

PLOT STRUCTURES IN THE FICTION
OF JOHN HAWKES:
FROM *THE CANNIBAL* TO THE SEXUAL TRIAD

In the United States the reputation of John Hawkes is still growing, but, even though he is considered by a handful of perceptive critics as one of the major living American authors he has not yet received from the general public the consideration he deserves. For example, in comparison with writers such as Barth, Pynchon, and Barthelme, Hawkes is still unknown. In fact, while courses on these writers are being offered in the colleges throughout the country, Hawkes is still ignored or, if known, misunderstood by many students and teachers.

If it is true that we most fear what we do not want to know, this situation should not surprise us. In fact Hawkes, more than any other contemporary American writer, ignores our need for «already read novels», for innocuous reading, and involves us in a world of nightmares and distortions, leading us to the discovery of that part of our unconscious that we prefer to relegate to the world of bad dreams.

In Europe, at least in France, Hawkes seems to have had better fortune: most of his works have been translated and many critics have reviewed his books with increasing interest. Unfortunately, here in Italy we cannot even talk of Hawkes' literary fortune. Only two novels have been translated¹ and the foreign language still remains a great hindrance to the recognition of this writer whose books, published by a respected but small publisher, New Directions, are hard to come by even in Hawkes' own country. No Italian critic has as yet devoted an entire essay to Hawkes' fiction. For this reason it seems to me appropriate to start, at last, to remedy this neglect. I say «at last» because thirty years have already

1. *Second Skin* (1964, *Seconda Pelle*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1967); *The Blood Oranges* (1970, *Avanzo d'amore*, Torino, Einaudi, 1974).

elapsed since Hawkes' first novel, *The Cannibal* (1949), was published. After *The Cannibal*, Hawkes wrote seven other novels in which he carried out different experimental techniques. Novels such as *The Lime Twig* (1961), *Second Skin* (1964), and *The Blood Oranges* (1971) are perhaps destined to become classics and represent along with *The Cannibal* Hawkes' best works, while I consider *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* (1974), *Travesty* (1976), *The Passion Artist* (1979) minor achievements. Particularly in *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* and *Travesty* I can see some influence of *The Cannibal* which can be explained as Hawkes' unconscious attempt to energize his fiction by returning to his first and more successful work. In a conversation we had in 1976², Hawkes talked of *The Cannibal* as the unconscious model of what he has written afterwards, and thus it would be interesting to examine the novel in this light both in terms of plot structure and theme. In fact, although the theme of *The Cannibal* has been already examined by John Kuehl in his *John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict*³, no one has ever placed it in close relationship with the structure of its content. After carefully examining the plot structure of *The Cannibal* in isolation, I will show how it is related in general terms to the plot structure of Hawkes' three novels — *The Blood Oranges* (1971), *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* (1979), and *Travesty* (1976) — called by Hawkes the «sexual triad». I have chosen these particular works and not others because, as Hawkes himself said, they «make a set»⁴ and seem to represent a turning point in his late production in that they substitute for the apparently barren and sexless landscapes of his early fiction a lush and sensual vision of life. This relationship, of course, does not pretend to be complete, but simply serves to enlarge and enrich the main point of this essay, which is to define the plot structure of *The Cannibal* and to show at the same time how *The Cannibal* in its macroscopic struc-

2. See JOHN HAWKES, «From *The Cannibal* to the Sexual Triad, an Interview with Stefano Tani», *Diskwura*, 39-45, 1979.

3. JOHN KUEHL, *John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1975.

4. See JOHN HAWKES, «From *The Cannibal* to the Sexual Triad, an Interview with Stefano Tani», *Diskwura*, 39-45, 1979.

ture is the unconscious model of Hawkes' recent fiction. After a consideration of the question of plot structures I will proceed to look at the themes of these novels. My discovery among Hawkes' manuscripts of an early piece of fiction which was written before *The Cannibal* (and which in some passages can be considered a first intimation of the novel) will be the point of departure for an examination of some thematic patterns present both in *The Cannibal* and in the sexual triad.

For Hawkes the word structure has always had an extensive and particular meaning. We can infer this from one of the author's comments during an early interview:

My novels are not highly plotted, but certainly they are elaborately structured. I began to write fiction on the assumption that the true enemies of the novel were plot, characters, setting and theme and having once abandoned these familiar ways of thinking about fiction, totality of vision or structure was really all that remained⁵.

Even though this statement comes after *The Cannibal*, it is perfectly, appropriate for it proving that Hawkes, as talented innovators often do, anticipated in his fiction what he later formulated in theory. As we will see in this analysis, in the case of *The Cannibal* the structure of the novel's plot plays an important role. Events in the novel acquire meaning from the way they are visually structured on the same page. For example, there are often shifts from one event to another, giving the reader an actual «totality of vision» — the possibility of knowing at a glance and in a few lines all the different things that happen in different places to different characters. This unconventional omnipresence and omniscience that the reader shares with the first person narrator of the novel, of course, gives to the structure — intended as totality of vision — a primary role. The other conventional elements such as plot, characters and setting, however, are not actually eliminated, in spite of what Hawkes says. Rather, plot and setting

5. JOHN HAWKES, «An Interview with John Erck», *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, VI, (Summer 1964) p. 149.

are determined by the continuous shifting from what is happening to one character to what is happening to another, while the characters themselves have more space to act than to achieve a deep psychological dimension. The short, continuously shifting and at times overlapping scenes that compose the crucial moments of *The Cannibal* give the novel a nightmarish atmosphere of precarious, heterogeneous unity. Thus, it is not accidental that Hawkes, during a talk we had, called *The Cannibal* «a single big dream in which everything exists».

This particular use of the structure as totality of vision and more general study of the structure of the content of the novel — whose tripartition becomes a pattern for the most recent fiction — is thus the first step in the development of this essay.

First of all, it is necessary to provide a scheme of the division in chapters of the book because the novel has no index pointing out its peculiar structure:

ZIZENDORE'S INTRODUCTION

PART ONE-1945	ONE
	TWO
	LOVE
PART TWO-1914	STELLA
	ERNST
	LUST
	TONIGHT
PART THREE-1945	LEADER
	LAND
	THREE

As we can see, only the first two chapters of PART ONE-1945 are characterized by a number: ONE for the first, TWO for the second. This progressive numeration is used again in the last chapter of PART THREE-1945, which is entitled THREE. The other chapters are entitled by nouns which are not casual at all. I will now examine the novel chapter by chapter.

The novel begins with Zizendorf's introduction, containing the reason why he wrote the story («I was forced to leave the town for a short time and while away I made a compromise. For I have told our story») ⁶ and informing us that everything is told from the point of view of the Nazi leader.

The introduction is followed by PART ONE-1945. It takes place in 1945 in a little German town partially destroyed by the war (Spitzen-on-the-Dein) and it is divided into two chapters.

Chapter ONE begins with a description of the location of the asylum of Spitzen-on-the-Dein («Beyond the edge of the town, past tar-covered poor houses and a low hill bare except for fallen electric poles, was the institution») ⁷ from which Balamir and «all Balamir's demented brothers, in like manner, had been turned out to wander far from the gravel path, to seek anyone who would provide a tin plate or coveted drink» ⁸. Germany is so prostrated that no one can any longer take care of the patients of the asylum. There follows a description of the ruined town and an introduction of the various characters. The Census-Taker pays a visit to Zizendorf, the only editor of Spitzen-on-the-Dein's destroyed newspaper.

Zizendorf is now the lover of Jutta, widow of the newspaper's former owner and sister of Stella.

Chapter TWO develops the episode of the encounter between the Census-Taker and Zizendorf. Then it shifts to describe the dance in the deserted locales of the institution. The asylum is momentarily occupied by a heterogeneous crowd of people, deranged and defeated, who try to obliterate themselves in a grotesque dance:

They swung out of the mist and appeared with pocketed cheeks and shaven heads. They 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.

6. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal* (New York: New Directions, 1949), p. xxiii.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

They danced continuously forming patterns, always the same, of grey and pale blue. The beauties were already sick, and the word *krank* passed from group to group over devious tongues, like the grapewine current of fervent criminal words that slide through wasted penal colonies⁹.

Zizendorf participates in the dance with Jutta. Then, late in the night, he reaches his two followers on the highway to ambush the American motorcyclist Leevey, who paradoxically oversees one third of Allied-occupied Germany: «I [...] had to wait for the puttering of the motorbike, for the saddlebags, the prize»¹⁰.

With these words PART ONE-1945 ends. Chapter TWO is characterized by short «shots» dealing with the Duke, a cannibalistic old aristocrat, survivor of the «ancien regime», who pursues Jutta's young son and wants to kill and eat him. Here we can observe a kind of cinematographic process, similar to the montage technique, which develops further in the second part of the novel. This technique consists of a sequence of «shots» concerning the progress of the various situations going on in the chapter; it unifies the narration, points out the often ironically parallel developments of the various episodes and concludes the chapter with a synoptic vision. What I propose to call «parallel montage» (in fact it emphasizes a «parallelism» among different brief events happening at the same time) is evident also in chapter two where, however, it is still being developed:

Jutta's son, the fairy, fled for his life, his knees the size of finger-joints whirling in every direction like the un-coordinated thrashings of a young and frightened fox.

The Duke continued to prod and tap with the gleaming cane, drew the coat tighter about his chest.

Jutta's daughter watched in the window, her golden curls tight like a wig about the narrow face.

Jutta herself, with the Census-Taker heavily against her shoulders, started down the cinder path, while over all the town and sty-covered outskirts hung a somber, early, Pentecostal chill¹¹.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

It is the montage technique which creates that totality of vision previously mentioned and increases that dreamlike feeling of structural superimposition and repetition also given by the narrative tripartition of the novel. In an interview Hawkes gives an interesting explanation of this characteristic structure of *The Cannibal*:

... Isn't *The Cannibal* an assemblage of fragments? In *The Cannibal* we shift from time period to time period and from locale to locale within a sentence. The technique of «simultaneity» reflects the novel's «cosmic consciousness», as if all life has been reduced to a single dream¹².

What Hawkes calls here «the technique of simultaneity» is what I have termed «montage technique». Quoting Hawkes' words, this technique makes of *The Cannibal* «a single big dream in which everything exists» (note here the sense of simultaneity) and «an assemblage of fragments» (note the obvious sense of fragmentation) and causes a «totality of vision», a «cosmic consciousness», which is plot structure in Hawkes' terms. So the main effects of the montage technique are somehow a balance, a fusion of simultaneity and fragmentation. The simultaneity is present in the fact that different events happen at the same time and thanks to the montage technique they are all briefly described on the same portion of a page so that the reader actually visualizes at a glance these simultaneous occurrences. The fragmentation is a consequence of the montage technique in the sense that all events, although related by the plot, are anyway different, analytical and brief. Fragmentation and simultaneity, totality of vision of all the fragments that compose the whole mosaic, have ultimately the same result on the reader, by helping to create the peculiar dreamlike atmosphere of the novel. On the novel itself, the effect is different. Simultaneity and fragmentation in fact help to create a plot structure differing from that of traditional novels and identified by Hawkes with a «totality of vision». This «totality of vision» can be intended in visual terms (the reader who visualizes the whole page

12. JON HAWKES, «From *The Cannibal* to the Sexual Triad, an Interview with Stefano Tani», *cit.*

at a glance), or in larger terms. In this second case totality of vision implies a dreamlike «totality» of the novel, a completeness which is fulfilled in its structural circularity that I will prove later on.

Going back to the analysis of the content, we can conclude that the second chapter is centered essentially on three events: the dance in the asylum, the pursuit of Jutta's son by the Duke, and Zizendorf's preparations for killing Leevey. These lead to the events that occur throughout the third part of the work and to the conclusion described in the last chapter of the novel, *THREE*.

PART TWO-1914 takes place in Munich in 1914, on the eve of World War I, in a Germany still exultant over the victory of the French-Prussian War of 1870.

The title of the first chapter is *LOVE*, the love born between Stella and Ernst Snow. Stella (who after her marriage with Ernst is called in the narration Madame Snow) sings successfully in the Sportwelt Branhaus of which Ernst's father is the owner. After her performance, Mr. Cromwell, a fanatic pro-German expatriate Englishman, takes Stella home in a carriage. Ernst, whose courtship is forestalled by Cromwell, chases the carriage running frantically through a park: «Then he was running through the shadows like a flapping bird. When he passed the lines of statues, each Hero gave him a word to harden his heart: *love, Stella, Ernst, lust, tonight, leader, land*»¹³. The words that the seven statues of the Heroes give to Ernst are also the titles of the chapters that follow. The first four are the titles of the four chapters that compose this second part set in 1914. The last three are the titles of the first three chapters of *PART THREE-1945* and concern Germany's future.

The chapter *LOVE* centers on the first encounter between Ernst and Stella, the birth of their love. The second chapter, *STELLA*, is about the life of Stella in her family and focuses on the episode of her first rendezvous with Ernst. As Stella is waiting for Ernst in the appointed place, she is tortured by a headache, painful fantasies and oppressive heat; the description of the entire scene seems

13. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, pp. 54-55.

to foreshadow that the love born between them will not have a happy outcome.

The heat seemed to grow more determined, even the clerks panted, whispering closely in each other's ears, and Stella believed the sun would never fall flaming through the torpid clear sky. She wondered how the strange wild cannibals on tropical islands or on the dark continent, running with white bones in their hair, dark feet hardened in the shimmering sand, could bear, in only their feathers, this terrible sun. For the headache made her drowsy. She saw those men, carrying victims high over their heads, as tall, vengeful creatures who sang madly on their secret rock, ... Even when she was tired and desperately warm and even in such a trembling state, she loved him. Her temple throbbed, the clerks were watching. Her fired heart and sweltering faith were beginning to fall away, swept by impatience. She was tired of this park filled with noise, ... She was afraid of being left alone¹⁴.

The third chapter, ERNST, centers on Ernst, on the slow transformation of the young man from potential future leader of Germany (as he had been described in LOVE) to an ambiguous Christlike figure. Ernst and Stella have now married and are on their honeymoon in the Alps. STELLA was the chapter of the rendezvous; ERNST is the chapter of the honeymoon in the mountain hotel. The sinister presages present in the rendezvous now acquire more ominous colours. Ernst buys crucifixes from a devil-like Christ-carver, fills their room with flowers, falls ill, and becomes weaker and weaker. He refuses Stella's love, revealing the sterile and funerary aspect of his mania for the crucifixes: «At night before they slept he arranged the flowers in her hair, and with a kiss laid her away»¹⁵.

At the end of the chapter Stella awakes in the morning and when she looks into Ernst's bed sees «only a small black-haired Christ on the pillow, eyes wide and still, who trembled, and with one thin arm motioned her away»¹⁶.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

The title of the fourth chapter is *LUST* and it is the first with a symmetrical and particularly interesting structure. It begins with a description of the return from the Alps of Ernst and Stella on a train pursued by a pack of dogs. At their arrival in Munich they find the town (that is often referred to in the narration as «das Grab», the grave) swarming with disbanded and wounded soldiers. The honeymoon is over. The war has started, and Stella's house has been abandoned. After this «prologue» the rest of the chapter can be divided into six sections which deal with three different events. The last three sections continue the three events of the first three. So the chapter has a narrative outline of this kind: A (arrival of Ernst and Stella in Munich), B1 (first event), C1 (second event), D1 (third event), B2 (continuation of the first event), C2 (continuation of the second event), D2 (continuation of the third event)¹⁷.

Thus *LUST* is characterized by a tripartite composition of the events as will be the case, even if in different ways, in the chapters of the third part. The title of the chapter is eloquently descriptive: all that happens is characterized by lasciviousness, excessive and ruinous desire. This lust can be for sex, power or something else, but the result is always the same: insanity and ruin. Munich, «das Grab», is a prey to the lust of the war: disbanded soldiers looking for women, confusion, filth and wounded men.

17. A closer examination of events can certainly help us to see better these relationships of continuity:

B1 — Greta, former nursemaid of Stella, now makes her living soliciting the soldiers who crowd Munich. Herr Snow, Ernst's father, has been recalled to arms and now wanders through the town in a state of mental numbness. Greta allures him by chance in the locales of the abandoned *Sperrwelt* of which Herr Snow is the oblivious owner.

C1 — Jutta, Stella's sister, has been taken to a nunnery in order to preserve her from the privations and the corruption of the war. An Oberleutnant, a lieutenant, maintains the discipline in the nunnery. Jutta disobeys the Superior by refusing to go to confession.

D1 — Stella, in her father's empty estate, nurses the dying Ernst who asks her for a crucifix.

B2 — Herr Snow and Greta arrive at the estate. Herr Snow laughs at the agonizing son. Ernst dies.

C2 — Jutta feels sick after the dispute with the Superior. The Oberleutnant looks after her.

D2 — Stella bears Ernst's son. Herr Snow and Greta take the child away.

What there is between Gerta and Herr Snow is not love but lust. In the nunnery where Jutta lives religion has been distorted, becoming a mere instrument of the lust for military power. The prayers are «produced» as in a Krupp factory under the supervision of the Oberleutnant, who thus increases the spiritual yield of the German people. Stella and Ernst end in LUST the parabola of their love begun in LOVE. The evil presages are now realities; Ernst dies insane because of his crucifix mania; their love has gone to ruin, dead. Their son, the fruit of this love, is taken away by Herr Snow and Gerta, the two lustful lovers.

The four chapters of PART TWO-1914 are connected in a relationship which is continuative, associative and oppositive. The continuative relationship is clearly expressed in the love story of Ernst and Stella: the first encounter in LOVE, the rendezvous in STELLA, the honeymoon in ERNST, the end in LUST. There is also an associative relationship between the chapter STELLA (centered on the life of Stella and on the rendezvous) and ERNST (centered on Ernst — on his transformation from potential leader of Germany to ambiguous Christlike figure — and on the honeymoon). The oppositive relationship is the one between the chapter LOVE (the first encounter, the beginning of Ernst and Stella's love story, Germany still exultant over the triumph of the 1870 French-Prussian war) and LUST (the death of Ernst, the end of the love between Ernst and Stella, Germany collapsing during World War I).

PART THREE-1945 is composed of four chapters. The titles of the first three are «Tonight», «Leader», and «Land», the last three words that the last three statues of the Heroes in the park had given to Ernst «to harden his heart»¹⁸. These are the words for the future, for the Germany of 1945 that has to rise again, just as «Love», «Stella», «Ernst», «Lust» were the words for the Germany of Ernst, the Germany of 1914 that was going to be defeated. The title of the fourth chapter is THREE. IN PART THREE-1945 the narrative returns to Germany in 1945, to Spitzen-on-the-Dein, and resumes the action at the point where it had left at the end of PART ONE-1945: the ambush to Leevey.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

In fact TONIGHT, after some lines about the terrible sanitary conditions of the town, returns to Zizendorf and his followers hidden by the side of the highway and waiting for the arrival of the American overseer. The title of the chapter, of course, refers to the events occurring the night of the ambush. Now it will be helpful to draw an outline of the episodes present in TONIGHT, marking each episode with a letter in order to point out better its recurrence inside the chapter. The action is very fast, all events from A to II take place within eight pages, from p. 125 to p. 132.

- A - The hygienic conditions of Spitzen-on-the-Dein. A terrible stench floats in the air.
- B1 - Zizendorf and his followers (Stumpfegel and Fegelein) wait for the arrival of Leevey.
- C1 - Selvaggia looking out of the window sees a looming light; it is the headlight of Leevey's motorbike. Herr Stintz, the school-teacher of the little town, talks with Selvaggia from the window of his apartment, located below the one where Selvaggia lives¹⁹. Justa, her mother, returns from the dance at the institution.
- B2 - Zizendorf and his followers wait for the arrival of Leevey.
- D1 - The Mayor of Spitzen-on-the-Dein, who testified against pastor Miller tried by the Americans, has nightmares during the night.

FIRST PARALLEL MONTAGE (I quote the text exactly as it stands):

- E1 - «Madame Snow held Balamir's hand.
- C2 - The child [Selvaggia] could not sleep and listened to the mother's breathing.
- F1 - Dancers [the ones at the dance in the institution] wearied and each time the record stopped, the silence made them anxious.
- III - A cow with its eyes shut clawed at the empty board walls of a barn with teeth like a hare but found no straw²⁰.

19 All the main characters of *The Cannibal* live in the same building of which Stella (now named Madame Snow) is owner and porter: in the basement lives Balamir, on the ground floor Stella, on the second floor the (poor) Duke, on the third floor the Ceasus Taker, on the fourth floor Herr Stintz, on the fifth Zizendorf, Justa and Selvaggia.

20. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, p. 132.

- I1 - Jutta's son takes shelter in the theatre of his cousin, Stella's son²¹.
The Duke follows him.

CENTRAL EPISODE: The mayor thinks in his sleep about the day of the arrival of the American troops (eight men) at Spitzenton-the-Dein. As the Americans arrive, they take Pastor Miller prisoner. The Colonel commanding the troops questions the Mayor about Miller. The Mayor is evasive. Herr Stints, the schoolteacher, interferes in the interrogation and precipitates the death of Miller. During the night the Colonel loads the rifles of his men with blank cartridges. The colonel compels Zizendorf to be in the firing party that has to shoot Miller in public. He gives Zizendorf a rifle loaded with a live cartridge, so it is Zizendorf who kills Miller. The Americans leave the town. (This episode goes from p.133 to p. 140).

SECOND PARALLEL MONTAGE (in two and a half pages — from the end of p. 140 to the beginning of p. 143 — Hawkes gives a synoptic vision of the actions of the characters in the chapter).

- B3 - Zizendorf and his followers are waiting for the arrival of Leevey.
C3 - Stintz, alone in the dark, stands by the open window and thinks of Selvaggia.
E2 - Madame Snow wraps a quilt around Balamir's shoulders.
D2 - The Mayor awakes and reaches «under the bed for a round receptacle».
I2 - In the abandoned theatre the Duke faces Jutta's son.
J1 - Winter is almost gone, the coagulated underground pipes begin to loosen.
C4 - Stintz, looking out of the window, sees a light. It is the headlight of Leevey's motorbike running on the highway towards the ambush.
B4 - Zizendorf and his followers are waiting for the arrival of Leevey: «At the same time we three heard the sound of the isolated engine as the bastard on the motor approached.

21. The son of Stella and Ernst had returned crippled from World War II and had shut himself off in a picture house «showing each day the same blurred picture to no audience». (HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, p. 5).

'I'll get him in the behind — *behind*' I whispered. The light flared once and went out»²².

From this outline the following conclusions can be drawn: TONIGHT, like LUST, has a complex decentralized structure that bases itself on a repeated and progressive development of many tangential and analytical episodes. The episodes (along with plot, characters, setting, and theme) are apparently fragmentary and disconnected, acquire unity and coherence thanks to the two parallel montages which emphasize a feeling of simultaneity and almost juxtaposition — that «totality of vision» which ties all of them together. The headlight of Leevey's motorbike piercing the night, which is glimpsed by Jutta and Stintz and is awaited by Zizendorf and his followers, is another almost visual *trait d'union*. Because it involves most of the main characters of the chapter. In addition TONIGHT, like following LEADER, has a kind of circular structure. The chapter, after the introductory passage about the sanitary conditions of Spitzen-on-the-Dein, begins properly with the episode in which Leevey is ambushed (pointed out in the scheme with B), which is taken up two more times and finally concludes the chapter. This kind of circular structure fits well Hawkes' conception of *The Cannibal* as a single big dream in which everything exists.

Donald Greiner considers these thematic recurrences to be an example of the cyclical conception of history present in the novel:

In *The Cannibal* he [Hawkes] views history as an ill defined process, a vague but overpowering force which sweeps up humanity and throws it into recurring nightmares. History in the guise of nationalism is the main character. Its cyclical nature is so insistent that it crushes man's efforts to resist, and Hawkes leaves little doubt that the end of World War II means no more than a moment of stasis before the explosion of the next global encounter²³.

Another interesting characteristic of the structure of this and

22. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, p. 143.

23. DONALD J. GREINER, *Comic Terror: The Novels of John Hawkes* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1974), p. 68.

of the next chapter is the presence of a central episode, here, the arrival of the Americans and the shooting of Pastor Miller. More precisely, this episode is «central» because of its position inside the chapter and for length rather than for a literally centralizing — or unifying — function, which seems more likely to be accomplished by the two parallel montages. However, the «central» episode is the only one which happens in the past. It is remembered, dreamed, by the Mayor, and it is in ideal contraposition with the other occurrence in the present that pervades the chapter: the ambush of Leevey, the preparations for breaking that American power which the central episode describes.

LEADER, the title of the second chapter of PART THREE-1945, has a precise meaning: Leevey, the motorcyclist who patrols and controls one-third of Germany, perishes in the ambush; Zizendorf is the new leader of the country. LEADER continues the narration of the events of TONIGHT and takes place entirely during the night.

Through the method already used in analyzing LUST and TONIGHT I will draw an outline of the episodes contained in LEADER.

- A1 - The morning of the day of his death, at one hundred miles from Spitzen-on-the-Dein, Leevey is beared by a prostitute with whom he has spent the night. Then he leaves for Spitzen-on-the-Dein. (pp. 144-146)
- B1 - Stintz and Selvaggia come out of the building and turn their steps towards the place where they have seen the light. (pp. 146-147)

FIRST PARALLEL MONTAGE (in less than three pages — from p. 147 to p. 149 — Hawkes outlines all the episodes of the narration which will be resumed and concluded in the second parallel montage. In this first montage the two shots concerning Madame Snow are longer than the others — they can be considered episodes rather than shots — perhaps because they prepare the central episode of the chapter in which Madame Snow is the main character).

- C1 - «The ghosts [the dead soldiers in an English tank] raised their heads in unison by the canal and sniffed the night air»²⁴.
- D1 - Zizendorf and his followers wait hidden by the side of the highway.

24. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, p. 147.

- E1 - The Duke reaches out his hand to catch Jutta's son who does not move.
- F1 - «Unconscious, drowned cold in acid, the Census-Taker lies on the third floor, dressed, uncovered, where Jutta had dropped him»²⁵.
- G1 - The Mayor awakes and finds out he has the hemorrhoids.
- C2 - The ghosts drink the green water from the canal.
- H1 - Madame Snow, at the ground floor, thinks for a moment that she has heard herr Stintz's voice. She prepares the tea.
- I1 - «On the fifth floor Jutta awakes and feeling less tired, begins to wash a blouse in the hand-basin»²⁶.
- H2 - Madame Snow looks out of the window, but it is completely dark and she doesn't see anything.

CENTRAL EPISODE: takes place in the past and is articulated in two parts. The first part describes the terrible sanitary and technical conditions of «the institution» towards the end of the war. The second part is the consequence of the situation described in the first one: the riot of the patients, which is quelled by the women of Spitzen-on-the-Dein led by Madame Snow. (pp. 149-157)

- D2 - Leevey is killed outright when his motorcycle crashes into a log. Zizendorf, Feglein and Stumpfegel begin to work at the motorcycle. (pp. 157-159)

SECOND PARALLEL MONTAGE (in two and a half pages from p. 159 to p. 161 — we have a synoptic conclusive vision of the episodes which compose the chapter by means of shots, fragments of a few lines. The longest episode concerns the development of Zizendorf's plan after the successful ambush of Leevey. In fact, this is the outstanding episode of the chapter, what we have been waiting for since the beginning of the novel).

- B2 - Hidden on the opposite side of the highway, Stintz and Selvaggia witness unseen the ambush and then go away.
- I2 - Jutta hangs the damp blouse to dry and returns to bed.
- C3 - The limping English ghosts return to the tank.
- E2 - The Duke finally catches Jutta's son in the deserted theatre.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

- G2 - The Mayor is very cold and adds an armful of coats to the blankets on the bed.
 113 - Madame Snow decides to dress and to wait for the light.
 D3 - Zizendorf, Fegelein, and Stumpfegel throw the cadaver of Leevey in a swamp and return to town with the motorcycle.
 A2 - «The slut sleeps alone in her house»²⁷.

It is worth stressing this kind of scheme because it points out the existence and the function of that particular narrative technique, here called parallel montage, which emphasizes the «totality of vision».

Of course, some longer episodes like B1 and D2 cannot be considered shots of the first or of the second montage, and for this reason they appear isolated in the context of this first scheme. But, if I now draw a more schematic outline of the structure of the chapter, it is clear that the entire narrative, with the central episode excluded, is a kind of introduction composed of various shots whose consequences are developed in the conclusive part, which follows the central episode.

The result is a simpler structure of this kind:

- 1) INTRODUCTION in the present time, composed by short fragments and wider episodes.
- 2) CENTRAL EPISODE in the past. It is thematically separated from the introduction and its consequences but, like them, it is divided into two similar moments:
 INTRODUCTION (tragic conditions of the asylum)
 CONSEQUENCES (riot of the patients quelled by the women)
- 3) CONSEQUENCES: DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTRODUCTION in the present time by fragments and wider episodes.

An analogous simplification is certainly also possible for TONIGHT (but without the internal division into «introduction» and «consequences» of the central episode). Both TONIGHT and LEADER have a tripartite structure like LUST, but, unlike it, their struc-

27. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

ture can also be considered circular. In fact, in both of them the shots or fragments of the last part (which I called «consequences») take up and conclude the narrative of the first part (which I called «introduction») and, more particularly, the last fragment of the chapter takes up the first one. For example, in *LEADER* the prostitute who in the last shot of the montage «slept alone in her own house»²⁸ is the same one that at the beginning of the chapter has beaten Leevey. The central episode of *LEADER* set in the past symbolizes the terrible prostration of Germany: the patients rise up because the once modern and effective asylum has collapsed in the chaos that is a consequence of the privations of the war. The women of Spitzen-on-the-Dein have to face the riot armed with barrel-staves; there are no guns and the healthy men are too far away to fight. As in *TONIGHT*, in *LEADER* the central episode in the past contrasts ideally with the development of the chapter in the present: it is in *LEADER* that the American overscor Leevey, the symbol of those who have defeated Germany, is killed. It is not accidental that Zizendorf recalls the darkest period in the moment of the liberation, for this is the best way to emphasize his own merits.

In *LAND*, the third chapter of *PART THREE-1945*, the title has a precise meaning: the land of Germany is finally reconquered by «the movement», which restores the previous order. It is in fact in this chapter that Zizendorf composes typographically his «Indictment of the Allied Antagonists, and Proclamation of the German Liberation», the message that at dawn his followers will distribute to the people. *LAND* resumes the events of *LEADER* and so still takes place during the night. This chapter presents many structural differences in comparison with the two previous ones. In this case, rather than drawing the usual outline, it will be useful to point out its distinctive characteristics. *LAND* starts with the episode in which Stella Snow's son, awakened by noises, finds in his theatre the Duke and Jutta's son. The young war cripple does not suspect the intentions of the Duke, talks respectfully to him and returns to bed. There follows an important event (Zizendorf has the impression they have been spied upon by someone on the highway)

28. *Ibid.*, p. 161

and different fragmentary episodes which do not compose an actual parallel montage and are not taken up at the end of the chapter. The consequence of Zizendorf's impression is that he finds out in talking with Selvaggia that he has been spied upon by her and Herr Stintz. He murders the schoolteacher and goes back to prepare his «Indictment». Unlike TONIGHT and LEADER, LAND contains no episode in the past. After a shot of Madame Snow, the chapter ends by resuming the episode of Stella's son (who in bed has erotic fantasies and thinks again of his strange encounter with the Duke) with which it started. So the chapter keeps the circular structure but lacks both the parallel montages and a central episode in the past. This is perhaps due to the fact that the narration is all focused on the development of Zizendorf's plans, and so it becomes less analytical, more compact. The main episode of the chapter, the composition of the «Indictment», is not placed at the center of the chapter in a past time: it is in the present and is «central» only because of its importance. However, there is no inner contrast between the Indictment and the possibility of its fulfillment in 1945 because its content is bombastic and ambitious and Zizendorf and his followers unreliable. In fact, in the titleless introduction to the narration Zizendorf had reluctantly admitted that he «was forced to leave the town for a short time»²⁹ and that now he is waiting for the first opportunity to return. Hence we can suppose that his program has not been fully accomplished and is now probably in exile.

The fourth chapter of PART THREE-1945 is entitled THREE because it is to be connected ideally with the second chapter of PART ONE-1045 (TWO) in that it concludes its three main events. These events were the pursuit of Jutta's son by the Duke, the plans of Zizendorf, and the situation of the asylum. In THREE the Duke finally kills, cuts, and cooks Jutta's son. Zizendorf concludes his plans for the night begun with the ambush of Lecvey in TWO. The evacuated asylum, which in TWO had been used as a dance-hall, resumes its original function.

29. *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

It now seems useful to consider not in the order of the narration, but rather in chronological order, the different situations through which the Institution passes because its story is also the one of Germany which the Institution seems to symbolize. First of all, one should recall how, in a previous time, the Institution was a modern and effective psychiatric hospital. It was the pride of German technology and, symbolically, Nazi Germany itself, the triumph of its insane efficiency. In *LEADER* the privations of war cripple the organization of the Institution, which is severely damaged by the riot of the inmates and the consequent repression. The Institution, like Germany itself at the war, is near collapse. In chapter *ONE* Germany has already been defeated. The inmates have been turned out because nobody can provide for them: the asylum is empty, the German megalomania seems ended. In chapter *TWO* there is the description of the dance in the asylum. The empty rooms of the Institution are temporarily occupied by people abased and prostrated by the war. In chapter *THREE* Zizen-dorf has, at least for the moment accomplished his plans, by restoring Nazism, and can describe with satisfaction «the long lines that were already filing back into the institution, revived already with the public spirit»³⁰. Germany, after the short bewilderment of defeat, has returned to its usual megalomania.

The action of *THREE* begins *ad dawn* and proceeds through the morning of the day after the ambush. Like *LAND*, it has a structure different from *TONIGHT* and *LEADER*; but, because this is not a deliberate pattern, one expects to find some discontinuity in the inner recurrences. The narrative of *THREE* is analytical. There are two parallel montages but they do not have the unifying energy of those in the first two chapters of *PART THREE-1945*; however, they are interesting for the impression of concise simultaneity given by the shots which compose them, as it is evident from these two examples:

The Duke, his arms loaded with the shopping bag, wearily climbed the stairs and unlocked the door.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

Madame Snow, hearing the noises overhead, knew that the second floor boarder was back.

The Signalman dozed in his chair and forgot the boy and the man with the upraised cane.

Madame Snow did not see the dying embers³¹.

The Census-Taker slept by the bottles in the newspaper office, his hands and face still grey with soot.

Madame Snow hummed while she tied up her hair.

Her son finally slept.

The hatches on the tank were closed³².

As usual, the emphasis is more on the actions than on the psychological dimensions of the characters. In the same way, setting and theme are manipulated by the continuous shifting typical of the montage technique. The central part of the chapter is occupied by a letter from Jutta's husband, a soldier in the German army. Dead or missing, he has never returned. So the letter comes from the past, from the war, and contrasts with the present «peace» restored by Zizendorf.

In this case the chapter does not end by taking up the episode with which it starts. Selvaggia asks «Has anything happened?»³³ and Zizendorf answers, «Nothing. Draw those blinds and go back to sleep...»³⁴. In the «Nothing» of this answer and in Selvaggia's reaction («She did as she was told») ³⁵ there is a sense of historical immutability and resigned victimization that is much more pessimistic than the mood at the end of the other chapters of the novel.

The four chapters of PART THREEE-1945 are in a relation of climactic continuity: every chapter resumes the narrative of the previous one and proceeds towards the end in a crescendo (TONIGHT: the ambush of Leevey; LEADER: the death of Leevey; LAND: the Indictment; THREE: the ephemeral success of Zizendorf).

31. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

The relationships of continuity which tie together the chapters and the parts will give a final proof of admirable structure if examined at a greater distance:

- PART ONE - 1945 is the introduction in the present to the action of the novel.
 PART TWO - 1914 is the center in the past.
 PART THREE - 1945 is the development of the introduction in the present.

The macroscopic structure of *The Cannibal* emphasizes tripartition since it reflects exactly the kind of outline we have drawn for TONIGHT and LEADER, whose inner structures are thus the unconscious model for the one of the novel.

I am now concerned with establishing some patterns of recurrences in the plot structure of *The Cannibal* (1949) and of the novels of the sexual triad: *The Blood Oranges* (1971), *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* (1974) and *Travesty* (1976). This should help us to see *The Cannibal* as the crucial point of Hawkes' fiction, one which potentially contains most of what he has written afterwards. In fact, here my main intention is to show that the macroscopic structuring of the content pointed out in *The Cannibal* is an essential and constant process in Hawkes' work and that it can be found also in his recent fiction³⁶.

We saw how, in *The Cannibal*, PART ONE-1945 is the introduction in the present to the action of the novel. In the novels of the sexual triad as well, there is an introduction in the present told by the narrator of the story which prepares for the subsequent exposition of past events: Cyril, in his present sadness caused by the collapse of his earthly paradise in Illyria evokes the god Love and prepares himself to narrate the event (the arrival of Hugh and

36. JOHN KUEHL in his *John Hawkes and the Craft of Conflict* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1975) gives an enlightening summary of *The Cannibal* (pp. 64-65) and clarifies plot and structure connections between *The Cannibal* and Hawkes' later fiction until *Second Skin*, a novel published in 1964 (pp. 70-75). My study is here concerned with *The Cannibal* and three novels published in the seventies, but I feel that I must mention and thank Mr. Kuehl for his work to which I have at least an indirect debt.

Catherine) that has caused the present situation (*The Blood Oranges*); Allert observes Ursula, who is packing and is going to leave him, and thus prepares us for the remembrance of those past events which are the cause of the departure of his wife (*Death, Sleep & the Traveler*); Henri, driving a sport car at night through the French countryside, announces to his two passengers, his daughter and his friend, that he is going to commit suicide by killing himself and two of them in a prearranged accident (*Travesty*).

In *The Cannibal*, PART TWO-1914 is the center in the past. Similarly, in the novels of the sexual triad, after the introduction there follows the narration in the past of the events that have caused the present situation: Cyril tells the past story of his life in Illyria from the arrival of Catherine and Hugh until the death of Hugh (*The Blood Oranges*); Allert evokes fragments of his life with Peter and Ursula and of his cruise (*Death, Sleep & the Traveler*); Henri remembers past episodes that prompted his suicidal design (*Travesty*).

In *The Cannibal*, PART THREE-1945 is the development of the introduction in the present. In the same way in the novels of the triad the three narrators — after having concluded the exposition of the events in the past — return to the present time of the introduction and conclude what was going on in it: Cyril, who is again in the little church where he was at the moment of the arrival of Hugh and Catherine in Illyria, reflects upon virginity as he observes the sketches on the walls of the church (*The Blood Oranges*); Allert assists at the departure of Ursula and then wonders what he can do (*Death, Sleep & the Traveler*); Henri, after having concluded his philosophical digressions about suicide and his remembrances, announces that the moment of the crash is close and promises to the two passengers that «there shall be no survivors»³⁷ (*Travesty*).

Thus, the tripartite structure of the novels of the triad also has its unconscious model in the macroscopic tripartite structure

37. JON HAWKES, *Travesty* (New York: New Directions, 1976) p. 128. Going through the novel, the reader will realize that the narrator of *Travesty* is actually alone in the car and that the poet friend whom he calls Henri and to whom he addresses most of his monologue is only a projection of his own self. This is why we call the narrator by his real name, that is, Henri.

of *The Cannibal*. It is interesting to observe how both these structures also imply a sense of circularity present in resuming and concluding in the third part of the tripartition the events described in the first. Structural circularity is of course related to the meaning of the novel. *The Cannibal*, for example, extends its literal cannibalism to a structural and symbolical meaning: the novel, because of its circularity, is like a snake trying to eat its tail, and thus «cannibalizes itself» in its cyclical historical repetition. In fact the ridiculous but successful putsch of Zizendorf in 1945 pushes Germany back to a situation similar to the one of 1914, and as the novel ends, it seems that another period of folly, nationalism and annihilation is going to start from the ashes of the past. In the sexual triad, circularity is connected more with timelessness at large than with cyclical repetition. *The Blood Oranges* ends with a significant sentence pronounced by Cyril: «In Illyria there are no seasons»³⁸. Cyril, more than going back to the past and his lost lover, wants to get out of the flow of time, to evoke and enter timelessness through the narration of a paradisiacal and perhaps imagined life. In the last page of *Death, Sleep & the Traveler*, Allet says that he wants only to «think and dream, think and dream»³⁹, that is, to overcome his present depression by forgetting his past and escaping time. For Henri in *Travesty* the final suicide is an act of poetry, the only way to transcend the routine of life and sex and gain eternity.

Another proof of a structural affinity between *The Cannibal* and the novels of the sexual triad is the fact that all of them are written in short paragraphs, particularly *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* which seems to take up at large the fragmentary technique typical of *The Cannibal*. The quick shifting of events of the parallel montages and the consequent «totality of vision» at an actual visual level of *The Cannibal* are not present in the sexual triad; however, in these three novels we can find a «totality of vision» in larger terms, that is, structural circularity and timelessness. In addi-

38. JOHN HAWKES, *The Blood Oranges* (New York: New Directions, 1970), p. 271.

39. JOHN HAWKES, *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 179.

tion, the continuous interchanging of episodes and the interrelation between present and past sometimes recall in *The Blood Oranges*, *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* and *Travesty* the fusion of fragmentation and simultaneity typical of *The Cannibal's* montage technique and thus its dreamlike atmosphere. Hawkes himself, in a conversation we had, was quite aware of these affinities:

But isn't *The Cannibal* an assemblage of fragments? In *The Cannibal* we shift from time period to time period and from locale to locale within a sentence. The technique of «simultaneity» reflects the novel's «cosmic consciousness», as if all life has been reduced to a single dream. From *The Beetle Leg* to *The Lime Twig* to *Second Skin* there is perhaps increasing surface order and I suppose that *The Blood Oranges* is the most conventionally-ordered fiction I've written. The short paragraphs of *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* are an explicit return to the earlier form of *The Cannibal*, and the method relates to the preoccupation with the unconscious that exists in both books. The irony is that *Travesty* appears to be the opposite, because of its purity. Yet even this short novel is a kind of frieze of images. An imaginary shepherd watching a speeding car becomes a fusion of the pastoral and cosmopolitan worlds⁴⁰.

Now that I have verified the structural recurrences of a tripartition in the plot of both *The Cannibal* and the sexual triad — as well as the permanence of some kind of fragmentation in all these works — I can move a step further and show how this structural recurrence is, in Hawkes, the aspect of a fundamental way of creating that can be found also at a thematic level, again exemplified in both *The Cannibal* and the sexual triad. In other words, these works, so far apart in time, are related both in terms of plot-structures and theme, showing *The Cannibal* to be the energizing source and the unconscious model of Hawkes' most recent fiction. This particular view of *The Cannibal* will enlarge and enrich the previous study of the structure of the novel, which is a necessary starting point since it is the source of both the structural and thematic recurrences I want to describe. But before examining *The*

40. JON HAWKES, «From *The Cannibal* to the Sexual Triad, an Interview with Stefano Tani». *Dicmisata*, 39-45, 1979.

Cannibal in this sense, it is worth stressing some connections between Hawkes' earlier fictional exercises and *The Cannibal* itself. In fact the discovery among Hawkes' manuscripts of a piece of fiction antecedent to *The Cannibal*⁴¹, which recalls some situations of the novel, will add to this essay a retrospective dimension giving a possible document of the genesis of *The Cannibal* itself and an even further proof of how early and deeply rooted are the thematic patterns going through all of Hawkes' fiction. I want to point out that here I am not dealing with a clear relation but with a kind of inner «net» of similar words and circumstances which could even be susceptible to wider study in psycholinguistic terms. This passage is from «The Ambulance Driver»:

Almost every morning I would awake from the cold when it was still dark, trying at first to find more warmth in the blankets, unwilling to admit a new day ... after struggling into the awkward coat, fumbling with the big buttons, and pulling on the stiff cold leather boots, I would climb over the front seat, bunch myself behind the wheel, and try to start the engine⁴².

This other passage is from *The Cannibal* and describes Leevey leaving his room after the night he has spent with the prostitute who beat and injured him:

Leevey doused his face in the basin, slicked down his black hair. «That's life», he said, «that's life», and as the sun rose clear and cold he slung the Sten-gun on his back, polished his boots, fastened the gauntlets, climbed on his rusty motorcycle, and began the tour of his district⁴³.

As we can see, there are many correspondences. First of all, both passages deal with the reluctant awakening of a soldier who

41. I found «The Ambulance Drivers» — a paper written by Hawkes in 1947 when he attended in Harvard a Creative Writing class taught by Albert Guerard — during some research in the Harvard Houghton Library, where all Hawkes' manuscripts are deposited.

42. JOHN HAWKES, *The Ambulance Drivers*, 1974, Unpublished manuscript in the Houghton Library, Harvard University. (Italics ours).

43. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, p. 145. (Italics ours).

has to perform his daily duties («... trying at first to find more warmth in the blankets, unwilling to admit a new day»; «'That's life', he said, 'that's life'»). Both the soldiers (the one of «The Ambulance Driver» may be considered Hawkes himself, because the paper is a description of his experience as an ambulance driver for the American Field Service during World War II) have to drive a vehicle in the cold dawn («I would awake from the cold») after the uncomfortable routine of dressing. The structures of the two passages, as well as the words used, are remarkably similar. The recurrence of the word «boots», the adoption of the verb «to climb» for both vehicles and the use of the conjunction «and» before the concluding verb phrases, which describe the moment of the departure, establish an interesting associative net. One could object that mechanical, everyday actions such as the dressing of a drowsy soldier imply an obvious and repetitive chain of actions and therefore a likely use of similar words. But the structures of the sentences are too closely related, the situations too similar: this is the case of an autobiographical experience transposed in fiction first consciously («The Ambulance Driver») and then unconsciously (*The Cannibal*), in the context of a more detached creative process. Continuing this comparative analysis, it is possible to find other analogies:

I HUNG ONTO THE STEERING WHEEL WHICH MADE MY HANDS COLD⁴⁴.

He [Leevey] traveled ninety miles with his palms shivering on the steerhorn handlebars, the white cold air glazed endlessly ahead...⁴⁵.

The feelings of cold and of uncomfortable driving focused on the steering device are as similar as can be permitted by vehicles so different from each other. The following two passages are also very explicative about a close but filtered relationship between life and fictional world:

44. JOHN HAWKES, «The Ambulance Driver».

45. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, p. 145.

I connected this vista with home and wrote long letters about it to my mother⁴⁶.

[Leevey] sped along thinking of the letters he would write home⁴⁷.

In the light of these observations, the following paragraph about Stella's crippled son, who is fantasizing in his bed after his encounter with the Duke and the child, may also have an autobiographical origin:

He remembered with fixed pleasure, that night in the shed behind the boarding house and the girl from out of town with braids, who was pretty as a picture. She lost her pants in the shed and left them when the old Madame called and they had to run. In the late night he thought it was delightful, a skirt without the pants beneath.

«I haven't felt this way», he thought, with the Duke and the child in the back of his mind, «since that ambulance ride four weeks after losing the leg. It was the bouncing of the car then, the driver said. Tonight it must have been jumping up and down the stairs⁴⁸».

In fact as an ambulance driver Hawkes had certainly to deal with rutted uncomfortable roads which exposed the wounded soldiers to bounces and jerks. This passage from «The Ambulance Drivers» is a possible source of the feeling experienced by Stella's crippled son:

I knew that if I ever had to travel down that road, I would get stuck. The ambulance wheels would spin around, clotting the underside of the fenders with mud ... I could hear the worried voices of the patients inside⁴⁹.

Stella's crippled son is a key character for better understanding some recurrences in the novels of the sexual triad. He is, in fact, the source of a particular thematic pattern displayed for the

46. JOHN HAWKES, «The Ambulance Drivers», (crossed out in the manuscript).

47. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, p. 145.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

49. JOHN HAWKES, «The Ambulance Drivers».

first time in the previously quoted passage: mutilation and erotic fantasies.

In *The Blood Oranges* one of the main characters, Hugh, is without an arm, is an onanist and reads «faded erotic periodicals»: ⁵⁰ sexually unsatisfied, Hugh «idealizes» sex. In *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* there isn't any real mutilation, but Allert, the narrator, collects pornographic pictures and is considered by the other two main characters, Ursula and Peter, «a psychic invalid» ⁵¹. Allert knows that his wife Ursula must have thought of him «as a Dutch husband who had been lobotomized — but imperfectly» ⁵². Even if the mutilation is not physical but (supposedly) mental, the situation of the character does not change; his own is a «mutilated» sexuality, limited to passive erotic fantasies. This pattern continues in *Travesty* with Henri, the narrator, and his physician. They both are mutilated: Henri has only one lung, his physician does not have a leg, like Stella's son. Henri knows that «once every week this poor, ruined man [the physician] sat entirely alone for precisely two hours in a little nearby movie house devoted only to the showing of so-called indecent films» ⁵³. It is now useful to remember the introduction to Stella's crippled son in *The Cannibal*:

He had returned to his wife and rooms in a corner of the moving picture house, and from then on, worked with the black machine in the hot projection room, showing each day the same blurred picture to no audience ⁵⁴.

Thus the image of the crippled physician watching pornographic films in an empty picture house has its source in the first description of Stella's son in *The Cannibal* and unifies in a single scene mutilation and erotic fantasies ⁵⁵. Indeed, in *The Cannibal* Haw-

50. JOHN HAWKES, *The Blood Oranges*, p. 84.

51. JOHN HAWKES, *Death, Sleep & the Traveler*, p. 8.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

53. JOHN HAWKES, *Travesty*, p. 92.

54. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, p. 5.

55. This pattern also appears in Hawkes' latest novel, *The Passion Artist* (New York:

kes' universe is already potentially present and his description of the novel as «a single big dream in which everything exists» seems now even more appropriate.

Another sexual pattern is voyeurism, present both in *The Cannibal* (The Census-Taker looks at Zizendorf and Jutta copulating)⁵⁶ and *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* (Allert looks at Peter and Ursula petting)⁵⁷.

One of the distinctive characteristics of *The Cannibal* is the sense of ruin which it emanates; Hawkes himself is aware that some of *The Cannibal's* symbols of destruction are present and renewed throughout his latest fiction:

In *The Blood Oranges* the canal of *The Cannibal* is literally present again; when Hugh accidentally hangs himself he does so within sight of that canal. The canal of *The Cannibal*, in a sense the ruined world of *The Cannibal*, is evident in the ruined fortress of *The Blood Oranges*, and in the canal of *The Blood Oranges*. In *Second Skin*, the abandoned lighthouse is the same image, the image of a building associated with destruction. Even in *Travesty* as they are driving through the little town at night there is that idea in the slates falling off the roofs, in the possible crash against the walls: there is this sense of destruction associated with stone⁵⁸.

Small or circumscribed settings are peculiar to Hawkes' works and represent another instance of the visualization that ties together *The Cannibal* with the sexual triad. In *The Cannibal* all the characters live in the same building, and this certainly helps that sense of simultaneity, of contiguous, tangential actions, which is mainly created by the original structure of the novel. This plot device is repeated also in *The Blood Oranges* where the two cou-

Harper & Row, 1979), where Konrad Vost, a middleaged employee, believes he has lost his left hand (but he actually hasn't) during a riot in a women's prison, and goes through all sorts of dreamed and real sexual experiences.

56. JOHN HAWKES, *The Cannibal*, p. 22.

57. JOHN HAWKES, *Death, Sleep & the Traveler*, p. 88.

58. JOHN HAWKES, «From *The Cannibal* to the Sexual Triad, an Interview with Stefano Tani», *Kyushu*, 39-45, 1979.

ples (Cyril and Fiona, Hugh and Catherine) live in twin villas close by each other. In *Death, Sleep & the Traveler* the ship is the isolated unifying setting in which the greater part of the novel takes place. In *Travesty* the three characters are in a car that speeds towards a predestined crash. In these works tangential or single settings are fictional focuses for plots which are structurally juxtaposed or spreading from these ideal centers. Hawkes, in fact, transcends the physical and often small setting which remains a kind of suggestion, a starting point towards a wider symbolical discovery.

In conclusion, *The Cannibal* is the model — often unconscious — of a wide pattern both structural and thematic which pervades Hawkes' fiction and of which I have given some hint. It seems that all his work is potentially contained in the nightmarish and yet sensual microcosm of this first novel. Thinking in a visual way of Hawkes' works, it is easy to see a series of links starting from *The Cannibal* and tending to return to it. In other words, it is easy to see a circular image; likewise, the main pattern of *The Cannibal* itself is thematic and structural circularity.

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