Progression and the Synthetic Secondary Character: The Case of John Wemmick

As noted in the introduction, my approach to the analysis of narrative progression claims to be an advance over other discussions of plot and structure because it pays attention to the temporal dynamics of the authorial audience's experience of narrative. In the discussions of thematizing so far, I have been illustrating that conception of progression, and as particular occasions such as the discussion of Scholes have allowed, I have been taking small steps to substantiate the introductory claim. I turn now to focus explicitly on the concept of progression and its explanatory power. I will compare the ideas about progression, both implicit and explicit, that I have drawn upon to this point, with the ideas about "reading for the plot" advanced by Peter Brooks in his attempt to account for the dynamics of narrative. Brooks's model provides a good test of my own not only because it is the most powerful model recently advanced but also because, like mine, it wants to consider how the reader's experience is directed by the text. Rather than being a rhetorically based theory, however, it is a psychoanalytically based one.

I will compare the models for analyzing narrative dynamics in connection with Dickens's *Great Expectations*, a narrative that Brooks also analyzes and that raises questions about the synthetic component of character—especially through Dickens's use of Wemmick. Indeed, Wemmick provides us with an occasion to consider the potentially problematic relationships among the three functions of character, because his outlandish mimesis foregrounds his synthetic status and has consequences for both our sense of Dickens's thematic intentions and our own understanding of Pip's mimetic function. Moreover, the variety of Wemmick's functions also illustrates some important general principles of progression that are highlighted by the comparison with Brooks's model.
Brooks offers an initial definition of plot that coincides with much of my own definition of progression, especially in its twin emphases on the temporality and centrality of plot: “Plot . . . is not a matter of typology or of fixed structures, but rather a structuring operation peculiar to those messages that are developed through temporal succession, the instrumental logic of a specific mode of human understanding. Plot . . . is the logic and dynamic of narrative, and narrative itself is a form of understanding and explanation” (p. 10). From this definition, Brooks sets out to develop a model for discussing the experiential dynamics of reading for the plot, a model that he labels an “erotics of art” (p. 36). As I examine that model and its application to Dickens’s novel, I shall argue that despite Brooks’s success in moving beyond the essentially static conceptions of structure proposed by other narratologists, he nevertheless fails to offer an adequate theory of reading for the plot.

As noted briefly above, Brooks departs from much previous psychoanalytic criticism by focusing not on the unconscious of the author, reader, or characters, but rather on the psychodynamics of the text: he wants, in his words, to “superimpose psychic functioning on textual functioning” in order to discover “something about how textual dynamics work and something about their psychic equivalences” (p. 90). His method privileges psychoanalysis as the way to explain how texts operate, but the method also respects textual functioning: in reading Brooks, one typically feels that narrative structure is being illuminated rather than made to lie on a bed fashioned by Procrustes for Freud.

Brooks begins with narrative, not psychoanalysis, and comments on the paradox of endings. The end always acts in some influential way on everything that precedes it, since the ending is what the beginning and the middle are preparing us for. Furthermore, “it is at the end—for Barthes as for Aristotle—that recognition brings illumination, which then can shed its retrospective light” (p. 92). Thus, 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 . . . 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. (P. 96)

That most ambitious investigation is Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and Brooks focuses first on what help it might be in thinking about repetition in narrative. “Narrative always makes the implicit claim to be
in a state of repetition, as a going over again of a ground already covered: a *sjuzet* repeating a *fabula*, as the detective retracts the tracks of the criminal*" (p. 97). In addition, repetition is the stock in trade of literary discourse: "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" (p. 99). In Freud's text, repetition is first introduced as a compulsion directed toward the assertion of mastery, as in the *fort-da* game, and then it becomes a compulsion directed at "binding" the instinctual drive for immediate gratification. Thus, Freud views repetition as making possible both the attainment of mastery and the postponement of gratification.

Similarly, Brooks argues, repetition in narrative functions as 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;" "repetition, repeat, recall, symmetry, all these journeys back in the text, returns to and returns of . . . allow us to bind one textual moment to another in terms of similarity or substitution rather than mere contiguity" (p. 101). In this respect, repetition is a key to our mastery over—and hence, pleasure in—the text; at the same time it will frequently involve postponement of that pleasure. "As the word 'binding' itself suggests, these formalizations [i.e., elements of the text that cause us to recognize sameness in difference] 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" (pp. 101-2).

Brooks next follows Freud through his examination of the relation between the repetition compulsion and the instinctual drives, and his conclusion that instincts are not drives toward change but toward stability, or indeed, toward the restoration of an earlier state of things. This conclusion in turn leads to the concept of the death instinct, a concept that stresses not just an organism's drive toward death but also its drive to follow the path to death in its own way. Brooks summarizes the point this way: "'the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion,'" and therefore, it will "struggle against events (dangers) that would help it to achieve its goal too rapidly—by a kind of short circuit" (p. 102). Repetition in narrative, then, says Brooks, works first to allow the operation of the death instinct, the drive toward the end as it is manifest in the text's attempt to return to an
earlier state. But repetition also works to "retard the pleasure principle's search for the gratification of discharge" which will occur when the end is reached. Thus, if we begin in an initiation of tension that seeks its own release and generates a desire for the end, the middle must be the place where the narrative seeks that end in the appropriate way, avoiding short-circuit even as it inexorably moves toward a return to the quiescent state before the beginning. The middle is a kind of detour between two states of quiescence at either end of the narrative.

Brooks offers the following succinct summary of his model.

[Plot] 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. . . . 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." (Pp. 107–8)

Brooks's model is, I think, very attractive. It not only focuses on the temporal, experiential dimension of reading, but also offers strong accounts of beginnings, middles, and ends. It offers a sensible account of the beginning as the introduction of some tension which produces desire for resolution; a suggestive analysis of the paradoxical drives of the middle, toward both continuation and closure; and a powerful account of the end as the dominant position of the narrative, one which exercises control over both the beginning and the middle. As in his definition of plot, there is considerable overlap here with my discussions of the introduction of instabilities and tensions, their complication in the middle, and their resolution at the end. At the same time, his discussion indicates that there are significant disagreements between us.
II

First, my conception of progression does not give so much dominance to the ending. Where Brooks sees the beginning and the middle as determined by the end, I see the three parts as more mutually determinative. When we read for the progression, we experience the ending as determined by the beginning and the middle, even as it has the potential, in providing both completeness and closure, to transform the experience of reading the beginning and the middle. This difference about the relation between the three stages of narrative is related to a larger difference based on a principle that I have been working with only implicitly to this point. This principle begins to emerge when we ask if there is anything beyond beginning, middle, and end that determines all three, or perhaps better, determines the way in which they are mutually determinative of each other. Can we extend our rhetorical (as distinct from our biographical or sociohistorical) analysis and explain why a particular beginning is chosen or why one out of many possible paths through the middle of the narrative is taken or why a particular kind of resolution might be better than another one? Answering these questions depends on our developing some working hypothesis of an overall design, some principle of a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts.

Austen's choice to begin *Pride and Prejudice* with the conversation between the Bennets not only has significant consequences for the middle and the end but is itself a consequence of a larger design, the development of a comic action that incorporates the narrator's norms and judgments about the marriage market as part of the comic satisfaction to be associated with the ending. Perhaps even more telling are Austen's choices in the middle. To have Darcy's first proposal occur at Rosings, a setting permeated by the values of Lady Catherine, Collins, and to a lesser extent of Charlotte; to have Elizabeth drawn to Darcy first through the intersection of his letter and her own sense of justice, then through what she sees and hears at Pemberly, and then finally through her own gratitude for his intercession in the Lydia-Wickham affair; to have the second proposal come about in part through the meddling of Lady Catherine: all these turns of the progression, which could have been managed in other ways, are in some nontrivial sense determined by the overall design. All these turns not only work to complicate and resolve the instabilities along the track established in the first half of the narrative but they also develop the nuances of the narrator's norms and thus significantly define the kind of satisfaction offered by the final resolution.
Similarly, although Fowles might have ended *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in many ways—Charles and Sarah might have been re-united and sent to an uncertain future in America—the ending is determined not just by what the beginning and middle allow but also by what the principle of design revealed in those parts allows. Given that design of explaining the shift from the Victorian Age to the modern, his ending, with its choice of closures, is more appropriate than the one suggested above. The reasoning may appear circular here but the circularity is more apparent than real. The notion of the whole is, to be sure, developed from reading the parts, but since developing that notion is always part of reading for the progression—since our sense of the whole is itself always in motion—it is also always corrigible. When we read the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice*, we make inferences about the whole of which it is a part, and our sense of that whole does influence our reading of new parts. But as the analyses of the ending of “Haircut” and of Chapter 13 of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* indicate, the new parts are also capable of radically reshaping our sense of the whole.\(^3\)

Perhaps the most useful way to illustrate the differences between Brooks's model and mine is to consider the different ways they would deal with the relations between beginning, middle, and end in works with flawed endings. Within Brooks's system there are two ways an ending can go wrong: it can come too soon, and thus short-circuit the working out of the desires aroused by the beginning and the middle; or it can unbind textual material that has been bound by the pattern of repetitions and thus fail to leave the reader in a state of quiescence.

In my terms, the first kind of flaw would be the production of an arbitrary resolution, one in which an author substitutes the imperative to provide a resolution for the greater imperative to work out the possibilities for resolution inherent in the introduction and complication of instabilities and tensions. The second kind would be the reintroduction of—or the failure to resolve—instabilities of the beginning or middle. Although I would be more concerned than Brooks with relating these flaws to some conception of a developing whole for each specific case, the differences between the models at this point are as much terminological as they are conceptual. A close look at the problems raised by a case such as the Phelps farm episode at the end of *Huckleberry Finn* will indicate that Brooks's two explanations of how endings can go wrong are insufficient. This conclusion in turn suggests that his model does not do full justice to the ways that endings can relate to beginnings and middles.

The trouble with the Phelps farm episode is certainly not one of
short-circuit; the whole business is unduly protracted. In part, however, the trouble may be that as Twain tries to bind some early textual material through the return of Tom Sawyer, he unbinds some material about Huck's relation to Jim that has been apparently bound for good in Huck's decision to go to hell: The intuitive sense of Jim's humanity that resides behind Huck's decision does not lead him to resist some of Tom Sawyer's inhumane plans for Jim in the Evasion. Yet the whole problem with the ending is more complicated than that, as a look at the tasks Twain sets for himself in the narrative makes clear.

In brief, Twain's narrative progresses by intertwining the two logically independent stories of Jim's quest for freedom and Huck's more intuitive, reactive attempt to find his niche in the world (calling Huck's efforts a "quest" would overstate his sense of direction) by working out his relationship to his society. The dominant focus, of course, is on Huck, and we see him in the beginning unable to enter fully into the world of Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas, or that of Tom Sawyer and his romantic fancies, or that of his Pap. Life on the raft with Jim presents a refuge from the larger world and its problems, but that life is itself provisional and unstable as both the steamboat and the King and the Duke dramatically prove. Twain nevertheless gives his audience enough of their undisrupted life to show the developing bond between the white boy and the black man. He then uses the shore episodes both to portray Huck's intuitive education in the hypocrisy and corruption of "sivilization" and to make his audience even more aware of those features. That development in turn makes the decision to go to hell a kind of resolution to Huck's hitherto unstable situation: he decides he must live outside the professed morality of his society, even if it means suffering the worst consequences the society predicts for such outsiders. What Twain needs at this point is not so much a device of completeness for Huck but a device of closure: a major part of the developing whole, the story of the moral implications of Huck's attempts to define his relation to his society, is essentially complete. If Twain could find a way to have Huck decide to light out for the territory at this point, he would be well on his way to a satisfactory ending.

The problem he faces, however, is how to end Jim's quest. Having intertwined Huck's story with Jim's, Twain cannot conclude Huck's until he also concludes Jim's. And the options he has open are not many: Jim is now in the Deep South where he will be regarded as the rightful property of some one or other of the white folks. The most logical thing to do is have Jim be set free by his owner, but given the way Miss Watson has already been portrayed, to do that would be to create a deus ex machina effect. So, falling back on his skills as a
humorist, satirist, and scene writer, Twain gives us the Evasion, his way of trying to hide the deus ex machina behind a cloud of Tom Sawyer’s romantic dust. But creating the cloud causes more problems than unbinding the material about Huck’s relation to Jim. It introduces material that is largely extraneous to the instabilities that have moved the plot until this point and it develops that material at great length. Although the scenes of the Evasion are funny in themselves, their irrelevance to what has gone before makes them as annoying as they are humorous.

The more general point here is that the beginning and the middle of *Huckleberry Finn* get developed in such a way that Twain has an unsolvable problem on his hands: given that beginning and middle, he cannot write a satisfactory ending. The ending in this case is not determinative of the beginning and the middle, and I would suggest that no ending could be. Furthermore, the ways the ending goes wrong exceed the ways predicted by Brooks’s theory. One could perhaps say that had Twain initially chosen a better ending, he could have made it determinative of the beginning and the middle. But such a move would have required him to write a different beginning and middle, and who would want to give up the beginning and middle that Twain has created?

The corollary of this point about Brooks’s overemphasis on the power of the ending is that he underestimates the power of the middle. Although he attributes to middles the important role of appropriately guiding the desires aroused by the beginning, the middle remains a means subordinated to the end of reaching resolution. It is a place of detour, of deflected direction, of arabesques. As *Huckleberry Finn* and *Pride and Prejudice* show, it is all those things—but can be much more as well. In Twain’s novel, the middle creates the impossibility of satisfactory ending, while in Austen’s it is the place where many of the thematic functions of Elizabeth’s character—especially those surrounding her own pride—are realized.

A second significant difference between Brooks’s model and my own is what each one implies about the reader’s activity—and thus, ultimately what each implies about the nature of the narrative text. Brooks’s discussion of the dynamics of reading becomes finally a description of a sequence of drives and reactions—the beginning establishes an initial tension that produces desire for ending, the middle produces the detour or arabesque leading eventually toward the end, and the end produces the discharge of pleasure with the release of the tension. This account is very consistent with Brooks’s announced intention of imposing “psychic functioning on textual functioning.” The problem is not with its consistency but with its adequacy as a description of the reader’s activity. In Brooks’s account, the dynamics
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of the plot itself merge with the dynamics of reading that plot. To give an account of reading for the plot is to give an account of the structure of the plot. In this respect, Brooks is working with a model of a single-layered text.

By contrast, the model of the text implied in my account of progression is double-layered. On this account, the text contains not just the patterns of instabilities, tensions, and resolutions but also the authorial audience's responses to those patterns. In other words, the concept of progression assumes that the narrative text needs to be regarded as the fusion of two structures: (1) the narrative structure per se—essentially the structure that Brooks describes in his model, or what I call the pattern of instabilities and tensions; and (2) the sequence of responses to that structure that the text calls forth from the authorial audience. In still other words, we might say that progression involves not only the developing pattern of instabilities and tensions but also the accompanying sequence of attitudes that the authorial audience is asked to take toward that pattern. This conception has been operating throughout my analysis so far, perhaps most obviously in the discussion of Scholes's model and my arguments about the importance of the authorial audience's involvement with the mimetic component of character. The pattern of judgments, fears, hopes, desires, expectations, and so on that typically but not exclusively cluster around the mimetic component is as much a part of the dynamics of reading as the sequence of actions in which the character participates. I will return to this point shortly because it has consequences for a third difference between Brooks's model and mine, but there is another side to this present difference that needs to be illuminated.

In the discussion of "Haircut" in the introduction, I noted that the final sentences help resolve the instabilities by contributing to the completion of the narrative through the alteration of the authorial audience's understanding of the resolution that has already been narrated. In the discussion of Pride and Prejudice, I claimed that although Charlotte Lucas's marriage to Collins does not complicate the instabilities of the main narrative line it nevertheless had a significant influence on the authorial audience's understanding of that line, and indeed, played an important role in Austen's development of the thematic function associated with Elizabeth's attribute of independence from the marriage market. Such conclusions about the dynamics of reading these narratives are, I think, simply not available if one is operating within Brooks's system. When the dynamics of reading are merged with the dynamics of plot structure, the reader's role is implicitly limited to responding to the movement of the instabilities.

Both consequences of this second difference between Brooks's
model and my own are related to the third difference. Because Brooks conflates the dynamics of reading and the dynamics of plot, he must find the key to reading for the plot not in the reader’s affective experience of the text but in formal features of the text, and as we have seen, his psychoanalytical framework leads him to repetition as the identifiable key. In order, however, to account for the significance of repetition within the limits of his way of talking about the reader’s experience, he must resort to talking about the thematic importance of the repetitions. The problem again is not so much that this is wrong, but that it is inadequate. When repetition gets linked to theme, then reading for the plot becomes reading for the themes in motion.

III

These last two differences between the models should become clearer as we examine Brooks’s analysis of *Great Expectations*, a novel that he chooses in part because it “gives in the highest degree the impression that its central meanings depend on the workings-out of its plot” (p. 114). Furthermore, the novel is “concerned with finding a plot and losing it, with the precipitation of the sense of plottedness around its hero, and his eventual ‘cure’ from plot. The novel imagines in its structure the kind of structuring operation of reading that plot is” (p. 114). Note here that in the very act of setting up his analysis Brooks implicitly makes reading for the plot reading about plot. Brooks’s model is already committing him to read about themes in motion, but that model leads him away from such standard themes as the individual and society toward this more reflexive one.

Brooks begins his account with an analysis of the novel’s famous opening paragraphs, where Pip discusses his acquisition of his name and his “first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things.” This impression occurs on the day in the churchyard when he became fully conscious of his environment and his own place in it as an orphan, a consciousness that in turn leads to his tears that are then interrupted by a “terrible voice,” crying out “Hold your noise!”

Brooks has many insightful things to say about this passage, some of which I shall return to, but his main conclusion stresses what the passage suggests about the role of plot in the novel. “This beginning establishes Pip as an existence without a plot, at the very moment of occurrence of that event which will prove to be decisive for the plotting of his existence, as he will discover only two-thirds of the way through the novel” (p. 117). In the first part of the novel, Brooks argues, Pip is in search of a plot and the novel recounts how a plot
seems to gather around him. In fact, Brooks identifies four lines of plot moving around Pip before the declaration of his expectations:

1. Communion with the convict/criminal deviance.
2. Naterally vicious/bringing up by hand.
3. The dream of Satis House/the fairy tale.
4. The nightmare of Satis House/the witch tale. (P. 117)

Brooks argues further that the four plots are paired as follows: $2/1 = 3/4$. "That is, there is in each case an 'official' and censoring plot standing over a 'repressed' plot" (p. 117). Pip himself favors plot 3, and when Jaggers comes with the news of Pip's Expectations, it appears that reality is conforming to his desire, and that the question of plot is now taken care of. But of course the Expectations "in fact only mask further the problem of the repressed plots" (p. 117).

The relation between the official and the repressed plots is perhaps best illustrated by the relation between the official, public events of Pip's life and both the continual return of "the convict material" and the repetitive features of Pip's experience in Satis House. After Pip is "bound" as an apprentice to Joe, the plot is all but suspended as the narrative recounts what Brooks calls a "purely iterative existence" in which the romance of life appears to be shut out. After the announcement of the expectations, Pip thinks that he need only wait for the next turn of the plot that is now happily controlling his life. Yet for the reader neither binding is sufficient to contain the energy discharged by the initial graveyard scene and the initial visits to Satis House. Moreover, the reappearance of the convict's leg-iron, and of Joe's file, as well as the "compulsive reproductive repetition that characterizes every detail of Satis House" (p. 123), including the trips by Pip and Miss Havisham around the bridal cake, signal the important presence of the repressed plots.

The middle of the narrative is, according to Brooks, "notably characterized by the return," specifically Pip's returns from London to his hometown, ostensibly to see and make reparation to Joe Gargery, and perhaps to find out something of Miss Havisham's intentions for him, but deflected always to a reminder of the nightmare of Satis House and his association with the convict. "Each return suggests that Pip's official plots, which seem to speak of progress, ascent, and the satisfaction of desire, are in fact subject to a process of repetition of the yet unmastered past, the true determinant of his life's direction" (p. 125).

Pip comes face to face with this determinant in the novel's recognition scene, which Brooks sees operating "for Pip as a painful forcing through of layers of repression, an analogue of analytic work,
compelling Pip to recognize that what he calls 'that chance encounter of long ago' is no chance, and cannot be assigned to the buried past but must be repeated, reenacted, worked through in the present" (p. 128). Pip's "education and training in gentility turn out to be merely an agency in the repression of the determinative convict plot. Likewise, the daydream/fairy tale of Satis House stands revealed as a repression, or perhaps a 'secondary revision' of the nightmare" (p. 130). The "return of the repressed shows that the story Pip would tell about himself has all along been undermined and rewritten by the more complex history of unconscious desire, unavailable to the conscious subject but at work in the text. Pip has in fact misread the plot of his life" (p. 130).

The resolution of the plot for Pip occurs after he comes to accept Magwitch, which also means accepting his past as both "determinative and past." Once Pip is able, through the repetitions of the aborted escape, to work through the material from his past, he is in effect able to escape from plot. In this respect, Dickens's original ending to the narrative is superior to the amended ending in which Pip's reunion with Estella may undercut the extent of his escape. Brooks offers the following summary of his conclusions:

*Great Expectations* is exemplary in demonstrating both the need for plot and its status as deviance, both the need for narration and the necessity to be cured from it. The deviance and error of plot may necessarily result from the the interplay of desire in its history with the narrative insistence on explanatory form: the desire to wrest beginnings and ends from the uninterrupted flow of middles, from temporality itself; the search for that significant closure that would illuminate the sense of an existence, the meaning of life. The desire for meaning is ultimately the reader's who must mime Pip's acts of reading but do them better. Both using and subverting the systems of meaning discovered or postulated by its hero, *Great Expectations* exposes for its reader the very reading process itself: the way the reader goes about finding meaning in the narrative text, and the limits of that meaning as the limits of narrative. (P. 140)

As even this somewhat truncated summary of Brooks's reading indicates, he is an impressive reader, one who uses his model with appropriate flexibility to produce an interpretation that is in many ways both compelling and original. My quarrel is less with the particulars of that reading than with its adequacy as an account of the experiential dynamics of *Great Expectations*. Brooks's theoretical conflation of plot structure and the reader's experience has its corresponding practical conflation here. The affective component of reading for the plot is nowhere present in Brooks's analysis. The reader's activity is exclu-
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progressively cognitive: “The desire for meaning is ultimately the reader's who must mime Pip's acts of reading but do them better.” Brook's reading in effect collapses the question of the experiential dynamics of the narrative with the question of how Pip's narrative can itself be seen as about plot. If one wants to know an answer to this second question, then Brooks is the man to see, but if one wants to know the answer to the first question, one better look somewhere else. In short, Brooks's conflation of the question of experiential dynamics with a question about a theme in motion fails to do justice to the complexity of the response built into Dickens's narrative. I shall now try to substantiate these brave words by offering a contrasting analysis of the progression. In order to build the contrast with Brooks's reading, I shall focus first on material he does discuss—the opening chapters—and then on material he does not discuss—the functions of Wemmick. Considering Wemmick will also add to the general movement of this part of the book, because he is a good example of how a character with a foregrounded synthetic component can affect both the mimetic and thematic levels of our reading.

IV

If we are not asking how Great Expectations is itself about plot, then we will respond more directly to the literal level of the opening paragraphs, and thus can recuperate some of Brooks's shrewd, specific insights. Rather than noting that these paragraphs characterize Pip as an existence without a plot, we note instead that they establish a specific instability that becomes the generating moment for the whole narrative. With Pip's description of his “first fancies” about his parents on the basis of the shapes of the letters on their tombstones, the narrative introduces the important idea that at this stage Pip is not the best reader of signs. Thus, later when Pip concludes that Miss Havisham is the agent behind his Expectations, we have cause to recognize that the tension of unequal knowledge between Dickens and the authorial audience is nevertheless maintained. More germane to the opening itself, the way in which Pip is wrong—imagining appearances from the shapes of the letters on tombstones—emphasizes the force of the initial instability, as it emphasizes his distance from and ignorance of his parents.

In the passage recounting his “first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things,” Pip tells us, as Brooks points out, how in effect he has become certain of his own difference from and aloneness among everything else. He concludes his litany of what he knows (“this was the churchyard, there were the graves of my dead
parents and brothers, that was the marshes, that over there was the river, and beyond that was the sea”) with his conclusions that “the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.” Because Pip’s acquisition of self-consciousness is accompanied by his fear and grief, the narrative identifies the initial instability as one involving Pip’s own identity and place in the world. In this respect, the omission of Pip’s situation as the adopted son of Joe and Mrs. Joe is significant: that situation is less a part of his identity than his awareness of himself as orphan. Furthermore, the information of the first paragraph—Pip’s account of how he got his name—now functions to emphasize his aloneness: he has not only lost his parents and brothers but also the name he shared with them. The narrative, then, gets its initial movement from the problem of whether and how this orphan will achieve an identity that will enable him to overcome his fear and anxiety. This question gets modified in different ways as the narrative progresses (when Pip the narrator speaks from the time of narration we worry less about whether and more about how) and redefines and resituates Pip’s fear and anxiety, but it remains a significant issue until the very end of the narrative.

Again if we are not asking about how Dickens’s novel is itself about plot, but rather what its temporal dynamics are, then we will redescribe Brooks’s four plot lines in the opening chapters as three, because there are three distinguishable tracks along which the instabilities operate, all three of which are related to the initial instability of Pip’s anxiety about identity. These three are what we might call the convict plot, the home plot, and the Satis House plot. In addition, the initiating moments of the convict plot and the Satis House plot establish some significant tensions that suggest an expansion of the scope of the narrative beyond Pip’s struggle; the early moments of the convict plot establish a tension about the relationship between Pip’s convict and his hated counterpart, and the introduction of Miss Havisham immediately introduces a tension about her past as well as about the presence of Estella in her house. Although the resolutions of these tensions, like the development of the instabilities along three different tracks, does place Pip’s story in a much broader thematic context, those resolutions are more striking for the way in which Dickens skillfully links them to the pattern of instabilities surrounding Pip. But that is getting ahead of our ourselves.

As we move into the middle of the narrative we see that the chief (though by no means only) source of the complication of the instabilities is Pip’s resistance to the identity offered by his home: he can be an honest blacksmith like Joe. At the same time, we recognize that the way in which Dickens has intertwined the plots makes Pip’s ac-
ceptance of that identity virtually impossible. He begins with the convict plot, immediately interlaces it with the home plot, and then further entwines them both with the Satis House plot, first covertly, then overtly. More specifically, Pip's association with the convict not only complicates his life with Mrs. Joe by making him steal from her, but for him it also increases his tendency to internalize her treatment of him as "naturally vicious." With this sense of his identity firmly established by the time he goes to Satis House, he is of course easily stung by being regarded as "common" and his desire to escape the scenes of his identity as criminal is understandably strong. At the same time, however, the home plot shows us that another side of his identity, the one that develops in his relationship with Joe, has made him unfit for the role he tries to play when the Expectations arrive. He goes on miserably caught between these two sides of his identity until Magwitch makes himself known, a resolution of a tension that sets in motion a major shift in the development of the instabilities. In short, Magwitch's return sets in motion a chain of events in which Pip works through his anxiety and fear about his identity by working back through the instabilities of the now fully interconnected plots and coming finally to accept and appreciate first Magwitch, then Joe, and finally himself.

In the course of these events the main tensions of the Satis House plot and the convict plot are also resolved in a way that signals the success of Pip's working through. Magwitch gives Pip part of the story about Compeyson, Herbert gives him part of the story about Miss Havisham, and he—and the authorial audience—learn of the connection between Miss Havisham and Magwitch through Compeyson. Jaggers and Wemmick give Pip part of the story about Molly, he makes the connection between Molly and Estella, Magwitch tells Herbert about the woman in his past, and Pip puts all the pieces together, even going so far as to startle Jaggers with his conclusions. When Pip is able to tell Magwitch on his deathbed that his daughter is alive and that he, Pip, loves her, the working through is essentially complete. It then remains for Pip to reestablish his relation with home first, through his reunion with Joe in London when Joe comes to nurse him through his illness and then through his being appropriately chastened for his dream of marrying Biddy by arriving home on the day of her wedding to Joe.

This sketch of the progression overlaps to some extent with Brooks's account of the plot but from this overlap our analyses move in two different directions—his toward the way in which the narrative is itself about plot, mine toward the affective structure of the progression, including the way it defines the relations among the mimetic,
thematic, and synthetic components of character. Let us return then to the first chapter.

Even as the first chapter identifies the initial major instability of the narrative and sets in motion the convict plot, it also induces the authorial audience to adopt a set of attitudes that are crucial to our experience of the whole narrative. Dickens handles the style of the first-person narration to convey Pip's discovery of his own misery with a combination of wit and matter-of-factness that results in our responding to the discovery with full and deep sympathy rather than seeing in it a sign of Pip the narrator's own unattractive self-pity. In fact, the humor of Pip's misreading of his parents' tombstones and of the "five little stone lozenges" (p. 1) marking the resting places of his brothers all but deflects our overt attention from Pip's situation as an orphan. As we have already seen, when Pip declares his own discovery of self-consciousness, it comes both matter-of-factly and wittily at the end of a series of discoveries (this place was the churchyard, etc. down to "the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip" [p.2]). With this arrangement and the shift to the third person, we register the narrator's own distance from the scene and so give our sympathy without reservation. Because Dickens establishes this initial sympathy at the time he establishes the initial instability, he has almost irrevocably established the authorial audience's positive attitude toward Pip. He then takes advantage of this firm foundation of sympathy later in the narrative when he shows how egregiously Pip wrongs Joe. At these points our foundational sympathy—as well as Dickens's recourse to letting the mature Pip comment on his former self—moves us to be pained not just for Joe but also—and perhaps even more—for Pip. The importance of this element of the dynamics will become clearer when I turn to discuss the functions of Wemmick; for now I want to emphasize that initially at least this pattern of judgments is developed in a context where the mimetic function of Pip is given more emphasis than any other. Indeed, the very presence of so many psychoanalytic readings of Pip's character is itself a sign of the strong mimetic signals being sent by the text.

Following hard upon the initial instability, the arrival of the convict (whom Pip describes as a man "in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg") plays a crucial role in the development of Pip's identity. Through Dickens's alternation between Pip on the marshes with the convict and Pip at home with Joe and Mrs. Joe in the first four chapters, he establishes the interpenetration of the convict plot with the home plot. Forced to act to aid the convict, and being told in countless ways by Mrs. Joe that he was no better than a convict, Pip identifies
very deeply with him, an identification that propels much of his behavior in the novel until the very end. At the same time, Dickens shows us that Pip also identifies with Joe, though not nearly as deeply. Indeed, the way the convict plot intertwines with Mrs. Joe's reminders of Pip's "natural viciousness" itself hinders the full identification: Pip thinks of Joe as an innocent child, himself as a wicked offender. Yet again Dickens's narrative technique complicates the audience's understanding of Pip's identification with the convict. In the second part of Chapter 1, Dickens restricts us to Pip's vision at the time of the action, and the overt comments focus, as we might expect given what we've just read about Pip's anxiety, on his growing terror. Yet what comes through the vision is Pip's intuitive sense of the convict's own misery:

A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin. (P. 2)

At the same time, he hugged his shivering body in both his arms—clasping himself, as if to hold himself together—and limped towards the low church wall. As I saw him go, picking his way among the nettles, and among the brambles that bound the green mounds, he looked in my young eyes as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in. (P. 4)

First and most obviously, such passages (there are similar ones in Chapter 3) generate our own sympathy for Magwitch, and thus give us a vision of him that is considerably softer than Pip's conscious one, a vision later confirmed and expanded on by his "confession" of having stolen from the blacksmith's. Second, these passages lead us to recognize a subtler motive in Pip's own desire to carry out his promise to the convict: not only will he do it to avoid the terrible young man but also to give the convict some relief. This subtler motive becomes more obvious in Pip's extra effort to take along the pork pie that his sister had tucked away in the corner of the pantry. Despite his emphasizing that "I had no time for verification, no time for selection, no time for anything" (p. 13), he takes extra time for the pie. "I was nearly going away without the pie, but I was tempted to mount upon a shelf, to look what it was that was put away so carefully in a covered earthenware dish in the corner, and I found it was the pie, and I took it" (p. 13).
The motive is further reinforced as it is essentially echoed in Joe's response to the convict's apology for having eaten the pie, which in turn reminds us of the essential similarity of Pip and Joe: "We don't know what you have done, but we wouldn't have you starved to death for it, poor miserable fellow-creatur.—Would us, Pip?" The force of all these effects is of course felt later in the narrative when Dickens returns to the convict plot and Magwitch is revealed to be Pip's benefactor. Pip's initial revulsion at that point seems not only unjust to Magwitch, but also untrue to his own earlier self, and thus a further sign of how his expectations have hindered rather than helped him.

But even at this early juncture of the narrative, the effects have their force. Although Pip feels that his behavior justifies his sister's many references to him as guilty and deserving of punishment, passages such as these enable us to recognize both the strength of Pip's feelings and the great error he is making—in this sense we have a much broader view of Pip than he does of himself. As we see Pip moving further and further away from Joe, a movement that begins in this opening section and gets accelerated once the Satis House plot begins, we also see him moving further and further away from the best and truest part of his own developing identity.

But of course that is not all that is accomplished by these opening chapters. More than anything else, they establish the depth and strength of Pip's identification with the convict and thus his conviction of his own guilt. In recognizing the strength of his feelings, we also recognize the important beginnings of what I might call the psychoanalytical side of the narrative: the set of associations that is set up here between Pip and Magwitch as father and son; the cluster of devices of setting—the wet, cold, misty weather in the early evening—that always recalls by association this first meeting, and Pip's subsequent guilt, e.g., when he first learns of his sister's being injured, and when Magwitch himself makes his return. Pip's identity, we feel, is not of his own making. When that identity is further confused by his visits to Satis House, we see him more and more in the grip of forces beyond his control. This background then enables Dickens to develop the home plot in such a way that Pip continually seeks to deny that home, even as he is never able to kill entirely his attachment to it. And as Dickens undertakes that development, he takes Pip to a very low point in that plot without seriously threatening our fundamental sympathy with the character.

Now while all that is going on in the mimetic sphere, the progression is creating multiple developments in the thematic sphere. Although the narrative itself is complicated with many more turns than
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Pride and Prejudice, the principles governing thematization are essentially the same in the two works: we have multiple characters with multiple attributes, many of which are converted by the turns of the progression into thematic functions, without there being a single dominant function acting as the central point of the progression. We can nevertheless identify an especially significant group developed from the actions of the main characters: both Magwitch and Miss Havisham function in part to exemplify the dangers of making others conform to our own images of what they should be; Joe functions as the exemplification of simple, honest dignity, while Estella exemplifies the absence of feeling. Pip, like Elizabeth Bennet, has multiple thematic functions. His responses to his expectations exemplify the consequences of a false pride. His responses to Estella offer a picture of irrational love. His susceptibility to the convict, Mrs. Joe, and Satis House all exemplify the difficulty of forging a strong identity in the world of this novel. This list is neither exhaustive nor impressive for the subtlety of its inferences about thematic functions. But lack of subtlety in the thematic sphere is, I think, a characteristic feature of Dickens's work. It is in the ingenious working out of those thematic elements in both the mimetic and synthetic spheres that his strength and distinctiveness are to be found.

Indeed, we are often led to pay attention to the thematic sphere of his works not only by the turns of the progression but also by his occasional foregrounding of the synthetic sphere. As a result, the reading of a Dickens novel typically involves a more fluid movement by the authorial audience among the spheres of meaning than occurs in the reading of a narrative by, say, Austen or James where the synthetic remains covert. One of the features of Great Expectations that contributes to this fluidity of movement—and to the ingenious working out of thematic material—is Dickens's handling of Wemmick.

V

After even a quick consideration of Wemmick's function in the narrative, we ought not be surprised that Brooks does not discuss his character at any length. Not only does Wemmick not fit into the pattern of repetition and return that Brooks identifies as the central part of the narrative's middle, but he also plays no main role in the working out of the resolution. If he were not in the novel, Dickens would have to find another means to accomplish such tasks as informing Pip about the best time to make his escape, but I daresay that none of us would feel that there was a big hole in the narrative, that Dickens just ought to have invented a virtually schizophrenic character whose life
was as sharply divided between home and office as Wemmick's. Our first question then is whether Wemmick actually makes a contribution to the progression that is consonant with the attention that the narrative gives to his character, and if so, what precisely the nature of that contribution is. Our second question will be about the relation of the components of his character and the influence of that relation on the progression as a whole.

I shall begin with the relation between Wemmick's peculiar mimetic status and the variety of synthetic functions that he performs in the novel. Wemmick is a character with multiple mimetic dimensions and a doubtful mimetic function. This mid-fortyish man has two distinct personalities—Walworth Wemmick and Little Britain Wemmick. The first is a gentle, caring, sensitive soul who takes devoted and patient care of his Aged Parent and who dotes on Miss Skiffins. He also exercises his imagination, as we see in the way he has done up Walworth like a fort. The fort motif is of course symbolic: his private self is hidden behind that fort—so much so in fact that even when he ventures outside of it in his private mode he hides his intentions, as we see in the appearance of serendipity he tries to put upon his marriage to Miss Skiffins. As a rule, once Wemmick moves to the Little Britain side of the "moat," his character gradually hardens until he becomes the man with a mouth like the slit in a post office box, and with dints instead of dimples in his chin. His values undergo a corresponding change: he is almost as hard as Jaggers himself and his raison d'etre becomes the acquisition of portable property.13

In the Wemmick of Little Britain, Dickens gives us a character who is part of the convict plot, and he takes advantage of the character's mimetic dimensions to accomplish certain synthetic functions. Wemmick shows Pip the importance of portable property in their tour through Newgate and at other times keeps Pip in contact with the "soiling consciousness" of his own identification with the convict, a contact that encourages his repression of the connection between Estella and Molly until after he has worked through his own relation to Magwitch, and that also contributes to his neglect of Joe.14 In Walworth Wemmick, Dickens gives us a character who invites reflection on the instabilities of the home plot. Wemmick performs the synthetic function there of providing a contrast between his treatment of his Aged P. and Pip's treatment of Joe. To that extent, the synthetic function reinforces the authorial audience's and the mature Pip's own judgments about Pip's treatment of Joe.

Yet the predominant effect of Wemmick's presence on the affective structure of the text is quite different from the function of either the Little Britain or the Walworth Wemmick alone. The very facts that
foreground Wemmick’s synthetic component—the sharp division and exaggeration of his two sides—give him a thematic function that in turn has consequences for our response to the mimetic function of Pip. Wemmick’s extreme self-division exemplifies the difficulty of living satisfactorily in two different spheres, among two very different sets of people. Consequently, Wemmick’s very presence in the novel works to generalize Pip’s difficulty in honoring his own lower-class background as he embarks upon his expectations. The problems we see Pip face are not just ones of his own reactions but ones endemic to living in a society where social mobility is becoming more common and where the separation between public and private spheres is becoming more and more pronounced. At the same time, Wemmick’s situation indicates one kind of solution to that difficulty. Although Wemmick is more successful than Pip in living in both spheres, the very division of his personality indicates that his solution is less than ideal. Despite the charm of the Walworth Wemmick, Dickens’s point is clear: Pip needs to work through to an integration of his different spheres that Wemmick never attains.

In these ways, then, Dickens uses Wemmick to complicate our judgments about the instabilities of the home plot, especially Pip’s relation to Joe. Even as the mature Pip is appropriately severe in his judgments of his earlier self’s treatment of Joe, Dickens’s elaboration of Wemmick’s character puts his behavior in a broader context, which allows a greater understanding of Pip’s problem and a softer judgment of his failures to solve it until so late in the narrative. Dickens also uses Wemmick to complicate our judgments in the convict plot, which of course is tightly wound together with the other plots in the latter stages of the narrative. Wemmick’s self-division functions to deepen our sense of what it is that Pip must overcome as he slowly comes to accept Magwitch. If Wemmick shuts out his private self from his public life, if Pip experiences a difficulty acknowledging Joe once he comes into his expectations, then how much more difficult is his task of acknowledging and accepting the fact that the source of those expectations is the convict. Consequently, Wemmick’s presence substantially increases our sense of what Pip eventually achieves in working through to that acceptance. Thus, despite being “compartmentalized” in both Little Britain and Walworth, Wemmick functions to influence significantly the authorial audience’s responses to the main narrative line. At the same time, the way in which his foregrounded synthetic component leads to an emphasis on his thematic function, which in turn influences our response to the mimetic sphere of Pip’s story, illustrates my earlier claim about the fluidity of movement among the three spheres of meaning in Dickens. When
Pip and Wemmick interact, the authorial audience has an overt awareness of all three components of their characters. In one sense, this simultaneous overt awareness makes *Great Expectations* less strictly realistic than, say, "The Beast in the Jungle," but it does not lead either to a rejection or even a subordination of the mimetic level of reading.

There is more to the story of Dickens's handling of Wemmick, but it is worth pausing here to reflect on the nature of the claims just made. In effect, I am arguing that Wemmick functions the way Charlotte Lucas does in *Pride and Prejudice*, only on a larger scale. Just as Charlotte's marriage to Collins influences the authorial audience's affective response to (and thematic understanding of) Elizabeth's rejection of Darcy's first proposal, so too does Wemmick's presence influence the authorial audience's affective response to and thematic understanding of many of Pip's actions. The question the analysis raises is one of limits: if the connection between the main and the secondary characters is to be found in the thematic sphere, can't one always find a thematic connection—if only by making a thematic leap of the kind that Levin has justly criticized?

The answer is that the thematic connection is not itself sufficient to justify the relevance or explain the contribution of the secondary character. (If it were, all narratives could be elaborated endlessly.) The connection in the thematic sphere needs to be tied not only to an affective result but also to the specific narrative means for achieving that effect. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen largely restricts herself to Elizabeth's point of view and commits herself to a mode of presentation that limits her own role as commentator and thus leaves much to her readers' inferences. By rendering Charlotte's decision within this largely dramatic mode of presentation, Austen gives the thematic point a force that would be impossible through the narrator's overt commentary on the pressures of the marriage market. In *Great Expectations*, Dickens's use of Wemmick works wonderfully well with his decision to have the mature Pip tell his own story. Dickens can then guide his audience's judgment by having Pip judge his treatment of Joe in the harshest possible terms, while also directing that audience to see the difficulty of Pip's position in relation to both Joe and Magwitch through the presentation of Wemmick. In that sense, Dickens's handling of Wemmick can be seen as the consequence of his decision to write the novel as a retrospective first-person account.

Another aspect of this same general point concerns some of the specific actions that Pip performs in his association with Wemmick. When Pip stays with the Aged P. and not only takes care of him but enjoys taking care of him, we see that side of his own character that
has only intermittently appeared since the bestowal of his expectations. Because we see Pip still able to act from the better side of his character, that side associated with Joe, we remain sympathetic to him and indeed strengthen our desires that he will correctly resolve the instabilities about his own identity, especially as these relate to Joe and Magwitch. Dickens's treatment of Wemmick is, in short, very well integrated with the progression of the whole narrative.

Consider, by contrast, Dickens's handling of Pip's visits to Matthew Pocket's household. This material, which emphasizes the way in which the Pocket children "were not growing up or being brought up, but were tumbling up" (p. 178), can be seen as thematically related to Pip's own experience of being brought up by hand. Significantly, however, that thematic connection is not sufficient to give it any significant role in the progression. As far as I can see, it does not materially alter our understanding or judgment of Pip or his actions. It does indicate some of the difficulties and ironies of his situation—with his great expectations comes this environment—and it does increase Pip's desire to help Herbert, but the extended focus on the family is much less a functioning part of the progression than the material on Wemmick, if in fact it is not altogether extraneous. Dickens's depiction of the Pocket family is funny in the way that Dickens is often funny, but the humor lacks the punch accompanying his depiction of Wemmick because the depiction itself is finally digressive.

Let us return then to Wemmick and Dickens's development of his mimetic dimensions into a function or at least a quasi-function. In effect, what Dickens does here is elaborate a mini-plot about Wemmick, one based on the tensions about the relations between his two selves, and complicated by the resolution of that tension in such a way that we can posit him as having at least a quasi-mimetic function, which makes possible a kind of satisfaction for the authorial audience in the last event of this mini-plot, his so odd ("Halloa! Here's a church!") "Halloa! Here's Miss Skiffins!" "Halloa! Here's a ring!") but so characteristic wedding. For a time our awareness of Wemmick's synthetic function is heightened by our uncertainty about how aware Wemmick himself is of the difference between the two sides of his personality. Then, after he refers to the difference, we remain unsure whether one side or the other is in effect the "real" Wemmick. This question does not get resolved until after Pip himself has come to accept Magwitch, has worked out the solution to the mystery of Estella's parentage, and desires confirmation from Jaggers at his office in Little Britain. When Jaggers initially tries to put him off, Pip successfully appeals to the Walworth Wemmick, and thus we know for certain that it is that side of his personality that is the real Wemmick:
the Little Britain twin is a creation of the Walworth character, a creation that has become a second nature, but a creation nonetheless. It is striking, I think, that it is only after this event that Dickens shows us Wemmick's marriage to Miss Skiffins, as if this alteration in Wemmick's situation could not occur until the question of the relation between the two sides of his character were settled.

At this point in the progression, the effects of Wemmick upon Pip's story that I described above have already occurred. Wemmick's marriage adds one small additional effect, even as it predominantly makes a different contribution to the whole. As the Walworth Wemmick functions to offer an alternative reading of the home plot, his marriage to Miss Skiffins raises questions about Pip's own eventual marrying. At first, the event may seem to suggest that Pip ought to marry Biddy. But a little reflection shows that Wemmick's marriage is working by contrast. Wemmick has a claim, while Pip has none. More importantly, however, the marriage itself adds another positive note to the ending of the book. It occurs right after Magwitch's trial and right before his death. We take a kind of pleasure in Wemmick's marriage that carries over and lightens the potentially dolorous emotions associated with Magwitch's death. This chain of effects could not have been possible without Dickens's gradual movement of Wemmick toward the mimetic. Again, Dickens proves to be a master of using the secondary characters to influence the affective structure of the progression, even as that use depends on the rather fluid movement among spheres of meaning.

Wemmick's marriage to Miss Skiffins also, I think, has the effect of making Dickens's revised ending, in which Pip sees no shadow of a further parting from Estella, less problematic. There is certainly no necessity for such an ending; the major instabilities of the narrative are resolved—Pip has worked through the issues of his identity, his relation to his own home, to his expectations, and to his past—in both the first and the second endings. Furthermore, unlike the situation in The French Lieutenant's Woman, the completeness of this narrative does not require two closures. To have closure Dickens does need to bring Pip into contact with Estella one last time, but since completeness has already been achieved, he has some latitude in choosing the outcome of the final meeting. In any representation, he must show that Estella is as altered as Pip or else Pip's feelings for her won't be in keeping with his present state; that stricture in turn means that any indication of their facing the future together must itself be muted, accompanied as it will be by their mutual knowledge of the unhappy past. Thus, regardless of the details of the closure, its emotional quality is already determined by the progression to this point. The ending
can be hopeful, indeed, it should be hopeful, but it cannot signal a fulfillment: too much painful education has preceded it; to make the ending triumphant would be to deny the validity of the middle. Within those limitations, Dickens can choose to unite Pip and Estella or to have them meet and pass on.\footnote{15}

My own preference is for the original ending because I prefer the idea of Pip living independently now that he has achieved his peace with himself and his acceptance of who he is. Nevertheless, Wemmick’s recent marriage is a reminder that the narrative has been concerned from the very beginning with questions of identity as they relate to family and, to some extent, to marriage. Consequently, the impulse to see Pip with his newly forged identity end, like Herbert and like his older allies Wemmick and Joe at slightly earlier stages, in a relationship that will lead to marriage and family is rather strong. It is that impulse that Wemmick’s marriage strengthens and that Dickens’s revised ending is responding to.

VI

A final note about the relation between Brooks’s model and my own. In emphasizing the differences between the two models, I have shied away from any claim that the trouble with Brooks’s model is its commitment to psychoanalysis. I locate that trouble rather in Brooks’s limited conception of the nature of the narrative text, a limit that stems more from the heritage of the New Criticism (reading for the plot must be reading the structure of the plot) and the whole Anglo-American critical habit of equating interpretation with thematizing. One consequence of this approach to Brooks is that he—or more likely another theorist committed to psychoanalysis—could come along and recast my whole rhetorical approach to progression in a psychoanalytical frame. That is, such a theorist could situate my interests in the sequential and affective structure of narrative in a psychoanalytical framework, one that would among other things psychoanalyze the responses of the authorial audience. I would have no great objection to such a procedure provided that no strong claims were being made about that recasting being a superior (rather than an alternative) form of explanation.

The reason I would object to any claim for superiority is connected to the one way in which I would fault Brooks for his turn to psychoanalysis. Such a move presupposes that to explain the surface structure of texts, to explain the experience of reading, we need to move away from that surface and propose a model of its deep structure. The trouble with that assumption is that it immediately causes one to
work at some distance from the details of texts, as one tries to find a model that will be applicable to all texts. In Brooks's case, we see him going to psychoanalysis, which gives him the concept of the death instinct, which in turn gives him the idea of the dominance of endings, which in turn causes him to underrate the importance of beginnings and middles.

The moral I draw at this point is that we need to do more work with the details of the surface structures before we are ready to consider different models of deep structures. My concept of progression commits its user to very little in the way of conclusions about the nature of any narrative to be read and interpreted. Instead, it seeks to posit categories and principles of analysis that correspond to the experience of reading, categories and principles that are specific enough to lead to detailed insights into individual narratives but flexible enough to be useful across the wide variety of surface structures that narratives offer us. As an additional test of my categories and principles, I turn in the next chapter to take an extended look at a self-reflexive, metafictional text in which the synthetic component of the protagonist is foregrounded throughout the whole narrative: Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler.*