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Theme and the Novel: A Homological Approach

Encouraged by frequent whippings, administered with equal dexterity by his mother and father, Ernest Pontifex learned to do rule-of-three sums before he was four years old.¹ Perhaps it was this skill so early and so painfully acquired that led finally to his constructing the proposition: child is to family as inmate is to prison.

Those introduced later in life to the "rule-of-three" may feel some uneasiness in accepting the pride of place it has been given in structuralist analysis of narrative and myth under its new title, the "four-part homology." Greimas has seen one version of the four-part homology as the most basic of all semantic structures.² Lévi-Strauss has developed on the homological model his celebrated four-volume analysis of American myths.³ In developing and applying this pattern, Lévi-Strauss has established that a dynamic integration of the disparate and fragmentary narrative material of myth is a possible, if controversial, alternative to traditional static classification. Faced with a similar wealth of heterogenous narratives, structuralist critics of the *novel* have tried to find in their field an application for the homological approach. In general, would-be practitioners have stressed the role of the homology in the description of structure (as in the work of Greimas) and overlooked the essentially *semantic* role that the homology plays in the work of Lévi-Strauss.⁴ Lévi-Strauss's concern is that of the anthropologist: to recover the meaning that a particular tale had for its creators. For him, the analysis of structure and the discovery of structural relationships is not, as it was for Propp and his progeny, an end in itself. For Lévi-Strauss, each myth, however full its narrative structure, is a mere fragment of a whole. To recover the relationship between the fragment and the whole (i.e., to grasp its *meaning*), the commentator must step beyond the confines of a single version of a myth and incorporate, homologically, elements from all the available versions of the myth. The grouping of these elements is frequently subject in Lévi-Strauss's practice to observations made about a culture

by anthropologists using quite different techniques. The groupings in which the elements finally come to rest reveal, to the skilled practitioner, the oppositions that a particular group of myth-makers perceive as important, and it is these oppositions that, in turn, reveal the meanings of the individual myths.

The central concern of the present essay is to ask whether this kind of analysis is applicable to the novel. Can the "theme" of a novel be approached through the use of the homological technique so favored by structural anthropology? I have already mentioned that homologically ordered patterns of relationship can be established within single novels; is it possible to go further and to discover patterns of relationship in a novel (or group of novels) that reveal in general terms the *meaning* such works might have had for the societies that produced them?

Structuralist commentators on literature have usually fought shy of assigning meanings to works of fiction; they have preferred the pose of the grammarian who sees no interesting differences between the propositions "John Booth assassinated Abraham Lincoln," and "Abraham Lincoln assassinated John Booth." As Roland Barthes remarked early in his career: "Literature is neither an instrument nor a vehicle: it is a structure."⁵ This position has been frequently modified, and Barthes' last major work, *S/Z*, is in part an examination of the "reading codes" that enable the reader to recover or "recuperate" from a narrative some kind of meaning. Even so, a fully fledged structural theory of how a novel achieves meaning has not emerged. The working hypothesis of this essay is that one basis for such a theory might be the homological model.

In order to clear the decks a little before examining this hypothesis, I would like to accept as axioms two "narrative contracts" explored by Jonathan Culler in his *Structuralist Poetics*. These "contracts" are expectations that the reader has about a novel (part of a culturally shared "novel-reading code"). The first contract is that "readers will, through their contact with the text, be able to recognize a world which it produces or to which it refers...."⁶ It is worth stating immediately that this expectation on the reader's part is not invalidated by even the most "advanced" novels however adamantly they refuse to create "worlds" or even characters; this refusal can be a refusal only in terms of the reader's expectations—you cannot refuse to do something nobody expects you to do.⁷ The second of Culler's contracts concerns intelligibility. The reader will, "after assimilating this world, attempt to move back from world to text so as to compose and give meaning to what has been identified."⁸ This idea will bear some examination. The *meaning* of a novel, Culler is suggesting, emerges only when its recog-

nized world provides the necessary basis for "composition," in other words, for the arrangement of its elements into a meaning-bearing structure. This is never an easy process, since even the most facile detective story resists "composition," revealing its true structure only in the final pages. The resistance to composition put up by a novel such as Robbe-Grillet's *La Maison de Rendez-Vous* is almost heroic, but nevertheless, in Culler's terms, strategies can be evolved for recuperating even novels of this type.

If Culler's two "contracts" are accepted, then this implies that the crucial moment in the composing, recuperating, or meaning-ascribing process is the moment at which everything falls into place, the final moment of the narrative. Hans-Georg Gadamer's examination of the *hermeneutic circle* provides the theoretical basis for this statement. Gadamer, basing himself on Schleiermacher and the nineteenth-century exegetical tradition, advances the view that meaning emerges from a text by an essentially circular process: the first meaning-bearing element in the text gives rise to a hypothesis (or cluster of hypotheses) about the meaning of the whole. As elements accrue, the hypothesis is tested against the new material; the hypothesis may be modified, extended, or even reversed in the light of what emerges. New elements are themselves tested against the existing hypothesis. This to-ing and fro-ing between the whole and the parts comes to rest only when the last element is in place and an ideal hypothesis consonant with all the material has been developed.⁹ If this model is accepted, then the key moment in the process of recuperating the text will be, as we have said, the locking into place of the last meaning-bearing element.¹⁰ At that point a synchronic view of the text is possible and a "meaning" is able to emerge. Returning then to the form of the homology—what part can it play in expressing the meaning (or, to use an old-fashioned word, the *theme*) of a novel?

A : B :: C : D

To implement this pattern, the first step must be to find some relationship within a given novel that can provide one half of the homology. If the analysis were then to follow Lévi-Strauss's procedure, the pattern A:B would be thickened up with other examples of the same relationship either from the same narrative or from other sources; the second half of the homology would then be constructed of elements (again from the target narrative or elsewhere) that show the same basic relationship, though in some significantly different context. This procedure, unfortunately, will not work for the novel: firstly, the body of available narratives is immense; this means that selection is necessary, but it is also dangerous. In handling myth it is possible to omit or

include material at will according to Lévi-Strauss's dictum that "a myth consists of all its versions." I cannot see that this remark has any useful application to the novel, or at least none that a critic could not readily sabotage by a subversive selection of novels. If then inclusiveness is impossible and selection is pernicious, it seems that Lévi-Strauss's procedure must be modified to cope with the novel. The second problem area concerns the intentions of the commentator. Lévi-Strauss's method is intended to recover the attitudes of a particular culture from its narratives; the problem addressed by the literary critic who shows a concern with *theme*, is the significance (or meaning) of a single narrative within a culture—an essentially different problem. For these two reasons, it is necessary to narrow the procedure in two ways. In the first place, it would be of great advantage if the pattern of relationship used to establish the first part of the homology could be made consistent from novel to novel. To discover such a consistent relationship, it is necessary to look at the most general kinds of patterns that exist in fiction. One such pattern derives from the first of Culler's contracts: if a novel creates a world, then it must certainly do more than this. The world it creates is a perceived world, and perception demands a perceiver. In the traditional, Jamesian novel, this "world-perceiver" is, of course, the point-of-view character(s). The relationship between the perceiver and the perceived world is the principal mode in which the meaning of the created world is mediated; at least this would seem to be generally the case with the traditional novel. To return to *The Way of All Flesh* as a test-case—the relationship between Ernest Pontifex and the world of the novel could readily be established as the first part of a homology:

Ernest: the world of the novel

In analysis, the exact nature of this relationship will be elaborated by aligning all those elements in the novel that have some bearing on it. More of this in a moment. If this formulation (world perceiver: world) is provisionally accepted for the first part of the homology, in what way might the second be so constituted as to form a *theme* for the novel?

To answer that question, a few general words are first necessary about the nature of a *theme*. A *theme* is a phenomenon unique in criticism in that it refers with equal validity to both the work of fiction and to the real world. It is like the statue of Janus at the crossroads, with two faces pointing in opposite directions. A correctly formulated theme is the nexus between a novel and empirical reality. This brings us to the second way in which the procedure I am suggesting here differs significantly from that adopted by Lévi-Strauss. I believe that a

literary theme will not clearly emerge if elements in the second half of the homology also derive from the novel itself. The most tempting approach, and one certainly not *excluded* by Lévi-Strauss, is to group elements from the novel on one side of the homology, and to group elements from outside the novel on the other.¹¹ In the case of *The Way of All Flesh*, the relationship between Ernest and his world would be seen as in some sense paralleling the relationship between some group of Victorians and Victorian society in general. The four-part homology would then read: "Ernest is to the world of *The Way of All Flesh* as 'Everyman' was to 'Victorian society.'" The specifics, of course, remain to be filled in. What kind of "Everyman" is Ernest Pontifex? Does he represent merely the first sons of Anglican clergymen living near university cities, or is he all youth at all times? For how much of Victorian society (or post-industrial society, or post-renaissance society) is the world of the novel a synecdoche? And again, what exactly is the relationship between Ernest and his society? Is it best characterized as repression successfully resisted, misguided revolution benevolently sidetracked, or as yet another manifestation of the "inherent contradictions of bourgeois society"? These are matters of interpretation. Of importance here is the general principle that *no matter what reading of the novel is adopted, the thematic pattern is reducible to a homological formulation*. Again hypothetically, I would like to advance the idea that, just as any deductive statement is always reducible to one of the patterns of the syllogism, so a thematic generalization, however expressed in practice, is always reducible to one of the patterns of the four-part homology.

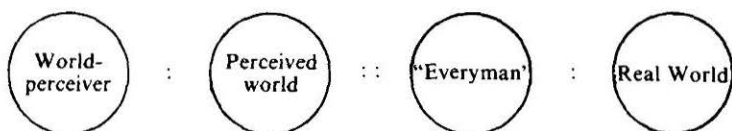
Before testing this hypothesis against some hard cases, it should be made clear, briefly but beyond doubt, that the homological model in juxtaposing the real and the fictional worlds does not open up literature for asset-stripping by sociologists on the look-out for portraits of the patriarchal society, for justifications of political viewpoints, or for any other extra-literary phenomena. The form of the homology is a highly restricted double metaphor (in the broad sense of the word "metaphor"), which postulates that the relationship between one pair of items is congruent with the relationship between another pair. With any metaphorical parallel, it is obvious that simple equivalencing of the elements is not in order. Thus, when Christ said that the relationship between sinners and God's wrath on the Last Day was like that between the tares and the bonfire, he cannot fairly be interpreted as saying that sinners will burn. The homologies of fiction must be held similarly immune from literalist interpretation.

If, to return to the main line of the argument, it is accepted that a homological formulation adequately expresses the theme of a simple

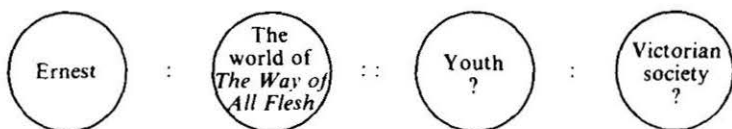
novel such as *The Way of All Flesh* with its single perceiver¹² and simple, naturalistically portrayed world, there is clearly a large number of cases where a more sophisticated model would be needed. Most obviously, larger structures or "polyphonic" novels such as *Anna Karenina* involve a large number of perceivers and, in a sense, a large number of worlds. There are two ways of tackling the problem posed by this multiplicity. The first is to pick a single perceiver (Levin is the obvious candidate) and treat his relationship with the perceived world of *Anna Karenina* as central. In validating this, the critic would explore the relationships between other perceivers (Kitty, Anna, Stiva, Vronsky) and their worlds, establishing that all these relationships in essence *align with* what can be said about Levin. A word about *alignment*: alignment takes three forms, direct, reversed, and ironic. In a pattern of direct alignment, a simple pattern of congruence is observed. In the reversed version, two relationships are found to be symmetrically the opposite of each other (the "mirror-image"). Ironic alignment exists when two patterns appear to align but in fact fail to do so, or when two patterns appear out of alignment but are discovered in fact to align closely. The choice of Levin as the "central" character is not of great significance; whichever character is picked, alignment can be, I think, assumed. Or to put it another way, in this kind of synchronic analysis we are dealing with Jakobson's "axis of substitutions"; in a fully achieved work, each relationship is simply another expression of the same essential pattern.

If one tactic for dealing with "polyphony" is thus to invoke the substitutability of all key relationships, the second would be to generalize the basic pattern of relationship in a novel into some more abstract form. Thus, instead of using Levin and his perception of the world (which are concrete, realized forms) as the first half of the homology, one might reexpress this essentially oppositional relationship in terms of some abstract antinomy, perhaps in Levin's case between Thought and Action, or between Withdrawal and Commitment, or between the values of Society and Family. Again, it would not matter greatly which formulation was chosen, or if some other were preferred; the three antinomies just mentioned form a paradigm-set and will each generate the others if a sufficiently detailed analysis of the elements in the novel is undertaken. In terms of the four-part homology then, the first half would be stated as the principal oppositional relationship found in the novel while the second half would be expressed as the generalized form of this relationship found in the real world. Taken together, these two tactics suggest that the homology is well able to formulate themes for novels of far greater complexity than Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*.

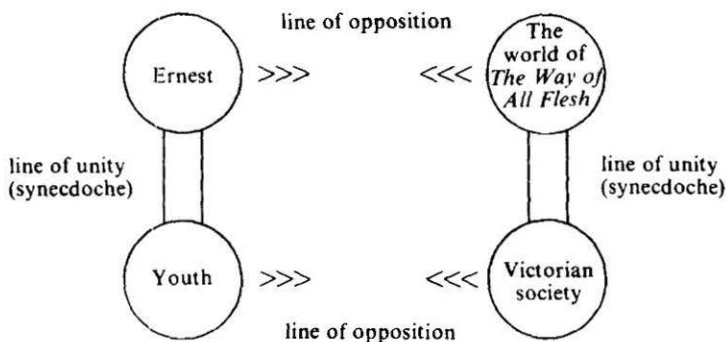
What happens though when novels are encountered in which traditional patterns of representation no longer hold good? Does the homology still offer a valid formulation of theme in these cases? To answer that question it is necessary first to establish the exact rules of the model discussed so far:



In the case of Ernest Pontifex, an extremely general formulation might be:



The terms "Youth" and "Victorian society" are, it must be repeated, interpretive, subject to expansion, contraction or any other modification. Similarly the *quality* of the relationship between Ernest and his world does not figure in this very general formulation, since that is also a matter of interpretation. What is of concern here is the general process of theme-formulation. If, as the next step, the four elements in the homology are arranged as a square, the lines of force at play in the model are nicely symmetrical:



Some explanation of these interconnecting lines is necessary. Jakobson and Halle have shown that fiction achieves much of its meaning by the process of metonymy (or, more exactly, of *synecdoche*).¹³ Because they represent synecdoches, the lines of unity drawn between the top half of the diagram and the bottom are, I think, uncontroversial—Ernest can be taken as a synecdoche for Youth, and the world of the novel as a synecdoche for Victorian society, *always bearing in mind*

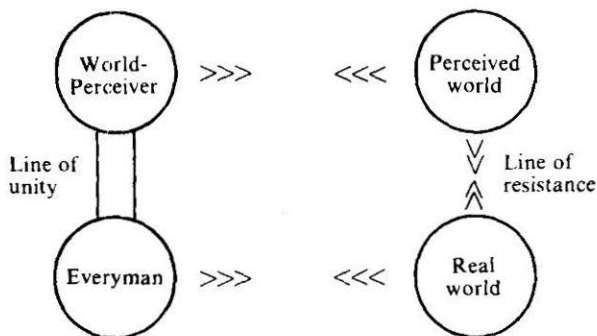
that the whole top line is a synecdoche for the whole bottom line, and that the parts cannot be treated individually. The horizontal lines in the picture are lines of opposition. What justifies these lines? In a novel such as *The Way of All Flesh*, it is clear that Ernest and his world are in conflict; the line of opposition represents this conflict. It might be argued, however, that Ernest has, by the end of the book, resolved some of these conflicts. Closely considered, however, this does not materially alter the picture. *The Way of All Flesh* is a novel of conflict; its elements achieve their place in the structure according to how they align with the patterns of opposition it holds in place. Considered syntagmatically too, the essential pattern of *The Way of All Flesh* is oppositional. At the outset, Ernest finds one situation; by acting and being acted upon, he creates another. Change generated by conflict is the fundamental pattern of fiction.¹⁴ In fact a novel in which the world-perceiver is entirely at one with the perceived world is hardly conceivable.¹⁵ For this reason, the line of opposition in the diagram can be allowed to stand with the proviso that it may represent an opposition in some way resolved (generally by synthesis of the two opposed terms, or by the annihilation of one of them), or an opposition not resolved at all. The bottom line of the picture must obviously be drawn as a line of opposition, since the logic of the homology demands that, when all its terms are positive, the top and bottom lines correspond.

Those then are the "rules" of the model appropriate to traditional fiction. Two ways of substantiating the model in practice suggest themselves. The first would be to examine themes that have been suggested for a range of novels, and to see how the homology would affect their formulation. The second approach would be to extend the model to cover different types of fiction, with a view to testing the homological model to breaking point. On the grounds of space and methodological rigor, I have opted for the latter approach. How is the model, then, to be extended? Pragmatically, one might find hard cases and adapt the model to them; formally, one might examine alternative versions of the model and ask what kinds of novels correspond with these new conformations. In practice, pursuing the second of these alternatives leads by a direct route to the same goal as pursuing the first, and therefore I have preferred it.

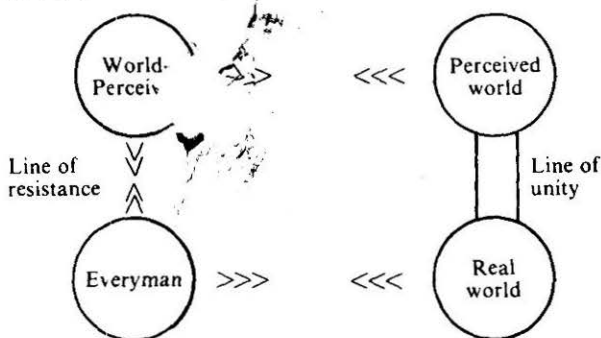
What rearrangement of the model is possible? I will assume that the horizontal line at the top will always remain a line of opposition (i.e., that all novels contain conflict between the world-perceiver and the perceived world). Changes in the bottom line can occur, but I would like to leave them out of account for the moment. That leaves the vertical lines to be considered. What happens, in fact, when the vertical

lines, traditionally lines of unity, resist the expectations of the reader? There are three logically possible variations:

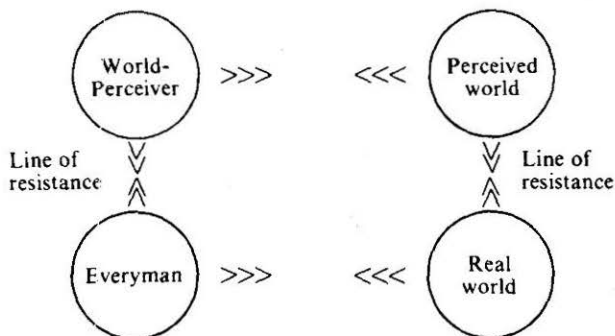
1. The synecdoche between the world-of-the-novel and the real-world resists formulation:



2. The synecdoche between world-perceiver and "Everyman" resists formulation:



3. Both synecdoches resist formulation:



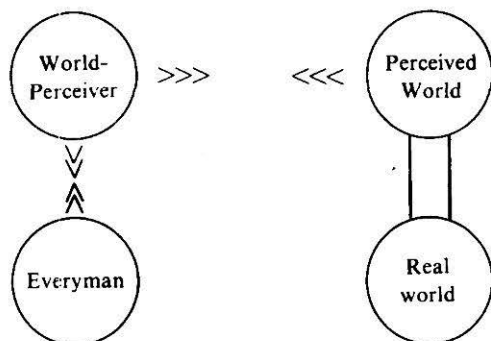
To what kinds of literary structures, if any, do these models correspond?

1. First, is there a kind of novel in which it is difficult to associate the world-of-the-novel and the real, empirical world? The genre of *fantasy* would seem to fill the bill. Of such fantasies, the science-fiction story is perhaps the most representative type, with the novels of H.G. Wells offering, perhaps, the broadest spectrum. In *The Time Machine* or *The Sleeper Awakes*,¹⁶ for example, the world-perceivers (the Time Traveller and Graham) are thrust into worlds that are carefully made unfamiliar. The London which Graham nominally owns is a wonder-city of clean air and automation; the socio-political state of development is wholly different from that of late Victorian society. In *The Time Machine* even greater industrial and social changes are manifest in the worlds visited by the Traveller. Both novels resist formulation of a theme in that the depicted world contains many features not identifiable in the empirically known world. More extreme fantasists than Wells try to create worlds having far fewer points of contact with the reader's world; such works probably come close to being themeless. In Wells' own case, however, it is not difficult for the reader to establish a strategy for recuperating the meaning of the novel, in other words for forging a link between the world-of-the-novel and the real world. Clearly in Wells' fantasy-worlds, the elements are extrapolations based on a picture of Victorian society that is more or less recoverable. In *The Sleeper Awakes*, Wells sets up the problem thus: take what we have now; add technology with its concomitant improvement in communications and increasing centralization of authority; posit two segments of society (proletariat and bourgeoisie) in conflict for power; postulate the raw Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest in the struggle to survive—and what kind of world results? The answer is, the world perceived by Graham. It is an unreal, hypothetical world, but since it can be recuperated, it is possible to derive a meaning from the work (i.e., to formulate a theme for it). Conversely it would seem to be the case that if the world-of-the-novel resists recuperation altogether, then no theme can be formulated for the book, since the line of synecdoche vanishes, destroying the structure of the homology altogether. It is very important to note that while creating this hypothetical world, Wells carefully stresses that Graham (or the Time Traveller, or the narrator of *The War of the Worlds*, or even the Invisible Man) is a perfectly unexceptionable Victorian gentleman, albeit under uncommon social stress. Successful science fiction usually works in much the same way—the Earthlings have to be kept as normal as possible. In terms of the homology, the synecdoche between world-perceiver and Everyman is kept unquestionably solid by all the devices of traditional realism.

perceiver in the story, *Kholstomer*.¹⁸ Tolstoy uses the horse's point-of-view to shed a new light on certain aspects of human life that can be distorted when we see them from our normal, anthropocentric perspective. *Kholstomer*, the horse, is certainly no Everyman. Slightly more familiar examples are, perhaps, offered by the *nouveau-roman*. In such works, a faceless, fragmented perceiver offers perceptions about a tolerably familiar world, sometimes at tedious length, but each single perception seems to be a perception "in its own right"; the perceptions do not, collectively, circumscribe a particular perceiving consciousness in the traditional way. There is no "created mind" for the reader to enter. In such novels it becomes extremely difficult to establish a line of synecdoche between world-perceiver and Everyman; the the "meaning" of the work is, for most readers, impossible to formulate.

The rarified atmosphere of the novels of Robbe-Grillet or Nathalie Sarraute has not produced many readers hardy enough to breathe it. A similar relationship between perceiver and Everyman can be found, however, in a number of widely read though still "difficult" novels; *L'Étranger* and *La Nausée* are two examples. In these novels, an existentially isolated world-perceiver becomes a kind of anti-Everyman. Meursault is certainly such a character, negatively defined,¹⁹ foreign to the society in which he lives,²⁰ guillotined because society needs people who weep at their mothers' funerals.²¹ He may be the "only Christ we deserve,"²² but he is scarcely Everyman—his uncompromising refusal to lie is alone enough to disqualify him for the role. Roquentin is similarly a poor candidate for the role of Everyman; he is the sole perceiver in a city of the unperceiving, the unrelated element in a network of social relations, an intellect without definition because it can find nothing in terms of which to define itself. Although one might argue that such characters *are* typical of our time, I think it is clear that Meursault and Roquentin do not stand as synecdoches for their contemporaries in the same sense that Ernest Pontifex, Anna Karenina, or Jake Barnes stand for theirs. Like the horse, *Kholstomer*, Meursault and Roquentin are devices for "making things strange"; their way of perceiving is not the reader's way of perceiving. (Or at least, a reader who does perceive in that way will find inordinately little point in the novels.) At the same time that they are creating these alien minds—and this is an interesting parallel with Wells' procedure—Camus and Sartre are at great pains to make the worlds of their novels as true to the recognizable world as possible. In both novels, for example, Sunday activities are used as a symbol of Everyman's normality. The sense of reality in both these sequences is worthy of Zola. In terms of the homology, the world-world line of synecdoche is massively reinforced.

As in the case of Wells and the fantasy-novel, the reader wishing to find a meaning in these novels must develop a strategy for dealing with the situation. After two generations of exposure to the anti-hero, this presents no problems to the reader today; it is clear that by adopting the anti-hero as anti-Everyman, the meaning of the novel can readily be recuperated. What happens then to the homological model under these circumstances? Three of the lines in the diagram have already been established:



To repeat the pattern: the world-perceiver and Everyman are opposed in their view of things, and so a line of opposition is appropriate between them; the perceived world and the real world are kept very close, making the line of unity uncontroversial. The top line remains a line of opposition. The status of the bottom line, however, changes in an interesting way. Although in *La Nausée* Roquentin refuses to be Everyman, the novel does contain numerous portraits of Everyman—Madeleine, Adolphe, Lucie, and so on—some so normal that they even momentarily relieve Roquentin's nausea. These characters are not at odds with their world—they are at one with it, integrated and functioning; they have, according to the odd wording of the superscription from Céline, "a collective importance." In this sense, Everyman is presented as in no way opposed to the real world. This implies that the bottom line of the diagram is a line of unity; in other words, the relationship between Roquentin and the world is the reverse of the relationship between Everyman and the real, empirical world. If this is true of *La Nausée*, which I think must be granted, then one can theorize that the same reversal would be found in any novel in which the world-perceiver resists identification as Everyman. The form of the homology derived from this state of affairs is this: A is to B as not-C is to D. The negation might be written into either part of the homology, but whichever way it is phrased, negation remains the distinguishing quality of a theme formulated homologically for this type of fiction. It is, of course, hardly surprising that grammatical negation should be

the hallmark of themes which emerge from novels of alienation or moral nihilism. One might even suggest that this correlation of "message" and grammatical expression implies that the homological model is not producing new interpretations, but merely formalizing old ones—exactly what it was designed to do.

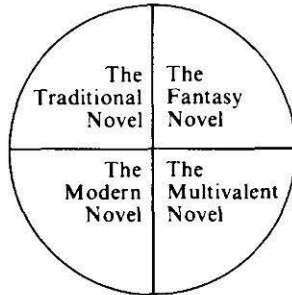
3. The final variation in the model is when both vertical lines of synecdoche resist formulation simultaneously. If novels exist that correspond to this variation, then they would have to depict both a world that was foreign to the reader's understanding, and characters whose way of perceiving (or of behaving in general) was likewise alien. There is a group of novels in which something of this sort occurs, the best representative being perhaps *Wuthering Heights*. The narrative within a narrative within a narrative used by Emily Brontë obscures the effect somewhat, and it is therefore first necessary to remark that Lockwood and Nelly Dean are not really perceivers, but are reporters, like Raphael Hythloday. The world into which the reader is thrown is the world of Catherine, Heathcliff and the equally strange Lintons.²³ We enter on their terms, a world run according to their laws; it is their perceptions that define this world, not those of the tepid Lockwood or of his gossip, Nelly Dean. If this view is accepted, then *Wuthering Heights* certainly falls into the third category of novels, those in which both world and world-perceivers resist recuperation. Among serious and acclaimed novels the type is not common. Flaubert's *Salammbô*, the Woland sections of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* would be examples. In popular fiction, however, the type is extremely common. The James Bond extravaganzas, for example, show unreal characters operating in unreal worlds; it is the commonest configuration of escapist literature.

Popular escapist fiction and the serious novels mentioned (*Wuthering Heights*, *Salammbô*, *The Master and Margarita*) all present a major problem when the critic tries to formulate a theme for them, or to assign them a meaning. What are these works "saying"? If we turn to the homological model, it becomes clear why this problem is so acute. It is essentially a problem of achieving definition. If (as in the traditional model and Variation 1) the world-perceiver is an acceptable Everyman—i.e., shares the reader's way of perceiving—then the details of the perceived world, however exotic, can achieve a high level of definition; we can see this world clearly enough through the eyes of a Graham or a Time Traveller. Similarly (as in the traditional model and Variation 2) if the details of the created world are familiar and humdrum—the Sunday promenade in Bouville-Le Harvre—then the reader is able to define the world-perceiver's place within this world,

even though the world-perceiver remain doggedly alien and negative. If, however, *both* lines of synecdoche are severed, then the created world exists in a multivalent, or perhaps completely fluid way. The perspective of the world-perceiver cannot be shared by the reader, but yet the reader has access to no alternative perspectives;²⁴ the world-of-the-novel exists in a vacuum at an indefinable distance from the reader. Are Heathcliff and his circle, the reader might ask, ants fighting in a jam-pot, or are they titans struggling in the cosmos? Is their world to be taken as existing only within their subjective perception of it, or can it be said to exist objectively? Are we in Angria or in nineteenth-century Yorkshire? This fluidity is the necessary result of simultaneously severing the vertical lines of the homology. It brings us back to the second of Culler's narrative contracts: the meaning of a novel emerges when the reader has reconstructed the world-of-the-novel and is using this knowledge to arrange all the elements of the novel into a meaning-bearing structure, valid for that world. Where the novel is fluid in value (or multivalent) in the manner of *Wuthering Heights*, no such structuring is possible, or rather a plethora of such structures is available, many of them mutually contradictory. Anyone who has tried to attach a meaning to *Wuthering Heights*, and who, in despair, has consulted the secondary "literature" will recognize the situation immediately. The interesting thing is that the homological model *predicts* such a situation as well as explaining it *ex post facto*.

To summarize then, the homology would seem to be a useful tool in that it gives a considerably sharper edge to the intuitive process of assigning a meaning to a novel; like the tools of the grammarian, it explains in formal terms how meanings are possible. Further, in suggesting that the relationship between a novel and reality is *logical* rather than *mimetic*, it keeps the structures of literature and those of reality suitably aligned, yet suitably apart; in the words of Spinoza's famous dictum: "Ordo et connexio idearum idem est ac ordo et connexio rerum."

One further observation can be made on the homological model developed here, which is of interest in a rather different way. Four types of novel emerged from the discussion: the traditional novel (*The Way of All Flesh*), the fantasy (*The Sleeper Awakes*), the "modern" novel (*La Nausée*), and the multivalent novel (*Wuthering Heights*). These four types seem to form a classification:



I would like to examine this four-part classification a little more closely since, if valid, it offers a new way of analyzing the whole untidy field of the novel. First, I think that it can be said that this classification is logically sound. The four categories do not appear to overlap (i.e., no novel would fit into two slots equally well). Further, it seems that the system is theoretically complete according to the rationale of its construction in that it exhausts all the primary variations of the homology.²⁵ Is this classification merely an empty academicism, or is it of literary value? The critical attempt to reduce the disparate and anarchic kingdom of the novel to order has not been particularly successful. Various attempts have been made to construct a taxonomy of the novel; most recently the meta-grammarians have adumbrated a number of such taxonomies based on patterns of narrative structure. None of these has won much support, perhaps because, for most readers of fiction, plot structure is not their central concern when reading. The antique Teutonic classification of novels by subject-matter (Erziehungsroman, Sozialroman, and so on) seems to have died unlamented of natural causes. The classification I have suggested is based on the way in which a novel achieves meaning or resists the achievement of meaning; it is a classification of semantic types which aims to show the different ways in which novels function as meaning-bearing structures. Although no attempt has been made in this preliminary essay to tackle the problems posed by irony, parody, or fragmentary works such as *The Trial*, the approach suggested seems logically valid, intuitively sensible, and surprisingly useful in its simplicity and explanatory power.

NOTES

1. Samuel Butler, *The Way of All Flesh* (London: Dent, 1933), Chap. 20, p. 77.
2. See A. J. Greimas, *Du sens* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 160. Greimas' version of the homology is specifically formulated on p. 138 of *Du sens*.

3. Lévi-Strauss's formulation of the homology occurs in a number of his works and in several forms. The formulation best supported by examples and explanation occurs in *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958), pp. 251-253.
4. See, for example, Tzvetan Todorov's *Littérature et signification* (Paris: Larousse, 1967), a study of *Les liaisons dangereuses* based on homological analysis.
5. Roland Barthes, "Authors and Writers," (1960) in *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), p. 145.
6. Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1975), p. 192. This idea is, of course, a commonplace of traditional commentary on the novel.
7. It is conceivable that one day character-less novels will have become the norm rather than antinomian experiments. That this is not yet the case is clear from iconoclastic programs such as Alain Robbe-Grillet's in *For a New Novel* (New York: Grove, 1965).
8. Culler, p. 193.
9. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), p. 178 et passim.
10. This model of how a text achieves meaning is, in the nature of things, unprovable. It is also worth noting that it does not necessarily rule out the multiplicity of the text so dear to the post-structuralists and the anti-structuralists. In a work as complex as a novel, it is unlikely that the current of enquiry would ever cease to pulsate around the hermeneutic circle. In line with Gestalt psychology, however, one might say that the preferred reading is the one that embraces the largest number of significant elements.
11. This is close to Goldmann's handling of the homology; see *Pour une sociologie du roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964). Goldmann writes: "Il existe une homologie rigoureuse entre la forme littéraire du roman...et la relation quotidienne des hommes avec les biens en général et par extension avec les autres hommes, dans une société productrice pour le marché... Ainsi les deux structures...s'avèrent-elles rigoureusement homologues, au point qu'on pourrait parler d'une seule et même structure..." (p. 26). Interesting as this idea is, it must be remembered that a homology is a metaphor; the inadmissibility of using a metaphorical connection to unleash Marxist sociology against the novel is apparent, I believe, to all those who do not share Goldmann's political beliefs.
12. The story-line is, in fact, narrated by a first-person narrator; Ernest's consciousness is, nevertheless, as central to the novel as it would be in a third-person narrative.
13. Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language, Part II* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), Chap. 5.
14. The narrative sentences of Todorov's *Grammaire du Décameron* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969) show essentially this pattern of development. Bremond comments: "...la modification est la condition minimum de la narrativité. Sans elle, pas d'histoire possible." *Logique du récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), p. 114.
15. A novel such as Flaubert's *Bouvard and Pécuchet* may approach this extreme. For comment see Jonathan Culler, *Flaubert: The Uses of Uncertainty* (London: Elek, 1974), pp. 136 and 138.
16. Also known by its original title, *When the Sleeper Wakes*.
17. See the original ending of the 1899 version, the Preface to the 1910 edition and the Preface to the 1921 edition of the novel.
18. *Kholstomer* is a key story in Viktor Shklovsky's account of *ostranenie* ("making-strange"), the process by which fiction reveals the known world by renewing our vision of it. See his "Art as Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism*, ed. Lemon and Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 3-24.
19. "I define my character negatively." Albert Camus, *Selected Essays and Notebooks*, trans and ed. Thody (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 209.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
23. Generally critics seem to accept the Lintons as representing some kind of pole of normality. However, the effort of imagining Edgar or Isabella in the context, let us say, of *Emma*, is enough to establish the contrary.
24. It is worth noting that Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights* offers no "alternative perspective." While in Yorkshire he plays Yorkshire rules, however incomprehensible these may be to him. One might contrast Graham in *The Sleeper Awakes* whose role is to offer without intermission a humanistic reading of Ostrog's London.
25. Secondary variations—for example a novel that appears to be of one kind but is in fact of another (*Northanger Abbey*?)—are obviously possible.