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# Structured Visions In The Novels Of John Hawkes

Eric Paul Henderson

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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ  
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STRUCTURED VISIONS IN THE NOVELS

OF JOHN HAWKES

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies  
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## ABSTRACT

John Hawkes' novels can be seen as expressing a dialectic between the act of fictional ordering and the chaos of a "reality" which is potentially subject to the ordering process but which ultimately threatens to dissolve such designs as are present in created or fictional reality. Both Hawkes and many of his protagonists, particularly his first-person narrators, are determined to "create a world." As "creators" and "visionary artists," they manifest a need to transform or transcend those forces which oppress them and oppose their efforts to create self-contained worlds based on principles of order, design and clarity; as embodiments of an ordering aesthetic, they battle against the powers of anti-art and often a specific antagonist who represents these powers. Such artist-figures seek (often unconsciously) to express deep-seated erotic, frequently sadistic or masochistic impulses which reflect universal though generally unacknowledged human desires.

The worlds of such visionary artists are unstable: what they reflect is creative man's endeavours to impose meaningful order rather than the enduring strength of aesthetic imperatives. The artist's structured vision is continually being threatened either by external forces or internal insufficiencies. Early visionary artists, like Skipper of Second Skin and Cyril of The Blood Oranges create fragile and insecure "Edens," and their control is limited, although their claim to this control is absolute. In Hawkes' three most recent novels, Travesty, The Passion Artist and Virginie, the artist-figure willingly embraces the forces of destruction and death in the fullness of his artistic efforts. Yet, of all Hawkes' visionary

artists, only Papa of Travesty succeeds in manifesting his authoritarian control absolutely, for Papa structures his vision in such a way as to preclude any interference or intervention.

In Hawkes' earliest fiction, the artist-figure is stifled by external forces; anti-art in its various forms dominates the world of The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg. It is Hawkes himself, through linguistic and stylistic devices, through the structuring capacity, who exhibits the authorial (and authoritarian) need to impose a sense of order and coherence on a world characterized by random eruptions of violence and chaotic disturbances emanating from undefined and unacknowledged human motivations and impulses. From the constant authorial presence manifested in early novels, Hawkes becomes concerned, in his first-person narratives, with filtering a sense of authoritarian will through the visions of narrators who are intent on shaping their own worlds and utilizing the energies of the unconscious and their imaginative capacity. The artist comes to define himself through his thorough isolation from others and from external reality: his quest is for an artistic purity to which he obsessively dedicates himself.

As the worlds of these artists become more confining, they also become more problematical. Many of the concerns of the visionary artist reflect Hawkes' own fictional values. In novels like Travesty and Virginie Hawkes seems to be testing these values, exploring the ultimate reaches of a fictional aesthetic he has expressed consistently in interviews and essays throughout his career. In this way, he subjects his aesthetic to an exacting scrutiny while composing novels which evoke in uncompromising terms the fundamental basis of fictionalizing, speaking, at the same time, to man's innermost desires.

Throughout Hawkes' fiction the artist-figure appears in different guises, and he emerges from work to work with varying degrees of clarity. The reader's response to this figure and the world he creates becomes increasingly complex as Hawkes' career progresses. Hawkes' comic method invites both our sympathy and judgment, while we respond to the efforts of each first-person narrator to express himself through his rhetorical and lyrical capacities. To deny the rhetorical intentions of the narrator's "text" may result in an uncritical embracing of the vision itself, while to focus on the narrator's determined efforts to convince and even to manipulate us is, inevitably, to undermine the lyrical capacities of a heightened and distinctively wrought figurative prose intent on conveying the dynamics of "a created world." Inevitably, Hawkes' works involve us in a process of discovery leading to potential self-discovery.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been a "privileged" writer (to modify the phrase used by one of John Hawkes' autobiographical narrators) in receiving the help and advice of Professors Mike Groden and Don McKay. I would also like to express thanks to Rexie Henderson.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

John Hawkes began writing while a student in Albert Guerard's creative writing class at Harvard. His first novel, The Cannibal, was published in 1949 and has been followed by eight more: The Beetle Leg (1951); The Lime Twig (1961); Second Skin (1964); The Blood Oranges (1971); Death, Sleep & the Traveler (1974); Travesty (1976); The Passion Artist (1979); and Virginie, her two lives (1982). Hawkes has also written three novellas, "Charivari," "The Owl," and "The Goose on the Grave" (all appear in Lunar Landscape, 1969), four plays (in The Innocent Party, 1966), and several short stories.

Early critics of Hawkes often referred to him as a neglected writer who deserved a wider audience. Although the five books and numerous articles dealing with his fiction (see Appendix B for a discussion of this criticism) belie this label, which was once almost automatically assigned to him, he is today probably America's least discussed and read major writer. Recent studies of contemporary American writers often acknowledge Hawkes' importance but consign him to prefatory comments or a footnote reference; he becomes one of those writers whom the author "regretfully" has to omit due to space limitations.

Unlike several contemporary writers--Thomas Pynchon and Donald Barthelme, for example--Hawkes has experienced no burgeoning of criticism in scholarly journals, although there has been steady growth in critical attention since the early to mid-1970's. At that time, three full length

studies appeared, and, in 1977, New Directions published a series of interviews, discussions and papers presented at a symposium held at Muhlenberg College the previous year. Perhaps the most significant contribution made by this symposium was its attempt to examine Hawkes' career from a number of different vantage points. It comprises an eclectic range of approaches and viewpoints which attempt to do justice to a career which is not always appreciated for its diversity. Recently, New Directions has published Humors of Blood and Skin: A John Hawkes Reader with selections from his major works, autobiographical notes, and an introduction by William Gass that is coloured by Gass' admiration for Hawkes' "healing art."<sup>1</sup>

It was once thought that Hawkes' limited readership was due to the inaccessibility of works which were stylistically dense and obscure, and which insisted on depicting scenes of violence and cruelty. To some extent, Hawkes' most recent works have been released from charges of obscurantism, as many readers find his later works less stylistically diffuse and technically complex. This contrasts with the perplexity, incomprehension and even outrage as reviewers strained to grasp the meaning of nightmarish early works like "Charivari" and The Cannibal. Even the charge of excessive or gratuitous violence has been modified. Critics often still complain of their inability to relate to Hawkes' seemingly inhuman vision of a violent universe, yet they are more often willing to analyze Hawkes' use of violence in terms of his aesthetic intentions.

Because Hawkes deals with primal material, often using dream imagery and shifting patterns of narrative, he has sometimes been termed a surrealist. However, such a label scarcely does justice to the range and complexity of his fictional output. In fact, judging by the assortment of labels

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which have been assigned to his fiction, it is apparent that no one label is sufficient to characterize his work. He has been called, as well, a picaresque writer, an anti-realist, a fabulator, a metafictionist, a sur-fictionist and an existentialist. But Hawkes appears to elude all final attempts at classification and schematization. On several occasions, he has referred to his own fiction as "visionary," emphasizing those fictional qualities which distinguish it from works which purport to imitate "life" or represent "reality" in various ways and through a range of generally mimetic techniques.

Hawkes is sometimes linked with John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, William Gass, Donald Barthelme and other contemporary writers in revolt against traditionalism in the novel. Hawkes' clearest statement of revolt was made relatively early in his career when he declared that "the true enemies of the novel were plot, character, setting and theme."<sup>2</sup> He occupies a rather unique position among his contemporaries, for while he shares many of their concerns, he also differs fundamentally from them in several respects. For example, many of these writers eschew the role of the unconscious and "psychology" in their fiction. Hawkes has spoken little of his debt to his contemporaries, though he has professed admiration for many of them; nonetheless, he seems to be reticent to compare his own fiction with that of writers often termed "metafictionists." (The major exception is John Barth.)<sup>3</sup> Yet Hawkes shares their interest in the nature of the fictional process, and his novels often examine the nature and status of fictionalizing. In interviews and essays, Hawkes has expressed his own sense of a tradition or line of descent underlying his fictional aesthetic. What emerges from his remarks is an aesthetic which is partly formed on and partly reacts to a host of literary influences and models

from American romancers like Melville to modernists like Conrad, Faulkner, and one of the main precursors of post-modernism--Kafka. He is both a revolutionary writer, responding to the particular climate defined by the sensibilities of contemporary thought and ideology, and one who acknowledges in his fiction and essays a debt to prior literary forms and practices; his writing reflects a broad spectrum of aesthetic and theoretical backgrounds.

Although Hawkes' fiction draws on diverse elements, it can be seen as embracing a unified, cohesive aesthetic with unique properties. John Barth was conscious of this unity when he observed that Hawkes "shows the astonishing continuity of voice and preoccupation that I associate with a writer such as Kafka."<sup>4</sup> Hawkes' aesthetic encompasses wide-ranging elements, including myth, psychology and literary traditions. The literary tradition most critical to an understanding of his aesthetic is the comic tradition. Comedy, Hawkes suggests, can present a unified vision of man, embracing dialectical truths about existence and man's nature: the comic method cannot only be used to expose and explore man's instinctual and unconscious beings, but comedy unifies disparate and enables the artist to attain harmony, a vision of human order. In Hawkes, comedy is a complex dialectic which asserts man's fundamental and aspiring nature.

Hawkes' "visionary" aesthetic arises out of his sense of art's involvement with the unconscious, on the one hand, and the imagination, on the other. Hawkes explores the sources and the nature of art as they are manifested through and arise out of the unconscious. Like D. H. Lawrence, Hawkes is concerned with those forces of experience which dissolve our recognition of traditional bonds and replace them by the recognition of our psycho-sexual selves and the inner drives and impulses we

all share. Violence is an integral part of Hawkes' aesthetic, and he is determined to involve us in the unflinching use of brutality and violence which he creates in his fiction. At the same time, the fiction expresses the need for the kind of liberation which the imagination seeks: that is, not flights of fancy, but a personal freedom which allows for the totality of self-expression. Many of Hawkes' characters are artist-figures, though they are not "artists" in the traditional sense. They construct worlds through which they attempt to impose their subjective views of reality and selfhood on others and their environment; they attempt to create a new, personal view of reality, a world of their own making which reflects their own values and can project their own "artistic" goals. These artists draw on the energies of the unconscious while striving to express their imaginative reconstructions of reality. Hawkes' visionary aesthetic becomes a function of both these needs.

Hawkes' aesthetic encourages a tripartite division for the critical purpose of determining and assessing the fundamental qualities of that aesthetic. Indeed, this division loosely represents three major areas of concern on which critics have focused at different times: early studies often considered Hawkes' use and justification of violent subject matter, while later commentators, responding particularly to Second Skin, began to look back at Hawkes' remarks on the comic element of his fiction, evaluating the nature and functions of his comic method; more recently, critics have attempted to explore the sources of the fictional impulse and the role of the imagination in Hawkes' fictions. Hawkes refers to these three central areas of interest in the opening section of Humors of Blood and Skin: "In most of my novels I have written with nearly obsessive intensity about the comedy and violence of sex and about the

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family--from the sexually dead families of The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg to the incestuous, broken families of Second Skin and Virginie. And I have written increasingly about the imagination itself, especially in The Blood Oranges, Travesty, The Passion Artist, and Virginie.<sup>5</sup> Because these three areas are of particular concern to Hawkes as well as many critics, I propose to examine Hawkes' aesthetic by using an essentially tripartite model encompassing: aesthetics of comedy; aesthetics of violence; and, the visionary aesthetic. A brief fourth section, entitled "Art and Anti-Art," forms out of the longer third section and can be considered to represent an extension of it.

#### The Aesthetics of Comedy

Hawkes has frequently complained that readers were unreceptive to the comic element in his fiction, while they overemphasized the horror and nightmare visions of works like The Cannibal, The Beetle Leg and The Lime Twig. In Second Skin, Hawkes set out to write a novel that would be appreciated for its comedy, and The Blood Oranges was composed "in the tradition of high comedy."<sup>6</sup> Hawkes' comic vision is an inseparable part of an aesthetic which is intended to treat man as harshly as possible yet maintain an indispensable attitude of sympathy toward him.

Hawkes insists on the double-edged nature of comedy; while it "almost seems a self-inflicting affair, it is also a saving, a saving attitude":<sup>7</sup>

On the one hand certain kinds of comedy in my work are used to revenge childhood indignities and all we've been made to suffer by the wrong kind of narrow-minded judgments imposed upon us by district attorneys, teachers, parents. . . . The opposite extreme is the comedy that is lyrical and saving, full of grace, full of harmony. It's a comedy that brings all things together in joyous resolution.<sup>8</sup>

Hawkes' comic method reflects the contemporary perception of a world no



longer dependent on traditional values; consequently, comedy has changed in both its form and function. Contemporary comic fiction seeks as one of its primary aims to disrupt the novel's conventional forms.<sup>9</sup> In his study of Hawkes, Donald Greiner reviews various traditional comic theories all of which are founded, to a great extent, on stable comic standards and ideals. He proposes two essential reasons why Hawkes' comic fiction departs from such norms:

First, the concept of a standard applicable to a particular society implies stability, an easily accessible norm. But Hawkes and his contemporaries see the world as fractured, chaotic, and lacking stability because of universal violence which can strike at any man without warning. Secondly, the ideal of a social norm suggests a standardization of manners and behavior which is desirable.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, traditional humour insists on the separation of comedy and emotion, prohibiting the kind of dual response between laughter and sympathy which Hawkes asks for in his fiction.<sup>11</sup>

In tracing his own fictional roots in the "avant-garde," Hawkes emphasizes the positive qualities of comedy. He claims a line of descent evolving from early picaresque writers like Quevedo and Thomas Nashe and continuing through Lautrémont, Céline, Nathanael West, Flannery O'Connor, James Purdy and Joseph Heller. The essence of the vision which Hawkes shares with these writers is, he states, "a quality of coldness, detachment, ruthless determination to face up to the enormities of ugliness and potential failure within ourselves and in the world around us, and to bring to this exposure a savage and saving comic spirit and the saving beauties of language."<sup>12</sup> Like these writers, Hawkes depicts scenes of shocking brutality, yet the exposure to the limits of violence and sadism is not gratuitous or arbitrary but rather serves more fundamental and deeper needs:

the comic method . . . creates sympathy, compassion . . . [and] it's a means for judging human failings as severely as possible; it's a way of exposing evil (one of the pure words I mean to preserve) and of persuading the reader that even he may not be exempt from evil, and of course comic distortion tells us that anything is possible and hence expands the limits of our imaginations. Comic vision suggests futurity, I think, always suggests a certain hope in the limitless energies of life itself.<sup>13</sup>

There are three crucial concepts involved in this quotation: most importantly, Hawkes enjoins sympathy and judgment, saying that the comic method should activate both these values within the reader. Also significant is Hawkes' insistence on the reader's own involvement; it is intended that the reader be drawn into a shared awareness encompassing the violent universe of Hawkes' fiction. The final and most self-evident point that Hawkes makes is that comic distortion enlarges our sensibilities, making us more imaginatively responsive as readers of his fiction, and as perceivers in general. This expansion is achieved through our ability to respond in a complex fashion to Hawkes' comic method; it lies in our awareness of our own responsibility in a violent world and in our ability to balance sympathy and judgment in our response to the characters who inhabit the fictional world.

Because Hawkes is concerned with evoking these values within the reader, morality becomes a focus in his fiction. In On Moral Fiction, John Gardner states his belief that "true art is by its nature moral" in its searching analysis for a system of values;<sup>14</sup> this is echoed by Hawkes for whom it is "impossible to think of fiction without a moral center."<sup>15</sup> But Hawkes' concept of morality in fiction resembles Lawrence's more than it does Gardner's. While expressing his belief that "The essential function of art is moral," Lawrence explains that he means "a passionate implicit morality, not didactic. A morality which changes the blood, rather than the mind."<sup>16</sup> Hawkes distinguishes his

fiction from that of humanists like Gardner and Saul Bellow whose vision of humanity he finds "too comforting."<sup>17</sup> Instead, Hawkes claims that his "moral center" is "Conradian," for it is concerned with the power and consequences of the unconscious act: "For Conrad, the best of men are never safe from their innermost impulses." Hawkes demands that the reader confront his criminal potential, for if he does not "then he is likely to suffer from a lack of personal insight and will judge others with excessive harshness."<sup>18</sup> "Reversed sympathy" arises when we are given the means to identify "with the so-called criminal or rebellious mentality."<sup>19</sup> Hawkes' aesthetic, which is partly rooted in the unconscious, the criminal or "immoral," depends on a balance between judgment and sympathy which causes us to identify in part with what we might under ordinary circumstances dismiss as too horrible and remote from our own experience. The point is that nothing--including such taboo subjects as homosexuality, sexual masochism or incest--is too remote from our experience. Hawkes deals with the mechanics of repression in all his works, forcing us to confront aspects of our own selves which we refuse to acknowledge in our conscious lives.

Hawkes' characters are sometimes termed "monsters," distorted or perverse human beings. Larry of The Lime Twig, for example, is a demonic underworld figure, but he is also referred to as "god-like" and an "angel." Like the seemingly innocent characters in the novel, Larry also has his dreams: "'A bit of marriage, eh? And then a ship, trees with limes on the branches . . . the Americas--a proper cruise, plenty of time at the bar, no gunplay or nags. Perhaps a child or two, who knows?'"<sup>20</sup> Neither Larry nor Zizendorf, the fascist dictator in The Cannibal, can simply be passed off because they are immoral. (As we shall see when specifically

discussing The Cannibal, it is not Zizendorf's immorality which serves primarily to reduce his status as an individual, but his pretensions toward absolute authority which undercut him as a threatening figure.) Our response to such characters is partly governed by Hawkes' ability to create a sense of mutuality within the reader; we come to see that we share with his characters certain appetites, passions and impulses. Ultimately, we see such characters as aspects of our selves.<sup>21</sup>

One of the possible reasons that Hawkes turned to first-person narration after The Lime Twig may have involved his need to induce within the reader a sense of shared identity with the major character. With the exception of The Passion Artist, Hawkes' six novels after The Lime Twig are first-person narratives. These narrators are all engaging, conversational and direct in their revelations about themselves. In all instances, Hawkes invites us to identify with unconventional, unusual types--at least two are or will be murderers. Yet because these narrators are, essentially, unlike us, we feel inclined to judge as well as sympathize with them. Hawkes determines that our response to them involves a counterpoise between judgment and sympathy. But he does not merely force us to identify with them through their engaging natures; the worlds they create for themselves have their sources in their unconscious selves. Through an aesthetic of violence, Hawkes suggests that art derives from internal mechanisms which have their foundation in erotic or sadistic drives.

#### Aesthetics of Violence

Hawkes utilizes the artist-figure to help him delineate the link between art and the subversive forces in the human personality which can potentially give rise to art. He discovers connections between the unconscious as it is manifested in erotic drives and the capacity for human

fulfillment through self-expression, between what is often repressed--sexual and sadistic impulses--and the imaginative potential to remake and reorder experience. The source for "visionary" art lies in the interaction between these crucial areas.

Because Hawkes finds it necessary to deal with what is repressed, anti-social, or "immoral," his artist-figures are often criminals or those who live outside of society's laws. Like a poem, says Hawkes, "experimental fiction is an exclamation of psychic materials which come to the writer all readily distorted, prefigured in that nightly inner schism between the rational and the absurd."<sup>22</sup> Hawkes' goal is to activate the imagination so that it becomes free to exercise itself fully in both its creative and destructive capacities. For such a liberation to take place, Hawkes must get in touch with the unconscious, and the act of fictionalizing provides him with the means:

My fiction is driven from the unconscious; its energy comes from deep psychic conflicts: I don't mean that I'm simply trying to exorcise my personal self; rather, I'm trying to touch on matters that are important to the inner lives of all people.<sup>23</sup>

Although the unconscious, pre-rational side of man affords Hawkes with a rich and diverse source for his writing, he is not interested in reproducing states of the unconscious directly or in pure form; thus, his fiction is not surrealistic in the traditional sense. He has described a process at work in his fiction where subterranean impulses are shaped and channelled into a fully articulated and formulated entity. The fictional process is incomplete until the conscious mind imposes its design.<sup>24</sup> Earl Rovit describes Hawkes' fictions as a dynamic between unconscious and conscious forces when he refers to them as "controlled assaults against his readers. . . . The art lies in Hawkes' control, in the restraint of

his assaults. . . . His fictions are constructs of sensuous stimuli which engage, sensitize, paralyze and release with a renewed vitality the slumbering energies of the human spirit."<sup>25</sup>

For Hawkes, as for those comic writers with whom he shares similar aims and commitments, the element of control depends on the ability of the writer to maintain a constant stance of detachment toward the objects of his creation, for "detachment is at the center of the novelist's experiment":

the product of extreme fictive detachment is extreme fictive sympathy. The writer who maintains most successfully a consistent cold detachment toward physical violence . . . is likely to generate the deepest novelistic sympathy of all, a sympathy which is a humbling before the terrible and a quickening in the presence of degradation.<sup>26</sup>

Hawkes has often been attacked for his use of violence and his preoccupation with pain and suffering. But this violence is never gratuitous nor meaningless in the context of his fictional worlds. Robert Scholes attempts to justify the sado-masochistic beating of Margaret in The Lime Twig by pointing to a balance which exists throughout the long, detailed description between the poignancy of the events and the ironical distancing which is created in this scene through the style; the effect is to create "a situation so fraught with tones and attitudes that no simple emotional reaction is adequate to it."<sup>27</sup> Earl Rovit and S. K. Oberbeck speak of the "liberating" effects of such violence. Claiming that Hawkes discovers "a mixture of pity and exhilaration in violence," Oberbeck points to the existence of a generalized or abstract violence in Hawkes' fiction, "a deeper, less obvious violence, that which is undeclared and potential, like anxiety that hasn't yet the referent of a specific fear."<sup>28</sup>

The source of violence in Hawkes is often undiscovered by the reader, for although violence is manifested through external action, its true

source usually lies in internal mechanisms, particularly agencies of repression.

Hawkes batters our senses through the choice and treatment of his subject matter. Through his style Hawkes often addresses the nature of an internal violence which expresses complex, even paradoxical needs. Hawkes' prose is richly evocative, its tonal qualities ranging from those of ruthless detachment to lyrical subjectivity and its rhythms alternately sensuous and sharply staccato. Such prose has the resonating power to convey a significant tension among the elements of the fictional world. Many passages in Hawkes' fiction carry us relentlessly into an inner world of intense suffering which is, in part, longed for by the victim himself. Thick's beating of Margaret in The Lime Twig provides an example of such a movement, as does the scene of Skipper's tattooing in Second Skin:

The scream--yes, I confess it, scream--that was clamped between my teeth was a strenuous black bat struggling, wrestling in my bloated mouth and with every puncture of the needle--fast as the stinging of artificial bees, this exquisite torture--I with my eyes squeezed tight, my lips squeezed tight, felt that at any moment it must thrust the slimy black tip of its archaic skeletal wing out into view of Cassandra and the working tattooer. But I was holding on. I longed to disgorge the bat, to sob, to be flung, into the relief of freezing water like an old woman submerged and screaming in the wild balm of some dark baptismal rite in a roaring river. But I was holding on. While the punctures were marching across, burning their open pinprick way across my chest, I was bulging in every muscle, slick, strained, and the bat was peering into my mouth of pain, kicking, slick with my saliva, and in the stuffed interior of my brain I was resisting, jerking in outraged helplessness, blind and baffled, sick with the sudden recall of what Tremlow had done to me that night--helpless abomination--while Sonny lay sprawled on the bridge and the captain trembled on his cot behind the pilothouse. There were tiny fat glistening tears in the corners of my eyes. But they never fell. Never from the eyes of this heavy bald-headed once-handsome man. Victim. Courageous victim.<sup>29</sup>

Hawkes achieves his effect here through repetitive rhythmic and irregular syntactical patterns and the use of unexpected images. The

first thing to note in this passage is the unusual bat image and its progressive evolution throughout the passage. Sentences where this image occurs are long and twisting, seeming to represent primal evocations of the unconscious self. (The bat originates in the caves of the unconscious.) The passage takes shape as a life-and-death struggle between Skipper's conscious and unconscious selves. The rhythm reflects this struggle through the use of complex, involuted sentences; exotic, often sexual images, proliferate on the page. Alternating with these sentences are direct, declarative ones, reflecting the temporary reassertion of Skipper's conscious self: "But I was holding on." The bat first appears as Skipper's consciously manipulated metaphor: "The scream . . . that was clamped between my teeth was a strenuous black bat struggling"; it then becomes a symbol of demon possession as Skipper longs to be part of "some dark baptismal rite." Finally, the bat is imagined "peering into my mouth of pain"--not so much an expression of Skipper's physical torment as the releasing mechanism of the unconscious. At this point, the bat has gained ascendancy over Skipper's "controlling" consciousness, and the image of Tremlow's "abomination"--his rape of Skipper--is suddenly recalled.

Throughout the passage, pain is experienced where the centre for pain exists, in the mind; and many of the resources of figurative language are brought to bear on this experience. The psychological painfulness of Skipper's tattooing session is made manifest along with the more evident physiological pain. Psychological pain is augmented by memory and, although Skipper believes that he is submitting to the tattooer's needle for Cassandra's sake, his heroism is undercut by the recollection of the Tremlow incident where he is beaten, mutilated and sexually assaulted,



images of which all recur in this scene. An authority over both Tremlow and Cassandra, Skipper undergoes intense physical and psychological pain at their hands, the victim, it seems, of his utter willingness to be victimized by those he is in a position to control. This passage, then, presents an intensifying probing into deeper and deeper levels of Skipper's unconscious wherein the complexity of human motives and desires is fully expressed. The tattooing rite reminds Skipper of Tremlow's rape, and both acts become defined as violations wished for by Skipper partly in order to reinforce the image of his own courageous victimization. Hawkes' style often leads us into deeper levels of the unconscious self where the individual is forced to confront without consciously acknowledging the frightening and unfamiliar shapes of his private nightmare.

Hawkes' fiction is steeped in violence, terror and the grotesque. Yet one need only compare a Hawkes novel with those of other recent writers who dwell on violent material to perceive a difference. Jerzy Kosinski's The Painted Bird, Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude and Joseph Heller's Catch-22 are examples of contemporary novels in which violence and brutality overwhelm the reader. Like Hawkes' The Cannibal and, to a lesser extent, Second Skin, these are novels either about war itself or the nature of warfare and revolution. Kosinski, García Márquez and Heller focus on external events; the books record the atrocities of murder and rape and other crimes as they become part of the daily scene. Every effort is made to augment the theme of violence through graphic depictions and dehumanized images. In these three works, the lives of the innocent are juxtaposed to the lives of those who perpetuate the violence, which further intensifies the sense of horror. The guilty and innocent alike are consumed by the violence around them, though a

considerable gap seems to exist between the victimizers and the victimized. In Hawkes, the gap is narrowed so that, ultimately, we are prepared to view each individual as both his own victimizer and victim.

García Márquez, Kosinski and Heller are interested in the consequences of external violence and the ways in which violence affects us internally or psychologically; they emphasize the victims' helplessness and struggles in the midst of a violent and chaotic universe. Although Hawkes uses violence to create a similar consciousness, the fact of violence is less important than his metaphoric use of it. Violent acts are part of the "real" world in García Márquez, Kosinski and Heller--a fact, perhaps the fact, of existence. Frequently, scenes of brutality, aggression and sadism in their novels are casually but concisely depicted. By contrast, Hawkes draws out such scenes which are rooted in violence, exploiting the metaphorical meaning of violent behaviour as it expresses man's unconscious desires and preoccupations, such as sexual desire, need for power, and self-destructive tendencies: above all, violence as metaphor conveys the disorder and misdirected energies of the human psyche. Details which would normally produce pure horror are often radically distorted so that a complex mingling of horror, shock, sympathy and humour results. Hawkes is not so much concerned with violence as with the source for violence amid the complex interplay of human motives, values and desires.

It is significant that there are so many suicides in Hawkes' fiction; those characters who do not die by suicide are often killed accidentally, so that the actual number of homicides is comparatively small. Outer violence is displaced into the self, as Hawkes' characters fail to realize or deal adequately with their own inner urges. The Beetle Leg, unlike the conventional Western which it parodies, is remarkably free of deaths,

but there are intimations of violence everywhere. The novel begins with the suggestion that a rape or assault is about to take place, but it never materializes; these gestures toward violence culminate in the mock ceremony of hunting down the Red Devils, a motorcycle gang whose worst crimes seem to have been voyeurism and poisoning the Sheriff's dog. There are killings in The Cannibal, but the most shocking murder symbolically reinforces the internalization of violence. The Duke stalks and kills Jutta's son and then proceeds to cannibalize him, after which others unknowingly feed on his remains. Because Hawkes never explains why this cannibalism occurs, and we have no access to normal cause and effect motivation, the horror that would arise through a realistic portrayal is minimized, or rather, occurs in conjunction with other responses. The scene becomes grotesque, blackly comic,<sup>30</sup> with the emphasis on the inappropriate response to a situation; the ritual comes to symbolize the process whereby humans become incapable of exorcising their violence-ridden selves. The characters in this novel cannibalize themselves, and in this way become more impotent and ineffectual; feeding on themselves, they lack the force to act against their true oppressors. Terror operates simultaneously with a comic irony which continually insists that the characters are prey to their inner selves.

Violence in Hawkes, with its reference to internal need, seeks to unify victim and victimizer in the single quest to express the underlying dynamics of a violent and chaotic universe. The reader himself becomes involved in this dynamic, in the apprehension brought home to him of the shared basis among victim, victimizer and reader. Until Second Skin, the reader participates vicariously as both victim and victimizer, but in this novel, the first to employ first-person narration exclusively, the

reader becomes aware of a gap intentionally created by the narrator, his refusal to play the role of victimizer; he becomes an all too easy victim of the evils practised on him by others, even by his own daughter, as the passage analyzed above (S.S., 19) suggests. One of the consequences of Skipper's determination not to repay violence with further violence is to implant in the reader exactly that desire for revenge which Skipper repudiates in the interests of his unnatural tolerance and self-sacrifice. The reader is implicated in the violence which he would have Skipper perform in response to his incessant, passive role as victim. Avoiding violence, we feel, in the midst of a world where brutalities and physical affronts are part of everyday life, is tantamount to avoiding reality. There seems something repugnant to many readers about the passive recipient in fiction--he who will absorb punishment without striking back. This is intensified when the character speaks continually about his "virtues" as a sufferer. In Second Skin, we may become unconscious victimizers of Skipper, punishing him, in effect, for his posturing passivity by our general condemnation of his character.<sup>31</sup> Whether we feel that some of Hawkes' protagonists go much too far in their search to realize sadistic and violent urges or, like Skipper, do not go far enough, violence becomes defined as a condition of life to which we, in part, must consent.

Skipper's excessive avoidance of violence is exceptional among Hawkes' artist-figures who project their own need for violent encounters onto the landscapes they, in part, create thereby exorcising their unconscious needs and desires. Papa in Travesty represents the extreme opposite of Skipper, seeking out violent death for himself and two others, attempting to incorporate the destructive impulse through his vision of art, as Hawkes also attempts to do, to some extent, in his fiction. Allert of Death,

Sleep & the Traveler refuses to acknowledge that he could have committed a murder; like Skipper, he sees himself as a docile, benevolent man who simply wishes the best for himself and his friends. Unlike Skipper and Allert, who in different ways avoid confronting their pasts, Konrad Vost of The Passion Artist undertakes a quest in which he rehearses scenes of childhood violence, finally coming to terms with the universal equation of pleasure and pain.

Hawkes' power to evoke the unacknowledged element of our private nightmares is, perhaps, that aspect of his fiction to which critics, particularly early critics and reviewers, pay the most attention. He alerts us to the disparity between the world as we ordinarily perceive it in the comfort of our everyday lives where there is order, routine and, consequently, security, and a world that can conceivably exist but which we seldom wish to acknowledge. He emphasizes this latter world where unreal dreams are transmuted into living nightmares. It is a world where cannibalism is a possibility, where erotic fantasies of masochism and death erupt and displace our ordinary, predictable lives. We may respond to this vision with terrified denials, but we are irrevocably drawn into it with a sense that nobody is immune to the processes of destruction, decay and disintegration depicted in these novels. We are compelled to admit our mutual participation in these processes, as we are forced to admit, along with Papa of Travesty, that we may be morbidly drawn to the bloodied scenes of terrible automobile crashes and human mutilation. Susan Sontag has observed that "Real art has the capacity to make us nervous";<sup>32</sup> Hawkes' fiction certainly succeeds in this, by making us question our own motives and private desires.

Terror permeates all of Hawkes' fiction, even those novels which,

on the surface, seem less terrifying. Although Donald Greiner speaks of Hawkes' "return to terror" with the publication of Death, Sleep & the Traveler,<sup>33</sup> the two preceding novels, Second Skin and The Blood Oranges, are perhaps just as terrifying because terror appears to be slumbering just beneath the surface of the bucolic landscape. The appeal, in the reader's terms, is like that of Yeats' beast before he "slouches toward Bethlehem to be born"; we fear especially that which we repress. The threat of terror marks these novels as an uneasy counterpoise between calm and catastrophe; they sustain, but only barely, the terror and violence that the sanguine reconstructions of the placid narrators would dispense with entirely.

In spite of the unremitting nature of terror and our anxiety in the face of this terror, Hawkes is also concerned with the human effort to construct a world which succeeds in merging terror with human purpose. He attempts to forge meaningful connections between violence and fear, on the one hand, and dimensions of human awareness, on the other. To submit to terror, as Skipper and Konrad Vost do, is to open oneself to new potential, to the possibility of renewal, though Skipper and Vost embrace this possibility in different ways. Michael Banks of The Lime Twig provides an early example of a character who is able to turn terror into meaningful action. At the end of this novel, after being victimized throughout by Larry and his gang, he suddenly realizes that he possesses the ability to be an agent of power himself and possibly to redeem his former actions. Although his final act results in his death, it also destroys the plans of those who have terrorized him and his wife, Margaret; terror is transformed into action which has affirmative overtones. From his first novel on, Hawkes addresses the possibility that violence can

be enlightening, that the capacity exists, often through the imaginative and ordering principles of the artist-figure, to use violence and pain as a means for exploring the nature of our relationships with others and with ourselves.

### The Visionary Aesthetic

In his provocative study of post-modernist fiction, Literature Against Itself, Gerald Graff criticizes the tendency of contemporary writers to create a "privatized world" of subjective consciousness; he contrasts the aims and effects of modernism and postmodernism:

modern fiction, except in a few instances, did not actually effect the total subjectivization and privatization of human experience called for by modernist theories which defined literature as an expression of inward 'consciousness' set over against the rational discourse of the public, objective world. By contrast, postmodern fiction tends to carry the logic of such modernist theories to their limit, so that we have a consciousness so estranged from objective reality that it does not even recognize its estrangement as such.<sup>34</sup>

The postmodernist's reply to Graff's final observation would probably be that such an estrangement is an illusion, the result of a falsified view of reality and is based on an inaccurate distinction between "objective reality" and "fictional reality." Metafiction stresses the similarities between these two "categories" as it explores the natures of the creative impulse and the fiction-making process itself.

In The Metafictional Muse, a useful overview of the literary and philosophic antecedents of metafiction, Larry McCaffery says that the metafictionist examines many of the same issues which more traditional writers have explored: the meaning of human identity, the accessibility of knowledge, the influence of environment and human systems, and the basis of man's innermost impulses, desires and fears. In exploring these

regions, charted countless times in the past by writers with differing commitments, the metafictionist diverges from the traditional writer by emphasizing the role of fiction itself in "unlocking the complexities of self-definition and the manner in which we project this definition through language."<sup>35</sup>

According to the metafictionist, all conceptualizations of reality which we assume in our day-to-day responsiveness to the life around us are "fictions" in the sense that they are imposed on us. There exists little qualitative difference between the fictions practised by the writer and those "fictions" which serve the purposes of the larger instruments of socialization and institutionalization; the essential difference is that while the writer knows his creations are relative and arbitrary, individuals seldom reflect on the arbitrary nature of these "other," seemingly absolute fictions. What underlies the impulse of metafiction is the consciousness that all forms and systems are created; thus none are any more valid than any other. In this sense, nothing is more "real" than anything else, for "fiction that insists on created reality is its own reality; has its own vitality and energy." Writers who "represent" rather than "create" "think they are reflecting or reproducing reality. They must think they know what reality is; they must think that 'out there' is reality, which I don't think at all."<sup>36</sup>

McCaffery refers to two kinds of metafiction: there is the kind which "directly examines its own construction as it proceeds or which comments or speculates about the forms and language of previous fictions." Such fictions may conspicuously announce their own area of exploration or even their theme. More generally, the second kind of metafiction embraces "books which seek to examine how all fictional systems operate,



their methodology, the sources of their appeal, and the dangers of their being dogmatized."<sup>37</sup> Although the first kind is applicable to Hawkes at times (for example, he often parodies prior fictional forms--the western, the detective thriller), the second kind is more generally applicable.

Hawkes is concerned with the deployment and operation of fictional systems, the creative impulse and its sources in the unconscious, and the relationship between two kinds of fiction: the fictions by which we live, including the laws of socialization, and the fictions which we create ourselves as individuals. Hawkes is concerned with exposing the "moral fictions" to which we often give false allegiance in our attempt to accommodate ourselves to conventions and "fit into" society. The novelist, Hawkes says, must seek "to destroy conventional reality," an act which he sees as "essential to our survival."<sup>38</sup> The other kind of fiction which concerns Hawkes relates to our efforts as individuals to create our own sense of reality often through the manipulation of others and external reality, the way we give shape or pattern to our own experience through our imaginative impulses and assert our identities in the process. In this sense, his main characters are artist-figures interested in creating "worlds" which reflect their own values (as set against the values of conventional or traditional morality) and in which they can project their own artistic goals and ideals of clarity and design.

Like William Gass, John Barth and other metafictionists, Hawkes feels the impulse to make or remake the world. Gass argues for "properly philosophical" appreciation of the novel, dismissing the interpretation of fictions which regards them "as ways of viewing reality and not as additions to it."<sup>39</sup> As the contemporary writer now better understands his medium, Gass claims that he need no longer be concerned with

"rendering" the world: "The esthetic aim of any fiction is the creation of a verbal world, or a significant part of such a world, alive through every order of its Being."<sup>40</sup>

Gass argues that objects in the external world have their correlatives in the verbal constituents of fictional "reality," that fiction is a structure composed of materials (words) like structures in the "real" world. Like all the metafictionists, Hawkes is concerned with the fictional process and he stresses the fundamental differences between fiction and "the world we live in." Hawkes characterizes his own novels as "visionary." Visionary fiction speaks to the primacy of individual experience and the translation of this experience into a heightened, enlivened prose which reflects the rhythms of a personal consciousness. Hawkes defines "vision" in abstract terms but emphasizes its separation from the "real" (outer) world:

Visionary fiction is a unique world, separate and different from the world we live in despite surface semblances. Visionary fiction is a fish bowl in which the clarity of the bowl is unique and you see the stream of fish, the gleam of fins--it is a fish bowl different from any other.<sup>41</sup>

Like the metafictionists, Hawkes stresses the primacy of language in visionary fiction:<sup>42</sup> "When fiction is original and yet speaks to all our primary and disturbing needs, it is phrased in a language that has a life of its own, an energy of its own, and takes on characteristics of what I would call visionary life."<sup>43</sup> Hawkes' comment, like his statement on visionary fiction, seems deliberately vague and abstract. One of the obvious qualities of fiction which "is original" yet addresses our "disturbing needs" relates to its "shock value." Hawkes' fiction, as previously discussed, is aimed at activating an awareness in the reader of a shared purpose or need with the characters in his fiction: Hawkes encourages our recognition of a common identity. Hawkes' language does

not merely describe, but it evokes images of our unconscious and even our "mythic" lives.<sup>44</sup> Referring to Hawkes' first novel, Leslie Fiedler speaks of Hawkes' propensity for "extorting from terror a poetry that will not mitigate that terror."<sup>45</sup> As readers, we become aware of levels of apprehension, sometimes contradictory, which challenge our tendency to reduce and restrict meaning. One of the dominant qualities of Hawkes' prose, particularly his first-person narratives, lies in its ability to express the rhetorical and lyrical constituents of the subjective worlds of these narrators. At the same time that these first-person narrators seek to convince and justify, they also seek to utilize language to help them attain the elevated heights of visionary power. In the opening passages of Second Skin and The Blood Oranges, the narrators of these works "overload" us by presenting us with elaborate and exotic images. They introduce themselves by relying heavily on figurative language and devices, enforcing their authority as creative artists and "world" makers. In this way, the openings to these two novels reflect both the rhetorical function and the lyrical capability.

We are able to engage, to some degree, with the narrator's experience as it becomes expressed through the capacity to make or remake reality. But all of Hawkes' first-person narrators create a form of authoritarian order which is dependent upon their status as controlling figures and manifested throughout the text in a variety of ways. Our response is dictated by our willingness to be drawn into the narrator's world while we simultaneously draw away from it, questioning, perhaps, the nature or extent of their control. We may become conscious of the manifold tyrannies of language, as we are forced to retreat into a kind of silence; in Travesty, for example, we become effectual prisoners of

an art where language is released from its traditional capacities and becomes the function of one man's psychopathic fantasy to dominate and control. In Hawkes there is inevitably a dialectic between the reader and the text, where the text becomes a manifestation of authoritarian will. This responsiveness of the reader to the text as both liberating and imprisoning becomes complicated further with the distinction to be made, particularly in the first person narratives, between the author's and the narrator's "text." The question for the reader may come to involve his readiness to succumb to authority as it is expressed through the vision of the narrator's reality or world, or it may focus instead on the evocative powers of language itself. In other words, the reader may be pressed to choose between the world in the novel (the narrator's world) or the world of the novel (the novel itself as lyrical expression). Hawkes' visionary fiction emerges as a process of reaction to and interaction between these "worlds."

Throughout Hawkes' fiction the narrator insists on his own partiality, his distinctive license to see things in a particular way. In his essay, "New Fiction in America," Richard Kostelanetz refers to "the creation of an unusual narrative voice" in works which "take as their subject the madness and/or 'vision' of their protagonists."<sup>46</sup> One of the strategies that a contemporary novelist may use to exploit the character's or narrator's point of view of reality, Sharon Spencer maintains, is the "closed structure":

The closed structure is a world in itself: a self-enclosed, private, usually intense, and often extremely haunting world in which the accustomed types of literary characters and the usual relationships in time and space are inappropriate. The closed structure depends for its enclosure upon the restriction of the perspective to one exclusively maintained emotional and intellectual attitude toward the subject.<sup>47</sup>

Such novels may project worlds where "fantasy and reality are so deeply intermingled that a fusion is attained, a fusion that is intended to represent an expanded . . . a more comprehensive and . . . a more accurate reality."<sup>48</sup> Novels which have a closed structure may possess various "secondary" characteristics, all of which have been attributed to Hawkes' novels: such traits include a pronounced style which may be odd or ornate; in subject matter they may deal with the grotesque, the unnatural, the marvellous, "the perverse and the perverted"; finally, they frequently evoke the unconscious mind and the dream world. Such novels operate autonomously or independently of traditional variables, for their authors are unconcerned with mimetic requirements and novelistic conventions:

There is no need for characters conceived and portrayed according to the principle of verisimilitude and provided with believable motives for their actions, no need for conventionally measured approximations of time and space, for dialogue that reproduces actual speech patterns, or for actions and themes that reflect the laws of ordinary men.<sup>49</sup>

Within this closed structure, the laws of the ordinary, the natural or the expected no longer apply. Hawkes takes particular delight in upsetting reader expectations, as when he "kills off" the character Hencher whose first-person meditations comprise the 25-page "prologue" of The Lime Twig; Hawkes defies formal conventions by structuring The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg around a succession of anti-climaxes. Neither novelistic conventions nor the laws of external reality apply within the closed structure. Under the conditions which operate in the traditional novel, the individual is frequently in a situation where some form of compromise becomes necessary: the identity of the individual may be shaped by various factors, including societal, familial and religious ones, and he must often acknowledge these factors in his discoveries about his own nature. Within the closed structure of much contemporary fiction, the individual

becomes free to explore the dynamics of his own being, particularly the processes whereby he creates his own world. Through this exploration, Hawkes scrutinizes his own fictional impulse and the process of fictionalizing. Through Hawkes' dream worlds, the artist encounters aspects of his own creation. In the efforts of the artist-figure to create a world are reflected Hawkes' own attempts to create a fictional world which is unique and independent of external reality; the fictional world, in turn, reflects many of the concerns, values and tribulations of the artistic self as Hawkes conceives it.

In various ways, the artist-figures in Hawkes' fiction rehearse the dilemmas, obsessions, and preoccupations with which he is concerned as a writer of fiction; they represent versions of the artist as he continuously examines his function as a writer through the act of fictional composition. In an interview, Hawkes spoke of Sidney Slyter of The Lime Twig and the ineffectual detectives at the end of this novel as "images of the absurd and lonely author himself."<sup>50</sup> An element of self-mockery is also implied in Hawkes' statement that Skipper, the narrator of Second Skin, may be viewed as a "comic representation" of the author.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Hawkes has commented that both Hugh and Cyril of The Blood Oranges may be taken as composite images of the authorial consciousness.<sup>52</sup> The list of correspondences is far from exhausted by these examples Hawkes affords us. The sordid activities of Zizendorf and the Duke in The Cannibal suggest the difficulties inherent in ordering material which refuses to yield itself to the conscious act of ordering; similarly, Seigneur of Virginie alludes in a seemingly casual fashion to the "occasional intractability" of his medium. Papa, the narrator of Travesty, parodies the artist's obsession with the conscious element of creation:

that which involves design, clarity and detachment--all matters to which Hawkes has alluded extensively in interviews and critical works. Self-parody is a crucial concept in Hawkes' novels through which the novelist scrutinizes many of his fundamental impulses and aesthetic theories.

Many of Hawkes' characters are outsiders who create intensely private worlds which are undermined or repudiated by society or its representatives. In visionary writing, whether the poetry of the Romantics or that of a novelist like Hawkes, the figure of the artist is often an alien or outcast. The Romantics, however, sought to liberate man by perceiving the universal and the abstract in the individual and the concrete. The visionary fiction of Hawkes depicts man's innermost needs and impulses, more than it does his aspiring potential. It points toward the idiosyncratic, the hidden potentiality of self without directing this awareness outward toward a universal vision of harmony. Its essence is the self reaching toward personal and imaginative fulfillment rather than a wholeness embracing all of mankind. The dangers of solipsism may be fully realized in Hawkes' fiction. Robert Langbaum speaks of the Romantic's need "for a strong individuality that can reject old values and create new ones, that can create its own organization of the world. On the other hand, there is the danger that such an individuality will make a world of itself."<sup>53</sup> The way to avoid this possibility was "to maintain a strong ego open to connections" with nature or "to reconstitute the self by drawing upon and helping to create a new secularism," as Yeats' religion of art or Lawrence's religion of love.<sup>54</sup> John Knapp believes that Hawkes succeeds in doing this in The Blood Oranges. He speaks of Hawkes' efforts in that novel to evoke an "imaginative creation of a new moral order, superseding a moribund, exceedingly sterile Christianity."<sup>55</sup> But Hawkes' fiction

fully realizes the artistic potential in both its creative and destructive capacities. In Hawkes' triad of novels, The Blood Oranges, Death, Sleep & the Traveler and Travesty, the three narrators define a gradient from narcissism to solipsism, from engaging in creative activity which draws on elements outside the bounds of the creator's imagination in The Blood Oranges, to fixing the self and others wholly within the constrictive limits of a personal vision in Travesty.

The position of the artist as an outsider allows him to retain his capacity for vision undiluted. Since he does not fit into society and is unable or unwilling to operate under its norms, he is able to develop the capacity to create those structures which serve his interests and his particular abilities.

Because the writer is concerned with extremes, then, he is able to form a figurative alliance with the outcast and even the criminal: those judged unfit for conventional society. In his concern with the role of the criminal within his fiction, Hawkes goes beyond a writer like Conrad whose characters are also frequently outcasts and criminals. Both these writers express a sympathy which is broad and nonjudgmental. But Hawkes' sympathy, which like Conrad's is for "the saved and the damned alike," is of a different order from Conrad's; for Conrad, the "few simple truths" were the necessary restraining bonds which held off a collapse into anarchy, and Conrad continually expressed his commitment to these "truths." Perhaps it can be said that while Conrad's sympathy, though always ambivalent, is morally motivated, the identification which Hawkes feels, a passionless identification in the interests of an art of ruthless exposure, is aesthetically oriented. It is grounded in the recognition of the necessity which he shares with many of his characters



to disrupt the terms of conventional thought (under which presumably fall even Conrad's "few simple truths") and to substitute a subjectively valid expression of the self, its ideals and ultimately, its repressed desires and unconscious dictates.<sup>56</sup>

Hawkes deems it insufficient merely to direct the fictional experience toward the disruption and destruction of conventional morality; this, in itself, suggests an essentially satiric or didactic function for art. He insists that art be restorative as well, just as he insists on the "double-edged nature" of comedy. In Second Skin and The Blood Oranges, he sets out to suggest a new basis for human relationships, replacing the conventional morality he believes the novelist should "destroy." The basis of this relationship is within the imagination itself: "it is necessary to destroy repression while showing at the same time that the imagination is unlimited."<sup>57</sup> On the surface, these may seem to be two incompatible operations--the first a moral one, and the second, aesthetic. It is typical of Hawkes' need for paradox that he links them in this way and, in Second Skin and The Blood Oranges, it seems as though Hawkes nearly succeeds in his "ideal" prescription of art's function. Nevertheless, the narrators of these novels do not manage to seduce every reader by the idyllic visions of harmony and peace which they set before him. At the very least, the reader becomes conscious of irresolvable tensions within the landscape of these novels: these are fragile Edens with lurking dangers.

In Travesty, the situation is more extreme. Hawkes defends the novel as pure vision, "so purely a work of art" and "not an outrage against life"<sup>58</sup> in spite of the narrator's intentions to kill his daughter and best friend. Travesty posits the existence of an airtight world governed

by Papa's aesthetic principles of clarity and design, where all moral considerations are dismissed as irrelevancies. But Travesty evokes a variety of responses from the reader (including moral ones). This narrator is, we discover, engaged in evasions, deceptions and contradictions. Like the other first-person narrators in Hawkes' novels, Papa's authoritarian claims challenge the reader in various ways, creating, in effect, a climate of incertitude and ambiguity. In Hawkes' novels; in general, the aesthetic vision is undercut and challenged and, in this way, the reader is placed in a position in which he can participate in the process of examining and testing the aesthetic vision at the same time that he is made receptive to it through the lyricism by which the vision is expressed.

#### Art and Anti-Art

A way to look at the controlling and shaping process in Hawkes is through his concept of "design and debris," a phrase often repeated by Travesty's narrator. Hawkes' works often express a dialectic between the act of fictional ordering and the chaos of a "reality" which is potentially subject to the ordering process but ultimately threatens to dissolve such designs as are present in created or "fictional reality."

Hawkes' first works of fiction (from "Charivari" through The Lime Twig) express the chaotic nature of experience; the world is seen in disarray;

in catastrophic strife against itself; all life suffers from the threat of total disintegration. The relation between a world portrayed, on the one hand, as chaotic, absurd, subject to laws which may be either mechanical or arbitrary, and fictional style, on the other hand, is evident in a novel like The Cannibal: against these forces of disorder, the visionary artist asserts the powers of language and metaphoric thought,

imposing a design, a shaping and creative consciousness. Hawkes' stylistic control suggests a sense of absolute order, asserting the artist's power to absolve the world from an emptiness which lacks even the echoes of despondency, the voice of its despair. Through the process of fictional patterning, Hawkes gives his universe a voice or, at least, the ghostly presence of one.

In terms of Hawkes' concern with the manifestation of artistic control and design, The Lime Twig is a significant work and anticipates the novels which follow it. The Lime Twig focuses on a region between dream and actuality, an amorphous realm where the self begins to form out of chaos, and, at the end of the novel, a single voice suddenly finds the strength and the resources to articulate its protest against the nightmare forces that would silence it. Second Skin and the triad of novels which follow (The Blood Oranges, Death, Sleep & the Traveler and Travesty)

extend the artist's need to impose form and design on chaotic reality.

The first-person narrators of these works strive to express the inner being and transform reality according to the imperatives of a subjective vision. These novels explore the limits of visionary art, an art which proposes in highly subjective terms the preeminence of imaginative thought discharged through an often obsessive concern with form, design and internal coherence. They express the visionary aesthetic in its powers to transform or transcend chaotic reality and to seek a form of absolute control largely through imaginative construction. The artist-figure feels the necessity of assuming an absolute authority in order to counter-balance that which threatens the ordered harmony he attempts to achieve. From Hawkes' first novels, then, where authorial control is exhibited largely through the linguistic and stylistic devices of Hawkes himself

as a constant authorial presence, we move to novels where symbolic artists filter their visions through equally constant, but unique and peculiar consciousnesses intent on dispelling chaos and setting in its place the clarity of their designs. By using first-person narration, Hawkes is able to present directly and with a sense of immediacy the visions to which these artist-figures are committed while allowing for comic and ironic overtones which serve to call these visions into question.

Hawkes' art refuses the imprisonment of design. Hawkes continually engages in a process of fictional "testing" in which he explores the limits of visionary art and its power to withstand those forces inimicable to it. Although Hawkes' artist-figures share common goals related to their common "vocation" as artists, his novels are also concerned with those forces which oppose the artist-figure. As they are embodied in the liberated unconscious, these forces can provide the creative energy used by the imagination to construct the visionary world. Almost all of Hawkes' narrators repress aspects of their unconscious selves, yet they are able to release the energy of the unconscious through their desire to "make a world"; in contrast, there are other figures in Hawkes' fiction who are unwilling or unable to utilize this energy and thus are doomed to sterile and meaningless activities. Among this latter group are Hawkes' failed or incomplete artists.

Inevitably, Hawkes' artist-figures are involved in a struggle against the forces of "anti-art." These forces may be embodied within a society which is dedicated to the pursuit of materialism, conventionality and death; often the artist-figure has a specific antagonist, a repressed or repressive individual who represents the sterile values of a societal order, like Miranda in Second Skin, Hugh of The Blood Oranges and Henri

of Travesty. Throughout Hawkes' fiction a dialectic struggle occurs between the forces of art and anti-art.

In the first three novels, The Cannibal, The Beetle Leg and The Lime Twig, the artist-figure is indirectly opposed to a character who embodies an anti-artistic sensibility; there is seldom much direct conflict between these two symbolic types. In the sterile and static landscapes which dominate these novels, the artist succumbs literally or figuratively to the forces of death which surround him; society stifles the artist or responds to him inadequately.

From the failed or incomplete artist-figures of the first novels, Hawkes comes to focus on the artist who is able to achieve relative success and effect an ambiguous triumph over the destructive forces of anti-art. These are the first of Hawkes' visionary artists who, like Hawkes himself, desire to "create a world." Skipper of Second Skin and Cyril of The Blood Oranges may be considered early versions of the radical artist, a term which applies more definitively to artist-figures belonging to the third phase of Hawkes' fiction. In the more recent fiction, the freedom to create becomes an absolute for the artist. These artists--Allert of Death, Sleep & the Traveler, Papa of Travesty, Konrad Vost of the Passion Artist and Seigneur of Virginie--combine qualities of the first two groups: like the anti-artists of the first phase, they possess and seek to exercise their inherently destructive capabilities, but like the artists of the second phase, they succeed to varying degrees in the impositions of their wills; finally, like the failed artists of the first phase, they become the victims of their own "success" and will to power. In works from Travesty on, Hawkes focuses on the artist's readiness to face a sacrificial death in the interests of an abiding,

intense commitment to an art which overrides humanistic concerns, an art which also minimizes to an extreme degree connections with external reality.

\* \* \* \* \*

Before we can consider the conflict between the forces of art and anti-art and the nature of the visionary artist in Hawkes' novels, we need to consider briefly Hawkes' shorter fiction. Hawkes' three novellas ("Charivari, 1949; "The Goose on the Grave," 1954; "The Owl," (1954) are radically experimental. In a sense these works can more justly be termed surrealist than Hawkes' novels, for in them chaos never attains, nor aspires to, articulation. Many events and characters' motivations are left unexplained. (This is particularly so in the first two novellas.) We never manage to determine the nature of characters' desires except in terms of what they refuse or renounce. The knowledge that Henry and Emily Van of "Charivari" are to become parents (a normal enough occurrence) sets off a series of hallucinatory visions relating primarily to sexuality for Henry and childbirth for Emily. The self is suddenly beset by a burst of unfamiliar and terrifying images, a spiraling sequence of bizarre dreams and fearful phantasmagoria, allowing Henry and Emily a kind of escape from the world of "responsible" order. (This order, however, only manifests itself ironically and comically in the deranged aspirations of their parents.) Though these hallucinations partake of the hellish, they act simultaneously as ironic cleansing agents, purifying the world for Henry and Emily, particularly of their new, adult fears. At the novella's end, the two forty year old "children" return to the world of innocence. The demons exorcised, Henry's friend, Gaylor

Basistini can now announce, "'All right, it's time to play.'"<sup>59</sup> The novella's dynamic depends greatly on the opposition between authorial control and the rhythm of unreason which drives the characters in this work.

There are several parallels between "The Owl" and "The Goose on the Grave" and Hawkes' first two novels both of which were written prior to these two novellas: the narrative voice of the dictator in "The Owl," *Il Gufo*, resonates with despotic authority as does Zizendorf's in The Cannibal, and several images, such as the depiction of a barren landscape, recall The Beetle Leg. The concepts of authority, repression and ritual are fundamental links between the novellas and Hawkes' novels (not only The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg, but later novels as well):

Hawkes has never published another novella in the thirty years following "The Owl" and "The Goose on the Grave," and it is probable he felt confined by this particular form, unable to create a fully developed and self-contained fictional world of interaction and conflict, and one, in addition, that could do justice to his overriding sense of design. The problem is more obvious with the short story; yet several of Hawkes' short fictions can be considered successful precisely because he utilizes the inherent "limitation" of this form, relying, for example, on a single effect, such as his concentration in "The Grandmother" on the tonal qualities he is able to bring to bear on a single incident.

In his novels Hawkes can fully express his sense of the artistic sensibility as it collides with the anti-artistic sensibility: order opposes disorder or, more often, conventional order; Eros opposes Thanatos. Hawkes' first novels are filled with failed or incomplete artist-figures: those who become overwhelmed by a form of chaotic reality--whether it

is the formless reality of unconscious forces or its outer manifestation, a random or absurd universe, or an order which masks chaos itself, as Zizendorf's fascism in The Cannibal. In the chapters which follow, I intend to trace the development of a fundamental dialectic in Hawkes' novels: the conflict between the visionary artist, who represents many of those values implicit in Hawkes' aesthetic (desire to create a world, a concern with design and the ordering function) and the embodiment of anti-artistic forces, which usually takes the form of an antagonist of the visionary artist and one who is seen to represent repressive, sterile and destructive forces. Treating Hawkes' novels in chronological order, beginning with The Cannibal, I will examine what I believe to be Hawkes' growing tendency toward a posture of self-scrutiny with regards to an aesthetic he has consistently expressed throughout his career. Of particular concern will be Hawkes' determination to subject his own aesthetic, through the complex worlds of the artist-figure in the middle and more recent fiction, to an exacting and intensive analysis in order to test the limits of his own visionary art. For this reason, the first-person narratives, Second Skin, The Blood Oranges, Death, Sleep & the Traveler and Travesty, are vital to this study; the visionary artist will be examined closely in these works for the light that this figure is able to shed on Hawkes' aesthetic.

The exploratory method to be applied in the succeeding chapters is consistent with Hawkes' own methodology which stresses "totality of vision or structure." Hawkes refers to "structure--verbal and psychological coherence" as his primary focus as a writer: "Related or corresponding event, recurring image and recurring action, these constitute the essential substance or meaningful density of my writing."<sup>60</sup> Structural



relationships, such as parallelism, contrast, correspondence, juxtaposition and recurrence are particularly crucial as fictional devices, and concrete schematizations on the basis of Hawkes' use of such devices can be applied to several of his novels (see Appendix A for two such examples). The focus of each section is on the ways in which structural and imagistic patterns serve to articulate the fictional world of the novel and express a dynamic relationship between the forces of art and anti-art in their various manifestations.

## END NOTES - CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>William H. Gass, Introd., *Humors of Blood and Skin*, by John Hawkes (New York: New Directions, 1984). Gass notes that Hawkes' "work has always refused ruin in the act which has depleted it, and this collection is the joyful showing forth and celebration of such a healing art," p. xvi. With the appearance of a recent issue of Review of Contemporary Fiction devoted to criticism on Hawkes and Julio Cortázar, along with the (also recent) publication of Humors of Blood and Skin, the claim that Hawkes is a "forgotten" major author retreats further into the background. However, it is true that many reviewers of his novels still tend to react to his more recent fictions with puzzlement and dislike and that he remains unpopular with the reading public.

<sup>2</sup>[John Enck], "John Hawkes: An Interview," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 6(1965), 149. Although this interview was conducted more than twenty years ago, it remains the best introduction to Hawkes' theoretical concerns as a novelist and is probably still the interview most often cited by critics.

<sup>3</sup>See John Hawkes, "The Floating Opera and Second Skin," Mosaic, 8, No. 3 (1974), 17-28. Hawkes has expressed admiration for several contemporary American writers: on the one hand, he has spoken favourably of "traditionalist" contemporaries, such as Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud; on the other hand, he also clearly admires post-modernists like Vladimir Nabokov and John Barth.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas LeClair, ed., "Hawkes and Barth Talk About Fiction," New York Times Book Review, 1 April 1979, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup>Humors of Blood and Skin, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>John Kuehl, John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1975), p. 171 (Interview).

<sup>7</sup>John Graham, "John Hawkes on His Novels: An Interview with John Graham," The Massachusetts Review, 7(1966), 461.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas LeClair, "The Novelists: John Hawkes," New Republic, 10 Nov. 1979, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup>Donald J. Greiner, Comic Terror: The Novels of John Hawkes (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1973), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>12</sup>[Enck], 143-4.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 146.

<sup>14</sup>John Gardner, On Moral Fiction (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 19.

<sup>15</sup>LeClair, "The Novelists: John Hawkes," p. 27.

<sup>16</sup>D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (1923; rpt. New York: The Viking Press, 1961), p. 171. See also, Hawkes' generalization that "in the most rigorously moral of writers the actual creation of fiction seems often to depend on immoral impulse." John Hawkes, "Flannery O'Connor's Devil," Sewanee Review, 70(1962), 398.

<sup>17</sup>LeClair, "Hawkes and Barth Talk About Fiction," p. 31.

<sup>18</sup>LeClair, "The Novelists: John Hawkes," p. 27.

<sup>19</sup>Kuehl, p. 162 (Interview). Hawkes is fond of drawing an analogy between the "radical," disruptive artist and the revolutionary or criminal. In a relatively recent interview, Hawkes explains the need for the reader's identification with the radical and the criminal and what this accomplishes: "If a person doesn't know that he too is not so different from the criminal, is potentially as much an out-cast, then he is likely to suffer from a lack of personal insight and will judge others with excessive harshness. I'm interested in the truest kind of fictive sympathy." Hawkes then refers to Albert Guerard who, in his Introduction to The Cannibal, declares that "the purpose of imaginative fiction is to generate sympathy for the saved and damned alike." Thomas LeClair, "The Novelists: John Hawkes," p. 27. Cf. Albert Guerard, Introd., The Cannibal, by John Hawkes (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. xii. On another occasion, Hawkes outlined "a kind of theory of fiction which can be expressed in a few words" and which focuses on the "act of rebellion" directed against "conventional pedestrian mentality . . . [and] conventional morality. . . . To me the act of writing is criminal. If the act of the revolutionary is one of supreme idealism, it's also criminal. I think that the so-called criminal act is essential to our survival." Robert Scholes, "A Conversation on The Blood Oranges between John Hawkes and Robert Scholes," Novel, 5, No. 3 (1972), 202.

<sup>20</sup>John Hawkes; The Lime Twig (New York: New Directions, 1961), p. 165.

<sup>21</sup>In his informal essay delivered at the John Hawkes Symposium in 1976, John Graham speaks of the identification he feels with the various "characters" in The Cannibal: "I think there's only one character. I think it's me--or, it's you. I'm looking at my brain here and it's swarming with needs and desires, with structures and languages that delude and tempt us. . . . But not only these needs and desires. I think, worst of all, the novel is talking about options that we are forced to take--that I must take--where the world is important and necessary and very, very dangerous." John Graham, on The Cannibal, in A John Hawkes Symposium: Design and Debris, ed. Anthony C. Santore and Michael Pocalyko (New York: New Directions, 1977), p. 48.

<sup>22</sup>John Hawkes, "Notes on the Wild Goose Chase," The Massachusetts Review, 3(1962), 786.

<sup>23</sup>LeClair, "The Novelists: John Hawkes," p. 28.

<sup>24</sup>Hawkes explains that his "writing process involves a constant effort to shape and control [his] materials as well as an effort to liberate fictional energy" [Enck], 148. Speaking more figuratively, Hawkes refers to his imagination as "a kind of hall of 'whippers' in which the materials of the unconscious are beaten, transformed into fictional landscape itself," Hawkes, "The Floating Opera and Second Skin," 20. He articulates the nature of the complex relationship between the unconscious and the shaping or controlling consciousness in the following comment on The Cannibal: "it is visual, it's compulsive, and a conscious knowledge of exactly what it means is not always there. On the other hand, that novel was, I think, artistically controlled. And this is a dilemma that I tend to get into in talking about fiction. I usually tend to betray it, to make it sound as if it is something that is merely happening to me, as if I am a mere receptacle or a vehicle and the imaginative image passes through, as if I had nothing to do with it. And of course, that's not really true. I mean that I am shaping and rewriting and thinking about these things." John Graham, 452.

<sup>25</sup>Earl Rovit, "The Fiction of John Hawkes: An Introductory View," Modern Fiction Studies, 10(1964), 151.

<sup>26</sup>"Notes on the Wild Goose Chase," 787.

<sup>27</sup>Robert Scholes, Fabulation and Metafiction (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 184.

<sup>28</sup>S. K. Oberbeck, "John Hawkes: the Smile Slashed by a Razor," in Contemporary American Novelists, ed. Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), p. 200.

<sup>29</sup>John Hawkes, Second Skin (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 19.

<sup>30</sup>In the very subject of cannibalism itself there seems to exist a strange mixture of the horrific and the humorous. Previous writers who have dealt with cannibalism in their fiction, such as Melville and Conrad, often depicted its serio-comic aspects--sometimes partly by accident. The problem in Conrad's short story "Falk," for example, asserts John A. Palmer, is that "the reader is faced too abruptly and too realistically with Falk's hungers," and so experiences "unintentional comedy." John A. Palmer, Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 86. By contrast, Hawkes' comedy in the cannibalism scene is deliberately and artfully achieved without severely undermining the attendant sense of horror. While "realism" produces unintentional comedy in "Falk," realistic and gruesome details contribute to the comic effect in The Cannibal by emphasizing the disparity between the Duke's delusions and reality.

<sup>31</sup>The victim as hero, however, is a familiar concept in recent fiction and criticism. T. A. Hanzo expresses the plight of the new anti-hero as one who "must endure shame, contumely, and embarrassment;

cuckoldry, exposure, and hatred. He must survive in defiance, in indignation, and in the sheer perversity of the will to live." T. A. Hanzo, "The Two Faces of Matt Donelson," Sewanee Review, 73(1965), 111. Josephine Hendin believes that much contemporary fiction-tries to express "the kind of durability that can be won from the clearest recognition of inadequacy," and she sees this as a corrective to romantic dreams of personal power. Josephine Hendin, Vulnerable People: A View of American Fiction Since 1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 10. Both excerpts describe Skipper reasonably well with the important distinction that he does not so much permit or endure victimization as encourage it. (In this, he differs from Kurt Vonnegut's Eliot Rosewater whom he otherwise resembles somewhat--both consider themselves crusaders for virtue, for example.) Skipper, then, represents a variation on the usual victim figure who generally does not invite his victimization to any great extent and therefore does not provoke the reader's own anger and frustration to the same degree.

<sup>32</sup> Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1966), p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Donald J. Greiner, "Death, Sleep & the Traveler: John Hawkes' Return to Terror," Critique, 17, No. 3 (1976), 26-38. In an essay written about the time of the publication of Death, Sleep & the Traveler, Hawkes admits he is "no longer interested in writing comic novels" but intends in his recent fiction "to come still closer to terror." John Hawkes, "Notes on writing a novel," TriQuarterly, No. 30 (1974), p. 111.

<sup>34</sup> Gerald Graff, Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 208. Graff's remarks are well worth considering in light of the failure of many of Hawkes' artist-figures to sustain their "privatized" worlds.

<sup>35</sup> Larry McCaffery, The Metafictional Muse (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> LeClair, "Hawkes and Barth Talk About Fiction," p. 32. The important issue of what constitutes reality (in or outside of the fictional world) is far too vast and complex a concern to be dealt with here. One view considers that Hawkes relocates "reality" rather than departs from it entirely: William Gass characterizes the reader's response to Hawkes' fiction: "many readers have recoiled as though from reality itself, and pretended to be running from a nightmare, from something sur- or un-real, restoring the disguise which Hawkes has torn away." Humors of Blood and Skin, p. xiv. Some critics of Hawkes stress the existence of "realistic" elements in his fiction. Noting that "Nothing happens in his stories that could not happen in waking life," W. M. Frohock declares that "John Hawkes's specialty is weaving little bits of authentic reality into a fabric of deep-textured nightmare." W. M. Frohock, "John Hawkes's Vision of Violence," Southwest Review, 50(1965), 69, 70. In his discussion of some contemporary American writers, Jerome Klinkowitz announces "fiction's greatest challenge" to be "to maintain a sense of life within the sense of art." The artists .

he discusses (Hawkes is not one of them, though his remarks often seem applicable to Hawkes) "write . . . about the imaginative qualities of actual things." Jerome Klinkowitz, "Literary Disruptions; or, 'What's Become of American Fiction,'" in Surfiction; Fiction Now . . . and tomorrow, 2nd ed. enlarged, ed. Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1981), pp. 178-9. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Flannery O'Connor has addressed the nature of an untraditional but intensive "realism": "All novelists are fundamentally seekers and describers of the real, but the realism of each novelist will depend on his view of the ultimate reaches of reality." O'Connor refers to a kind of "realism" to which Hawkes himself would at least in part subscribe (though he has never referred to his own work as "realistic" in any sense): "we find that the writer has made alive some experience which we are not accustomed to observe every day. . . . We find that connections which we would expect in the customary kind of realism have been ignored. . . . Yet the characters have an inner coherence, if not always a coherence to their social framework. Their fictional qualities lean away from typical social patterns, toward mystery and the unexpected." The writer who "believes that our life is and will remain mysterious . . . will use the concrete in a more drastic way. His way will much more obviously be the way of distortion." Flannery O'Connor, "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction," in her Mystery and Manners, ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969), pp. 40-2.

<sup>37</sup> McCaffery, p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> Scholes, "A Conversation on The Blood Oranges," 204.

<sup>39</sup> William H. Gass, Fiction & the Figures of Life (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1971), pp. 26, 25.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony C. Santore and Michael Pocalyko, "'A Trap to Catch Little Birds With': An Interview with John Hawkes," in Symposium, p. 174.

<sup>42</sup> See Melvin J. Friedman, "Dislocations of Setting and Word: Notes on American Fiction Since 1950," Studies in American Fiction, 5(1977), 79-81, 94. Friedman refers to "a language-intoxicated tradition in American literature which starts with Melville, includes Faulkner, [and William Gass in Omensetter's Luck], and ends up with Hawkes," 94.

<sup>43</sup> LeClair, "The Novelists: John Hawkes," p. 28.

<sup>44</sup> Hawkes comments on the mythic element in his fiction: "I think that my fictions exemplify the emotional substance of certain mythologies. . . . I know that my fiction has some unusually deep pertinence to the human condition--a pertinence which I would call mythical." Paul Emmett and Richard Vine, "A Conversation with John Hawkes," Chicago Review, 28, No. 2 (1976); 165.

<sup>45</sup> Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (rev. ed.; New York: Stein and Day, 1966), p. 491.

<sup>46</sup>Richard Kostelanetz, "New Fiction in America," in Surfiction, p. 87.

<sup>47</sup>Sharon Spencer, Space, Time and Structure in the Modern Novel (New York: New York University Press, 1971), pp. 2-3. Hawkes also stresses the importance of novelistic structure, which he calls "my largest concern as a writer" [Enck], 149. Spencer emphasizes the fragmentary nature of the contemporary novel (see p. xx), while Hawkes suggests the unity achieved through the structuring principle.

<sup>48</sup>Spencer, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 28, 27.

<sup>50</sup>[Enck], 155.

<sup>51</sup>John Hawkes, "The Floating Opera and Second Skin," Mosaic, 8, No. 3 (1974), 24.

<sup>52</sup>See Scholes, "A Conversation on The Blood Oranges," 199, and Kuehl, p. 164 (Interview).

<sup>53</sup>Robert Langbaum, The Mysteries of Identity: A Theme in Modern Literature (1977; rpt. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 7.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>55</sup>John V. Knapp, "Hawkes' The Blood Oranges: A Sensual New Jerusalem," Critique, 17, No. 3 (1976), p. 21.

<sup>56</sup>Both Conrad and Hawkes profess to be interested in conveying values which enjoin men to a common bond. Conrad claims for fiction the task of taking us "into the light of imperishable consciousness." Joseph Conrad, "Henry James," in Notes on Life and Letters (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1921), p. 17. He comments that the artist's vision "of regret or pity, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity." Joseph Conrad, The Nigger of the Narcissus (New York: Nelson Doubleday, 1914), p. xiv (Preface). Although Hawkes' sympathy is generally more hard-edged than Conrad's, the tone of the following suggests his concern with the universal, enduring qualities which men possess: "If something is pathetically humorous or grotesquely humorous, it seems to pull us back into the realm, not of mere conventional values but of the lasting values, the one or two really deep permanent human values. I think any writer of worth is concerned with these things." John Graham, p. 461.

<sup>57</sup>LeClair, "The Novelists," p. 27.

<sup>58</sup>Santore and Pocalyko, pp. 174-5, 181.

<sup>59</sup>John Hawkes, Lunar Landscapes: Stories & Short Novels 1949-1963 (New York: New Directions, 1969), p. 136.

<sup>60</sup>[Enck], 149.

## CHAPTER II

### FIGMENTS OF HISTORY AND MYTH: CHARACTERIZATION IN THE CANNIBAL

During the course of his career, John Hawkes' novels demonstrate an increasing concern with art and, in particular, with the power of art to transfigure reality. In the early novels, the artist is portrayed as a dormant figure, doomed by the powers of anti-art as they are variously manifested in these works.<sup>1</sup> The conflict between artistic and anti-artistic sensibilities is an unequal struggle in The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg, for the world is controlled by the forces of anti-art.

In the sterile and static landscapes which dominate these novels, the artist-figure succumbs literally or figuratively to the forces of death which surround him; society stifles the artist or responds to him inadequately. The outbreak of World War I inhibits Jutta of The Cannibal from realizing her potential as an architect, while Stintz, another artist-figure in The Cannibal, is murdered by Zizendorf, the narrator and primary figure of the anti-artist in that work. Zizendorf also suppresses Jutta by turning her into an object of his sexual pleasure. It has been suggested that Zizendorf is a parody of Hawkes himself,<sup>2</sup> yet unlike later artist-figures, Zizendorf is really the antithesis of Hawkes. Although Zizendorf struggles with his medium as he sets the type for his "proclamation" to the German people, it is the message itself that concerns him and not the form that the message takes. To Zizendorf, rhetoric alone serves his purpose, which is to communicate to the populace his declaration of the liberated German state; the proclamation is all politics and has nothing to do with art at all.



In The Beetle Leg the figure who best embodies the artistic sensibility is Mulge Lampson who accidentally drowns and becomes buried in the timeless world of the Mistletoe dam the way he was figuratively buried when he was alive. Ironically, he achieves a kind of grudging apotheosis from the inhabitants after his death, because now he presents no immediate threat to the stasis which the inhabitants unconsciously but doggedly pursue. Hawkes' first two novels express an unbalanced dialectic between the forces of art and anti-art in which those of anti-art are seen to be winning out. In The Beetle Leg, however, some efforts are made--ill-directed and confused as they are--to break through the cycle of infertility. Without understanding the meaning of their actions, some of the inhabitants of Mistletoe attempt to disengage themselves from stasis in limited and fragmentary ways; though such efforts can also be seen as confirmation of their static and futile existence. Like the inhabitants of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, the characters in The Beetle Leg desire rebirth without having access to the means to bring it about. It is not until Michael Banks' gesture to free himself at the end of The Lime Twig that a character is able to find a release from the nightmare of repetition and despair, to exert a form of personal control over the forces which dominate him. As John Kuehl points out, Hawkes' two early novels are pervaded by a lack of tension: they consist of a succession of static, disconnected scenes as form is decentralized; there is no conflict between Eros and Thanatos, as there is in works beginning with Second Skin, for death is omnipresent in these degenerative landscapes.<sup>3</sup>

Hawkes reinforces this sense of an undynamic universe by employing techniques of distortion, dislocation and fragmentation; all serve to break down traditional concepts of reality and erect in their place nightmare visions of human futility and fatality. Characters themselves seem

incomplete or fragmentary, too weak to combat the oppressive forces without and unconscious of repressive internal forces. The relativity of all human effort and endeavour is envisaged against mammoth impersonal factors like history and war, technology and the law.

Narration also reflects the way that characters are trapped within a static order imposed by an authoritarian will or by an arbitrary universal order. Zizendorf of The Cannibal and the Sheriff of The Beetle Leg in their shared concerns with authority--political or civil absolutism--seem to define the point in the political spectrum where revolutionary and reactionary meet: both typify the fascist mentality and represent the force of anti-art in these two novels. The mixture of omniscient and personal narration produces the effect of one consciousness presiding over the waste lands of war-ravaged Germany and desert America. In The Cannibal, Hawkes achieved this effect by revising the original version of the novel, changing third person to first person pronouns so that Zizendorf became the teller of events which, in some cases, he could not have known about.<sup>4</sup> Zizendorf comes to exercise an approximation of omniscient authority in the novel as he does through his symbolic status as an embodiment of the national German will. The Beetle Leg is framed by two monologues between which the activities of the inhabitants are described through third-person narration. The monologues are spoken by the two controlling figures in the waste land of the novel: the Sheriff who symbolizes the inhabitants' imprisonment within their selves and Cap Leech, the itinerant physician, the symbolic agent of pain in the waste land. In both works, then, formal structure reinforces entrapment within a sterile landscape.

Confined as they are by both external and internal forces, characters in The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg lack the mobility and the complexity

typical of characters appearing in American fiction during the nineteen-fifties. While characters in Hawkes' later works appear more conventional or "realistic" in their greater complexity and in their capacity for reacting to their environment and to others, Hawkes continued to believe that they were not "characters" in the ordinary sense.<sup>5</sup> His narrators and main protagonists become embodiments of the artistic will to order, and their "complexity" often seems to evolve from their artistic and representative functions. When acted upon by the imagination, their unconscious psychic drives are projected onto the world in the form of artistic patterns, coherent expressions of the subjective will to create a valid order of the self.

In Hawkes' first two novels, however, this artistic potential is overcome by the forces of anti-art (which also represent the exertions of an authoritarian will). One of the results of the prominence of anti-artistic forces in The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg, according to Fr derick Busch, is that

Characters are subservient to narrative moments; they do what the point or the intellectual abstraction of each moment dictates they should in order to bring the abstraction of that moment home to the reader. They are not developed as people; they do not progress in their development while we observe them; they act as if to prove the truth of an equation.<sup>6</sup>

Anti-artistic forces in these novels are embodied in one or more central figures, but they are far more pervasive in scope and ultimately beyond the control of those figures who perpetuate the forces: in The Cannibal, history becomes a counterforce to art while technology and the law act to oppose artistic potential in The Beetle Leg.

Character in The Cannibal is subsumed by larger forces which extend beyond modern history into the remote age of myth. Not only does Stella

Snow, who appears in all three parts of the novel, link the two wars in The Cannibal, but her descent suggests her embodiment as a figure who transcends time:

Her ancestors had run berserk, cloaked themselves in animal skins, carved valorous battles on their shields, and several old men, related thinly in blood from a distant past, had jumped from a rock in Norway to their death in the sea. Stella, with such a history running thickly in her veins, caught her breath and flung herself at the feet of her horned and helmeted kinsmen, while the Bavarians schnitzled back and forth in a drunken trio.

Seen in this way, Stella is the victim of primitive urges, the racial accumulation of forces which lead to wars of aggression and to self-destruction.

She enacts a pattern which repeats that of an earlier time but which in its historical descent reaches into modern culture. Not only does such a pattern define the modern German state, but it embraces the entire modern world.

Characters in The Cannibal are caught in a world where their actions as individuals cannot be unique;<sup>8</sup> hence, they are unable to assert themselves as individuals acting independently of outer forces. Besides being the book's narrator, Zizendorf dominates the novel intellectually or spiritually, rather as the doctor dominates Djuna Barnes' Nightwood--by sheer force of personality and will. Although he thinks of himself as Germany's true emancipator, Zizendorf merely perpetuates a static cycle which has led in the past to war and destruction of the German state:

In this sense history is the greatest cannibal of all, and the nation, because it is caught up in historical processes, is its own victim as it once again readies itself for the resurgence of nationalism and the resulting catastrophe of war. The inhabitants of Hawkes' Germany may vaguely remember history, but they are doomed to repeat it anyway.

It is significant that Hawkes rejects the cyclic view of history, and in juxtaposing the period after the close of World War II (actually, Hawkes

warns that we are to "disregard" the date of 1945 as "The time of the novel is simply in the future")<sup>10</sup> with the time just prior to and during the inception of the First World War, Hawkes suggests "that perhaps we don't move so much in cycles as repetitions or that we have always had these particular problems of violence, destruction, sadism and so on."<sup>11</sup> Although Donald Greiner notes that the distinction between cyclic and repetitive history makes little difference and that, in either case, man is seen as a victim of the historical process,<sup>12</sup> the fact is that a cycle signifies an eventual return to the same place during which time any number of events may serve to distinguish one age or era from another; repetitions convey the inescapability of an event during any given point in history, for such an event has already occurred and will occur in one form or another again. Such recurrences are implied in The Cannibal. For example, as Ernst pursues Stella and Cromwell in their carriage, Ernst becomes Gavrilo Princip, the future assassin of the Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Cromwell takes on the role of the Archduke, while Stella assumes that of his Archduchess (54-5). If man is involved in a process of continual repetitions, then he can never be free to assert himself, never free to determine either his own course in history or direct that of others. History determines the individual; the individual does not determine history, according to the fatalistic view of historical process expressed in The Cannibal. Because individuals lack significance and effectiveness in The Cannibal, as they do in The Beetle Leg, many actions are reduced to the level of empty, meaningless gesture, and characters are denied a creative part in forming their own destinies.

In novels after The Beetle Leg the actions of the characters tend to become more psychologically or philosophically explicable; characters come to manifest a degree of inner coherence, which renders such actions as

Michael Banks' suicide at the end of The Lime Twig conceivably significant as an existential gesture. The imaginative "fictions" of Skipper of Second Skin and Cyril of The Blood Oranges may be legitimized in the sense that their narrators are involved in the process of seeking out and realizing a fabricated order which reflects and is consistent with subjective beliefs and values. The order they impose is not arbitrary, spurious or simply escapist because their sense of commitment is entire and unequivocal, justified by their sustaining belief in an inner coherence or unity. History may determine Skipper's response to the present, but it is the nature of this response which shapes and determines his future.

For characters in The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg, there exist no fundamental grounds for distinguishing past from future. With their lack of historical process, such characters are consequently cut off from a sense of self-discovery: their alienation from their selves is complete and unalterable.

#### The Long Night of the Tyrant

In contrast to what many readers believe, Zizendorf does little more than make a puny gesture of revolt, though he has grandiose pretensions toward the role of a great leader and revolutionary. As the novel progresses and Zizendorf gains confidence in this role, he ceases to refer to himself as "I, Zizendorf," and after the chapter entitled "Leader" in which Leevey, the overseer of one-third of Germany, is killed, he begins to refer to himself as "I, the Leader" (170).

The main action of the 1945 sections of the novel takes place in a span of time which does not exceed 24 hours. During this time, Zizendorf engages sexually with his mistress Jutta on several occasions, attends a

funereal dance, anticipates the arrival of Leevey and eventually kills him. In the early hours of morning, Zizendorf disposes of two traitors and, after hauling the somewhat decimated printing press to the shed behind Madame Snow's boarding house, he prepares the "message" with which he intends to stir the nationalistic feelings of the populace. Yet all this activity is misdirected, for history has not chosen the characters of The Cannibal, including its narrator, to play any significant function on the world's political stage. Rather, these characters merely mimic historical personages; at best, they can only ape a heroism of importance which they cannot attain. Zizendorf's inflated rhetoric, seen particularly in the phrasing of the "message," belies his ignoble thoughts and methods while it supports his unconquerable egotism.

The consequences of all his exertions are seen to be minimal; he deceives himself and a gullible populace in his pretensions to power and authority. The message to the people, with its nationalistic jargon and its overblown, cliché-ridden style, ends with a declaration that is immediately undercut: "From the ruins of Athens rise the spires of Berlin." But Zizendorf admits that he "had never seen Berlin" (177), and it goes without question that he knows nothing of "the ruins of Athens." Unwittingly, Zizendorf points to the discrepancy between words and reality. Like the saner and less malicious Skipper of Second Skin and Cyril of The Blood Oranges, Zizendorf is a manipulator of both words and people, yet his actions are those of a small-scale revolutionary. Everything he does--including his method as a revolutionary--is tainted by being perverse or merely absurd and ridiculous.<sup>13</sup> To assassinate Leevey, Zizendorf plants a log in the path of the intended route of his motorcycle, and he admits that "He and the whole machine simply toppled over it, spokes and light and helmet flying

every which way. Nothing grand about the commander's end at all!" (170). There is nothing "grand" either about the way Zizendorf disposes of the traitor, Stintz, who witnesses the assassination with Jutta's daughter, Selyaggia. Practically speaking, the schoolteacher's amateur spying cannot pose much of a threat to Zizendorf and his plans, yet to one so enthralled with what he presumes is his role as a liberator, Stintz's careless spying is elevated to an act of espionage against the state, and Stintz becomes a traitor to Germany. The manner of his death reveals Hawkes to be a black humourist in the tradition of Nathanael West, depicting scenes of violence in which outrage and laughter are inseparable responses on the reader's part. The black humourist, in his scenes of violence which are his trademark, often distracts us away from the fact or consequence of the act of violence by dwelling on relatively inconsequential matters or on the inappropriate reaction to the act. Zizendorf, who would suppress virtually the only form of music heard in Spitzen-on-the-Dein, kills Stintz with his own tuba. The narrator focuses on his inability to wield the ponderous, misshapen instrument as a weapon of death. Zizendorf is only conscious of the instrument's inefficiency; rather than being reluctant or even slightly remorseful that he has to commit another murder, he is baffled by the lack of space he has to work in and by the instrument's perverse awkwardness in his hands:

I swung the tuba short. I should have preferred to have some distance and be able to swing it like a golf club. . . . Somehow thinking of the tuba as squat, fat, thinking of it as a mallet. I had expected it to behave like a mallet; to strike thoroughly and dull, to hit hard and flat. Instead it was the rim of the bell that caught the back of Stintz's head, and the power in my arms was misdirected, peculiarly unspent. I struck again and the mouthpiece flew from the neck and sang across the room. I was unnerved only for a moment and when finally out in the hall, thought I would have preferred a stout club (173-4).



What is comic here is the juxtaposition of the cumbersome instrument and the easy grace of a "golf club" or "mallet," and the narrator's puzzlement over his inability to wield this monstrous weapon the way he would a club or mallet; Zizendorf's ridiculous self-confidence in using such a weapon is also comically apparent.

Zizendorf's next action is to move the printing press to a new secret location and to make the press operable again. Significantly, the place from which Zizendorf intends to issue his "Proclamation of the German Liberation" is a former chicken coop, and Zizendorf's revolutionary partners ingloriously labour to clear away the debris of its former inhabitants. The scene is less darkly comic than the assassinations of Leevey and Stintz, but the narrator unconsciously dwells once again on details which actually serve to ridicule and undermine his pretensions to authority. Despite his apparent fascination with the filthy work of Stumpfegle and Fegelein (suitably unsavoury sounding names for Zizendorf's degenerate comrades), Zizendorf tries to make himself aloof from their efforts by standing in the open door, "trying not to breathe, allergic to the must-filled air" and dreaming of his days in Paris, but nevertheless inhaling the rancid smell of the birds and "brushing the feathers and white powder from my jacket" (175). Zizendorf urges the two men on with patriotic encouragement. After Zizendorf forms "the words of the new voice," mechanically improvising as he goes along (175), the press is put into operation, and "the sheets, hardly legible, began to fall, like feathers, on the delivery table" (177); the simile, through its associations with the chickens previously referred to, reinforces the true nature of Zizendorf's ignoble enterprise.

Zizendorf's plans for his new state further clarify his role as a parodic revolutionary. The relation of these plans occurs between two

scenes of death: the Duke's cannibalizing over the corpse of Jutta's son, and the disposal of Stintz's body, during which the Mayor becomes another victim of Zizendorf's fanaticism. Apparent rebirth--the "renewal" of modern Germany--is set off and put into focus by these two acts of murder. Zizendorf is ~~he~~ shown to be unconcerned with public welfare, interested solely in his own gratification. He decides that the boarding house would be ideal for the National Headquarters, for this would enable him to "keep Jutta [his mistress] right on the premises," while the secretaries for the stenographic bureau "would have to be young and blonde." Most revealing of all, Zizendorf declares his intention to repair the old horse statue and give it a place of prominence: "It might be better to mount it on blocks of stone, so that visitors drawing near the city could say, 'Look, there's the statue of Germany, given by the new Leader to his country'" (183). Self-glorification here as elsewhere appears to be Zizendorf's single motivation.

The new leader also decides that "the children would have to go" (183). This stifling of the only true potential for new life is reiterated in the closing admonition which Zizendorf gives to Jutta's daughter. Selvaggia sees the light of Leevey's motorcycle, and then, with Stintz, witnesses the assassination of the American overseer: "'His light was smashed'" (171), she tells the narrator. With the destruction of this ironic light of hope, Zizendorf is free to lead Germany, if he were capable of such an accomplishment, into another long night of political turmoil, chaos and suffering. Zizendorf seems to sense the child's confused consciousness of what has happened and observes that she is "wild-eyed from watching the night and the birth of the Nation" (195). As he advises Stumpfagle "'Don't think, do you understand'" (165), he now advises Selvaggia to "'Draw those blinds and go back to sleep,'" and the impressionable, frightened child "did as

she was told" (195). Children, it seems, have no place in Zizendorf's repressive regime; like spies they see too much, only lacking in the means to communicate their vision. However, Zizendorf enthusiastically reserves prominent places in his new government for a deranged Duke who eats children and a wasted alcoholic who behaves like a child (183).

The most revealing passage in terms of Zizendorf's failure as a revolutionary also suggests the exact nature of his motivation. Curiously, many critics virtually ignore Zizendorf's prologue or miss some of its ironic implications. W. M. Frohock, Donald Greiner and Patrick O'Donnell believe that Zizendorf may be writing his book as an inmate of the asylum,<sup>14</sup> despite the fact that he discloses here that he is in a foreign city. Also, it is apparent that in *Spitzen-on-the-Dein* the truly insane are not those confined, but many of the officially sane remain free to practise their victimizations on an all-too-willing populace. When the asylum reopens its doors at the novel's conclusion, it is merely the harmlessly insane who return, not those active madmen like the Duke, the Census Taker or Zizendorf, who remain at large because they have a designated or official authority within society.

The evidence in the prologue suggests that Zizendorf has exiled himself from his community. Refusing at this point to disclose this town's exact location or name, he nevertheless reveals that "It has been slowly bettering itself now, under my guidance, for three years, and I am very nearly satisfied with the progress we have made." In three years, then, Zizendorf's revolution has been carried only to the point where he is "very nearly satisfied with the progress." The liberation of Germany has evidently not been as all-encompassing as this petty revolutionist had anticipated, as the new German state is still confined to one town. Although

Zizendorf tells us that his proclamation is carried "in ever widening circles about the countryside" (194), he here rationalizes that "I thought it more appropriate to have my people keep their happiness and ideas of courage to themselves." Finally realizing his failure, Zizendorf has retreated to those foreign fleshpots which have always attracted him, ostensibly to tell "our story" which is, in fact, the story of his one night of glory as "the Leader." When the narrator first introduces himself in his narrative, he is musing on "the spoils I had found but had never seen again in Paris" (15). In the second part of his trip to Paris, Zizendorf "somehow found [his] nerve and hence perfume and boudoir parties" (23), and dancing with Jutta, secure with his pistol under his arm in Spitzen-on-the-Dein, Zizendorf recalls "burnished Paris women and silver bars . . . murky waters stirred with blinking lights and faint odors of flowers on street corners" (34). Zizendorf again summons up his romanticized vision of Paris when observing his fellow patriots clean up the chicken coop; "the white women and darkness of Paris" (175) serve to remind him of the days of his triumph as a young man in "the outside world," a time when his instinctual self-gratification came nearest to fulfilment. Zizendorf's efforts to stir a community of the figuratively dead and the literally insane to revolution have undoubtedly failed, and so he now seeks to exercise his fanatical egotism in the Paris of his corrupt and demented dreams. It is also apparent that Zizendorf intends no quick return to the town to which "in the days of power [he] would always return" (169). The phrasing of the prologue strongly suggests evasion. Zizendorf has indeed "made a compromise"; he has compromised his status as revolutionary leader in order to fulfill his fantasies which cannot be satisfied in Spitzen-on-the-Dein, and his repeated reassurances to the reader only further clarify his intentions to remain in the

"foreign city" for which he has long yearned:

The things that remain to be done weigh heavily on my mind, and all the remarkable activity of these foreign cities cannot distract me. At present, even though I enjoy it here, I am waiting, and at the first opportunity I will, of course, return (prologue, italics added).

Zizendorf takes great pains to state the imminence of his return in spite of his "enjoyment" of what the foreign cities offer him; yet it appears that with the failure of his dream for Germany with himself as leader, "the first opportunity" to claim his position will be indefinitely postponed.

History has little place for Zizendorf, about whom there is nothing of greatness, because there is nothing of nobility or stature, nothing of great but perhaps maladapted ideals. He is a fit ruler of Spitzen-on-the-Dein, a community of the terminally insane, the dead and the defective, but only a petty and scurrilous imitation of those who have achieved fame or infamy in the annals of the past.

#### The Walking Dead

The world of The Cannibal is a world like T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, where even ritual will not serve to revitalize the inhabitants or give them a sense of common purpose. Yet they often turn to ritual, because action as individuals seems beyond them; dismal and decadent ritualized behaviour characterizes their response to an existence which bears little resemblance to life at all. Nearly all the characters participate in various forms of ritual, and many of the actions in the novel are of a ritualistic quality. The dance at the institution involves what is almost a lost ritual:

Figures stepped forwards, backwards, caught in a clockwork of custom, a way of moving that was almost forgotten. . . . They danced continuously, forming patterns, always the same. . . . The Czechs, Poles and Belgians danced just as [Jutta], their wooden shoes sticking to the floor, wearing the same blue dresses with faded dots (30-1).

Even lovemaking is reduced to bare, meaningless uniformity, as the many sexual encounters between Zizendorf and Jutta are "consistent and unvaried without end" (24). Ernst, Stella Snow's lover and eventual husband, fights duels, and his father warns him, "they're cutting you apart bit by bit" (52); but Herr Snow also encourages his son in another action which becomes ritualized: he advises the timid Ernst to "join the chase" (54), and Ernst literally does so, pursuing the carriage where his future wife rides with her escort, Rowell.

The former reference to duelling anticipates the most shocking ritual in the novel in which the depraved Duke stalks, kills and actually cannibalizes a young boy. Thematically, the scene where the Duke dismembers and disembowels Jutta's son horribly but comically evokes more clearly than any other the dominant image in the novel (referred to initially in the work's title); it becomes a metaphor for the modern impulse toward sadism and destructive fantasizing. This grotesque scene unquestionably illustrates the practitioner of black humour in his most darkly sardonic mood. Again it is the attention to unexpected, repugnant details and the total inappropriateness of the response which define the element of black humour.

We know of the Duke's homosexual pursuit of the small boy from the beginning of the novel, well before we learn of Zizendorf's plot to assassinate Leevey. In effect, then, this is the single action which can structurally as well as thematically unify The Cannibal, and it is significant that the climax of this action follows upon and is temporally coincident with what is, at least for the narrator, the major climax in terms of his own activities--the death of the overseer. At this point in the narrative everything coheres, as Zizendorf attempts to give

universal significance to the act which is to lead to Germany's liberation.

The Duke's pursuit of his prey and Zizendorf's equally obsessive plan to kill Leevy are intended to parallel each other, and their simultaneous culmination reinforces this parallelism. However, neither plan ends here, but as each evolves further, more extensive parallels are suggested: the Duke proceeds to dissect the boy, who has now metamorphosed into a fox, in preparation for the act of cannibalism; the Duke is tired and frustrated but nonetheless intent on his work. Similarly, after the assassination, Zizendorf becomes involved in the messy work of cleaning the chicken coop ("The three of us were spattered with the wash, became luminous and tired," 175) and the more delicate and precise work of composing type. Here, too, both the Duke and Zizendorf struggle with their medium, though to Zizendorf it matters little that the sheets are "hardly legible" (177), that "the print was smeared quite badly, and some of the pamphlets were unreadable" (194); unlike the aristocratic Duke, Zizendorf is indifferent to the "value" of the finished product; he cares little for artistic ordering. The Duke despairs in the "infernal humanness" of his prize, in his inability to manipulate the befouled and slimy parts in the manner he is accustomed to when dissecting the carcass of a deer, possum or rabbit (181). The after effects of their respective efforts leave Fegelein, who locks the stick of the press into place, and the Duke, in a state of excitement (177, 182), while Zizendorf is tired but energized as his night's activities near their end (169). Yet both Zizendorf and the Duke look forward to the completion and fulfillment of their arduous work: the distribution of the pamphlets to a cannibalized but willing public, and the actual cannibalism of Jutta's

son in which Madame Snow, the personification of the German spirit, the "Teutonic earth-mother,"<sup>15</sup> partakes. At this point, Zizendorf's nationalistic activities and the Duke's pursuit and slaughter of his quarry symbolically merge; Zizendorf's figurative depiction of Madame Snow as "the eater, the greatest leader of us all" (131) becomes realized as literal fact. Madame Snow is the first to acknowledge and herald the "truth" of Zizendorf's message, as she screams from her window to the sister with whom she seldom communicates:

'Sister, sister, the news has come, the liberation has arrived. Sister, thank your countrymen, the land is free, free of want, free to re-build, Sister, the news, it's truly here.' She wept as she had never wept when a girl (193).

Although her cries are unheard by the perpetually somnolent Jutta, it is significant that the gesture toward an ironic unity has been made; it only remains for the mythologically conceived Madame Snow to consummate this unity "in a demonic communion celebrating the rise of the new nation"<sup>16</sup> by feasting on the remains of her nephew's corpse--the ultimate and defining act of cannibalism in the novel.

All of the characters in The Cannibal find themselves victimized in some way, cannibalized in part by war and history itself,<sup>17</sup> or by romantic politics.<sup>18</sup> But, as D. P. Reutlinger notes, "Everyone is implicated in one way or another in every murder so that the perverse charisma of cannibalism victimizes the entire insensate community."<sup>19</sup> All characters can be seen ultimately as both victim and victimizer; the cannibal and the cannibalized are one. Lacking independent identities, characters in The Cannibal become tools of a destiny which simply repeats itself; caught in such an unregenerative process, they are unequipped with the means to achieve an awareness of their predicament. They can merely fulfill the roles assigned to them, and their identities merge entirely with these roles. They become,



like Zizendorf, Madame Snow, the Duke, Leevév and Pastor Miller, victims of larger controlling forces and appetites; or, if they do not play a role, they are apt to become the passive victims of smaller forces. Jutta's son becomes the victim of the depraved Duke; and Balamir, the Census Taker, Jutta and others are victimized essentially by their own selves, their inability to act.

Ironically, it is Jutta, perhaps the most passive character in the novel, who once contained the greatest potential; she is the failed artist. Where war provides the means for Zizendorf's rise to power, the coming of world war I thwarts Jutta's plans to become an architect. Originally a victim of larger forces of history and war, we see her in Parts One and Three as a victim of her own indifference. Jutta responds to her daughter's question about the invaders by saying, "You shouldn't even think about them" (26); similarly, Luke in The Beetle Leg repudiates the boy who attempts to tell him about the jewels the Red Devils were wearing when they invaded by Gymnasium: "We don't want to hear about it."<sup>20</sup> Jutta has become impervious to the external world, unconcerned about the fate of the German nation:

she failed to understand the German life, failed as a mother, at least for her son. She had never been quite able to allow a love for her country to intrude within her four walls, had never been loyal, and though she never gave herself like segments of a fruit, she never envisioned the loyalty due her State (25).

Jutta is described as "the nation's born leader" (112), one artistically capable of shaping the outer world and providing design to reality. The war, however, disrupts her plans to be an architect, forcing her to "design herself inwards" (109) in order to escape the repetitive demands of society; eventually, though, she retreats to a static world of self manifested physically by her lengthy illness: "The world was growing dimmer for Jutta.

. . . Whether or not she was responsible, she had her weakness, physical and perhaps beyond control, and it made her guilty of disease while the calcium continued to dribble away from the cold, well-bred bones" (112). As she loses her will and abrogates her own responsibility as she becomes physically weaker, Jutta loses her power to assert herself artistically. Isolated in her childhood, she is placed in a convent after her parents die, where she becomes victimized by the cannibalistic sisters who are "difficult and grasping, feeding on their wards" (112). In particular, Jutta is the victim of female authority which has always surrounded her and frustrated her efforts to transcend her environment. From the beginning, she hates her sister Stella (17), and later, her nurse Gerta's "unpleasant love" deprives "her of sacrifice and intelligent suffering" (111). At the convent she refuses to yield to the will of Superior, the "dark angel" who blocks the light "from the outside world" (113). Later still in her life she succumbs to the male authority of Zizendorf by becoming his mistress, seemingly content to subject herself to his will and avoiding all contact with the external world.

In spite of her early promise, which goes unrecognized except during her brief stay at the Academy, Jutta becomes one with the other inhabitants of Spitzen-on-the-Dein. Although she recovers from her illness in spite of being alone and unloved, her life, like theirs, becomes characterized by internal stasis: "whatever wisdom she may have felt lay restless, lost beneath the sheets" (21), and her ideals become buried in meaningless routine: "She spoke of most intimate life with her daughter, tried to instill in her son ideas of manhood, and spent a certain part of the day sweeping dust into a little bin and rubbing with a damp cloth" (24). Her illness brings her to embrace a view of life which approximates Zizendorf's in its denial

of a driving and dynamic life force. For her, "life was not miraculous but clear, not right but undeniable" (120-1); according to Zizendorf, "Death is as unimportant as life," which he sees as "the desperate efforts of the tenant" to keep his house "from sliding into the pool, keep it from the Jew's claw or the idealist's pillaging" (431, 130). For the narrator, as well, life is "undeniable" and is reduced to a struggle for mere survival.

Most of the characters in The Cannibal respond to life on this level. Although it is not always apparent and their actions are seldom if ever beneficial in terms of an impelling life force, the characters in the novel engage in some form of struggle or conflict, and their existence is defined, in part, by their misdirected efforts to overcome the overwhelming atmosphere of stasis.

The Cannibal begins by a reference to one of the two major buildings in Spitzen-on-the-Dein: the institution--the other significant building is Madame Snow's boarding house. The inhabitants of the institution or asylum have been "turned out . . . to seek anyone who would provide a tin plate or coveted drink" (3). The initial description of the town is of a ravaged community in which the mad Balamir and "his brothers" seem the only inhabitants. The mental patients are, indeed, virtually indistinguishable from the town's regular inhabitants. All of the former inmates remain unaware "that they were beyond the institution's high walls" (3); the town, in effect, becomes synonymous with the asylum itself. The Census Taker, ostensibly the proponent of civil order, has forsaken his responsibilities and records no increase in the population despite the sudden influx caused by the release of the inmates (3,5).

In Spitzen-on-the-Dein, the former inhabitants of the asylum, the "officially" insane, do not constitute the entire population of the mad or

defective. In this nightmare town, the sane and insane cohabit as one, as do the dead and the living; indeed, the "ghosts" who inhabit an overturned tank are far more active than many of the town's "living" population (9-10). These ghosts are often referred to, engaged in the habitual action of leaving the abandoned tank at night and going down to the polluted canal to drink its water (10, 126, 147, 159, 168, 194); and like the other inhabitants, the ghosts are active by night while enclosing themselves by day inside their own private world. At night Zizendorf engages in his revolutionary activities as Herr Stintz spies on him, the Duke stalks his prey, the non-Germanic populace attends a dance, Selvaggia is vigilant as she observe clouds passing over the moon, Stella comforts the mad Balamir and attends his ravings, Stella's son awakes and becomes sexually aroused as he laboriously makes his way down and up the flight of stairs to investigate a noise he hears in the theatre. Even though the Mayor spends most of the night sleeping, his dreams are tortured reminiscences of his betrayal of Pastor Miller, while by day he "was too blind to tend the chronicles of history" (8).

The proximity of life and death is always in evidence: "When an old man was gripped dying in a terrible cough, Jutta was betraying her lost husband and bearing child again" (8); Stella gives birth to her frail son a few months after Ernst dies (122). The life-cycle is inextricably tied to the inescapability of death. Madame Snow "would have been a grandmother" had her son's child not become one of the accidental casualties of the war (5), and during the war, too, "pregnant women went out of doors at night to freeze themselves to death" (150). What forms of life do exist are often only partial and incomplete; the inhabitants of Spitzen-on-the-Dein are generally deformed, physically defective or disfigured. Madame Snow's son

has braces and only one leg, and because of his "mutilation . . . she would not see her son" (18); similarly, Herr Snow rejects his younger son who "forever wore his head strapped in a brace, and the words that came from the immovable mouth came also from a remote frightening world" (46); his older son, Ernst, has two fingers missing from one hand (44). Herr Stintz has one eye, and "it seemed likely that [Jutta's] child could never have breasts" (26). The men of Spitzen-on-the-Dein return from war with "their ears chopped from their skulls" (9); even the town's horse statue, which Zizendorf would repair and elevate to a place of prominence, is without either its legs or head (7).

Nature has retreated from this world, and the unnatural has come to prevail. Jutta refuses to admit that any man has had a part in the creation of her children (21); the birth of Stella's twin brothers is a "remarkable conception," and "the boys never saw their parents" (65), both of whom are well advanced in their dotage. It is a world where bizarre metamorphoses are possible, where Jutta's son is transformed into a fox during the Duke's predatory chase of him. Jutta herself has the head of a man and the body of a woman (17), while Zizendorf sees in her body "something that graced . . . the nibbling lips of the goat" (22). (When Jutta's mother leaves the bed where she spends most of her life, she is transformed into a figure who is "monstrously large" (76), as she dons her ill-fitting and ponderous clothes.) Superior's face "was neither a man's nor a woman's" (109). Androgynous characterization is pronounced: the Duke, Jutta's son and Ernst are all seen, to a degree, as feminized.

Births, deaths and marriages in both ages are characterized by the unnatural, the unpredictable and the irrational. Not only is the atmosphere one of decay and stagnation, but a sense of a doomed or fated

existence is prominent in the pre-war period as well as the time following World War II. On only one occasion do any of the characters manage to escape, however temporarily, from the confining strictures of family and society. On their honeymoon, Stella and Ernst travel to the "upper world" of a mountain resort. Here, free from the "lower world" which is now plunged into war, Ernst is able to forget its stifling impositions. In particular, he is able to put distance between himself and his father "the demon" (117), for in the upper world, "he was nearer God" (84). Ernst is able to find peace here and discovers his romantic being, both of which are lost to him in the lower world. Yet Ernst's religious questing eventually overcomes his need for peace and romance. By the time of his return to the lower world, Ernst has become seriously ill (another disease which reflects a spiritual malaise), while his longing for the purity of religion continues to pursue him like the wild dogs who follow the train which carries him back to "das Grab," miraculously metamorphosing into "paying passengers" and inhabiting the train's compartments before leaping out "into the night and the pack" (96). The "snarling dogs" are only found in the lower world, however, and seem to personify a destructive force, like that of war. Ultimately, though, Ernst's religious quest is equally destructive, and like Myshkin's spirituality in Dostoevski's The Idiot, eventually condemns him. Spiritual values in a world of base materialism and narrow nationalism become a potential subject for parody. In his obsessive pursuit of Christ, Ernst comes to stake his entire being; it becomes an illness itself and merges with the physical disease through which he comes to assume a "cruel and saintlike" aspect (114), becoming "only a small black-haired Christ on the pillow" (94).

Like other characters in The Cannibal, Ernst becomes what he seeks

after. In fact, this is one of the novel's themes: we become what, in our degraded sense of purpose, we aspire to. Characters manage partly to create a sense of being through suffering and turmoil, but what they create gives them little satisfaction, for it is founded upon those elements of pain and regression which the characters cannot help but embrace in the process of self-creation. The potential does not exist in The Cannibal or The Beetle Leg to transform internal pain and suffering through imaginative vision, because the forces of anti-art are in control in these novels.

Ernst's favourite walk, which he takes with Stella every afternoon while in the upper world, leads him past the house of an old man who carves religious figures. These crucifixes are, in fact, demonic, "more human than holy, more pained than miraculous" (87). The Christ-carver sells Ernst many of his figures, which are soon to be found throughout the hotel. More demonic than holy himself, the Christ-carver directs Ernst's gaze toward the void which lies beyond his hut, an unconscious gesture by which he seems to embrace the values of the lower world which his dwelling overlooks (87). Gradually, the upper world takes on the qualities of a static uniformity which typifies the lower world:

The children became thin and tired and the adults suddenly were unable to find their own among the solemn faces. . . . During the three meals the tables were half empty. . . . All of them smelled the fog, it curled about their hair and chilled them in the bath, and the nurse's playing fingers could do nothing to help, while the air became more thin and the water difficult to pump (90-1).

The stifling fog, carrying the impurities and disease-ridden air of the lower world, is not the only intrusion from this world. Cromwell, the English traitor, visits the mountain retreat, bringing details of the war to Ernst, "telling him everything he did not want to know" (92), binding him against his will to the lower world of "sacrifice, siege, espionage, death, social democracy or militant monarchism" (93). The death of the

old horse which labours daily between the two worlds is the ultimate sign that death has infected the world where Ernst sought his escape (94).

Ernst returns to the lower world to die, but predictably his final vision is not one of peace and sanctity. As Ernst dies, "the calm of Heaven evaporated" with the sight of his father, "the devil":

. . . In that moment of defense, of hating the devilish return of boisterous heroic Herman, Ernst died without even realizing the long-awaited event; in that last view of smallness, that last appearance of the intruder, Ernst, with his mouth twisted into dislike, died, and was relieved from saintliness. (119-20).

For Ernst, as for the other characters in the novel, escape from a mortality synonymous with stasis can never be achieved; the fact of existence condemns one and all if not to death, then to a death-like existence. It condemns Stella Snow to a long life in which she clings to the illusory belief of the free German state, and it equally condemns Zizendorf, who seeks glory and self-gratification through revolutionary politics. The Census Taker attempts to escape his mortality through alcohol, while the Duke, Balamir, and others to a lesser degree, become deranged and live entirely in the world of their destructive fantasies. In such a nightmare world, Balamir's delirium, in which he believes himself to be the Kaiser, seems as valid as any other; the distinction between the wholly insane and those partly so is essentially inconsequential. The voice of a mad prophet speaking through a dead monkey at the asylum could be said to stand for all the characters in The Cannibal: "'Dark is life, dark, dark is death'" (155). Dark, indeed, is Hawkes' vision of the contemporary world in which individuals are entrapped by history and the nature of an existence which deprives them of the means to seek knowledge of their own selves; and dark is the vision underlying The Cannibal itself where sanity and insanity, life and death, are inextricably bound into a unity of unproductive suffering and profound stasis.



## END NOTES - CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>Such a conflict is implicitly at the basis of Joyce's early fiction--Dubliners, Stephen Hero and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man; yet, in the last two of these, Joyce emphasizes the struggles of the artist in his effort to overcome philistinism, nationalism and the other "nets" of convention and tradition which threaten the artist.

<sup>2</sup>Tony Tanner, City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970 (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 208.

<sup>3</sup>John Kuehl, John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1975), p. xi.

<sup>4</sup>[John Enck], "John Hawkes: An Interview," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 6(1965), 150.

<sup>5</sup>Kuehl, p. 182 (Interview).

<sup>6</sup>Frederick Busch, Hawkes: A Guide to His Fictions (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1973), p. 60.

<sup>7</sup>John Hawkes, The Cannibal, Introd. Albert J. Guerard (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 43. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>8</sup>Studies focusing exclusively or primarily on The Cannibal usually attempt to come to grips with the problem of characterization in the work. In the following articles, the critics minimize the existence of traditional functions played by character, stressing as Reutlinger and Armstrong do, the nature of textual process and the problems of readership, or taking a collective view of character, as Graham does. See D. P. Reutlinger, "The Cannibal: The Reality of Victim," Critique, 6, No. 2 (1963), 30-7; Charles Matthews, "The Destructive Vision of John Hawkes," Critique, 6, No. 2 (1963), 38-45; John Graham, "on The Cannibal," in A John Hawkes Symposium: Design and Debris, ed. Anthony C. Santore and Michael Pocalyko (New York: New Directions, 1977), pp. 38-49; Thomas Armstrong, "Reader, Critic, and the Form of John Hawkes's The Cannibal," Boundary 2, 5(1977), 829-44.

<sup>9</sup>Donald J. Greiner, Comic Terror: The Novels of John Hawkes (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1973), p. 74.

<sup>10</sup>John Graham, "John Hawkes on His Novels: An Interview with John Graham," The Massachusetts Review, 7(1966), 450.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Greiner, p. 70.

<sup>13</sup>The suggestion that Zizendorf be viewed ironically and parodically is consistent with Hawkes' statement that Zizendorf "is really an absurd figure and is supposed to be ironically viewed throughout," Graham, 451. Critics have tended to take this absurd character too seriously.

<sup>14</sup>W. M. Frohock, "John Hawkes's Vision of Violence," Southwest Review, 50(1965), 74; Greiner, p. 84; Patrick O'Donnell, John Hawkes (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 27. There are really no grounds for assuming that Zizendorf has suddenly been recognized as insane; for one thing, the inhabitants lack the means for making a decision between sanity and insanity.

<sup>15</sup>Albert J. Guerard, "The Prose Style of John Hawkes," Critique, 6, No. 2 (1963), 20.

<sup>16</sup>O'Donnell, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup>Greiner, p. 74.

<sup>18</sup>Reutlinger, 33-4.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>20</sup>John Hawkes, The Beetle Leg (New York: New Directions, 1951),

p. 63.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE SEARCH FOR MYTH IN A LAND OF DEATH: THE BEETLE LEG

Of all Hawkes' novels, The Beetle Leg is the one most often overlooked by critics or only given a cursory analysis. If The Goose on the Grave is the "bête noire" among Hawkes' shorter fiction, The Beetle Leg occupies that dubious distinction among his novels. One of the reasons for this apparent neglect is that The Beetle Leg lacks a "human" centre to which one can relate. In contrast to The Cannibal, which also lacks a "human" dimension, The Beetle Leg does not appear to depict a universal situation. The irrigation problems of a tiny mid-western community and the concurrent collapse of American ideals of progress and development into spiritual apathy and sterility do not in themselves offer much potential for elaboration and development. Yet such lifeless and apparently uninteresting subject matter seems to present itself as a challenge to Hawkes. In works like Charivari, The Owl, The Innocent Party and much of his early and short fiction, Hawkes resembles Beckett in his ability to transform an essentially static situation so that it becomes representative of modern culture and thought. Hawkes is able to energize the lifeless by presenting the everyday through startling and bizarre images which jar our expectations.

Hawkes alters our conventional images of the American west in The Beetle Leg by exposing us to the reality which hides behind the myth, rather as Stephen Crane does in "The Blue Hotel" and "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky"; both Crane and Hawkes make extensive use of anti-climax to achieve this purpose. At the same time, Hawkes makes us aware of the need for myth.

The inhabitants of Clare and Mistletoe reconstitute what they can of their lost "paradise" by mythologizing their past as, in different ways, Skipper of Second Skin and Cyril of The Blood Oranges are to do. The inhabitants transform the time of the dam's construction into a golden age and elevate Mulge Lampson, who died when the dam collapsed, to mythic status in order to retain the images of heroism and sacrifice they need to counter their present state of unfulfillment and to avoid confronting their failure.

Mythic consciousness is as necessary to the inhabitants of Mistletoe as it is to those of Spitzen-on-the-Dein who embrace the myth of Teutonic supremacy. It also becomes essential for Michael Banks of The Lime Twig to aspire to the myth of power and potency as it is figured in the god-like Larry. While characters in Hawkes' early fiction often embrace myth in desperation, in an attempt to circumvent the ordinariness of their lives, Hawkes' later characters, particularly his first-person narrators, use myth to legitimize, sanctify or make complete the world they create for themselves; myth becomes part of the process whereby the visionary self is realized and expressed.

Critics often do not pay sufficient attention to the mythologizing process in The Beetle Leg, as they tend to focus primarily on the various mythic patterns which they see as giving structural coherence to the work.<sup>1</sup> Through the mythologizing process the inhabitants express their need to transfigure everyday life, to shape reality so as to give meaning to lives which are otherwise vacant and directionless. Barren and ineffectual as their efforts are often seen to be, they mark the initial engagement in Hawkes' fiction of characters with their environment, an engagement which becomes defined in the later fiction by increasing complexity and creativity in the shaping process.

Essentially, though, the inhabitants of the American desert lack the

will and the means to transform the landscape. As in The Cannibal, the characters in The Beetle Leg are presented as one-dimensional and static: they lack mobility in terms of a structure of recognition or self-discovery. But, in the oppressive landscape of post-war Germany and the sterile wastelands of the American desert, Hawkes could hardly depict characters who were other than impotent, amoral and predisposed to violence and brutality. In both books, the landscape, whether essentially a political or a physical one, reflects the inhabitants' psychic sterility and formless moral code. Landscape and character are interfused in these two novels: qualities within the characters manifest themselves in the landscape and vice versa; or, perhaps more accurately put, amoral, decadent and diseased characters create a world for themselves which reflects these degrading qualities. Novels like The Cannibal, The Beetle Leg and The Lime Twig are strongly expressionistic in the manner in which they deal with an objective outer world as an expression of inner being.

#### Return to the Waste Land

There are conscious or partly conscious echoes of Eliot's The Waste Land throughout The Beetle Leg; Hawkes deployment of the Fisher King myth appears to have been "second hand," derived through Eliot's use of it in The Waste Land. Scenic parallels are, perhaps, the most pronounced. On the most extensive level, both Eliot and Hawkes draw metaphoric links in dealing with the relationship between desert setting and the water which should, but somehow cannot, replenish life; both go further and evaluate the barrenness and sterility of the lives of the inhabitants. In Chapter 3 of The Beetle Leg, Hawkes establishes the card game as a focal point. It is an indifferent duel among four women (marked, as is "A Game of Chess" in The Waste Land, by occasional lapses into a fantasy world), three from

Mistletoe and the outsider, Lou. The same mood of intense futility and longing for escape pervades this scene as it does the second part of Eliot's poem. The pub scene, which concludes "A Game of Chess," is paralleled by the scene at the Gymnasium in The Beetle Leg which follows the card scene. These echoes extend to the verbal level where Hawkes' pessimism often involves parodying whatever hope for renewal was left for Eliot's waste landers. The last words of Eliot's poem, "Shantih, shantih, shantih," with their echoes of reconciliatory peace and mystic knowledge, receive a demonic reply in Luke's animal cries--"Yip, yip, yip"--which terminate the final numbered chapter of The Beetle Leg.<sup>3</sup>

Hawkes' use of time also resembles Eliot's. In The Beetle Leg, there are two main temporal sequences which proceed chronologically, and several temporal dislocations, as well. In both works, as in The Cannibal, an implicit theme concerns the failure of the past to transmit positive values to the present, which makes us question these values; both works consider the spiritual death of the present as contrasted with the prospects presented by the past; they embrace an entropic view of Western society.

As in The Cannibal, the action in the present occurs during a 24-hour period; in the past, the action spans approximately a decade. Hawkes begins, in the past, at the time just before Mistletoe was founded and the dam built, considering, in particular, the history of one family of settlers: Hattie and her sons, Mulge and Luke, and Ma, Mulge's wife. In the present, Luke finishes the day's work of seeding on the dam, goes home to eat (where we first meet Ma and Maverick, the Mandan), then out for his night's entertainment, looking for Bohn, whom he finally meets up with in Chapter 6; meanwhile, on his way into Mistletoe, Luke encounters Camper, who is traveling into the area with his wife and son to fish the waters of the dam, and

attends to the son's snake bite. The action splits when Camper arrives in town and Lou remains in the dormitory to play cards while Camper immediately hurries off to fish. In the dormitory, Lou meets three important waste land figures: Thena, Bohn and the Finn. In the final action in the present, Cap Leech arrives conspicuously in Mistletoe, implants himself like a sore in the centre of the street, only to be taken by Wade, the Sheriff's deputy, to see the Sheriff. In each chapter, the action unfolds as the characters momentarily converge and separate, building towards two climactic scenes which exemplify the dilemma of waste land existence: the fishing scene in Chapter 9, which is, in many respects, the expected logical climax and the shooting of the Red Devils, the actual climax; in reality, the latter scene is an anti-climax. In both these scenes, individual actions converge in unified action as a collective will seems to inform and motivate the characters.

Most of all, it is in Hawkes' characters themselves where the greatest resemblance lies with Eliot's poem. Like the faceless crowd which flows over London Bridge, Hawkes' characters seem "undone" by death or a death-like existence: collectively, they are a soulless group, seemingly doomed by the sterility of the lives they lead, yet unable to die. Hawkes' characters, like Eliot's, lack knowledge--both the ability to relate to others and self-knowledge, particularly sexual self-knowledge. The typist in "The Fire Sermon" responds "with automatic hand" and the conversations in "A Game of Chess" are isolated bursts of egotism. In The Beetle Leg, this fusion of machine and animality can be seen in the recurring image of the Red Devils, hermaphroditic creatures who are frequently portrayed as extensions of their motorcycles. Virtually all characters in The Beetle Leg are dominated by egotistic impulses that prevent understanding or access

to others; Bohn tyrannizes the Finn, the Sheriff tries to control anyone who strays within his dominion. Yet despite these urges to dominate, transmutation of character takes place with one character blending into another, so that distinguishing traits seem essentially superficial and there is uniformity beneath. Rather than employ extended descriptions of the characters, Hawkes often uses "identifying tags," an object or a phrase, for convenience of identification. Uniformity in character portrayal is also apparent in Hawkes' use of continuous dialogue in a group where the voice of the speaker is not always readily discernible (100, 136). This kind of characterization is consistent with a complex technique which John Kuehl has described:

Repetitive time, metamorphic characterization, and iterative imagery, which produce recurrence, and associational flow and spatial juxtaposition, which create indefiniteness, function in Hawkes's pre- and post-1960 fiction to establish a mythopoetic vision of reality.

The difference between these two periods of Hawkes' writing lies primarily in the exclusive emphasis of the earlier writing on methods of structuring and the somewhat diminished effort in the later fiction to structure his art around the mythopoetic.<sup>4</sup>

Where all characters suffer from the same basic malaise and there is a uniformity among characters there cannot be much scope for the development of identity. The waste land mentality concerns both Hawkes and Eliot, the condition of being cut off from self-knowledge and the possibility of rebirth. In Hawkes' later fiction the individual is often able to shape his environment in such a way that it reflects his subjective vision; Eliot's characters and Hawkes' early characters are all too much at one with their world, content to be passive recipients of an arbitrary or autocratic order.



### Action and Character

In The Beetle Leg, Hawkes' disjointed technique manages to convey a sense of randomness and absurdity, a picture of a land in which hostile forces arbitrarily combine to erase human endeavour and sense of purpose. This randomness accompanied by an underlying violence or hostility is manifested in the nature of action in the novel. Occurrences are often sudden or haphazard: Cap's horse proceeds without directions from its owner; suddenly a cow flies through the air; there are eruptive and sporadic discharges of energy marking violent encounters. We are left to guess the reason for something so often that we may be forced to conclude that human action is basically random, like the "actions" of natural forces, or is not founded on reason or even, possibly, emotion; individual action seems to involve some inexplicable interaction between motive, thought and sensation. Thus, we never discover why Mulge marries Ma, nor why the Sheriff's self-appointed deputy, after showing apparent concern for the Sheriff's prisoners--some Red Devils, an invading motorcycle gang--violently kicks them as they lie helplessly on the "tank room" floor (34-5). Such a refusal or disinclination on Hawkes' part to "account for" the actions of his characters reduces the value, in effect, placed on the act. We can hardly be expected to sympathize with a character whom we do not know and in whom there is no consistency or accountability of action; such characters are not so much ambiguous or ill-defined as simply vacuous. They seem neither to think nor feel. It is not correct to refer to them as "caricatures," for they lack the typical dominance of a singularity or trait which defines this form of characterization. They do have, however, stereotypical models or equivalents based on the Western genre: the Sheriff is a "type" of the Western Sheriff; Luke represents the cowboy; Ma is a version of

the frontier wife; and Camper and his wife are versions of the "city slicker." In general, then, Hawkes' refusal to inform us concerning his characters' "inner selves" and the implication that there would not be much here to consider anyway, disengage us from any meaningful method of character determination.

Opposed to these arbitrary, seemingly motiveless actions are the "overly motivated" or obsessive ones: the Sheriff's attack on the Red Devils; Ma's hopeless nocturnal quest for Mulge above the dam; Camper's obsession with his old fishing grounds. Minor actions, as well, tend to become obsessive--on three occasions Luke inquires about the whereabouts of Bohn (29, 60, 96). Even acts which seem motiveless on the surface may involve an obsessive will; for example, Wade's act of kicking the Red Devils indicates his cowardice. (see also 38, 156) combined with an obsession with violence. Action in The Beetle Leg is nearly all either haphazard or obsessive, while the underlying motivation is either absent or ambiguous. Action, then, cannot be reduced to rational terms.

The concept of meaningless or unmotivated action is introduced early. In the "prologue" entitled "The Sheriff," the Sheriff of Clare reminisces about his encounter with Mulge Lampson. The episode has several functions: in its monologue form it introduces us to the waste land itself through the figure of its keeper of "law and order," the main figure of the anti-artist in the novel; it gives us one of two direct representations of character--the second is Cap Leech's brief monologue at the close. Understanding the role that both characters play is fundamental to a larger understanding of the waste landers' methods of dealing with reality. The Sheriff's need for control over others is his most distinguishing attribute; this control extends to his need to seek control over nature by knowledge

or by foreknowledge. Thus, he is seen, in the opening sequence, consulting an "indoor gardener's calendar." The words of the almanac (it is significant that the Sheriff is reading only about the barren signs here) seem to echo the opening lines of The Waste Land where fertility remains only a painful possibility. As with The Cannibal, which uses first person narration interspersed with third person, Hawkes uses narrative voice to suggest an ironic perspective. In both works, Hawkes gives us a narrator whose authoritarian concern with order (whether a revolutionary order of some kind or an ultra-conservative one--both repressive in essence) is established early and becomes a focal point; in effect, the narrative represents the process whereby this order becomes "realized" through action and ultimately asserts itself in the form of a violent act.

"The Sheriff" section also juxtaposes the two kinds of action in the novel: haphazard or arbitrary action and obsessive action. The Sheriff's behaviour becomes clearly defined as obsessive, narrowly bounded not so much by codified legal standards as by a private sense of right and wrong. In his job of patrolling Clare, the Sheriff relies heavily on his instincts: "I know when to bide my temper and just size up the stride of a man or the way he hangs back when you ask him what he is at. . . . And if I stop a couple, I may let them go, I may not" (12); "I'm quick to feel out a stranger" (13). In the Sheriff, moral order is reversed: large crimes become reduced to the level of lesser ones, as he reveals when relating his expectations on receiving a call from a young girl: "I suppose I thought to hear of a killing or of a man with his hand pierced on a fork" (10). In this example of bathos, a murder and a barnyard accident assume similar proportions in the Sheriff's mind. In a land where impotence reigns, fornication is considered the major crime, and the Sheriff

is the principal crusader against it and regulator of it. The Sheriff refers to "doing things a man can't talk about" (8) and, true to his word, constantly reduces the act to the level of the neuter pronoun: "But I never caught them Lampson brothers at it" (8); "people big enough to do wrong have done it, or tried to. . . . A man is wise if he keeps to town. But even there he comes across it" (10). The Sheriff quantifies the law in apportioning justice according to private dictates: ". . . things that happened or not depending on whether you arrived five minutes early or five late. . . . It almost depended on how much white showed from the side of the road" (8).

If we see the Sheriff as one primarily engaged in an obsessive suit, then the Mulge of the "Prologue" presents the other recurring pattern for human behaviour in the waste land: arbitrary or disengaged action. Counterpoised to the Sheriff's crafty deliberation is Mulge's indifference to his surroundings and refusal to commit himself to any kind of action despite the Sheriff's efforts to get him to do so. The scene is, above all, one of unresolved tension created through the ambiguous interaction of two apparent waste land prototypes. All the potential violence which exists in nearly every waste land activity is here submerged. Repression of human energy, particularly sexual energy, is expressed in more than the attitude of the Sheriff, but in the underlying dynamics of the situation and, as it often is in Hawkes' works, in the symbolic framework. The river, unharnessed at the time, is introduced in terms which suggest its correspondence with sexuality: "In those days, before they choked her off, that river widened or narrowed as it pleased. . . . I knew children shouldn't play around it." The town is more immune than the river ("the crime rate [ie., copulation] was high around the river," 11) from incidents of sex,

but "even there [one] comes across it" (10). The river stirs the instinctual side of man to revolt and "drives men and women to undress and swim and maybe kill themselves" (11). The Sheriff's hatred for dragging the river suggests his inability to confront his own subconscious in the form of his sexual self.

The situation in which the Sheriff finds himself has latent sexual overtones. Mulge is seated on the river bank and the Sheriff later describes Mulge as "snarled with this river," foreshadowing his eventual death and also clarifying a symbolic correspondence. A few details hint at Mulge's exhibitionism. The Sheriff describes how Mulge is dressed with more elaboration than he describes his appearance--near the end of the chapter, he simply observes that "He was young" (14). "He was only half dressed" as "his pants were off" (13), but he is wearing a conspicuous yellow shirt like one the (future) Sheriff owns but would never wear. The colour yellow may suggest exhibitionism, but in a more significant way, it might also suggest individuality and the dominance of the life-force, as it does in The Blood Oranges where it is associated with Fiona, the animator of corpses; it stands out, as well, against the drabness of most of the waste landers. Lou, the urban sophisticate, and one who, clearly, does not belong, is the only one associated with other primary colours--red and blue, as well as green.

The Sheriff's voyeuristic tendencies come to the surface here, as well. Only half-hidden behind some ineffectual shrubbery, the Sheriff is so intent upon his target that "My pipe went out and I found I was watching so hard I sat chewing on it dry" (13)--keeping Hawkes' sometimes excessive Freudianism in mind, one could perhaps see this reference as onanistic. Just as the Sheriff would control the forces of nature through

the pamphlet he is reading as the novel opens, so he would control and determine human nature. He strives to reduce the unknown and the instinctual into his own form of order and, for this reason, insistently posits reasons for the stranger's presence and tries to lure him into betraying his motivations. But Mulge reveals neither his motives nor intentions to the Sheriff nor to the reader. The "prologue," then, focuses on the ambiguous act, one which eludes definition or justification. The scene typifies waste land encounters by its stasis, its complete lack of meaningful or self-defining action. The waste land of The Beetle Leg results from or arises out of an alliance or interaction of arbitrariness or chance and what we could call the essential "fatality" of the waste land--an omnipresent force which acts on the land and the people to create the dominant pattern or characteristic of both: stagnation or stasis, failure and sterility. If human action were more dependent on positive values or on rational or sympathetic behaviour, the inhabitants might be able to overcome the stasis. As it is, they have little hope of doing so.

If the inhabitants of Clare and Mistletoe exist in a moral vacuum, there was a time, perhaps, when this was not quite so. The Great Slide is the focal point of the novel itself and that which brings the inhabitants of Mistletoe together; an event in the past--a remembered one--structurally unifies The Beetle Leg as The Cannibal is unified and the country brought together through an anticipated event--the appearance and assassination of the overseer, Leevy.

The Slide was a time when latent heroism was allowed to surface. In particular, Thegna the cook responded with fervor and was responsible for inspiring others:

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Thegna cried the loudest. She caught the spirit of the Slide in sawed-off gum boots, canvas gloves and apron. She worked. From the hour when the full-swing diggings were evacuated and the entire project quit in midstream to the day when they crept once more to the grizzled flat, as the dam seethed, settled and worked the body to the least disturbing depths, she stood alone in the cook tent and perspired. She fried her entire store of beans and hacked open cans of beef to last three days; she barred them from the tent and boiled coffee. They were sobered by her taking on and listened as she ranted from the piece of iron on the ground before the stove to the plank tables, setting out tinware, blowing into the apron (70).

The mystical communal bonds created by the disaster soon give way, and commercialism and sentimentality come to prevail. These two elements combine in the image of Ma who, unable to rescue Mulge's "relics," is forced to obtain "photographs" of them (presumably by buying the postcards sold at Estrellita's) on which she inscribes momentos (72).

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But while Mulge's death momentarily activates the heroic, it eventually serves to deflate and ultimately destroy the hope that positive values will assert themselves in a more permanent way. Mulge can be seen as a waste land prototype--unmotivated, passive--as he is portrayed in the "prologue" and in Luke's description of him: "'He wasn't good for much around the house''; "'And as far as going into the field or on the prairies, not him'' (100). Yet he does not seem irrevocably trapped in the cycle of sterility and infertility. Because of this, his death represents the death of the hope for the waste landers that renewal is possible. It seems as though there are two sides to Mulge's character or two views which we are afforded into that character. On the one hand, he is a typical waste lander (though it is significant that those who view him in this light--the Sheriff and Luke--are more typical waste landers) but, in another respect, he is able to transcend the waste land stasis; he is an outsider, an alien, in a sense, and a man who perhaps has a personal vision. We cannot assume that Mulge achieves another state of awareness

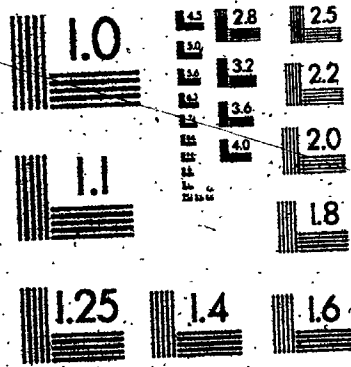
but, rather, a less confined state of being. In this latter view, Mulge is seen as dynamically alive, a functioning sexual being, committed to self-defining action: "But he went on the project, right down into the trough where a damn big river used to run, worked with machinery that could chew a man to pieces" (100). As a waste land prototype, Ma is a suitable bride for him; however, it is with his mistress Thegna that Mulge spends his wedding night, and she is associated with this "other" view into his character. Mulge and Thegna, and to a lesser extent Camper (who Lou discovers was once Thegna's lover as well) are those waste landers who have a sexual identity, who embody, to the extent that any character can, that world of fertility and promise with which the waste landers cannot get in touch.

After Mulge's death, the waste land seems robbed of its vital source; Camper departs the region; Thegna's love life continues; but the sterile Bohn fills the place in her heart once occupied by Mulge. Thegna represents the frontier spirit gone to seed; she becomes a grotesque portrait of what she once used to be, as many of the characters are grotesque versions of heroic "types." Her degeneration as a character over time recalls Jutta's similar degeneration in The Cannibal.

In the opinion of most readers, Mulge is essentially an average waste lander who, through his accidental death, has had heroic status thrust upon him: he becomes, consequently, an ironic "god" whose elevation is thoroughly undeserved. But there is the further irony that his apotheosis is, in a measure, merited, though the waste landers fail to appreciate the nature of it. Camper is the only one who is able to perceive that Mulge's individuality set him above the others; Camper responds even without being



# 2



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sure he ever saw him, and is able to piece together a more meaningful portrait of him than the stammering description Luke gives of his brother and a more genuine and consistent one, than that of the townspeople whose adoration frequently strays to a mere grudging acknowledgement. They seem half aware at times that they have elevated someone whom they did not even like.

Mulge is different from most of the others for he seems to possess a sexual identity. Sexuality is largely absent in the waste landers; frequently, as with the Sheriff, sexuality is repressed and suddenly released in asexual actions, displaced as violent behaviour or sublimated so that it takes the form, for example, of a fanatical pursuit of the "law." Besides being largely ignorant of themselves as sexual beings, the waste landers are also unequipped to confront death. We are told that the land is remarkably free of natural and unnatural deaths, but this state is, in itself, unnatural. Perhaps the waste landers are not in a position to acknowledge death because their existence is so death-like itself. Mulge, however, is the only one of the inhabitants who is a fully-formed sexual being and one of the very few who has confronted death; in this, he seems to have an identity while the others do not. The other waste landers exist in a stasis characterized by fear and impotence brought about largely through their ambivalence towards and unawareness of the forces of sexuality and death.

The Sheriff has been linked with the character of Cap Leech; the ubiquitous medicine-man, yet their respective monologues which frame the novel differ markedly. In length and style they are dissimilar: the Sheriff's style in the "prologue" is rambling but clear in its content, whereas Cap's utterance which closes the novel is terse and enigmatic.

While the Sheriff needs no encouragement to talk, Cap Leech needs to be prodded: "Now I'll talk" (126). Talking and listening are two important acts which help to define the waste land mentality. Chapter 3 ends with Luke protesting that he does not want to hear what the Red Devils were wearing when they raided the Gymnasium, and Chapter 4 begins with Ma complaining, "'No one wants to hear what I got to say'" (65). At the end of Chapter 2, the Sheriff, as he does in the "prologue" marks his place and begins to talk (7, 46), and Chapter 2 ends with the same phrase which begins the Sheriff's "talk" earlier--"It is a lawless country"--defining the Sheriff's conversation as obsessive and circular.

The Sheriff and Cap Leech are the two controlling waste land figures. Both are closely associated with the symbols of their professions and these symbols, in turn, represent the two dominant aspects of the waste land condition. The importance of and justification for linking the two symbols may be seen in Hawkes' use of the "key" image in both cases: The symbols of the Sheriff's profession are his handcuffs and the key to the cell, the latter of which has been around his neck for fourteen years (8). Together they symbolize the condition of imprisonment which the waste landers both foster and endure. It is significant that some of the Red Devils are the Sheriff's prisoners at one point for they symbolize the sexual license which the Sheriff would repress.

The insignia of Cap Leech's profession is the pair of tongs which he "carried in his trousers like a small key" (125), suggesting the other dominant aspect of the waste landers' condition: pain. Ironically, the tongs can also be used as an instrument of birth--as forceps; however, birth in The Beetle Leg is hardly a renewing act, but one that results in death and further degeneration. The range of suffering which the waste

landers apathetically experience is defined by these symbols. What imprisons the waste landers and causes them pain is their failure to accept the forces of sexuality and death and in doing so to come to terms with them in relation to their own identities.

The Sheriff is not the only character who represses sexuality. Bohn refuses the advances of Thegna. In a peculiar reference, but one which unmistakably reinforces the view of the Sheriff's and Bohn's asexuality, Bohn is described as "drawn to the expressionless genitals of animals as the Sheriff was in a later day" (108). Luke also is portrayed as asexual. He forms one of the group that makes the attack on the Red Devils, the motorcycle gang who would bring unrestrained sexuality to the waste land. The Sheriff says, "the younger's [Luke's] record is still clear" (9), meaning that he has never arrested Luke for a sexual "crime." In symbolic terms, Luke is seen as a snake-killer who has never been bitten himself by a snake (28). Finally, Luke wears "lady-size cowboy boots" (which, curiously, Camper wants to exchange for his own sandals) over his "black little feet" (20) and wears thick socks even in summer. He spends his working hours sowing flowers on his brother's grave. Luke is a parody of the conventional cowboy with his typical "masculine" characteristics.

If the Sheriff seeks control of others through the repression of natural instincts, Cap Leech seeks a similar control through the agency of pain. The Sheriff wears the insignia of society and is a fit representative of society's repressions, but Leech is a more fit embodiment of that "fatality" which equally characterizes the waste land condition, rendering the inhabitants helpless and dependent on forces other than their own wills. Leech seems a symbol of the indifference and amorality of nature embodied in man--that aspect which provokes unthinking cruelty and a lack of empathy

among individuals. This can be seen in Bohn's treatment of the Finn and Thegna, in Wade's act of kicking the Red Devils, but most dramatically, perhaps, in the use of anti-climax in the fishing scene where Luke recognizes Leech as his father (Chapter 9). There is irony in the fact that the meeting is more significant for Luke than for Cap, that much more than a recognition takes place in Luke who had "never before touched bone of his own" (135) than in Cap in whom there occurs a minimal physiological response. Luke becomes more clearly defined to Cap as he becomes reduced in essence:

Man, boy, ~~stard~~, Cap Leech thought of his eye dilating by its own design, a mean spring opening with surprise, thought of the red rash that would creep along his arms at night from now forward. Within the brainless cord of spinal fluid there was a murky solid, a floating clot of cheerless recognition (141).

It is not surprising that the meeting with his son is marked by so little a response, for to Cap all people may be reduced to a common denominator and all, ultimately, are seen as victims: "He had the power to put them all to sleep, to look at their women if he wished, to mark their children" (129). But they are victims not only of Cap's questionable profession but, like the characters in The Cannibal, victims of their own selves and the waste land predicament. At one point, Hawkes presents a grotesque image of a pastiche in one body of the organs of Leech's dissection as they "seesaw across the floor under tresses of arms and ventricles hung from shoulders, [and] would turn the other emasculated cheek" (144). This is an image of the collective identity of the waste land inhabitants as they are practised on by a surgeon most fit and appropriate to operate on them, the kind of doctor who delivers a life from the womb of a dead mother in the form of the impotent Bohn, and with the indifferent words "'Now be good'" (108), sends him out to inflict the waste land with further

paralysis. This phrase, essentially empty and meaningless, spoken by one who might be considered the most omniscient character in the novel, bespeaks the absence of moral order which characterizes The Beetle Leg. It is also worth remarking that Bohn's name is a homonym for the French "bon." The name is also connected with the waste land image of the bone (see page 59 for an example of Hawkes' use of this image).

Though an "outsider," Leech is very much a waste land figure; as the image above (144) indicates, Leech unifies the waste landers in their masochistic longing for pain, their willingness to be victimized. The other "outsider," Camper, is on a more specific quest than Leech's, though in Leech's "epilogue," he does give a quest-like purpose to his wandering. Camper wants to fish the waters of the dam. This desire, at least, symbolically bespeaks the wish for regeneration; the inhabitants have "rarely fished" (18) these waters, indicating their lack of concern with the regenerative process and suggesting their asexuality, as well. The names "Camper" and "Leech" help to define their relationships with the setting of The Beetle Leg. Camper's relationship is both temporary and tentative; he moves around throughout his night's stay, unable to engage fully with the inhabitants nor the place itself, because he is not one of them nor one with it. Camper's attraction to the waste land and its people indicates, perhaps, his own inadequacy and points to his failure, in terms of the central myth, to bring relief to the land, despite his apparent potential to do so.

Leech's name suggests parasitism and permanence. Leech installs himself so that his wagon blocks the street, an emblem of the waste land itself. Like Tiresias in The Waste Land, Leech becomes a personal embodiment of the land over which he presides and, again like Tiresias, represents

its irresolvable contradictions, its ultimate inability to cure its condition. Leech possesses ironic curative powers (leech = doctor), yet is also diseased himself with warts on his hands (123). Both Leech and Camper wear glasses to which attention is drawn, signifying, perhaps, a distinction in vision between the outsiders and the more fixed waste landers (who merely have defective, uncorrected vision). Each, however, has a strong tie to the community of The Beetle Leg and each, in order to realize himself fully, must come to terms with the "waste land" aspect of his character. Cap seems to do this indirectly and automatically with the recognition of Luke as his son. Camper retreats, partly in fear, after his unsuccessful fishing expedition, to the dormitory where Lou waits, to take up a revolver. (153-4) which he clasps for "useless protection." Neither character confronts his "waste land" aspect totally, then; it is, at best, a confrontation marked by either indifference or fear.

The picture of victimizer as victim represents a dominant theme of the novel. Cap is himself a victim--of Bohn's malevolence, the Sheriff's designated authority, of society which deems him an outcast. At one point, Camper says "'I'm a hunter'" (97), but this is primarily an ironic claim as a later reference shows his fear of being hunted himself (109). Bohn is perhaps the best example of victimizer as victim. Bohn tyrannically preys on the Finn, who seems paralyzed by the former's will. He also exerts control over Luke, and when Camper bargains for Luke's boots, the cowboy asks Camper: "'What would Bohn think if I gave away my boots?'" (98). Bohn binds the men with a sense of sinister purpose, enjoining them to Camper's fishing expedition: "Except for Bohn each might have run his way" (109). But Bohn is a victim of his fate, of his physical condition. In particular, he is a victim of Cap's tongs, the instrument of pain in

the waste land and the instrument which delivered the disfigured infant. On one page alone (108) there are four references to the circumstances of Bohn's birth: "wailing forceps" is a recurring epithet in connection with Bohn and one which also signifies the condition of pain symbolized by the forceps or tongs. The final chapter portrays three scenes of victimization in which the victimizers are seen in perfect control. By now, however, Hawkes has stressed the ultimate unity of victimizers and victims, and we are in a position to acknowledge these incidents of violence and brutality as acts against the self or aspects of the self as much as acts against others.

Ma seems to be one of the clear-cut victims in the novel. She is a victim of her marriage to Mulge, a marriage so unsatisfying it has left her a virgin-widow. In her nocturnal search for "the slow, and unbreathing, blackly preserved, whole and substantial being of the dead man" (117), Ma hopes to possess Mulge the only way she can do so. Like the others, Ma seeks some kind of communion with the dead Mulge, never having been in touch with his vitality when he was alive. As the others do in a more figurative sense, Ma searches for death in a land of perpetual non-renewal and lingering perdition--a dying land which can never die--and opens "many graves" (115) in the process. Just as Ma cannot establish a significant or meaningful understanding of death, so she cannot accommodate the forces of sexuality despite the fact that "She knew, she understood these signs of the young shoots crushed in the darkness, the sudden appearance and whirl of insects" (117). Evidence of passion and sexuality is all around her (as the Sheriff believes it to be all around him), but she is remote from it. Ironically, the phallic divining rod "jerks her . . . in sudden palsy" (116), but her gratification remains incomplete by the absence of



Mulge.

The Art of Irony and Anti-Climax

In the fishing scene (Chapter 9) expectations point towards crisis and climax. Main characters converge in an action which is interrelated symbolically to many other actions in the novel beginning with Mulge's ambiguous behaviour in "The Sheriff" section. In this scene, the Sheriff comments, "he must have had his fish already" (12). The need for Hawkes' waste landers to fish corresponds to the desire of Eliot's waste landers for water, a desire which appears about to be realized near the end of the poem. At this point occurs one of two specific references to fishing in Eliot's work. The lines are suggestive of rebirth, but they also convey futility--the two alternating modes in The Waste Land out of which the poem's tension emerges:

I sat upon the shore  
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me  
Shall I at least set my lands in order?<sup>6</sup>

In The Beetle Leg, all "rebirths" are ironic ones. Futility has gained the upper hand, and the waste landers submit to a sense of hopelessness without being conscious of a need for change. There are twelve chapters in The Beetle Leg, excluding the unnumbered "prologue" and "epilogue," which, when considered collectively, give the sense of a completed cycle.<sup>7</sup> Every chapter, except for the anti-climactic final one, contains or is structured around a "rebirth" which is unquestionably ironic. In a sense then, The Beetle Leg is a chronicle of lost opportunities, a statement about modern man's incapacity for self-development or fulfillment: it presents an anatomy of failure, in particular, the failure to surmount stasis by self-realization or a confrontation with the multiplicity of

self and with the forces of sexuality and death.

"Rebirths" occur in both the present and the past. They may be implied in a statement or image or manifested in a particular action, such as Luke's act of seeding "the mile long stretch of his brother's grave" (18) at the opening of the first chapter. Cap Leech's arrival in Mistletoe suggests the possibility of rebirth in Chapter 2, especially in terms of the Fisher King myth. Chapter 3 begins with the founding of Mistletoe and is ironically imbued with the frontier, pioneering spirit. The naming of Mistletoe is cited in apocryphal fashion, and the cycles of nature are tied to the activities of the inhabitants:

When it finally thawed and the river rose, when the mud sloshed over the top of their boots and shoepacks, the women came. From that time on the wash was hung to dry out of doors. In the sun-- when it was warm and a fresh breeze rose from the reteding banks-- in mid-morning, whole lines of workmen hunched forward on crates or squatted in the sand and earth that was still damp, with dirty towels on their shoulders, not turning to talk, staring off where birds were flying or hills emerging from the prairie, getting haircuts from their wives (48-9).

Chapter 4 concerns the Great Slide and the efforts of the waste landers, particularly Thegna, to reconstitute their lives after the climactic event. In this chapter, Mulge's "resurrection" takes place as they glorify "the one death" by displaying his relics in the barber shop and selling post cards at Estrellita's. Chapter 5 is devoted to Ma's marriage--a ceremony which should symbolize rebirth, while in the following chapter, Mulge's parodic "second coming" is speculated upon by the welders. The "rebirth" motif occurs again in Chapter 7 in Ma's quest for Mulge with the divining rod. The action characterizes, as does Luke's fishing episode in the past, the waste landers' pursuit of death. Chapter 8 is concerned with yet another ironic rebirth: the forceps delivery of Bohn out of the womb of his dead mother. Leech is said to have "fished [Bohn] none too soon from the dark

hollow" (121). In Chapter 9, these various quests and rebirth images converge in the two fishing episodes, the one in the past and the other in the present.

Luke's act of fishing the dead baby out of the water is an ironic echo of Leech (whom we discover in this chapter to be Luke's father) and his act of rescuing the live baby (Bohn) from the mother (121). The dead baby is symbolically connected to Mulge as well as to the waste landers themselves. The baby's death, coming about like Mulge's through an incident connected with the dam, is the only other "unnatural" death specified in the novel. As the dead baby snags Luke's fishing line, thus resurfacing the world of the living<sup>8</sup>--an ironic reminder, among other things, of the waste landers' inability to die--so Luke speculates on the possibility of his brother's emergence and mobility: "Luke wondered if his body ever shifted in the sand, he thought of it when seeding. 'Some day he'll worm himself right out to the open air,' the cowboy said. 'Mighty like he's crawling around in there right now, winding his way up toward the side I've sown'" (24). Even the dead in Hawkes' waste land, it seems, do not gain stability or permanence in their condition. Mulge is conceived of as "a blindly swimming man" (100). This aspect of apparent mobility, or the uncertain fixity of death, is crucial to our understanding of the waste landers' predicament. Like the dead baby, Mulge is physically trapped, yet he is, nonetheless, conceived by the waste landers, as a potential threat to their existence: "'they'd riot again if he came back'" (102). Any reminder of death is threatening because it is a reminder of the death-like existence of the waste land itself. Nobody saw how, specifically, Mulge met his death, nor can they locate his "mile-long" grave. Like death itself to the waste landers, Mulge's whereabouts are unknown, and

Ma's gruesome nocturnal search is revealed as hopeless. The waste landers reject death, or, at least, they are unaware of death as a primary force of their existence. Both the dead baby and Mulge are trapped by death, but the paranoia of the inhabitants is such that they cannot see them as other than a threat. The dead become a concrete threat when they emerge, in some sense, into the waste landers' world, as the dead baby does to Luke and as Mulge, they believe, is about to. Likewise, the stasis of the waste landers in life is analogous to the actual stasis of the baby and Mulge: it is Luke's fear of, yet attraction to, death, which brings the symbolic baby to the surface, and similar contradictory impulses which lead the waste landers to "revitalize" Mulge in one form or another. So, the actual state of the waste landers is one characterized by stasis (seen as a kind of death) in which movement is illusory and unbeneficial (like the projected or actual movements of the dead) because it is usually the product of an unhealthy interaction between fear of and attraction toward death or, in other cases, sexuality; an irresolvable tension exists and perpetuates itself in this relationship between these two major forces of existence.

Chapter 9 appears to build towards its climax which, according to conventional methods, should be the scene where Luke, Cap, and Camper go out in the boat; instead, the real "climax" of the chapter--in terms of dramatic action--is the fishing episode in the past, which occurs at the beginning of the chapter. The rest of the chapter proves to be anti-climactic because no complex realization takes place between Luke and Cap. Even though the action does rise somewhat as the chapter proceeds, the portrayal is primarily comic: "There was no bean can or grappling pine-- the shotguns lay in the trunk--but still enough darkness and promise of a

wild sunrise to excite them to paw and stumble, a few to expose rawly their seedy chests" (133). After they "bait the ghost" (134), Leech arrives, making the group complete: The central characters from the three intertwined narrative strands are assembled--Luke, Camper and Cap--and the other main characters are also present--Bohn and the Sheriff. In terms of our emotional response, the incident of Luke hooking the dead baby in Chapter 9 carries sufficient intensity to be considered a climax; thus, Hawkes has used a disguised climax--the earlier fishing scene in Chapter 9--in such a way as to reinforce its connections with character and symbol while structuring the remainder of the chapter as a progression towards anti-climax.

Other chapters proceed toward anti-climax, as well, as Hawkes consistently refuses to indulge the reader's expectations. The chapter describing Ma's marriage, for example, builds climactically as the wagons ceremonially make their way towards Clare. There they encounter an obstacle (the Sheriff), but, although the marriage eventually takes place, it does so "by bonfire light and to the music of a borrowed and portable celesta, in a roped-off lot behind the church" (91), and before it can be consummated, the groom Mulge runs off to Thegna. The first example of a chapter structured to reveal anti-climax is, of course, "The Sheriff" section where Mulge never does act at all, and the ambiguity is never dissipated.

In The Cannibal, the action tends toward the arrival of Leevey. The climax is the assassination of the American overseer, and what follows is not exactly anti-climax but an expected falling off of the action and the emotional response, as Zizendorf and the others make preparations for the "new regime"; the action which terminates the novel arises as a consequence of past action. But what follows Chapter 9 in The Beetle Leg is not a falling off of the action as, indeed, there has been little action in the previous

chapter. In contrast to prior chapters, Chapter 10 is the only chapter where action predominates, where one act succeeds another. Yet Chapter 10 cannot provide a climax because of the nature of the actions that occur here: once again, Hawkes' thorough dependency upon anti-climax is evidenced. The actions here have little integral relation to immediately preceding events. Three scenes of violence and brutality compose Chapter 10; yet, in each scene, the actual violent act is a sublimated form of another more brutal act: the act of rape underlies Cap Leech's attempt to extract a tooth from the Mandan; the act of cannibalism lies behind the hunt of the rooster (the similarities to the Duke's expressly cannibalistic act in the prior novel have been pointed out);<sup>9</sup> finally, the attack on the Red Devils is the waste land version of the act of murder. In a sense, these all represent attacks on the sexual being as the victims here can all be associated with sexual expression or the instincts. Yet it is perhaps more important to acknowledge that these actions represent displacements of those more meaningful acts of rape, cannibalism and murder and that, once again, it is the waste landers' inevitable attraction towards yet fear of the forces of sexuality and death which brings about such displacements. The inner condition of the waste landers is such that they are unable to come to terms with their repressed desires and impulses. In Hawkes' later fiction, the potential often exists to transform these internal or unconscious needs into subjective vision, but in The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg, the characters lack the will to do so.

Chapter 10, then, is related thematically to what precedes it but, like many others in the novel, this chapter can hardly be dealt with as comprising a logical sequence of narrative action. Hawkes is less concerned with a disruptive or fragmented chronology than with dispensing

entirely with the concept of novelistic time; as the characters seem to run together, blending into one another, so all temporality seems to be able to be considered as existing simultaneously. This apparent simultaneity is a result of the absurdity of human action; in particular, it arises inevitably from the absence of meaningful correspondence between cause and effect, impulse or reason and act. It is appropriate, then, that transitional scenes are consistently lacking throughout, for they imply some intermediate state where action tends toward completion; this would suggest a "cause and effect" universe--one quite remote from the actual random world of The Beetle Leg.

The Beetle Leg is a novel which is committed to dealing with the relationship between "self" and the world that this self creates out of its own powerlessness for constructive, beneficial action. Character and landscape merge and become inseparable reflections of each other. Such a sterile coexistence can be summed up in the description of the inhabitants as ones who "took without asking and gave no thanks to a process that bestowed upon them only cloth and clay" (114).

In The Beetle Leg, inner conflict is seldom, if ever, manifested; individuals neither rebel against themselves nor their environment; consequently, identity never becomes a valid concern. The only hint of rebellion can be seen in the character of Mulge who, in his assertiveness, is able to establish himself as an opponent of the psychic stasis in which the others are imprisoned; in a sense, he seems a shadowy forerunner of later Hawkesian characters who come in conflict with a dominant order of some kind. But, because we discover so little about him, the question of his identity can never be satisfactorily addressed within the terms of the novel.

The Beetle Leg can be considered a transitional novel in Hawkes'

canon, though at first glance it seems to repeat in different guises many of the technical and thematic concerns present in The Cannibal. Though The Beetle Leg cannot be said to represent a significant change in direction for Hawkes (and technically it may be considered inferior to The Cannibal), it seems important that many of the characters in Hawkes' second novel acknowledge in a limited way their need for rebirth. Madame Snow and the others glorify Zizendorf as the liberator of Germany, yet we readily see that he is totally unworthy of this elevation. Unlike Mulge Lampson, Zizendorf is not an outsider but, like Cap Leech in The Beetle Leg, an embodiment of the collective spiritual malaise of the inhabitants. Their literal quest for Mulge is ironic and hopeless, a search for death: Mulge, who once represented a life-force in a land which seemed to realize its own potential, is dead, and the life of the land is buried by the collapse of the dam. Yet the figurative search for Mulge involves a mythologizing process in which the inhabitants hope to give unity and meaning to their lives; it is a unifying element in a land where unity is almost always otherwise synonymous with uniformity. The fact that Camper, Luke, Ma and Cap Leech search for Mulge suggests their desire for rebirth, a desire which a later character like Skipper of Second Skin is to realize through his experience with a world of death and through an imaginative consciousness which expresses itself partly in the images of myth.



## END NOTES - CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>Five major studies of The Beetle Leg stress the prominence of mythic patterns of various kinds. Frederick Busch traces the development of the Fisher King myth, applying it to the actions and roles of different characters. He sees Mulge as a drowned god and Cap Leech as the Fisher King: Frederick Busch, Hawkes: A Guide to His Fictions (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1973), pp. 39-42. Lucy Frost claims that the biblical myth of Adam's fall "organizes the narrative" into three stages corresponding to times before, during and after the Fall: Lucy Frost, "The Drowning of American Adam: Hawkes' The Beetle Leg," Critique, 14, No. 3 (1973), 65. Donald J. Greiner discusses The Beetle Leg as a parody of the American Myth of westward expansionism: Donald J. Greiner, Comic Terror: The Novels of John Hawkes (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1973), pp. 100-1. John Kuehl believes that Mulge's fate "burlesques that of Osiris and the Fisher King." John Kuehl, John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1975), p. 39. Alan Heineman discovers the existence of Egyptian allusions and images in the novel which reinforce associations made between Mulge as Osiris and Ma as Isis; he purposes, furthermore, that the "Prologue" may depict Mulge's mumification as an Osiris-figure. Alan Heineman, "'It is a Lawless Country': Narrative, Formal and Thematic Coherence in The Beetle Leg," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 (1983), 139.

<sup>2</sup>Hawkes' awareness of even well-recognized and often cited mythic patterns appears to have been limited; he is unfamiliar with the Osiris myth and has not (as of 1974) read Frazer's The Golden Bough: Kuehl (Interview), p. 160. On another occasion, Hawkes remarked that the process of his "private myth-making" owes little to "formal texts." Paul Emmett and Richard Vine, "A Conversation with John Hawkes," 28, No. 2 (1976), 164.

<sup>3</sup>John Hawkes, The Beetle Leg (New York: New Directions, 1951), p. 158. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>4</sup>Kuehl, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Greiner's claim that "Mulge does not deserve his fame." Greiner believes that he is essentially a comic character whom Hawkes continually undercuts, pp. 114-5. Alan Heineman, in a recent article, makes perhaps his most pertinent remarks concerning this ambiguous character, connecting him (and also the Red Devils) to active sexuality in the waste land, Heineman, 139, 145.

<sup>6</sup>T. S. Eliot, Collected Poems, 1909-1962 (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 79 (ll. 423-5; cf. ll. 189-92).

<sup>7</sup>Names in the novel often suggest an ironic fertility: Mistletoe is symbolic of the natural cycle, and Mulge's name denotes fertility ("Mulch"); however, the place of his burial suggests little prospect for fertility: he is "locked within the lifeless shale of the dam-grave, where flowers cannot grow and water cannot be found." Patrick O'Donnell, John Hawkes (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 64.

<sup>8</sup>In Dylan Thomas's poem, "The Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait," the fisherman himself uses a girl for bait, an act which defines his renunciatory nature. Carnal forces present in the sea devour the girl, who symbolizes fleshly temptations, Dylan Thomas, Collected Poems, 1934-1952 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1952), pp. 149-57.

<sup>9</sup>More important than surface similarities between the Duke and Cap Leech is the shared nature of the anti-artistic response; the decreative act is implicit in those who "represent the destructive potentialities of art, the artist as malefactor and disseminator, fruitlessly scattering the shards and pieces of artistry over the landscape," O'Donnell, 70. As a contrasting figure, the symbolic artist seeks to unify through the activities of the imaginative self.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LIME TWIG: AWAKENING FROM NIGHTMARE

In The Cannibal and The Beetle-Leg, Hawkes presents us with essentially static "plots" and motiveless characters. But while human action remains far from coherent or explicable, in The Lime Twig, both plot and character are more highly resolved than in the prior novels. In The Lime Twig, an ordinary couple, Michael and Margaret Banks, are swept away by Michael's dream of owning a horse. While Michael comes to inhabit his fantasy world where dreams of unlicensed eroticism and power prevail, he is scarcely aware that both he and Margaret are captives in a design mapped out by an underworld gang led by Larry the Limousine. Michael becomes an unwitting pawn in Larry's scheme to steal a thoroughbred and run him under an assumed name and lineage in a prestigious race. The novel traces Michael and Margaret's gradual absorption in their unconscious dreams and desires, the activities of the gang as they carry out their plans, and Michael's final realization and escape from what has become a terrifying nightmare.

In The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg, the characters are captives of a degenerative cycle, imprisoned within a nightmare of stasis and unfulfillment. They become victims of arbitrary fate or sterile forms of thought and behaviour, like nationalism and conventional morality. Michael and Margaret Banks of The Lime Twig seem initially to belong to this early group of characters. The only thing which distinguishes them (in particular, Michael) from the other faceless, largely unsympathetic characters in the previous two novels is their greater capacity for a dream life. Michael's desire to escape from the mundane aspects of modern life is more overt

than Margaret's, but both are possessed by inner needs which have their basis in their erotic selves. Ironically, Michael's embrace of the dream world presents him with a vision of his own nothingness in spite of the sexual satisfactions and feelings of supremacy that this embrace temporarily provides. Michael's achievement of a hard-won awareness bespeaks Hawkes' new sense of commitment: he not only remains committed to portraying the nightmare of existence, but in The Lime Twig, he expresses more strongly than ever before the sense that some kind of salvaging is possible, that individuals can exert a form of control over their lives. In this, The Lime Twig looks forward to the novels which follow where the artist-figure is able to manifest a high degree of control through his acts of imaginative synthesis and his overriding concerns with order and design.

The Lime Twig not only signals a change for Hawkes in terms of character interactions with the landscape, but the completion of the novel marks a discernible movement towards the narrative voice and the more conventional techniques of Second Skin. Hawkes was aware of a shift towards conventional forms and described this shift largely in terms of a need to render the consciousness of a particular character in each work from The Cannibal on in a distinct way. From The Cannibal's narrator who "possessed an unusual omniscience" to Hawkes' first attempt to depict "an actual human voice" in "The Sheriff" section of The Beetle Leg to the opening pages of The Lime Twig where Hencher speaks as a psychic whole, there is a progressive sequence of intensifying portraits which leads ultimately to the self-revealing narrative of Skipper in Second Skin.<sup>1</sup> In Second Skin, Hawkes was able to utilize the method of first-person narration the potentials for which he was gradually realizing. Through first-person narration, Hawkes is able to deal with characters in a way which was not previously

possible;

With Hencher in The Lime Twig, Hawkes aimed at "a certain depth" of portrayal,<sup>2</sup> while in order to maintain the critical level of authorial detachment with respect to the main action, Michael and Margaret Banks are seen through the wide-angle third-person lens; however, the third-person viewpoint breaks down, as does the first-person, into two distinct perspectives, making four categories in all.

A further way to divide narrative voices is in terms of "stance" or involvement. The reader responds to the various voices according to a degree of greater or lesser involvement:

voice		
distance	first-person	third-person
involved	Hencher	Michael/Margaret Banks
distanced	Slyter	omniscient

It is essential that we do not feel too close to Michael and Margaret Banks; use of the third-person objectifies their status and allows us to judge and sympathize with them simultaneously. To reinforce this, Hawkes establishes a close bond between Hencher and the reader through a confessional prologue, only to jar our expectations and sensibilities by having him "killed off" at the end of Chapter 1. The effect is to warn us not to place our sympathies in any one character.

Sidney Slyter's position is that of a figure distanced from the main action who desires to be a part of it. Reflecting this duality, he sometimes refers to himself in the third-person. Rather than attracting sympathy by speaking directly to the reader, Slyter's intrusive confidentiality repels. He conceives of himself as "God's silent servant,"<sup>3</sup> but his

machinations are more satanic than god-like. Like the Sheriff in The Beetle Leg, he is a reveller in violence and crime. Despite his determination for shady probings of the truth, Slyter remains an outsider to the plot he would penetrate--a sly and often accurate guesser of the truth, not one privy to it. Otherwise, Slyter is the glib commentator whose columns always contain a glimmer of truth. He is the proponent of the cheerful exterior, as he goes about trying to be part of the busy scene he complacently describes while above it at the same time, or perhaps behind it. Yet he is exactly what he reveals himself to be in his gossipy pages. Slyter cannot penetrate surface reality to any significant extent, and his viewpoint, consequently, remains severely limited; like Zizendorf of The Cannibal, he is a figure of the anti-artist. Slyter's voice, like that of the omniscient narrator, is devoid of feeling, cannot express complexity of emotion or sensation.

"Authorial" in terms of involvement, the strictly omniscient narrator binds the action together where necessary, generally depicting the activities of one or more members of Larry's gang in scenes where neither Margaret nor Michael appears. Taken together, these "authorial" viewpoints present a basically exterior view of the action. The authorial viewpoints, then, essentially record what can be observed, as when, in the final section of the novel, the detectives who discover Hencher's body take steps to uncover "the particulars of this crime" (175); they are concerned with the facts, and they remain severely limited (as is Slyter) in their knowledge of the truth.

Hencher's prologue and those portions of the narrative in which Michael's or Margaret's perspective dominates comprise what we could term the "involved" viewpoint which presents a basically subjective view of

character, and this makes up the bulk of the narrative. Through this perspective emerges the possibility for distortion as the subjective, consciousness transforms external reality under the pressure of extraordinary circumstances. In the perspectives of Michael and Margaret, Hawkes gives us the blurred, "unreal" vision which is the product of the baffled understanding trying to accommodate new and terrifying experiences. The cumulative effect of such an effort of comprehension is to create a world of nightmare which, in its usurpations of the ordinary, becomes for each character a version of "reality."

The various perspectives in The Lime Twig, whether involved or distanced, subjective or objective, all interact and reflect on each other. The perspectives of Michael and Margaret, especially when juxtaposed to that of Sidney Slyter, allow one to set two divergent views of "reality" beside each other. The existence of Hencher's prologue permits a further basis for comparison while the view of Larry's gang (considerably distanced by the narrative voice--which also serves to render Larry as aloof and god-like) extends even further this capacity which the narrative voice creates to multiply our perception of "realities." The result is a novel, which is unlike those which precede or follow it where, in general, a single and consistent narrative voice is maintained.

In The Lime Twig, identity becomes an important concept for the first time in Hawkes' fiction. Michael desires a new identity, one founded on the myth of potency symbolized by Larry the Limousine (in Second Skin and Travesty, cars symbolize masculine power). For a time Michael is permitted to indulge in the fantasy of acting like Larry, though he is apparently punished when he pushes his desires too far, as when he has intercourse with Larry's "moll," Sybilline. But his fantasy is to be Larry, to change

his identity for that of the gangster. At the point of his most intense immersion in the fantasy, during his night of almost continuous lovemaking, Michael almost believes himself invulnerable until other events awaken him to his actual situation.

The identities of Hencher and Larry are also important in the novel. In a sense, Michael's destiny depends on these two figures: Hencher<sup>4</sup> has basically good intentions for Michael, yet his manipulations result in Michael's entrapment by Larry's gang, of which Hencher seems to be a "fringe" member. Larry's manipulations are more sinister in origin: he intends to use Michael in a scheme to race a horse illegally; yet through Larry's manipulations, Michael is led to realize the falseness of the identity he has assumed and, in the end, takes decisive action against his former manipulators. Michael is a victim of a force for good that turns into evil and a contrary force of evil out of which something positive emerges. Although on the surface, these opposite forces may seem clearly defined for the first time in Hawkes' fiction, we are still, in fact, in a world where "bad" and "good" have no absolute meaning; there is only an amorphous region in between which the principles of "good" and "evil" operate in a manner which cannot be determined or anticipated.

In some respects, Hencher possesses the ordering qualities of the artist; he attempts to order the outer world to reflect a subjective vision. In the company of the Bankses, his landlords, Hencher finds a security which he has lacked in his life since the death of his mother. Hencher finds he "can get along without" his mother by adopting Michael and Margaret and again become part of a "family."<sup>5</sup> After thinking of what he can "do" for Michael and Margaret, he decides that he can repay them by letting Michael into the racehorse scheme. (Exactly whose scheme it is--Hencher's



or Larry's--is not clear.) Hencher sets the scheme in motion, though, through an essentially altruistic impulse. Patrick O'Donnell observes that "everything in the novel follows from Hencher's vision; he is its author, another of Hawkes's artists whose fanatical attachment to the past rules over the unredeemed confines of his artistry."<sup>6</sup>

In Hencher's prologue, outer reality is integrated into the self. Hencher has both an inner and an outer existence, although like Hawkes' later artist figures, Skipper and Cyril, the inner world is more important to him. Hencher is concerned with others (though in an obsessive way), with indulging them or repaying them for kindness. In this sense, his prologue serves as a bridge between objective and subjective realities, though its emphasis on the internal world prepares us for the inner world of fantasy to which Michael becomes subjugated. The external and internal factors of personal experience fuse in the scene where Hencher witnesses the falling plane, a scene which suggests Hencher's capacity as an artist-figure for transforming and making connections between the self and others. In this scene, external reality is given meaning through a process of self-integration. Hencher emerges from the chamber of his dying mother (world of inner consciousness) to "watch the sky, hear what I could of the cries coming down from Violet Lane . . . ." (18). He becomes aware of a "Large, brown, lifeless airplane" and observes that "it was simply there": "the thick wings did not fall, no frenzied hand wiped the pilot's icy windscreen, no tiny torch switched on to prove this final and outrageous landfall. It made no sound" (19). The plane exists as an external fact, but an air of absurdity surrounds its presence. After it crashes, Hencher climbs aboard, sits in the pilot's seat, turns the wheel, tries to work the pedals, and finally dons both the pilot's breathing apparatus and his helmet (22-3).

Hencher is sustained by human relationships, imperfect as they might be; after his mother dies, it is these relationships (even the memory of "Reggie"--the phantom pilot) which cause him to "smile" at life. His gratitude and friendliness towards Banks make him want to include his landlord in the plot to steal "Rock Castle." But with both Hencher and Skipper of Second Skin, the value of love borders on the obsessive and even the perverse. Hencher and Skipper are determined to "serve" the members of their family in a way which is ultimately destructive. Like Skipper's world, Hencher's world represents a fusion of the outer and the inner lives. Hencher has the artistic capacity to give a shape to outer reality through the requisites of a subjective vision. However, Hawkes takes the drastic step of killing off this "promising" character before he intrudes too much in his design, calling this act, in an interview, "an appropriate violation of fictional expectation or fictional 'rules.'"<sup>7</sup>

Although Larry is also a manipulator, his ends are not artistic in the sense that Hencher's are. Like Zizendorf, he is only interested in self-aggrandizement; the inner world does not exist for Larry, whose hedonism has nothing in common with Cyril's pursuit of pleasure in The Blood Oranges. Like those other representatives of anti-art, Zizendorf in The Cannibal and the Sheriff in The Beetle Leg, Larry wants to control others, primarily for purposes of his own gratification. In the broad sense, his motives are political, not artistic.

#### Identity and the Fantasy World

By the time Hencher has become the novel's first victim, Michael Banks (and to a lesser extent, Margaret) has assumed the function of primary consciousness. We see the world of The Lime Twig essentially through the

perceiving and cognitive apparatus of an ordinary man--more the representative of a specific class which existed at a specific time than an individual of any great complexity. We are told virtually nothing about his character: Hencher observes that, he "is not a talker" (11), and by all early indications we may assume that he is a timid man undertaking what he considers to be a bold enterprise and rather proud of his efforts which, in effect, hamper more than help. He is portrayed, as is Margaret, as a basically comic character; both are versions of the child-adult, like Henry and Emily of Charivari. The Bankses have the lower-middle class values typical of a certain kind of post-war British mentality--one which reacted to life with a high degree of compliance and acceptance--an attitude which kept them mired in a class system in which the mundane and the ordinary recurred with predictable regularity. Following Hencher's prologue, the way we are introduced to the Bankses stresses their routine existence and calls attention to the special status of this particular day in Michael's life:

It is Wednesday dawn. Margaret's day, once every fortnight, for shopping and looking in the windows. She is off already with mints in her pocket and a great empty crocheted bag on her arm, jacket pulled down nicely on her hips and a fresh tape on her injured finger. She smells of rose water and the dust that is always gathering in the four rooms. In one of the shops she will hold a plain dress against the length of her body, then return it to the racks; at a stand near the bridge she will buy him--Michael Banks--a tin of fifty, and for Hencher she will buy three cigars. She will ride the double-decker, look at dolls behind a glass, have a sandwich. And come home at last with a packet of cold fish in the bag.

Most Wednesdays--let her stay, let her walk out--Michael does not care, does not hold his breath, never listens for the soft voice that calls good-by. But this is no usual Wednesday dawn and he slips from room to room until she is finally gone. In front of the glass fixes his coat and hat, and smiles. For he intends not to be home when she returns (30).

Into this routine, upon which the meaning of their lives depends, Michael is poised to confront "his own worst dream and best" (33): his fantasy of owning a horse. For Margaret, the fantasy world remains

unattainable--something seen in films and, therefore, quite separate from reality. But for Michael the fantasy is to materialize out of the fog of his desire and become a concrete reality. This metaphoric transformation is literally enacted in the scene in which the stolen horse is transported from the barge to Hencher's van. In figurative terms the fog symbolizes the dissolution of the "real" or outer world, an alternate "reality" which calls forth a new identity commensurate with a commitment to different values. Michael Banks' old identity is bound up with this world which is now breaking down to become replaced by his fantasy world.

Michael's misfortune arises, essentially, out of three misconceptions. First of all, Michael cannot live up to his new identity. He finds that though his "world" has altered, his true self has not; hence, there is a disparity between what he would be and what he is. Ultimately, he fails to adapt to the new demands put on him. His other misconceptions have to do with awareness. Michael is unaware that his fantasy world is not contained entirely by the boundaries of his subjectivity, that, in a sense, his fantasy is not interdependent or separable from the "realities" of others--Hencher, Margaret and Cowles are all victims of the fantasy-nightmare which eventually claims Michael, and Larry and the other members of his gang are the dangerous agents of it. To complete Michael's unawareness, it is evident that he does not realize that to conjure up one part of his fantasy is to call all aspects of this world into being. One cannot have fantasy, love and fulfillment without the correlatives of nightmare, fear and frustration; similarly, the fantasy world is not confined to the mind--it is all too "real"; one cannot simply wish or will it away once it has become a nightmare. When what has begun as "wish-fantasy" cannot be negated by the will, the imagination or thought. Michael's fantasy world

is no fairy tale fantasy or a world of pure imagination: the former demands some form of confrontation while the latter signals simple escape from the conditions of the ordinary world. Michael's fantasy world leads him along a path of self-confrontation and evaluation. Margaret mistakenly assumes that there exists only the ordinary world--untransformed and predictable--and the fantasy world of the films with no possibility in between for the different, fantastic or bizarre shapes that the ordinary world transformed by the human mind can assume.

Once Michael's fantasy has assumed the dimensions of "the real," as it does when the fog dissolves, the tarpaulin is pulled back and the figure of the horse is revealed on the barge (49), it requires an action on his part to destroy the fantasy. Since Michael's new identity is bound up with this fantasy, it would seem as though Michael were overthrowing this identity in his final act. It has to be determined whether this represents an heroic act and the terms of heroism which can be applied to Michael's suicide at the end of the novel.

In a process which begins early in the novel, Michael's obsessive nature comes to mark a separation between his old and new identities and to supplant the ordinary world with the fantasy world. Early in The Lime Twig Michael has a vision of "Rock Castle" standing in the midst of his sitting room, an image which depicts the usurpation of the old life's domesticity. As Michael dwells on this image, its destructive capacity emerges as the horse of Michael's fantasy "raises one shadowed hoof on the end of a silver thread of foreleg and drives down the hoof to splinter in a single crash one plank of that empty Dreary Station floor" (33, see also 39 for a repetition and strengthening of this image). As yet, Michael's flat is intact, as is his old life, with only the threat of destruction;

but this image anticipates the actual obliteration, not of the flat, but of everything in it (102) after the nightmare has assumed control. The vision of Michael's fantasy horse as a potential agent of violent ruin reveals Michael's subconscious willingness for the total sacrifice of the old self--his past life and values, even Margaret (34)--for the sake of his fantasy. However, as yet, Michael's fantasy world and his old life seem compatible; as the image of the horse in the sitting room implied compatibility, however tenuous or threatening it might be. At least, Michael is still able to enforce his old identity in the face of his fantasy. In the van, Michael experiences a sickening sensation whenever he feels the thump of the horse against the metal side of the van. The sound and feel of the swaying horse ("his horse") represent his fantasy intruding on his old consciousness; he recalls this commitment to his old identity, and he finally advises Hencher to drop him off at his flat (55).

Although Michael's request to Hencher represents a temporary reassertion of his old identity, two events quickly follow which serve to widen the chasm between the new and old identities. Hencher, who has been from the start the individual who links together the ordinary and the fantasy worlds for Banks (and his two identities), is kicked to death by "Rock Castle," and, as a result, Banks realizes that "for himself there will be no cod or beef at six, no kissing her at six, no going home" (67). This incident--the first death--also marks the beginning of the transition from fantasy into nightmare. Hencher is killed at the end of Chapter 1, and in Chapter 2 Michael's fantasy becomes complicated by the intervention of underworld characters--Larry, Sparrow, Thick and their women, one of whom accompanies Margaret on the train to Aldington. As we learn in the subsequent chapter, Margaret is held captive and not permitted to see Michael while Michael

equally becomes a prisoner of his erotic desires and dreams; he becomes overwhelmed by his fantasy and the possibilities he perceives for fulfillment and gratification. By this time Michael has relinquished all control of his fantasy and is the willing subject of Larry's manipulations, yet he scarcely seems aware of this. Even after he encounters the dead Cowles in the Baths and realizes the potential for violence and death which lurk beneath the surface of the fantasy world, Michael still has faith in his new identity and in Sybilline's feelings for him. In his sexual exploits with the widow, Sybilline and Annie (the last is his neighbour, transformed from her identity in Michael's old world to become a prostitute figure in his new one), Michael strives toward the god-like status of Larry:

. . . there was the perfect nose, the black hair plastered into place, the brass knuckles shining on the enormous hand, and the eyes, the eyes devoid of irises . . . he was cock of this house (157-8).

Michael's fantasy is a fantasy controlled by others, and it is prevented from becoming nightmare for him at this time only by his absence of self-awareness; with the recognition of the falsity of his new identity come depression, disillusionment and guilt.

Two scenes in particular portray the collapse of the old identity and the convergence of fantasy on nightmare--two simultaneous processes that Michael and his world undergo: the extended bath house scene in Chapter 5 and a brief section in Chapter 4 which relates an incident from the omniscient viewpoint in which Michael is not actually involved. This is the scene in which Michael's old identity is eradicated completely from the outer world by the systematic demolition and removal of every article in the Banks' flat. The perspective from which this scene is viewed suggests Michael's total inability to perceive how his true identity is being destroyed; it also conveys the emptiness of his new identity. The emptiness of the

flat after Thick and Sparrow have been through it is parallel to the emptiness of Michael's new or false identity after the destruction of the old one:

Bare walls, bare floors, four empty rooms containing no scrap of paper, no figured piece of jewelry or elastic garment, no handwriting specimen by which the identity of the former occupants could be known (102).

The Baths become a metaphor for the self stripped of its identity where everyone is reduced to "anonymity" (104). In a sense, Cowles' death in the bath house marks a further intensification of Michael's fantasy into nightmare. In the earlier fog scene, Cowles' materialization heralds the realization of the fantasy, and "Rock Castle" himself then appears; Cowles' second materialization out of the steam is that of a bloodied corpse and suggests the death of the fantasy and the beginnings of nightmare for Michael. And as the horse "Rock Castle" materializes out of the fog to represent the fleshly physical manifestation of Michael's fantasy, so now Larry, Sparrow and Thick materialize to become literal embodiments of the nightmare world Michael has called into being (115). The steam baths themselves are described in hellish terms as a place of punishment and torture: "He breathed--and tasted, smelled the vapors filling the lung, the eye, the ear. So many clouds of it, so thick that the tin-sheeted walls were gone and only a lower world of turning and crawling and groaning men remained" (112). The bath house is, in fact, a place of retribution with Larry, Thick and Sparrow the satanic agents and Cowles, who "had had his own kill oncê" (116), now the victim. Cowles is like others in this and other Hawkes novels who are both victim and victimizer; this ultimate unity is the consequence of living in a universe where there can be no guarantee of survival, where chance and the laws of nature combine with the human need to exploit.



and control to determine the outcome of one's existence.

"Something They Couldn't Show in Films"

Margaret undergoes a similar process to Michael's with respect to her identity, though it is less complete with her. Margaret has no concrete fantasy to call into being except repressed sexual fantasies which emerge in her beatings from Thick and her rape by Larry; but, she is equally drawn into the nightmare world through Michael. Margaret commits herself entirely to the world of everyday reality and to her role within this world as "Banks' wife by the law" (70): "She was a girl with a band on her finger and poor handwriting, and there was no other world for her" (69-70). Unlike Michael, who is willing to sacrifice his wife along with his old identity for the sake of his fantasy, Margaret is capable of self-sacrifice "for Michael's sake":

. . . if the men ever did get hold of her and go at her with their truncheons or knives or knuckles, she would still be merely Margaret with a dress and a brown shoe, still be only a girl of twenty-five with a deep wave in her hair (70).

Not only is her identity fixed and defined, but she does prove able to retain it when the words above come true, and she suffers the blows of Thick's truncheon and the cuts from his knife; unlike Michael, Margaret never becomes other than she is.

The nightmare world of captivity and beating is so remote from the prosaic reality of her previous existence that she can only come to terms with it by comparing it to the world of "films"--her only escape from "reality"--but admitting that in some way, it surpasses it. Her response largely typifies one who believes in a conventional moral order; because she is no longer in a world where morality has any meaning, she struggles

unsuccessfully to appreciate the moral terms of her predicament:

She knew there was an enormous penalty for what they had done to her--but she could not conceive of that, did not require that (125-6);

Later, lying strapped to the bed, she told herself it was what she might have expected: it was something done to abducted girls, that's all (126);

--and no matter how much she accepted she knew it now: something they couldn't show in films. What a sight if they flashed this view of herself on the screen of the old Victoria Hall where she had seen a few pictures with Michael. What a view of shame. She had always dressed in more modest brown, bought the more modest cod, prayed for modesty, desired it (129-30).

Such passages and many others, refute critical comment which sees the beatings of Margaret as a demonstration of Hawkes' propensity towards violence for its own sake. Both the descriptions of the beatings themselves and Margaret's response to them are necessary because, in the former, Hawkes conveys the meaningful gap between the nightmare world and the prosaic world and, through the latter, he gives us Margaret's attempts to close this gap. Margaret gropes for some kind of understanding of what is happening to her as she attempts to relate what she is undergoing to some experience in the past. Among the confused sensations and contrary recollections she remembers herself as a girl (126), recalls what she read or saw (126, 129) or heard someone relate of an injury (130).

These attempts to reconstruct on the basis of experience ultimately fail because Margaret does not abandon her moral view of the world. What bothers her is not the sense that evil and good have been confused but the sense that the scales of right and wrong are not weighted properly. Even as Thick intentionally cuts her wrists, she admonishes him as if for his carelessness (137). His behaviour, she feels, is not evil, but simply wrong. It is true of The Lime Twig as of The Beetle Leg, however, that we

are in an amoral universe in which, because the reader lives in a world of right and wrong (though the distinctions may be blurred), moral order actually seems reversed. In The Lime Twig there exist no absolutes of right and wrong. Nor does evil triumph in the novel; it merely survives longer than good.

Michael's old identity becomes lost as his new one gradually supplants it. But, in retaining her view of the world and reasserting her identity through repeated acts of the memory, Margaret never loses hers in spite of efforts to make her surrender it. When she arrives in Aldington under the guardianship of Little Dora, she is taken to a large, white room and forced into "a white shapeless gown" (83). In addition, all her clothing is burned along with her identification card (84). Later on, Sparrow and Thick dispose of all of both her and Michael's belongings from the flat (100-01). In spite of this attempt to rob her of her outer being, Margaret manages to steal a dress and escape, at which time Michael catches a fleeting glimpse of her (167); however, she is soon recaptured, put again in a white gown and, this time, physically and painfully bound to the bedpost (125) where she becomes the victim of two beatings and a slashing by Thick and a rape by Larry.

The chapter which portrays her intense physical suffering is framed by conversation referring to Michael's sexual entertainment with Sybilline (122, 140). Certainly, Chapter 7 which chronicles Michael's sexual exploits, does much to undercut any sympathy we may have been feeling for him. Yet it is necessary in order to convey the extent and scope of Michael's deluded image of himself and to prepare the way for the reversal which occurs in which Michael realizes both the falseness of his new identity and the nightmare existence he has created for himself and others.

Eventually, Michael's recognition converges with Margaret's sense of being irreparably wronged, and both escape the nightmare world through death. Convergence is suggested through the parallel images of the oven tits which both Michael and Margaret hear in their deepest moments of isolated despair. Margaret's bird and its "mate" whom Michael hears become symbols for the entrapment of self in the nightmare world. Both Michael and Margaret identify with the bird, and the scene from the outer world has correlatives with the inner ones of the characters. Margaret's recognition is largely unconscious, while Michael's is more explicit as he realizes that "Even two oven tits may be snared and separated in such a dawn" (159). Margaret's bird makes "no attempt to disguise the mood, the pallidness, which later it would affect to conceal in liveliness and muted song" (135). As Margaret and Michael lie in their respective rooms it is roughly dawn, and the nightmare existence is ebbing into the light of reality. As the outer world asserts its supremacy it will "conceal" by the routine of daily existence the nightmare world, but it will not erase it. It is only now--the metaphoric dawn--when nightmare and "reality" are interfused--that some form of recognition becomes possible.

For Margaret there is only death; but Michael's death is actively pursued rather than passively suffered. Critics of The Lime Twig invariably focus closely on the meaning of the ending and the nature of Michael's act of throwing himself in front of the oncoming "Rock Castle." Some critics find the ending ironic; for example, Marcus Klein believes that the ending only "redeems" "the landscape of 'Dreary Station' with which the novel begins."<sup>9</sup> At the other extreme is Robert I. Edenbaum who finds the ending "unambiguously triumphant."<sup>10</sup> Although there is undoubtedly some ambiguity, not in the meaning of Michael's act, but in its motivation, the latter

estimate is more accurate. Michael is not reasserting his old identity by his suicide, so he is not redeeming the landscape with which the novel opens. He now possesses an awareness he did not previously have; he is neither the naive, self-centred protagonist he was at the beginning, nor does he now aspire to be like Larry. There is only one identity left open to him if he is to have an identity at all. He now has the opportunity to end the control others have had in his life and in determining his identity. He chooses to take that opportunity rather than accept his function as a passive, weak individual who lacks control of his own life. In throwing himself in front of the oncoming horse, Michael is destroying his fantasy-nightmare at the moment of its near completion. In one sense it represents an assertion not of his old identity but of an heroic new one, as he renounces the falseness of the identity which is founded on his admiration for Larry. As he begins to run he whispers the words "Margaret, Margaret" (168-9), and the description of his run echoes his breathless determination as the fatalistic convergence of racing man and horse approaches. Significantly, one passage reads as if ~~it~~ were describing a prison break:

Someone fired at him from behind a tree and he began to trot, shoes landing softly, irregularly on the dirt. The tower above the stands was a little Swiss hut in the sky; a fence post was painted black; he heard a siren and saw a dove bursting with air on a bough (170).

Michael's suicide may propose an existential solution to the problem of identity. For, in this novel, unlike previous ones, Hawkes has his central character assert himself by what seems to be a self-defining action in the outer world. "Pyrrhic" victories, in which one refuses ultimately to sacrifice one's integrity, where survival or living is a lesser concern than a particular way of living, tend to be the mark of some existential and tragic writing.

Yet perhaps Hawkes is right for pointing towards a comic interpretation of the ending, although he seems to view it as comic for peculiar reasons: "When Michael is killed the whole world collapses with him; and comically--that is, the race track is littered with the bodies of the fallen jockeys and horses."<sup>11</sup> This in itself is not comedy nor does Hawkes afford us with an extensive description of the track "littered with bodies"; the physical state of the track and the victims of Michael's dramatic suicide are passed over, and we are given a glimpse of the hasty exit of those whose corrupt dreams of lime groves are entangled with the injured and dying on the track. Everything about the race is fixed, even the crowd (166), and one recognizes the hidden but familiar metaphor of life as a game in which the odds are stacked against one. In dying, Michael ensures that evil is at least temporarily defeated and, in literature, the defeat of evil does, indeed, declare the presence of comedy; the little man's triumph over people or forces larger than himself represents a comic pattern in literature. (Hawkes is to use this pattern more explicitly in Second Skin.) Also, the comic conception of character is retained in the ending. Michael sees as hopeless his quests to be equal or superior to Larry and to win Sybilline's love and admiration; he watches Sybilline in the crowd and sees that she never looks his way (166). Realizing that he has set up a false image of himself and that there is nothing now with which to replace this false self, Michael is "himself fagged and tasteless as the bird on the sick bough" (159). The ending suggests that Hawkes aimed at a paradoxical balance. As one who is "small, yet beyond elimination" (170), Michael refuses to conform to the role required of him. Michael stands poised between Hawkes' early, anonymous characters and the strongly defined Skipper and Cyril who forge new worlds for themselves, and who

possess the artistic potential to alter the physical world to make it conform to their own visionary demands.

## END NOTES - CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>[John Enck], "John Hawkes: An Interview," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 6(1965), 150.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>John Hawkes, The Lime Twig, introd. Leslie A. Fiedler (New York: New Directions, 1961), p. 123. All further references to this edition will appear in the text.

<sup>4</sup>Hencher's name, with its resemblance to "henchman," suggests his unintentional double function in the novel. A henchman is a "squire, or page of honour to a prince or great man" (O.E.D.) and, in an ironic sense, this definition is applicable, for Banks comes to see himself as a great man. But the word also has strong negative connotations, suggesting one who carries out the instructions of a powerful second party: a strong-man or "heavyweight." Hencher unwittingly becomes this as well.

<sup>5</sup>In this way, Hencher becomes a member of one of the unnatural "families" that populate Hawkes' fiction--families not held together so much by traditional bonds of love or loyalty as by obsessive, sometimes parasitic interests and self-concerns.

<sup>6</sup>Patrick O'Donnell, John Hawkes (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 77.

<sup>7</sup>[Enck], 151.

<sup>8</sup>"Rock Castle" is an appropriate name for the horse of Banks' fantasy, for castles are the stuff of fairy tales and enchantment; in addition, "rock," in England, is one of the most popular forms of candy. Graham Greene uses Brighton Rock as the title of his novel (to which The Lime Twig is often compared) to conjure up ironically the image of a seaside resort where fantasy prevails on the surface, and terror beneath it.

<sup>9</sup>Marcus Klein, "John Hawkes' Experimental Compositions," in Surfiction: Fiction Now . . . and Tomorrow, ed. Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1981), p. 212.

<sup>10</sup>Robert I. Edenbaum, "John Hawkes: The Lime Twig and Other Tenuous Horrors," The Massachusetts Review, 7(1966), 475.

<sup>11</sup>[Enck], 154. To emphasize the comic aspects of the novel may have been one reason why Hawkes chose to name his protagonist after the characters (father and son) in Mary Poppins. The fantasy world of Mary Poppins has several correlatives with the fantasy-nightmare of The Lime Twig, in fact. When the fantasy is at its zenith in Mary Poppins, the nightmare terrifyingly prevails in The Lime Twig through the image of the horse race in both works--the actual race in The Lime Twig where Michael is trampled by the horse (narrated in seeming slow-motion) and the hunt in Mary Poppins where the fox is saved from being



trampled (in which animation in the movie version signals the complete departure from reality). The divergent consequences of the "hunted ones"--the potential victims--reflect the dominance of either fantasy or nightmare in the respective works. The relationship between fantasy and reality is a theme the two works--otherwise so different--have in common.

"THIS SCHIZOPHRENIC FLESH": THE DUALISTIC  
WORLD OF SECOND SKIN

Second Skin is the first in a succession of four first-person narratives in which the narrator and central character attempts to justify his life and actions both to the reader and himself. In works prior to Second Skin, Hawkes was gradually working towards a fully realized fictional voice that would exhibit many of the qualities of authorial control expressed by Hawkes himself in his function as artistic consciousness. In The Cannibal, The Beetle Leg and The Lime Twig, first-person narration is used on a limited scale; but, importantly, those who speak in the first-person in these novels are figures who seek a form of control over others within the novel. From the beginning, use of this type of narration in Hawkes is associated with control.

From Second Skin through Travesty, the first-person narrators attempt to establish a particular relationship with the reader, and control extends to the narrator's attitude toward the reader as well as other characters. However, implicit in a consideration of the narrator-reader relationship in Hawkes is our determination of the existence of irony and our attendant feelings regarding the narrator's reliability.<sup>1</sup> In the narrator-reader relationship we are concerned, among other factors, with the narrator's rhetorical capacity, and his ability to use it to sway our judgments. But while we are led through irony and, perhaps, through various kinds of contradictory testimony, to judge the narrator's actions, we are undoubtedly being influenced by his lyricism, his poetic ability to render his visionary

world, and the sincerity which underlies this determination to set his world before us. First-person narration reflects the individual's ordering capacity; it becomes a particular manifestation of the ordering powers of the artist-figure. Skipper reorders his<sup>1</sup> past in such a way that allows him to create out of a chaotic past a new, revitalized present and future order, more in harmony with the values of the self. This reordering process is expressed to the reader through the act of composition.

Second Skin also represents Hawkes' deliberate attempt to write a work which would be immediately recognized as comic, and critics in general have tended to stress elements relating to Skipper's comical inadequacies, such as his naivete and lack of awareness. They have been conscious, as well, of the larger comic pattern at work in Second Skin, as many have emphasized the affirmative qualities of the work. Such a pattern emerges, in part, through allusions to The Tempest which, according to Ronald Wallace, "establish the comic norms on which the novel is based."<sup>2</sup>

Skipper is Hawkes' first-character who is able to create a mythos in which his beliefs and values are firmly grounded; he creates an identity for himself which is intensified by mythic and historical allusions and by metaphoric expression. Such devices help to secure Skipper in the world which he creates for himself as Hawkes' first visionary artist.

Skipper moves through a world of hell toward a vision of paradise, paralleling a Dantesque pattern of personal salvation. Whether Skipper actually attains salvation is a crucial issue to be considered here. From a world of instability and pain, Skipper comes to experience at the end of his journey "the still voice" presiding over a world of permanence: "The sun in the evening. The moon at dawn."<sup>3</sup> The act of composition becomes a kind of equivalent to Dante's Purgatory, for it encompasses both

the pain of Skipper's past and the promise of his future on the paradisaical wandering isle. Through the purgatorial act of writing, Skipper is able to confront a past in which he has often proved inadequate; he comes to consider himself an "accomplice" in the deaths of his father and daughter. Compelled to relive his past, Skipper illustrates to the reader that he considers it an essential part of the "naked history" he presents. His vision is balanced by the horrors he depicts in the past as well as by the pleasures and satisfactions which sustain life on the wandering isle.

The protagonist of Second Skin, then, is engaged in a process in which he moves from a nightmare world to a fantasy world--a reverse movement from that of Michael Banks. Like Michael, Skipper is a "little man" who is able to assert himself in his battle against larger forces which oppose and oppress him; yet Skipper survives as a result of his determined efforts. Unlike Michael, Skipper never loses or changes his identity despite the attempts of others to undermine or destroy that identity. By his survival, Skipper achieves what he terms a "victory" over evil and establishes the maxim that "virtue always wins" (98). On one level, Second Skin is a lyrical testimony to the power of the mind to transcend a world of cruelty. It captures the extremes of existence: the savage and the soothing, the raw end of evil and viciousness and the refinements of the ideal and beautiful. And Skipper is Hawkes' first idealist, only too willing to sacrifice the physical aspect of being to the spiritual values of love, devotion, and tolerance. As an idealist, Skipper wants to recast reality in the image of his ideals; Skipper attempts to transform reality to accommodate a subjective vision.

Skipper's doctrine has affinities with Christian Idealism as, in the opening pages, Skipper defines his great capacity for love and suffering;

and Skipper describes himself as "the aggressive personification of serenity, the eternal forward drift or handsome locomotion of peace itself . . . a tiger" (3). Forgiving his enemies (2), Skipper attempts to "neutralize" the world's "poison" with his "unblemished flesh" (5) while smiling the "suffering smile" of "self-sacrifice" (15, 61). The Christ allusions take on more significance in relation to his father's profession as a mortician. Skipper's father becomes "death himself" (161), and Skipper is the "redeemer" of that profession (47), countering the "seeds of death" expelled from the explosion in the bathroom during his father's suicide by the "seeds of life" used to artificially inseminate cows on the tropical island. In this sense, Skipper is a comic or parodic New Testament Christ to his Jehovah-like father with his "morbid" vocation. In his more specific quest to prevent his daughter's (Cassandra's) death, Skipper is unsuccessful. The most he can do is "neutralize" evil by assuring that there is something to balance it. His efforts to assert the power of love, inadequate as they are, may indicate the presence of this force in a world where, consequently, the dominance of evil cannot be considered as complete or total. But is Skipper's "triumph" in fact a spiritual victory or a practical defeat? Do we measure and judge Skipper in light of his determined efforts to survive evil or by his failure to preserve Cassandra's life--to make any meaningful impact on the world of evil and death? The question amounts to determining the correct evaluative response to Hawkes' most complex and problematic character to this point in his writing.

In Second Skin, Hawkes is concerned with establishing a comic balance between judgment and sympathy; comedy functions in part as a means to examine and test Skipper's capacity as a visionary artist, as succeeding novels also strive to do. Hawkes has often insisted that the comic impulse is

composed of two somewhat contradictory strains, and it is apparent in Second Skin that these strains are fused in a way not hitherto seen in his fiction. Skipper may be dismissed as a character unworthy of respect, as a bungler, or a hopeless innocent, a man unequipped to deal with the everyday. But many critics view Skipper in another, more favourable light: they see his actions as affirmative, even heroic, especially when contrasted with many of those who surround him, including his wife, father and daughter, all of whom eventually succumb to their nihilistic impulses and choose death over life.<sup>4</sup>

To approach questions relating to Skipper's "success" or "failure" within the novel we need more than a simple measure of "success." We will have to admit, for one thing, the existence of a basic dualism in Second Skin. This, like all of Hawkes' novels, is heavily rooted in the physical dimension. Hawkes is interested in not only how the mind conceives but also how the body expresses mental states; his is a concern with, an intense responsiveness to, the physical being:

Awake and prone in my seat next to the window, all my body fat, still, spread solid in the curvature of my Greyhound seat. And yet in my back, elbows, neck, calves, buttocks, I felt the very motion of our adventure (29).

Skipper's sheer physicality is a continual source of the reader's comic pleasure; (the same is true with the narrators in the two novels which follow Second Skin.) There is something terribly comic in the image of (sometimes naked) elephantine figures sporting amid natural scenes, just as there is today in Rubens' ponderous mythological figures striking delicate poses. Fat, bald and slow-moving, Skipper is, nonetheless, capable of being flattered. When, in the end, he speaks of his "victory over Cassandra too, since there are always faces, strange or familiar, young

or old, waiting to kiss me in the dark" (205, 50), he is doubtlessly recalling Cassandra's remark after the three soldiers have kissed her: "Nobody wants to kiss you, Skipper" (43).

Skipper, however, demonstrates the ability to make of the physical being a means of transmitting or expressing deeper spiritual truths about the self. For example, on his "regal carriage" (5), Skipper comments:

Since childhood I have walked into a room, or out, out into the shadowed greens or dangerous sand lots of the world, holding my chin lifted, my lips pleasantly curved and my eye round, measuring my steps so that they would never falter and keeping my hands in motion at my side, wishing never to appear intimidated by the death of my parents, wishing never to conceal the shame which I thought had left its clear and rancid mark on my breast. Even today I take these same slow-paced, deliberate, impervious footsteps, using the balls of my feet in proud and sensual fashion, driving a constant rhythm and lightheartedness and a certain confidence into my stride through the uninhibited and, I might say, powerful swinging of my hips. Of course there are those who laugh. But others, like Sonny, recognize my need, my purpose, my strength and grace. Always my strength and grace (3).

On the tropical island, where the physical self becomes truly liberated, Skipper again draws attention to the "manner of his walking" which in other places has encouraged laughter and "maliciousness" (3): "Cassandra is gone but I am wrapped in wind, walk always--from the hips, from the hips--through the thick entangled currents of this serpentine wind" (46); "I swayed, I swung myself from side to side" (164-5). One of the results of liberating the physical self is the absence of such "maliciousness."

That Skipper's walk is rather unabashedly feminine is consistent with its being an assertion of the spiritual self. The world that Skipper yearns for, the ideal or visionary world that he wills into existence, is associated with female life. On the other hand, the leader of "the Kissin' Bandits" belongs to the real world where survival and self-gratification are the main concerns. His walk, thoroughly masculine,

contrasts with Skipper's: "easy gait, eyes down watching for the enemy, back and shoulders loose and buttocks hard, fierce, inseparable, complementary, all his walking done with the buttocks alone" (41). Where personal survival is uppermost and the forms of life work for gratification of the instincts, we are in the real world where masculine images abound. In Second Skin, the world of everyday reality is the nightmare world and the world where the ideal appears as an obtainable objective is the fantasy world.

Early in Second Skin both the nightmare and fantasy worlds are linked to images that Skipper has of his father and mother, respectively, and the associations remain tied to gender. The nightmare world is marked by a preponderance of male images, symbols and references, while the fantasy world is anchored, as it were, by its reliance on feminine values and virtues also presented through related clusters of images and references feminine in essence.

In "Naming Names," Skipper recalls his mother, Mildred, a character of little importance to the actual story he is to tell but who, in a sustaining role, was "the vague consoling spirit behind the terrible seasons of this life when unlikely accidents, tabloid adventures, shocking episodes, surrounded a solitary and wistful heart" (5). His mother, and his vision of her death console him, for they are associated with the ideal and the life of the imagination. From this vision emerges the transforming power of visionary art in the novel, while from the vision of his father's death, the power of anti-art emerges as the opposing force.

Skipper's recollection of his mother is incomplete in its details, and she never emerges from the visionary world where Skipper places her "with most of her features indistinct" (5) ". . . silent . . . at a great



distance off" (6). A recreation partly of memory and partly of imagination, like the story Skipper tells us, Mildred is described abstractly as resembling "a gifted angel in a dreamer's cemetery" (7); she wears white dress, hat and gloves to his father's perpetual black, and is conceived of in an attitude of prayer. In Skipper's vision of his mother's death, similar images recur. The angelic aspect is created through references to stillness, silence, his mother's serenity, and her smile of acceptance, and also through the use of colour. The most prominent colour is, once again, white, which is mentioned seven times here. The driver of the car in Skipper's vision is wrapped in a black muffler which disguises his face, symbolically rendering the death figure unreal and ambiguous--in contrast to the way death appears to an undertaker's son accustomed to the funereal procedure (6) and more sharply contrasted with the way Skipper is confronted face-to-face with death in his father's suicide. The car's horn too is black, but this colour is offset by the fact that Skipper fails to hear the sound it makes. As the car moves away, it is said to resemble a "golden insect," a phrase anticipating the "golden fleas" of the paradisaical setting. Along with the dominance of the colour white, pastel shades of "peach and rose" contribute to the dream-like atmosphere (8).<sup>5</sup>

As "the mortician's muse," Mildred's main function was to welcome visitors "in the parlor, smiling," to attend solicitously to the spiritual needs of the mourners and comfort them while the mortician himself attended to the physical demands of his morbid profession. In a similar way, Skipper's diametrical versions of his parents' deaths enable him to ponder death's complexity: he becomes aware of death simultaneously "as a lurid truth" and "the promise of mystery" (8); he grasps the hard physical fact and the muted spiritual uncertainty of death. But his version of his

mother's death also demonstrates the creative capacity of the individual to overcome or circumvent death through imaginative vision. His vision comes to him, significantly, as he lies in the back of his father's hearse. As he describes his vision, it becomes a kind of comic rebirth where he sits up "like a miniature fat corpse" (7) and, in a blaze of orange, yellow and bright pink light, the casket runners, cobwebs and carpeting vanish and, "I saw her, saw her, after all, in the vision which no catastrophe of my own has ever destroyed or dimmed" (8).

Admitting that the version of his mother's death is "no doubt the product of a slight and romantic fancy," Skipper nonetheless prefers the vision to the reality of his father's death (9). These two "interpretations" of the death experience--the one real and the other imaginary--form the basis for Skipper's perceptual tendencies in Second Skin. The alternatives of perception between sordid reality and elevated vision continue to obsess Skipper in various ways; for example, they effect his perception of his daughter. The question of consciousness itself revolves around the potentialities of the real and the visionary for satisfying his quest for understanding or knowledge; importantly, Skipper's qualities as Hawkes' first visionary artist arise out of his need to assert and imaginatively extend the vision of his mother's death.

At the same time that Skipper's vision of his mother's death extends and enriches the concept of death, it also reduces it in the sense that it becomes a little less real; too great a reliance on the vision as a substitute for reality could indicate not a way for the creative self to reshape experience but to avoid it. It has to be decided finally whether Skipper's embrace of the fantasy world is a product of delusion (whether it actually exists) or of exclusion (whether he is simply retreating from

the "real" or nightmare world as the vision of his mother's death suggests in part), or whether it represents a true reshaping of "reality." Is Skipper a visionary artist who imaginatively transcends the real, or does he simply seek to deny or avoid it?

By the time Skipper has proceeded very far in his depiction of scenes from the nightmare world, he makes us aware that there is something with which to balance it:

. . . it is time to say that it is Catalina Kate who keeps the hammock filled with flowers for me . . . here I mention my triumph, here I reveal myself and choose to step from behind the scenes of my naked history, resorting to this strategy from need but also with a certain obvious pride, self-satisfaction, since now I anticipate prolonged consideration of Miranda. I would be unable to think of her for very long unless I made it clear that my triumph is over Miranda most of all, and that I survive her into this very moment. . . (46, 48).

From this point on, we are brought back to the wandering isle from a past which Skipper cannot relate whole without the respite of the present. The structural movement of The Lime Twig is one of a gradual intensification of the nightmare, but Second Skin's rhythmical movement of alternating scenes enables us to see the two "worlds" of the novel in contrast; sordid reality and elevated vision achieve respective preeminence in "the erratic flight of the hummingbird." The world where anti-artistic forces prevail contrasts with the world where Skipper's artistic vision may be realized. When we speak of "worlds" in Second Skin we can make more than metaphoric use of the word, for the nightmare that Skipper undergoes and the fantasy that he attains become localized in the sense that each is associated with a particular island. The island in the Northern Hemisphere which Miranda inhabits is representative of the values of a corruptive society, a society which rejects vision and discards ideals, choosing instead the alternatives of indifference and cynicism in its relations with others. The Atlantic island abounds in images from the masculine world which serve collectively

to present the brutality of existence, self-gratification and aggressive sexuality--in effect, a whole range of regressive values and a spectrum of immoral or amoral behaviour which illustrate within a constrictive sphere the condition of the contemporary Western World. By contrast, the island in the Southern Hemisphere, where Skipper lives an ideal life with Catalina Kate and Sonny, reflects a society far less representative of modern culture. Though this society is also centered on the instinctual being, it tempers this through the presence of ideals, innocence and a form of spiritual awareness or faith. Images from the feminine world convey the peacefulness of life, sexual freedom or ease as well as imaginative freedom; love and faith determine and direct a morality which is altruistic as well as self-serving. The relation of this hypothetical society to Western society is described by Lucy Frost, who explains that "a highly sophisticated civilization is [n]ever likely to exist here . . . but only in a post-cultural environment where the cultural forms inherited from Europe and existing there and in the United States have ceased operating altogether."<sup>6</sup>

The two islands, then, representing contrary modes of life, also embody contrary modes of perceiving and experiencing life and represent extensions of the divergent ways presented in the chapter "Naming Names" for incorporating experience; in one view there is a total acceptance of the "real," immediate or concrete, life lived without guiding values or ideals, with survival and instinctual self-satisfaction uppermost: Skipper's morality urges him to reject such a way of life, but the evidence of Skipper's failure to accommodate the pressures of this life to his individuality and his specific failure to prevent Cassandra from being a victim of such an existence are significant failures. Inherent in them is his profound inability to substitute an alternate experiential mode which will

prove viable under the conditions which he finds in this life. To attain his fantasy world, Skipper has to find sanctuary in a remote, primitive island. The point seems to be that while the fantasy world is attainable, it is so only under optimum conditions where love and faith are allowed to operate; in the nightmare world, vision is never permitted to fuse with everyday reality. The imaginative potential may exist for such a fusion, however, and in its so doing utopia becomes, at least, a contemplative possibility within the individual consciousness:

### Two Triangles

From the presentation of the two opposing "interpretations" of death in "Naming Names," the novel is concerned with expressing elements of the nightmare and fantasy worlds; Second Skin, particularly those sections which take place on the two islands, is structurally conceived to set up oppositions, dualities, parallels and juxtapositions in relating the extremities of contrary "worlds."

Among the parallels which exist are those of character. On the two islands character groupings balance each other, but in this symmetrical arrangement reversals of roles reveal the antithetical pattern at work. The assembly of minor characters from both islands (all of whom are native islanders) reflect the dominance of either the male or female image. The minor characters from the Atlantic island are male--Captain Red and his degenerate sons, Jomo and Bub--while they are female on the tropical island--Sister Josie and Big Bertha. On each island there are three major characters, forming two triangles (see Appendix A): the triangle of Skipper, Cassandra and Miranda is balanced by one in which Skipper, Kate and Sonny occupy corresponding positions. The relationships in which Skipper is involved

demand closer examination--first, to point out how the corresponding relationships balance or oppose each other and, second, to determine, as far as Skipper's narrative permits, the dynamics of each relationship and how this bears on Skipper's quest for understanding, his perceptual capacity and scope for interpreting experience.

With both his daughter, Cassandra, and Catalina Kate, Skipper has a dual relationship: that of father-lover. But with Cassandra his relationship is only implicitly so as, not surprisingly, he never openly confesses to an incestuous urge; but, as he seems at least generally honest in recording his conscious thoughts, it is inevitable that some of the more or less subconscious content would reach consciousness, perhaps partly disguised by the action of an agent of consciousness, such as the superego. For example, as Skipper and Cassandra are dancing in a Chinatown cafe, he legitimizes his feelings by referring to them as "paternal." In a thought which is left incomplete, he wishes he could relinquish his identity as her father to give her the love she needs:

I wished all at once to abandon rank, insignia, medal, bald head, good nature, everything, if only I might become for a moment an anonymous sea man second class, lanky and far from home and dancing with this girl, but felt instead the loose sailors pressing against us (11).

Skipper's description, at times, suggests that he feels some guilt in this relationship which he cannot openly acknowledge. He speaks of "the shame and longing of my paternal sentiment" which lead him "flushed and bumbling" to feel "her knee, her hip, once more her breasts" (11), to blush, to sigh, to blush once more, to hold her "ringless" hand (12-14), and to remove his Good Conduct Medal and pin it on Cassandra with the revealing words: "she the one who deserved it; I, never" (13). Skipper's behaviour here resembles that of the bashful suitor with questionable intentions.

Cassandra herself at times appears to echo the theme of latent incest. Disillusioned by her husband's flight, Cassandra is willing, to some extent, early in the novel, to accommodate Skipper's sexual claim on her. She even thinks of him as her "blind date" and begs him not to "jilt" her--a claim he appears to take too literally. The tattooing rite which Skipper undergoes--where the name of Fernandez is engraved on his chest--is described partly in terms of a sexual assault, at the peak of which he recalls Tremlow's "abomination" (19)--another assault which in its confused and entangled imagery has strong sexual connotations. Cassandra explains to the tattooer that "My boy friend is bashful" (16). "'My boy friend,'" she says later, "'My boy friend would like to have this name printed indelibly on his chest. Print it over his heart, please'" (16-17). Suggestive of a sado-masochistic encounter, the tattooing rite is characterized as Cassandra's "sadistic fantasy" (18), while it becomes Skipper's "exquisite torture" (19).

In his relationship with Catalina Kate the roles tend to be reversed; that is, he defines himself more in terms of a lover than father figure: in the first reference to Catalina Kate, aside from a metaphoric earlier one, he says, "Here I have only to drop my trousers . . . to awaken paradise itself, awaken it with the sympathetic sound of Catalina Kate's soft laughter" (46). But, as in the relationship with Cassandra, it is the repressed or secondary role which may actually be the more meaningful one. He thinks of himself basically as Kate's lover, but in some respects he behaves more like a father to Kate than to Cassandra. Obviously, he is the dominant one in the relationship with Kate, and he constitutes the island's main authority figure, deciding on the way things are done. He determines, wrongly as it turns out, how the iguana is to be removed from Kate's back, saying "I was in no mood to take advice from Sister Josie and told her

so" (107); he decides where Kate is to have her baby and how to wash it when it is born (205); similarly, he dictates to Kate on her receiving Sonny's advances: "'Hugging ~~is~~ all-right, Kate,' I thought to say, 'but nothing more, Kate, do you understand?'" (169). He provides few, if any, examples of actual love-making with Kate, but the implication is that Kate disobeys his stricture to refrain from "anything more" with Sonny, for as Skipper falls off to sleep he sees Kate rinsing out Sonny's drawers in a spring and hanging them on a limb. When he awakes, he notes that Kate is awake (he thinks they awoke together) "leaning over Sonny and looking down at me" (169). Although, in this scene, Skipper says Sonny "sighed for Bertha" he does not reach for her, but rather, for Kate (169); and, despite his perhaps real indifference as to whether Kate's child is his or Sonny's, his innocent response once the child is born may indicate a need to repress the realization that he is not its biological father. Although the baby is "three times as black" as Kate's breast (209), it still provokes his question: "'Who do you think it looks like, Kate? Sonny or me?'" Subconsciously though, he may have come to terms with the fact for, in a comment in which the dual roles of authority and lover are combined, he says "'We can start you off on another little baby in a few weeks. Would you like that, Kate? But of course you would'" (209). The issue of the baby's father may provoke the further supposition that Skipper is not Cassandra's true father for which, however, beyond Gertrude's rather phenomenal unfaithfulness, he provides no concrete evidence. However, physically and temperamentally, Cassandra and Skipper are opposite types.

Another parallel between Cassandra and Kate is the basis for a further contrast. They both have babies, but while Kate adapts immediately to the mothering role (when Skipper suggests the new pregnancy, Kate replies



by smiling and holding her baby tightly, 209) Skipper speaks of Cassandra's "pretended mothering of Pixie" (59). Skipper, in fact, does much of the real "mothering," particularly on the Atlantic island--preparing Pixie's bottles, feeding her and playing childish games with her.

With the other paired relationships (Skipper-Miranda and Skipper-Sonny) contrasts and inversions are more self-evident. The former relationship is marked by duplicity and faithlessness while Sonny is a loyal and faithful companion to Skipper. Sonny's black skin is paralleled by Miranda's figurative blackness: ". . . old antagonist on a black Atlantic island, there she was--my monster, my Miranda. . . . Now I think of her as my black butterfly" (5). The colour black often recurs in descriptions of Miranda and the Atlantic island; recalling the use of it in the opening chapter in connection with his father's hearse. Cars in Second Skin are often used symbolically to convey psychic states of being; Skipper's father's hearse becomes a reflection of his father himself, and later on Skipper finds in his father the allegorical being "Death" (161). Assigning this colour to Miranda and her surroundings makes the connection clearer between black, and suffering and death. But this connection is forged not only through continual associations; also significant "is that normal human relationships are lost in a dark atmosphere of sadism and pain."<sup>7</sup> Thus, not only do the descriptions of blackness convey a society which is unknowingly in the pursuit of death and self-destruction (Skipper's father was not only a mortician, but he also killed himself), but they suggest the breakdown of "normal" relationships with the substitution of clearly abnormal ones. Skipper's jealous possessiveness toward his daughter comes to prevail in light of any more reasonable alternative; on account of his fierce guardianship, Miranda and others set traps for him, luring him

away from his daughter who clearly, and not surprisingly, resents his interference. Cassandra and Miranda form a relationship, perhaps largely in order to plot against Skipper. At any rate, Skipper is suspicious of them and describes the partnership in terms of a dark collusion:

I began to notice that Cassandra was Miranda's shadow, sweet silent shadow of the big widow in slacks. When Miranda poured herself a drink--tumbler filled to the brim with whiskey--Cassandra put a few drops in the small end of an egg cup and accompanied her. And when Miranda sat in front of the fire to knit, Cassandra was always with her, always kneeling at her feet and holding the yarn. Black yarn. Heavy soft coil of rich black yarn dangling from Cassandra's wrists. Halter on the white wrists. Our slave chains. Between the two of them always the black umbilicus, the endless and maddening absorption in the problems of yarn. It lived in the cave of Miranda's sewing bag--not a black sweater for some lucky devil overseas, nor even a cap for Pixie, but only this black entanglement, their shapeless squid (69-70).

In no extended scene following this one do Cassandra and Skipper appear alone. Skipper futilely and recklessly pursues the image of his "child courtesan" (17) which leads to more and more desperate attempts to detract him from the course. Believing that he is "her guardian, her only defence" (81), Skipper only succeeds in contributing to Cassandra's downfall and eventual death.

Much more is said in the narrative about Miranda than about Sonny, the character who parallels her. In several respects, though, they both typify the island of their habitation. Each embodies or illustrates certain values unique to his/her respective island. In his relationship to Skipper, Sonny exemplifies the values of love (1) and loyalty (21, 131) which, on the tropical island, form the basis for a communal existence, an ideal and harmonious life. The values which Miranda exemplifies are all death related: hatred and disloyalty are uppermost, however--values which promote individual survival and gratification, not group well-being.

The key to Miranda's character is in her prevailing maleness; her

masculinity represents a threat not only to Skipper but to the cycle of life itself; where Miranda is, death and infertility thrive. Her symbolic male qualities combine with negative female ones such as deception and entrapment to personify more than anyone in the novel the nightmare world and its associations with the death cycle.

While Sonny's name helps to define the filial relationship between the former naval officer and mess boy, Skipper explains that Miranda's name signifies the direct reverse from the expected with its "false suggestiveness": "no one could have given a more ugly denial to that heart-breaking and softly fluted name than the tall and treacherous widow" (5). Skipper carries on this note of "false suggestiveness" when he refers to Miranda's island in the chapter heading as "The Gentle Isle." Clearly, in both instances, he is drawing attention to the dangers that lurk beneath initial perception and warning the reader of the inversions which will take place on the island. Order and harmony have been disrupted in this world: a young American war widow spends her time listening to a triumphant German march; Skipper is drawn against his will to the "Peter Poor," the music, Miranda's car, and finally, to the lighthouse; inanimate objects appear to take on a frightening life of their own.

Skipper's initial description of Miranda is of "Shoulders curving and muscular, unbowed" (59), of a "Cleopatra who could row her own barge . . . outrun horses on the beach or knock down pillars of salt" (64). Her voice is deep and masculine (58), and as he sees her a second time she is wearing "a man's white shirt" (62). Finally, as she listens to the loud military strains of the Horst Wessel, she drinks whiskey, pulling at the glass "like a man" (63). It seems as though as Miranda becomes more threatening she actually grows in size--especially as she becomes more

of a sexual threat to Skipper. In this regard, two scenes take place in Miranda's hot rod (another male symbol equated with Miranda). After Skipper is deserted at the Christmas dance, he walks home only to be confronted by Miranda, who lures him into the wrecked hot rod and makes sexual advances towards him. As Skipper is smothered and choked by her scarf, he sees "not a bone to interrupt that mass, no garment to destroy the rise of the greater-than-life-size breasts" (95). Again in the hot rod, during the chase after the black car along the beach, "Miranda was larger and whiter and more Venus-like than ever" (191).

Sexually, Skipper may not be able to come to terms with Miranda, but actually Skipper equates Miranda with a larger and more overwhelming force than sexuality. For Skipper, Miranda is "my monster," and her island is equally "my island world" (55), "my kingdom" (45, 50, 204)--a world of evil which he must confront and survive. Skipper sees Miranda metaphorically as an embodiment of that evil and the world of death. Cassandra's suicide, an act brought about partly by Miranda's machinations, recalls Skipper's father's suicide. As an agent of death she perpetuates the cycle he is trying to end, even though, in the nightmare world, Skipper himself helps to perpetuate the cycle too. In the nightmare worlds of The Lime Twig and Second Skin, a force which intends only "good" can be overturned by the prevailing force of "evil" and can end up serving corrupted ends.

It is important to remember that Skipper conceives of Miranda figuratively, and this explains why particularly in the last two encounters with her, her bigness is emphasized continually. Metaphorically, for him "evil" is winning out and dwarfing the efforts of his tolerance and love. Skipper himself makes us conscious of this process through images of

metamorphoses. When he sees Miranda for the first time from the beach, she says, "'You look like a damn seal. People shoot seals around here'" (59). Similar images of the hunted prey are associated with Skipper's victimization during the school dance. He is lured outside and, as he contemplates a journey to the cemetery where he is told he will meet someone, he comically pictures himself as "six feet and two hundred pounds of expectant and fearless snowshoe rabbit" (86)--the comedy, as it often does, merely serves to underlie Skipper's unawareness of his victimization. Later in this scene, after he is bombarded by snowballs, Skipper likens himself to a stag at bay (88).

Images of victimization and death combine in an early description of Miranda, who beckons Skipper into her widow's parlor. Skipper describes implements in front of her "witches' fire" "for the impaling and roasting of some headless blue turkey," hellish light which "throws hand-forged or handmade engines into relief" and "a coffin-shaped legless duck" with "sightless chips of glass" for eyes (63). In this room also, the spinning wheel is kept, which, with the black yarn, sewing bag and paraphernalia is a symbol of female entrapment and deception.<sup>8</sup>

Not much else about Miranda is portrayed as distinctly feminine. In fact, it may be that Miranda represents more of a masculine threat to Skipper as, in the wrecked car, Skipper feels, "she had mocked me with the beauty of her naked stern, had challenged, aroused, offended me with the blank wall of nudity, and I perceived a cruel motive somewhere" (96). Phallic images abound on the Atlantic island: the two main landmarks (the lighthouse and Crooked Finger Rock) are phallic in nature. Both are seen as threats to Skipper's masculinity, indeed, to his very being. The two hot rods, also, are symbols of male sexuality and, as Skipper sits behind the wheel

of Miranda's orange, white and blue car, he thinks "that in Miranda's eyes I was not the man to win a hot rod race" (192). Accordingly, and for one of the very few times when with Miranda, Skipper assumes an aggressive guise, swerving and gunning the car--he refers to it as "her" --and setting his jaw (192). Otherwise, he is generally Miranda's solicitous servant, lighting her fire, rummaging for her curative powder and warning her to "'Watch out for the asthma'" (76), preparing to come to her rescue if she has an attack; also, he plays Mah Jongg with her. Ironically, Skipper christens the car he uses for pursuit along the beach "Cicisbeo"--the name given to a professed gallant of a married woman.<sup>9</sup> This name may be given simply to bolster his self-image at this point, but it is more applicable to him when, after Cassandra and Fernandez marry, he accompanies the couple on their honeymoon, sitting between his daughter and new son-in-law.

The ruined lighthouse is perceived as a threat in Skipper's two encounters with it. It is almost as if, on drawing near to it, Skipper fears a sexual attack. In fact, the lighthouse seems to be approaching him, not the other way around: "It was not safely in the distance as I had thought, but was upon me . . . that forbidden white tower" (57-8, italics added). The key word here is "safely." When the lighthouse and what it represents remain in the distance there is no danger, for what is "safe" is locked away in the subconscious and is no threat to the conscious self. The word "forbidden" suggests that, once again, the superego is performing its censorious function; "forbidden knowledge" is, after all, to be equated with sexual knowledge and Skipper cannot come to adequate terms with sexual knowledge of himself. Similarly, the second time, he sees "the abandoned white tower . . . coming down the beach to meet me, black cliff and all, in my direction" (196). Like other objects on the island, the lighthouse

is personified. Skipper describes it as having "Black missing tooth for a door" (57), "empty head" (58), "unlighted eye" (196) and "iron gut" (198). The lighthouse embodies Skipper's simultaneous fear of and attraction to his fate as, in a similar way, he feels pulled toward other objects in which he senses the inevitability of his dark destiny. On the one hand, he knows "that I could not escape the lighthouse" (58), yet when he finally prepares to enter it, "I wanted nothing more than to turn my back on it and flee" (196). The lighthouse is a major landmark in the nightmare world with its smashed light emblematic of hope destroyed and shattered ideals; it recalls the destruction of Leevy's light when he is killed in The Cannibal. But, as Skipper views the lighthouse for the first time, he can deal with it without directly confronting its true significance for him. In an effort to reduce his fear of it, he tries to disengage it from the real world, making it part of a fantasy of "princess, poor princess and her tower" (58). This image also foreshadows Cassandra's eventual fate.

As Skipper is unable to prevent the sexual encounter between Jomo and Cassandra in the lighthouse, so he is unable to act to "save" his daughter on the "Peter Poor." Although he is being physically threatened in three respects (he is being hit over the head by Bub with a tire iron, Jomo is steering the boat in such a way as to make him seasick, and he fears the approach of Crooked Finger Rock), it is the approach of Crooked Finger Rock which provides Skipper with the rationale for the paralysis which grips him and prevents him from performing the sort of heroics which he consistently seems incapable of performing. He is unable to shelter Cassandra from the sexual attacks of the AWOL soldiers, unwilling as well to confront the suspicious evidence of mutiny aboard the "Starfish." In times when Skipper should exert his physical self, he cannot do so. On

the day of the impending mutiny, he spends his time helping the chaplain with Mass and reading the New Testament; as his father crouches in the bathroom with a revolver to his head; Skipper helpfully plays his cello until the shot is heard. Sexual assaults or simply "brutal acts," instead of drawing forth a corresponding aggressive response, serve to bring out the spiritual or the fantasizing self.

The approach of the "Peter Poor" to Crooked Finger Rock parallels Skipper's gradual realization of what is taking place. The rock, which is submerged by the sea every one or two seconds, seems to represent the sexual act itself as the rock and waves conjoin in a constant rhythmic pattern imitative of intercourse. Cassandra's and Captain Red's consummation is seen by Skipper against Crooked Finger Rock:

But I saw the rock and heard the bell and Captain Red and Cassandra were posed against the rock itself, in my eye were already on the rock together. . . . So I could only measure the rock and measure Red and wait for the end, wait for the worst (185);

. . . there was nothing to see except Cassandra's small slick wide-eyed white face lit up with the light of Red's enormous candle against the black bottom, the black tideless root, of Crooked Finger Rock (186).

The significance of the lighthouse as a unifying symbol becomes more clearly expressed when it is used as the scene of Cassandra's suicide. The scene, as well, of her last sexual encounter, it unifies the forces of sexuality and death. It could be said to represent fatality or the cycle of death working through sexuality--that which should be a life-giving force but which to Skipper and Cassandra in the nightmare world leads only to destruction. As the setting of the "last death" in the novel, the lighthouse as symbol also unifies in a further sense. Skipper's father's shot from his gun initiated the death cycle in which both Skipper and Cassandra became tragic participants. The lighthouse, with its hollow interior and cylindrical



structure, resembles in magnified form the weapon with which his father killed himself. From the time of his father's suicide, death has become the dominant force in Skipper's life, the omnipresent fact of his existence. And, as the lighthouse is literally and figuratively connected with sexuality, so his father's death has sexual overtones; obviously, the gun itself is a phallic symbol, while there are strong Freudian overtones in the fact that his father kills himself in the bathroom.

### The Nature of Skipper's "Victory"

In a strong sense, the lighthouse for Skipper comes to embody a world of grief--the entire burden of suicides and death, his "naked history." Skipper expresses this after his laborious ascent and descent: "I reached the bottom after all. . . . I sat there with the lighthouse on my shoulders" (199). In climbing the tower, Skipper has to confront his failure, to acknowledge something which he was unable to acknowledge previously.<sup>10</sup> In what sense is his "slow ascent" an ascent "to the unknown"? (197). After all, he knows that he will climb the stairs of the tower "all for nothing . . . that I could not possibly be in time" (197).

The answer to this question lies in Skipper's perception of his daughter and in the constant but confused embrace of the physical and spiritual beings. In Skipper's relation to Cassandra, he is reluctant to acknowledge her as a unified, complex human being. This makes his love destructive, as he wants to protect Cassandra from sexual experience, thereby preserving an image of her purity. Instead of reconciling what he sees as dual and distinct aspects of her being, he considers that he must make a choice between these apparently distinct beings. Throughout Second Skin, he is trying to determine which image truly represents Cassandra: the "intensive fantasy" of "the teen-age bomb" (32) or the more somber portrait of the "young matron" (33).

(In an inversion characteristic of his understanding, the "fantasy" is the more truly representative image.) Skipper wants to break down the "schizophrenic flesh," to come to terms with "this double anatomy" (33) through constant dissection. But he fails in his quest to understand Cassandra by minimizing her complexity as an individual. He wants to understand his daughter in order to save her; he has to determine which image or aspect is the greater threat to her, so he can "at the right moment fling himself in the way of the ascendant and destructive image" (33). If Skipper could honestly acknowledge Cassandra's duality, then quite conceivably some of the misunderstandings and misjudgments which result ultimately in her death could have been avoided. But he chooses to displace or largely repress realization of Cassandra's sexual being; acting as the jealous guardian of her sexual purity, "her only defense" (81) against the sexual approaches of others, enables him to satisfy with the aid of the superego his incestuous urge toward her.

And, as Skipper "prefers" the clouded vision of his mother's death to the cold brutality of his father's, so he prefers to idealize Cassandra and transform her into a visionary being. In doing so, she becomes a static individual for him, incapable of change. She is his "museum piece" (29), the "sweet queenly head on an old coin" (32). Ironically, she is "a silvery blue Madonna in the desert" (42) prior to being kissed by the soldiers; Skipper's image here hardly befits the sexual nature of her own response, to the third soldier in particular (43). He comes to identify Cassandra with the Blessed Virgin Mary, an association triggered by a plastic statue in Fernandez's car--which serves to undercut the association, of course. Skipper's wording suggests the ambiguity and confusion in the association:

". . . I was snug between Cassandra and my son-in-law of several hours now,

and the Madonna was standing over me and holding out her moon-struck plastic arms in benediction. She was the Blessed Virgin Mary, I knew, and I smiled back happily at her in the moonlight" (117), *italics added*). A few lines later, Skipper confirms his preference for the static, unchanging vision of Cassandra: "She would never lose the invisible encyclopedia balanced on the crown of her head and would always be identified for me with the BVM" (118).

It is not until near the close of his narrative that Skipper acknowledges a further role for [him]self than those of his daughter's "sentry" (38), "guardian" (81) or "porter" (115); that he is, "accomplice, father, friend, traveling companion, yes, old chaperon, but lover and destroyer too" (176, *italics added*). Indeed, Skipper is destructive through his love, his insistence on Cassandra's purity and denial of her sexuality.<sup>11</sup>

The image of the lighthouse on Skipper's shoulders represents the burden of his history which, at this point, becomes synonymous with a burden of guilt. His guilt becomes universalized because he accepts it without fully understanding its connection with his own actions. He remains as committed as ever to the purity of Cassandra and, as he looks from the lighthouse he sees the image of Cassandra's face on the rocks below and with him there as inseparable from "the small white plastic face of the BVM" (199). Yet for all his failings in understanding, in coming to terms with the truth--failings which some critics spend much energy and ingenuity expounding upon instead of acknowledging his frequent candid honesty-- Skipper does understand the shared nature of guilt and willingly accedes to responsibility here. When he refers to himself as an accomplice (twice in reference to his father's death, once to Cassandra's), he does so in an abstract or ambiguous sense. It seems that with his father's death simply being a "witness" and involved makes him an "accomplice." With Cassandra

Skipper believes he may have been inexplicably to blame, "the unwitting tinder that started the blaze" (197). Although the reason for Cassandra's suicide remains a mystery to Skipper, at least until Miranda scornfully informs him she was two months pregnant at the time, and though he never comes to terms with his true relationship with his daughter, the nature of the partial recognition that does take place is significant for in it is contained the seeds of Skipper's regeneration. If Skipper had never acknowledged a role in Cassandra's death, his "victory" would have been entirely a hollow one; but, in doing so, he admits to the "Clytemnestra" (1) in his being, along with the Iphigenia; he admits to a duality within himself that he refuses to acknowledge in others such as Cassandra.

#### The Nightmare and Fantasy Worlds

In contrast to the Atlantic island where the forms of male life prevail and the masculine will asserts control over its surroundings, the tropical isle is associated with female life-forms and symbols, denoting fertility, growth and fruition. Miranda's infertility is suggested by the description of her "broad flat stomach bound and yellow" of which she is proud (59); in contrast, Kate is pregnant, her stomach having "stretched and swelled and grown magnificently" (162). Childless herself, Miranda performs the sadistic action of cutting off the nipples of Pixie's baby bottles and emptying them of the milk (60-1)--an unequivocal denial and negation of motherhood and, indeed, of the cycle of life itself.

The Atlantic island hardly seems able to sustain life, "this strange island of bitter wind and blighted blueberries and empty nests" (55), set amid "mile after square mile of intricate useless channels and breaking waves and sharp-backed lacerating shoals and spiny reefs. Mile after

square mile of ocean cemetery that wasn't even true to its dead but kept flushing itself out on the flood tide" (199). The offspring of the island's inhabitants--"undernourished high school girls and retarded boys" (80)--reflect the condition of impoverishment in their lack of vigour and spiritlessness:

Daughters of poor fishermen. Daughters of the sea. Anemic. Disposed to scabies. Fed on credit, fed on canned stock or stunted berries picked from a field gone back to brier, prickly thorns, wild sumac. . . . Plain Janes, island sirens, with long skinny white legs--never, to know the touch of silk--and eyes big enough and gray enough to weep buckets, though they would never cry, and little buttocks already corrupted, nonetheless, by the rhythm of pop melodies and boys on leave (81-2).

Finally, what potency exists is radically curtailed by an attitude of brutal indifference toward life. From the tip of the aerial on the black hot rod hangs a death "flag," "a little fat fuzzy squirrel tail . . . freshly killed and plump" (78). Miranda's "gift" of the two month foetus for Skipper is the ultimate, degrading insult to human life--"Sort of makes you a grandfather for the second time, doesn't it?" (203)--Both these defilements of life have their echoes in incidents on the wandering isle where life-forms, from the smallest to the largest, are revered. Skipper carefully and joyfully monitors the baby's growth inside Kate, and the visit to the cemetery after its birth is not for a burial--as Skipper buries the jar in which the presumed foetus is contained--but to celebrate the renewal of life, the continuity of the life-cycle. Skipper and Sister Josie observe a black newborn lizard together: "It was black, fuzzy, about an inch and a half in length. . . . I lifted him slowly into the warm sweet air that hovered between Sister Josie and myself. Lifted him up to my nose" (101). On the wandering isle, human life and natural forms merge in tableaux reflecting harmonious and ordered existence. The one that many critics cite occurs

after Skipper has impregnated Sweet Phyllis, whereupon "the whole tree burst into the melodious racket of the dense tribe of blackbirds cheering for our accomplished cow" (171).

There exist many other parallels and contrasts between the gentle isle and the wandering isle. The violence of the sea, the bitterness of the wind on the Atlantic island contrast with descriptions of these elements on the tropical island. Several passages could be cited to point out the differences: Skipper's early morning stroll when he first meets Miranda ("And the wind, the black wind was rising off the iron flanks of the Atlantic and driving its burden of frozen spray . . ." 53) could be compared with Skipper's description of the sensual wind of the wandering isle as "this bundle of invisible snakes" that "nests itself and bundles itself across this island . . . and even when it drops down, fades, dies, it continues its gentle rubbing against the skin" (46). But, even though Skipper announces early that "In all likelihood my true subject may prove to be simply the wind" (3), it is the sea which lies nearer to Skipper's "subject" and which is a greater determining factor in the outcome of events. And the sea is part of a larger pattern of water imagery in the novel, serving to distinguish the twin potentials of nature as a perpetuator of life and a destroyer-- a death force.

Skipper sees the destructive force unleashed by the action of the sea when on board the "Peter Poor." On the day of Tremlow's mutiny, "the ocean was calm and I wasn't sick" (141), but this day "the Old Man of the Sea was against me" (182), and Skipper becomes violently ill. He observes the sea surging around the dilapidated craft and "saw a chip of black rock rising and falling in those black crests and hair-raising plumes of spray" (181). Even Skipper's "second skin" cannot protect him from the elemental powers of

nature, but on the tropical island he swims naked and scrubs himself with cleansing sand, languishing in the sea's restorative powers:

My arms floated out straight on the warm dark tide, I rinsed my mouth with sea water and spit it back to the sea, I tasted the smooth taste of salt. When we rose up out of the slow-motion surf the conchs were glistening at us in the moonlight (172).

Here the sea is depicted as a life force, and the passage is replete with sensual detail. Nature has become benevolent and sheltering; dangerous rocks have transformed into "glistening conchs"--a female symbol parallel to the phallic rocks on the Atlantic island.

On the wandering isle, water performs a number of functions, usually related to cleansing. As mentioned, Skipper and Sonny wash themselves in the sea; Kate is seen by Skipper rinsing Sonny's drawers in a stream; and, when the baby is born Skipper instructs that it be washed (205). Ice and snow on the Atlantic island destroy life: as Skipper walks home from the dance his "road was littered with the bodies of dead birds--I could see their little black glistening feet sticking up like hairs through the crusty tops of the snow banks" (92). But on the tropical island, ice is used to preserve "the seeds of life"--the sperm from the bull with which Skipper impregnates Sweet Phyllis (167).

One could hardly ignore the principal symbol of female life and fertility on the wandering isle: Skipper's cows. On the Atlantic island Skipper explores the cow paths alone (69)--"cows dead and gone, of course" (191)--but, as the artificial inseminator of cows on the wandering isle, he ensures the continuity of life and becomes an agent himself of vitality and regeneration. He is proud of his profession and claims, "I am much esteemed as the man who inseminates the cows and causes these enormous soft animals to bring forth calves" (47). Mythologically, cows have always been equated with the goddesses Venus and Isis.<sup>12</sup> The cow for Joyce is sometimes a

symbol of "Mother Ireland," and in The Hamlet Faulkner deals with the affection that Ike Snopes has for a cow in remarkably evocative passages of sensual and erotic detail. In being the artificial inseminator of cows, Skipper is aware of more than his reputation; in this, he is "esteemed" but, in the symbolic sense, he "redeems" (47) not only his father's profession but his own past; it is important to realize the terms of Skipper's personal redemption, for in this redemption, as well as in his partial recognition of guilt, lies Skipper's "victory" over the degenerative forces of evil and death.<sup>13</sup>

#### Space and Time on the Wandering Isle

The nightmare world is trapped both in space and time, but in the fantasy world Skipper stresses his freedom from the conventional boundaries of space and time. The fantasy world is not severed from time and space altogether; but, somehow, the usual conditions of the temporal and spatial dimensions have ceased to operate with their customary stringency. Again, the fantasy world of the tropical island has its contrastive echoes in the nightmare world--not only the Atlantic island, but in other American localities as well; stasis prevails. In the Chinatown cafe, Skipper and Cassandra are packed in a room with other sailors and their partners. Skipper is specific about the precise time: it is midnight--Pacific War Time--(12) and "there was only an hour to spare." Skipper gives us a sense of a claustrophobic world of chaos and desperation:

only the noise, the smoke . . . crowded elbows and bowls of boiled rice; only this night, the harbor plunging with battleships, the water front blacked-out, bloody with shore leave and sick with the bodies of young girls sticking to the walls of moist unlighted corridors; only our own cafe and its infestation of little waiters . . . only ourselves--agitated eccentric naval officer, well-meaning man, and soft young woman, serious, downcast--only ourselves and in the middle of no romance (11).



Skipper moves from one static situation to another. He and Cassandra board the Greyhound Bus to travel across the country, but a tire blows, and they become stranded in the desert. As Skipper surveys his surroundings, the rhythm of the prose is the familiar one used to describe the confinement of the Chinatown cafe: long sentences of unvarying structure in which the connectors "only," "and" and "which" are extremely predominant, marked by a uniform rhythm which carries with it the suggestion of unrelieved stasis and boredom. (For comparative purposes, the paragraph partially reproduced above --[S.S., 11]--can be examined alongside the final paragraph on p. 36.)

The real or nightmare world is reliant on the constant action of time and the fixity of place. Once again, the two death "interpretations" provide a hint as to the function and nature of time and place in the nightmare and fantasy worlds. In Skipper's vision of his mother's death, he sees his mother emerge from a house and step into a car which drives away. The scene is conceived in terms of motion and activity: his mother "steps from under the portico, raises a gentle hand to the hat trembling with a motion all its own, and lifts her face, turns it left and right." The car itself "is thumping up and down," the driver "contracts his arm," squeezes the car's horn, grips the steering wheel and turns his head (8). Suddenly, from a picture of potential motion, the car surges forward, tires "rolling, the trunk swaying, the muffler beating the air," and his mother is touching her fingers to the crown of her hat and preparing to wave (9).

In contrast, Skipper's depiction of his father's death embodies qualities of fixity and stasis. The only movement from one place to another is Skipper's as he lumbers to his room to get his cello. Where temporal details are vague in the vision, the few moments preceding his father's death are locked in time. The incident takes place at noon on a Friday in midsummer

(159). Measuring time--the last few moments of his father's life--is the constant and regular drip of the faucet. The monotony of the dripping faucet represents the action of time in the "real" world as all forms of life in it move toward death. Here, as in The Beetle Leg, water symbolizes a destructive force. To his father, who is entranced by the sound, the dripping water is like the last grains of sand in an inverted hour-glass. Typically, Edward (which is Skipper's given name) tries to counter the dripping faucet by the rhythm of music, the precise and complex measures of art. Edward loses his sense of the moment, and the terrible threat of death behind the locked door is almost obliterated. Even in the physical description of the cello one gets the sense of Edward's having suspended death, put off the actuality of it for a while, at least:

Cello in the sunlight, tiny shadows beneath the strings, wood that was only a shell, a thin wooden skin, but dark and brown and burnished. The sunlight brought out the sheen of my cello--tiny concentric circles of crimson moons--brought out the glow of the thick cat strings. I stood there, put my palm on its thin hard belly, and already it was warm and rich and filled with my slow awkward song (159-60).

At first, Skipper supposes, the music from the cello destroyed "the spell of the faucet"; but, just as art can disrupt or alter reality and even the consciousness of death, so reality can be destructive to the vision and forms of art. As Edward hears the lavatory door unlock, his artistic efforts cease only to be followed by the fateful shot which "killed everything" (161).

Skipper is most conscious of time as an officer in the Navy. He refers to "Pacific War Time" and "Eastern War Time." During war, time operates heavily on individuals, and Skipper becomes one with the time-trapped world when serving on board the "U.S.S. Starfish." Skipper progresses through the day on which the mutiny occurs recording the time of his various activities: at 0500 he first consults his watch; at 0600 he

observes and reports to Mac particular coral formations; visiting the sick and wounded at 0730 Skipper comments, "time was passing, that much I knew" (139); a half hour later, Mass begins, and it ends at 0940; around 1600, after spending the day reading, the New Testament and "in hard meditation" (141), Skipper returns topside to check on Tremlow's still undiminished interest in the lifeboat.

While Skipper is going through the routine dictated by time, he is involved in a process of what he believes is spiritual enrichment. Aware of and even a part of the temporal order, Skipper nonetheless strives to escape it by reading and meditation. But Skipper's efforts at this time are ideologically oriented on religious concerns, while all the obvious signs point to the dangerous consequence of insurrection.

Ironically, Tremlow, also wants to escape from the time-trapped world (which, despite Skipper's other interests, also includes him at this point) and live a freer, less constrained existence. But wearing his ludicrous grass skirt and dancing the Hawaiian hula hula, Tremlow presents a parody of the fantasy world of the tropical paradise. Tremlow and Skipper, then, have similar goals in mind, but where Tremlow chooses escape by violence and open rebellion, Skipper elects the moderate, less conspicuous route, though one which allows Tremlow to complete his escape without resistance.

But time continues to play a central role in Skipper's life. On the Atlantic island questions of survival itself become questions of timing. At first, Skipper merely wants to prevent his daughter from sexual encounters. He arrives "in time after all" (93) to upset Miranda's plans for Cassandra and Jomo after the dance, but is distracted from interfering. In May, Skipper hopes he will be in time to rescue Cassandra from Jomo (190). But as he prepares to mount the lighthouse steps, he knows "that I could not

possibly be in time" and thinks, "What a bad end for time" (197).

Indeed, Skipper's involvement with the time-trapped world is virtually over. And, from the "frozen episode[s]" on the gentle isle, locked not only in time but "rooted fast" (149) in its "fixed position in the cold black waters of the Atlantic" (48), Skipper travels to an island on which both time and place become not so much determinants of action as manifestations of a new imaginative vision. It is the sense that time and space undergo transformations just as the mind does that accounts for the apparent timelessness and freedom from spatial conditions existing on the wandering isle.

Skipper himself continually celebrates his break from the temporal world and its conditions. The island is "out of time" (46), existing in a "time of no time" (162, 166, 173); in another permutation, Skipper refers to "our sweet timeless time" (171). When the individual is not tied to routine--mechanical time--he can allow the time of nature to determine action. Thus, Skipper gently admonishes Sonny who is anxious for the insemination of Sweet Phyllis to take place: "'In good time, Sonny,' I murmured. 'She'll wait, she'll keep, don't worry'" (169). After Skipper awakes, he unconsciously reverts to the old conception of time only to dismiss it because it has lost its meaning in the context of the fantasy world: "And had the hours passed? Days, years? I put down the thought because I was wide-awake and the sharp harmony was like a spear in the ribs" (170). The phrase "sharp harmony" suggests Skipper's way of conveying the imperative of nature and, accordingly, the impregnation of the cow now takes place. While "sensitive to the time of cows" (48), Skipper is also sensitive to natural time in following Kate's pregnancy. It is significant that the growth of Kate's baby parallels the evolution of Skipper's narrative, and

Skipper is determined that the parallel will be exact: "So in six months and on the Night of All Saints Catalina Kate will bear her child--our child-- and I shall complete my history" (49). Art of the higher imaginative order must encompass nature, or arise from nature, if it is to be considered as something more than purely visionary and remote from our world.<sup>14</sup> In Skipper's narrative, time becomes a function of the individual consciousness and not a mechanical process of chronological recovery and representation. Skipper follows a "natural order" in this method of writing.

While it becomes evident that Skipper is using the concept of timelessness to get at the less abstract notion of natural time (unconsciously, perhaps), his references to the "wandering" nature of the island suggests a metaphoric purpose more clearly. Skipper claims the island is "unlocated in space," not that it does not exist in space; his other references confirm that Skipper's island is not so "invisible" as to be a void in the real world. The island is "invisible" because others simply lack the visionary capacity to see it, so enthralled are they in the nightmare world and the death cycle. In fact, ships have no need to visit Skipper's island and so ignore its existence:

I saw the few lights and long black silhouette of a ship at sea and smiled to myself since apparently our wandering island has become quite invisible. Only a mirage of shimmering water to all the ships at sea, only the thick black spice of night and the irregular whispering of an invisible shore (109, italics added).

In drawing implicit contrasts between the Atlantic island's fixity and the tropical island's wandering, Hawkes is, once again, setting up the opposition between stasis (in which the nightmare world is mired) and motion in which the dynamic qualities of the fantasy world strive toward some form of realization through artistic self-expression. Movement at least implies the possibilities for development, for extension of the boundaries of

perception and selfhood.

Lucy Frost is initially disturbed by questions which she feels many readers share concerning the nature of reality in the novel. In part, the issue revolves around locating reality: are the sections on the wandering isle real in the same sense as those which take place elsewhere? she asks. The answer to this provokes the further question of our response to Skipper's narrative. Briefly, Frost presents Skipper's view: "To him the environments are distinct in the quality of life available but not in their degree of reality";<sup>15</sup> she urges the reader's imaginative acceptance of an "art which does not aim at realism in the narrow sense."<sup>16</sup> Clearly still disturbed by the "imaginary nature" of the wandering isle, Frost adopts the view that the voyage from a destructive society to a world ruled by love represents a universal impulse within members of that society.<sup>17</sup> But it is a mistake for critics to conceive of an absolute polarity between the two islands in terms of "their degree of reality"; oppositions exist to distinguish the two "worlds" of the novel--the nightmare and fantasy worlds--but not to mark unequivocal distinctions between "the real" and "the imaginary."

Why should Skipper's island not be considered as a real place--a place which remains largely inaccessible to us only insofar as the ideals it posits are deemed insignificant, valueless and consequently, not worth striving for. In fact, Skipper's narrative reveals the island as a real place, the product of an ideal imaginative fusion between subjective vision and outer reality. Kuehl is certainly mistaken, or at least he oversimplifies, when he claims that "Skipper feels he has discovered timelessness through placelessness" (what does this mean exactly?): Kuehl's further assertion that Hawkes "undercuts" Skipper by giving evidence of the

wandering island's "mortality"<sup>18</sup> is therefore doubly wrong. Such evidence points to a positive and beneficial fusion between the "paradisaal" and reality, not to ironic undercutting.

Such a fusion is hardly, if ever, possible in the nightmare world. Values such as love and faith are defeated by a society or culture in which self-interest prevails over all else and survival is the main concern; destructive reality prevails over the possibilities of redemptive or constructive vision. Skipper's successive attempts to impose such ideal values end not only in failure but in tragedy; and the efforts to impose them frequently result in comic scenes as Skipper's inadequacy in adapting to the conditions of the nightmare world is exposed.

We see a fusion in the wandering isle in the image of Kate, whose uncorrupted innocence is a quality representative of an Edenic world; but, at the same time, she is of the real world, "this girl, this mauve puff of powder who still retains her aboriginal sweaty armpits and lice eggs in the pores of her bare dusty feet" (49). The island itself represents a fusion of these two worlds--the one idyllic and the other deadly: "the beach was a quarter-mile strip of snowy pink sand and the tide was sliding in, frothing, jumping up in little round waves" (104). In close proximity to this scene is the swamp: "Dark green tepid sludge of silent waters drifting inland along the ferns and roots and fuzzy pockets and pools of the infested swamp. Haven of veiled orchids, cells of death" (105).

Ordinary conditions are suspended, at times, on the wandering isle when in the exuberance of the imaginative capacity, the self strives toward full and complete liberation from the bounds of reality in its attempt to achieve a visionary cohesion, an artistic unity. At times, Skipper's lyricism reaches intense proportions as reality becomes transformed into

something nearing pure vision. A comic example is when two cows (Beatrice and Gloria) exchange positions and try to mount each other, and Skipper questions, "And who's to say nothing will come of it?" (169). The complex interplay between reality and imagination is also evident in the following passage where Skipper describes the procession to the calabash tree where Sweet Phyllis awaits:

Down we went, and the tennis shoes and combat boots and little black pointed shoes from the missionary's museum and two other lovely pairs of naked feet hardly touched the earth, hardly made a sound, surely left no prints in the soft wild surface of the empty field (166).

Here reality is transformed into vision. There is a corresponding passage on the Atlantic island where apparent vision becomes confirmed as reality as Skipper examines Miranda's footprints in the earth and discovers that "the footprints were real, real enough the shape of her large naked foot in the crushed frozen grass" (59).

As we began the discussion of reality and fantasy in Second Skin we admitted the presence of dualism in the novel, that the physical and the spiritual were ever-present in Skipper's consciousness. On the wandering isle these two dimensions of existence are permitted to fuse. But, in a passage which has neoplatonic echoes, Skipper intimates the interrelatedness of the two "worlds" of the novel, implying perhaps the latent possibilities in the real world for the kind of fusion which he is able to effect on the wandering isle:

. . . behind every frozen episode of that other island--and I am convinced that in its own way it too was enchanted, no matter the rocks and salt and fixed position in the cold black waters of the Atlantic--there lies the golden wheel of my hot sun; behind every black rock a tropical rose and behind every cruel wind-driven snowstorm a filmy sheet, a transparency, of golden fleas. No matter how stark the scene, no matter how black the gale or sinister the violence of Miranda, still the light of my triumph must shine



through. And behind the interminable dead clanking of some salt- and seaweed-encrusted three-ton bell buoy should be heard the soft outdoor lowing of this island's cows, our gigantic cows with moody harlequin faces and rumps like enormous upturned wooden packing crates (48-9).

In the climactic scene on the gentle isle, Skipper tries unsuccessfully to save his daughter's life. In the ritualistic scene in the graveyard of the wandering isle, Skipper celebrates the birth of another child-- probably not his. The loss of his physical child is balanced by the birth of his spiritual child, a kind of metamorphosis which embodies the movement in the novel (which Skipper has been, at times recklessly, trying to bring about all along) from a world reliant on material values, a world without vision where the only "mystery" is the mystery of the irrational, to a world of completed vision, where the "mystery" is of a supernatural or visionary order. Skipper's "victory," seen in these terms, is not a hollow one or a delusion but an affirmation of life as composed of spiritual values as well as material ones, and a recognition that, to a large extent, the spirit determines and makes up life while a world wholly without ideals is a world of nightmare and death.

Second Skin repudiates the view of life implicit in the behaviour of characters like Miranda, Captain Red and Cassandra, but neither does it accept the ideal as the sole guiding principle of life. Hawkes stresses the importance of idealistic values such as love, forgiveness and tolerance (essentially Christian values) while using the comic method to illustrate their limited efficacy in the nightmare world. As a visionary artist, Skipper battles against those who reject such values, and he is ultimately forced to withdraw to a place untouched by the spirit of contemporary materialism and nihilism. We may wonder whether Prospero's return to Milan at the end of The Tempest will be successful in the face of his absolute

authority and the absence of competitive forces on his island; with Skipper, there can be no ambiguity in this regard: he remains seriously unequipped at the end of the novel to deal with society and its representatives. His artistic vision requires a separation from a world governed by the values of anti-art.

## END NOTES - CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>Wayne Booth defines the reliable narrator as one who "speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms)." Referring to the distinction of person as greatly "overworked," Booth establishes various criteria which refine types of narration into more useful and descriptive (rather than prescriptive) categories. "For practical criticism probably the most important of these kinds of distance [one of Booth's descriptive categories] is that between the fallible or unreliable narrator and the implied author who carries the reader with him in judging the narrator." See Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 154, 158; cf. pp. 155-163. One of the functions of this and the following three chapters is to assess the distance between the narrator and the implied author. However, because first-person narration is a reflection and expression of the narrator's capacity to "create a world," the term "first person" is necessary in a consideration of Second Skin, The Blood Oranges, Death, Sleep & the Traveler and Travesty.

<sup>2</sup>Ronald Wallace, "The Rarer Action: Comedy in John Hawkes's Second Skin," Studies in the Novel, 9(1977); 181.

<sup>3</sup>John Hawkes, Second Skin (New York: New Directions, 1964), 210. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>4</sup>Second Skin is one of those works, like Melville's Billy Budd, for example, in which critics tend to line up on one of two "sides," choosing to see the work as either dominantly affirmative or essentially pessimistic and ironic. The following articles stress the affirmative qualities: Stephen G. Nichols, Jr., "Vision and Tradition in Second Skin," in The Merrill Studies in "Second Skin", ed. John Graham (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1971), pp. 69-82. Nichols believes that Skipper undergoes a process of self-transformation which leaves him in control of his own destiny; Carey Wall, "Solid Ground in Hawkes's Second Skin," in Makers of the Twentieth-Century Novel, ed. Harry R. Garvin (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1977), 309-19. Like Nichols, Wall focuses on Skipper's self-recognition and treats the novel as an inner journey; William R. Robinson, "John Hawkes' Artificial Inseminator," in Merrill Studies, pp. 63-8. Referring extensively to Skipper's "triumphs," Robinson celebrates Skipper as "Hawkes' vehicle for professing the new." The pessimistic readings usually suggest that Second Skin must be read between the lines, that the actual story is one of Skipper's repressive attitude toward the events he narrates; they consider the ways in which Skipper alters reality for self-protective purposes. See Anthony C. Santore, "Narrative Unreliability and the Structure of Second Skin," in Merrill Studies, pp. 83-93; Thomas LeClair, "The Unfeliability of Innocence: John Hawkes' Second Skin," Journal of Narrative Technique, 3(1973), 32-9; Ron Imhoff, "On Second Skin," Mosaic, 8, No. 2 (1974), 51-63; Paul Witherington, "Character Spin-Offs in John Hawkes's Second Skin," Studies in American Fiction, 9, No. 1 (1981), 83-91; John Kuehl, John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1975),

pp. 113-126. Like the interpretations of the following critics, the reading of Second Skin presented in this chapter is intended to suggest Hawkes' creation of a balance of attitudes toward a complex character, one whose "heroism" is challenged to some extent through Hawkes' comic method. See Donald J. Greiner, Comic Terror: The Novels of John Hawkes (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1973), pp. 159-99; Wallace, "The Rarer Action: Comedy in John Hawkes's Second Skin," 169-86.

<sup>5</sup> See Greiner, Comic Terror, 190-8, for an extensive analysis of colour imagery in Second Skin: "most of the references to color illustrate thematic considerations to such a degree that, depending upon Skipper's geographical position at the time, the mention of a specific color helps to bring a desired response from us," p. 190. Greiner, however, does not refer in much detail to Hawkes' use of colour in determining our response to the scene Skipper constructs of his mother's death.

<sup>6</sup> Lucy Frost, "Awakening Paradise," in Merrill Studies, p. 59.

<sup>7</sup> Greiner, p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> Hawkes' use of classical motifs and names has been established and well-documented. See Nichols, "Vision and Tradition in Second Skin," pp. 69-82. Nichols canvasses various literary allusions in the work and relates them to structure; Wallace, 169-86. Wallace focuses on allusions to The Tempest, in particular, and discusses classical comic "types"; Richard Pearce, Stages of the Clown: Perspectives on Modern Fiction from Dostoyevsky to Beckett (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press; 1970), pp. 102-16. Pearce considers Skipper as the traditional eiron; Kuehl, John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict, pp. 33-6. Kuehl considers Hawkes' use of names and images connected with the Trojan War and The Tempest. None considers the thematic significance of images of entrapment, and their possible relation to Aeschylus' use of net imagery in Agamemnon to convey fatality and feminine deception.

<sup>9</sup> Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable (New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.), p. 208.

<sup>10</sup> The metaphor of the physical ascent toward spiritual knowledge and self-understanding recurs throughout literature, as Dante's ascent of Mount Purgatory and Eliot's ascent of the winding stair in "Ash Wednesday." Skipper's ascent, however, results only in partial or limited awareness.

<sup>11</sup> Cassandra's name--that of the Trojan prophetess who died at the hands of Clytemnestra--means "helper of mankind," and seems applicable only in an ironic sexual sense. However, it is at least slightly connected with Kate's name in that a diminutive for both is "Cassie." Kate signifies "pure," and Catalina is a Spanish form of Catherine. Catalina Kate's name thus suggests her absolute purity in Skipper's eyes--the ideal woman.

<sup>12</sup>Harry Thurston Peck, ed., Harper's Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities (New York: American Book Company, 1923), p. 887. The story of Io may be relevant to Second Skin. Loved by Zeus, she was changed into a white heifer by the perennially jealous Hera; after which she travelled through the continents of Europe and Asia. Io means "the wanderer," a designation not insignificant on the wandering isle, Harper's Dictionary, p. 881.

<sup>13</sup>Once again, critics are divided when they consider the nature of Skipper's "redemption." The "affirmative" critics draw attention, as Skipper himself does, to his function of renewing life as an inseminator; according to most "ironic" interpretations of the novel, the artificial method whereby he does so serves as a metaphor indicating his own impotence and reflecting his larger failure to come to terms with his repressive nature.

<sup>14</sup>Both Skipper and Cyril of The Blood Oranges (the novel which follows Second Skin) insist on the close relationship between their visionary art and nature, recalling, perhaps, the lines of Polixenes in Shakespeare's A Winter's Tale, who contends that true art is forged by nature itself (IV, iv, 89-97). Neither of Hawkes' narrators gives absolute priority to nature; however, Cyril comes the closest to doing so.

<sup>15</sup>Frost, p. 61.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>18</sup>Kuehl, p. 73.

CHAPTER VI

ILLYRIA'S BENEVOLENT DESPOT:  
CYRIL OF THE BLOOD ORANGES

Cyril, the narrator-artist of The Blood Oranges, is, like Skipper, also cut off from his society, living in a primitive region of the world. Yet the other three main characters in this novel are, like him, representatives of Western European culture. Two "worlds" are not seen in opposition, as in Second Skin, but the four characters in The Blood Oranges comprise one "world" in which both the forces of art and anti-art are embodied. Cyril is a slightly frightening figure, an egotist (like Skipper) whose vision partakes of the obsessive power of Papa, the narrator of Travesty. In The Blood Oranges we begin the movement in which the completed vision assumes the strength of an absolute need for the artist, where human feelings and sympathies may come to be sacrificed to the process of artistic ordering and design. The Blood Oranges is the first work of Hawkes' triad which sets out to examine the limits of visionary art.

The Blood Oranges is central in a consideration of Hawkes' evolution as a novelist. The reasons for this are not so much technical (as the centrality of Second Skin in Hawkes' canon of fiction is due in part to its narrative technique) as thematic: Hawkes evinces an increasing concern with the function and nature of visionary art in this first of a triad of novels dealing with "the relationship between sexuality and the imagination."<sup>1</sup> The narrator of The Blood Oranges, Cyril, is an artist in the Hawkesian mold, and Hawkes appears to possess considerable sympathy towards him. It will be one of the functions of this chapter to determine

the grounds for this sympathy and to what extent it is justifiable.<sup>2</sup>

Early reviews of The Blood Oranges depart, however, in their reactions to Cyril. As with Second Skin, Hawkes has divided critics who are otherwise almost unanimous in praising his exuberant prose and exacting style. Some critics deride Cyril for his cold and ruthless actions, while others see him as a figure mocked and ridiculed by the author. Pearl K. Bell questions the values of Cyril and his wife Fiona, who prize sensuality "above and instead of everything else"; Gerald Weales condemns Cyril as "a fat, dead white sensualist, incapable of pain or compassion," but he clearly separates Hawkes from his "tiresome" protagonist; on the other hand, Roger Sale unreservedly damns both narrator and author: The Blood Oranges "is the work of a contemptible imagination," the story "of a narrator unable to see how awful he is." Hawkes is cited as a novelist for whom people no longer matter. Other reviewers respond to Cyril more positively. Charles Moran sees the novel as "another step in the writer's journey out of the waste land," though Cyril's victory over the death instinct, he says, is "limited and qualified"; and Thomas McGuane depicts Cyril as "a kind of romantic and sexual visionary" for whom the author creates considerable sympathy.<sup>3</sup>

It is evident that Hawkes' sympathies, indeed affinities, are much with Cyril. Both Hawkes and Cyril share an interest in overriding or destroying conventional morality. In fiction, one should consciously work to undermine "all the constraints of the conventional pedestrian mentality around us. Surely it should destroy conventional morality,"<sup>4</sup> according to Hawkes; Cyril decries such a morality where "love itself is a crime."<sup>5</sup> Cyril's view of sexual freedom, that "anything that lies in the palm of love is good" (58), finds an echo in Hawkes' more cautiously phrased belief

that "any form of sexual experience is probably desirable, probably has built into it human poetic excitements, fulfillments, joys."<sup>6</sup> A more direct parallel is shown in Hawkes' comment on the characters' innocence: "in The Blood Oranges . . . a few adult characters are freed of the question of guilt in their sexual lives. Cyril insists that they are all pure, all innocent, no matter what they are doing--which is my own view."<sup>7</sup> Through Cyril, Hawkes portrays a revitalized commitment to new human values, replacing those sterile values which are mere reflectors of conventions and a rigid moral code; the values of the visionary artist again oppose those values representing anti-art.

If one begins reading The Blood Oranges immediately after Second Skin, one is struck by numerous resemblances between these two novels, even though they were written seven years apart. Yet the more one examines The Blood Oranges, the more one is conscious of differences or of the superficial nature of the similarities. Like Skipper, Cyril attempts to justify himself through his narrative, but justification is a fairly minor concern for him. In Skipper's past, he has unwittingly played the buffoon and victim, and he ardently strives to convince us that by refusing to yield to the selfishness and indifference of others, he manages to triumph over his enemies. Cyril cares little about our judgment of him, which may be partly why critics have been so willing to pass their judgments. He depicts his recent past as paradisaical, and if we take issue with his egotism or supposed immorality, then we risk being categorized with his "conventional enemies" (36), those who would impose society's morals on him. Skipper is a survivor who urges us to sanction him for the values which he adopts in spite of the tendencies of others to minimize or subvert these values. Cyril is also a survivor, who essentially wants to convince



us that Illyria, his designation for his land of love, is worth striving for.

Cyril extends Skipper's function as a myth-maker, one who seeks to affirm his vision through the higher order of mythical "truth." At times, Hawkes seems to portray this effort comically, as in the scene where Cyril conducts Hugh's three daughters in the ceremonies of nature appreciation and wreath-making. Cyril sees himself as a "flower god at play" (165), but the passage where this phrase occurs serves to reveal Cyril's pretensions and childishness. Cyril's dislike of children is suggested here through an almost petty and juvenile competitiveness with Hugh's daughters. Despite his "good judgment" in weaving the three crowns of flowers for the children, he "erred somewhat," and Meredith's crown "sat low on her slender brow and obscured her eyes." He composes the twin's crowns of commonplace "leftovers." However, he makes no mistake when composing his own wreath which elicits the extravagant praise of the three adults: "'God, boy, what a sight," and "Don't ever take it off, baby. Ever'" (167).

Cyril seems to see himself as a sort of nature god, a Pan or Dionysius figure. He presides over natural settings, such as scenes set in the grape arbour. Goats are particularly prevalent in the Illyrian landscape, and strangers with whom he has contact are associated with goats. The goat is an important symbol in the novel, and its connections with Pan and Dionysius are well-known. (Hawkes is to use the image of the goat for similar purposes of evoking the sensual and sexual self in his next novel, Death, Sleep & the Traveler.) In addition to the goat, Dionysius is also associated with the faun (he is often depicted in art as surrounded by a retinue of fauns), and Fiona, Cyril's wife, is called a faun (201, 261). Like Lawrence, Hawkes frequently employs animal or nature imagery in

ritualistic scenes which serve to bring primal, instinctual impulses to the surface. In his role as a myth-maker, Cyril becomes a conscious symbolizer, capable of giving expression to the unconscious demands of man's inner life; like Hawkes, he can be seen as a visionary artist.

In addition to this mythologizing function, Cyril's exaltation of the erotic self and his reverence for all forms of nature link him to the "ideal of pastoral love."<sup>8</sup> (Fiona calls him a "pastoral person," and Cyril readily agrees [183].) He seeks the pastoral ideal in his numerous contacts with nature and in his concern with sexuality. Cyril's paradise represents the nearly complete realization of a fantasy shared, perhaps, by the reader himself. By contrast, Skipper's paradise is clearly lacking in relevance to the reader's world. Although Skipper need not be concerned with this, the reader surely is.

What truly makes Cyril's Illyria more relevant to the reader also serves to undermine the foundations of this paradise. Illyria is more delicately poised on the brink of disintegration than Skipper's wandering isle: the presence of Hugh, who represents the conventional moral values of contemporary society, threatens the stability of Illyria. In other words, while the threat to Skipper's paradise could only come from outside, Cyril's Illyria is ultimately destroyed by inner forces. Hawkes has declared that Cyril and Hugh represent "versions of a single figure."<sup>9</sup> In The Blood Oranges Hawkes presents us with a composite image of man in which he is seen striving to assert his imaginative potential as he struggles to realize the inherited values of culture and religion: man the individual is in conflict with those "truths" which society has taught him to revere.

Interpretations which treat Cyril as a symbolic pastoral figure and comments like Hawkes' tend to diminish our perception of Cyril as a complete, complex human being to whom we are able to respond with a range of attitudes and sympathies. In contrast to his portrayal of Skipper, Hawkes' schematization of character in The Blood Oranges, observes John Kuehl, sacrifices "complexity of characterization to produce a conflict more intelligible to the reader."<sup>10</sup> One of these possible conflicts involves the struggle of a figure representing Eros against one representing Thanatos. When this struggle focuses on art, it can represent the conflict often portrayed in Hawkes' fiction between the forces of visionary art and those of anti-art.

#### Eros and Thanatos

Norman O. Brown's reconstruction and elaboration of Freud's theories in Life Against Death confirm the relationship between art and Eros. The proponent of Eros, or the life instinct, expresses his sense of bodily pleasure through his actions and language itself:

The life instinct, or sexual instinct, demands activity of a kind that, in contrast to our current mode of activity, can only be called play. The life instinct also demands a union with others and with the world around us based not on anxiety and aggression but on narcissism and erotic exuberance.<sup>11</sup>

Paraphrasing Freud, Brown says that art's function "is to help us find our way back to sources of pleasure that have been rendered inaccessible by the capitulation to the reality-principle . . . in other words, to regain the lost laughter of infancy."<sup>12</sup> Art, therefore, is connected both with the infantile and the unconscious. An art which attempts to satisfy this aim becomes subversive to society and its values. Seen in these terms, the conflict in The Blood Oranges is enacted as a struggle between Eros, seeking to find natural expression through "erotic exuberance," through

a union with the world and others, and Thanatos, expressed through agencies of sexual repression and an exclusive concentration on the interests of the self. Cyril's lyricism is the art form through which the narrator mediates his concerns with the world and the sexual being. Cyril's vision is expressed through a concern with aesthetic values, while Hugh expresses his moral vision through a traditional system of values: Cyril's "lyricism" opposes Hugh's "medievalism." Underlying Cyril's art is an awareness that the sexual self is to be acknowledged, and that art can best justify its own existence by being the medium through which the sexual self is fully liberated and called forth.

In his concern with aesthetic manipulations to bring about harmony (the word "harmony" is, along with "empathy," one of the most crucial recurring words in the novel), Cyril resembles Hawkes who, while beginning to write The Blood Oranges, "was quite aware of Twelfth Night, that beautiful whole in which all our fragmented selves are finally realigned into the ultimate harmony."<sup>13</sup> Hawkes' design is, as usual, apparent everywhere--in the work's structure, setting, characterization and image-patterns. As he does in Second Skin, Hawkes creates an architectonic design in The Blood Oranges. Inherent in the relationships between one character and another are the elements of balance, parallels and oppositions.

Cyril is as much concerned with the elements of design as Hawkes. Cyril orders existence in Illyria by imposing the aesthetics of a subjective vision on external reality and on the other members of the quaternion. His ultimate concern, like Hawkes', is to subjugate raw, untransformed matter according to the imperatives of a poetic vision; like Hawkes, Cyril is a world creator, not a world representer. Both are visionary artists

who eschew "reality," substituting in its place highly wrought forms and elaborate structures which have their basis in the primordial function of language and metaphoric thought.

Cyril calls Hugh "a sex-singer of softs" (58), but he also refers to Hugh's "constricted" song (152). In his collection of peasant nudes, Hugh exhibits an urge through which the primitive and crude become endowed through the photographic eye and enter into the sphere of "art." Photography, however, arrests movement, and in Hawkes' fiction, that which brings about stasis is invariably associated with a kind of death. Cyril and Hugh represent extremes of the artistic consciousness in the sense that Cyril embodies the liberating potential of art where Hugh, ultimately, embodies art as stasis, the kind of deadening potential which Hawkes seems to see in forms of art dedicated to capturing "reality."

All Hugh's "artistic" acts are connected to his repressed nature. Even in his use of the chastity belt, Hugh considers himself an artist of sorts: "'At least it's ingenious. You have to admit it's pretty ingenious. . . . I'm crafty, boy, crafty. And that damn belt's a work of art. . .'" (245). Hugh's actions as an "artist" are defined in light of repressive sexual urges. His cameras serve as phallic equivalents. "Unleashing" one (62), Hugh aims "the enormous wide-open lens" (63) at the naked girl from various positions, perspiring and imitating the motions of the sexual act: "writhing, jerking the camera to and fro" (69). At one point, Hugh holds up the camera to her as if for admiration:

he . . . turned it slowly in front of her face, in front of her narrow eyes, displaying and silently extolling its value, its delicacy, its enormous power, suggesting for all I knew that this one small instrument was more important than a simple illiterate young woman or even an entire farm (66).

Later in the scene, Cyril witnesses Hugh's collapse and, inevitably,

assumes its source to be erotic stimulation of the photography session; latent or repressed sexual behaviour provokes the inauspicious "'Hand of death'" (71-2) here, as it is to have a more disastrous effect later in the novel with Hugh's "accidental" death.

A World "Circumscribed"

The dominant vision in The Blood Oranges, then, is largely a product of the imaginative self. Conceiving, rather than perceiving, is the primal act which best typifies the relation of the imaginative self to its surroundings. To make viable the imaginative vision of the novel, Hawkes severs any significant ties with the outer world of people, place and time. Although landscape is important in The Blood Oranges, actual settings are conspicuous by their absence. Instead of giving us immediately identifiable scenes, Hawkes focuses on symbolic qualities in the landscape; he draws us toward an apprehension of the figurative rather than the literal. The absence of a specified locale and a well-defined time period helps to transport Illyria into the realm of the abstract and imaginary; inevitably, it conveys the sense of a placeless and timeless existence; in Illyria, even more than on Skipper's island, "there are no seasons" (271).

Perhaps more striking than the omission of external details and "factual" information is the lack of biographical and autobiographical data. In answer to a question posed by John Kuehl regarding Cyril's background, Hawkes says, "I wanted to create characters in total purity and to deny myself the novelistic reconstruction of past lives."<sup>14</sup> Hawkes' narrator departs from his predecessor, who gives us an initial self-portrait. Skipper is at great pains to relate his background to the reader, including events well in the past, for it is partly through such explanations that he hopes to justify himself. The chronology of The Blood

Oranges begins with the circumstances of the two couples' meeting. Although Cyril gives us details of personal description (belabouring, as do Skipper in Second Skin and Allert in Death, Sleep & the Traveler, his greater-than-life-size physical appearance), he tells us virtually nothing concerning his prior life, experiences or family history. Except for some sketchy details in one scene about the joys and agonies of "mate-swapping," we are confronted by a narrator who is either unwilling to provide us with specific information, or who thinks such details unimportant. At any rate, who Cyril is to the reader depends on what he says and does during the time sequences dealt with in the novel. He has no history to fall back on to justify or sustain him. He asks the reader to formulate a view of him based essentially on one episode in his life.

By limiting the scope of character presentation Hawkes (and Cyril) help to circumvent the intrusion of psychology or any other schematic means for explicating character. The world of The Blood Oranges must be approached through its narrator, and the personality of Cyril can only be approached through his narrative.<sup>15</sup> Since the novel and its narrator are inextricably fused, imported morality can have little benefit for the critic or reader. He should be aware from the start that under the ordering or cohering principles of such a world, ordinary expectations will not prevail and he must stand in readiness, consequently, to enter a world where laws and forms will have little or no outside reference. Illyria is a land of love ruled over by a lord (Cyril = "lord") whose dominion is nearly absolute.

Like Skipper, Cyril begins his story by introducing himself. Unlike Allert, the narrator of Death, Sleep the Traveler, Skipper and Cyril confidently set out to reveal particular and definite identities to the reader.

Skipper professes to "tell you in a few words who I am" (S.S., L), but he only succeeds in telling us in many words how he likes to think of himself. Cyril uses fewer words and even more abstractions, but he, too, urges the reader to view him in a particular light: "See me as small white porcelain bull . . . as great white creature horned and mounted on a trim little golden sheep . . . as bull, or ram, as man, husband, lover, a tall and heavy stranger" (2). Skipper asks us to consider him heroically, as the defender of love and antagonist of evil; Cyril is asking, first, to be viewed poetically or metaphorically as Love's servant. As with Skipper's refuge in alleged heroism, Cyril's determined and lyrical efforts to be accorded a figurative status tend initially to undermine his credibility or, at least, to make us reserve judgment about him. Can we trust men who, without giving us any concrete information about themselves, press upon us such exotic and extravagant identities and call on us to accept them?<sup>16</sup>

However, the rhapsodizing tone of the novel's opening soon changes to accommodate Cyril's awareness of his present circumstances. Now "purged . . . from the joyous field" of Love (3), Cyril must be content with making ineffectual erotic declarations toward his illiterate maid whom he has (playfully, wistfully?) named Rosella ("love"). In the first scene, then, the narrator presents us with divergent perspectives, rather as Skipper does in Second Skin by recalling the deaths of his mother and father, and setting up a basis for further contrasts between these perspectives. Despite the fact that Cyril's fantasy world has not endured, he still holds out hope for its restitution. The process which evolves in the first scene of The Blood Oranges represents a kind of encapsulation of the three-stage process dealt with in the novel itself: attainment of



the fantasy world, followed by the loss of Illyria, and the final attempt to-recover it and, in so doing, to reinstate the sexual being.

At the same time, the opening of The Blood Oranges serves as a significant introduction to a narrative technique intended to bridge inner and outer worlds in the novel. In The Blood Oranges, the metaphoric and the poetic all but supplant the perceptual viewpoint. It is possible to admire the richness in imagery and diction, to luxuriate in the lyricism of the narrator, without being fully conscious of the way in which language controls and determines our responses. Through language and metaphor Cyril is able to direct us to a comprehensive understanding of the inner man and the consciousness which he projects onto external reality. Through a lyricism which reflects and expresses his own awareness and sexual being, Cyril brings about our separation from conditions of ordinary life, removes us from a world of familiar objects and common thoughts to speculate on the possibilities of the "paradise" he sets before us.

The awareness of the power of language, and its resources is implicit in Hawkes' paradoxical phrase "realities of the imagination." By this he refers to that which lies behind conventions, traditions and certain absolutes such as morality--a realm to which fiction, if sufficiently challenging, can conduct us. The phrase is paradoxical in that it points us toward "the existence of that which does not exist,"<sup>17</sup> a true paradox to which Hawkes often refers in his interviews, and which is related to Hawkes' concept of visionary art. Where these "realities" prevail, Cyril's triumph is complete (as Skipper's is complete under similar conditions). But to the extent that the prosaic or the conventional intrudes, Cyril's victory becomes diminished, and the imaginative self must concede defeat. In The Blood Oranges, Hugh is the representative of "pedestrian mentality"

and conventionality--of anti-artistic forces--but his death, somewhat paradoxically, leads to the dissolution of Illyria--the fantasy world.

In a sense, Hugh's death marks the temporary triumph of the death-related forces in the novel, and it is only through the renewing powers of the imaginative self that Illyria can, perhaps, be rebuilt. Thus, Cyril takes Catherine to tour "this landscape of old deaths and fresh possibilities" (167), and they indulge in meditations "on the painted bones of Love" (98). Because renewal is possible only within the context defined by "realities of the imagination," Cyril stays with Catherine after Hugh's death and Fiona's departure "to account for her missing children, to convince her that I was not, as she thought, responsible for all her losses, to renew our love" (210-11). Cyril's stated priorities here, however, are clearly the reverse of his real ones. He is less interested in "accounting for her missing children" than in convincing Catherine that he bears no responsibility in the outcome;<sup>18</sup> primarily, he wants to restore what has been lost to him--the Illyrian paradise.

As in Second Skin, Hawkes again presents us with a protagonist in whom there resides a powerful impulse for transforming reality. Both works emphasize the positive potential within man to recast the sordid and bizarre shapes which oppress him. Prior to Second Skin, such potential seldom manifests itself in Hawkes' fiction. Through techniques of distortion in early novels, Hawkes creates a context which reflects and emphasizes the nightmare existence characterizing the human condition. But what is distorted reality in these earlier novels becomes transfigured reality in Second Skin and The Blood Oranges. Humans who lack the creative or imaginative capacity, as do all Hawkes' protagonists until Skipper, are subject to the distorting forces of existence; unable to respond to their

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own beings except in the most sterile, meaningless fashion, they become victims of the hostile and indifferent conditions of life--a random universe. Thus, characters in The Cannibal, The Beetle Leg and even The Lime Twig are dominated by static inner needs, and historical setting and landscape have such crucial functions in these novels partly because the characters are unable to overcome their destructive influence. In Second Skin and The Blood Oranges, the past and landscape no longer represent irrevocable influences in a largely deterministic universe: futurity, to a degree, supplants fatality; control is not placed solely in the hands of external agents but comes under the auspices of the individual himself. With this control over his surroundings, creative man is comparatively free, though never absolutely so, to fulfill the imperatives of his imaginative being.

#### Darkness and Death

It is with this sense of imaginative freedom that Hawkes' protagonists, Skipper and Cyril, call the fantasy world into being. As Skipper practices the humanistic or New Testament Christian virtues of love and sacrifice in the presence of evil, so Cyril practices his "sex-aestheticism" in the face of Hugh's determined monogamy and the implicit condemnation of a moralistic society. The tension in both works springs from a similar source: the opposition between individualistic needs requiring self-expression--symbolically portrayed as a life-force--and the dictates or values of a degenerative society or representative of such a society dealing in violence, death and sterile morality: the requisites of visionary art oppose those of anti-art. Tension, in its broad literary meaning of the internal dialectic through which the story's action becomes "realized," then, arises out of the relative freedom which the imaginative self possesses seen against the apparent absolutes in the world, such as

destructive materialism, conventional morality or indifference to life--  
all death-related values.

Cyril has been attacked for his egotism and narcissism, yet psychology has often insisted on the healthy need of both within the human personality. Brown, following Freud, asserts that the narcissistic "experience of union of the self with a world of love and pleasure sets the pattern for all human love." Original autoerotic instincts are transferred to objects in the outer world, which become incorporated into the ego. Thus "the ultimate aim of the human ego is to reinstate what Freud calls 'limitless narcissism' and find itself once more at one with the whole world in love and pleasure."<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, egotism may be considered a constructive force in The Blood Oranges. Erich Fromm, who has written extensively on selfish and unselfish behaviour, distinguishes between self-love and selfishness, assigning a positive connotation to the former. Hugh, in many ways, typifies the selfish individual as portrayed in Fromm's depiction of the "blocked" personality. On the other hand, Cyril possesses a healthy and productive self-love:

Love of man is not, as is frequently supposed, an abstraction coming after the love for a specific person, but it is its premise, although, genetically, it is acquired in loving specific individuals.

From this it follows that my own self, in principle, must be as much an object of my love as another person: The affirmation of one's own life, happiness, growth, freedom, is rooted in one's capacity to love, i.e., in care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. If an individual is able to love productively, he loves himself too; if he can love only others, he can not love at all.

. . . The selfish person is interested only in himself, wants everything for himself, feels no pleasure in giving, but only in taking . . . he lacks interest in the needs of others, and respect for their dignity and integrity . . . he is basically unable to love.<sup>20</sup>

Fromm goes on to point out that selfishness and self-love, contrary to

the common fallacy, are actually opposites:

The selfish person does not love himself too much but too little; in fact he hates himself. This lack of fondness and care for himself, which is only one expression of his lack of productiveness, leaves him empty and frustrated. He is necessarily unhappy and anxiously concerned to snatch from life the satisfactions which he blocks himself from attaining. He seems to care too much for himself but actually he only makes an unsuccessful attempt to cover up and compensate for his failure to care for his real self. . . . It is true that selfish persons are incapable of loving others, but they are not capable of loving themselves either.

Hawkes is at pains to establish Hugh's morality as puritanical and unfulfilling; yet it is in his somewhat satanic quest for the chastity belt and his determined use of it that Hugh evolves fully as an unsympathetic character. During the meeting between him and Cyril in the grape arbour Hugh truly exposes his degradation. This lengthy scene (by far the longest at 31 pages) treats Fiona's frustration at Hugh's sexual refusals, Cyril's discovery of the belt on Catherine, the climactic meeting between Hugh and Cyril, Cyril's removal of the belt and, finally, Fiona's fulfillment; in this way, the grape arbour portion is strategically situated in the structural centre of this symmetrical episode.

Beginning by gloating over his own cunning, Hugh reveals his "idealism" for what it is: a superficial disguise for masking feelings of self-pity, inadequacy and selfishness. Just how shallow Hugh's idealism actually is can be seen by comparing his response to Cyril at one point to his actions immediately following their conversation. Hugh is adamant as he replies to Cyril's efforts to "reassure him to accept the arrangement which would make Fiona his mistress: "'There's nothing you can say. Nothing'" (247). Yet Hugh seemingly heads directly from the arbour to Fiona's bed and from there to a place of apparent permanence in the completed quaternion. However, Hugh's behaviour after the meeting with Cyril

only serves to point out the extent to which he is ruled by his repressive needs as, far from "completing Love's natural structure" (260), Hugh "is still at the mercy of his inner and thoroughly isolated sexual life,"<sup>22</sup> and the bizarre manner of his death reinforces this.

It is while at the mercy of repressive sexual forces that Hugh has his "accident" in his photography studio. Few readers would be apt to respond so violently against Cyril if Hugh had not died. Hawkes remarks that he deliberately misled the reader by attempting to inculcate Cyril in the "accident," making it look like a suicide and, consequently, a "moral judgment" on him.<sup>23</sup> In fact, Hugh's death is almost inevitable given his precarious way of achieving sexual release (268). Symbolically, his death reinforces and gives final meaning to a host of death images and associations connected with him throughout the novel. That Hugh is "the man who died for love" is ironic though consistent with the inverted use of Christian symbolism in The Blood Oranges.<sup>24</sup> It also suggests paradox in Cyril's terms, for love is always a creative force in Illyria, not something which can be renounced in this way. Conversely, Cyril reveals himself as the man who lives for Love, who, as an embodiment of Eros, throughout his life has "simply appeared at Love's will" (2).

The link between sexuality and death in the novel is forged largely through the character of Hugh and through the further association Hawkes makes between Hugh and the repressive and repressed inhabitants of the region--of whom Rosella is a fit representative--those "whose origins lie in historical darkness" (68). Hugh's expeditions are, invariably, into a heart of darkness, whether to photograph a peasant nude in a darkened barn; to descend to the depths of a ruined fortress or to conduct a ritualistic burial of a dead dog. Hugh is accustomed to keeping the shutters of his

studio perpetually closed, and Cyril and Fiona discover him dead in the "brutal darkness" of his studio (265). The squat church where Cyril sees the wooden arm, explicitly linked to Hugh, is "dungeonlike" with "rude rectangular holes" for windows (18). Rosella is Hugh's last peasant nude and a virgin who spurns all lovers; she is like Hugh in the repression of her sexual self. Not only is she metaphorically associated with darkness but scenes where she is prominent take place at night or in the dark (49, 61, 94).

In the scene which describes the group's descent into the fortress, the associations among darkness and decay, sacrifice and sexual repression cohere and reinforce one another in what becomes defined as an internalized quest. Since this scene is critical to a proper understanding of Hugh's character, particularly as he embodies the forces of anti-art in the novel, it will be examined in detail. Early in this excursion Cyril identifies the ruined fortress with "the dark caves of the heart" and "Self-imprisonment" (189). Previously, Cyril had associated the "ruined penitential structure" with disorder, "as if the clearly visible iron base and broken stones and streaks of lichen were portentous, related in some way to our presently idyllic lives" (118). The fortress becomes immediately linked to Hugh, who proposes an expedition there in the future. Its description also recalls the earlier scene in which Hugh is compared to "some fallen stone figure sandblasted, so to speak, by centuries of cruel weather" (84). The imagistic link between Hugh as he masturbates in the crab grass and the fallen fortress already associates the building with repressed sexuality, and Cyril remarks that "a ruined fortress was not a safe place for a man like Hugh" (118). Still, Cyril is able to impose order for now, and the tapestry remains secure, despite Hugh's partial exclusions from



the "sacred circle."

With the fortress in the distance, Cyril can sustain harmony; however, as they make their approach to the ruined structure, Cyril feels that they are leaving the secure borders of Illyria behind to encounter "severance, isolation. . . world of blue sky, black sea, penitential fortress" (190). Cyril again exhibits his need for order as he urges the group to stay together, but Hugh has already moved far ahead, taking Fiona with him. Momentarily, they converge to study some graffiti which, at first, Cyril assumes he will be able to interpret. But Cyril is only adept in the language of Illyria where "even the dialogue of the frogs is rapturous" (1). The "large and undecipherable signs" on the walls are "private sex legends," not universalized declarations of love. Surmising their repressive nature, Cyril takes them to be "appeals to big-boned virginal women," "songs to a young girl" or "ribald declarations of one grizzled fisherman's love for another and much younger fisherman" (190). Given their content, perhaps Hugh is their more fit interpreter; however, Hugh has moved on again, drawn irrevocably to the heart of his "compulsive quest" (189).

As the expedition continues, the mental states of the four characters undergo changes. Catherine and Fiona become aware that Hugh is denying them something, Cyril experiences mixed feelings toward the expedition, and Hugh becomes so fixed and obsessed in his quest that the feelings of others are completely discounted. Catherine's resignation eventually gives way to frustration and annoyance. She complains of claustrophobia inside the fortress and accuses Hugh of being selfish: "'Hugh's not about to change his mind. He'll deny us the same way he denies the children'" (198). Fiona, at first, seems enthusiastic but then becomes bored and expresses

her desire to go swimming. Cyril's "empathy" with Hugh remains strong until the point when he recalls a "trivial morning incident" about Hugh which he believes, in some obscure way, might explain his present behaviour (198-9). At first, Cyril ironically assumes that the expedition was motivated by "'Hugh's rather boyish interest in old fortresses'" so they all become "like a bunch of kids" in their desire for adventure (191, 199).

However, Hugh tersely contradicts Cyril's remark concerning the apparently innocent nature of the expedition, saying ambiguously that he dreamed of an object within the fortress. From this point on until they reach the bottom of the shaft, Hugh's silence along with his pronounced unconcern for others (he takes little care to direct others safely with his torch and he barely responds when Fiona falls) convey his total immersion in his dream. The dream allusion recalls the earlier episode describing Hugh's photographic expedition "into the old world of 'sex'" (60); Cyril notes at this point that Hugh seems to be "struggling against the sudden unreasonable dictates of his dream" (64).

Hugh isolates himself from others in the "intensity of [his] descent" into his unconscious, sexual being. Symbolically, Hugh's quest is completely unlike other expeditions undertaken in the novel during which the members, usually with the exception of Hugh, celebrate sexuality and achieve a spiritual community in the process. Hugh's quest becomes an effort of "his clearly secret self" to destroy the purity of the quaternion, "to bury our love in the bottom of this dismal place and in some cul-de-sac, so to speak, of his own regressive nature" (196). The discovery of the object of Hugh's quest at the bottom of the shaft in the innermost recesses of the structure signals the spiritual death of the group, and this is implicit in Catherine's comment that they are "'Buried . . . Buried alive'" (202).

During the descent, Hugh's psychic sterility is revealed through images of decay, sacrifice and sexuality. The presence of "obstacles to passage" blocking the "dark mouth" of the entrance suggests that the area they are about to enter is one of forbidden sexuality. The imagery suggests deprivation and torture, and there is a foreshadowing here of the chastity belt itself which has a similar function of denying access: "briars clotting the entrance way, the ringbolts and fallen rock, the iron bars driven into the rounded arch and now bent aside" (191). After proceeding through the entrance which was "low and rounded and deep" they find themselves surrounded by walls with small openings leading to a "labyrinth of pits and tunnels." The sense of oppression intensifies as decay is manifested everywhere--inside and outside the fortress. Its walls have been scorched by fire, "streaked and seared with enormous swatches of unnatural color": "intestinal" pinks, "lurid" oranges and "lifeless" purples (192). Weeds and bird droppings encrust the fallen pediments. The scene of devastation provokes Cyril's ironic recollection of the lost Illyria: "No juice of the growing fruit, that's for sure." Fiona, committed to Hugh's expedition at this point, finds the remark "cryptic" and even Catherine censures him (192). As they continue, feeling the "leprous masonry" with their hands, they are confronted by the smell of human excrement (194). Cyril, however, is still "partially willing to forego my kind of pleasure for [Hugh's]" (193), unaware that Hugh's pleasure will involve depriving them of the opportunity for sexual expression; today Hugh intends that "there would be no hugging and kissing" (202). Cyril supposes that Hugh will want to explore the tower but, characteristically, Hugh inclines towards depths, and so they make their way through a "cold, tight, irregular doorless opening"--a symbolic equivalent to the vagina; the first two adjectives

suggest virginal entry. Cyril takes the torch from the rucksack and hands the phallic object to Hugh, an action which symbolizes the unconscious transfer of sexual control from the champion of Love to Love's denier. The torch is a "long-handled affair that was obviously filled with greenish and partially corroded batteries"; these generate the "weak beams" they use to proceed along the "narrow corridor" with its "slick invisible walls" (194).

It is significant that with Fiona's fall she becomes Hugh's sacrificial victim, as she is the victim, as well, of his sexual refusals. Cyril's image of Fiona lying on her back "like the remains of some lady saint stretched head to toe on her tomb" (201) recalls the scene in the squat church where Fiona crouches over the skeleton of a child and kisses the skull (19-20). There a revivification process seems about to occur as Fiona's life-giving qualities are displayed. In the later scene, death and life have been inverted with the recognition that Hugh is capable of transforming Fiona "into a lifeless and sainted fixture in his mental museum" (201). The consequence, once again, is to connect Hugh's repressive sexuality with death, an association strengthened through inverted Christian symbolism. Significantly, the response Hugh makes to this sexual temptation is to begin a fanatical search for the chastity belt by exploring a "hole in the cavern floor" with his torch:

In the midst of this pulpy refuse, he had poked with the torch itself until we heard the dull yet tinny sound of metal on metal, had thrust down the head of the torch and hooked what he was looking for and slowly, in rigid triumph, had raised the unmistakable object of his lonely search (204).

Cyril feels he is, in some sense, an accomplice in Hugh's discovery of the belt, one who "shared with Hugh clear-knowledge of the [belt] . . . as if I myself had sought it and found it and inflicted it on the four

of us" (203-4). In a similar sense, Skipper refers to himself as "phantom accomplice" to his father's suicide in Second Skin. In neither case should these admissions be misconstrued as acknowledgments of guilt. In the course of their involvement with others, both Skipper and Cyril confront situations which compel them to consider and even to take on partial identities which oppose their own life-views. They come face to face with a destructiveness inherent in Man--a universal urge toward annihilation (of self or sexual self)--and may come to enlarge their capacity for human knowledge and understanding in the process. In being an "accomplice" in his father's death, Skipper feels the need for absolution, for a form of beneficial and life-giving action to counter the "seeds of death" from the bathroom explosion. And so Skipper's wandering isle represents a release from the real world, a place of paradisaic calm and content which follows suffering. It balances Miranda's island and repairs the damage done by the past--the suicides of Skipper's father, wife and daughter--leaving us with a sense that life's struggles can lead somewhere, that the positive potential existing within the individual is capable of realization. Cyril's Illyria is not "justified" in the sense that it is the "earned" end-product of a ceaseless striving against hostile forces, both human and natural. While Cyril's paradise is, undeniably, an act of will, Skipper's could almost be said to be additionally an act of grace.

It could be justifiably argued that Cyril's narrative represents, in part, an attempt at achieving "absolution." Cyril's function in contributing to Hugh's death may be larger than we suppose. In the end, we have only Cyril's word that Hugh's death was accidental and not motivated by the despair of a man driven to force a chastity belt on his wife or driven to infidelity. Cyril does not know prior to Hugh's death, of course,

of his use of the rope to attain sexual release, so we may wonder why he and Fiona should be so concerned when Hugh is absent from his villa. At that time Cyril anticipates Hugh's death, and Fiona reassures him: "'Fiona,' I said clearly and gently, 'I'm not to blame. . . .' 'I'm not blaming you, baby. How could I'" (264). After the discovery, Cyril still insists: "'At least it was an accident. . . .' 'For God's sake, I understand'" (268). Cyril, perhaps, should have been aware of Hugh's desperation during their meeting in the grape arbour.

The action in the present may also point to this need for absolution. Cyril recognizes as part of his role in the present to reassure Catherine that he was not the cause of the disaster, as she believed he was. He can only do this by "explaining Hugh's death," not only to Catherine but to the reader as well. This entails much more than a recounting of the apparent circumstances of Hugh's death; it also involves a careful reconstruction of the immediate past and of Hugh's character as he perceived it. Even though Cyril's narrative may be somewhat coloured by Hugh's later actions, it is clear that Hugh is a man consumed by fear and jealousies and reigned over by repressive urges. As Cyril was pursuing "sensuous rationality among the bright leaves" (203), Hugh was, all the while, "obviously determined to fill our days . . . with . . . the obscure tensions of his own unnecessary misery" (86), his "self-created pain" (174). It becomes apparent through the dialogue between Cyril and Hugh in the grape arbour that Hugh's first and overriding concern is for himself and not his marriage or his wife. Finally, in defeat, Hugh gives way to abasement and self-pity: "'So I don't count. Don't count at all'" (248); "'You've got your manhood . . . Let me have mine. . ..'" (249). At last, he moans, "'I'm not worth it boy. Not worth it. . . . I'm losing out all around,

don't you see'" (250). Indeed, the death-force is "losing out" as the "ruined" harbour is once again regaining signs of life: "There was a sweetness on the night air that engulfed my cologne, Hugh was behind me" (252-3). As Cyril returns to Catherine, the darkness which was beginning to beset Illyria is dissipating, "And already the seeds of dawn were planted in the night's thigh" (253); sexual rebirth becomes a vital possibility.

### "Realities of the Imagination"

Through its narrator, The Blood Oranges offers an insight into the imaginative being and the transmuting power of metaphoric thought. Nearly all images in the outer world for Cyril have a close bearing on the imaginative self. Occasionally in Second Skin we see a fusion of landscape and inner being, but in The Blood Oranges landscape or an object in the landscape seldom exists independent of self; it is usually transformed in some way. Sometimes, Cyril uses the word "reality" to suggest his distance from a scene or object. For example, the bus which becomes lodged in the canal the day the couples meet "was more real" to Cyril when he sees it on a later visit to Hugh's studio than "the one I remembered" (173). The actions of time in the real world on the bus have altered it the way the imagination would never do. In the early scene, Cyril is involved and implicated in the events, but later he is simply a passive witness to the continuing presence of the rusted vehicle; he merely perceives it. Similarly, during the descent into the fortress, Cyril pauses to view the sea at a distance, commenting on the "all-too-real surface" of "the inaccessible water" (197); at this point, the swimming party is a long way off. Cyril sometimes feels an antipathy for that which is real as Skipper prefers the

imaginatively reconstructed version of his mother's death to the harsh reality of his father's. Cyril approves of "Fiona's occasional inaccuracy for the sake of a deeper vividness, for the sake of an important mood. Between Fiona's voice and Hugh's sometimes brusque insistence on reality there was, for me, no choice" (138).

This statement could be considered an implicit acknowledgment of indebtedness to Hawthorne or his theory of the art of Romance. The narrator of "The Custom-House" chapter of The Scarlet Letter refers to "details" of everyday life being "invested with a quality of strangeness and remoteness"; the imagination creates "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other."<sup>24</sup> In their concern with "atmospherical medium," Cyril and Fiona characterize themselves as Romance "artists." Hugh, with his appeals to what is "real," typifies the opposite.<sup>25</sup>

Cyril's world--the Illyria of the novel--is metaphorically reinforced, a product of continual associative links between the outer and inner worlds, or "the Actual and the Imaginary." In The Beetle leg, landscape was made to represent a universal psychic state of paralysis and apathy and, in a more limited way, scenes in The Lime Twig and Second Skin serve an expressionistic purpose, too. The relationship between objects in the external world and the inner world of self is not the same in The Blood Oranges. Landscape and setting there form correlatives with the inner world, establishing a nexus of correspondence. It is Cyril's intent to extract what he can from the outer world, thereby enriching the inner one. Cyril often sees "worlds" as interacting with or juxtaposed to each other. The ultimate purpose in such juxtapositions is to enlarge the inner world through the



assimilative powers of the imagination, to make this world more comprehensive through links with the outer world, and in particular, with nature.

There are essentially three methods through which the meaningful internalizations occur in The Blood Oranges: identification or empathy; intrusions into Illyria from outside; and parallels drawn between the two worlds in which metaphors or symbols act as agents of synthesis. Through the empathetic response, Cyril reaches out to establish a bond of identity with someone else. Cyril's relationship with Rosella involves a kind of empathy despite the fact that they cannot communicate verbally. Yet Cyril participates with her in snail-hunting rituals and, after helping Rosella prepare a meal of sparrows, sits down with her to feed on them. The end or goal of empathetic action is to arrive at a unity or oneness, to share a commitment to the point that it becomes truly a mutual one. However, in the snail-hunting episode, Cyril's empathy is a force provoking laughter and is clearly misdirected onto one so oblivious to his attentions. Cyril's readiness and prompt solicitude contribute to the comic design of an episode which burlesques the Illyrian modes of seduction and love-making. The comic tone is pronounced as Cyril has a near encounter with Rosella's "partially exposed buttocks" and insists on seeing this as "a kind of accidental Arcadian embrace" (48). Yet Cyril perseveres in the empathetic response even while he is a comic foil and victim of his own pretensions; he is still able to speculate hopefully on his "re-entry into the pink field" (53), even if he and Rosella are the only figures there.

The dawn hike to their favourite hill provides a more serious instance of empathy. Although the expedition is "Fiona's idea, of course," group empathy is evident in "our desire to please each other, our sense of well-being" (134-5). Cyril's empathy is more crucially tested in the various

expeditions led by Hugh. During the photography trip Cyril is initially reluctant, for he feels that "At best a photograph could result in small satisfaction." Despite this minimal interest, "for Hugh's sake" Cyril welcomes the possible challenges the expedition might bring and the "artfulness my one-armed friend might yet display" (60). He has "faith in Hugh" (63), which is reflected in his "quickenning interest" (70) in Hugh's methods and the peasant girl who serves as the subject. Cyril eventually acknowledges that he "was at last acquiring a more personal understanding of Hugh's photographic collection" (67).

Despite his misgivings concerning the fortress expedition, Cyril is able to feel empathy with Hugh until he becomes conscious of a more sinister purpose behind it. At first, Cyril admits that "Today of all days my empathy with Hugh . . . was fairly strong" (189), and he is "partially willing to forego my kind of pleasure for his" (193). Characteristically, his empathy builds so that even after Hugh retreats inside himself in secret pursuit of his "dream," it is strong and "real enough" to overcome "the little resistances" of his wife and mine" (198). Empathy, even when it is viewed as comic or inappropriate is a positive, constructive force in The Blood Oranges. The desire and ability to identify with another in pursuit of an objective reflect the receptive qualities of the mind seeking harmony through an inner-outer synthesis. Through empathy, Cyril exercises one of his functions as an embodiment of Eros, the human instinct which seeks a union with others.

The second method whereby internalizations occur in The Blood Oranges also relates to Cyril's role as a perpetuator of the life-instinct: his attempt to establish connections with the world around him--in particular, the natural world. It often happens that someone or something from the

outer world intrudes into the consciousness of the group, allowing another kind of synthesis to occur. The incomer may ~~be~~ be an animal which is somehow able to give expression or a sense of coherence to the group's consciousness at that moment. The eagle which appears during one of their morning expeditions assumes a variety of possible "meanings" relative to the group:

But was the bird descending, drawing closer to us, a deliberate herald of the rich desolation that lay before us, fierce bird of prey somehow attracted to large lovers and the cherries in Fiona's bag? Was he singling us out as further confirmation of Fiona's essential soberness and lack of fear, or even as a reminder of the terror that once engulfed the barbarians and from which Hugh, for instance, was still not free? (138-9).

The baby goat which appears somewhat miraculously in an earlier scene manages to confirm the harmony of the group; its nubile energy is discharged through the revitalized behaviour of Hugh and his ordinarily reluctant daughter, Meredith:

Then he sprang, leapt, danced his soaring stiff-legged dance. And while Hugh romped with the goat and I squatted beside the distasteful Eveline, comforting her and helping her climb back into the discarded pants, I glanced up and saw that Meredith had stripped off her modest trunks and halter at last and with both thin arms raised above her head was leaping up and down in the black water (93).

Frequently, the agent of synthesis is a rustic or primitive figure often accompanied by an animal or animals: a shepherd, a goat-girl or the "goat-faced man." These intrusions generally follow a repeated pattern in the episodes where they occur. The outsiders enter near a climactic point. The goat-girl appears immediately following the sunrise and appearance of the eagle, establishing a "correspondence" between two worlds (142); the "goat-faced man" takes charge of the launching of the boat into the water following the arduous procedure of transporting it to the shore from the village; and the shepherd intrudes just as Meredith's dog is to be buried, initially creating further disorder in the group. They leave (the

goat-girl and the "goat-faced man" break contact abruptly) having focused the consciousness of the group and raised it to a higher level than it was before. This consciousness leads the members of the group to be more aware of their closeness to nature and natural beings and often promotes a sexual release (as in the passage above, 93).

Although none of these rustics can communicate verbally with members of the group, they manage to convey their understanding, concern or interest through other more primal means. The goat-girl speaks buoyantly in "barbaric syllables" and uses "girlish pantomime" to communicate "her judgment, her appreciation, her right to associate herself with our mystery, our beauty" (144). The shepherd calmly (but wrongly) appraises the situation and takes control of the burial, solemnly bestowing his sympathy through his actions and unspoken thoughts:

he also knew what it was like to bury children, that only men could work together in the service of death, that death was for men, that now his only interest was in the one-armed man and bare-chested man and the coffin. The rest of it (our wives, our children) meant nothing to him. Only death mattered. He had joined us only because of the coffin (224).

In each instance human bonds are established which are rooted in something deeper than language. Yet the effect of such contacts is not simply to show the underlying humanity that individuals representative of different cultures share; we are made aware not so much of similarities as of differences: "The distance between the goat-girl and singer of sex could not be bridged by a single kiss, prolonged or not, agreeable or not" (145). The purpose, though, is not to bridge the disparity among individuals but to be fully conscious of what any one individual can offer another; receptiveness, again, is involved and the necessity of remaining open to other contacts, particularly with those whose lives lie close to natural law.

Only with the "goat-faced man" are the differences overcome to the point where a "spiritual relationship" is reached (133). The fusion or synthesis is suggested here in the ritual of toasting the boat. The old man himself brings the tray with the "colorless" liquid to Cyril and Catherine:

He extended the tray, raised one shoulder, looked into Catherine's eyes and into mine. Little more than a commonplace event, an instant in time, only a small disreputable old man with a gray shirt ripped open to the waist and partially unbuttoned trousers loose at the large hips. But thanks to his agility and bright blue eyes and stubby fingers, I realized immediately that he was a friendly guide who at a glance had read Catherine's past and mine in the very shape of our middle-aged bodies that were so much larger than his (128-9).

In a sense, Cyril and Catherine are the intruders in this scene but, like the rustics--the goat-girl and shepherd--the deformed villager is a representative of the natural order or law. The goat-faced man exhibits this natural order as he takes command of the white boat, guiding it over the waves. His position of authority in his world resembles Cyril's in Illyria, and he too wrests for it with a representative of the moral order--a priest (127, 130). It is not primarily the old man's authority to which Cyril responds, however, but rather his sexual vitality; he embodies not social or moral authority, but natural authority:

Catherine and I were staring up into the orange brilliance of the old man's aged nakedness, and his shanks were dripping, his buttocks were dripping, his obviously unspent passion was hanging down and rotating loosely like a tongue of flame (133).

Although in life-style and thought those individuals representing a sophisticated society and those representing a primitive one are irreconcilably removed from one another, the spontaneous interchange between them is somehow a source of mutual renewal or creates an atmosphere where renewal becomes possible. It is the contact itself, made significant through the investment of the self, not simply language, which permits the exchange

to be constructive and meaningful.

The third method whereby internalization takes place is through metaphoric associations. Metaphoric thought more than heightens or enriches life in Illyria; it helps to create the conditions through which Illyria is "brought into being." Birds, flowers, statues, trees and luminary orbs are made to serve as mediators between external reality and subjective consciousness, linking together perception and conception. Generally, symbols in The Blood Oranges are connected with nature, as are those outsiders (animal and human) who act as agents suffusing Illyria with their natural being. As manifestations of nature, such symbols bear witness to nature's renewing and regenerating qualities. Cyril's art, more than Skipper's, is closely tied to nature and natural forces.

Cyril is a deliberate symbolizer who uses images symbolically to reinforce connections between the inner and outer worlds. As a conscious symbolizer capable of a lyric intensity, Cyril resembles Melville's Ishmael. Ishmael's intent within his narrative is to effect a fusion of "fact" and "fancy," but he uses a different means for doing so. Factual detail often gives way to flights of fancy as the self imposes an imaginative order on the mundane, routine or ordinary. Ishmael often begins a chapter by describing an activity related to whaling and ends on a metaphorical, speculative level. The transformations are swift with the effect that we are jarred out of our usual planes of thought through the disjunctions which occur.

Cyril does not employ metaphor to transform experience in the same sense. Metaphor does not act on everyday reality in a synthesizing capacity, though a kind of synthesis is achieved. Objects in the outer world are valuable insofar as they may be used to represent or render the inner one.

It is really a question of subordination. In Illyria the imagination reigns unchallenged. The real world does not so much need transformation as connections, for these give it relevance or significance within the context of the fantasy world. Loss of Illyria necessitates a reimmersion in the real world, and Cyril is conscious of his inability to survive there. Reality in The Blood Oranges, as in Lord Jim, is the destructive element, and Hawkes uses an image similar to Conrad's to reinforce this.

Am I embracing air? Could that be all? Is that what it feels like to discover with absolute certainty that you yourself have simply disappeared from the filmy field? (34).

In the section which begins with this passage, Cyril makes a rather Wordsworthian progression in mental states.<sup>27</sup> He begins by questioning his feelings of displacement and loss. The interrogatory tone persists, but a sense of growing confidence begins to emerge until Cyril finally is able to reaffirm his belief: "I am a match, I hope, for the hatred of conventional enemies wherever they are" (36).

After Hugh's death and the consequent dissolution of Illyria, Cyril continues to manifest his faith that "paradise" can be regained. If he cannot restore the past he can, at least, through metaphoric associations, indulge his expectations of the future. Watching two birds copulating on a wall (the wall surrounding and cutting off Eden?), Cyril believes them to be "a sign, an emblem, a mysterious medallion, a good omen" of Catherine's recovery and a continuance of their relationship (15). The sensual experience of kissing the mimosa tree conjures up intimations of a future sexual relationship with Rosella: "Perhaps I shall turn out to be Rosella's mimosa tree as well as her white beast" (55). "Mimos" derives from "mimus," meaning "actor," and in this curious episode, the tree itself is a kind of surrogate for a female figure. Perhaps that figure is Rosella, for Cyril only makes

the explicit link with his illiterate maid. On the other hand, the physical description of the "encounter" suggests Fiona: Cyril refers to the tree's "particular depth of yellow" (54), and yellow is Fiona's colour (20, 271). Just as Hugh acknowledges the sexual meaning of the grape-tasting game (186), so Cyril confesses, largely through the imagery, the sexual intent of the kiss; in fact, the "passionate kiss" reminds him of the grape-tasting game (54). The tree may symbolically portray simply Woman herself and comically reinforce his claim that "I have never denied a woman young or old" (2). At first, the tree acts as a temptress, seducing him into a "sexual" encounter:

I stopped, reconsidered, turned to the mimosa tree, and with nothing more than a mild and rational interest in this sudden burgeoning, approached the tree and found myself standing unusually close to its silent flowering. Actually, at that moment one of the yellow clumps was already brushing against my vest. I stood there thinking of the delicate structure of so much airy growth and admiring this particular depth of yellow. I was alone; the sun had warmed the tree, the tree was full throated; I began to smell its gentle scent (54).

Now conscious of the eroticism of the flowering tree, Cyril begins his pseudo-sexual contact by "thrusting" his hands and face into "the vulnerable yellow substance" with "tenderness" until the blossoms "yield" against his lips. At the climax Cyril "stops breathing" and feels "against all the most sensitive membranes of tongue and oral cavity . . . the yellow fuzzy pressure of the flowering tree" (54). The irony may be that the mimosa tree is sometimes considered a symbol of Platonic love,<sup>28</sup> and, as such, the encounter may suggest a desire which is incapable of attainment, foreshadowing his "sexless matrimony" with Catherine, perhaps, or Rosella's rejection of "all lovers," including Cyril.

The language of Illyria is, in good part, a symbolic, unspoken language where virtually every "gesture [is] informed with its own hidden



sense" (38-9). This is why Cyril despairs that Hugh will "ever learn" (92) and berates him for "not holding up his end" (42), for failing to respond to the imperatives implicit in the design. The landscape of Illyria is, then, populated with potential symbols, affording Cyril with meaningful connections between the two worlds. Among these images are those of circularity, fecundity and sexuality. In one way or another, most symbols in the novel can be classified as belonging to one of these three closely intertwined image patterns. Weaving a constant thread throughout the novel is the tapestry image which serves as a symbol both of Cyril's narrative art and a benevolent equivalent to the mythological Fates who spin the thread of life.

The circle image suggests the operation of the life-force in Illyria, conveying continuity and permanence through the rhythm of recurrences and renewals. Many scenes, particularly those where harmony prevails, are set during sunrise or sunset. The sun itself becomes the focus at times, bestowing unity on the group and manifesting its transformational powers. The sun could be considered as a symbol for the imagination, then, as it was for the Romantic poets, a creative force which heightens and alters consciousness: "it was the sun, the sun alone that filled all our thoughts and was turning the exposed skin of all four bodies the same deepening color" (38). Water in The Blood Oranges often connotes sexuality, as it does in The Beetle Leg. The foul, dank waters of the canal suggest the repressed sexuality of the natives of the region while the sea itself suggests sexuality without constraints. The sunset over water in the boat-launching episode "turned time itself into a diffusion of thick erotic color" (132). The union of sun and water is described in sexual terms: "The orange sun descended, the open sea undulated in slow fleshy waves" (130).

Significantly, this union prefigures the beginnings of the renewed relationship between Cyril and Catherine. Cyril is also implicitly associated with the sun as he is described as "blond" and "god-like" (7) and is connected with golden objects (such as his eyeglasses) and the colour gold: Hugh "was black while I was gold" (118).

Circularity also conveys a particular intrinsic relationship with the immediate past. While the pattern of the narrative is linear in Second Skin, it is circular here. Cyril attempts to recover the past through writing about it; Skipper recites his past largely in order to justify his present, to free himself from memory. The embodiment of the past in the present is a constant preoccupation of Cyril's. His "interest in coherence and full circles" (225) is demonstrated in his preservation of circular "relics"--mementoes of a past which can be ordered and perhaps restored (271). Cyril is often reminded of an image in the past recurring in some form in the present, and this affirms his belief that cycles are an inherent part of existence. Recalling the day of their meeting, Cyril asks Catherine if the scene on the beach during the boat-launching reminds her of anything (127, 130); later, he urges, "'Doesn't it remind you of a wedding'" (131). In one episode, Cyril lies awake pondering when in the past he experienced the sensations he is presently feeling (96). As Cyril helps to lower the dog's coffin into the hole prepared for it, he is again reminded of the earlier scene of the rescue from the floundering bus (225).

A possible sub-classification of circle imagery would include incomplete circles or circles which enclose and cut off, where renewal is no longer possible: the chastity belt and the rope with which Hugh accidentally hangs himself are examples of the latter. Hugh's unwillingness makes the group's "sacred circle" "forever metaphysical" (118). Until the appearance

of the shepherd in the scene of the dog's burial, the group lacks order; they are confused and stand uncertainly in a "semicircle" around the grave (218). A more subtle disunity is suggested in the image of Catherine and Cyril as "the two halves of the ancient fruit together but unjoined" (126).

The circle image may also combine with images of fertility or fecundity to suggest fullness or completion--an exalted state of being possible in Illyria. In the grape arbour, Cyril is "crowned with fruit" (109) and as "the flower god at play" amid the fig trees he weaves for himself a kingly yellow wreath (165). Images of fecundity are often closely tied to sexual imagery. In general, positive sexual images take the form of references to vegetable or animal life: grapes, lemons, oranges, birds, goats, rabbits and flowers. Images of negative or repressed sexuality take inanimate forms, and are invariably linked to Hugh: the wooden arm, camera lenses, the torch used to explore the fortress and, of course, the fortress itself. As in Second Skin, positive images are usually drawn from nature, and they are consequently disassociated from the more overtly phallic images denoting sterile, unproductive sexuality.

From the extensive and intricate network of symbols and imagery it is possible to extract two images of unquestioned symbolic importance but complex implications. Both the image of the cistern and that of the hermaphrodite statue appear in the episode describing the visits Cyril and Catherine make to familiar "landmarks." The theme of this section could be summed up in the phrase "landscape of old deaths and fresh possibilities" (167), for it considers the possibilities of sexual and spiritual rebirth through a fusion which is sexual and artistic in essence.

In classical Freudian terms, the cistern can be considered a symbol of the vagina while the pear tree which grows out of it represents the

male phallus; thus, the image presents a true fusion of sexual identities. Yet the tree's "heroic" nature, without doubt, involves more than what is conveyed through this symbolism. Its "heroism" resides in its innate striving to surmount the conditions which gave rise to it. In terms of the imaginative being, these strivings reflect the attempts of the creative self to transcend the world of decay and disintegration; they may represent Cyril's efforts to revive the fantasy world of Illyria after its dissolution. The imagination is seen here as a tree which "has burst the masonry" and "now flowers high above the large ragged hole its green head once forced through the blanket of hard tile" (168). The image, then, presents us with a kind of dialogue between the Illyrian imagination and the world of external reality which it both depends on and transcends. Similarly, it is possible to conceive of the cistern as representing the raw materials of the unconscious mind transformed by the imagination into the burgeoning tree of art.

The statue is interchangeably male or female depending on whether a "missing part" is inserted or removed. The gender which the statue assumes for any individual in the group becomes relative to the observer's own gender: Hugh and Cyril see it as a girl; Catherine and Fiona "prefer" it as a boy. Through differing modes of perception the statue presents a fusion of sexual identities, and it is only "complete" as art when both sides of it are apprehended. Cyril describes the dilapidated condition of the statue with its "deteriorating" stone, broken or cracked limbs and missing head all "covered with a leprous pink skin of dust" (160). Yet in spite of the ravages done by time, the statue conveys an "erotic power," "some secret design . . . brilliant and . . . ravaging guile" (170). The source of its "grace and power" lies in its sexual mystery, its appeal to

the unconscious self, which seeks an ideal sexual union. Whether it acts on an ancient statute or on the novel's four characters, all of whom are well past their prime, time seems to have little power against the transforming force of the imagination.

#### "Intended Symmetries"

The circle images and the symbolic fusions referred to in the episode dealing with old "landmarks" illustrate the operation of the law of harmony in Illyria. All things cohere in the willingness of the narrator to have them do so. Cyril's "omniscience" (92) within the fantasy world allows him to see harmonious relationships, correspondences and fusions. Cyril claims to "complete the picture" (2) and, because the boundaries of Illyria are "circumscribed" in the manner he sets forth, he can do just that. In essence, Illyria is a personal vision, not a collective one, though, importantly, its limits extend beyond the self. Cyril announces that he is the group's "conscience and consciousness" (134), implying that he both orders and applies values to existence. Though casually alluded to, this claim is not gratuitous. As his name signifies, Cyril is the "lord" over all matter in Illyria, and can thus justify his claim.

The process of fusion and convergence lies at the imaginative centre of The Blood Oranges. Illyria evolves out of a particular consciousness of design, a concern with structure that is analogous to artistic creation. Cyril is an artist in the Hawkesian mold with a certain ruthless, serene detachment towards the materials of his art but a firm dedication to its purpose and a commitment to carrying it out. Consequently, Cyril can rigorously, sometimes clinically, distinguish between himself and Hugh, the tormented, self-sacrificing "artist." "The nausea, the red eyes, the lips white in blind grief and silent hate, these may have been the external's

of a pain that belonged to Hugh but never once to me. Hugh's pain perhaps. Not mine" (57).

The law of harmony and principle of fusion operating in Illyria extend to the characters. While Second Skin focuses essentially on one individual whose inner conflicts are elaborated through encounters with others, the arrangement of characters in The Blood Oranges suggests a different means for conflicts to be revealed. Hawkes and several critics have stressed the polarities between Cyril and Hugh, Fiona and Catherine. The four characters may be considered to compose a total personality which is continually undergoing change as it reacts to different pressures, comes under the sway of one dominant aspect or another.

When each person is in accord with the consciousness of the group and freely expressing that consciousness through his own individuality, harmony prevails. At such times, they all "fit together like the shapely pieces of a perfectly understandable puzzle" (88). Cyril often expresses harmony through images of joining or fusion. He may see "two lovers joined by their shiny burden" (213) or two sets of lovers united: "Hugh and Fiona came out shoulder to shoulder and with their hands full of Fiona's crockery, Catherine and I stepped forward with our arms about each other's waists" (261). Cyril often depicts the group's unity through geometric metaphors: they resemble "a four-pointed human starfish" (37), a "four-pointed constellation" (157), or "[constitute] the four major points of the compass oddly compressed, distorted, oddly disarrayed" (135). In this last image, the irregular shape of the group's formation suggests tension beneath the surface; this soon becomes more clearly articulated as Fiona reveals her particular need for silence which creates an imbalance in the consciousness of the group. But on another occasion, Cyril emphasizes the grace and

uniformity of the group as they move at a leisurely pace through the water:

All four of us side by side in an undulating line of naked bathers peaceful, untiring, synchronized. . . . Four large human porpoises similarly disposed and holding formation (229).

In Illyria, the laws of the real world are often replaced by some form of "magic" and metamorphoses. All the characters possess some magical article or part: Cyril and Fiona have "magic pants" (74); Hugh's injured arm extracts an "odd magic" (64) while Cyril perceives a mystical connection (presumably sexual) between that arm and the wooden arm in the church: "it was in my power to lead them [Hugh and Fiona] both to the exact spot where his missing arm was hidden" (32). On their wedding night, Fiona speaks "magic words" to Cyril, urging him to be a "sex-singer" (97); even Catherine is given "magical" rabbits with "curative powers" which appear to aid in her recovery (79). Cyril calls the time when he first sees her with the rabbits "the moment of transformation" (78). "Another moment of metamorphosis" occurs as the four swimmers reach the shore of the "timeless island" (230). Fiona is called "'Circe'" (73), presumably not only because she "tempts" Hugh but also on account of her "transformational powers" (104). The shepherd girl knows "that the affinities between certain men and certain animals were to be respected" (145), for there is a fundamental unity among all life in Illyria; nature and life-forms themselves may undergo some form of metamorphosis:

. . . cold dawn had given way to hot morning, the sun had yielded to light, the eagle had flown off only to return to us as a flock of long-haired semidomesticated animals (140).

As ordinary cause and effect breaks down in Illyria (as it sometimes does on Skipper's wandering isle), there is a general sense of mystery or bafflement regarding occurrences in the outer world. Cyril often rejects the obvious in favour of the obscure. The trivial or meaningless may

suddenly be examined in light of some meaning because the inner self is always attempting to impose meaning on outer reality. Thus, as Cyril hurries with Fiona to Hugh's studio, he notices the wind: "Why wind? Where was it coming from? How could it blow with so much power and yet no direction?" (263).

Cyril's questioning of the external world is unlike Skipper's, whose naive interrogations often belie his understanding of a situation. If it is not possible for Cyril to integrate consciousness and perception then meaning becomes lost for him. He cannot find consequence in things without first finding connections between them. Cyril possesses the imaginative power to order experience, and we see this in his efforts to give coherence to the incident of the bus afloat in the canal. Perceived from the "outside," the scene is comically absurd, a Conradian picture of human inefficiency and futility during a crisis. Cyril dismisses details with a lack of concern or with impatience:

The pigeons, of course, were small and sweet and serene, while the helpless crowd and remnant of the fire brigade were clumsy, violent. But what of Fiona and me? In all their shock and fear, did those in the bus give a passing thought to Fiona and me? (26).

What is important in the scene, says Cyril, are Fiona's efforts on behalf of the bus's occupants, and he speculates: "might not the power of Fiona's psyche have been as much responsible as anything else for the continued presence of the motorbus on the viscous surface of the historically significant canal?" (27). Cyril claims that he also was instrumental in the rescue, a kind of divine agent, for he "was picked out of the crowd, so to speak, as the man with the authority to receive survivors" (33).

The boat-launching scene in the present time is similarly constructed and has other parallels with the episode of the bus. There, too, Cyril finds himself witnessing the clamour and the largely unsuccessful endeavours of a



group of villagers. Instead of rescuing a stranded bus from water, they are preparing to haul a boat into the water; a rescue has become an inaugural rite. As in the earlier scene with the bus, external details recede, "as if all those other sounds (water, music, laborious breathing, grinding of wood on wood) were only a silence for me to fill or existed only that Catherine and I might listen more attentively to what each of us had to say" (131). Again, Cyril feels his own "priority" in the scene, a position which he shares this time with Catherine instead of Fiona and extends to a third symbolic figure: "that white boat was moving only for the sake of Catherine, me, and for one agile and ageless village elder obviously deformed at birth" (130).

Cyril often addresses the question of the influence of consciousness on the outer world--an inversion of the relationship we usually perceive. Such inversions, though, become speculative possibilities when pre-eminence is given to consciousness, language and metaphoric devices as a means of presenting consciousness. In one instance, a metamorphosis of the symbolic into the literal takes place as an actual goat materializes from "the little invisible white goat" of Cyril's thoughts. He considers that "one of my speechless creatures of joy and sentiment [might have] torn itself loose from the tapestry that only I could see" (93), thereby becoming a physical manifestation of the Illyrian vision. But there is a difference between the creature conjured up by Cyril's imagination and the real animal: the literal goat is of a different order from the one which "had danced among us in my mind," and its muted off-white colouring differentiates it from the symbolic animal.

#### "Fresh Possibilities"

The danger of dissolution and disintegration exists in Cyril's

"paradise" because the foundations are built upon the variable determinants of human behaviour: emotional and motive forces. Skipper's paradise is, after all, a rather static place. He has achieved stability and the power to order existence through love. The reader may be assured that Skipper has attained the happiness he has so ardently striven for, but what is absent, from the reader's perspective, is relevance. No matter how willing we are to admit to Skipper's "triumph" over his antagonists and the forces of evil, the victory becomes at least partly pyrrhic when we consider that this "triumph" necessitated Skipper's removal or escape from the conditions of everyday reality--from the reader's world, in effect. And, although the ending of Second Skin is idyllic and everything points to permanence, in life even the triumphs of the imagination are subject to the actions of time. Although Skipper may feel as though he were in his "prime"--he refers to his age in an apparent defiance of time--his final words, like those of Prospero, are filled with allusions to passing time: he refers to a "half-burned candle," to "insects sweating out the night," the cyclic recurrences of evening and dawn (S.S., 210).

To some extent, Cyril's enemy is time even more than Skipper's; yet in The Blood Oranges, Hawkes takes us beyond the state of apparent or metaphoric timelessness which characterizes Second Skin. The actions of time impose harsh imperatives on all the main characters in The Blood Oranges, severing their unity: Catherine suffers a mental breakdown; Fiona departs indefinitely with the children; Hugh dies, and Cyril is left trying to repair the "tapestry" which is all but in shreds. Yet there is a strong hope for renewal in spite of the devastation caused by Hugh's death: Catherine begins a process of recovery and comes to live with Cyril in a state of "sexless matrimony" which, nonetheless, shows signs of becoming

more like their previous intimacy; the hope remains strong that Fiona's departure was not "a finality" and that someday she "would simply come looking for us through the funeral cypresses" (212). Her departure could be seen as a renewal, also, in that her new role is that of a mother to Meredith and the twins. Perhaps there is hope that under Fiona's guardianship Meredith will not grow up like her father.

On one level, The Blood Oranges deals with the cycle of life where the possibilities of renewal never seem exhausted; but, on another, it admits to the diminishing vitality of the cycle in the course of perpetuation and recurrences, to the entropic nature of life itself as it proceeds toward death. In other words, it considers the inevitability of the destructive as well as the constructive aspects of the cycle, throwing the emphasis, perhaps, on the regenerative side, while the other two novels of the triad emphasize the degenerative side. Cyril's three "relics" reflect both extremes of the life-cycle. The fact that he includes the chastity belt among the more positive items suggests his acknowledgment of the degenerative and destructive sides. The other two "relics" similarly convey the destructive aspects of the cycle, for the crown of flowers is "dried out" and in the "sagging pants" is suggested an absence of vitality. Yet, as relics in the almost religious sense that Cyril intends, they embody inherent and permanent spiritual truths in the eyes of the "worshipper." By "restoring" Illyria, Cyril hopes to reanimate these last two objects by breathing into them the breath of creative power.

Classical comedy has always emphasized life and love, or Eros, in the face of death, ruination and disaster, whereas tragedy has, of course, traditionally been concerned with Thanatos--man's mortality in the midst of life. Yet comedy is seldom reluctant to confront death or to see it

as part of life. Death overshadows The Tempest, both as an illusion (Ferdinand believes all the others are dead, the court party believes he is dead) and as a potential Actuality (Antonio and Sebastian are at the point of killing Alonso and Gonzalo, Caliban and his drunken friends plot to kill Prospero). At the end, when harmony is restored and the comic spirit approaches its zenith, Prospero announces his plans to return to Milan, at which time "Every third thought shall be my grave."<sup>29</sup> Twelfth Night is not one of Shakespeare's "dark" comedies, yet it too begins with intimations of death: Olivia is grieving over a lost brother while Viola and Sebastian, separated by a shipwreck, each believe the other dead. Classical comedy, then, tacitly accepts the presence of death while carrying us out of disorder, darkness and fragmentation into the light of the oneness of the human community. Perhaps, in this sense, Second Skin, despite its horror and grotesque elements, lies closer to pure comedy and the comic pattern, for there we see clearly the emergence of harmony and order out of the chaos of the past.

The Blood Oranges both reaffirms the comic vision on one level and, on the other, partially supplants it with a more sober vision, an Unamuno-like spirit encompassing the awareness of death. The temporal dislocations in The Blood Oranges tend to have a reverse effect from those occurring in Second Skin. In the latter book, "future" time points toward Skipper's restitution on Kate's island while in The Blood Oranges, "future" dislocations anticipate Hugh's death and the disintegration of the union which once existed. There is a similar sense in The Blood Oranges in which Cyril arranges scenes in such a way as to suggest an illusory comfort or security in the past (rather than in the present as in Second Skin). For example, he chooses to present the climactic scene of Hugh's discovery of the belt

between two brief but harmonious scenes. His artistic design points toward the affirmation of Illyria, whereas the underlying chronological design points toward Illyria's dissolution.

In the divergent moods that they encompass, each novel appears to move through different modes. Second Skin progresses from comedy-spring to romance-summer. The wandering isle is a place of wish-fulfillment, and Skipper tends to portray his life there romantically. The terms in which he speaks of his "victory" over Miranda, his "old antagonist," suggest that he conceives of his life's struggles as a basic contest between good and evil in which "heroism" wins through. The movement of The Blood Oranges could be characterized as one from romance into tragedy-autumn where idealized existence is undermined and destroyed (only to be recovered?) through tensions inherent in the apparently ideal existence and the actions of time. We never know for certain whether Cyril and Catherine resume their former relationship.<sup>30</sup> Yet to insist on any finality in this regard would, perhaps, misrepresent the central theme of continuity and draw attention away from the focus on the efforts of one individual to reassert the imaginative vision. What we remember most about Cyril is not his "success," but his unflagging and perhaps truly heroic efforts to ward off death, disintegration and the inevitable entropy to which all life is subject. His limitations, when seen in this light, become less significant, and he emerges, finally, as one of Hawkes' more sympathetic characters, as an artist-figure sincerely and resolutely committed to actualizing his vision.

## END NOTES - CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>"The Novelists: John Hawkes," New Republic, 10 November 1979, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Rosenzweig seems to take Hawkes to task for what he calls "a partisan identification" with the narrators of the triad (The Blood Oranges, Death, Sleep & the Traveler and Travesty): "while Hawkes . . . chooses to describe the equation between the artistic and the socially aberrant mentalities [of the narrators] principally by emphasizing the clarifying function of alienation, the novels themselves, with the increasingly obtrusive abnormal psychology of each successive narrator, make impossible so simple or comforting a relationship to either the narrators or their aesthetic visions." Paul Rosenzweig, "Aesthetics and the Psychology of Control in John Hawkes' Triad," Novel, 15, No. 4 (1982), 149, 151. I believe it is entirely appropriate for Hawkes to emphasize the aesthetic visions of his narrators; it does not seem that he is attempting to legitimize their efforts but rather is pointing to what is essential within the narratives themselves.

<sup>3</sup>Pearl K. Bell, "Dull Decay and Exuberant Comedy," New Leader, 4 October 1971, p. 17; Gerald Weales, "Fiction Chronicle," Hudson Review, 24(1971/2), 730; Roger Sale, "What Went Wrong?" New York Review of Books, 21 October 1971, pp. 3-4, 6; Charles Moran, "John Hawkes: Paradise Gaining," The Massachusetts Review, 12(1971), 840; Thomas McGuane, "The Blood Oranges," New York Times Book Review, 19 Sept. 1971, sec. 7, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Scholes, "A Conversation on The Blood Oranges Between John Hawkes and Robert Scholes," Novel, 5, No. 3 (1972), 204.

<sup>5</sup>John Hawkes, The Blood Oranges (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 36. All further references to this edition will appear in the text.

<sup>6</sup>Scholes, 198.

<sup>7</sup>John Kuehl, John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1975), p. 171 (Interview).

<sup>8</sup>Lois A. Cuddy, "Functional Pastoralism in The Blood Oranges," Studies in American Fiction, 3(1975), 15-18. See, for a discussion of qualified role of innocence in the novel, Heide Ziegler, "Postmodernism as Autobiographical Commentary: The Blood Oranges and Virginia," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 (1983), 135.

<sup>9</sup>Scholes, 199.

<sup>10</sup>Kuehl, p. 129.

<sup>11</sup>Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), p. 307.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 60. Although Fiona sometimes calls Hugh "baby," it is a designation usually reserved for Cyril; Hugh often calls Cyril "boy." Both terms befit one who is attempting to recover "the lost laughter of infancy" as a figure of Eros. Interestingly, Cyril is considerably the oldest member of the quaternion, "two or three long leaps beyond middle age" (T.B.O., p. 16).

<sup>13</sup> Scholes, p. 200.

<sup>14</sup> Kuehl, p. 167 (Interview).

<sup>15</sup> In this way, the narrator approaches in its exclusivity the "closed structure" as delineated by Sharon Spencer, Space, Time and Structure in the Modern Novel (New York: New York University Press, 1971), pp. 2-3, 25-47. She also notes that in Anais Nin's Cities of the Interior "characters have no last names. Their faces and their bodies are rarely described, even though their clothing is frequently carefully detailed," p. 17. Hawkes violates traditional methods of character portrayal similarly in The Blood Oranges. Ronald DeFeo seems to miss the point when he says that the present is "interesting enough" in itself to sustain our attention in The Blood Oranges. Ronald DeFeo, rev. of The Blood Oranges, Saturday Review, 23 Oct. 1971, p. 92. In evaluating Skipper, we are constantly led back to his past, but we have no such resource with Cyril. Hawkes deliberately manipulates us into assessing the validity of the world of the novel and the narrator's relationship to this world. We are led to appraise Cyril's ordering capacity and qualities as a visionary artist, not his qualities as a human being.

<sup>16</sup> C. J. Allen reads The Blood Oranges unironically but sees the third work of the triad (Travesty) as drastically altering our perceptions of the former novel, particularly with regard to its narrator. Clearly, Allen misses much of the irony and humour associated with Cyril. For example, while he admits the hyperbolic nature of Cyril's self-description as a "great white creature horned and mounted on a trim little golden sheep" in the novel's opening, Allen simply says the reader "can only admire the lyricism and keep going." C. J. Allen, "Desire, Design, and Debris: The Submerged Narrative of John Hawkes' Recent Trilogy," Modern Fiction Studies, 25(1979), 579-92.

<sup>17</sup> Scholes, p. 198.

<sup>18</sup> See Cuddy, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> Brown, pp. 45-6.

<sup>20</sup> Erich Fromm, Man For Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1947), p. 130 (italics in text).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 131 (italics in text).

<sup>22</sup> Kuehl, p. 169 (Interview).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> See John V. Knapp, "Hawkes' The Blood Oranges: A Sensual New Jerusalem," Critique, 17, No. 3 (1976), 21-2.

<sup>25</sup> With a different concept of the romantic in mind, Eliot Berry discusses Hugh as a failed romantic artist for whom "Love is frequently a desire for pure beauty that remains an unattainable image." Although Berry views Cyril "positively," as "an artist of Love [who] gives expression to his imaginative and passionate forces," he is not omniscient but sometimes a victim of Hugh's "self-destructive romanticism." Eliot Berry, A Poetry of Force and Darkness: The Fiction of John Hawkes (San Bernardino, Calif.: The Borgo Press, 1979); p. 51.

<sup>26</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, ed. Sculley Bradley, Richmond Croom Beatty, and E. Hudson Long (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1962); p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> It is not surprising to find resemblances between Cyril's poeticized diction and lyricism and those of other poets, including another "sex-singer," John Donne. Both Cyril and Donne employ paradox and use fanciful conceits to express their erotic visions; there is some similarity, as well, between Donne's microcosmic world of love and Cyril's Illyrian world: both are physically constricted worlds which, the lyricists try to convince us, are dynamically alive.

<sup>28</sup> Eva C. Hangen, Symbols, Our Universal Language (Wichita, Kansas: McCormick-Armstrong, 1962), p. 171.

<sup>29</sup> Alfred Harbage, Ed., William Shakespeare: The Complete Works (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 1395, V, i, l. 311.

<sup>30</sup> It is ironic, however, that Cyril's attempts to restore paradise depend on Fiona's return, and he is reduced from one whose active ordering brings Illyria into being to one who passively awaits for the sound of Fiona's "footsteps" (p. 271). Without Fiona, and given the restoration of sexual relations between Catherine and Cyril, their relationship becomes that of a conventional, married couple.



## CHAPTER VII

### NON-IDENTITY AND THE ARTISTIC SELF: DEATH, SLEEP & THE TRAVELER

The critical response to Hawkes' next novel, Death, Sleep & the Traveler, often focuses on the relativity of meaning in the work. After deciding that the novel is about "the ungraspable nature of reality," Irving Malin praises it for "the cleansing anxiety it provokes"; in a similar vein, Calvin Bedient comments, "the novel opens its mouth for the hooks of the deep but is saved by the glass of its own art." Other critics seem to transfer their own sense of confusion about the work to the author's failure to clarify issues: thus, Michael Silverblatt disparages the novel's "needless interiority and ambiguity of intention," while Bennett Carriere remarks that Hawkes' work eludes analysis based on "'sense.'" Clearly baffled by the novel, W. M. Frohock laments that Donald Greiner's study of Hawkes' novels was published prior to this new work. Greiner obliges with his "official interpretation," observing that although Death, Sleep & the Traveler "is far from a wispy exercise," "Its relative accessibility . . . may be a flaw."<sup>1</sup> Most critics seem to agree, in short, that this is a novel in which "meaning" plays a significant role, but they do not agree on the novel's willingness to yield its particular "meaning."

The reason for critical bemusement lies partly within the peculiarities of the narrative voice, arising from the narrator's attitude toward his subject matter. Like Hawkes' two previous narrators, Allert is telling his own story, but his perspective is grounded in doubt, incertitude and a reflexive tendency to avoid implications which are inherent in the story.

What Allert gives on the one hand, he takes away on the other. That is not to say that he wavers, but that he is engaged in a process of dialectic discovery concerning his own nature. He seeks for the truth, or believes that he does, while he seeks, to an even greater degree, to avoid it.

In particular, Allert is engaged in a quest for self-discovery, a quest which is usurped by his underlying need to avoid a confrontation with his true self. Allert is like a man who searches for something with his eyes closed, and this is suggested by the importance he attaches to dreams. If Allert could realize and accept his identity, then he might be able to realize his function as a symbolic artist as well. Skipper in Second Skin and Cyril in The Blood Oranges possess a strong sense of identity, and the worlds they create for themselves depend on the expression of their identities. But Allert creates a nightmare world of "puzzlement" and "terror"<sup>2</sup> which is as disordered and fragmented as his sense of identity: this world represents the other side of Cyril's Illyria with its fusions and symmetries. Lacking a sense of inner coherence, Allert cannot make the necessary connections with others and the outer world. For such an individual, life is seen in hazy outline, and the world is populated by unreal "characters": Allert protests that "I want to please, want to exist, want others to exist with me, but find it difficult to believe in the separate characters on the stage" (9). Like Beckett's Molloy, Allert sees images of barrenness and confusion around him, for he himself lacks the capacity to impose an order in his own life; he responds to life impassively since he lacks an inner purpose or determination.

Death, Sleep & the Traveler technically resembles its predecessor with its displaced chronological segments, a multiple plot with temporally distinct lines of development and an obtrusive first-person narrator. The

segments themselves are briefer than the corresponding segments in The Blood Oranges, as they average only one and a half pages. The more clipped quality represents Hawkes' attempt to portray a narrator who is less sure of himself, more tentative in his approach to his subject matter. Death, Sleep & the Traveler carries us out of the idyllic cadences of The Blood Oranges and, in its desperation, is nearer to the head-long rhythms of Travesty; this novel is certainly not written in the romance mode, like Second Skin, or the romance-tragic mode of The Blood Oranges, but lies much closer to the hard irony of the next novel, Travesty.

As is usually the case with a Hawkes novel, the jumbled chronology masks a decipherable plot. Allert is a middle-aged Dutchman whose wife, Ursula, is preparing to leave him. Until the death of his psychiatrist friend, Peter, Allert shares his wife with this man, apparently without overt resentment. When Allert is directed by his wife to take a sea-voyage, he becomes part of another sexual triangle. The relationship with his nubile, sympathetic companion for the voyage, Ariane, ends with her disappearance overboard, and Allert is accused of her murder. In the trial which follows, he is acquitted; haunted by this incident, Allert nonetheless denies any role in Ariane's death, as he denies much about his own personality. In the novel's penultimate section, Allert muses on the possible directions a future without Ursula could take without resolving on any decisive step towards eventual self-knowledge.

There is considerable blurring among the four temporal sequences of Death, Sleep & the Traveler; the chronology is difficult to fix with precision. It would be helpful to know, for instance, whether some or all of Allert's dreams occur prior to his voyage--the event which is most useful in helping to determine the novel's chronology. The narrator

focuses on a time span prior to the sea voyage, in which the climax is Allert's departure on the white ship; the time span of the voyage itself, in which the climax is the disappearance of Allert's companion, Ariane, and his subsequent confinement on the ship; and after the voyage. This last sequence can be broken up into two further sequences: the near past (composing about five years and including Allert's trial) which culminates with Peter's death, and the present, in which the climax is his wife's departure three years after the trial.

The central ambiguity in the novel arises out of Allert's alleged murder which he never acknowledges. In place of definiteness we have only the enigmatic comments of others and the (possibly malicious) questioning of his wife: "'Did you do it'? she asked, cupping the roses against her breasts. 'Did you, Allert? Did you? I want to know'" (78); "'And if they acquitted you unjustly and only because you happened to have at your side a handsome wife, I can say nothing but that your next trial will be different'" (114).

#### Motion and Stasis

The two novels which follow The Blood Oranges take place partly or wholly in vehicles in motion. The car in Travesty is bound to a certain destination preordained by its driver, but the white ship in Death, Sleep & the Traveler apparently wanders directionless. Both the car and the sea-going vessel embody the will of the narrator, however, for Hawkes carefully establishes early symbolic links between the ship, the narrator and the journey, as he does in a more explicit way between the car and its driver in Travesty. "The ship was carrying us not toward any place but away" (45), claims the narrator of Death, Sleep & the Traveler. This figurative sense of the journey away from something is a significant

movement in terms of the narrator and his feelings about himself. The ship has many departure points but seemingly no destination: "We sailed from Amsterdam, from Bremen, from Brest, from Marseilles, from farther north, from farther south, from Amsterdam" (16). It is not until Ariane disappears that the ship becomes "on course to a destination" (171) and, by this time, we are prepared to examine this fact in light of the psychic connection already delineated: there appears to be an unmistakable correlation between the ship's new-found direction and Ariane's disappearance in which the narrator is inculcated; in symbolic terms, it is suggested that the narrator's own lack of direction has given way to a sudden consciousness of direction. Paradoxically, by murdering Ariane, he may have opened himself up to self-knowledge and given his life "direction." In this way, he may be "the legacy of my friend, my wife's lover, our psychiatrist" (168) whose theory he may have justified "'that a man remains a virgin until he has committed murder'" (26, 145). This is, however, one view among several of the implications which surround Ariane's disappearance. It seems likely that at least some of Peter's comments and "theories" are simply Hawkesian red herrings strewn across the path of the novel to invite opposing or contradictory interpretations.

In contrast to the motion implied through the symbolic journey framework are those scenes or images which convey stasis in the novel. The opposition between motion (whether real or illusory) and forms of stasis becomes a primary mode for articulating the dynamics of a struggle within the psyche of the narrator. Allert simultaneously endeavours to determine an identity and gain self-knowledge and to avoid an identity and deflect such knowledge. The novel's title itself reflects the two extremes of motion and stasis and hints at the nature of the struggle central to

meaning in Death, Sleep & the Traveler. The three nouns in the title strongly suggest either stasis or movement. The novel's title is taken from a work of sculpture by Aristedes Stavrolakes we are informed on the copyright page of editions of the novel. Sculpture is a form of art which attempts to fuse the moving or dynamic and the motionless. Although the medium of a work of sculpture is inevitably a static one, the work itself strives for dynamism. It conveys permanence through its form and possesses a characteristically enduring nature while, at the same time, it generally conveys movement and energy.° As an art in which form and proportion contribute almost wholly to meaning, sculpture can be considered a kind of analogue for what Allert secretly fears: the motionless, frozen state where definition becomes possible and the truth of the self can be apprehended. Allert is a man lost between the ambiguous realms of death and sleep or between consciousness and the unconscious (consciousness for him is a kind of death) and traveling helplessly between them.<sup>3</sup> Ostensibly, he is an individual in search of a destination, but unable to arrive there for he does not know from where he has come. Lacking a strong ego, Allert seeks refuge in the confusion and chaos of his "psychic slime" and his puzzling dreams in order to avoid the identity which others would thrust on him.

While Second Skin and The Blood Oranges attempt to give full expression to the imagination and its powers, Death, Sleep & the Traveler is preoccupied with the unconscious--the obverse side, in a sense, of the coin of fantasy, and the obverse side of Hawkes' aesthetic which sees "experimental fiction" as "an exclamation of psychic materials."<sup>4</sup> The unconscious should provide the artist with a rich source which can then be transformed through the powers of the imagination and consciousness

itself, which can serve in an ordering capacity. But Allert is an incomplete artist, for he never permits this process to occur. He becomes lost in the mazes of his own unconscious, for only there can he avoid the process of self-discovery. He depends on a sense of internal chaos. As a character in Anaïs Nin's novel, Ladders of Fire, puts it, "Chaos always turns out to be the greatest trap of all in which you'll find yourself more securely imprisoned than any one."<sup>5</sup>

While the imagination depends greatly on the creative capacity of the individual, the shaping function, the unconscious cannot be controlled or manipulated, to any degree, by the conscious process, but contents of the unconscious assume "qualities which are the hallmarks of instinct: automatism, nonsusceptibility to influence, all-or-none reaction, and so forth."<sup>6</sup> Allert lacks control in the world of his psyche, and this lack of control differentiates that world from the timeless and placeless wandering isle of Second Skin and Cyril's Illyria: it distinguishes the nightmare from the fantasy world. Greiner is correct to say, then, that in Death, Sleep & the Traveler Hawkes re-enters the world of the Bankses in The Lime Twig where two hapless individuals are overcome by the nightmare they half create through their repressed desires. Yet in Death, Sleep & the Traveler, Allert insists on his continual preference for the nightmare; he elects unquestionably to remain in the world of his dreams "where sex and death unite."<sup>7</sup> In this sense, Allert represents a portrait of the incomplete artist, one incapable of translating his subjective demands and dreams into visionary art.

But Allert may also be identified in the tradition of Skipper and Cyril, for all three write narratives for the purpose, to some extent, of self-justification.<sup>8</sup> Only Allert, however, stands publicly accused of

a crime. Skipper and Cyril may be considered "accomplices" in one or more deaths; the degree of culpability is ultimately decided by the reader himself, who must act as the judge in deciding to what extent each is responsible. Although Allert has actually undergone a trial, we are placed in a position which denies our accessibility to the "facts" in the case; we are unable positively to resolve the issue of his guilt and, on a strictly literal level, we cannot resolve the issue of his act if, indeed, an "act" was involved at all. Perhaps Skipper and Cyril feel they have nothing to hide and so are not hesitant to present us with what they consider to be the "truth." We may receive the distinct impression that they should be hiding something, and that some deficiency in their moral natures prevents them from becoming fully aware of their accountability in the deaths of others. Allert's narrative conveys the sense that he is hiding something--perhaps from himself and certainly from the reader. Thus, he seldom permits himself to think about his acquittal (135) and, under the guise of Ursula's cruelty, Allert indirectly refers to his own sense of guilt or his avoidance of it. He recoils as Ursula questions him concerning the crime (61, 78):

I could not bear the question. I could not believe the question. I could not answer the question. I could not believe that my wife could ever ask me that question. I could not bring myself to answer that question (61).

On other occasions, too, we are afforded the "other view" of the act which Allert denies having committed (78, 114). Invariably, these sections are brief, for Allert seems unable to address the issue of his guilt on a conscious level. His assertions to the contrary form the two shortest sections in the novel: "How could I have done harm to such a person? (46); "I am not guilty" (179):

The crucial difference between Skipper and Cyril, on the one hand,



and Allert, on the other, is that Allert lacks a creative vision. For the Romantic artist, the imagination and the unconscious align themselves in a harmonious relationship which is beneficial in terms of its capacity for expressing the subjective self, and in this sense Cyril can be considered a Romantic artist. The Romantic artist is able to realize the exaltation of his individuality partly through the process in which the materials of his unconscious self are unleashed and liberated through the imaginative capacity. Coleridge's "visionary" poetry, such as "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel," present fusions of unconscious and imaginative material. But the imagination in Death, Sleep & the Traveler is hardly a positive force. As an incomplete artist, Allert is unable to channel his creative energy. Despite his claim that the "imagination cannot be denied" (80), Allert succeeds in misusing it, in misconstruing its most vital functions and cutting off its potential in unproductive, introspective questioning and futile thought. Allert clearly subordinates the imagination to his unconscious, his waking dream to his nighttime dreams and, in doing so, relinquishes the possibility of an identity in favour of the murky alternative of an existence incapable of unambiguous definition. It is ostensibly to discover "who he is" but, in reality, to avoid this question that Allert retreats to an obsessive interest in his mostly obliterated past and his active dream life where, not unexpectedly, he encounters images of disorder and rampant confusion.

Allert's narrative, then, consists of a double narrative strand, for while he chronicles the story of his conscious life, he is, all the while, absorbed in his past and his dreams. Yet Allert's dreams in themselves do not provide the "key" to unlock the novel's meaning. He prefers to remain in the dark about his past and likewise chooses to meditate on

the possible symbolic meanings of his elusive dreams rather than pursue their phantasms into the light of day; he elects the tantalizing obscurity of the dream world in which his fantasies are permitted to be played out. That is why Allert feels threatened by Peter. When Peter requests Allert to take "an in-depth psychological test," Allert responds with grudging compliance: "You know what I think of psychiatrists." In an ironic tone, he adds further: "Unfortunately, Peter was not able to administer the test before his death" (36). In a more emphatic way, Allert states his "prohibition" to Peter's request to search the records of "Acres Wild," the institution with which he is affiliated, in order to discover whether Allert has ever been a patient there (115).

In a sense, Allert seems to be another parody of Hawkes himself, who uses various stratagems in his fiction to obfuscate and confuse, to intrigue, but, most of all, to avoid simplistic reductions of complex material and themes. Allert draws us into his narrative in spite of our reservations as to its validity and the soundness of the narrative viewpoint, and enables us to participate in a mutual process of sorting out odd and baffling pieces of evidence which never seem to resolve into certitude; he subjects us to the vicissitudes and exotic vagaries of a life steeped in repressions and puzzling lapses of memory. In what some critics take to be his most accessible, least diffuse work, Hawkes appears to make truth deliberately and profoundly inaccessible. But further readings of Death, Sleep & the Traveler reinforce the idea that if literal truth lies beyond our grasp, another kind of truth--more symbolic--is better obtainable.

#### Sexuality and Death

Sexuality has always been an ambiguous force in Hawkes' writing. The inhabitants of the post-war wastelands of Germany in The Cannibal

and the desert wastelands of The Beetle Leg fear and are largely successful in repressing sexual forces embodied in their environment; the middle-class Bankses in The Lime Twig eventually give way to these forces; Skipper in Second Skin appears to find sexual freedom on the wandering isle after a lifetime of repression while Cyril, in The Blood Oranges, makes sexuality the basis for life in Illyria in spite of the lurking dangers of his erotic decrees. One of the reasons why sex is portrayed ambiguously is because of the human capacity to pervert and deny the life-giving principle of Eros by accepting the dictates of convention and attempting to repress Eros. In Death, Sleep & the Traveler, sexuality is depicted through the eyes of one with an "extensive pornographic collection" (40). In one respect, life and sexuality have joined forces with death, at least in the mind of the narrator. Cyril delicately omits details of the sexual act itself by engaging in a sort of celebratory verbal dance around it rather than portraying it graphically. The lyricism of The Blood Oranges gives way to the lurid as, in its description of sexual acts, Death, Sleep & the Traveler lies close to pornography.<sup>9</sup> The circumstances of the many sexual encounters are usually unpleasant. It is significant that the sex acts among the triad of Ursula-Peter-Allert are more vividly and distastefully portrayed, while those between Allert and Ariane are only briefly alluded to. This latter relationship is the only positive one involving the narrator, yet a crucial point in the novel occurs when Ariane is driven to have sexual intercourse with Olaf, the wireless operator, on the floor of the reptile house.

In Second Skin and The Blood Oranges, animals engaged in the sexual act are a source for admiration and wonder at nature's superabundance. The copulating birds in The Blood Oranges conjoin in a graceful and poetic

union witnessed by the enraptured Cyril. The scene at the zoo on the "Paradise Isles" is far different as Allert, his friend Ariane, and Olaf watch two huge bats occupying themselves "in the slow, jerky calisthenics of autofellatio" (124). While Cyril, in his comparative innocence, sees in his birds an omen of his future relationship with Catherine, the three observers of the bats respond animalistically: Olaf becomes "uncontrollably aroused," and he and Ariane (who first excitedly points out the bats' "exhibitionistic" display) perform the sexual act in front of the bat cage. Allert himself feels an affinity with the animal life around him:

I smelled the dreams of the coiled snakes, in my slowness I contained the desperation of the two bats, in my mouth I tasted the oily residue of peanuts dropped accidentally and long ago by children who also would have been interested in the performance of the two bats (124-5).

Although Allert is sexually active and even receptive, inviting "girl friends" to share with him "the pleasure of the guest room bed" (59-60), his attitude toward sex seems that of an adolescent. In two of his three dreams focusing on sex, he is a young boy around the age of puberty who is engaged in some form of sexual experimentation. All three dreams involve exhibitionism and the contrary emotions of fear and elation through which the adolescent experiences the ambiguity of his new outlook on sex. Evidently, Allert has not come to terms with his mature sexual being, and so he regresses in his dreams to the point in his development when his initial awareness of sexuality was beginning and experiences again the emotions he felt then. Allert's lack of sexual maturity is also reflected in his predilections for onanistic sex and for forms of voyeurism; sexuality, for him, as for Hugh in The Blood Oranges, retains its prohibitive nature. Although Ursula states that her reason for leaving him is "'not sexual'" (46), she complains of his "'poeticizing my crotch'" (79) and

"trying to mythologize our sexual lives" (176). He is compliant as Ursula upbraids him for the behaviour of his girl friend, Simone, and he agrees not to see her again (60). His is the adolescent's or young boy's insecurity about the fact of his own sexuality.

The worlds of death and sex draw closer together in Death, Sleep & the Traveler. Allert is sexually alive but emotionally "dead," according to Ursula. The narrative contains two allusions to a man who died for Ursula; obviously, he is a former lover (48, 62). His death, like Hugh's in The Blood Oranges, does not redeem love but only serves to mock it. Allert is continually perceiving links between the forces of sexuality and death. He describes the figures in the photograph he finds on his valise as "fading maggots" who are "apparently devouring each other sexually with carnivorous joy" (39). Allert has a vision of Peter's death in the sauna from which the three have emerged after an orgiastic encounter (24). Allert has another image of Peter in which sex and death are grotesquely fused. In this vision, Peter is "sealed at last in his lead box but with his penis bursting through the roof of the box like an angry asphodel" (31). The words "at last" suggest that Peter is conceived of in terms of a sexual threat; yet, the vision has ironic life-in-death overtones, for the asphodel is the immortal plant in the Elysian Fields.<sup>10</sup>

It is not only in its treatment of sexuality that Death, Sleep & the Traveler differs from the two preceding works; Allert's insecurity about his sexuality is mirrored by his insecurity concerning his own identity. Allert constantly protests he does not know who he is. Skipper tells us immediately that he knows precisely who he is, and Cyril, likewise, never questions his identity. Yet, for Allert, an identity seems impossible to determine, and external reality, consequently, dissolves

in unreality. Allert describes the process whereby the child comes to lose his sense of self:

'sooner or later the young child discovers that he cannot account for himself. As soon as he becomes inexplicable he becomes unreal. Immediately everything else becomes unreal as one might expect. The rest is puzzlement. Or terror' (90-1).

Allert, then, represents an extreme from Cyril, whose inner life forms invaluable connections with the outer world which nourishes and sustains this life. The lack of an identity and of an attendant sense of reality causes Allert to be obsessed with his inner being and makes him a victim of his dreams. In his dreams and through his past Allert finds the "puzzlement" and "terror" which he believes to compose such a large part of existence; and he finds the ambiguity there which enables him to avoid a true confrontation with his self. Skipper and Cyril define reality in terms of their own beings, yet Allert cannot know what is "real" because he cannot come to an understanding of what is "real" within him. The world of Death, Sleep & the Traveler--the record of Allert's psyche or unconscious self as it engaged in an unproductive struggle with consciousness--is a world of reversals because the creator of that world has, essentially, reversed the terms of reality and unreality and sees the real as unreal, the unreal as real. Cyril, in a sense, turns reality inside out, successfully incorporating external reality within the boundaries of the self and creating a fantasy world; Allert transposes the real and the illusory, consequently becoming the creator of nightmare. An example of such a transposition occurs as the ship passes the "heart-shaped knoll," and Allert and Ariane observe a group of goats surviving on the island in spite of its apparent dearth of water and food. The goats stand "as still as rocks" amid "pure desolation" in this "haunting" scene (56).

Ariane remarks that these goats survive "'because they're unreal" (55), but, strangely enough, these distant goats, who might almost inhabit another world, are "real enough" to Allert (55, 56). Clearly, the goats are, in a sense, in another world from that of the ship, and they see the ship as a "specter . . . bearing down on their final garden" (56). In his loneliness and in his perception of objects in the outer world as unreal, Allert is also like one of the goats. He appears to feel compelled to convert concrete experiences into tenuous, ambiguous terms: an ordinary afternoon skiing expedition strikes Allert as an "unreal" experience (92). Such statements as the following, made as Allert prepares to go to the ship's deck, reflect his insecurity in relation to the outer world: "The intense light of midday, the ungainly binoculars on a strap around [Ariane's] neck, the now louder sounds of the expectant passengers, it was all exactly as I knew it would be, concreteness rotating toward illusion" (52).

Allert's professed desire to believe in the existence of others (9) is mirrored by the later regret: "I wish I had known my wife and friend. I wish they had known me" (165). Allert's lament is that of Isabel for her brother in Melville's Pierre: "'All's o'er, and ye know him not!'"<sup>11</sup> However, unlike Pierre, Allert is not a victim of circumstance as he would like to believe, but a victim primarily of his own inherent failures. Allert fears that no one has understood him, and yet he demonstrates little in the way of self-knowledge, nor does he attempt to know others. Allert would like to imagine his friends as "only dark figures within a gilded frame" (165), and, indeed, he is often able to simplify his view of Ursula and Peter precisely through imagining them as figures in a photograph (95, 148).

Allert hopes to use Ursula and Peter not so much to give him self-understanding or relief from "puzzlement," as to give him sympathy or relief from "terror." Yet they merely taunt him and provoke him by partially indulging his doubts, fears and fantasies about himself. Allert is grateful for the moments of unexpected sympathy which Ursula gives him, but complains: "how unfortunate that Ursula could not have been always so perceptive and so humane" (141). Allert relies sometimes on the opinions of Ursula and Peter. He has "psychic ties" with Peter (31) and, at one point, asks his professional opinion "'on the inability to believe in the reality of the human self'" (90). In interpreting Allert's dreams, Ursula becomes a kind of priestess figure, one to whom he continually turns in spite of her generally unsympathetic; dispassionate analyses and in spite of her tendency, according to Allert, to "preserve herself psychologically at my expense" (78). That Allert can consider Peter a good friend and wonders at Ursula's leaving him, though, suggest the severe limitations of Allert's ability to perceive how others think of him.

For the most part, Allert rejects or retreats from his wife's and friend's attempts to tell him who he is, for what they say is little conducive to the image he has of himself. Allert is more strongly impelled to reject the notion of an identity rather than accept the identities which Ursula and Peter would bestow on him. Allert would like to think of himself rather as Skipper does of himself, for Allert believes he is, in his own way, a "lover of my harmless and sanguine self" (S.S., 1). He would also like to think he is a lover of others. Thus, he objects when Ariane says, "'you are not in general friendly'": "'But I am remarkably friendly as you well know'" (37). Perhaps to Ariane Allert is "'remarkably friendly,'" but he himself says of Ariane: "she was the only other person



on the ship I was willing to know" (34). Such contradictions reflect the double nature of Allert's quest for self-knowledge.

To Ursula, Allert is a "'psychic invalid'" because he is unresponsive: "'You have no feeling. . . I wish that just once you might become truly obsessional'" (8). At another point, she sarcastically remarks, "'Allert aggressive! What a nice idea'" (91). Peter is interested in Allert largely as a psychological phenomenon: "'If you manage to destroy your guilt,'" he warns, "'you will destroy yourself . . . since all your generosity and even your strength depend on unfathomable guilt, which is part of your charm'" (48). Both directly and indirectly, Peter often addresses the question of Allert's mental state: he suggests a psychological test for Allert and insinuates that Allert perhaps has been, or should be, a patient at his own institution (115, 134); he states that Ursula likes him particularly for his "'emotional strangeness'" and makes a further point of declining to comment medically on his condition unless asked to do so (168); however, he is not asked. Peter recounts with apparent relish the details of an archaic treatment once used at "Acres Wild" where the patient is led into deeper and deeper levels of coma. Allert is warily conscious that all through this recitation his own mind is being probed and, as the sweat stands out on his neck, he finds himself "wishing for gray light and falling snow"--images associated with his childhood. Clearly, Peter has diagnosed Allert as a schizophrenic (133) who has spent his "'entire life in a coma . . . never entirely emerg[ing] from [his] flickering cave'" (144).

Unlike Peter, who claims that Allert's identity is "'quite undeniable'" (155), Ursula insists that because he has no memory, he can have no identity (155). She argues with her husband that he is "'not real'" (91), and says

she is leaving him because "you don't know yourself . . . you have no idea what you are" (46). Ursula accuses Allert of having "emotionally annihilated [him]self" (46). Later, she says he is "already dead," and she has "mourned at [his] funeral far too long already" (129). Saying he is "incapable of emotional response" (2, 5), she compares Allert to "an open cesspool" (46), a comparison which he reasonably and patiently counters. He claims, in turn, he is "in love with Psyche" (the only mention of "love" in his narrative) and needs Psyche's "periodic buckets" of slime (75).

Although Allert rejects most of what Ursula and Peter tell him, both characters function in the narrative as more or less reliable aids to the reader in his search to determine where truth actually lies in the novel. Such "guides" are important where the narrator resists the truth about himself. Allert presents us with confusing and contradictory evidence, facts which are distorted by his own need to deflect their significance and applicability. It may be usually evident that Allert is not telling the truth, but he does not affect knowledge the way John Dowell does in Ford's The Good Soldier. Thus, without guides like Ursula and Peter, we would have little means for determining for ourselves the truth about Allert's repressions. Dowell reveals a great deal about himself through his apparent self-assurance, his certitude regarding himself and other characters. He begins and ends his narrative in a confident tone and never hesitates to give us his "definitive" view of events while it is consistently being undermined by our perception of Dowell's character. In contrast to Dowell, Allert appears confused and disoriented from the first, seldom professing to know the reasons or motives behind anything.

" . . . Sleep . . . "

In his dreams Allert often encounters his past; through his dreams he seeks for the riddle to his being, though his quest there is likewise beset by contrary impulses. In the end, his dreams portray the destructive and futile side of his search for understanding as does his waking life. Allert presents us with eight dreams, methodically complete, and on at least two other occasions he reports to have been dreaming but cannot recall the content. The recitation of his dreams follows a repeated formula: the dreams commence abruptly but are always prefaced by the phrase, "In my dream . . ."; similarly, after the dream sequence has been reported, Allert employs the ritualistic words, "When I told this dream to Ursula, . . ." Ursula's interpretation then follows and is, in turn, often succeeded by a brief comment on the interpretation. This mechanical or ritualistic procedure reinforces the notion of Allert's dreams as bringing order to his life. In fact, Allert's dreams do not tell us much about the narrator to which we do not otherwise have access; but they do help us define the terms of Allert's quest for self-knowledge and the reasons for its ultimate failure.

Apart from some of the dream-images themselves, there are two pronounced features which virtually all the dreams share: Ursula's uncompromising analyses provide skeleton keys in interpreting the particular dreams; they direct us, with maximum economy, to the central image in the dream or what it exists primarily to express. Certainly, there is no justification for dismissing all of Ursula's spare but expert interpretations out of hand.<sup>12</sup> The second common feature is that within the dreams there generally occurs a conflict, a disparity in emotional tenors or a choice between alternatives. The main symbolic link among the dreams is that in almost

every dream ~~the dreamer~~ is revealed in search for his "anima," the Jungian archetype of life itself or the "soul-image."<sup>13</sup> When Ursula appears in a dream (as she does in dreams one [14-15] and six [76-8]), she is the anima figure. Except for dreams two (16-17), three (47-8) and five (72-5), a female figure appears or is implied; dreams three and five, however, revolve around female symbolism which may be considered to represent the anima. Only dream two, then, the briefest dream, appears devoid of such imagery.

Half of the dreams deal in some way with the distant past. Two are set in the village of Allert's birth and involve his actions as a youth (dreams four [49-51] and eight [136-41]). These dreams have as their focus his early discoveries of sexuality. Dreams one and five have obvious connections with birth and the womb. The remaining four dreams appear to take place in the present or approximate present, and they cannot be readily categorized in terms of their content. Two of the dreams involve death (three and seven [108-11]); dream two revolves around the sexual experience of the "rare North Penis"; and dream six has as its focus Ursula's confinement in a mental institution. The dreams bear other immediate resemblances. Five of the first six dreams take place at night. (The time of dream two is unspecified.) The darkness, as well, is usually intense: dream three occurs in "pitch darkness"; dream four is set indoors but during "the darkest time of night"; the night in dream five "is as pure and dark as a blackened negative." Generally, there is a single source for the light in these dreams: candles, a bare bulb or several bulbs. The elemental darkness in dream five suggests the womb; in dream one, there is a mysterious "light coming from nowhere," which may again suggest the womb, perhaps at the moment of birth, or the birth of consciousness.

The anima, according to Jung, is a double-sided phenomenon. On the one hand,

Everything the anima touches becomes numinous--unconditional, dangerous, taboo, magical. She is the serpent in the paradise of the harmless man with good resolutions and still better intentions. She affords the most convincing reasons for not prying into the unconscious, an occupation that would break down our moral inhibitions and unleash forces that had better be left unconscious and undisturbed.<sup>14</sup>

But through encounters with the anima another side emerges:

Although she may be the chaotic urge to life, something strangely meaningful clings to her, a secret knowledge or hidden wisdom . . . the person who comes to grips with her seriously . . . come[s] to realize more and more that behind all her cruel sporting with human fate there lies something like a hidden purpose which seems to reflect a superior knowledge of life's laws. It is just the most unexpected, the most terrifyingly chaotic things, which reveal a deeper meaning. And the more this meaning is recognized, the more the anima loses her impetuous and compulsive character.<sup>15</sup>

The anima embodies "the image of the other sex that we carry in us as individuals and also as members of the species."<sup>16</sup> Ursula is clearly the first embodiment of the anima:

Ursula was to me one woman and every woman. I was more than forty years old when we married, quite experienced enough to realize early in our relationship that Ursula was practical, physical, mythical, and that all the multiplicities of her natural power were not merely products of my own projections or even of the culture into which she was born--like a muted wind, a fist through glass. . . .<sup>17</sup> She has always been one woman and every woman to me because her attitudes have never been predictable, while minute by minute throughout the long years of our marriage her physical qualities have undergone constant metamorphosis from fat to lean, soft to hard, smooth to rough, lean to fat--languid urgent Ursula (61).

The two dreams where Ursula appears reveal destructive confrontations with this anima figure. In dream one, a female figure who turns out to be his wife lures the dreamer, tempting him with knowledge, but then abruptly performs an act of destruction on the subject of the dreamer's curiosity. In dream six, the precise nature of the destructive relationship with the anima turns on one of two possible interpretations or may involve both.

It is possible that, in this dream, Allert is able to confine his anima, and this interpretation is in accord with Ursula's own interpretation (78). Alternatively, dream six might depict the loss of the anima to Allert's sexual rival, Peter. In the dream Allert approaches Peter at "Acres Wild" to ask for Ursula's release because "'She has no business here. She is different from all the rest'" (76). The significance of the aborted rescue is left ambiguous: Allert may be trying to make contact with the anima, but is unable to do so, for the instructions which apparently provided for Ursula's release become unreadable after they are rained on; furthermore, Ursula refuses to leave, saying, "'As long as Peter is there, we have nothing to fear'" (78). However, in her interpretation of this dream, Ursula accuses Allert of trying to "wrap her in the rubber sheet of [his] destructive unconscious" (78)--to subject the anima to bondage, in other words. It is unclear whether Allert is the agent or victim of the separation of anima from self that the dream unmistakably portrays.

There is little ambiguity about the role of the anima in dream one, as she lures him to a repellent and horrifying vision. Though the female figure in the dream does not explicitly invite Allert's approach to the table where some grapes are contained in a clay bowl, she "expects" him to approach, and eventually draws close herself "to watch my reaction" (15). As they are initially perceived, the grapes have a sinister cast; it is obvious that the "shining wet blood-purple grapes" are far removed from the sensuous objects of The Blood Oranges: "their slick skins are watery red . . . they are definitely moving against each other . . . they are stretched and twisted into oddly elongated shapes" (14-15). The grotesque appearance of the grapes is explained by the discovery that each grape contains a tiny fetus; however, no sooner is this birth connection

made when their movement is seen to resemble the "wriggling" of "a heap of worms": the beginnings of life are imaged in terms of death. As if to reinforce this connection in the most shocking terms possible, the anima, now revealed to be Ursula, picks some of the grapes and sadistically crushes them. Although this act "revolts" the dreamer, and Allert later comments on Ursula's "thoughtlessness" or "cruelty" in placing a bowl of dripping grapes on a table between them (46), it is ironic that, in the following dream, Allert is seated in a restaurant drinking "excellent wine" (17).

The dominant feature of most of the other dreams, as well, is either the anima figure or some representation of it. Dream seven hides the anima even from the dreamer, and it is an otherwise enigmatic comment by Ursula that reveals her presence here. In dream seven we see the paradoxical existence of lifelessness amid the appearance of life. The dream involves perception and the characteristic inability or unwillingness of the dreamer to bring to the surface the true images of the unconscious. This is the only dream that makes extensive use of colours to describe the scene onto which the dreamer gazes; yet colours, in this context, really only mask the essential deadness of the scene. It appears as though the dreamer is, at least, disturbed by the absence of life even if he is not able to penetrate totally beyond the illusory facade: "There is not a person in sight, the trees are still, I am troubled by the fact that in all the surrounding trees and heavy foliage there exists not a single bird. . . . Apparently the courtyard belongs to a farm complete and real except for the total absence of animals and human beings" (108-9). The dreamer's position in this dream is highly suggestive, for he stands above the courtyard and looks out a window. This appears to portray the conscious self or the rational ("unemotional," 109) self gazing over the landscape of the

unconscious. Significantly, the dreamer wears a gold watch, symbolizing his attachment to the world where time is consequential--the world of consciousness. In addition, he stands "in full view" of anyone in the courtyard; his feeling of vulnerability reflects his wary incertitude in this passive but disturbing encounter with his unconscious. Initially, the conscious self holds sway, and Allert resists "the temptation to look down." When he does he views a "tableau intended for no one's sight but my own" (109). The mere absence of life is now intensified as he sees death around him and, even in him, as he is no longer able "to feel the slightest sensation of my own breathing," In looking down, he has entered the world of the dead. He sees a tin coffin resting on a wooden wagon. The coffin is draped with a "string of near-dead collapsing flowers" (110). These may be white carnations, flowers traditionally worn on Mother's Day indicating that the mother of the wearer is deceased. The dreamer, however, remains unaware that the coffin contains a female--the anima--but only speculates on the burden he might have to bear if he is to be the one to "drag this inexplicably grief-ridden assemblage to whatever resting place awaits it" (111). Allert is troubled by indecision and a lack of knowledge. He has failed to detect the existence of the anima, buried as it is deep in his unconscious. Curiously enough, he does not even speculate on the possible contents of the coffin; instead, he considers the symbolic action of ridding himself of the coffin and its contents. Not only does Allert prove himself incapable of confronting the anima in this dream, but even after Ursula gives her interpretation (which is, once again, meant to guide the reader toward an understanding of the dream's dynamics), Allert continues to be puzzled and to "contemplate Ursula's remarks" for the next two hours (111), presumably without coming to any further understanding.



In dream three, Allert appears to turn away from a world of death; although in this dream he clearly identifies with the corpse, he chooses not to follow the funeral procession into the church. Yet the alternatives in that dream are not the clear-cut ones of death and life. In fact, the context of the dream suggests that Allert is, once again, rejecting pursuit of the anima embodied in the form of an empty church. On the surface, the candle-lit cathedral and the shabby petrol station seem to present divergent choices for the dreamer because the church is immediately associated with death, for it is the destination of the procession. But the two sites are, in fact, related: "I perceive and yet do not perceive the monstrous incongruity between the empty cathedral and abandoned petrol station," the one a "palace for dead men" and the other a "hovel for dead autos" (47). This double perspective, which occurs often in Allert's dreams, neatly summarizes the contrary tendencies to seek out knowledge and, at the same time and with a greater degree of intensity, to avoid it. (The same tendencies are pronounced in his waking life.) Despite the omnipresence of death in dream three, the choice is not arbitrary, although it appears so as, without any contemplation or apparent decision, Allert simply turns away from the procession which he has joined and passes "through the unlighted and doorless entrance of the petrol station" (48). Between the spiritual-feminine (unconscious self) and the rational-masculine (conscious self), Allert thoughtlessly elects the latter and denies himself the possibility of regeneration through knowledge of the anima. Surprisingly, Ursula initially trivializes this dream in her interpretation of it; this is one of the few occasions when her response might tend to mislead the reader.

The anima appears in two of the three dreams that focus on sexuality,

those in which Allert is a youth newly experiencing his sexual being. In dream four, the anima, or, more precisely, the mother archetype<sup>18</sup> takes the form of a naked girl in a photograph that Allert sees as he sits in the barber's chair. As he becomes aroused, he notices that "The girl is watching, the girl understands what is happening while I do not" (50).

In dream eight, Allert experiences his contrasexual self by "transforming" himself into a "woman." Realizing that "I myself am my only access to what I want to know" (138), Allert dons the undergarment of "an adult woman" and appears before "the magic glass" so that just his torso is visible. Dream eight is linked to the fourth dream by a "comforting" bodiless female voice near the end of the dream, which is heard instructing Allert: "'Tomorrow you must get a haircut'" (140).

Allert insists that dream five is "central" to his life, "since few men are privileged and courageous enough to undertake this journey" (75). The images suggest that the journey is partly sexual in nature; it is also partly a quest to recover his past, for Allert feels he is "somehow walking backward in time" as he proceeds towards the chateau in the dream (73). The chateau stands for the mother archetype, a primordial image in man's unconscious, while the field and the ditch probably also represent manifestations of this archetype. Throughout the dream, Allert is beset with contrary feelings. He crosses the field with trepidation but also with excited anticipation, with pleasure and fear; when he realizes that what appeared to be large pads of cow manure are actually stepping stones of congealed blood, he experiences awe and elation; and upon his discovery of the emptiness within the "sacred structure," which stands alone in the middle of the single room of the chateau, he is disappointed but still appreciative of "the barren actuality" he discovers within the structure.

As the dreamer pulls aside the skins which cover the structure (suggesting the potential birth of self-knowledge?) he "surveys the desolation of my own beginning"; he sees, again, images of death: ashes, bones and feathers. Allert has undertaken the journey, yet his reward is little different from what he gains from looking down into the courtyard in dream seven. He cannot penetrate beyond the death images which dominate his unconscious. In whatever form the anima manifests itself in his dreams he cannot relate to its potentially positive side. His dreams are full of false anima figures, incompleting quests and ultimate denials in the face of self-knowledge.

"... the Traveler"

The sea-voyage Allert undertakes represents a conscious manifestation of the quest for self-knowledge and an identity, just as his dreams embody the unconscious quest. Yet, it is this conscious nature that makes Allert reluctant to undertake the quest. His reluctance symbolizes his fear of self-knowledge. Cyril is similarly reluctant prior to the fortress expedition, but this is because he instinctively associates the fallen structure with repression. Because Allert's dreams are manifestations of a baffling unconscious, he can ponder their possible significance without feeling threatened. Though the journey is established early in symbolic terms, Allert himself makes clear and unmistakable associations between himself and aspects of the journey in which its threatening nature becomes established. In Jungian psychology, the sea is invariably a symbol of the unconscious. The ship, which rides over the water of the unconscious, can be seen as representing Allert's conscious self, wandering directionless and without any definite control. There seems no one at the helm, for Allert lacks an identity, and thus, control in his life.

As Ursula points him in the direction of meaningful dream interpretation,

so she directs Allert toward the sea-journey: "'all men wish occasionally to be free of their wives. You really must go on this cruise. And go alone'" (17). Ursula even designates his companion for the voyage--a young girl with nobody to see her off, who stands at the ship's rail as the passengers embark. And, as Ursula convinces him to board the white cruise ship, so Ariane convinces him to board the smaller boat to visit the island of the nudists despite his initial reluctance (99); both women become determining factors in Allert's destiny and help bring about confrontations with his self, though Allert ultimately discovers ways to avoid such confrontations that might bring about self-knowledge.

As he does in Second Skin, Hawkes again gives us two balancing triads in opposing settings: Allert-Ursula-Peter form the "northern" group while Allert-Ariane-Olaf compose the shipboard or "southern" triad. The arrangement is similar to Second Skin also in the existence of parallel relationships between opposing members of each triad. Peter and Olaf are rivals with Allert for the attentions of Ursula and Ariane, respectively, and Allert must share his wife and mistress with these men. As the ship's wireless operator, Olaf establishes relations with the outside world, while, as a psychiatrist, Peter attempts to penetrate the frontiers of the self: in their professions, both deal in some form of communication. Significantly, Peter describes the "dangerous treatment" once undertaken at "Acres Wild" (insulin shock therapy) in terms of a symbolic immersion in the sea:

'The patient descended within himself and, while we, the worried staff, hovered at his side, always waiting to administer the antidote or undertake the rescue mission, so to speak, the patient was traveling inside himself and in a kind of sexual agony was sinking into the depths of psychic darkness, drowning in the sea of the self, submerging into the long slow chaos of the dreamer on the edge of extinction. The closer such a patient came to death the greater his cure. The whiter and wetter he became in his grave of rubber sheets, my friend, and the deeper his breathing, the

slower his pulse, the more he felt himself consumed as in liquid lead, the greater the agony with which he approached oblivion, then the greater and more profound and more joyous his recovery, his rebirth. The cure, when it occurred, was remarkable. The only trouble was the possibility of the patient's death. On the other hand, coma and myth are inseparable. True myth can only be experienced in the coma. Perhaps such an experience is worth the necessary risk of death' (143-4).

Symbolically, Allert's sea voyage becomes an externalized version of what Peter describes: a descent into the self. Allert's fear of the sea is intense. Not only has he no desire for a sea journey, but "the thought of salt water is unbearable to me" (26); furthermore, he announces his intention "never again to look at the rough sea" (16). Allert is alarmed by the prospect of the open porthole in Ariane's cabin (65), as if he expects the imminent confirmation of his statement: "A clear day was no guarantee against the diving and rising monsters of the deep" (28). Allert's reluctance toward the voyage also manifests itself in his fear of opening the new valise he carries on board with him. On the one hand, the valise, which is packed by Ursula, is evidence that she intends for Allert to undergo some form of "sea change": "the articles inside were unfamiliar and appeared not to be mine, as if Ursula had determined that my transformation as a result of travel would be complete in every way" (39-40). On the other hand, Allert seems to associate the valise with his past. When he brings it aboard the ship, he refuses to let anyone else carry it (24). As he does with his own past, he seems to feel at ease when the valise is tightly strapped and securely locked up (25). He feels as though the pornographic picture which is left on top of the unopened valise "diminishes" or "alters" its reality (38) the way sexual knowledge, perhaps, reduces the image of childhood or innocence, an image which Allert wants to retain. Like the many references to snow, the

reference to the valise may suggest his past prior to the development of his sexuality. Thus, when he finally opens it and rummages through the strange contents, he feels "as if I had violated the coffin of some unknown child" (40); his childhood past is, indeed, unknown to him.

Although he is "the most reluctant voyager ever to depart on a cruise for pleasure" (3), Allert's fear of his impending journey intensifies beyond a disinterest in "severance, sun, sea, the geography of separation and islands and unexpected encounters in cabins like mausoleums" (16). The ship is seen in images which reflect Allert's own fears. He refers to the "great ponderous black anchors wet and dripping . . . like monolithic torture instruments" (12). As he walks down the ship's corridor he notes that "it might have been leading me through some unfamiliar hotel or through the severe structure of a bad dream" (28). Sexual insecurity is revealed in his description of his bedspread as "stretching like a sterile skin across my empty bed" (29). Importantly, Allert draws numerous comparisons between himself and the ship. He compares the life preserver's function in saving a man's life to the ship's hawser in securing the ship (13). Apparently, Allert conceives of himself as a "drowning" man, for he imagines himself "tying the white cords in the darkness of a night at sea" (27); "Only considerable inner concentration prevented me from donning one of the orange life jackets over my white robe" (29). He is particularly conscious of the ship's internal rhythms, "motion I could not visualize . . . the subliminal grinding of iron wheels and greasy gears . . . the stabilizing throb and purpose of the engines far below" (25). To varying degrees, Allert identifies with the ship: "Our propellers, great pieces of underwater brass statuary, were today functioning with purpose, with power" (32); "quite distinctly I felt some

alteration in the position of our tonnage as it shifted in the deep sea" (51-2); "The distant vibrations were all around us, were inside me, as if my own intestinal center was pulsating with pure oceanic motion and the absolute certainty of the navigational mind doing its dependable work" (8).

Allert's greatest fear is of the ship's immobility: "suddenly I knew the ship was making no forward progress whatsoever. The knowledge was startling. . . . To stop, to lose headway, could only put the vessel in gravest danger" (2-3). Allert confronts several situations when the ship is immobile:

Directly beneath my spread feet I felt the rumble of the anchor chain. I heard that terrible noise distinctly and felt the black chains descending link by mammoth link as if we were going to drop both anchors and remain forever in the midst of that natural desolation known only to birds (70).

In the ship's immobility "the actuality of my own worst dream" (96) is realized. Allert fears the "death" of the ship (97), yet experiences a "total identification with the dead ship" (8). The "deadness" of the still ship suggests Allert's emotional deadness, which is the view that others have of him yet which he cannot accept. As he is reluctant to confront the fact of his own emotional unresponsiveness, so he becomes fearful of the ship when it, too, becomes a prey to forces beyond its control; at such times, the chaotic unconscious and the "incomprehensible" sea are beyond conscious and human efforts to contain them. The ship does not have to be adrift at sea to alarm Allert, but even when it is at anchor he feels impelled to escape from it. But going ashore is no escape, in fact, and islands provide at best an illusory comfort, for they, too, are surrounded and sustained by the sea. On islands, as on the ship itself, Allert is forced into unwanted confrontations with his self. Thus, on

the island of the nudists, Allert is stripped to "psychological nudity" by the wireless operator (101), and on the "Paradise Isles," he is forced to acknowledge his true sexual being on watching the performance of the bats.

In these confrontations both Ariane and Olaf play a part. These characters represent aspects of Allert's unconscious self. Ariane is a flirtatious girl of twenty-six, "ordinary yet unfamiliar" (41), who has "many favorites" on board (42) and makes it a routine to press the trousers of the ship's officers (63). We see very little evidence of other passengers during the cruise, but the focus narrows and intensifies onto Allert himself and the process through which he confronts central and essential aspects of his being.

Ariane is the second anima figure in Death, Sleep & the Traveler, the outer form of the archetype:

We encounter the inner form of animus or anima in our dreams, fantasies, visions, and other expressions of the unconscious when they disclose contrasexual traits of our own psyche; we are dealing with the outward form when we project a part or the whole of our unconscious psyche upon someone in our environment and fail to realize that this other person who confronts us is in a way our own inner self.<sup>19</sup>

As one onto whom Allert projects his anima, Ariane symbolizes the emotional self which is hidden behind the persona he projects in the outer world. She enables him to come in contact with a part of him which it is necessary for him to develop: she is "the young woman I knew so emotionally and so briefly on the cruise" (35-6). Ariane is symbolically linked with the sea, which links her additionally with Allert's unconscious--associations which strongly recall Conrad's "secret sharer." A frequent traveler on cruise ships such as the one they are on (45), she bears a physical tell-tale sign of her symbolic origins in the form of a scar shaped like a fish



hook (34, 66, 102). Ariane also vanishes overboard into the sea like Conrad's secret sharer. In various ways, Ariane's symbolic origins suggest the climactic scene in The Beetle Leg when Luke fishes a dead baby out of the water. Allert's apparent murder of Ariane further recalls Luke's ultimate response, which is to commit the baby to the depths from which it came; both reject the unconscious self through their actions: fishing the waters of the unconscious results in no new awareness or self-discovery as it does with Conrad's narrator.

Ariane combines sympathetic understanding with the strength to bear "any amount of pain or fear my presence might inflict on her" (8). She even appears to know who Allert is and possesses insights into his character. She is "more friendly to me than anyone I had ever known" (8) and says, "'you are a good-hearted person, Allert. I know you are'" (103). Allert believes that Ariane's claim to know "who he is" "was somehow more than an assertion of innocence" (53). Like her Grecian namesake, Ariane becomes a guide ("she who guided me to the end of the journey," 179). Through the assistance of Ariane, Allert is able to find his way partly out of the labyrinth of the unconscious by acknowledging her "reality" (102). Yet, in the end, Allert wants not the truth but an illusory innocence, and he cannot accept the "other side" to her character; like Skipper's response to his daughter, Allert insists on Ariane's innocence and cannot accept her duality.

For a time, though, Allert has faith in his guide. This dependence is tested as they embark for the nudist island: "'I know you will take us directly to the beach of the nudists and then return us to the waiting ship'" (99). In response, Ariane takes command of him, exhorting: "'But you must trust me, Allert. You said you would'" (101).

As a representative of the anima, it is not surprising to note that Ariane has connections with both nature and myth. A Pan figure, she plays the flute expertly and always in the nude (67). She claims the island of the goats as her own (recalling, perhaps, Cyril's possessiveness of natural objects), and she dons a "mythical garment" in the shape of a goat's head (174-5). According to one legend, Ariane became the wife of Bacchus or Dionysius<sup>20</sup> which would further tie her to nature elements. (Dionysius, along with Pan, is often depicted in the form of a goat.) On the island of the nudists, Ariane admires the expression of simplistic joy evinced by a family of nudists. In contrast to the self-conscious Allert and the hapless wireless operator, who is turning a "sickening red," Ariane is at one with nature: "She had allowed her black hair to fall down her narrow back, her eyes were large, her small calves were shapely, there was a curious dignity in the plumpness of the small naked belly exposed without embarrassment" (102). She immediately reassures Allert when he expresses concern that he might show a "lack of control" while on the beach: "what you describe is entirely possible. But it is also natural. To me it would not be at all embarrassing" (103)..

Olaf's insights into Allert's character are focused specifically on sex. Throughout the cruise the wireless officer haunts Allert with insinuations which are lewdly conceived but certainly not untrue. He automatically senses Allert's interest in pornography and offers him photographs to buy. But it is primarily his relationship with Ariane that Allert objects to. Allert is determined to think of her as innocent (Ariane = "the holy one"), and the relationship she has with Olaf undermines this determination. He is always calling attention to her childish appearance. He observes her "childish" chest and legs (11, 33) and that "her energetic

upper body was like a child's" (129). Allert sees her in "a boy's white undershirt" (129) or in a revealing halter in which "the naked waist was as smooth and child-like as the expression on her guileless face" (131). As she straddles the diving board by the pool she reminds Allert of "a child at play" (131) and, at another point, Allert observes "the exertion of her girlish labor" (131). Allert cannot accept Ariane as sexually experienced. He replies sarcastically to allusions she makes to shipboard "friends" (150) and is equally ironic when passing her door and seeing her engaged in ironing the pants of a "newly favored" officer (151). As he leaves Olaf and Ariane in front of the bats' cage at the zoo, he has a vision "of Ariane wearing the white officer's cap as would a sailor's whore" (115). On the night of her disappearance Ariane is wearing this cap along with the wireless operator's tunic as they attend the ship's ball (166), and the cap falls from her head moments before (according to the circumstantial evidence provided by Allert) she falls into the water-- a probable victim of Allert's unconscious act and certainly a victim of his symbolic denial of her. In his incomplete view of Ariane, Allert rejects part of his own being. The destruction of the anima figure, symbolically or literally, is the final indication that Allert does not want to know himself.

Like Hawkes' early artist-figures, Allert is an incomplete artist, though it is not the external world that suppresses his artistic potential, as in the early fiction, but his own refusal to allow to consciousness that which would make him more complete as an individual and an artist. He is an incomplete artist because he lacks the willingness to synthesize and ultimately transform subjective experience through the imaginative capacity. Therefore, it is significant that others in the novel see him

as metaphorically dead or else as a foetus, an unformed and undifferentiated individual incapable of responding to the complexities of his being. Like Hugh of The Blood Oranges, Allert continues to indulge in repressive behaviour, and his feelings of despair and helplessness intensify as he plunges deeper into the nightmare of the self.

Paradoxically, out of this helplessness and utter lack of control the vision of Travesty's obsessive narrator emerges. The chaos which surrounds Allert is pierced by the cold and brutal light of Papa's theories and aesthetic sense of design and order. Out of his failure as an individual--a human failure--Papa is determined to fashion an indestructible artistic triumph.

END NOTES -- CHAPTER VII

<sup>1</sup> See Irving Malin, rev. of Death, Sleep & the Traveler, Commonweal, 3 May 1974, p. 222; Calvin Bedient, "On Cat Feet," New Republic, 20 April 1974, p. 27; Michael Silverblatt, "Our Weekly Reader," Spectrum (S.U.N.Y.), 12 April 1974, p. 5; Bennett Carriere, rev. of Death, Sleep & the Traveler, Minnesota Daily, 24 June 1975, p. 8; W. M. Frohock, "How Hawkes's Humor Works," Southwest Review, 59(1974), 330-2; Donald J. Greiner, "Death, Sleep & the Traveler: John Hawkes' Return to Terror," Critique, 17, No. 3 (1976), 27, 37.

<sup>2</sup> John Hawkes, Death, Sleep & the Traveler (New York: New Directions, 1974), p. 91. All further references to this edition will appear in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Hawkes describes the work of sculpture by Stavrolakes as containing "two figures leaning away from each other, with a third figure, suspended, like a hammock, in the middle. . . . So death and sleep are carrying the traveler." Quoted by Patrick O'Donnell, John Hawkes (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), p. 155, Note 12.

<sup>4</sup> John Hawkes, "Notes on the Wild Goose Chase," The Massachusetts Review, 3(1962), p. 786.

<sup>5</sup> Anais Nin, Cities of the Interior, introd. Sharon Spencer (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1974), pp. 71-2.

<sup>6</sup> Violet Staub de Laszlo, ed., The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung (New York: Modern Library, 1959), p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> Greiner, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> See Elisabeth Kraus, "Psychic Sores in Search of Compassion: Hawkes' Death, Sleep & the Traveler," Critique, 17, No. 3 (1976), p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> But see Greiner's misplaced and mystifying claim that "In its evocation of sexuality, Death, Sleep & the Traveler is Hawkes' most erotic novel," p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> Eva C. Hangen, Symbols, Our Universal Language (Wichita, Kansas: McCormick-Armstrong, 1962), p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Herman Melville, Pierre Or, The Ambiguities (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 405.

<sup>12</sup> See Kraus, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> The Freudian concept of Eros may also be applied to this novel. However, because Jungian psychology has much more to say about the concept of identity, I have elected to give Death, Sleep & the Traveler a Jungian rather than a Freudian reading. It is valid, I believe, to interpret the struggle in Allert as involving a conflict between the forces of Eros (Art) and Thanatos (Anti-Art). But, as usual, the more

"relevant" interpretation is that which does justice to the greater number of disparate elements, which succeeds in demonstrating the highest level of consistency within the undeniably comprehensive scope of the novel.

<sup>14</sup> de Laszlo, p. 312.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>16</sup> Jolande Jacobi, The Psychology of C. G. Jung, 8th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> Hawkes is to use the nearly identical "fist through glass" image in his next novel, Travesty. Here, the image may suggest the perilous nature of the anima to one who cannot accept its presence but can only approach it through the unconscious; the image captures the sense of danger Allert unconsciously associates with one who embodies this archetype. See following chapter ("Driving Toward the Limits: Travesty as Vision"), Note 25.

<sup>18</sup> The archetype of the anima invariably appears, at first, mingled with the mother image. All three essential aspects of the mother archetype as defined by Jung appear here. See de Laszlo, p. 334.

<sup>19</sup> Jacobi, p. 115.

<sup>20</sup> Harry Thurston Peck, Ed., Harper's Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities (New York: American Book Company, 1923), p. 124.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DRIVING TOWARD THE LIMITS: TRAVESTY AS VISION

Travesty is the concluding novel of Hawkes' triad, but also the last in a succession of first-person narratives. Beginning with Second Skin, Hawkes explores the visionary capacity of each narrator to "make a world"; he examines such aspects as the narrator's attempts at control (including control of the reader) and the integration of other elements within the created world (natural and sexual ones, for example); as a test of the vision's durability and strength, Hawkes subjects the narrator's vision to comic and to various kinds of potentially destructive influences. The overall effect is a fiction which is engaged in the examination and often the challenging of many of its own basic impulses, assumptions and tenets.

Each narrator's vision contains a fundamental weakness, and one of the functions of the narrative in each case is to expose and clarify the nature of this weakness. Skipper's paradise in Second Skin is continually "wandering," for only in its separation from the rest of the world can Skipper achieve the security which enables him to practise his humanistic values. Cyril's Illyria in The Blood Oranges is unstable owing to the presence of the conventionally moral, puritanical Hugh. Of the four first-person narrators, only Allert in Death, Sleep & the Traveler fails to achieve what he sets out to achieve; however, it can be argued that Allert sets out to "fail," in a sense, and is therefore "successful." Allert's fundamental weakness is a lack of self-knowledge. Unlike the others, he does not pursue the clarity of his vision but becomes absorbed

in a problematic past and an equally problematic dream life. Papa, the narrator of Travesty, has isolated himself and two other passengers within a speeding car, proposing to crash the car and kill everyone, including himself, his daughter, Chantal, and his artistic and sexual rival, Henri. He is thoroughly alienated from the world which exists outside of the automobile, sealed within a dark and destructive vision.

If one is concerned with the unity of Hawkes' work, particularly his triad of novels, one can hardly read Travesty without discomfiting backward glances toward those novels preceding it. In Second Skin and The Blood Oranges, the narrators' visions, while incomplete or limited in some way, are seen in a generally beneficial or positive light; both narrators affirm life-related values. Death, Sleep & the Traveler begins the downward swing in which death-related values begin to prevail. Yet in spite of the succession of powerful imagery related to death in Travesty, this work proclaims the ultimate power of the imagination<sup>1</sup> and thus closely resembles The Blood Oranges where Cyril's claims for the imagination are nearly as strong as Papa's. How is the Illyrian paradise to be reconciled with Papa's "private apocalypse"?<sup>2</sup> Does Papa's vision simply represent a coldly logical extension of Cyril's vision of a seemingly idyllic existence and, if so, are we to see this latter vision in retrospect begin to waiver precariously and perhaps dissolve in the light of the novel's own tenuous affirmation? Is it then feasible to reread The Blood Oranges without a sense of teleological reckoning abiding in the fabric of the Illyrian dream? Finally, where does Hawkes' fictional aesthetic lie in relation to these two novels?<sup>3</sup>

#### Vision and Travesty

Travesty encourages such questions as those proposed above, and many



others as well. This is because the novel is profoundly self-questioning, examining the aesthetics which give rise to it. The novel itself provides few answers to these questions; indeed, there is no attempt to account for its very existence as narrative: how can Papa's monologue exist given the fact that he is minutes away from his own suicide? Coleridge's familiar "suspension of disbelief" helps to create in the reader the imaginative atmosphere in which the novel is to be read, and it mitigates against our desire for objective truth and the recitation of "real" events, as it does in much post-modern metafiction. The emphasis on and questioning of the vision in Travesty enrich the concepts of vision in Hawkes' other novels without necessarily undermining it. They should not lead us to assumptions of priority in which Papa's vision effectually pre-empts Cyril's, in which Cyril's fragile but sustaining structure cascades before our eyes, but only to be replaced by a greater intangibility: the void of destruction and death which represents the physical culmination of Papa's journey. In both The Blood Oranges and Travesty, the visionary impulse controls the actions within the novels and, to some extent, exerts itself toward the successful completion of the vision. But while this impulse leads Cyril to reaffirm life, it "drives" Papa toward death. The visionary impulse is employed in different directions, but the nature of that impulse is essentially the same in each work.

The relation between vision and comedy is evident in Hawkes' comments concerning the dualistic nature of the comic impulse in his fiction: comedy disrupts and disperses conventional moral concerns, while it strives toward an ultimate resolution in harmony. In the first-person narratives (including the more unusual form of first-person narration found in The Cannibal), comic distortion undercuts the narrators themselves, mocking

their seriousness and pretensions. Travesty encompasses both aspects of the comic impulse (disruption of morality and the harmonizing potential), while incorporating three interrelated aspects of comic distortion, ranging from the most localized (verbal) to the formal or structural. Papa's verbal humour is the major form of comic distortion which is directed at Henri and the reader rather than at Papa himself. Papa's monologue contains numerous instances of word play, ironic reassurances and sequences of twisted logic based partly on verbal artifice. He also employs euphemisms continuously; for example, he observes, "the life of the car is running out, the end of our journey tonight is not as distant as one might think" (33-4). The transposition of two words here ("life" and "journey") distorts and seemingly minimizes the true state of their predicament.

There are also specific scenes in Travesty, as in other novels, where burlesque is prevalent. The snail hunting scene in The Blood Oranges mocks Cyril's pretensions as an Arcadian lover. There is a scene in Travesty which similarly serves to undercut the narrator's eroticism, though it is far more graphic than the episode from the earlier novel. In this scene Papa describes his affair with his only mistress, Monique, and the spanking he administers to her. Monique ultimately challenges Papa's sense of control, and the whipping which Monique administers to him following his spanking forces him to acknowledge that "I am not always in total mastery of the life I create, as I have been accused of being" (74).<sup>4</sup> The comic tension present in this scene erupts in the image where Papa portrays himself as degraded yet elated by the punishment which Monique has given him:

In my defeat and discomfort I too felt a certain relief, a certain happiness for Monique, and if in the midst of helplessness and pain I had nonetheless been able to photograph her benign expression, surely I would have set up the tripod, triggered the blinding light. As it

was I merely gave myself to the sound of the rain and finally, on all fours, made my way to my clothes (74).

The comedy in this passage turns on the phrase "As it was," and what follows humorously stresses at Papa's expense the disparity between his irrepressible desire as an erotic artist and the inevitability of his humiliating situation.

The third and most important form of comic distortion extends far beyond a localized context and questions the very existence of Papa's aesthetic and, indeed, Hawkes' own aesthetic. Travesty presents a sustained self-travesty, which can be seen partly through Papa's seeming casual allusions to imperfections in his design. Papa insists that the actual journey he undertakes in a speeding automobile will mirror the journey which he has previously envisioned, but it clearly does not do so in one fundamental aspect: the fact that there will be a fire after the crash (57). This fact, in turn, leads us away from Papa's focus on the imagination and vision--away from the all-encompassing aesthetic. For one thing, it leads to questions regarding Papa's true motives and unconscious preoccupations; Papa's aesthetic may then become a secondary rather than a primary force which instigates the journey. His aesthetic may simply amount to an expression of a psychic and subjective need which must be "legitimized." This is in accord with Hawkes' own view of his art and with both Hawkes' and Papa's view of "design and debris." It is significant that Papa continually avoids and responds defensively to his apparent motivations during the course of the journey, while only appearing to be addressing them. Largely through his linguistic control, he appears able to defeat or counter such questions as Henri addresses to him: he is extremely adept at disposing of Henri's interrogations through his manipulations of language and logic; also, as a monologist, he exhibits absolute

control over what Henri says, perhaps deliberately failing to report Henri's rebuttals or more incisive and probing comments. We may well ask (though Henri does not) why, given Papa's acknowledgment at one crucial point that "The unseen vision is not to be improved upon" (58), he persists in the journey, and whether he has some other motive for completing it. The phrase Papa uses provides an example of a euphemism which appears to serve his purpose of self-deception, preventing him from directly acknowledging that his vision is actually unattainable:

In neither The Blood Oranges nor Travesty is the visionary triumph complete or absolute. Yet the clearer focus in Travesty on vision itself suggests an intensification of purpose as Hawkes explores the essence of the vision and its function within his aesthetic. In this way Travesty presents a more elaborate representation of Hawkes' aesthetic than is revealed in The Blood Oranges where the narrator, Cyril, shares several of Hawkes' own concerns relating to vision, artistic creation, erotic fulfillment and the imagination. Since Papa rejects both nature and love in his quest for artistic purity, there remain virtually no connections which he can make with the external world or the lives of others; in fact, Papa plans to sever the only connection which does remain by taking his own life, proclaiming in the process the absolute powers of the imagination and the triumph of his vision.

Like Cyril, Papa shares many of Hawkes' aesthetic values, and Papa sometimes deliberately echoes Hawkes. Hawkes has claimed that "As an artist, I'm not interested in 'life,'" while Papa declares, "'belief in life' is . . . not for a poet" (36). They also share an obsessive interest in clarity, design and purity (both artistic purity and innocence itself); Henri's "mythos of cruel detachment" which Papa "admires" (43)

is a dominant feature of Hawkes' aesthetic. Hawkes closely identifies with Papa's "responsibility" which he assumes as an artist:

The irony is that I'm not appalled yet by the privileged man's murder/suicide in Travesty. This is because I think of it as so purely a work of art that he assumes responsibility rather than commits an outrage against life itself.<sup>6</sup>

Papa himself refers to "the responsibility I have assumed" and invites Henri "to share equally" in it (81). Perhaps the subtlest link between artist and artist-figure is suggested in an image which both use to express the visionary nature of their art. Hawkes describes visionary fiction as "a fish bowl in which the clarity of the bowl is unique and you see the stream of fish, the gleam of fins."<sup>7</sup> From the constricted perspective of the artist actively engaged within his vision, Papa employs the same image but for a different effect:

. . . a concept of existence so suddenly constricted that one feels like a goldfish crazed and yet at the same time quite paralyzed in his bowl (19).

Hawkes has discussed the use of paradox in works of other writers (notably Flannery O'Connor),<sup>8</sup> and Papa is fascinated by paradoxes. The novel itself is organized around the projected occurrence of a paradoxical event, a blatantly logical contradiction: the narrator proposes to kill himself and meanwhile engages us and his passengers in the car in which he is driving in an "impossible" discourse minutes before the fatal "accident" he has planned. The reader is afforded no prologue or preface or, for that matter, postscript or epilogue--no clue of any kind to explain or justify this "miraculous" narration. Hawkes refuses to close the gap between the plausible and the impossible. Making the improbable or "impossible" narrative viable has preoccupied writers from Edgar Allan Poe and his Gothic ancestors to Jorge Luis Borges, but, unlike these writers,

Hawkes makes no effort to substantiate the monologue's credibility.<sup>9</sup> It is as if Melville had made Ishmael, along with the others on The Pequod, a victim of Moby Dick. In Travesty there is nothing provided which would help us associate the monologue with a "real" event. The world of the visionary artist is "unique" and "separate" from the world we live in, says Hawkes,<sup>10</sup> and he insists on this necessary aspect of isolation by refusing to resort to such traditional devices as prologue or epilogue which would give more credibility to the narrative itself.

In one sense, the "accident" itself is a perfect paradigm of the absurd "in which invention quite defies interpretation" (23). Yet, paradoxically, it is the reverse of an "accident," for it is elaborately planned. Nevertheless, it will appear absurd and meaningless to all those who attempt to reconstruct and analyze it. In reality, the "accident" could not have been more highly orchestrated, for Papa's design is intended to obfuscate and deny rational analysis. For Papa, the central paradox will involve "design and debris." He calls the "utter harmony between design and debris" "the truest paradox," one which is to be realized through the "Total destruction" of the car which Papa is driving as it collides with a stone wall (17). Papa expands on the nature of this paradox as he graphically depicts the accident in its visionary form. The accident becomes a paradigm of artistic creation, revealing both elements of the paradox, fusing design and debris in a way that recalls some of Hawkes' comments on the process of artistic creation. For example, Hawkes speaks of his fictional method whereby subterranean or psychic impulses, "all readily distorted" as in a dream, are shaped into a discernible, formulated entity in which the clarity of design ultimately emerges.<sup>11</sup> However, as we have seen in The Blood Oranges (and as we will see in Virginie, her

two lives), such designs are unstable themselves and constantly threatening to dissolve once again into chaos. Hawkes' fiction provides evidence of the "design and debris" process in the function of the visionary artist, who labours to create an order or design out of his psychic being, a design which ultimately succumbs to its own temporality, its inability to achieve permanence on account of its internal insufficiencies or imbalances.

At times, Papa becomes preordinately a figure of ridicule as his aesthetic ideal is undercut and parodied. The only way that Hawkes can fully explicate the basis of his visionary art is to subject it to travesty. Thus, while Travesty contains the clearest statement of Hawkes' aesthetic, it is also a judgment on that aesthetic.<sup>12</sup> Hawkes' novels have often contained within them a dualistic impulse in which the nature of subjective art is thoroughly examined and questioned at the same time that the artist-figure engages, in the process of realizing his particular vision. The effect has not been an art which promotes and exemplifies concerns central to the novelist. Rather, Hawkes' novels effect a recognition of artistic limits; they question the very values through which the visionary world is brought into being. The last thing such novels are is complacently self-serving.

Throughout his career Hawkes has carefully, if not extensively, presented his fictional aesthetic to the reader of his fiction through periodic essays and interviews, while he has continuously incorporated that aesthetic within his fiction, emphasizing particular qualities at different times. The figure of the visionary artist appears consistently throughout his works, but in his triad of novels, he subjects his aesthetic to a close and exacting scrutiny. In Travesty Hawkes explores the limits of his visionary art, raising issues and questions which concern him intimately

as a writer. Only by travesty many of these issues can Hawkes fully explore the fundamental qualities of his aesthetic and the problematical issues inherent in it.<sup>13</sup> In this way, Travesty can be seen as a serio-comic exposé of the limits and limitations of an art which insists on the preeminence, even exclusivity of vision, which denies the "real" and "life-like" in favour of subjective truths. Through his exaggerated and distorted views on the function and nature of his art, Papa extends Hawkes' aesthetic to the breaking point, exerting considerable tension through the extravagant claims Papa makes for his art. At the point where travesty becomes so pronounced that it threatens the existence of the aesthetic, art itself begins to dissolve into anti-art; art becomes a destructive force, reflecting the psychological imbalance of the artist himself. Like Henri, Zizendorf of The Cannibal, Larry of The Lime Twig and Hugh of The Blood Oranges, Papa can then be seen as a parody of the artist rather than a visionary artist.

The tension between art and anti-art seems to resolve in an ending which appears to reaffirm the aesthetic values which Papa expostulates. Henri represents the anti-artist, one who opposes the visionary's art by catering to an adoring public and cultivating a false mask of the "suffering" artist. Papa struggles to make Henri submit to his aesthetic beliefs, cajoling, deriding and torturing him in the effort to render him receptive to these beliefs. The ending of Travesty where Henri admits the superiority of "imagined life" over "remembered life" (127) suggests, on one level, that Papa succeeds in his attempts and that the reader, as well as Henri, must admit to the superiority of Papa's imaginative vision. To the extent that this is true, art is redeemed just before the car makes its final plunge toward nihilism and death, toward a physical finality as total and



unsparring as the finality of Hawkes' art would seem to be should such an ending represent a resolution of this kind.

But, although Henri submits, the reader does not necessarily do so; in fact, he cannot do so. The tensions residing within Papa himself, which are related to the artistic-anti-art dialectic, prohibit such an easy or definite resolution. Though the reader and Henri are similarly placed with respect to Papa's monologue (both are silenced and helpless), they are not in parallel situations. Naturally, survival is uppermost in Henri's mind, and it can do him little good to resist Papa's invitation "to make what we can of this experience" (25), to learn to see through Papa's eyes and identify with him as a visionary. In fact, it is logically possible that to do so might aid him in overcoming Papa's megalomania. Though the reader cannot actually respond (for Papa silences everyone), ultimately he must do so, and his response--that is his response to the experience of reading Travesty--is everything. Henri finally responds, apparently by affirming the imagination over memory, and Papa then becomes silent; his rhetoric can no longer serve a purpose. The reader undergoes a different learning process in which Papa's words are vitally important in that they reveal a tension within the aesthetic ideal that Papa proposes. The reader must learn, not by understanding the meaning of Papa's act, as Henri supposedly comes to do, but by responding experientially to language, by making this his primary focus, by attending to the twin capacities of language as lyrical expression and as potentially deceptive. The monologue form, of course, encourages such a responsiveness.<sup>14</sup> For the reader, there is no resolution because the text itself does not lead him toward finality but keeps him in suspension for the course of the journey and even beyond.

Charles Baxter discusses the nature and implications of the reader's entrapment within the text, emphasizing Hawkes' manipulation of narrative form (the monologue) to effect "submission" and, finally, to provoke "the imagination into a frenzy of compensatory activity." Through the efforts of the monologist, who "achieves [his] success by sensory overload," "the verbal spaces are closed."<sup>15</sup> But Baxter does not fully consider the ongoing process whereby the reader seeks to activate his own involvement and become an integral part of an evolving, non-static text. According to Wolfgang Iser, the relationship between the text and imagination constitutes the "virtual dimension of the text," which comes into being through the existence of "gaps." These gaps are crucial elements in the writing process, for they enable the reader to establish connections, creating "indeterminacy" in the act of reading.<sup>16</sup> The inexplicable nature of Papa's text is one such indeterminacy, while the central disparity between Papa's vision of the accident and what he unwillingly projects as certain to occur creates another indeterminacy. Indeterminacy sets off a responsiveness in the reader, enabling him to participate much more fully than Baxter suggests in the process of realizing the dynamic qualities of the literary work.<sup>17</sup> Precisely because the reader is not trapped "in the suicide seat," he refuses to be "traumatized" by the events Papa recites.

We begin and end our experience in reading the novel by attending to negatives: Travesty begins with the word "No" (which immediately attracts our attention and interest), and ends with a declarative and decisive "None." Such negatives provide a focus, a guidepost of sorts, in between which occur a dizzying sequence of blurred or intangible images, sharpened into focus by Papa's insistence that these images are "true."

But the text itself teaches us to resist Papa's clarifying imagination while we closely attend to the startling forms which inhabit it. Hawkes asks that we respond experientially to a text where nothing will be clarified in spite of Papa's claims that clarity is his goal. Hawkes gives us mere straws to clutch at in our search for the meaning of Papa's act or the novel's meaning. Even Henri's "recognition" is such a straw; to grasp it is not to seize victoriously Hawkes' purpose in writing the novel or to grasp the meaning of the work: the recognition promotes no similar recognition in the reader and leads to no real resolution; it creates, instead, a further indeterminacy. "[T]he true language," says Papa, is "always precious and treacherous at the same time" (33), and the reader must attune himself to the double nature of language if he is to "make the most" of his reading experience in Travesty. Language becomes a register of Papa's artistic-aesthetic preoccupation and a means of deception, a way of avoiding concerns outside of the vision--such as moral ones. The reader can neither afford to be drawn in and entrapped by Papa's narrative nor can he dismiss its lyrical, sometimes rhapsodizing tone, nor the startling clarity of many of its images--the poetic intensity. In The Blood Oranges linguistic devices often serve to connect Cyril's Illyria with the natural world. But while Cyril often "seduces" us through his language to experience the Illyrian paradise, through Papa, Hawkes alerts us to the treacherous function of language when the goal of the artist is aesthetic purity. The effect is to put the reader on his guard and enable him to engage fully in the reading experience through examining and testing the logic and consistency of Papa's words. In a novel which is full of paradoxes, Hawkes makes his concern with language one of the central paradoxes.

From The Blood Oranges on, there has been an increasing sense of

enclosure within the narrator's world, with fewer connections to be made with the external world. Such an intensification bespeaks the greater preoccupation of each successive narrator with himself and also reflects what some have perceived as each narrator's increasing insanity. Yet none of these narrators--not even Papa--can be dismissed as merely insane. As the visionary artist approaches the limits of sanity, he becomes a more potent mouthpiece for Hawkes himself in his greater ability to express the visionary aesthetic. The journey is intended to focus our entire beings on the qualities of the imagination and the preeminence of the creative vision over death. But to the extent that we come to doubt the narrator's psychological equilibrium, his vision seems less accessible, and he becomes, for us, less reliable in his capacity to express that aesthetic. We may see him as obsessed with his own revelatory power to the exclusion of everything else, psychopathically committed to the attainment of a fantasy, the willed enactment of a destructive and deadly vision. In this he represents a travesty of the visionary artist.

Insanity is basically a function of society's norms, and if we readily declare Papa insane,<sup>18</sup> we run the risk of simultaneously asserting these norms. The only thing which truly challenges conventional morality is extremity itself. This can be seen in an assortment of Kafka's characters who reject conventional norms in the effort to understand themselves more fully in relation to conventionalism or authority or in order to fulfil their assumed functions as artists or suffering human beings. It becomes clear why Hawkes identifies the acts of the criminal and revolutionary with the artistic function, and why he persistently claims for art the need to "destroy conventional morality."<sup>19</sup> The conventionally moral individual and the writer who asserts moral values in his fiction merely

reasserts the status quo; thus, such a writer works in the service of a complacent readership. In contrast, Travesty presents a direct challenge to a world organized around moral concerns (as does The Blood Oranges), even if, in reality, many merely give lip service to these concerns.

Hawkes' exploration of the limits of art involves risk; perhaps, like Papa's drive toward death, it could be considered a form of artistic suicide.<sup>20</sup> Yet to choose not to explore these limits, to fall short by succumbing to external pressures (like conventionally moral or artistic concerns) would be, too, a form of suicide. Thus, Papa ridicules the conventional poet, Henri, as he argues with Papa:

perhaps it would be better for all concerned if just this once I could find you in the right . . . and all at once find myself overcome with fear and so pull to the side of the road, thus ending our journey, and in rain and darkness sit sobbing over the wheel (italics added; 83).

Neither will Hawkes stop the car of his art; indeed, he cannot. "Do not ask me to slow down. It is impossible" (16), says Papa, but Hawkes can be heard here voicing a similar concern. Both are committed to a vision which transcends the need for security and safety. The experience of Travesty is an experience in reading Hawkes, and readers of his fiction must rid themselves of this need to rest in the security of the commonplace to take up the challenge which such fiction sets before us. At the same time, we must be conscious of a language which eschews meaning and a narrative which avoids resolution--a language and narrative which are formulated to deceive as much as they are to clarify. Through the tensions which arise out of paradox, contradiction and doubt,<sup>21</sup> the true climate of reader responsiveness must be determined and enacted in the reading process.

Vision and Eroticism

During the course of the ride, the car's three occupants engage in varying activities. Papa is, or appears to be, totally in control as the car's driver and the work's one consciousness. Just as he coolly and deftly manœuvres the car on tricky twists and turns of the road, so he calmly and rationally manipulates Henri's arguments; dismissing them as "disappointing" (18), "obvious" (82) and "last resorts" (106, 120); at one point, he accuses Henri of "being emotional again, rather than rational" (95). Chantal's responses are the extreme opposite of Papa's rationalism. They are emotionally based and are exhibited physically or physiologically: she spbs and attempts to assault Papa (11); then, she withdraws and curls up in the fetal position between the seats (53-4); finally she is heard vomiting (95). Papa notes early in the journey that "we will not be able to count on Chantal for any very meaningful contribution" (25); but from Henri he expects "total attention" (22). Henri, who Papa claims is a bad poet (106) but an artist nonetheless, is capable of more complex responses. He is forced to adopt various strategies for survival; like Chantal, he is at times violent (as the novel opens, he is struggling for the steering wheel), and he too reacts physiologically to the stress of the ride (60-1); at other times, he seems more or less a passive witness, smoking a cigarette; observing the car's increasing speed. Mostly, though, he argues conventionally in what Papa would call "moral" terms.

As the novel closes, Papa reminds Chantal that he has not forgotten her. But on the surface, her presence, in spite of, or more likely because of, Papa's assurances of his "devotion" and "love" for her is somewhat baffling. Papa is vague and evasive in declaring that Chantal was "the necessary third person whose importance was quite equal to Henri's and

mine" (40). As far as the contradictory actions of a protective parent, Papa dismisses such considerations as "a disillusionment I cannot discuss for now" (39)--nor does he ever discuss them. The suggestion is, though, that what Papa calls his "devotion" and "love" amount to distorted feelings of sexuality directed towards his daughter. Consumed by an ego-possessiveness Papa determines to kill Chantal rather than continue to see her in the role of Henri's mistress, a role also adopted by Honorine. The journey could then be considered a revengeful act against daughter, wife and "best friend"--it is triggered by unconscious needs as well as by aesthetic concerns.

Aspects of Papa's sexuality recall earlier works: Like Allert in Death, Sleep & the Traveler, Papa is a collector of pornography, and like Hugh in The Blood Oranges, he photographs nudes. The sado-masochistic encounter between Papa and Monique is somewhat reminiscent of the beating given to Margaret in The Lime Twig, though the former is primarily a comic scene. The theme of incest should be familiar from Second Skin. Both "Papa Cue Ball" and Travesty's Papa "court" their daughters: "Don't you know that Papa loves you?" (12). In a more sinister but revealing vein, Papa says, "No one can rob you now of your Papa's love" (40).

Two later scenes in Travesty reinforce the theme of latent incest: the Chez Lulu episode and the final episode of the novel. Papa's motivations are subtly suggested by an allusion later in the work to Lulu, the husky proprietor of Chez Lulu where "Chantal gained her emotional though not legal majority" (110-11). Henri and Lulu are linked, as Papa suggests that Lulu might have taken the place of Henri in the death-car. Since "both Honorine and Chantal were fond of [Lulu]" the suggestion is that Lulu has had affairs with both Papa's wife and daughter. It is significant that Papa conceives of Lulu as being virtually interchangeable with

Henri, for both are corruptors of his daughter. Henri, though, was the more logical choice for the journey; says Papa, for the intellectually inferior Lulu would hardly be "fit for the mental and emotional rigors of the private apocalypse" (110).

The spectacle of Chantal's performance at Chez Lulu, as it is depicted by Papa, has obvious sexual overtones. In this public performance three young girls stand on a stage-like platform so that they appear "more provocative, more indiscreetly revealed, than most professional seminude girls in a chorus line" (115). Then, kneeling with faces raised and legs apart, they grope with their lips for immense carrots suspended in front of them. The object of the "game," which the girls are not told and have "to intuit," is to eat the carrot. The "responsive" Chantal (118) is the first to complete this simulated sexual act, whereupon she becomes "the Queen of Carrots" and the companion the following day of "the notorious Lulu" (119), "the possessor of an unlimited store of sexually aggressive ways" (112). Evidently, Lulu's conquest is complete, and he is able to enjoy "to the full this first day [of many?] with his little pink and amber Queen" (120).

The placement of the Chez Lulu episode is particularly significant. Although the narrator alludes to Chantal becoming Queen of Carrots much earlier, and in a context equating this performance with both sexuality and death (14-15), he reserves relating this episode until late in the journey. Only two, much briefer scenes from the past follow. Hawkes generally structures his first-person novels so that the most climactic scenes are related in the final pages; those episodes most traumatic in the minds of the narrators occur in a psychologically appropriate position in the narrative. Inevitably, they contain the most repressed content which



cannot be directly or immediately confronted: Hugh's death, breaking up the quaternion and disrupting paradise in The Blood Oranges, can only be admitted to consciousness once Cyril has reassured himself that he can redeem his original vision in some form; Allert's apparent murder of Ariane in Death, Sleep & the Traveler is never directly acknowledged, but scenes immediately prior to and following it occur in the last pages. The performance where Chantal becomes Queen of Carrots is designed to display the sexuality of the three girls for an appreciative, "aroused" audience, but Papa cannot admit openly that his daughter's sexual being attracts him. His sublimated desire appears in the form of his admiration for Lulu, particularly in the exaggerated description of his outer, physical qualities: "our charming, dark-haired young brute of a man . . . large, handsome . . . one of those tall, strapping young men who would have made an excellent athlete had it not been for his relentlessly dissolute nature" (110-12).

The Chez Lulu episode is interconnected with the final episode in which Papa describes his attempt to run down a young girl who is in the company of an older poet; Papa perceives the older man as a threatening figure. Both these episodes are anticipated by earlier allusions. Preparing us for the eventual recital of the latter episode, Papa promises to tell of a "travesty" which "determined or revealed the nature of the life I would lead henceforth as well as the nature of the man I had just become" (47). This "travesty" has echoes within Travesty and also recalls in several ways Allert's apparent murder of Ariane in the preceding work of the triad. Both Allert and Papa deny the possible consequences of their act: "I do not believe I struck that little girl. In retrospect it does not seem likely" (126). Papa at least admits his intentions; yet neither

⊕ Papa nor Allert can account rationally for their attempts to commit murder. In their denials and lack of motivations are suggested a deeper need which both narrators refuse to allow to consciousness. Charles Baxter postulates the operation of the psychological mechanism of trauma here; he sees this episode as the major effort by Hawkes to "traumatize" the reader:

If the narrator ran down the child and has only screen memories of the entire event, as it appears, then the whole episode qualifies as a trauma over which the narrator is attempting to gain control. Confounded by overwhelming stimuli, he repeats a pattern in order to feel the anxiety he lacked previously.<sup>22</sup>

Allert's murder of Ariane is psychologically explicable on the grounds that he has not come adequately to terms with his own sexuality and loss of innocence; consequently, he cannot accept the flirtations of the "child-like" Ariane with the crude wireless operator. The narrators of all the works comprising the triad, in fact, cling to the false security of an illusory innocence. Cyril insists that "sex-singing" is impossible without the existence "of the frail yet indestructible little two-or-three-note theme of innocence," and he is attracted to sketches in the chapel portraying the adolescence of the Virgin (The Blood Oranges, 268-71). For Allert and Papa, no reconciliation seems possible, no poetic merging of innocence and sexuality as Cyril creates; neither they, nor Skipper, for that matter, can come to terms with the corruptibility of young girls. Just as Allert perceives Ariane as "child-like," Papa perceives Chantal and the other two girls at Chez Lulu as "young, innocent," and "girlish" (117); dressed "in undershirts designed for boys" they form a "giggling line" (114, 115). This makes Lulu, who signals out Chantal for his special attentions, manipulating her like "an erotic doll" (118), a corruptor of innocence, the precursor of Henri on whom Chantal has "spent almost the total share of [her] youthful sexuality" (38). Like Ariane, though, Chantal is not really

very young despite the narrator's perception of her--she is 25.

Henri's more obvious "precursor" is the poet who accompanies the young girl as related in the book's final episode. Papa perceives this poet as he does Henri, as a corrupter of innocence. As the young Papa approaches the pair in his car, the old poet scowls angrily at him "as if he could read in my face the character of a young man who would regard . . . [the child] with indifference or even disrespect" (126). The young girl is a portrait of innocence with an "ingenuous little heart-shaped face filled with uncanny trustfulness and simple beauty" (126). The old poet's sexual designs on the girl are symbolically suggested by the furled umbrella he carries and, on Papa's approach, gestures with threateningly.

2 The poet's possessiveness offends Papa whose "disrespect" for the girl is perceived by the older man. The sexual challenge is then taken up by Papa who steers the car--a phallic symbol in Travesty as in Second Skin--toward the girl. She becomes the victim of a sexual-aggressive need which has no other outlet for Papa. He compares the feeling of the body against his car to the imperceptible sensation of running over a rabbit. The rabbit image reinforces her victimization, for it recalls not only the rabbit that is hit during the journey (35) but the comparison of the girls at Chez Lulu to "sniffing rabbits" during the "Queen of Carrots" ceremony (116).

Like Skipper in Second Skin, Papa experiences repressed incestuous feelings toward his child-like daughter but makes no conscious acknowledgment of them. Skipper's feelings become comically displaced; he acts as Cassandra's "escort," "date" and "boyfriend"; at the same time, he projects his sexual feelings by being overprotective, eternally vigilant against any sexual "threat." He is alternatively submissive and overbearing in

his relations with Cassandra. Papa is able to displace similar incestuous feelings onto others who resemble Chantal. Like the young girl he attempts to run down, Chantal has "dark hair" (54); she has her "lovely grandmother's" "small size and rose-and-olive beauty" (65, 55); most noticeably, she shares with Monique, Papa's only mistress, not just extreme smallness but a "painfully and wonderfully" tightness of her skin (65, 55). Papa is twice compelled to deny that he chose Monique as his mistress because her small size "mimed specifically" that of his daughter (65). (As we see at other points in the novel, what Papa denies most strongly is usually that which he fears and represses most strongly.) These various displacements enable Papa to avoid dealing with the subconscious incest wish. While admiring from a distance Chantal dismounting from her horse, Papa is safe "from the long waves of regret which that same scene would have inspired in me in years past" (54). He is now quite "capable of loving Chantal without putting [him]self perversely at the center of [their] relationship"; he has become a "normal father" who can "enjoy licking smeared chocolate from [his] daughter's fingers . . . with perfect impunity" (32-3).

Prior to this "normal" relationship Papa would experience "a curious emotional reaction" in accordance with Chantal's prevailing emotion. Papa now "rarely recall[s]" (31) this time when his emotions were always contrary to those of his daughter: "I was a perfect companion to her gloom. . . . But let Chantal throw her arms around my neck . . . and I was hopelessly alien from her and depressed, inexplicably downcast" (32). In this manner, Papa punishes himself unknowingly for his subconscious desires. The substitution of negative emotions for the positive ones which would evoke anxiety, and vice versa, suggests the manifestation of a reaction formation. Psychological defenses distance Papa from the source of anxiety, allowing

# 4



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1.6

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2.0

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2.8

3.2

3.6

4.0

2.8

3.2

3.6

4.0

2.5

2.2

2.0

1.8

1.6



him to avoid confronting his incestuous feelings.

The Chez Lulu and "travesty" episodes both reveal a link between eroticism and sadism or death. Papa's sexual feelings for the young girl translate into an impulse to kill or hurt her--interestingly, it is not directed against the old poet who "irritates" and repulses him. The girls on the platform at Chez Lulu are blind-folded, and Papa describes "the young trio kneeling as if awaiting the revolver of some brutal executioner" (116). The more explicit encounter between Papa and Monique involves a sado-masochistic exchange indicative of Papa's repressed eroticism which may at any time surface as a sadistic impulse. As a young man, two kinds of periodicals absorbed him: those

depicting the most brutal and uncanny distractions of human flesh (the elbow locked inside the mouth, the head half buried inside the chest, the statuary of severed legs, dangling hands) and those other periodicals depicting the attractions of young living women partially or totally in the nude (21).

In these periodicals--the one devoted to violence, the other to sex--Papa finds outlets for his erotic and sadistic impulses which, transmuted by the imagination, may serve as the artistic or "fictional energy" liberated in the process of creative activity. Creative energy for Papa arises out of deep-seated roots of eroticism and sado-masochism; through an artistic sense of design, an obsessive commitment to form, this energy is to be discharged ultimately in an "accident" which will represent the fulfilment of the three impulses of eroticism, sadism and masochism. In particular, his sexual desire towards Chantal will be discharged through the violence of the car crash.

Papa's photographic study of Honorine provides an artistic outlet for some of his erotic impulses. Papa strongly associates the poetic impulse with acts of destruction. He is particularly interested in the

ravages done to automobiles and to the human body through car wrecks. He considers his attraction to collision sites a manifestation of the poetic sensibility, saying of Henri's distaste for such scenes, "Your poetry lies elsewhere" (20). He characterizes his attempt to run down the young girl as his "moment of creativity" (47).

The visionary art of Cyril, Papa, and to a lesser degree, Allert, unleashes forces which run counter to accepted or conventional behaviour; in these terms, it may be thought of as "abnormal" and, in Papa's case, "criminal." The tendency since the publication of the initial book of the triad has been for death and sex to merge, cohabiting the consciousness of Hugh in The Blood Oranges, Allert in Death, Sleep & the Traveler, and Papa. Papa's fondness for "spent" or "dead passion" (62-3) verbally denotes an acknowledgment of such a fusion. Traveling through a landscape of "spent passion," recalling the decadent landscape of The Blood Oranges, Papa hopes to achieve the final orgasm as his car encounters the stone wall. At the instant of the crash orgasm will become death and death become "ecstasy" (17); sexuality and death will merge.

Artistically and sexually Papa can only experience freedom behind the wheel of a car or in meditating on an accident site. Like Allert, he lacks control of his own life and the lives of others. Henri basks in an ill-deserved popularity; he is admired not only for his poems but for his fraudulent image as a man of "desperate courage," modesty, honesty, and humility (42). Such frustrations within his own life point to revenge as a likely motive for the journey. Papa's wife and daughter have both become this man's mistress. The freedoms that Papa enjoys behind the wheel of a car parallel the freedoms of artistic creation as well as those of sexual freedom. Significantly, Henri is struggling for control of the

wheel as the novel opens; he who controls the wheel is, like the author, in a position of absolute authority relative to the car's passengers or an audience. In this way Papa becomes symbolically free to explore the limits of his vision, which for the visionary artist are those of artistic creation, eroticism and death itself. The journey, then, becomes the symbolic act of composition and creation directed purposefully toward idealized form; the completion of the vision in death.

#### Vision and Form

Critics have stressed Papa's propensity for imposing forms on reality. Paul Rosenzweig claims that the facade of each of the triad's narrators "masks a highly subjective, self-serving psychology, desirous of both justifying events and exonerating the narrator from any responsibility for them and intent upon dispelling the chaos and isolation to which he has fallen victim."<sup>23</sup> Marcus Klein speaks of the imposition of forms in Travesty as a strategy of defensive mechanism erected against "the fact of perfectly unresolvable dilemma."<sup>24</sup> Forms are present everywhere: the form of the novel itself attests to the efforts of the narrator to convey his subjective vision as "purely" as possible. Because of the continuous, uninterrupted monologue form everything must be registered through the "speaker's" consciousness, thereby possibly altering what is said by others, at least orienting them for the speaker's own advantage in order to refute them.

Ultimately, it is not only Papa who imposes forms but, of course, Hawkes himself, the lurking authorial presence that is more pronounced in Travesty, perhaps than in any other novel. Hawkes' concern with physical forms is evident in earlier works. Statues and sculptural works are important motifs in the triad; and, on a larger scale, ruins of various



kinds are central symbols throughout his fiction: the abandoned lighthouse and disused watermill in Second Skin; the crumbling fortress and the hermaphrodite statue in The Blood Oranges. Hawkes drew the name for his next work after a piece of sculpture entitled "Death, Sleep & the Traveler."

Statues, works of sculpture, structures fallen into disuse--all become analogues for what the artist, particularly the contemporary artist, may be trying to achieve: form divorced from meaning, form which simply declares itself to be what it is. In the case of the hermaphrodite statue in The Blood Oranges, individuals are free to impose or project their own associations or meanings upon the object of contemplation; its meaning, in this sense, is dependent on the viewer's own perspective. But this would be less true if the statue were complete, if the missing part did not create this unintentional ambiguity. The missing part is, in fact, a clue to the otherwise indeterminate gender of the statue, and it is the imperfection in the work of art (whether created by time or vandalism) which allows for disparate interpretations. Papa confesses his pleasure in "alignments which to me are the lifeblood of form without meaning" (91). Such alignments Papa has sought in life, and he seeks them in death as well. Papa plans an "accident"

so perfectly contrived that it will be unique, spectacular, instantaneous, a physical counterpart to that vision in which it was in fact conceived. A clear "accident," so to speak, in which invention quite defies interpretation (23).

The journey Papa has planned will take him and his two passengers past their expected destination--Tara, his wife's chateau--across a viaduct after which he will execute an "incomprehensible" turn; finally, without losing speed, Papa will crash the car into a meter-thick wall of a roofless barn (24). He has rehearsed the journey innumerable times by himself "and at the fastest speed I could achieve" (16); he has elaborately

marked out the precise route that they are now taking. Through his prior imaginative projections he has done everything, in fact, to minimize the distance between his vision of the journey and the actual journey. At one point during his preparations he describes himself standing "in the last of the sun with this precise moment of our dark passage fixed in my mind--hearing the rain, the engine, the tires, seeing the lights" (103).

Although the actual journey takes place at night and the vision of the car's occupants is confined to the area delineated by the car's headlights, Papa repeatedly points out invisible landmarks and alerts the other two riders to upcoming ones; he is the infallible guide in this land of nightmare and terror. He warns Henri and Chantal of possible dangers; he expresses relief when he successfully manages to negotiate particularly treacherous curves. Such acknowledgments of his driving skills contribute to the black humour of the work. Since he intends violent death for all three of the occupants, his ironic reassurances of their temporary safety (12, 17, 52, 54, 79) seem designed to torture, to draw out the agony of the eventual ending and to emphasize his control over the lives of the others in the car. Papa perversely calls on Henri, Chantal and the reader to relish what is to them and to us the profoundest horror: the certain, desperate knowledge of impending death.

Besides warning Henri of possible dangers along the route, Papa refers to significant landmarks which none but Papa can see. The sites the narrator points out usually have associations with death or disease. Paul Emmett has linked allusions to and images of deadness with the failure of the imagination in Travesty.<sup>25</sup> Papa is driving through a landscape which owes its "beauty" and "truth" to an absence of life. The old Roman viaduct over which they will travel near the end of their journey reminds the

narrator of "flaking bone" (23). Papa also describes a scene depleted of life:

It is difficult to understand that the life of the stone hut has been emptied into the darkness, and that the olive tree is beautiful only because it is so deformed. Yet these things are true (29).

Indeed, we know we have made the circuit from life to death when we compare Cyril's admiration in The Blood Oranges for his luxuriant grape arbour and his mimosa tree in full bloom to Papa's preference for a deformed olive tree. Cyril's world, and Skipper's to a lesser extent, depend on natural agents and encompass natural forms. Nature acts as a constructive force within the narrator's world; as imaginative and natural forces function harmoniously; nature's renewing powers suggest the imagination's restorative capacity. But Papa retreats from this vision in which the imagination and nature work to enrich one another, ceasing altogether to seek connections with any force external to the vision. Because his vision focuses exclusively on death, perhaps, nature becomes transformed in the process into a decayed, atrophic force, no longer capable of renewal.

The fusion of the imaginative (art) and death is suggested in Papa's description of the cemetery they pass as an "excellent example of our morbid artistry." Admitting that Henri would see nothing if he looked, Papa claims he sees it "totally and clearly" through "a quality of deadened daytime colors" (101):

The white vases, the red flowers composed of wax, the sagging ribbons, the tiny photographs that might have been stripped from an album depicting all the participants in the last great war . . . now you have an idea of the true reason I so enjoy driving at night (101-2)

This scene, with its utter absence of vitality (somewhat reminiscent perhaps of Cyril's description of his relics at the end of The Blood Oranges), anticipates Papa's discussion of "spent passion."

Papa does not "see" in the ordinary sense. Darkness for him enhances

vision rather than inhibiting it.<sup>26</sup> According to Papa "the night is to my eye as is the pair of goggles to the arc-welder. Through the thick green lens of the night I see only the brightest and most frightening light" (100). He speaks of when, as a child, he experienced the excitement of riding in a car at night when "sight so uncontrollably reduced was of course all the more magnified and pleasing" (28). This way of seeing is not unlike Papa's now; his sight is reduced and magnified in the sense that he sees as one who is already dead. He can penetrate into the world of the dead; he sees not only the death-like forms around him but also the ghosts of his own past. Thus when he indulges in a reverie over his dead son Pascal, he exclaims to Henri: "Do you see her [his wife, Honorine]? Do you see Pascal and me?" (88). Papa sees through the imagination, but with his focus on death, only images of decay and death are revealed to him. (If Skipper's imagination were turned wholly inward as Papa's is, we could readily conceive of the kind of images which would be revealed to him: images of death, nightmare, failure and frustration.)

During the journey Papa encourages us to see through his eyes. "I see quite well for the two of us" (101), he announces to Henri and simultaneously to the reader. We are subjected to his vision as we are subjected to his voice; in both we experience his very particular imposition of design on debris, a design which through its death images is continually threatening to dissolve again into debris. In one sense, the imagination is the imposer of forms and design, while Papa's memory contains the "debris" out of which design eventually arises. One sees a continual process where the debris of memory is subjected to the strictures and formalizing properties of imaginative thought. Papa's consciousness of the alternation of design and debris (17, 19, 27, '59), however, reveals a mind, like Cyril's,

aware of transformation. But Cyril's awareness that "in Illyria there are no reasons" (T.B.O., 271) suggests permanence through continuance; and Cyril's pursuit of Catherine in order to restore their old lives in some measure is his confirmation of the continuance of a human order paralleling the natural one. The alternation of design and debris in Travesty suggests less an ongoing cycle of existence than a ceaseless pattern epitomizing the stasis of Papa's mind.

Papa cannot, of course, escape imposing design on debris for his psychological equilibrium. Besides, to one who is continually reducing objects through his theory of "likenesses," design and debris amount to much the same thing. Significantly, Papa's most expansive comment on design and debris is undercut by the context of his remark. He describes the days succeeding the car wreck during which time "nothing has disturbed the essential integrity of our tableau of chaos, the point being that if design inevitably surrenders to debris, debris inevitably reveals its innate design" (59). But "the most desirable rendering of our private apocalypse . . . is not to be" (58, 60). Debris will not surrender to poetic or "innate design," because there will be a conflagration followed by "blue lights, motorcycles, radio communications, the arrival of several of our little white ambulances," and finally "nothing left but the smell of gasoline and the dark signs of a recently extinguished fire" (60). In the end, the intrusion of the "real" world will ensure that there will not even be debris. As in the ending of The Lime Twig, the detectives will come and methodically impose their own design, which will have nothing at all in common with the poetic design. Papa's concept of design and debris amounts to little more than an illusory projection of his own artistic power so that it becomes a questionable "universal." Papa's

power, so thoroughly omnipotent as long as he is alive in his car, ceases with the "accident" and his loss of consciousness. It is not Papa who is the "all-powerful" artist, but the comic artist who projects this power partly through travesty and comic undercutting at key points in his narrative. For this artist the pattern of design and debris is revealed in the dimensions of the novel. The design, ironic or comic, at times serious, often threatens to dissolve into the debris of parody and self-ridicule.

In spite of the lens of the "invisible camera" trained on Papa, the reader sees, in turn, through Papa himself. The "invisible camera" presumably misses nothing, but it simply records. Papa transports us from his distant past into the present and future, subjecting us to the limits of a vision which is both horrendous and fascinating, dynamic and synthetic in its efforts to transcend the everyday. Yet the vision is also static and unvarying owing to Papa's obsession with death and what he calls, "spent passion" (62).

As Allert in Death, Sleep & the Traveler forms an identity with the cruise ship, so Papa forms one with the sleek, beige-coloured car he drives. Papa says that the yellow headlights of the car "are the lights of my eyes; my mind is bound inside my memory of this curving road like a fist in gloves" (15). The lights of the car reveal the road for us as well. For Papa, they reveal the known; for us, they show, fragment by fragment, the unknown; for us, as for Henri, the road is unfamiliar. What is "the known" for Papa is memory, and it is these fragments of memory recited by Papa which gradually serve to make the road and the journey known to us and to Henri. The progress of the car thus becomes analogous to the reconstruction of the past, the shaping of the artistic self just as it prepares for the self's total annihilation. By extension, the car's instruments

which register and monitor progress are paralleled to the "instruments"-- words--which record Papa's reconstruction of the past:

. . . for me the mere climbing or falling of needles, the sometimes monstrous metamorphosis of tiny, precise numbers behind faintly illuminated glass, a droplet traveling too quickly or too slowly through its fragile tube--these for me are the essential signs, the true language, always precious and treacherous at the same time (33).<sup>27</sup>

All through the journey Papa is attempting to transform memory (debris) by the actions of the imagination (design). Cyril attempts to restore memory through imaginative recall; his goal is to metamorphose the present into the past. Allert relegates memory, which he professes to pursue, to his subconscious where images of the past reappear in his dreams; Allert ultimately fears the clarity of self-knowledge, and he designs his narration to avoid the consequences of memory. Papa's relationship to his past is more like Cyril's: the imaginative process working on the past allows debris to submit to design and a visionary order to cohere. The difference is that while Cyril wants to restore "paradise," Papa wants to destroy what is being restored. In the "accident" Papa seeks the final transformation where memory will be obliterated and the imagination will triumph. (But it is also true that Papa's "impossible" narrative will exist and that in it "design and debris--memory and imagination--will co-exist.") Such a transformation will involve the invention and arrangement of "that context of circumstances in which the three of us will no longer exist" (56). The purest act of the imaginative self is what Papa has in mind: to create by his final act something out of nothing. This involves the paradox of all paradoxes: "the existence of what does not exist" (57).<sup>28</sup> Papa proclaims the artist's powers exercised in their most god-like capacity:

the power to invent the very world we are quitting. Yes, the power to invent the very world we are quitting. It is as if the bird could die in flight (57).<sup>29</sup>

Papa assures Henri and the reader that there will be "no maudlin loss of consciousness," for an extended state of diminishing consciousness would necessitate or at least imply the intervention of memory. The creative or imaginative function exercised in its fullest, most intense form at the moment of death will enable Papa to achieve the "clarity" for which he seeks.

Papa is the only one of Hawkes' protagonists who actively pursues death in a calculated manner. The waste-landers in The Beetle Leg pursue a metaphoric death, and Michael in The Lime Twig desperately, perhaps heroically, throws himself in front of the horse "Rock Castle"; Allert lives a death-like existence through his inability to allow repressed memories to rise to consciousness and his consequent failure to acknowledge his identity. Yet in all Hawkes' novels, the death impulse, Thanatos, affects the protagonist, driving him to embrace the extreme, sometimes in the very face of death or a death-like existence. The fact that death is the inevitable end is a truth many contemporary novelists, particularly the "black humourists," embody in their fictions. As an artist-figure Papa is representative of one who seeks to impose his personal vision through a violent act of will, asserting the creative self against the one inevitability which conjoins all men. To fail to do this is, according to Papa, to resign oneself to the common fate. Riding smoothly in the car, Papa is aware of the illusory "guarantee of timelessness": "The song and the road are endless, or so we think" (22). In fact, unless the artist exercises "the power to invent the world we are quitting . . ."

we merely slide toward the pit feet first, eyes closed; slack, and smiling in our pathetic submission to an oblivion we still hope to understand (57).



### Vision and Omniscience

Papa shares with Cyril and even with Skipper the supreme power of ordering existence. The three, however, use this power in vastly different ways. Skipper employs it against the evil he has confronted in his past, to counter all "the seeds of death." Cyril offers no justification for the ordering power beyond that of his own inherent right to be a "sex-singer." Cyril's Illyria is a less harmonious realm than Skipper's wandering isle. Hugh's puritanism embodies an opposing principle to Cyril's lyricism. As Illyria's "Malvolio" he attempts to disrupt the order Cyril has brought into being; he wants to restore conventionality and restrict the freedoms--both imaginative and sexual--at the heart of Illyria.

Skipper is the acknowledged leader, and his leadership is unopposed. But Cyril meets with more opposition to his leadership. Skipper, Cyril and Papa strive to assert their creative power as orderers in proportion to the resistance to this power that they encounter through others. To the extent that they have to exert this power they come to perceive themselves as omniscient and omnipotent. The relation to vision is evident: the world of "pure" vision is dominated wholly by the will of the visionary who will seem entirely omniscient and omnipotent within the world he has created out of his ordering capacity.

Obviously, Papa meets more resistance to his ordering powers than either Skipper or Cyril. He replies by exerting an absolute authority in which he assumes total control over the lives of two others--he exerts considerable control over Honorine's life as well. For him the "real" world is all but subsumed by the visionary. Understandably, Hawkes is inclined to consider Travesty his most visionary novel.<sup>30</sup> In the world of his own vision Papa exhibits the three absolute degrees or orders of

power: omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. Skipper claims a limited omniscience when, for example, he declares that Kate's baby is born on the day and hour he had decided on and is even the sex he had predicted (Second Skin, 205). Cyril, too, refers to his powers of omniscience and omnipotence (The Blood Oranges, 32-3, 92). But Papa's claims are far more extensive to the point of being god-like.

In the "real" world it is, of course, impossible for the individual to exercise authority and control so thoroughly through these three degrees of power. But in the restricted confines of an automobile speeding through the night Hawkes conceives of an apt physical situation in which such control may be manifested. Henri is warned to make no false moves; Papa grants him permission to move one arm to light a cigarette or turn on the radio but otherwise places him in a position in which any movement involves an immediate threat to his life: "Surely it is obvious that your slightest effort to wrench away the wheel will pitch us into the toneless world of highway tragedy even more quickly than I have planned" (11). His only hope of avoiding death lies in his ability to convince Papa to end the journey. It lies not in action but in words: "you will attempt to dissuade me, to talk me back to sanity (as you will express the idea), to appeal to my kindness and good sense. I approve. I am listening. The hour is yours" (12). But as if to underscore the futility of this effort, Henri's words are not directly reported, and Papa continually mocks Henri's effort through derisive sympathy: "I understand your frustration, your feelings of incomprehension. . . . What can you do?" (17); "You wish only to open your eyes and find us safely parked on the edge of the dark road, the interior of the automobile filled with our soft and private laughter. I understand" (18).

Trapped physically within the automobile, Henri and Chantal are equally trapped in Papa's vision. Through their confinement they are victims of Papa's physical omnipotence and equally of his omniscience and omnipresence. Throughout the novel Papa exhibits these qualities: he employs the future tense continuously, predicting, for example, the onset of rain (35) and dismissing such obstacles as a "lumbering disruptive oil truck" because it would "destroy the symmetry I have in mind" (25). He claims to have access to otherwise "hidden" areas: he "knows" that Honorine is dreaming about "a flock of sheep" (122); although he has never seen the old curate of La-Roche, he describes his cough, tobacco breath and wine-stained fingers (25).

Papa's states of omniscience and omnipotence are supported and emphasized by his theories of "coercion" and "likenesses." Both theories stress unanimity and wholeness. The imaginative powers are directed toward the achievement of a subjective vision where others are subsumed by this vision. Papa's theories, however, stress the uniformity of all things, for he reduces everything to a common base; stasis exists because he is not interested in the external world or in forming connections of any kind which will extend the boundaries of his vision. The cost of "pure" vision, it seems, involves the sacrifice of everything else.

The theory of coercion or fatality states that "all the elements of life coerce each other, force each other instant by instant into that perfect formation which is lofty and the only one possible" (15). Papa's theory of coercion is illustrated by his tendency to see events as fixed and determined and time as reduced to an all-encompassing present: "For us the moment remains the same while the hour changes" (35). The spatial equivalent to the theory of coercion is Papa's theory of likenesses or

repetition:

this propensity of mine toward total coherence . . . leads me to see in one face the configurations of yet another, or to enter rose-scented rooms three at a time, or to live so closely to the edge of likenesses as to be eating the fruit, so to speak, while growing it. In this sense there is nowhere I have not been, nothing I have not already done, no person I have not known before (75).

In vision things do cohere, as there is unity and completeness in the way the world is seen. Yet Honorine calls this "propensity toward total coherence" Papa's "most dangerous quality" (75). It falsifies the reality of a fragmented world by creating an illusory unity. It creates the conditions whereby extremes are brought together: life and death, fiction and reality, form and chaos.

Papa insists that "mine is not a fixed and predictable personality" (46), and "I am always moving. I am forever transporting myself somewhere else. I am never exactly where I am" (75). Yet nothing in the monologue bears out these statements. No one could be more "fixed and predictable" than Papa, who has elaborately planned the journey and will not allow the slightest deviation from his plan. Papa is "deadlocked" (102) between such contraries--literally locked into death. His theories of fatality and repetition reduce all things to a common denominator; they permit him to attain omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence within the narrow breadth of his world but at an inevitable sacrifice. Papa finds himself, like John Barth's artist, in the funhouse of the self where there is only duplication, repetition and similarities. Papa purports to "know" that of which he can only be generally cognizant: he professes to "know" the habits of a man he has never seen (25) and the routine of a hospital he has never visited (98). But rather than manifesting his frustration at his predicament, he creates out of his "awareness" his source of power

as an artist. He becomes capable of any "knowledge"; he becomes master of his frustrated condition. In a sense, he turns what may at first seem human weakness into an artistic strength.

If Papa's theories simplify and reduce, acted upon by the imagination they become capable of a complex evolution. Papa expresses these theories artistically through images of wholeness and completeness, and significantly, through the use of paradox. The "projected destination" of the car's occupants becomes "the final blinding piece in a familiar puzzle, the fourth and solid wall in a room of glass" (28). Papa and Henri share an "odd affinity" since both are astrological Leos; Papa considers this "One more unbreakable thread in the web" (40).

Papa sees paradox as central to the act of artistic creation and that upon which his vision of the "accident" is founded: "one moment the car in perfect condition, without so much as a scratch on its curving surface, the next moment impact, sheer impact" (17); "in the smallest amount of time our demon steel shall fuse with the stasis of old stone" (23). Designed to obfuscate rational analysis, the "accident" will possess an inner clarity, according to Papa, an inherent purpose of design. But it is not merely in relation to the "accident" that Papa contrives the paradoxical; his world is one of paradoxical relationships where "reality" and "unreality" are often juxtaposed: a silent clock ticks louder than when it is working (35); a doctor's artificial leg "is more real" to the narrator "than the natural limb" (27). Paradoxes attest to the efforts to achieve an imaginative unity, to transcend the sameness which Papa sees around him; on the other hand, paradox itself seems a particular manifestation of that sameness, a way of reducing and even impoverishing life to achieve the artistic purity he demands.

Vision and the "Privileged" Reader

The "privileged man" to whom Papa often refers in Travesty is, of course, Papa himself--the visionary artist, he who controls and dominates, imposing aesthetic patterns in order to realize his vision. However, the question of "privilege" may not be addressed precisely in the terms Papa supposes. How "privileged" can a man be whose vision is undermined by the frustrations which exist in his own life, prompting him to engage in a devastating act of revenge?<sup>31</sup> Reduced to its essence, the "privileged man" may simply be he who sets himself up as separate from others, who determines which laws and principles are applicable to him, and who, in effect, creates the conditions of privilege.<sup>32</sup> In aesthetic terms, Papa seems to be able to justify his privileged claim by making that claim serve the function of art, but, even here it must be observed that Papa's vision cannot be attained in its "most desirable rendering" (58). In general terms, Papa has the privilege of many creators, particularly those who attempt to create "something out of nothing." But what precisely is this "something"? Is it that which Papa creates or Hawkes himself? How, finally, are we to respond to Papa's viewpoint? Another way to phrase this is to determine as far as we can which "audience" best qualifies as "privileged" in Travesty: Henri or the reader himself?

Several critics have equated Henri with the reader.<sup>33</sup> It is true that we are implicitly on Henri's side at first because we, too, want to understand Papa's motivations: we want to know what would make him commit such an act. Initially, he functions like a Jamesian ficelle or substitute for the reader who raises the kinds of questions we want answered. On another level, we share Henri's helplessness in the situation--not so much his physical helplessness<sup>34</sup> as the way in which he is effectively silenced.

Like Henri, we may protest that what Papa is doing is cruel and sadistic, but Papa drives on filling Henri's ears and ours with elegant phrases, testing our limited capacities for endurance by calm and measured understatement, bathos and self-indulgent wit and irony. Finally, though, Henri does not fulfil the functions of a ficelle because he is far too ineffective (or rendered so by Papa's monologue); we never do receive adequate answers to the questions Henri proposes and, in the end, Papa is able to turn most of Henri's questions around so that Henri himself becomes the implicated party. In the process of "refuting" Henri's arguments, Papa is able to direct many potent barbs at Henri's false values and hypocrisy.

The relationship between Henri and Papa is like that between Hugh and Cyril in The Blood Oranges: the two pairs play off divergent views of art and morality. Like Cyril, Papa decries conventional morality, while Hugh and Henri are conventional moralists. Papa at least does not hide his true personality behind assumed traits like courage, humility and honesty as Henri does. Papa attacks the "institutions" of "moralists or the metaphysicians" which propound a false order (37). Before a universe stripped of moral pretensions, Papa's "'worst' would not fill a crooked spoon" (36), which makes him "the kindest man you will ever meet" (15). (Since Henri will meet no more men, kind or otherwise, Papa can make this latter claim with utter confidence). Henri's image is entirely fabricated, designed to evoke public admiration and sympathy. Papa calls Henri "the most banal and predictable of poets. No libertine, no man of vision and hence suffering, but a banal moralist" (14). Papa frequently draws attention to Henri's "public acclaim," reserving his most sustained attack in trying to counter Henri's claim that Papa is sexually envious of Henri; in the process of the "rebuttal," Papa unwittingly reveals he is jealous

of Henri both as the lover of his wife and daughter and as an artist (105-9).

Papa claims that Henri has "cultivated" the persona of a sufferer. For real understanding Henri substitutes pandering to an illusion or image "of understanding earned through boundless suffering that obtrudes itself in every instance of [his] being and that inspires such fear of [him] and admiration" (42); for vision Henri substitutes public morality. Thus, although Henri speaks of the poet as "a betrayer, a murderer" and the writing of poetry as "a descent into death," that is "mere talk" (80). Despite his conventionality, Papa says that Henri like "the true poet has the face of the criminal" (40). But Henri has forsaken his poetic nature for the sake of his reputation as "the unsmiling poet whose photograph is so often taken among those festive crowds at the bull ring" (41). The specific image here may be meant to recall Hemingway, another artist who created a particular mystique and was admired by some partly on account of his image as a suffering stoic and his "heroic" code of living.

Although there are no means to substantiate what Papa says of Henri through other characters, the evidence does suggest that he is an unappealing character. He is, after all, the seducer of his "best friend's" wife and daughter, an "emotional parasite" (106), according to Papa, who has cultivated a private mythos of detachment and suffering while paying homage to a false and contrived morality--not a "true poet" so much as a travesty of one. Obviously, Henri has both human and artistic failings.

Owing largely to the situation in which Papa has placed Henri, he also has failings as a listener. The possibilities for understanding are limited for Henri not only by the stake he has in the journey and the necessity for arguing against it but also in the simple fact that the journey is for him an actuality. He hardly has the perspective which would enable



him to embrace the experience aesthetically. Yet Papa demands that he abrogate his concern with survival, with gaining a "reprieve" (47), in order to contemplate and contribute to the experience of the journey as richly and fully as possible. Papa expects "total attention" from Henri (22). He insists "it will be up to the three of us to make what we can of this experience" (25). A little later he reminds his passengers that there is "still time enough to tax us, preoccupy us, demand the utmost from our living selves" (34). Papa's warnings become more imperative, as he urges Henri to "be in a position to prepare yourself moment by moment to achieve understanding and avoid merely shocking or destructive surprises" (77); "Tonight of all nights why can't you give me one moment of genuine response? Without it, as I have said, our expedition is as wasteful as everything else" (82). Papa's promptings indicate that Henri is to be much more than a passive audience for Papa; they suggest at the same time that Henri is symbolically engaging in the experience of art, as Papa defines it, he is also a potential creator of art along with Papa, that he himself can transform his subjective experience of the journey into visionary art; thus, Papa urges Henri to embrace the artistic ideal offered by "the privileged man." But Henri only continues to argue, "unable to put aside self-preservation, the survival instinct, the low-level agitation of the practical mind, the whole pack of useless trumps of the ego" (81). Because Henri does not understand the nature of Papa's art, he accuses him of meaningless verbalizing, an objection often made of the contemporary writer:

So you think that I am merely deceiving you with words. You think that I am trying to talk away the last of our times together merely in order to destroy the slightest possibility of my change of mind. You think that I am shrouding the last dialogue of our lives in the gauze of unreality, the snow of evasion (46).

Having finally exhausted his arguments, Henri at last "submits" to Papa at approximately the point they are passing Honorine's Chateau, their ostensible destination. At this time, Papa reports a complete sentence apparently spoken by Henri: "Imagined life is more exhilarating than remembered life" (127). Papa is overjoyed; Henri has, it seems, accepted the artistic ideal. But the context is ambiguous, and the words themselves may also be so. Occurring so near the ending, these words appear anticlimactic, an insufficient resolution for the novel; to impress their importance on us they need to be italicized and repeated. It is possible and consistent with Henri's previous arguments that these words are only deceptively reconciliatory and represent Henri's last effort to halt the car. It is also possible that they simply lack the significance the narrator wants to give them; or perhaps Papa so desperately wants to hear these words that he merely attributes them to Henri. The passage represents another key point where indeterminacy enters into the narrative.

The reader's relationship with respect to Honorine is more problematical than the relationship established with Henri. Papa's wife appears to represent the "absent" Muse referred to in one of the novel's epigraphs (from Michel Leiris' Manhood). At one significant point when Papa is contemplating his journey and stands gazing into the "Fountain of Clarity" (a "landmark" which Papa points out during the actual journey), he recalls Honorine. When relating this incident to Henri, he refers to Honorine as "Your [Henri's] Muse, my clarity" (104). But clarity is Papa's Muse, and he says that he is undertaking the journey for Honorine's sake.

Early in the novel Papa "reassures" Chantal that "there will be no comforting Honorine once she receives the news" of the "accident" (18). According to Papa's equation of vision with suffering (14), Honorine's

inconsolable grief in hearing of the deaths of husband, daughter and lover will lead to visionary understanding. The achievement of this understanding, according to Papa, will be a product of suffering and the strength of her will:

when she recovers, at last, she will exercise her mind in order to experience in her own way what we have known . . . most important, months and years beyond her recovery, Honorine will know with special certainty that just as she was the source of your poems, so too was she the source of my private apocalypse. It was all for her. And such intimate knowledge is worth whatever price the gods may demand, as she herself said. No, cher ami, Honorine is a person of great strength. Sooner or later she will understand (124-5).

Is Honorine, then, to be taken as an embodiment of the "privileged" reader? Apparently not, for she is an elusive, almost a mythological figure who only flits across the novel's landscape periodically; in spite of the detailed description of her provided in one section of the novel (48-52), she generally seems too intangible a character to assume this role, though as a "muse," her intangibility is, perhaps, to be expected. However, the process she will have to go through to achieve "understanding" is nothing like the reader's. Because the reader undergoes the total experience of Papa's monologue while Honorine does not, his position is closer to Henri's than to Honorine's.

Finally, only the reader himself possesses the emotional distance to assume the "privileged" role. Whereas in a more traditional novel the reader forms bonds of sympathy or identification to varying degrees with the different characters, in Travesty, along with many works of contemporary fiction, such bonds never materialize. The aspect of being distanced and detached from the action and the characters' lives is, as Hawkes has insisted, the prime authorial virtue; but, this detachment is also a vital requisite on the reader's part as the experience of reading Travesty exhibits. Detachment enables us to be conscious of every textual

resonance and to respond to the novel as purely as possible as a work of art, a created artifact. In Travesty this is underscored by the method of "miraculous" narration. Detachment directs us to attend experientially to words themselves. The privileged reader of Travesty must learn to resist the text (like all of Hawkes' first-person narrators, Papa attempts to persuade us through rhetoric) as much as accept what is being said. We attend to a rhythm of resistance and acceptance, and this particular rhythm strengthens our bond with Hawkes' text as opposed to Papa's monologue. Every reader of Travesty and, indeed, of Hawkes' fiction in general, is potentially "privileged" if he does not seek to reduce the novel by imposing the absolutes of his own mentality or morality upon it.

END NOTES - CHAPTER VIII

<sup>1</sup>Hawkes explains that he was reading about Camus' death and reflecting on Camus' philosophical question "why not suicide?" when he decided to reverse the question and explore through fiction "not reasons to live, but what might possibly justify the act of suicide." Hawkes claims that "the ultimate exercising of the imagination" for Papa is the ability for one "to imagine one's own death." Thus, he sums up his intentions with respect to the novel: "In Travesty, I hoped to write a comic novel about the fatal importance of the imagination." John Hawkes, Humors of Blood & Skin: A John Hawkes Reader, introd. William H. Gass (New York: New Directions, 1984), pp. 219-20. See also Thomas LeClair, "The Novelists: John Hawkes," New Republic, 10 Nov. 1979, p. 28: "The only reason that the narrator drives the car deliberately toward total destruction is to force himself and his double, Henri, the poet, to imagine their own deaths."

<sup>2</sup>John Hawkes, Travesty (New York: New Directions, 1976), p. 47. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>3</sup>Such questions are invoked, if not addressed directly, by critics examining Hawkes' triad of novels as a unit. Some critics discuss the triad's "progression," while others put less emphasis on this aspect. Enid Vernon examines the three works in terms of comic forms present in each; the triad, she says, progresses from "classical" comedy toward farce. Enid Vernon, "From Festival to Farce: Design and Meaning in John Hawkes's Comic Triad," in A John Hawkes Symposium: Design and Debris, ed. Anthony C. Santore and Michael Pocalyko (New York: New Directions, 1977); pp. 64-77. C. J. Allen determines that there is a very close relationship between The Blood Oranges and Travesty; a "submerged narrator" exists within the triad, and the earlier idyllic visions come to be "undermined by unconscious needs and fears." Allen believes that Papa is a parody of Cyril. C. J. Allen, "Desire, Design, and Debris: The Submerged Narrative in John Hawkes' Recent Trilogy," Modern Fiction Studies, 25(1979), 579-92. Albert Hornung considers the three novels to express distinct but related structural modes which "represent levels of human creation and perception which either limit a person's potential or set it free." Albert Hornung, "Sex and Art in Hawkes' Triad: The Pornographic, the Erotic, and the Aesthetic Modes," Amerikastudien, 26, No. 2 (1981), 159-79. Noting that the triad focuses on the narrators' "facade of detached objectivity mask[ing] a highly subjective, self-serving psychology," Paul Rosenzweig stresses the basic similarities among the three works and their narrators. Paul Rosenzweig, "Aesthetics and the Psychology of Control in John Hawkes's Triad," Novel, 15, No. 2 (1982), 146-70. Patrick O'Donnell believes that the three novels are only "loosely affiliated," but the progression through the triad "is a complex one." He considers that the novels collectively express "the trials of the imagination." Patrick O'Donnell, John Hawkes (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), pp. 113-42. One possible link not pursued by any of these critics involves the relative preeminence given to design and debris in each:

Cyril is an orderer who will not accept any form of disturbance to his imaginative design; by contrast, Allert is unwilling to impose the crystallization of design on his formless, fragmented psyche; Papa is the only one who attempts to incorporate the two into a paradoxical aesthetic.

<sup>4</sup>It is possible to imagine the voice of Hawkes here, as in other places in the novel, parodying his will toward authorial control.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas LeClair, ed., "Hawkes and Barth Talk About Fiction," New York Times Book Review, 1 April 1979, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup>Anthony C. Santore and Michael Pocalyko, "'A Trap to Catch Little Birds With': An Interview with John Hawkes," in Symposium, p. 181.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>8</sup>See John Hawkes, "Flannery O'Connor's Devil," Sewanee Review, 70(1962). In this article Hawkes also discusses O'Connor's creation of "'aesthetic authority,'" a term which can be applied equally to Hawkes' work both in terms of the writer himself and the narrator-as-artist.

<sup>9</sup>Several of Hawkes' contemporaries often include prologues or forewords for the ostensible purpose of clarification and explanation; however, the result in Alain Robbe-Grillet's Djinn, for example, is not clarification at all but greater mystification: objective "facts" do not corroborate one another but multiply possibilities. Similarly, Kinbote's interventions in Vladimir Nabokov's Pale Fire, both in his "Forward" and "Commentary," result more in contradiction and confusion than elucidation.

<sup>10</sup>Santore and Pocalyko, p. 174.

<sup>11</sup>John Hawkes, "Notes on the Wild Goose Chase," The Massachusetts Review, 3(1962), p. 786.

<sup>12</sup>Hawkes once said, "Even the author is not exempt from judgment in my fiction." [John Enck], "John Hawkes: An Interview," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 6(1965), 155; in an interview conducted after the publication of Travesty, Hawkes admitted, "to some extent I have parodied myself." Santore and Pocalyko, p. 174.

<sup>13</sup>Of those reviewers of the novel who attempt to examine the target of Travesty, none actually considers that Hawkes might have been parodying himself. Thomas LeClair, however, acknowledges that Hawkes may be examining some of his impulses as a writer; he sees the novel, though, as a parody of A. Alvarez's "'art of suicide.'" Thomas LeClair, rev. of Travesty, New Republic, 8 May 1976, pp. 26-7.

<sup>14</sup>Hawkes uses a passage from Camus' The Fall for one of the novel's epigraphs; however, the dominant feature linking Travesty to Camus' novel is the monologue form, as many reviewers have observed. In addition, the two narrators have much in common, including the need for domination and control, to which the monologue form itself attests. In each novel there is a central event or "trauma" which alters the narrators' lives and thinking. Both also express a need for their listeners' "understanding" (though this implies different things in each case). What Thomas Hanna has observed of Camus in The Fall is equally true of Hawkes in Travesty: "In no other work has Camus so enjoyed playing with his readers, alternately speaking rather obviously about himself and abruptly shoving the mask of Clamence [the narrator] between himself and the reader." Thomas Hanna, The Thought and Art of Albert Camus (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1958), p. 219. In spite of many surface resemblances, there is one major point of departure between the two novels: Camus is interested in probing man's conception of his own morality, his willingness to judge others and elude judgment himself, and his guilt; Hawkes is concerned with exploring the visionary artist's conception of his own art. The two writers use similar means to explore two essentially distinct realms.

<sup>15</sup>Charles Baxter, "In the Suicide Seat: Reading John Hawkes's Travesty," The Georgia Review, 34(1980), 875-6.

<sup>16</sup>See Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns in Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 278-82.

<sup>17</sup>Hawkes also "increases the proportion of indeterminacy" by having Papa frequently contradict himself. The process in which "one detail appears to contradict another," says Iser, "simultaneously stimulates and frustrates our desire to 'picture,' thus continually causing our imposed 'gestalt' of the text to disintegrate," Iser, p. 283. There are further instances where Hawkes' first-person narrators contradict themselves; for example, Cyril of The Blood Oranges claims, at one point, "I am a dispassionate man," then later announces, "I am a man of feeling" (T.B.O., pp. 6, 56).

<sup>18</sup>Donald Greiner seems hostile to the concept of vision within Hawkes' triad. He hypothesizes that Henri and Chantal (and perhaps other characters) are phantoms of Papa's imagination, serving basically autoerotic needs. Papa desires to express these needs to the reader whom Papa considers as living a "morally limited life." Greiner's theory seems far-fetched, reductive and does little justice to Hawkes' concerns about art and morality. Such a reading also demolishes the novel's dramatic tension. Passing Papa off as "insane" allows Travesty to become a comforting rather than a disturbing book. Donald J. Greiner, "Private Apocalypse: The Visions of Travesty," in Symposium, pp. 142-54. Eliot Berry takes a similar though somewhat less extreme view of the novel; he considers that with Travesty Hawkes runs the risk of turning his art into an "intellectual exercise." Eliot Berry, A Poetry of Force and Darkness: The Fiction of John Hawkes (San Bernardino, Calif.: The Borgo Press, 1979), p. 64.

<sup>19</sup>Robert Scholes, "A Conversation on The Blood Oranges Between John Hawkes and Robert Scholes," Novel, 5, No. 3 (1972), p. 204. Hawkes has made similar claims elsewhere.

<sup>20</sup>In this regard John Graham offers an interesting comment: "In Travesty the progression into an isolated world of language goes so far that . . . Hawkes may next offer a blank page." John Graham, "on The Cannibal," in Symposium, p. 49.

<sup>21</sup>All three of these elements come into play in Papa's statement: "trust me but do not believe me . . . ever" (p. 102). This is a logical contradiction, for if we are never to believe Papa, how are we to respond to this particular assertion that he is to be trusted? See Note 17.

<sup>22</sup>Baxter, p. 879.

<sup>23</sup>Rosenzweig, p. 151.

<sup>24</sup>Marcus Klein, "The Satyr at the Head of the Mob," in Symposium, p. 163.

<sup>25</sup>Paul Emmett, "The Reader's Voyage Through Travesty," Chicago Review, 28, No. 2 (1976), pp. 177-9.

<sup>26</sup>The destruction of vision (the sense of sight) has often been connected with the birth of true vision (inner "sight")--Oedipus' loss of eyesight, for example. Recent novels have sometimes sought to make a similar connection. Sightlessness, or restricted sight (sometimes voluntary) becomes a means for the self's assertion of a truer order, a new, "clarified" and internal vision. Ralph Ellison and Robbe-Grillet play upon the concept of altered vision in Invisible Man and Djin respectively. For Papa, night driving provides a way of blinding Papa to the outer world so that the imagination can assert itself more fully.

<sup>27</sup>The imagery in this passage is particularly striking, probably intended to underscore the treacherous nature of language. Here, several of the images relate to drugs and injections: "needles," "droplet," "fragile tube." As in the simile, "like a fist in glass" (p. 15), the reader is being directed toward the deadly possibilities inherent in language to deceive, yet express its "precious" energized and energizing capacity.

<sup>28</sup>Hawkes is fascinated by this paradox which expresses for him the true nature of artistic creation. He states that the lines of Henri's poetry which Papa quotes at the end of Travesty are "about that paradox of the existence of that which does not exist." Paul Emmett and Richard Vine, "A Conversation with John Hawkes," Chicago Review, 28, No. 2 (1976), p. 167.



<sup>29</sup> On the surface, Papa's statement sounds like an existentialist dictum, but Papa intends to eradicate completely his identity as an individual by such an act, asserting the absolute powers of art. See Hawkes' comment: "I think that every writer . . . writes in order to create the future." [John Enck], "John Hawkes: An Interview," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, 6(1965), 143.

<sup>30</sup> Santore and Pocalyko, pp. 174-5. Hawkes, however, has drawn attention to the "visionary" qualities of The Cannibal and The Blood Oranges as well. See John Graham, "John Hawkes on His Novels: An Interview with John Graham," The Massachusetts Review, 7(1966), 452; and John Kuehl, John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1975), p. 182 (Interview).

<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to note some basic similarities which Travesty shares with the revenge tragedy. C. Hugh Holman outlines some characteristics which apply, in varying degrees, to Travesty: "the use of either real or pretended insanity, suicide . . . an able scheming villain, philosophic soliloquies, and the sensational use of horrors." C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1980), p. 377. The emphasis in these tragedies is inevitably on terror, and dramatists worked to heighten terror to almost inconceivable heights. In Travesty such horrific effects depend largely on black humour, designed partly to emphasize the fine points of mental torture. The resolution of the revenge tragedy is never in doubt once the murderer has made his resolution: the avenger's victim will ultimately be disposed of, and the avenger too pays the inevitable price of his crime. (Papa's suicide, however, is motivated much differently from that of the classical avenger.) The audience is suspended by its feelings of pity for and horror towards both the avenger and his intended victim; neither attracts our strong sympathy, yet owing to circumstances, neither is wholly deplorable either. An atmosphere of horror and dread hangs over the play pending the anticipated event. (Such an atmosphere also exists in Robbe-Grillet's novel, Jealousy, where the narrator is methodical, watchful and determined--all qualities which such avengers, once committed to murder, share.) In these tragedies, as in Travesty, the position of victim and victimizer is dramatically reversed, with the once-victim suddenly in control and in a position to exploit the agonies of his victim.

<sup>32</sup> Dostoevski's Raskolnikov, who believes he is the "extraordinary man," similarly creates the conditions whereby he can "logically" convince himself of his own superiority. As "special" individuals, both Raskolnikov and Papa claim a license over traditional moral concerns. The difference between them lies in the total exclusivity of Papa's world and the relative exclusivity of Raskolnikov's. The world of Dostoevski's hero is also one of suffocating, physical enclosure paralleling his thorough self-absorption, but in Crime and Punishment an external world does exist and a whole moral universe to which he must finally address himself.

<sup>33</sup> See Baxter, 874, Berry, p. 62; Greiner says that the reader finds himself "within the car," p. 150.

<sup>34</sup>Since Travesty is short enough to be read in one sitting, a rule which Poe prescribes for fiction, it is possible to simulate Henri's helplessness to a degree by a continuous, uninterrupted reading.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ARTIST AS EROTICIST: THE WORLDS OF THE PASSION ARTIST AND VIRGINIE, HER TWO LIVES

In several respects Hawkes' two most recent novels offer greater potential for contrast than for noting similarities and shared concerns. The Passion Artist is Hawkes' only novel narrated entirely in the third person, breaking the pattern of first-person "confessional" narrative which marks the four previous novels. In Virginie, her two lives Hawkes returns to first-person narration. He also returns to titled chapters (which he abandoned after Second Skin), dispensing with untitled sections of varying lengths which become part of a disjointed but continuous text.

The Passion Artist and Virginie differ markedly in the way that Hawkes handles plot in each. Both novels have chronologies which are ultimately resolvable, though Hawkes utilizes "flashbacks" in The Passion Artist but not in Virginie. In the latter novel there are two distinct times considered, and the novel alternates between Virginie's 1740 and 1945 lives. The Passion Artist is a highly plotted work; to summarize its plot would not be difficult, but it would be lengthy. It is not always apparent in novels prior to The Passion Artist precisely when events in the past occurred relative to one another. But perhaps because Hawkes is concerned here with a developing consciousness, the chronological sequence is clear; plotting on the basis of objective chronology largely replaces a plot based on an indeterminate psychological coherence. In Virginie Hawkes returns to a static plot, rather like that of The Beetle Leg. But the plot of Virginie is even more static than that of the earlier work. The sequence of the

"sex-charades" is virtually arbitrary, particularly those which occur in Virginie's "second" (1945) life. Furthermore, in beginning the novel at its chronological end and by enclosing it by scenes in which the main protagonists are being engulfed by flames, Hawkes may be attempting to convey a dilemma expressed by various contemporary writers such as Barth who has seen art as a funhouse of replication and duplication.

The Passion Artist is unlike Hawkes' other novels in its explicitness. Albert Guerard observes that "controlled statement has replaced metaphor"<sup>1</sup> as a stylistic mode in this novel. When the reader is informed three times within a dozen pages in words which vary only slightly that "inner life and outer life were assuming a single shape,"<sup>2</sup> the effectual force of imagery used in conjunction with such overt declarations is minimized. After the stylistic excesses of The Passion Artist, the more relaxed rhythms of Virginie (with the exception of the opening and italicized portions) are conducive to the mood of "reverie" in which, Hawkes claims in his Preface to Virginie, the work was conceived.<sup>3</sup> The style of The Passion Artist is somewhat reminiscent of Faulkner in its rhetorical effects, its use of abstract diction and the relentless rhythms of a deeply probing consciousness. The style of Virginie reflects the consciousness of its innocent protagonist, of one who observes without seeing profoundly into things. There still exists in Virginie, though, a characteristic quality with which Hawkes imbues his writing: however pastoral or sedate in content, the pulse of the passage will inevitably reveal the unconscious self in the process of turmoil and struggle; this process is conveyed partly through imagery which may be violent, exotic or extreme. The two passages reproduced below may serve to illustrate fundamental differences between the styles of the two novels as well as that characteristic quality which they share:

He was in the hands of darkness. He was lying face down on his bed of stars. But it was not the darkness of night, which is always brimming with the implicit light of the impending day, but rather the eternal darkness of that interior world into which no light can shine and whose nomenclature can be found only in the formulations of the psychological function (The Passion Artist, 58).

I drank, I took a bite of my bread, with my other hand I touched the thick and bloodstained wooden surface, chopped and scarred, of the table that stretched away to my left and right so far that it might have provided fifty horsemen places at which to eat. But I sat alone and in the centre of the single ray of light that came down thick and broad, like the blade of a weapon, through the high and vaulted window (Virginie, 50).

While Virginie manages to create a tradition of its own as it pays homage to other traditions, particularly to the sado-eroticism of de Sade, The Passion Artist is a work in a recognizable tradition. It has obvious affinities with the works of Kafka and Thomas Mann, and the influence of Joseph Conrad is also pronounced; it is no accident that the protagonist's first name is the same as Conrad's third given name (Konrad) and a variant of his adopted surname, or that the action of this novel takes place in an Eastern European city. It is not surprising that Hawkes should be stressing the Conradian element in his fiction around the time he had completed The Passion Artist. Hawkes claims a Conradian "moral center" for his fiction. Conrad's compassion for the outcast resembles Hawkes' more hard-edged sympathy for those who live outside the moral order:

My work is an effort to expose the worst in us all, to cause us to face up to the enormities of our terrible potential for betrayal, disgrace, and criminal behavior. I think that it is necessary to destroy repression while showing at the same time that the imagination is unlimited.<sup>4</sup>

Hawkes, like Conrad, believes that no man could be impervious to his innermost impulses; each individual lives under the threat of giving up his ideals or his values in order to ensure his own survival.

Like Conrad's Jim of Lord Jim, Decoud of Nostromo or Razumov of

Under Western Eyes, Konrad Vost initially finds himself in a safe universe in which he conforms to an orderly and conventional routine. Prufrock-like, he idly theorizes about what might have been, but does not "dare disturb the universe." Without being dissatisfied with his job as a pharmaceutical clerk and ordinary father to his motherless daughter, Vost wonders why he has not striven for a higher position in life. Like Conrad's characters, he experiences unconscious longings but denies the commitments these longings would entail, commitments to another and far more unstable form of existence. But then, unexpectedly, Vost is placed in a position inimicable to the safe, orderly world he has fashioned for himself. He moves from a world of illusion--a static world safeguarded by routine--to a nightmare world in which he must confront new truths about his essential self. He embarks on an intensive internal quest, a journey "inside himself," mapping out the terrain of his unconscious. Vost's quest exposes his own artistic possibilities, though Vost also becomes a symbolic or universal figure in the process. In its symbolic and mythic overtones The Passion Artist probes the limits of human consciousness and unconsciousness; it becomes a drama of the unresolvable conflict between what is conscious and what is unconscious in man. Jungian and Freudian echoes are prevalent in this work, which can be termed a self-consciously psychological novel.<sup>5</sup> The work strains curiously toward a psychological equipoise, a coherence which it can never quite attain, and Hawkes is surprisingly unrestrained in his efforts to convey through the resources of language the "unknowable" states of human consciousness.

Virginie, perhaps, represents a purer expression of the erotic will in man; however, both works are dominated by visions of the artist, and in this way they extend many of the concepts dealt with in the triad and earlier novels. But the artist-figures portrayed in The Passion Artist

and Virginie mark a new and different stage in Hawkes' exploration of art and the constituents of the artistic sensibility. Although sexuality and eroticism are crucial concerns within the triad, the powers of the visionary artist there are inextricably bound up with the imaginative power to "create a world." But while the imagination is the key creative force for the visionary artist, the artist-figure in the two most recent novels is he who exercises his erotic powers; to some extent, eroticism replaces imagination as the sublime, guiding principle of the artist. Konrad Vost and Virginie make voyages into their sexual beings in which they ultimately lose their innocence. Seigneur resembles more closely the visionary artist in his need for clarity and design yet, as the novel's ending reveals, Seigneur lacks the visionary artist's sense of absolute control.

The Passion Artist charts the development of the artistic-erotic consciousness in a man whose life has previously revolved around routine, but who becomes an initiate in a process of personal "disordering." Konrad Vost comes to unleash his past or his "storehouse of memory" (14), and with it, unacknowledged fears, sexual repressions and desires. Sexually dormant as the novel opens, Vost is subsequently led through a series of sexual encounters shocking to his sense of conventionality and ultimately fatal to his being. Reluctantly, Vost continues to admit to consciousness that which he is initially unwilling to see. Yet he never entirely relinquishes his own identity. Much of the novel's irony and tension proceed from Vost's determination to cling stubbornly to his "fixed" identity even in the face of death.

In both works, the artist is defined as he who recognizes the erotic potential either in the self or in others. Vost comes to realize that every man becomes an artist through the experience of "the willed erotic union"

(181); Seigneur of Virginie teaches his pupils to achieve the "'person of true womanhood'" (29). Both Konrad Vost and Virginie must lose their innocence in order to acquire the artist's depth of vision; but Seigneur must retain his purity in order to fulfill his artistic function. While Vost can only become an artist through an intense process of inner turmoil (which he characterizes as a "disordering") and psychic restructuring, Seigneur stands as a portrait of the detached artist. In contrast to Konrad Vost, who becomes an artist in the discovery of the depths of his own passion, Seigneur divorces himself from the products of his creation and from his passion; he rigorously instructs others in the kind of knowledge Vost gains through experience.

Virginie is the second artist-figure in Virginie. In some respects she is the complement of Seigneur, a necessary presence who makes Seigneur's artistic endeavours possible. But, ultimately, she differs from Seigneur in her artistic capacity: only by losing her innocence (her virginity) can she discover her true prophetic powers. Although in her two lives Virginie is an observer of the "sex-charades" that go on around her, she is far from the objective or detached figure that Seigneur is; she yearns to be part of the erotic life she sees around her.

It is significant that Vost, Seigneur and Virginie all sacrifice their lives. All are victims of the forces of anti-art, which are ultimately in control in these novels as they are in works preceding Second Skin. Vost is accidentally killed by his friend Gagnon, who seeks revenge on the inmates of the prison after a fire bomb, aimed for the prison, explodes instead in his room across from the prison. Seigneur is the victim of a more hypocritical moral order when he is raped and burned by those on whom he has practised his art. Both Vost and Seigneur sacrifice themselves for



their art, undergoing the death that comes about as a result of overturning conventional morality. Virginie, too, sacrifices herself in both her lives; in her second life she gives up her erotic being at the moment of attainment.

Hawkes has been concerned with the concept of the artist's sacrifice throughout much of his middle and particularly later fiction, though those underdeveloped artist-figures from his early fiction also sacrifice themselves in one way or another: Jutta and Stintz of The Cannibal, Mulge of The Beetle Leg, and Hencher of The Lime Twig. Skipper of Second Skin characterizes himself as "a large and innocent Iphigenia betrayed on the beach" (S.S., 1). In works beginning with Travesty, Hawkes focuses on the readiness of the artist to face a sacrificial death in the interests of an intense, abiding commitment to his art.

#### A Small World's Disordering

The Passion Artist contains many echoes of Hawkes' previous works. In its concern with the criminal or asocial basis of creative activity, in its searching analysis of what constitutes the dark reaches of the psyche and its roots in terror, guilt and repression, The Passion Artist recalls works like Death, Sleep & the Traveler and Travesty as well as early works like The Cannibal and The Owl. In the often contradictory nature of his search, Konrad Vost resembles Allert of Death, Sleep & the Traveler; both alternate between a striving for the truth and the attempt to preserve illusory images of the self, and both prefer the illusions of an assumed identity to the truth of the void. The importance of memory and the prominence of the psychological defense of repression recall Second Skin and the works of the triad. In his passivity Vost resembles Michael Banks of The Lime Twig, and to a lesser extent, Skipper of Second Skin. Both Michael and

Konrad Vost enter a nightmare world after living secure, ordinary lives, and both feel attraction toward this world, though Vost simultaneously feels a repulsion as well, and, ultimately, Michael does too.

The Passion Artist begins with a surprisingly bald, factual assertion; given Hawkes' propensity for inexplicitness, the opening strikes an incongruous note:

Unlike most people, Konrad Vost had a personality that was clearly defined: above all he was precise in what he did and correct in what he said (1).

With its firm phrasing and simple diction, this line echoes Vost's precision and exactness. But it soon becomes evident that Vost's "correctness" may represent an elaborate mechanism or mask enabling him to preserve himself from his past and self-knowledge and to sanctify his old identity: his wife, Claire, is dead, and his mother is in the city's prison; in addition, like Skipper and Papa, he has a daughter "whose maturity he refused to acknowledge and who, in his eyes alone, remained a child" (2)..

Hawkes takes one of his epigraphs for The Passion Artist from Kafka's short story "A Hunger Artist,"<sup>6</sup> and the allusions to Kafka are particularly marked early in the novel. Externally, Vost's situation resembles that of a Kafka hero. The ironic tone of some early passages suggests Kafka, for they point us toward a naive protagonist secure in his daily routine and in his illusions. Vost lives in a medium-sized, dull Eastern European city, and his vocation as a clerk is typically that of a Kafka hero. Vost is isolated from others and leads a modest solitary life. Until he experiences that shock of realization that Kafka's heroes inevitably encounter--also a form of "disordering"--Vost's life is entirely repetitious and predictable: he works at the pharmacy "dispensing syrups and powders to old women in black shawls" (4), makes regular visits to the cafe across from the prison

and to his wife's gravesite and occasional visits to the railway station. Sometimes he would accompany his daughter home from school, receiving "immense satisfaction" on these occasions. But like Josef K. of The Trial or K. of The Castle, Vost comes to experience the "disordering" of his old life; as the "unaccountability" (P.A., 83) of the world increases, the main characters of these three works turn from their puzzled examination of the external world to more intensive probings into the inner one: self-scrutiny becomes the focus. Kafka's heroes and Hawkes' Vost possess unexpected reserves of determination and resolve in the face of situations which are absurd on one level and potentially tragic on another.

Unlike the Kafkaesque or Conradian hero, however, Vost is middle-aged, not dominated by dreams of glory or success but beset by memories. In this, he resembles Aschenbach of Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice" or Isak Borg of Ingmar Bergman's film Wild Strawberries. Though both these characters have achieved success, their lives have become unfulfilling, and they both seek a form of completion through a journey. Like Aschenbach, Vost is largely unaware of the true nature of his quest; his original convictions persist along with his illusions, as he becomes the will-less victim of his dimly acknowledged impulses. The quest of all three protagonists is in some sense a journey of renewal at the same time that it is undeniably a journey toward death or the void, a journey simultaneously toward a new understanding of the self and away from the realizations concomitant with this understanding.

In the "small world" (13) of Konrad Vost "was implicit the boredom and security of time passing as it was expected to pass, indifferently, without meaning, without the threat of impending unwanted change or even disaster" (5). - Vost's life is defined by stasis and mirrored externally. Vost does not manipulate external reality to conform to subjective vision

as earlier artists like Cyril and Papa do; the landscape in The Passion Artist reflects the inner world of consciousness in an expressionistic manner. This use of landscape partly recalls Hawkes' first two novels in which a barren and formless landscape expresses the inhabitants' psychic sterility. Whether it is the sterile four bare rooms in which he lives or the larger backdrop of the city itself, the outer world presents an oppressive landscape where the possibility of life is denied:

He knew only too well that the city in which he lived was without trees, without national monuments, without ponds or flower gardens, without even a single building to attract visitors from other parts of the world. It was a small bleak city consisting almost entirely of cheaply built concrete dwellings and unfinished apartment houses. It was a city without interest, without pride, without efficiency (11; see also 73).

Vost's own boundaries of experience become defined by the major landmarks of the city; the limits of the city mark the limits of Vost's containment within the self (see Appendix A). All roads lead, directly or indirectly, to the cemetery, for the cemetery lies at "the center of the dead city . . . like a replica of the city itself" (21). Deadness also lies at the fixed centre of Vost's personality. He pays conventional homage to his dead wife, kneeling before her grave, "only an actor in a film long since destroyed" (21); after leaving the hospital where he is confined after suffering injuries during the prison revolt, Vost walks automatically toward the cemetery; he is a man driven by death and haunted by the past. The "dead light" (22) which falls on him in the graveyard also enters the room where he is led by a prostitute, a friend of Mirabelle: "Through the slats in the shutters the light entered the room as through the skeletal ribs on an animal long dead" (36).

Each of the city's landmarks is symbolically linked to Vost's life:

to the east was the school, to the west the railway station, to the north La Violaine, to the south a hospital that bore on its roof an

enormous cross the color of blood-washed in the rain. The cemetery, not far from the park for children, more or less marked the center (11).

The east-west axis could be said to represent the personal, achronological axis of Vost himself. The easterly direction represents Vost's expectations for his future, and these reside entirely in his daughter who attends the school on the east side of the city: "Vost did nothing that was not for her" (3). Vost associates the railway station with his past, seeing its resemblance to "the storehouse of memory" (14):

memory was an infinitely expanding structure of events recollected from life, events that had been imagined, imaginary events that had been recollected, recomposed, dreamt once again, remembered. Yes, he told himself, the storehouse of memory was like a railway terminal for trains of unlimited destination (22).

Although Vost has never set foot in a train since his arrival in the city years before, his visits to the railway station satisfy a contrary need in him: they allow him the illusion of escape. There he can accept the fantasy of escape for the reality: "he knew that at the station he was indistinguishable from someone actually arriving or setting forth" (13). Vost feels "significant . . . remarkably self-defined" (14), though anxious should he "be exposed for what he was, the only person who had no business meeting that train or standing in the midst of those who had travelled" (15). Yet the realization that "Nothing is lost," but "Every image, sensation, concept, has its own invisible track" (43) fills Vost with "dread" because, rather like Allert in Death, Sleep & the Traveler, he fears to confront his own memories. The railway station is a place where he is reminded of the existence of memory without having to confront the burden of the past directly. Thus, on one occasion, he sees in the station a woman in chains destined for the prison, La Violaine. He meets the eyes of the woman but the "irony of her disregard" "suffuses" him with the

woman's guilt (17-18). In the indifference of the woman, Vost imagines his mother's arrival years before and contemplates her own probable indifference. Allied entirely with the forces of convention and order at this point, Vost notes that "secretly, deep within, he approved of the chains" (18).

Though Vost's mother is an inmate of the prison, Vost's contact with La Violaine is curiously remote; he is content simply to observe its virtually unchanging facade from a cafe--also called "La Violaine"--situated across the street. There is a saying, "La Violaine to La Violaine," which refers to an apparently unvarying tradition that when a woman is released from the prison, she immediately walks across the street to the cafe to sit with someone else also bound to the prison before proceeding to the railway terminus (7). Most of the cafe's regular occupants are waiting for friends or relatives within the prison; thus, like Vost, they become effectual prisoners themselves with only the illusion of freedom in the absence of barred windows and cement cells.

The "disordering" of Vost's world begins with an encounter with a released prisoner. From the woman Vost hears the name of his mother, a name he seldom allows to consciousness (21), which "relieves" yet "alarms" him, making "him wish both to strike and to embrace the woman" (27). Like Allert, he has not come to terms with his past and so is continually beset by contrary impulses. Vost responds to the woman with a mixture of aggressive hostility and sexuality. On the one hand, "he detested [her] small bright red hat" (24) and "wanted to denounce the woman" (28); yet he "had not been so intimately related to any woman since the death of Claire" (25). He waits to look directly into her eyes, "aware of the bosom beneath the dark shiny material of the dress"; he wants to put his hand on her waist

and embrace her (26-8). These contrary reactions are characteristic of Vost who fights a perpetual inner battle between convention and the values of his "fixed personality" and deeper psychic forces countervailing to this order: the desire to punish the woman opposes the need to acknowledge an "erotic union" between the two. As he later catches sight of the woman, not at the railway station but in a lover's embrace, Vost feels his sexuality thwarted. In an image recalling the photograph placed on Allert's valise in Death, Sleep & the Traveler, Vost sees the two mouths "enjoined, as if each were at the same time devouring the other and being devoured" (30). Sexuality is automatically transmuted into hostility and disgust.

The second incident in this disordering also occurs in the midst of an accustomed routine. Proposing to walk his daughter home from school, Vost arrives late at the schoolyard. He discovers indirectly from Mirabelle's friend that his daughter has become a prostitute. Feeling "annulled" but also "inflamed" (35), Vost passively submits to the young girl and goes to her rooms. In reality, Vost is satisfying an incestuous wish toward his own daughter. Pursued by the sound of the girl's sandals on the pavement even after he leaves her place alone, Vost walks directly to the Prefecture of Police and reports his daughter for prostitution. After this apparently successful attempt to reassert the old conventional order, Vost is no longer haunted by the sounds of the sandals. In spite of his own compliance with the prostitute, Vost is able to deny his sexual self through his betrayal. Significantly, Vost turns in his daughter and not his daughter's friend. Only by punishing himself in this instance can Vost retain the ideal image of himself and restore his sense of morality; through self-punishment Vost is able to release his guilt. For a similar reason Vost

joins those volunteers recruited to subdue the revolt at the woman's prison in spite of the possibility he might come face to face with his mother. Like the other men who participate in the clash, Vost is seen as the oppressor of the female power, one whose eroticism has been channeled into controlled violence for the purpose of maintaining a sterile, male-fashioned order. In Hawkes' novels it is inevitably the male who represses, while the potential for sexual freedom exists in the female will. Hawkes seems to feel that the male is, to a great degree, the embodiment of a neurotic urge existing in society, the male who is largely responsible for the gulf which Freud, N. O. Brown and others have found to exist between the repressive needs of society and an outlet in natural sexuality.

The revolt at La Violaine externalizes the conflict in Vost between order and disorder. It is the point at which Vost's life "collapse[s] into chronology, that private axis had coincided with public axis" (42). It is only well after the coinciding of personal and public axes that Vost comes to realize that he has lived a life "uninformed by chronology." Because his life has been uneventful, "he had come to prize his superiority, his irony, his self-condemnation, his intractable belief in his identity as Konrad Vost" (20). But disordering promotes new recognitions, although Vost continues to struggle between the needed sense of order and an apprehension of the "secret" self:

without chronology, without unexpected events suddenly manifesting themselves in series like the links of a chain, a person could never uncover the sum of his own secrets or profit truly from lessons of devastation. When the time arrived, and disorder surrounded him with the force of shattered morality, he was stunned to discover how rigorously he clung to his former self and how bestial he had in fact become (20-1).

Previously, the outer world sterilely reflected the inner one for Vost; there was security in stasis, though Vost also needed the illusion



of change and escape from this stasis. Thus, he makes nostalgic visits to the railway station and, less frequently, he walks or rides the trolley until he comes to the edge of the city itself and can "enjoy the shock . . . of the 'landscape that mirrored light without meaning'" (13, 12). With the disordering Vost becomes the victim of the active forces of the universe and a prey, as well, to the previously unexpressed internal forces of his personality. The relationship of outer and inner worlds becomes dynamic, as "the inner landscape had become externalized". (84). His own personality, with its newly apprehended conflicts, is expressed by an outer world which is constantly evolving. On the marsh Vost encounters an insubstantial world, neither living nor, like the city, dead: "Nothing but the light, the swollen breath of life in decay, the muddy plains and fissures of the deceptive topography" (85). Vost's flight from the city corresponds to his escape from the stasis of his old life. Ostensibly, Vost "commit[s] himself to the marsh" in order to hunt down the escaped women convicts (77); but, in fact, he is hunting himself, coming to realize the erotic potential in both its constructive and destructive aspects. In the sections entitled "Skirmishing" and "The Prisoner," we witness the growth of "the passion artist," the gradual recognition and assimilation of the unconscious, erotic self.

Vost's decision to enter the prison in order to help subdue the rioting women and his subsequent choice to pursue the women onto the marsh represent his conscious need to assert the order wherein he defines and has always defined himself, though they also suggest the underlying subconscious need to discover his true potential, to lose his innocence. Vost is an everyman figure precisely because his "fixed identity" is so firmly rooted in convention and an accepted moral order, and because he is unaware of his

erotic potential. The evolution and acknowledgment of the consciousness of Vost would seem to substantiate Allert's claim in Death, Sleep & the Traveler that every man is an artist in sex (D, S & T, 153). In The Passion Artist, Vost explores the reaches beyond the self, a Dionysian realm in which the personality is subsumed by inchoate forms, primal impulses and subterranean needs. Hawkes tries to reproduce a sense of the state of the unconscious which gives rise to primigenial visions. Through the repetition of key abstract words--"light," "darkness," "time"--in the following passage, Hawkes attempts to depict the unmarked uniformity of this ghostly terrain.

Here the star is a matter of neither light nor time. Here the spectator is never allowed to forget that the illumination occasionally and slowly gathering, like a fog on a marsh, and in itself becoming the "daylight" necessary to the experience of the interior world, is not in fact the light of day or the light of dawn, but is only a reflection of that light-in-time by which a certain day once existed, or will in the future exist, or now exists but as imaginary without a genesis in either the past or the future. By the "light" that appears in the eternal darkness, the spectator has the sensation that for him actual light, natural light, light-in-time has been extinguished. No day will come. Now he himself is only a figment of his own psychological function within the only domain that is eternally dark, even when "lighted," and eternally insubstantial despite the sights and sounds with which it is either suddenly filled or emptied. It is here, when he has all but lost it, that the spectator knows the dread of consciousness (58).

Vost's determination to preserve his identity is often seen against the alternative of nothingness. Realizing the truth of his daughter's prostitution, Vost nevertheless finds himself "creating a dream, escaping a dream, clinging as best he could to incomprehension" (34); but, suddenly, "his entire world fell from him" and "He was annulled" (35). Vost puts off "explicit knowledge of the disordering of his life," on hearing the reports of rioting at La Violaine, admitting only the physical necessity of "the journey," while refusing to "recognize its object or that it was

taking him in fact from woman to woman in a disarrangement that would finally effect his change." He feels unreal, "a representation of the seated man grimacing in the face of unseen events, or only as a large rubber puppet dressed in black" (44).

Like Allert of Death, Sleep & the Traveler, then, Vost experiences feelings of non-existence when his stable identity is threatened. Vost often takes refuge in his belief in his old self, his "intractable identity." Thus, when he is jolted by the unexpected materialization of one of the escaped convicts, Vost reassures himself of his individuality: "nowhere in all these streets or alleyways, in all the labyrinths, was there another Konrad Vost" (75). Like the black glove he wears which Vost believes adorns a silver hand, Vost's persona is apparently the outer manifestation or expression of unalterable and innate attributes; it reflects his dignity, his severity and pride--assumed traits which disguise his metaphorical nakedness. The black glove and silver hand become part of a private myth of metamorphosis: "The silver hand of the little trumpeter became the offending hand of the abandoned child and, in turn, at the end of his days, the silver hand of the uncomprehending Konrad Vost" (144). Such a myth produces the return of his own innocence while relating also to the myth of his own supremacy: "He was thinking that only the hero is awarded the magnificence of the silver hand" (73). The "fixed personality" of Konrad Vost is a function of these two illusions: that of his innocence and that of his superiority.

Vost is alarmed by the prospect that there may not exist clearly defined boundaries of the self, that the edges of individuality may be blurred into indistinctness. He fears Claire's insistence (which closely resembles Papa's of Travesty) on the multiplicity of being. Claire's

belief "that every person is repeated endlessly" so that "We are all the same" (77, 78) is "monstrous" to Vost, for "then a single person would know in his hour of joy or hour of dread not only his own life and former lives, but the lives and former lives of everyone" (78). Such a belief minimizes and mocks his concept of identity. Yet as Vost "skirmishes" in the protean realm outside the city limits, he experiences his nightmare of multiplicity and feels the threat to the self:

the world was now in a constant state of metamorphosis, duplication, multiplication; figures deserving existence only within the limits of the dream now sprang alive; the object of least significance was inspired with its secret animation; no longer was there such a thing as personal safety; in every direction there rose the bars of the cage. What could be worse? (90-1).

Like the evolving landscape of Vost's mind, the marsh is a region where consciousness slowly succumbs to innermost impulses and promptings of the unconscious. It forms a landscape of chaos and, paradoxically, potential: "Everything was here and nothing" (82). Vost finds himself a victim of shifting and disconnected scenes, unexpected vantages which may disappear before his eyes; he is "alone and unable to move in a landscape without shape or meaning." Vost encounters in this environment a mirror of his own confused self. Here he must confront a truth which he has always feared, that "the unaccountable is the only key to inner life, past life, future life" (83). As Vost continues his trek through the marsh his sense of disorientation increases. Amid the dense and shifting fog he discovers that "the marsh was an immensity of cobwebs" which "duplicated" in their sizes and designs "the crystal of snow" (99). While Vost had previously sought safety in comfortable routine, he is now concerned for his physical survival. Vost finds, like Conrad's Jim or Razumov, that the sheer need for survival overcomes idealism. In order to preserve in

his mind the vision of a naked female he unexpectedly comes across bathing in a millpond, Vost turns away and congratulates himself for not harming one whom he recognizes as a former inmate of the prison; he feels renewed by the experience of looking at but not harming her (95). Yet when surprised by a uniformed man with a snarling dog, he betrays the woman immediately and without prompting from the officer. In this way, he instinctively sacrifices "the purity of his vision" only to experience the deeper shock of recognition as he hears shortly after a burst of gunfire in the distance (97-8). It is appropriate that Vost eventually discovers a place of shelter by "grop[ing] his way toward the sound of what was apparently a starving hen clucking quietly to itself as well as scratching for seed" (100). In his isolation and his overwhelming need to survive, Vost is reduced to his essential animal self: "he of the purest habits and coldest turn of mind, was to sleep on dung" (102).

#### Apocalypse of Passion

We learn very early in the novel that women have always populated the outer and inner worlds of Konrad Vost: his "every move and thought occurred only in a context of women" (1). As the novel opens Vost is dedicated to an illusory image of his daughter, worships his dead wife and is obsessed by his incarcerated mother; all these relationships are, in different ways, defective. The most significant relationship and the most contradictory is that which he has with his mother. He dismisses the parental bond with his daughter after he discovers the truth about her activities. In time he even comes to renounce his dead wife and her influence over him. Dreading to see his mother, Vost never visits her in prison; yet, "He wanted nothing more than to see this woman," whom he loves yet condemns (2); "who

else had he played [his trumpet] for if not precisely this same Eva Laubenstein who had destroyed his childhood . . . yet even now he loved the sight of her" (126-7). His responsiveness to women in general, in fact, evolves from his contradictory feelings for his mother. Vost desires to punish his mother through his behaviour towards other women; on the other hand, his need to find love and security in other women reflects a similar need to discover this in his mother. His contrary feelings are the result of an apparently unresolved Oedipal complex. Thus, the young Konrad Vost, acting on "secret impulses" and a "vague and innocent desire" (113), used to take pleasure in stealing to his mother's empty bed. In one traumatic incident from the past, Vost recalls his intention to "usurp the forbidden bed" only to find, unexpectedly, Konrad Vost the Father asleep in it. Emboldened by his father's presence in "the bed that was not his own," he uses a chair to help him up onto the bed.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, Konrad perceives his father maternally: he curls "against the warm and hairless arm . . . that was as thick and soft and smooth as a woman's thigh"; "with both hands and the side of his head he touched as lightly and fervently as he could the gentle flesh of Konrad Vost the Father. What more could he ask?" (114-16). Though terrified by his own mother, he finds himself able to satisfy his urges toward her through the transformation of his father into a maternal figure.

Denied his mother's affection--indeed, he "hardly dared look at her as a child" (127)--Konrad later invests his love in a drunken and disfigured peasant with masculine characteristics. Under the care of Anna Kossowski, Konrad's sexuality is constantly thwarted and derided; his natural sexual development is frustrated. Inevitably, Vost develops a strong superego to counterbalance the "shame and grief" produced by traumatic

and repressive childhood incidents.

As Vost's relationship with his mother lies at the centre of his psychological being, it is his mother's words that permit him to re-evaluate the object of his journey and redeem the psychological self. When Vost finally encounters his mother, he is entirely the submissive captive of women: he has surrendered himself to the female will which, in the novel, is associated with the unconscious.<sup>8</sup> In his return to the prison he acknowledges the end of his quest. Although he arrives at the prison "disordered, demoralized, dislocated" (122),

Konrad Vost found himself exactly where he had always wished to be without knowing it: in the world of women and in the world of the prison, where the most dangerous rudiments of common knowledge are unavoidable and where he would receive the punishment he deserved and desired, in confinement, for his acts of innocence as well as for his ultimate inability to be always right, always correct (120);

. . . he belonged where he was, never had he expected enough good fortune to find himself exactly where he most longed and feared to be: in prison (124).

Like Josef K. of The Trial, Vost has come to terms with the fact of his imprisonment; he is prepared to move beyond punishment to examine the necessity for punishment. Importantly, he is now committed to the knowledge of his own past. Thus, Vost's arrival at the prison represents a paradoxical freedom for him.

Eva Laubenstein's words release Vost further from the conditions of his self-imprisonment. Speaking to him indirectly by addressing her companion, Hania, she explains that a wife must never become maternal to her husband, or she must face losing her womanhood; a wife's relationship must never be that of a comforter, companion or intellectual guide, but must retain its basis in sexuality (129). In admitting this to be true, "Konrad Vost was able to learn his first lesson with ease, and at that moment lost

the last shred of his grief for the woman he no longer needed"; "his grief for Claire was finished" (121, 129).

While Eva Laubenstein is speaking, Hania performs a slow, mesmeric seduction of Vost, completely unlike the earlier seduction by the young prostitute. The extreme eroticism of the seduction somehow harmonizes with his mother's words, as sexuality becomes elevated to the level of articulation: "The words of his mother had come to him on the tongue of this woman" (133). Eva Laubenstein speaks about various instances of victimization: those involving Vost, herself and women in general. Through this process which yokes sensuality and descriptions of victimization, Vost experiences the simultaneity of passion and pain--an inevitable conjunction in Hawkes' world.

We may distinguish three stages in Vost's relationship with women: in "The Revolt," Vost is in a position to assert supremacy over women, denying his feminine-erotic potential and diverting natural sexual impulses through a socially approved aggression. Here Vost responds to an ingrained moral order, fundamentally masculine, dictatorial and repressive. In "Skirmishing," images of female life dominate the landscape. Women constantly materialize in this world, and symbolic female forms are also pronounced: the prison, the marsh and the barn can all be taken as representing the vagina. The division of the character's world into masculine and feminine spheres recalls Second Skin. The more internal nature of Vost's quest is evident in the existence of a landscape in which there is no permanence; Vost experiences the shifting contours of the unconscious. In the final section, "The Prisoner," Vost submits himself to the feminine will, and his return to the prison could be said to represent both a return to the womb as well as a symbolic acceptance of the vagina.<sup>9</sup>



The point at which the world of The Passion Artist ceases to be dominated by the male order and comes under female control occurs during the prison revolt. Initially, control lies with the invading males. The underlying sexual nature of their attack is emphasized. The men are given primitive sticks as weapons against the women. For Vost, "It was as if he had never before held in his hands a simple stick; he did not know how to hold it, how to carry it" (47); but, once in the van which transports the volunteers to the prison, Vost grips the stick between his knees and tries to avoid the eyes of others (48). Significantly, the men attack first, "confident in their purpose, in their masculinity, in the power of the sticks that they held aloft and shook as they charged . . . sweeping forward into the violation that had been sanctioned" (53). The tableau which forms suggests a violent sexual orgy: "Men and women were crushed together, standing or falling, forearm jammed into open mouth, legs tangling, a small head buried in the immensity of a broad chest."<sup>10</sup> Amid this chaotic disarray, Vost hears the words "'Ah, no, ah no'" rhythmically repeated "in the voice of someone . . . who loves her antagonist as strongly as she suffers the pain he inflicts" (54); again, passion and pain are conjoined. The nature of the "violation" becomes typified by scenes which are progressively more comically and absurdly grotesque. In the finale, Vost and another man, also an habitué of the cafe, strike consecutive blows to the front and back of a tiny woman, "chopp[ing] away at her, he and Spapa, like two boys beating to death a bird or like two wooden figures striking a bell" (56).

Vost's encounters with each one of the female prisoners within the prison has its corresponding encounter in the world outside La Violaine; either Vost again meets an inmate he remembers seeing or having contact

with in the prison, or else he encounters anonymous figures who are associated in their new roles out of prison with anonymous figures inside La Violaine. Importantly, these encounters outside the prison are repeated in the same order in which they occurred inside. As Vost instinctively seems to realize on sighting the first of these women in the cemetery: "the prison had exploded, so to speak; interior and exterior life were assuming a single shape; rebellious women appeared to be arising even from the graves of the dead" (74). The first encounter at the cemetery corresponds to the initial sighting of the solitary women at La Violaine. Both figures are anonymous, draped in the loose-fitting tunics of the male guards at La Violaine and carry phallic-shaped objects: the torch of the original woman in the prison has been replaced by one of the sticks of the attacking men, emphasizing the women's physical triumph.

It is significant that the woman rises from behind Claire's grave, for it suggests the beginning of a revivification process, a transference of the female power. For Vost the power of the female has been expressed through Claire and now that she is dead, through her memory. But this power has not encompassed sexuality, the full expression of which is prohibited in Vost by a strong superego. Claire has had regular sexual relations with another man for six years prior to her death (4); Vost's memories of Claire are never revealed to be of a physical or sexual nature. The appearance of the woman from behind his wife's headstone suggests the new embodiment of the female power: the intellect and philosophical intuitions of Claire are becoming less influential in directing Vost's course of action; he becomes increasingly driven by passion, a prey to his emotional and instinctual being. On seeing the escaped convict in the cemetery, he responds angrily to the presence of the woman "in Claire's resting place" (74), but

he never again visits this site; indeed, his mourning period seems abruptly curtailed by this incident.

After Vost leaves the hospital, he encounters, one after another, various of the women he sees in La Violaine: on the march he first confronts the old woman whom he saw the prison looking down "happily" into the prison yard as the rioting goes on (54-5, 88); next, Vost witnesses the woman whom he calls "the little martyr of La Violaine" innocently bathing in a pool. Stung by the remembrance of his original "violation" of her in the prison, Vost is determined to preserve the idealized portrait he now has of this naked woman; thus, he turns away from his spying in his anxiety to avoid a sexual response to her. He is able to sustain the "vision of the bather" as a "clear indestructible sight" (95); "bearing the entire millpond inside his head, he had eyes only for the nudity of her whom he had spared" (96). Consequently, his betrayal of the woman is, in a sense, a self-betrayal as well. Unlike his betrayal of Mirabelle, his betrayal of the tiny inmate, though more unconscious in origin, forces him not to abrogate but admit and confront his own responsibility. From a sense of moral superiority, Vost comes to realize that morality is really a sham when opposed to the fact of his own survival. Moral superiority is simply a luxury that becomes a concern only when the basic needs are safeguarded by a comfortable routine.

The barn where Vost seeks shelter for the night initially represents for him the security of the womb. Typically, Vost first responds to women as comforters, surrogate maternal figures. He even believes that the woman who attacks him with the hatchet during the revolt is about to "embrace" him (58). The sound of women's voices in the barn alleviates his fears, for "in the accompaniment of women . . . he himself could be in no grave

danger of pain or harm" (104); "Thanks to the sleeping women he was safe" (105). The barn does not represent the security of the womb, after all, but like the barn in which young Konrad spent much of his time, it becomes the place of thwarted passion, the prison of his frustrated sexuality. In the barn Vost relives many of his old fears. The fog on the marsh reminds him of snow, while the cobwebs revealed in the peculiar light "duplicated, though many times enlarged, the crystal of snow" (99)--dung and snow, the narrator tells us, "were the essential ingredients in the crucible of his innocent and detested childhood" (102). Triggered by such elementary memories of snow, straw, dung and the horse, Vost begins to recreate his past.

Section 3, "The Prisoner," intersperses Vost's growing awareness of his sexual being while in prison with traumatic scenes from his distant past which he is now able to relive. This psychological unravelling is a necessary part of the process by which, in releasing his burden of memory, Vost comes to understand and fully appreciate his basis in sexuality. Vost's new awareness, then, embraces an acknowledgment of his true sexuality through a confrontation with a past he has successfully repressed until this point in the journey. That is why the two women, Eva Laubenstein and Hania, are present in Vost's cell during much of this section: the presence of his mother symbolically conveys the return to the womb, while Hania's presence here makes possible Vost's sexual regeneration. At the same time, the women represent extremes of the life-cycle which Vost is now able to accept equally. Eva Laubenstein was "The woman who had given him life," while Hania, "the tall handsome woman" with the hatchet during the prison revolt, had attempted to end his life: life and death, passion and pain are merging in this ultimate apotheosis of Konrad Vost.

One of the final acts before the "willed erotic union" between Vost

and Hania is "the removal of his shiny glove" (161); this is the culmination of the act of undressing him begun by Hania on their first meeting (128). Metaphorically, Vost is being stripped of his old identity, but this process cannot be completed until Vost is also stripped of his illusions surrounding the "silver hand." Only with his "total disrobement" in which "his own ordinary hand [is] restored" (161, 163) is Vost free to face the fact of his existential nakedness and realize himself as the passion artist.

In the end, though, Vost seems less willing to acknowledge what he has learned through suffering. Accidentally shot by his friend Gagnon, Vost's dying words are defiant but somewhat ambiguous:

↓ Poor Gagnon. . . . They may destroy me, they may devour me.  
But I am who I am' (184).

But do these words represent a denial or full acceptance of what he has become: who is Vost referring to as "they"? We are only told that Vost, in his death, was "already smiling and rolling over to discover for himself what it was to be nothing." Vost may be revoking the "discovery" of his true self, unaware that the agents of his destruction are the forces of convention and conventional morality. Thus, he is unable to perform the act of integration whereby he transforms himself through his experience; what he has become through trial and suffering never totally conjoins with his awareness of self. He is, from the first, a man led through a series of painful encounters with others; and with aspects of his own personality, who can never wholly appreciate the nature of his experience.

Such an ending denies finality. Vost has continually fought against self-knowledge, avoiding throughout the novel conscious acceptance of his role as the passion artist. Unlike many existential writers, Hawkes denies

us ~~the~~ completed pattern in which self-awareness is realized. Vost undergoes the pattern unconsciously but never does acknowledge it consciously. If this reading is valid, then Vost is not so much a passion artist as a would-be one--in reality, a failed or incomplete artist.

"Virginie": An Artist's Tale

Virginie, her two lives is comprised of two closely linked stories occurring 205 years apart but narrated by the same character who is "the authoress not of one journal but of two, and [is] the child not of one life but of two" (18). Virginie is "transported" from one age to the next and back again, encountering in one life characters and situations which parallel those in her other life. In both of Virginie's lives she is an eleven year old girl of mysterious origins. She vaguely refers to herself as "doomed to eternal childhood" (87, 141), one who has none of "the prospects of a woman" (30), a "Child with no past, child forever denied her passing time, her maturation, her future realm of womanhood which justifies all our course of indentured innocence" (9). A witness to the "charades of love" of Bocage and Seigneur, to both of whom she is ward and sister, Virginie remains, like these characters, more of an observer than a participant in the charades. Virginie thinks of removing her clothes, but she never would do so (68); one "could speak of kissing me but nothing more" (77). Prevented from relating sexually to others, Virginie lives under a cloud of interdiction of which she is aware, though she is unaware, it seems, of its origins.

In her "first" life (1740), Virginie is devoted to the services of Seigneur who fancies himself a creator of women. Seigneur periodically roüsts the countryside for candidates whom he then instructs in the art of "true womanhood" at his chateau, Dédale. On the agreement to join his

household, each of the five women he selects must adopt a name denoting one of the five qualities Seigneur designates as essential to "true womanhood": Colère, Bel Esprit, Volupte, Finesse and Magie (30). The artist names his future creations on the basis of an artistic ideal he has set up. For Seigneur this ideal is ultimately to be embodied physically and spiritually in the figure of "the Noblesse"--the finished "work of art," the perfected product.

In Virginie's "second" life (in 1945), she is the sister of another creator, Bocage, whom she worships as she does Seigneur in her first life. Bocage has fewer pretensions as an artist; his "sex charades" are not designed for instructive purposes, but to provide amusement for willing participants solicited by Bocage himself; yet, like Seigneur, Bocage creates a "world" for himself in which he and others can indulge in "sex charades." After their Maman is suddenly struck dumb and paralyzed, Bocage forages the neighbourhood and engages five women for his "charades of love." It is appropriate that Maman becomes mute, for her muteness symbolically conveys her opposition to the artistry of the charades of love. Her muteness seems in direct opposition to Virginie's prophetic powers which compel her to fulfil her function as an artist. What Maman "could not prevent or even condemn aloud in human speech" (11), she must destroy; impotent before an art of which she disapproves, she nevertheless manages to set aflame the house where the charades are taking place. In Virginie's first life, the dominant Comtesse similarly acts as a destroyer. La Comtesse is Virginie's mother through an incestuous act with her son Seigneur. An "imposing and wrathful woman" (92), "merciless" and "overbearing" with a "tyrant's body" (169), La Comtesse is the severe representative of a hypocritical moral order. She condemns and destroys Seigneur and his art

because he sexually denies her (169). Finally, she stirs up a group of former Noblesses (whom Seigneur has also denied) against him; and together they seek to purge Seigneur and his art through fire:

'at this moment when you are burning, so burns Dédale! The flames climb about your body and about Dédale! Your art is gone! Your art is dead! In days to come, nothing shall remain of it but a few blackened stones. In the years to come, even the blackened stones shall have disappeared. Your page is justly blank, Seigneur. Our condemnation ends' (Italics added; 212).

The moral pretensions of the last Noblesse are evident here. The Comtesse and the corresponding figure in Virginie's second life, Maman, embody a censorious moral order or a manifestation of the forces of anti-art which seeks to deny, destroy, and above all, to silence. Against these ultimately successful attempts, the artist exercises the resources of his creative being: Virginie becomes "the insubstantial voice of the page that burns" (11), recording in her journal "dreams of creations" (191); Seigneur pursues his art amid an environment hostile to the aims and principles proclaimed by his teaching; and Bocage creates his "sex arcade" in spite of the intense but helpless disapproval of the bed-ridden Maman and the strictures of a condemnatory society.

In Second Skin, parallelism proceeds spatially and basically serves to point out differences between characters on the two islands; but in Virginie parallelism functions on a temporal plane and emphasizes resemblances: in many respects, Virginie's two lives duplicate each other. The parallels between central characters extend to minor characters and to situations within consecutive scenes also. Père La Tour, the older man who runs Seigneur's stable and assists him in his art, is paralleled by the minor character Monsieur Malmort in Virginie's second life; both are largely outsiders, but contribute to the charades. Each of the pairs of the five women wears an article of clothing (a gown or underpants)



of an identifying colour, thus reinforcing the associations: Madame Pidou and Colère share the colour black, Minouche and Magie are identified by orange apparel, Sylvie and Bel Esprit by white, Clarisse and Finesse by violet and Yvonne and Volupté by red. In addition, each of the paired women has a dominant trait or characteristic which she shares with the other member of the pair; for example, Sylvie and Bel Esprit are petite, Madame Pidou and Colère are older women; both Minouche and Magie have a small child (Déodat, Dédou). Structural parallels are also pronounced: in the chapter entitled "The Sex Arcade," Monsieur Malmort explains how he won the white corset by firing a rifle at a target (114); in the subsequent chapter, Seigneur hunts and kills the white bird (132-6). Similarly, Bocage's dinner oration to the women (68-73) is succeeded by a speech by Seigneur in the following chapter given while the women are eating (97-102).

Key images in Virginie tend to reinforce the theme of static existence. Virginie's function as the artist's "soul" (206), according to Seigneur, is not to inspire him to greater creative efforts but to enable the artist "to repeat himself with perfection" (182). The images of the labyrinth and the mirror (which recur in works by several contemporary artists--Barth, Borges, Robbe-Grillet and Nabokov, for example) are prominent in Virginie, suggesting multiplicity and duplication. In its sexual sense, the labyrinth refers to the mystery of the vagina. The image of the labyrinth is used to describe Dédale, Seigneur's chateau (49, 51, 89), the scene of sexual tutoring and testing. The labyrinth of Surrender 'All is the focal point in Seigneur's allegorical Land of Love which he depicts for the women in the chapter entitled "Land of Love; Colère and the pig." Here the labyrinth symbolizes sexual replenishment, but the allegory goes beyond this

and points to the cessation of the cycle. Although "we-constantly return throughout our stay in the Citadel of the Desire to Please" to the labyrinth, the force of memory eventually interrupts and destroys love's bliss, according to Seigneur (100-101); through the agency of the past, the cycle is completed and a new journey can then begin, one which, according to Seigneur, will involve the same process of repetitive but renewing action.

The image of the mirror pertains more directly to Virginie; it helps point toward Virginie's narcissism which, along with her innocence, is her most dominant trait. Virginie often studies herself in a pool or mirror (53, 86) and refers at one point to "the mirror that was myself" (49).

Lacking a true identity, Virginie is concerned with her own image as it is reflected back to her. The allusions to mirrors of various kinds merge with floral imagery to suggest connections with Narcissus. Maman calls Virginie "my flower" (12), and she is frequently associated with floral imagery (20, 35, 167, 184, 192, 215). Virginie's two lives mirror each other. We have no way of knowing whether they are equally real or whether one is reality and the other illusory or the product of a vision. There exists the possibility that, like Narcissus, Virginie cannot distinguish her real self from an illusory self; however, as the artist, she is able to embrace both equally and completely.

While stasis reigns over character, plot and even image in Virginie, change over time becomes significant only in terms of artistic values and ideals. What particularly distinguishes Virginie's two lives is not the characters who inhabit them but the time or age involved. Like Virginie, the characters who surround her are similarly static; they too are doomed to a recycled existence. Yet, significantly, the age changes, and with these changes come differing perceptions of what constitutes art and the

nature of the artist. While characters repeat in various forms the purgatory of their previous lives, the function and aspirations of the artist, particularly the erotic artist, alter their foundations. The values and ideals which hold true for the eighteenth century artist are considerably displaced by the revised concerns of the twentieth century artist.<sup>11</sup> The assumption that man is capable of perfectability derives from a way of thinking which predates modernity. Seigneur's ideals of the perfected woman reflect a classical, Apollonian perspective in which discipline, control and the imposition of form work to manufacture a highly wrought and definitive unity: the "Augustan age" of art is embodied in these characteristics. In some respects, Seigneur's work hearkens back to a time earlier than 1740; he lives in a world where lyricism as it was once manifested through the spirit of the troubadors still underlies the erotic ideal. Hence the story of Virginie's first life is interwoven with strands of fable and myth, allegory and love lyrics.

In the sections which deal with Virginie's first life, self-parody is much in evidence; in those sections depicting her second life, comedy takes primarily another form. In an age where perfectability is no longer a legitimate concern and where values are no longer accounted absolute, the need for self-mockery may not be so intense; it becomes a traditional assumption in the modern world that values and morals be questioned. In the place of a self-parody which balances the seriousness of the former age, a comedy which is essentially valueless, such as broad farce, now comes to prevail. Farce rather than parody is the dominant comic mode throughout those episodes depicting Virginie's second life. As an early reviewer observed, "the amorous details (concerning corsets and toilets, G-strings and tattoos) are apt to come from such lowly mimetic forms as the ribald tale and the

long filthy joke."<sup>12</sup> In one scene, though, remarkable for its black humour, Monsieur Malmort relates his visit to the Galerie d'Amour. After wandering some time in the darkness of a cellar, he encounters several tableaux, all constructed from strings and wired bones, among which is a circus:

I smiled and put my face as close as I could to a bareback rider who was a dainty composition of tiny bones and tutu on the rump of her horse. Why so close? I still ask myself. After everything else, why now seduced?

. . . Because she popped, ladies! Popped! Right in my face! A hand fell off before my eyes. The other. She was losing herself. . . (121).

The self-parody in the 1740 sequences primarily revolves around the figure of Seigneur. With his insistence on order and design, he resembles Hawkes. In speaking of the seating arrangements and decor of the dining hall, Virginie refers to "Seigneur's passion for symmetry and need for order":

Two tapestries of blue sequences on fields of white complemented each other on our facing walls; and overhead there were two rows of chandeliers (with candles lighted despite the bright day) instead of one; and even Seigneur's whippets comported themselves in accordance with his designing mind. . . . But there was more than this: for adjacent to the northern wall, and in the space between our tables, and equidistant from each, there stood the serving table. . . . (96-7).

Seigneur's vision of the Land of Love is similarly a vision of order achieved. Disorder yields to a sense of order with the realization of the erotic self. The pilgrim's progress in Seigneur's allegorical land is toward the garden and citadel which are emblematic of this realization: "The garden of green confusion, which it initially appears to be, is in fact as orderly as the citadel itself; the greenness of the labyrinth determines all. Everything in the citadel is held in its proper place, attains its balance and hence its meaning" (100). The erotic visionary artist, then, is concerned with the creation of meaning through formal patterning.

Seigneur also proves himself to be a Hawkesian artist in his conscious detachment from the objects of his creation. He remains ever impassive and severe in his dealings with the women. Despite the "lust" Seigneur "inspires" in his students, he abstains from sexual contact with them (210); nor is Virginie, who is also his "creation," permitted to make physical contact with Seigneur; significantly, he touches her for the first time immediately after he speaks about giving up his art (136-7); life and art occupy remote extremes for him. As an artist, Seigneur continues to exercise detachment, self-control and objectivity in his obsessive pursuit of perfection.

Many references are made to Seigneur's art. Most of them suggest the burden of creativity and portray Seigneur as an artist who is victimized by misunderstanding and misinterpretation. In his efforts to mold the "shape of womanhood which is art itself" (29), "There is no higher form of art . . . no greater responsibility" (24). Seigneur explains that he once considered giving up his art, complaining of

'The constant effort of invention; the occasional intractability of my materials; the disapproval of most of those in rude huts or elegant chateaux in the vicinity of the mysterious Dédale, all of whom had only rumored knowledge of what I was doing' (137).

Seigneur goes on to distinguish the nature of his art from the misguided notions others have of its purpose. He ends his criticism of his critics by articulating a claim which was quite foreign to the critical sensibilities of the eighteenth century artist: the assertion of art's inherent value, that art justifies itself simply by being what it is, and that it needs no external standard or criterion to measure its purpose. Seigneur attacks those for whom he is compelled to write, even "the best of them" who refuse to understand that the products of his objective labours are works of art, not a part of the real world or partaking of the actual (137).

Seigneur's aims, then, as those of Hawkes, do not lie in "creating life." The measure of his success as an artist becomes a function of his ability to transform women into art. Yet Seigneur's goal is not simply to "create women" as works of art, but to create women who measure up to the standards of perfection he himself has set (30).<sup>13</sup> In life, Seigneur's goals would be impossible to achieve; in art, perfection is conceivable and perhaps attainable, for the artist himself determines the nature of the perfection for which he seeks. Rather like Papa, Seigneur creates his own aesthetic values which become "absolutes" for him as an artist.

Seigneur's ideals are embodied in the finished product of his teachings-- the figure of the Noblesse, Seigneur's term for the woman perfected through his art and ready to enter the world as sexual companions and wives of members of the gentry. As far as we can see, though, the process of transforming promising women into art is the very reverse of a revivification. As the women move closer to the perfected ideal, they lose their humanity. Life and art must be seen ultimately as antithetical forces, as they are for Papa of Travesty, but not for Cyril of The Blood Oranges. While Seigneur is the creator of beauty as he fashions the aesthetic ideal, he is, in some sense, the destroyer of life. He acknowledges his "failure" to Virginie: "There is no living statue more beautiful than Noblesse. And what can we say of the statue that disdains the very sculptor who brings it to life" (24). In spite of this metaphor, Seigneur is certainly no Pygmalion. While like the original Pygmalion, Seigneur may well be a hater of woman, it is obvious that he never permits himself to form any emotional attachment to any of his creations. Judging by the cold and haughty behaviour of Seigneur's latest creation on her departure from Dédale, it seems as though he has robbed life, not given it. Seigneur's art may

enhance and exalt the erotic self, but it does so at the expense of more humanistic qualities, at the expense of human life itself. Although Seigneur takes credit for creating twenty-five women with only the one most recent failure among them, it is evident that there exist many more such "failures." As Seigneur appeals to the women who finally rise up against him and threaten his life, it is apparent that he is speaking to some of his former pupils: "'Mesdames . . . I have helped you to discover for yourselves and within yourselves the art of pleasing, the rhetoric of pleasing, and its music'" (212).

Like Papa of Travesty, Seigneur resembles Hawkes in many respects. But Papa and Seigneur obsessively pursue their art while denying the potential for life. Both artist-figures embody an artistic extreme; they are parodies of the objective, dispassionate artist which, for Hawkes, exists as an aesthetic ideal. In this sense, they recall those rational men of Hawthorne who devote themselves to coldly analytical and scientific studies of human life. Both Papa and Seigneur strive toward the ineffable in art, sacrificing human feelings and, finally, themselves. Seigneur's obsessive, unsparing commitment to his art is ultimately as suicidal as Papa's attempt to attain artistic purity and relief by crashing his car into a stone wall. Like Papa, Seigneur knows that the pursuit of his art will inevitably result in his death: "'Now I must die for my art, as I have long known I must'" (206). The singleminded pursuit of an art purified of all which is living leads to death; and the termination of life becomes part of the ideal in the sense that it represents the final purification of art--the only purification possible under the conditions set up by the artist. It is significant that the car crash in Travesty will result in a fire, while Seigneur dies engulfed by flames; their deaths are marked by the action of

a purifying agent which will erase all signs of life. Similarly, in Virginie, Seigneur's chateau is being destroyed by flames at the same time he is dying, erasing all signs of life there. Papa and Seigneur as artists evince a strong aversion to life, renouncing it in favour of an art which "transcends" life by denying it, by being so distanced from it that its true perfectability can only come about when life is denied utterly in death.

Seigneur's teaching and his art depend heavily on Virginie herself, who sometimes plays a role as instructress in many of the feats the women have to perform. Even if Virginie has no role to perform, Seigneur insists on her presence. In one instance, she is installed in a vertical black box, hidden from view but a witness to a bestial encounter between Colère and a pig. The reasons for Virginie's presence are concealed: "Seigneur assured me that my little confessional was intended to contribute to his own satisfaction and not to mine, and in ways which he preferred not to explain" (106). But Virginie herself appears quite satisfied with the vantage afforded her: "I missed nothing. My hands were spiders on my knees. I was veiled. Unseen child that I was, I saw it all" (112).

Like Seigneur, Virginie is unable to escape her fate. She seems at times a ghostly presence, strangely intangible in both her lives, as if will-lessly suspended between life and death or two orders of reality. Constantly dressed in grey, hiding herself in dark corners, Virginie's existence is a paradox. She is the "'sacred irregularity'" who "'has no right to life'" (170). She is the daughter about whom none would speak (163), is "never the person embraced and kissed" (182). Virginie herself does not know who she is and consequently defines herself largely in relation to what she knows she is not or cannot be. She feels herself to be



"more real" when "closer to {an} extinction" (32) brought upon by the incestuous relation with Bocage; realization of her sexual being gives her a strong sense of reality. When for others "she does not exist," Virginie "is the vessel brimming with all the world" (49). Self-consciousness for her is the measure of consciousness: "I saw them all in the mirror that was myself" (49).. She has the visionary capacity, like many of ~~Harkes'~~ artists, to imagine the world which exists out of her presence. Although excluded from witnessing the degradation of Seigneur at the hands of the seven women, Virginie hears and sees "in her mind" the torments of the women and the agonies of Seigneur (209).

Virginie is, in fact, much more than Seigneur's sister, daughter, ward and necessary exemplar for Seigneur's pupils; she is, in a sense, his muse and the expression of innocence which he needs to be complete as an artist.<sup>14</sup> It is this quality of innocence that Virginie possesses which Seigneur would have in the "perfect" woman: "'It is the child herself that the woman must regain. There can be no womanhood without the inner child'" (183). Virginie must remain the "perpetual child," because her innocence is essential to Seigneur and his art. Seigneur stifles any possible growth by denying her "right to life" in several ways. Virginie knows, in both lives, that the erotic regimens practised by the five women are not for her, that she is to be excluded from contact with her erotic self. Similarly, Seigneur stifles her sense of identity by keeping her ignorant of her origins. It is not until Seigneur prepares to meet his own death that he reveals her parentage to her. Tied to the burning stake, a sacrificial victim of his art, Seigneur advises Virginie to lose her innocence, but she chooses instead to join Seigneur in death. In this way, the stasis which has characterized Virginie's life to date is preserved,

and in her second life, Virginia is once again a captive of her own innocence, her sexual inexperience. In this sense, there is no progression in self-knowledge between Virginia's first and second lives.

Identity, for most of Hawkes' characters, can never become clarified without an understanding of its basis in the sexual being; sexuality and personal history--one's past--are inextricably bound up with the question of identity. In both lives, Virginia is urged to suppress her sexual self while silently witnessing erotic scenes. Finally, this suppression erupts into an incestuous encounter with Bocage in her second life. It is uncertain whether by directly confronting her sexual self in this way Virginia is able to free herself from the purgatory of non-identity; this is the novel's final, and apparently irresolvable, ambiguity. Through her recollection of her two lives, Virginia conveys to us who she is, however; as an artist who reconstructs from her memory, Virginia achieves a "reality" of sorts, even while the flames ignited by Maman threaten her being and sense of identity: "All is aflame. I do not exist. I am only Virginia, and melting" (10).

Virginia's "second" death coincides with the death of her innocence, a death which may be significant in terms of Hawkes' artistic quest to rid himself of his own innocence. In an interview Hawkes remarks that "I've been trying to destroy my own innate innocence for a long time now, over thirty years, but it still permeates my work."<sup>15</sup> The novel itself, then, particularly in its climactic resolution, may be viewed as Hawkes' own attempt to exorcise through art an obsessive concern with innocence. Virginia is not only "a celebration of the decay of love"<sup>16</sup> but equally a celebration of the decay of innocence.

One of the earlier, less arduous exercises in Virginia for Seigneur's

pupils is to look into Virginie's eyes and to note, as in the eyes of a dog; the "seven precious expressions" which denote innocence (54). In her first life, Virginie dies by throwing herself on the flaming pyre in obedience to Seigneur's last words: "'Virginie! Destroy your innocence!'" (212). In her second life, too, Virginie's life ends in flames, but these flames represent more clearly the flames of passion:

The fire that burns without is but the fire within? Passion? Passion? Is that the word I say at last? At last admit that I feel it in captive arm? in spread thigh small and bare? but most of all in my place of longing that has all but consumed itself and so become the very sensation of which it is the source and with which I ache, and which Bocage has found, though now it does not exist yet floods me? (114).

Virginie has repressed her sexual longing for Bocage as she has done with Seigneur. United in death with Seigneur, Virginie is united in a sexual embrace with Bocage, conscious but uncaring of the death which awaits her there as well. The two parallel stories of Virginie take us to the point where innocence or the need for innocence is lost, leaving us with the sense that the creative self is somehow inextricably connected with the innocent self, and to move beyond innocence is to move toward death.

Virginie acknowledges the necessity of innocence in the creative act. Several of Hawkes' characters depend on innocence or are concerned with innocence as part of a process to realize their artistic selves. Skipper of Second Skin and, to some extent, Cyril of The Blood Oranges resist any movement beyond innocence, choosing to remain perpetual inhabitants of a world essentially cut off from human pain and suffering or transcending them through the powers of the visionary artist. But, paradoxically, creativity in Virginie is also contingent upon this loss of innocence. Virginie becomes the personification of the creative self at the moment of visionary awareness; memory of her two lives is a consequence of the

visionary state she achieves through her sexual encounter with Bocage. Virginie is perpetually locked in an "ideal" life-death agony. She is the artist voicing her bewilderment; she is both innocent and capable of prophetic truth, the perpetually guiltless and the eternally damned. As the uncomprehending receptor of experience, she represents the artist who lacks the power to order experience meaningfully, but must, as an artist, try to achieve through language a kind of personal version of chaos. Virginie symbolizes the paradoxical nature of an art which seeks to unite both ends of the cycle of human experience encompassing order and disorder, life and death.

The question of whether Virginie is able to free herself from the sterile cycle of recurring lives is never conclusively resolved in spite of an ending which suggests the termination of the cycle:

Brightness falls from the air. The day dies. I am committed to the earth at last. I am become at last what I always was for my Maman.

Remember the ghosts of dead flowers (215).

Working against the finality implied here are verbs in the present tense, suggesting a continuing consciousness. Although Virginie appears to have come to terms with her true identity through sexuality she, like most of The Passion Artist, does not live to test this identity fully; and it is suggested in Virginie that even this realization may not be sufficient to end the cycle of ceaseless repetition. For Hawkes, the process of exercising his innate innocence may have proved to be an impossible one.

The artist-figure in Hawkes' two most recent novels, in contrast to the visionary artist in the preceding four novels, is more controlled than controlling. Even Seigneur, whose art extends further than the self-explorations of Vost and Virginie, is finally subject to the forces of

anti-art, doomed and damned by an order which unleashes its passion under the guise of morality. The achievement of the erotic artist is thrown into doubt the endings of The Passion Artist and Virginie. Like the underdeveloped artist-figures of Hawkes' first two novels, the erotic artist is essentially powerless in a world which refuses to recognize his claims. Papa exercises his vision through control; and Cyril, who combines many of the functions of erotic and visionary artist, exercises a similar, though far less total, form of control.

If Papa demonstrates the limits of the visionary artist in his obsessive pursuit of clarity and purity, then the artist-figures in The Passion Artist and Virginie demonstrate in different ways the limitations of the erotic artist, his inability to sustain a vision which fully encompasses his erotic potential. The future that Hawkes' fiction will take cannot be determined on the basis of prior works, for Hawkes is committed to overturning reader expectations, and each succeeding novel ably accomplishes this intent. However, it is reasonable to assume that his fiction will continue to challenge in different and unique ways the very aesthetic which it is concerned with expressing, and that the artist-figure will continue to occupy a central place in that aesthetic.

## END NOTES - CHAPTER IX

<sup>1</sup> Albert Guerard, rev. of The Passion Artist, New Republic, 10 Nov. 1979, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> John Hawkes, The Passion Artist (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 72. See also pp. 74, 84. All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>3</sup> John Hawkes, Virginie, her two lives (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), "Preface." All further references to this work appear in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas LeClair, "The Novelists: John Hawkes," New Republic, 10 Nov. 1979, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Emmett observes that Freud's theories of the unconscious "show us how latent content is distorted into manifest content," and, in providing "the 'nomenclature' we need to discuss Vost's inner darkness, they help us explore the latent content of The Passion Artist." Paul Emmett, "The Cannibal to The Passion Artist: Hawkes's Journey Toward the Depths of the Unconscious," Chicago Review, 32, No. 1 (1980), 145. Pierre Gault, however, cites "obvious examples of Freudian parody" which may exhibit "the oxymoric order attempting to deny the power of psychoanalysis." He sees Freudianism in the novel as possible evidence of "intertextuality." Pierre Gault, "The Oxymoron as Central Trope in The Passion Artist," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 (1983), 135.

<sup>6</sup> In "A Hunger Artist," the artist is a figure manipulated by public demand, a public which is fascinated by the artist's "performance" yet, ultimately, unconcerned by his personal plight. Nonetheless, the artist brings to his endeavours a total commitment to a personal vision. Some of the hunger artist's qualities can be seen in Vost who comes to typify Kafka's artist-hero in his role as scapegoat and sacrificial victim, and in his seeming need for humiliation, even degradation.

<sup>7</sup> In classical Freudian terms, the act of climbing symbolizes sexual intercourse. See James Strachey and Angela Richards, ed., Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Vol. I of The Pelican Freud Library (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 191. Young Konrad also climbs on a chair to examine the genitalia of his favourite horse which he has named after the woman with whom he is infatuated (p. 139).

<sup>8</sup> This is consistent with Jung's belief that the conscious self is taken to be masculine, while the unconscious is associated with the female.

<sup>9</sup> In Jungian terms this can be expressed as an embracing of two important symbolic archetypes: the Great Mother and the anima.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Iravesty, p. 21 for the recurrence of a similar image.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of eighteenth versus twentieth century views of art and Seigneur as a representative of the omniscient author, see Heide Ziegler, "Postmodernism As Autobiographical Commentary: The Blood Oranges and Virginie," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 (1983), 210-12. John Kuehl also remarks on the differing aesthetics of Seigneur and Bocage: Seigneur exemplifies "the craft of detachment" while Bocage represents "the craft of involvement"; Virginie, then, is the inheritor of "contrary aesthetics," and ultimately symbolizes the "synthesis" of body and soul, involvement and detachment. John Kuehl, "Virginie as Metaphor," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 (1983), 150-2.

<sup>12</sup> Alan Friedman, "Pleasure and Pain," The New York Times Book Review, 27 June 1983, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> In general, this is true of all Hawkes' visionary artists, and their designated authority is suggested by the titles they go by: "Skipper" or "Papa Cue Ball" of Second Skin; Papa (of Travesty) and Seigneur ("lord"). Cyril of The Blood Oranges is the only one whose name is given to us, but Cyril means "lord."

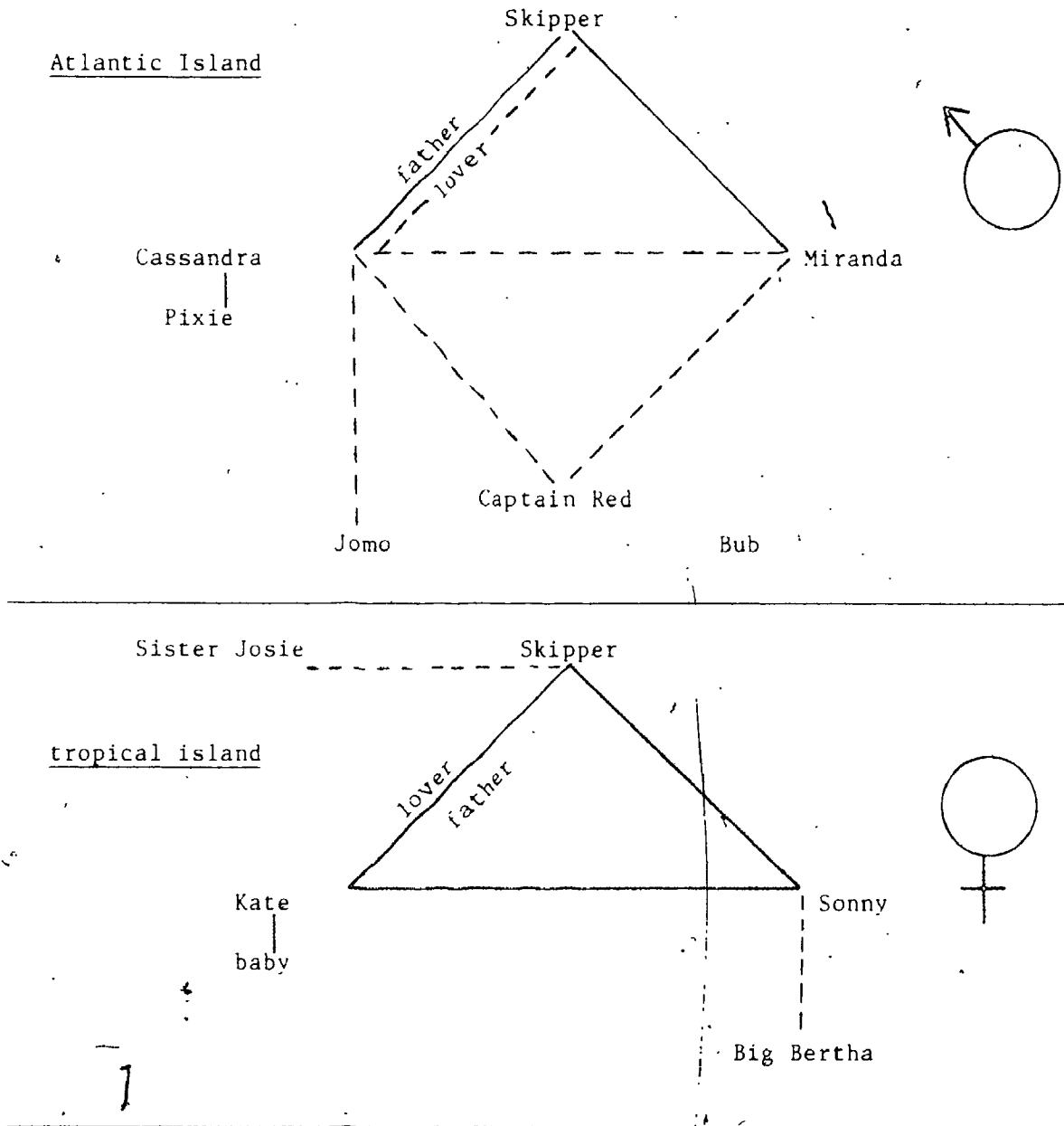
<sup>14</sup> In this sense, she may be compared to Honorine of Travesty. Seigneur and Papa claim Virginie and Honorine, respectively, as their muses to whom each creator dedicates his "purified" art and who makes this art possible. Virginity or chastity and honour were two qualities required of the idealized lady of medieval romance. For the operation of a "purified" aesthetic, both Seigneur and Papa need to claim a spiritualized love in place of sexual longing. Thus, it becomes clear why Virginie has no "right to life" and why Papa transforms Honorine into the "face not seen, [the] voice not heard" (Travesty, p. 127).

<sup>15</sup> LeClair, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Friedman, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Heide Ziegler offers an interesting and convincing interpretation of Virginie's paradoxical innocence and its relation to the novel itself. According to Ziegler, Virginie is a postmodernist novel "about the impossibility of storytelling" in which "this impossibility results from, and in turn engenders, the impossibility of true womanhood." Virginie incorporates "the paradox of female plus narrative innocence," becoming "the author's own text." She is, then, the innocent transmitter of experience through language without becoming the receptor of experience: "The beauty of language, Hawkes seems to imply, cannot be defiled, since language does not partake in experience. Like language, Virginie, by remaining aloof, can come to express everything. . . . [She is] the page before it is read, the text before interpretation." Virginie becomes an expression of the self-sufficiency of the postmodernist text where the text's "ontological status . . . can only be understood as the condition for its self-dissolution," Ziegler, 210.

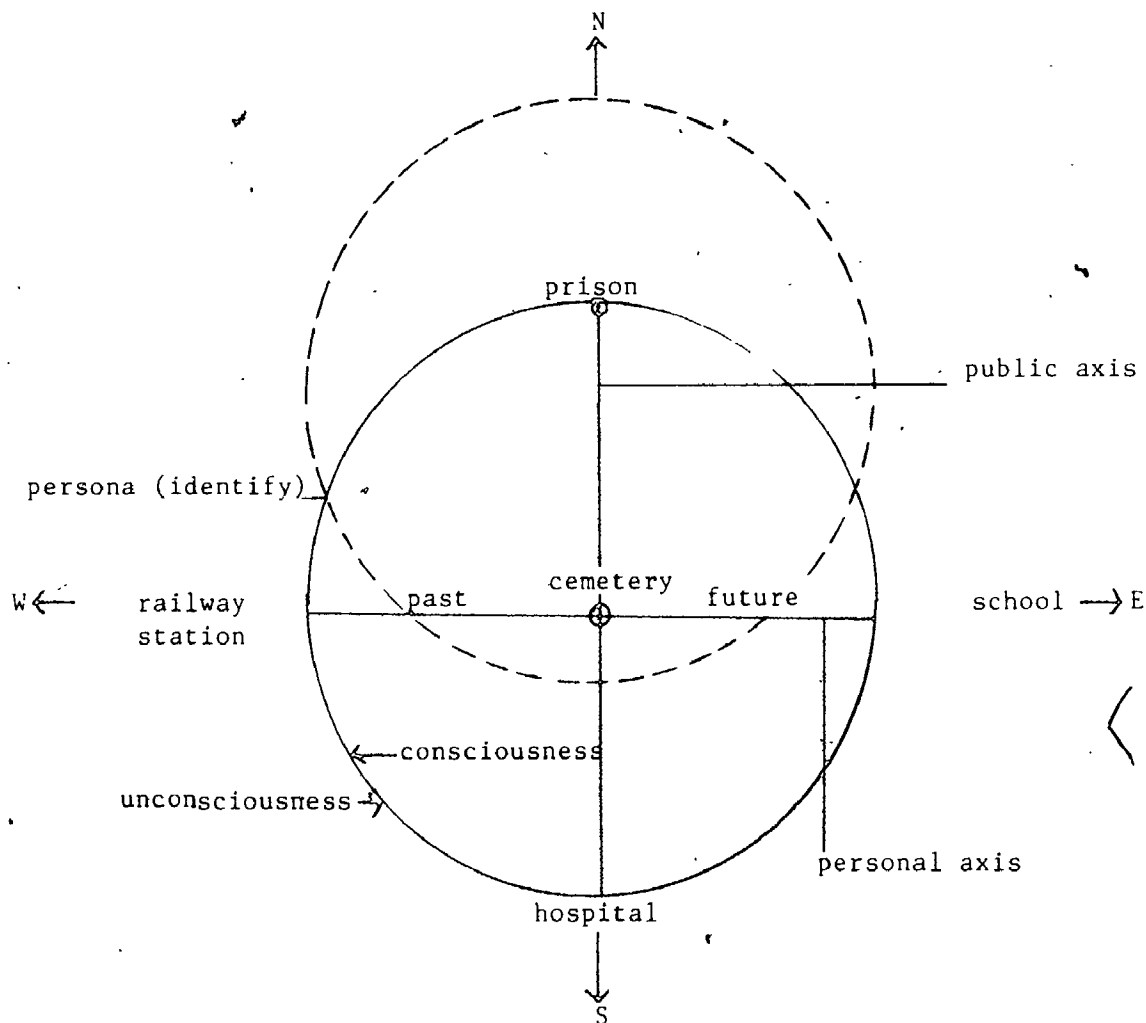
APPENDIX A: Character Groupings in Second Skin



What Skipper specifically addresses in his narrative is traced with a solid line; ambiguous relationships or those not fully addressed in the narrative are traced with a broken line. (They may denote repression or simply a relative lack of importance.) Obviously, on the Atlantic island much of the meaningful action takes place beneath the confident surface of Skipper's narrative and, interestingly, Cassandra is at the center of virtually every relationship. On the tropical island, Skipper has moved from the one left out to the one occupying the focal point of the diagram.



The Persona of Konrad Vost



The four major landmarks of the city define the boundaries of Vost's experience; the horizontal axis represents his personal, achronological axis, while the vertical axis represents the public chronological one. The region outside the circle stands for the unconscious; thus the dotted circle symbolizes (within the limited resources of the graphic representation) the identity of the passion artist with the prison (replacing the cemetery) as the focal point.

APPENDIX B

Reviewers (and critics) have been responding to the unique and disturbing fictional worlds of John Hawkes for over thirty-five years. What follows is a summary of the major criticism on Hawkes' fiction: books and monographs; articles of general criticism; and, articles pertaining to single works.

I. BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS

The first full-length study of Hawkes' work to be published was Frederick Busch's Hawkes: A Guide to His Fictions (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1973). Busch reviews Hawkes' entire literary output to date. To some extent, Busch is conscious of a mission to introduce readers to an important writer who is seldom read because of his obscurity and inaccessibility. Busch attempts to make Hawkes more accessible by clarifying and disentangling plots, and in this he is a dependable but not infallible guide. Presumably, he feels that Hawkes will never be read extensively until he is understood at least on a superficial level; but, in general, Busch lacks a consistent methodology or organizing principle.

Essentially, Busch's problems are those of a forerunner. His occasional insights tend to frustrate rather than fructify; though he reproduces an abundance of the text, intensive analysis is lacking. The only consistent focus involves an extended discussion of animal imagery, and he traces an evolution in this pattern of imagery from early works where people are synonymous with animals to works in which people are seen animalistically to a more ambiguous yet sparing use of animal imagery in later works.

Busch's analyses often focus on the mythic function in Hawkes; in his discussion of The Beetle Leg, for example, he shows Hawkes dealing ironically with three central myths: fertility rituals, Christian belief and the myth of the American cowboy. He also briefly attempts to place Hawkes in the tradition of writing which stresses the primacy of language in dealing with contemporary reality, and he suggests future directions that Hawkes' criticism should take.

Donald J. Greiner's Comic Terror: The Novels of John Hawkes (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1973; revised 1978) is a study with a clear focus and a carefully applied critical apparatus. Insisting that Hawkes' novels have not been appreciated for their comedy, Greiner reviews traditional theories of humour--those of Meredith, Kronenberger and Bergson--and finds they are "inadequate in an age of fragmentation, chaos and standardization. Hawkes' comedy is closest to the theory propounded by Meredith, but emphasizes the "malignity," as opposed to the "humane" aspect of the comic spirit in order to point to the "pain and absurdity of reality." Unlike the traditional theory of Bergson, modern comics such as Hawkes reject the division between comedy and emotion; Hawkes demands that we laugh at and sympathize with most of his characters.

Greiner then considers Hawkes' novels. The Cannibal is examined as a novel which investigates historical process. Greiner relates the comedy in this work to the first-person omniscience of the narrator, Zizendorf; his use of anachronism in trying to create the Germany of 1914 which he never experienced provides an example of his comic limitations. Calling The Beetle Leg "a primary example of anti-realism," Greiner addresses this work in terms of parody and the creation of nightmare. Although parody also occurs in The Lime Twig, it is secondary to the creation of nightmare; Hawkes draws his readers into a fantasy world in which our subterranean desires and impulses are evoked. Greiner stresses the role of victim in the novel and the involvement of Michael Banks with time. In his analysis of Second Skin, Greiner addresses Skipper's survivability as an affirmation of life. The reader rejects Skipper for his imperfections but celebrates "his unlikely survival," his heroic endurance in an absurd, violent world. In The Lime Twig, Second Skin and The Blood Oranges, Greiner emphasizes the tendency of the protagonists to make the inappropriate response, and the comedy in these works arises partly as a result of this tendency. In spite of surface similarities between Second Skin and The Blood Oranges, Greiner sees their respective narrators as contrasting figures. Hawkes distances himself from Cyril, essentially a ridiculous character. Greiner seems to limit himself, however, by his determination to view Cyril as merely absurd, and his other warnings about this novel also betoken a reading which tends to mitigate complexity: we are told, for example, not to take the many allusions in The Blood Oranges "too seriously," for they are used to create irony and support the "other-world setting." Greiner does not adequately explain the difference between Second Skin and The Blood Oranges in terms of Hawkes' use of allusion in each work.

In the revised version of Comic Terror, Greiner analyzes Death, Sleep & the Traveler and Travesty. He sees characters and events in the former work as projections of the narrator's own self, which he characterizes as schizophrenic or insane. This work represents a return to the early mode of terror largely unmitigated by comedy. Similarly, Greiner views Travesty as the enactment of the narrator's private fantasy, though he acknowledges the comic element in this work. All three narrators of the triad are deficient to Greiner, for they no longer acknowledge the outer world and are intent on proving the equation between sexuality and death.

John Kuehl's John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1975) considers Hawkes' work up to The Blood Oranges; there is a brief Postscript dealing with Death, Sleep & the Traveler in light of techniques and themes previously discussed in Kuehl's book. Kuehl proposes to explore connections between form and content in Hawkes, and he is concerned throughout with Hawkes' evolution as a novelist. He divides Hawkes' fiction into pre-1960 and post-1960 categories, noting various differences between works which chronologically fall into these two groups. Among the changes which serve to demarcate these periods, Kuehl refers to decentralized form and characterization becoming more dramatic in intent and portrayal, static landscapes tending to be replaced by dynamic ones, flat characters by round and circular by linear structure. Where Kuehl finds earlier works "death-oriented," works from The Lime Twig on show a tension between Eros and Thanatos; finally, these forces "share ultimate victory."

Kuehl's organization makes retrieval of information pertaining to specific works difficult, for there is no index, while the chapters themselves are replete with cross-references and parallels among the works. Hawkes' complexity as a novelist emerges, but the sense of the individual work is consequently lacking.

The chapters deal respectively with the formal devices of landscape and setting, myths and rituals, structure, character, and narrative technique; a final chapter recapitulates these devices in an extended analysis of The Blood Oranges. Kuehl considers Hawkes' landscapes as partaking of dream and actuality. Symbolic settings in his fiction illuminate the unstable nature of the worlds in which Hawkes' characters live. Myths may signify landscape or setting, convey a particular tone or delineate character. Kuehl discusses the ways Hawkes parodies the conventional novel and considers the way his novels embody modern myths, such as the myth of the American west and the crime thriller. Characters are often assigned mythic counterparts, and Kuehl discusses the Osiris and Fisher King myths in The Beetle Leg, the Circe and Icarus legend in The Lime Twig and the myth of the Trojan War and allusions to The Tempest in Second Skin. Religious rituals are invariably treated negatively in Hawkes' fiction and often represent perversions of their traditional form and meaning. After 1960, Hawkes' use of myth grows more ambivalent, and only in The Blood Oranges do unambiguous life-affirming myths take precedence.

Kuehl next discusses poetic and non-poetic techniques which Hawkes uses to establish "a mythopoeic vision of reality." Examples include use of colours, metamorphoses, recurrent actions, circular endings and spatial juxtapositions. In contrast to many critics, Kuehl finds the post-1960 novels deterministic, for family-environmental factors continue to act on the characters in the later fiction. He notes two trends in Hawkes related to narrative focus: an evolution towards more complex characterization and increased authorial involvement in the later fiction. He finds Hawkes "oversympathetic" to Hencher of The Lime Twig and Skipper of Second Skin. Though he considers both the "positive" and "negative" interpretations of Second Skin, he gives greater attention to the latter, analyzing Skipper as an impotent, unperceptive character who is afraid of women and an indirect agent of murder.

Kuehl argues that The Blood Oranges is a simplified version of Second Skin which attempts to "clarify" its forerunner. Hawkes accomplishes this clarification by a schematization of the eros and thanatos forces; image patterns, setting and mythic characterization serve to dramatize the opposition between Cyril-Eros and Hugh-Thanatos. Kuehl stresses how external nature reflects character and psychic states, recalling the similar relationship between external nature and human nature expressed in The Beetle Leg. He draws analogues between The Blood Oranges and two works which have influenced it: Twelfth Night and Ford's The Good Soldier.

Eliot Berry's A Poetry of Force and Darkness: the Fiction of John Hawkes (San Bernardino, Calif.: The Borgo Press, 1979) is a brief, but illuminating survey of Hawkes' fiction from his earliest published fiction to Travesty. In spite of the study's limited length, Berry proposes complex and challenging arguments, stressing the importance of symbol and metaphor

in the works he considers. He is also concerned with ~~sexuality~~, an area in which the longer studies seem surprisingly deficient, and how it relates to the imagination. Of the 64 pages which comprise his study, however, only about 20 pages are devoted to novels after The Lime Twig. This imbalance may be partly explained by the fact that Hawkes' later works are more traditionally "novelistic," and Berry is primarily concerned with the romance elements in Hawkes' fiction.

After briefly considering resemblances between Hawkes and other American writers, Berry places Hawkes within the American Romance tradition; he applies several of the characteristics of romance form as delineated by Richard Chase, including the metaphoric utilization of character and the interweaving of image patterns to create a multi-layered text.

Although Berry notes the novelistic "superstructure" of The Cannibal, he refers extensively to Hawkes' dependence on romance elements in this work: characters have no mobility and are often seen as grotesques; he points to the dense, labyrinthine nature of language in The Cannibal, as Hawkes constantly raises the image to the level of symbol and metaphor. Berry sees various conflicts lying at the centre of The Beetle Leg which are epitomized by the opposing viewpoints of its central figures, the Sheriff and Cap Leech. The implications of the shift to first-person narrative voice in Second Skin denote a new concern with the responsibility of the individual for the self. Skipper's problem is a "narrative problem . . . of distance and perception." He views The Lime Twig as a synthesis of romance and novel forms and analyzes key images in the work, including the horse, eyeglasses, lime and pearls. The characters' problems relate again to perception: Michael Banks loses his in pursuit of his present gratification, while Hencher is a prisoner of his past. Hugh of The Blood Oranges is depicted as a self-destructive romantic; while Cyril is the true artist, his world (and, indeed, the world of Hawkes' three interrelated novels composing his triad) defeats "the romantic pattern to which [it] would speak" by fixing to immobile meanings images that would have taken their metaphoric power from an unobtrusive association with other images and figures." Berry notes that after Second Skin, Hawkes becomes more explicit in his designation of image and metaphor. Allert of Death, Sleep & the Traveler is engaged in a journey which he cannot understand for he has difficulty distinguishing among three levels of unconsciousness. Berry sees Papa of Travesty as less of an artist-figure than Hawkes' preceding narrators, for he is less interested in "discovering the harmony of paradox" than he is in experiencing "the limits of existence, the existential point of intersection of Man and Artist." In the triad, Berry believes that Hawkes runs the risk of turning his fiction into "an intellectual exercise."

The most recent book-length study of Hawkes was published as part of Twayne's United States Authors Series: Patrick O'Donnell's John Hawkes (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982) is intended to introduce Hawkes "to an interested academic and general public." O'Donnell makes frequent allusions to prior criticism in his survey of Hawkes' work (excluding the short stories and plays). He begins by relating biographical information, focusing on the way incidents in Hawkes' past are transformed into the fictional landscape. O'Donnell stresses the oppositions within Hawkes' fiction and focuses on two key recurrent images--the scapegoat and the foetus--which "symbolize

the important thematic and narrative elements of his fiction."

In his discussion of The Cannibal, O'Donnell is less concerned with the historical dimensions of the novel, while directing us toward the internal human struggle for survival which underlies the failure of ideology and historical forces. Ernst in the 1914 section and Jutta's son in the 1945 section become sacrificial victims of the need to progress through chaos to a new social order. The novel itself may be characterized as "the psychic history of the contemporary imagination." In the chapter on The Beetle Leg and The Lime Twig, O'Donnell focuses on Hawkes' need to parody in order to free the artist to explore his own limits and the artistic act itself. The former novel is a meditation on "antediluvian" time where the concept of human time is denied. Cap Beech, the waste land authority and artist-figure, is seen as anticreative, while Hencher of The Lime Twig is another artist-figure whose prologue provides "the template from which the design" of the novel arises. Conceiving of The Lime Twig as a "dream-vision," O'Donnell notes that the realization of the Banks' destructive dream suggests the way in which our fantasies and inner desires condemn us.

Both Second Skin and The Passion Artist incorporate the plight of the artistic imagination, but Vost is Skipper's opposite, and the novels are "each other's obverse." Skipper is seen as a sometimes absurd transformer of reality, and this process can be determined by examining key image patterns in which wind, birds and skin become beneficent forces through the act of Skipper's imagination. Skipper knows what he is but continually exaggerates what he knows about himself; his triumph is rendered ambiguous. The reader responds to Vost of The Passion Artist both with horror and admiration, says O'Donnell, for more than any other Hawkes protagonist, Vost goes further and deeper as he submits himself to the terrors of the imagination. Vost is another scapegoat--a victim of the war between men and women.

The narrators of the triad are united by their need, realized through linguistic structuring of their narratives, to actualize their aesthetic visions, however absurd, parodic or extreme they become. Cyril lies closest to Skipper, while Allert and Papa are "crippled" by their artistic imperatives. The narcissistic narrator of The Blood Oranges enforces his vision, however, on those who are at least partly unwilling to accept his art; as a result, we are led to question Cyril's authoritarian stance as a god-like figure and narrator. Allert of Death, Sleep & the Traveler has an even more limited sensibility, which makes him incapable of breaking through the repressions of his past and present lives. Though Papa of Travesty goes farther than any of the triad's narrators in creating "a coherent vision that replaces the disparities of life," he becomes trapped by his imposed design and through his conscious choice for annihilation.

O'Donnell discusses Hawkes in relation to several of his contemporaries. In directing us to confront violence, Hawkes shares the concerns of the black humorists who determine that detachment and laughter are the only legitimate responses to contemporary life. Like Nabokov, Hawkes explores "aesthetic power and its discontents," while his double-edged concern with language allies him with Barth and Gass. Finally, O'Donnell discusses Hawkes' position among experimental writers who expose us to life's enormities and ugliness while bringing to their fiction a "saving comic spirit."

## II. GENERAL CRITICISM

This category of Hawkes' criticism encompasses articles and sections of larger studies which deal with more than one work or attempt to explore one or more fundamental issues which the critic considers to play a major role in Hawkes' fiction.

Several studies examine Hawkes in light of prior or contemporary traditions. In his book New American Gothic (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), Irving Malin discusses Hawkes' fiction as it is seen to incorporate several characteristics of the Gothic mode, including the predominance of narcissism and disfiguring love within the family structure. New American Gothic depends on the image, not the idea, and also on the dream landscape. Malin discusses the non-human elements in The Cannibal and The Lime Twig. In a later section of his study, Malin focuses on a particular passage from The Cannibal, noting such features as the ambiguous symbol, the attention given to the "insignificant," the obscurity, and the inhumanity present in the passage.

Marcus Klein sees Hawkes as exploring, in part, modernist traditions. In "John Hawkes' Experimental Compositions" (in Surfiction; Fiction Now . . . and Tomorrow [Chicago: Swallow Press, 1981], pp. 203-14), Marcus Klein discusses works up to Second Skin. He states that Hawkes' novels establish a kind of equipoise between a "sense of composed stasis" and the "irrational marauders . . . [who are] vivid and instinctual." He elaborates on some of the apparent paradoxes in Hawkes' fictional aesthetic, concentrating on the element of composition and its relation to death in the novels. Klein addresses the ambiguity of the ending of Second Skin and questions Banks' "redemption" in The Lime Twig.

In an essay developed from his Keynote Address to the Hawkes Symposium in 1976 ("John Hawkes: A Longish View," in A John Hawkes Symposium: Design and Debris [New York: New Directions, 1977], pp. 1-13), Albert J. Guerard discusses several aspects of Hawkes' writing, canvassing his entire career (up to and including Travesty), focusing initially on his movement toward "a more conscious and more suave psychology and art." He discusses some of the sexual displacements in The Cannibal while describing the novelist at this early point in his career as "by far the most eccentric stylist of his time." Travesty, however, is "a masterpiece of wholly conscious and controlled, truly classical art." Guerard concludes by speaking of Hawkes' "Illumination of Other Writers," including Conrad, Dickens, Dostoevsky and Faulkner.

In "Notes on the Rhetoric of Anti-Realist Fiction" (TriQuarterly, No. 30 [1974], pp. 3-50), Albert Guerard places Hawkes among a group of writers (including Nathanael West, Anais Nin and Vladimir Nabokov) who are "determined to re-imagine the world or create a new one." Linking Hawkes with the anti-realists is his early rejection of plot, theme, character and setting, as well as the use of parody in his fiction. Acknowledging that "the powerful anti-realist . . . has his own deep connections with reality," Guerard notes striking similarities as well as differences in this regard between Hawkes' The Cannibal and Jerzy Kosinski's The Painted Bird, two works where "the dark materials of sexual or other dread . . . are above all fictional rhetoric rather than 'psychology' for its own sake."

Alan Trachtenberg and Robert Scholes view Hawkes as a contemporary fabulist. In "Barth and Hawkes: Two Fabulists" (Critique, 6, No. 3 [1963], 4-18), Alan Trachtenberg reviews Hawkes' early works from The Cannibal to The Lime Twig, emphasizing the visions of horror and degradation and the dependence of characters on the sterilities of history. Trachtenberg designates both Hawkes and Barth as "fabulists," though he spends far more time discussing Barth's fiction. Hawkes is engaged in writing "fables of desire reaching out for satisfaction in a battered world."

In The Fabulators (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967; revised edition, Fabulation and Metafiction), Robert Scholes discusses Hawkes' theoretical position and his use of violence. He points to Hawkes' paradoxical position within the context of contemporary fiction: Hawkes is the most "consciously traditional" of modern fabulators yet also the most experimental and avant-garde, according to Scholes. He believes that Hawkes represents the picaresque strand of modern fabulation "with its traditional cruelty and violence modified by its passage from a proto-realistic form to a surrealist one." Like other fabulators included in Scholes' study, Hawkes takes delight in formal and verbal dexterity. Scholes examines Hawkes' aesthetic of fiction, focusing specifically on a brief but crucial passage in a 1965 interview. He then addresses the concept of violence in Hawkes, analyzing the passage which describes Margaret's beating in The Lime Twig; he finds a deliberate counterpoise to exist there between cruelty and tenderness and goes on to show "the way Hawkes qualifies and controls the cruel vision of his later works."

Two major studies of Hawkes' fiction focus closely on its stylistic features: In "The Prose Style of John Hawkes" (Critique, 6, No. 2 [1963], 19-29), Albert Guerard concentrates on "the language that informs and at last redeems the enormities" of Hawkes' fictional world. Citing passages from The Cannibal through to The Lime Twig, Guerard analyzes the changes which Hawkes' prose have undergone. In general, he finds Hawkes' later prose less excessive and self-indulgent; there is greater control and clarity exhibited there as Hawkes is able to manipulate the reader's anxieties and sympathies to a greater depth and intensity. He examines the changes under three headings: "The relative abandonment of 'literary' display"; "The appeals of irony and control"; and "Voice." The Cannibal and The Beetle Leg contain strong impulses toward "verbal play and gnomic utterance," but in The Lime Twig, language is subordinated to story, theme and vision. Guerard examines in detail the modulations in tone and voice evident in selected passages from The Lime Twig. In general, Guerard finds that both humour and horror are intensified in that work. In summary, he notes that Hawkes' achievement lies in "his power to render so much uncensored reverie, so much significant and violent fantasy, so much of the pullulant underground life, with so much stylistic control."

Earl Rovit's interesting and enlightening early study of Hawkes ("The Fiction of John Hawkes: An Introductory View," Modern Fiction Studies, 10 [1964], 150-62), focuses on his technique and the effect of his particular style on the reader. Rovit characterizes the reader's reaction to Hawkes as a dual responsiveness. Calling Hawkes' fictions "controlled assaults against the reader," Rovit addresses the nature of the reader's "violation" at the same time that he experiences "aliberating release"; this reaction



stems from his inability to hold in check his emotional response to the material presented. Rovit considers Hawkes' use of vertical plots to intensify the reader's involvement, to stretch his sense of empathy and weaken his resistance. He examines two important passages from Hawkes' fiction, suggesting the way in which style works to fuse structure and narrative. After commenting on the unity of victim and victimizer, he considers early artist-figures and their relation to Hawkes who, as a humorist, often functions as an "'exchange center' whose creative spirit becomes the repository for all the demonic and perverse transactions of his fictions."

Rovit calls attention to the relationship in Hawkes' fiction between the writer's stylistic control and his vision of violence; three further studies are also concerned with this relationship. In his essay, "John Hawkes: The Smile Slashed by a Razor" (In Contemporary American Novelists, ed. Harry T. Moore [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964], pp. 193-204), S. K. Oberbeck discusses Hawkes' use of violence and the way Hawkes combines the real and the imaginary in his fiction. He notes Hawkes' "refusal to recognize, or abide the rational consciousness." Oberbeck explores the dual reaction of the reader to Hawkes' vision of violence: while admiring the scope of Hawkes' "purely creative horrors," the reader also reacts to these horrors with "extreme repugnance." Oberbeck analyzes the kind of violence which is "undeclared and potential," not expressed directly or articulated clearly within the fiction. He concludes by saying that Hawkes' fiction is "to be felt rather than talked about intellectually."

In "The Destructive Vision of John Hawkes" (Critique, 6, No. 2 [1963], 30-7), Charles Matthews discusses Hawkes as a contemporary poet of the abyss who conveys the disintegration of modern society through techniques of "'re-ordering'" and bizarre, startling imagery. He considers Hawkes' works up to The Lime Twig, referring to his "myth-making, symbolic and surrealistic powers." The Cannibal depicts the failure of modern man's institutions, including religion, to give meaning and true order to his life. He judges The Lime Twig to be Hawkes' best book, as it contains detailed realism, poetic images and some sympathetic characters. In general, he criticizes Hawkes' characters, to whom he finds it difficult to relate, and some of his stylistic indulgences. He also analyzes, while stating his own reservations, toward Hawkes' concept of comedy as it is expressed in his novels.

W. M. Frohock ("John Hawkes's Vision of Violence," Southwest Review 50 [1965], 69-79) discusses Hawkes' "technique of secretiveness" as it relates particularly to his concern with characters' motivations and the problem of perspective. He concentrates on the latter aspect while analyzing The Cannibal and The Lime Twig. Frohock discusses contradictions within the narrative voice of The Cannibal and declares the narrator to be "murderously insane." While describing how Hawkes consciously manipulates perspective in The Lime Twig, he notes that the consistent point of view in Second Skin is the result of "the sacrifice [Hawkes] makes in order to strengthen his picture of the world." Remarking on the American preoccupation with violence, Frohock distinguishes Skipper's heroism from that of more representative characters in American fiction: unlike Hemingway's Harry Morgan in To Have and Have Not, Skipper "does not accept, but rather records one more in a long series of humiliations of the human."

Tony Tanner explores what he considers the fundamental relationship between style and landscape. Tanner includes a substantial chapter on Hawkes in City of Words (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). He focuses on the original, startling landscapes in Hawkes, landscapes which are "necessary" because of the opportunity they afford the novelist "to experience, and demonstrate . . . possibilities of stylistic compensation and control." Tanner examines the entropic landscapes of The Cannibal in which the characters are imprisoned. In The Lime Twig, Hawkes distances us from our absorption into the landscape through "the complicated and wrought fabric of his style." Tanner characterizes Skipper's quest in Second Skin to find "another kind of reality" as a prototypical American quest.

Three general studies isolate a particular image pattern and trace its evolution throughout Hawkes' fiction. In "Icebergs, Islands, Ships Beneath the Sea" (In Symposium, pp. 50-63), Frederick Busch discusses a connection which he believes exists between the imagery of Hawkes and Hemingway. He cites Hawkes' "ship figures," whether employed directly or indirectly; as representations of the sunken ship imagery used by Hemingway in "After the Storm." He also attempts to trace Hawkes' use of particular imagery as it may have arisen through his childhood experiences. Through such image patterns as those referred to in the article's title, Busch believes that Hawkes conveys his characters' psychological isolation. He speaks about the dangers of confusing dreams and vision with the art one creates, and he closes by suggesting that the writing experience for Hawkes is deeply personal and psychological, directed at the "examination of his own writing."

Although Robert Steiner and Marcus Klein use a central image in Hawkes to organize their discussions, both range far beyond a consideration of this image's function in terms of Hawkes' fiction; Steiner is ultimately interested in the existence of a mythic consciousness in Hawkes, while Klein studies the importance of form to Hawkes and his narrators.

In "Form and the Bourgeois Traveler" (In Symposium, pp. 109-41), Robert Steiner looks at the figure of the traveler in Hawkes. He is concerned with the roles of memory and recollection and the way the bourgeois traveler expresses them through the alienated imagination. Skipper, he says, lives "a myth of his own creation and construct[s] the inevitability of loss around the mystification of accidental, but fateful death."

Although Marcus Klein proposes examining the image of the satyr in its dialectical complexity in "The Satyr at the Head of the Mob" (In Symposium, pp. 154-65), this article also addresses fundamentally the concept of composition in Hawkes as it is opposed by "the raw materials" which help to form his art. Klein points to the uniformity of voice in Hawkes which reduces everything to "the same level of signification" and ultimately, to death. He discusses sex in the novel as "a metaphor for life and for murder." Klein illustrates his theses by closely examining Travesty. Referring to the narrator's rage to compose and order, he observes that each of the strategies of unity in this novel is "sabotaged." Papa "responds to this confusion by imposing forms, which act indicates not only a desperation but also the fact of perfectly unresolvable dilemma."

### III. STUDIES OF INDIVIDUAL NOVELS

#### The Cannibal

In "Reader, Critic, and the Form of John Hawkes's The Cannibal" (Boundary 2, 5 [1977], 829-44), Thomas W. Armstrong takes a fundamentally structuralist approach to Hawkes' first novel. Armstrong deals with the emergence of form in the relationship between the reader and the text. The verbal nature of the work is emphasized in which characters differ "as ways to fulfill the grammatical function of nouns and verbs in the language that defines this world." Armstrong focuses on the Duke and Zizendorf whose rhetoric challenges the reader's objectivity in its shifting perspectives. In responding to all the characters in the novel, the reader must establish priorities among linguistic and literary structures and systems of knowledge. The novel "offers an understanding of history itself as language;" and the reader becomes engaged through reading with the nature of his own understanding.

In "On The Cannibal" (in Symposium, pp. 38-49), John Graham informally examines the universality of The Cannibal, commenting on Hawkes' creation of a social structure contingent on ordering and labelling. He terms The Cannibal "a highly revolutionary polemic" and a call to resist authority.

D. P. Reutlinger ("The Cannibal: 'The Reality of Victim,'" Critique, 6, No. 2 [1963], 30-7) stresses the union between victim and victimizer where cannibalism becomes the archetypal union. Hawkes presents a vision of Germany's regression from a nineteenth-century heroic individualism which ends in celebrating an empty, sterile nationalism. In its indictment of romantic politics, The Cannibal points to the dehumanizing potential which is involved where men eventually become alienated and detached from history; everyone becomes a member in this "community of victims." In our lack of a sympathetic response to character, "the art becomes primary though not exclusive." Reutlinger summarizes: "Hawkes' depersonalized vision of cyclic disaster recognizes the limits of sympathy and identification in romantic art at a point in history where there can be no more romantic wars."

#### The Beetle Leg

Regarding paradox as central to the artist's vision, Lucy Frost ("The Drowning of American Adam: Hawkes' The Beetle Leg," Critique, 14, No. 3 [1973], 63-74) notes that paradox functions to illuminate a view of the devolution of contemporary American culture. The narrative blends events, images and language in a mythic frame which serves to organize the static tableaux of the novel. Three stages of the biblical myth of Adam's Fall are presented corresponding to the time before Mulge's death, his death, and the time succeeding, the last of which is crucial in presenting Hawkes' vision of "America's disintegrating technological culture." The Red Devils symbolize a projected inhuman order. Cap Leech, Frost feels, has an awareness of a doomed future which other characters express through their apathy and lack of awareness.

Alan Heineman ("It is a Lawless Country": Narrative, Formal and Thematic Coherence in The Beetle Leg," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 [1983], 136-48) sets out to "anchor in the text" Hawkes' "meanings and purposes" in The Beetle Leg. He points out evidence to show that the "conversation" between the Sheriff and Cap Leech occurs near the middle of the book even though their monologues structurally frame the novel. Heineman elucidates three other "mystifying sequences," but his claim toward "coherence" is somewhat undermined by his confession at one point that his argument is "reductive" and, at another point, that he might be "forcing the imagery." In his discussion of characters in the novel he emphasizes their lack of normal sexuality (Mulge is the exception). Heineman believes that The Beetle Leg belongs in the tradition of novels (like The Scarlet Letter and As I Lay Dying) which portray the threat of the "morally neutral forces of energy within" as against the greater threat of "the morally partisan forces of containment."

### The Lime Twig

Robert I. Edenbaum ("John Hawkes: The Lime Twig and Other Tenuous Horrors," The Massachusetts Review, 7 [1966], 462-75) draws several parallels between West's The Day of the Locust and The Lime Twig. He is concerned with exploring the relationship between both writers and their shared commitments to "the phantasmagoric realms behind the commonplace exterior of ordinary people." He stresses Hawkes' portrayal of the "inexplicable." The burden of understanding is on both reader and author who jointly "participate in the devil's vision." In The Lime Twig, Hawkes shows how fantasy allows characters to recognize their "'worst dream and their best.'"

John C. Stubbs ("John Hawkes and the Dream-World of The Lime Twig and Second Skin," Literature and Psychology, 21, No. 3 [1971], 149-60) examines how Hawkes "succeeds in bringing conscious structure to his essentially unconscious material." He considers Hawkes' efforts to express man's psychic being as representing a prime concern of the contemporary writer in the post-Freudian age. Stubbs proposes to understand Hawkes' The Lime Twig and Second Skin "by regarding each as a series of dreams from a human psyche." While the main protagonists in The Lime Twig express their "desire for power or sensuous pleasure" and their simultaneous fear of this, Skipper of Second Skin feels both his individual security and sense of self threatened. Stubbs explores specific scenes in each work to support his thesis.

In his chapter, "Conspiracy From Without and Within," from Beyond the Waste Land (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), Raymond M. Olderman discusses The Lime Twig as a representative 60's novel in its use of waste land images, the blurring of fact and fiction and in its exploration of forces that rule our lives. He considers the three specters conjured up by Michael's dreams who also represent certain "brute facts about the external world." Olderman suggests several connections with Eliot's "The Waste Land," including the role of Slyter as a Tiresias figure. In

considering the ending of The Lime Twig, he points to the "costly symbolic affirmation [which is] characteristic of many novels of the sixties."

In "Parody in Hawkes' The Lime Twig" (Critique, 15, No. 2 [1973], 49-56), Lawrence K. Boutrous reviews some of the prominent devices and techniques of the thriller and the detective story (such as "playing hide-and-seek with perspective") and elaborates on the ways which Hawkes utilizes them. Hawkes reverses several conventions; for example, the criminal is not apprehended nor his identity even guessed at by the "law"; only the reader can "solve" the murders. Larry, Banks and Hencher are all parodies of suspense story types. In a fragmented world, says Boutrous, the highly orchestrated reality of the detective story must be subject to parody. The Lime Twig is "designed to extend the parameters of fiction" in creating "an ambivalent world of destruction and hope."

In "'Internalized Quest Romance' in Hawkes' The Lime Twig" (Modern Fiction Studies, 19 [1973], 89-95), John M. Warner discusses the world of the novel as it is revealed through mythic correspondences. Referring to Harold Bloom's concept of Romanticism, Warner's thesis is that characters in The Lime Twig embody different aspects of artistic expression. The novel symbolizes the artist's effort to free himself from nature in order to "achieve the 'imagination's freedom.'" Michael and Larry represent two "prototypes of the modern artist-as-hero." Michael is faced with two alternatives: to succumb to the temptation of selfhood or pursue the imagination. The ending, with its tentative affirmation, suggests the difficulty of modern man to achieve a consciousness that would permit him to live "in a transformed world of nature."

## Second Skin

Four studies of Second Skin examine the novel in the light of a prior tradition. In "The Structure of Second Skin" (Novel, 5, No. 1 [1972], 208-14), Norman Lavers suggests that Hawkes is parodying the Great American Novel in Second Skin. He draws on two central studies in American fiction in making his claim: Leslie Fiedler's Love and Death in the American Novel and Richard Chase's The American Novel and its Tradition. Specifically, Lavers claims that Hawkes has written an "arcadian" romance in which there is a recurring alternation between pastoral scenes and those involving violence and cruelty. Longus's Daphnis and Chloe and Apuleius' The Golden Ass are two archetypal romances cited which employ a romantic pattern also found in Second Skin. Lavers draws attention to the "subversive" elements in Skipper's narrative, such as the numerous Christ references applied to Skipper.

Richard Pearce, in Stages of the Clown (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), attempts to place Second Skin in the comic tradition. Comparing Second Skin with Bellow's Henderson the Rain King, Pearce finds both main protagonists to have attributes of the harlequin, an apparently naive buffoon who is, nevertheless, aware of his predicament and of himself. Pearce stresses Skipper's awareness, calling him an eirone or the "self-deprecator" of classical comedy. Through stylistic and structural properties of the narrative, Skipper forces us to examine our attitudes toward the characters and their world and, ultimately, our own world. In Skipper are revealed "the contradictions of modern man's psychological reality."

Like Pearce, Ronald Wallace focuses on the comic element in Second Skin, but he is more concerned with Hawkes' comic techniques than the ways in which Skipper represents a particular "type." In "The Rarer Action: Comedy in John Hawkes's Second Skin (Studies in the Novel, 9 [1977], 169-86), Wallace points to a "complex balance of attitudes" in which Skipper's inadequacies are set off by his affirming, sympathetic actions. First, Wallace points to a variety of comic inadequacies: Skipper's innocence in which he acts as a child-victim; his tendency to misinterpret serious events; and his predisposition towards inaction during crises. He fulfills the traditional comic roles of the pander and blocking figure. Yet Skipper also acknowledges his own failure and, given the horrors of contemporary society depicted in Second Skin, Skipper may be said to redefine the concept of heroism by refusing to adopt society's methods to achieve his goals. Wallace also considers parallels with The Tempest, including those between Skipper and Gonzalo and Prospero; Shakespeare's play, according to Wallace, "establishes the norms on which the novel is based."

In "John Hawkes' Artificial Inseminator" (In The Merrill Studies in "Second Skin," ed. John Graham [Columbus: James E. Merrill, 1971], pp. 63-8), William R. Robinson discusses various literary correlates to Second Skin including the metaphorical and comic traditions and the tradition of nineteenth-century romance; through such correlates, Hawkes "disciplines fantasy into vitalistic and humanistic art" in his vindication and celebration of life forces.

Various critics see narrative reliability as the crucial question to be determined in Second Skin. Anthony C. Santore ("Narrative Unreliability and the Structure of Second Skin," in Merrill Studies, pp. 83-93) attempts to prove that Skipper belongs in the tradition of the unreliable narrator. Making extensive use of the text, Santore argues that Skipper uses deception as a "second skin" to hide from the truth. Skipper deceives himself, especially with regards to his courage and his ineffectuality. Such self-deceptions, according to Santore, are founded in his refusal to admit his impotence and "possible homosexual inclinations." Santore examines the novel's structure for the clues to this hidden truth.

Thomas LeClair ("The Unreliability of Innocence: John Hawkes' Second Skin," Journal of Narrative Technique, 3 [1973], 32-9) examines Hawkes' use of an unreliable narrator to explore the themes of death and innocence. He emphasizes Hawkes' control of sympathy and information which enables us to test Skipper's innocence continually. LeClair then examines Skipper's relationship to two women in his past: his mother, of whom he preserves a "romantic image," and his daughter, who becomes the victim of Skipper's inability "to cope with his own sexual relations." Like Anthony Santore, LeClair believes that Skipper's second skin is adopted for self-protective purposes. In its concern with innocence, LeClair claims that Second Skin is solidly in the tradition of the American novel.

In "Character Spin-Offs in John Hawkes's Second Skin" (Studies in American Fiction, 9, No. 1 [1981], 83-91), Paul Witherington concentrates on Skipper's creation of characters, which allows him to mask his feelings toward his daughter and best friend. He creates "spin-off characters" and stereotypes who "serve to defuse complexity and diffuse anxiety over a number of figures and events." Miranda and Catalina Kate are spin-offs of Cassandra, the former combining her sexuality and cruelty and the latter embodying her innocence; both Tremlow and Fernandez are spin-offs from Sonny who Skipper manipulates into becoming "a safe stereotype." Witherington concludes by saying that Skipper is a "frustrated fabulator" who alters reality in order to stop time and justify himself.

Though specifically addressing the novel's structure, Ron Imhoff is also interested in the way Skipper manipulates the presentation of his material. Ron Imhoff ("On Second Skin," Mosaic, 8, No. 2 [1974], 51-63), adapts the linguistic theories of Jan Mukarovsky to delineate the structure of Second Skin, which he sees as an important aspect of the novel usually neglected by critics. Imhoff examines successive chapters in Second Skin, noting that the "norm" (which he determines as "narrative-with-a-chronological flashback") is violated with "The Brutal Act" chapter. This chapter is foregrounded against a background which represents the traditional novelistic canon: "By creating a novelistic structure that violates all accepted fictive norms . . . Hawkes realizes his professed enmity toward the obsolete devices of the conventional novel." Imhoff determines that the motivation for this structure lies in Skipper's unconventionality as a character; it allows Skipper to postpone revelation of his guilt arising from his homosexual attraction to Fernandez. The "dominant" (the scene of Fernandez's murder) is surrounded by two scenes which reinforce Skipper as a blameless, impotent victim; thus, the structure becomes Skipper's "verbal victory." Finally, Imhoff demonstrates how the foregrounded section (particularly the

dominant) works dynamically with unforegrounded sections to establish the novel's "coherence."

The following critics stress Skipper's potential for self-development. In "Vision and Tradition in Second Skin" (in Merrill Studies, pp. 69-82), Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. comments on the role of literary allusion (Nichols believes "literary infusion" in the more accurate term) as a structural principle in Second Skin. Focusing primarily on the journey between two worlds as vision, Nichols surveys several of the visionary effects which Hawkes creates. Like many works of modern fiction, Second Skin is concerned with "the discovery of the self by the self," a process by which Skipper comes to realize his complicity in a world of brutality and death. Ultimately, through his experience and the transforming power of language, Skipper emerges as the master of his own destiny and that of others.

Carey Wall ("Solid Ground in John Hawkes's Second Skin," in Makers of the Twentieth-Century Novel, pp. 309-19) focuses on the systems of correspondences in Second Skin, insisting that Hawkes employs a "conventional plot" and also structures his novels in a "traditional" way. Wall analyzes Second Skin as an inward journey toward the "light of vision and peace." The true confrontation with consciousness and his moral identity occurs in the chapter where Skipper contemplates the possibility of Tremlow, his enemy, as the sacrificial defender of Fernandez. Prior to this scene, Skipper tended to divide up people into victims and bullies. In this (according to Wall) crucial scene, Skipper recognizes that his distinction was false and that the forces of life and death are embodied in everyone.

Richard Yarborough also stresses the affirmative element in Second Skin. In "Hawkes' Second Skin" (Mosaic 8, No. 2 [1974], 65-73), Richard Yarborough draws parallels between Second Skin and John Berryman's The Dream Songs: the protagonists in both have to adjust to the traumatic events of their fathers' suicides; in addition, each narrator possesses an "intensely lyrical vision . . . which informs the textual symbols and patterns." Yarborough briefly examines male and female figures in Second Skin and the two "worlds" of the novel, pointing out relevant contrasts and polarities. He also notes a tragic pattern in the work, stressing the role of Fate and the fact that Skipper views himself simultaneously as guilty and guiltless. Yarborough sees Skipper as child-like, confused and contradictory in his responses to others and ends up by relating this to Skipper's "vivid, desperate use of the imagination" which forms "the basis for some sort of affirmation."

Lucy Frost and Albert J. Guerard propose that Second Skin balances potential and actuality, light and darkness. Lucy Frost begins her essay, "Awakening Paradise" (in Merrill Studies, pp. 52-63) by addressing some of the questions related to the "reality" of the setting and the reliability of the narrator. Frost discusses Skipper's inadequacies in dealing with a world pervaded by death. The allusions to The Tempest establish a somewhat ironical "pattern for a new voyage ending in triumph rather than defeat." Although these allusions help create a "bridge" between two "realities," Frost stresses the cultural exclusivity of the idyllic wandering island setting. Like Book IV of Gulliver's Travels, the sections which occur on the wandering island speak to our desires: although the awakening of paradise is Skipper's private vision, it is public in the sense that "a world



governed by Eros evoke[s] a response in so many various people now trapped in a violent, destructive civilization."

In "Second Skin: The Light and Dark Affirmation" (in Merrill Studies, pp. 93-102), Albert Guerard looks at the novel as a version of "bright vision and dark materials." After dealing with imagery and instances of regression, Guerard suggests analogues between Hawkes and Dickens, Nabokov, and Bellow.

Finally, Bruce Bassoff ("Mythic Truth and Deception in Second Skin, Études Anglaises, 30 [1977], 337-42) suggests it is possible to reconcile the two antithetical views of Skipper as hero and villain. Bassoff attempts to answer questions regarding Skipper's god-like status and the unanimity of violence against him. Drawing on René Girard's concept of a "'sacrificial crisis'" and mythic patterns of sacrifice, Bassoff explains Hawkes' use of doubles in the context of remedying a pandemic evil. Hawkes is able to convey a "conversion of bad imminence into good transcendence" through the metamorphoses in the novel. The key scene which suggests this "conversion" is that in which Skipper draws a parallel between the positions of prayer and of vomiting. Bassoff considers violence in Second Skin to beat "the secret heart of the sacred," and "Skipper's god-like transcendence [to be] the metamorphosis of this violence."

### The Blood Oranges

In "The Blood Oranges as a Visionary Fiction" (The Journal of Narrative Technique, 8 [1978], 97-111), Steven Abrams argues that Cyril is essentially a trustworthy interpreter of events. The novel's structure relies not on Cyril but on Hawkes and his need to sacrifice his narrator's "psychological coherence" to the imperative of writing "visionary fiction." Abrams then demonstrates Cyril's reliability by directing us to consider events which are not under Cyril's control. He finds textual evidence to support Hawkes' contention that Hugh's death was accidental, thus absolving Cyril of responsibility for it. He concludes by describing the novel as an "exercise in the imaginative experience of reading a novel."

Lois A. Cuddy ("Functional Pastoralism in The Blood Oranges," Studies in American Fiction, 3 [1975], 15-18) discusses the ways in which Cyril and his Illyria conform to the conventions of the pastoral tradition. She speaks of a collision of values as the rural life of Illyria (or the life of the imagination) conflicts with the social world of conventional morality. The novel projects two pastoral ideals: the pastoral of innocence, and the pastoral of happiness that produces conflict. Cyril can be viewed as a symbolic figure whose value system cannot encompass either responsibility or remorse, but in Hawkes' world of "old myths" these are important concerns. Cuddy discusses the characters in light of their "pastoral duality" but, ultimately, Cyril and Hugh offer "different versions of pastoral man."

John V. Knapp ("Hawkes' The Blood Oranges: A Sensual New Jerusalem," Critique, 17, No. 3 [1976], 5-25) claims that the main purpose of the novel "is the imaginative creation of a new moral order," and finds its representative in Cyril, a joyous sensualist; Hugh is associated with "a moribund,

exceedingly sterile Christianity." He points to the structural arrangement of episodes to support his views. He considers the novel as pondering the nature of love and lovers and finds echoes of these themes in Plato and Socrates; he also discusses the way conventions in the pastoral elegy "Lycidas" are undercut. Each character has his limitations, says Knapp, and it must be realized that "a new moral order must be based realistically on the whole of life."

In his short article ("The Blood Oranges: Cyril's Lyric," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 [1983], 127-30), Stanley Fogel analyzes significant motifs and image-patterns in The Blood Oranges, showing how this novel incorporates characteristics representative of "the lyrical novel." Like this fictional type, The Blood Oranges relies on pictorial-spatial and totalistic (rather than temporal and sequential) aspects of narrative.

#### Death, Sleep & the Traveler

In "Psychic Sores in Search of Compassion: Hawkes's Death, Sleep & the Traveler" (Critique, 17, No. 3 [1976], 39-52), Elisabeth Kraus examines this novel in light of Hawkes' prior novels, finding Allert, like other narrators, to be a deceiver who presents to the reader a "self-justifying and self-pitying version" of his life. She addresses the validity of Allert's dreams and what they unconsciously reveal of him; in particular, she proposes the existence of a homosexual fixation in Allert. We are allowed to see the truth about Allert not only through his dreams but through the views of other characters. Kraus points to Allert's mythologizing tendencies and aesthetic concerns as a weakness which enables him to avoid life.

John Banks ("Self-consciousness and Death, Sleep & the Traveler," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 [1983], 164-7) presents a study of this novel which is favourable to Allert (the story of "an alert, brilliant protagonist"). Banks briefly argues that Allert is a complex character capable of evolution; he is essentially a tragic figure, becoming a "psychic suicide" "abandoned by his vehicle of transformation."

#### Travesty

Charles Baxter ("In the Suicide Seat: Reading John Hawkes's Travesty," The Georgia Review, 34 [1980], 871-85) conceives of Travesty as a kind of game Hawkes is playing with the reader; the novel challenges the reader but refuses to yield any understanding. He examines the use of the dramatic monologue form and its emphasis on language rather than communication. This form also acts to subdue the audience through "sensory overload" while it is an "ideal showcase for the self." After considering the aesthetics of trauma, Baxter reflects on the narrator's effort to move "into that other world where art and imagination coexist in silence." He discusses the parodic elements of the novel, concluding by saying that Travesty "stands as a kind of power play against the modern academic audience that Hawkes knows as well."

Like Baxter, Paul Emmett in "The Reader's Voyage Through Travesty (Chicago Review, 28, No. 2 [1976], 172-87) focuses primarily on the role of the reader in Travesty. He believes that by concentrating on the element of the unconscious, the reader is able to discover a mythic framework which provides a vital clue to the novel's interpretation. Emmett then proceeds with a Jungian analysis of the work. He conceives of Travesty as a voyage to unleash the universal or the mythic or, in Jungian terms, an inner journey in search of unity and self-awareness. He points to Honorine's dual symbolic role as anima and dominating mother.

In "The Devil & John Hawkes" (Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 [1983], 155-63), Steven Weisenburger discusses Travesty (and, to a lesser extent, The Passion Artist) as a work in the satiric mode in which Hawkes employs a "polarized" style. Papa deals with the absence of unity by exalting "dead passion" and by mythologizing. The stylistic trace of the former is found in synecdoche while the trace of the mythologizing response is found in "tropes of comparison and identity." Weisenburger finds evidence of a "master trope" in satire which conveys chaos or hysteria. Referring to Hawkes' work in general, he says that "Hawkes' darkest satires reveal the hysterical need behind [the] myth-making process. In a loveless surrounding, his protagonists enact a terrifying need for coherent order."

Christine Laniel ("The Rhetoric of Excess in John Hawkes's Travesty," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 [1983], 177-85) speaks of the "cannibalistic" qualities of the narrative voice in which the denial of the autonomy of the "other" threatens the subject's own identity. She also notes that the absence of referential discourse implies the poetical use of language. Discussing "the technique of indirect writing," Laniel points to the abundance of artificial constructions promoting a "rhetoric of excess." She studies semantic shifts and what they signify in terms of the relationship between the signifier and the signified and in terms of Papa's control over language. Travesty typifies a form of writing which "is always in reprieve . . . [which] can only survive by creating its own destruction."

The following articles discuss Hawkes' 70's triad as a unit: C. J. Allen ("Desire, Design and Debris: The Submerged Narrator of John Hawkes's Recent Trilogy," Modern Fiction Studies, 25 [1975], 579-92) believes that Hawkes' three novels are unified by "a submerged narrative in which the power of the unconscious mind to create idyllic versions is gradually undermined by unconscious needs and fears." There is a significant opposition in The Blood Oranges between Cyril, the world-maker, and Hugh, the repressed individual, but in the next two novels, the narrators grow more like Hugh. While Cyril dispenses with sexual restraints in his love of imposing patterns, Allert is the victim of his unconscious, including a repressive homosexuality. The submerged narrator is brought full circle in Travesty by its apparent return to Cyril's conscious artistry; yet this novel parodies both earlier novels and there is a definite movement in the trilogy from idyll to holocaust. Hawkes' treatment in Travesty of ideas introduced in The Blood Oranges "suggests that Cyril's attempts to reify his vision are maniacal and destructive."

Paul Rosenzweig ("Aesthetics and the Psychology of Control in John Hawkes's Triad," Novel, 15, No. 4 [1982], 146-62) stresses "the formal qualities of the triad and the manner in which they not only share . . . meaning and morality but in the end become an essential part of that meaning itself." After noting Hawkes' apparent "partisan identification with his narrators," Rosenzweig goes on to illustrate the ways in which each narrator's claim of objectivity "masks a highly subjective, self-serving psychology" concerned with self-justification and giving clarity to the chaos each sees around him. Control is fundamental for these narrators who impose forms and their own visions of reality on the world and other individuals. In conclusion, Rosenzweig points out that each of Hawkes' narrators is disappointed in his efforts, for "Reality does not prove as malleable in actuality as it seems in word and thought, reasserting itself ruthlessly with disastrous effect to the dreamer."

Enid Vernon's "From Festival to Farce: Design and Meaning in John Hawkes' Comic Triad" (in Symposium, pp. 64-77) examines the progression in the triad in terms of comic modes. The Blood Oranges is an example of "high comedy" in which the main impulse is one of celebration. But in Death, Sleep & the Traveler, Hawkes begins the movement toward farce, and reverses many of the concepts present in The Blood Oranges. Both Allert and Papa are buffoons or figures of ridicule. Hawkes achieves the farcical effects in these last two novels through deflated language and through a focus on man's basest nature. Vernon closes by noting some similarities among the three narrators: "If there are strains of farce in The Blood Oranges, threatening to dissolve the fragility of the festival into saturnalia, so the idyllic vision is implicit in the extravagances of the last two novels."

Alfred Hornung's study ("Sex and Art in Hawkes' Triad: The Pornographic, the Erotic, and the Aesthetic Modes," Amerikastudien, 26, No. 2 [1981], 159-79) attempts to place the triad within the literary tradition concerned with expressing man's erotic being. Hornung describes a "process of desexualization by sublimation" initiated by Plato which has been reversed by the writing of Kierkegaard and, more recently, Marcuse and N. O. Brown, all of whom emphasize the existence of the opposed instinctual forces of Eros and Thanatos and the role of the imagination. Before examining the works of the triad, Hornung discusses the views of several modern writers (Joyce, Laurence, Miller and Nabokov) on the relationship of art and sex. Hornung claims that what distinguishes Hawkes from these predecessors is "his use of structured modes of organization rather than character and plot." Hornung defines three such structural units: The Blood Oranges represents the erotic mode; Death, Sleep & the Traveler represents the pornographic mode; finally, Travesty embodies the aesthetic mode where the antithetical forces of Eros and Thanatos can be reconciled. Hornung somewhat sketchily discusses the ways that each work typifies the respective mode to which he assigns it.

#### The Passion Artist

Paul Emmett begins his article ("The Cannibal to The Passion Artist: Hawkes's Journey Toward the Depths of the Unconscious," Chicago Review, 32,

No. 1 [1980], 135-52) by citing Guerard's remarks, throughout Hawkes' career, on the novelist's progressions toward and away from "realism." He disagrees with this stance, claiming that Hawkes' fictions are like dreams with "a surface reality that is a distorted form of materials from the psychic cesspool." Hawkes moves from the unconscious distortion of his early works to conscious distortion, which produces well-constructed but "problematic" novels in which the reader must become aware of the underlying latent content. Emmett leads up to his exploration of The Passion Artist by reviewing the progressions of first-person narratives from The Lime Twig to Travesty where the intensified probing of unconscious states provokes each successive narrator's incremental "self-knowledge." In this progression, more latent content becomes manifest content which, in fact, is "the distorted form of new latent content." In The Passion Artist the perspective alternates between that of Vost's conscious and his unconscious selves, presenting respectively his own distortions and his undistorted, unconscious desires. Emmett examines the phallic mothers in the novel, determining that Vost fears yet desires castration. Associated imagery is used to support the contention that Vost yearns for "a homosexual union with the father"; yet he fails to penetrate to the furthest reaches of his unconscious.

In his article ("The Oxymoron as Central Trope in The Passion Artist," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 [1983], 130-6), Pierre Gault discusses Vost's evolution in terms of the novel's controlling trope--the oxymoron. Addressing the absence of "lexical certainty" in the novel and "diversion of signification," Gault explores the development of "two contradictory tendencies" which came to be defined in Vost as he is torn between his need for tenderness and for violence. The oxymoron functions as a "privileged trope of symbolic exchange," reconciling Vost's contradictions without cancelling them. Vost's last words, a tautological pronouncement, emblemize the qualities of reversibility and circularity, exhibiting "meaning which is not meaning,"

### Virginie

John Kuehl ("Virginie as Metaphor," Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 [1983], 148-52) discusses some of the parallels between the fictional present and past in the novel, suggesting that Virginie represents an extended metaphor in which the vehicle is Eros, and the tenor is Art. Although Seigneur and Bocage represent the craft of detachment and the craft of involvement respectively, each supports the life-force. Kuehl believes that Virginie, like Hawkes' other novels, embodies the struggle between Eros and Thanatos in which organized religion and sexual frustration represent the primary opponents of Eros.

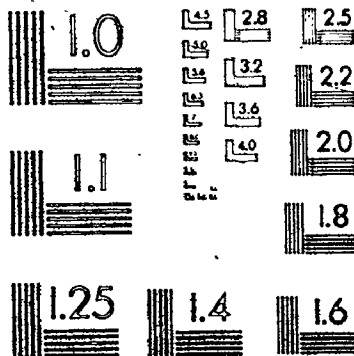
In "Postmodernism as Autobiographical Commentary: The Blood Oranges and Virginie" (Review of Contemporary Fiction, 3, No. 3 [1983], 207-13), Heide Ziegler explores how Hawkes, as a postmodernist, relates to "the process of narration"; he re-interprets his text in writing by "forgetting" his own text in order to achieve "the innocence necessary for a second interpretation." The theme of innocence links together The Blood Oranges and Virginie, the former a "modernist" work, and the latter, a representative of Hawkes' "recent postmodernist stance." What specifically

changes between these two novels are the forms of narrative expression of innocence. Ziegler explains that Cyril's attempts to restore the lost paradise are futile, for "Cyril's tapestry is not his own," and "only the author, by writing another text which constitutes a comment on The Blood Oranges, can regain the innocence that Cyril has irrevocably lost." Virginie represents the text itself, and, by remaining distant Virginie "can come to express everything." Ziegler closes by reiterating the process of fictionalizing in Hawkes as autobiography and allegory.

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