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Freud's Masterplot: A Model for Narrative

Our exploration so far of how plots may work and what may motivate them suggests, if not the need, at least the intellectual desirability of finding a model—a model that would provide a synthetic and comprehensive grasp of the workings of plot, in the most general sense, and of the uses for plot. To meet these requirements, such a model will have to be more dynamic than those most often proposed by the structuralists; it will have to provide ways to think about the movement of plot and its motor force in human desire, its peculiar relation to beginnings and ends, its apparent claim to rescue meaning from temporal flux. As my argument thus far will have indicated, I find the most suggestive indications for the needed model in the work of Freud, since this still offers the most probing inquiry into the dynamics of the psychic life, and hence, by possible extension, of texts. If we turn toward Freud, it is not in the attempt to psychoanalyze authors or readers or characters in narrative, but rather to suggest that by attempting to superimpose psychic functioning on textual functioning, we may discover something about how textual dynamics work and something about their psychic equivalences.

It may be helpful to begin our discussion by recapitulating for a moment, by way of one of the best essays in structuralist narratology, Tzvetan Todorov's "Narrative Transformations."[1] Working toward a greater formalization of the criteria advanced by Victor

Shklovsky and Vladimir Propp for understanding the "wholeness" of a narrative, Todorov elaborates a model of narrative transformation whereby plot—*sjužet, récit*—is constituted in the tension of two formal categories, difference and resemblance. Transformation—a change in a predicate term common to beginning and end—represents a synthesis of difference and resemblance; it is, we might say, the same-but-different. Now, "the same-but-different" is a common (and if inadequate, not altogether false) definition of metaphor. If Aristotle affirmed that the master of metaphor must have an eye for resemblances, modern treatments of the subject have affirmed equally the importance of difference included within the operation of resemblance, the chief value of the metaphor residing in its "tension." Narrative operates as metaphor in its affirmation of resemblance, in that it brings into relation different actions, combines them through perceived similarities (Todorov's common predicate term), appropriates them to a common plot, which implies the rejection of merely contingent (or unassimilable) incident or action. Plot is the structure of action in closed and legible wholes; it thus must *use* metaphor as the trope of its achieved interrelations, and it must *be* metaphoric insofar is it is totalizing. Yet it is equally apparent that the key figure of narrative must in some sense be not metaphor but metonymy: the figure of contiguity and combination, of the syntagmatic relation.[2] The description of narrative needs metonymy as the figure of linkage in the signifying chain: precedence and consequence, the movement from one detail to another, the movement *toward* totalization under the mandate of desire.

The problem with "the same-but-different" as a definition of narrative is the implication of simultaneity and stasis in such a formulation, its implicitly spatial modeling of a temporal form. Todorov, faithful to the lesson of Propp, recognizes the need to consider sequence and succession as well as the paradigmatic matrix; he supplements his definition with the remark: "Rather than a 'coin with two faces,' [transformation] is an operation in two directions: it affirms at once resemblance and difference; it puts time into motion and suspends it, in a single movement; it allows

discourse to acquire a meaning without this meaning becoming pure information; in a word, it makes narrative possible and reveals its very definition" (p. 240). The image of a double operation upon time has the value of returning us to the frequently eluded fact that narrative meanings are developed in time, that any narrative partakes more or less of what Proust called "un jeu formidable . . . avec le Temps," and that this game of time is not merely in the world of reference (or in the *fabula*) but also in the narrative, in the *sjužet*, if only because the meanings developed by narrative *take time*: they unfold through the time of reading. If at the end of a narrative we can suspend time in a moment when past and present hold together in a metaphor—which may be that recognition or *anagnorisis* which, said Aristotle, every good plot should bring—that moment does not abolish the movement, the slidings, the mistakes, and partial recognitions of the middle. The "dilatory space" of narrative, as Barthes calls it—the space of retard, postponement, error, and partial revelation—is the place of transformation: where the problems posed to and by initiatory desire are worked out and worked through.

Barthes makes explicit an assumption common to much thought about narrative when he claims that meaning (in the "classical" or "readable" text) resides in full predication, completion of the codes in a "plenitude" of signification, which makes the "passion for meaning" ultimately desire for the end. It is at the end—for Barthes as for Aristotle—that recognition brings its illumination, which then can shed retrospective light. The function of the end, whether considered syntactically (as in Todorov and Barthes) or ethically (as in Aristotle) or as formal or cosmological closure (as by Barbara H. Smith or Frank Kermode), continues to fascinate and to baffle.[3] One of the strongest statements of its determinative position in narrative plots comes in a passage from Sartre's *La Nausée* which bears quotation at some length. Sartre's protagonist, Roquentin, is reflecting on the meaning of "adventure" and the difference between living and narrating. When you narrate, you appear to start with a beginning. You say, "It was a fine autumn evening in 1922. I was a notary's clerk in Marommes." But, says Roquentin:

> In reality you have started at the end. It is there, invisible and present, it is what gives these few words the pomp and value of a beginning. "I was out walking, I had left the town without realizing it, I was thinking about my money troubles." This sentence, taken simply for what it is, means that the guy was absorbed, morose, a hundred miles from an adventure, exactly in a mood to let things happen without noticing them. But the end is there, transforming everything. For us, the guy is already the hero of the story. His moroseness, his money troubles are much more precious than ours, they are all gilded by the light of future passions. And the story goes on in the reverse: instants have stopped piling themselves up in a haphazard way one on another, they are caught up by the end of the story which draws them and each one in its turn draws the instant preceding it: "It was night, the street was deserted." The sentence is thrown out negligently, it seems superfluous; but we don't let ourselves be duped, we put it aside: this is a piece of information whose value we will understand later on. And we feel that the hero has lived all the details of this night as annunciations, as promises, or even that he lived only those that were promises, blind and deaf to all that did not herald adventure. We forget that the future wasn't yet there; the guy was walking in a night without premonitions, which offered him in disorderly fashion its monotonous riches, and he did not choose.[4]

In Roquentin's argument, the beginning presupposes the end, since the concept of an ending is necessary to that of a beginning. The idea of "adventure" has to do with what is to come, the *ad-venire*, so that an adventure is a piece of action in which beginnings are chosen by and for ends. The very possibility of meaning plotted through sequence and through time depends on the anticipated structuring force of the ending: the interminable would be the meaningless, and the lack of ending would jeopardize the beginning. We read the incidents of narration as "promises and annunciations" of final coherence, that metaphor that may be reached

through the chain of metonymies: across the bulk of the as yet unread middle pages, the end calls to the beginning, transforms and enhances it. As Roquentin further suggests, we read only those incidents and signs that can be construed as promise and annunciation, enchained toward a construction of significance—those markers that, as in the detective story, appear to be clues to the underlying intentionality of event. The sense of adventure thus plotted from its end, so to speak, has something of the rigor and necessity provided in poetry by meter and rhyme, the pattern of anticipation and completion which overcodes mere succession; or else, to take a banal example, the music of a film, which patterns our understanding of the action. The movie audience, for instance, instinctively recognizes finale music and begins to leave the theater when it tells them to do so.

The sense of a beginning, then, must in some important way be determined by the sense of an ending. We might say that we are able to read present moments—in literature and, by extension, in life—as endowed with narrative meaning only because we read them in anticipation of the structuring power of those endings that will retrospectively give them the order and significance of plot. To say "I have begun . . . " (whatever it may be) acquires meaning only through postulation of a narrative begun, and that beginning depends on its ending. Sartre pursues further his reflection on end-determination in his autobiography, *Les Mots*, describing how in order to escape his sense of himself as unnecessary, utterly contingent, he had recourse to a book discovered in his grandfather's library entitled *L'Enfance des hommes illustres*, which told of children named Johann Sebastian or Jean-Jacques and, without ever mentioning the names Bach and Rousseau, in recounting their childhood constantly inserted casual references to their future greatness, contriving the account so artfully that it was impossible to read of the most trivial incident without relating it to its subsequently revealed significance. These children, Sartre comments, "thought they were acting and talking at random, whereas the real purpose of their slightest remarks was to announce their destiny. . . . I read the lives of those falsely mediocre children as God had conceived

them: starting at the end."[5] Sartre in emulation began to see himself as in a book, being read by posterity "from death to birth"; he undertook to live his life retrospectively, in terms of the death that alone would confer meaning and necessity on existence. As he most succinctly puts it, "I became my own obituary" (p. 171).

All narrative may be in essence obituary in that, as our reading of *La Peau de chagrin* suggested, the retrospective knowledge that it seeks, the knowledge that comes after, stands on the far side of the end, in human terms on the far side of death. The further we inquire into the problem of ends, the more it seems to compel a further inquiry into its relation to the human end. As Frank Kermode has put it, man is always "in the middest," without direct knowledge of origin or endpoint, seeking the imaginative equivalents of closure that will confer significance on experience.[6] I have already cited Walter Benjamin's claim that a man's life "first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death."[7] Benjamin analyzes the implications of the common statement that the meaning of a man's life is revealed only in his death, to reach the conclusion that in narrative, death provides the very "authority" of the tale, since as readers we seek in narrative fictions the knowledge of death which in our own lives is denied to us. Hence Benjamin can state that "Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell." While this need not be a literal death—it can be some simulacrum, some end to a period, an arrest—very often it is. A popular proto-novelistic form was the Newgate biography, recording the life of a celebrated criminal—especially that life made significant by impending execution. And in the nineteenth-century novel, the deathbed scene repeatedly stands as a key moment of summing-up and transmission. We can at once call to mind Goriot's extended death agony, in *Le Père Goriot*, where he sums up and judges his life and his century; or the dying Miss Havisham's judgment of error and plea for forgiveness in *Great Expectations*; or Aunt Reed's deathbed reparations to Jane in *Jane Eyre*; or the key confession of the publican Luke Marks in *Lady Audley's Secret*; or, in a less sensationalistic vein, the summing-up of Emma's passionate aspirations and their failure in the anointment of her body by the

priest during the administration of the last rites in *Madame Bovary*; or the death of the writer Bergotte, obsessed at the last by interpretation—of a detail in a Vermeer painting—in Proust's *Recherche*. Whatever their specific content, and whatever their degree of tragic awareness or melodramatic enunciation, all such scenes offer the promise of a significant retrospect, a summing-up, the coming to completion of a fully predicated, and readable, sentence. It is in this sense that the death of the ending quickens meaning: death in narrative, says Benjamin, is the "flame" at which we as readers, solitary and forlorn because cut off from meaning, warm our "shivering" lives (p. 101).

These arguments from the end are at least apparently paradoxical, since narrative would seem to claim overt authority for its origin, for a "primal scene" from which—as from the scene of the crime in the detective story—"reality" assumes narratability, the signifying chain is established. We need to think further about the deathlike ending, its relation to origin, and to initiatory desire, and about how the interrelation of the two may determine and shape the middle—the "dilatory space" of postponement and error—and the kinds of vacillation between illumination and blindness that we find there. If in the beginning stands desire, and this shows itself ultimately to be desire for the end, between beginning and end stands a middle that we feel to be necessary (plots, Aristotle tells us, must be of "a certain length") but whose processes, of transformation and working-through, remain obscure. Here it is that Freud's most ambitious investigation of ends in relation to beginnings may be of help, and may contribute to a properly dynamic model of plot.

Let us undertake, then, to read *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) in intertextual relation to narrative fictions and the processes of plotting as we have begun to understand them. We may find a general legitimation for this enterprise in the fact that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* constitutes Freud's own masterplot, the essay where he lays out most fully a total scheme of how life proceeds from beginning to end, and how each individual life in its own manner repeats the masterplot and confronts the question of whether the

closure of an individual life is contingent or necessary. It is indeed so difficult to say what Freud is talking about in this essay—and especially, what he is *not* talking about—that we are almost forced to acknowledge that ultimately he is talking about the very possibility of talking about life—about its very "narratability." His boldest intention may be to provide a theory of comprehension of the dynamic of the life span, and hence of its narrative understanding. It is also notable that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is plotted in ways which, Freud suggests, have little to do with its original intention: near the end of the essay he speaks of the need to "throw oneself into a line of thought and to follow it wherever it leads."[8] The plotting of the masterplot is determined by the structural demands of Freud's thought, and it is in this spirit that we must read it as speaking of narrative plots.

Narrative always makes the implicit claim to be in a state of repetition, as a going over again of a ground already covered: a *sjužet* repeating the *fabula*, as the detective retraces the tracks of the criminal.[9] This claim to an act of repetition—"I sing of," "I tell of"—appears to be initiatory of narrative. It is equally initiatory of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: it is the first problem and clue that Freud confronts. Evidence of a "beyond" that does not fit neatly into the functioning of the pleasure principle comes first in the dreams of patients suffering from war neuroses or from the traumatic neuroses of peace: dreams that return to the moment of trauma, to relive its pain in apparent contradiction of the wish-fulfillment theory of dreams. This "dark and dismal" example is superseded by an example from "normal" life, and we have the celebrated moment of child's play: the toy thrown away, the reel on the string thrown out of the crib and pulled back, to the alternate exclamation of *fort* and *da*. When he has established the equivalence between making the toy disappear and the child's mother's disappearance, Freud is faced with a set of possible interpretations. Why does the child repeat an unpleasurable experience? It may be answered that by staging his mother's disappearance and return, the child is compensating for his instinctual renunciation. Yet the child has also staged disappearance alone, without reappearance,

as a game. This may make one want to argue that the essential experience involved is the movement from a passive to an active role in regard to his mother's disappearance, claiming mastery in a situation to which he has been compelled to submit.

Repetition as the movement from passivity to mastery reminds us of another essay, "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (1913), where Freud, considering Bassanio's choice of the lead casket in *The Merchant of Venice*—the correct choice in the suit of Portia—decides that the choice of the right maiden in man's literary play is also the choice of death; by this choice, he asserts an active mastery of what he must in fact endure. "Choice stands in the place of necessity, of destiny. In this way man overcomes death, which he has recognized intellectually."[10] If repetition is mastery, movement from the passive to the active, and if mastery is an assertion of control over what man must in fact submit to—choice, we might say, of an imposed end—we have already a suggestive comment on the grammar of plot, where repetition, taking us back again over the same ground, could have to do with the choice of ends.

But other possibilities suggest themselves to Freud at this point. The repetition of unpleasant experience—the mother's disappearance—might be explained by the motive of revenge, which would yield its own pleasure. The uncertainty that Freud faces here is whether repetition can be considered a primary event, independent of the pleasure principle, or whether there is always some direct yield of pleasure of another sort involved. The pursuit of this doubt takes Freud into the analytic experience, to his discovery of the analysand's need to repeat, rather than simply remember, the past: the analysand "is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past" (p. 18). In other words, as Freud argued in two papers that prepare the way for *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "The Dynamics of the Transference" (1912) and "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through" (1914), repetition—including the need to reproduce and to work through—is itself a form of remembering, brought into play when recollection properly speaking is blocked by resistance. Thus the

analyst encounters a "compulsion to repeat," which is the work of the unconscious repressed and becomes particularly discernible in the transference, where it can take "ingenious" forms. (I note here, as a subject for later exploration, that the transference is itself a kind of metaphor, a substitutive medium for the analysand's infantile experiences, and thus approximates the status of a text.) The compulsion to repeat gives patients a sense of being fatefully subject to a "perpetual recurrence of the same thing"; it can indeed suggest pursuit by a demonic power. We know from Freud's essay "The Uncanny" (1919) that this feeling of the demonic, arising from involuntary repetition, is a particular attribute of the literature of the uncanny, of texts of compulsive recurrence.[11]

Thus in analytic work (as also in literary texts) there is slim but real evidence of a compulsion to repeat which can override the pleasure principle, and which seems "more primitive, more elementary, more instinctual than the pleasure principle which it overrides" (p. 23). Now, repetition is so basic to our experience of literary texts that one is simultaneously tempted to say all and to say nothing on the subject. To state the matter baldly: rhyme, alliteration, assonance, meter, refrain, all the mnemonic elements of literature and indeed most of its tropes are in some manner repetitions that take us back in the text, that allow the ear, the eye, the mind to make connections, conscious or unconscious, between different textual moments, to see past and present as related and as establishing a future that will be noticeable as some variation in the pattern. Todorov's "same-but-different" depends on repetition. If we think of the trebling characteristic of the folktale, and of all formulaic literature, we may consider that the repetition by three constitutes the minimal repetition to the perception of series, which would make it the minimal intentional structure of action, the minimum plot. Narrative, we have seen, must ever present itself as a repetition of events that have already happened, and within this postulate of a generalized repetition it must make use of specific, perceptible repetitions in order to create plot, that is, to show us a significant interconnection of events. An event gains meaning by its repetition, which is both the recall of an earlier moment and a

variation of it: the concept of repetition hovers ambiguously between the idea of reproduction and that of change, forward and backward movement (as we shall consider further in the next chapter). Repetition creates a *return* in the text, a doubling back. We cannot say whether this return is a return *to* or a return *of*: for instance, a return to origins or a return of the repressed. Repetition through this ambiguity appears to suspend temporal process, or rather, to subject it to an indeterminate shuttling or oscillation that binds different moments together as a middle that might turn forward or back. This inescapable middle is suggestive of the demonic: repetition and return are perverse and difficult, interrupting simple movement forward. The relation of narrative plot to story may indeed appear to partake of the demonic, as a kind of tantalizing instinctual play, a re-enactment that encounters the magic and the curse of reproduction or "representation." But to say more about the operations of repetition, we need to read further in Freud's text.

"What follows is speculation" (p. 24). With this gesture, Freud, in the manner of Rousseau's dismissal of the facts in the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, begins the fourth chapter and his sketch of the economic and energetic model of the mental apparatus: the system Pcpt-Cs (the perceptual-conscious system) and the unconscious, the role of the outer layer as shield against excitations, and the definition of trauma as the breaching of the shield, producing a flood of stimuli which knocks the pleasure principle out of operation. Given this situation, the repetition of traumatic experiences in the dreams of neurotics can be seen to have the function of seeking retrospectively to master the flood of stimuli, to perform a mastery or binding of mobile energy through developing that anxiety which earlier was lacking—a lack which permitted the breach and thus caused the traumatic neurosis. Thus the repetition compulsion is carrying out a task that must be accomplished *before* the dominance of the pleasure principle can begin. Repetition is hence a primary event, independent of the pleasure principle and more primitive. Freud now moves into an exploration of the theory of the instincts, or drives, the most basic forces of psychic life.[12] The

instinctual is the realm of freely mobile, "unbound" energy: the "primary process," where energy seeks immediate discharge, where no postponement of gratification is tolerated. It appears that it must be "the task of the higher strata of the mental apparatus to bind the instinctual excitation reaching the primary process" before the pleasure principle can assert its dominance over the psychic economy (pp. 34–35). We may say that at this point in the essay we have moved from a postulate of repetition as the assertion of mastery (as in the passage from passivity to activity in the child's game) to a conception whereby repetition works as a process of *binding* toward the creation of an energetic constant-state situation which will permit the emergence of mastery and the possibility of postponement.

That Freud at this point evokes once again the demonic and the uncanny nature of repetition, and refers us not only to children's play but to their demand for exact repetition in storytelling as well, points our way back to literature. Repetition in all its literary manifestations may in fact work as a "binding," a binding of textual energies that allows them to be mastered by putting them into serviceable form, usable "bundles," within the energetic economy of the narrative. Serviceable form must, I think, mean perceptible form: repetition, repeat, recall, symmetry, all these journeys back in the text, returns to and returns of, that allow us to bind one textual moment to another in terms of similarity or substitution rather than mere contiguity. Textual energy, all that is aroused into expectancy and possibility in a text, can become usable by plot only when it has been bound or formalized. It cannot otherwise be plotted in a course to significant discharge, which is what the pleasure principle is charged with doing. To speak of "binding" in a literary text is thus to speak of any of the formalizations, blatant or subtle, that force us to recognize sameness within difference, or the very emergence of a *sjužet* from the material of *fabula*. As the word "binding" itself suggests, these formalizations and the recognitions they provoke may in some sense be painful: they create a delay, a postponement in the discharge of energy, a turning back from immediate pleasure, to ensure that the ultimate pleasurable

discharge will be more complete. The most effective or, at the least, the most challenging texts may be those that are most delayed, most highly bound, most painful.

Freud now moves toward a closer inquiry concerning the relation between the compulsion to repeat and the instinctual. The answer lies in "a universal attribute of instincts and perhaps of organic life in general" that "*an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things*" (p. 36). Instincts, which we tend to think of as a drive toward change, may rather be an expression of "the conservative nature of living things." The organism has no wish to change; if its conditions remained the same, it would constantly repeat the very same course of life. Modifications are the effect of external stimuli, and these modifications are in turn stored up for further repetition, so that, while the instincts may give the appearance of tending toward change, they "are merely seeking to reach an ancient goal by paths alike old and new" (p. 38). Hence Freud is able to proffer, with a certain bravado, the formulation: "*the aim of all life is death.*" We are given an evolutionary image of the organism in which the tension created by external influences has forced living substance to "diverge ever more widely from its original course of life and to make ever more complicated *détours* before reaching its aim of death" (pp. 38–49). In this view, the self-preservative instincts function to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death, to ward off any ways of returning to the inorganic which are not immanent to the organism itself. In other words, "the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion." It must struggle against events (dangers) that would help it to achieve its goal too rapidly—by a kind of short-circuit.

We are here somewhere near the heart of Freud's masterplot for organic life, and it generates a certain analytic force in its superimposition on fictional plots. What operates in the text through repetition is the death instinct, the drive toward the end. Beyond and under the domination of the pleasure principle is this baseline of plot, its basic "pulsation," sensible or audible through the repetitions that take us back in the text. Yet repetition also retards the pleasure principle's search for the gratification of discharge, which

is another forward-moving drive of the text. We have a curious situation in which two principles of forward movement operate upon one another so as to create retard, a dilatory space in which pleasure can come from postponement in the knowledge that this—in the manner of forepleasure?—is a necessary approach to the true end. Both principles can indeed become dilatory, a pleasuring in and from delay, though both also in their different ways recall to us the need for end. This apparent paradox may be consubstantial with the fact that repetition can take us both backward and forward because these terms have become reversible: the end is a time before the beginning.

Between these two moments of quiescence, plot itself stands as a kind of divergence or deviance, a postponement in the discharge which leads back to the inanimate. For plot starts (or must give the illusion of starting) from that moment at which story, or "life," is stimulated from quiescence into a state of narratability, into a tension, a kind of irritation, which demands narration. I spoke earlier of narrative desire, the arousal that creates the narratable as a condition of tumescence, appetency, ambition, quest, and gives narrative a forward-looking intention.[13] This is to say as well that beginnings are the arousal of an intention in reading, stimulation into a tension, and we could explore the specifically erotic nature of the tension of writing and its rehearsal in reading in a number of exemplary texts, such as Rousseau's account, in the *Confessions*, of how his novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse* was born of a masturbatory reverie and its necessary fictions, or the similar opening of Jean Genet's *Notre-Dame des fleurs*. The ensuing narrative—the Aristotelian "middle"—is maintained in a state of tension, as a prolonged deviance from the quiescence of the "normal"—which is to say, the unnarratable—until it reaches the terminal quiescence of the end. The development of a narrative shows that the tension is maintained as an ever more complicated postponement or *détour* leading back to the goal of quiescence. As Sartre and Benjamin compellingly argued, the narrative must tend toward its end, seek illumination in its own death. Yet this must be the right death, the correct end. The complication of the detour is related to the danger

of short-circuit: the danger of reaching the end too quickly, of achieving the im-proper death. The improper end indeed lurks throughout narrative, frequently as the wrong choice: choice of the wrong casket, misapprehension of the magical agent, false erotic object choice. The development of the subplot in the classical novel usually suggests (as William Empson has intimated) a different solution to the problems worked through by the main plot, and often illustrates the danger of short-circuit.[14] The subplot stands as one means of warding off the danger of short-circuit, assuring that the main plot will continue through to the right end. The desire of the text (the desire of reading) is hence desire for the end, but desire for the end reached only through the at least minimally complicated detour, the intentional deviance, in tension, which is the plot of narrative.

Deviance, detour, an intention that is irritation: these are characteristics of the narratable, of "life" as it is the material of narrative, of *fabula* become *sjužet*. Plot is a kind of arabesque or squiggle toward the end. It is like that arabesque from *Tristram Shandy*, retraced by Balzac, that suggests the arbitrary, transgressive, gratuitous line of narrative, its deviance from the straight line, the shortest distance between beginning and end—which would be the collapse of one into the other, of life into immediate death. The detour of life in fact creates a momentary detour in Freud's essay, in chapter 5, as he considers the sexual instincts, which are in a sense the true life instincts yet also conservative in that they bring back earlier states of living substance; yet again, they stand in dynamic opposition to the death instincts, and hence confer a "vacillating rhythm" on the life of the organism: "One group of instincts rushes forward so as to reach the final aim of life as swiftly as possible; but when a particular stage in the advance has been reached, the other group jerks back to a certain point to make a fresh start and so prolong the journey" (p. 41). Freud's description of the "vacillating rhythm" may in particular remind us of how a highly plotted nineteenth-century novel will often leave one set of characters at a critical juncture to take up another where it left them, moving this set forward, then rushing back to the first, creating an

uneven movement of advance, turning back the better to move forward. As with the play of repetition and the pleasure principle, forward and back, advance and return interact to create the vacillating and apparently deviant middle.

Freud's text will in a moment take us closer to understanding the formal organization of this deviance toward the end. But it also at this point offers further suggestions about the beginning. For when he has identified both the death instincts and the life (sexual) instincts as conservative, tending toward the restoration of an earlier state of things, Freud feels obliged to deconstruct the illusion of a human drive toward perfection, an impulsion forward and upward: a force that—this is where he quotes *Faust* as the classic text of man's striving—"presses ever forward unsubdued." As we have already noted, the illusion of a striving toward perfection is to be explained by instinctual repression and the persisting tension of the repressed instinct, and the resulting difference between the pleasure of satisfaction demanded and that achieved, the difference that "provides the driving factor which will permit of no halting at any position attained" (p. 42). This process of subtraction, we saw, is fundamental to Lacan's theory of desire, born of the gap or split between need and demand. Lacan helps us to understand how the aims and imaginings of desire—its enactments in response to imaginary scenarios of fulfillment—move us from the realm of basic drives to highly elaborated fictions. Desire necessarily becomes textual by way of a specifically narrative impulse, since desire is metonymy, a forward drive in the signifying chain, an insistence of meaning toward the occulted objects of desire.

The complexities of the next-to-last chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* need not be rehearsed in detail. In brief, the chapter leads Freud twice into the findings of biology, first on the track of the origins of death, to find out whether it is a necessary or merely a contingent alternative to interminability, then in pursuit of the origins of sexuality, to see whether it satisfies the description of the instinctual as conservative. Biology can offer no sure answer to either investigation, but it offers at least metaphorical confirmation of the necessary dualism of Freud's thought, and encouragement

to reformulate his earlier opposition of ego instincts to sexual instincts as one between life instincts and death instincts, a shift in the grouping of oppositional forces which then allows him to reformulate the libidinal instincts themselves as the Eros "of the poets and philosophers" which holds all living things together and which seeks to combine things in ever greater living wholes. Desire reformulated as Eros thus is a large, embracing force, totalizing in intent, tending toward combination in new unities: metonymy in the search to become metaphor.

But for the symmetry of Freud's opposition to be complete, he needs to be able to ascribe to Eros, as to the death instinct, the characteristic of a need to restore an earlier state of things. Since biology will not answer, Freud, in a remarkable gesture, turns toward myth, the myth of the Androgyne in Plato's *Symposium*, which precisely ascribes Eros to a search to recover a lost primal unity that was split asunder. Freud's apologetic tone in this last twist to his argument is partly disingenuous, for we detect a contentment to have formulated the forces of the human masterplot as "philosopher and poet." As he would write with evident satisfaction late in his career—in the *New Introductory Lectures*—"The theory of the instincts is so to say our mythology. Instincts are mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness."[15] Here in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the apology is coupled with a reflection that much of the obscurity of the processes Freud has been considering "is merely due to our being obliged to operate with the scientific terms, that is to say with the figurative language, peculiar to psychology" (p. 60). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, we are to understand, is radically figural, a displaced argument that knows no literal terms. It is not merely metapsychology, but also mythopoesis, necessarily resembling "an equation with two unknown quantities" (p. 57), as Freud concedes, or, we might say, a formal dynamic the terms of which are not substantial but purely relational. We perceive that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is itself a plot which has formulated that dynamic necessary to its own detour.

The last chapter of Freud's text recapitulates, but not without difference. He returns to the problem of the relation between the

instinctual processes of repetition and the dominance of the pleasure principle. One of the earliest and most important functions of the mental apparatus is to bind the instinctual impulses that impinge upon it, to convert freely mobile energy into a quiescent cathexis. This is a preparatory act on behalf of the pleasure principle, which permits its dominance. Sharpening his distinction between a *function* and a *tendency*, Freud argues that the pleasure principle is a "tendency operating in the service of a function whose business it is to free the mental apparatus entirely from excitation or to keep the amount of excitation in it constant or to keep it as low as possible" (p. 62). This function is concerned "with the most universal endeavour of all living substance—namely to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world." Hence one can consider "binding" to be a preliminary function that prepares the excitation for its final elimination in the pleasure of discharge. In this manner, one could say that the repetition compulsion and the death instinct serve the pleasure principle; in a larger sense, the pleasure principle, keeping watch on the invasion of stimuli from without and especially from within, seeking their discharge, serves the death instinct, making sure that the organism is permitted to return to quiescence. The whole evolution of the mental apparatus appears as a taming of the instincts so that the pleasure principle—itself tamed, displaced—can appear to dominate in the complicated detour called life which leads back to death. In fact, Freud seems here at the very end to imply that the two antagonistic instincts serve one another in a dynamic interaction that is a complete and self-regulatory economy which makes both end and detour perfectly necessary and interdependent. The organism must live in order to die in the proper manner, to die the right death. One must have the arabesque of plot in order to reach the end. One must have metonymy in order to reach metaphor.

We emerge from reading *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* with a dynamic model that structures ends (death, quiescence, nonnarratability) against beginnings (Eros, stimulation into tension, the desire of narrative) in a manner that necessitates the middle as detour, as struggle toward the end under the compulsion of imposed delay,

as arabesque in the dilatory space of the text. The model proposes that we live in order to die, hence that the intentionality of plot lies in its orientation toward the end even while the end must be achieved only through detour. This re-establishes the necessary distance between beginning and end, maintained through the play of those drives that connect them yet prevent the one collapsing back into the other: the way in which metonymy and metaphor serve one another, the necessary temporality of the same-but-different which to Todorov constitutes the narrative transformation. Crucial to the space of this play are the repetitions serving to bind the energy of the text so as to make its final discharge more effective. In fictional plots, these bindings are a system of repetitions which are returns to and returns of, confounding the movement forward to the end with a movement back to origins, reversing meaning within forward-moving time, serving to formalize the system of textual energies, offering the pleasurable possibility (or illusion) of "meaning" wrested from "life."

As a dynamic-energetic model of narrative plot, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* gives an image of how the nonnarratable existence is stimulated into the condition of narratability, to enter a state of deviance and detour (ambition, quest, the pose of a mask) in which it is maintained for a certain time, through an at least minimally complex extravagance, before returning to the quiescence of the nonnarratable. The energy generated by deviance, extravagance, excess—an energy that belongs to the textual hero's career and to the reader's expectation, his desire of and for the text—maintains the plot in its movement through the vacillating play of the middle, where repetition as binding works toward the generation of significance, toward recognition and the retrospective illumination that will allow us to grasp the text as total metaphor, but not therefore to discount the metonymies that have led to it. The desire of the text is ultimately the desire for the end, for that recognition which is the moment of the death of the reader in the text. Yet recognition cannot abolish textuality, does not annul that middle which is the place of repetitions, oscillating between blindness and recognition, between origin and ending. Repetition toward recognition constitutes the truth of the narrative text.

It is characteristic of textual energy in narrative that it should always be on the verge of premature discharge, of short-circuit. The reader experiences the fear—and excitation—of the improper end, which is symmetrical to—but far more immediate and present than—the fear of endlessness. The possibility of short-circuit can, of course, be represented in all manner of threats to the protagonist or to any of the functional logics that demand completion; it most commonly takes the form of temptation to the mistaken erotic object choice, who may be of the "Belle Dame sans merci" variety, or may be the too perfect and hence annihilatory bride. Throughout the Romantic tradition, it is perhaps most notably the image of incest (of the fraternal-sororal variety) that hovers as the sign of a passion interdicted because its fulfillment would be too perfect, a discharge indistinguishable from death, the very cessation of narrative movement. Narrative is in a state of temptation to oversameness, and where we have no literal threat of incest (as in Chateaubriand, or Faulkner) lovers choose to turn the beloved into a soul sister so that possession will be either impossible or mortal: Goethe's Werther and Lotte, for instance; or Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, where Saint-Preux's letter to Julie following their night of love begins: "Mourons, ô ma douce amie" ("Let us die, my beloved"); or Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's Axël and Sara, who choose death on the threshold of consummation. Incest is only the exemplary version of a temptation of short-circuit from which the protagonist and the text must be led away, into detour, into the cure that prolongs narrative.

It may finally be in the logic of our argument that repetition speaks in the text of a return which ultimately subverts the very notion of beginning and end, suggesting that the idea of beginning presupposes the end, that the end is a time before the beginning, and hence that the interminable never can be finally bound in a plot. Any final authority claimed by narrative plots, whether of origin or end, is illusory. Analysis, Freud would eventually discover, is inherently interminable, since the dynamics of resistance and the transference can always generate new beginnings in relation to any possible end.[16] It is the role of fictional plots to impose an end which yet suggests a return, a new beginning: a rereading. Any

narrative, that is, wants at its end to refer us back to its middle, to the web of the text: to recapture us in its doomed energies.

Some demonstration of how the model derived from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* may be useful in thinking about the plot of a specific text has already been suggested in the discussion of *La Peau de chagrin*, where Raphaël de Valentin's discovery of the talisman and its hyperbolic power to realize desire is simultaneously the discovery of death, and where his subsequent choices to preserve the self can only institute a deathlike existence, devoid of desire and movement, through which desire will once again reassert itself and its drive to the end. Raphaël at the last wishes to will himself into the "conservative law of nature," hoping in his retreat to the mountains of Auvergne to become like a lichen on the rock—nearly quiescent, almost inorganic. The effort is, of course, doomed, and superseded by a last outburst of desire, and then total quiescence. *Le Rouge et le noir* offers a more complex and oblique relation to the model, willing an abrupt and perhaps arbitrary end in such a way as to suggest a permanent deferral and evasion of the problem of the end. I shall in the next chapter discuss Dickens's *Great Expectations* specifically in light of the model, to consider how the energies released in its liminary primal scene (Pip's terrifying encounter with the convict Magwitch in the graveyard) are subsequently bound in a number of wished-for but superficial ways, and in other latent and more effective ways, which have the quality of repetition and return. Each of Pip's choices, consciously life-furthering, apparently forward oriented, in fact seems to lead back to the enigma of origins.

The stories of Raphaël and Pip, perhaps even that of Julien Sorel, and of so many other young protagonists of the nineteenth-century novel, while ostensibly a striving forward and upward, a progress, may also be, perhaps more profoundly, the narrative of an attempted homecoming: of the effort to reach an assertion of origin through ending, to find the same in the different, the time before in the time after. Most of the great nineteenth-century novels tell this same tale. Georg Lukács has called the novel "the literary form of the transcendent homelessness of the idea" and argued that it

is in the discrepancy between the idea and the organic that time, the process of duration, becomes constitutive of the novel as of no other genre:

> Only in the novel, whose very matter is seeking and failing to find the essence, is time posited together with the form: time is the resistance of the organic—which possesses a mere semblance of life—to the present meaning, the will of life to remain within its own completely enclosed immanence. In the epic the life-immanence of meaning is so strong that it abolishes time: life enters eternity as life, the organic retains nothing of time except the phase of blossoming; fading and dying are forgotten and left entirely behind. In the novel, meaning is separated from life, and hence the essential from the temporal; we might almost say that the entire inner action of the novel is nothing but a struggle against the power of time.[17]

The understanding of time, says Lukács, the transformation of the struggle against time into a process full of interest, is the work of memory—or more precisely, we could say with Freud, of "remembering, repeating, working through." Repetition, remembering, reenactment are the ways in which we replay time, so that it may not be lost. We are thus always trying to work back through time to that transcendent home, knowing, of course, that we cannot. All we can do is subvert or, perhaps better, pervert time: which is what narrative does.[18]

To bring a semblance of conclusion to the discussion of Freud's masterplot, we may return to the assertion, put forward by Barthes and Todorov, that narrative is essentially the articulation of a set of verbs. These verbs articulate the pressure and drive of desire. Desire is the wish for the end, for fulfillment, but fulfillment must be delayed so that we can understand it in relation to origin and to desire itself. The story of Shahrazad again suggests itself as the story of stories. This implies that the tale as read is inhabited by the reader's desire, and that further analysis should be directed to that desire, not his individual desire and its origins in his own

personality, but his transindividual and intertextually determined desire as a reader, including his expectations for, and of, narrative meanings. Because it concerns ends in relation to beginnings and the forces that animate the middle in between, Freud's model is suggestive of what a reader engages when he responds to plot. It images that engagement as essentially dynamic, an interaction with a system of energy which the reader activates. This in turn suggests why we can read *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as a text concerning textuality and conceive that there can be a psychoanalytic criticism of the text itself that does not become—as has usually been the case—a study of the psychogenesis of the text (the author's unconscious), the dynamics of literary response (the reader's unconscious), or the occult motivations of the characters (postulating an "unconscious" for them). It is rather the superimposition of the model of the functioning of the psychic apparatus on the functioning of the text that offers the possibility of a psychoanalytic criticism. And here the intertextual reading of Freud's masterplot with the plots of fiction seems a valid and useful move. Plot mediates meanings within the contradictory human world of the eternal and the mortal. Freud's masterplot speaks of the temporality of desire, and speaks to our very desire for fictional plots.

5

Repetition, Repression, and Return: The Plotting of *Great Expectations*

We have defined plot, for our purposes, as a structuring operation deployed by narratives, or activated in the reading of narratives: as the logic and syntax of those meanings that develop only through sequence and succession. We noted that the range of meanings assigned to the word plot in the dictionary includes the sense of the scheme or machination to the accomplishment of some end—the sense apparently derived from the "contamination" of the French *complot*—and we suggested that nineteenth-century novels regularly conceive plot as *complot*: they are structured by a plotting for and toward something, a machination of desire. Some narratives clearly give us a sense of plotting and of "plottedness" more than others, and in particular a sense that their central meanings come to us through plotting: that there is no disjuncture between idea and symbol on the one hand, and the requirements of narrative design on the other. Such a disjuncture will, I think, be characteristic of the novel in its "modernist" and "postmodernist" phases, where there is a pervasive suspicion that plot falsifies more subtle kinds of interconnectedness. If the novels of Joyce and Woolf and Proust and Gide, and then Faulkner and Robbe-Grillet, cannot ultimately do without plotting insofar as they remain narrative structures that signify, they plot with irony and bad conscience, intent (in their very different ways) to expose the artifices of formal structure and

17. Gustave Flaubert, *L'Education sentimentale*, in *Oeuvres* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléïade, 1952), vol. 2, p. 352.

18. See Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 124–25. On the nature of Stendhalian temporality, see also Genette, " 'Stendhal,' " and Georges Poulet, *Mesure de l'instant* (Paris: Plon, 1968).

19. René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Grasset, 1961).

20. Some examples of the use of "monster" in the novel: When Julien enters his post at the Hôtel de la Mole, the Abbé Pirard notes the magnitude of what the Marquis is doing for him, and says, "Si vous n'êtes pas un monstre, vous aurez pour lui et sa famille une éternelle reconnaissance" ("If you are not a monster, you will be eternally grateful to him and his family") (p. 443); when Julien reflects on the calumny his name will receive if he is killed while climbing to Mathilde's bedroom, he says to himself, "Je serai un monstre dans la posterité" ("I will be a monster for posterity") (p. 537); when the Marquis berates him for seducing Mathilde—and Julien has just cited, in his defense, the words of Tartuffe: "je ne suis pas un ange . . ." ("I'm no angel")—he calls him "Monstre!" (p. 629); when the Abbé Chélan comes to visit Julien in his prison cell, the Abbé addresses him: "Ah! grand Dieu! est-il possible, mon enfant . . . Monstre! devrais-je dire" ("Ah! Lord, is it possible, my child . . . Monster, I should say") (p. 1651). Note also this remark of Stendhal's about his relations with his own father: "J'observai avec remords que je n'avais pas pour lui une *goutte* de tendresse ni d'affection. Je suis donc un monstre me disais-je, et pendant de longues années je n'ai pas trouvé de réponse à cette objection" ("I observed with remorse that I hadn't a *drop* of tenderness or affection for him. I am thus a monster, I said to myself, and for many years I found no answer to this objection"), *La Vie de Henry Brulard*, in *Oeuvres intimes*, pp. 217–18.

21. On the resistance to ending in Stendhal, see the excellent study by D. A. Miller in *Narrative and Its Discontents* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 195–264.

22. Using the terms of the Russian Formalists, one could say that the *fabula* (the order of event referred to by the narrative) intrudes into the *sjužet* (the order of event in its presentation by the narrative discourse). But to do so would mean reducing the *fabula* to the bare-bones anecdote from which Stendhal worked, whereas the *fabula* is properly understood as the whole of the story to which the narrative discourse refers, the order of events that a reading of the narrative enables one to construct, an order that, of course, has no existence beyond this construction. What invades the narrative discourse of *Le Rouge et le noir* is distinctly heterogeneous, another order of discourse, another genre, another story. The account of Antoine Berthet's trial in *La Gazette des Tribunaux* is reprinted in the Pléïade edition, pp. 715–30.

23. Some earlier critics of *Le Rouge et le noir*—Léon Blum, Henri Rambaud, Maurice Bardèche—noted that Stendhal seems to insist upon returning to his documentary scenario at the end: see the summary of their comments in Castex, *"Le Rouge et le noir" de Stendhal*, pp. 126–27. Here again, I find the more "traditional" critics closer to the mark: they have noted real problems, though their treatment of them does not fall within the analysis of narrative that interests me here.

24. On the metalepsis of the author, see the discussion by Genette (himself referring to Fontanier) in "Discours du récit," p. 244.

25. Possessing the mother/mistress, Julien may realize a final desired confusion of origins, enacting the oedipal story according to Claude Lévi-Strauss as well as Freud. He has answered the problem of origin by its confusion, "sowing where he was sown": note that not only does Julien want Mme de Rênal to be mother to his unborn child, Mme de Rênal herself earlier expresses the wish that Julien were father to her children—children who curiously are sometimes three in number, and sometimes two, further confusing the question of generation and perhaps thereby further confirming Lévi-Strauss's view that the Oedipus myth tells the story of an insoluble problem: see "The Structural Study of Myth," in *Structural Anthropology* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor-Doubleday, 1967), pp. 202–28. As with the postulated paternity of the Duc de Chaulnes, we are here faced with a significant confusion. See also Leo Bersani's remark: "almost the entire story is an immense detour which Julien takes in order to return, in prison, and this time consciously and with full consent, to the happiness of merely being with Mme de Rênal which he had thought himself ready to sacrifice to his ambition." *A Future for Astyanax* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), pp. 111–12.

4. Freud's Masterplot: A Model for Narrative

1. Tzvetan Todorov, "Les Transformations narratives," in *Poétique de la prose* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), p. 240; English trans. Richard Howard, *The Poetics of Prose* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977). Todorov's

terms *récit* and *histoire* correspond to the Russian formalist distinction between *sjužet* and *fabula*.

2. Todorov in a later article adds to "transformation" the term "succession" and sees the pair as definitional of narrative. He discusses the possible equation of these terms with Jakobson's "metaphor" and "metonymy," to conclude that "the connection is possible but does not seem necessary" (Todorov, "The Two Principles of Narrative," *Diacritics* [Fall 1971], p. 42); but there seem to be good reasons to maintain Jakobson's terms as "master tropes" referring to two aspects of virtually any text.

3. See Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), and Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967). Kermode's book has been particularly important to my own thinking about endings.

4. Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), pp. 59–60.

5. Sartre, *Les Mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p. 171.

6. Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, p. 7.

7. Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller" [*Der Erzähler*], in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 94.

8. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*] (1920), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–74), vol. 18, p. 59.

9. J. Hillis Miller has noted that the term *diegesis*, used by Plato to designate the narrative of events—the summary of action, as opposed to its imitative reproduction, or *mimesis*—suggests in its etymology that narrative is the retracing of a line already drawn. See "The Ethics of Reading: Vast Gaps and Parting Hours," in *American Criticism in the Poststructuralist Age*, ed. Ira Konigsberg (Michigan Studies in the Humanities, 1981), p. 25.

10. Freud, "The Theme of the Three Caskets" [*Das Motiv der Kästchenwahl*] (1913), in *Standard Edition*, vol. 12, p. 299.

11. See Freud, "The Dynamics of the Transference" [*Zur Dynamik des Übertragungs*] (1912), in *Standard Edition*, vol. 12, pp. 99–108; "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through" [*Errinern, Wiederholen, und Durcharbeiten*] (1914), *Standard Edition*, vol. 12, pp. 147–56; "The Uncanny" [*Das Unheimliche*] (1919), *Standard Edition*, vol. 17, pp. 219–52.

12. The dynamic model of psychic life, Freud wrote in 1926, "derives all mental processes . . . from the interplay of forces, which assist or inhibit one another, combine with one another, enter into compromises with one another, etc. All of these forces are originally in the nature of *instincts* . . ." (*Standard Edition*, vol. 20, p. 265). I shall use the term "instinct" since it is the translation of *Trieb* given throughout the *Standard Edition*. But we should realize that "instinct" is inadequate and somewhat misleading since it loses the sense of "drive" and "force" associated (as the preceding quotation suggests) with Freud's conception of *Trieb*. The currently accepted French translation, *pulsion*, would be more to our purposes: the model that interests me here might indeed be called "pulsional."

13. On the question of the beginning as "intention," see Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975). It occurs to me that the exemplary narrative beginning might be that of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*: waking up to find oneself transformed into a monstrous vermin.

14. See William Empson, "Double Plots," in *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1960), pp. 25–84.

15. Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* [*Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*] (1933), in *Standard Edition*, vol. 22, p. 95.

16. See Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" [*Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse*] (1937), in *Standard Edition*, vol. 23, pp. 216–53.

17. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), p. 122.

18. Gérard Genette discusses Proust's "perversion" of time in "Discours du récit," in *Figures III* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), p. 182.

5. *Repetition, Repression, and Return: The Plotting of* Great Expectations

1. E. M. Forster's strictures on plot, his refusal of the primacy assigned to plot by Aristotle, in *Aspects of the Novel* (mentioned in chapter 1, herein) are representative of the modernist attitude toward traditional plotting. One finds more extreme dissents later on, for example: Virginia Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf, 1924); Nathalie Sarraute, *L'Ere du soupçon* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956); Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1963).

2. Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 1. References are to this edition, and will hereafter be given in parentheses in the text. I will include chapter numbers to facilitate reference to other editions.

3. On the theme of reading in the novel, see Max Byrd, " 'Reading' in *Great Expectations*," *PMLA* 91, no. 2 (1976), pp. 259–65.

4. On the archaeological model in Freud, see in particular the use he