## CHAPTER FIVE

## JOHN HAWKES

With John Hawkes we move to the very centre of the theme of this dissertation. That is why it was decided to treat him separately as he is the most quintessential practioner of that fiction which blends madness, violence and comic cruelty in an organic form.

It has been remarked earlier that the fabulists deal with collective violence. In Hawkes, however, violence appears as a kind of psychic entity. And yet the characters of Hawkes are not individuated as the characters of the humanists are - they are more like the faceless people of Barth, Vonnegut and Pynchon. What we find in Hawkes is the paradox of psychic activity generated by the rhetoric itself. Hawkes maintains that language is form. In a symposium reported by Roger Henkle, Hawkes says:

> I want to object to Kermode's notion of the anti-realistic novel - the visionary novel, the novel of imagination - as being formless. He suggests a kind of chaos in such work and I think the opposite is true. Whatever Kurt Vonnegut or John Barth are talking about, it is certainly form. Perhaps language as form or vice-versa.[1]

The chief difference between Hawkes and the other fabulators is that he does not undercut fear by a witty remark or comic turn as frequently as Barth and Pynchon do but enhances it through an eerie mix of comedy and cruelty.

The other important difference is that in Hawkes there is no Shandyan laying bare of fictional technique as in Vonnegut or Barth.

The grotesque predominates over the absurd in Hawkes and in this he is perhaps closer to the semi-fabulists, than the fabulists, because in the grotesque situation at least one character retains a sense of the horrible. Total absurdity reduces horror to play, as in Barth. But unlike the semi-fabulist character, no Hawkes character puts up a struggle to halt the process of decline into fantasy.

Another difference is that in Hawkes there is no schizophrenic mask, no survival tactics as in Heller. In fact, madness in Hawkes stresses the disjunction between reason and reality. Madness, like violence, seems to become a psychic entity and serves as an initiator of comedy. It is more fully assimilated to the rhetoric rather than being attached to a single human being. It serves to intensify the element of what Artaud calls cruelty. One can then say that both madness and violence in Hawkes seem to function as rhetorical questions rather than physical acts.

The detachment of Hawkes, the writer, from his material leads to anti-comedy. We have sought to place this in the tradition of what Segal calls schadenfreude. This is the kind of comedy which provides, according to Segal, "an inward release for various anti-social instincts..."[2] Segal quotes Freud to stress the point: "The tendency to aggression is an innate, independent, instinctual disposition in man, and... it constitutes the most powerful obstacle to culture".[3]

Schadenfreude is delight at someone else's misfortune and Segal traces its genesis to the beating of Thersites by Odysseus in the Iliad and later on to Marlowe's Jew of Malta.

In Hawkes' work one also finds cruelty in the Artaudian sense. Cruelty in Artaud is meant to shock one into an awareness of the elemental. This kind of text is aggressive and evokes unspeakable horror. This violence is cruel in the special sense of Artaud's metaphor. It stirs the idea within the flesh. Unlike the self-reflexive texts of Barth, the Hawkes text creates dimensions of awareness of an experience through incendiary images which suddenly flash into our minds so that violence and madness are felt as sensory events. These images test our humanity. They almost seem to confront one with all that is potentially vile in mankind. The sense of evil is "released into the audience's sensitivity with the sense of an epidemic".[4]

We shall look at Hawkes' work under thematic categories before proceeding to examine his technique.

We said earlier that in Hawkes the fictional technique is not on display as in a Shandyan novel. however, the characters of Hawkes and Sterne share the characteristic of being ruled by one dominant obsession.

In Tristram Shandy, characters are cut off from the world, staying in a closed internal world where only a single obsession rules: "when a man gives himself up to the government of a ruling passion - ..., farewell cool reason and fair discretion!"[5] None of the critics of Hawkes has noticed that the same could apply to Hawkes' characters. Each one, while going mechanically through the gestures of life, is alive only where his obsession is concerned. Nothing else matters much.

But where the Shandy characters have passions which could do harm to no one but themselves - they are just hobby-horses, after all - Hawkes' characters have an obsession which is violent, if not in its nature, at least in its consequence. The Duke in The Cannibal is obsessed with the desire to devour a small boy; the executioner in The Owl is interested only in executing people - his life exists in the death of others; Banks' obsession in The Lime Twig is a horse and he pursues it though it means leaving a stable life and loving wife; Travesty's narrator is concerned only with

the perfect design - to accomplish it he is willing to lay down not just his own life but also his daughter's and friend's. The protagonist of The Passion Artist lives in the freedom of the world but has an internal life in the prison where his mother is incarcerated - his real life flowers only when he is inside the prison; Cyril (The Blood Oranges), can think of nothing but sex - his exploits cause intense pain to others but he does not turn a hair.

An enclosed violent world in which the external world is rarely allowed to enter - this is Hawkes' peculiar territory. His is also the territory of the nightmare, a landscape which is morbid, inescapable, pervaded by a dank odour. It is a quick-sand world into which the reader sinks. Flannery O'Connor comments on his use of the nightmare when she talks of The Lime Twig:

> You suffer The Lime Twig like a dream. It seems to be something that is happening to you that you want to escape from but can't. The reader even has that slight feeling of suffocation that you have when you can't wake up and some evil is being worked on you.[6]

O'Connor's observations are understandable because in her work the horror is contained by the doctrine of redemption which though not simplistically incorporated helps make sense of evil in Christian terms. There are no such escape routes in Hawkes hence the feeling of 'suffocation' she mentions.

Kuehl points out how Hawkes' public nightmare resembles the private nightmare as described by Ernest Jones in On The Nightmare: "The three cardinal features of nightmare are present in both: "agonizing dread", "suffocating sense of oppression", "conviction of helpless paralysis".[7]

This presence of nightmare has led some critics to label Hawkes work as surrealistic - something Hawkes himself is not too happy about. Without pigeonholing him, we can say that surrealism is an important facet of his work which has the essential function of destroying "certain surface plausibilities in order to liberate realities that are habitually concealed by habits of vision attuned only to the surface itself".[8]

A nightmare world filled with violence - this is what we discover in Hawkes. But the violence is not gratuitous. Hawkes himself says that he deplores torture, terror and nightmare. But, on the other hand:

> we can't deny the essential crippling that is everywhere in life... I happen to believe that it is only by travelling those dark tunnels, perhaps not literally but psychically, that one can learn in any sense what it means to be compassionate.[9]

This is the main source of violence in Hawkes - the crippling that is everywhere in life. By creating characters who expect their worse dreams to come true, Hawkes dramatizes the fear modern man lives in. By making the connection between

nightmare and violence Hawkes points to the motiveless violence present today.

The other source of violence in Hawkes is history: "Everything I've written comes out of nightmare, out of the nightmare of war, I think".[10]

The coming together of present violence and historical violence brings forth a progeny of varied and unexpected forms of violence, which we shall examine under various categories:

Violence can be seen operating on two levels: the real and the surreal or in the terrain of dreams.

"Charivari", on the realistic plane, concerns a marriage going wrong. The surreal plane is created by the couple's overwhelming fear of parenthood - an example of this is Emily's visit to the hospital. In the car Emily's feet and hands are tied and she is gagged. The driver drives at such a manic pace that the car takes off at one point. The hospital is a Gothic house of torture where the examination rooms are butcher's blocks with doctors stropping scalpels. Long rows of skulls hang on pegs, candles burning behind the eyes. Babies have black hair and cheeks covered with matted black side-whiskers. Emily's fear of pregnancy has distorted her perception or we can say that Hawkes is presenting a visual picture of Emily's fears.

In The Lime Twig the realistic level is provided by a gangster world in which two outsiders are trapped while the surrealistic level enacts the coming true of nightmares. Margaret's worst dream is of finding Michael gone one day. Michael's best and worst dream is the vision of a horse in his sitting room. The horse is the source from which all the violence in the book emanates. He is directly connected with violence in a single, brutal act when he kicks Hencher to death in a dance of death.

Surrealistic violence is presented in two vivid scenes in The Cannibal. One is of baying dogs running alongside a train. The dogs "ran with the train, nipped at the tie rods, snapped at the lantern from the caboose, and carrying on conversation with the running wheels, begged to be let into the common parlor".[11]

The other scene is of the frozen monkeys and rats on the grounds of the asylum. The asylum has a riot which is quelled by Stella and other amazons. The garden is strewn with the corpses of monkeys and rats, frozen in the snow:

> One of the monkeys seemed to have grown and frozen, was sitting upright on the bodies of the smaller beasts, tail coiled about his neck, dead eyes staring out through the gates... "Dark is life dark, dark is death," he suddenly screamed as the women charged across the snow.[12]

These surreal images of horror rising out of the subconsicious envelope and underline the realistic violence.

In Charivari there is a cat which talks. He annoys the dressmaker who lunges at him with a pair of scissors. The cat escapes and the dressmaker attacks a dummy insted. She stabs the dummy in the abdomen with a pin and since the scene is surrealistic, drops of blood appear on the dress.

Violence of the physical variety is of an extraordinary kind in Hawkes either because of the presentation or because of the situation.

It is not very common, for instance, for a plane to fall out of a sky but it happens in two books: The Cannibal and The Lime Twig.

Stella's mother (The Cannibal) is killed when a plane crashes near her sending a splinter into her chest. Stella, is never able to forget this image of her mother's death, and the scene is repeated in Stella's consciousness as is snowden's death in Catch-22. The recollections of the mother's death are like the musical refrain in the background of a violent film.

Another plane falls near Hencher, though this time no one is injured. Violence in Hawkes, can simply erupt out of the sky pulverizing lives.

Although The Lime Twig employs the formulae of a thriller it finally avoids as Fiedler says, "The treacherous lucidity of the ordinary shocker, the kind of clarity intended to assure

a reader that the violence he relives destroys only certain characters in a book, not the fabric of the world he inhabits".[13] The wrecking of the Bank's flat, for instance, is the wrecking of their existence, their identities.

An extremely violent scene in The Lime Twig is the physical and psychological destruction of Margaret by Thick. There is a detailed description of Thick beating her for a long time with a truncheon. This beating leads to Margaret's death later on. (Quite a few critics assume that Margaret is dead before the race begins, but what about the line: "Take me out to him... take me out to him, please", (p. 171) after Michael has run to his death?). When the beating stops and Thick goes away Margaret starts sobbing. At the same time young Monica begins to scream because she is having a nightmare. Transsubjectivity is suggested when Margaret feels "the two sounds coming from herself, starting from the same oppressive breast, as if the other half of sadness was quite naturally fear".[14]

That such things should happen to a nice, ordinary girl like Margaret is unthinkable and all she wants at that moment is ordinary comforting things like standing at the window or eating from a familiar plate. The horror, however, is unrelieved and she is raped by Larry.

Michael too is an ordinary man but unfortunately has an overweening dream which leads to destruction. But he finally redeems himself by running into the horses and stopping the race. This is a cinematic scene with the horses running in, the screaming crowds, the close-up of a gun-hand, a slow-motion shot when "he seemed only to be drifting, floating across the green".[15] The scene ends dramatically with the horses running toward Banks and Banks running toward the horses:

> The pace so fast that it ceases to be motion, but at its peak becomes the long downhill deathless gliding of a dream until the arms are out, the head thrown back and the runner is falling...[16].

The Lime Twig ends when the detectives find Hencher's body but unlike an ordinary detective story, this one holds out no promise of the bad being caught and punished. All the good, in fact, are dead.

Hawkes even tranforms a natural death into an extremely violent one as though a man's organs are his enemies, tenants of his body, waiting for a chance to attack and kill. Peter's death from a heart-attack (Death, Sleep and The Traveler) is described in such an agony of detail that his pain becomes tangible. It is a sensuous rendering of violence, with Peter in complete silence flinging his hands to his chest and looking around him "with eyes filled with the joy of extreme pain".[17]

In Second Skin extreme violence is associated with Skipper. All those connected with him - except his graddaughter - die violent deaths. But unlike a tragic figure he is not doomed to a life of suffering. In an unusual ending for a Hawkes' novel, he finds peace and dignity and happiness on an island.

Skipper's father, wife and daughter all commit suicide. His son-in-law is murdered. Perhaps since his father's profession is death - he is a mortician - it is a fact of life for this family. The suicides seem inevitable as though the characters know from the beginning their final destiny.

His father's suicide is depicted in a comically grotesque scene with Skipper as a fat young boy desperately playing Brahms on his cello to prevent his father killing himself in the locked bathroom. "So I played on, phantom accomplice to his brutal act, and all the while hoping, I think, for success and pleased with the song".[18] His father shoots himself anyway, but first is considerate enough to unlock the bathroom door so it would not have to be knocked down.

His mother deafens herself by filling her ears with melted candle wax - because she is not able to bear the sound of "the death-dealing shot".[19]

Skipper's daughter is unresponsive to his affection and makes him go through the pain of having her husband's name

tatooed on his chest. She commits suicide by jumping off the eerie lighthouse.

Skipper has always been closely associated with violence, although he himself is a passive man who would prefer to keep unpleasant scenes at a distance. He is attacked by Tremlow in a mutiny on his ship and then sexually abused. This incident leaves a deep mark on him so that whenever there is an occurance of extreme violence, he thinks Tremlow is responsible for it. When his son-in-law is killed, for instance, he feels Tremlow was either responsible for the murder or was Fernandez's homosexual partner who has been killed too.

The seedy murder of Fernandez is described in brutal detail. Even the fingers of one hand have been chopped off. It is a motiveless murder committed by some sailors who think it a game to let a homosexual pick them up and then to kill him.

Skipper's island presents its own brand of violence. An iguana climbs onto Cateelina Kate's back and does not let go inspite of Skipper's efforts. But Kate waits patiently and finally it leaves of its own accord. Island violence may take this sort of strange, grotesque form but it resolves itself peacefully. It is city violence which cannot be got rid of, which ends in death and disaster.

At the same time Hawkes does not produce physical violence when one expects it. The Beetle Leg, a book about

the wild west contains very little physical violence. A parody Western, its bad guys are the Red Devils in whom there is potential for violence but only at the end are they involved in a shoot-out with the sherrif and his men.

Menace radiates, however, from the grotesque face peering through the window; in the figure of Cap Leech, a medicine man whose healing power seems better connected to death than to life; in the external presence of a dead man who lay

> buried just below the water level of the dam. He was embedded in the earth and entangled with a caterpiller, pump engine and hundred feet of hose, somewhere inside the mountain..."[20]

The most compelling portrayal of menace is in The Lime Twig when Michael is cornered by three men in the men's room. Bereft of physical violence, the incident is still terrifying. What is evoked is the suffocating feeling of hideous entrapment and the threat of imminent violence. The men "dressed in rags, lean, fast as birds"[21], carrying slates on which the name, of the horse, Rock Castle, is written, jostle against Michael.

Terror lies in the description of the men, the way they speak and smile: "when he whispered the saliva behind his lips, between his teeth, was tinted pink with blood constantly trickling into the throat".[22]

War is an important source of violence in Hawkes. This is specially true of The Cannibal. For Greiner this is a "full-fledged war protest novel which reveals his horrified response to World War II..."[23]

But rather than viewing it as a protest novel one might say that war becomes a means for exploiting various aspects of violence. The Cannibal is the stringing together of many violent moments: the chase of the boy by the Duke; the killing of the boy, the American overseer, Stintz; the riot in the asylum; the past with its wartime violence of betrayals and firing squads. By focussing violence on a tiny town, Hawkes produces a concentrate of violence of so much diversity that it extends from the personal to the universal.

War provides justification for violence. Zizendorf cold-bloodedly carries out the assassination of the American overseer and then kills Stintz who has seen the murder. Stintz's body is taken to the Mayor's house and the house is set on fire. The Mayor is left to die in the house because he has betrayed Zizendorf's friend in the war; "The Mayor did not cry out, but died, I was very glad, without recompense or absolution".[24] When the omnipresent narrator is so cold-blooded he is bound to view violence with detachment. There is no question of compassion or moral musing - a past-present symbiosis of violence is presented with indifference.

Brutalization which results from war is present in the figures of Gerta, a nursemaid who becomes a prostitute "for she had survived and hunted now with the pack",[25] and Stella. Stella had loved her husband but when he falls seriously ill she wonders unemotionally how to dispose of his body when he dies: "if only the body would fly away with the soul, but, no, it would linger on, linger on in this very room".[26]

The other pattern of violence we find in Hawkes is of the hunt. One of the most violent scenes in his work is the hunt of the little boy in The Cannibal. This chase takes place throughout the novel and ends with the killing of the boy and the gruesome hacking of his body. To the Duke the child is not human but a fox. In this unnatural life-and-death game he has indeed been reduced to a vulpine state.

There is another chase in The Lime Twig, this one of a gangster by his gang. It takes place in the fogginess of the Baths where no one can be seen clearly. The hunt is carried on through the white vapours of steam. Again the technique of cross cutting as in cinema is used as we are shown bits of this and that through the steam: "A sleeve, a hand, the tall man's torso, a pair of wet shoes..."[27] till Michael stumbles upon the body of Cowles, his throat slit. Hawkes forces the reader to look at Cowles through Michael's eyes. "His throat was womanly white and fiercely slit and the blood poured out..."[28] But this is not gratuitious as Mailer's description of Deborah in An American Dream is. In Mailer there appears

to be self-indulgence, a perverse delight in describing a violent death - the slow travelling down of a smashed head as though it is a landscape he is traversing. Hawkes' description is unsparing but it has the sense of Michael suddenly coming upon a grisly sight and registering the details before he is able to turn away.

No reason is given for the Cowles murder. It is just part of "the illogic and perversity that may exist in a dream world whose resources are improvidently tapped."[29]

Children appear in the works of recent American writers only to draw attention to the violence done to them. No child is left alone - it is either beaten or killed or corrupted. But only in Hawkes is a child made the quarry of a cannibal and eaten. Though the child's terror is obvious to the Duke, he chases him mercilessly till he has caught and killed him.

Monica in The Lime Twig is also killed though there seems to be no motive behind it. Having a moll for a mother she seems to be tough, capable of dealing with the violent life she is part of. But her subconscious horror surfaces in nightmares.

Monica's killing is done in the manner of a still landscape: frozen headlamps, the dripping tyres of a parked double decker, a poster showing bunched horses on a turn. The arrested motion on the poster is repeated in the freezing of action in the child's lying still, "smoke still circling out

of the belly, smoke and a little blood... And the old man crouching with drawn gun..."[30]

Psychological damage is done to a child in The Blood Oranges. Meredith cannot stand Cyril because she knows he is having an affair with her mother. Cyril, like Slocum, often uses his age and experience to browbeat her into submission. Once, when he is in her mother's bedroom, she has a nose-bleed and Cyril deals with it calmly and efficiently. When he finishes "her face hung below me a moment like the small white mask of some sacrificial animal".[31] The fact that he might be leaving a permanent scar on a young mind does not even cross his mind.

Discussing the title, The Blood Oranges with Scholes, Hawkes says that he got it from the fruit he ate in France. The fruit is sweet but streaked with the colour of blood: "It means that the blood is real but also sweet... It suggests wound invading desire, desire "containing" agony".[32]

As this statement obliquely reveals, violence in this book emanates from sex. Cyril, who calls himself a sex-singer, wallows in sensuality, luxuriates in the suspicion that he is one of the greatest lovers the world has seen.

While some critics feel that a passage like that oft-quoted one about Cyril as a bull in a tapestry, reveals self-parody, there is no such indication anywhere in the book. Cyril is unbearably smug and self-satisfied, "a narrator", as Sale puts

it "unable to see how awful he is".[33] Cyril keeps smiling "deeply", "seriously" or "genuinely", he constantly points to his gentleness or graciousness or grace.

Hawkes has created a character who is terribly egoistical and selfish and he is revealed as such through his first-person narration. He even thinks of himself as Dionysius and so he plays grape games. When he offers to help the children make flower-chains for their hair he makes the best for himself so the children have to do with the left-over flowers. He puts it on, then poses for effect:

> With both hands I settled that outspoken yellow mass into the heavy texture of my blond hair. I felt the tree at my back and slowly glanced up through the speckled light toward the clear sky...
>
> "God, boy, what a sight".
>
> "Don't ever take it off, baby. Ever".[34]

Greiner, too, finds his tone infuriating and one wonders if Hawkes has not overdone the attempt to present Cyril as a self-satisfied [illegible]roué. He has produced a narrator who is so irritating that one shudders at an Illyria which has a resident-God like Cyril.

Being self-satisfied he is throughly selfish. "I am a man of feeling", he proclaims, proving William Riggan's point about unrealiable first person narrators.[35] When he calls an end to an affair he feels no guilt. He thinks it strange that the other person should feel pain because he himself is

incapable of suffering: "But it is hardly a fault to have lived my life, and still to live it, without knowing pain".[36]

Cyril's female counterpart is Fiona. The two are birds of prey, very suave and sophisticated in their relentless stalking of a victim. Lives which seek nothing but sexual gratification are finally empty. They don't even want children because children have to be looked after and would interrupt their pursuit of sex. Although Hawkes thinks of Cyril as "a God-like man with infinite capacities for love",[37] as Greiner says, it is really Cyril's sex-singing which is sterile (Hugh has children) because this "self-proclaimed priest of love, unknowingly distorts love by limiting it to sexual freedom".[38]

Cyril is so devoid of understanding he cannot see why Hugh should feel resentful about his wife's affair with him. He "begrudged me Catherine, tried to deny me Catherine",[39] he grumbles. When Hugh tries to stay faithful, Fiona pursues him relentlessly till he finally gives in. She is like the preying mantis who devours her mate because immediately afterwards Hugh hangs himself. Cyril does not blame himself, it was an accident, he tells Fiona. It is obvious, however, that Hugh is their victim. As Harris says, "our sympathies are engaged by sick Hugh and his victimized wife Catherine, and not by self-deluding Cyril or self-indulgent, castrating Fiona".[40]

All the violence in the book, then, radiates from Cyril's sex-singing: the past of broken affairs, the breakdown of Catherine, the suicide of Hugh. One might think of The Blood Oranges as a fresh perspective on the standard theme of adultery, a radical problematic of adultery in the desensitized American context: "Cyril's modest defiance of matrimonial convention", says Hawkes, "is intended to lead us into realities of the imagination".[41] But instead of paradise what one ends up with is a vision of an empty sterile world.

Hawkes gives a full treatment in The Goose on the Grave to the violence bred by rigid religious rituals which have retained the empty form but are meaningless. Through Adeppi's search for a protector are exposed the brutalities enforced by adherence to a strict religious code.

Crucifixion, says Smalhour, was taken over from the Phoenicians by the Romans who "perfected it as a sophisticated, almost scientifically calibrated technique that produced the maximum of pain and a death struggle of adjustable duration: They would decide how much they wanted it to hurt and how long it would take you to die".[42]

This most extreme form of violence is paradoxically the harbinger of peace. But the inherent violence of the act can lead to violence in religion and its rites. What can be emphasized is not the sacrifice of Christ out of love for making but the violence of the act itself. Hence we have

brutally depicted crucifixes, or the picture of a bleeding heart with brambles around it: "The arteries, cut close were painted flamboyantly and crowned with gilt; the thorns, a mustard green, went deep".[43] This picture is kissed every day by Arsella. Dolce, the priest, worships Christ, but it is the suffering face of Christ that he worships. His passion is devotion to the face itself. A procession of Brothers has a group of women whose wounds, "each time verified with a kiss, long judged unremediable and painful, are exhibited noiselessly and listlessly".[44] Adeppi's mother is burnt to death.

Though Adeppi does manage to retain some innoncence he gets corrupted to a certain extent in this atmosphere of religious extremity. He leads the blind Pipistrello deliberately to the edge of a hill and calmly watches him fall.

Hawkes briefly touches upon the violence of a nunnery in The Cannibal. The Mother superior breaks the nuns through a routing of guilt. She is presented as a kind of Nazi General who hypotizes her prisoners into total subjugation rather like Nurse Ratched in Kesey's book.

One finds an extraordinary and extensive treatment of violence as psychic entity in Hawkes.

Some of his characters, for instance, are obsessed with death. It is their only passion. Il Gufo (The Owl) is the supreme example of necrophilia.

Il Gufo is frozen in a single stance, the stance of a hangman about to slip a noose over the prisoner's head. His life is only a series of repeated acts of hanging. He hates life and women and is in love with death. There is no room for anyone in his life but his "tall-lady", the gallows. Notice the loving tone of the hangman when he talks of the gallows:

> She was of wood and black as a black ark, calm by nature, conceived by old men with beards and velvet caps, simple and geometric as frescoes of the creation of the world.[45]

How cold and detached he is when speaking of a living woman:

> Already her hair was gray and her complexion altered... no man would come for her and the rest of her days would be spent with the manual for the virgins not yet released to marriage.[46]

Scholes talks of Il Gufo thus: "This creature is a construct, obviously a talking fiction - grotesque, macabre, absurd. But such fabrications have stalked our real world all too frequently".[47] This seems a valid point - if Hitler were a fictive character, who would believe him?

The hangman, not only because of his occupation, but because of the kind of person he is, is surrounded by latent violence. His constant companion is the owl, a creature of prey like the hangman. He has a scarred face, "enraged and bloody, always anesthetized with the cold enormity of the

eyes..."[48] When the young girl, Ginevra, comes to the hangman's house at night, the owl attacks her: "he sat upon her head, slowly raising and lowering his wings as a monk his cowl. He dug into her scalp, circumcising the brain".[49] The hangman does not bother to dress the girl's wounds. He is only concerned about his owl who is upset. He comforts him by wetting the feathers under his beak with his tongue. He gives him a large rat and sleeps near him that night.

The gallows and the owl - creatures of death - these are all the hangman cares about. In his eyes he is God and hence is not afraid of any deity. When the Domna is desecrated, Il Gufo does not do violence to the vandals but to the statue. With his boot he rams her in the chest and dislodges her from her pedestal. As Scholes says, he treats her like a "painted whore rather than a vandalized icon".[50]

Il Gufo's supremacy is again highlighted at a feast which is a corruption of the Last Supper. Twelve members of council gather for a "judgement supper", as the hangman calls it, because it is here that they decide the fate of the prisoner. This is a mockery since there is never any doubt of what his fate is to be. The hunchback who serves, eats the crust left on the hangman's plate - again a corruption of the act of eating bread.

These extreme acts of violence have a mythical, primeval aura about them and may be thought of as metaphors meant to

evoke and formalize modern violence resulting from cannibalism.

Not so obviously necrophilous, but necrophilous in any case, is the narrator of Travesty. The book is based on violence since it narrates a deliberate drive to death. The narrator is driving his best friend, his daughter and himself to a meticulously planned accident which can have no survivors. Whereas so far we have had characters adopting various survival tactics, for the first time we have a protagonist who deliberately eschewes them.

His motive is not revenge, as Victor Harris feels it is, nor jealously (both wife and daughter are lovers of his friend). His motive is not so ordinary. He has conceived of this accident because he can perceive a perfect design in a death like this. He is an artist engaged in the creation of what to him is a work of art, imposing order over life's disorder:

> What I have in mind is 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.[51]

To him this total destruction is "in its own way... a form of ecstasy, this utter harmony between design and debris".[52]

The narrator is the embodiment of the figure of Death. A hideous sense of menace is felt because his conversation is so

witty and relaxed. It is only sometimes that his language acquires violent overtones as when he describes the path of their trajectory "which on a white road map looks exactly like the head of a dragon outlined by the point of a pen brutally sharpened and dipped in blood."[53]

The narrator has known violence in a car before. When he is a young man he sees a stunningly beautiful and innocent young girl. He thinks he has knocked her down but does not stop to confirm it. This incident has left a sharp impression on his mind and could be the genesis of his urge to create the perfect design out of destruction.

While the narrator is detached and calm in the face of death what about the helpless occupants? Henri does not lose his head. He cajoles, tries to persuade, reason. He finally reaches a stage of stoic acceptance. Chantal is terrified. She burrows into the back seat, "like some frightened animal or tearful child",[54] lies in the foetal position, is sick.

The narrator is already dead, leading an empty, unsatisfactory life. He states that his relationship with his wife is a dead passion. He likes to imagine her reaction to their accident. As Allen says, Honorin is "the source of his private apocalypse just as she is the Muse for Henri's poetry".[55]

The only creative act he is capable of is death designed by him. This is one ending he is sure of. Harris says:

> The narrator, like Hawkes himself, is a specialist in the erosion of feeling of life itself. The journey he takes us through is a landscape of dead passion. The sex singers are voyeurs and necrophiliacs. There is no exit from the hell of the overheated car. Its riders are already dead. [56]

The widow is Second Skin is totally evil. She performs macabre, witch-like actions. She mutilates Pixie's milk bottles, enjoys the marching music of the German soldiers - The Horst Wessel, keeps a dressmaker's dummy in Skipper's room, dressed in Skipper's navy uniform on which she has flung ketchup. Once Cassandra has come under her spell she has no chance of escape.

Miranda's most evil action is her present to Skipper. It is, she says, Cassandra's two month old foetus. Laughing at Skipper's horror, she says, "Good God, I thought you'd like to have it! Sort of makes you a grandfather for the second time, doesn't it?"[57]

Death, Sleep and the Traveler is quite casual about a violent event such as Ariane's murder and intensely probing into the internal life of Allert. His dreams are described in vivid detail and a great deal of attention paid to his hobby of collecting pornography. It is suggested that violence lies fermenting in everyone's psyche, without their realizing it. No one is safe, not just from the world but from himself as well:

> who is safe? who knows what he will do next?
> who can confront his own psychic sores in
> the clear glass?[58]

The suggestion of latent violence could mean that anyone - even Allert - could have murdered Ariane.

The protagonist of The Passion Artist also has a psyche seething with violence. It needs certain incidents to bring it to the surface.

The Passion Artist revolves around a prison for women. A prison is closely associated with violence:The violence done by the inmates, the violence done to the wrongly condemned, the violence of keeping human beings in a tight enclosed space without fresh air or sunlight. Even if the prisoner is guilty, one cannot overlook the violence inherent in the idea of a prison. Imprisonment has replaced the old system of torture or as Foucault puts it, "From being an art of unbearable sensations punishment has become an economy of suspended rights."[59]

But a free man can also enclose himself in a prison of his own making. The protagonist lives in a prison closed in by the obsession of a dead wife, imprisoned mother and young daughter. His life consists of visits to his wife's grave, visits to the café across from the prison and care of his daughter.

He is deeply affected by a tableux he once withesses at a railway station in which a young woman is manacled to two young men. He thinks of the sight as a gift to him - this is how his mother must have come to prison years ago. This is when Vost makes an admission of horror within himself, although he does not recognize it as horror - that "secretly, deep within, he approved of the chains".[60]

His enclosed world first cracks open when he is confronted with the fact of his daughter's prostitution. He is solicited by another teenager whose depraved behaviour is Vost's first awakening into passion. After this encounter Vost reports his own daughter to the police. This is the first letting-out of the violence within him.

When the women prisoners revolt, instead of feeling happy that his mother might escape, Vost becomes a volunteer for putting the revolt down. When the first woman prisoner is spotted Vost is aware of "wanting nothing more than to beat the woman first to surrender and then to unconsciousness".[61]

Vost is merciless in his beating of women, specially of a beautiful young woman. Vost from the front and Spapa from behind "together... chopped away at her... like two boys beating to death a bird or like two wooden figures striking a bell".[62]

A prison revolt is unlawful and one would suppose that right is with the men who put it down and yet the reader's

sympathy is with the women. The men seem like predatory beasts crushing helpless creatures. Hawkes makes the prisoners more the victim of society than its wrong-doers and one is glad when there is a sudden reversal and it is the men who are beaten and wounded.

When Vost wakes up in the hospital he sees an artificial hand in a black glove instead of his real hand. His character, he feels, is externalized in the gloved hand so that inner and outer life were assuming one shape.

After Vost leaves the hospital violence begins to assume dream-like shapes. Figures loom up suddenly, as in a nightmare. When he passes the cemetry a figure rises from behind his wife's tombstone. It is one of the rioting women and Vost is filled with anger at her sight: "rebellious women appeared to be arising even from the graves of the dead".[63] One wonders if The Passion Artist is an allegory of the modern feminist movement, with women rising up from the dead and taking over the prison in which they were imprisoned for so lang.

His walk though the marsh has the same oneiric quality. There is a dead smell and he feels as though "he were walking on the crushed or broken bones of the world's dead".[64] There is no sound, not even a bird in sight. This eerie silence is suddenly broken by the incongrous sound of laughter.

The laughter comes from an old woman in black clothes and he is convinced that she is one of the escaped prisoners.

He raises his black hand high above his head as though to bring it down on her head although he has no intention of doing so. But the woman feels it anyway, feels it fall, the rush of air, the impact of the blow. Death lights up "the old woman's face as from within"[65] and she crumples at his feet. It is only then that he notices the pile of faggots tied with a rope. She is not a prisoner at all. His imagination has played him false and caused the death of a harmless old woman.

As he goes further, dream-like, the landscape changes to a pastoral one. It contains a pond with a young woman bathing in it. This is the prisoner he and Spapa had beaten so brutally. He leaves, happy he has not done further harm to her.

This idyllic scene reverts to the slimy marshes with the entry of a snarling vicious black dog held by an animal-like guard. Vost too reverts into his ugly self, changing with the landscape. He tells the guard about the bathing girl and when he hears the gun shot killing her, he knows it is he who has killed her.

Vost covers his face when he hears the shots and when he looks up the landscape has undergone a transformation once more. The marsh is now covered with fog, "gauzelike, thick, tinted here and there with a wet pinkness... covering the entirety of his now subterrnean world whereever he looked".[66]

When Vost is taken prisoner by the women he feels relief because the prison is where he has always wanted to be.

He is locked up in a cell where he is visited every evening by his mother and another prisoner. There is never any exchange between mother and son or acknowledgement of their relationship, but a monologue is carried on by the mother while the other woman makes love to him. In her monologue she tells him of his violent birth.

Vost's hand is restored in the prison. The book ends with the murder of Vost and the information that the prison is no longer a prison: "In the words of the noble person who led the revolt and attempted to attain the liberation of her only son, La Violaine is no longer a prison, and yet remains, as it should under the sway of women".[67]

Very often violence is enacted within the municipal limits of a town. The most vivid illustration of this is the town in The Owl.

A town which has the hangman as its ruler is as surely condemned to death as its prisoners are. It seems to be under an Oedipus-like curse. There are no young men in town and no marriages, no children. Sasso Fetore is indeed a town of the dead: a fortress dominating, a ravine filled with dead soldiers. The only excitement and, ironically, cause for hope is the arrival of a prisoner. The hope is self-deluding because no prisoner can escape the gallows. Il Gufo's rule is a

death-sentence to all that is natural and living. Even the rooks scream "the cry of a drying species".[68]

There is direct violence only when the prisoner tries to escape. He kills the four ganders and is caught when his attempt to fly away fails. He is tortured and one is reminded of Foucault's discussion on torture where he says, "the punishment was thought to equal, if not to exceed, in savagery the crime itself..."[69] But most of the violence is in witnessing the town's act of dying, the violent desire for marriage and most of all, violence as incarnate in the figure of Il Gufo.

Sasso Festove is a town more concerned about the victimizer than the victim - the hangman not the prisoner. Perhaps that is why the macabre version of The Last Supper has the executioner at its head and not Christ the Victim.

Spitzen-on-Dein is another small town which knows violence in its every part (The Cannibal). Geurard puts it thus:

> Spitzen-on-Dein-with its feverish D.Ps., its diseased impotent adults and crippled children, with its foul choked canals, with its hunger, militarism, primitive memories and its unregenerate hatred of the conqueror - is Germany itself in microcosm.[70]

This civilization gone to decay, fetid, is represented by the figure of Stella, an aristocrat who has become coarse

vulgar and ruthless in her effort to survive in the new world.

The lack of order is symbolized by the chaos in the asylum. The liberation of Germany, the return of hope is presented by men coming back to the asylum in neat file. It is an ironic comment - order means keeping things running smoothly for a universe of mad men.

The city in which The Passion Artist is placed is a dead city which has a cemetry at its centre. In fact, the cemetry is "like a replica of the city itself".[71] The prison is another important landmark.

The acoustics of Hawkes' novels are handled with great aural skill. In Vonnegut, by and large, images reflect the psychological crisis of modern man. In Hawkes, as in Artaud, words as sound reach out to the very quick of life.

Violence builds up to an oppressive pitch as sounds of pursuit orchestrate the boy's terror in The Cannibal. Terror is evoked through the sounds the boy makes while running, slipping, his breathless haste contrasted to the Duke's unhurried, calm pursuit as though there is never any doubt of the outcome.

Sound conveys menace in the men's room scene in The Lime Twig when Michael is cornered by three men. First he hears footsteps:

> They were none he knew... These were the sounds of a measured step, the left foot heavier than the right, the dragging of shoe nails against the stones... He turned... but there too he saw the flickering of a white hand, fragments of darkness about to become the shape of a man.[72]

Later in the scene, there is the sound of their boots and rubbers sloshing in the water, the silence except for this sloshing and their whispering. Sounds heard, unformed shapes are more terrifying than actual physical violence because they prophesize the imminence of unimaginable violence.

Sounds convey the feeling of something being not quite right before the Baths murder. In an oneiric tableaux of terror, steam rolls in great clouds and people are seen in fragments. The men there are groaning and moaning as is common in the Baths, when suddenly there are new sounds, voices out of place there because they belong to the street.

Sound is employed very effectively to convey violence in the prison riots in The Passion Artist when the men beat up the women prisoners. Even in this vividly visual cinematic rendering, it is a sound which makes the reader aware of the raw brutality taking place. It is a high soft voice saying over and over, "Ah no", without emphasis: "Ah no, ah no", she said in the voice of someone who wishes to express her pain without imparting it to her listener..."[73]

When the beautiful prisoner bathing in the pond is killed, it is the shot of a gun which imparts this information to Vost and the reader. We are not taken back to the girl and are reminded of similar shots echoing from the woods in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find".

Besides sound, Hawkes' other distinct technique for presenting violence is imagery of great sensuous charge. As in Artaud in Hawkes imagery has a carnal quality and it almost seems to pullulate with life of its own to create a sense of consciousness screwed upto a feverish pitch of Artaudian cruelty.

In The Beetle Leg one image of violence stands out as a sharp close-up will in a photo where everything else is out-of-focus. A shocking, stark image, it is one of Hawkes most terrible. Luke is fishing and he catches on his hook the body of a dead child:

> The eyes slept on either side of the fish line and a point of the barb protruded near the nose stopped with silt. It turned slowly around and around on the end of the wet string that cut in half its forehead.[74]

The harrowing chase in The Cannibal is made more frightening by Hawkes' description of what the boy passes as he tries to escape the Duke: shadows "groaning out of the empty doorways with nothing to mangle in their jaws";[75] the butcher's shop which has a

> few cold strands of flesh hung unsold
> from hooks, the plucked skin and
> crawling veins uninspected, hanging
> but without official sanction. Wire
> caught the child's knee.[76]

The juxtaposition of the child's skin tearing and presumably exposing the flesh, with the raw flesh hanging in the butcher's shop is proleptic of the violence to follow.

Proleptic violence is found in The Lime Twig too. Just before Margaret goes to meet Michael she hears mortuary bells, her palm has a short life line, Michael is always reading obituaries. The train by which Margaret travels has a cargo of coffins. In a morbid image of violence, Margaret feels that "each tie crushed under the wheels became a child. Children were tied down the length of track..."[77] The field she sees at the platform's edge is shaped like that of a "murdered horse or sheep".[78] The race-course on which Michael is to die, is decribed as "the oval of roses in which men were murdered..."[79]

The suggestion that violence is lying in wait within a person is made in Death, Sleep and the Traveler, through images like the musician playing his vibraphone with naked knuckles, "knuckles split to the bone and bleeding onto his sentimental percussive instrument."[80] Or Allert unpacking his valise and feeling as if he has "violated the coffin of same unknown child".[81] Spilt wine leaves a "long wet crimson stain that dribbled down the full length of his tunic".[82]

The violence of the prison revolt in The Passion Artist is first revealed through inanimate objects:

"A toilet bowl, torn from its fixtures and dragged into the yard, lay on its side near the trampled flowers; fragments of green roof tiles glittered here and there in the sand".[83]

Through imagery Hawkes transforms ordinary or morbid moments of violence into extraordinary moments of lyrical beauty:

When a fire bomb meant for the prison (The Passion Artist) goes astray it falls into the room where Gagnon keeps his birds:

> The singing of birds was transformed into color; there were entire showfalls of severed wings. The frequency of movement which had animated finches, canaries, lovebirds, was transformed from moderation to frenzy and from frenzy to the stasis of empty air; dead birds flew slowly about the room as in a glass tank of light.[84]

Vost's mother kills her husband by setting him on fire:

> He exploded in radiance which, in the instant, subsisted on his person like a mystical fire, allowing the man himself to remain perfectly visible inside the flames that imitated, though in a much larger size, the shape that was his.[85]

This discussion shows how numerous and varied are the forms of violence in Hawkes. Although madness is not as central as violence, almost every book has at least one character with a mental aberration.

Madness is worked out at the historical as well as individual level.

The historical is in The Cannibal where the asylum is an extended metaphor for Germany. The working of the asylum is chaotic:medicine is scarce, the wards are cold, all treatment is stopped and the patients lie huddled and sullen in the corridors. Even the doctors start losing their minds: "several unrecognized, unwashed doctors wandered without memory in the pack of patients..."[86].

Monkeys and rats kept in the asylum for experiments, die. They are thrown out into the hospital grounds where they freeze in grotesque poses. These frozen monkeys are a surrealistic image immediately evocative of madness.

The disorder in the asylum has the inevitable consequence of a riot but it is quelled by the Amazons of the town. It is only after Zizendorf's little revolution that order is restored - men file back into the hospital. This is ironical because the re-opening of the asylum heralds the resurrgence of madness is Germany.

There are plenty of crazy characters in Hawkes and through them he explores different kinds of madness:

Characters possess obsessions verging on madness.

Ernst (The Cannibal) normal to begin with, starts going mad on his honeymoon. He buys a crucifix from an old man.

showing a horribly pain-racked, agonized christ dying on the cross. He starts buying these distorted and grotesque crucifixes so that they begin to fill the hotel.

Ernst's obsession is for the image of the dying Christ. Hencher's is for his dead mother. He is fixated on his mother, in life and in death. He can still smell her skin and talk to her although she is dead. This mad love lasts for a decade till it is transfered to the Banks. He makes breakfast for them and takes it to their room while they are sleeping. He prowls through their flat when they are not at home. He draws a circle around his eyes with Margaret's lipstick. He sleeps on their bed. He can even say, "I can get along without you, Mother".[87]

His madness is so macabre that one cannot understand Sharon Spencer's insistence that Hencher is warm, devoted, and represents age-old values (Spencer also mistakenly assumes that the second narrator is Slyter). Hencher's is an unnatural love.

Konrad Vost (The Passion Artist) is also obsessed with his dead wife, his mother and daughter. His life revolves around them, leaving no place for anything else.

Travesty's narrator is totally necrophilous. He goes a step further than the ordinary necrophile for he is not only attracted to death, he is an aesthetician of death. For him the perfect design lies only in death.

The formative incident of his life is when he thinks he has run over a beautiful child. Road accidents hold a special fascination for him. When there is an accident, sand is scattered over the blood. He thinks of these patches as "a skin, this small area of dusty butchery, that might have been peeled from the body of one of the offending cars". He always spends a few moments in "reverential amazement whenever and wherever I have discovered one of these sacred sites".[88]

Even as a child he divides his "furtive time" between those journals which depict "the most brutal and uncanny destructions of human flesh... and those other periodicals depicting the attractions of young living women partially or totally in the nude".[89]

His behaviour to Chantal when she was a child also reveals a necrophilous trait. He would show great affection and understanding when she was depressed but would be depressed when she was happy. But this perversion he says, has long been cauterized. Though he still cares for her he no longer feels responsible for her. And now when he is driving her to her death he is not even tempted to look into the rear-view mirror to see how she is.

His meticulous planning of the accident is an indication of the madness within him. The accident does not have a normal motive but is an act of clarity in his vision. All his life he has wanted clarity, pursuing it "as relentlessly as the worshippers pursue their Christ".[90]

He would like the accident to be preserved always - the necrophilic tendency is to turn the animate into the mechanical - so that the "human remains are integral with the remains of rubber, glass, steel."[91]

He himself feels exhilaration at the thought of his death. His earlier fear of death has led to a sick fascination for it.

Connected in a way to necrophilia are those Hawkes characters who are more dead than alive. Allert, for instance, (Death Sleep and the Traveler) lives only in his dreams. He is interested in failure, has an elaborate collection of pornography - getting it bound in several leather volumes - he even gets pleasure in watching his wife make love to Peter, his best friend.

His dreams are peculiarly violent and extremely detailed. One of them is about a bunch of red grapes, each one with a foetus in it.

Allert believes that no one can know anyone else however intimate they might be. He wishes that he could have "cleaved Peter down the length of his back and pulled the halves apart as though they had belonged to a gutted dummy and then climbed inside"[92] in order to know him.

Peter, who is a psychiatrist, mentions a treatment which they had discontinued because it was dangerous. It involved subjecting the patient to deeper and deeper states of coma

till he got close to death. The patient descended into himself and the closer he came to death, the greater was his cure. He then says to Allert, "has it ever occurred to you that your life is a coma? That you live your entire life in a coma?"[93]

These necrophilous characters are attracted to the grotesque. The narrator of Travesty has lost one lung. The doctor he picks is not chosen for his skill but for the fact that he has a leg missing. Vost too is attracted to missing limbs and feels that an artificial one "adds splendor to the body presumed to be merely maimed..."[94] There seems to be no schizophrenic self-defensive mask in Hawkes as there is in the other fabulators.

Madness, at times, leads to extreme violence. The narrator of Travesty causes the loss of three lives through his madness.

The Duke in The Cannibal is totally mad. He relentlessly chases a small child, kills him and hacks him up and then cooks the pieces. He does not see the boy as human but as a fox. He continuously refers to him as a fox ("the small's fox's jacket"[95] e.g.).

Hugh's (The Blood Oranges) strange moods and dark depressions lead to his own death. Cyril once overhears him persuading his wife to go to bed with him by saying "Don't be afraid of Daddy Bear".[96]

He is one more Hawkes character with a collection of pornography - he himself takes photos of nude peasant girls.

He takes moral outrage to an extreme form. When he discovers Cyril's affair with his wife he clamps an ancient chastity belt on her. When he finally gives in to Fiona he hangs himself.

Out of these mad characters two have been to the asylum. One is Balamir (The Cannibal) who thinks of himself as Madame Snow's prince. He often fights "with the terrible shapes that leaped from drawers".[97]

Henri, one of the occupants of the car being driven to death was a mental patient. He appears to be wholly cured but the violence of the treatment has ravaged his face. As the narrator describes it:

> ... in that short time they so sutured the lobes of your brain with designs of fear and hopelessness that the threads themselves emerged from within your skull to travel in terrible variety down the very flesh of your face, pinching, pulling and scoring your hardened skin as if they, your attendants, had been engaged not in psychological but surgical disfigurement...[98]

Hawkes in this description emphasizes the violence attached to treatment. He has a definition of madness: "... pure white eyes staring and blinking from a skull like a bird's, the whole area behind the thin tissue eaten away and lost".[95] This makes one imagine a whole colony of insects sitting inside a brain, nibbling away at the tissues that comprise it.

A violent image and yet when visualized in this way there is something slightly comic about it. In Hawkes one often gets a sense of the comic in a situation which is violent in the extreme. This is comic cruelty or as Greiner calls it, "a shocking sense of humor. Shocking because it encourages laughter at events which are, more often than not, horribly violent..."[100] Hawkes himself explicates comic cruelty. Suppose, he says:

> You're made to laugh at a dismembered body, you experience the horror of dismembering in a different way from simply being confronted and repelled by the stark shock of dismemberment... Comedy violates normal expectations..."[101]

Hawkes requires of us a total revision of our theory of comedy. Traditional comedy has the function of social correction or of an escape from an intolerable reality. This comedy sees the possibility of improvement but in our fractured world the idea of improvement is itself laughable.

What the comic in Hawkes does is to highlight violence from a different perspective. It does not try to obviate or even lessen the horror. Hawkes says he certainly does not mean to

> minimize the terror... my aim has always been the opposite, never to let the reader (or myself) off thebhook... never to let him think that the picture is any less black than it is or that there is any easy way out of the nightmare of human existence.[102]

For Artaud cruelty is something which shocks one bodily into an awareness of the undomesticated or the uncanny. He thinks of cruelty as a disease which attacks human will power, consciousness and thought. This attack leads to freedom from constraint, "Hence this full-scale invocation of cruelty and terror, its scope testing our entire vitality, confronting us with all our potential".[103] These are released into the "audience's sensitivity with the strength of an epidemic".[104]

In Hawkes potential for violence is treated with comic detachment, cruelty is not the result of violence as much as the result of this detachment. Although someone like Heller employs comic cruelty there is a certain humanity accompanying it since Yossarian, for instance, betrays shock or emotion. There is no such humanity in Hawkes.

There are a few instances when comedy results from the totally unexpected response. Violence dissolves into laughter when a character says or does something totally out of keeping with what is taking place.

When the old man tries to strangle Edouard in The Goose on the Grave, he pretends nothing is happening. "You will... wrinkle my tie",[105] he whispers, even though his eyes are starting from their sockets.

When Jacopo is beating him up he says, ""I hope", it was hard to talk, "you haven't... lost my soap..." "[106]

This kind of response recalls Quilty's murder in Lolita. Riddled with bullets he continues an animated conversation, singing, joking. The vivacity of the victim produces laughter but also shocks us into a new awareness of violence and leaves as feeling queasy. Without the humour we would be left only with the horror.

In Charivari Henry is violently unhappy about being a father. Musing about fatherhood he says, "Why don't they come and change my pants?"[107] That a man of forty should say this shocks us into laughter but also makes us aware of his arrested childhood and subsequent fear of fatherhood.

Comic cruelty persists throughout Travesty. It emanates from the conversation of the man who is driving three people to destruction. To console them he says, "at least you are in the hands of an expert driver".[108] His terrified daughter is told to stop sobbing because "not many young women have the opportunity of passing their last minutes in the company of lover and loving Papa both".[109] Affection, not hostility lie behind his coldest actions:"After all, my Scorpio influence inspires me to unimaginable tenderness".[110]

In The Owl Antonina tells the hangman that she loves him. He touches her but only to remove the purse she carries under her skirt. (Greiner misses the humour here when he comments on the seriousness of an affair with Il Gufo - p. 62)

The despair of the parents to get their daughters married is so great that it becomes ludicrous instead of pathetic. Signor Barabos, for example, stands below the fortress bellowing to a prisoner he has never seen, "My son-in-law, future son-in-law, look here: stamping his foot and shaking his black hat in the evening..."[111]

While appreciating comic cruely in Hawkes, one should be careful not to see it in every violent act, as Greiner sometimes does. He finds humour in Margaret's thoughts after she is beaten by Thick. He says, "her funniest response is her most consistent:The beating is terrible mostly becaue "it was something they couldn't even show in films".[112] What Hawkes is doing is drawing out attention to the extreme violence of the beating - it is so violent that even the purveyors of sensation would balk at putting it in a film. If her thoughts are ordinary it is because this is her wayof dealing with the enormity of what has happened to her, her method of reducing the horror.

What Greiner also forgets is that Margaret is an ordinary girl and that this is her voice. Voices are very important in Hawkes.

It is the character's voice which conveys a distorted world view. Zizendorf is so indifferent that even when writing of extreme violence his tone remains detached. Hawkes first wrote The Cannibal in the third person and then in a sudden

decision revised it using the first person narrative. Zizendorf naturally acquires omnipresence. Hawkes says:

> The result was interesting, I think... because the "narrator" naturally possessed an unusual ominiscience, while the authorial consciousness was given specific definition, definition in terms of humor and "black" intelligence.[113]

In the Sydney Slyter columns in The Lime Twig is present not detachment but a certain seediness, a blasé I've-seen-it-all quality. Hawkes abhors his "snake-like character embodied in the ugly sibilance of his name... his vaguely obscene excitment in the presence of violence..."[114] His column and character, he says, afford the best opportunity for dramatizing the evil in The Lime Twig. Hencher as the first person narrator is killed violently very early in the novel in an "appropriate violation of fictional expectation or fictive 'rules'"[115]

The most intriguing use of voice is of Travesty's narrator. The entire book is a "chilling and elegant monologue",[116] as Harris calls it. No other voice is heard. Reverie, memory, the present moment, all this is addressed to Henri and sometimes Chantal.

The act he is committing is gruesome but the language is of an intellectual, a witty and charming man. As Harris says, "his act may be vicious but his sinuous argument and his tender language almost humanize it".[117]

Through the voice the character is revealed. There is not much reference to the past to explain the character.

At times characters are parodied through exaggeration as in The Beetle Leg. Sometimes an economic line of description suffices to expose the essence of a character - Sybilline has red hair" "like the orgnge of an African bird".[118] 'Red' and 'African bird' suggest jungle primitivism. Dora "with her shadow of mustache, steel spectables, purple hat held in place..."[119] is like a Nazi.

Sometimes Hawkes uses words which are the exact opposite of what a person is. Larry, the archetypal gangster, is consistently referred to as angel. Hugh (The Blood Oranges) is likened to saints. He always reminds Cyril of Saint Peter. At one point though, he is represented as the Serpent about to destroy Eden so that the language uses snake imagery for him. When he is found hanging and Fiona and Cyril take him down, it is reminiscent of the taking down of Christ from the cross. Busch[120] points out that this is a negative Christ whose coming brought about a religion of rigid ethics resulting in the loss of pagan joys. Hugh's moral views destroy Cyril's Illyria.

But the point to remember about Hugh is that he is likened to Christ because he is a victim. In all of Hawkes work the victim-victimizer situation is present. Hawkes creates potent folk symbols of terror by foregrounding the victim's terror.

To illustrate comic cruelty and sensuousness which mitigate abstraction of fabulation, Hawkes enlists the grotesque. Peter Brooks says that Hawkes seeks to "rewrite the world in depth... though exploitation of the illogical, grotesque, and obsessive..."[121]

Some of the illustrations of the grotesque in Hawkes are:

A one-eyed school teacher in The Cannibal, a dwarfed cat, a crippled boy. Ernie's left hand has only three fingers. His nine-year-old brother always has to have his head strapped in a brace and "the words that came from the immovable mouth came also from a remotely frightening world".[122] The dead merchant is Hawkes' most grotesque figure: He "was wedged, standing upright, between two beams, his face knocked backwards, angry, disturbed. In his open mouth there rested a large cocoon..."[123]

The protagonist of Travesty consults a doctor who has had a leg amputated. He has never tried to walk properly with his artificial leg and so his walk is grotesque in the extreme, thrusting, "to the side one fat, startled hand for balance and swinging in great arcs from the hip his artificial limb..."[124] The doctor's nurse dabs herself with antiseptic instead of perfume.

When Vost gets an artificial hand he sees around him "packed together the bodies of creatures naturally rather than

artificially misshapen... who was to say that he was any different from the hunched or limping figures surrounding him?"[125]

There is not much in the way of a story-line in Hawkes. The individual scene is picked up by a spot-light while the rest of the stage is dark, visible in outline.

It is imagery more than anything else which highlights the Hawkes scene of terror. Images create the dense atmosphere, the suffocating violence, the oneiric landscape. "My fiction", says Hawkes, "is almost totally visual and the language depends almost totally on image."[126]

He is Kafkaesque in his employment of the vivid imagery found in dreams. In his interviews with Scholes he admits that his language depends on his feeling for dreams and on his interest in "exploiting the richness and energy of the unconscious".[127] His imagery is also sensuous, tactile and Artaudian.

Hawkes' language is analyzed in the following way:

1. Grotesque

Inanimate as Animate

> "... fat hands holding the claws of chairs..."[128]
>
> "The ivory necklace about her neck flicked its tail and collected itself to squeeze".[129]

"... the white chandelier hanging from the ceiling swayed to and fro, its feet lifeless and still".[130]

"One discolored furrow, a rib of earth that wormed for half an inch above the rest".[131]

"That perpetual afternoon clawed about her knees..."[132]

"... elbows gnawing at elbows..."[133]

The camera's "cyclopian lens".[134]

"... the agonized camera..."[135]
"... his blind hand..."[136]
"... at the edge of the city the small yellow road-working machine, abandoned with its tortured iron claw in the air".[137]

"... the wings of her white headgear fluttered..."[138]

"... the claw of the small yellow earth remover clutching the air..."[139]

"... ribs of sand..."[140]

"... the rotten ribs and backbone of a small boat..."[141]

"... the city was now only the faintest line of little concrete teeth littering the horizon".[142]

"The scream... that was clamped between my teeth was a strenuous black bat struggling, wrestling in my bloated mouth..."[143]

"... the highway was a dead snake in the distance..."[144]

"... I heard a few more snorts of machine gun fire..."[145]

"... the wind, this bundle of invisible snakes ... seems to... coil about my naked legs..."[146]

"... I could hear the tongue swinging about tonelessly in the bell..."[147]

"Far in the distance I could see the cold white thumb of the condemned lighthouse".[148]

The lighthouse has a "black missing tooth for a door... broken glass in its empty head..."[149]

"But time, the white monster, had already gripped this edge of the island in two bright claws, had already begun to haul itself out of an ugly sea, and the undesirable day was upon me".[150]

"... the tall swallow-tailed flames..."[151]

"... the snowballs... were winging at me from all angles, every direction".[152]

"The coffee... was beginning to bubble up into the little myopic eye of the old percolator".[153]

"... little yellow teeth of light".[154]

Animate as Inanimate

A priest has eyes "that retreated on either side of the white bridge of the nose into embittered catacombs..."[155]

Figures who "seemed to dance with one leg always suspended, small white bodies colliding like round seamless pods, and fingers entwined were twice as long as palms".[156]

"... his marionette arms and legs..."[157]

"The Devils... dropped punctured and deflated".[158]

"... a row of tallow girls".[159]

"... enormous unhappy face like the tortured white root of a dead tree..."[160]

2. Man as Creature

"... his mother who visibly had spoken, tottered, folded wings and died".[161]

"The Duke... was keen on the scent".[162]

"Herr Stintz... pointed his snout towards the apartment above, straining his muzzle".[163]

"... the pack of patients..."[164]

"... he ... allowed Little Dora to flap against him and... waited while Dora took the undervest away in her claws".[165]

"... the third camera was in his claw..."[166]

"... Hugh pulling himself out of the settee uncoiling..."[167]

"... boys with... darting tongues and eyes".[168]

3. Funeral Imagery

"... a black and white sentry box, upended like a coffin..."[169]

"A barracks song was coming ffom the coffin box of the piano..."[170]

"... nearby shrouded tree".[171]

"... cabins like mausoleums".[172]

"... the row of weather-beaten bath-houses like upended coffins..."[173]

"... that little road maker no larger then a child's stone in a cemetry..."[174]

"... the baggage carts or... the metal bins like crypts for the dead."[175]

"fruit carts shrouded for the night..."[176]

4. Violent Imagery

"A long scar with a noose at the end of it ran down the thin white flesh..."[177]

Emily's "landscaped abdomen" has "twisting scars like a rough starfish. Every year she liked to have an operation... and the starfish grew larger and larger with fat stitched tentacles".[178]

"... my walls, ceilings, and stairwells were painted often with a white chalk, fresh and sharp as bone..."[179]

"The moon, having suffered in the heavens some voracious attack by night-migratory flocks, its face having been picked by the wind, drifted low past us now in shreds of yellow against the darkness..."[180]

"The town... was as shriveled in structure and as decomposed as an ox tongue black with ants".[181]

"Each letter in the plates of type was butchered into the next..."[182]

"Her widespread eyes were always afraid..."[183]

"... the wrinkles had strangely deepened until the face was gone..."[184]

"... dead unopened letters..."[185]

"... the disease that calmly ate at the calcium in her bones and dark the humbleness out of her system".[186]

"... the calcium continued to dribble away from the cold, well-bred bones".[187]

"Behind cataracts of pale eyes..."[188]

"... the gas flames puffed up from the pipe in a circle like tiny blue teeth round the rim of a coronet".[189]

"... the woman's eyes... set into tiny spectacles with tweezers".[190]

"... eyes nearly awash in their sockets".[191]

"... a scar hanging down from the eye like a hand".[192]

"... pinched lips smashed together".[193]

"... bone-white tennis shoe".[194]

"... instestinal pink, lurid orange, great blistering sheets of lifeless purple".[195]

"... the sand like powdered bone..."[196]

"... sudden long splintered shaft of light..."[197]

"... skin of ice..."[198]

"... rocks... the color and texture of a man's skull..."[199]

"... the flowered bedspread that was stretching like a sterile skin..."[200]

"... white eggs with their... decapitated shells..."[201]

"... fragile cords of flame binding themselves tightly about the log..."[202]

"... the black trees bleeding at the edge of our path".[203]

"... the logs were as large as the bodies of young children..."[204]

"... the sun was rising in the lowest quadrant of my porthole like blood in a bottle..."[205]

"... dead white eyes."[206]

"... a skin of dust".[207]

"... wallpaper the elegant color of dry bone..."[208]

"... a garage... where trucks and automobiles were dismantled and subjected to the hissing of blue flames or hoisted into the air on chains".[209]

"Through the slats in the shutters the light entered the room as through the skeletal ribs of an animal long dead".[210]

"... the black and white toilet stark and waiting like an instrument of execution..."[211]

"... the chaise longue that extended into the room like an ornate tongue, like the narrow prow of an entombed boat..."[212]

"... the cadaverous blue lights..."[213]

"... old women haloed... in the vapors of their terrible coughs".[214]

"... an earthernware jar that hung from the slanting wall like a large bird on a length of cord..."[215]

"Rails and bonelike ties..."[216]

"... the small twisted ears that appeared to have been sewn to the sides of the skull with coarse thread..."[217]

"The trees appeared to be clothed in pale green skins..."[218]

"... the lettuce was a wrinkled leaf of soft green skin, the bits of pimento were little gouts of jellied blood..."[219]

larch trees with their broken backs, the enormous black sky
"The, streaked with fistfuls of congealed fat..."[220]

"... the black crotch of a tree... puckered wounds of lopped branches..."[221]

"... the steam pipes along the walls with their enormous plaster casts like broken legs..."[222]

"... the gearshift level - little white plastic skull for a knob..."[223]

"... the little spotlight... speared the crowd".[224]

"And the dawn was lying out there on its side and bleeding to death".[225]

"... Coca-Cola like dark blood, little drowning buttons of melted ice..."[226]

"... a giant sea-green grandfather cactus stabbed to death by its own needles..."[227]

"... the unshapely humps and amputated spikes, thorns, of miles of crippled cacti..."[228]

"... my weightless wife, a flower already pressed between leaves of darkness before we met..."[229]

In conclusion one can say that in Hawkes cruelty seems to be many edged or polychromatic. The sheer variety of carnal imagery constitutes an attack on our entire anatomy, as Artaud might put it.

Through this carnal imagery the familiar is invested with an almost hypnotic menace plunging one into deep subliminal terror. As we have just seen, some of these images animate the sense of biological terror in the manner endorsed by Artaud, terrors which lie dormant within the corporeal frame. What Artaud calls, "terrible essential cruelty objects can practise on us"[230] is embodied in the decapitated eggs, bleeding trees, bedspreads of sterile skin in Hawkes.

One can say that the fundamental difference between Pynchon and Vonnegut on the one hand and Hawkes on the other, is that whereas the former stress violence enclosed in social and ideological spheres of life, in Hawkes we are face to face with the thought that stirs in the flesh.

As we have seen in the introduction to this chapter, the humour in Hawkes is not ironic in the manner in which it is in Vonnegut of Pynchon because irony diffuses the blackness and reins in terror to a certain extent. In Hawkes there is no lightening of the blackness and fear is not exorcised. In fact, one sees a general mistrust of laughter, and comedy instead of diluting fear, accentuates it.

The schadenfreude hero is like Hawkes' heroes - indifferent and unfeeling. We can see this clearly in the narrator of Travesty, in Cyril, Il Gufo. This is something one notices in Flannery O'Connor as well. The Misfit, Mrs.Turpin are insensitive, unfeeling creatures. This aspect is stressed in each character without much variation.

In Pynchon we noticed sudden shifts from horror to comedy and from comedy to horror. These shifts do not exist in Hawkes who builds a scene till it reaches the pitch of utmost cruelty in the Artaudian sense.

Writers like Dostoevsky write about characters who have been excluded. But Hawkes' world is already upside-down and made up of disorder. He does not let order come back to it as the old writers did. Hawkes' characters do not put on any positive or self-defensive schizophrenic mask - they take the violence of life for granted. The insanity in Hawkes is not contained by the assumed insanity of the central character and reigns supreme. Insanity is the comic victimizer.

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