it were, I can afford to say and think many things that I couldn't venture on in my own person, now that it is a person, and I know the public are staring at it. I can't talk to folks in Inns, etc. for that reason of my uncontrollable modesty, and wish to the deuce I were not a public character" (Letters . . . ., IV, 436). All these letters were private, of course, but Thackeray could speak the same way publicly. Near the end of his life he wrote a series of essays, the "Roundabout Papers," for the Cornhill, in one of which he noted that "perhaps of all the novel-spinners now extant, the present speaker is the most addicted to preaching." 38

As indicated in the letter quoted above, Thackeray used the device of a named narrator, Arthur Pendennis (the hero

38"De Finibus," Cornhill Magazine, 6 (1862), 286. Of course, it should be noted that Thackeray was creating a persona for this essay.
of his first novel after *Vanity Fair*) for *The Newcomes*. But at the close of that novel he dropped the device, and a new voice addressed the reader, a voice that anyone, at least anyone lacking the concept "implied author," would conclude was the voice of Thackeray himself taking leave of his readers:

Two years ago, walking with my children in some pleasant fields, near to Berne in Switzerland, I strayed from them into a little wood; and, coming out of it presently, told them how the story had been revealed to me somehow, which for three-and-twenty months the reader has been pleased to follow. As I write the last line with a rather sad heart, Pendennis and Laura, and Ethel and Clive, fade away into Fable-land. I hardly know whether they are not true: whether they do not live near us somewhere. They were alive, and I heard their voices, but five minutes since was touched by their grief. And have we parted with them here on a sudden, and without so much as a shake of the hand? Is yonder line (-----) which I drew with my own pen, a barrier between me and Hades as it were, across which I can see those figures retreating and only dimly glimmering? (Ch. 80, p. 842)

Because my proposed study involves three sides of a triangle--implied author, narrator, and implied reader--it at first seemed logical to explore the contemporary scene within which historical authors and readers wrote, read,
and lived. My original plan, since modified, was to assemble a work for which I had found no prototype: a social-historical-autobiographical study of contemporary reader attitudes and reactions towards the novelists and their works, combined with an examination of the technique of narrators and implied authors in a number of Victorian novelists and novels. I hoped that evidence from the actual contemporary readers of the novels might help determine the kinds of material from which the implied authors attempted to create their peers as well as the kinds of peers they were trying to create. Unfortunately, however, the information that would make possible the first half of such a study just does not exist in sufficient quantities, as Amy Cruse, the major worker in this field, discovered:

It is unfortunate . . . that so few Victorian readers have put their reactions to the books they read on record. . . . The diary habit is not a common one, and even industrious diarists often make little mention of books. . . . Biographies . . . are equally disappointing. Even if they give, as they often do, the weighty works which their subject studied as part of his education, they make only casual mention of a few of the books he read for his pleasure and entertainment. Often from a lengthy Life and Letters it is only possible to gather a few meagre scraps of information on this point; sometimes even these are lacking. Autobiographies are a little more fruitful, but in many of these
the writer, after raising our hopes by telling us some really interesting things concerning the reading of his boyhood and youth, drops the subject altogether when he comes to the period of his manhood. 39

Cruse blames this omission partly on the fact that the majority of novel readers "came from the hosts of the Philistines," who "rarely recorded the names of the books they read, or their impressions of them." Thus, "we are forced to rely on the minority—that smaller body of readers made up of the cultivated classes, who did on occasion talk and write about the novels" (p. 260). What this means for the purpose of my own study is that we are forced mainly to rely not on the private readers who are Cruse's concern, but on the periodical critics, a necessity which presents problems of its own.

I can indicate these problems by briefly reviewing some of the information we do possess about the Victorian general reading public, which includes in many respects those professional critics whose responses I have already examined. For instance, David Carroll mentions "the two most pronounced characteristics of the Victorian reader—an insa-
tiable interest in fictional characters and a commitment to
the Christian religion, "40 and in respect to these charac-
teristics, many critics differed little from the most
average members of the general public. The characteristics
manifested themselves both in identification with the
fictional creations as real people and in a desire to see
that justice was done them, as though the novelist were a
God dispensing justice according to the prevailing morality
and system of values. As to the pervasive interest in
characters as real people, a good deal of evidence does
exist, mostly in the form of gushing letters to the various
novelists or of their replies. One such letter to George
Eliot from a certain Ralph Q. Quirk [sic] in San Mateo,
California, begins, "Oh you dear lady, I who have been a
Fred Vincy ever so long, only not so little ugly and not so
little unintelligent, thank you very very much for Middle-
march, most of all for the last chapter. I almost know that
even I who have played vagabond and ninny ever since I knew
the meaning of such terms, may reform to find my Mary too--

40 Editor, George Eliot: The Critical Heritage (New
perhaps." A review of *Pendennis* by Mrs. Oliphant, herself a novelist of some repute, reveals how similar the professional critics were to the general reading public in regard to trying to influence the course of a novel: "Few can paint a wasted life, and great powers wearing down with the continual dropping of every day, better than Mr Thackeray; but we are glad to think that he has still the means of rescue for this character in the exhaustless resources of fiction. Will not Mr Thackeray take into his gracious consideration ways and means for disposing of the graceless unknown Mrs Warrington, and leave Bluebeard free to make his fortune once more? We will answer for the entire satisfaction of the general population of these British Islands with any proceeding of the kind."  

The same Mrs. Oliphant, reacting as outraged reader rather than as novelist, lectured Trollope—half tongue-in-cheek, but half seriously—on his treatment of Lily Dale: "Mr Trollope's readers have been cheated about this young woman. It is a wilful abandonment of all her natural


42"Mr Thackeray and His Novels," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 77 (1855), 89.
responsibilities when such a girl writes Old Maid after her name. She has no business to do it; and what is the good of being an author, we should like to know, if a man cannot provide more satisfactorily for his favourite characters?"

Seemingly even more upset was the critic who wrote, again of Lily Dale, that "the bitterest pill . . . which the reader has to swallow is the provokingly unsatisfactory conclusion. No jury in a court of poetical justice would convict the author of anything less than a violent assault upon his reader's feelings in leaving Lily Dale unmarried. . . . The fact is, Lily Dale is one of the most charming creations that ever author devised; and flesh and blood cannot endure that she should be sentenced to lead the life of a 'widowed maid.'"

Significant also of the ways in which a Victorian audience's response could be manipulated by the novelist is Trollope's own comment on The Small House at Allington and the bewitching Lily Dale,

one of the characters which readers of my novels have liked the best. In the love with which she has been greeted I have hardly joined with much enthusiasm, feeling that she is somewhat of a

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43"Novels," Blackwood's Magazine, 102 (1867), 277.

44Illustrated London News, 44 (1864), 375.
French prig. . . . Prig as she was, she made her way into the hearts of many readers, both young and old; so that, from that time to this, I have been continually honoured with letters, the purport of which has always been to beg me to marry Lily Dale to Johnny Eames. Had I done so, however, Lily would never have so endeared herself to these people as to induce them to write letters to the author concerning her fate. It was because she could not get over her troubles that they loved her. 45

In fact, Trollope seems to have taken these letters, and the emotions which inspired them, quite seriously. In the role of patient and kindly teacher, he replied in 1864 to Miss E. B. Rowe, who had written him on behalf of herself and her sisters:

I have got your letter, but I do not know that I can tell you anything about Lily Dale & her fortunes that will be satisfactory to you. You were angry with me because I did not make my pet happy with a husband, but you would have been more angry if I had made it all smooth, and supposed her capable of loving a second man while the wound of her first love was still so fresh. Indeed the object of the story was to show that a girl under such circumstances should bear the effects of her own imprudence, & not rid herself of her sorrow too easily. I hope none of you will ever come to such misfortune as hers;--but should such a fate be yours do not teach yourself to believe that any other man will do as well. 46


Of course, the girls would not have been at all angry had Trollope smoothed Lily's way, so even in this letter we see him subtly influencing their reading, i.e., creating implied readers.

The Victorian reader's interest in fictional characters was inextricably bound up with the fact of serial publication, though exact cause-and-effect relationships may be more difficult to determine. Several modern critics have, however, noted the interaction. Kathleen Tillotson writes that "serial publication . . . induced a close relationship between author and reader," though her discussion focuses primarily on the reader's relationship to the entire serial part or number, not to the (implied) author. Quentin Anderson observes that "one of the things about George Eliot and her readers which it is hardest for us to recapture is the artless and unashamed emotionalism of the latter over the fate of her characters, and the benign acceptance of this situation on the part of the writer. The century which wrenched Hamlet out of Hamlet had not the least scruple about lobbying for its favourite character while [a] novel was in the course of publication in parts--while it was in

fact still being written." And Gordon Haight writes of *Middlemarch* that "leisurely publication, protracted over a full year, developed a remarkable rapport between George Eliot and her readers. Enthralled by her accurate perception of human nature, many felt that she was writing especially for them. Letters came to her from all over the world." Although other factors also operated to create this emotional tie between readers and characters, serial publication clearly played a leading role, and we should note that contemporary critics were aware of the phenomenon. Robert Stephen Rintoul attacked Thackeray on the very grounds of serial publication: "There are also obvious

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48 "George Eliot in Middlemarch," From Dickens to Hardy (Vol. 6, The Pelican Guide to English Literature, 1958), pp. 274-93, in A Century of George Eliot Criticism, p. 316. The same fact is noted by James Pope-Hennessy in Anthony Trollope (Boston, 1971), p. 19, when he writes about the outrage Trollope elicited for his treatment of Lily Dale. Of the twenty-two novels I will be considering in this study, nine were published in parts or serially in a magazine: Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*, *The Virginians*, and *Philip*; Trollope's *The Last Chronicle of Barset*; and George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Romola*, and *Middlemarch*.

49 George Eliot: A Biography, p. 447. Were it not outside the area I have staked out for myself here, I could also refer to some of the extensive available evidence regarding Dickens' relations with his readers in this respect.
drawbacks . . . such as direct addresses to the reader, and a little of writing for the million, which would have been omitted in another mode of publication."  

The Victorian public's commitment to Christianity, which David Carroll noted, manifested itself in many areas of morality and taste—too many to permit a comprehensive statement here. It did, however, bear heavily on a phenomenon of which any one wishing to gain some understanding of the Victorian reading public needs to be aware: the anti-novel prejudice which remained in force throughout the century. Richard D. Altick writes that "the hostility to novels which had been building up for several decades reached its peak in the early nineteenth century," but, as Altick makes clear, the hostility certainly did not disappear after that point, though it did diminish. Consider the young, and evangelical, Mary Ann Evans writing in 1839 to Maria Lewis:

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50 *Spectator*, 21 (1848), 709-10, in *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, p. 60.

51 *The English Common Reader* (Chicago, 1957), p. 123. Professor Altick has indicated that he would now amend the statement to read "early Victorian era."
I am . . . not an impartial member of a jury in this case for I owe the culprits [novels] a grudge for injuries inflicted on myself. I shall carry to my grave the mental diseases with which they have contaminated me. When I was quite a little child I could not be satisfied with the things around me; I was constantly living in a world of my own creation, and was quite contented to have no companions that I might be left to my own musings and imagine scenes in which I was chief actress. Conceive what a character novels would give to these Utopias. I was early supplied with them. . . . But it may be said, "no one ever dreamed of recommending children to read them; all this does not apply to persons come to years of discretion, whose judgments are in some degree matured." I answer that men and women are but children of a larger growth; they are still imitative beings. We cannot, at least those who ever read to any purpose at all, we cannot I say help being modified by the ideas that pass through our minds. . . . As to the discipline our minds receive from the perusal of fictions I can conceive none that is beneficial but may be attained by that of history.\textsuperscript{52}

George Eliot obviously overcame Mary Ann Evans' antipathy to novels, and yet this early prejudice certainly played a role in making the implied author of the George Eliot novels the most morally serious of all the Victorian implied authors and the one most concerned with the teaching role vis à vis the implied reader.

Years later, shortly before his death in 1882, we find

Trollope referring to this anti-novel prejudice and defending himself against it on quasi-religious grounds:

There are many who would laugh at the idea of a novelist teaching either virtue or nobility,—those, for instance, who regard the reading of novels as a sin, and those also who think it to be simply an idle pasttime. They look upon the tellers of stories as among the tribe of those who pander to the wicked pleasures of a wicked world. I have regarded my art from so different a point of view that I have ever thought of myself as a preacher of sermons, and my pulpit as one which I could make both salutary and agreeable to my audience. (An Autobiography, p. 134)

We must, I think, recognize the powerful influence which Christianity and the anti-novel prejudice exerted on authors to outwardly justify their fiction in terms of its ability to make people better. It will be interesting to observe whether the same purpose functions implicitly in the creation of implied readers.

I have not been able to realize my goal of achieving some sense of how the common or nonprofessional Victorian reader reacted to the great narrative voices of his age and what sort of relationship he established with them. The little evidence available either is of only general historical interest or else it consists of particular reactions to authors and their books that may tell us something about the Victorians' taste but shed little light on
the concerns of this study. The first and not very trustworthy class of evidence is supplied by such remarks as: "those who remember that winter of nine-and-twenty years ago [1848] know how something like a 'Jane Eyre' fever raged among us. The story which had suddenly discovered a glory in uncomeliness, a grandeur in overmastering passion, moulded the fashion of the hour, and 'Rochester airs' and 'Jane Eyre graces' became the rage." The second class of information survives primarily in the authors' correspondence or in scattered anecdotes. It consists mainly of adoring—though sometimes critical—comments to or about the novelists or their characters, and it often reveals the profoundest misreadings, which may, in their perverse way, give us some insight as to how much the novelist could rely on the reader to understand what he was about. There is, for instance, this letter from George Eliot to John Blackwood in 1859:

I wish you had read the letter you enclosed to me—it is really curious. The writer, an educated person, asks me to "perfect and extend" the benefit Adam Bede has "conferred on society," by writing a sequel to it, in which I am to tell

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all about Hetty after her reprieve—"Arthur's efforts to obtain the reprieve and his desperate ride after obtaining it—Dinah on board the convict ship—Dinah's letters to Hetty—and whatever the author might choose to reveal concerning Hetty's years of banishment." "Minor instances of the incompleteness which induces an unsatisfactory feeling may be alleged in the disposal of the locket and ear-rings—which everybody expects to re-appear—and in the incident of the pink silk neckerchief, of which all would like to hear a little more": (The George Eliot Letters, III, 184)

In the same vein is an incident reported by G. H. Lewes in an 1872 letter to Alexander Main:

A lady known to Mrs. Lewes [i.e., George Eliot] declared to another lady that she couldn't get to sleep at night thinking of "poor Bulstrode and all that had fallen on him after sitting up to tend on that wretch. . . . and I don't believe it was the Brandy that killed him. . . . Well, now Bulstrode has nothing left but Christ!"
Isn't this just the sort of touch George Eliot would have invented? To me it is strangely significant. 1st of the profoundly real impression the book makes. 2nd of the profoundly immoral teaching that passes for religious. Here is a pious woman so utterly blinded by the fact of Bulstrode's piety that it prevents her from seeing what Bulstrode himself sees, the guilt which that piety has not prevented. In real life where motives are hidden and deeds admit of many explanations, we would expect the mere fact of

54Main, incidentally, was a young, worshipful Scotsman who pestered George Eliot so long and ardently by mail that she and Lewes at last good-naturedly allowed him to rummage through her books for passages that were published as Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings in Prose and Verse (London, 1872).
piety to lead judgment astray, and make people seek for any but a criminal explanation; but there we see that in the face of the clearest evidence, and the sinner's own confession, the guilt is not believed in! (The George Eliot Letters, V, 337)55

It is clear, however, that the skimpy evidence of this sort that does exist will not take us very far, and I have abandoned what originally seemed a promising avenue of exploration.

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My intention, then, is to discuss the reader-narrator-implied author relationships and problems in Victorian fiction without oversimplifying any of the difficulties.

One of the most obvious of these difficulties is, as I have

55 It is understood, I hope, that a novel can fail to create the readers who will truly appreciate it, and yet still be a "success." That is, throughout history readers have willfully insisted—and still insist—on reading their own novel, poem, etc. instead of the author's. Teachers know this problem well. In an 1873 letter to John Blackwood, George Eliot gives us another instance of it, in addition to the lady discussed above: "When I was at Oxford in May, two ladies came up to me after dinner: one said, 'How could you let Dorothea marry that Casaubon?' The other: 'O I understand her doing that; but why did you let her marry the other fellow, whom I cannot bear?' Thus, two 'ardent admirers' wished that the book had been quite different from what it is." (The George Eliot Letters, V, 441)
stressed, the fact that in various ways the reader was encouraged to believe he was in direct communication with the historical author when he was engaged in reading a novel. Lacking the kinds of social, historical, and autobiographical information that would give contextual depth to a study of the novels, we are left with the novels themselves—more than enough material to produce critical problems of the utmost complexity. A good deal of what I consider nonsense has been recently written about the Victorian narrative convention (e.g., "It should be noted that omniscience is a novelist's most lazy approach"), as well as some stimulating theorizing. J. Hillis Miller, one of the few thought-provoking theorists, writes that the "omniscient narrator . . . convention is so crucial to nineteenth-century English fiction, so inclusive in its implications, that it may be called the determining principle of its form. The characteristic work of each of these novelists comes into existence when he chooses to play the role not of a first person narrator who is an actor in the drama, and not even the role of an anonymous

storyteller who may be identified with an individual consciousness, but the role of a collective mind." He adds that

the reader of a Victorian novel, like the author of it, must be on both sides of the mirror at once, seeing the fiction as a fiction, as a cunning model in words of the society it reflects, and enjoying at the same time a sovereign inwardness gained through perfect coincidence with the collective awareness of the community. To be both inside and outside in this way is to escape the pain of mute exclusion and it is to escape also the danger of blind imprisonment within the community. Though each novelist uses the omniscient narrator in his own way, a similar strategy of narration may be identified in each (p. 68).

But though Miller is thought-provoking, I believe he is basically wrong (a belief I will discuss more fully later), or at least that he has had greatly to oversimplify various techniques of the different novelists in order to make them fit his general theory.

The late W. J. Harvey seems to me the most perceptive critic to have written extensively on this aspect of Victorian fiction and the one to have most carefully recognized the pitfalls. He writes that

the 'omniscient author convention' is only a convenient shorthand term describing one kind of relationship existing between the writer and his work. But clearly, this relationship is complex and contains many elements that will manifest themselves in the novel through a variety of techniques. Thus the use of the convention will differ as between author and author and will further depend upon the quality of the work involved. Leavis has made the point succinctly in another connection when, writing of E. E. Stoll's Shakespearian criticism, he says, 'When Shakespeare uses the "same" convention as Beaumont and Fletcher, Dryden and Voltaire, his use is apt to be such that only by a feat of abstraction can the convention be said to be the same.'

This is obvious enough, yet of the three critics I have cited, only Mrs. Van Ghent reveals even limited recognition of the fact. Mrs. Bennett, it is true, distinguishes between George Eliot and Thackeray, but only on the grounds that Thackeray needed the convention and George Eliot didn't. She does not recognize any difference in the kind or quality of the convention being used, but assumes that it is something external to particular novels, a ready-made technique that the novelist may simply adopt or reject.

Strictly speaking, I suppose we ought to say that the omniscient author convention does not exist apart from any particular manifestation of it and that only these manifestations are the proper objects of critical study. This, however, would be extreme; few critics would wish to be so stranded high and dry upon the particular since


they would lose a useful, if potentially dangerous, critical abstraction. But abstractions may be checked by particulars. 61

What I propose to do in this study is to look at the particular manifestations of this convention in four major mid-Victorian novelists of recognized stature. I believe that by comparing these novelists rather than concentrating on only one of them I will be able to produce a number of valid generalizations about the methods used and effects achieved as these novelists create their readers. But in order to avoid obscuring vital distinctions, I propose to set up seven categories, or variables, and to keep them as rigidly separated as possible:

1) the actual living, historical person who wrote the novels;

2) the actual living, historical readers of the novels, who will sometimes appear to overlap with the fictive audience;

3) the created persona or narrator of the novels, not to be confused with either the historical or the implied novelist;

4) the fictive audience (the audience of or in the

novel), established by the narrator through his use of direct addresses and through other rhetorical devices;

5) the implied author of Booth's theory, whom we come to know as we discover the values and norms that the novel establishes;

6) the implied audience of the novel (so called by analogy with the implied author), those ideal readers created in the course of the novel from the raw material of the real readers;

7) myself as representative modern critic-scholar-reader, who will necessarily differ from the real audience of one hundred years ago and will have a different relationship with the fictive audience of the novels.

Since extensive research did not uncover sufficient evidence about categories one and two, my discussion will focus mainly on the mass of direct evidence provided for categories three and four and what this evidence leads us to conclude about categories five and six. I will use category seven when it seems necessary or advisable.

The novelists I will study in the chapters that follow are Thackeray, Trollope, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot. I will begin with Thackeray, concentrating
primarily on *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) but also examining *The History of Pendennis* (1848-50), *The Newcomes* (1854-55), *The Virginians* (1857-59), and *The Adventures of Philip* (1861-62) for contrast and further elucidation; I will also draw upon his contributions to *Punch* and his lectures, *The English Humourists* and *The Four Georges*, when appropriate.

With Trollope, I will emphasize his first two successful novels, *The Warden* (1855) and *Barchester Towers* (1857), but I will also devote a chapter to the other four novels in the Barsetshire series: *Doctor Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), *The Small House at Allington* (1864), and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867). With Charlotte Brontë, I will divide my study between *Shirley* (1849), the only novel in which she does not use a first-person narrator, and her three first-person novels, *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Villette* (1853), and *The Professor* (1857). With George Eliot, I will divide my attention between her undisputed masterpiece, *Middlemarch* (1871-72), and all of her pre-*Middlemarch* novels: *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857-58), *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola* (1863), and *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866). Thackeray, Trollope, George Eliot and Charlotte
Brontë are without question four of the most distinguished novelists of the whole Victorian period, and the first three created preeminent examples of the kind of narrative fiction that was practiced intensively until the twentieth century. Charlotte Brontë is a somewhat special case, in that she created only one omniscient narrator; yet she too must be placed among the great narrative voices of fiction. If any valid generalizations can be made about the creation of readers in mid-Victorian fiction, a comparative study of these major authors should produce them.
CHAPTER II

THACKERAY: VANITY FAIR AND THE EARLY APPRENTICESHIP

Vanity Fair, a difficult novel from many perspectives, offers particular problems for an implied-author/narrator/implied-reader approach. From the first reviews to the present, so much has been written about it both in praise and in blame and so many major critics have quarreled over it that the neophyte critic approaches the novel with some trepidation. The length of this chapter testifies to both the complexity and the significance of Thackeray's masterpiece. I will begin with a look at the background to Vanity Fair, namely the personae Thackeray created for his satiric Punch writings, moving to a discussion of what both Victorian and modern critics have had to say about the novel. I will spend some time on the important prefatory section of Vanity Fair, "Before the Curtain," moving then to the main body of my discussion, in which I will talk about the narrator's attacks on heroism, novel conventions, and readers' expectations, his supposed love of truth, the problem of knowledge within the novel, and the subject of
the different poses the narrator assumes, or masks he wears. I will then spend some time on the fictive reader within *Vanity Fair* and conclude with the question of the created implied readers.

An illuminating aspect of Thackeray's career that has frequently gone unrecognized for its bearing on the novel is his pre-*Vanity Fair* writings, particularly those that appeared in *Punch*. Before he left *Punch* and struck out on his own as a novelist, Thackeray had already shown himself to be highly skilled at creating a persona to narrate his humorous-satirical contributions; we should bear this apprenticeship in mind when looking at *Vanity Fair* and the later novels.\(^1\) Gordon N. Ray has remarked that "throughout his earlier career Thackeray had trained himself in mimicry and parody. His stories and essays, when not anonymous,

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\(^1\)To place Thackeray's work in a context, one should also be aware of the quite common convention of inventing personae in the light journalism of the early Victorian period. In addition to Punch himself, a similar eccentric character and presumed editor, Oliver ("Nol") Yorke, appeared as a regular feature of *Fraser's Magazine* throughout the 1830's. Also, beginning in the early 1820's and running for some twenty years, *Blackwood's* regularly presented a dramatic scene, the "Noctes Ambrosianae," featuring a number of such personae.
had been given to the world under a series of pseudonyms. Nor were these aliases . . . transparent masks; Thackeray made each a personality in its own right."

Of the various personae Thackeray created during this period, surely one of the more enjoyable is the "Fat Contributor," a prolific Punch correspondent. This gentleman—gluttonous, proud, irascible, pompous, and chauvinistic—is, of course, used as a satiric mask, but he is a delightful and complex creation. First we see him as a typical British bourgeois as he begins a foreign journey; he is infatuated by the upper classes, lacking in social perception, yet unabashed by his blunders: "The couriers and gentlemen's servants are much the most distinguished-looking people in the ship. Lord Muffington was on board, and of course I got into conversation with his Lordship—a noble-looking person. But just when I thought he might be on the point of asking me to Muffington Castle, he got up suddenly, and said, 'Yes, my Lord,' to a fellow I never should have suspected of a coronet. Yet he was the noble Earl, and my friend was but his flunkey. Such is life!

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and so may its most astute observers be sometimes deceived." Later in his wanderings we see the Fat Contributor as a parody of the British tourist, proudly desecrating a local wonder, and condescending to his readers in the telling:

> If I use in the above sentence the longest words I can find, it is because the occasion is great and demands the finest phrases the dictionary can supply; ... The 19th of October was Punch's Coronation; I officiated at the august ceremony. To be brief—as illiterate readers may not understand a syllable of the above piece of ornamental eloquence—ON THE 19TH OF OCTOBER 1844, I PASTED THE GREAT PLACARD OF PUNCH ON THE PYRAMID OF CHEOPS. I did it. The Fat Contributor did it. If I die, it could not be undone. If I perish, I have not lived in vain. (Contributions to Punch, Etc., 11, 83)

Although they are amusing, these passages from the Fat Contributor contain a sober undertone of rebuke. Through a number of the personae which he created for his Punch writings Thackeray was able to convey darkly serious acts and sentiments in a light and easy style that seems directly antithetical to its subject matter. This ability is one we should remember when we come to Vanity Fair. For instance, in the famous Book of Snobs,
the narrator remarks that

I once knew a man who committed before me an act as atrocious as that which I have indicated in the last chapter as performed by me for the purpose of disgusting Colonel Snobley; viz., the using the fork in the guise of a toothpick. I once, I say, knew a man who, dining in my company at the "Europa Coffee house"... ate peas with the assistance of his knife. He was a person with whose society I was greatly pleased at first... a man of great powers, excellent heart, and varied information; but I had never before seen him with a dish of peas, and his conduct in regard to them caused me the deepest pain.

After having seen him thus publicly comport himself, but one course was open to me—to cut his acquaintance. I commissioned a mutual friend... to break the matter to this gentleman as delicately as possible, and to say that painful circumstances—in nowise affecting Mr. Marrowfat's honour, or my esteem for him—had occurred, which obliged me to forego my intimacy with him; and accordingly we met, and gave each other the cut direct that night at the Duchess of Monte Fiasco's ball.

Everybody at Naples remarked the separation of the Damon and Pythias—indeed, Marrowfat had saved my life more than once—but, as an English gentleman, what was I to do?...

By the way, as some readers are dull of comprehension, I may as well say what the moral of this history is. The moral is this—Society having ordained certain customs, men are bound to obey the law of society, and conform to its harmless orders. (Contributions to Punch, Etc., 11, 306-8)

The judicious and light tone of the passage is likely to fool us, if we are not careful, into missing the grim sequence that is portrayed—the termination of a deep friendship over a breach in table manners, one of society's "harm-
less orders." Similarly, the narrator of "Sketches and Travels in London" relates that

I mention poor Tibbits to show the curious difference of manner which exists amongst us; and which, though not visible to foreigners, is instantly understood by English people. Brave, clever, tall, slim, dark, and sentimental-looking, he passed muster in a foreign saloon, and, as I must own to you, cut us fellows out: whereas we English knew instantly that the man was not well bred, by a thousand little signs, not to be understood by the foreigner. In his early youth, for instance, he had been cruelly deprived of his h's by his parents, and though he tried to replace them in after life, they were no more natural than a glass eye, but stared at you as if they were in a ghastly manner out of the conversation, and pained you by their horrid intrusions. Not acquainted with these refinements of our language, foreigners did not understand what Tibbits's errors were, and doubtless thought it was from envy that we conspired to slight the poor fellow.

I mention Mr. Tibbits, because he was handsome, clever, honest, and brave, and in almost all respects our superior; and yet laboured under disadvantages of manner which unfitted him for certain society. It is not Tibbits the man, it is not Tibbits the citizen, of whom I would wish to speak lightly: his morals, his reading, his courage, his generosity, his talents are undoubted—it is the social Tibbits of whom I speak; and as I do not go to balls because I do not dance, or to meetings of the Political Economy Club, or other learned associations, because taste and education have not fitted me for the pursuits for which other persons are adapted, so Tibbits's sphere is not in drawing-rooms, where the h, and other points of etiquette, are rigorously maintained. (Contributions to Punch, Etc., 12, 660)
In the most civilized of prose styles, these passages lay bare the most savage of societies, and the seemingly trivial lapses of etiquette or pronunciation mentioned lead to the most serious and destructive of consequences. The passages offer clear examples of narrators and implied authors who are separated from each other by the kinds of major ironies that make that separation readily apparent.

Few critics would make the mistake of equating the Fat Contributor or any other of the pre-Vanity Fair personae with Thackeray the Victorian writer. As we read this entire body of work we get a clear picture both of the narrating personality and of the intelligence behind it, the creator—in short, the implied author. That the mistake is made with regard to Vanity Fair may perhaps be attributable to the critics' having overlooked this considerable body of apprentice work in which Thackeray carefully developed his narrative skills. Thus, I have already established one basic premise of my study: until or unless proven otherwise, the historical author, the implied author, and the narrator of any work must not be equated. It is time now to introduce a second basic premise:
that, again until or unless proven otherwise, we must assume that the author as artist (as implied author) knows what he is doing.

I insist on what appear to be embarrassingly elementary assumptions only because my research in the critical history of these novels has disclosed that far too often they seem not to have occurred to commentators, whether they be contemporary reviewers or modern critics. In one of the first reviews of *Vanity Fair*, Abraham Hayward states that "the great charm of this work is its entire freedom from mannerism and affectation both in style and sentiment,—the confiding frankness with which the reader is addressed. . . . In a word, the book is the work of a gentleman, which is one great merit." 4 Thirty years later H. H. Lancaster argues that "the author speaks for the most part in his own person, and herein lies one of the principal reasons for the success of the book." 5 A few years later, in what seems to me now one of the more ludicrous of Victorian reviews, a reviewer of Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* notes that "we miss perhaps that agreeable play of kindly humour


which in Thackeray, Mr. Trollope’s great predecessor in depicting the illusions of Vanity Fair, tones down the harsh judgment of the reader, and gives to the scenes and persons represented the appearance of a big child-world. Now, the fact is that Vanity Fair offers one of the most complex and puzzling implied-author/narrator/implied-reader triangles to be found in Victorian fiction. Even granting these critics an awareness of the element of artfulness, their view of the author as narrator precludes any systematic of coherent perception of the method and implications of Vanity Fair’s narrative technique. If the early critics actually thought that Thackeray was addressing them in his own person, with a confiding frankness, as a gentleman, it is difficult for me to perceive why they did not also conclude that they were dealing with the author as madman.

Modern criticism, however, has not, on the whole, done much better. Some critics, such as Carl H. Grabo,


To be fair, I must note that not all modern criticism has failed miserably. Geoffrey Tillotson’s Thackery the Novelist (Cambridge, Eng., 1954) in particular contains a long and valuable discussion of narrative technique and the “person writing”; it also contains a masterful analysis of Percy Lubbock’s shortcomings. More recently, Juliet
simply equate author and narrator, accept the Lubbockian aesthetic unquestioningly, and reject Thackeray out of hand: "It is probably laziness which prompts Thackeray's intrusive comments upon his story characters. All the talk of puppets in *Vanity Fair*, despite its easy charm, is the second best of a writer who knew very well how hard it is to make characters reveal themselves in word and deed and how relatively easy it is to gossip about them. . . . Thackeray knows perfectly how the thing should be done and is usually content not to do it, cynical in his contempt for the great stupid public which does not distinguish good workmanship from bad." Other critics have simply accepted "intrusiveness" as a standard Victorian convention and have then proceeded to ignore entirely the specific implications of the convention in a particular novel. Joseph Warren Beach is guilty of this approach in his "Introduction" to a widely-used edition of *Vanity Fair*; he

McMaster's *Thackeray: The Major Novels* (Toronto, 1971) contains a perceptive first chapter devoted to "Narrative Technique" in which she discusses the life of the novels, the commentary, and the extent to which they depend on each other. I disagree with both authors on a number of points I will not examine here, but their work is of high quality.

discusses "features of Victorian writing," among which he notes
the unfailing presence of the author throughout, his overt presence as genial guide, philosopher and mentor, who will never trust the reader to draw his own conclusions. This is characteristic of many great English novelists of the nineteenth century. . . . Thackeray is perhaps the most obviously self-conscious in regard to the kind of story he is telling. . . . He is always reminding us that this is a made-up story, in the very act of boasting ironically that it is all literally true and that he has personal knowledge of the characters. . . . The Victorian novelist had a way of telling you at the start exactly what each character was like and what was to be expected of him.9

Recently, with the psychological studies of Thackeray by Gordon Ray in particular, the author-narrator equation, with all its attendant problems, has become much more sophisticated. These psychological studies of the historical author may convincingly demonstrate—or attempt to demonstrate—the ways in which the overt facts of his life and the more debatable assumptions about his psychology

9 Vintage Books (New York, 1950), pp. xiii-xiv. Although some of the preceding material could just as well be located in Chapter I, to illustrate the modern critics' acceptance of simple "intrusiveness," it is equally useful—and necessary—to show the situation in regard to Thackeray specifically; and Chapter I probably already contains a sufficiency of critical quotation.
make their appearance in his fiction, but such demonstra-
tions are no more valid than is the traditional "leap of
faith" assumption in establishing that author and narrator
are one and the same; yet they often do give the appearance
of logically supporting the leap of faith. I believe,
however, with Ann Y. Wilkinson, that "with the traditional
assumption that writer and narrator are identical, we have
no choice but to see Thackeray as incompetent [or, I might
add, a fool], dishonest, or at least dismayingly two-sided
in his personality," the latter being what the psycholog-
ical critics seem to conclude. I hope we can see by looking
at the novel that such conclusions are woefully inadequate
for the magnificent work of art that Vanity Fair is.

iii

The obvious place to begin is with the section titled
"Before the Curtain," which Thackeray added after serial
publication. Joan Stevens says that "in all our discussions
of Vanity Fair . . . we would do well to remember that
'Before the Curtain' is in fact only a postscript intended

10 "The Tomesavian Way of Knowing the World: Technique
to introduce a repeat performance [i.e., book publication after the original run in serial form], and in no sense a master design conceived before composition began. . . . That when the book was completed Thackeray fitted puppetry so skilfully into his final address to readers and set it at the opening of the book should not mislead us into giving it too much weight in critical discussion."\textsuperscript{11} However, I do not think that we should be intimidated by the fact that Thackeray perceived a design at the end of the novel rather than having conceived it in advance. "Before the Curtain" may indeed be a postscript, but it does introduce and tie together major themes running throughout the novel.

"Before the Curtain" consists of the narrator, or the "Manager of the Performance" or "Author"—he uses both terms—speaking to listeners who are not specifically identified; thus the first problem arises, that of audience. A good deal of address aimed at fictive readers does appear in the novel, but such address is usually clearly marked, as in "be cautious then, young ladies; be wary how you

\textsuperscript{11}"A Note on Thackeray's 'Manager of the Performance,'" \textit{NCF}, 22 (1967-68), 396-7.
engage." Therefore, we, the actual readers, may be justified in subconsciously expecting that this first address is designed as a preliminary step in the creation of the implied reader; but we had better read most carefully:

As the Manager of the Performance sits before the curtain on the boards, and looks into the Fair, a feeling of profound melancholy comes over him in his survey of the bustling place. There is a great quantity of eating and drinking, making love and jilting, laughing and the contrary, smoking, cheating, fighting, dancing, and fiddling: there are bullies pushing about, bucks ogling the women, knaves picking pockets, policemen on the look-out, quacks (other quacks, plague take them!), bawling in front of their booths. ... Yes, this is VANITY FAIR; not a moral place certainly; nor a merry one, though very noisy.

What we have, then, is a performance (a puppet show, as we soon discover) about to take place, and what we are getting from this philosophical Manager of the Performance ("manager," not creator, at this point) is a pitch. It is a

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\textsuperscript{12}Vanity Fair (New York, 1950), Chapter 18. Because of the number of different editions of all the novels I will be using in this study, I will follow the practice of initially presenting the bibliographic information and thereafter identifying all quotations within the text, using just the chapter number.
clever pitch, no question of that, when compared to those of the other quacks bawling in front of their tents, a pitch designed perhaps for a higher class of customer, but a pitch nonetheless and one delivered by a self-confessed quack or mountebank, though, since he reveals a reflective temper, we should be aware that as a mountebank he is a special case. The tolerant and philosophical Manager continues:

A man with a reflective turn of mind, walking through an exhibition of this sort, will not be oppressed, I take it, by his own or other people's hilarity. An episode of humour or kindness touches and amuses him here and there... but the general impression is one more melancholy than mirthful. When you come home, you sit down, in a sober, contemplative, not uncharitable frame of mind, and apply yourself to your books or your business. I have no other moral than this to tag to the present story of "Vanity Fair." Some people consider Fairs immoral altogether, and eschew such, with their servants and families; perhaps they are right. But persons who think otherwise and are of a lazy, or a benevolent, or a sarcastic mood, may perhaps like to step in for half an hour and look at the performances. There are scenes of all sorts... the whole accompanied by appropriate scenery, and brilliantly illuminated with the Author's own candles.

The rhetoric in these passages is sophisticated and clever. The Manager acknowledges that some people are not fairgoers— that is, that they do not concern themselves with the humor and kindness or the vanity and heartbreak
which comprise the great melancholy ebb and flow of human life. He even generously admits they may be right; but for those of us who are of a lazy, benevolent, or sarcastic turn—who are, in fact, novel readers—this show may be just the thing. The rhetoric is that of distance; we are not invited to identify either with this quack Manager or with the painted puppets he introduces in the next paragraph. We are apparently expected to remain tolerantly lazy, benevolent, or sarcastic at a distance, and we can expect to have the whole performance "brilliantly illuminated" for us—no problems at all, just an amusing novel to read. The Manager concludes unctuously with a reference to the novel's successful serialization:

What more has the Manager of the Performance to say?—To acknowledge the kindness with which it has been received in all the principal towns of England through which the Show has passed, and where it has been most favourably noticed by the respected conductors of the Public Press, and by the Nobility and Gentry. He is proud to think that his puppets have given satisfaction to the very best company in this empire. The famous little Becky Puppet has been pronounced to be uncommonly flexible in the joints and lively on the wire: the Amelia Doll, though it has had a smaller circle of admirers, has yet been carved and dressed with the greatest care by the artist: the Dobbin Figure, though apparently clumsy, yet dances in a very amusing and
natural manner. . . . And with this, and a profound bow to his patrons, the Manager retires, and the curtain rises.¹³

The puppet Vanity Fair (microcosm) within a fair (macrocosm), the description of characters as Puppets and Dolls, the bland and seemingly ingratiating tone of the narrator, the implication that we will be amused and tolerant readers—this is the rhetoric of distance or alienation. As potential implied readers, we should be getting the message loud and clear that there is nothing threatening here, simply a delightful amusement that has been acclaimed everywhere. But should we not be just a little suspicious? As potential implied readers, we are, I think, searching for the clues that will tell us what parts of ourselves we should look to if we are to be created into the kind of readers who will appreciate this novel. We seem to get some of those clues, but depending on our sophistication and experience, we may look askance at a half hour's entertainment and "scenes of all sorts." We may think that that final paragraph goes a bit too far and may remember that this Manager did label himself a

¹³Professor Altick has brought to my attention the fact that an extra tone is heard here in the Manager's ironic echoing of the clichés of contemporary show-biz advertising.
quack. We may indeed be suspicious, and we should be, be­
cause, as we shall see, this Manager has not been at all honest with us.

The Manager's rhetoric, which tends to ally us with him while separating us from the characters and their story, has been commented on by several modern critics. James H. Wheatley notes one possible effect when he writes that

whether or not his work purports to be "A Novel without a Hero," as Vanity Fair does, a satiric narrator might of course be his own comic hero. Given a place to stand, he might implicitly promise to pry up, lift into notice and isola­tion for the purposes of criticism, the particu­lar world which is his subject. Speaking of Becky and Sir Pitt, the narrator of Vanity Fair says, "Such people there are living and flour­ishing in the world---Faithless, Hopeless, Charity­less; let us have at them, dear friends, with might and main. Some there are, and very success­ful too, mere quacks and fools: and it was to combat and expose such as those, no doubt, that Laughter was made." In this statement are most of the standard elements of satire: the narrator's confidential relations with his audience; his "place to stand"---in this case, apparently, an assumed and easily granted Christianity; and his confidence in the face of the enemy. Despite his exhortation to "have at them," the satirist's audience evidently need only look on as he outwits and outparries their mutual enemies, and winks at his audience over his shoulder.14

As a description of *Vanity Fair*, however, this clearly will not do, as Wheatley recognizes. To become his own hero, the Manager needs his readers' acquiescence, and he mocks us far too often and too outrageously to get that. Nor is it at all certain that he conquers the common enemy or, indeed, who that enemy is. And yet these views have been accepted by so discerning a critic as Kathleen Tillotson, who writes that

the commentary springs also from Thackeray's wish to 'convey the sentiment of reality'. Through it he openly admits, as no modern novelist dare, all the relations of the novelist to his story. The novelist does write what he knows to be 'terrific chapters', he does construct and manipulate his characters. . . . He remembers, and observes; he is affected, as he writes, by what is happening around him—the 'unwritten parts' of novels. Thackeray's candour about all this is part of his love of truth. Believing in truth, he can afford to admit that what he writes is fiction. And the illusion is not thereby broken. When he calls his characters puppets, it is not their smallness, but their separateness from him, that strikes us; and perhaps his own largeness. . . .

Ah! *Vanitas Vanitatum!* Which of us is happy in this world? which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?—Come children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out. The great picture is not the less great from our final awareness that we and the author stand
outside its frame. The words are a recall to life and individual responsibility as the preacher lays his cap and bells aside.\textsuperscript{15}

To reiterate, once again and always, it is not Thackeray who calls his characters puppets but the narrator/Manager, and we must be very cautious about thinking we stand anywhere with him: who, after all, is being addressed when he says "Come children" at the end of the novel? More important, the references to writing 'terrific chapters'\textsuperscript{16} and the like which Kathleen Tillotson sees as demonstrating a "wish to 'convey the sentiment of reality,'" are, as I will demonstrate, actually part of a pervasive pattern of attack on novelistic conventions and on reader expectations of novels. Anthony Trollope recognized this fact, but (surprisingly, since he did the same kind of thing) seemed puzzled by it. He writes, "but Captain Dobbin does become the hero, and is deficient. Why was he called Dobbin, except to make him ridiculous? Why is he...

\textsuperscript{15} Novels of the Eighteen-Forties (Oxford, 1961), pp. 255-6.

\textsuperscript{16} Professor Altick has pointed out to me that this very adjective adds credence to my argument, since it was associated with melodrama and generally meretricious (pop) literature.
so shamefully ugly, so shy, so awkward? Why was he the son of a grocer? Thackeray in so depicting him was determined to run counter to the recognised taste of novel readers."\(^{17}\) Thackeray was so determined, but in more ways than this, and his determination is simply one aspect of a much larger plan of attack that the Manager launches against his audience.

iv

The first object of the Manager's attack is the concept of heroism, a concept introduced in the subtitle, "A Novel without a Hero," which, as with "Before the Curtain," Thackeray added when *Vanity Fair* was published as a whole. Lionel Stevenson has pointed out\(^{18}\) that the subtitle can be interpreted in a double sense: either that *Vanity Fair* has only a heroine (Stevenson says Becky Sharp, though Amelia Sedley is a possibility) or that it contains no conventionally heroic figure. As Stevenson notes, the ambiguity is ironic in either case: "if Becky is the

\(^{17}\) *Thackeray* (New York, 1902), p. 92.

'heroine,' she is the antithesis of all traditional heroic virtue; if the whole panorama of society contains no heroic figure, this is proof that the idealistic world of the epic poets has given place to drab mediocrity." Stevenson observes that Thackeray could with equal truth have called *Vanity Fair* '"a novel without a villain."'

However one attempts to resolve the ambiguity for himself, he will soon be frustrated by the wily Manager, who introduces Amelia with the comment that "there is no harm in saying, at the outset of our acquaintance, that she was a dear little creature; and a great mercy it is, both in life and in novels, which (and the latter especially) abound in villains of the most sombre sort, that we are to have for a constant companion, so guileless and good-natured a person. As she is not a heroine, there is no need to describe her person" (Ch. 1). The attack on novels is characteristic; more noteworthy here is the fact that just a few pages later we find the narrator identifying Amelia as the heroine: "nor can it be expected that twenty-four young ladies should all be as amiable as the heroine of this work, Miss Sedley (whom we have selected for the very reason that she was the best-natured of all, otherwise what on earth was to have prevented us from putting up Miss Swartz,"
or Miss Crump, or Miss Hopkins, as heroine in her place?)" (Ch. 2). The very obviousness of the contradiction serves to trivialize the whole subject rather than to make it important. Further, the average novel reader, expecting heroes and heroines, is of course being mocked by the narrator, who tells us that anyone can be selected as heroine (thus implying that there are no criteria), so we might as well take the best-natured girl—the girl who, the perceptive reader already suspects, is somewhat of a simpleton. Much later, the heroine changes, and again the intention is to mock the reader, or at least to attack his conceptions about novels: "Among the notes in Rawdon's pocket-book, was a draft for twenty pounds on Osborne's banker. This made her [Becky] think about Mrs. Osborne. 'I will go and get the draft cashed,' she said, 'and pay a visit afterwards to poor little Emmy.' If this is a novel without a hero, at least let us lay claim to a heroine. No man in the British army which has marched away, not the great duke himself, could be more cool or collected in the presence of doubts and difficulties, than the indomitable little aide de camp's wife" (Ch. 30). Contrasted with the hysterical and incapacitated Amelia, the cool and indomitable Becky may indeed lay claim to the title of heroine; she only
lacks any discernible love or concern for her husband, traits of small value in Vanity Fair, where all that really matters is success.

Further attacks on novelistic conventions and the readers' expectations take various forms, one of which is the casual sarcasm: "the conversation, as may be judged from the foregoing specimen, was not especially witty or eloquent; it seldom is in private societies, or anywhere except in very high-flown and ingenious novels" (Ch. 4). Another of the narrator's tricks is to give his story inaccurate descriptions. At one point he refers to "the Muse . . . who presides over this Comic History" (Ch. 50), mocking both Classical conventions and Fielding's description of his novels, since the narrator knows very well that his story is not "Comic" in the generic sense. At another point he remarks that the causes of Miss Crawley's "deplorable illness . . . were of such an unromantic nature that they are hardly fit to be explained in this genteel and sentimental novel. For how is it possible to hint of a delicate female, living in good society, that she ate and drank too much, and that a hot supper of lobsters profusely enjoyed at the Rectory was the reason of an indisposition which Miss Crawley herself persisted was solely
attributable to the dampness of the weather" (Ch. 14)? Finding it impossible to hint at the fact, he simply states it, satirizing the whole genre of genteel and sentimental novels.

The narrator/Manager's role in mocking novelistic conventions and our expectations as readers can assume complicated forms. At the point of Amelia's marriage to George, early in the novel, the narrator remarks, in what seems a typical swipe at a standard convention, that "as his hero and heroine pass the matrimonial barrier, the novelist generally drops the curtain, as if the drama were over then: the doubts and struggles of life ended" (Ch. 26). However, at the time of Amelia's second marriage, to Dobbin, he turns the irony against himself (since he does have to end the story some place) as well as keeping it directed at us:

The vessel is in port. He has got the prize he has been trying for all his life. The bird has come in at last. There it is with its head on his shoulder, billing and cooing close up to his heart, with soft outstretched fluttering wings. This is what he has asked for every day and hour for eighteen years. This is what he pined after. Here it is--the summit, the end--the last page of the third volume. Good-bye, colonel--God bless you, honest William!--Farewell, dear Amelia--Grow green again, tender little parasite, round the rugged old oak to which you cling. (Ch. 67)
The animal and plant imagery should give us some pause at this point, but just a few pages later we are really brought up short. Coming up to London, Amelia, Dobbin, and the children unexpectedly encounter Becky running a stall at a "Fancy Fair" for such distressed beings as "the Destitute Orange girl, the Neglected Washerwoman, the Distressed Muffin-man." Dobbin seizes "his little Janey, of whom he is fonder than of anything in the world--fonder even than of his History of the Punjaub. 'Fonder than he is of me,' Emmy thinks, with a sigh. But he never said a word to Amelia, that was not kind and gentle; or thought of a want of hers that he did not try to gratify" (Ch. 67). The Manager has warned us that he must stop somewhere, but as novel readers we should take no comfort from this; the drama still goes on, and Amelia suffers for her past mistakes--and suffers doubly, since now she is aware of what she has lost and why.

The passage referred to earlier by Kathleen Tillotson as exemplifying Thackeray's love of truth is an interesting one to examine closely in the light of my discussion so far. It begins, "I know that the tune I am piping is a very mild one (although there are some terrific chapters coming presently), and must beg the good-natured reader to remember,
that we are only discoursing at present about a stockbroker's family in Russell Square" (Ch. 6). Again, the important thing to remember is that this is not Thackeray speaking; it is that quack Manager who inveigled us into stopping at his booth in the first place. And just what are those "terrific chapters" we can expect? We can expect some good writing, yes, but if we look forward to any of the blood and thunder or crime and sensationalism that were staples of so much Victorian fiction (and which Thackeray parodied in his early novel Catherine), we will be sadly mistaken—fooled again, in fact, by this slippery narrator. Some thirty pages after the above comment, the Manager warns his "kyind friends," then, that I am going to tell a story of harrowing villainy and complicated—but, as I trust, intensely interesting—crime...

And, as we bring our characters forward, I will ask leave, as a man and a brother, not only to introduce them, but occasionally to step down from the platform, and talk about them: if they are good and kindly, to love them and shake them by the hand; if they are silly, to laugh at them confidentially in the reader's sleeve: if they are wicked and heartless, to abuse them in the strongest terms which politeness admits of. (Ch. 8)

Truth-loving? This Manager is a master dissembler, and his

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19 Though some doubt remains as to whether Catherine was Thackeray's, I will accept it as his.
story will be very little like what he describes here. As for stepping down from the stage "occasionally," as soon as he has extended Vanity Fair beyond the stage of his puppet show, beyond the particular fair in which he has set up his booth, and into society and the wide world itself, he is with us constantly. Then again, what about his confidential asides to us—can we take him at his word here? Hardly; and let us look at just a few examples to see why this is so.

The Manager has claimed that he will love the good and kindly characters and shake them by the hand, and if the adjectives apply to anyone in the novel, doubtless that person is Dobbin. How then as readers should we react, except to feel that we have once more been had, to the following description of Dobbin's relationship with Amelia, and especially to the final sentence?: "This woman had a way of tyrannizing over Major Dobbin (for the weakest of all people will domineer over somebody), and she ordered him about, and patted him, and made him fetch and carry just as if he was a great Newfoundland dog. He liked, so to speak, to jump into the water if she said, 'High, Dobbin!' and to trot behind her with her reticule in his mouth. This history has been written to very little purpose if the
reader has not perceived that the major was a spoony" (Ch. 66). And what about the wicked and heartless characters in this "story of harrowing villainy" and, harking further back, those brilliant author's candles that will illuminate everything? Surely we think of Becky in this context, but we are sadly mistaken—and deluded—once again if we expect any help from this crafty Manager. The important question is the extent of Becky's guilt, and here is what we get the first time it is introduced:

"Was Rebecca guilty or not?" The Vehmgericht of the servants' hall had pronounced against her. And, I shame to say, she would not have got credit had they not believed her to be guilty. It was the sight of the Marquis of Steyne's carriage-lamps at her door, contemplated by Raggles, burning in the blackness of midnight, "that kep' him up," as he afterwards said; that even more than Rebecca's arts and coaxings. And so—guiltless very likely—she was writing and pushing onwards towards what they call "a position in society," and the servants were pointing at her as lost and ruined. (Ch. 44)

To say the least, the matter is left in considerable doubt; nor is it clarified by the narrator's comments when the final blowup with Rawdon occurs: "What were her thoughts when he left her? She remained for hours after he was gone . . . sitting alone on the bed's edge. . . . She knew he would never come back. He was gone for ever. . . . What
had happened? Was she guilty or not? She said not; but who could tell what was truth which came from those lips; or if that corrupt heart was in this case pure? All her lies and her schemes, all her selfishness and her wiles, all her wit and genius had come to this bankruptcy" (Ch. 53).

I will return to this passage and the question of Becky's guilt, for they are important in relation to the whole question of characters as puppets. Now, however, I would like to look at a significant comment by G. Armour Craig on the rhetoric of this scene and the issues it raises:

The words . . . that command our moral response are precisely those that most nearly approach parody: Becky responds to a nameless "that" in Rawdon's face by exclaiming "I am innocent." If the reader trained in melodrama scoffs at the response and turns Becky into a consummate villain, he will have some trouble getting through the rest of the novel, and it is likely that he will long since have become exasperated with Thackeray's tone, his silences and implications. The same is true, moreover, of the sentimental reader who throws down the volume and declares that Becky has been monstrously wronged and victimized by wicked men in a bad world. But the reader who says, in effect, "it is impossible to tell whether or of what she is guilty" is exactly in the difficult position of one who accepts Thackeray's narrative as it is given. And what such a reader sees from this position must fill him with wonder if not dismay. For he sees that while he wants to answer these questions, he cannot do so, and he can only conclude that he is looking at a situation before which his moral vocabulary
is irrelevant. Becky in her isolation has finally gone out of this world, and it will take a new casuistry to bring her back. Thackeray uses some strong moral words in his comment, it is true: "who could tell what was truth which came from those lips; or if that corrupt heart was in this case pure?" But while we know that Becky has lied heartily to Steyne, and to his hearty admiration, we cannot know that she is lying to Rawdon when she insists on her innocence. Whatever corruption we may have seen, the question this time is in earnest. The qualities named in the final statement, and especially by its last word, tell us where we are: "All her lies and her schemes, all her selfishness and her wiles, all her wit and her genius had come to this bankruptcy." For these are the terms not so much of moral but of financial enterprise, and "this bankruptcy" is the real touch of genius in the passage. Thackeray's questions and his comment express neither indignation nor sympathy. Rather, they bring before us the terrible irresolution of a society in which market values and moral values are discontinuous and separate. And Thackeray will not—he can not—support us as we revolt from such a spectacle.20

In her recent book on Thackeray, Barbara Hardy, reacting strongly to Craig and to other critics who continue to consider the question of "what had happened," writes that Thackeray does not answer because the question is irrelevant and that "we have been observing her lies for fifty chapters by now, and Thackeray is interested in truth and lies rather than in chastity, fidelity and adultery." She goes even further, however, and argues that Rawdon's exclamation,

"I always shared with you," indicates "a superior moral intelligence." She says that "Becky has manipulated not only Rawdon but his reputation. . . . Disloyalty, deceit and the destruction of reputation, Thackeray is saying, are worse than adultery. Critics who fail to see this are perilously close to Becky, who is unable to appreciate the finer points of morality."  

It seems to me, however, that Hardy is dangerously sentimentalizing Rawdon. What is there, after all, that suddenly makes his moral perceptions superior when he catches Becky playing without him a game they had often played together, as they lived on nothing a year? The question of Becky's guilt is irrelevant, but only because she has committed Vanity Fair's one major sin: she has lost. Rawdon, who played with his own reputation as he helped to defraud poor Raggles and so many others, suddenly balks and is exposed for what Becky knew he was all along, one not worthy of playing for the highest stakes. Becky grandly staked all and lost all--thus her "bankruptcy"--but the whole point of the Vanity Fair morality is that it is nonexistent. To boggle at the "finer points," as Rawdon does and as Hardy

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praises him for doing, is to reveal oneself as a hopeless loser. You cannot play the Vanity Fair game halfway, or to a point only.

Thackeray the implied author certainly knew—as, we will see, did Trollope and George Eliot—that most of his readers were trained in melodrama and sentimentality by the novels they read; thus the many-faceted attack launched by his narrator/Manager on novels, novel readers, and novelistic expectations has a definite purpose. What Craig is discussing, though he does not use the same words, is the creation of an implied reader who can live with the narrative as it is given, i.e., live with uncertainty, without doing what the criticism shows so many readers did: either lapsing into sentimentality or accepting the melodramatic vision. What Barbara Hardy does with Rawdon by ennobling him is, it strikes me, just such a lapse. But by upsetting and playing with our expectations over and over again, the narrator who is the product of the author's second self tries constantly to jar us out of our novel-reading rut and to get us to regard this particular novel—and, in the long run, the whole genre by contrast—in a new light. It seems to me a
magnificent attempt, even if it failed with many readers.  

After assuring us that there are some terrific chapters in store, the Manager goes on to state that

We might have treated this subject in the genteel, or in the romantic, or in the facetious manner. Suppose we had laid the scene in Grosvenor Square, with the very same adventures—would not some people have listened? Suppose we had shown how Lord Joseph Sedley fell in love, and the Marquis of Osborne became attached to Lady Amelia, with the full consent of the duke, her noble father; or instead of the supremely genteel, suppose we had resorted to the entirely low, and described what was going on in Mr. Sedley's kitchen; . . . Such incidents might be made to provoke much delightful laughter, and be supposed to represent scenes of "life." Or if, on the contrary, we had taken a fancy for the terrible . . . we should easily have constructed a tale of thrilling interest, through the fiery chapters of which the readers should hurry, panting. (Ch. 6)

What we have here is the somewhat clumsy handling of a

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22In Thackeray's Critics: An Annotated Bibliography of British and American Criticism 1836-1901 (Chapel Hill, North Caroline, 1966), Dudley Flamm writes that "it is worth noting this inability to read the novel as a story with an unhappy ending, if only because Thackeray himself was set on writing that kind of story. . . . The critics of Vanity Fair did not explore this phenomenon, and in the face of the sub-title, 'A Novel Without a Hero,' they sought heroes and heroines of the customary variety and tried to grant them some measure of success. If they did in fact sense Thackeray's true intentions, they skirted any head-on engagement with such ideas because of their uncharted dangers, and in no way was the book's popularity impaired on this account" (pp. 9-10).
technique that we will see more fully developed in Trollope: an open admission from narrator to reader that while the story itself is inviolate, the narrator enjoys unlimited freedom in the telling. But while this fact becomes a basic theme for Trollope's narrator, it is not a major concern for Thackeray's. Rather, his emphasis here falls upon satirizing the great numbers of "high-" and "low-life" and sensational novels and their readers, while once again trying to educate his audience into higher levels of thought and reading. It is certainly a laudable aim, but as members of Thackeray's audience, we are being attacked and ridiculed by the Manager of the Performance, and there are so many different attacks that all of us must feel more or less uncomfortable at some time or another. To attribute such remarks, as Kathleen Tillotson does, to Thackeray's candor and love of truth seems to me drastically to simplify and distort their intention.

One more aspect of novels, reader expectations, and the role of the Manager deserves attention: the problem of knowledge and its sources. The Manager indicates several times that he knows the characters personally. He casually drops remarks like "as Captain Dobbin has since informed me" (Ch. 22); "Becky has often spoken in subsequent years
of this season of her life" (Ch. 51); or "it was on this very tour that I, the present writer of a history of which every word is true, had the pleasure to see them [Dobbin and Amelia] first, and to make their acquaintance" (Ch. 62).  

A second-hand source of personal knowledge is introduced into the narrative through a variety of remarks similar to this one: "and then Tapeworm, who of course knew all the London gossip, and was besides a relative of Lady Gaunt, poured out into the astonished major's ears such a history about Becky and her husband as astonished the querist, and supplied all the points of this narrative, for it was at that very table years ago that the present writer had the pleasure of hearing the tale" (Ch. 66).

23 Professor Altick has drawn my attention to the possibility that the idea expressed in this last remark may be seen as an additional thrust at audience expectations--specifically, the novelist's conventional assurance of "truth" in order to counteract claims by Evangelicals and their ilk that fiction was a fabric of lies. Such protestations were pro forma and, of course, hypocritical, which is what the implied author's irony indicates.

24 This knowing-through-gossip side of the novel has been explored in detail by Ann. Y. Wilkinson in "The Tomeavian Way of Knowing the World." Wilkinson states that "in fact, the narrator of Vanity Fair is not historian, nor a lover of truth, nor in any real sense omniscient, though it is part of his pose to like to seem so at times. He is,
On the other hand, the Manager is also fond of introducing comments which take the narrative out of the realm of the apparently real world and into a more obviously fictive one, as when he remarks that "the novelist, who knows everything, knows this also" (Ch. 33), thus evoking all the connotations of "novelist." Since, however, the Manager constantly demonstrates in various ways that he is a devious and slippery character, we, as potential implied readers, must remain on guard. The Manager clearly does not—or at least pretends he does not—know everything, which may simply mean, though it seems unlikely, that he does not consider himself a novelist, and thus is satirizing those novelists who do pretend to know everything and those readers who believe them. But there are two levels of the Manager’s not knowing in the novel, one important and one not. The important level is best illustrated by the question simply, a gossip who is telling a story he has gleaned largely through gossiping with other eavesdroppers, who report the scene to him perhaps even at third or fourth hand, since they too, like the narrator, are to be supposed gossiping all the time. Moreover, a gossip, in this like an historian, is telling a story everyone is more or less familiar with, but, unlike an historian, is allowed all the vagaries and capriciousnesses, even the prejudgments, he likes to have in the telling. And he is not above all interested in the truth, but in the telling of a good story, with as much suggestiveness as he can put in without entirely ruining his own reputation" (p. 376).
of Becky's guilt; the unimportant level appears in small matters of which the Manager says he has no knowledge but which any careful reader can determine for himself. For instance, about half-way through the novel, George remarks to Amelia what a comfort it will be to her that Becky has come, and the Manager says, "to this Amelia did not answer, yes or no: and how do we know what her thoughts were" (Ch. 29)? If we have been at all alert, we know very well that her thoughts are not at all pleasant, and we see that the Manager is playing another little game with us. Later, after the breakup of Becky's marriage, the Manager informs us of her vagabond life that "when she got her money she gambled; when she had gambled it she was put to shifts to live; who knows how or by what means she succeeded" (Ch. 64)? Well, we suspect he knows, and we are pretty sure we do too. Conversely, when the Manager remarks that "certainly (for novelists have the privilege of knowing everything), he [Jos] thought a great deal about the girl [Becky] upstairs" (Ch. 3), we know that such knowledge hardly requires a novelist's special powers, since we are quite capable of deducing it ourselves.

What is it to be taken as, then: a history related by the principals, every word of which is true; a history based
mainly on hearsay, second- and third-hand sources, and malice-influenced gossip; or a novel, a total fiction, created by the author/narrator/Manager? The question may be unanswerable within the context of *Vanity Fair*, but what of the reader who is shaped by such a confusion of sources and answers? It is clear, I think, that he must be a reader who can remain comfortable with the impossibility of really knowing anything and one who is far more aware, critical, and responsive than are the actual readers implied through the numerous attacks on the novel found in *Vanity Fair* and than are those who compose the fictive audience of the novel itself, a subject we will get to shortly.

Although he himself cannot be his own hero because of his relationship with his readers, the narrator/Manager in all his manifestations is obviously the crux of *Vanity Fair*. His various roles and functions require the systematic examination I have been attempting, but we also need to recognize a strange fact about our relationship with the novel, a fact that perhaps defies rational explanation: though we can barely trust this Manager for a page at a time and must constantly be on our guard against him, yet somehow we also believe him, a process which is, of course, essential to our creation as implied readers. Although
D. H. Stewart refers to Thackeray rather than to the narrator, he gets at the truth of this aspect of the novel:

Thackeray lies, cheats, dissembles, suppresses information. All right, let him. He gives us a world that reflects honestly the real world— which certainly deceives us quite as often, quite as blatantly. A better wisdom than that which condemns his contradictions would express gratitude to Thackeray for making it difficult after reading Vanity Fair to deceive oneself into believing he was ever quite undeceived. We are hoaxed and defrauded again and again by the showman in his belled cap, yet we assume he believes in truth and strives to reveal it to us, so we listen intently, accept the reality before us, keep faith, but can never finally close our ears to the intolerable clack and squeak of the marionettes. A wretched, bitter, futile game indeed. Thus the emptiness, the void is borne in upon us; and it is given still greater weight by the consciousness of death in Vanity Fair which is nearly continuous.25

Somehow we do believe the story, which may indeed lead us to the void, but we do not arrive at our belief through totally trusting the Manager when he comes down off the stage and takes us by the hand. Why should we, after all, give our trust unquestioningly to one who, assuming once again the role of the novelist himself, reveals such blatantly mercenary motives: "The novelist, it

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has been said before, knows everything, and as I am in a situation to be able to tell the public how Crawley and his wife lived without any income, may I entreat the public newspapers which are in the habit of extracting portions of the various periodical works now published, not to reprint the following exact narrative and calculations—of which I ought, as the discoverer (and at some expense, too), to have the benefit" (Ch. 36).

But of course this is just one of the Manager's poses, though we should not overlook the implication that he himself has been to the Fair and been cozened. A much more interesting passage to examine is one in which we are forced, perhaps despite ourselves, to take the Manager at his word. Of all the excellent writing that occurs in Vanity Fair, the following strikes me as among the most sophisticated and rhetorically effective passages:

Sick-bed homilies and pious reflections are, to be sure, out of place in mere story-books, and we are not going (after the fashion of some novelists of the present day) to cajole the public into a sermon, when it is only a comedy that the reader pays his money to witness. But without preaching, the truth may surely be borne in mind, that the bustle, and triumph, and laughter, and gaiety which Vanity Fair exhibits in public, do not always pursue the performer into private life, and that the most dreary depression of spirits and dismal repentances sometimes overcome him. . . . O brother
wearers of motley! Are there not moments when one grows' sick of grinning and tumbling, and the jingling of cap and bells? This, dear friends and companions, is my amiable object—to walk with you through the Fair, to examine the shops and the shows there; and that we should all come home after the flare, and the noise, and the gaiety, and be perfectly miserable in private. (Ch. 19)

In a prose style marked by its restrained tone and simple diction, but which constantly builds towards its climax, the Manager begins with a blatant untruth about "mere story-books" (which he knows his is not), takes a passing swipe at other novelists, and insults our motivation (the "public" is all of us readers—no fictive audience in this case) by stating that our only interest is a comedy. Then, after delivering an obvious pious reflection, he joins himself

This Manager, by the way, has an extraordinarily curious idea of "comedy." We have already noted his reference to his "Comic history"; near the end of Vanity Fair, in a long passage dealing with the certainty of death for all of us—and the negligible effect that event will have on those we leave behind—he remarks that "the doctor will come up to us too for the last time there, my friend in motley. The nurse will look in at the curtains, and you take no notice—and then she will fling open the windows for a little, and let in the air. . . . Your comedy and mine will have been played then, and we shall be removed, oh how far, from the trumpets, and the shouting, and the posture-making" (Ch. 61). He is very comforting, this friend and brother of ours.
with us as "brother wearers of motley"—performers in Vanity Fair. Since, by this point, the story has moved out of the booth in the fair into history and the larger society, there is no escaping the implication and no possibility of separating ourselves from the story. In an obviously ironic address, we, the Manager's "dear friends and companions," are invited to stroll with him through the Fair, only to come home afterwards and be "perfectly miserable in private." This is hardly an "amiable" or comic purpose; indeed, it is a remarkably grim one. We have been warned, however, and so have no excuse for ignoring the consequences of continued reading.

Perhaps it is to help us be more miserable that the Manager is sometimes so cynical. At one point, for example, he remarks that "if Miss Rebecca Sharp had determined in her heart upon making the conquest of this big beau, I don't think, ladies, we have any right to blame her; for though the task of husband-hunting is generally, and with becoming modesty, entrusted by young persons to their mammas, recollect that Miss Sharp had no kind parent to arrange these delicate matters for her, and that if she did not get a husband for herself, there was no one else in the wide world who would take the trouble off her hands" (Ch. 3). On its
deepest level, the comment is absolutely valid, and it offers a sound criticism of the system of love and marriage it describes. Likewise, the following remark may at first appear to be merely another one of the Manager's mocking about-faces, but the more one ponders it the more likely one is to be forced into agreeing with its basic soundness:

And who knows but Rebecca was right in her speculations—and that it was only a question of money and fortune which made the difference between her and an honest woman? If you take temptations into account, who is to say that he is better than his neighbour? A comfortable career of prosperity, if it does not make people honest, at least keeps them so. An alderman coming from a turtle feast will not step out of his carriage to steal a leg of mutton; but put him to starve, and see if he will not purloin a loaf. (Ch. 41)

The careful—and therefore disturbed—reader of these comments is also going to find that he has become an implied reader who will have difficulty making snap judgments about Becky.

The narrator goes even beyond his apparent deep cynicism to deliver comments downright brutal in their implications. He says at one point that "if Messrs. Howell and James were to publish a list of the purchasers of all the trinkets which they sell, how surprised would some families be: and if all these ornaments went to gentlemen's lawful
wives and daughters, what a profusion of jewellery there
would be exhibited in the genteelest homes of Vanity Fair" (Ch. 30). Later he remarks that

to know nothing, or little, is in the nature of
some husbands. To hide, in the nature of how
many women? O ladies! how many of you have
surreptitious milliner's bills? How many of
you have gowns and bracelets, which you dare'n't
show, or which you wear trembling?—trembling,
and coaxing with smiles the husband by your
side, who does not know the new velvet gown from
the old one, or the new bracelet from last
year's, or has any notion that the ragged-looking yellow lace scarf cost forty guineas, and
that Madame Bobinot is writing dunning letters
every week for the money! (Ch. 48)

I do not think these passages are terribly significant for
the creation of the novel's implied readers, but they may
have had a great capacity for producing guilt or suspicion
among the respectable husbands and wives who formed the
actual first audience of Vanity Fair.

As I have said, the narrator/Manager dons various masks
and performs various functions in his continued efforts to
keep us off balance. Occasionally he is in fact what most
readers and many critics take him to be on occasion, the
straightforward moralist and teacher, seemingly without
irony or sarcasm. Supported by the events of the story and simply stated, these generalizations seem meant to be taken seriously:

Her heart was dead long before her body. She had sold it to become Sir Pitt Crawley's wife. Mothers and daughters are making the same bargain every day in Vanity Fair. (Ch. 14)

Time out of mind strength and courage have been the theme of bards and romances; and from the story of Troy down to to-day, poetry has always chosen a soldier for a hero. I wonder is it because men are cowards in heart that they admire bravery so much, and place military valour so far beyond every other quality for reward and worship? (Ch. 30)

It is difficult to say what good the old man saw in these combats; he had a vague notion that quarrelling made boys hardy, and that tyranny was a useful accomplishment for them to learn. English youth have been so educated time out of mind, and we have hundreds of thousands of apologists and admirers of injustice, misery, and brutality as perpetrated among children. (Ch. 56)

At other times, however, one cannot be so positive. The following passage, for example, seems at first glance to be another piece of moral exhortation: "The hidden and awful Wisdom which apportions the destinies of mankind is pleased so to humiliate and cast down the tender, good, and wise; and to set up the selfish, the foolish, or the wicked. Oh, be humble, my brother, in your prosperity! Be gentle with those who are less lucky, if not more deserving."
Think, what right have you to be scornful, whose virtue is a deficiency of temptation, whose success may be a chance, whose rank may be an ancestor's accident, whose prosperity is very likely a satire" (Ch. 57). Being consciously opposed to brutality among school-children is one thing; being consciously humble is quite another, and may, indeed, smack of vanity. I think that we as readers are probably correct if we suspect from the inflated rhetoric that the Manager is having at us and mocking us once again—but mocking us with the intention of creating the ideal readers who will not only perceive the mockery and the serious intent contained in the passage but will also appreciate the moral complexities this conjunction of mockery and seriousness gives rise to.

Far more often than he is apparently serious, however, the Manager is delivering himself of homilies, generalizations, and rhetorical questions whose intent is clearly mocking and ironic. He may pretend ignorance and leave us with a question to consider, as in this example: "Her sister, meanwhile, was having children with finer names every year—and the intercourse between the two grew fainter continually. 'Jane and I do not move in the same sphere of life,' Mrs.
Bullock said. 'I regard her as a sister, of course'—which means—what does it mean when a lady says that she regards Jane as a sister" (Ch. 42)? Or he may pose as the cynical mentor, offering good advice:

The different conduct of these two people is pointed out respectfully to the attention of persons commencing the world. Praise everybody, I say to such: never be squeamish, but speak out your compliment both point-blank in a man's face, and behind his back, when you know there is a reasonable chance of his hearing it again. Never lose a chance of saying a kind word. As Collingwood never saw a vacant place in his estate but he took an acorn out of his pocket and popped it in; so deal with your compliments through life. An acorn costs nothing; but it may sprout into a prodigious bit of timber. (Ch. 19)

Sometimes the Manager will side with a character in his rationalizations, as he does here with Becky: "She was immensely happy to be free of the place, and yet loath to go. Queen's Crawley was abominably stupid; and yet the air there was somehow purer than that which she had been accustomed to breathe. Everybody had been dull, but had been kind in their way. 'It is all the influence of a long course of Three per Cents,' Becky said to herself, and was right very likely" (Ch. 51). Or he will totally accept the world's reasoning and calmly justify what we, the readers in the process of creation, identify as the most outrageous
kind of immoral behavior:

When one man has been under very remarkable obligations to another, with whom he subsequently quarrels, a common sense of decency, as it were, makes of the former a much severer enemy than a mere stranger would be. To account for your own hard-heartedness and ingratitude in such a case, you are bound to prove the other party's crime. It is not that you are selfish, brutal, and angry at the failure of a speculation—no, no—it is that your partner has led you into it by the basest treachery and with the most sinister motives. From a mere sense of consistency, a persecutor is bound to show that the fallen man is a villain—otherwise he, the persecutor, is a wretch himself. And as a general rule, which may make all creditors who are inclined to be severe, pretty comfortable in their minds, no men embarrassed are altogether honest, very likely. . . . Who has not remarked the readiness with which the closest of friends and honestest of men suspect and accuse each other of cheating when they fall out on money matters? Everybody does it. Everybody is right, I suppose, and the world is a rogue. (Ch. 18)

All of this sort of thing should, of course, make us extremely uncomfortable, as it works toward our creation as ideal readers.

In the same vein, the Manager frequently turns his sarcasm against aspects of the British character and social structure. In the following short asides, for instance, he slashes out at servants' servility (though this remark surely cuts both ways), the obsequiousness of the middle class, and the arrogant pride of the "high-bred British
female".

Isidor, the valet . . . hated Mr. Osborne, whose conduct to him, and to all inferiors, was generally overbearing (nor does the continental domestic like to be treated with insolence as our own better-tempered servants do). (Ch. 31)

The old gentleman pronounced these aristocratic names with the greatest gusto. Whenever he met a great man he grovelled before him, and my-lorded him as only a free-born Briton can do. (Ch. 13)

And so, determined to cut their new acquaintance in Bond Street, these great folks went to eat his dinner at Brussels, and condescending to make him pay for their pleasure, showed their dignity by making his wife uncomfortable, and carefully excluding her from the conversation. This is a species of dignity in which the high-bred British female reigns supreme. To watch the behaviour of a fine lady to other and humbler women is a very good sport for a philosophical frequenter of Vanity Fair. (Ch. 28)

In instances such as these the Manager unequivocally aligns himself with moral values that, presumably, we as readers in the process of creation are expected to accept. At other times, however, he does an about-face and ironically presents himself as one of the Vanity Fair worldlings, especially in matters relating to the aristocracy: "in a word, the whole baronetage, peerage, commonage of England did not contain a more cunning, mean, selfish, foolish, dis-reputable old man. That blood-red hand of Sir Pitt Crawley's would be in anybody's pocket except his own; and it is with
grief and pain that, as admirers of the British aristocracy, we find ourselves obliged to admit the existence of so many ill qualities in a person whose name is in Debrett" (Ch. 9). He tells us how he himself admires "that admiration which the genteel world sometimes extends to the commonality. There is no more agreeable object in life than to see Mayfair folks condescending" (Ch. 14). And late in the novel we see him swelling "with pride as these august names are transcribed by my pen; and I think in what brilliant company my dear Becky is moving" (Ch. 51).

It can be argued that these are fairly inconsequential remarks and that their irony is obvious; yet they do serve to keep us on our toes. If the Manager assumed only one mask from behind which to condemn the values and conduct of Vanity Fair, he could easily create readers who would fall in with his view unquestioningly and become smug moralists. It is true that the Manager's various masks and poses actually conceal a steady and consistent moral stance, a morality which, I believe, reveals the implied author's consistent condemnation of Vanity Fair values. But surely the Manager's ambivalence and the multiplicity of the masks he dons are meant to reflect an ambivalence which exists
in all of us, and though we can, with him, easily recognize and condemn toady and arrogance, we should also recognize that given the right circumstances we too are capable of toady and bullying our inferiors. The implied reader who accepts the view that the world and human nature are complex and that easy moralizing is not an adequate response will perhaps be much more receptive to those instances, like the following, when the Manager really crosses us up:

I protest it is quite shameful in the world to abuse a simple creature, as people of her time abused Becky, and I warn the public against believing one-tenth of the stories against her.27 If every person is to be banished from society who runs into debt and cannot pay—if we are to be peering into everybody's private life, speculating upon their income, and cutting them if we don't approve of their expenditure—why what a howling wilderness and intolerable dwelling Vanity Fair would be! Every man's hand would be against his neighbour in this case, my dear sir, and the benefits of civilization would be done away with. We should be quarrelling, abusing, avoiding one another. Our houses would become caverns: and we should go in rags because we cared for nobody. Rents would go down. Parties wouldn't be given anymore. All the tradesmen of the town would be bankrupt. Wine, wax-lights, comestibles, rouge, crinoline petticoats, diamonds, wigs, Louis Quatorze gimcracks,

27Stories, of course, which are all related by him. We have got to be careful every minute with this motley-wearing brother of ours.
and old china, park hacks, and splendid high-stepping carriage horses—all the delights of life, I say—would go to the deuce, if people did but act upon their silly principles, and avoid those whom they dislike and abuse. Whereas, by a little charity and mutual forbearance, things are made to go on pleasantly enough: we may abuse a man as much as we like, and call him the greatest rascal unhung—but do we wish to hang him therefore? No. We shake hands when we meet. If his cook is good we forgive him, and go and dine with him; and we expect he will do the same by us. Thus trade flourishes—civilization advances: peace is kept. (Ch. 51)

Here the Manager has presented us with an inescapable dilemma. The morality from which he argues is abhorrent—for "a little charity and mutual forbearance" read "hypocrisy"—and yet we know that we live by his conclusions every day of our lives in most of our relationships, and thus contribute to the advance of civilization. Or at least we should know it if our creation as perceptive implied readers has kept pace with the narrative. If it has not, we may rail, as many of his original critics did, at Thackeray's cynicism.

The narrator/Manager is fond of articulating in an ostensibly straightforward, non-ironic manner judgments which should shock us into recognizing that although they are not valid within the context of the novel, we have probably been guilty of similar thinking in our own social and familial relationships. For instance, after presenting
a scene in which Amelia has been ignored by everyone, including her husband George, the Manager says that "Amelia was making a fool of herself in an absurd hysterical manner, and retired to her own room to whimper in private" (Ch. 25). The perspective is exactly that of the people who have been wounding her and who are so wrapped up in their own selfishness that they cannot empathize at all with another human's pain. Similarly, in another description of Amelia's troubles, the narrator concludes a sympathetic description with a phrase of brutal insensitivity that mirrors the judgment of those around her:

always to be pining for something which, when obtained, brought doubt and sadness rather than pleasure: here was the lot of our poor little creature, and harmless lost wanderer in the great struggling crowds of Vanity Fair. Here she sat, and recalled to herself fondly that image of George to which she had knelt before marriage. Did she own to herself how different the real man was from that superb young hero whom she had worshipped? It requires many, many years—and a man must be very bad indeed—before a woman's pride and vanity will let her own to such a confession. Then Rebecca's twinkling green eyes and baleful smile lighted upon her, and filled her with dismay. And so she sat for a while indulging in her usual mood of selfish brooding. (Ch. 26)

The Manager has a way of dropping a phrase about a character that rips the facade off a whole complex of social
values, as when he mentions "Miss Swartz, the rich woolly-haired mulatto from St. Kitts . . . (who paid double)" (Ch. 1). Nothing more need be said about Miss Pinkerton and the moral values with which she operates her school for young ladies. Given this habit, however, he can be highly ambiguous, as when he remarks that "Miss Sharp . . . had previously made a respectful virgin-like curtsy to the gentleman" (Ch. 3). As we become increasingly watchful of everything this Manager says, and as more of Becky's vagabond youth is revealed to us, we are likely to recall that ambiguous adjective, "virgin-like," and wonder whether he was indeed implying something beyond the fact that Becky's ingenuousness was but a pose. We cannot be sure, because we can never ultimately be positive of anything he says, but he does frequently work through implication and innuendo. He certainly condemns Becky roundly enough at various times, but he also admires and sympathizes with her and asks us to do so as well. He remarks, for instance, that "in later days Miss Sharp would never have committed herself so far as to advance opinions, the untruth of which would have been so easily detected. But we must remember that she is but nineteen as yet, unused to the art of deceiving, poor innocent creature! and making her own experience in her own
person" (Ch. 2). The heavy sarcasm somewhat spoils the effect, but as careful readers we perceive that Becky is indeed making her own way in a society that offers only models of deception and hypocrisy (remember the treatment of Miss Swartz) and that basically she is a "poor innocent creature." In a much later comment the Manager observes that "in fêtes, pleasures, and prosperity, the winter of 1815-16 passed away with Mrs. Rawdon Crawley, who accommodated herself to polite life as if her ancestors had been people of fashion for centuries past—and who from her wit, talent, and energy, indeed merited a place of honour in Vanity Fair" (Ch. 34). There is a note of admiration here, and we are meant to share it. Wit, talent, and energy are positive attributes, especially when we are given a panoramic view of a society controlled by rigid class prejudices and barriers. Given the amoral world of Vanity Fair, which is the world of the readers as well, the talented and vivacious Becky does indeed merit a place of honor, and once again the Manager has made it impossible for his implied reader to make any easy moral generalizations or judgments.
The creation and manipulation of a fictive audience by the Manager is a technique of implied-reader formation quite as complicated, even confusing, as any of the others I have been discussing. On the most obvious level is the creation of certain types of people who are then addressed specifically or generically for the purposes of satire and education. Early in the novel, for instance, we see a clearly sarcastic address aimed at Jones, a type of the club-going sensualist who fancies himself a critic: "All which details, I have no doubt, Jones, who reads this book at his Club, will pronounce to be excessively foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental. Yes; I can see Jones at this minute (rather flushed with his joint of mutton and half-pint of wine), taking out his pencil and scoring under the words 'foolish, twaddling,' &c., and adding to them his own remark of 'quite true.' Well, he is a lofty man of genius, and admires the great and heroic in life and novels; and so had better take warning and go elsewhere" (Ch. 1). Little more is involved here than a laugh by narrator and reader at a type we presumably recognize, and the same is true of such passing swipes as the following,
aimed at a type of the moral hypocrite: "The actions of very vain, heartless, pleasure-seeking people are very often improper (as are many of yours, my friend with the grave face and spotless reputation;--but that is merely by the way)" (Ch. 64). Often the Manager will even address a specifically-named character who seems to represent no particular class of people but is used merely to shape our attitudes towards the story and its characters: "I know Miss Smith has a mean opinion of her [Amelia]. But how many, my dear madam, are endowed with your prodigious strength of mind" (Ch. 25)?

This sort of fictive-audience creation is, however, rather inconsequential on the whole. More important, I think, are those occasions when the Manager uses a generic form of address so that, rhetorically, the distinctions between fictive audience and real audience become somewhat ambiguous:

There are things we do and know perfectly well in Vanity Fair, though we never speak them ... and a polite public will no more bear to read an authentic description of vice than a truly refined English or American female will permit the word "breeches" to be pronounced in her chaste hearing. And yet, madam, both are walking the world before our faces every day, without much shocking us. If you were to blush every time they went by, what complexions
you would have! It is only when their naughty names are called out that your modesty has any occasion to show alarm or sense of outrage. (Ch. 64)

The example is dated now, but the sentiment is still accurate, and the passage works well. Addressed to the fictive prude of the novel, it includes everyone, since the mention of "English or American female" makes explicit what has hitherto existed inferentially: "Vanity Fair" includes the world outside as well as inside the novel. If the real reader has a touch of the prude in him, he should respond by recognizing—and hopefully abhorring—it, and thus he is on his way to becoming a created implied reader who will reject such prudery.

Two of the most effective devices used by the narrator are the adoption for both himself and his reader of the values of Vanity Fair and the constant linkage of himself with his reader through addresses which employ some form of "brother" or "brethren." They are effective because once again they enter that ambiguous grey area somewhere between the purely fictive audience and the real one, and thus further the creation of implied readers through the discomfort they cause the real ones. For instance, taking an unctuous and fatherly attitude, the Manager says that
"by humbly and frankly acknowledging yourself to be in the wrong, there is no knowing, my son, what good you may do," a perfectly acceptable platitude; however, he continues with, "I knew once a gentleman, and very worthy practitioner in Vanity Fair, who used to do little wrongs to his neighbours on purpose, and in order to apologize for them in an open and manly way afterwards—and what ensued? My friend Crocky Doyle was liked everywhere, and deemed to be rather impetuous—but the honestest fellow" (Ch. 22). The real reader should be shocked to realize that such behavior will probably produce the described effect. Likewise, the Manager has a habit of ironically attributing to his readers the pride and arrogance endemic to the world of Vanity Fair: "I hope the reader has much too good an opinion of Captain and Mrs. Crawley to suppose that they ever would have dreamed of paying a visit to so remote a district as Bloomsbury, if they thought the family whom they proposed to honour with a visit were not merely out of fashion, but out of money, and could be serviceable to them in no possible manner" (Ch. 17). In an allied remark, the Manager says that "in a word everybody went to wait upon this great man [the evil Lord Steyne]—everybody who was asked: as you the reader (do not
say nay) or I the writer hereof would go if we had an in-

vitation" (Ch. 47). The thing is, he is probably right,
as he is when he dissect our relations with rich relatives:

What a dignity it gives an old lady, that
balance at the banker's! How tenderly we look
at her faults, if she is a relative (and may
every reader have a score of such), what a kind,
good-natured old creature we find her! . . .
How, when she comes to pay us a visit, we gen-
erally find an opportunity to let our friends
know her station in the world! We say (and
with perfect truth) I wish I had Miss MacWhirter's
signature to a cheque for five thousand pounds.
She wouldn't miss it, says your wife. She is my
aunt, say you, in an easy careless way, when
your friend asks if Miss MacWhirter is any
relative? Your wife is perpetually sending her
little testimonies of affection, your little
girls work endless worsted baskets, cushions,
and footstools for her. What a good fire there
is in her room when she comes to pay you a visit,
although your wife laces her stays without one!
. . . Is it so, or is it not so? I appeal to the
middle classes [a wonderful touch, that]. (Ch. 9)

The Manager is perhaps most insidious of all, however,
when he is brotherly and solicitous: "And let us, my
brethren who have not our names in the Red Book, console our-
selves by thinking comfortably how miserable our betters
may be, and that Damocles, who sits on satin cushions, and
is served on gold plate, has an awful sword hanging over
his head in the shape of a bailiff, or an hereditary disease,
or a family secret, which peeps out every now and then from
the embroidered arras in a ghastly manner, and will be sure to drop one day or the other in the right place" (Ch. 47).

The sly Manager slips such passages by us so easily and without commotion that we have got to be on our toes constantly: if this is the best he can do by way of consolation, then all of us are in pretty bad shape indeed.

vii

I have been examining various ways in which the narrator/Manager assumes roles, delivers himself of ironies, sarcasms, and satires, and addresses his readers. All of these techniques work to create implied readers who will recognize their own vanities and their stratagems for surviving in the large world of Vanity Fair, but they do so only in fragmentary and limited ways. Surely the end product of this complex novel is not merely an implied reader who recognizes that he has it in him to debase himself before a rich relative; but if it is not, what can we say about the implied reader who is created by the novel as a whole, and of the implied author who created that novel? A great deal has been written about *Vanity Fair*, and some of it has an important enough bearing on these questions to demand attention.
One major work which argues a thesis it seeks to apply to most of the significant Victorian fiction generally is J. Hillis Miller's *The Form of Victorian Fiction*. Miller's treatment of *Vanity Fair* is indicative of his approach, and the following comment provides a capsule summary of his thesis:

The narrator of *Vanity Fair* moves from one assumed voice to another. One quality of his voice, however, identifies him as a perfect example of a spokesman for the general consciousness of the community. This is his use of the editorial "we." The novel is punctuated by direct addresses to the reader in which he is encouraged to think of himself as one of a vast number of other readers who share similar experiences of life and similar judgments of it. We are asked to identify ourselves with one another and with the narrator who speaks for us until by a kind of magical sympathy we lose our identities, are drawn into the group, and taken all together come to form a ubiquitous chorus of judgment, the whole middle and upper class Victorian community surrounding the stories of Becky and Amelia, and judging them collectively or allowing the narrator to judge them in our names.28

One hates to say it, but this is almost total nonsense. In the first place, when the narrator does use the "we" technique, it is sometimes clearly the editorial "we," while at other times it is used to link both narrator and reader

(usually fictive) to the sordid world of Vanity Fair." More importantly, however, it is surely wrong to speak of being asked to identify ourselves exclusively with other readers or, especially, with the narrator. Much of the rhetoric of the addresses is designed to cut special types of readers out of the pack and hold them up to the light of mockery, and how can we identify with this Manager of the Performance who cannot be trusted even to give us straight information on such a trivial question as whether or not he is married? We can never be quite sure as readers when the narrator is levelling with us and when he is mocking us, and, as a result, the whole matter of judgment is left up in the air exactly because of this distrust that we, as implied readers, must develop. Certainly we cannot expect the narrator to judge for us, since, basically, he refuses to do so, and if he refuses, what grounds are we left with?

Early in the novel, in what appears to be a significant passage, the Manager warns us that

my kind reader will please to remember that this history has "Vanity Fair" for a title, and that Vanity Fair is a very vain, wicked, foolish place, full of all sorts of humbugs and falsenesses and pretensions. And while the moralist, who is holding forth on the cover (an accurate portrait of your humble servant), professes to wear neither
gowns nor bands, but only the very same long-eared livery in which his congregation is arrayed: yet, look you, one is bound to speak the truth as far as one knows it, whether one mounts a cap and bells or a shovel-hat; and a deal of disagreeable matter must come out in the course of such an undertaking. (Ch. 8)

Possibly overlooking the implications of "humbugs and false-nesses and pretensions" coming from the pen of one who is very much a part of the Fair, we are likely to retain the impression that we will get the truth "as far as one knows it." Yet as Ann Y. Wilkinson has shown, the nature of the truth and the extent to which the narrator does know it soon become important questions. Even in terms of gossip, however, how far does the Manager attempt to tell the truth? We have already looked at this question to some extent in relation to Becky's guilt, but what about the "deal of disagreeable matter" that is supposed to come out in the course of his undertaking? Late in the novel we find the Manager telling us that

it has been the wish of the present writer, all through this story, deferentially to submit to the fashion at present prevailing, and only to hint at the existence of wickedness in a light, easy, and agreeable manner, so that nobody's fine feelings may be offended. I defy anyone to say that our Becky, who has certainly some vices, has not been presented to the public in a perfectly genteel and inoffensive manner. In describing this siren, singing and smiling,
coaxing and cajoling, the author, with modest pride, asks his readers all round, has he once forgotten the laws of politeness, and showed the monster's hideous tail above water? No! Those who like may peep down under waves that are pretty transparent, and see it writhing and twirling, diabolically hideous and slimy, flapping amongst bones, or curling around corpses; but above the water line, I ask, has not everything been proper, agreeable, and decorous, and has any the most squeamish immoralist in Vanity Fair a right to cry fie? (Ch. 64)

So, we get servile cringing before the moral hypocrisies of the world he is attacking, and for disagreeable matter we get a metaphor—one which is grossly inappropriate to anything we have learned about Becky. In fact, the metaphor, with its implications, even contradicts those passages in which the Manager has indicated considerable admiration for Becky. Or, when he remarks, shortly after delivering the metaphor, that "I am inclined to think that there was a period in Mrs. Becky's life, when she was seized, not by remorse, but by a kind of despair, and absolutely neglected her person, and did not even care for her reputation" (Ch. 64), does the implied sexual looseness justify the hideous imagery of the metaphor? It is difficult to think so.

Ann Y. Wilkinson has argued that "the novel [Vanity Fair] becomes a kind of existential document, in the way
that 'My Last Duchess' is. It is an experience that takes place in the reading of the novel, with the reader involved in half-truths, malice, and sentiment, and left just as frustrated as the persona in his inept attempts to get at what is really happening. This is a good description of the way the actively involved reader may feel after finishing the novel, but it strikes me as rather inappropriate for the narrator, who does not seem particularly frustrated; in fact, he seems remarkably in control, no matter what he is saying or how contradictory it is. At times he is quite fatalistic, even about his own role. Speaking of Miss Crawley's rejection of Rawdon and Becky, the Manager notes that "if Rawdon Crawley had been then and there present, instead of being at the club nervously drinking claret, the pair might have gone down on their knees before the old spinster, avowed all, and been forgiven in a twinkling. But that good chance was denied to the young couple, doubtless in order that this story might be written, in which numbers of their wonderful adventures are narrated—adventures which could never have occurred to them if they had been housed and sheltered under the comfortable uninteresting

forgiveness of Miss Crawley" (Ch. 16). Later he says that "I suppose it was because it was predestined that I was to write this particular lady's [Amelia's] memoirs, that I remarked her" (Ch. 62), a thought which may very well imply that in respect to the ultimate fate controlling the world the Manager himself is as much a puppet as are those characters whose story he tells.

Harriet Blodgett, another perceptive critic, has written that "the narrator in his interrelated roles of preacher (yet also participant in Vanity Fair), puppeteer, and self-conscious author imposes upon the reader the novel's theme of human imperfections or vanities: false values, false emotions—hence, elusive happiness." Yet that theme is entirely negative in its implications, and in all my talk so far about created implied readers, I have stressed positive values that are produced through the dissection of the negative values of Vanity Fair. Finally, however, in talking about the implied reader created by the whole of Vanity Fair, I believe that we are indeed pointing to a reader left standing on the edge of the void.

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of nihilism, realizing that, in fact, nothing has very much meaning, knowledge of facts is elusive, and judgment is ultimately impossible. Such little discussion of the matter as we have from Thackeray the person seems to bear out the grimness of this conclusion. In July, 1847, writing to his mother, Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth, Thackeray said, "of course you are quite right about Vanity Fair and Amelia being selfish— it is mentioned in this very number. My object is not to make a perfect character or anything like it. Don't you see how odious all the people are in the book (with exception of Dobbin)— behind whom all there lies a dark moral I hope. What I want is to make a set of people living without God in the world (only that is a cant phrase) greedy pompous mean perfectly self-satisfied for the most part and at ease about their superior virtue." 31 A year later, in September, 1848, he wrote to Robert Bell, a critic, that if I had put in more fresh air as you call it my object would have been defeated— It is to indicate, in cheerful terms, that we are for the most part an abominably foolish and selfish people "desperately wicked" and all eager after vanities. Everybody is you see in that book. . . . I want to leave everybody dissatis-

fled and unhappy at the end of the story—we ought all to be with our own and all other stories. Good God don't I see (in that may-be cracked and warped looking glass in which I am always looking) my own weaknesses wickednesses lusts follies shortcomings? ... We must lift up our voices about these and howl to a congregation of fools: so much at least has been my endeavour. You have all of you taken my misanthropy to task— I wish I could myself: but take the world by a certain standard (you know what I mean) and who dares talk of having any virtue at all? (Letters ..., II, 423-4)

Thackeray the historical person appears to be speaking pretty much as implied author in these letters, and his intentions regarding Vanity Fair seem quite clear.

The Manager of Vanity Fair ends his performance with the famous "Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?—Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out" (Ch. 67). The rhetorical questions may be clichés, but in the context of the novel preceding them, their implied answers are also true, and I think (to perhaps state the perfectly obvious) that in an essential way the "children" addressed are the novel's implied readers: what, after all, have we been created for if not to realize that in the face of our desires, actions, and thoughts we are children—unaware and innocent? Even more,
we, like the novel's characters, are puppets who are jerked and moved about by our desires and passions. The Manager has presented himself as the puppet-master, but he has also presented himself as simply the predestined teller of the tale, and this role is the truer one, for the characters do indeed pull their own strings and dance their own dance, whether it be Dobbin's dance of unrequited devotion, Amelia's of a human god to worship, or Becky's of a social order to conquer.

Ioan M. Williams has remarked of this point that "none of the characters acquire the status of human beings; all are puppets in a very real sense, driven by their own desires rather than purposefully seeking an object worthy of the devotion of complete men and women. From time to time certain of them realize the direction in which they are being impelled and have sufficient strength of character, to alter their course. For others an essential poverty of nature makes it impossible to do anything but hover and swim along on the tide of their own desires." 32 Let us not forget, however, that the question of perspective is not quite

as easily disposed of as Williams may imply here. Part of *Vanity Fair*'s rhetoric has operated to distance us from the characters and their story so that we may judge, but another part of it has operated to identify us with the characters and the world of *Vanity Fair* so that we may have something to judge: our own vanities and our complicity. In a passage halfway through the novel the Manager remarks that "you and I, my dear reader, may drop into this condition [specifically, that of old Mr. Sedley] one day: for have not many of our friends attained it? Our luck may fail: our powers forsake us: our place on the boards be taken by better and younger mimes—the chance of life roll away and leave us shattered and stranded" (Ch. 38). James H. Wheatley has cogently observed that "to the satirist—and to John Bunyan—*Vanity Fair* is a separate domain, walled and recognizable, on the spiritual landscape. To the realist, however, the walls are down, and citizenship in that city has become universal. All men are in *Vanity Fair* instead of the other way around—instead of *Vanity Fair* being merely one of many spiritual possibilities." 33 The world is *Vanity

Fair, and we are all performers of one kind or another in our attempts to live and survive in the world. The implication of the Manager's method seems clear: the stage and the fairgrounds are both populated by puppet-people and by people-puppets.

D. H. Stewart is the most extreme of the modern existential Thackerayan critics, but I think he reveals the essence of *Vanity Fair* when he writes that

in Thackeray every value is somewhere negated. All that one is left with is the excruciating *Geworfenheit* of man (the being thrown) into the stream of time. That is why the truest gesture Thackeray ever made was slamming the lid shut on his puppets at the end—to the dismay and aggravation of most critics. . . . Thackeray willed these living, three-dimensional human beings into existence, breathed life into them, compelled our eyes to believe in their reality as surely as we believe in our own. But then the inevitable and infallible Thackerayan grimace, and bang! the box goes shut. Our pretty follies must end—including our art. Surely the author who will calumniate Empire and Church, impugn even that Supreme Power to whom Amelia prayed, mock men and men's works and men's mores—such an author will mock men's art too. The inflated value placed on art by Flaubert and Yeats is little more than a desperate modern prejudice, however comforting. What Thackeray seems to ask is this: who are we, for all our talent and energy, to presume that either our creations or we ourselves are of much worth? We may be men; but we are also, sadly,
only instruments—sometimes highly specialized, as for example when we are artists. And the show, after all, is an old one.\textsuperscript{34}

Of course, Stewart's observation—and this is its weakness—applies not to "Thackeray," but to \textit{Vanity Fair} and to that aspect of Thackeray which became the implied-author creator of a work whose implied reader finds himself after finishing it face to face with ultimate despair. This is a despair which he must cope with himself because the novel as a whole, bleakly ironic as it is, contains no values large enough to give him a solid support. Several modern critics have written perceptively about \textit{Vanity Fair}, but it seems to me that often their criticism is weakened by their failure to take into account the final impact of the whole novel or by their failure to make the distinctions which are the basis of this dissertation. I believe that by paying careful attention to these distinctions we must finally conclude that Thackeray's method—his use of the evasive narrator/Manager—leads us to a situation in which the moral values held by the implied author are to a large extent negated and trivialized by the world of \textit{Vanity Fair}, which either ignores them or punishes those who hold them.

\textsuperscript{34}"Life in the Void," p. 214.
A few characters, like Dobbin, can simply refuse to play the game, but most of the characters, like Becky, have very little choice, and for them winning or losing is the only moral issue. This is indeed another situation over which we can go home and be perfectly miserable in private. But the implied author of *Vanity Fair*, that particular Thackerayan second self, does not appear again, as we will see by looking at Thackeray's post-*Vanity Fair* novels.
CHAPTER III
THACKERAY AND THE POST-VANITY FAIR NOVELS

After *Vanity Fair*, a definite change occurs in Thackeray's work; the side of his personality that had gained ascendence and become the implied author of *Vanity Fair* is subordinated, to be seen thereafter only in occasional fitful outbreaks. One senses from the later novels that the implied author has somehow begun to take his narrator, his characters, and his readers more seriously and perhaps (we will have to see) to treat them more pompously. No longer is the narrator a participant in *Vanity Fair* and the manager of it, with all the biting sarcasm and melancholy pity that go with that job; no longer are the boundaries broken down so that the implied reader again finds himself both an observer of the great ebb and flow of the Fair and a participant in it. Perhaps the increased emphasis on particular social problems (e.g., the spoiling of children, arranged marriages) rather than on the existential condition of mankind has something to do with the
change, but it seems to me that the devices that appeared in *Vanity Fair* as conscious aspects of an organic whole no longer function organically in the following novels. Whereas the narrator/Manager of *Vanity Fair* has moments when he addresses us in deadly serious tones, dead seriousness becomes the prevailing characteristic of the later narrators, who increasingly appear to be loquacious preachers in pulpits rather than brother wearers of motley.

Many critics have noted the differences between *Vanity Fair* and the novels that followed it, and most have posed personal/financial reasons as the explanation. Lionel Stevenson writes, 'no wonder that readers of Thackeray's books complained uncomfortably about the dark abysses that he would sometimes momentarily reveal beneath his urbane banter. If he was to make a living by his novels, he knew he had to humor the complacent illusions and fetishes of his public; but he was too honest an artist to conceal the fact that in his own personal universe the axioms of happy men were mocking shams.'¹ Chauncey C. Loomis, Jr. writes from a slightly different angle that "in the novels following

¹The Showman of *Vanity Fair* (New York, 1947), p. 293. After 1840, Thackeray's wife had become hopelessly insane; he had to support her, of course, as well as his two young daughters.
Vanity Fair he deliberately attempted to modify his satire—to soften it by accenting the positive and by minimizing, if not eliminating, the negative. But Thackeray was a realist-satirist both by inclination and training; all he succeeded in doing in his attempts to soften his satire was to cloud and weaken his later fiction. And no matter how hard he tried to avoid it, his reputation for cynicism, far from diminishing, increased. Gordon N. Ray, with his psychological approach, speaks of "Thackeray's exhaustion, the relaxation of his intellectual and artistic standards, and his reconciliation to life" which are all reflected in the writings of his last ten years. With his break with Mrs. Brookfield he ceased to live an intense emotional life, and he had consequently to draw on capital rather than on interest in his fiction. While he reproduced the surface of life as accurately as ever, he did not cut below it as he had in Vanity Fair and Esmond. He came more and more to talk about things that have no direct connection with his story, knowing that his readers regarded him as a privileged friend of the family, whose charm, wit, and sagacity made his opinion on any topic worth having.


Perhaps it was simply an awareness that he had done everything possible with that particular aspect of himself which led Thackeray to dismiss the Manager, or perhaps it was an awareness of his effect upon readers (Ray's "privileged friend of the family"), along with a truer sense than most readers showed of what he had actually accomplished in *Vanity Fair*. In May, 1849, Thackeray wrote to Dr. John Brown and the eighty Edinburgh residents who had sent him a small silver statue that

such tokens of regard & sympathy are very precious to a writer like myself, who have some difficulty still in making people understand ... that under the mask satirical there walks about a sentimental gentleman who means not unkindly to any mortal person. ... I assure you these tokens of what I can't help acknowledging as popularity--make me humble as well as grateful--and make me feel an almost awful sense of the responsibility wh falls upon a man in such a station. Is it deserved or undeserved? Who is this that sets up to preach to mankind, and to laugh at many things wh men reverence? I hope I may be able to tell the truth always, & to see it aright, according to the eyes wh God Almighty gives me.  

This letter certainly contrasts strongly with the one concerning *Vanity Fair* he had written just a year earlier to

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Robert Bell, and it is, I think, this new sense of awesome responsibility, lacking in the implied author and especially in the narrator of *Vanity Fair*, that makes itself felt in the later implied authors and narrators and in Thackeray himself. Surely it played a part in the humorless didacticism of *The English Humourists* (first delivered as lectures in 1851, then published as a book)—the vicious attacks on Sterne and such unbelievable critical blind spots as the following from "Swift":

As in the case with madmen, certain subjects provoke him, and awaken his fits of wrath. Marriage is one of these; in a hundred passages in his writings he rages against it; rages against children; an object of constant satire, even more contemptible in his eyes than a lord's chaplain, is a poor curate with a large family. The idea of this luckless paternity never fails to bring down from him gibes and foul language. Could Dick Steele, or Goldsmith, or Fielding, in his most reckless moment of satire, have written anything like the Dean's famous 'Modest Proposal' for eating children? Not one of these but melts at the thought of childhood, fondles and caresses it. Mr. Dean has no such softness, and enters the nursery with the tread and gaiety of an ogre.⁵

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Thackeray's next novel after *Vanity Fair*, *The History of Pendennis*\(^6\) begins with a "Preface," much as *Vanity Fair* begins in its book form with "Before the Curtain"; but whereas "Before the Curtain" introduces us to the character and methods of the Manager, the "Preface" to *Pendennis* apparently gives us Thackeray himself talking, and thus illuminates some of the problems we will encounter with the rest of the novels:

If this kind of composition, of which the two years' product is now laid before the public, fail in art, as it constantly does and must, it at least has the advantage of a certain truth and honesty, which a work more elaborate might lose. In his constant communication with the reader, the writer is forced into frankness of expression, and to speak out his own mind and feelings as they urge him. Many a slip of the pen and the printer, many a word spoken in haste, he sees and would recall as he looks over his volume. It is a sort of confidential talk between writer and reader, which must often be dull, must often flag. In the course of his volubility, the perpetual speaker must of necessity lay bare his own weaknesses, vanities, peculiarities. And as we judge of a man's character, after long frequenting his society, not by one speech, or by one mood or opinion, or by one day's talk, but by the tenor of his general bearing and conversation; so of a writer, who delivers himself up to you perforce unreservedly, you say, Is he honest? Does he tell the truth in the main? Does he seem actuated by a desire to find out and speak it? Is he a quack, who shams 

\(^6\)New York, 189_, 2 vols. in one.
sentiment, or mouths for effect? Does he seek popularity by claptraps or other arts? I can no more ignore good fortune than any other chance which has befallen me. I have found many thousands more readers than I ever looked for. I have no right to say to these, You shall not find fault with my art, or fall asleep over my pages; but I ask you to believe that this person writing strives to tell the truth. If there is not that, there is nothing. . . . Many ladies have remonstrated and subscribers left me, because, in the course of the story, I described a young man resisting and affected by temptation. . . . A little more frankness than is customary has been attempted in this story; with no bad desire on the writer's part, it is hoped, and with no ill consequence to any reader. If truth is not always pleasant, at any rate truth is best, from whatever chair—from those whence graver writers or thinkers argue, as from that at which the story-teller sits as he concludes his labor, and bids his kind reader farewell.

The differences from *Vanity Fair* are numerous and obvious: an awareness of the many actual readers, of how easily they are offended, and of the writer's responsibilities to them; a more serious attitude toward the novel as a form and an assumption that striving to tell the truth is its highest—perhaps only—object; a surer belief that the truth can be known and related; and most important—and surprising from this great creator of personae—an equation of author and narrator. This last is most significant, for if Thackeray can talk in this "Preface" of the "writer," "the perpetual speaker," "this person writing," and "the
story-teller," and of judging him by what he says, small won­der that his readers equated Thackeray the historical person with his narrators; or that "when illness interrupted the appearance of Pendennis, thousands 'took the matter to heart as though some dear friend and cherished companion had been suddenly smitten,' the reason being, so David Masson believed, that 'there is no writer of the present day who has established such friendly relations between himself and the public--none whom the reader seems to know so well, none with whom he feels so familiar.'"7 I believe that the major difference between Vanity Fair and the novels that followed it is that while Vanity Fair shows clear distinctions among Thackeray the his­torical person, the implied author, and the narrator, in the subsequent novels the distinctions are blurred in the pages themselves, in the minds of the readers, and in the mind of Thackeray himself. That is, in the post-Vanity Fair novels the narrators and implied authors become virtually indistin­guishable.

Some traces of the Vanity Fair manner and techniques do, however, remain in Pendennis. One practice, which carries

through all the later novels, is that of referring to characters from earlier books, though what is important in the following passage is not the practice itself but the style:

One of the illustrious patrons of the Museum Theatre . . . was a gentleman whose name has been mentioned in a previous history; that refined patron of the arts, and enlightened lover of music and the drama, the Most Noble the Marquis of Steyne. His lordship's avocations as a statesman prevented him from attending the playhouse very often or coming very early. But he occasionally appeared at the theatre in time for the ballet, and was always received with the greatest respect by the manager, from whom he sometimes condescended to receive a visit in his box. It communicated with the stage, and when anything occurred there which particularly pleased him, when a new face made its appearance among the coryphees, or a fair dancer executed a *pas* with especial grace or agility, Mr. Wenham, Mr. Wagg, or some other aide-de-camp of the Noble Marquis, would be commissioned to go behind the scenes and express the great man's approbation, or make the inquiries which were prompted by his lordship's curiosity, or his interest in the dramatic art. He could not be seen by the audience, for Lord Steyne sat modestly behind a curtain, and looked only towards the stage—but you could know he was in the house, by the glances which all the corps-de-ballet and all the principal dancers cast towards his box. (I, Ch. 14)

The ironic manner may remind us of *Vanity Fair*—indeed, the passage is rather more explicit about Steyne's activities than is any passage in the first novel—but it is not successful; we learned to look for and expect ironic trickery of all sorts from the Manager, but in light of the
prefatory insistence on truth and of the didactic seriousness which pervades this novel, such ironic innuendoes as these assume the hue of an off-color joke—the narrator snickers and digs an elbow in our ribs. However we regarded the implied author and narrator of *Vanity Fair*, they were not guilty of such lapses in taste, and the implied reader was not created so as to appreciate such lapses.

We also saw in *Vanity Fair* a consistent, many-faceted attack on the form, techniques, and functions of the novel, and though in *Pendennis* such an attack is seriously undercut by the "Preface" I quoted, the narrator sporadically introduces similar comments. He says, for instance, that since "novelists are supposed to know everything, even the secrets of female hearts, which the owners themselves do not perhaps know, we may state that at eleven years of age Mademoiselle Betsi, as Miss Amory was then called, had felt tender emotions towards a young Savoyard organ-grinder at Paris, whom she persisted in believing to be a prince carried off from his parents" (I, Ch. 23). Such remarks are merely perfunctory, however, perhaps introduced through force of habit and lack of thought; they do not materially affect the new seriousness with which the implied author regards the novel.
Though *Pendennis*' narrator is capable of remarking unironically on "the young gentleman who is the hero of this history" (I, Ch. 2), he mostly assumes, as did the Manager, the impossibility of heroism; but he does so with a new seriousness about the characters themselves. He remarks that "one to another the sobbing women sang laments upon their hero, who, my worthy reader has long since perceived, is no more a hero than either one of us" (II, Ch. 15) and requests that "knowing how mean the best of us is, let us give a hand of charity to Arthur Pendennis, with all his faults and shortcomings, who does not claim to be a hero, but only a man and a brother" (II, Ch. 37). The emphasis has shifted from brotherhood in motley and folly to brotherhood in serious humanity, and the narrator pointedly does not call our attention to the fact that Arthur Pendennis is a "spoony," though he clearly is one. The effect the narrator intends the novel to have on his readers has also shifted. Whereas the Manager indicated that we were all to come home and be perfectly miserable in private, the narrator of *Pendennis* issues this invitation: "Well, friend, let us walk through the day, sober and sad, but friendly" (I, Ch. 30).

Many critics have noted that the sentimental side of
Amelia Sedley, often treated ironically in *Vanity Fair*, is emphasized and portrayed with the utmost seriousness in Laura Bell and Helen Pendennis (Arthur's mother), Pendennis' two major female characters. In fact, the narrator uses and expands the same image that was introduced quite briefly at the close of *Vanity Fair*; but whereas in *Vanity Fair* it was used with a deadly irony, in *Pendennis* one is certainly tempted to read it seriously:

Laura once said to Helen, "If Pen had loved me as you wished, I should have gained him, but I should have lost you, mamma. I know I should; and I like you to love me best. Men do not know what it is to love as we do, I think." . . . For my part, I suppose Miss Laura was right in both statements, and with regard to the latter assertion especially, that it is an old and received truism—love is an hour with us: it is all night and all day with a woman. Damon has taxes, sermon, parade, tailors' bills, parliamentary duties, and the deuce knows what, to think of; Delia has to think about Damon—Damon is the oak (or the post), and stands up, and Delia is the ivy or the honeysuckle whose arms twine about him. Is it not so, Delia? Is it not your nature to creep about his feet and kiss them, to twine round his trunk and hang there; and Damon's to stand like a British man with his hands in his breeches pocket, while the pretty fond parasite clings round him? (II, Ch. 18)

In *Vanity Fair* the implied reader was created to feel and appreciate the shock of the ivy metaphor; in *Pendennis* he is not so created, and whether the metaphor here is intended
ironically or not (in the context of the whole novel, it becomes just that much more ambiguous), the implied reader is unprepared for it and is thus confused.

To note one more specific parallel with *Vanity Fair*, we can also remark the narrator saying that "what Pen had to tell, through a multiplicity of sobs and interruptions, must be compressed briefly, for behold our prescribed limit is reached, and our tale is coming to its end" (II, Ch. 37). Compared with the brilliant ironic crescendo of the Manager's "here it is--the summit, the end--the last page of the third volume," the remark from *Pendennis* is merely gratuitous, aimed at an implied reader unequipped to appreciate it or to fit it into any prepared context.

Still, as a *bildungsroman* concerned with the moral education of Pen, who commences as a real puppy, *Pendennis* does have a definite *Vanity Fair* undercurrent; the narrator notes that "ours, as the reader has possibly already discovered, is a Selfish Story, and almost every person, according to his nature, more or less generous than George, and according to the way of the world as it seems to us, is occupied about Number One" (II, Ch. 18), and when following this current the narrator can be marvelously ironic. For
instance, in the following passage, which mocks Pen's puppy love for the Fotheringay (a twenty-six-year-old actress), he uses the watch in an ironic adaptation of the Homeric simile to achieve a wonderful rhetorical effect:

Was Pen frightened at the summons [from his uncle]? Not he. He did not know what was coming; it was all wild pleasure and delight as yet. And as, when three years previously, and on entering the fifth form at the Cistercians, his father had made him a present of a gold watch which the boy took from under his pillow and examined on the instant of waking; forever rubbing and polishing it up in private, and retiring into corners to listen to its ticking: so the young man exulted over his new delight; felt in his waistcoat pocket to see that it was safe; wound it up at nights, and at the very first moment of waking hugged it and looked at it.—By the way, that first watch of Pen's was a showy, ill manufactured piece; it never went well from the beginning, and was always getting out of order. And after putting it aside into a drawer and forgetting it for some time, he swapped it finally away for a more useful time-keeper. (I, Ch. 4)

Likewise, he can juxtapose his own factual knowledge with a paraphrase of Pen's thoughts to achieve needed ironic deflation: "And the Marquis of Fairoaks [i.e., Pen], wondering that such a creature as this could have the audacity to give him a card, put Mr. Huxter's card into his waistcoat pocket with a lofty courtesy. Possibly Mr. Samuel Huxter was not aware that there was any great social differ-
ence between Mr. Arthur Pendennis and himself. Mr. Huxter's father was a surgeon and apothecary at Clavering, just as Mr. Pendennis's papa had been a surgeon and apothecary at Bath. But the impudence of some men is beyond all calculation" (II, Ch. 8).

To illustrate further that Pendennis' narrator is being whip-sawed between two opposed implied authors, we should note one passage of brutal cynicism that matches in its bitter implications several such passages in Vanity Fair:

Thus, oh friendly readers, we see how every man in the world has his own private griefs and business, by which he is more cast down or occupied than by the affairs or sorrows of any other person. . . . How lonely we are in the world! how selfish and secret everybody! You and your wife have pressed the same pillow for forty years, and fancy yourselves united.---Psha! does she cry out when you have the gout, or do you lie awake when she has the toothache? Your artless daughter, seemingly all innocence, and devoted to her mamma and her piano-lesson, is thinking of neither, but of the young Lieutenant with whom she danced at the last ball. The honest frank boy just returned from school is secretly speculating upon the money you will give him, and the debts he owes the tart-man. The old grandmother, crooning in the corner and bound for another world within a few months, has some business or cares which are quite private and her own---very likely she is thinking of fifty years back, and that night when she made such an impression, and danced a cotillion with the Captain before your father proposed for her; or what a silly little overrated creature your wife is, and how absurdly
you are infatuated about her—and, as for your wife—O philosophic reader, answer and say,—Do you tell her all? Ah, sir, a distinct universe walks about under your hat and under mine... you and I are but a pair of infinite isolations, with some fellow-islands a little more or less near to us. (I, Ch. 16)

Unfortunately, the passage is isolated and thus does not function as part of an ongoing creative process for the implied reader.

Regarding *Pendennis* as a *bildungsroman*, we should not overlook Pen's uncle and frequent mentor, a thoroughly worldly old creature of *Vanity Fair* and a brilliant creation; he is clearly a device for the moral education of both Pen and the implied reader, and he is presented both straightforwardly and ironically to those ends. Early in the novel the narrator discusses him impartially, giving him his due but exposing his morality with perfect clarity for the implied reader:

It can't be said that Mr. Pen's new guide, philosopher, and friend, discoursed him on the most elevated subjects, or treated the subjects which he chose in the most elevated manner. But his morality, such as it was, was consistent. It might not, perhaps, tend to a man's progress in another world, but it was pretty well calculated to advance his interests in this; and then it must be remembered that the Major never for one instant doubted that his views were the only views practicable, and that his conduct was perfectly virtuous and respectable. He was a man of
honor, in a word; and had his eyes what he called open. He took pity on this young greenhorn of a nephew, and wanted to open his eyes, too. No man, for instance, went more regularly to church, when in the country, than the old bachelor. "It don't matter so much in town, Pen," he said, "for there the women go and the men are not missed. But when a gentleman is sur ses terres, he must give an example to the country people; and if I could turn a tune, I even think I should sing." (I, Ch. 9)

Similarly, with any of his reprobate characters, such as old Costigan, the Fotheringay's father, the narrator can toss off an ironic quip with which we have no trouble: "Even his child, his cruel Emily, he would have taken to his heart and forgiven with tears; and what more can one say of the Christian charity of a man than that he is actually ready to forgive those who have done him every kindness, and with whom he is wrong in a dispute" (II, Ch. 17)? Again, however, when he juxtaposes ironic asides with discussions of characters he treats with uniform seriousness, the narrator leaves his implied reader floundering:

Albeit she [Laura] was angry with Pen, against his mother she had no such feeling; but devoted herself to Helen with the utmost force of her girlish affection—such affection as women, whose hearts are disengaged, are apt to bestow upon a near female friend. It was devotion—it was passion—it was all sorts of fondness and folly; it was a profusion of caresses, tender epithets and endearments, such as it does not
become sober historians with beards to narrate. Do not let us men despise these instincts because we cannot feel them. These women were made for our comfort and delectation, gentlemen,—with all the rest of the minor animals. (I, Ch. 21)

If we accept the truth of the relationship depicted in the first two sentences and heed the truth of the third (presuming, no doubt, that there actually are other readers who would despise these instincts), what in the world are we to make of the final sentence? Surely it is meant to be ironic, but whom is the irony directed at—the narrator himself, the characters, actual readers, or ourselves as implied readers? None of the answers makes much sense, nor does looking for the educational or creative purport of the sentence seem to take us very far. It appears, in fact, that by allying the implied-author aspect of his personality so closely with the narrator, Thackeray has lost the perspective that would allow him to recognize that the sentence is a glaring mistake.

On the other hand, however, it may not be a mistake at all. *Vanity Fair*, from one perspective, displays a pattern of anti-feminism, but then nobody in that novel shows up very well, and the anti-feminism is not glaring. In a short while I will be discussing the sentimentality of *Pendennis*. 
and the following novels, and it seems clear to me that the reverse side of the coin of sentimentality is a definite anti-feminine bias: one cannot sentimentalize what one truly respects. Thus, the apparent irony of the two passages I have already quoted that deal with women is ambiguous because the anti-feminism of Pendennis is both blatant and non-organic to the novel's structure. Early in the novel we find the narrator remarking, "indeed, whoever accused women of being just? They are always sacrificing themselves or somebody for somebody else's sake" (I, Ch. 3). The "somebody" is muted, and thus the remark is not as bitter as it might have been, but the import is clear after a moment's thought. Shortly thereafter the narrator delivers the opinion that "indeed, calamity is welcome to women if they think it will bring truant affection home again: and if you have reduced your mistress to a crust, depend upon it that she won't repine, and only take a very little bit of it for herself, provided you will eat the remainder in her company" (I, Ch. 21). I can detect no irony here, unlike the conclusion of the following passage—a description of Pen—where the narrator's portrayal of himself as a Turkish Sultan would seem to indicate irony:
The women had spoiled him, as we like them and as they like to do. They had cloyed him with obedience, and surfeited him with sweet respect and submission, until he grew weary of the slaves who waited upon him, and their caresses and cajoleries excited him no more. Abroad, he was brisk and lively, and eager and impassioned enough—most men are, so constituted and so nurtured.—Does this, like the former sentence, run a chance of being misinterpreted, and does anyone dare to suppose that the writer would incite the women to revolt? Never, by the whiskers of the prophet, again he says. He wears a beard, and he likes his women to be slaves. What man doesn't? What man would be henpecked, I say? (II, Ch. 15)

Ironically phrased, yes, but serious in its view of women nonetheless. Finally, we may note the narrator remarking that "the prudery of our females is such, that, before all expression of feeling, or natural kindness and regard, a woman is taught to think of herself and the proprieties, and to be ready to blush at the very slightest notice" (II, Ch. 19). Both the sentimentality and the anti-feminism are pervasive. The irony is not, and when a remark is ironic, its target is often ambiguous. Thus, the implied reader is necessarily confused. In fact, it would seem that the ideal implied reader would be the one who accepts both the sentimentality and its accompanying anti-feminism, a perfectly logical paradox. Whatever the explanation for the passages I have looked at, however, they seem to me to
be lapses committed by an implied author who is not totally in control and who apparently does not perceive the effect of his uncertainly applied method.

On the whole, *Pendennis* is anti-*Vanity Fair*, repudiating that work in nearly every way, as comparing the two will reveal. Take, for instance, the matter of boyhood and schooling, which both novels deal with, though on different levels. In the world of *Vanity Fair*, school is a miserable, spirit-breaking, time-wasting affair, lacking either joy or learning. Dobbin, a grocer's son, is continually made the butt of jokes about his father's occupation, after which "a roar would follow from all the circle of young knaves, usher and all, who rightly considered that the selling of goods by retail is a shameful and infamous practice, meriting the contempt and scorn of all real gentlemen" (Ch. 5). When Dobbin threatens to fight the school bully, the following scene ensues: "'No, I won't. Don't strike, or I'll thmash you,' roars out Dobbin, springing to a leaden inkstand, and looking so wicked, that Mr. Cuff paused, turned down his coat-sleeves again, put his hands into his pockets and walked away with a sneer. But he never meddled personally with the grocer's boy after that; though we must do him the
justice to say he always spoke of Mr. Dobbin with contempt behind his back" (Ch. 5). In both cases the Manager assumes the other boys' values in order to highlight the cruelty. In another instance, after Dobbin remonstrates with George Osborne, who has informed the school of his father's occupation, the Manager speaks seriously, condemning the mass of his readers--as society--for Dobbin's misery while trying to make them empathize with it:

"Your father's only a merchant, Osborne," Dobbin said in private to the little boy who had brought down the storm upon him. At which the latter replied haughtily, "My father's a gentleman, and keeps his carriage," and Mr. William Dobbin retreated to a remote outhouse in the playground, where he passed a half-holiday in the bitterest sadness and woe. Who amongst us is there that does not recollect similar hours of bitter, bitter childish grief? Who feels injustice; who shrinks before a slight; who has a sense of wrong so acute, and so glowing a gratitude for kindness, as a generous boy? and how many of those gentle souls do you degrade, estrange, torture, for the sake of a little loose arithmetic, and miserable dog-Latin? (Ch. 5)

In *Pendennis*, youth and education are treated rather differently. Early in the novel the narrator asks us to "look back, good friend, at your own youth, and ask how was that? I like to think of a well nurtured boy, brave and gentle, warm-hearted and loving, and looking the world in
the face with kind honest eyes. What bright colors it wore then, and how you enjoyed it! A man has not many years of such time. He does not know them whilst they are with him. It is only when they are passed long away that he remembers how dear and happy they were" (I, Ch. 3). The reader created for *Vanity Fair* cannot absorb this passage without a complete about-face. Later, the narrator remarks about school days that

> every man, however brief or inglorious may have been his academical career, must remember with kindness and tenderness the old university comrades and days. The young man's life is just beginning; the boy's leading strings are cut, and he has all the novel delights and dignities of freedom. He has no ideas of cares yet, or of bad health, or of roguery, or poverty, or tomorrow's disappointment. The play has not been acted so often as to make him tired. Though the afterdrink, as we mechanically go on repeating it, is stale and bitter, how pure and brilliant was that first sparkling draught of pleasure!--How the boy rushes at the cup; and with what a wild eagerness he drains it! But old epicures who are cut off from the delights of the table, and are restricted to a poached egg and a glass of water, like to see people with good appetites; and, as the next best thing to being amused at a pantomime one's self is to see one's children enjoy it, I hope there may be no degree of age or experience to which mortal may attain, when he shall become such a glum philosopher as not to be pleased by the sight of happy youth. (I, Ch. 17)

What is interesting about this passage is its second half, the picture of the "old epicure," looking "pleased by the sight of happy youth." Such a nakedly sentimental appeal
would be unthinkable in the world of *Vanity Fair*. The narrator concludes this theme in *Pendennis* with an admonition to "cultivate kindly, reader, those friendships of your youth: it is only in that generous time that they are formed. How different the intimacies of after days are, and how much weaker the grasp of your own hand after it has been shaken about in twenty years' commerce with the world, and has squeezed and dropped a thousand equally careless palms" (II, Ch. 23). The youthful Amelia-Becky and Dobbin-Osborne friendships of *Vanity Fair* mock such a sentiment, and the created readers of *Vanity Fair* would gag on it.

It is surprising, actually, how many parallels, both great and small, one can find between *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis*, and how often these parallels are the mirror-images of each other. In *Vanity Fair*, Amelia and Becky both set out on the path of life, as does Pen in *Pendennis*, but the latter is treated much differently in the narrator's remarks: "It was the first step in life that Pen was making.—Ah! what a dangerous journey it is, and how the bravest may stumble and the strongest fail. Brother wayfarer! may you have a kind arm to support yours on the path, and a friendly hand to succor those who fall beside you! May truth guide, mercy forgive at the end, and love
accompany always! Without that lamp, how blind the traveller would be, and how black and cheerless the journey" (I, Ch. 17). This is most certainly not the world or the philosophy of *Vanity Fair*. Or consider the following remark from *Pendennis*, which sums up in one sentence the whole tragedy of Amelia's life, and yet which appears to be written with the utmost seriousness and approval: "And that is a point whereon I suppose many a gentleman has reflected, that, do what we will, we are pretty sure of the woman's love that once has been ours, and that that untiring tenderness and forgiveness never fail us" (I, Ch. 21). These mirror-image reversals even extend to the determining actions of a person's life. Early in the novel, the narrator discusses the marriage of Pen's mother and father:

Perhaps if he had had an early love-passage, she too had one day hoped for a different lot than to be wedded to a little gentleman who rapped his teeth and smiled artificially, who was laboriously polite to the butler as he slid upstairs into the drawing-room, and profusely civil to the lady's-maid, who waited at the bed-room door; for whom her old patroness used to ring as for a servant, and who came with even more eagerness; perhaps she would have chosen a different man—but she knew, on the other hand, how worthy Pendennis was, how prudent, how honorable; how good he had been to his mother, and constant in his care of her. (I, Ch. 2)
The world indicated by this latter passage is not the world of *Vanity Fair*, ruled by selfishness and vanity (even the vanity of Dobbin's lost cause); it is a world whose actions are ruled by the hard force of practical reality and circumstances. I, for one, do not care to argue against the validity of such a view of the world, society, and human motivation; it takes, after all, but a slight shift of perspective and the softening of a stern moral view to arrive at it from the world-view underlying *Vanity Fair*. The problem is that the narrator/implied author is not consistent in presenting such a view, as is evidenced by the too frequent instances of outrageous sentimentalizing and pious moralizing, both of which serve to interrupt the smooth development of a coherent relationship between the implied author (or narrator) and the reader in the process of creation. The implied reader is pulled between contradictory emotions and philosophies, a process which negatively affects his ultimate creation as a unified perceiving intelligence.

In *Vanity Fair* servants and the poor seem to exist primarily to be taken advantage of (they make living on nothing a year possible), while in *Pendennis* we get such remarks as the following, delivered with a cheerful and
idiotic complacency: "and I do not know any more cheering mark of the increased philanthropy of our times, than to contrast our domestic architecture with that of our ancestors, and to see how much better servants and poor are cared for at present than in times when my lord and my lady slept under gold canopies, and their servants lay above them in quarters not so airy or so clean as stables are now" (I, Ch. 22).

Finally, whereas Amelia, who is a simpleton, is the only female character actually seriously called a lady in *Vanity Fair*, other "ladies" being ironically admired for their condescending arrogance, in *Pendennis* the narrator not only believes in the reality of the true "high bred English lady," but praises her profusely, sentimentalizes her outrageously, and falls prostrate before her:

I think it is not national prejudice which makes me believe that a high-bred English lady is the most complete of all Heaven's subjects in this world. In whom else do you see so much grace, and so much virtue; so much faith, and so much tenderness; with such a perfect refinement and chastity? And by high-bred ladies I don't mean duchesses and countesses. Be they ever so high in station, they can be but ladies, and no more. But almost every man who lives in the world has the happiness, let us hope, of counting a few such persons amongst his circle of acquaintance—women in whose angelical natures there is something awful, as well as beautiful, to contemplate; at whose feet the wildest and fiercest of us must fall down and humble ourselves, in admiration of
that adorable purity which never seems to do or
to think wrong. (I, Ch. 2)

Wayne Booth has noted that implied authors and created
readers may, and probably must, change from novel to novel
as different aspects of an author's personality come to the
forefront and as he has different purposes in mind, but
there is a limit to the extent we can perceive actual
readers as putty in the hands of an implied author, a limit
which perhaps reveals itself more clearly in Thackeray than
in any other major Victorian novelist. The reader thoroughly
created by *Vanity Fair*, the reader who can assimilate and
live with its values and its essential despair, is going to
have very rough going with *Pendennis*; he just will not be
able to wrench himself about so drastically as to accept
and live with the kind of commentary that appears more and
more frequently in the novel's second volume, in which Pen
takes up residence in London and begins to make his way in
the world. This commentary principally concerns itself
with women, as in the following address, which arises from
Pen's erotic—but non-consummated—relationship with a
foolish young girl of the lower classes:

O Clarissas of this life, O you poor little
ignorant vain foolish maidens! if you did but
know the way in which the Lovelaces speak of you:
if you could but hear Jack talking to Tom across
the coffee-room of a club; or see Ned taking your
poor little letters out of his cigar-case, and handing them over to Charley, and Billy, and Harry across the messroom table, you would not be so eager to write, or so ready to listen! There's a sort of crime which is not complete unless the lucky rogue boasts of it afterwards; and the man who betrays your honor in the first place, is pretty sure, remember that, to betray your secret, too (II, Ch. 16)

Disregarding the fact that this is not a very good description of the original Clarissa, the reader may agree that the educational purpose here—the address aimed at those young women to whom it applies—is a noble one, but to become the created reader who will accept it without irony, as seriously as it is delivered, one must become a moral, practical, and artistic simpleton. Those girls who need such advice are not the ones capable of profiting from it, especially when they read it in a novel, and the address itself displays a smugness and moral self-righteousness unacceptable to a reader with any sense of humor or of irony; it displays, in fact, a good deal of vanity.

Similarly, the narrator's portrayal of Helen Pendennis and Laura Bell and his comments about them become increasingly unacceptable because of their sentimentality, as the following passages demonstrate. Speaking of Pen's mother, and of the fading of Pen's grief after her death,
the narrator says that

all the lapse of years, all the career of fortune, all the events of life, however strongly they may move or eagerly excite him, never can remove that sainted image from his heart, or banish that blessed love from its sanctuary. If he yields to wrong, the dear eyes will look sadly upon him when he dares to meet them; if he does well, endures pain, or conquers temptation, the ever-present love will greet him, he knows, with approval and pity; if he falls, plead for him; if he suffers, cheer him;—be with him and accompany him always until death is past, and sorrow and sin are no more. Is this mere dreaming, or, on the part of an idle story-teller, useless moralizing? May not the man of the world take his moment, too, to be grave and thoughtful? Ask of your own hearts and memories, brother and sister, if we do not live in the dead; and (to speak reverently) prove God by love? (II, Ch. 23)

This is an appeal to experience and emotions outside of the novel itself, and thus must be aimed at actual readers rather than implied ones.

The sentimentalizing of Laura Bell is perhaps even more grotesque. The narrator remarks at one point that it was the custom of this young lady, to the utmost of her power, and by means of that gracious assistance which Heaven awarded to her pure and constant prayers, to do her duty. And as that duty was performed quite noiselessly—while the supplications, which endowed her with the requisite strength for fulfilling it, also took place in her own chamber, away from all mortal sight,—we, too, must be perform silent about these virtues of hers, which no more bear public talking about than a flower will bear to bloom in a ball-room. This only will we say—that a good woman is the loveliest flower that blooms
under heaven; and that we look with love and wonder upon its silent grace, its pure fragrance, its delicate bloom of beauty. Sweet and beautiful!— the fairest and the most spotless!—is it not pity to see them bowed down or devoured by Grief or Death inexorable—wasting in disease—pining with long pain—or cut off by sudden fate in their prime? We may deserve grief— but why should these be unhappy?— except that we know that Heaven chastens those whom it loves best; being pleased, by repeated trials, to make these pure spirits more pure. (II, Ch. 13)

Virtues which do not bear public talk are strange virtues indeed—somewhat of the hot-house variety perhaps—but certainly that final sentence, transferred to *Vanity Fair* and used to describe Becky Sharp, would reveal itself for the cant that it is, as would this second passage if applied to Amelia Sedley and her trials and tribulations:

> Did you ever know a person who met Fortune in that way, whom the goddess did not regard kindly? Are not even bad people won by a constant cheerfulness and a pure and affectionate heart? When the babes in the wood, in the ballad, looked up fondly and trustfully at those notorious rogues whom their uncle had set to make away with the little folks, we all know how one of the rascals relented, and made away with the other— not having the heart to be cruel to so much innocence and beauty. Oh, happy they who have that virgin loving trust and sweet smiling confidence in the world, and fear no evil because they think none. (II, Ch. 28)

Well, to answer the questions, yes to the first and no to the second—but there lies the point; it is much too easy to respond sarcastically to such passages, a reader reaction
impossible in *Vanity Fair* because the Manager himself was the one being sarcastic, and we as readers needed to be constantly alert against his sudden shifts and trickery. In *Pendennis* we either accept such nonsense as actual people before we come to the novel as readers, or we never accept it at all; the third alternative, in which we are created into implied readers who accept it, does not exist.

Thackeray's abandonment of the distinction between implied author and narrator, his partial suppression of that part of himself that created *Vanity Fair*, may well have been caused by his success as a novelist and an increasing sense of his responsibilities to educate and uplift his public; unfortunately, as we have seen, the new side of his personality which emerged as the implied author of *Pendennis* is shot through with some of the worst excesses of Victorian cant and sentimentality. When he lost the Manager, Thackeray also lost his aesthetic distance and control so far as to allow even Thackeray the man to appear in the novel and make sympathetic appeals to his readers. Thackeray's sickness during the course of *Pendennis* and the great public reaction to it have been noted, but when the same events actually appear in the novel, we perceive, I think, a failure of art:
"Everybody was kindly disposed towards the sick man and his family. His heart (and his mother's, too, as we may fancy) melted within him at the thought of so much good feeling and good-nature. Let Pen's biographer be pardoned for alluding to a time not far distant when a somewhat similar mishap brought him a providential friend, a kind physician, and a thousand proofs of a most touching and surprising kindness and sympathy" (II, Ch. 15). The narrator, alluding to an actual occurrence in the life of Thackeray the man, has gone too far, as he does later when he makes the same appeal in slightly more general terms:

We have said before, could we know the man's feelings as well as the author's thoughts—how interesting most books would be!—more interesting than merry. I suppose harlequin's face behind his mask is always grave, if not melancholy—certainly each man who lives by the pen, and happens to read this, must remember, if he will, his own experiences, and recall many solemn hours of solitude and labour. . . . Fever or sickness were lying possibly in the next room: a sick child might be there, with a wife watching over it terrified and in prayer; or grief might be bearing him down, and the cruel mist before the eyes rendering the paper scarce visible as he wrote on it, and the inexorable necessity drove on the pen. What man among us has not had nights and hours like these? But to the manly heart—severe as these pangs are, they are endurable: long as the night seems, the dawn comes at last, and the wounds heal, and the fever abates, and rest comes, and you can afford to look back on the past misery with feelings that are anything but bitter. (II, Ch. 33).
The fact is that books read with such knowledge would not be more interesting, nor can discussion of the author overcoming his troubles with a manly heart do more than encourage the implied reader to indulge in similar sentimentality.

Concomitant with the breakdown of implied author/narrator distinctions is, of course, a breakdown of fictive audience/implied reader distinctions. The latter is more difficult to prove than the former, but I am convinced it does occur. For instance, in the following passage we see the kind of linking of narrator and audience which gives limited support, as *Vanity Fair* did not, to J. Hillis Miller's thesis that the narrator assumes the role of a collective mind; more important, however, given the confusion of roles between narrator and implied author and the considerable amount of straight moralizing and lecturing that occurs in the novel, the passage tends to confirm that no systematic attempt is being made to create implied readers, and thus that the categories of real reader, fictive reader, and implied reader remain undifferentiated:

Our friend Pen was not sorry when his Mentor took leave of the young gentleman on the second day after the arrival of the pair in Oxbridge, and we may be sure that the Major on his part was very glad to have discharged his duty, and to have the duty over. More than three months of precious time had that
martyr of a Major given up to his nephew. Was ever selfish man called upon to make a greater sacrifice? Do you know many men or Majors who would do as much? A man will lay down his head, or peril his life for his honor, but let us be shy how we ask him to give up his ease or his heart's desire. Very few of us can bear that trial. Let us give the Major due credit for his conduct during the past quarter, and own that he has quite a right to be pleased at getting a holiday. (I, Ch. 18)

Likewise, whereas in *Vanity Fair* it was usually clear that the reader addressed was neither the actual reader nor the implied reader, in *Pendennis* these distinctions are not apparent and make no difference anyway. To illustrate, I will take one of the novel's major themes, parent-child relationships, and examine a few of the narrator's comments. Early in the novel he directly addresses parents on public schools and what they do to children:

And, by the way, ye tender mothers and sober fathers of Christian families, a prodigious thing that theory of life is, as orally learned at a great public school. Why, if you could hear boys of fourteen who blush before mothers and sneak off in silence in the presence of their daughters, talking among each other—it would be the woman's turn to blush then. Before he was twelve years old, little Pen had heard talk enough to make him quite awfully wise upon certain points—and so, Madam, has your pretty little rosy-cheeked son, who is coming home from school for the ensuing holidays. I don't say that the boy is lost, or that the innocence has left him which he had from "Heaven, which is our home," but that the shades of the prison-house are closing very fast over him, and that we are helping as much as possible to corrupt him. (I, Ch. 2)
Shortly thereafter, discussing the young Pen, he gives mothers a stern warning against excessive meddling with the private, imaginative world of their children's minds: "He had a world of his own. What ardent, imaginative soul has not a secret pleasure-place in which it disports? Let no clumsy prying or dull meddling of ours try to disturb it in our children. . . . Leave him occasionally alone, my good madam, if you have a poet for a child. Even your admirable advice may be a bore sometimes. Yonder little child may have thoughts too deep even for your great mind, and fancies so coy and timid that they will not bare themselves when your ladyship sits by" (I, Ch. 3). Much later he returns again to the first point: "O you mothers at home, how much do you think you know about your lads? How much do you think you know" (II, Ch. 17)? Clearly, the narrator is deadly serious in these sermonettes and rhetorical questions, and given that seriousness, there is little point in talking about real, fictive, or implied readers: because the narrator is telling rather than creating or manipulating, they are, for all practical purposes, one. I think it only logical, then, that the same effect occurs in all addresses, such as the gushing "happy blushes! bright eyes beaming with the light of love! The
story-teller turns from this group to his young audience,
and hopes that one day their eyes may all shine so" (II,
Ch. 37). Regarding the readers, all barriers are down.

iii

After Pendennis, Thackeray published, in order, The New-
comers, 8 The Virginians, 9 and The Adventures of Philip, 10
after which he confined his writing to "The Roundabout
Papers" for The Cornhill, a circumstance which Lambert Ennis
sees as a logical result of the growing discursiveness and
increasing disinterest in plot of the later novels, whose com-
mentary was not, like that of Vanity Fair and Esmond, a vital
part of a "narrative organism." He notes that the essays of
"The Roundabout Papers" "have in common a limpid stylistic
grace; a tendency to nostalgia; and a sentimental moralizing
that epitomize the later Thackerayan manner." 11 Gordon Ray

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8 New York, 1880.

9 New York, 189_, 2 vols. in one.

10 The Adventures of Philip; A Shabby Genteel Story;
Catherine: A Story (New York, 189_), 2 vols. in one.

11 Thackeray: The Sentimental Cynic (Evanston, Ill.,
1950), pp. 221-2.
attributes the quite different tone of the later novels to Thackeray's "reconciliation to life" and says that "endeavoring to be playful rather than satiric, he inquired: 'I wonder if sneering is of the Devil and laughter not wicked?' He took pains to be pleasant, to avoid giving offence by too blunt a statement of heterodox opinions. He softened and generalized his revelations of the hidden self-interest that underlies seemingly altruistic actions. He writes in his later books as a father addressing his children rather than as a man of the world speaking in good society."12

The fact is that in his final three novels Thackeray's narrators talk more, they talk for longer stretches, and they lend themselves quite easily to being labeled "Thackeray." This practice has bothered some critics and readers; others it has not. Hepworth Dixon, in a contemporary review of The Virginians, says that "in this volume more than in any other Mr. Thackeray preaches—and the text is quickened by a multitude of personal allusions. Most of these sermons are delightful for their insight and their satire. They stop the story, cries a cynic. Who cares? Does any one groan when Uncle Toby stops the story? The test of a good story is,

12 The Buried Life, p. 119.
that it can be stopped without harm.\textsuperscript{13} John W. Dodds, a modern critic, elaborates the same point by writing that Thackeray has come in for a good deal of abuse because of this habit. The test ought to be: does it help the story or get in the way? Does it make it seem more or less real? Does it add to or detract from our enjoyment? . . . It seems to me that Thackeray's interpolations add, in the long run, to the illusion of reality, certainly to our enjoyment of the story. In the dramatic novel they would be quite out of place, but in the discursive novel of manner they indicate the mood of the story and intensify the mellow, introspective manner which is the very tissue of a Thackeray novel. The answer to the question hinges largely upon the quality of the mind which makes the comments. When it is Thackeray, we can usually afford to pause with him briefly.\textsuperscript{14}

Although these comments may be valid, when the critic considers the interpolations separately, they miss the major critical point: the whole complex of issues surrounding the question of implied authors and created readers, a question which Thackeray himself seems at times to have been aware of.

I quoted in Chapter I Thackeray's letter about \textit{The Newcomes} in which he writes that "Mr. Pendennis is the author of the book, and he has taken a great weight off my mind, for

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Athenaeum}, Oct. 23, 1858, p. 516.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Thackeray: A Critical Portrait} (New York, 1941), p. 121.
under that mask and acting, as it were, I can afford to say and think many things that I couldn’t venture on in my own person, now that it is a person, and I know the public are staring at it” (Letters . . . , IV, 436). This was a device he obviously had on his mind, for sometime between July 26 and August 7, 1853, he wrote to Sarah Baxter that “Mr. Pendennis is to be the writer of his friend’s memoirs and by the help of this little mask . . . I shall be able to talk more at ease than in my own person” (Letters . . . , III, 297-8). Certainly there is no evidence that this device of Pendennis as pseudo author/narrator had much effect on readers’ tendencies to equate the speaking voice with Thackeray the man, but Thackeray appeared to have in mind a notion of implied author versus historical person and thought that this device might somehow take care of the problem. The unspecified narrator of The Virginians (the narrator of Philip is again identified as Pendennis) refers to masks in a passage which once more seems a recognition of the implied author concept:

Oh, let us be thankful, not only for faces, but for masks! not only for honest welcome, but for hypocrisy, which hides unwelcome things from us! Whilst I am talking, for instance, in this easy, chatty way, what right have you, my good sir, to know what is really passing in my mind! It may
be that I am racked with gout, or that my eldest son has just sent me a thousand pounds' worth of college-bills, or that I am writhing under an attack of the *Stoke Pogis Sentinel*, which has just been sent me under cover, or that there is a dreadfully scrappy dinner, the evident remains of a party to which I didn't invite you, and yet I conceal my agony, I wear a merry smile; I say, "What! come to take pot-luck with us, Brown, my boy? . . . Eat! Welcome! Fall to! It's my best!" I say that humbug which I am performing is beautiful self-denial— that hypocrisy is true virtue. Oh, if every man spoke his mind, what an intolerable society ours would be to live in! (II, Ch. 8)

Yet Thackeray the implied author just did not seem to care enough to keep the Pendennis game going without error or contradiction, and it certainly did not satisfy the critics, one of whom, Whitwell Elwin, writes of *The Newcomes* that "Arthur Pendennis becomes an execrescence. . . . [W]e wish him away, and should prefer that Mr. Thackeray would tell his own tale without the unnecessary interposition of an Editor. . . . However modest it may be in Mr. Thackeray to ascribe his writings to a person of no greater calibre than his very inadequate representative, the incongruity is too glaring, and no one can for an instant bring himself to believe that the intrusive Mr. Pendennis could have written 'The Newcomes.'"15 Yet it is also unclear what Elwin is objecting to, for aside

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15 *Quarterly Review*, 97 (1855), 360-61.
from sporadic personal references, there is little discernible difference between the narrators of *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*, *The Virginians*, or *Philip*, whereas there is abundant evidence that they were all written by the same implied author.

In fact, after *Vanity Fair* Thackeray has trouble keeping his implied authors, and thus his narrators, distinct from each other, as well as trouble distinguishing between the implied author and narrator of each novel. One continuing habit is the carrying of characters over from novel to novel; thus the Warrington twins of *The Virginians* are the grandsons of Henry Esmond, and have read his memoirs. But Thackeray particularly likes to introduce various minor characters from one novel into other novels, as "there has walked, or rather reeled, into the room, a gentleman . . . with whose name and person some of my readers are perhaps already acquainted. In fact it was my friend Captain Costigan" (*Newcomes*, Ch. 1). The alert reader will realize that "my readers" are Thackeray's readers from *Pendennis*, not Pen's. More significantly, however, these later novels increasingly return to the concept of "Vanity Fair," a concept which worked so well in the original novel but which often seems incongruous in the later
novels with their more realistic narrative framework. Allusions can be minor, as "he woke at Fribourg the next morning. Not Baden, the prettiest booth of all Vanity Fair" (Newcomes, Ch. 30), or "a generous young fellow comes to market with a heart ready to leap out of his waistcoat, forever thumping and throbbing, and so wild that he can't have any rest till he has disposed of it. What wonder if he falls upon a wily merchant in Vanity Fair, and barters his all for a stale bawble not worth sixpence" (Philip, I, Ch. 8)?

The cross-references can also be major, however, and sometimes fatal, if he is indeed trying to create a narrative illusion. The narrator of The Virginians says that "I know it is an old story, and especially that this preacher has yelled vanitas vanitatum five hundred times before. I can't help always falling upon it, and cry out with particular loudness and wailing, and become especially melancholy, when I see a dead love tied to a live love" (I, Ch. 26). Philip's narrator, supposedly Pendennis, cries out, "O, me! O my beloved congregation! I have preached this stale sermon to you for ever so many years. O my jolly companions, I have drunk many a bout with you, and always found vanitas vanitatum written on the bottom of the pot" (I, Ch. 2). Later, he
remarks, "Ah me! The doctor who preaches is only taller than most of us by the height of the pulpit: and when he steps down, I dare say he cringes to the duchess, growls at his children, scolds his wife about the dinner. All is vanity, look you: and so the preacher is vanity, too" (I, Ch. 15).

It seems to me that a major problem with the post-Vanity Fair novels is that side by side throughout them run the Manager and the anti-Manager: the Sentimentalist. In the passages above, the voice wailing is that of the Manager: older, tireder, more sanctimonious and more discouraged, perhaps, but the Manager nonetheless. It is also the somewhat faded Manager who addresses his "dear, kind reader (with whom I love to talk from time to time, stepping down from the stage where our figures are performing, attired in the habits and using the parlance of past ages)" (Virginians, II, Ch. 14). Unfortunately, the Manager is out of place in these later novels; the sermon may be the same—the stories are indeed old ones—but the means of preaching those sermons has changed, and the confusion of implied authors and narrators that is clearly reflected in such passages cannot help, I think, but reflect itself in the creation of implied readers—a creation which itself becomes confused and frag-
merited. Perhaps Thackeray should have heeded a review of *Pendennis* by Henry F. Chorley, who seems to have discerned what was coming:

There seems to us great need that an alarm should be rung pretty loudly in the ears of one of our most shrewd, vigorous, accomplished, and kindly writers,—bidding him beware of his own tendencies lest they become organic defects. The denouncer of nuisances, the omnipresent and omniloquent accuser who cries "Death in the pot!" over every morsel that we put into our mouths, becomes himself of nuisances the worst; a perpetual skeleton at the banquet; in its influences nearly as deadly as the vitriols and the sulphates and the rancid particles upon which he is forever pouncing.16

Of course Thackeray may really have wanted to say things through the mask of Pen that he felt he could not say in his own person, though why he felt he needed the mask is unclear. If he were trying to reverse some of the worst implications of *Vanity Fair*, he would seem to have accomplished that in *Pendennis*, and, as I noted, it certainly made little difference to his readers. In any case, he does characterize Pen to some extent, which is perhaps what upset the critics who found Pen most disagreeable. At one point we get a taste of Pen's pseudo world weariness: "I was myself nearly two-and-twenty years of age at that period, and felt as old as, ay, older than the Colonel" (*Newcomes*, Ch. 1). At another point, after

Colonel Newcome has asked Pen to act as brother and guardian to Clive, Pen remarks, "Ah! who is to guard the guardian? The younger brother had many nobler qualities than belonged to the elder. The world had not hardened Clive, nor even succeeded in spoiling him. I perceive I am diverging from his history into that of another person, and will return to the subject proper of the book" (Ch. 26). Pen also writes passages of the most blatant sentimentality, as in the following one concerning his mother, but this is no worse than a good deal of such talk in *Pendennis*, and, in fact, exactly parallels one passage I have already quoted:

"Not attend her own son when he is ill!" said my mother. "She does not deserve to have a son!" And Mrs. Pendennis looked towards her own only darling whilst uttering this indignant exclamation. As she looked, I know what passed through her mind. She nursed me, she dressed me in little caps and long-clothes, she attired me in my first jacket and trousers. She watched at my bedside through my infantile and juvenile ailments. She tended me through all my life, she held me to her heart with infinite prayers and blessings. She is no longer with us to bless and pray; but from heaven, where she is, I know her love pursues me; and often and often I think she is here, only invisible. (*Philip, I*, Ch. 1)

It is entirely possible, however, that one half of Thackeray wished to express thoughts and sentiments which the *Vanity Fair* half rebelled against, and that this battle of
implied authors was seemingly settled by the device of Pendennis. Certainly the following passage, from the beginning of *The Newcomes*, expresses some of the most outrageous romanticising of the past to be found in all of Thackeray, and, whether he did or not, the creator of *Vanity Fair* should have felt guilty about the kind of implied reader it would help to create:

There was once a time when the sun used to shine brighter than it appears to do in this latter half of the nineteenth century; when the zest of life was certainly keener; when tavern wines seemed to be delicious, and tavern dinners the perfection of cookery; when the perusal of novels was productive of immense delight, and the monthly advent of magazine-day was hailed as an exciting holiday; when to know Thompson, who had written a magazine-article, was an honor and a privilege; and to see Brown, the author of the last romance in the flesh, and actually walking in the Park with his umbrella and Mrs. Brown, was an event remarkable, and to the end of life to be perfectly well remembered; when the women of this world were a thousand times more beautiful than those of the present time; and the houris of the theatres especially so ravishing and angelic, that to see them was to set the heart in motion, and to see them again was to struggle for half an hour previously at the door of the pit; when tailors called at a man's lodgings to dazzle him with cards of fancy waistcoats; when it seemed necessary to purchase a grand silver dressing-case, so as to be ready for the beard which was not yet born. . . . It was in the days of my youth then that I met one or two of the characters who are to figure in this history, and whom I must ask leave to accompany for a short while, and until, familiarized with the public, they can make their own way. As I recall them the roses bloom again, and the nightingales sing by the calm Bendemeer. (Ch. 1)
The narrators of the later novels continue the tradition of attacking novelistic conventions and the expectations of novel readers, but these attacks too only appear sporadically, and thus lose much of their power to create a certain kind of implied reader. The matter of heroes and heroines is, for instance, pursued, but much more ambiguously. The narrator of *The Newcomes* says that "for a heroine of a story, be she ever so clever, handsome, and sarcastic, I don't think for my part, at this present stage of the tale, Miss Ethel Newcome occupies a very dignified position. . . . A girl of great beauty, high temper, and stronger natural intellect, who submits to be dragged hither and thither in an old grandmother's leash, and in pursuit of a husband who will run away from the couple, such a person, I say, is in a very awkward position as a heroine" (Ch. 45). Ethel's behavior is criticized as part of the continuing attack on arranged, loveless marriages, but the concept of a heroine is not. Likewise, the narrator says of Clive Newcome that "he is, in a word, just such a youth as has a right to be the hero of a novel" (Ch. 6). If irony is intended, it has become too subtle, and implied readers are being created who will be perfectly willing to accept the reality of heroes and heroines—a kind of reader
that even *Pendennis* struggled to disillusion. At the same
time, however, a continuing attempt is made to attack readers
of conventional novels and to educate them into new perceptions
of the purposes of novel reading:

He with whom we have mainly to do is a gentleman
of mature age now walking the street with boys of
his own. He is not going to perish in the last
chapter of these memoirs—to die of consumption
with his love weeping by his bedside, or to blow
his brains out in despair, because she has been
married to his rival, or killed out of a gig, or
otherwise done for in the last chapter but one.
No, no, we will have no dismal endings. Philip
Firman is well and hearty at this minute, owes no
man a shilling, and can enjoy his glass of port
in perfect comfort. So, my dear miss, if you
want a pulmonary romance, the present won't suit
you. So, young gentleman, if you are for melan-
choly, despair, and sardonic satire, please to
call at some other shop. That Philip shall have
his trials is a matter of course—may they be
interesting, though they do not end dismally!
That he shall fall and trip in his course sometimes
is pretty certain. Ah, who does not upon this
life-journey of ours? Is not our want the occasion
of our brother's charity, and thus does not good
come out of that evil? (*Philipp*, I, Ch. 2)

The hit-and-miss nature of such attempts does, however, seri-
ously limit their effectiveness.

There also occurs in these later novels an assumed con-
cern (i.e., another kind of strategy or pose) which is
developed much more explicitly and systematically in the early
Barchester novels of Trollope: the concern for dealing honestly with the reader, for not regarding him as a dupe or having him so regard himself. We read that "I tell you they are married; and don't want to make any mysteries about the business. I disdain that sort of artifice. In the days of the old three-volume novels, didn't you always look at the end, to see that Louisa and the earl (or young clergy-man, as the case might be) were happy? If they died, or met with other grief, for my part I put the book away" (Philip, I, Ch. 23). The reference to three-volume novels and peeking at a novel's end could have been lifted from Trollope. As we will see, however, there is little consistency to this kind of honesty either, since the end of The Newcomes leaves us with a mass of questions. In the same vein, however, we can look at another passage in which Pendennis tells us that

I have of late had to recount portions of my dear old friend's history which must needs be told, and over which the writer does not like to dwell. If Thomas Newcome's opulence was unpleasant to describe, and to contrast with the bright goodness and

17One might speculate as to whether Thackeray was influenced by Trollope, or, conversely, whether Trollope's cracks about novel-reading and fictional conventions might actually have been suggested by Vanity Fair. The question of influences is, however, academic, since there was a convention of self-conscious irony in references to fiction made in the course of novels, and Thackeray and Trollope were not the only authors to play the game.
simplicity I remembered in former days, how much more painful is that part of his story to which we are now come perforce, and which the acute reader of novels has, no doubt, long foreseen. Yes, sir or madam, you are quite right in the opinion which you have held all along regarding that Bundelcund Banking Company, in which our Colonel has invested every rupee he possesses. . . .
I disdain, for the most part, the tricks and surprises of the novelist's art. (Newcomes, Ch. 70)

The reference to the "acute reader of novels" may be seen as an effort (rather feeble perhaps) to mold an implied reader who will be acute or perhaps to flatter the reader who thinks that he is already acute and judicious, as can the following reference to the "judicious reader" that begins a passage in which the narrator explains to his fictive audience how he goes about putting the novel together: "This narrative, as the judicious reader no doubt is aware, is written maturely and at ease, long after the voyage is over, whereof it recounts the adventures and perils" (Newcomes, Ch. 24). What we find far more often than these kinds of addresses, however, is the practice so many critics have noted: short essays interpolated directly into the novel.
The point is that such essays do not create readers; they only speak to those who agree or offend those who do not. I think I should quote one of these mini-essays, not only because they are so prevalent, but also because they are the means the
narrator/implied author uses to discuss some of his most serious concerns, one of which, reappearing constantly, is the restraints to his art suffered by the Victorian novelist:

And in public and private morality? Which is better, this actual year 1858, or its predecessor a century back? Gentlemen of Mr. Disraeli's House of Commons! has every one of you his price, as in Walpole's or Newcastle's time,—or (and that is the delicate question) have you almost all of you had it? Ladies, I do not say that you are a society of Vestals—but the chronicle of a hundred years since contains such an amount of scandal, that you may be thankful you did not live in such dangerous times. No: on my conscience I believe that men and women are both better. . . . Did you ever hear of such books as "Clarissa," "Tom Jones," "Roderick Random"; paintings by contemporary artists, of the men and women, the life and society, of their day? Suppose we were to describe the doings of such a person as Mr. Lovelace, or my Lady Bellaston, or that wonderful "Lady of Quality" who lent her memoirs to the author of "Peregrine Pickle." How the pure and outraged Nineteenth Century would blush, scream, run out of the room, call away the young ladies, and order Mr. Mudie never to send one of that odious author's books again! You are fifty-eight years old, madam, and it may be that you are too squeamish, that you cry out before you are hurt, and when nobody had any intention of offending your ladyship. Also, it may be that the novelist's art is injured by the restraints put upon him, as many an honest, harmless statue at St. Peter's and the Vatican is spoiled by the tin draperies in which ecclesiastical old women have swaddled the fair limbs of the marble. But in your prudery there is reason. So there is in the state censorship of the Press. The page may contain matter dangerous to bonos mores. Out with your scissors, censor, and clip off the prurient paragraph! We have nothing for it but to submit. Society, the despot, has given his imperial decree. We may think the statue
has been seen to greater advantage without the tin drapery; we may plead the moral were better might we recite the whole fable. Away with him—not a word! I never saw the pianofortes in the United States with the frilled muslin trousers on their legs; but, depend on it, the muslin covered some of the notes as well as the mahogany, muffled the music, and stopped the player. (Virginians, I, Ch. 41) 

From the "Preface" of Pendennis on, this subject is one that Thackeray's narrators return to again and again; in fact, they complain so often about these restraints without ever rebelling against them, that the judicious reader is likely to feel some irritation—do something about it or stop whining, he is tempted to say.

As I noted in Chapter I, The Newcomes contains a postscript which has to be seen as Thackeray himself talking to his readers. The postscript does several things, including

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While we are on this subject, I might challenge anyone to prove that the following remark does not come from The Virginians: "We can't tell—you would not bear to be told—the whole truth regarding those men and manners. You could no more suffer in a British drawing-room, under the reign of Queen Victoria, a fine gentleman or fine lady of Queen Anne's time, or hear what they heard and said, than you would receive an ancient Briton. It is as one reads about savages, that one contemplates the wild ways, the barbarous feasts, the terrific pastimes, of the men of pleasure of that age." It does not, however. It comes from the lecture on Steele in The English Humourists, p. 93.
criticizing Pendennis for various errors and asking a number of questions about the characters' fates, most of whose answers are buried within the novel itself—the speaker seems to be having a little joke. But after asking these questions, the novel ends with this rather strange passage:

But for you, dear friend, it is as you like. You may settle your Fable-land in your own fashion. Anything you like happens in Fable-land. Wicked folks die àpropos (for instance, that death of Lady Kew was most artful; for if she had not died, don't you see that Ethel would have married Lord Farintosh the next week?)—annoying folks are got out of the way; the poor are rewarded—the upstarts are set down in Fable-land. . . . And the poet of Fable-land rewards and punishes absolutely. He splendidly deals out bags of sovereigns, which won't buy anything; belabors wicked backs with awful blows, which do not hurt; endows heroines with preternatural beauty, and creates heroes, who, if ugly sometimes, yet possess a thousand good qualities, and usually end by being immensely rich. Ah, happy, harmless Fable-land, where these things are! Friendly reader! may you and the author meet there on some future day! He hopes so; as he yet keeps a lingering hold of your hand, and bids you farewell with a kind heart. (Ch. 80)

One might expect the "dear friend" and "friendly reader" addressed here to be the finally created implied reader, but that cannot be, because of the tone of the address, because I do not believe that any but a schizophrenic reader has been created by means of narrative techniques, and because the passage seems to be inviting us to read the novel any way we
please. As a matter of fact, however, the description given here of what the "poet of Fable-land" can do does not fit The Newcomes, or any of Thackeray's novels, so what are we to make of it?

Gordon N. Ray says of this postscript that "as the end of the novel approached, Thackeray was besieged by appeals to unite his hero and heroine, and finally he brought himself to assure his readers 'that in fable-land somewhere Ethel and Clive are living most comfortably together.'" He adds that "with his novel attuned throughout to a minor key," Thackeray knew he had committed an artistic blunder, "just as Dickens did when he brought Estella and Pip together at the end of Great Expectations." Ray neglects to note that several references scattered throughout The Newcomes imply the eventual marriage of Ethel and Clive. It may be, however, that Thackeray's resentment at both the overt and covert pressures brought to bear on him by his readers is breaking out here and that the postscript is an oblique attack on all those readers. If so, we can only say that he is resenting a situation that he himself, as implied author, helped to create

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19 The Age of Wisdom, pp. 244-5.
through the techniques and approaches of his later novels. I wish there were an easy answer for this puzzle, but I cannot perceive one.

I say the created implied readers of the later novels are schizophrenic (using the term loosely) because it seems clear that the implied authors are schizophrenic; thus, the reader must either accept parts of the commentary while rejecting others, or, if he accepts all of it, must be a strange, unthinking, unreacting beast indeed. As I remarked earlier, these final novels contain a strange intermingling of the Manager and his opposite, the Sentimentalist. We have seen a good deal of the sentimental and sappy side, but there are also passages of bitter satire worthy of *Vanity Fair*, the difference being that in that novel nearly everything fits together with everything else. In *The Virginians*, for in-

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20 In this regard, we should not overlook a strange— and unique— passage from *The Virginians*: "James Wolfe has promised to come to dinner; but James is dancing attendance upon Miss Lowther, and would rather have a glance from her eyes than the finest kickshaws dressed by Lord Wrotham's cook, or the dessert which is promised for the entertainment at which you are just going to sit down. You will make the sixth. You may take Mr. Wolfe's place. You may be sure he won't come. As for me, I will stand at the sideboard and report the conversation" (II, Ch. 3). The mincing coyness of the passage is totally without purpose or precedent, but we will see it again— in Charlotte Brontë, that great admirer of Thackeray.
stance, it is clearly the implied author as Manager who says that "I forbear to go into too curious inquiries regarding the Lady Maria's antecedents. I have my own opinion about Madam Bernstein's. A hundred years ago people of the great world were not so straitlaced as they are now, when everybody is good, pure, moral, modest; when there is no skeleton in anybody's closet; when there is no scheming; no slurring over of old stories; when no girl tries to sell herself for wealth, and no mother abets her" (I, Ch. 17). Again in *The Virginians*, with a thought lifted from *Vanity Fair*, the narrator describes the rumors of Harry's great wealth that spread about the countryside and concludes, "no wonder the honest Britons cheered him and respected him for his prosperity, as the noble-hearted fellows always do. I am surprised city corporations did not address him, and offer gold boxes with the freedom of the city—he was so rich. Ah, a proud thing it is to be a Briton, and think that there is no country where prosperity is so much respected as in ours: and where success receives such constant affecting testimonials of loyalty" (I, Ch. 20). One of the best of such examples occurs in *The Newcomes*, but whereas the Manager of the Performance could assume Vanity Fair values and make the device work, when
Pendennis becomes a Manager the role is too much at odds with other aspects of his displayed personality to be truly effective in relation to an implied reader:

To push on in the crowd, every male or female struggler must use his shoulders. If a better place than yours presents itself just beyond your neighbor, elbow him and take it. . . . A woman of the world will marry her daughter and have done with her; get her carriage and be home and asleep in bed; while a timid mamma has still her girl in the nursery, or is beseeching the servants in the cloakroom to look for her shawls, with which some one else has whisked away an hour ago. What a man has to do in society is to assert himself. Is there a good place at table? Take it. At the Treasury or at the Home Office? Ask for it. Do you want to go to a party to which you are not invited? Ask to be asked. Ask A., ask B., ask Mrs. C., ask everybody you know: you will be thought a bore; but you will have your way. What matters if you are considered obtrusive, provided you obtrude? By pushing steadily, nine hundred and ninety-nine people in a thousand will yield to you. Only command persons, and you may be pretty sure that a good number will obey. How well your shilling will have been laid out, O gentle reader, who purchase this; and, taking the maxim to heart, follow it through life! You may be sure of success. If your neighbor's foot obstructs you, stamp on it; and do you suppose he won't take it away? (Ch. 8)

The later novels take considerably more advantage of the possibilities offered by the fictive audience, so we see many more examples of the "dear" and "gentle reader" address used for mocking and satiric purposes. One of these possibilities is the "lady who has just left the room" technique: "You toss
down the page with scorn, and say, 'It is not true. Human nature is not so bad as this cynic would have it to be. You would make no difference between the rich and the poor.' Be it so. You would not. But own that your next door neighbor would. Nor is this, dear madam, addressed to you; no, no, we are not so rude as to talk about you to your face; but, if we may not speak of the lady who has just left the room, what is to become of conversation and society" (Newcomes, Ch. 5)? The purpose, of course, is to shape us as readers by making us feel superior to other—supposed—readers. I do not think that a method designed to flatter our superior perceptiveness and to cause us to scorn other, less perceptive readers—i.e., to play to our vanity—is a sound means of creating the humane implied reader indicated by most of Thackeray's work, but it is used frequently in the later novels, as in the numerous addresses to Mrs. Grundy: "I know, my dear Mrs. Grundy, you think she was an old fool? Ah! do you suppose fools' caps do not cover gray hair, as well as jet or auburn? Bear gently with our elderly fredaines, O you Minerva of a woman! Or perhaps you are so good and wise that you don't read novels at all" (Virginians, I, Ch. 27)? The problem here is that the ridicule of Mrs. Grundy outweighs the tolerance that is
being preached to her, and, in fact, contradicts it, which leaves the implied reader in somewhat of a quandary.

I have maintained in this chapter that in his final novels Thackeray suppressed the Manager side of his personality and brought to the forefront an implied author who embodied (embodied, that is, from the standpoint of the humane, Christian values implicitly presented in *Vanity Fair* and both explicitly and implicitly taught in the later novels) some of the worst aspects of his own personality and who played to and cultivated the worst aspects of his audience. Most of the addresses to members of the fictive audience support this conclusion; they serve to distance us from some of our more absurd or prejudiced fellow readers, while not really endangering our own complacency; in fact, they usually encourage it. Occasionally, however, the strain becomes a bit too much, and a different kind of bitterness from that aimed at segments of the fictive audience breaks through. In *The Virginians*, for instance, the narrator remarks that
have I, my eminent young Grubstreet! any more than
you have ears. Dear ladies! I assure you I am
only joking in the above remarks.—I do not advocate
the thrashing of your sex at all,—and, as you
can't understand the commonest bit of fun, beg
leave flatly to tell you that I consider your sex
a hundred times more loving and faithful than
ours. (I, Ch. 35)

This attack belongs to the same order as the remarks
about Mrs. Grundy and the complaints about society's
restraints on the novelist, but those passages had an educa-
tional purpose and, presumably, an implied reader in mind,
whereas this one categorically insults entire classes of
readers—real, fictive, and implied. It may very well be that
for an instant the implied author has given up attempts at
reform and just let his real resentment emerge. Another
passage, whose implications are remarkably grim, occurs in

The Newcomes:

Have we not all such closets [where skeletons are
hid], my jolly friend, as well as the noble Marquis
of Carabas? At night, when all the house is asleep
but you, don't you get up and peep into yours?
When you, in your turn are slumbering, up gets
Mrs. Brown from your side, steals down stairs like
Amina to her ghoul, clicks open the secret door,
and looks into her dark depository. Did she tell
you of that little affair with Smith long before
she knew you? Psha! who knows any one save himself
alone? Who, in showing his house to the closest
and dearest, doesn't keep back the key of a closet
or two? I think of a lovely reader laying down the
page and looking over at her unconscious husband,
asleep, perhaps, after dinner. Yes, madam a closet
he hath: and you, who pry into everything, shall never have the key of it. I think of some honest Othello pausing over this very sentence in a railroad carriage, and stealthily gazing at Desdemona opposite to him, innocently administering sandwiches to their little boy—I am trying to turn off the sentence with a joke, you see—I feel it is growing too dreadful, too serious. (Ch. 11)

Rather too dreadful indeed, a passage worthy of *Vanity Fair*, but wasted and easily overlooked in *The Newcomes*, where the Manager emerges only occasionally and thus has little impact when he does. The passage, and others like it, is meant seriously, and a good deal in the later novels supports its validity; but too much more of the commentary subverts and directly contradicts it, and thus I think that the thrust of these later novels is to create the very implied readers whose values (e.g., egoism, absolutism, sentimentality, social and cultural chauvinism) and state of mind (particularly unthinkingly smugness) are so vigorously attacked both in the later novels themselves and especially in *Vanity Fair*.
CHAPTER IV

TROLLOPE AND THE BARSET NOVELS

Although the short novel *The Warden* was by no means an immediate commercial success, the critical acclaim it received combined with the sales of the more successful *Barchester Towers* to determine Trollope's career as the eventual author of some forty-seven novels in one hundred and nine volumes. Because the six novels of the Barset series remain among his most popular and best known works, and because they are a series, I will focus on them. In their way, they offer as complex and interesting a field for study of the implied author/narrator/reader relationship as any Victorian novels, for, despite the bad posthumous press he received for his methodical writing habits and his large output and despite Henry James' attacks upon his narrative methods and techniques, Trollope knew what he was doing, and he achieved effects that demand recognition.

Probably more than any other Victorian novelist, Trollope has been harshly criticized for intruding himself into his novels. An early critic of *The Warden* patronizingly points out
a "defect" which "he may easily remedy, and which, he may
take our word for it," is regarded as a serious fault "not by
critics only, but by the general public as well." The defect
is "that Mr. Trollope speaks far too much in his own person
in the course of his narrative. . . . This is a fault in Art;
and if Mr. Trollope should doubt it, we refer him to the
stage as an illustration."¹ A reviewer of Barchester Towers
says that "in point of lively writing and well-restrained
humour, this is perhaps the best of Mr. Trollope's novels;
and it might have been better, if he would have refrained
from frequently and somewhat offensively coming forward as
author to remind us that we are reading a fiction. Such in­
trusions are as objectionable in a novel as on the stage."²

This line of criticism was best stated in the 1883
critique by Henry James, who writes that

there are certain precautions in the way of pro­
ducing that illusion dear to the intending novel­
ist which Trollope not only habitually scorned
to take, but really . . . delighted wantonly to
violate. He took a suicidal satisfaction in
reminding the reader that the story he was tell­
ing was only, after all, a make-believe. He
habitually referred to the work in hand (in the

course of that work) as a novel, and to himself as a novelist, and was fond of letting the reader know that this novelist could direct the course of events according to his pleasure. Already, in *Barchester Towers*, he falls into this pernicious trick. . . . These little slaps at credulity . . . are very discouraging, but they are even more inexplicable; for they are deliberately inartistic, even judged from the point of view of that rather vague consideration of form which is the only canon we have a right to impose upon Trollope. It is impossible to imagine what a novelist takes himself to be unless he regard himself as an historian and his narrative as a history. It is only as an historian that he has the smallest *locus standi*. As a narrator of fictitious events he is nowhere; to insert into his attempt a backbone of logic, he must relate events that are assumed to be real. . . . Therefore, when Trollope suddenly winks at us and reminds us that he is telling us an arbitrary thing, we are startled and shocked in quite the same way as if Macaulay or Motley were to drop the historic mask and intimate that William of Orange was a myth or the Duke of Alva an invention.3

Despite James' acuteness as both critic and novelist, I believe that he misread Trollope's narrative commentary, that he misjudged the novel-reader relationship indicated by his own history-novel analogy, and that he was unable to appreciate the quite different philosophy of fiction held by Trollope. Moreover, James has remained the fountainhead for one major stream of Trollopian criticism, as Bradford A. Booth demonstrates in a passage that I find remarkably silly:

Henry James was a shrewd critic of Trollope. . . . Nothing that Trollope did seemed to James more reprehensible than his almost perverse habit of shattering the illusion of reality which must lie at the very heart of every novel's appeal. . . . Thackeray, from whom Trollope had learned almost as many faults as virtues, had presented himself as the puppet-master of Vanity Fair. Trollope not only goes further in showing his readers how the strings may be pulled, he asks them which string he ought to pull. . . . There are literally scores of such passages [of authorial intrusion]. In their cumulative effect they tend to persuade one that the novelist does not take his work seriously and that the reader is a dupe. Since no one enjoys being put in such a position, there develops a good deal of resentment toward the author. That a judgment against his sincerity may be erroneous, as it certainly is with Trollope . . . is simply a measure of the damage which the chatty writer inflicts upon himself when he takes the reader behind the scenes and explains the mechanics of the pulleys and levers.4

The passage is silly because Booth uncritically accepts the notion of a single kind of illusion, which Trollope supposedly "shatters"; because the glib comparison of the narrative techniques of Vanity Fair and Barchester Towers seriously distorts both novels; and because the final three sentences could only have been written by a critic laden with prejudices and incapable of evaluating Trollope's novels on their own terms. A far better criticism is James R. Kincaid's

"Barchester Towers and the Nature of Conservative Comedy,\textsuperscript{5} one of the more significant articles on Trollope's techniques and values to have appeared in recent criticism. I believe that it offers a fruitful way of evaluating Trollope's intention. Kincaid argues that "though the darkness of this comedy must not be overstated, an adequate appreciation of Trollope's novel demands, I think, a recognition of its complexity, its startling values, and its maturity. . . . Trollope's novel shares with Thackeray's masterpiece a cynicism concerning youth, a suspicion of standard novelistic formulae, a distrust of commonly-accepted heroic virtues. . . . But most important, in its values and in its particular tone, it echoes the mellow and strong sadness of Vanity Fair" (p. 612). Although this comment considerably understates the darkness of Vanity Fair, Kincaid does make an excellent case for the conservatism of Barchester Towers. As he demonstrates, the norms of Barchester Towers are suspicious of youth and other traditional comic values and even antagonistic towards them. Mr. Harding, who can be seen as the major character of both The Warden and Barchester Towers insofar as he most nearly embodies their normative values, is a gentle

\textsuperscript{5}ELH, 37 (1970), 595-612.
and meek old man who receives the narrator's highest commendation for his inaction. But whereas Kincaid focuses on Harding and on other characters and devices that further the conservative comedy, my focus will be on the narrator and the implied author behind him. In regard to the narrator and his story I think that the key word is "maturity": these first two Barchester novels are works about maturity intended to create mature implied readers and narrated by a mature man who identifies with Mr. Harding more than with any other character, though he does not share all of Harding's shortcomings. This emphasis on maturity also helps to explain some of the apparent contradictions in the novels, such as that between writing a novel and relating a true story, which I believe Trollope reconciled better than did Thackeray.

To return to the history-versus-fiction conflict that James taxed Trollope with, I think we should establish immediately that the two men obviously held different views on this matter (a fact which James, attributing no view at all to Trollope, apparently failed to recognize) and, furthermore, that Trollope was more modern than James in his conception. James argued that the novelist who did not maintain the illusion that he was relating a factual history had no place
to stand, but a look at the major twentieth-century novels quickly demonstrates the inadequacy of this view. It seems to me that Trollope had a better (or at least a wider and deeper) grasp of novels and of a reader's relationship to a novel than James did, for his practice clearly shows that he relied more on his audience's appreciation of the narrative for its own sake and of the symbolic movement toward a comic or ironic resolution than he did on tricking them with the illusion of an actual history.

Evoking the illusion of an historical reality is not attempted very often in the first two Barset novels (not as often as in *Vanity Fair*), but the few instances are revealing. During one rather serious and pompous procedure, the installation of Bishop Proudie, the narrator remarks that "on this occasion the new bishop took his seat for the first time in the throne allotted to him. . . . The old carved oak-wood of the throne, ascending with its numerous grotesque pinnacles half-way up to the roof of the choir, had been washed, and dusted, and rubbed, and it all looked very smart. Ah! how

6 James, of course, did not have the example of twentieth-century fiction. Still, I think it fair to expect of a great critic a wider, more comprehensive vision than that afforded by the practices of his own time.
often sitting there, in happy early days, on those lowly benches in front of the altar, have I whiled away the tedium of a sermon in considering how best I might thread my way up amidst those wooden towers, and climb safely to the top-most pinnacle" (Barchester, Ch. 6). What is important here is not the illusion of reality but the fact that the solemnity of this important event within the story is undercut by the older narrator's recollection of the child enduring the "tedium of a sermon" and of his desire to climb about on the carved throne. In another instance the narrator remarks that "I never could endure to shake hands with Mr. Slope. A cold, clammy perspiration always exudes from him, the small drops are ever to be seen standing on his brow, and his friendly grasp is unpleasant" (Barchester, Ch. 4). Here, as with the first example, the important point is not, as James would have it, the illusion of a history induced by the narrator's appearance in the story. Rather, it is the slimy presence of Slope evoked by the description. Slope is made real to us in his physical repulsiveness, and I doubt that we pay much attention to the narrator's presence.

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A more significant example of the use the narrator makes of himself occurs in *The Warden*, when he recounts his knowledge of Archdeacon Grantley's imposing house:

And yet I have never found the rectory a pleasant house. The fact that man shall not live by bread alone seemed to be somewhat forgotten; and . . . I generally found the rectory somewhat dull. . . . I never could make companions of the boys. Charles James, though he always looked as though there was something in him, never seemed to have much to say; and what he did say he would always unsay the next minute. . . . Henry once quarrelled with me for taking his sister Grizzel's part in a contest between them as to the best mode of using a watering-pot for the garden flowers; and from that day to this he has not spoken to me, though he speaks at me often enough. For half an hour or so I certainly did like Sammy's gentle speeches; but one gets tired of honey, and I found that he preferred the more admiring listeners whom he met in the kitchen-garden and back precincts of the establishment; besides, I think I once caught Sammy fibbing. (Ch. 8)

Whereas similar intrusions by *Vanity Fair*’s narrator are almost gratuitous and could probably be dispensed with, this passage is important, but, again, not because of the sought-for illusion. Clearly, I think, the narrative voice here is that of an older and maturer man who does not really like or trust these children, and in that respect it furthers the attack on youth that runs through both novels. But more important, the narrator (who opens the passage with a gospel truth and closes it with an exquisitely put condemnation of
lying and who, in between, lets us know that he is patronized by at least one of the children) seems here very much allied to the character Mr. Harding, though he is perhaps a bit blunter and more perceptive and is without that gentleman's family ties.

Professor Kincaid has demonstrated how in *Barchester Towers* the novel's—and the narrator's—"implicit distrust of the young" has "its corollary admiration for the aged moral center, the sixty-four-year-old Mr. Harding" (p. 596), who, though he is meek and passive, is neither soft nor naive. As Kincaid says,

while tolerant enough to allow "the Pope the loan of his pulpit" (Ch. vii), as Dr. Grantley says in exasperation, Mr. Harding is neither soft nor naive. He immediately dislikes Slope for all the right reasons, and he firmly resists all the pressures put on him by his friends. His final triumph, then, reverses the general terms of comedy: his satisfaction, more complete than anyone else's (Ch. lxi), comes simply from escaping power. He is the strongest symbol of the most powerful impulse of the novel: the attack on the competitive instinct. In the world of fighting, Trollope argues, the man in the wrong is the one who is defensive, carefully storing up weapons, while the man in the right is confident and unarmed. "The one is never prepared for combat, the other is always ready. Therefore it is that in this world the man that is in the wrong almost invariably conquers the man that is in the right" (Ch. xxxvii). Therefore, one does not fight. (p. 611)
For the purposes of creating implied readers in the novels, however, another dimension is needed to complement the moral values dramatized in Mr. Harding; this dimension is supplied by the narrator, who, often Harding-like in his values and morality and even, as we have seen, in his personality and character traits, can also go beyond Harding in allowing himself anger and specific moral commentary and judgment. Thus, the technique of giving us these supposedly first-hand accounts functions as a device for forming our attitudes in a manner more subtly persuasive than a distanced impersonal account would be.

For the most part, however, the narrator is definitely aware of himself as story teller or novelist--the fact which upset James so much--and he is also well aware of all the techniques of the form and of the expectations it creates, both of which he, like Thackeray's Manager, can play with and mock. He announces that "Mr. Slope, however, on his first introduction must not be brought before the public at the tail of a chapter" (Barchester, Ch. 3), a sentence that grows in irony as one considers it: it draws attention to an established novel convention while strongly implying that a novel is not life and that we should not confuse the two. Again, the
narrator can remark that "our tale is now done, and it only remains to us to collect the scattered threads of our little story, and to tie them into a seemly knot. This will not be a work of labour . . . and were it not for the custom of the thing, we might leave it to the imagination of all concerned to conceive how affairs at Barchester arranged themselves" (Warden, Ch. 21). By pointing out that such summations are traditional, he once again highlights the contrived nature of art. Similarly, when writing of Mrs. Quiverful's interview with Mrs. Proudie, the narrator says that "Mrs. Proudie has not been portrayed in these pages as an agreeable or an amiable lady. . . . It is ordained that all novels should have a male and a female angel, and a male and a female devil. If it be considered that this rule is obeyed in these pages, the latter character must be supposed to have fallen to the lot of Mrs. Proudie. But she was not all devil. There was a heart inside that stiff-ribbed bodice, though not, perhaps, of large dimensions, and certainly not easily accessible" (Barchester, Ch. 26). By recognizing a standard convention which does not really apply to his novel, then fitting Mrs. Proudie into that convention, and then further qualifying to show that Mrs. Proudie is a human being, the narrator accom-
plishes a number of purposes. He exposes another convention as a distorted representation of life, and he forestalls his own reader from fitting Mrs. Proudie into the convention's slot without the reader's noting the humanity she displays towards Mrs. Quiverful. Near the conclusion of *Barchester Towers*, the narrator goes even further, first remarking that "a difficulty begins to make itself manifest in the necessity of disposing of all our friends in the small remainder of this one volume," then exclaiming, "oh, that Mr. Longman would allow me a fourth! It should transcend the other three as the seventh heaven transcends all the lower stages of celestial bliss" (Ch. 43). He thus mocks the whole idea of illusion by drawing attention to the artifice of an art form bound by a publisher's rule that a novel should fill up, but should not exceed, three volumes. In all these examples, the narrator subtly works at the creation of an implied reader who will see that novels are indeed art but who will simultaneously bring more appreciation and discrimination to them.

Trollope is quite similar to Thackeray in several respects, including various common values, especially so in this attack on novels and the readers' expectations of them; in many ways, though, I think that Trollope shows himself the
more clever and subtle artist. Take, for instance, the following passage, which resembles the examples I have discussed above, but which is longer and thus rather more complicated in its achievements:

These leave-takings in novels are as disagreeable as they are in real life; not so sad, indeed, for they want the reality of sadness; but quite as perplexing, and generally less satisfactory. What novelist . . . can impart an interest to the last chapter of his fictitious history? Promises of two children and superhuman happiness are of no avail, nor assurance of extreme respectability carried to an age far exceeding that usually allotted to mortals. The sorrows of our heroes and heroines, they are your delight, oh public! their sorrows, or their sins, or their absurdities; not their virtues, good sense, and consequent rewards. When we begin to tint our final pages with couleur de rose, as in accordance with fixed rules we must do, we altogether extinguish our own powers of pleasing. When we become dull we offend your taste. . . . And who can apportion out and dovetail his incidents, dialogues, characters, and descriptive morsels, so as to fit them all exactly into 439 pages, without either compressing them unnaturally, or extending them artificially at the end of his labour? Do I not myself know that I am at this moment in want of a dozen pages, and that I am sick with cudgelling my brains to find them? And then when everything is done, the kindest-hearted critic of them all invariably twits us with the incompetency and lameness of our conclusion. (Barchester, Ch. 51)

This is rhetorically excellent. The narrator introduces another convention, but he implicitly points out again that novels are different from life, not being as intense or real.
Then he proceeds with much good taste to educate his implied reader about what the average novel reader looks for in novels, how these expectations can clash, and the trouble this gives the novelist, who is bound by conventions; he concludes with another passing reference to the artificiality of the novel form and a further elucidation of the bind in which the novelist can find himself. Thackeray's later narrator found himself, as we saw, lecturing to his audience about how much more interesting they would find novels if they could only know the difficulties and sorrows of the man who was the author. Trollope's narrator elucidates the sorrows and difficulties of the artist, and I do believe he has found the more effective strategy.

Probably the most famous Trollopian passage dealing with aspects of the novel is the one Henry James was so incensed about, in which the narrator discusses Eleanor Bold and her suitors:

But let the gentle-hearted reader be under no apprehension whatsoever. It is not destined that Eleanor shall marry Mr. Slope or Bertie Stanhope. And here, perhaps, it may be allowed to the novelist to explain his views on a very important point in the art of telling tales. He ventures to reprobate that system which goes so far to violate all proper confidence between the author and his readers, by maintaining nearly to the end of the third volume a mystery as to the
fate of their favourite personage. Nay, more, and worse than this, is too frequently done. Have not often the profoundest efforts of genius been used to baffle the aspirations of the reader, to raise false hopes and false fears, and to give rise to expectations which are never to be realized? Are not promises all but made of delightful horrors, in lieu of which the writer produces nothing but most commonplace realities in his final chapter? And is there not a species of deceit in this to which the honesty of the present age should lend no countenance?

And what can be the worth of that solicitude which a peep into the third volume can utterly dissipate? . . . And then, how grievous a thing it is to have the pleasure of your novel destroyed by the ill-considered triumph of a previous reader. . . .

Our doctrine is, that the author and the reader should move along together in full confidence with each other. Let the personages of the drama undergo ever so complete a comedy of errors among themselves, but let the spectator never mistake the Syracusan for the Ephesian; otherwise he is one of the dupes, and the part of a dupe is never dignified. (Barclester, Ch. 15)

Implicit throughout the passage are the assumptions that no intelligent (or mature) reader is going to forget that he is reading a novel, an essentially artificial construction, and that the only truth one can count on is the narrator's honesty. Trust me, says the narrator, and I will level with you, for I assume you have no more desire to be a dupe than I do, and so I scorn playing any games with you. Partly he lectures his readers in a reasonable and low-keyed manner, but more important than the lecturing is the basic assumption
that we are intelligent and mature readers; in reality we are probably not, but that assumption should work upon us to make us the created readers to whom it will apply. My theory is that because this assumption is hidden, the implied author expects that we will more naturally tend to become—or at least to assume we have become—the intelligent readers who do not forget that we are reading a novel. It is indeed a sophisticated technique for forming implied readers.

James objected to the implication that the author can do what he likes with his characters and their story, but he was clearly mistaken in his reading, as many critics have pointed out. Towards the middle of Barchester Towers the narrator remarks that "had she given way and sobbed aloud, as in such cases a woman should do, he would have melted at once, implored her pardon, perhaps knelt at her feet and declared his love. Everything would have been explained; and Eleanor would have gone back to Barchester with a contented mind. How easily would she have forgiven and forgotten the arch-deacon's suspicions had she but heard the whole truth from Mr. Arabin. But then where would have been my novel" (Ch. 30)? Clearly the implication in both of the last two passages I have quoted is, as Wayne Booth has noted, "only that
how he tells about the events can be altered. . . . The characters' lives are inviolable; what may be manipulated is only the relation of the author and reader to those lives, and the author, in praising his own mastery, heightens the comedy of these petty but representative lives which he is using for our pleasure.⁸ This point is, of course, also touched on by Thackeray. I believe that if Henry James had considered a little further, he might also have concluded that the same relationship between matter and manner holds for what passes as straight history. What is wonderful about Trollope's narrator, though, in his presentation of these subjects, is the tact and deftness with which he assumes intelligence and maturity in his readers, thus, hopefully, tending to create readers with such attributes—and readers who are then more ready to accept the norms and values inherent in both Mr. Harding and the narrator himself, norms and values which are conservative and which might be harder to accept (like Thackeray's sentimentality) if they were presented more explicitly.

One of the major sets of conservative norms running through these two novels is the attack on youth, with the

There is, perhaps, no greater hardship at present inflicted on mankind in civilised and free countries, than the necessity of listening to sermons. No one but a preaching clergyman has, in these realms, the power of compelling an audience to sit silent, and be tormented. No one but a preaching clergyman can revel in platitudes, truisms, and untruisms, and yet receive, as his undisputed privilege, the same respectful demeanour as though words of impassioned eloquence, or persuasive logic fell from his lips. . . . With what complacency will a young parson deduce false conclusions from misunderstood texts, and then threaten us with all the penalties of Hades if we neglect to comply with the injunctions he has given us! Yes, my too self-confident juvenile friend, I do believe in those mysteries, which are so common in your mouth; I do believe in the unadulterated word which you hold there in your hand; but you must pardon me if, in some things, I doubt your interpretation. The Bible is good, the prayer-book is good, nay, you yourself would be acceptable, if you would read to me some portion of those time-honoured discourses which our great divines have elaborated in the full maturity of their powers. But you must excuse me, my insufficient young lecturer, if I yawn over your imperfect sentences, your repeated phrases, your false pathos, your drawlings and denouncings, your humming and hawing, your oh-ing and ah-ing, your black gloves and your white handkerchief. To me, it all means nothing. (Barchester, Ch. 6)
The slow glide from laughing at boring sermons to sneering at complacent young parsons, who then become the dandified fops viciously attacked in the conclusion, is masterly, and the implied reader is carried right along from the humorous opening into the savage attack on youth, which is deepened by the reference to the "time-honoured discourses" of the "great divines" in the "full maturity of their powers." Then, later in the novel, after having worked on us with such skill, having taken us into his confidence in various ways, and having assured us we will not be dupes, the narrator can fully unleash his sarcasm without any preparatory feints. Notice how the "I" of the preceding passage turns into the "us" and "we" of the following, much later, one:

It often surprises us that very young men can muster courage to preach for the first time to a strange congregation. Men who are as yet but little more than boys, who have but just left, what indeed we may not call a school, but a seminary intended for their tuition as scholars, whose thoughts have been mostly of boating, cricketing, and wine parties, ascend a rostrum high above the heads of the submissive crowd, not that they may read God's word to those below, but that they may preach their own word for the edification of their hearers. It seems strange to us that they are not stricken dumb by the new and awful solemnity of their position. How am I, just turned twenty-three, who have never yet passed ten thoughtful days since the power of thought first came to me, how am I to instruct these greybeards, who with the weary
thinking of so many years have approached so near the grave? Can I teach them their duty? Can I explain to them that which I so imperfectly understand, that which years of study may have made so plain to them? Has my newly acquired privilege, as one of God's ministers, imparted to me as yet any fitness for the wonderful work of a preacher? (Barchester, Ch. 23)

For all of Trollope's writing habits which later brought him into so much disrepute, and for all that this is one of his first novels, he shows here a skillful control of his material.

As I said before, The Warden and Barchester Towers offer a nearly pure model of the kind of relationships this study deals with. Trollope the implied author does not overtly appear in the novels, but his control—his creative intelligence—is felt throughout them, and certainly neither Harding, the moral center, nor the narrator, who is stronger, tougher, and more aggressive than Harding, but who nevertheless shares many of Harding's traits, can be equated with Trollope the historical man. But the integration of the narrator into the novels is remarkable, for we must recognize, I think, that, as is true with Thackeray's Manager in Vanity Fair, nearly all of the narrator's addresses to his readers, his comments on his characters, his statements of general truth, and even his rare emotional outbursts relate to the central
theme and dichotomies of the novels. Almost always the contrast is youth against age, and almost always the tone is that of the mature, charitable, gentle but wise man appealing to (i.e., creating) others of his kind to share his perceptions and his values. Central to much of what he says in the novels is the narrator's belief that "it is astonishing how much difference the point of view makes in the aspect of all that we look at," a remark occurring immediately after his observation that "while the outer world was accusing Mr. Quiverful of rapacity for promotion and of disregard to his honour, the inner world of his own household was falling foul of him, with equal vehemence, for his willingness to sacrifice their interest to a false feeling of sentimental pride" (Barchester, Ch. 24).

As regards such remarks, the narrator does, of course, face a ticklish problem, for a good deal of what he says could be construed as preaching, and since we have seen how he attacks preaching by the newly-hatched divines, he cannot himself appear to be young and brash. But of course he does not; in ways both overt and subtle he portrays himself as a mature, mellow and experienced man. Part of his technique in achieving this image is a masterly control of his fictive
audience. One point the narrator stresses, and it is surely knowledge gained through many years of living, is the healing power of time. He remarks on "how much kinder is God to us than we are willing to be to ourselves! At the loss of every dear face, at the last going of every well beloved one, we all doom ourselves to an eternity of sorrow, and look to waste ourselves away in an ever-running fountain of tears. How seldom does such grief endure! how blessed is the goodness which forbids it to do so" (Barchester, Ch. 2)! Later he repeats the same lesson with specific application to Eleanor, and with more homiletic overtones: "Alas for the memory of poor John Bold! Eleanor was not in love with Bertie Stanhope, nor was she in love with Mr. Arabin. But her devotion to her late husband was fast fading, when she could resolve in her mind, over the cradle of his infant, the faults and failings of other aspirants to her favour. Will any one blame my heroine for this? Let him or her rather thank God for all His goodness,—for His mercy endureth for ever" (Barchester, Ch. 24).

Similarly, the narrator asks, "do we not all know some reverend, all but sacred, personage before whom our tongue ceases to be loud and our step to be elastic" (Warden, Ch. 2);
"Gentle reader, did you ever feel yourself snubbed? Did you ever, when thinking much of your own importance, find yourself reduced to a non-entity" (Warden, Ch. 13)? Such rhetorical questions are not meant for the young and arrogant or for the powerful of the world—the Slopes or Grantleys—but for the old, mature, and humble—the Hardings, and sometimes for the women (the second question refers to Eleanor). They serve not only to create the narrator but to create the implied reader as well. The narrator relies on these rhetorical questions; at another point he asks, "our archdeacon was worldly—who among us is not so? He was ambitious—who among us is ashamed to own that 'last infirmity of noble minds!' He was avaricious, my readers will say. No—it was for no love of lucre that he wished to be bishop of Barchester" (Barchester, Ch. 1). Again, it is not the young and immature but the old and mature who can so come to terms with themselves. Likewise, when, in The Warden, the narrator criticizes John Bold's intemperate, idealistic, and indiscriminate zeal for reform, the emphasis falls not on Bold's personal idiosyncrasies, but on his youthfulness: "It would be well if one so young had a little more diffidence himself, and more trust in the honest purposes of others—if he could be brought
to believe that old customs need not necessarily be evil, and that changes may possibly be dangerous; but no, Bold has all the ardour and all the self-assurance of a Danton, and hurls his anathemas against time-honoured practices with the violence of a French Jacobin" (Ch. 2). Later in The Warden the narrator remarks that "had Bold been judging of another love and of another lady, he might have understood all this as well as we do; but in matters of love men do not see clearly in their own affairs" (Ch. 7). The unstated but implied conclusion to the final sentence is surely "especially when they are young."

In Vanity Fair, Thackeray's Manager achieved an effective consistency through his inconsistency; in The Warden and Barchester Towers, Trollope's narrator establishes a personality and an outlook and remains consistent within them, though he is really no less versatile than the Manager, and in some ways, perhaps, he is far more seductive. For instance, in portraying the awful poverty and squalor of the Quiverfuls, and their hope for advancement, he remarks that "there were fourteen of them--fourteen of them living--as Mrs. Quiverful had so powerfully urged in the presence of the bishop's wife. As long as promotion cometh from any human
source . . . will not such a claim as this hold good, in
spite of all our examination tests, detur digniori's and
optimist tendencies? It is fervently to be hoped that it may.
Till we can become divine we must be content to be human,
lest in our hurry for a change we sink to something lower"
(Barchester, Ch. 43). This is persuasive, so persuasive that
it will take a critical reader to realize that it is an
overt attack on a merit-based system and a defense of a
spoils and personal-privilege system; moreover, if we are not
very critical indeed, we may even overlook the fact that
Quiverful is being considered for promotion in the first place
only because he has been perceived as a possible malleable
pawn in the ecclesiastical power struggle that is occurring.
Mrs. Proudie is touched by the Quiverfuls' plight—the nar-
rator gives her that much credit—but that plight is only
marginally the reason Quiverful was originally chosen. These
are indeed conservative—even reactionary—values, though
they are argued most humanely. Likewise, the narrator can
state theories as implicitly pessimistic as anything in
Vanity Fair, but they are softened by being delivered through
the passive resignation of his Harding-like personality:

Wise people, when they are in the wrong, always
put themselves right by finding fault with the
people against whom they have sinned. Lady De
Courcy was a wise woman; and therefore, having treated Miss Thorne very badly by staying away till three o'clock, she assumed the offensive and attacked Mr. Thorne's roads. Her daughter, not less wise, attacked Miss Thorne's early hours. The art of doing this is among the most precious of those usually cultivated by persons who know how to live. There is no withstanding it. Who can go systematically to work, and having done battle with the primary accusation and settled that, then bring forward a counter-charge and support that also? Life is not long enough for such labours. A man in the right relies easily on his rectitude, and therefore goes about unarmed. His very strength is his weakness. A man in the wrong knows that he must look to his weapons; his very weakness is his strength. The one is never prepared for combat, the other is always ready. Therefore it is that in this world the man that is in the wrong almost invariably conquers the man that is in the right, and invariably despises him. *(Barchester, Ch. 37)*

This passage ranks with the one in *The Newcomes* about pushing in and asserting oneself, but whereas the former was heavily ironic, this one resignedly accepts the truth of the situation in which the man who holds Mr. Harding's and the novel's values finds himself. It is a grim and ugly reality, but as implied readers we are being created to accept the fact that there is nothing to be done about it, that fighting back either ends in futility or places one in the camp of those who are in the wrong.

In the relative, fair-minded spirit of "it all depends on your point of view," the narrator constantly explains and amplifies the action of the story from the mature and
open-minded position he has created for himself. We should not forget, however, that his commentary is delivered in conjunction with dramatic action, not in place of it, and it thus enriches the story and works on implied readers in a manner effective because it is low-keyed. In the course of Mr. Slope's love-making to Madeline Stanhope, she remarks, "'My heart! . . . you quite mistake the principles of my composition if you imagine that there is such a thing about me,'" and the narrator adds that "after all, there was very little that was false in anything the signora said. If Mr. Slope allowed himself to be deceived it was his own fault. Nothing could have been more open than her declarations about herself" (Barchester, Ch. 27). Again, in the course of the confusion over Eleanor's intentions towards Mr. Slope, Slope sends her a letter at Archdeacon Grantley's house, which triggers Grantley's outburst that "'it's very hard on me . . . that this should go on under my roof.'" The narrator comments that

now here the archdeacon was certainly most unreasonable. Having invited his sister-in-law to his house, it was a natural consequence that she should receive her letters there. And if Mr. Slope chose to write to her, his letter would, as a matter of course, be sent after her. Moreover, the very fact of an invitation to one's
house implies confidence on the part of the inviter. He had shown that he thought Mrs. Bold to be a fit person to stay with him by his asking her to do so, and it was most cruel to her that he should complain of her violating the sanctity of his roof-tree, when the laches committed were none of her committing. (Barsetshire, Ch. 28)

These comments are, of course, all quite obvious, but I feel that as readers we do not mind them, principally because they are precisely what Mr. Harding would say, in the same tone of voice, if he were in possession of all the facts (as the narrator is) and if he had a little less diffidence. Thus, though the commentary is obvious, it enriches the comedy for us.

Finally, in this same vein, we come to the famous scene in which Eleanor hits Mr. Slope. The narrator's commentary on the incident constitutes a fairly long passage, which is an important one in that he accomplishes so many effects with such skill. He begins by positing a number of fictive readers who negatively judge Eleanor in various ways; then, while partly agreeing with them, he proceeds to delicately analyze the situation so as to explain Eleanor's conduct to us, conduct partly attributable to her being raised by her father. The implication is, I think, that to have been raised in such a way as to avoid the naiveté that got her
into the situation would have been to lose more than she could have gained. At the same time, however, the passage contains some rather harsh judgments of Eleanor and of young women in general, and thus reaffirms many of the novel's conservative values. All in all, it is a performance that would have been hard to duplicate through strict dramatization:

And now it is to be feared that every well-bred reader of these pages will lay down the book with disgust, feeling that, after all, the heroine is unworthy of sympathy. She is a hoyden, one will say. At any rate she is not a lady, another will exclaim. I have suspected her all through, a third will declare; she has no idea of the dignity of a matron; or of the peculiar propriety which her position demands. At one moment she is romping with young Stanhope; then she is making eyes at Mr. Arabin; anon she comes to fisty-cuffs with a third lover; and all before she is yet a widow of two years' standing.

She cannot altogether be defended; and yet it may be averred that she is not a hoyden, not given to romping, nor prone to boxing. It were to be wished devoutly that she had not struck Mr. Slope in the face. In doing so she derogated from her dignity and committed herself. Had she been educated in Belgravia, had she been brought up by any sterner mentor than that fond father, had she lived longer under the rule of a husband, she might, perhaps, have saved herself from this great fault. As it was, the provocation was too much for her, the temptation to instant resentment of the insult too strong. She was too keen in the feeling of independence, a feeling dangerous for a young woman, but one in which her position peculiarly tempted her to indulge. And then Mr.
Slope's face, tinted with a deeper dye than usual by the wine he had drunk, simpering and puckering itself with pseudo piety and tender grimaces, seemed specially to call for such punishment. She had, too, a true instinct as to the man; he was capable of rebuke in this way and in no other. To him the blow from her little hand was as much an insult as a blow from a man would have been to another. It went direct to his pride. He conceived himself lowered in his dignity, and personally outraged. . . . Even the pain was a great annoyance to him, and the feeling that his clerical character had been wholly disregarded, sorely vexed him. (Barchester, Ch. 40)

When the narrator comments on his characters, he knows, as maturity should teach us to know—bad novels to the contrary—that we will not find absolutes of good and evil or of strength and weaknesses; at the same time, however, he knows how to damn with praise. For instance, at one point the narrator exclaims, "Poor Eleanor! I cannot say that with me John Bold was ever a favourite. I never thought him worthy of the wife he had won. But in her estimation he was most worthy. Hers was one of these feminine hearts which cling to a husband, not with idolatry, for worship can admit of no defect in its idol, but with the perfect tenacity of ivy. As the parasite plant will follow even the defects of the trunk which it embraces, so did Eleanor cling to and love the very faults of her husband" (Barchester, Ch. 2).
At the conclusion of the novel, he remarks again that "when the ivy has found its tower, when the delicate creeper has found its strong wall, we know how the parasite plants grow and prosper. They were not created to stretch forth their branches alone, and endure without protection the summer's sun and the winter's storm. Alone they but spread themselves on the ground, and cower unseen in the dingy shade. But when they have found their firm supporters, how wonderful is their beauty; how all pervading and victorious" (Barchester, Ch. 49). The metaphor is, of course, the same one used by Thackeray, and despite the praise for Eleanor contained in these comments, it has the same damning effect that it did in Vanity Fair. One of the conservative norms of these novels is a distinct anti-feminism, but, paradoxically, the sexist bias is neither as readily apparent nor as offensive as Thackeray's because it is not tainted with Thackeray's corresponding sentimentality.⁹

In his comments on Slope, the narrator also damns while seeming to praise, and he also serves to give a stronger, more

⁹As James Kincaid points out, one of the most damaging charges against Eleanor is that she does not instinctively know that Slope is not a gentleman.
articulate, and more knowledgeable cast to the confused and timid thoughts of Mr. Harding, who instinctively recoils from Slope because he is not a gentleman, but who goes so far in his attempts to be fair and just that he is ready to accept Eleanor's marriage to Slope. The narrator says that "my readers will guess from what I have written that I myself do not like Mr. Slope; but I am constrained to admit that he is a man of parts. He knows how to say a soft word in the proper place; he knows how to adapt his flattery to the ears of his hearers; he knows the wiles of the serpent, and he uses them. Could Mr. Slope have adapted his manners to men as well as to women, could he ever have learnt the ways of a gentleman, he might have risen to great things" (Barchester, Ch. 8). As an implicit comparison with Mr. Harding, this attempt to be fair to Slope emerges as a strong condemnation, and it is hardly flattering to women either. Later the narrator states that "the author must beg it to be remembered that Mr. Slope was not in all things a bad man. His motives, like those of most men, were mixed; and though his conduct was generally very different from that which we would wish to praise, it was actuated perhaps as often as that of the majority of the world by a desire to do his duty.
He believed in the religion which he taught, harsh, unpalatable, uncharitable as that religion was" (Barchester, Ch. 15). Whether "badness" is determined by the sincerity of one's beliefs is a question the narrator does not stop to consider, but in any case we may conclude that he has at least attempted to give Slope his due, granting that with the narrator's values there is blessed little he can say in the way of praise.

Although the non-aggressive Mr. Harding is the moral center of both The Warden and Barchester Towers, and although the narrator's constant purpose seems to be to bring the implied reader closer and closer to Harding's values and to those of the novel as a whole, the narrator does recognize Harding's weaknesses. In fact, he says that "Mr. Harding was by no means a perfect character. In his indecision, his weakness, his proneness to be led by others, his want of self-confidence, he was very far from being perfect" (Barchester, Ch. 18). Thus, the narrator adds a dimension to the novel by sharing Harding's values and yet by adding to them some of the moral outrage and the strength to express it that Harding lacks. Once in each novel we find that his abhorrence of the new doctrines being peddled by the Slopes
of the world is so strong that he must lash out at them in a way Mr. Harding could never do. There is no doubt that this anger is deliberate and that it provides another oblique criticism of Harding's shortcomings, thus perhaps indicating to the implied reader that total passivity is not ultimately desirable. In both cases the outburst is laced with the heaviest sarcasm. In The Warden the subject is the power of the popular press: "Were it not well for us in our ignorance that we confided all things to the Jupiter? Would it not be wise in us to abandon useless talking, idle thinking, and profitless labour? Away with majorities in the House of Commons, with verdicts from judicial bench given after much delay, with doubtful laws, and the fallible attempts of humanity! Does not the Jupiter, coming forth daily with fifty thousand impressions full of unerring decision on every mortal subject, set all matters sufficiently at rest" (Ch. 14)? In Barchester Towers the outburst concerns the new theories of Mr. Slope, which have so upset and paralyzed poor Harding:

'New men are carrying out new measures, and are carting away the useless rubbish of past centuries!' What cruel words these had been; and how often are they now used with all the heartless cruelty of a Slope! A man is sufficiently con-
demned if it can only be shown that either in politics or religion he does not belong to some new school established within the last score of years. He may then regard himself as rubbish and expect to be carted away. A man is nothing now unless he has within him a full appreciation of the new era; an era in which it would seem that neither honesty nor truth is very desirable, but in which success is the only touchstone of merit. We must laugh at every thing that is established. Let the joke be ever so bad, ever so untrue to the real principles of joking; nevertheless we must laugh—or else beware the cart. (Ch. 13)

To re-emphasize, these remarks are not aimed at the young, the upcoming, or the brash, but at the old, the mature, the timid and insecure. I myself find that part of me rejects many of the consequences of such a relationship (i.e., the political and social conservatism). Yet that critical aspect of self disappears as the rest of me is caught up in the excitement of reading, and I look back later with surprise to find that for a time I too have become an implied reader who enters into a relationship with an implied author constructed on his terms and shares the feelings and assumptions I have been discussing.
From 1858 through 1867 Trollope published the other four novels in the Barset series: *Doctor Thorne*,\(^{10}\) *Framley Parsonage*,\(^{11}\) *The Small House at Allington*,\(^{12}\) and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*.\(^{13}\) A reading of the contemporary criticism shows that the reviewers added little if anything new to what had been written about *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*. For instance, Trollope's continuing attack on certain fictional conventions was criticized by a reviewer of *Doctor Thorne*: "the contract of the writer with the reader is to create and maintain a reasonably perfect illusion as to the reality of the events which he relates, and he breaks that contract if he wantonly points out the difficulties of his task, and says that there is a way out of them, but that he does not choose to take the trouble to find it."\(^{14}\) A reviewer of *Framley Parsonage* says that "the twaddle, from which his

\(^{10}\) Boston, 1959.

\(^{11}\) 2 vols. (New York, 1915).

\(^{12}\) 3 vols. (New York, 1914).

\(^{13}\) Boston, 1964.

\(^{14}\) *Saturday Review*, 5 (1858), 618.
former works were not always free, here colours every thing with its dull sickly hue; and the rambling tendency which he could never keep quite down, here drags him into fields of description neither fresh nor by any means entertaining.15 One new issue was given, however, to the critics in these later Barset novels: the reintroduction of characters from previous novels, a device used much more extensively and in more major ways (such as the role of the Proudies and Grantleys in The Last Chronicle) by Trollope than by Thackeray. Despite the fact that these characters give continuity and depth to the Barset series, critics as a whole did not like the practice, and criticized it rather harshly, as do the following two representative reviewers of Framley Parsonage. The first says that "Mr. Trollope gives way too in this and other of his novels to a weakness now very common with our writers of fiction, we mean in the return to characters which they have treated with more or less success in former works. This can hardly ever be accomplished successfully, and while it betrays a great poverty of invention, most commonly does but vulgarize,

if not destroy, what may have been originally a happy conception."  

The second critic adds that "with some of the best characters in *Framley Parsonage* we are already acquainted. Mrs. Proudie, Miss Dunstable, the Greshams, and the Grantleys, are creations which belong to older and fresher works. It is astonishing how much a novelist loses in freshness and vigour by adopting the plan now so much in vogue, of borrowing from himself. It is at best a lazy and seductive artifice. It tempts the writer to save time by dispensing with new efforts and fresh draughts upon his own imagination, and the loss of interest to the reader is very great."  

Though contemporary critics apparently did not perceive them, there are at least two major differences between the first two and the last four Barset novels. First (and I will discuss this at some length), the whole complex of remarks, discussions, and confidences about novels and novel-writing found in the first two novels virtually disappears from the final four. In fact, most of the very few such references that occur after *The Warden* and *Brachester Towers* appear in *Doctor Thorne*, the third novel in the series. For instance,  

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16 *Westminster Review*, 76 (1861), 283.  

17 *Saturday Review*, 11 (1861), 452.
the narrator gives us a glimpse of the problems he has in writing and the effects to be achieved by various writing styles, the intent being a small joke at his own inadequacies, but this practice is not systematically developed:

From my tedious way of telling it, the reader will be led to imagine that the hand-squeezing had been protracted to a duration quite incompatible with any objection to such an arrangement on the part of the lady; but the fault is all mine: in no part hers. Were I possessed of a quick spasmodic style of narrative, I should have been able to include it all—Frank's misbehaviour, Mary's immediate anger, Augusta's arrival, and keen, Argus-eyed inspection, and then Mary's subsequent misery—in five words and half-a-dozen dashes and inverted commas. The thing should have been so told; for, to do Mary justice, she did not leave her hand in Frank's a moment longer than she could help herself. (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 8)

At another place, the narrator refers obliquely to the trouble a number of Victorian novelists had with legally-trained critics when he remarks that "it has been suggested that the modern English writers of fiction should among them keep a barrister, in order that they may be set right on such legal points as will arise in their little narratives, and thus avoid that exposure of their own ignorance of the laws, which now, alas! they too often make." After remarking that he will be happy to contribute to such a fund, the narrator goes on to say that "I can only plead for mercy if
I be wrong in allotting all Sir Roger's vast possessions in perpetuity to Miss Thorne, alleging also, in excuse, that the course of my narrative absolutely demands that she shall be ultimately recognized as Sir Roger's undoubted heiress."

He then concludes, "if under such a will as that described as having been made by Sir Roger, Mary would not have been the heiress, that will must have been described wrongly"

(Doctor Thorne, Ch. 45). Though he saves himself in the final sentence, the narrator does come perilously close to violating that principle so strongly established in Barchester Towers: that the story is inviolate, only the manner of telling being open to interpretation.

One major passage—the one which so upset the first critic I quoted—appears at the beginning of Doctor Thorne:

As Dr. Thorne is our hero—or I should rather say my hero, a privilege of selecting for themselves in this respect being left to all my readers—and as Miss Mary Thorne is to be our heroine, a point on which no choice whatsoever is left to any one, it is necessary that they shall be introduced and explained in a proper, formal manner. I quite feel that an apology is due for beginning a novel with two long dull chapters full of description. I am perfectly aware of the danger of such a course. In so doing I sin against the golden rule which requires us all to put our best foot foremost, the wisdom of which is fully recognised by novelists, myself among the number. It can hardly be expected that
any one will consent to go through with a fiction that offers so little of allurement in its first pages; but twist it as I will I cannot do otherwise. I find that I cannot make poor Mr. Gresham hem and haw and turn himself uneasily in his armchair in a natural manner till I have said why he is uneasy. I cannot bring in my doctor speaking his mind freely among the big-wigs till I have explained that it is in accordance with his usual character to do so. This is unartistic on my part, and shows want of imagination, as well as want of skill. Whether or not I can atone for these faults by straightforward, simple, plain story telling—that, indeed, is very doubtful. (Ch. 2)

The passage continues the refreshing honesty (though tinged with irony) between narrator and implied reader that was established in the first two Barset novels, and it embodies a rather subtle attack on the standard novelistic convention regarding openings (the "public rule") and on those readers who cannot enjoy a good story and its telling when the convention is broken. Of course the narrator is being disingenuous in the final sentence, for given his way of telling a story, his opening is no more "unartistic" than are the novels themselves, and he knows it; but we have seen already how subtle Trollope as implied author can be in the creation of implied readers.

I will digress for a moment by noting that one theme—a facet of the whole subject of novels and novel-writing—
which does remain in the final four novels is that of heroism; "attack" here is really too strong a word, but we can speak of ironies directed at or skepticism about the concept of heroes and heroism. The narrator begins Doctor Thorne by commenting that

the one son and heir to Greshamsbury was named as his father, Francis Newbold Gresham. He would have been the hero of our tale had not that place been pre-occupied by the village doctor. As it is, those who please may so regard him. It is he who is to be our favorite young man, to do the love scenes, to have his trials and his difficulties, and to win through them or not, as the case may be. I am too old now to be a hard-hearted author, and so it is probable that he may not die of a broken heart. Those who don't approve of a middle-aged bachelor country doctor as a hero, may take the heir to Greshamsbury in his stead, and call the book, if it so please them, "The Loves and Adventures of Francis Newbold Gresham the Younger." (Ch. 1)

By proposing that the reader have a choice of heroes, the narrator seriously undermines the whole concept of heroism, as he does more ironically when he says of Mary Thorne that "she is my heroine, and, as such, must necessarily be very beautiful" (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 3). In Framley Parsonage the narrator takes a different approach, and uses his fictive audience to criticize what he is doing. He remarks that "it will, perhaps, be said of Lord Lufton himself that, putting aside his peerage and broad acres, and handsome, sonsy [sic,
meaning "comely" or "cheerfully genial" face, he was not worth a girl's care and love. That will be said because people think that heroes in books should be so much better than heroes got up for the world's common wear and tear. I may as well confess that of absolute, true heroism there was only a moderate admixture in Lord Lufton's composition; but what would the world come to if none but absolutely true heroes were to be thought worthy of women's love" (I, Ch. 21)? Continuing the theme later, the narrator hears "some well-balanced critic" say, "'Your hero, then . . . is not worth very much.'" He answers that "in the first place Lord Lufton is not my hero; and in the next place, a man may be very imperfect and yet worth a great deal. A man may be as imperfect as Lord Lufton, and yet worthy of a good mother and a good wife. If not, how many of us are unworthy of the mothers and wives we have" (II, Ch. 7)!

In The Small House at Allington the primary concern is Johnny Eames, that most imperfect young man who is definitely not intended to marry Lily Dale; but the narrator also gets a lot of ironic mileage out of Crosbie, the cad who jilts Lily and ends up wretchedly married to one of the De Courcy girls (though by now she is a little too old to be considered
a girl). Early in the novel, the narrator introduces the concept of multiple heroes: "I do not say that Mr. Crosbie will be our hero, seeing that that part in the drama will be cut up, as it were, into fragments. Whatever of the magnificent may be produced will be diluted and apportioned out in very moderate quantities among two or more, probably among three or four, young gentlemen—to none of whom will be vouchsafed the privilege of much heroic action" (I, Ch. 2). Later, he ironically laments, "Alas, alas! I fear that those two years in London have not improved John Eames; and yet I have to acknowledge that John Eames is one of the heroes of my story" (I, Ch. 5). And finally, near the end of the novel, he once more discusses John Eames in a passage aimed at disabusing the implied reader of any notions of heroism in novels or in life:

But here we will leave John Eames; and in doing so I must be allowed to declare that only now, at this moment, has he entered on his manhood. Hitherto he has been a hobbdehoy,—a calf, as it were, who had carried his calfishness later into life than is common with calves; but who did not, perhaps, on that account, give promise of making a worse ox than the rest of them. His life hitherto, as recorded in these pages, had afforded him no brilliant success, had hardly qualified him for the role of hero which he has been made to play. I fear that I have been in fault in giving such prominence to a hobbdehoy, and that I should have told my story better had I brought Mr. Crosbie more conspicuously forward on
He at any rate has gotten to himself a wife—as a hero always should do; whereas I must leave my poor friend Johnny without any matrimonial prospects. (II, Ch. 20)

The last sentence is a brilliant ironic touch, and the whole novel offers a good example of embodying anti-romantic heroism both in the commentary and in the story, since it leaves Crosbie miserably married and both Johnny and Lily apparently destined to remain single.

Because of this anti-heroism, *The Small House at Allington* makes an interesting contrast to the final novel in the series, *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. In *The Last Chronicle*, the Rev. Josiah Crawley probably approaches closer to true heroic stature than any other character in the Barset novels, but his heroism has elements of the tragic, not the romantic. Given the narrator's views of heroism, and his continuing denial of it, perhaps we should not be surprised that the narrator never mentions heroism in conjunction with Crawley, but leaves the whole matter up to the reader's intelligence and discretion. The narrator does mention heroism once, but again it is in relation to Johnny Eames, of whom he says, "my old friend John was certainly no hero,—was very unheroic in many phases of his life; but then, if all the girls are to wait for heroes, I fear that the difficulties in the way of
marrimonial arrangements, great as they are at present, will be very seriously enhanced. Johnny was not ecstatic, nor heroic, nor transcendental, nor very beautiful in his manliness; he was not a man to break his heart for love or to have his story written in an epic; but he was an affectionate, kindly, honest young man; and I think most girls might have done worse than take him" (Ch. 76). Perhaps this remark is interjected to remind us of Josiah Crawley, who is most austerely transcendental and beautiful in his manliness and rigid moral code, and who does approach tragic heroism. In any case, throughout the Barset novels, the narrator works hard to create an implied reader who will thoroughly reject the whole concept of romantic heroism.

To return to my major subject, a second great difference between the first two and the last four Barset novels is the virtual disappearance of the conservative comedic values and norms so apparent in The Warden and Barchester Towers. Though the later novels do have major older characters, the most prominent of whom are Dr. Thorne and Josiah Crawley (neither of them as old or as meek as Mr. Harding), those characters do not embody the novels' values or find themselves aligned with the narrator in the way Mr. Harding did. The praise of
age and maturity and the attacks on brash youth and on women
(including such dramatized attacks as the baby-worship
chapter of Barchester Towers) are altogether missing. Also,
as a result of the absence of narrative commentary on these
subjects I have been discussing, the role of the narrator is
subdued and his closeness to the implied reader is diminished.
The narrator's active involvement in the first two Barset
novels is replaced by a much more distant stance in relation
to the story and to its readers; and the burden of conveying
the novels' and the implied author's values shifts to a
greater reliance on a more neutral moralizing commentary and
on the fictive audience.

A flash of the Barchester Towers' outraged conservative
spirit is seen but once, in an address by the narrator to the
ostler of Courcy, a small village abandoned since the advent
of the railroad:

Oh, my friend! my poor lame friend! it will avail
nothing to tell thee of Liverpool and Manchester;
of the glories of Glasgow, with her flourishing
banks; of London, with its third million of in-
habitants; of the great things which commerce is
doing for this nation of thine! What is commerce
to thee, unless it be a commerce in posting on
that worn-out, all but useless great western turn-
pike road? There is nothing left for thee but to
be carted away as rubbish--for thee and for many
of us in these now prosperous days; oh, my melan-
choly, care-ridden friend. (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 15)
There are also fewer instances of the strong irony, very much in the Thackerayan manner, which appeared in the first two novels but which is increasingly notable by its absence in the final four. The narrator remarks, for instance, that "dinner-graces are, probably, the last remaining relic of certain daily services which the church in olden days enjoined: nones, complines, and vespers were others. Of the nones and complines we have happily got quit; and it might be well if we could get rid of the dinner-graces also. Let any man ask himself whether, on his own part, they are acts of prayer and thanksgiving—and if not that, what then?" He footnotes "daily graces" in this remark and then says that "it is, I know, alleged that graces are said before dinner, because our Saviour uttered a blessing before his last supper. I cannot say that the idea of such analogy is pleasing to me" (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 19).

Doctor Thorne contains one longer passage of seemingly cynical philosophizing that is reminiscent of the Thackeray manner, and which may, indeed, be a tribute to him, or the result of a momentary influence, since the manner is rare in Trollope:

There is no doubt but that the privilege of matrimony offers opportunities to money-loving young men which ought not to be lightly abused. Too many young men marry without giving any
consideration to the matter whatever. It is not that they are indifferent to money, but that they recklessly miscalculate their own value, and omit to look around and see how much is done by those who are more careful. A man can be young but once, and, except in cases of a special inter­position of Providence, can marry but once. The chance once thrown away may be said to be irrecover­able. How, in after-life, do men toil and turmoil through long years to attain some prospect of doubt­ful advancement! Half that trouble, half that care, a tithe of that circumspection would, in early youth, have probably secured to them the enduring comfort of a wife's wealth.

You will see men labouring night and day to become bank directors; and even a bank direction may only be the road to ruin. Others will spend years in degrading subserviency to obtain a niche in a will; and the niche, when at last obtained and enjoyed, is but a sorry payment for all that has been endured. . . . Now, in many of these cases, all this might have been spared had the men made adequate use of those opportunities which youth and youthful charms afford once—and once only. There is no road to wealth so easy and respectable as that of matrimony; that is, of course, provided that the aspirant declines the slow course of honest work. But then, we can so seldom put old heads on young shoulders. (Ch. 18)

But these few passages I have pointed to occur only in Doctor Thorne, and even there they are too few to provide adequate evidence of a pattern of implied-reader creation or of the narrator's personality and values.

The Warden and Barchester Towers had very precise normative centers located in the figures of Mr. Harding and the narrator himself, who tended to complement each other,
and thus it was that everything in the two novels—commentary, characters, and dramatic action—worked toward the creation of implied readers who would share these values and appreciate them. Particularly since the values were strongly conservative and thus not likely to be shared by all of Trollope's readers, the two novels offered a nearly perfect illustration of the validity of Wayne Booth's thesis that the implied author creates his readers. The rest of the Barset novels, however, do not have precise normative centers in one character; thus, though we do not see any abrupt change in the Barset narrator (as we did in Thackeray's narrator), other than his dropping certain themes and subjects, there is a shift in the later novels. Implied readers are still being created, of course, but in terms of norms and values they are not being extensively created either through the expansive but focused commentary of the narrator or through one particular character, and the norms themselves are not nearly as precise. In fact, they add up to a general open-mindedness and Christian humanitarianism that are difficult to object to but that are also not very disturbing—as the norms of the first two novels could be. The narrator is capable of playing small games with us, as when he remarks of Louis Scatcherd that
the name which Joe had given to his master's illness
was certainly not a false one. He did find Sir
Louis "in the horrors." . . . I will not disgust my
reader by attempting to describe the poor wretch in
his misery: the sunken, but yet glaring eyes;
the emaciated cheeks; the fallen mouth; the parched
sore lips; the face, now dry and hot, and then
suddenly clammy with drops of perspiration; the
shaking hand, and all but palsied limbs; and worse
than this, the fearful mental efforts, and the strug­
gles for drink; struggles to which it is often neces­
sary to give way. (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 40)

For not attempting to describe Louis' condition, he does a
fair job anyway. More important, perhaps, is the narrator's
comment, "Lilian Dale, dear Lily Dale--for my reader must
know that she is to be very dear, and that my story will be
nothing to him if he do not love Lily Dale" (Small House, I,
Ch. 2). Trollope recorded his own opinion that Lily Dale
was a prig, but there is no discernible irony operating
here between the implied author and the narrator, so I do not
think it is to be wondered at that numerous readers took the
narrator at his word, fell madly in love with Lily Dale, and
then ignored his final request: "I can only ask the reader
to believe that she was in earnest, and express my own
opinion, in this last word that I shall ever write respecting
her, that she will live and die as Lily Dale" (Last Chronicle,
Ch. 77). These are minor instances, however, of the narrator's
appearance, and they are of little import in the totality of the final four novels.

The general tone of the later Barset novels, much less harsh than that of the first two, is captured well, I think, in the narrator's final address to his readers:

And now, if the reader will allow me to seize him affectionately by the arm, we will together take our last farewell of Barset and of the towers of Barchester. I may not venture to say to him that, in this country, he and I together have wandered often through the country lanes, and have ridden together over the too-well wooded fields, or have stood together in the cathedral nave listening to the peals of the organ, or have together sat at good men's tables, or have confronted together the angry pride of men who were not good. I may not boast that any beside myself have so realized the place, and the people, and the facts, as to make such reminiscences possible as those to which I should attempt to evoke by an appeal to perfect fellowship. But to me Barset has been a real county, and its city a real city, and the spires and towers have been before my eyes, and the voices of the people are known to my ears, and the pavements of the city ways are familiar to my footsteps. To them all I now say farewell. (Last Chronicle, Ch. 84)\(^{18}\)

With much similarity to the post-\textit{Vanity Fair} Thackeray novels, the friendly hand on the arm and the atmosphere of "good fellowship" are what typify the narrator/implied reader relationship in these later Trollopian novels, even when the

\(^{18}\)This address should, of course, remind us of the postscript to \textit{The Newcomes}, and there is little doubt that the voice speaking here could be—and probably was—confused by many readers with that of Trollope the man.
narrator is implicating us as readers in the small vanities and miseries of the world, which he does occasionally. He says, for instance, that John Eames "got into the train at Guestwick, taking a first-class ticket, because the earl's groom in livery was in attendance upon him. Had he been alone he would have gone in a cheaper carriage. Very weak in him, was it not? little also, and mean? My friend, can you say that you would not have done the same at his age" (Small House, II, Ch. 14)? Again, the narrator remarks that

Lily, though she put on it all so brave a face, had much to suffer, and did in truth suffer greatly. If you, my reader, ever chanced to slip into the gutter on a wet day, did you not find that the sympathy of the bystanders was by far the severest part of your misfortune? Did you not declare to yourself that all might yet be well, if the people would only walk on and not look at you? And yet you cannot blame those who stood and pitied you; or, perhaps, essayed to rub you down, and assist you in the recovery of your bedaubed hat. You, yourself, if you see a man fall, cannot walk by as though nothing uncommon had happened to him. It was so with Lily. (Small House, II, Ch. 11)

Both these insights are valid, and yet they do not threaten or intimidate us as similar remarks in the later Thackeray tend to do. The narrator is uniformly friendly and understanding, as Thackeray's narrator is not.
It is true that the adjectives used to address the reader are a Victorian convention, yet I do not think they can be dismissed offhandedly on those grounds, because when they are not delivered ironically, they do establish a tone which helps to create implied readers. The Barset narrator relies on them a good deal in the later novels. He says, "yes, my gentle readers; it's true, as your heart suggests to you. Under such circumstances Mr. Crosbie should not have gone to Courcy Castle" (Small House, I, Ch. 17). Similarly, he comments, "dear, affectionate, sympathetic readers, we have four couple [sic] of sighing lovers with whom to deal in this our last chapter, and I, as leader of the chorus, disdain to press you further with doubts as to the happiness of any of that quadrille. They were all made happy" (Framley Parsonage, II, Ch. 24). And again, he says that "some kind and attentive reader may perhaps remember that Miss Grace Crawley, in a letter written by her to her friend Miss Lily Dale, said a word or two of a certain John. . . From which words the kind and attentive reader, if such reader be in such matters intelligent as well as kind and attentive, may have learned a great deal with reference to Miss Lily Dale" (Last Chronicle, Ch. 15). Conventional as
they may be, the adjectives do indicate the qualities desired in the implied-reader--kindness, gentleness, and sympathy. Intelligence, I believe, is optional, as it was not in *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*, where much more involvement was demanded of us. By this I do not mean to deliver a harsh criticism of the later novels, which are, on the whole, both interesting and well done, but to indicate that the narrator has shifted his focus and his concerns.

Leaving aside the values and norms conveyed by the dramatic side of the novels, with which I am not concerned in this study, we should note that the Barset narrator comes increasingly in the later novels to rely on his own discursive commentary for the general dissemination of his diffuse and unobjectionable values. Of course, he did talk a good deal in *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*, but his talk was very much integrated into a single cluster of values--conservative ones--and this integration is what is missing in the later novels, where the values conveyed cannot really be labeled conservative or liberal; they are simply kindly and humanitarian. Of course, he can be ironic, as when he notes that "Olivia Proudie had just
accepted a widowed preacher at a district church in Bethnal Green,—a man with three children, who was dependent on pew-rents; and Griselda Grantley was engaged to the eldest son of the Marquis of Hartletop! When women are enjoined to forgive their enemies it cannot be intended that such wrongs as these should be included" (Framley Parsonage, II, Ch. 16).

It is clear that he is looking at the situation from Mrs. Proudie's viewpoint. Again, in a remark that reminds us of one of Thackeray's favorite themes, he notes that

if one wishes to look out in the world for royal nomenclature, to find children who have been christened after kings and queens, or the uncles and aunts of kings and queens, the search should be made in the families of democrats. None have so servile a deference for the very nail-pairings [sic] of royalty; none feel so wondering an awe at the exaltation of a crowned head; none are so anxious to secure to themselves some shred or fragment that has been consecrated by the royal touch. It is the distance which they feel to exist between themselves and the throne which makes them covet the crumbs of majesty, the odds and ends and chance splinters of royalty. (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 10)

The differences from Thackeray are the absence of any harsh bitterness or sarcasm and the addition of some attempt at explanation; in Thackeray we are prompted to feel derision, whereas in Trollope our feelings are closer to
loving pity, as in the following description of a class of men who epitomize empty vanity: "there are men who have the most lively gratification in calling lords and marquises their friends, though they know that nobody believes a word of what they say,--even though they know how great is the odium they incur, and how lasting is the ridicule which their vanity produces. It is a gentle insanity which prevails in the outer courts of every aristocracy; and as it brings with itself considerable annoyance and but a lukewarm pleasure, it should not be treated with too keen a severity" (Small House, III, Ch. 20). The same is true of the Barset narrator's infrequent one- and two-sentence, throwaway aphorisms, as "none but the worst and most heartless of women know the extent of their own power over men;--as none but the worst and most heartless of men know the extent of their power over women" (Small House, II, Ch. 9); or "it is to the vain and foolish that the punishments fall;--and to them they fall so thickly and constantly that the thinker is driven to think that vanity and folly are of all sins those which may be the least forgiven" (Small House, III, Ch. 20). Even when he appears to have stolen an observation, complete with cynical anti-feminism, from the
Thackeray's narrator, the Barset narrator still delivers it with a mildness all his own: "A man who desires to soften another man's heart, should always abuse himself. In softening a woman's heart, he should abuse her" (Last Chronicle, Ch. 44).

It seems to me at least conceivable that Trollope the artist may have learned something from the later Thackeray, whom he accused of intruding too much into his novels. Certainly the Barset narrator is present a good deal, and even talks about some of the same things, but he does so in a slightly more indirect way, and whereas Thackeray's narrator tends to become sanctimonious and sometimes slightly hysterical, Trollope's always remains kindly, tolerant, and slightly detached. For instance, while discussing Roger Scatcherd's wife, the narrator slips into the following remarks:

We hear a good deal of jolly widows; and the slanderous raillery of the world tells much of conjugal disturbances as a cure for which women will look forward to a state of widowhood with not unwilling eyes. The raillery of the world is very slanderous. In our daily jests we attribute to each other vices of which neither we, nor our neighbours, nor our friends, nor even our enemies are ever guilty. It is our favourite parlance to talk of the family troubles of Mrs. Green on our right, and to tell how Mrs. Young on our left is strongly
suspected of having raised her hand to her lord and master. What right have we to make these charges? What have we seen in our own personal walks through life to make us believe that women are devils? (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 24)

The use of first-person plural pronouns is very skillful here, and I think that the effect is to make the implied reader uncomfortable over the truth of the sentiments, though he is in no way alienated by the kindly and judicious tone of the narrator. Similarly, the narrator uses a seizure by bailiffs to deliver a sermonette on the morality of business which in its thoughtful fairness and humor tends to invoke a similar thoughtfulness in the implied reader:

The bailiffs on that day had their meals regular,—and their beer, which state of things, together with an absence of all duty in the way of making inventories and the like, I take to be the earthly paradise of bailiffs; and on the next morning they walked off with civil speeches and many apologies as to their intrusion. "They were very sorry," they said, "to have troubled a gen'man as were a gen'man, but in their way of business what could they do?" To which one of them added a remark that "business is business." This statement I am not prepared to contradict, but I would recommend all men in choosing a profession to avoid any that may require either an apology at every turn or else a somewhat violent assertion of right. Each younger male reader may, perhaps, reply that he has no thought of becoming a sheriff's officer; but then are there not other cognate lines of life to which, perhaps,
the attention of some such may be attracted? (Framley Parsonage, II, Ch. 22)

In a similar instance, the mellow and kindly narrator highlights the virtues of Lucy Robarts by illustrating how exceptional she is as compared to most people. Yet he does this without attacking "the million," even by implication; in fact, he explicitly allies himself with the mediocre and trivial concerns of the mass of his readers. Thus, the effect of this masterly passage is that we recognize Lucy's superiority and yet do not feel ourselves attacked and are not in the least offended, though we are definitely being molded into implied readers:

Lucy, indeed, was not demonstrative; and she was, moreover, one of those few persons,--for they are very few,--who are contented to go on with their existence, without making themselves the centre of any special outward circle. To the ordinary run of minds it is impossible not to do this. A man's own dinner is to himself so important that he cannot bring himself to believe that it is a matter utterly indifferent to every one else. A lady's collection of baby-clothes, in early years, and of house-linen and curtain-fringes in later life, is so very interesting to her own eyes, that she cannot believe but what other people will rejoice to behold it. I would not, however, be held as regarding this tendency as evil. It leads to conversation of some sort among people, and perhaps to a kind of sympathy. Mrs. Jones will look at Mrs. White's linen chest, hoping that Mrs. White may be induced to look at hers. One can only pour out of a jug that which is in it. For the most of us, if we do not talk
of ourselves, or at any rate of the individual circles of which we are the centres, we can talk of nothing. I cannot hold with those who wish to put down the insignificant chatter of the world. As for myself, I am always happy to look at Mrs. Jones's linen, and never omit an opportunity of giving her the details of my own dinners. (Framley Parsonage, I, Ch. 10)

In these later Barset novels the narrator restrains himself from attacking youth, and, in fact, seems quite sympathetic to it and even ready to defend it. The following passage is interesting in that the narrator, himself older, very subtly works on his implied reader to think older as well and yet to achieve a thoughtful appreciation of the mental state of the young:

Young men, very young men,—men so young that it may be almost a question whether or no they have yet reached their manhood,—are more inclined to be earnest and thoughtful when alone than they ever are when with others, even though those others be their elders. I fancy that, as we grow old ourselves, we are apt to forget that it was so with us; and, forgetting it, we do not believe that it is so with our children. We constantly talk of the thoughtlessness of youth. I do not know whether we might not more appropriately speak of its thoughtfulness. It is, however, no doubt, true that thought will not at once produce wisdom. It may almost be a question of whether such wisdom as many of us have in our mature years has not come from the dying out of the power of temptation, rather than as the results of thought and resolution. Men, full fledged and at their work, are, for the most part, too busy for much thought; but lads, on whom the work of the world has not yet fallen with all its pressure,—they have time for thinking. (Small House, I, Ch. 14)
The narrator also treats youth with more tolerant humor than we saw in the first two novels. Speaking of Frank Gresham, he remarks that "had Frank known more about a woman's mind—had he, that is, been forty-two instead of twenty-two—he would at once have been sure of his game, and have felt that Mary's silence told him all he wished to know. But then, had he been forty-two instead of twenty-two, he would not have been so ready to risk the acres of Greshamsbury for the smiles of Mary Thorne" (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 29). This is a very good statement of the novelist's youth-versus-age problem. Trollope proved in The Warden and Barchester Towers that he could write excellent conservative comedy focused on age and maturity, but, as appears to have been the case with Thackeray and the singular eccentricity of Vanity Fair, that would seem to be a vein not conducive to extensive mining. In this passage the narrator recognizes that impetuous, romantic, and inexperienced youth produces the kind of comedy we are most used to and probably respond to best.

In this same respect, it is interesting to note that the Barset narrator provides a comment on young men's temptations that is similar to passages from Thackeray's
Pendennis dealing with young men's worldly education at school and with their parents' meddling in their imaginative lives. Thackeray's narrator is a little more sarcastic in his tone and word choice, but the passages are remarkably similar overall:

it seems to me that in this respect the fathers and mothers of the present generation understand but little of the inward nature of the young men for whom they are so anxious. They give them credit for so much that it is impossible they should have, and then deny them credit for so much that they possess! They expect from them when boys the discretion of men,—that discretion which comes from thinking; but will not give them credit for any of that power of thought which alone can ultimately produce good conduct. Young men are generally thoughtful,—more thoughtful than their seniors; but the fruit of their thought is not as yet there. And then so little is done for the amusement of lads who are turned loose into London at nineteen or twenty. . . .

O ye mothers who from year to year see your sons launched forth upon the perils of the world, and who are so careful with your good advice, with under flannel shirtling, with books of devotion and tooth-powder, does it never occur to you that provision should be made for amusement, for dancing, for parties, for the excitement and comfort of women's society? That excitement your sons will have, and if it be not provided by you of one kind, will certainly be provided by themselves of another kind. If I were a mother sending lads out into the world, the matter most in my mind would be this,—to what houses full of nicest girls could I get them admission, so that they might do their flirting in good company. (Small House, III, Ch. 12)
The difference is that whereas Thackeray's narrator later becomes so contradictory and fragmented that all of his commentary is rendered suspect, the Barset narrator remains consistent, and thus this kind of commentary does merge into a pattern. I have a feeling that in some cases at least consistency is actually more important than subject matter in the creation of implied readers. It certainly plays a major role in the creation of the reader who accepts the outlook and values of *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*.

The latter Thackerayan narrator seems, on the whole, unable to avoid the danger of absolutes as he swings somewhat wildly between the extremes of the Manager and the Sentimentalist and as he rails at the artistic constraints he labors under. If the Barset narrator insists on anything, it is the rejection of absolutes in respect to our judgments about people, and thus a great deal of his commentary is designed to make us see his characters from all sides and to make snap or absolute judgments impossible for us. The characters he discusses in this way are not very likeable, but he insists that we view them with some fullness and respect, no matter how grudging. Thus, in *Doctor Thorne* he takes a close look at Frank Gresham's mother:
It will probably be said that she was a consummate hypocrite; but at the present moment she was not hypocritical. She did love her son; was anxious—very, very anxious for him; was proud of him. . . . No grief would be to her so great as that of seeing him sink below what she conceived to be his position. She was as genuinely motherly, in wishing that he should marry money, as another woman might be in wishing to see her son a bishop. . . . When Frank spoke of a profession, she instantly thought of what Lord De Courcy might do for him. If he would not marry money, he might, at any rate, be an attaché at an embassy. A profession—hard work, as a doctor, or as an engineer—would according to her ideas, degrade him; cause him to sink below his proper position; but to dangle at a foreign court, to make small talk at the evening parties of a lady ambassadress, and occasionally, perhaps, to write demi-official notes containing demi-official tittle-tattle; this would be in proper accordance with the high honour of a Gresham of Greshamsbury. We may not admire the direction taken by Lady Arabella's energy on behalf of her son, but that energy was not hypocritical. (Ch. 44)

In Framley Parsonage, the narrator dwells on Sowerby, a somewhat minor but seemingly reprehensible character:

"I fear my friend Sowerby does not, at present, stand high in the estimation of those who have come on with me thus far in this narrative. He has been described as a spendthrift and gambler, and as one scarcely honest in his extravagance and gambling. But nevertheless there are worse men than Mr. Sowerby. . . . Reckless as this man always appeared to be, reckless as he absolutely was, there was still within
his heart a desire for better things, and in his mind an understanding that he had hitherto missed the career of an honest English gentleman" (I, Ch. 24). And in The Last Chronicle of Barset, the narrator returns once again to Mrs. Proudie, remarking, as part of a rather long passage, that "I fear that it may now be too late for me to excite much sympathy in the mind of any reader on behalf of Mrs. Proudie. I shall never be able to make her virtues popular. But she had virtues, and their existence now made her unhappy" (Ch. 47). Such remarks and dissections are common as a technique for impressing values on the implied reader, but they are also interesting in that they address him indirectly rather than directly. I believe it is possible that this technique was Trollope's method of avoiding the troubles that he saw Thackeray's narrator getting himself into and that it thus helps to explain why he criticized Thackeray for intruding when it appears that his own narrator talks nearly as much as Thackeray's.

The post-Vanity Fair and post-The Warden and Barchester Towers novels of Thackeray and Trollope show some intriguing similarities; in fact, Vanity Fair and the first two Barset novels do also, although they may seem dissimilar. In
Vanity Fair Thackeray created a narrator much different from any other we will see in this study, one, I believe, who moves and works perfectly in—and is perfectly created for—the world he describes. But the Manager was a one-shot creation, and after Vanity Fair Thackeray turned to another type of narrator, one that reflects a different implied author. The narrators of the post-Vanity Fair novels seem to be, as I argued, much closer to their implied author and thus much more identifiable with Thackeray himself, and their giving in to sentimentalism, bombast, and cant seems to indicate a breakdown in aesthetic control and in art. A similar movement takes place in Trollope's Barset novels, but without the disastrous results found in Thackeray.¹⁹

¹⁹ In an unpublished 1966 Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Virginia entitled The Character and Function of the Barset Narrator, John David Crews argues that the Barset narrator's defining characteristic is versatility and that he plays five major roles in the series: (1) "artist-maker, in which he discusses the novelist's art"; (2) "explicit commentator, the role for which he is most noted"; (3) "implicit commentator, speaking through mock epic and mock romantic convention"; (4) "manipulator of the dramatic irony"; (5) "mediator of the various points of view expressed in the novels" (p. iii). Giving a chapter to each of these functions, Crews concludes that "the Barsetshire fictional world and the narrator's view of it are impressively consistent throughout the series" (p. lx). Perhaps this is so when the novels are studied as Crews has
Considered together, *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* are a masterpiece of integrated dramatic action, characters, and narrative voice in the service of comedic norms which are actually radical in their extreme conservatism. The Barset narrator does not disappear or metamorphose after these two novels in the manner of Thackeray's *Manager*, but he does become a much less impressive force, and his values become much less objectionable—more liberal and also more vague. In addition, like Thackeray's narrator, though not nearly as often, the Barset narrator at times appears indistinguishable from the implied author. At the conclusion of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, for instance, the narrator says that

> before I take my leave of the diocese of Bar-
> chester for ever, which I purpose to do in the
> succeeding paragraph, I desire to be allowed
to say one word of apology for myself, in answer
to those who have accused me,—always without
bitterness, and generally with tenderness,—of
having forgotten, in writing of clergymen, the
first and most prominent characteristic of the
ordinary English clergyman's life. I have
described many clergymen, they say, but have

studied them, but from the standpoint of this study, there is a clear break between the first two Barset novels and the final four, just as there is a clear break in Thackeray after *Vanity Fair*. The reasons for the break are unclear, though Trollope believed strongly in the teaching function of novels, as did Thackeray, and perhaps the change in both cases owes something to their belief and, in Trollope's case, possibly to what he learned from Thackeray's negative example.
spoken of them as though their professional duties, their high calling, their daily workings for the good of those around them, were matters of no moment, either to me, or in my opinion, to themselves. I would plead, in answer to this, that my object has been to paint the social and not the professional lives of clergymen; and that I have been led to do so, firstly, by a feeling that as no men affect more strongly, by their own character, the society of those around than do country clergymen, so, therefore, their social habits have been worth the labour necessary for painting them; and secondly, by a feeling that though I, as a novelist, may feel myself entitled to write of clergymen out of their pulpits, as I may also write of lawyers and doctors, I have no such liberty to write of them in their pulpits. (Ch. 84)

In its emphasis on "I the novelist" and in its serious discussion of a question of criticism, this passage is certainly comparable to the one appearing at the end of The Newcomes in which Thackeray himself seems to step before us. It is, however, but an isolated instance appearing at the end of the final Barset novel—surely, we can agree, a moment for strong emotion and the letting down of one's aesthetic barriers.

Though there are similarities in the careers of the two novelists, there are also major differences, and here it is, I think, that Trollope emerges the winner, that his novels are, on the whole, more successful than Thackeray's, at
least in certain respects. Thackeray lost control in his later novels, and an implied author gained ascendence whom we probably do not find very appealing or compatible. He is sentimental and cant-ridden, he rambles, and often the preaching is just too obvious; in short, we tend to read the novels as observers, since we are not turned into implied readers who will participate in them and share their values. Trollope, I think, must have learned from Thackeray and taken a warning. He read and loved him—later he wrote a book about him—and, as I have noted, he criticized him for intruding. Trollope liberalized and generalized his values and caused his narrator to play a somewhat lesser role in the later Barset novels, but he avoided the rhetorical and emotional excesses that mar the later Thackeray novels. He kept control, and as a result I think that we tend to read the later Barset novels more uncritically than we do Thackeray's and allow ourselves to become the implied readers who can fully appreciate the novels and participate in them. If Trollope did study Thackeray's work with a critical eye, then I think that he learned much from him and wrote stronger, more coherent novels as a result.

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20 We must remember, of course, that I am limiting myself to a mere handful of Trollope's novels.
I have decided to include Charlotte Brontë in this study for a number of reasons. In the first place, she deserves to be ranked among the major novelists of the mid-Victorian period. Her masterpiece, Jane Eyre, is still as well known and as popular as Thackeray's Vanity Fair—perhaps even more popular—and though Thackeray produced more than she did on the next level down from masterpieces, I doubt if his novels are generally read much more than her three other novels. Second, I think she is worth considering because of her stated admiration for Thackeray, an admiration reflected in the "Author's Preface" to the second edition of Jane Eyre:\(^\text{1}\)

\[^{1}\text{New York, 1971, p. 2. This "Preface" was designed to specifically refute criticisms of Jane Eyre of the sort typified by Elizabeth Rigby's in the Quarterly Review of December, 1848, which labels the novel an "anti-Christian composition" (although this famous review appeared after the "Preface" was written): as Charlotte Brontë puts it, "the timorous or carping few who doubt the tendency of such books as 'Jane Eyre': in whose eyes whatever is unusual is wrong; whose ears detect in each protest against bigotry—}\\]
Why have I alluded to this man? I have alluded to him, Reader, because I think I see in him an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognised; because I regard him as the first social regenerator of the day—as the very master of that working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things; because I think no commentator on his writings has yet found the comparison that suits him, the terms which rightly characterise his talent. . . . Finally, I have alluded to Mr. Thackeray, because to him—if he will accept the tribute of a total stranger—I have dedicated this second edition of *JANE EYRE.*

Modern critics often mention offhandedly something about Charlotte Brontë picking up forms of narrative address or ways of regarding the world from Thackeray, so a sustained look at her practice may be illuminating. Third, Charlotte Brontë is worth studying because, although she and Dickens rank as the major mid-Victorian novelists of the first person, she also poses a challenge to the other great narrative voices of the age with a novel featuring an omniscient, discursive narrator. In both types of novels, however, the narrating voices are obviously present, and they give us startling reader addresses. Finally, including that parent of crime—an insult to piety, the regent of God on earth" (p. 1). Even so, I regard the "Reader" in the second sentence of the quoted extract from the "Preface" as being indistinguishable from numerous unnecessary addresses or "reader" tics delivered by Charlotte Brontë's narrators, a subject I will discuss later in the chapter.
Charlotte Brontë nicely balances this study between two male and two female novelists, and comparing her with George Eliot, as well as with Thackeray, should prove interesting.

In a recent book, Raymond Williams, a challenging, if sometimes uneven, English critic, writes of Jane Eyre that

the connecting power of Charlotte Brontë's fiction is in just this first-person capacity to compose an intimate relationship with the reader: from the easy friendly beginning—'I was glad of it, I never liked long walks'—to the final and secret sharing—'I kept these things then, and pondered them in my heart': things the reader knows but the others—the other characters, the outside world—do not.

'Reader, I married him'. But that address to the reader, that capital public address, is a late pulling-away as the story fades into retrospect. While the experience lasts, the 'I' of the novel and the subjective position—the only available position—of the reader are on a much closer bearing. What matters throughout is this private confidence, this mode of confession: the account given as if in a private letter, in private talk: the account given to a journal, a private journal, and then the act of writing includes, as it were involuntarily, yet it is very deliberate and conscious art—the awareness of the friend, the close one, the unknown but in this way intimate reader: the reader as the writer, while the urgent voice lasts.2

W. A. Craik, on the other hand, in a slightly earlier book, takes a totally opposite view, arguing that "Jane, who

cares passionately for Mr. Rochester, preserves her detachment from him, and Charlotte Brontë takes care that the reader, who comes rapidly to care passionately about Jane, shall preserve his degree of detachment as well. The reader is quite often addressed and so forced to think of himself and his own personality as very much a thing apart from the narrator's and the demands that he shall do so grow more frequent as the story goes on."³

It seems to me that, paradoxically, both critics are correct, but correct only because each somewhat ignores an aspect of Jane Eyre that the other focuses on. Williams is surely right to talk about the extraordinary personal relationship created between Jane Eyre the narrator and her reader, a relationship having little to do with direct addresses. It is not my purpose here to analyze all the ways in which the speaking voice of Jane Eyre draws us into this relationship and causes us, as implied readers, to love and admire her and to accept her behavior and her values, some of which were particularly shocking to sections of the Victorian public.⁴ The "Jane Eyre" craze noted in

³The Brontë Novels (London, 1968), p. 73.

Chapter I is surely attributable in part to Jane's success as narrator. The same phenomenon operates to a lesser extent, as we will see, in *Villette* (her third and final first-person novel), but hardly at all in *The Professor* (her first) which is a dismal failure; *Shirley*, with its third-person narrator, I will discuss separately. But our relationship with Jane is created during the process of the novel as a whole, and is created to a great extent by Jane's awareness of her readers, even though she does not mention

1971), pp. 496-507, notes of this point that "Jane, in
Chapter XV, betrays no embarrassment at having to enter Rochester's bedroom; she also violates two of the strictest taboos of Victorian etiquette, in life as in fiction, by falling in love, uninvited, with her master, then by confessing it to herself, to us, and even to him, before he has dropped the slightest hint as to the state of his own feelings. . . . And Jane's general attitude to conventionality (which, Charlotte emphatically asserts in her preface, 'is not morality') is clearly stated in Chapter XXXII: 'I could never rest in communication with strong, discreet, and refined minds, whether male or female, till I had passed the outworks of conventional reserve'" (pp. 502-3). Given the shock potential of *Jane Eyre*, it is interesting to note—especially in light of my discussion of all of Charlotte Brontë's novels—her letter of October, 1847, to W. S. Williams, in which she asks, "What will the critics of the monthly reviews and magazines be likely to see in *Jane Eyre* (if indeed they deign to read it), which will win from them even a stinted modicum of approbation? It has no learning, no research, it discusses no subject of public interest. A mere domestic novel will, I fear, seem trivial to men of large views and solid attainments" *(The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence [Oxford, 1931]), II, 151. It seems incredible that she actually held such a distorted view of what she had accomplished.
us or address us all that often. That is, Williams is right in seeing the novel as a private conversation or journal which constantly remains aware of the reader and which draws him into an intimate closeness. However, Craik is also correct in pointing out that the reader is addressed often enough to perhaps remind him of his separateness from Jane. But this question will need further discussion: the difficulties here are really quite complex, and of a kind we have not hitherto encountered.

Sylvince Monod, in his important article "Charlotte Bronte and the Thirty 'Readers' of Jane Eyre," seems to tackle head-on just those problems I have been attempting to deal with in this study. Noting that Jane Eyre was Charlotte Bronte's first published novel, "her first contact with the reading public," he concludes that we are therefore in a privileged position (I grant that his logic is awfully weak) "to determine what the author's purpose was, what kind of attitude she adopts toward the reader, and more specifically what kind of relationship she wished to establish with him" (p. 496). Unfortunately, he tends

I will of necessity be covering much of his ground myself, in my own way, but I must here acknowledge the large debt I owe to Professor Monod's essay.
to confuse the narrators of *Jane Eyre* and the other novels with Charlotte Brontë herself, as when he notes that "one attitude, however, was ruled out from the very beginning: it was out of the question that she should ever fawn upon the public, for she was congenitally much too sturdily independent for that" (p. 497). Monod's approach is to study the thirty passages from *Jane Eyre* in which the reader is apostrophized as "Reader," supplementing these with examples from the other three novels. Monod remarks that "we shall see that among Charlotte Brontë's readers there are many fools, cowards, and Pharisees" (p. 498); that "Charlotte Brontë is thus led to bully her reader because she distrusts him" (p. 500); and that "an image of the reader does begin to take shape, and he is a vapid, conventional creature, clearly deserving no more than he is given."

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6 Monod goes further—indeed, goes much too far—when he quotes Jane Eyre's remark that "'It is a fine thing, reader, to be lifted in a moment from indigence to wealth—a very fine thing; but not a matter one can comprehend, or consequently enjoy, all at once' (ch. XXXIII)," then comments himself that "it is true that we cannot know the effect of sudden wealth, but neither does poor Charlotte; and since we are all reduced to fancying what we might feel under such circumstances, we do not take kindly to the lessons taught by inexperience" (p. 501). This is an example of equating narrator and author, and of ignoring the implied author, with a vengeance.
These remarks reflect the general course of Monod's argument, and he has two major conclusions of the utmost importance, the first dealing with the sex of this addressed "Reader." Monod says that one point must be made clear. The reader of Jane Eyre has been constantly referred to in the masculine. This has been done deliberately, for the creature we have just been looking at through Jane's eyes, this contemptible being, conventional, silly, cowardly, ignorant, and vain, coincides at every point with the image which the Brontë girls pictured to themselves of the average male, embodied especially in the narrator of Wuthering Heights, the unspeakable Lockwood, but also in the hero of The Professor, a book whose failure can be largely accounted for by Charlotte's unsuccessful attempt to create a male character from the inside. The tone which Charlotte uses to address the reader, being herself shielded by her male or equivocal pen-name [i.e., "Currer Bell"], is what she fancies to be the tone of a conversation between men. This is rather more than an individual impression, for there is a sentence in Chapter V that begins with "Let the reader add . . ." and goes on with "and he will have." Not "she" or "he or she," but "the reader . . . he will have." The idea that Jane and Charlotte have of the reader is the idea they have of the human being of the male sex. (pp. 504-5)

Monod is clearly amiss in overlooking the conventional application of he to both sexes, which I believe operated in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century. He also fails to mention the commonplace--yet undoubtedly true--observation that the Victorians regarded fiction as
being designed primarily for women rather than men, which
does give rise to interesting conjectures about Charlotte
Brontë's implied author. On the whole, however, I believe
that Monod is correct in saying that we feel, at least, that
a male reader seems to be addressed in all of Charlotte
Brontë's novels, though the one sentence he offers so
triumphantly in the above quotation is rather weak proof.
His interjection of biographical and psychological criticism
of the "Brontë girls" into his article, again with no
clearly established validity outside the novels themselves,
does, however, leave me very uncomfortable. As we shall
see, the consistency of tone and subject matter of the com-
mentary in all four of Charlotte Brontë's novels easily
gives rise to such conjectures about their implied author;
but the implied author is not Charlotte Brontë the histori-
cal person, and to talk similarly of Emily Brontë on the
basis of Wuthering Heights seems to me even more farfetched.

Monod's second major conclusion concerns our reactions
to the addresses and apostrophes. He says that

one of the most striking consequences of her art
is doubtless that the humiliating treatment
inflicted on so many of her readers does not
arouse the resentment of any. That may be due
in part to our cherishing the hope that after
all she is perhaps mistaken about us. Also,
while we dislike being despised by people who are themselves despicable, it is impossible not to admire Jane Eyre. Of course, she is not always amiable; such is not her purpose; she has her disagreeable and her spinsterish sides; she is highly critical and rarely pleased with other people; with herself she is only too easily pleased. . . . But all the rest of her personality is admirable. There are few heroines in fiction as strong, as independent as Jane. . . . Few heroines are as intransigent, as uncompromising, as able to defend themselves and go firmly forward to the fulfillment of their personalities, through remaining faithful to a few clear principles, through accepting only what is wholesome in instinct and impulse, through being infallibly sincere and genuine in every circumstance of life. . . . [A]t a deeper level her personality is entirely sterling, and that is why we do not complain of her attitude to us; we are too much fascinated by the sight she presents to us in her eager and lucid endeavor to preserve the integrity of her being. Nothing truer is said of her than the words of Rochester which sum up Charlotte's personality as well as Jane's when he says: "Never was anything at once so frail and so indomitable" (ch. XXVII). (pp. 505-7)

I do not think that the remarks about Jane Eyre can be more truly or better stated, but the problem here is what Monod says about the reader, or, rather, the question of what reader he is talking about. Without the concepts of actual, implied, and fictive readers, the critic is faced with the same dilemma as when he discusses authors and narrators. Monod seems to posit only one reader—the one who is addressed and who does or does not respond—but
I hope I have at least established in connection with Thackeray and Trollope that the matter is far more complex than that. If one ignores the complexity, as Monod does, one's criticism becomes too ambiguous and confused to be as useful and insightful as it should be. I hope, in the body of this chapter, to be able to throw more light on the problems that are obscured in Monod's otherwise excellent discussion.

Charlotte Brontë and her narrative techniques are most certainly not easy to discuss. We saw that Thackeray and Trollope in their best work created and skillfully used narrators whose commentary and addresses were integrated into the novels to perform functions of an important and wide-ranging nature in the creation of implied readers. Some of these functions, primarily the attacks on novels and on standard novelistic conventions and expectations, were not necessarily integral to the stories, but they were made to seem so; others, like the attack on certain fictive readers in order to instill values in implied readers, were more basic to the stories. Both novelists, however, made the convention of the commentating narrator their own and used it effectively; we will see that George Eliot did so too.
With first-person novels, the process of establishing values and creating implied readers is different; the narrator is the chief actor, and the implied reader is created as he interacts with the teller at every point in the story. It would seem as though the speaker in first-person narration could hardly help being aware of an audience reading—this is the case, anyway, with Charlotte Brontë's narrators—but such an awareness does not necessitate direct addresses of the "dear reader" variety. For instance, at one point Jane Eyre remarks that "this, par parenthèse, will be thought cool language by persons who entertain solemn doctrines about the angelic nature of children, and the duty of those charged with their education to conceive for them an idolatrous devotion: but I am not writing to flatter parental egotism, to echo cant, or prop up humbug; I am merely telling the truth" (Ch. 12). There can be no greater awareness of an audience than is found here, and yet Jane slants her rhetoric so as not to mention or address any specific reader or class of readers by name; i.e., the persons she is addressing are not the same as those she is discussing. Again, the staples of many of the addresses in Thackeray and Trollope are concerns not apparent
in the works of Charlotte Brontë; for instance, she shows no interest in attacking novel conventions except as both social and novelistic conventions are attacked in the dramatic course of the story—as they are often enough in the lives of Jane Eyre and of Lucy Snowe in Villette. Indeed, "novel" is mentioned only once in the whole of the three first-person novels: "A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play: and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the 'George Inn' at Millcote" (Jane Eyre, Ch. 11).

It is true that the subject of reader expectations is obliquely—and ironically—brought at the conclusions of both Villette and Shirley. I will discuss Shirley in some detail later. The reference in Villette comes after Lucy Snowe lets us know quite clearly, without ever coming out and saying it, that Paul Emanuel has been drowned at sea and will not be returning to her. Lucy says: "Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life" (Ch. 42). Mrs. Gaskell, in her biography of Charlotte Brontë, indicates that Charlotte's father wanted a happy ending, but that Charlotte was imaginatively committed to Paul Emanuel's death, so that this indirection was her way of compromising; certainly Lucy's irony in the lines I have quoted is rather heavy against any readers who refuse to understand what she has clearly told them. In any case, my remark about Thackeray and Trollope refers to a conscious pattern which reveals a significant concern; such we do not find in Charlotte Brontë.
This single reference is surely a mistake that had been better left unwritten, but the important question still remains: why address the reader—any reader—at all? Karl Kroeber has an interesting comment that will serve well to begin my actual discussion of Jane Eyre and of The Professor and Villette. He says that "Charlotte Brontë's sense of community with her readers is a more uncertain one than Jane Austen's. An interesting feature of the notorious addresses beginning 'Dear Reader' or, more imperatively, 'Reader' is how often they are not required by the immediate situation. These gratuitous addresses crop up, I believe, because Charlotte Brontë knows that her themes and characterizations run counter to conventional patterns of fiction, and she feels compelled occasionally to assert a community between the narrator and his presumable audience." Kroeber is certainly correct about this phenomenon, which I refer to as "reader" tics,

8Oxford, 1931.

9Boston, 1971.

10Styles in Fictional Structure (Princeton, N.J., 1971), p. 46. This comment is corroborated by Charlotte Brontë's Juvenilia, where the communion is openly asked for.
for tics are almost what they seem to be. In *Jane Eyre* we see such examples as "and was Mr. Rochester now ugly in my eyes? No, reader. Gratitude, and many associations, all pleasurable and genial, made his face the object I liked best to see" (Ch. 15); "Reader!—I forgave him at the moment, and on the spot" (Ch. 27); and "now, I did not like this, reader. St. John was a good man; but I began to feel he had spoken truth of himself when he said he was hard and cold" (Ch. 34).

Likewise, in *Villette*, we read that "I submitted to be looked upon as the humiliated, cast-off, and now pining confidante of the distinguished Miss Fanshawe; but, reader, it was a hard submission" (Ch. 18); and that "to speak truth, reader, there is no excellent beauty, no accomplished grace, no reliable refinement, without strength as excellent, as complete, as trustworthy" (Ch. 27). In each case, the "reader" could be deleted without any change in sentiment or meaning; in fact, the passages would then read like many, many others in both books, such as, "this was very pleasant: there is no happiness like that of being loved by your fellow-creatures, and feeling that your presence is an addition to their comfort" (Jane
Eyre, Ch. 22). "Reader" could be added to this sentence, or deleted from any of those quoted above, and we would be hard pressed, I believe, to show that it made any difference. The conclusion seems inescapable that Kroeber is right, that the implied author has intruded here and is asserting a community. Kroeber attributes this assertion to unconventional themes and characterization, which is doubtless correct, but I would add as well that the implied author intrudes and asserts because she does not trust her own creations to do what they actually do anyway—create the community through the strength and appeal of their own personalities. The other explanation is that we, as readers (implied or actual, I am not sure), are being reminded of our distance from the narrators, but I do not find this convincing, since I believe that as novel readers we are implicitly aware of it most of the time anyway and since the addresses to a presumed masculine reader by a feminine narrator tend to enforce the distance naturally. What Kroeber's argument does not do, however, is explain those apostrophes that are not mere tics.

To work up to that subject gradually, I should like to begin with one of the truly noteworthy aspects of Charlotte
Brontë's narrative technique—the impassioned outbursts by her narrator/heroine that deeply move us as actual readers and that powerfully affect us as implied readers. Such passages occur principally in *Jane Eyre*, as in this powerful feminist cry of rage:

It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (Ch. 12)

We know she is talking to us as actual readers, attempting to make us, as implied readers, feel and believe what she says, and within the context of Jane's story, where it fits perfectly, the appeal is powerful indeed, so that we gladly
abandon ourselves to her courage and her intelligence.
Likewise, the effect on us of the raw honesty of Jane's laying before us her erotic dreams is simply enormous; we must give ourselves up to her:

At this period of my life my heart far oftener swelled with thankfulness than sank with dejection; and yet, reader, to tell you all, in the midst of this calm, this useful existence—after a day passed in honourable exertion amongst my scholars, an evening spent in drawing or reading contentedly alone—I used to rush into strange dreams at night: dreams many-coloured, agitated, full of the ideal, the stirring, the stormy—dreams where, amidst unusual scenes, charged with adventure, with agitating risk and romantic chance, I still again and again met Mr. Rochester, always at some exciting crisis; and then the sense of being in his arms, hearing his voice, meeting his eye, touching his hand and cheek, loving him, being loved by him—the hope of passing a lifetime at his side, would be renewed, with all its first force and fire. Then I awoke. Then I recalled where I was, and how situated. Then I rose up on my curtainless bed, trembling and quivering; and then the still, dark night witnessed the convulsion of despair and heard the burst of passion. (Ch. 32)

We cannot help, I think, being moved to the very depth of our real—and thus implied—beings by such a passage, as we are again by the following outburst, in which Jane shows only minimal awareness of her audience:

'I tell you I must go!' I retorted, roused to something like passion. 'Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings?
and can bear to have my morsel of bread
snatched from my lips, and my drop of living
water dashed from my cup? Do you think, be­
cause I am poor, obscure, plain, and little,
I am soulless and heartless? You think
wrong!—I have as much soul as you,—and full
as much heart! And if God had gifted me with
some beauty and much wealth, I should have
made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is
now for me to leave you. I am not talking to
you now through the medium of custom, convention­
alities, nor even of mortal flesh—it is my
spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if
both had passed through the grave, and we stood
at God's feet, equal—as we are!" (Ch. 23)

The implied reader is surely meant to thrill to these
words and to feel that the world could be well lost for
such a woman.

Of course, the technique does not always work:

he laid on the table a new publication—a poem:
one of those genuine productions so often vouch­
safed to the fortunate public of those days—
the golden age of modern literature. Alas! the
readers of our era are less favoured. But,
courage! I will not pause either to accuse or
repine. I know poetry is not dead, nor genius
lost; nor has Mammon gained power over either,
to bind or slay: they will both assert their
existence, their presence, their liberty and
strength again one day. Powerful angels, safe
in heaven! they smile when sordid souls
triumph, and feeble ones weep over their destruc­
Mediocrity, no: do not let envy prompt you to
the thought. No; they not only live, but reign,
and redeem: and without their divine influence
spread everywhere you would be in hell—the hell
of your own meanness. (Ch. 32)
What is Jane talking about? What has caused this excess of emotion? Nothing in the novel prepares us for this outburst or explains it to us, and to whom, precisely, the "you" of the final sentence refers is a mystery. Obviously, Charlotte Brontë as implied author has somehow slipped into the story and gotten something off her mind, but the passage itself is discordant.

Charlotte Brontë can use addresses to the fictive reader in fairly sophisticated ways to establish values and create implied readers, but such occasions are not numerous. For instance, Jane remarks that "there was nothing to cool or banish love in these circumstances; though much to create despair. Much too, you will think, reader, to engender jealousy; if a woman, in my position, could presume to be jealous of a woman in Miss Ingram's. But I was not jealous; or very rarely" (Ch. 18). This is the kind of thing we might see in Thackeray or Trollope—the assumption of a thinking, judging reader tends to, presumably, create that kind of reader, and even though the reader who so judges is told he is wrong, his mistake is very gently rebuked, as Jane goes on in the passage to explain how Blanche Ingram is not worth her jealousy. Another such
effect is achieved when Jane says that "I had not intended to love him: the reader knows I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, green and strong" (Ch. 17)! If the reader does not know—has somehow missed it—he will gladly accept Jane's word and become the implied reader who loves and respects her.

This technique of assuming thoughtful judgment on the reader's part is used slightly more often in Villette. Lucy Snowe makes such remarks, carrying hidden assumptions, as "my reader, I know, is one who would not thank me for an elaborate reproduction of poetic first impressions" (Ch. 5); "before you pronounce on the rashness of the proceeding, reader, look back to the point whence I started; consider the desert I had left, note how little I perilled; mine was the game where the player cannot lose and may win" (Ch. 7); and "the reader must not think too hardly of Rosine; on the whole, she was not a bad sort of person, and had no idea there could be any disgrace in grasping at whatever she could get, or any effrontery in chattering like a pie to the best gentleman in Christendom" (Ch. 13).
In all these remarks, a judiciously thoughtful reader is assumed and thus to some extent created. But there appears only once in any of these first-person novels a technique much more common in the other novelists: the naming of certain kinds of fictive readers in order to counter their assumptions and bring the implied reader closer to the narrator's viewpoint. This occurs in *Villette*, when Lucy first describes her despair, and then addresses various fictive readers:

Alas! When I had full leisure to look on life as life must be looked on by such as me, I found it but a hopeless desert: tawny sands, with no green fields, no palm-tree, no well in view. The hopes which are dear to youth, which bear it up and lead it on, I knew not and dared not know. If they knocked at my heart sometimes, an inhospitable bar to admission must be inwardly drawn. When they turned away thus rejected, tears sad enough sometimes flowed; but it could not be helped: I dared not give such guests lodging. So mortally did I fear the sin and weakness of presumption.

Religious reader, you will preach to me a long sermon about what I have just written, and so will you, moralist; and you, stern sage: you, stoic, will frown; you, cynic, sneer; you, epicure, laugh. Well, each and all, take it your own way. I accept the sermon, frown, sneer and laugh; perhaps you are all right: and perhaps, circumstanced like me, you would have been, like me, wrong. The first month was, indeed, a long, black, heavy month to me. (Ch. 15)
Raymond Williams says of this passage that "this is conscious art. The actual reader, feeling these other responses forming, is distanced, named; or to put it another way, these observing questioning criticising responses are distanced." I think he is right; the passage seems an obvious attempt to create a reader who will not judge on narrow sectarian or philosophical grounds, but who will share Lucy's feelings and thoughts and realize that circumstanced the same he might very well feel and think the same. Thus the passage is sympathetically and empathetically expansive—implied-reader creation at its best.

The problem, however, is that because this technique is rare in Charlotte Brontë's first-person novels and because it is overshadowed by the numerous contemptuous and condescending addresses, it tends therefore to be ineffective.

The nature of the English language permits a linguistic ambiguity which we might use to explain some of the insulting addresses delivered by Charlotte Brontë's narrators, such as Jane Eyre's comment that "sometimes I saw her; she would come out of her room with a basin, or a plate, or a tray in her hand, go down to the kitchen, and shortly

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11 The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, p. 72.
return, generally (oh, romantic reader, forgive me for
telling the plain truth:) bearing a pot of porter" (Ch. 12); or her somewhat milder, "gentle reader, may you never feel what I then felt! . . . for never may you, like me, dread to be the instrument of evil to what you wholly love" (Ch. 27). If these epithets are seen as being addressed not to the whole class of "readers," but to that part of the fictive or real audience which is "romantic" or "gentle," then we can read them as being somewhat ironic or satiric in the manner perhaps of Thackeray, and we can disassociate ourselves from those subclasses of readers. In the same way, when the masculine narrator of The Professor scornfully announces, "know, O incredulous reader! that a master stands in a somewhat different relation towards a pretty, light-headed, probably ignorant girl, to that occupied by a partner at a ball, or a gallant on the promenade" (Ch. 14), we can disassociate ourselves, though we may wonder to what purpose, from those readers so incredulous as to think he does not. Of course, The Professor's narrator goes on to inform us, rather emotionally, that

a professor does not meet his pupil to see her dressed in satin and muslin, with hair perfumed and curled, neck scarcely shaded by aerial lace, round white arms circled with bracelets, feet
dressed for the gliding dance. . . . No; he finds her in the school-room, plainly dressed, with books before her. Owing to her education or her nature books are to her a nuisance, and she opens them with aversion, yet her teacher must instil into her mind the contents of those books; that mind resists the admission of grave information, it recoils, it grows restive, sullen tempers are shown, disfiguring frowns spoil the symmetry of the face, sometimes coarse gestures banish grace from the deportment, while muttered expressions, redolent of native and ineradicable vulgarity, desecrate the sweetness of the voice. Where the temperament is serene though the intellect be sluggish, an unconquerable dullness opposes every effort to instruct. Where there is cunning but not energy, dissimulation, falsehood, a thousand schemes and tricks are put in play to evade the necessity of application; in short, to the tutor, female youth, female charms are like tapestry hangings, of which the wrong side is continually turned towards him. (Ch. 14)

Our recoil from such contempt for his pupils is surely where the bedrock creation of implied readers—the wrong kind—takes place in The Professor, and we are not likely to worry about whether we or someone else are "incredulous."

The fact is, however, that adjectives as used in these examples occur infrequently in any of the three novels, and most of the addresses of substance (to distinguish them from the mere tics) simply use "reader."

On the whole, balancing the instances in which the device seems to work against those in which it clearly does not, the inescapable conclusion, it seems to me, is that
Charlotte Brontë the implied author made a serious mistake when she let her first-person narrators ever address their readers, or, perhaps, when she decided to step in and address them for her narrators. The teller's constant implicit awareness of the audience is more than sufficient to engage us in the story, and when any of the narrators go beyond that, they often tend to raise emotions in us ranging from minor irritation to major discomfort, depending on how deeply we respond to the narrator. These emotions are augmented by the fact that there simply are no clues given as to which class or subclass of readers is being addressed, so that for all practical purposes, I think, they all are. Moreover, if one reads all three novels, he discovers that though the stories are quite different, the condescending passages are virtually interchangeable. For instance, the following remark from The Professor could appear in Villette and we would not see anything strange at all: "Reader, perhaps you were never in Belgium? Haply you don't know the physiognomy of the country? You have not its lineaments defined upon your memory as I have them on mine" (Ch. 7)? Since The Professor's narrator is impossible to like in any case, the prissiness of the remark is
simply added to his other sins, as is his condescending, "now, reader, during the last two pages I have been giving you honey fresh from flowers, but you must not live entirely on food so luscious; taste then a little gall—just a drop, by way of change" (Ch. 23), after which he describes a week's attack of severe hypochondria. Perhaps he means to imply the "romantic" reader, and we should not feel incensed by his tone and imagery; but we must stretch a bit for that explanation, I think.

Jane Eyre the character is so admirable and indomitable that she conquers all; in fact, we might say that the story creates an implied reader who simply ignores or is unfazed by the potentially insulting passages, which are not terribly numerous in any case. I would like to look at just a few from near the end of the novel, when, presumably, the implied reader should be pretty much a finished creation. While Jane has been living with St. John and his sisters, she has been dropping clues to prepare us for what becomes increasingly inevitable—the fact that she is related to the Rivers family. When the time comes for the revelation, she says that "I knew, by instinct, how the matter stood before St. John had said another word: but I cannot expect
the reader to have the same intuitive perception, so I must repeat his explanation" (Ch. 33). It is impossible to see this—if we ponder it—as anything but an insult to our perception, as is her remark that "perhaps you think I had forgotten Mr. Rochester, reader, amidst these changes of place and fortune. Not for a moment" (Ch. 34). Only an idiot would think so, as only the most careless of readers would answer yes to this question: "And, reader, do you think I feared him in his blind ferocity?—if you do, you little know me" (Ch. 37).

Such remarks are insulting, but weighed against Jane's honesty, her courage, and her strength to be true to herself—everything about her character and her response to her environment that elicits our admiration as implied readers—they are not destructive to our opinion, just as, functioning as real, historical people, we are prepared to overlook or forgive a good deal of waspishness, arrogance, condescension and other negative qualities in loved ones and friends. All this is true, I believe, if we have become the implied readers the novel works to create, readers who accept Jane and her demand to be viewed as a free and full person in her own right. Those Victorians,
for instance, who criticized the novel severely and believed that Jane should have gone off to be a missionary with St. John, obliterating all free will and individuality from her life, obviously did not become the desired implied readers, which only helps to prove that no novelist can hope to be completely and universally successful.

Lucy Snowe, the heroine/narrator of *Villette*, is another and more vexing problem. She is far from being as unlikeable as *The Professor*'s narrator, and yet she is not nearly as likeable as Jane Eyre, a fact that can be partially explained in a number of ways. One factor that strikes me is that her environment and circumstances are considerably and consistently more sordid than Jane's, and while I would not want to imply that this sordidness rubs off on Lucy, we should not overlook the manner in which the highly romanticized elements of *Jane Eyre* help to form our reactions to Jane herself. The fact is that Lucy, working her way up to teacher in the continental girls' boarding school, has a considerably tougher life than Jane, the private governess to one small child in a luxurious country mansion. Similarly, the characters who surround Lucy Snowe are a good deal meaner than those Jane encounters;
neither Graham Bretton, smugly self-complacent and all but blind to Lucy, nor Paul Emanuel, the archetypal male chauvinist, come close to the almost-mythical figure of Rochester, nor is Lucy likely to meet anyone who does. Earl Knies, comparing *Villette* to *Jane Eyre*, offers other explanations of why identification with Lucy is more difficult than it was with Jane.\(^{12}\) He notes that in *Jane Eyre* everything is seen immediately and chronologically from Jane's point of view, whereas in *Villette*, Lucy—like a third-person narrator—often withdraws and gives us generalized sketches, often skips around in and summarizes chronology, and often withdraws personally from the action to concentrate on other characters. In addition, Knies shows how Lucy Snowe is a much less dependable narrator than Jane Eyre, so that "because of her unreliability, Lucy makes it possible for us to entertain value judgments which differ from hers" (p. 179).

The potential meaning and implications of *Villette* are in many respects nearly identical with those of *Jane Eyre*: a single woman, poor and plain (perhaps even ugly in Lucy's  

case), struggling to maintain integrity of body and soul. Moreover, because the romantic elements of *Jane Eyre* have been replaced in *Villette* with what almost in some cases amounts to naturalism, perhaps the potential impact of *Villette* is even more significant. Partly because of this very fact, however, I think we do tend to be less immediately sympathetic to Lucy Snowe and more critical of her, and thus her attitude toward her readers is a liability that we do not forgive as easily; in addition, the contempt is more extensively displayed and developed. We must consider, of course, conscious irony on Charlotte Brontë's part, the deliberate creation of an unreliable and unsympathetic narrator, but in entertaining this hypotheses, I have great difficulty determining what such a strategy accomplishes. Potentially, I think, *Villette* is one of the great feminist novels of all time, but it seems to me that this potential is vitiated by Lucy Snowe's overt stance toward her readers and by the things she says and does not say which detract from the significance of her life's struggle.13

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13 One aspect of the difficulty may be demonstrated by showing possible critical reactions to the novel's conclusion. In *The Art of Charlotte Brontë*, Earl Knies ends his
Part of Lucy's thinking is revealed in the school-teacher's stance she takes toward us, as when she announces that "the reader is requested to note a seeming contradiction in the two views which have been given of Graham Bretton" (Ch. 19), or when she delivers the following order: "I liked her. It is not a declaration I have often made concerning my acquaintance, in the course of this book; the reader will bear with it for once" (Ch. 32). At other times, she can simply be most annoying. At one point in _Villette_ chapter by stating that "having had M. Paul's love, even for a time, [Lucy] is now able to face the storm alone" (p. 200). Kate Millett offers a quite different view in _Sexual Politics_ (New York, 1971): "Lucy will not marry Paul even after the tyrant has softened. . . . She plays pupil to a man who hates and fears intelligent women and boasts of having caused the only woman teacher whose learning ever challenged his own to lose her job. Lucy endures the baiting about the 'natural inferiority of females' with which Paul tortures her all through the lesson, and understands that only the outer surface of his bigotry melts when she proves a good student and thereby flatters his pedagogic vanity. Yet in his simplicity he has been hoodwinked into giving her the keys. The moment they are in her hand, and she has beguiled him into lending her money, renting her a school of her own, and facilitated her daring in slipping from the claws of Madame Beck—she's gone. The keeper turned hind must be eluded anyway; Paul turned lover is drowned" (p. 146). Given Lucy's life and character, I find Kate Millett's analysis much more congenial, yet I think that Charlotte Brontë as implied author could have conveyed the lesson far more convincingly, convincingly enough to have precluded the response of Earl Knies altogether.
the novel she accepts Graham Bretton's invitation to the opera, "and away I flew, never once checked, reader, by the thought which perhaps at this moment checks you: namely, that to go anywhere with Graham and without Mrs. Bretton could be objectionable" (Ch. 23). This is not Thackerayan satire, which shows us our priggishness in order to create—at the least—implied readers who are not prigs; it is a direct assumption that the reader is a prig bothered by quibbling moral considerations to which Lucy Snowe is far superior. It cannot be designed to create readers, since it excludes them from intelligent consideration. Likewise, at another point she states that "underneath this aperture, I pushed a large empty chest, and having mounted upon it a smaller box, and wiped from both the dust, I gathered my dress (my best, the reader must remember, and therefore a legitimate object of care) fastidiously round me" (Ch. 14). The careful reader squirms under this bland assumption of his stupidity. At the end of the novel Lucy remarks that "in winding up Mistress Fanshawe's memoirs, the reader will no doubt expect to hear that she came finally to bitter expiation of her youthful levities" (Ch. 40). Again, this seems
little more than gratuitous insult. Both Thackeray and Trollope attacked bad novels and readers' expectations of them in order to create implied readers who would perceive both novels and life in new ways, but nothing like that occurs in this remark. The narrator is simply contemptuous of us as conventional novel readers who expect evil to be punished and good to be rewarded, and that is it.

Snide remarks and assumptions relating to our moral or intellectual inferiority do not, however, account for all the uneasiness that we feel about this novel. Our irritation arises also, I think, from our perception that Lucy Snowe is an unreliable narrator, that she engages in game-playing and the withholding of information seemingly for no other purpose than to display her low regard for her readers. For instance, one gathers that after Lucy leaves Mrs. Bretton's as a child, she has a rough time of it—apparently both her parents die, or perhaps do not die, but rid themselves of Lucy somehow. She does not, however, dramatize these events or even tell them to us. Instead, she delivers herself of a very strange metaphorical passage, one that begins mockingly:
It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted. Far from saying nay, indeed, I will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass. . . . A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?

Picture me then idle, basking, plump, and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently soft. However, it cannot be concealed that, in that case, I must somehow have fallen over-board, or that there must have been wreck at last. I too well remember a time—a long time, of cold, of danger, of contention. . . . I even know there was a storm, and that not of one hour nor one day. . . . In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished. (Ch. 4)

For some reason of her own, Lucy Snowe wishes to avoid giving us the truth of these events; she chooses deliberately to leave part of her life incomplete. That could be acceptable, though puzzling, for I think that, as with Jane Eyre, a fuller knowledge of Lucy's youthful tribulations would help to create a more sympathetic and understanding implied reader. But why the first paragraph? Why mock us for assuming, quite naturally, that she will "permit the reader to picture me" living a conventional young girl's life when all that follows clearly indicates she does not live such a life? If we take the passage as insult, we will
receive no apology; if we take it simply as a mystery, we will find no clarification. Either way, I am disturbed because I cannot decipher what the narrator (as well as the implied author behind her) is trying to accomplish or to do to me as implied reader.

Similarly, though we do not realize it at the time, the following passage is insulting because it tricks us: "I turned: my light was dim; the room was long—but as I live! I saw in the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black or white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white. Say what you will, reader—tell me I was nervous, or mad; affirm that I was unsettled by the excitement of that letter; declare that I dreamed: this I vow—I saw there—in that room—on that night—an image like—a NUN" (Ch. 22). Lucy has already related the legend of the nun's ghost that haunts the school, and we are not likely here to doubt our narrator's word or her sanity. We know, however, that she is writing her history in old age, and when we discover near the end of the novel that the ghost was in fact one of the schoolgirl's lovers who had been surprised in his trysting place and had donned the nun's garb to frighten Lucy, we
are likely to think—and rightly so—that Lucy Snowe as narrator has simply been playing with us in a manner that smacks of gratuitous insult. Our narrator may be unreliable, but if that unreliability is going to function in any positive way, we must be able to discern some pattern or logic in it. That is difficult here; thus, once again our relationship to Lucy and her story is badly wrenched.

Jane Eyre often corrected our misinterpretations—as in the question of her jealousy towards Blanche Ingram—with a softness and concern that increased our respect for her and also our willingness to believe her explanations, even if doubts remained. Part of our shaky relationship with Lucy Snowe, however, arises from the fact that she does not even bother. The following outburst, for instance, reeks of condescension but also verges on hysteria. The "sneaking suspicion" which we as readers are accused of holding is that Lucy is more than half in love with Graham Bretton—a suspicion that is inescapable if we read carefully, and which Lucy's hysterical outburst, and her previous unreliability, do nothing to diminish:

...—(once, for all, in this parenthesis, I disclaim, with the utmost scorn, every sneaking suspicion of what are called "warmer feelings": women do not entertain these "warmer
feelings" where, from the commencement, through the whole progress of an acquaintance, they have never once been cheated of the conviction that to do so would be to commit a mortal absurdity; nobody ever launches into Love unless he has seen or dreamed the rising of Hope's star over Love's troubled waters)—when, then, I had given expression to a closely-clinging and deeply-honouring attachment-- ... then, just at that moment, the doors of my heart would shake, bolt and bar would yield, Reason would leap in, vigorous and revengeful, snatch the full sheets, read, sneer, erase, tear up, re-write, fold, seal, direct, and send a terse, curt missive of a page. She did right. (Ch. 23)

Now, it is perfectly acceptable for a reader to know more about a narrator than the narrator himself does--especially in first-person narrated novels. That is when shared irony between implied reader and implied author comes into the picture. Here, though, while we feel we know the narrator better than she knows herself, there is not a hint of irony--the whole passage seems meant to be taken seriously. In addition, with Lucy's unreliability--our feeling that she is either ignorant of or deliberately refuses to acknowledge certain basic facts about herself--a significant amount of the trust necessary for our creation as implied readers is left suspect. *Villette* is definitely not a novel whose purpose is to ironically expose its unreliable narrator. Somehow the implied author has abdicated
or lost control, and as implied readers we are left floundering with nothing to hang onto. When this sort of thing happens too often in a novel, as I believe it does in Villette, and is not saved by the powerfulness of the narrator—as Jane Eyre is saved but Villette is not—then I think we finish the novel as implied readers still struggling to be born, which means that in one of its major aspects the novel has essentially failed. Charlotte Brontë would have done far better to have allowed her first-person narrators their awareness of an audience but forbidden them to directly address that audience. She did not, and I believe her art suffered as a result. Let us turn, therefore, to her single third-person novel and see how she compares with the other great narrative voices of her time.

Why Charlotte Brontë felt the need to write a third-person novel after finishing Jane Eyre is, I suppose, a basically unanswerable question, though W. A. Craik does attempt to provide an answer of sorts:

Charlotte Brontë is still very much drawn to the self-revelatory method, though now the teller is not an actor in the story, and is, as far as any narrator is, the individual writer's own self. She had the precedent of
her well-read and much-loved Scott for her man-to-man tone to the reader in the conveying of unfamiliar material and solid general reflection; and the precedent of her much-admired contemporary Thackeray for an even more familiar tone and a sardonic and disillusioned view of the 'comédie humaine.' She must have felt that, in the main current now of the English novel, and protected by anonymity and her apparently masculine pseudonym, she was in safe waters—much safer than she was in the very original and very feminine *Jane Eyre.* . . . Charlotte Brontë nevertheless selected the type of narrator most suited to her, that involving the closest contact with the reader. She was fond of apostrophizing her reader in *Jane Eyre,* and continues to do so here at moments both serious and comic, both of involvement and detachment, with equal success. She is flexible and assured.14

Whether Charlotte Brontë felt that she was in safe waters with *Shirley* is an unanswerable question, though it does appear likely that the examples of Scott and of Thackeray especially might have influenced her in the direction of a third-person narrative.15 My opinion, however, is that

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14 The Brontë Novels, pp. 124-5.

15 Which does not explain, of course, why she tried it only in *Shirley.* Perhaps subconsciously she was as upset as I will show I am with what I consider to be the failings of the implied author. We should also note—though I am unsure of its relevance to the appearance of her only novel featuring a detached narrator—that the year preceding the publication of *Shirley* late in 1849 was a most
Craik could not be more wrong than in trying to defend *Shirley* in terms of its narrator and, by implication, of its implied author. *Shirley*'s narrator does not suit at all, and though the contact with the reader may be "close," it is a most uncomfortable closeness. Nor are the apostrophes successful, flexible, or assured; they are by turns arrogant, cloying, coy, and insulting. I believe that in *Shirley*, much more than in the first-person novels, the narrator—in relation to creating implied readers—is in the position of fighting against the thrust of the story itself, i.e., is at cross purposes with herself, and thus the careful reader is again left to some extent uncreated and unfulfilled. This is not, as with Thackeray and Trollope, a matter of the reader's recoiling from the story and refusing to be created; it is a matter of the narrator and implied reader acting in so contradictory a manner that they give us no place to stand.

To illustrate, we might look first at the matter of fiction versus reality, used so consciously and cleverly by traumatic one for Charlotte Brontë: Branwell, her brother, died on September 24, 1848, followed by Emily on December 19 and Anne on May 20, 1849. It is a wonder, perhaps, that she was able to finish and publish *Shirley* at all.
both Thackeray and Trollope, and used extensively enough by both so that we can talk without distortion of their method and skill: it is plan and repetition, after all, which act decisively in the molding of implied readers. In *Shirley*, we find both a reference to a novel and one to the reality of the story, but there is no pattern. Early in the novel, the narrator remarks that "though I describe imperfect characters (every character in this book will be found to be more or less imperfect, my pen refusing to draw anything in the model line), I have not undertaken to handle degraded or utterly infamous ones. Child-torturers, slave-masters and drivers I consign to the hands of jailers; the novelist may be excused from sullying his page with the record of their deeds" (I, Ch. 5). The remark stands alone, and if (thinking perhaps of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* or even of Thackeray's *Catherine*) we reply "what arrogance," there is nothing to contradict us or to teach us otherwise. In a somewhat related remark, the narrator warns that "you must not think, reader, that in sketching Miss Ainley's character, I depict a figment of imagination--no--we seek

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the originals of such portraits in real life only" (I, Ch. 10). This is most interesting. Is she really instructing us in the practice of novel writing, informing us that imagination is not involved, but that all her characters are copied from life? Apparently so, but she goes even further, using "we," not "I," in the second clause, which seems not only to flaunt her status as a novelist but to attribute her own practice to all other novelists. Surely Thackeray and Trollope would object, and surely we as readers ought to object as well.

Near the end of Shirley, we find the narrator remarking that "I suppose Robert Moore's prophecies were, partially, at least, fulfilled. The other day I passed up the Hollow, which tradition says was once green, and lone, and wild; and there I saw the manufacturer's day-dreams embodied in substantial stone and brick and ashes—the cinder-black highway, the cottages, and the cottage-gardens; there I saw a mighty mill, and a chimney, ambitious as the tower of Babel" (II, Ch. 37). Again, the passage simply is: standing alone, it constitutes part of no pattern. Likewise, the

17 The sentence is ambiguous and, conceivably, "we" can be read as meaning "you and I," but then the sentence does not make particularly good sense.
narrator may occasionally play a little game, as she appears to do in this chapter heading: "CASE OF DOMESTIC PERSECUTION.--REMARKABLE INSTANCE OF PIOUS PERSEVERANCE IN THE DISCHARGE OF RELIGIOUS DUTIES" (II, Ch. 34). Is this meant simply to mock Malone, the curate, or is it a parody of something else—religious papers, perhaps? It is difficult to tell, and as a result we are probably not affected one way or another by it. Without narrative patterns of some kind, which are difficult to perceive in Shirley, such examples as I have cited serve little purpose.18

A major function of third-person narrators is to enrich and broaden the story with philosophical or practical commentary gleaned from a wider experience or knowledge than the reader's, and this function Shirley's narrator

18 I do not mean to imply that as a novel Shirley is in all respects chaotic. In fact, Arnold Shapiro, in a clearly-reasoned and convincing article titled "Public Themes and Private Lives: Social Criticism in Shirley" (Papers on Language and Literature, 4 [1968], 74-84) notes that from the outset critics have said that Shirley lacks unity and then proceeds to argue that "one cannot separate the public and private themes of Shirley, just as one cannot separate the public and private lives of its central characters" (p. 75). Professor Shapiro makes a sound case for a good deal of plan and unity in Shirley. However, my concern is with the tone and meaning of the narrative commentary, and as regards this rather special aspect I do not find the pattern which I feel is necessary.
adequately assumes at times with passages that, in context, can be delightful and instructive. She notes that "in English country ladies there is this point to be remarked" and follows with a dissection worthy of Thackeray: "Whether young or old, pretty or plain, dull or sprightly, they all (or almost all) have a certain expression stamped on their features, which seems to say, 'I know--I do not boast of it--but I know that I am the standard of what is proper; let every one therefore whom I approach, or who approaches me, keep a sharp look-out, for wherein they differ from me--be the same in dress, manner, opinion, principle, or practice--therein they are wrong" (I, Ch. 7). Likewise, the following passage seems a rather good deflation of a standard cliché:

Tradesmen, when they speak against war, always profess to hate it because it is a bloody and barbarous proceeding: you would think, to hear them talk, that they are peculiarly civilized--especially kindly and gentle of disposition to their fellow-men. This is not the case. Many of them are extremely narrow and cold-hearted, have no good feeling for any class but their own, are distant--even hostile to all others; call them useless; seem to question their right to exist; seem to grudge them the very air they breathe, and to think the circumstance of their eating, drinking, and living in decent houses, quite unjustifiable. They do not know what others do in the way of helping, pleasing,
or teaching their race; they will not trouble themselves to inquire: whoever is not in trade is accused of eating the bread of idleness, of passing a useless existence. Long may it be ere England really becomes a nation of shopkeepers! (I, Ch. 10)

Of course, this narrator can also defend and explain clichés at somewhat tedious length, as she does in a passage beginning, "people never die of love or grief alone; though some die of inherent maladies, which the tortures of those passions prematurely force into destructive action" (I, Ch. 11). Likewise, she uses the hackneyed device of melodramatically apostrophising an abstraction: "Alas, Experience! No other mentor has so wasted and frozen a face as yours; none wears a robe so black, none bears a rod so heavy, none with hand so inexorable draws the novice so sternly to his task, and forces him with authority so resistless to its acquirement. It is by your instructions alone that man or woman can ever find a safe track through life's wilds: without it, how they stumble, how they stray" (I, Ch. 7)

Though capable of excellent functional commentary, this narrator can, like Thackeray in the post-Vanity Fair novels, destroy her good effects by mounting a pulpit and preaching a kind of sentimental morality which is unsup-
ported by the story and which can only be accepted on faith, as when she tells us that "most people have had a period or periods in their lives when they have felt thus forsaken; when, having long hoped against hope, and still seen the day of fruition deferred, their hearts have truly sickened within them. This is a terrible hour, but it is often that darkest point which precedes the rise of day.

... Yet, let whoever grieves still cling fast to love and faith in God: God will never deceive, never finally desert him. 'Whom He loveth, He chasteneth.' These words are true, and should not be forgotten" (II, Ch. 20). Another tendency which confuses the implied reader and muddles his relation to the story is the implied author's loss of control in the delineation between narrator and character. This clearly happens in Shirley in one long, significant passage dealing with the question of women's emancipation. The passage begins with Caroline Helstone musing about her own state—useless and unemployed, but forbidden by her uncle to get out and make something of herself:

"Nobody," she went on—"nobody in particular is to blame, that I can see, for the state in which things are; and I cannot tell, however much I puzzle over it, how they are to be altered for the better; but I feel there is
something wrong somewhere. I believe single women should have more to do—better chances of interesting and profitable occupation than they possess now. And when I speak thus, I have no impression that I displease God by my words; that I am either impious or impatient, irreligious or sacrilegious. My consolation is, indeed, that God hears many a groan, and compassionates much grief which man stops his ears against, or frowns on with impotent contempt. I say impotent, for I observe that to such grievances as society cannot readily cure, it usually forbids utterance, on pain of its scorn: this scorn being only a sort of tinselled cloak to its deformed weakness. People hate to be reminded of ills they are unable or unwilling to remedy: such reminder, in forcing on them a sense of their own incapacity, or a more painful sense of an obligation to make some unpleasant effort, troubles their ease and shakes their self-complacency. Old maids, like the houseless and unemployed poor, should not ask for a place and an occupation in the world: the demand disturbs the happy and rich: it disturbs parents."

Caroline then goes on to consider the neighborhood girls, hothouse plants whose sole aim and wish is to be married, but who, in an overstocked matrimonial market, are laughed at and scorned by their fathers and brothers and who grow weak and sickly. Then, still within quotation marks, we get a ringing challenge which cannot be from Caroline; it may be from the narrator, or perhaps from the implied author herself stepping in, but in any case it indicates a certain loss of artistic control over the story, despite the fact that it is in itself quite moving:
"Men of England! look at your poor girls, many of them fading around you, dropping off in consumption or decline; or, what is worse, degenerating to sour old maids,—envious, backbiting, wretched, because life is a desert to them; or, what is worst of all, reduced to strive, by scarce modest coquetry and debasing artifice, to gain that position and consideration by marriage, which to celibacy is denied. Fathers! cannot you alter these things? Perhaps not all at once; but consider the matter well when it is brought before you, receive it as a theme worthy of thought: do not dismiss it with an idle jest or an unmanly insult. You would wish to be proud of your daughters and not to blush for them—then seek for them an interest and an occupation which shall raise them above the flirt, the manoeuvrer, the mischief-making tale-bearer. Keep your girls' minds narrow and fettered—-they will still be a plague and a care, sometimes a disgrace to you: cultivate them—-give them scope and work—-they will be your gayest companions in health; your tenderest nurses in sickness; your most faithful prop in age." (II, Ch. 22)

Shirley's narrator has a marvelous ability to leave us floundering and frustrated, an ability displayed most prominently in her addresses to the Yorke family, whose father plays a secondary role in the novel but whose children contribute nothing at all to the plot. She begins by playing the magician and addressing Mr. Yorke:

Mr. Yorke, if a magic mirror were now held before you, and if therein were shown you your two daughters as they will be twenty years from this night, what would you think? The magic mirror is here: you shall learn their destinies--and
first that of your little life, Jessy. Do you know this place? No, you never saw it. . . . Here is the place; green sod and a gray marble headstone—Jessy sleeps below. She lived through an April day; much loved was she, much loving. . . . Her death was tranquil and happy in Rose's guardian arms, for Rose had been her stay and defence through many trials: the dying and the watching English girls were at that hour alone in a foreign country, and the soil of that country gave Jessy a grave. (I, Ch. 9)

Much later in the novel she returns to Jessy again, saying, "but, Jessie [sic], I will write about you no more" (II, Ch. 23), and then going on to describe the post-burial scene. Immediately after the first passage, however, she turns to Jessy's sister Rose: "Now, behold Rose, two years later. . . . This, indeed, is far from England. . . . The little, quiet Yorkshire girl is a lonely emigrant in some region of the southern hemisphere. Will she ever come back" (I, Ch. 9)? We never find out, nor is our natural question—what in the world is going on here?—ever answered. Even more remarkable, however, is what occurs when the narrator moves on to Martin, one of the brothers. After describing his character in some detail, she concludes that "he will want all that the world can give him, both of enjoyment and lore; he will, perhaps, take deep draughts at each fount. That thirst satisfied—what next?
I know not. Martin might be a remarkable man—whether he will or not, the seer is powerless to predict: on that subject, there has been no open vision" (I, Ch. 9).

Since we have been given no reason whatsoever to care about any of these children, the seemingly arbitrary granting or withholding of information appears to be designed only to frustrate us, and if we are skilled enough readers to be looking for the clues that will guide us to our creation as implied readers, we are likely to be all the more frustrated. If, however, we read biographical material on Charlotte Brontë,¹⁹ we will discover that the Yorkes are based on a family Charlotte knew very well, one of the daughters of which died in Belgium. Robert Bernard Martin has commented on this fact: "The reason for Miss Brontë's descriptions of the futures of Matthew, Mark, and Jessy seems primarily to be that the originals of these characters were part of the family from which the Yorkes were drawn, and that consequently she felt she must include them and tell all that she knew about them. As characters they hardly exist, for they neither contribute to the major

¹⁹This information was first provided by Mrs. Gaskell in her biography, The Life of Charlotte Brontë (1857).
themes and actions of the book nor provide pleasure in them­selves. Miss Bronte has mistaken the literal for the significant." In a footnote, Martin then adds that "prob­ably the recent loss of her brother and sisters made Miss Bronte feel that the death of Jessy was more significant than it is for the reader." The important point here is that the reader knows something is drastically wrong while he is reading, that the implied author herself must be making some serious mistake. The biographical information is only important insofar as it throws a little light on that mistake. The whole chapter is remarkable, however, and I think what happens is that as implied readers in the process of creation we are seriously impeded by our growing realization that the implied author is quite capable of totally losing control of her material and thus of leaving us without any guide whatsoever.

Which brings us to the most serious indictment of all, the continuing contempt displayed by this narrator for her audience. A case can be made, albeit ineffectively, that the hostile attitudes displayed at times by Jane Eyre and

Lucy Snowe can be related to their characters—strong and independent—and to their situations—forced to battle for their livelihoods in an unfriendly world. The same defense cannot be made for the narrator of Shirley, however, because we are not reading her first-person story and do not get to know her intimately at all. Thus, what we may perceive as offensive—though all critics do not perceive it so—is nothing less than gratuitously offensive. One aspect of this offensiveness is the narrator's stuffy pedantry in the French language. We first get a glimpse of this habit in The Professor, whose narrator informs us that "his physiognomy was 'fine and spirituelle.'" I use two French words because they define better than any English terms the species of intelligence with which his features were imbued" (Ch. 7). The practice is then dropped, however, until Shirley, were we get more of it. The narrator informs us

21 In an attempt to give Charlotte Brontë every benefit of the doubt, it might be argued here that the narrator is actually flattering her readers, in that she relies upon their appreciation of French nuances. I would find this argument unconvincing, however, because it does not take into account the reaction of those readers who lack such an appreciation and because the narrator insists on explaining what she has done, which tends to undermine the flattery.
that "the pupil knew her too well to remonstrate or com-
plain of coldness; she let the punctilious whim pass,
sure that her natural bonté (I use this French word, be-
cause it expresses just what I mean; neither goodness nor
good nature, but something between the two) would presently
get the upper-hand" (I, Ch. 17). She tells us later that
"she took those thin fingers between her two little
hands—she bent her head 'et les effleura de ses lèvres'
(I put that in French, because the word 'effleurer' is an
exquisite word)" (II, Ch. 33). And, finally, she notes that
"the world wore a North Pole colouring: all its lights and
tints looked like the 'reflets' of white, or violet, or
pale-green gems," then adds a footnote to "reflets": "Find
me an English word as good, reader, and I will gladly dis-
pense with the French word. Reflections won't do" (II,
Ch. 32). Spread throughout the novel, this kind of thing
can create even an implied reader who feels rather stupid
and insignificant; or, as Sylvestre Monod (himself a Frenchman)
says, "this is deliberately humiliating for one who had pre-
cisely been thinking that reflections would do very well." 22

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22"Charlotte Brontë and the Thirty 'Readers' of Jane
Eyre," p. 500.
There are clearly a few instances where the narrator of *Shirley* takes a cue from Thackeray or Trollope and attacks a section of her fictive audience, as in this chapter heading: "Which the genteel reader is recommended to skip, low persons being here introduced" (Ch. 13). This is heavily ironic, though not very funny, since the "low persons" turn out to be highly commendable workers.

Perhaps the same principle is operating also at the end of the novel, when the narrator says, "the story is told. I think I now see the judicious reader putting on his spectacles to look for the moral. It would be an insult to his sagacity to offer directions. I only say, God speed him

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As a corollary to my discussion here, we might note one interesting passage from *Shirley* in which the narrator attacks a section of her actual historical audience: "Men of Manchester! I beg your pardon for this slight résumé of warlike facts; but it is of no consequence. Lord Wellington is, for you, only a decayed old gentleman now: I rather think some of you have called him a 'dotard'--you have taunted him with his age, and the loss of his physical vigor. What fine heroes you are yourselves! Men like you have a right to trample on what is mortal in a demi-god. Scoff at your ease--your scorn can never break his grand, old heart" (II, Ch. 37). The implied author seems once more to be giving in to some private grievance, though in "Public Themes and Private Lives: Social Criticism in *Shirley*," Arnold Shapiro does show that the passage is part of the theme of the novel.
in the quest" (II, Ch. 37)! This remark is more ambiguous, however. It is one thing to laugh at "genteel" readers and to separate ourselves from them, to become, as implied readers, "ungenteel." It is not as clear, however, that we should laugh at judicious readers, separate ourselves from them, and become unjudicious. There is an insult in this remark, though I do not think it is entirely clear who is being insulted. In the same way, we can separate ourselves from the conventional novel-readers when the narrator says that "I doubt not a justice-loving public will have remarked, ere this, that I have thus far shown a criminal remissness in pursuing, catching, and bringing to condign punishment the would-be assassin of Mr. Robert Moore: here was a fine opening to lead my willing readers a dance, at once decorous and exciting: a dance of law and gospel, of the dungeon, the dock, and the 'dead-thraw.'" She is perhaps satirizing novel conventions in the manner of other novelists. When she resumes, however, with "you might have liked it, reader, but I should not" (Ch. 37), it is difficult not to feel implicated, to feel that that "justice-loving public" includes all of us; the force of that italicized "I" is too strong to allow for easy escape.
Similarly when the narrator informs us that "I did not find it easy to sketch Mr. Yorke's person, but it is more difficult to indicate his mind. If you expect to be treated to a Perfection, reader, or even to a benevolent, philanthropic old gentleman in him, you are mistaken" (I, Ch. 4). There really is no reason why any reader should expect any such thing, and it is hard again to escape the feeling that that scorn for our taste is indeed aimed at every one of us.

In fact, I believe that what stays with us and gains in force throughout the course of the novel is the relentless pounding of that repeated, unmodified "reader," delivered time after time with cool superiority and unconcealed disdain. Other critics have not thought so. Early in the novel we read, "if you think ... that anything like a romance is preparing for you, reader, you never were more mistaken. Do you anticipate sentiment, and poetry, and reverie? Do you expect passion, and stimulus, and melodrama? Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly standard. Something real, cool, and solid, lies before you; something unromantic as Monday morning" (I, Ch. 1). My feeling is that if I were to reply that I was not thinking
or expecting any such thing, I would be met with a scornful laugh—not an auspicious way to begin my transformation into implied reader. Kathleen Tillotson, however, says of this passage that "her tone is unconciliating, triumphant rather than apologetic, but not without humour: satirising a hypothetical reader, and making us, the intelligent ones, feel superior in sharing her own preference." That is at least a comforting interpretation; even if it is valid, however, it leads to more unpleasantness, as in the following passage:

I am aware, reader, and you need not remind me, that it is a dreadful thing for a parson to be warlike: I am aware that he should be a man of peace; I have some faint outline of an idea of what a clergyman's mission is amongst mankind and I remember distinctly whose servant he is; whose message he delivers, whose example he should follow; yet, with all this, if you are a parson-hater, you need not expect me to go along with you every step of your dismal, downward-tending, unchristian road; you need not expect me to join in your deep anathemas, at once so narrow and so sweeping—in your poisonous rancour, so intense and so absurd, against 'the cloth.' (I, Ch. 3)

If we join in the game that Kathleen Tillotson proposes, we must go far beyond simply feeling superior when

we read this brutal passage; we must, in fact, put on our own iron boots and help stomp this poor fool of a reader into bloody submission, for that in effect is what is occurring. For the sake of comparison, we might examine a similar statement in Trollope and note how differently the tone is handled. Surely the gentle remonstrating and kindly educating of the Trollopian narrator is far more effective for the creation of implied readers:

The tone of our archdeacon's mind must not astonish us; it has been the growth of centuries of church ascendancy; and though some fungi now disfigure the tree, though there be much dead wood, for how much good fruit have not we to be thankful? Who, without remorse, can batter down the dead branches of an old oak, now useless, but, ah! still so beautiful, or drag out the fragments of the ancient forest, without feeling that they sheltered the younger plants, to which they are now summoned to give way in a tone so peremptory and so harsh? (The Warden, Ch. 5)

But even if the vicious contempt of Shirley's narrator is not aimed at me, I do not want particularly to ally myself with a narrator or implied author who can aim it at anyone; I do not want to be that kind of an implied reader. Besides, when I read later, "come near, by all means, reader; do not be shy: stoop over his shoulder fearlessly, and read as he scribbles" (II, Ch. 29), I know perfectly well that I and every other reader are going to read what Louis Moore is
writing. The tone is cloyingly condescending, but how can I disassociate myself from the timid little reader who is being led?

It really is difficult to escape the conclusion that the implied reader being molded by this novel's narrator will be as contradictory and fragmented as the implied author seems to be. When we read the novel's conclusion, we find this address: "Yes, reader, we must settle accounts now. I have only briefly to narrate the final fates of some of the personages whose acquaintance we have made in this narrative, and then you and I must shake hands, and for the present separate" (II, Ch. 37). If I separate myself from that romantic reader of the first chapter, do I also separate myself from the hand-shaking reader of the final chapter? But if I do not separate myself from all the readers at whom so much contempt has been leveled, how can I be expected to simply forgive and forget—as the narrator appears to be doing—and part with a friendly handshake? The handshake, however, does not end our relationship with the narrator, for the scorn continues after it is given. The narrator calls her characters forward, and the first to appear is Malone, one of the curates:
No, Peter Augustus, we can have nothing to say to you: it won't do. Impossible to trust ourselves with the touching tale of your deeds and destinies. Are you not aware, Peter, that a discriminating public has its crochets: that the unvarnished truth does not answer; that plain facts will not digest? Do you not know that the squeak of the real pig is no more relished now than it was in days of yore? Were I to give the catastrophe of your life and conversation, the public would sweep off in shrieking hysterics, and there would be a wild cry for sal-volatile and burnt feathers. "Impossible!" would be pronounced here: "untrue!" would be responded there. "Inartistic!" would be solemnly decided. Note well! Whenever you present the actual, simple truth, it is, somehow, always denounced as a lie: they disown it, cast it off, throw it on the parish; whereas the product of your own imagination, the mere figment, the sheer fiction, is adopted, petted, termed pretty, proper, sweetly natural: the little spurious wretch gets all the comfits,—the honest, lawful bantling, all the cuffs. (II, Ch. 37)

Distancing ourselves here is difficult, I think— it is "the public" that is guilty. But what is all this emotion and bitterness about; why carry on like this? Robert Martin comments on the passage that "curiously, though not uncharacteristically, [Miss Brontë] is equating fiction with the prosaic, truth with the unbelievable."25 In truth, it does seem as though Charlotte Brontë as implied author has

25 The Accents of Persuasion, p. 112.
stepped in and delivered an harangue for which there is no basis in the novel itself. Even this, however, is not the end of the behavior which I find so frustrating, even infuriating. The narrator finally concludes with

perhaps I ought to remark that on the premature and sudden vanishing of Mr. Malone from the stage of Briarfield parish (you cannot know how it happened, reader; your curiosity must be robbed to pay your elegant love of the pretty and pleasing), there came as his successor another Irish curate, Mr. Macarthey. I am happy to be able to inform you, with truth, that this gentleman did as much credit to his country as Malone had done it discredit: he proved himself as decent, decorous, and conscientious, as Peter was rampant, boisterous, and—(this last epithet I choose to suppress, because it would let the cat out of the bag). (II, Ch. 37)

Why the emphasized "with truth"? It is clear that something is going on here that the novel itself does not explain and that requires information that we as readers are not privy to. Or is it clear? W. A. Craik says of the passage I have just quoted that "she continues the method and continues to hold her reader until the last delightful dismissal of Malone. . . . In such dealing with the reader she never fails, and the high spirits and gusto continue to effervesce from time to time throughout the novel."26

26 The Brontë Novels, p. 126.
I cannot help thinking that this interpretation is perverse and that, in fact, the narrator of *Shirley* almost always fails when she is dealing with the reader.

And yet, presumably, Craik and I have read the same novel, and I should confront that fact and try to account for our differences. I am not sure I can. I know that Malone's dismissal I quoted above leaves me cold, offends, in fact, both my sense of good taste and my sense of art, in that I believe that *Shirley* is meant to be a serious novel with serious themes. I know that I respond powerfully to Jane Eyre and less powerfully to Lucy Snowe, though I can perceive how a different approach might have caused me to respond just as powerfully to Lucy, and perhaps to have been left a good deal more disturbed by her story. Charlotte Brontë created both these characters, and surely (as implied author anyway) she was a most complex and interesting woman, but she has done nothing to cause me to abandon my critical faculties and fawn over whatever she chooses to write on the page. I try to imagine the reader—real or implied—who would thrill to that parenthetical "you cannot know how it happened" or to the withholding of whatever licentious slip the Rev. Peter Malone may have stumbled
Into. I cannot. Nor can I imaginatively ally myself with W. A. Craik, the critical implied author; when she finds such passages "delightful." My implied-author self is too far removed from hers, so, it seems to me, all I can do is leave it to my own implied reader to draw his own conclusions about the matter.

In Charlotte Brontë's approach to novel-writing, the third-person narrator would appear, then, to be a mistake. Implicit and explicit attitudes towards readers that I perceive as being somewhat softened and diffused in her first-person novels by our closeness to the narrator appear all the more glaring and painful in Shirley. The existence of similar techniques and attitudes throughout all four of her novels would seem to indicate, however, that the failure lies with the implied author. As implied authors, both Thackeray and Trollope used narrative address, attacks on various classes of readers, and their awareness of themselves as novelists working in a form dominated (quantitatively) by trash and without the status of other art forms in order to accomplish certain effects and to create certain kinds of implied readers. Charlotte Brontë had stories to tell—in many respects I think Shirley is a strong and interesting novel—but either her intuitive feeling about implied-reader
creation or her understanding of what other novelists were doing in creating relationships between narrators and readers seems to have been defective, which led her to disastrous practices of her own. It seems to me that Charlotte Bronte the implied author (unlike Thackeray in *Vanity Fair* or Trollope in the Barset novels) would have produced much stronger work if she had ignored any explicit knowledge of the reader completely, or if she had employed her attitudes toward the reading public in some systematic, patterned way to influence that public, such as changing their attitudes about or relations with life or novels. She did what she did, however, and it seems clear to me that her work suffers as a result.  

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27 A partial explanation—though not a justification—for the trouble Charlotte Bronte got herself into in her later published novels can be discerned in her early Juvenilia, especially the prose works of the Angrian cycle. These stories are narrated by Lord Charles Albert Florian Wellesley, younger brother of Zamorna, the King of Angria, toward whom Lord Charles feels a bitter animosity. As one reads the stories chronologically, he sees that the Angrian narrator makes increasing use of direct "reader" addresses and references. What is important, however, is that Charlotte Bronte as implied author of the Angrian stories had an exact knowledge of whom her readers were: her sisters and her brother. This special and peculiar relationship of author and readers, which lasted in Charlotte Bronte's case for a number of years, surely provides some clues to the nature of the problems I have explored in this chapter. Yet, as
I indicated, I do not think that our understanding of how these problems may have developed naturally excuses or justifies their appearance in the published novels, though it might help us understand something of how Charlotte Brontë's mind worked and tell us more about her as a novelist. In respect to this study, at least, I must still judge Charlotte Brontë as implied author rather harshly.
Many other critics—including distinguished ones—have analyzed George Eliot's novels in detail and have discussed aspects of the general area within which I am working. They have vigorously disagreed among themselves about the nature and value of her narrative commentary and about the response it calls for from the reader. It has seemed to me that we can view George Eliot's narrative voice, more so than that of any other of our novelists, as progression; that, after some false starts at the beginning—and including a sort of lull after The Mill on the Floss—the course of the novels in this respect is one of sophisticated refinement leading to Middlemarch; and that her concerns and techniques remain essentially unchanged throughout her career. George Eliot's narrative stance (the narrator's relation to the story), again more so than that of any of the other novelists, reveals the clearly perceived and defined purpose of the overview, the tying together and
connectedness of lives and events. Her career shows a clear continuous effort to merge the implied author with the narrator and the implied audience with the fictive audience. These are the major points I will be developing in the course of the next two chapters.

The contemporary reception of George Eliot's novels is rather curious in two respects, the first of which is the nearly unanimous objection to the narrative commentary. The criticism began with Adam Bede, her first real novel, but climaxed with Middlemarch. About Adam Bede one reviewer wrote that "there is also some fault to be found with the manner in which the author intrudes himself in the book. . . . He makes a great deal too much of a very slight novelty of opinion at which he has himself arrived, and he puts the merit of holding this opinion on much too grand a footing."¹ This early in her career, however, George Eliot's reputation was minimal, and such criticism is perhaps not especially significant. Middlemarch, though, is Eliot's universally recognized masterpiece, and one might have expected the critics to have become more sympathetic

¹Saturday Review, 7 (1859), 251.
to—or at least thoughtful about—her chosen manner of writing. Such is not the case, and the attacks even seem to intensify.

R. H. Hutton, who extensively reviewed each book of Middlemarch as it appeared, and who greatly admired the novel, led the attack. In his review of Book III, he wrote that "indeed, perhaps, the greatest improvement of which it is susceptible . . . would be something more of reserve in the display of the authoress's excessive, almost morbid, intellectual ability. As it is, she crowds her books as full of eyes as some of the lower insects are said to be; she dissects her own characters till she spoils the charm of some of them, and makes the humour of others of her conceptions too evident by subtle comment and elaborate analysis."²

Albert Venn Dicey (a Professor of English Law at Oxford, 1882-1909) introduced the dramatic analogy in his review: "a main feature—in short, perhaps the main feature—of Middlemarch is the prominence given to what, borrowing a term from Greek tragedy, may be called the 'chorus' . . . [which is] never long absent. . . . But a critic . . . can hardly

deny that the part taken by George Eliot as the moralizer over her own handiwork, if it gives her novel a peculiar charm, also greatly damages its whole effect." 3 The same thought is picked up by Monckton Milnes: "Strictly speaking, the writer should be as little seen in person in a novel as he would be in a modern drama, where he only gives the stage directions; but here the Chorus is too continually present, calling us away from the excitement and anxiety of the piece to the consideration of the eternal moralities and humourous contrasts of life." 4 Interestingly, Milnes appears to make a clear distinction between the "excitement and anxiety" and the "eternal moralities," and to come down hard for the former. Finally, Dicey again, in a later review of Daniel Deronda, writes that "the predominance of what may be fairly termed the chorus is the main characteristic by which George Eliot's earlier and later works are distinguished from one another. . . . What we note is not the moral aim of the works but the mode in which the moral instruction they contain is now enforced. In George Eliot's earlier works the chorus kept in the background, the tale told its


4 Edinburgh Review, 137 (1873), 262-3.
own moral. In *Middlemarch*, and still more in *Daniel Deronda*, the chorus becomes obtrusive." I find this last observation strange indeed in light of my study of the individual novels.

The second curious aspect of contemporary George Eliot criticism is the frequency with which she is compared with Thackeray, with whom she would appear to have little in common, either as regards his techniques or his sometimes muddled philosophy of fiction. In a number of cases, the comparison seems so labored that one wonders if it is founded on anything more than the critic's perception that both authors talk a lot, as in this early savage review of *The Mill on the Floss*:

> Her interjctional remarks are seldom very wise or very pertinent. In nine cases out of ten they only interrupt the story, without offering a fair sop to the reader's impatience. Utterly lacking the tender illustrative beauty of like halting-places in *The Newcomes* and *Vanity Fair*, they often jar upon our feelings with signs of imperfect knowledge hidden beneath a great show of philosophic sarcasm and a sound of idle complaining. With the peevish fretfulness of a camel in the act of loading, our authoress keeps groan-

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To be fair, we can note that the critic does see a point of contrast between the two authors; but he is so wrong-headed, so far from reality in relation to either, that one can only shake one's head and wonder what he did think he was getting in *Vanity Fair*.

The comparisons with Thackeray continued. In one of the few reviews favorable to the narrative commentary, H. H. Lancaster remarks that "she acts herself the part of chorus, showing us how and why things go wrong, and improving the occasion generally, all in a style somewhat more explicit than that of the chorus of old time. In the hands of most writers this would become tedious; it is not so in her hands. On the contrary, as is the case with Thackeray, though these comments may detract from the animation of the story, they give breadth and power to the whole work." It was left to R. H. Hutton, one of the more perceptive and fair of Victorian critics, to employ the comparison meaningfully. In his review of Book I of *Middlemarch*, he

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writes of

our only complaint of the volume,—the number of rather acrid and . . . disagreeable and not unfrequently heavy sarcasms which the author introduces, after Thackeray's manner, into her own running comments. Thackeray was a satirist, and it was quite of a piece with his whole style, as a man of the world, to interpose these little sarcasms from time to time, though even he overdid it; but George Eliot's style as a painter of human character and life is a much larger and more sympathetic one than Thackeray's, and it suits that style far better to let human feelings and weaknesses speak for themselves, without a constant run of jarring little laughs at them. . . . To us one of George Eliot's great charms consists in her large friendly way of letting the light full on human weakness; and these mannered sarcasms—which have always haunted her books—seem altogether out of keeping with that way, seem like broken lancet-points in a living body. Something of the cruelty of vivisection is natural in Thackeray's style, and very unnatural in George Eliot's. 8

Later, in his review of Book III, Hutton adds that "it is Thackeray who has set the example which George Eliot so


it perhaps occurs to my own reader to ask at this point whether, if an intelligent reader like Hutton could say such things, Charlotte Brontë, for instance, was not justified in her sarcasm towards her "dear reader." There is some sense in this question, and no doubt most of us are rather doltish most of the time, which fact one could advance as a major reason for the existence of every novel in this study. The problem with Charlotte Brontë remains that she attempts to create a less doltish implied reader simultaneously with the outbursts of sarcasm, which tends to be self-defeating.
freely follows of playing unfeeling critic to his own creations, but Thackeray is at least pretty impartial, and criticizes his 'puppets' all round with even satiric indifference. George Eliot has favourites and aversions, and deals very hardly by the latter."9 I do not believe that either author really plays the unfeeling critic, but Hutton alone does use the Thackeray-George Eliot comparison to make some significant points about both authors, points I will be considering in the following discussion.

If the contemporary criticism of George Eliot's narrative methods was not particularly insightful, modern criticism has certainly not resolved the major issue. Strong objections to the commentary have still appeared, of which one of the more obtuse comes from Walter Allen:
"Compared with Fielding's and Thackeray's, the authorial comment in which her stories are embodied is intrusive, indeed obtrusive. . . . She lacks tact, as she lacks wit, except a ponderous irony. She gives the impression, in fact, of not quite knowing whom she is addressing."10 For

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the most part, however, modern critics do not attack the narrative commentary as such; they only disagree about its specific functions and its degree of success. Representing one pole is a distinguished and prolific Eliot critic, W. J. Harvey:

the intrinsic quality of these comments is of the greatest importance. If they repel the reader or provoke his dissent they will fail in their purpose and the reader will be diverted from his proper task of contemplation and understanding into debating the pros and cons of the opinion expressed. This would be fatal to George Eliot's purpose, for these comments are a means to an end; they are one of the bridges between our world and the world of the novel. They are not ends in themselves, not the proper objects of our contemplation. And we are meant to pass easily and quickly over these comments, these bridges; if we halt to discuss the rights and wrongs of a particular comment we shall find that it has turned into a cul-de-sac, leading us nowhere, or worse, into a path leading us away from the novel into an area of intellectual discourse remote from the body of particular life in the novel.\textsuperscript{11}

Representing the other pole is Isabel Armstrong, who writes that "I should like to reverse W. J. Harvey's description and say that the authorial comment creates bridges not between our world and the world of the novel but between the world of the novel and our world, for, ... . George Eliot's procedure depends upon the constant corroboration

and assent of the reader to her sayings. In other words, the status of moral comment inside her novels is the same as any moral comment outside any novel. It demands inspection."\textsuperscript{12}

There is, however, a fundamental agreement among most critics regarding the overall general or philosophic thrust of George Eliot's narrative commentary. As Bernard J. Paris puts it, "in \textit{Daniel Deronda}—and, in varying ways, in most of her novels—George Eliot makes signal use of the point of view of the omniscient narrator to impress upon the reader the fact of the connectedness of things and the need to envision the hidden relations of visible phenomena."\textsuperscript{13} W. J. Harvey puts it a slightly different way: "Generally speaking, we may say that the great majority of these moral comments share roughly the same characteristics and function. They are generalizing, expansive and concerned to involve the reader in a particular way. As such, they are essential to George Eliot's purpose,  


\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Experiments in Life: George Eliot's Quest for Values} (Detroit, 1965), p. 40.
both moral and aesthetic."\textsuperscript{14} Yet the exact relationships created between the narrator ("George Eliot," as she is continually labeled) and her readers remains a matter of debate. Isabel Armstrong perceives one sort of relationship:

> the success of George Eliot's sayings is more than a matter of tone, more than a matter of giving the impression of having pondered and of being able to manipulate the reader. Her success depends, I think, upon her capacity to move beyond the moral universe of the novel, turn outwards towards the reader and to invoke a general body of moral and psychological knowledge or, rather, experience, which can be the corporate possession of both writer and reader; this shared experience is continually being brought to bear on the novel. She constantly asks for an assent, a corroboration from the reader, before she proceeds.\textsuperscript{15}

Karl Kroeber, on the other hand, perceives a quite different sort:

> the frequency and importance of George Eliot's authorial comments testify to how remote she feels her narratives to be from the ready comprehension and sympathy of her audience. Eliot has been accused of being didactic, but the accusers have not always remembered that a teacher-pupil relation is likely to be a remote one. . . . Eliot assumes again and again that her reader will misunderstand or misjudge her characters and their actions, and she introduces commentary to

\textsuperscript{14} The Art of George Eliot, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{15} "Middlemarch": A Note on George Eliot's 'Wisdom,'" pp. 120-21.
explain them. . . . These explanations arise from Eliot's conviction that she presents the reader with something that is unfamiliar, literally foreign, to his experience . . . or, more important, disguised by habits of thought and feeling in contemporary society.\textsuperscript{16}

There are disagreements here too deep ever to be satisfactorily resolved, and yet I feel that much of the disagreement—and confusion—is a result of that failure we have seen so often to distinguish among historical person, narrator, and implied author and among real, fictive, and implied readers. Perhaps, as I move now to look at George Eliot's novels themselves, some of the disagreement and confusion can be disposed of. I do think that by following George Eliot's novels chronologically we will discover that more than any of our other authors she learned—both from herself and, possibly, from them—and that as a result the implied-author control and the relationships created among novel, narrator, implied author and implied and fictive readers are constantly tightened to produce work unmatched in certain respects by any of the other Victorian novelists.

Scenes of Clerical Life, George Eliot's first fictional work, is not, of course, a novel, but a collection of three long short stories or novelettes: "Amos Barton," "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," and "Janet's Repentance." Scenes as a whole introduces Eliot's continuing habit of setting her stories just beyond the immediate past and of treating them in a semi-historical manner. The work also introduces most of the concerns and methods which were to characterize all of George Eliot's fiction, but it is clearly an exploratory first attempt; thus it suffers weaknesses and excesses that are eliminated in later works, and it also displays more overtly than other works the influence of other writers of fiction on Eliot, as well as her reaction against them.

One of the devices which George Eliot soon outgrew but which she obviously felt the necessity for in this first work is the attempt to create a contextual reality for the narrative voice—a masculine reality. Of course she was writing under a masculine pseudonym, her real identity

17 Boston, 1909, 2 vols.
not yet exposed, but this attempt to give a masculine body to the speaking voice appears to be the device of a writer not yet fully sure of herself or in control of her powers. Barbara Hardy has written that "in Amos Barton, we hear of George Eliot as a little 'boy,' being given bread-and-butter in church by his nurse," but here is the same old problem we have seen so often. It is, of course, the narrator we see as a boy, not George Eliot. In "Janet's Repentance," as part of a longer passage, the narrator remarks that

the genteel youths of Milby were chiefly come home for the midsummer holidays from distant schools. Several of us had just assumed coat-tails, and . . . we were among the candidates for confirmation. I wish I could say that the solemnity of our feelings was on a level with the solemnity of the occasion; but unimaginative boys find it difficult to recognise apostolical institutions in their developed form, and I fear our chief emotion concerning the ceremony was a sense of sheepishness, and our chief opinion, the speculative and heretical position, that it ought to be confined to the girls. It was a pity, you will say; but it is the way with us men in other crises, that come a long while after confirmation. The golden moments in the stream of life rush past us, and we see nothing but sand. (II, Ch. 5)

As a device for fleshing out the story, this emphasizing of the narrator's masculinity serves little purpose, and is

even distracting. Here, it allows Eliot to work up to the final generalization, which is not very impressive; but here, as well as elsewhere, the narrator sounds very much like a stuffed-shirt. George Eliot is obviously feeling her way in these first attempts at fiction, and the fact that she soon dropped the device shows, I think, that she too realized its inadequacy and irrelevance.

Such criticism as "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" shows that George Eliot read and thought about fiction as well as writing it, and she had read a good deal of the leading novelists of her day before she began her own career. Certainly the stories comprising Scenes of Clerical Life show a mishmash of the techniques and approaches we have seen in other novelists, and it seems safe to assume that George Eliot was, consciously or unconsciously, employing these techniques to discover whether or not they suited her. One of the techniques that would certainly have come to her attention is that of the narrator consciously aware of writing novels, and, as we have seen, often attacking them. George Eliot attempts to employ this technique in the Scenes, but both her clumsy and sporadic use of it and the fact that she soon dropped it indicate that she found
it uncongenial. But she does display concerns which continue, even if the method of communicating them changes.

Early in "Amos Barton" the narrator addresses a remark to his entire audience to the effect that "the Rev. Amos Barton, whose sad fortunes I have undertaken to relate, was, you perceive, in no respect an ideal or exceptional character; and perhaps I am doing a bold thing to bespeak your sympathy on behalf of a man who was so very far from remarkable,—a man whose virtues were not heroic." The narrator then proceeds to a device common in other novelists—the creation of a specific, and thoroughly mistaken, fictive reader: "'An utterly uninteresting character!' I think I hear a lady reader exclaim—Mrs. Farthingale, for example, who prefers the ideal in fiction; to whom tragedy means ermine tippets, adultery, and murder; and comedy, the adventures of some personage who is quite a 'character.'" We have seen such attacks on novelistic expectations before in Thackeray and Trollope, but the kind of criticism and ridicule indicated by the creation of Mrs. Farthingale is not really George Eliot's forte. She is more interested in sympathy than in ridicule; hence the narrator immediately drops the heavy irony from his
But, my dear madam, it is so very large a majority of your fellow-countrymen that are of this insignificant stamp. At least eighty out of a hundred of your adult male fellow-Britons returned in the last census are neither extraordinarily silly, nor extraordinarily wicked, nor extraordinarily wise. . . . Yet these commonplace people—many of them—bear a conscience, and have felt the sublime prompting to do the painful right; they have their unspoken sorrows, and their sacred joys. . . . Nay, is there not a pathos in their very insignificance—in our comparison of their dim and narrow existence with the glorious possibilities of that human nature which they share?

Depend upon it, you would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and the pathos, the tragedy and the comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull grey eyes, and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones. . . . As it is, you can, if you please, decline to pursue my story farther; and you will easily find reading more to your taste, since I learn from the newspapers that many remarkable novels, full of striking situations, thrilling incidents, and eloquent writing, have appeared only within the last season. (I, Ch. 5)

The passage begins and ends mockingly, a stance which is contradicted by the tone and sense of the subject discussed. George Eliot is using techniques employed by other artists, but the implied author indicated by the sympathetic passages clashes with the narrator's gibes, as we see again in a similar passage from "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story": "Here
I am aware that I have run the risk of alienating all my refined lady-readers, and utterly annihilating any curiosity they may have felt to know the details of Mr. Gilfil's love story. 'Gin-and-water! foh! you may as well ask us to interest ourselves in the romance of a tallow-chandler, who mingles the image of his beloved with short dips and moulds.' But in the first place, dear ladies, allow me to plead that gin-and-water, like obesity, or baldness, or the gout, does not exclude a vast amount of antecedent romance" (I, Ch. 1). And so on through a sketch of the past's influence on the present.

Both of these examples illustrate the major failure of this first attempt at fiction. George Eliot as implied author is a philosophical writer, and her concerns are to bring us as implied readers into a sympathetic understanding with people and times which is missing from either our real-life or our fictional experience. The tactics used occasionally by Trollope and often by Thackeray become too jarring in this context. We cannot mock a fictive reader and then immediately switch to full sympathy for a character very much like the reader who has been mocked.
On the matter of influences, an even more startling passage occurs at the beginning of "Amos Barton":

Reader! did you ever taste such a cup of tea as Miss Gibbs is at this moment handing to Mr. Pilgrim? Do you know the dulcet strength, the animating blandness of tea sufficiently blended with real farmhouse cream? No—most likely you are a miserable town-bred reader, who think of cream as a thinnish white fluid, delivered in infinitesimal pennyworths down area steps; or perhaps, from a presentiment of calves' brains, you refrain from any lacteal addition, and rasp your tongue with unmitigated bohea. . . . If I am right in my conjecture, you are unacquainted with the highest possibilities of tea; and Mr. Pilgrim, who is holding that cup in his hand, has an idea beyond you. (I, Ch. 1)

Critics have discussed the stilted and pompous diction found in the Scenes ("lacteal addition" and many similar locutions), but as far as I know, no one has pointed out what a quintessentially Brontëan passage this one is.

From the imperative "Reader!" through the increasing contempt for the hapless and hopeless object of the address, this is pure Brontë. I have no evidence that George Eliot was copying Charlotte's stance, but the idea is intriguing. In any case, this technique was employed only once, and like similar techniques traceable to Thackeray and Trollope, it was soon discarded.

By far the most frequent kind of narrative commentary in the Scenes is the short generalization or moral statement
uttered in amplification of the developing action. Many of these are trivial and sentimental clichés: "In the love of a brave and faithful man there is always a strain of maternal tenderness; he gives out again those beams of protecting fondness which were shed on him as he lay on his mother's knee" ("Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," I, Ch. 19). Echoes of Thackeray there. Others are more tough-minded and thought-provoking, and more significant for the process of implied-reader creation: "It is apt to be so in this life, I think. While we are coldly discussing a man's career, sneering at his mistakes, blaming his rashness, and labelling his opinions,—'Evangelical and narrow,' or 'Latitudinarian and Pantheistic,' or 'Anglican and supercilious,'—that man, in his solitude, is perhaps shedding hot tears because his sacrifice is a hard one, because strength and patience are failing him to speak the difficult word, and do the difficult deed" ("Janet's Repentance," II, Ch. 8).

These addresses are obvious attempts to effect the creation of implied readers, but the lack of assurance in the implied author's control of the narrator is indicated, I think, by the use which is made of the fictive audience.
When the direct "reader" address enters, it is used as a kind of crutch, and as George Eliot the implied author gains assurance in her powers, this crutch of direct address is discarded. For instance, early in "Amos Barton" the narrator remarks that "Milly had one weakness--don't love her any the less for it, it was a pretty woman's weakness--she was fond of dress. . . . You and I too, reader, have our weakness, have we not? which makes us think foolish things now and then. Perhaps it may lie in an excessive admiration for small hands and feet, a tall lithe figure, large dark eyes, and dark silken braided hair" (I, Ch. 3). Later in "Amos Barton" we get another aspect of the same problem:

I dare say the long residence of the Countess Czerlaski at Shepperton Vicarage is very puzzling to you also, dear reader. . . . How, then, you will say, could this fine lady choose to quarter herself on the establishment of a poor curate. . . . Surely you must be straining probability. Heaven forbid! For not having a lofty imagination, as you perceive, and being unable to invent thrilling incidents for your amusement, my only merit must lie in the truth with which I represent to you the humble experience of ordinary fellow-mortals. I wish to stir your sympathy with commonplace troubles--to win your tears for real sorrow: sorrow such as may live next door to you--such as walks neither in rags nor in velvet, but in very ordinary decent apparel. (I, Ch. 7)

The attempt explicitly to bind the (masculine) narrator and
the "reader" together through the itemizing of specific "weaknesses" and the identifying of a supposed reader's objections in order to state explicitly the writer's purpose are the devices of an unskilled and unsure implied author. The implicit and, frequently, very explicit values (which are stated so clearly in the above passage) of the Scenes are the same values that will recur throughout all of George Eliot's novels. In this, unlike Thackeray's implied author, George Eliot's does not change.

Adam Bede, George Eliot's first real novel, shows the artist (the implied author) not yet entirely in control, not yet settled on what sort of relationship she wishes to reflect from herself through the narrator to the novel's readers. Consequently, various passages and comments seem to work at cross-purposes with each other. For the most part, the attempt to give the narrator some sort of historical relationship to the story and to give him/her a sexual identity has been dropped, though not entirely. At one point the narrator mentions "Adam Bede, to whom I talked of these matters in his old age" (Ch. 17), but this is the only time the narrator injects himself into the story. At another point he comments that "I find it impossible not to

expect some depth of soul behind a deep grey eye with a long dark eyelash, in spite of an experience which has shown me that they may go along with deceit, peculation, and stupidity. But if, in the reaction of disgust, I have betaken myself to a fishy eye, there has been a surprising similarity of result. One begins to suspect at length that there is no direct correlation between eyelashes and morals" (Ch. 15). This passage would appear to indicate a masculine personality, though the term "fishy eye" is more usually applied to men, I think, than to women. But again, this is the only remark indicating gender, and it is clear that these are matters that George Eliot increasingly perceives as unimportant or irrelevant.

The major disjunctions of technique occur in the various ways the narrator addresses his readers, and it is here that we see George Eliot searching for and experimenting with the modes that will suit her best. One mode she tried, but clearly found wanting, is a device used much more frequently by other authors. She employs it only once, to introduce the most lengthy, and one of the most important, narrative interjections in the novel:

"This Rector of Broxton is little better than a pagan!" I hear one of my readers exclaim. "How much more edifying it would have been if you had
made him give Arthur some truly spiritual advice. You might have put into his mouth the most beautiful things—quite as good as reading a sermon."

Certainly I could, if I held it the highest vocation of the novelist to represent things as they never have been and never will be. Then, of course, I might refashion life and character entirely after my own liking; I might select the most unexceptionable type of clergyman, and put my own admirable opinions into his mouth on all occasions. But it happens, on the contrary, that my strongest effort is to avoid any such arbitrary picture, and to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. . . .

It is so very rarely that facts fit that nice medium required by our own enlightened opinions and refined taste! Perhaps you will say, "Do improve the facts a little, then; make them more accordant with those correct views which it is our privilege to possess. The world is not just what we like; do touch it up with a tasteful pencil, and make believe it is not quite such a mixed entangled affair. Let all people who hold unexceptionable opinions act unexceptionably. Let your most faulty characters always be on the wrong side, and your virtuous ones on the right. Then we shall see at a glance whom we are to condemn, and whom we are to approve. Then we shall be able to admire, without the slightest disturbance of our prepossessions: we shall hate and despise with that true ruminant relish which belongs to undoubting confidence." (Ch. 17)

The narrator then goes on to talk to this reader for many more paragraphs about the relative value of life and character and the duty of fiction to portray this relativity, the duty of art to show us ugliness as well as ideal beauty.
I have quoted a lengthy extract from the entire passage because W. J. Harvey has examined it and strongly objected to it. He says that "I take it as axiomatic . . . that the omniscient technique only becomes objectionable when the author intrudes directly into her fiction either by way of stage-directions or of moral commentary. . . . Chapter 17 of _Adam Bede_ is probably the extreme instance in George Eliot's work of such intrusion. . . . The content cannot in fact be separated from the mechanics of the convention; the very purpose and manner of the intrusion are part of the ideology." Harvey, of course, makes no distinction between historical author, implied author, and narrator, which I believe to be his first mistake. He also, as far as I can see, equates length with extremity. Chapter 17 is the lengthiest narrative intrusion in Eliot's novels, but I am not sure that it is any more "extreme" than some of the others. Harvey continues:

George Eliot begins the chapter with an arch brightness that betrays her nervousness and uncertainty; she assumes a reaction by the reader about the Reverend Irwine. . . . The infuriating thing about this . . . is that she hears nothing of the sort; the reader is repelled by having his reactions determined for him; he feels himself, and not the character, to be a puppet manipulated by the author. Earlier I defined the omniscient author conven-
tion in terms of the relation of author to novel, but this is clearly insufficient and we have to extend the term to cover also the relationship existing, or assumed to exist, between writer and reader. Seen thus, a successful use of the convention depends upon the author's tact, upon delicacy of tone, and George Eliot is here being tactless; we feel insulted at being identified with such a crass reaction as George Eliot assumes us to have. (I discount the fact that many of George Eliot's contemporary readers may well have had precisely this reaction; I do not think we can allow historical relativism to rescue us in quite this way.)

20

Taken altogether, this is very strange criticism. Granted a certain nervousness and uncertainty in the tone of the passage—George Eliot is, after all, feeling her way—we must recognize, as Harvey seems not to, that the fictive reader, set up for attack and correction, is a well-established technique, which does not, of course, automatically make it good. We have seen it used by other authors, however, for the purpose of creating feelings of superiority in the implied reader, and there are absolutely no grounds at this point for equating "one of my readers" with Harvey's "the reader." There is a certain tactlessness and crudity here in George Eliot's use of the technique.

20 The Art of George Eliot, pp. 69-70.
She was not comfortable with it and she does not use it again. However, the fictive reader in this instance is employed merely to introduce the long passage in which the narrator discusses the theory of fiction which controls not only this novel, but all of George Eliot's novels. She is doing what both Thackeray and Trollope had done before her: educating the implied reader to accept and appreciate a different kind of fiction from what the actual readers were used to. The concerns of the implied author are being established. What the author is having problems with is the manner in which she will communicate these concerns and values, but I can see no reason to be infuriated.

This particular use of the fictive reader is actually only an aberration, something tried but proving unsuccessful. The implied author's confusion is displayed more clearly through her uncertainty about how to address her audience, of which, it is clear, she is constantly aware. Thus, scattered throughout Adam Bede, we find a number of remarks addressed to the "reader" of a type used most extensively by Charlotte Brontë's narrator. On the first page of Adam Bede we are told that "with a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal
to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader" (Ch. 1). Towards the middle of the novel we find, "do not reason about it, my philosophical reader. . . . You will never understand women's natures if you are so excessively rational" (Ch. 22). And near the end she says, "that is a simple scene, reader. But it is almost certain that you, too, have been in love" (Ch. 50). These "reader" addresses, which introduce narrative commentary arising from the action of the novel, tend to be a little too archly clever and patronizing, and they draw attention to themselves rather obviously and painfully. Because of vast differences in the personalities and characters of the narrators and of the differences between first- and third-person narration, the addresses seem more jarring and discordant than they did even in Charlotte Brontë, and we recognize, I think, even as George Eliot herself must have, that they do not fit her style and purpose.

By far the most common mode of address found in Adam Bede is the easy, unstrained "you," and this is obviously the address that George Eliot as implied author felt most comfortable with and could achieve the best effects with.
It certainly is the most effective in establishing the kind of trusting, easy-going relationship between the reader and the narrator—and the implied author standing behind the narrator—that allows for the creation of the most fully realized implied reader. That creation is undercut in *Adam Bede* by the other, unharmonious, techniques I have discussed, but the "you" seems most comfortable for both speaker and reader, and it is much more versatile in terms of the effects it allows. At one point in the novel, the narrator inquires,

> are you inclined to ask whether this can be the same Arthur who, two months ago, had that freshness of feeling, that delicate honour which shrinks from wounding even a sentiment, and does not contemplate any more positive offence as possible for it?—who thought that his own self-respect was a higher tribunal than any external opinion? The same, I assure you, only under different conditions. Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds; and until we know what has been or will be the peculiar combination of outward with inward facts, which constitutes a man's critical actions, it will be better not to think ourselves wise about his character. (Ch. 29)

Without being offensive, the question points us—as implied readers being created—exactly to the matters we should be pondering and the questions we should be asking. If we are engaged in both these processes—with or without her
help—we are exactly those readers the implied author wants to reach. The "you" is general enough to show she is aware of us, yet it is not too distracting. The short explanation that expands on the question's answer is very important—after all, it sums up Arthur's downfall—but it too is not shrill or offensive, though it does demand our thought and our assent.

At another point the narrator speculates that possibly you think that Adam was not at all sagacious in his interpretations, and that it was altogether extremely unbecoming in a sensible man to behave as he did—falling in love with a girl who really had nothing more than her beauty to recommend her, attributing imaginary virtues to her, and even condescending to cleave to her after she had fallen in love with another man, waiting for her kind looks as a patient trembling dog waits for his master's eye to be turned upon him. But in so complex a thing as human nature, we must consider, it is hard to find rules without exceptions. Of course, I know that, as a rule, sensible men fall in love with the most sensible women of their acquaintance, see through all the pretty deceits of coquettish beauty, never imagine themselves loved when they are not loved, cease loving on all proper occasions, and marry the woman most fitted for them in every respect—indeed, so as to compel the approbation of all the maiden ladies in their neighbourhood. (Ch. 33)

The use of "you" is a little sharper than in the previous example, and possibly some overly critical readers might be
upset, but let us consider for a moment. Making snap judgments of an absolute nature is so easy, both in life and fiction, that possibly we, or many of us (the "you" is ambiguous) are thinking such a thought. If so, the narrator reminds us of some truths we should know, and then indulges in some gently ironic satire, which perhaps encompasses Adam, readers, and narrator as well. It should not be particularly offensive.

As a final example in this vein, consider the narrator's use of "you" after she has sketched Hetty's decision to go ahead and marry Adam: "'Strange!' perhaps you will say, 'this rush of impulse towards a course that might have seemed the most repugnant to her present state of mind, and in only the second night of her sadness!' Yes, the actions of a little trivial soul like Hetty's, struggling amidst the serious, sad destinies of a human being, are strange" (Ch. 31). Harvey did not say if he found this passage infuriating, but surely it is just as direct an attribution of thought as that other example was. If we are following the story closely and are carefully considering its implications—if we are, in other words, taking the novel seriously—we are quite likely to remark that this
behavior is strange. If we are not thinking along those lines, we should be. No fictive reader is ridiculed or lectured here, but the implied readers are either encouraged by seeing that their thoughts coincide with the narrator's or they are set right without too much fuss.

The narrator does not stop at the use of "you," which does indicate a separation between the reader and the narrator/author, but moves beyond it to commentary in which she binds herself to her readers through the use of the first-person plural pronoun. The following passage is long, but it fulfills a number of important functions:

You perceive that Arthur Donnithorne was "a good fellow"--all his college friends thought him such. . . . Whether he would have self-mastery enough to be always as harmless and purely beneficent as his good nature led him to desire, was a question that no one had yet decided against him: he was but twenty-one, you remember; and we don't inquire too closely into character in the case of a handsome generous young fellow, who will have property enough to support numerous peccadilloes--who, if he should unfortunately break a man's legs in his rash driving, will be able to pension him handsomely; or if he should happen to spoil a woman's existence for her, will make it up to her with expensive bon-bons, packed up and directed by his own hand. It would be ridiculous to be prying and analytic in such cases, as if one were inquiring into the character of a confidential clerk. We use round, general, gentlemanly epithets about a young man of birth and fortune. . . . The chances are that he will
go through life without scandalising any one; a sea-worthy vessel that no one would refuse to insure. Ships, certainly, are liable to casualties, which sometimes make terribly evident some flaw in their construction, that would never have been discoverable in smooth water; and many a "good fellow," through a disastrous combination of circumstances, has undergone a like betrayal. (Ch. 12)

The passage serves to foreshadow Arthur's fate, of course, but just as important is its satire of the way we judge people on the basis of material prospects and outward appearance, rather than on the basis of those not-so-hidden character defects and soft spots that we could discover if we cared to. The satire is meant to be discomfitting, which it is, the more so because the narrator includes herself in the general condemnation. "We" are the ones who judge so superficially, and I believe that it is the inclusiveness of that "we" that makes the satire effective, as it does in other similar passages, such as the following conclusion to a long comment. Here the narrator even includes herself among the readers of bad novels: "Considering these things, we can hardly think Dinah and Seth beneath our sympathy, accustomed as we may be to weep over the loftier sorrows of heroines in satin boots and crinoline,
and of heroes riding fiery horses, themselves ridden by still more fiery passions" (Ch. 3).

In both *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* we have seen George Eliot feeling her way not so much in terms of the implied author's values, which are constant, as of the way in which those values are to be presented through narrative commentary. A number of techniques—techniques which, it is tempting to think, she observed in the works of the other authors this study has covered—are used and discarded, either in these first works or in later ones. What George Eliot seems to find most congenial is a speaking voice undistinguished as to sex or to physical relationship with the story, one which would prefer to address the reading audience in no stronger or more specific terms than the gentle, somewhat ambiguous "you" and which would also like to identify or fuse itself with that audience as much as possible. What she is working towards, in fact, is a narrative voice virtually indistinguishable from that of the implied author, George Eliot's "second self." Let us remember, however, that it is a second self, and not make the mistake of Barbara Hardy, who quotes this passage from near the end of *Adam Bede*: "For Adam, though you see him
quite master of himself, working hard and delighting in his work after his inborn inalienable nature, had not out-lived his sorrow—had not felt it slip from him as a temporary burthen, and leave him the same man again. Do any of us? God forbid" (Ch. 50). Hardy comments that "the fictitious mask is no longer necessary. This is the voice of George Eliot or Marian Evans at its calmest and most intense, without disguise, exaggeration, or arch humour. From *Adam Bede* onwards this undisguised voice is heard." This voice is not heard undisguised in *Adam Bede* but is, rather, heard mixed with a number of other voices, which detract from its power and effectiveness. And the fact that George Eliot the artist did experiment with several voices in no way leads to the conclusion that the one she found most congenial is purely and simply that of George Eliot or Mary Ann Evans. It is the voice of the narrator, which sounds very much as we would expect the implied author to sound; the implied author, however, is not that female person born Mary Ann Evans.

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21 The Novels of George Eliot, p. 160.
Thackeray was never quite able to achieve again the magnificently integrated success of *Vanity Fair*; Trollope subdued the narrator's role in the later Barset novels; and Charlotte Brontë seemed unable to formulate an effective narrative approach to her reading audience. Each of these authors in some way produced his or her best work early and then lost momentum. George Eliot, however, though she does appear to pause and take stock of herself in the three novels preceding *Middlemarch*, progressed, learning from herself and from others as she went and steadily developing and refining her powers. And it is in *The Mill on the Floss* that we find the first full coming together of those techniques and approaches that were to realize their ultimate potential in *Middlemarch*. Although he touches on matters unconnected with this study, U. C. Knoepflmacher summarizes this point well:

In *The Mill* . . . we have the voice of that Victorian sage who was to speak with far greater assurance in *Middlemarch*. Multiple allusions to Greek, Shakespearian, and Romantic tragedy, to natural science, history, and legend are made by a bookish commentator who even possesses "several manuscript versions" of the history of St. Ogg, the city's patron saint. This nar-
rator differs considerably from the limited observers who had pretended to know Adam Bede and Amos Barton personally. Unlike the earlier works, The Mill never disguises the fact that its author is a sage eager to influence her own age. The same writer who in "Amos Barton" professed to be neither "erudite or eloquent," now openly is personified as a figure who wants us to share his capacity to connect and interrelate.22

I am not particularly concerned with erudition, though it appears for the first time in abundance in The Mill. What I am concerned with is the implied author as sage and the narrator as implied author. George Eliot was to write to John Blackwood in 1873 that

Unless my readers are more moved towards the ends I seek by my works as wholes than by an assemblage of extracts, my writings are a mistake. I have always exercised a severe watch against anything that could be called preaching, and if I have ever allowed myself in dissertation or in dialogue [anything] which is not part of the structure of my books, I have there sinned against my own laws.

I am particularly susceptible on this point, because it touches deeply my conviction of what art should be, and because a great deal of foolish stuff has been written in this relation.

Unless I am condemned by my own principles, my books are not properly separable into "direct" and "indirect" teaching.23


My intention is certainly not to compile an "assemblage of extracts" or to make it appear that the kind of separation George Eliot mentions here is a necessity or even a possibility. I will, however, be dealing with a specific aspect of her art, my intention being to support her perception of that art's integrated nature and to show that *The Mill on the Floss* is where George Eliot's art began to come together.

*The Mill on the Floss* opens quite casually and informally, but two important devices are used to set the tone for the rest of the novel. The first of these is the use of the past; the second is the I-you-we/us complex of relationships that is established throughout. The narrator, sitting in her chair and thinking about the river Floss, Dorlcote Mill, and the Tullivers, comes to with a start: "Ah, my arms are really benumbed. I have been pressing my elbows on the arms of my chair, and dreaming that I was

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25 Since, after this point, George Eliot's narrator becomes a relatively sexless, disembodied voice, the choice of pronouns presents a difficulty. As I have indicated, I believe that this narrator is a reflection of the implied author, who could, of course, represent the masculine (or "George Eliot") side of Marian Evans. I see no solid evidence for this, however, and will henceforth refer to the narrator as "she."
standing on the bridge in front of Dorlcote Mill, as it looked one February afternoon many years ago. Before I dozed off, I was going to tell you what Mr and Mrs Tulliver were talking about, as they sat by the bright fire in the left-hand parlour, on that very afternoon I have been dreaming of" (Book I, Ch. 1). The narrator makes clear right from the beginning that she is telling a story about the past (but not what we commonly mean by "historical novel"), and thereafter throughout the story she interjects short comments whose purpose is to remind us. She remarks that "Mr Tulliver was speaking to his wife, a blond comely woman in a fan-shaped cap (I am afraid to think how long it is since fan-shaped caps were worn— they must be so near coming in again. At that time, when Mrs Tulliver was nearly forty, they were new at St. Ogg's, and considered sweet things)" (Book I, Ch. 2). Later she notes that "Mrs Pullet brushed each door post with great nicety, about the latitude of her shoulders (at that period a woman was truly ridiculous to an instructed eye if she did not measure a yard and a half across the shoulders)" (Book I, Ch. 7). In a final instance she remarks that "everywhere the brick houses have a mellow
look, and in Mrs Glegg's day there was no incongruous new-fangled smartness, no plate-glass in shop windows, no fresh stucco-facing or other fallacious attempt to make fine old red St. Ogg's wear the air of a town that sprang up yesterday. . . . Ah! even Mrs Glegg's day seems far back in the past now, separated from us by changes that widen the years" (Book I, Ch. 12). George Eliot does, of course, use the past constantly to teach the lesson that human nature and humanity's problems change little through the years (and also, as my first example indicates, that social fashions are often cyclical), but my concern shortly will be the way in which, once she has established a certain bond with her readers, the narrator employs the past to satirize the present.

Probably the most significant aspect of that easy, unselfconscious beginning is the manner in which the narrator introduces "I" and "you," so gently that it seems to me that only a determinedly unsympathetic critic would note irascibly that the novel is "as full of eyes as an insect." It is, of course, and the narrator does not spare us them. In numerous remarks like the following, the narrator comes through as a strong-minded and forceful personality not
afraid to deliver her thoughts and opinions directly, though with both seriousness and humor:

Mrs Tulliver was what is called a good-tempered person—never cried, when she was a baby, on any slighter ground than hunger and pins; and from the cradle upwards had been healthy, fair, plump, and dull-witted; in short, the flower of her family for beauty and amiability. But milk and mildness are not the best things for keeping, and when they turn only a little sour, they may disagree with young stomachs seriously. I have often wondered whether those early Madonnas of Raphael, with the blond faces and somewhat stupid expression, kept their placidity undisturbed when their strong-limbed, strong-willed boys got a little too old to do without clothing. I think they must have been given to feeble remonstrance, getting more and more peevish as it became more and more ineffectual. (Book I, Ch. 2)

At the same time that she is so very aware of herself as a speaking personality, however, the narrator is also just as aware of her reader: not the fictive idiot experimented with in Adam Bede, not even the reader as "reader," but the neutral and undifferentiating "you" settled on by the implied author to allow her to speak the most personally and yet the least offensively to all of her audience with the intelligence to follow her. The two things we always know is that she is aware of us and that she is not shy about speaking to us, whatever tone she chooses. She may
point out the obvious to us, and often does so: "It is
evident to you now, that Maggie had arrived at a moment in
her life which must be considered by all prudent persons
as a great opportunity for a young woman" (Book VI, Ch. 6).
She may even plead with us, as part of her attempt to
educate us away from absolute and harsh judgments, as when
she says, "you will not, I hope, consider it an indication
of vanity predominating over more tender impulses, that she
just glanced in the chimney-glass as her walk brought her
near it" (Book VI, Ch. 1), or when she requests, "do not
think too hardly of Philip. Ugly and deformed people have
great need of unusual virtues, because they are likely to
be extremely uncomfortable without them: but the theory
that unusual virtues spring by a direct consequence out of
personal disadvantages, as animals get thicker wool in
severe climates, is perhaps a little overstrained" (Book V,
Ch. 3). She has no fear of directly instructing us to the
end of fuller self-knowledge: "Watch your own speech, and
notice how it is guided by your less conscious purposes,
and you will understand that contradiction in Stephen"
(Book VI, Ch. 13). Nor, finally, is she afraid to mock us,
if the shoe fits: "If you think a lad of thirteen would
not have been so childish, you must be an exceptionally
wise man, who, although you are devoted to a civil calling,
requiring you to look bland rather than formidable, yet
never, since you had a beard, threw yourself into a martial
attitude, and frowned before the looking-glass. It is
doubtful whether our soldiers would be maintained if there
were not pacific people at home who like to fancy themselves
soldiers. War, like other dramatic spectacles, might
possibly cease for want of a public" (Book II, Ch. 4).
The narrator is fully aware of the "I," and she is fully
aware of the "you." If this were all, she might have
trouble. Fortunately, however, she is also fully aware of
the "we."

By including herself in the troubles and weaknesses
of general humanity, the narrator forges the final link in
the chain that binds all of us together--herself, her
characters, and her readers--and that makes us willing to
accept the speaking voice even when it is satirizing or
lecturing us, an acceptance which must take place if
we are to be transformed from potential to actual implied
readers. We must accept her, and because she is such a
strong personality, so aware of herself and of us, so willing
to talk directly to us, the common bond is necessary for that acceptance. At one point she includes everyone—herself, characters, and readers—in the general propensity to judge harshly and irrationally: "They had always thought her disagreeable; they now thought her artful and proud; having quite as good grounds for that judgment as you and I probably have for many strong opinions of the same kind" (Book VII, Ch. 4). At another point she explicitly includes everyone again in that fact of the human condition which more or less lies at the heart of all the George Eliot novels: "Tom, like every one of us, was imprisoned within the limits of his own nature, and his education had simply glided over him, leaving a slight deposit of polish: if you are inclined to be severe on his severity, remember that the responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision" (Book VII, Ch. 3). Very early in the novel she employs an emphatic "we" to include all of us under the terrible constraints imposed by society: "We learn to restrain ourselves as we get older. We keep apart when we have quarrelled, express ourselves in well-bred phrases, and in this way preserve a dignified alienation, showing much firmness on one side and swallowing
much grief on the other. We no longer approximate in our
behaviour to the mere impulsiveness of the lower animals,
but conduct ourselves in every respect like members of a
highly civilised society" (Book I, Ch. 5). And, finally,
in what I think is an extremely effective passage, she
includes herself and all of us once again in a common
experiential process, one that involves first the receiving,
then the giving, of fatuous advice and pain:

Very trivial, perhaps, this anguish seems to
weather-worn mortals who have to think of
Christmas bills, dead loves, and broken friend­
ships; but it was not less bitter to Maggie—
perhaps it was even more bitter—than what we
are fond of calling antithetically the real
troubles of mature life. "Ah, my child, you
will have real troubles to fret about by-and­
by," is the consolation we have almost all of
us had administered to us in our childhood, and
have repeated to other children since we have
been grown up. We have all of us sobbed so
piteously, standing with tiny bare legs above
our little socks, when we lost sight of our
mother or nurse in some strange place; but we
can no longer recall the poignancy of that
moment and weep over it, as we do over the
remembered sufferings of five or ten years ago.
Every one of those keen moments has left its
trace, and lives in us still, but such traces
have blent themselves irrecoverably with the
firmer texture of our youth and manhood; and so
it comes that we can look on at the troubles
of our children with a smiling disbelief in the
reality of their pain. . . . Surely if we could
recall that early bitterness, and the dim
guesses, the strangely perspectiveless conception of life that gave the bitterness its intensity, we should not pooh-pooh the griefs of our children. (Book I, Ch. 7)

It is through the common bond of "we" and "us" that the potential implied reader is brought openly into the novel and given the opportunity to become the created, fully realized implied reader that the implied author has in mind.

As the narrator is establishing both a sense of the past in her readers and a bond with them through a strong awareness of herself, of them, and of herself and the readers together, the narrator often uses the past to satirize the present. This satire must be designed to keep the reader from becoming complacent about himself personally or his times in general, knowing as he does that the novel is set in the past, but I am not sure that the technique is entirely successful, since the narrator primarily relies on a rather heavy sarcasm. This sarcasm is not aimed at any particular readers, either fictive or real, nor at any specific social abuses (as in Dickens' novels). Rather, the narrator periodically makes short statements which deflate the reader's possible sense that times have
gotten better or that "progress" has taken place. Early in the novel she remarks that "I know it is difficult for people in these instructed times to believe in Uncle Pullet's ignorance; but let them reflect on the remarkable results of a great natural faculty under favouring circumstances. And Uncle Pullet had a great natural faculty for ignorance" (Book I, Ch. 7).26 Shortly thereafter the sarcasm becomes somewhat heavier when she says that "Maggie Tulliver, you perceive, was by no means that well-trained, well-informed young person that a small female of eight or nine necessarily is in these days" (Book I, Ch. 11). At a still later point she notes that "all this, you remember, happened in those dark ages when there were no schools of design--before schoolmasters were invariably men of scrupulous integrity, and before the clergy were all men of enlarged minds and varied culture" (Book II, Ch. 4). The closest the narrator comes to aiming her sarcasm at any specific readers or their habits of thought or practice is when she remarks that

26Note how in this instance the narrator has cleverly separated all the readers of the novel from the non-readers by employing the pronoun "them" instead of "you" or "us." This ploy surely strengthens the implied reader's bond with her.
these narrow notions about debt, held by the old-fashioned Tullivers, may perhaps excite a smile on the faces of many readers in these days of wide commercial views and wide philosophy, according to which everything rights itself without any trouble of ours: the fact that my tradesman is out of pocket by me, is to be looked at through the serene certainty that somebody else's tradesman is in pocket by somebody else; and since there must be bad debts in the world, why, it is mere egoism not to like that we in particular should make them instead of our fellow-citizens. I am telling the history of very simple people, who had never had any illuminating doubts as to personal integrity and honour. (Book IV, Ch. 2)

I think these sarcasms are a little too obvious and clumsily handled to work well in The Mill, but they are worth noting because the technique is used widely and with a good deal more skill in Middlemarch.

The real achievement of The Mill on the Floss is the narrator's ability to speak directly and seriously to us, sometimes at great length, without offending us to any fatal extent. I think that this relationship, markedly different from the kinds of addresses we have seen in the other authors we have looked at, succeeds because we perceive clearly that the speaking voice is that of the novel's controlling intelligence, i.e., the implied author, which is certainly what George Eliot meant when she wrote that
the direct and indirect teaching could not be separated in her novels. The two are of a piece, and the story deals with such fine distinctions of character and behavior that the commentary is necessary for our full comprehension and sympathy. As an example of the kind of commentary I am referring to, we should look at the following gloss on the action:

The pride and obstinacy of millers, and other insignificant people, whom you pass unnoticingly on the road every day, have their tragedy too; but it is of that unwept, hidden sort, that goes on from generation to generation, and leaves no record—such tragedy, perhaps, as lies in the conflicts of young souls, hungry for joy, under a lot made suddenly hard to them, under the dreariness of a home where the morning brings no promise with it, and where the unexpectant discontent of worn and disappointed parents weighs on the children like a damp, thick air, in which all the functions of life are depressed; or such tragedy as lies in the slow or sudden death that follows on a bruised passion, though it may be a death that finds only a parish funeral. (Book III, Ch. 1)

George Eliot knew what she was dealing with, and her perceptions are as valid today as they were a hundred years ago: readers conditioned by bad novels (perhaps today we would have to substitute movies or television) and bad habits of thought to such an extent that they lacked adequate abilities to judge behavior or to empathize with their fellow human beings. One of the problems with the Lubbockian
aesthetic is that it tends, with the dramatic analogy, in
the direction of literature as spectacle, but once George
Eliot came to accept fiction, rejecting her youthful
prejudice against it, she regarded it with the utmost serious­
ness, and it is clear that she felt that she could not create
her implied readers through the workings of characters and
actions only. That calm, intelligent, and loving speaking
voice seems more a necessity to her than to any of the
other authors studied here. She was not, however, an imme­
diately successful novelist. In fact, her first works fall
far short of the standard set by the first novels of
Thackeray, Trollope, and Charlotte Brontë. She learned as
she went, and I believe that The Mill on the Floss is the
first novel in which she began to perceive clearly what was
the best method for her and what she could achieve with it.
At the same time, however, The Mill is flawed to some extent,
mainly through the length of some of the commenting pas­
sages. She achieved a much greater economy in Middlemarch,
but she did so partly because her novels are cumulative in
their effect. I think that Middlemarch gains in impact if
one first reads The Mill, and that this is so because the
implied author/narrator delivers statements—lengthy ones—
in *The Mill* that bear directly on George Eliot's greatest novel.

I am referring specifically to one very long passage which occurs near the end of *The Mill*, a passage which immeasurably enriches all of George Eliot's fiction and which is necessary for a full appreciation of it. It is, in short, an attempt to wrench the implied reader around to a whole new way of perceiving both life and novels. The narrator begins by speaking of Rhine castles, and then proceeds to give her feelings about "these dead-tinted, hollow-eyed, angular skeletons of villages on the Rhone [which] oppress me with the feeling that human life—very much of it—is a narrow, ugly, grovelling existence, which even calamity does not elevate, but rather tends to exhibit in all its bare vulgarity of conception; and I have a cruel conviction that the lives these ruins are the traces of, were part of a gross sum of obscure vitality, that will be swept into the same oblivion with the generations of ants and beavers."

Then, with a great deal more skill and tact than she showed in the first novels, she proceeds to tell the reader in great detail exactly what his thoughts and feelings probably are about the story she has been relating. Lubbock would
surely object, but how many of us, no matter how skilled as readers, would have the time or patience to set down our own reactions as precisely as the narrator does for us:

Perhaps something akin to this oppressive feeling may have weighed upon you in watching this old-fashioned family life on the Banks of the Floss, which even sorrow hardly suffices to lift above the level of the tragi-comic. It is a sordid life, you say, this of the Tullivers and Dodsons—irradiated by no sublime principles, no romantic visions, no active, self-renouncing faith—moved by none of those wild, uncontrollable passions which create the dark shadows of misery and crime—without that primitive rough simplicity of wants, that hard submissive ill-paid toil, that childlike spelling-out of what nature has written, which gives it [sic] poetry to peasant life. Here, one has conventional worldly notions and habits without instruction and without polish—surely the most prosaic form of human life: proud respectability in a gig of unfashionable build: worldliness without side-dishes. Observing these people narrowly, even when the iron hand of misfortune has shaken them from their unquestioning hold on the world, one sees little trace of religion, still less of a distinctively Christian creed. Their belief in the Unseen, so far as it manifests itself at all, seems to be rather of a pagan kind; their moral notions, though held with strong tenacity, seem to have no standard beyond hereditary custom. You could not live among such people; you are stifled for want of an outlet towards something beautiful, great, or noble; you are irritated with these dull men and women, as a kind of population out of keeping with the earth on which they live. . . . A vigorous superstition, that lashes its gods or lashes its own back, seems to be more congruous with the mystery of the human lot, than the mental condition of the emmet-like Dodsons and Tullivers.
The narrator is not attacking these reactions. They are, after all, partly the product of literature—both good and bad—as well as of natures with some aspirations for the ideal. But as the narrator goes on to make clear, such a viewpoint lacks both sympathy and love, and it blinds us to a proper perception of how common the conditions described are in reality:

I share with you this sense of oppressive narrowness; but it is necessary that we should feel it, if we are to understand how it acted on the lives of Tom and Maggie—how it has acted on young natures in many generations, that in the onward tendency of human things have risen above the mental level of the generation before them, to which they have been nevertheless tied by the strongest fibres of their hearts. The suffering, whether of martyr or victim, which belongs to every historical advance of mankind, is represented in this way in every town, and by hundreds of obscure hearths; and we need not shrink from this comparison of small things with great; for does not science tell us that its highest striving is after the ascertainment of a unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest? In natural science, I have understood, there is nothing petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations, and to which every single object suggests a vast sum of conditions. It is surely the same with the observation of human life. (Book IV, Ch. 1)

Having sketched a summary of how a sensitive and intelligent, if somewhat shortsighted, reader might analyze and respond to the novel he is reading, the narrator moves here to a sketch of the value and meaning of this novel if one is sensitive to more than the gross treatments of plot and
action. It is entirely likely, I believe, that George Eliot as implied author, aware of the prevalent readings and misreadings of novels, is attempting here to re-educate the reading public. Certainly such narrative intrusions are designed to do more than simply guide or enlighten the reader; they also force him to take his novel-reading as seriously as the implied author intends it to be taken, as seriously as he must take it if he is to become her implied reader. In addition, the passage is just as relevant to Middlemarch as it is to The Mill, but in Middlemarch she will not repeat it with such lengthy explicitness, expecting us, possibly, to have already read it. In any case, what we find in The Mill on the Floss is a still somewhat flawed and hesitant version of the deepest and most serious implied author and implied reader relationship to be found among the Victorian novelists.

iv

Rather strangely, George Eliot's next three novels—Silas Marner, Romola, and Felix Holt, the Radical—present a kind of hiatus in the line leading from The Mill on the Floss through Middlemarch. Having nearly perfected the
techniques of creating the implied author-reader relationship that contributes so much to the success of her masterpiece, it seems almost as though, as regards the narrator, Eliot is taking a breather, perhaps letting the thought of these techniques simmer on a backburner of her subconscious. As with nearly all novels, we could certainly talk about an implied author and transmitted values in these novels, but in relation to the particular focus of this study so far, there is not much to say or to analyze. W. J. Harvey, discussing George Eliot's use of the omniscient convention, remarks that "statistics count for little in aesthetic matters, especially when they ignore the length, placing, or quality of instances; but for what it is worth, my count of omniscient intrusions in my edition of the novels gives the following ratio of instances to pages. Adam Bede 1:10. The Mill on the Floss 1:14. Middlemarch 1:33. This serves at least to underline the growing economy in George Eliot's use of the convention." Harvey is certainly correct in his observation, though my problem is understanding what exactly he means by "omniscient intrusions." It is noteworthy, however, that he says nothing of

the three novels between *The Mill* and *Middlemarch*. George Eliot's powers of presenting provincial life, speech, and humor remain strong in two of these novels, and her concerns with character and plot are apparent in all three, but her awareness of the narrative voice and its relationship to readers is held very much in abeyance.

*Sular Marner*, the first novel after *The Mill* and the bane of generations of United States schoolchildren, opens with Eliot's familiar evocation of the near past and its implicit but muted ironic comparison with the author's present:

In that far-off time superstition clung easily round every person or thing that was at all unwonted, or even intermittent and occasional merely, like the visits of the pedlar or the knife-grinder. No one knew where wandering men had their homes or their origin; and how was a man to be explained unless you at least knew somebody who knew his father and mother? To the peasants of old times, the world outside their own direct experience was a region of vagueness and mystery: to their untravelled thought a state of wandering was a conception as dim as the winter life of the swallows that came back with the spring; and even a settler, if he came from distant parts, hardly ever ceased to be viewed with a remnant of distrust, which would have prevented any surprise if a long course of inoffensive conduct on his part had ended in the commission of a

crime; especially if he had any reputation for knowledge, or showed any skill in handicraft. All cleverness, whether in the rapid use of that difficult instrument the tongue, or in some other art unfamiliar to villagers, was in itself suspicious. (Ch. 1)

Thus the scene is set for the strange, almost dream-like tale that is Silas Marner, and the narrator remains throughout the novel what she is here: a disembodied voice, seemingly unaware of itself or of its audience, and little inclined to be any more ironic or satiric than she is in the opening passage. Infrequently the narrative voice will show itself aware of the kind of communality that was one aspect of the technique of The Mill. It says at one point that "we are apt to think it inevitable that a man in Marner's position should have begun to question the validity of an appeal to the divine judgment by drawing lots; but to him this would have been an effort of independent thought such as he had never known" (Ch. 1). At another point, after asking two rhetorical questions, the voice provides an explanation that includes itself in the community of understanding:

Have not men, shut up in solitary imprisonment, found an interest in marking the moments by straight strokes of a certain length on the wall, until the growth of the sum of straight strokes, arranged in triangles, has become a mastering purpose? Do we not while away
moments of inanity or fatigued waiting by repeating some trivial movement or sound, until the repetition has bred a want, which is incipient habit? That will help us to understand how the love of accumulating money grows an absorbing passion in men whose imaginations, even in the very beginning of their hoard, showed them no purpose beyond it. (Ch. 2)

For the most part, however, on those occasions—not numerous—when the narrative voice does speak to us, it does so calmly and didactically, without self- or reader awareness—somehow detached from the story in a way previous narrators have not been:

The sense of security more frequently springs from habit than from conviction, and for this reason it often subsists after such a change in the conditions as might have been expected to suggest alarm. The lapse of time during which a given event has not happened, is, in this logic of habit, constantly alleged as a reason why the event should never happen, even when the lapse of time is precisely the added condition which makes the event imminent. A man will tell you that he has worked in a mine for forty years unhurt by an accident as a reason why he should apprehend no danger, though the roof is beginning to sink; and it is often observable, that the older a man gets, the more difficult it is to him to retain a believing conception of his own death. (Ch. 5)

It almost seems as though George Eliot were experimenting in Silas Marner with a complete removal from the story of the narrator/implied author as a personality, an
experiment which is carried even further in her next novel, *Romola*, an historical novel set in fifteenth-century Florence. In *Romola* the speaking voice engages in even less glossing of the descriptions and dialogue, so that an almost Jamesian withdrawal occurs. There are a few comments in which the first person plural is employed to suggest the speaker-reader community, but they are rare: "Tito was experiencing that inexorable law of human souls, that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil which gradually determines character" (Ch. 23). More common is the expansive moral gloss following a descriptive passage, as in the following example, but even these are rare in a nineteenth-century novel by an author who received more than her share of the critics' abuse for talking too much:

When, the next morning, Tito put this determination into act he had chosen his color in the game, and had given an inevitable bent to his wishes. He had made it impossible that he should not from henceforth desire it to be the truth that his father was dead; impossible that he should not be tempted to baseness rather than that the precise facts of his conduct should not remain forever concealed.

Under every guilty secret there is hidden a brood of guilty wishes, whose unwholesome infecting life is cherished by the darkness. The contaminating effect of deeds often lies less

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29Garden City, N. Y., 1922.
in the commission than in the consequent adjustment of our desires—the enlistment of our self-interest on the side of falsity; as, on the other hand, the purifying influence of public confession springs from the fact, that by it the hope in lies is forever swept away, and the soul recovers the noble attitude of simplicity.

(Ch. 9)

Felix Holt, the Radical commences with the calm Eliot narrating voice once again evoking the past for the reader, this time more explicitly comparing its good and bad aspects to the present:

FIVE-AND-THIRTY years ago the glory had not yet departed from the old coach-roads: the great roadside inns were still brilliant with well-polished tankards, the smiling glances of pretty barmaids, and the repartees of jocose ostlers; the mail still announced itself by the merry notes of the horn; the hedge-cutter or the rick-thatcher might still know the exact hour by the unfailing yet otherwise meteoric apparition of the pea-green Tally-ho or the yellow Independent; and elderly gentlemen in pony-chaises, quartering nervously to make way for the rolling swinging swiftness, had not ceased to remark that times were finely changed since they used to see the pack horses and hear the tinkling of their bells on this very highway.

In those days there were pocket boroughs, a Birmingham unrepresented in Parliament and compelled to make strong representations out of it, unrepealed corn-laws, three-and-sixpenny letters, a brawny and many-breeding pauperism, and other departed evils; but there were some pleasant

things too, which have also departed. . . . Posterity may be shot, like a bullet through a tube, by atmospheric pressure from Winchester to Newcastle: that is a fine result to have among our hopes; but the slow old-fashioned way of getting from one end of our country to the other is the better thing to have in the memory. ("Introduction")

As with the same device in most of George Eliot's stories, this careful recreating of the past at the beginning is apparently designed to give the reader a certain distance from the time of the story, resulting in an increased objectivity, so that the truths of the story itself and of the narrator's commentary may be more directly borne home to him. Some of this comment, in any case, deals with the unchanging nature of certain conditions, with the past as a kind of backdrop: "These social changes in Treby parish are comparatively public matters, and this history is chiefly concerned with the private lot of a few men and women; but there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life" (Ch. 3).

What is notable in Felix Holt is the partial return of the self-aware narrator, although her role in this respect remains minor. But she is not afraid of introducing her thoughts and perceptions into the story at times: "I have
known persons who have been suspected of under-valuing gratitude, and excluding it from the list of virtues; but on closer observation it has been seen that, if they have never felt grateful, it has been for want of an opportunity; and that, far from despising gratitude, they regard it as the virtue most of all incumbent—on others towards them" (Ch. 17). At one point she even utters a somewhat puzzling remark that seems to revive for an instant the narrator-as-actual-observer technique: "I confess to smiling myself, being sceptical as to the effect of ardent appeals and nice distinctions on gentlemen who are got up, both inside and out, as candidates in the style of the period; but I never smiled at Mr. Lyon's trustful energy without falling to penitence and veneration immediately after" (Ch. 16). Similarly, she is once again aware both of her reader as a separate entity and of narrator and reader as members of the human community. She addresses the reader and asks him to "forgive [Esther Lyon] if she needed this satisfaction: all of us—whether men or women—are liable to this weakness of liking to have our preference justified before others as well as ourselves" (Ch. 46). She also returns to the use of "we": "We mortals sometimes cut a
pitiable figure in our attempts at display. We may be sure of our own merits, yet fatally ignorant of the point of view from which we are regarded by our neighbour. Our fine patterns in tattooing may be far from throwing him into a swoon of admiration, though we turn ourselves all round to show them" (Ch. 11).

Such uses of the pronouns are kept to a minimum, but they do serve to recreate a sense of contact with and knowledge of the narrator that is missing from Silar Marner and Romola—both somewhat strange and remote novels because the relationship intrinsic to George Eliot's other novels is missing. George Eliot herself must have noticed this lack of relationship, because both novels also lack the sentences and passages of philosophical and moralizing commentary that depend to a great extent for their acceptance by the reader on the establishment of some kind of relationship. In Felix Holt the implied author emerges once again as narrator, and with the attempts to re-establish a relationship through the commentary appear the passages of moralizing, like the following, which create so much of the texture of a George Eliot novel:

For there is seldom any wrong-doing which does not carry along with it some downfall of blindly-
climbing hopes, some hard entail of suffering, 
some quickly-satiated desire that survives, with 
the life in death of old paralytic vice, to see 
itself cursed by its woeful progeny--some tragic 
mark of kinship in the one brief life to the far-
stretching life that went before, and to the life 
that is to come after, such as has raised the 
pity and terror of men ever since they began to 
discern between will and destiny. But these 
things are often unknown to the world; for there 
is much pain that is quite noiseless; and vibra-
tions that make human agonies are often a mere 
whisper in the roar of hurrying existence. There 
are glances of hatred that stab and raise no cry 
of murder; robberies that leave man or woman 
for ever beggared of peace and joy, yet kept 
secret by the sufferer--committed to no sound 
except that of low moans in the night, seen in 
no writing except that made on the face by the 
slow months of suppressed anguish and early 
morning tears. Many an inherited sorrow that 
has marred a life has been breathed into no 
human ear. ("Introduction")

With this kind of commentary the implied author is back in 
her most comfortable position: speaking calmly and 
directly--and at length if necessary--of those concerns 
closest to the heart of her fiction and her moral view; 
the terrible human pain of common people, pain quite likely 
unnoticed in the "roar of hurrying existence," is one of 
those concerns, a primary one. I am not sure why she 
abandoned this position in *Silas Marner* and *Romola*, but 
the spotty return to it in *Felix Holt* may have been a neces-
sary precondition for the writing of Middlemarch. As it is, had the trend begun in Silas Marner, carried even further in Romola, and retreated from only slightly in Felix Holt continued, George Eliot's later novels might have been everything Percy Lubbock could have wished. The question is whether Middlemarch would then have been George Eliot's acclaimed masterpiece.
One of the widely used plot summaries and study guides to Middlemarch for the use of students speaks of the ways in which George Eliot is "not uniformly successful" and discusses a "factor" which is "wholly intentional": "the hovering presence of the author-narrator herself. George Eliot had no intention of projecting a slice of life and leaving us to draw our own conclusions. She interprets for us as she goes along, here philosophizing, there moralizing, always analyzing... In spite of the modernity of her theme and of her psychological insights, these 'dear reader' passages are obviously not of our time and require some patience on the part of readers who are eager to get on with the action."¹ We are accustomed by now to the easy equation of author and narrator, but I hope that the equally easy reference to "'dear reader' passages"

comes as a shock, if only for the fact that *Middlemarch* contains not a single "reader" or "dear reader" address.

The maturity George Eliot achieved in *Middlemarch* has been recognized and discussed by a number of perceptive critics. W. J. Harvey notes that "in *Middlemarch* George Eliot achieves the steadiness and clarity of ironic contemplation which belongs to full maturity. . . . The steady, clear ironical gaze derives from the stability of the author-novel relationship and it results in local touches that the early George Eliot would have found unthinkable." Quentin Anderson writes that "Thackeray cannot step on his stage without shaking it or dwarfing it; the effect is always of diminution, a voice which condescends to or coos about the pettiness or charm of the creatures displayed. . . . George Eliot, however, speaks to the issues of her own work, and addresses the reader in terms which set her above it but never to one side." And U. C. Knoepflmacher says that George Eliot "challenges her readers to share the

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understanding of her omniscient narrator, a commentator whose psychological shrewdness and awareness allows him to unravel the webs which enmesh all human endeavors."\(^4\)

Later, he argues that it is precisely in his command of "numerous strands of experience" and in his willingness to bring them together that this narrator differs from the intentionally limited narrators who acted as spokesmen for Trollope and Thackeray. The narrator in *Middlemarch* is a synthesizer, as capable of laughter as of interpreting the sum total of the experiences of his characters. . . . George Eliot's narrator is equally cognizant of the need for connections. He dissects human frailties with uncanny precision; but in his efforts to interpret and repair them he always moves from the particular to the general. . . . This concern with universals, like his superior erudition, gives weight and consequence to the narrator's utterances. . . . The narrative voice that George Eliot creates in *Middlemarch* is thus both more complex than those devised by Thackeray and Trollope and more effective than the one she herself used in *The Mill on the Floss*. In that novel, too, the narrator professed that "there is nothing petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations." But the comical bookish gentleman who was forced to hold on to his armchair in his study in the first chapter of *The Mill*, became a helpless observer of Maggie's agonies in the novel's tragic conclusion. In *Middlemarch*, however, the narrator maintains absolute control from beginning to end. (pp. 179–80)

My contention is that the genius, maturity, and control recognized by all these critics can be accounted for precisely—though not exclusively—in terms of the concerns which this study has developed.

We must recognize, first of all, that Middlemarch's narrative voice, "that voice," Quentin Anderson says, "which frames the whole book" is indistinguishable from the creative intelligence—the implied author—which controls the entire novel, both the commentary and the action. The voice of this narrator/implied author refuses to become involved with its readers and its story in the manner of the slippery stage master of Thackeray's Vanity Fair, nor does it allow any elements of the real author behind the implied author to slip into the story, as happens with the later Thackeray and with Charlotte Brontë in Shirley. At the same time, it does not particularly identify itself with one of its characters, as the Harding-like narrator of the first two Barset novels tends to do, nor does it efface itself, as Trollope's narrative voice does in the later Barset novels. Rather, this narrative voice truly does frame the whole novel and is one of the supreme examples in

fiction of another Victorian phenomenon—the Sage. In its breadth and depth of knowledge, in its control of the multitude of characters and their stories which comprise the novel's totality, and in the skill with which it lectures us, mocks us, and creates us as implied readers, this narrative voice is truly, I believe, the consummation of a certain way of telling a novel—the way the Jamesian critics have rejected. Yet all this does not mean that Middlemarch is an easy novel to read or be created by, for the narrator does treat us both ironically and seriously and the narrator's very sage-like attitude causes its own problems for the implied reader in a novel that is firmly in the ironic mode, offering the comfort of neither tragedy or comedy.

From the opening sentence of Middlemarch we are enthralled by a narrative voice that we cannot ignore.

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6 I am, of course, enabled to use this term in a passing reference because of the influence of John Holloway's impressive study The Victorian Sage (London, 1953), in which he devotes a long chapter to George Eliot. A more recent study, George Watson's The English Ideology (London, 1973), subtitled "Studies in the language of Victorian politics," spends its final chapter on "The Sages." Unlike Holloway, Watson excludes the novelists from his group of true sages, but both books are crucial for anyone wishing to explore the subject further.

7 Boston, 1956.
a voice that predominates throughout the novel and is marked by intelligence and knowledge and by the calm and controlled rhetoric of one who knows herself to be a teacher and a good one. As we continue to read, we are forced to pay attention to exactly what the voice is saying and how it is saying it, to weigh every word and sentence for their own meaning and for their potential significance in what is to follow. The "Prelude" begins by invoking Saint Theresa, asking "who that cares much to know the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time, has not dwelt, at least briefly, on the life of Saint Theresa, has not smiled with some gentleness at the thought of the little girl walking forth one morning hand-in-hand with her still smaller brother, to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors," and concluding, "she found her epos in the reform of a religious order." We must pay attention here, must recognize that that smile of "some gentleness" is a sadly ironic gesture of recognition for a time when the innocence that allowed heroes to exist was possible. George Eliot's narrator/implied author, for all the talking she does in this novel, does not directly discuss heroes and heroism, yet she is just as concerned
with these subjects as Thackeray and Trollope were. She often speaks directly to her readers, but she also speaks to them indirectly.

The narrator continues in the "Prelude" by noting the "many Theresas [who] have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept into oblivion." Here the concept of tragedy is evoked in passing, but it is quickly undercut as the narrator notes that "these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul." The "Prelude" is usually seen—and as such often disparaged—as a capsule introduction to the life of Dorothea Brooke, whose story takes up much of Middle-march. It is that, but it is also a good deal more, for the narrator gives us here a cogent description of the historical forces—the disappearance of a "coherent social faith and order"—that have made heroism and tragedy impossible and left an ironic vision as the only possible alternative. In
the final paragraph of the "Prelude" the narrator goes even further and, with a more apparent tonal irony of her own, introduces a cosmic irony frustrating to those who would like to perceive the world in black and white terms: "Some have felt that these blundering lives are due to the inconvenient indefiniteness with which the Supreme Power has fashioned the natures of women: if there were one level of feminine incompetence as strict as the ability to count three and no more, the social lot of women might be treated with scientific certitude. Meanwhile the indefiniteness remains, and the limits of variation are really much wider than any one would imagine from the sameness of women's coiffure and the favourite love-stories in prose and verse."

If we allow ourselves to be lulled into passivity by the learned and sage-like teaching voice, if we ignore the historical, cosmic, and personal ironies (the last-named grounded on hairdos and light reading) which surround and pervade the novel, we will find it impossible to become the implied readers who can accept the novel, and especially its conclusion, without incomprehension or rebellion.

On one level, the narrative voice is comforting and reassuring to us as implied readers in the process of
creation, as, with controlled certainty, it talks to us, teaches us, and guides us through the maze of characters and events that comprise Middlemarch. In its grasp of historical processes, for instance, the narrative voice can guide us surely through the passage of years and the changes they bring:

When George the Fourth was still reigning over the privacies of Windsor, when the Duke of Wellington was Prime Minister, and Mr Vincy was mayor of the old corporation in Middlemarch, Mrs Casaubon, born Dorothea Brooke, had taken her wedding journey to Rome. In those days the world in general was more ignorant of good and evil by forty years than it is at present. Travellers did not often carry full information on Christian art either in their heads or their pockets; and even the most brilliant English critic of the day mistook the flower-flushed tomb of the ascended Virgin for an ornamental vase due to the painter's fancy. Romanticism, which has helped to fill some dull blanks with love and knowledge, had not yet penetrated the times with its leaven and entered into everybody's food; it was fermenting still as a distinguishable vigorous enthusiasm in certain long-haired German artists at Rome. (Ch. 19)

Likewise, through her descriptive and analytic skills the narrator is very careful to see that we do not misunderstand, as a purely dramatic mode of presentation might allow us to. Early in Middlemarch, she delves deep into Dorothea's character:
The intensity of her religious disposition, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent: and with such a nature, struggling in the bands of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency. The thing which seemed to her best, she wanted to justify by the completest knowledge; and not to live in a pretended admission of rules which were never acted on. Into this soul-hunger as yet all her youthful passion was poured; the union which attracted her was one that would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance, and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path. (Ch. 3)

We must know Dorothea as no one around her does, so that we can understand why she acts as she does (marrying Casaubon in particular) and sympathize with her, and so the narrator constantly tells us in detail exactly what we need to know. In the same way, she refuses to let us go astray by agreeing with characters' mistaken notions of themselves or of their actions. She notes of Rosamond Vincy that "in this way poor Rosamond's brain had been busy before Will's departure. He would have made, she thought, a much more suitable husband for her than she had found in Lydgate." Rosamond is deluded indeed, but the narrator will not allow
the least perceptive of her readers to make a mistake on this point: "No notion could have been falser than this, for Rosamond's discontent in her marriage was due to the conditions of marriage itself, to its demands for self-suppression and tolerance, and not to the nature of her husband; but the easy conception of an unreal Better had a sentimental charm which diverted her ennui" (Ch. 75).

Certainly this sage-like, eminently humane and intelligent narrator is never long out of sight, and her expansive commentary of a philosophic, moral, or educational nature continually makes its appearance. Even though many of these comments are very short, as numerous critics have remarked they usually move from the specific to the general. Speaking of Will and Dorothea, the narrator notes that "Will saw that she was offended, but this only gave an additional impulse to the new irritation of his latent dislike towards Mr Casaubon. It was too intolerable that Dorothea should be worshipping this husband: such weakness in a woman is pleasant to no man but the husband in question. Mortals are easily tempted to pinch the life out of their neighbour's buzzing glory, and think that such killing is no murder" (Ch. 21). No matter how casually the commentary
is delivered, we cannot let it slip by because it is always so morally significant to the dramatic action, because it resonates far beyond the novel into our lives as real persons, and because it carries such weight in our creation as ideal readers. The narrator remarks of Lydgate that "it seemed to him as if he were beholding in a magic panorama a future where he himself was sliding into the pleasureless yielding to the small solicitations of circumstance, which is a commoner history of perdition than any single momentous bargain" (Ch. 79). She says of Lydgate and Rosamond that "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" (Ch. 58). These may seem almost like throwaway remarks, but they apply directly to a good deal of suffering which the novel dramatizes. In the same way, the narrator frequently delivers one-sentence statements that are crucial to the novel's themes and morality. She says that "it is true Lydgate was constantly visiting the homes of the poor and adjusting his prescriptions of diet to their small means; but, dear me! has it not by this time ceased to be remarkable—is it not rather what we expect in
men, that they should have numerous strands of experience lying side by side and never compare them with each other" (Ch. 58), an observation which captures one of the basic ironies of Middlemarch and of human life generally. The narrator informs us that "the opposition to the New Fever Hospital which Lydgate had sketched to Dorothea was, like other oppositions, to be viewed in many different lights" (Ch. 45), a key notion which is both stated and dramatized. And, in one of the clearest statements of what is behind the morality of Middlemarch, she offhandedly notes in some remarks on Bulstrode that "there is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men" (Ch. 61).

I think U. C. Knoepflmacher is correct when he writes of Middlemarch that "in connecting the various narrative strands of the novel the narrator constantly complicates our experience by forcing us to evaluate opposing points of view. The reader, he implies, cannot assess the total movement of the novel without such changes in perspective. . . . Only by seeing a character or an event from a variety of angles can the reader avoid the narrow vistas to which
the characters themselves succumb. . . . By giving full
play to a multitude of outlooks, the narrator gradually
enables us to see beyond the characters in the novel."8
The danger is that we will make easy, limited, one-sided
judgments that will prevent us from fully comprehending
the terrible ironic power of events, circumstances, and
personal liabilities to thwart heroic ideals. A good deal
of the narrator's most intense and thought-packed commentary
is thus designed to help us achieve a more understanding
and all-encompassing view. In the following passages, for
instance, having already taken us through Lydgate's high
ideals and shown us his "spots of commonness," she goes to
a good deal of careful trouble to force us to understand
and to sympathize with his grinding and sordid money
problems:

Some gentlemen have made an amazing figure in
literature by general discontent with the uni-
verse as a trap of dullness into which their
great souls have fallen by mistake; but the
sense of a stupendous self and an insignificant
world may have its consolations. Lydgate's
discontent was much harder to bear: it was the
sense that there was a grand existence in thought
and effective action lying around him, while his

8Laughter and Despair, p. 181.
self was being narrowed into the miserable isolation of egoistic fears, and vulgar anxieties for events that might allay such fears. His troubles will perhaps appear miserably sordid, and beneath the attention of lofty persons who can know nothing of debt except on a magnificent scale. Doubtless they were sordid; and for the majority, who are not lofty, there is no escape from sordidness but by being free from money-craving, with all its base hopes and temptations, its watching for death, its hinted requests, its horse-dealer's desire to make bad work pass for good, its seeking for function which ought to be another's, its compulsion often to long for Luck in the shape of a wide calamity. (Ch. 63)

Likewise, in her exquisite dissection of Casaubon's position and Lydgate's pitying contempt (ironic in view of his own fate) for the man, she forces us to view Casaubon with a much deeper sympathy than anything less than an extensive dramatic representation would give us grounds for:

Nay, are there many situations more sublimely tragic than the struggle of the soul with the demand to renounce a work which has been all the significance of its life—a significance which is to vanish as the waters which come and go where no man has need of them? But there was nothing to strike others as sublime about Mr Casaubon, and Lydgate, who had some contempt at hand for futile scholarship, felt a little amusement mingling with his pity. He was at present too ill-acquainted with disaster to enter into the pathos of a lot where everything is below the level of tragedy except the passionate egoism of the sufferer. (Ch. 42)
The relationship established between narrator and implied reader in the process of creation in *Middlemarch* is similar to, while at the same time being very much different from, that established in *Vanity Fair*. In *Vanity Fair* the reader must constantly evaluate the Manager's narrative for its trustworthiness and examine it for trickery. The narrator of *Middlemarch* forces us into the same kind of close examination of her commentary, analyses, and explanations, not out of fear she may be tricking us but because the commentary is so loaded with weighty matter and moral significance, both for the novel itself and for the real world of which it is a paradigm. Thus, I agree with the thrust of Isabel Armstrong's remarks that "George Eliot's procedure depends upon the constant corroboration and assent of the reader to her sayings" and that "the status of moral comment inside her novels is the same as any moral comment outside any novel. It demands inspection." That is, I believe the inspection is crucial; the assent follows most of the time, but it is not as crucial as Armstrong, who quotes the following remark from *Middlemarch*, believes: "We mortals, men and women, devour many a disappointment between breakfast and dinner-time; keep back the tears and look a little
pale about the lips, and in answer to inquiries say, 'Oh, nothing!' Pride helps us; and pride is not a bad thing when it only urges us to hide our own hurts—not to hurt others" (Ch. 6). Armstrong proceeds to criticize the remark thus:

But one's reaction to this is not corroboration, but sharp dissent. We may well endure disappointments, but some of us want to complain, and we may even complain a good deal. There are often occasions when nothing helps us and the question of hurting others is irrelevant. This is one of the occasions when one is in sympathy with those critics who wish George Eliot had managed the Jamesian conjuring trick of the disappearing author. The source of the irritation . . . is that this statement is simply not wise. It is not sufficiently inclusive—it is not, indeed, truistic, and that is partly what is wrong with it. It is moralizing and preachy instead, suggesting that we should swallow disappointment, not that we do. It looks too much as if it is drawn from George Eliot's personal experience and that she is showing the reader how to be wise.9

No doubt George Eliot the implied author did draw upon the personal experience of George Eliot the person for such commentary, though there is not the slightest overt hint of that here. Nor do I think Armstrong is justified in speaking of "one's reaction" when she means her own; her reaction to

the comment is certainly not mine, partly since I feel we should swallow our disappointments and not "complain a good deal." The reader can, after sufficient thought, disagree with the narrator, and no real harm is done. Certainly the tone is not antagonizing, and even if the narrator is saying that we should swallow our disappointments, disagreement does not destroy the moral effectiveness of all the commentary. The significant point is that the narrator does engage us, does make us think, and does force us to be better implied readers whether we agree in every case or not. If we devote this kind of care to the novel, we are going to achieve the sympathy for Dorothea, Casaubon, Lydgate, Rosamond, and the rest of the characters that the implied author expects us to achieve.

By far the most pervasive and most effective method used in Middlemarch for creating a bond of respect and mutual fallibility between the readers and the narrator/implied author is the narrator's straightforward use of the first- and second-person pronouns. She is fearless and sure of herself in using the first person singular, honestly aware of her readers in her use of the second person, and very much aware of the human bonds that link us all in her use
of the first person plural. I think that the narrator's use of the first-person pronoun is marvelously effective in getting us to think and in helping us to feel that we really are of some concern to her, that she cares about what we think and how we react. At one point, for instance, she remarks that

at present this caution against a too hasty judgment interests me more in relation to Mr Casaubon than to his young cousin. If to Dorothea Mr Casaubon had been the mere occasion which has set alight the fine inflammable material of her youthful illusions, does it follow that he was fairly represented in the minds of those less impassioned personages who have hitherto delivered their judgments concerning him? I protest against any absolute conclusion, any prejudice derived from Mrs Cadwallader's contempt for a neighbouring clergyman's alleged greatness of soul, or Sir James Chettam's poor opinion of his rival's legs,—from Mr Brooke's failure to elicit a companion's ideas, or from Celia's criticism of a middle-aged scholar's personal appearance. (Ch. 10)

Some might feel that the narrator has been loading the deck against Casaubon up to this point, but her "I protest against any absolute conclusions" strikes with force, and we do feel that we are almost engaged in a meaningful dialogue with her. We need to be convinced by her protest, for the lesson is one we must carry with us through the whole of the novel.
In another highly effective passage, we see the narrator reacting against herself in mid-sentence:

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 those too will get faded, and will know the older and more eating griefs which we are helping to neglect. In spite of the blinking eyes and white moles objectionable to Celia, and the want of muscular curve which was morally painful to Sir James, Mr Casaubon had an intense consciousness within him, and was spiritually a-hungered like the rest of us. (Ch. 29)

The rhetoric is once again designed to have an air of conversation about it; we almost feel that we are observing the narrator's thought process, unshaped by art, as her mind converses with itself, and the objecting half of that mind is arguing much like one of us, her perceptive readers, might argue. In so molding the passage rhetorically the narrator brings home to us the lesson that we are all "spiritually a-hungered" and that we must extend the bond and sympathy of common humanity to Casaubon, even though her remarking of the physical defects may possibly arouse in us a good deal of sympathy for Celia as well. Similarly, in the following passage the narrator moves from her own
"I protest" to a linkage of narrator, character, and reader in the troubles of "self," the common doubt as to how adorable others really find us. The passage, like similar ones, serves wonderfully to help form the humane and broadly sympathetic created readers so necessary to the novel:

Instead of wondering at this result of misery in Mr Casaubon, I think it quite ordinary. Will not a tiny speck very close to our vision blot out the glory of the world, and leave only a margin by which we see the blot? I know no speck so troublesome as self. And who, if Mr Casaubon had chosen to expound his discontents—his suspicions that he was not any longer adored without criticism—could have denied that they were founded on good reasons? On the contrary, there was a strong reason to be added, which he had not himself taken explicitly into account—namely, that he was not unmixedly adorable. He suspected this, however, as he suspected other things, without confessing it, and like the rest of us, felt how soothing it would have been to have a companion who would never find it out. (Ch. 42)

My contention all along has been that for the implied reader in the process of creation, the way in which he is taught is just as important as—perhaps even more important than—what he is taught. I believe that Middlemarch's implied author handles the teaching most skillfully through her direct addresses to the reader as "you." Her knowledge and intelligence make us feel that the novel is worth the great time and effort an adequate reading demands, but her
tact and her concern for us make us also feel that she thinks us worth her effort. At one point she tells us that "Rosamond never showed any unbecoming knowledge, and was always that combination of correct sentiments, music, dancing, drawing, elegant note-writing, private album for extracted verse, and perfect blond loveliness, which made the irresistible woman for the doomed man of that date," a devastating sketch. But then she addresses us directly and asks that we "think no unfair evil of her, pray: she had no wicked plots, nothing sordid or mercenary; in fact, she never thought of money except as something necessary which other people would always provide" (Ch. 27). The explanation is equally devastating, but the courtesy of the request helps to elicit the correct response from us. Likewise, at another point in the novel the narrator is discussing Lydgate's character, both the faults and the strengths that cause his future to hang in the balance. She suddenly turns to the reader and makes a direct request of him, following it up with a question that brings Lydgate's problem down to the level of the reader's actual life and forestalls the easy response that the narrator obviously recognizes as one of the dangers novels are liable to: "The
faults will not, I hope, be a reason for the withdrawal of your interest in him. Among our valued friends is there not some one or other who is a little too self-confident and disdainful; whose distinguished mind is a little spotted with commonness; who is a little pinched here and protuberant there with native prejudices; or whose better energies are liable to lapse down the wrong channel under the influence of transient solicitations" (Ch. 15)?

The narrator's use of the first person plural flows in the same masterly vein. She controls and encompasses the story, and she stands above it, but neither she nor her readers stand above the human condition, and her inclusion of herself within this condition is just another of the reasons why we want to give her our respect and trust. She delivers numerous pithy, one-sentence comments such as the following which seem almost to be inconsequential throwaways, except that they demand that we recognize our fallibility:

"But most of us are apt to settle within ourselves that the man who blocks our way is odious, and not to mind causing him a little of the disgust which his personality excites in ourselves" (Ch. 47). She remarks that "we all know the difficulty of carrying out a resolve when we secretly long that
it may turn out to be unnecessary. In such states of mind
the most incredulous person has a private leaning towards
miracle: impossible to conceive how our wish could be ful-
filled, still--very wonderful things have happened" (Ch.
60)! And again she notes that "poor Mr Casaubon had imagined
that his long studious bachelor-hood had stored up for him
a compound interest of enjoyment, and that large drafts on
his affections would not fail to be honoured; for we all
of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in meta-
phors, and act fatally on the strength of them" (Ch. 10).
This is the sort of common remark which is so pertinent to
poor Casaubon and yet at the same time has such universal
application that one really does admire the narrator's in-
sight. The narrator also links herself and her reader
through the knowledge they have gained in order to comment
on a character, as when she says that Dorothea "was as blind
to [Casaubon's] inward troubles as he to hers: she had not
yet learned those hidden conflicts in her husband which
claim our pity. She had not yet listened patiently to his
heartbeats, but only felt that her own was beating vio-
lently" (Ch. 20). In all this type of commentary there is
nothing to take offense at, and the narrator guides us with
a sure hand to where she wants us to go.
The aspects of the narrator-reader relationship in *Middlemarch* that I have been discussing thus far basically work to comfort us as readers. Even though we are engaged by the narrative voice and forced to consider what it says, the tone of the teacher/preacher narrator, the equality with which she addresses us, and the values she is constantly working to inculcate in us (such values as looking at people and events from different viewpoints, having compassion for our fellowmen, and, by implication, trying to know ourselves as the characters do not) all suggest a comforting order and a universal meaning to the events and the characters' lives. The narrative methods I have discussed indisputably exist in the novel and work in the ways I have indicated, and the values and norms conveyed are certainly meant to be taken seriously.

However, there is another side to the novel, an ironic side, and this irony functions through both the narrative commentary and the narrative structure to undercut the comforting aspects and the apparent universal significance. The irony, of course, immensely complicates *Middlemarch* itself, our reaction to it, and our relationship with the narrator. Without it, the novel would still be challenging
and worthy of our attention, but it would be something different—probably a generic comedy rather than the masterpiece of generic irony which it is. The fact is that George Eliot as implied author has the same intention to deny heroism and tragedy that Thackeray and Trollope do, but she accomplishes this denial much more subtly, for she does not talk about heroes as they do. In this particular respect, the narrator's comments are mostly indirect, and a good deal of weight is carried by the movement of the novel itself. But the narrator does prepare us for the final generic irony by delivering a good deal of ironic commentary within the course of the novel itself.

A major source of narrative irony derives from the fact that the narrator is relating a story set forty years in the past. Only occasionally will she direct a satiric remark specifically at the present, as when she comments, "three thousand a-year—a rental which seemed wealth to provincial families, still discussing Mr Peel's late conduct on the Catholic question, innocent of future gold-fields, and of that gorgeous plutocracy which has so nobly exalted the necessities of genteel life" (Ch. 1). Her primary technique is to deliver apparent criticisms of the
past and satiric comments upon it which, upon reflection, become double-edged, in that they turn out to be equally applicable to the present of the readers. The irony achieves a universality which serves to show that nothing much really changes and that little can be hoped for in the way of progress. During a discussion of household purchases, Lydgate remarks that "'one must hire servants who will not break things,'" to which the narrator adds, "(certainly, this was reasoning with an imperfect vision of sequences. But at that period there was no sort of reasoning which was not more or less sanctioned by men of science)" (Ch. 36). Certainly we have no grounds for assuming that reasoning powers have improved; nor do we have grounds for congratulating ourselves upon the progress of education when the narrator remarks upon "Dorothea, whose slight regard for domestic music and feminine fine art must be forgiven her, considering the small tinkling and smearing in which they chiefly consisted at that dark period" (Ch. 7). The clue to the irony lies, of course, in the severity with which the present of the novel is characterized and the manner in which it is discussed, as though it existed far back in the historical past rather than its actual few years: "The
friend's stable had to be reached through a back street where you might as easily have been poisoned without ex-

pense of drugs as in any grim street of that unsanitary period" (Ch. 23).

The narrator is at her best, however, when she directs her often bitter irony at the continuity of human behavior and manners while couching her language in terms of the past. She notes with deceptive mildness that "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" (Ch. 1). In a passage that cuts much deeper, the narrator begins by observing that "Miss Pippin adoring young Pumpkin and dreaming along endless vistas of unwearying companion-

ship, was a little drama which never tired our fathers and mothers, and had been put into all costumes," but she soon moves to a more serious insight whose implications are not limited to any set historical period: "But perhaps no persons then living--certainly none in the neighbourhood of Tipton--would have had a sympathetic understanding for the dreams of a girl whose notions about marriage took their
colour entirely from an exalted enthusiasm about the ends of life, an enthusiasm which was lit chiefly by its own fire, and included neither the niceties of the trousseau, the pattern of plate, nor even the honours and sweet joys of the blooming matron" (Ch. 3). And finally, in one of her most masterfully grim ironic analyses, the narrator locates in Middlemarch a situation which is of all places and all times: the pleasure of making someone else miserable and the rationalization of that pleasure:

In Middlemarch a wife could not long remain ignorant that the town held a bad opinion of her husband. ... When a woman with her thoughts much at leisure got them suddenly employed on something grievously disadvantageous to her neighbours, various moral impulses were called into play which tended to stimulate utterance. Candour was one. To be candid, in Middlemarch phraseology, meant, to use an early opportunity of letting your friends know that you did not take a cheerful view of their capacity, their conduct, or their position; and a robust candour never waited to be asked for its opinion. Then, again, there was the love of truth—a wide phrase, but meaning in this relation, a lively objection to seeing a wife look happier than her husband's character warranted, or manifest too much satisfaction in her lot: the poor thing should have some hint given her that if she knew the truth she would have less complacency in her bonnet, and in light dishes for a supper-party. Stronger than all, there was the regard for a friend's moral improvement, sometimes called her soul, which was likely to be benefitted by remarks tending to gloom,
uttered with the accompaniment of pensive staring at the furniture and a manner implying that the speaker would not tell what was on her mind, from regard to the feelings of her hearer. On the whole, one might say that an ardent charity was at work setting the virtuous mind to make a neighbour unhappy for her good. (Ch. 74)

The context of this remark is Mrs. Bulstrode's ignorance of her husband's disgrace, but even more important is that these are the people who remain after Lydgate's defeat and Dorothea's leaving with Will Ladislow. The narrator introduces the Middlemarch community sufficiently that we cannot avoid noticing the numerous ignorant and prejudiced people who serve as background for the main characters. This background remains unchanged no matter what happens to the characters the narrator focuses on, a fact which provides the novel with one of its deepest and most bitter ironies.

As I have indicated, through her use of pronouns to produce a community of understanding, the narrator/implied author creates a remarkably close, tight bond between herself and the implied readers in the process of creation. This relationship does not, however, preclude a certain amount of pointed irony on the narrator's part directed either at certain general classes of limited readers or at
herself and the individual reader together. The irony aimed at a more general target includes the request for "any lady who is inclined to be hard on Mrs Cadwallader" to "inquire into the comprehensiveness of her own beautiful views, and be quite sure that they afford accommodation for all the lives which have the honour to co-exist with hers" (Ch. 6). Though phrased so generally as not to deeply offend any particular reader, the remark should sting all of us a bit, even though the narrator has tricked us by first describing Mrs. Cadwallader so that we tend to be hard on her and then by ironically uncovering the pretensions of our own "beautiful views" in so doing. Likewise, the following remark, though only aimed at "some," directs a fairly biting irony at any readers inclined in whole or in part—as a result of their own prejudices—to be too forgiving and undiscerning of those character faults that are inevitably leading Lydgate into serious difficulty: "Opinions may be divided as to his wisdom in making this present; some may think that it was a graceful attention to be expected from a man like Lydgate, and that the fault of any troublesome consequences lay in the pinched narrowness of provincial life at that time, which offered no conveni-
ences for professional people whose fortune was not proportioned to their tastes; also, in Lydgate's ridiculous fastidiousness about asking his friends for money" (Ch. 58).

Finally, the narrator uses the device of positing a "young lady" to ask a question that all her readers must to some extent ask about Lydgate, and then, with just a faint touch of cool irony in her tone, she explains to us one of the basic ironies of existence: that one excellence does not ensure universal excellence, that great strength may and often does coexist with great weakness. Each implied reader must take the lesson to heart for himself:

All his faults were marked by kindred traits, and were those of a man who had a fine baritone, whose clothes hung well upon him, and who even in his ordinary gestures had an air of inbred distinction. Where then lay the spots of commonness? says a young lady enamoured of that careless grace. How could there be any commonness in a man so well-bred, so ambitious of social distinction, so generous and unusual in his views of social duty? As easily as there may be stupidity in a man of genius if you take him unawares on the wrong subject. . . . Lydgate's spots of commonness lay in the complexion of his prejudices, which, in spite of noble intention and sympathy, were half of them such as are found in ordinary men of the world: that distinction of mind which belonged to his intellectual ardour, did not penetrate his feeling and judgment about furniture, or women, or the desirability of its being known (without his telling) that he was better born than other
country surgeons. He did not mean to think of furniture at present; but whenever he did so, it was to be feared that neither biology nor schemes of reform would lift him above the vulgarity of feeling that there would be an incompatibility in his furniture not being of the best. (Ch. 15)

The narrator of Middlemarch is, of course, a committed teacher and does not try to pretend that she is not. Thus, I for one find it perfectly natural that she sometimes succumbs to a sharp impatience with her students' imaginative limitations, as she does when she requests that "if you think it incredible that to imagine Lydgate as a man of family could cause thrills of satisfaction which had anything to do with the sense that she [Rosamond] was in love with him, I will ask you to use your power of comparison a little more effectively, and consider whether red cloth and epaulets have never had an influence of that sort." The sarcasm is immediately followed by the moral lesson: "Our passions do not live apart in locked chambers, but, dressed in their small wardrobe of notions, bring their provisions to a common table and mess together, feeding out of the common store according to their appetite" (Ch. 16). Such waspishness, however, is relatively uncommon and unimportant. More significant is her occasional ironic recog-
nition of the impossibility of any of us, including herself, absolutely mastering the moral lessons she imparts. For instance, when she remarks that "poor Mr Casaubon felt (and must not we, being impartial, feel with him a little?) that no man had juster cause for disgust and suspicion than he" (Ch. 37), the irony directed both at herself and at us is rather biting, despite the fact that impartiality is one of the moral lessons she has been teaching. But she recognizes (as her constant use of the adjective "poor" to describe Casaubon also indicates) that neither she nor her implied reader can achieve absolute impartiality. The lesson here seems to me to be that the best any of us can hope for is a recognition that the attempt is doomed, so that we can at least act with the knowledge that we are partial. In fact, she has such a fine ironical sense of the shortcomings on an absolute scale of her own teachings that she can even laugh at herself and one of her most dearly-held teachings—the sympathy gained from examining events and people from more than one point of view. Early in the novel she is speaking of a future Radical speech on the incomes of bishops that Mr. Brooke will deliver, but of which he is as yet unaware. She then says, "but of Mr
Brooke I make a further remark perhaps less warranted by precedent—namely, that if he had foreknown his speech, it might not have made any great difference. To think with pleasure of his niece's husband having a large ecclesiastical income was one thing—to make a Liberal speech was another thing; and it is a narrow mind which cannot look at a subject from various points of view" (Ch. 7). This is a wonderful touch, and we should surely bear it in mind when we come to that much later, cosmically ironic statement which I have already quoted that "there is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men" (Ch. 61).

The close, deep relationship which Middlemarch's narrator establishes with her reader is necessary if that ideal conception of himself which is the implied reader is to come fully into being. At the same time, however, the verbal and tonal ironies which appear in the narrative are necessary to help prepare us for the deeper thematic and cosmic ironies which underlie both the morality of the novel and the conclusion towards which it moves. If we recognize the lesser ironies, we will perhaps be better prepared to
recognize the greater ones. One of these—in fact, one of the most bitingly ironic statements in Victorian literature—is delivered by the narrator in her most gentle and reasonable tone of voice:

Nor can I suppose that when Mrs Casaubon is discovered in a fit of weeping six weeks after her wedding, the situation will be regarded as tragic. Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual, and we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. The element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity. (Ch. 20)

"That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency" is, of course, not tragedy at all, but irony, the irony of the human condition. The passage I have just quoted denies the possibility of heroism or tragedy as effectively as anything in Thackeray or Trollope, and, of course, the statement is fully dramatized by the entire novel. Surely the hardest lesson the novel teaches us is that, despite our courageous and worthwhile attempts to have sympathy and empathy for others, we must live "well
wadded with stupidity," or else die quickly of the suffering that surrounds us.

The narrator closes *Middlemarch* with a "Finale," as she opened it with a "Prelude." In it the ironic story of Dorothea comes full circle, as, by implication, does the ironic human condition which the novel reflects. The narrator tells us that

Will became an ardent public man, working well in those times when reforms were begun with a young hopefulness of immediate good which has been much checked in our days and getting at last returned to Parliament by a constituency who paid his expenses. Dorothea could have liked nothing better, since wrongs existed, than that her husband should be in the thick of a struggle against them, and that she should give him wifely help. Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done—not even Sir James Chettam, who went no further than the negative prescription that she ought not to have married Will Ladislaw.

That final sentence is a biting enough criticism of those who react negatively to Dorothea's choice, for the question of what Dorothea could or should have done hangs ironically unanswered over the whole novel. The narrator has established for Dorothea tragic potential and tragic
emotion but has denied her, because of conditions beyond Dorothea's control, any possibility of tragic or heroic action, as she goes on to make clear in the "Finale":

Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it. A new Theresa will hardly have the opportunity of reforming a conventual life, any more than a new Antigone will spend her heroic piety in daring all for the sake of a brother's burial: the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is for ever gone. But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know.

As implied readers we have learned fellow-feeling in the course of the novel, and the narrator here uses that fellow-feeling to impress upon us that we are not only well wadded with stupidity against the suffering around us but that the daily trivialities of our lives help to cause that suffering. It is the kind of trap one finds in an ironic universe, from which the consolations of comedy and tragedy have fled.

The narrator concludes that Dorothea's "finely-touched
spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible. Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs." Critics generally seem either to ignore the ending of the book (Dorothea's marriage to Will) or to look for reasons for its failure. I do not think that it fails, but, rather, that the narrator here gives her implied readers what she has been preparing them for all along. She denies them the satisfaction of either comedy or tragedy and leaves them instead to draw whatever small satisfaction is possible from an ironic vision of the world. The faintly optimistic remark about the "growing good of the world" can be accepted or not; certainly her previous statement about "those times when reforms were begun with a young hopefulness of immediate good which has been much checked in our days" tends to undercut it. But both the
narrator's commentary and the story she has related have served to lead us to this ending and to force on us the conclusion that Dorothea herself has implicitly accepted: when circumstances make heroism and tragedy impossible, all that is left is the ironic consolation of attempting to become a more self-aware and sympathetic person oneself and to leave the world and the people in it just a little better than one found them.
I am attracted to Victorian fiction and have chosen four of its better-known practitioners to study in the preceding chapters for two main reasons. First, I am sympathetic to the technique of the commenting narrator and I regret the disregard for its possibilities that has characterized twentieth-century criticism and theory. I agree with Wayne Booth when he says that "though garrulity in narrators is as tedious as garrulity in acquaintances, though commenting narrators are, in fact, peculiarly tempted to be pompous and redundant, at their best they can yield a breadth of experience unlike that provided by any other artistic device."¹ That is, simply, though the Victorian narrative technique lends itself easily to abuse, it also has great potential strengths. The same can be said for the Lubbockian, strictly-dramatic technique— it was Henry James, after all, who noted that the house of fiction has many rooms.

My second reason is that the best of the Victorian novelists had a lofty vision of their art and of its social function—a vision which, if it has not disappeared from the consciousness of modern novelists, at least seems to have been minimized by them, and ignored by the theorists. Thackeray, Trollope, and George Eliot were very much concerned with making better novel-readers of their audience, with creating implied readers who could comprehend the difference between good and bad novels and who could read with discrimination and sympathy. The concern arose naturally from their belief that fiction was important, that it had the power, if not to change people's lives, at least to make some impact on them. And I see no evidence that these novelists were merely pandering to the prevailing moral truisms; they believed in what they were doing, and they had a good grasp of the issues involved. Witness Trollope's narrator on one difference between novels and reality:

People are so much more worldly in practice than they are in theory, so much keener after their own gratification in detail than they are in the abstract, that the narrative of many an adventure would shock us, though the same adventure would not shock us in the action. One girl tells another how she has changed her mind in love; and the friend sympathizes with the friend, and perhaps applauds. Had the story been told in print,
the friend who had listened with equanimity would have read of such vacillation with indignation. She who vacillated herself would have hated her own performance when brought before her judgment as a matter in which she had no personal interest. 2

There is nothing particularly unusual about the sort of compartmenting Trollope describes here, but surely he is implying that one of the goals fiction may strive for is the breakdown of such compartmental thinking, the encouragement of a growing self-knowledge in the reader. The same point is emphasized in an important statement from a recent Trollope critic, Robert M. Polhemus:

Trollope wrote about his changing world, but he himself helped to change it. . . . The popular Victorian novelist had a tremendous influence on his world. We can imagine what reading novels could mean to a girl living in an English village who knew perhaps fifty people at most. The novel, for thousands, became an important way of knowing, and a writer like Trollope, to use Marshall McLuhan's terms, extended the consciousness of his public. The closest analogy we can make today to the impact of the novel in the last century is the effect of television on our world, and when we have said that, we can begin to appreciate what a humane and noble enterprise the Victorian novel was. A popular art which, to a surprising degree, avoids complacency and does not pander to its audience appears to us as a kind of miracle. And yet the major Victorian

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2 *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (Boston, 1964), Ch. 56.
novelists, like Trollope, involved though they were in a highly commercial undertaking, sought to change people for the better and make them see their own problems and faults.  

Knowledge of the world and society, knowledge of other people and their psychological motivations, self-knowledge and the ability to judge more objectively--these kinds of wisdom, and many more, the best Victorian novelists attempted consciously to impart to their readers. As George Eliot wrote in one of her critical pieces, "our social novels profess to represent the people as they are, and the unreality of their representations is a grave evil. The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. . . . A picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of human sentiment." Given that overriding concern in the implied authors, I think it understandable--perhaps even inevitable--that the Victorian novelists fixed upon the device of the commenting narrator

3The Changing World of Anthony Trollope (Berkeley, Calif., 1968), pp. 244-5.

as the one most likely to produce the desired effects.

Presumably, the Victorian critics would have shared the idealistic goals sketched by Polhemus in the passage I have quoted. And yet, as we have seen, their attacks were, though not unanimous, sufficiently strong to help eventually to discredit that particular approach as a viable narrative alternative. How does one explain this fact? First, there can be no question that this narrative method was susceptible to great abuse, as Booth has noted; and it was terribly abused, so that a good deal of criticism was justified. In addition, the critics were struggling to develop a theory of this still relatively new art form called the novel, and in many cases—I think unfortunately—they latched onto the drama, with its already codified rules, as an apt analogy. The novelists, on the other hand, did not much concern themselves with rules and theories—with technique per se—other than as the means one chose to achieve the important goal of affecting the reader. Novels were whatever they wrote, and, to restate an old formula, their primary concerns were to teach people and to please them. As the critics viewed the matter from a much different perspective, quite possibly they just did not
understand what the novelists were trying to do. It is important to note, however, that the Victorian critics lent their weight to a movement that would culminate in the rejection of nearly everything that the Victorian implied authors stood for in their novels.

To illustrate my point, let me call on a now almost forgotten critic from the turn of the century, Charles Whibley. In sentences that sound all too familiar, Whibley attacks Thackeray's intrusions and his sentimentality: "These excesses of sentiment are plain for all to see. They interrupt the progress of the story with irritating frequency. They put a needless accent upon what is called the 'cynicism' of Thackeray, and confuse the very simple method of the book." Then, as an example, Whibley quotes the passage from *Vanity Fair* in which the Manager states that "this, dear friends and companions, is my amiable object--to walk with you through the Fair, to examine the shops and the shows there; and that we should all come home after the flare, and the noise, and the gaiety, and be perfectly miserable in private." Whibley adds a rhetorical question--a most revealing and significant rhetorical question: "But why should we be miserable--in
private or public—about that in which our interest is, or should be, purely artistic?"\(^5\) That question, surely, is the crux of the matter; its answer demands a justification of all the assumptions Victorian novelists made about their art, as it demands a justification of the assumptions that lie behind this study. For if our relationship to a novel is, or should be, a purely artistic one, then the relationships that the Victorian novelists attempted to establish with their readers (i.e., the kinds of implied readers they tried to create and the methods they used to do so) are unjustifiable, or perhaps irrelevant. A novel is reduced to a purely aesthetic object having little relation to anything but itself and the ideal form towards which it should be striving. Further, a novel should be striving not merely toward the dramatic but probably toward some even purer form—music perhaps. To put it bluntly, according to this view novels have no redeeming social value, and the Victorian novelists were all misguided.

My purpose here, in my conclusion, is not to begin another treatise as long as or longer than the one I have

\(^5\) *William Makepeace Thackeray* (Edinburgh, 1903), pp. 93-4.
just finished. Rather, I would like simply to emphasize the fact that had I not rejected the assumption contained in Whibley's question—an assumption which I believe is shared by many critics and teachers today—then I could not have undertaken this study. The novel is not pure form, nor can it be; and though it may offer us only an analogue of reality, it is an analogue of reality. If we do not emerge from our fictional experience as improved people (either intellectually wiser or morally better), we have, in a very real sense, wasted our time. These are sweeping generalizations, I know, and the process of becoming "better" can take many forms. We can become the implied reader of a novel and take away with us when we are done that ideal vision of ourselves as something with which to compare our everyday, fallible behavior; or we can, on the other hand, react with revulsion or despair to the reader implied in a particular novel; but the thought necessary for either the acceptance or the denial should still teach us something about ourselves and our world. If it does not, then we are not thinking but are using the novels we read for mindless escapism.
At this point it is appropriate to raise a problem which doubtless has been bothering my own thinking reader for some time now: When is the implied reader finally created in the course of a novel? Is there a point after which delaying the process would cause a partial destruction of effect? I have been pondering these questions and I have been forced to conclude that, illogical as it may seem at first, the implied reader is never fully and finally created, that he cannot be. The fact is that none of the components I have been dealing with can be put in stasis, frozen forever like Keats' Grecian urn. If we give ourselves over fully to the implied author (especially the very skillful one), we may become his ideal implied reader for an instant, but for an instant only. After that, the delicate balance point when novel, implied author, implied reader, and real self all come together successfully is already a part of our past and thus begins to change. Further experience and thought—as well as simple escape from the thrall of the novel—will begin to modify the components of the balance and our view of them, and we may finally end by altogether rejecting that implied reader we had momentarily become.
But even that hypothesis—that we can fully become the ideal implied reader for an instant—is faulty. Lowry Nelson, Jr. has written that "as readers we willingly enter into an imagined cosmos not properly as escapists or dupes but as provisional believers and hopeful collaborators; we enter into the world of the 'as if,' the simulacrum of reality, the self-aware questioners of what reality is." If this is so, and I think it should be, then we are the self-aware questioners of that imagined cosmos as well. If we are not questioners as we read, we must be as soon as we finish reading, for every novel will have a different implied author and a different implied reader, and allowing ourselves to become any one of those implied readers without thinking will have consequences. Even though I become the implied reader of the implied author Anthony Trollope in The Warden and Barchester Towers as I read the novels, I do not particularly want to remain that implied reader or to have the values he accepts impinge too seriously on the values held by my real self. However, the critical intelli-

gence I bring to bear, after finishing the novels, does help me to appreciate more fully both the skill of Trollope's art and the values held by the implied author of these particular works.

The type of study I have undertaken here perhaps lends itself most readily to novels told by self-aware narrators of the kind usually labelled "intrusive" or "omniscient": that is, the novel that flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and then disappeared, except for an occasional oddity or self-conscious tour de force, like the recent *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles. I think my approach could be applied with good results to such novelists as Defoe, Fielding, Smollett, and Dickens, as well as a host of lesser-known English writers from these centuries. In addition, I believe it might prove rewarding to examine the great continental novelists of the nineteenth century from the same standpoint, especially if they were to be compared and contrasted with their English counterparts. However, we should not overlook the applicability of my theory and method, when appropriately modified and adapted, to the entire range of fiction. No matter what the subject matter of a novel or the narrative technique it employs,
it will have a shaping intelligence—an implied author—and it will be moving toward the creation of an implied reader. Ideally, anyone who reads a novel should recognize that an implied author is attempting in various ways to create an implied reader. That ideally self-aware part of our hypothetical Everyman reader will then be much better prepared to examine critically the extent to which he has become or has rejected that implied reader, and to examine the effects of his acceptance or rejection on his behavior as a real person in the real world.
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