**Alan Palmer, “Constructing Social Minds in Novels: Perspectives from Cognitive Narratology”**

**Abstract**: Cognitive narratology is an exciting new branch of literary studies that has revealed unexpected and important insights into a wide range of narrative texts. This paper applies some of its conceptual tools to one of the great passages of twentieth-century English literature: the description of Guy Crouchback’s departure from Italy at the beginning of Evelyn Waugh’s novel *Men at Arms* (1952). I approach this passage from the following four perspectives: storyworlds, theory of mind (i.e. our awareness of the minds of others), intermental (or joint, group, shared, or collective) thought, and unconscious thought. I argue that:

-         the passage constructs a fictional storyworld that readers have to gain access to in order to understand the narrative;

-         readers gain access to this storyworld primarily by trying to follow the workings of the minds of the characters who inhabit it, and, in particular, by following how these characters try to follow the workings of each other’s minds;

-         one of the minds that is active in the passage is the collective or group mind of the inhabitants of the town; and

-         some of the thinking that this group mind does is unconscious.

In considering the last issue, I make use of some of the ideas on unconscious thought that are developed in *Strangers to Ourselves* (2002) by the psychologist Timothy Wilson. Although he discusses only individuals, I show that it is illuminating to apply his ideas on the role of the unconscious to social minds, i.e. the thinking of groups. Because the workings of the social mind of the town have a significant unconscious element, the town judges people in the same way as the individual unconscious mind, the town’s attitudes to individuals are conditioned by what Wilson calls *feeling rules,* and, as a result, the town has *dual attitudes* towards Crouchback and other individuals. And, most importantly, these features account for what is most remarkable and distinctive about the passage – its counterintuitive and apparently paradoxical quality.