A MAGIC BOX AND RICHARD BRAUTIGAN

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PREFACE

The structure of reality has been a major concern of both writers and critics in recent years because of the changing concepts of the nature of the real. No longer convinced that concrete experience is the only reality, contemporary novelists are changing the form of the novel in order to portray the many modes of perception through which one can perceive the layers of reality that exist within the self. With this in mind I conceived during a study of the Continental Novel a metaphor which I named a "magic box" that seems to be a means by which I could show similarities between the two Twentieth Century novels The Steppenwolf by Herman Hesse and Pale Fire by Vladimir Nabokov. This study led to an examination of the way in which many writers have used multiple modes of perception to convey the many layers of reality that apparently exist. Convinced that such a study demonstrates that the "magic box" could stand for a certain type of fiction that began with the inception of the novel, I have examined and analyzed a number of novels from the Eighteenth Century to the present. I then examined Richard Brautigan's novels for evidence of the magic metaphor in his works. I chose Brautigan because I believe him to be a significant contemporary writer.

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CHAPTER I

A MAGIC BOX

A magic box can be a metaphor appropriate to a particular kind of fiction, that is, a mode with several distinct structural characteristics, all of which are based on philosophical issues concerning the nature of reality. The first of these characteristics is the use of multiple modes of perception through which more than one level of reality is expressed. Hermann Hesse's Steppenwolf, from which the original construct of the magic box metaphor emanated will illustrate this premise. Prismatic in structure, the novel has multiple modes of perception: the narrator who submits to the reader both Haller's records and his final impressions of him; the records themselves, which contain Harry Haller's experiences while he stays in the room across the hall from the narrator; and the "Treatise on the Steppenwolf" included in Haller's records. All three views give a different perspective on Harry, the most objective one being the "Treatise." The central theme, the desire for death as an exit from the realities of life and the ability to cope with the self, are exemplified in Haller's constant desire to commit suicide--at one time he sets the date for age fifty and contemplates it so strongly that in the early part of the novel he is afraid to go home. The crux of Harry's problem is that he is hampered by illusions that are more self-deceit than conviction, but like the contemporary writers of the 1970's--only as an author not as a character--Harry attempts to reshape his world through

imagination. Harry cannot make a workable distinction or find a point between imagination and so-called concrete experience, does not understand that no definition of reality in conventional terms can be made.

Harry Haller's dichotomy of values is an illusion about a false ideal, that is, that one can accept only one aspect of his personality rather than accept all as justifiable and natural. Even the "Treatise," which points out to Haller the two beings, wolf and man, with all its various aspects that reside in the self, does not make him come to terms with his divided nature. The warning against suicide as only an emergency exit or as a crutch to support the belief that life is simply a bad joke makes no real imprint on Haller until he meets Hermine and gives himself up to his other irreconcilable half; and even then, he harbors the illusion that these experiences are not really a part of his existence in the same sense as his rebellion against Philistinism. Actually, Haller invents in his imagination a kind of sainthood associated with the concrete and mundane reality of his sensual experiences. Theodore Ziokowski, a foremost critic of Hesse states:

> On the everyday level, Haller's experiences with Hermine constitute the first blows against the illusory and oversimplified existence that Haller had constructed for himself in his flight from the world. Through her he sees that his 'ideals' were largely a pose, that he actually lived in a world just as tight as that of the average bourgeois--but lonelier.
>
> On a higher level Hermine and Pablo, the jazz musician to whom she introduces Haller, are equally important as reflections of his own thoughts. Occasionally these two representatives of the sensual world utter deep and significant statements that will conform to the realistic picture drawn of them. Hermine, for example, expresses quite lucidly the central tenet of the novel, which Haller is unable to formulate articulately for himself; she confirms his inchoate belief in the eternal spiritual kingdom of the Immortals, telling him what people of their sort, the Steppenwolf-natures, live for: not fame, but eternity--the third kingdom of the spirit according to Hesse's chiliastic vision.

> Just as Haller read his own speculations on the Steppenwolf into an indifferent pamphlet, so has he transplanted his own thoughts into the words of a clever courtesan. This fact is stressed: 'All of these, it seemed to me, were perhaps not her own thoughts, but mine, which the clairvoyant girl had read and breathed in and which she was now restoring to me so that they had form and stood before me as though new.' Even Hermine understands this, for she reminds Haller why she is important for him; she is a kind of mirror for him because there is some part of her that understands and responds to him.[1]

Hermine's sainthood is invented; only Haller's double perception gives her the dimension which makes the realistic plane consistent throughout the novel assume symbolic proportions. The point is, however, that to Haller both levels are equally real, and both levels function as prismatic reflections of both realities.

Haller's relation to Pablo is even more striking. While Pablo is presented on one level throughout the novel as more of a sensuous animal than a human being and takes Harry on an opium fantasy trip through his Magic Theater--Hesse emphasizes that Pablo is familiar with narcotics--Pablo also gives Haller a visible view of his own world. This trip is carefully foreshadowed from the beginning; the message in the letters on the wall in the alley, Haller's dream of Goethe when he is under the influence of alcohol, the "Treatise" which states that immortals are those who transcended the self. Haller sees in the Magic Theater a reflection of his own inner life just as the "Treatise" and Pablo tell him he will.

Haller perceives many facets of his personality in the magic mirror, facets that date back to childhood, through the present, and into the future in his old age; and then he enters only four of the thousands of boxes prepared for his amusement. In one box marked "All Girls Are Yours," Haller reexperiences all his past loves and learns how he failed to react in a normal manner, but he has also seen himself jump out of the

magic mirror as a young man who embraces Pablo and goes off with him. Haller is both homosexually and heterosexually inclined and is more fascinated than frustrated by the knowledge at the moment. In another box Haller learns that he can enjoy war and killing; in fact, whether Haller enters a box or not, every motif is mentioned in the fifteen "sideshows" Hesse mentions by name--suicide, the decline of Western civilization, art, music, humor, solitude, personality. But one box differs slightly, "The Marvels of the Steppenwolf Training"; this scene externalizes in surrealistic fashion the conflict between the ascetic versus the sensual. In a scene similar to an incident in Waiting for Godot, man and wolf play a normal role and then reverse, only the reverse is the most horrifying in that the man turned wolf eats the lamb and the rabbit, eats what the wolf is trained to refuse for the reward of some chocolate.

In yet another box labeled "Guidance in the Building Up of the Personality. Success Guaranteed," a man in oriental dress who looks like Pablo plays chess with the pieces of Haller's personality and gives the following advice:

> The mistaken and unhappy notion that a man is an enduring unity is known to you. It is also known to you that man consists of a multitude of souls, of numerous selves. The separation of the unity of the personality into these numerous pieces passes for madness. Science has invented the name schizomania for it. Science is in this so far right as no multiplicity may be dealt with unless there be a series, a certain order and grouping. It is wrong insofar as it holds that one only and binding and lifelong order is possible for the multiplicity of subordinate selves. This and the single advantage of simplifying the work of the state-appointed pasters and masters and saving them the labors of original thought. In consequence of this error many persons pass for normal, and indeed for highly valuable members of society, who are incurably mad; and many, on the other hand, are looked upon as mad who are geniuses. . . . We demonstrate to anyone whose soul has fallen to pieces that he can rearrange these pieces of a previous self in what order he pleases, and so attain to an endless multiplicity of moves in the game of life.[2]

After playing the game several times, that is, building the same world but with a different key so that each world is entirely new, Pablo adds: "This is the art of life. . . . You may yourself as an artist develop the game of your life and lend it animation. You may complicate and enrich it as you please. It lies in your hands" (p. 220).

In the final tableau box labeled "How One Kills for Love," the two levels of reality which Haller has experienced throughout the novel intermingle and entangle to such a degree that he cannot separate them. Haller has a sublime experience, a contact with the immortals in the person of Mozart very similar to the experience of killing Hermine when he sees her in the arms of Pablo. While the murder is not necessarily an actuality, it marks the climax of the novel, for in Haller's mind the idealized, invented image of Hermine that has obsessed him is reduced to bourgeois reality by his jealousy and disgust because she is very much of the flesh. When she shows herself in a sensual capacity, it defies his invention of her as a spiritual ideal just as he defied Molly's leg--it turns into a scorpion--in his dream about Goethe. And even though Mozart appears again and tunes in a Handel concert on a poorly tuned radio, Haller recoils in despair. But Mozart chastises him: "Listen you poor thing . . . Handel, who, disfigured by radio is, all the same, in this most ghastly of disguises still divine. . . . When you listen to radio you are a witness of the everlasting war between idea and appearance, between time and eternity, between the human and the divine" (p. 242). Pablo whom Haller discovers was the Mozart also chastises Haller for confusing the Magic Theater with "reality" because he kills Hermine. Haller asks for death, the easy out, but his punishment is to stay alive. He must learn to live and "to listen to the cursed radio music of life and to reverence the

spirit behind it and to laugh at its distortions" (p. 247). Haller fails in one respect because he cannot sustain the creative will of the imagination, but he does come to understand that there is no such thing as reality in conventional terms. One's constructs whether they be imagined or concrete are equally real; in fact, he sees that one must not try to make specific distinctions between the two, must blend both invention and concrete experience to come to terms with the unity of self.

The magic box metaphor is developed in explicit terms in Pablo's Magic Theater and is implied in the novel as a whole. In a larger context, however, the magic box metaphor could stand for a certain type of fiction, which through multiple modes of perception deals with the nature of reality, but that construct of reality can no longer be limited to the traditional view.

The realist usually uses the traditional modes of perception. Concerned with rational conscious behavior and discernable consequences that can be verified by experience, the realist follows the traditional structural pattern in his fiction, either short story or novel in order to give order to life; consequently, he has great concern about the effect of action upon character, and his central issues are that of conduct. Democratic and objective, the realist selects issues accurately as they affect men and women in actual situations. The realist, often an omniscient author, constructs scenes or boxes with only three sides in which, like the drama, the reader is allowed to see the characters in action in the here and now. Plausible characters in plausible scenes that reflect a concrete world act out issues of conduct or expose character traits by means of psychological probings. Only one level of reality is expressed;

the rational conscious mind operates in an identifiable world which is presented in single box scenes.

Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice is a good example of this kind of realistic novel. The central concern of the novel is conduct, that is, how an individual must behave in certain social circumstances as he is defined in the world in which he lives, and that world is simply the social environment, a "civilized" community with "gentlemen" and "ladies" who must observe refined behavior and sentiments, must fall in love, and yet preserve their dignity. For Austen the social environment is based, in a word, on property; property metaphorically becomes a young man, which all the Bennet girls must find and marry, but they must stay within the terms of the "civilized" world because marriage is simply a complex engagement between a couple and society; the individual marries society as well as her mate. The manhunt motif, the Bennet girls' major concern, must be tempered with self-respect and intelligence; some sensitivity is acceptable, but never can there be uncontrolled emotion. In order for Jane Austen to portray the proper action for the individual, three female and three male character types emerge in the novel: Jane, the tame girl; Lydia, the mere hussy; and Elizabeth, the spirited and sensitive one. These three representative types ally themselves respectively with Bingley, a muff; Wickham, a rake; and Darcy, the eligible. Backed by an absurd, vulgar mother and a bitter father, all three girls undergo conflicts in a sequence that reveals the proper values and behavior which one must employ in order to maintain oneself in the social milieu.

Jane, Bingley, Elizabeth, and Darcy are the four developing characters with whom one learns these values and with whom one could identify in real life. Lydia, Wickham, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Parson Collins, and Lady

Catherine remain flat, but they still represent types that one could meet in a typical Eighteenth Century drawing room. Wickham seems to develop, but only through Elizabeth's eyes; Wickham is essentially static, but he functions as a foil for both Elizabeth and Darcy in order to develop Austen's point about the proper amount of pride and prejudice one should have. In Chapter V, Miss Lucy wonders how such a fine young man as Darcy with family and fortune, everything in his favor, could be so arrogant, but concludes that he has a right to be proud. Elizabeth agrees and admits that had he not mortified her pride, she could forgive him. What is relevant here is that Austen is explaining as a realist the way minds operate in certain circumstances; to Austen the physical particular is subordinate to the attitude it serves to stimulate. Darcy's pride is acceptable, and even though his pride leads to prejudice, this too is acceptable in Darcy because Elizabeth is not his social equal. On the other hand, Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy over his rudeness in Chapter I and what she believes about his treatment of Wickham later turns to pride, but this is not acceptable in her because even her pride is shattered in Chapter XVIII when Mrs. Bennet stays too long and talks too much about Jane and Bingley at the ball. Even though both Darcy and Elizabeth must be "converted," Austen makes it quite clear that Darcy is superior to the whole group, including Elizabeth. Even Bingley is dull. In fact, Darcy's developing sensitivity and kindness would become a fairy tale without the agony he undergoes to allow himself to love Elizabeth who is beneath him socially, and were she not such a spirited and sensitive girl who becomes humbled finally by Darcy's attentions to her, the resolution of the novel could not be their marriage. However, both Jane and Bingley and Darcy and Elizabeth marry, an ideal reconciliation for both girls. They gain

"proper" marriages in a society which demands a balance between emotion and intelligence. Neither Elizabeth nor Jane are forced to marry a man they do not love as Charlotte is. She marries Collins without loving him because she knows he is the best she can have. On the other hand, Lydia loses herself to Wickham because she is too emotional. But Mr. Bennet has learned from Lydia's loss to be a good father and will train Kitty to be "proper," so all the issues of conduct are balanced and in order in the end.[3]

Realism reigns supreme in Jane Austen's world; both the truth and her obligation to the reader are balanced, and so is the basic structure of the novel. The plot line moves through six scene patterns or three sided boxes exemplifying recognition, negative reconciliation, and finally a positive reconciliation for Elizabeth and Darcy. Jane and Bingley undergo a similar but less complete pattern. The point is, however, that the form of the novel operates on diverging and converging mathematically balanced movements with antithetical balances that are all reconciled.[4] This balance and symmetry of form in relation to the effect of action on character fits the realistic view that life must have order. Those who behave properly get what they deserve, and those who do not also get what they deserve. The values are clear; social and moral standards must be maintained, and emotion must be controlled if the social environment demands it. That is what Austen's world is, and that is all one sees in the boxes, one set of boxes arranged in a linear line, one point of view and only one level of reality.

Austen's Sense and Sensibility, Turgenev's Fathers and Sons, Tolstoy's War and Peace, and Balzac's Pere Goriot, to name a few, are also realistic novels, but emerging out of this frame of reference are novels

that begin to function on more than one level of reality and begin to move into the level of the surreal. The surrealistic frame deals primarily with the subconscious modes: intuition and imagination. One need not necessarily see logical relationships between idea and statement, between cause and effect relationships. Time and space are dislocated, and characters relate more to the cosmic scheme of things than to civilization or codes of conduct. Structurally images that are unrelated may be linked together or superimposed over one another. There may be symbols that operate and indicate the lateral content of the dream. There may be a merging of antitheses, montage, grotesqueries that give pattern and design; and even though there may be a traditional plot line, the characters operate in a dream world or in a fantasy one.

These surrealistic elements begin to occur from the beginning of the development of the novel. For example, Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders is primarily realistic, but there are actually four separate perceptions in the novel: a narrator who attempts to establish a realistic atmosphere when he explains that he has altered Moll's words to keep from offending the reader, that she is really more penitent than she appears at the end, that her private history be taken for genuine fact as well as a lesson in conduct. But Moll never struggles over her moral state, and when she tells her story, it is strictly hers just as she remembers it; she wants to be honest, but she cannot be. She thinks subjectively, seeing logical relationships only as they affect her day to day needs; she operates in a fantasy world of values which only she can justify. Her moralistic values are superimposed over the pleasure of the moment. Moll is a plausible prostitute and thief; she does the only thing an outcast woman from the middle class can do; the real crux of Moll's revelation lies in the

discrepency between her aspirations to be a human being and the truth of the insolvable contradictions of the Eighteenth Century world in which she lives. In order to survive Moll lives subjectively in both imagination and reality, so she creates her own imaginative world in which her secret life is also made visible. Moll is both narrator and creator, and in the process of telling her story, three points of view emerge--her inward condition of mind and spirit, the concrete facts of her outward so-called reputation, and the invented other self that Moll sees in herself, a self which emerges from the first two points of view. Moll conveys three realities operating at the same time, one through mind and spirit, one through imagination, and one through concrete details; thus, what evolves is a triple set of boxes or scenes of reality superimposed over each other and set in a frame by a narrator to achieve distance.[5]

The dual nature of character, that is, the inward condition of mind and spirit and the outward so-called reality of concrete experience also occurs in Samuel Richardson's Clarissa; as in Moll Flanders realistic and surrealistic elements work together to produce multiple perceptions and two new levels of reality through form and symbol. Clarissa's situation as a pawn of her parents is most realistic in terms of the totally different worlds of the male and female in Eighteenth Century society, and the correspondences reflect this. That she be a dutiful daughter, a model of Puritan virtue, would have been expected, for Clarissa exemplifies both Puritan virtue and merchant class wealth; these qualities contrasted with Lovelace who is an aristocrat and a rake (an aristocrat can be one) could be equally real to any Eighteenth Century reader as is Clarissa's intellect, which exemplifies the new concept of individualism and spiritual independence that was associated with Puritanism. While

these attributes are both her destruction and her triumph, she still escapes in death both the oppression of her family and Lovelace, both of whom exploit every disadvantage of her situation. While the disparity between what Clarissa expects and what she gets is unendurable, the conduct issues involved in her conflicts create a realistic universe that exemplifies the values of the time.

However, all points of perception in the novel are subjective, that is, the novel presents a multiple set of subjective reactions. The form of the novel, letters, are in themselves subjective in nature. This subjectivity plus the images and symbols that become the primary concern create a symbolic overlay that exemplifies a construct of reality that is as real, if not more so, than the concrete reality. For example, all the "purity" images that surround Clarissa and the antithetical "desirable womanhood" images evolve into what Dorothy Van Ghent calls the Clarissa symbol. She states:

> In the early scene when Clarissa is brought down into the parlor for a family conference, we are given a picture of the girl as she sees herself in the mirror beside her chair--pale, debilitated, and distraught, with heaving bosom, and most interesting and attractive. Cumulatively, many similar images reinforce this picture of attractive, desirable womanhood: Clarissa wilting like a broken lily on its stalk, Clarissa resting her lovely pale head on the motherly breast of Mrs. Lovick, Clarissa lifting her eyes in gratitude to heaven for a simple bowl of gruel or glass of water, Clarissa on her knees in prayer in miraculously dirt-resistant white garments, or Clarissa in torn clothes and with streaming eyes, prostrated at the feet of her demon-lover. The womanly quality which Richardson has made attractive in these is that of an erotically tinged debility which offers, masochistically, a ripe temptation to violence. Thus the image of Clarissa achieves, under construction in the context, the status of a symbol, a focus of feelings and attitudes, rich, dense, and deep, however strange and even perverse.[6]

From this point of view the novel conveys the content of the dream. Another surrealistic element is the effect of framing but not by a

narrator as in Moll Flanders; the reader always sees Clarissa through someone else's eyes or as she sees herself in a mirror. It is almost as though the inner self is made public. The letters expose all, turning all the characters inside out; even the rape scene occurs with the door open so the women in the house as well as the reader can watch. There is no invention as there is in Moll, no creation of another self, but there is a projection of a social dream. Clarissa is a love goddess of the Puritan middle class. Van Ghent would place her on the cover of both Vogue magazine and True Confession; both extremes are more of a dream world fantasy than a reality.

In like manner the image of man evolves into a symbol that functions in the same way; "the image grows by reiteration and variation into a symbol; attractive elements are fused with the repellent elements so that the abominable reptilian 'man' becomes demonically fascinating; a creature obsessed with desire to violate virginal, high-minded, helpless womanhood, and so single-tracked in his passion to destroy this divinity that he, too, assumes divine stature; he is the evil divinity, the devil himself."[7] Even Miss Howe confesses that she has seen Lovelace in her dreams. Van Ghent sees this whole symbol as myth. Her whole discussion of the novel as myth projected dramatically further substantiates the magic box concept and its multi-dimensional modes of perception. In fact, even at this point, and there are more yet to be developed, one can conceive of the box, which was at the beginning of the metaphor simply a series of three sided boxes--dramatic scenes arranged in a linear line--now as a prism, many mirrors that reflect in, out, and up in order to convey many points of perception that overlap and operate together through "magic" correspondences.

The myth concept expressed here creates a montage effect in that the Puritan myth and the myth of class are superimposed over each other. Van Ghent states:

> The Puritan myth, as it is inflected in Clarissa is a demonic view of life. Deity and the evil spirit are deeply concerned in the affairs of men. Through charm of body and other lures--wit, worldly graces, worldly power, mobility, uninhibited freedom--and with the most cunning deceit, the evil spirit tempts the woman as he tempted Eve. The ultimate obsession of the devil is, of course, sex, for in the Puritan mythology sex is the culmination of all evil, the unmasked face of fear. . . . Clarissa is the paragon of virtue, a 'divinity of a woman,' which is the reason why she holds any interest in many ways, she is charitable 'to the industrious poor,' she disciplines herself to deserve 144 merit marks for virtue every week, and if she omits to earn one of them she has to add it onto next week's budget. But above all she is chaste. As the devil's evil obsession is sex, so the woman's virtuous obsession is her chastity, but it must be observed that chastity is here a physical attribute (quite as it is in Moll Flanders), that innocence of spirit is not distinguished from bodily intactness, that the two are identified as one. Therefore, when the devil has succeeded in befouling the woman's body, he will have obtained a victory over her soul--save for the intervention of the Deity. The woman's will makes her subject to an inspiration for Divine Grace. . . . Clarissa has been selected from among all women for unique travail as preparation for sainthood. Potent as the Devil is, the universe is well loaded against him, and when the crisis is over, Providence begins distributing rewards and punishments with remarkable accuracy to everyone in the book, thoroughly satisfying poetic justice.[8]

However, in the light of the myth of social class, Lovelace's wit, worldly graces, power, and freedom are the qualities and privilege of the aristocracy; Clarissa, like Elizabeth in Pride and Prejudice, is middle-class and powerfully attracted to him. But no marriage takes place; the aristocracy and the middle class are not united. Van Ghent says that "what has been indulged by this myth is the middle-class wish to be aristocratic, to be elegant and idle and uninhibited; for, like dreams, myths indulge the hopes and passions and impulses of men."[9] But this dream has a censor. The aristocratic wish is negated by the wish to create a

divine and social universal order for the middle class, but not until after a bit of indulging in the desire for aristocratic pleasures.

The same situation holds true of the sexual myth. Clarissa keeps her Puritan code while she indulges in sexuality; the whole sexual scene is a construct of irrationalities. Granted Clarissa returns home to the "God" father both sexless and dead, but not until after she has undergone violent sexual experiences. Clarissa is abducted, placed in a house of ill-fame, drugged, and raped. This is exactly what happens in dreams where the forbidden wish is indulged under the guise of nonindulgence. Clarissa dreams her own dream and society's dream, the carnal assault of a virgin that is sanctioned by her death and her virtuous, Puritan saint-hood. All these elements of the dream give potency to the novel; in fact, the combination of these surrealistic elements with the realistic values of the period make all aspects of the Clarissa symbol, that is, the combination of a single and collective mind, become equally real.

The collective mind invents its own reality, creates an ideal self in the singular and in mass; man is a creator in the act of creating, and Tristram in Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy creates the construct of creating as a reality in itself. The narrator establishes himself as a mind, a consciousness that creates a world out of the association of ideas. If there is any relation to plot in the traditional sense, it is more of an intentional mockery of the chronological line of a sequence of events than actual complication, reversal, and denouement. Sterne deliberately destroys the common notion of time, place, and action. Tristram is born before he is christened and put into pants before he goes to France; but for the most part, time explodes. Past, present, and future overlap and intermingle, sometimes being felt at the same time; Sterne does give time

in dates, but these, too, function as mockery since the line of action changes as often as the mind changes: digressing, connecting, forecasting, summing up. The unity of the novel lies in objectifying subjective material in its own right and for its own sake; this is the function of Sterne's narrative mind. This is the original stream of consciousness technique. The center of gravity in the novel consists in:

> . . . the endlessly fertile rhythms of a consciousness, as those rhythms explore the comic ironies of a quest for order among the humdrum freaks of birth and paternity and place and time and language. In reading Tristram Shandy, we are never allowed to forget that the activity of creation, as an activity of forming perceptions and maneuvering them into an expressive order, is itself the subject: the technique does not allow us to forget it--for let alone the harum-scarum tricks with the printer's ink, the narrator plunges at us in apostrophes, flirts his addresses at us with 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam,' explodes into the middle of a disquisition of a scene in defiance of time, space, and logic.[10]

Sterne also analyzes and represents the creative process of writing a novel. The artist conscious of himself gives periodic cries of authorial distress and discusses the form the novel should take, but it does not take that form. Using Locke as his guide post, Tristram takes the reader down several roads at one time that are continuously meeting at one point.

> Locke had attempted to explain the genesis of ideas from sensation. Simple sensations produce simple ideas of those sensations; associated sensations produce associated ideas of sensations, a process which becomes immensely complicated with the accretion of other associations of this kind. Besides the capacity of the mind to form ideas from sensations, it has the capacity of reflection. By reflection upon ideas acquired from sensation, it is able to juggle these into new positions and relationships, forming what we call 'abstract ideas' [or realities]. Thus the whole body of logical and inferential 'knowledge' is built up, through association from the simple primary base of sensation.[11]

Van Ghent points out a good example of this association of ideas with what follows the explanation of Mrs. Shandy's association of the marital

act with the winding of the clock.

> The explanation leads to a determination of the date of Tristram's geniture and the manner of his birth, which involves a digression into the history of the parson Yorick, who was responsible for establishing the midwife in her vocation; and the history of Yorick necessitates first a description of his horse (before we can get back to the midwife), but the parson's horse recalls Rosinante, and that steed, that belonged to a famous gentleman with a hobby, sets Sterne off on the subject of hobby horses in general, which leads to--(When are we going to learn the circumstances of Tristram's birth?) Sterne's comment on 'the sagacious Locke,' who understood the 'strange' combination of 'ideas' to which men's brains are liable, indicates the method here. It is precisely in the strangeness of the combinations of associations that Sterne finds the contour of his subject, the logic of the grotesquerie and the logic of its gaiety. At the same time, he is in perfect control of the 'combinations,' as we are slyly reminded again and again; for we do come back to the midwife.[12]

The trip downstairs that takes Uncle Toby and Mr. Shandy three chapters plus an appeal to the critic to step in and help them down is another case in point. Existence in clock time and timeless consciousness are tied together to exemplify the paradox of man's existence both in time and out of it, the out-of-it being more relevant than many concrete, mundane actions. The mind creates reality here as much if not more than the concrete act. Shklovsky credits Sterne for writing a parody of the novel. He sees the disorder as intentional, "according to law, like a painting by Picasso."[13] Everything is displaced and transposed on purpose. The "Dedication" is between the second and third chapters; the "Preface" is in Chapter Twenty in Volume Three. Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen follow Chapter Twenty-five, to mention only a few of the obvious ones. The important point here is that there are even external guide posts for the reader to see mind or consciousness in action, a point of perception of its own for its own sake.

One must give Tristram, however, a nature and quality of his own. He is not a mere projection of Sterne, not simply a mind. Tristram has both a physical and associational life.

> He has a nature and a quality of his own. In a sense nothing happens to him, certainly no events that can be laid end to end and called an action. Yet he observes everything and reflects on everything, even if often the reflection is implicit in the report. His mind is in continuous activity, under the dominance of its own laws. There is no selection and ordering in terms of an issue raised by an impermanent or local morality, nor in terms of falsifying line of action called a plot. The activity goes on, whether forward or backward, by the associational relevance of the apparently irrelevant, by fixing on the illusive, the evanescent, the indefinable which engage that mind and which it contrives to report by suggestion. And if, sometimes, led by who shall say what sensation-association, it hops as unfollowably as a flea, we have simply to admit that Tristram's mind was like that, Sterne saw it thus. And it is so true to nature that we can often not tell what it is about, just as we cannot tell what nature is about.[14]

Tristram is still less of a personality than the other characters in the story. All the other characters operate in their own isolated world, and Tristram ties them together. A kind of loneliness is at the core of each as a life itself. While they do not seem mature in their own natures, they do grow in reality in the mind of the reader. Uncle Toby, Trim, Mrs. Shandy, Yorick become living personalities in that they show themselves in different aspects to different people; the reader sees them doing things, which is a different set of circumstances than those of Tristram. Even though these characters become <u>real</u> through the associational mind of the narrator, they do render reality per se and must be counted as such. All these characters function in the total structure of the novel in this way.

The main theme of <u>Tristram</u>, the comic clash between the world of learning and human affairs is best exemplified by giving as true a picture

as possible of people as they are in themselves, not as they imagine themselves to be, nor as others judge them to be by their actions and outward behavior alone. Shifting the "emphasis from external to internal event, from the patterned plot artificially concerned and imposed on the characters, to the free evocation of the fluid ever-changing process of being . . . [reveals] Sterne's awareness of the degree to which the accepted conventions limited the expression of this greater inwardness in fiction, and of the discrepancy between fictional illusion."[15] Sterne becomes involved in the levels of the mind that lie below the rationalizing conscious plane of being. Much akin to modern fiction, Tristram Shandy matches mind with not only creator, character, plot and scene, it also matches mind with form, language, and syntax, another addition to the magic box metaphor and its many faceted modes of perception.

It is interesting to note that all the multiple modes of perception and layers and levels of reality discussed so far in the framework of the magic box metaphor occurred in the Eighteenth Century seed period for the novel. With the exception of the function of nature and its imagery as a reflection of states of mind or as an abstract reality within itself, a mode of perception that occurs in the Nineteenth Century, those early novels function as forerunners of the contemporary form. The function of nature is most highly developed in the Nineteenth Century due for the most part to the development of impressionistic art and the rise of romanticism which views nature as God's plan and an arbitrator of truth as well as a natural phenomenon. George Eliot, the Bronte sisters, and Thomas Hardy, to name four, saw man's nature personified in nature; consequently, nature personified becomes another mode of perception, as either a mirror reflection of states of mind or as a reality in itself. In either event

it adds another prism to the already complex magic box. For example, the environment functions as a symbol of the various states of mind in George Eliot's Adam Bede. Stonyshire-Snowfield is as barren and sterile as Loamshire-Hayslope is beautiful and fertile, and Hetty and Arthur's love affair is surrounded by the lush Hayslope landscape and daydream imagery. But Hetty's retribution for their emotional fantasy, their erotic and sensual self-love, takes place in Snowfield, a dreary poverty-ridden wasteland. In Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles nature functions as a symbol revealing states of being rather than just a mere inventory of surroundings. Tabothy's is a Loamshire-Hayslope, a Garden of Eden where evil lurks; passion and sensuality ironically superimpose themselves over the landscape. In the garden where Tess and Angel (an ironic name for a sensual prig) meet, there are weeds among the rank overgrowth of lush vegetation; in the meadow is a poisonous weed that must be pulled in order to eliminate the bitter taste in the butter; and the creek swells beyond its banks from the rain--it should be an omen of purity. All these scenes intrude on this conventional bower of bliss. On the other hand Tess suffers from the bitter cold of Flintcomb-Ash, a Stonyshire-Snowfield; her hands are scratched and marred by the immovable evil that abounds in both environments. Reflected in the environment and events that surround her is the sense of evil in Tess's subconscious mind; she cannot reconcile her sensuality with her sense of goodness. In this sense there is more of a cosmic element in Tess than a conscious element which places one's natural nature in conflict with conventional codes. Also supporting Tess's subconscious gropings are the earth and rocks in which the turnips grow, the flying straw of the binder, and the remaining stubble in the fields that torture her whole body. Both settings function as symbols of Tess's

mental states and development. Certainly these surroundings exemplify Tess's fall and retribution in the same way as the woods, the mistletoe in the oaks, the ritualistic dance in celebration of the harvest on the green where Alex first meets Tess at Marlows do; but they also represent Tess's soul development in relation to the subconscious knowledge of the self. In fact, the primitive imagery surrounding her capture at Stonehenge and the realistic outcome of being sent to prison are not only appropriate plotwise; they are also symbolic of the inevitable, that is, of the inability of Tess's psyche to reconcile those opposites.[16] Hardy operates on the surrealistic level. As a subconscious writer whose imagination transcends the mere telling of the here and now, he also portrays inner states of being in which outward so-called reality is a contrivance, a cosmic force in both nature and man that hampers self-actualization.

Nature imagery identifies Heathcliff and Catherine in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights,[17] and the two houses Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights emerge by extension into two magic boxes with surrounding antithetical nature imagery that like Stonyshire-Loamshire in Adam Bede and Tabothy's Flintcomb-Ash in Tess give two sets of abstract realities. The grange sits on a hill in sunshine where birds sing; a gentle breeze blows, and the garden is lovely, while Wuthering Heights is surrounded by neglected overgrowth, the howling of dogs, unruly wind, and the moors which in themselves are somewhat sinister and foreboding. Catherine in her illness refers to two birds as possible ways to free herself from her physical prison of illness; she refers to her bed as a fairy cave and to herself and Heathcliff as heifers. Heathcliff is many times related to an undefined shadow; in fact, light and dark colors surround the two lovers and function as antitheses of their differences; Catherine, the golden

girl, is surrounded by angelic light, and Heathcliff, the child of darkness, emanates a melancholy force that is both daemonic and haunting, as well as frightening and fascinatingly powerful. In the resolution light and dark blend in the spiritual reunion of the two after death, and then their spirits romp the moors as they did as children. The brutish element in both their natures is reconciled in the spiritual realm. Their story is the story of irrational love that resides outside ethical values, and this supernatural element has been superimposed over the flights of fancy and the grotesqueries of character and surroundings that permeate the novel. The real crux of Wuthering Heights develops through the surrealistic elements which in their total composition form an elaborate dream sequence--another aspect of the magic box, and another view of reality.

Other elements of the dream in Heights include dislocation of time and space; the novel is concerned only with aspects of life that are unaffected by time and place; the characters relate only to the cosmic scheme, a different type of cosmic scheme from Hardy's. Hardy's cosmic order functions like the intervention of the gods, which control man's destiny, making fortune their fate. Catherine and Heathcliff are free spirits, like figures in a dream, living a universal, half-divine life, a level of experience that defies the familiar background of most fiction. What the reader experiences is a kind of primitive energy, a brutish force in human nature coupled with an arduous love that knows no boundaries, in essence, a feeling that resists normal analysis. The whole novel is a flight of fancy, highly improbable, but an intense experience from a different vantage point. Set in a frame like Moll through Nelly Dean and Lockwood both of whom belong to the world of practicality, the novel reveals that Catherine and Heathcliff's love operates on a spiritual

principle, not in actual time and space relationships. Their love is ravenous, possessive, amoral; the kind of love that belongs to the imagination. There is neither good nor evil involved in their relationship, nor is there life and death, and while the two have intense emotions, their love is devoid of sex or sensuality. Their love is a life-force relationship, conditioned by nothing but itself. The moral center of this love story lies in the opposition between actual inner identity--Catherine betrays hers and destroys herself, and Heathcliff who simply dies for love of her--and the social conscious existence. But their relationship cannot exist in a life of its own, so some synthesis between it and external action is necessary. Hareton and young Catherine's marriage reconciles Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange; Catherine joins Heathcliff in the grave so their love principle can exist beyond life, and this principle becomes, then, the ideal of shared reality in life.

Dorothy Van Ghent compares Wuthering Heights to a Chinese painting. She states:

> Essentially, Wuthering Heights exists for the mind as a tension between two kinds of reality; the raw inhuman reality of anonymous natural energies, and the restrictive reality of civilized habits, manners, and codes. The first kind of reality is given to the imagination in the violent figures of Catherine and Heathcliff, portions of the flux of nature, children of the rock and heath and tempest, striving to identify themselves as human, but disrupting all around them with their monstrous appetite for an inhuman kind of intercourse, and finally disintegrated from within by the very energies out of which they are made. It is this vision of reality radically alien from the human that the ancient Chinese landscape paintings offer also. But in those ancient paintings there is often a tiny human figure, a figure that is obviously that of a philosopher, for instance, or that of a peasant--in other words, a human figure decisively belonging to and representing a culture--who is placed in diminutive perspective beside the enormously cascading torrent, or who is seen driving his water buffalo through the overwhelming mists of faceless snows; and this figure is outlined sharply, so that, though it is extremely tiny, it is very definite in the giant surrounding

> indefiniteness. The effect is one of contrast between finite and infinite, between limitation of the known and human, and the unlimitedness of the unknown and the nonhuman. So also in Wuthering Heights: set over against the wilderness of inhuman reality is the quietly secular, voluntarily limited, safely human reality that we find in the gossipy concourse of Nelly Dean and Lockwood . . . in the romance of Cathy and Hereton . . . in verbs and modifiers and metaphors that seethe with a brute fury . . . within a most rigorous pattern of repeated motifs and of what someone has called the 'Chinese box' of Nelly Dean's and Lockwood's interlocution.[18]

The analogy here and its relationship to the magic box metaphor is apt, for in Wuthering Heights the reader is allowed to see not only the surface things, but also to the depth of infinity. The man in the painting is similar to the analogy John Ditsky makes with the man on the Quaker Oats box. Like the man in the Chinese painting, the "Quaker himself does not move, and is not involved in linear narrative. He is, however, a figure whose existence forces a reconsideration of the nature of things, and who at every level participates in a metaphysical adventure of some importance."[19] Ditsky's Quaker is the creator, Van Ghent's Chinese painting is the form, but their function in relation to the magic box metaphor is similar. Both extend the depth of the magic box to infinity in that both alter the characteristics of structure in order to achieve this. Both are concerned with the displacement of emphasis in relation to so-called reality; both are concerned with the visual sense; both are concerned with the use of absurd realities as a way to express mental states or conditions of heightened perception; both are concerned with the distortion of the normal setting and plot in order to heighten and merge mental state and exterior image; with domination of a story line through dreamscape landscape; and both attempt to achieve "an immersion in a milieu where mental state and exterior image merge to an unrealistically

high degree . . . [in a sense] a tapestry in which we recognize our deepest selves, our most secret lives inhibited past all expression."[20]

Ditsky concludes his article with the statement that experimental writers are "fusing the romantic expression of the inner man with the classicist's mirroring of the outer world; in making the latter purpose the mere extension of the former, however, they create a personal expression, a self-portrait by means of collage, that in conventional terms is not 'responsible,' 'according to the rules.'"[21] The point is, however, that with a narrator such as Nelly and Lockwood or with a creator as he is presented by Ditsky, the reader is forced to supply his own perception of what reality is.

What Ditsky implies is dislocation by the author. This aspect is very important to the magic box metaphor, but dislocation is not new to experimental fiction in character and scene. Charles Dickens is a good example of this. In Great Expectations Dickens uses disassociation through character and dislocation of scene to express solipsism in character and a surrealistic picture of reality. For example, in the graveyard scene, the convict picks up Pip, rolls him around, shakes him, and bends him over the grave stone so that he sees everything upside down. From that moment on Pip's as well as the reader's world is tilted, distorted, and grotesque. All the characters live in a labyrinthine world, a world of vain longing pitted against the world of hard experience, living nightmare lives, where nothing is real to any of them but themselves. Surrounding these characters are grotesque nature images and personified inanimate objects--even the elements function as fetishes--so both nature and objects function as modes of perception through which the reader comes to terms with another level of reality as well as what Dickens means by

"great expectations" and the inner guilt that comes from using people as ends to achieve them.[22] When Miss Haversham commands Pip and Estella to play, the dissociation and solipsism of character is made obvious. In the light of what Ditsky says of contemporary authors, that is, that they are attempting "to see the self in the other and thereby deny the Void for awhile,"[23] the concept is extremely important. Truth even to the contemporary author is as relative as it is to the reader. To expect the author to tell the reader the way things really are would be presumptuous.

George Stade in his article, "The Realities of Fiction and the Fiction of Reality," calls the traditional realists:

> . . . reality instructors [who] have only forgeries to peddle. That to play any part at all you have to improvise. That to play your part straight is to be no more than a straight man. That reality--to pull on the reins of a runaway trope--has absconded, and with it went the secure ego of the solid citizen. The suspicion has become general, I believe. The result is that we have all become anxious, or anomic, or ironic, critical, or criminal, or paranoid . . . [that modern writers share the assumptions of Leontini, 427 B. C. that] nothing exists. . . . If anything exists, it cannot be known. . . . If anything exists, and can be known, it cannot be put into words.[24]

Myron Greenman in his article "Some Experimental Modes" develops the premise that reality does not precede an imitation of it, that imitation is reality,[25] and Arlen Hansen in his article "The Celebration of Solipsism: A New Trend in Fiction" adds to this premise with the concept that reality is simply a construct that can be filled out by the imagination. "It is what the perceiver imagines it to be . . . [but] whatever man transforms it to be has consequences."[26] Even contemporary writers are searching for a value system. Frederick Karl and Leo Hamalian in their "Introduction" to The Naked I discuss the same premise concerning reality and apply it even more than Hansen does to the structure of the novel. They state that in contemporary fiction the reader can no longer expect:

> . . . a common mode of perception that any writer could employ with some assurance . . . [that] such a mode assumed that both writer and reader understood certain symbols and tones. . . . [Consequently] there is an obsession with linguistic structure rather than with symbolic meanings. Realism of character and even location have been largely abandoned, and in their place, the hallucinatory theme, the dreamlike setting, and the driven self-contained narrator have become dominant. . . . The external becomes diminished, and the writer moves away from objective reality, away from history . . . plot . . . defined character, until the subjective perception of the narrator is the only guaranteed fact in the fiction.[27]

They conclude as Hansen does, but in a larger context that: "The nature of the world beyond the eyes of the observer depends upon his perception of it. There is no way of knowing the nature of Nature, human or otherwise; there is no neutral witness who can be presumed to have the truth. And there are no other means of arriving at such a blessed vision, short of a leap into faith. Only the subjective eye can confer value on what is perceived and how it is perceived. Perhaps that 'subjective eye' is the modern leap into faith."[28] This mode of perception is different from a central intelligence such as that used by Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and Herman Melville, to name three; this is a different kind of literary intelligence, a subjective eye in which "the action, the events, the world itself are reported through the single eye of the narrator, without correction from the objective data of things otherwise perceived and without coercion from the omniscient author."[29]

Reality in contemporary fiction is perceived as only a subjective, alienated, existential author can perceive it; no more than existential man can depend on the reality of his world can the reader depend on the assistance from an author as to what reality in modern terms really means. The support of tradition is no more of a comfort to the creator of contemporary fiction than it is to the reader who seeks it. To place this

construct into the magic box metaphor, one must assume that fiction in contemporary terms is a "purely personal flow of perception by the author . . . [and that he is simply trying to] reflect accurately the inward state of being or the very process of perception itself."[30] Thus, the crux of the problem for both the contemporary writer and reader lies in the need to reshape the world through imagination in order to find a construct for reality, that is, a workable point between imagination and so-called concrete experience: the magic box metaphor is composed of such prismatic reflections through which this kind of surrealistic view of reality can be expressed. As Karl and Hamalian aptly suggest:

> Perhaps the best the contemporary writer can do is to reduce the magnitude of the lie [reality] by rendering the perception of his narrator as precisely and as authentically as possible. Such authenticity is achieved by the author's fidelity to the precise word or phrase, by his avoidance of the cliche, and by his attention to the rhythms of common speech. If the reader is persuaded that "this or that" is the way such and such a person would indeed perceive, then "this or that" becomes the truth of the situation. God, if he were not dead, might put to the narrator the kind of questions He once put to Job. But today God would have to accept the subjective truth of the narrator's feelings: the truth of religion belongs in church, the truth of science belongs in the laboratory. The truth about feeling, about the human condition, must be found in man's infinite modes of perception. It is this that the writers for the '70's reveal to us.[31]

While this concept is not new, the contemporary writer is more concerned with a mode of perception, is more concerned with a portrayal of as Shade put it, with <u>what is what</u>, is more concerned with what one can identify as reality portrayed in perceptive terms, surrealistic terms in that the point of view depends on the perceiver, and the contemporary writer crafts his fiction in this frame of reference.

Vladimir Nabokov's <u>Pale Fire</u> is a good example to illustrate this point. Similar to <u>Steppenwolf</u> in many respects, <u>Pale Fire</u> has multiple

modes of perception: Shade's poem, which contains an autobiographical account of his life as well as the life and death of his daughter; the "Forward," "Commentary," and "Index" by Kimbote who presents in the "Commentary" and "Index" a novel about the king of Zembla; and Nabokov who intervenes from time to time with value judgments that are obviously the author's. Shade's poem works toward the positive attitude in the matter of spirit, but Shade's concerns with death and possible immortality superimpose themselves over and beyond any positive statements that could transcend his world of suffering. Like Steppenwolf one of the central themes is the desire for death as an escape from the realities of life and the inability to cope with the self, and also like Haller, both Shade and Kimbote experience the same dilemma; neither can arrive at a workable point between imagination and experience.

Shade in his poem is as hampered by illusions as Haller is; Shade's refusal to accept the present as part of his life, his conviction that he lives in either his past or in the ever present presence of death is his major self-deceit. Shadow and reversal images exist throughout the poem, images that create a reality of their own, that is, the expression of death. Shade sees no God, but he sees no freedom either; he views himself as "artistically caged . . . the shadow of the waxwing slain . . . a cloutish freak . . . a thread of subtle pain, / Tugged at by playful death, released again / But always present."[32] While there are bursts of sudden light, the poet lives for the most part in "after night. That blackness was sublime" (p. 27). Shade's shadows are a conviction that life is death, and there is no consciousness behind, but they also imply that man's sanity in this life is a message "scribbled in the dark" (p. 29). Even Shade's description of his love for his wife and daughter

is tinged with sadness, especially his description of their daughter in her unattractiveness, her unpopularity; in fact, even in his invention of her, his fictional reshaping of her world in his imagination, sadness permeates the invention. When the daughter commits suicide, even the invention is aborted, and Shade and his wife's "best yesterdays are now foul piles" (p. 37).

Shade concludes that he wants no immortality, if there is one, unless the past goes with him, and if one does have immortality, how does one rectify the conflicting experiences of his past life? But he also questions life; it is simply the hell of remembering, and all present experiences are shaded by the shadows of the past, primarily the memory of his lost daughter who in aborting her life has killed him. None of his contemporary experiences have meaning; his work as a writer, his lectures, Lolita and its fame (Nabokov's authorial intrusions are ever present), his returning "old fits" (p. 42), or his heart attack--he is convinced that he was dead--that still binds him to the earth are mere illusions and make little sense even though they are concrete experiences. The death of his daughter is more real to him than life. He finally concludes that the real point in life is "the contraptional theme . . . not text, but texture: not the dream / But topsy-turvical coincidence. / Not flimsy nonsense, but a web of sense" (p. 44). The only true meaning in life is in the texture of things; it is only in the creative process that one can have any hope for immortality; the only existence one can understand to any degree is through one's art.

But Shade also compares man's life to a hard-to-understand unfinished poem, and considering the last line of the poem being the first line--"I was the shadow of the waxwing slain" (p. 23)--there is no real resolution

to the problem of illusion versus reality, especially when the reader considers the rest of the sentence--"By the false azure in the window pane, / I was the smudge of ashen fluff--And I lived on, flew on, in the reflected sky" (p. 23). Shade's whole life even in his poetry is one of reflected images with death at its center. The poet's death is a conscious one, metaphysical in Canto III, forshadowed in Canto IV, and made real by Kimbote in the "Commentary." Like Haller Shade wishes for death, and he is granted that wish, but both Haller and Shade fail to accept the fact that the real point of life lies in the essence of things rather than in appearances. Shade understands more than Haller how to perceive the eternal spirit behind external reality, but neither of them can sustain the will of their imagination. Shade cannot accept the invented beauty of his daughter, the romantic view of his wife, or the aesthetic view of himself as a poet any more than Haller can accept Hermine, Pablo, or his own dual nature in realistic terms. Neither can accept the dual nature of reality, and both fail because of this. The only difference lies in the resolutions; Haller is condemned to life, while Shade is allowed to die.

Kimbote in his "Forward," his "Commentary," and his "Index" cannot accept reality either. He cannot believe that Shade's poem does not contain parts of him, so he writes a story of himself that he claims is within the poem; he describes the kingdom of Zembla in which he is the hero. Only once in the poem (l. 938) is Zembla even mentioned, and when it is, it is in relation to Shade's beard. But Kimbote prepares the reader for this in the "Forward." He states: "Let me state that without my notes Shade's text simply has no human reality at all since the human reality of such a poem as his (being too skittish and reticent for an autobiographical work), with the omission of many pithy lines carelessly rejected

by him, has to depend entirely on the reality that only my notes can provide" (pp. 18-19). The reality that Shade sees in the poem is only in relation to himself; since it is not there, he includes it so that the poem will convey a construct of reality with which he can live.

In the beginning of the "Commentary," Kimbote begins his story of Zembla. The "waxwing slain" (p. 53) is a sample of Zemblan language and is one of the "armorial bearings of the Zemblan King, Charles the Beloved" (p. 53) whom he has often discussed with his friend. The connection is immediate; "that Crystal land" (p. 54) is obviously "an allusion to Zembla" (p. 54) which would have been mentioned in much greater detail without Shade's wife's interference. Kimbote goes on to explain that Charles was a great lover of literature, who not long before the collapse of his throne lectures "under an assumed name and in heavy make-up, with wig and false whiskers" (p. 55), and, of course, he resembles the disguised king because he has not shaved for a year. He also mentions Gradus, the Quilty of Pale Fire, who in the end of the novel kills Shade by mistake. It is only the word "gray" (p. 55) that brings this inference; it does, however, foreshadow the event to come. Kimbote adds: "We shall accompany Gradus in constant thought, as he makes his way from distant dim Zembla to green Appalachia, following the road of its rhyme . . . [only] falling asleep as the poet lays down his pen for the night" (pp. 56-57). Kimbote not only includes a life of his own; he also makes a detective story out of his counterpart Shade and his poem.

In later lines Kimbote describes his relationship with Shade--how he met him on a winter's day, how he was sure he would fill his rhymes with Zembla were it not for his "domestic censor" (p. 59), how he watches through the window, Shade in the joy and bliss of creativity with both

pride and envy, how it is Sybil's fault not Shade's that the two men are merely friendly and nothing more. Kimbote displays his homosexuality in both his present life and his Zemblian one--King Charles has an affinity for young boys--and Kimbote makes many more overt advances toward Shade than Shade does toward him. He makes excuses to stop in, and he uses every line of the poem as a take-off for the Zemblan story. For example, the line "one foot upon a mountain" (p. 99) brings on a seven page detailed narrative of Charlie's escape; in fact, the King and Oden's escape becomes as the "Commentary" progresses, the main part of the criticism. Then line 171--"a great conspiracy" (p. 107)--introduces Gradus, an unsuccessful businessman in "the glass business" (p. 109)--glass reflects--who is chosen to kill Charles but who eventually kills Shade by mistake. Gradus operates like Humbert's Quilty in Lolita, always lurking in the shadows; in fact, the lines of the poem seem to diminish in importance because of the tension created within the story that emanates from Kimbote's comments. The only objectifier is his tendency to break in with conversation between himself and Shade. For the most part, Shade's and Gradus' progress--Shade on his poem, Gradus on his search for the exiled King--is parallel. This comparison added to Kimbote's own emotional state, his migraine headache, and its causes, begins to tie all three characters together in much the same way Humbert ties himself to Lolita and Quilty; the more Kimbote discusses Shade, and the more subjective he becomes, the more the reader realizes just how much of an illusion Kimbote's actual relationship with Shade is. He confesses slight when not invited to Shade's birthday party, admits having watched to see what guests were invited, admits that during the month of June he had "many walks, actually nine but dwindling to two in the first three weeks of July" (p. 121), admits that it

took much detective work to find the Shade's summer cabin--they did not tell him--and becomes overly defensive about Shade's toleration of him simply because he is a colleague and neighbor, overly defensive usually at Sybil's expense. Kimbote not only invents the friendship; he also invents excuses for Shade's indifference. He never makes an ideal out of Shade, but he does create a mental illusion to satisfy his own specific needs.

The climactic scene by Kimbote is his innuendo to Shade concerning his being the exiled King. He explain Charles' decision to go to America to teach, the intimate details and departure from both Fleur and Disa, and presses Shade to put the experience into poetry, to make it into art. When Shade responds by questioning personal things about those who are still alive, Kimbote replies that "as soon as your poem is ready, as soon as the glory of Zembla merges with the glory of your verse, I intend to divulge to you an ultimate truth, an extraordinary secret, that will put your mind completely at rest" (p. 153). It is immediately after this statement that death as a spiritual situation becomes Kimbote's main concern. From this point on Kimbote's explanation follows closely with Shade's concerns; the "Commentary" becomes parallel and is equal in theme and design. Both discuss the possibility of immortality; both discuss spirituality through art; both make numerous references and comparisons to other works of art; and both discuss the problem of evil and the release from this life through death. Kimbote even credits the King's arrival in America "by parachute" (p. 174) as being on the same day as Shade's heart attack. Parallel also is Kimbote's mutual desire for death; Shade's one reference to Zembla (l. 192) causes Kimbote to resign himself to a personal death of a sort in that he accepts that one reference as

concrete evidence that their friendship is one-sided. Immediately following this discovery, Kimbote begins the final scene of the assassination and his theft of Shade's poem.

There are actually two killings: Shade by Gradus and Kimbote's illusion of a friendship which Shade refuses to accept. Haller's murder of Hermine is similar to Kimbote's loss of Shade in that Kimbote's world crumbles in the same way that Haller's does when his idealized illusion of Hermine as a savior crumbles. Both protagonists have to kill their illusion breaker; Kimbote has Shade assassinated, and Haller stabs Hermine. Neither situation may exist in so-called reality, but both scenes are real to the teller. Whichever the case may be, Kimbote like Haller exists in two lives and wishes to exist in three or more, a conclusion that Haller accepts at the end of Steppenwolf, and a conclusion that the reader draws from Pale Fire. Which is the more real? Which self exists in a greater degree than the other? Kimbote's fantasy friendship is an interwoven composition for which the poem, whoever wrote it, is a glass, and the imagination Kimbote uses to connect his life to Shade and the poem seems to be a major point of the novel. As Stark aptly states: "Reality is finally unknowable and any meaning or direction that can be discovered in life is going to come from an imaginative reshuffling of occurrences."[33] Stark's statement that a "poet's reality can be distinct from rather than an imitation of reality"[34] proposes a similar premise. There are two inventions tangled together in Pale Fire: Shade's invention of his daughter's popularity in his autobiographical poem and Kimbote's invention of his friendship with Shade in his autobiographical novel developed through the "Commentary" and "Index." In Steppenwolf there are two inventions tangled together also; Haller's self image and Hermine's savior image both of

which originate in Haller's mind. Neither Haller, Kimbote, nor Shade can come to any workable point between their imagination and their so-called concrete experience, and this is their dilemma. They cannot accept both either in themselves or in others. Both novels, then, are magic boxes through which the reader moves and comes to the conclusion that no conventional definition of reality can be made. Haller goes through four boxes in the Magic Theater; the reader goes through three or four if Nabokov counts in Pale Fire, and this does not count the many other modes of perception in both novels, magic boxes in themselves that reflect even more levels of reality. Both Hesse and Nabokov support the premise that a total of the boxes is the only acceptable or workable solution; Hesse by the total self, Nabokov by interwoven layers. Both novels conclude with the premise that there can be no division between imagination and concrete experience, no division between the many modes of perception and concrete details, and all should be considered as equally real.

Richard Brautigan's construct of reality is very similar to Nabokov's and Hesse's only with an added implication. In Brautigan's work one totals up the boxes--he makes use of almost every mode of perception discussed here--and finds an acceptable or workable solution in the constructs of reality exemplified there in multi-level dimensions. But the reader is told time and time again that these constructs are merely for observation, that while these constructs fit the fictional situation in which they exist, they do not necessarily fit the reader and must not be taken as such. As Pablo tells Haller in the Magic Theater: "One can rearrange the pieces of a precious self in whatever order he pleases and so attain to an endless multiplicity of moves in the game of life" (p. 213). Brautigan tells the reader through structure that one cannot

only rearrange the modes of perception in whatever order he pleases, that one can also rearrange the constructs of reality in whatsoever order he pleases and attain an endless multiplicity of realities in the game of life. To make a metaphor out of a metaphor, Brautigan's major premise concerning reality is that it is a chess game without pawns; each novel establishes constructs of reality that the reader may accept or reject or simply observe because to Brautigan reality is based on the personal perception of one's own multifaceted construct in which concrete experience is only one layer and not necessarily even the beginning point of departure.

This does not mean that Brautigan is not involved in concrete experience and the so-called realistic aspects of life. For example, the abortion scene in The Abortion, the sexually deviant and violent scenes in Willard and His Bowling Trophies, and the drug scene in Confederate General from Big Sur, to name three, are brutally real, and Brautigan gives the realist's obligation to truth as well as a statement of value on conduct in relation to these scenes. He implies in all three instances verifiable consequences for the characters' actions. All the scenes involved imply a wasteland world with wasteland figures participating. Sterility, futility, frustration, impotence, death operate in all these cyclic scenes. But some kind of retribution takes place even on the innocent, and this in itself is a value judgment and fulfills the realist's obligation to the reader.

For the most part, however, Brautigan's alternative to a wasteland life lies in the surreal: the imagination, dreams, the Nabokovian concept of the act of creation of a work of art. Like Shade, Brautigan sees the essence of life in the texture of things, a "web of sense" exemplified

through multiple modes of perception, that is, diverging plots that converge, fragmentary scenes, metaphors, motifs, images, symbols: magic boxes in large and in miniature with infinite breadth, depth, and width, boxes that superimpose themselves over each other giving the reader a kaleidoscope view of the prismatic possibilities of the many selves and many realities that exist in each of us. Making extensive use of the magic box metaphor, Brautigan through the elements of realism and surrealism creates a set of constructs in a uniquely Brautigan style that may be copied in the same way writers copied the Hemingway dialogue and will be classified by future critics as strictly Brautigan.

NOTES

[1]Theodore Ziokowski, The Novels of Hermann Hesse: A Study in Theme and Structure (1967; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 212-13.

[2]Hermann Hesse, Steppenwolf, trans. Bill Creighton (1969; rpt. New York: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 212-13. Specific references appear in parentheses following quotations.

[3]Samuel Klinger gives a complete discussion of Eighteenth Century social values in "Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice in the Eighteenth-Century Mode," University of Toronto Quarterly, 16 (1945-46), 357-71.

[4]Dorothy Van Ghent uses the same technique to visualize form in her article, "On Pride and Prejudice," in her book The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), pp. 99-111.

[5]Arnold Kettle's defense of Moll's verisimilitude ironically substantiates the surrealistic premise in his article "In Defense of Moll Flanders," in Of Books and Human-Kind: Essays and Poems Presented to Bonamy Dobree, ed. John Butt (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), pp. 55-67.

[6]Van Ghent, pp. 48-49.

[7]Van Ghent, p. 51.

[8]Van Ghent, p. 54.

[9]Van Ghent, p. 57.

[10]Van Ghent, p. 87.

[11]Van Ghent, p. 89.

[12]Van Ghent, p. 90.

[13]Victor Shklovsky, "A Parodying Novel: Sterne's Tristram Shandy," in Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Traugott (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 67.

[14]Benjamin H. Lehman, "Of Time, Personality, and the Author," Studies in the Comic: University of California Studies in English, 8, No. 2 (1941), 238-39.

[15]A. A. Mendilow, "The Revolt of Sterne," in Time and the Novel, ed. A. A. Mendilow (1952; rpt. New York: Humanities Press, Inc., 1965), pp. 158-59.

[16]Ian Gregor gives a complete discussion of the interior states visualized in terms of landscape in his chapter "The Novel as Moral Protest: Tess of the D'Urbervilles," in The Moral and the Story (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1962), pp. 135-50.

[17]Mark Schorer develops extensively the landscape imagery in relation to the human condition and character in "Fiction and the Analogical Matrix," in Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1952), pp. 57-68.

[18]Van Ghent, pp. 157-58.

[19]John Ditsky, "The Man on the Quaker Oats Box: Characteristics of Recent Experimental Fiction," Georgia Review, 26, No. 3 (Fall, 1972), 299.

[20]Ditsky, p. 303.

[21]Ditsky, p. 313.

[22]Van Ghent discusses in detail Dickens' use of the pathetic fallacy among other techniques to achieve this vision of human separateness as the ordinary condition in her book on pp. 125-38.

[23]Ditsky, p. 313.

[24]George Stade, "The Realities of Fiction and the Fiction of Reality," Harper's (Fall, 1975), p. 86.

[25]Myron Greenman's concern is similar to Ditsky's in that his major concern is author subjectivity and so-called realistic expectations in "Understanding New Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies, 20 (Aug., 1974), 307-16.

[26]Arlen J. Hansen discusses the individual's need to adjust to his environment through solipsism and the contemporary writer's attempt to portray this in fiction in his article "The Celebration of Solipsism: A New Trend in American Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies, 19, No. 1 (Spring, 1973), 7.

[27]Frederick R. Karl and Leo Hamalian, "Introduction," The Naked I (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1971), pp. 1-2.

[28]Karl and Hamalian, p. 2.

[29]Karl and Hamalian, p. 3.

[30]Karl and Hamalian, p. 5.

[31]Karl and Hamalian, p. 6.

[32]Vladimir Nabokov, Pale Fire (New York: G. B. Putman's and Son, 1962), p. 26. Specific references appear in parentheses following quotations.

[33]John Stark, The Literature of Exhaustion (Durham: Duke University Press, 1974), p. 82.

[34]Stark, p. 82.

CHAPTER II

A CONFEDERATE GENERAL FROM BIG SUR

In A Confederate General, his first novel, Brautigan uses many modes of perception: Jesse, a first person, subjective narrator who tells the story of Lee Mellon as well as his own; Brautigan as author who like Nabokov makes himself known from time to time; the italicized sections concerning the Civil War and the invented history of Augustus Mellon similar to Kimbote's "Commentary" in Pale Fire; a "Preface" at the beginning of Part I, which gives statistics on Generals from the Civil War; a set of letters at the beginning of Part II, which reveals states of mind of both Jesse and Lee; the houses in both San Francisco and Big Sur, which are similar to Kafka's rooms in The Trial; the dreamscape scenes, especially the drug scene at the end of the novel which is similar to some of the scenes in the Magic Theater in Steppenwolf; and history, nature, animals, insects, and things personified, some of which reach symbolic proportions, which function either as a mirror of states of mind or another construct of reality. On the realistic level, in a linear line of boxes, Brautigan portrays the sub-culture wasteland world of the Sixties in which plausible wasteland characters either exist in a state of stasis or develop into a more impotent state than they are at the beginning. On the surrealistic level, Brautigan through multi-layers of boxes that superimpose themselves over each other portrays the subconscious and abstract levels of reality through antithetical imagery, grotesqueries, and

magic metaphors, the major one, the Civil War which encompasses minor metaphors such as Lee Mellon's teeth, Ecclesiastes, and allusions to the whole literary world. It is through all these elements that Brautigan's use of the magic box metaphor is revealed.

The most valuable criticism of Confederate General to date comes from Gerald Locklin and Charles Stetler who compare the novel to Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises. They compare Nick Carroway to Jesse, Gatsby to Lee Mellon, the Hemingway expatriates with those at Big Sur, Hemingway's to Brautigan's use of a war. In Brautigan's case it is the decline of America since the Civil War, a decline reflected through the Civil War metaphor that permeates the whole novel just as the invented history of Augustus Mellon does. Another important parallel that Locklin and Stetler make is that all three novels witness the end of a dream; in Confederate General it is the West, once a "symbol of a dream, a goal, a wilderness . . . but . . . alive with vast promise [and they add that] . . . Brautigan now lays the dream to rest."[1] The parallels here are excellent. Confederate General like The Great Gatsby and The Sun Also Rises portrays a wasteland world where the dream of the past is ended and the present world is a nightmare. Even Big Sur and its inhabitants in the past surrealistically depict it. Big Sur, a Confederate State between Monterey and San Luis Obispo, California, has clifflike beaches that are rebels; redwood trees, ticks, and cormorants wave rebel flags; the San Lucia Mountains are a "thousand-year-old flophouse for mountain lions and lilacs";[2] the Pacific Ocean is a "million-year-old skid row for abalone and kelp, sending representatives back to the Confederate Congress in Richmond, Virginia" (p. 17). Operating with the Civil War metaphor here is nature personified and supported by antithetical metaphors which

connect human habitats and locations with animals who are more alive than the Big Sur inhabitants. Jesse tells the reader: "I've heard that the population of Big Sur [a play on the word surreal?] in those Civil War days was mostly just some Digger Indians. I've heard the Digger Indians down there didn't wear any clothes. They didn't have any fire or shelter or culture. They didn't grow anything. They didn't bury their dead or give birth to their children. They lived on roots and limpets and sat pleasantly out in the rain" (p. 18). The whole description is absurd, a dreamscape nightmare in which bizarre figures function as symbols of a wasteland state of mind.

Brautigan's world of the present is equally sterile. In Part I in San Francisco, the house where Jesse and Lee Mellon later live rains in the front hall because of a broken skylight. A Chinese dentist owns the house and always wears blue bib overalls over his business suit to collect the rent. He keeps the overalls in a tool room--no tools--"only the blue overalls hanging on a hook" (p. 35), and his response to the rain and "the long puddle leading splash, splash down the hall to the community kitchen in the rear" (p. 36) is no response at all: "he refused to be moved by it" (p. 36). Jesse lives in the attic, which "had been vacant for years" (p. 37), and the floor is so thin that Jesse's feet make too much noise. Jesse tells the reader that: "With all those years of peace and quiet, he probably thought that there was a meadow up there with a warm gentle wind blowing through the wild flowers, and a bird getting hung up above the trees along the creek" (p. 37). Jesse bribes him with a record of Mozart, which reduces his burden. Then he adds: "I could feel my feet beginning to weigh less and less as he smiled at the phonograph record. It smiled back. I now weigh a trifle over seventeen pounds and

danced like a giant dandelion in his meadow" (p. 37). This absurd solution sets the surrealistic state for the description of the whole house and its occupants.

The building is peopled with lonely, alienated characters. A sixty-one-year-old retired music teacher lives right under Jesse. Spanish in origin with all the traditions and attitudes of the old world, he is "in his own way, the manager. He had appropriated the job like one would find some old clothes lying outside in the rain, and decide that they were the right size and after they had dried out, they would look quite fashionable" (p. 36). And like a typical wasteland figure, his life is aborted. He takes a vacation and dies on his return, "on the gangplank just a few feet away from America" (p. 36). In one of the other rooms on the second floor lives a secretary, whom Jesse never sees even though they all share the same bathroom. No communication takes place so Jesse has to invent a story about her--Brautigan himself is ever present--she must be an actress because she has "long ingenue legs--one might as well believe that as anything else because there was no way of knowing" (p. 38). In the other room on the second floor is a man who simply greets him in the morning and evening. All Jesse knows about him is that: "One day in February he went down to the community kitchen and roasted a turkey" (p. 38). He spends hours preparing it, takes it upstairs, and never uses the kitchen again; shortly after that, he stops speaking even twice a day. On the bottom floor lives an eighty-four-year-old woman who has a hot plate in her room and does all her cooking there; she never uses the community kitchen. Jesse knows more about her than the others. "Her father had been a wealthy doctor in the Nineteenth Century and had the first franchise in Italy and France for some wonderous American electrical device" (p. 40).

The old lady cannot remember what it was, but he had lost all his money trying to sell it; nobody wanted it because they were afraid of it. The photograph on the dresser tells Jesse that she had once been a beautiful woman. Once "a governess and language instructor in Italian, French, Spanish and German . . . [she is now] Heap-like senility" (p. 40). She has never married, has no friends, vaguely remembers the vineyards of her youth on the Mediterranean, and worries about what will happen to her shabby trunk full of things when she dies. A female Prufrock, the old woman slowly drinks a glass of wine that Jesse brings her because he likes her. Alienated and lonely with nowhere to go and nothing to do but remember the past, the old woman's response to the mere act of communication makes the shared glass of wine seem to her to be one of her most pleasant experiences.

On the bottom floor next to the community kitchen lives a "quiet, typical middle-aged woman . . . [who leaves] the door from her room to the kitchen open all the time" (p. 41). She watches and stares while Jesse cooks his meager meals, and even though it makes Jesse uncomfortable, it is, no doubt, all that she has to do. When she moves, the room is filled with one pretty blonde and two uglies; college girls, they are first intrigued with "college and post-college types, mostly clean cut . . . [but] as the girls grew more sophisticated, they acclimated themselves to the throbbing pulse of a cosmopolitan city, their attentions naturally switched to bus drivers" (p. 42). The irony is obvious here; the house itself is a wasteland, and all the characters who live in the house are wasteland figures of one type or another; lonely, hopeless, frustrated, impotent people living futile lives.

William Hogan in his article "Rebels in the War with Life" calls these Brautigan types "throw-away characters . . . [and adds] that the potentially interesting ones dissolve before they are formed,"[3] but this is just the point. All these characters even though the reader only gets glimpses of them are plausible, but they also function like states of mind that reflect Jesse's state of mind. As the reader travels with Jesse down the flight of floors, the descent becomes a Jungian journey from the conscious to the subconscious. In essence, the rooms on each floor function like the rooms in Kafka's The Trial; each room and its occupant operate like a distorted mirror of the self who is in the world and conditioned by the life of the world, a wasteland world that is both external and internal. Like K., Jesse cannot communicate with these people because neither he nor they are able to. Like K.'s court, behind each door a double reality exists, a dream world that slices off a level of the real world. Jesse tries like K. to create in these fragmentary characters some kind of essence out of their existence, but he cannot because he, too, like the tenants in the house is sentenced by the external world of facts. This is all he knows. What the reader sees, however, are mirror reflections of Jesse's states of mind. The house, then, with its inhabitants is a microcism in itself of a wasteland world on both the conscious and subconscious levels.

The three women, Susan, Elizabeth, and Elaine, as well as August Mellon and Roy Earle, are more developed than the "throw-away characters" but are equally plausible and equally appropriate to Brautigan's multiple view of a wasteland world. Susan, the daughter of a Jew, meets Lee in San Francisco, becomes pregnant, is deserted by both Lee and her father, retaliates by becoming fat and promiscuous, producing a baby a year until

she is twenty-one. Jesse tells the reader: "She became huge and grotesque, putting layers and layers of fat like geological muck" (p. 49). She decides to be a painter and finds that it is easier to talk about it than do it; she takes up smoking cigars, hating the Germans. At twenty-one she is prehistoric, and her fad has run its course. "She even gave up smoking cigars. She was attending movies all the time now" (p. 50). Susan, too, is a plausible character, but she also functions as a mirror reflection, in this case, of Lee Mellon's inhumanity. Right after Lee moves into the dead manager's room in the tenant house, Jesse finds him ravishing Susan, and when she becomes pregnant and comes back to find Lee, Jesse lies about him; in fact, "I lied" is repeated seven times in three paragraphs of dialogue on page forty-seven. On page forty-eight he reiterates: "Everytime she saw me she asked me anxiously if I had seen Lee Mellon, and I always lied, no. The disappearance had us all wondering. What else could I say? Poor girl. So I lied breathlessly--no. I lied no again no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no again" (p. 48). Eventually they both play the lie, and his description of her becomes more and more grotesque. First he says that the "months had gathered at her waist" (p. 47), that she becomes "bigger and bigger like a cross between a mushroom and a goiter" (p. 48). The double irony here, however, is exemplified through the movies, a screen in itself that reflects Jesse's state of mind as well. Jesse tells the reader that he spends the time in the movies while Lee is ravishing Susan.

> I went down town to see three movies in a Market Street flea palace. It was a bad habit of mine. From time to time I would get the desire to confuse my senses by watching large flat people crawl back and forth across a huge piece of light, like worms in the intestinal track of a tornado.
>
> I would join the sailors who can't get laid, the old people who make those theaters their solariums, the immobile

> visionaries, and the poor sick people who come there for the outpatient treatment of watching a pair of Lusitanian mammary glands kiss a set of Titanic capped teeth.
>
> I found three pictures that were the right flavors: a monster picturehelphelp, a cowboy picturebangbang and a dime store romance pictureIloveyou, and found a seat next to a man who was staring up at the ceiling (pp. 44-45).

The teeth in the movies are capped, as false as the relationship between Lee and Susan, and the description of Susan at the movies is as grotesque as the watchers with Jesse. "She wheeled those by now comfortable layers of fat into the movies every day, taking four or five pounds of food in with her in case there should be a freak snowstorm inside the movie and the concession stand were to freeze like the Antarctic" (p. 50). At the end of Part I, Susan plays the lying game in front of Lee on the street corner. When she with a big smile on her face asks where Lee is, Jesse says that he can now truthfully say no. Lee Mellon shows no interest at all; he simply walks across the street in his gray uniform and sword, walks away in his counterfeit uniform. The false smile, the capped teeth, Lee's genius for losing his teeth, all tie together to support the mirror reflections of the big lie. When Jesse points out that Susan "didn't give a damn anymore" (p. 49), it applies to all three. No one does, not even Jesse, and Lee never did.

Elizabeth is a different sort of prostitute from Susan, but her life in many respects is equally futile. She lives in Big Sur for nine months out of the year "in a rough three-room shack with four children that were all reflections of herself. . . . She wore her hair long and loose about her shoulders and on her feet she wore sandals and on her body she wore a rough shapeless dress and lived a life of physical and spiritual contemplation . . . then she hired somebody to watch her children, and she went to Los Angeles and made the physical and spiritual transformation

into a hundred dollar call girl who specialized in providing exotic pleasure for men who wanted a beautiful woman to put out with some weird action" (pp. 86-87). Jesse calls her a "highly paid technician" (p. 86) who saves her money so she can live a quiet life for two-thirds of the year. She never talks about her husband who was killed in Korea, but she succumbs to Lee Mellon just as Susan does and becomes a part of the expatriate group in Big Sur, which mirrors her catering to high-priced perversion in L. A. Like Laura in Porter's wasteland story, "Flowering Judas," she betrays herself and negates all the implications of her freedom from the corruption in the city.

Elaine is the most developed of the three women, but she too is a wasteland prototype. Elaine is a young college girl from the East who gives up her parents and looks for a new life in the West, but all she does is exchange one wasteland world for another. Beautiful, intelligent, witty, and generous, she delights Jesse in the bar with her repartee; she takes him home with her and feeds him; she buys groceries and two alligators to kill the frogs in the pond at Big Sur; but she also succumbs like Elizabeth and Susan to Jesse, in this case, and the life at Big Sur. She indulges in the drug and drinking scenes with equal ease. As Locklen and Stetler aptly say of her: "She takes to dope as if it were personally invented for her. At the end she has no sense of tragedy, doom or even peril."[4] In the drug scene, similar on the surrealistic level to the trip Haller takes through the Magic Theater, Elaine stares at the fire in the cabin, stares at the waves on the beach, and tries to seduce Jesse who at this point is impotent. Jesse says of her: "She was exploiting the maximum amount of drama out of taking off her clothes. It made me think of Hamlet, some kind of weird Hamlet where maybe Ophelia would take her

clothes off like Elaine was doing. . . . She was wearing a pair of jeans. . . . She pulled them down slowly. . . . Why would anyone want to do anything like that? . . . I didn't feel any desire. . . . Of course she would help me out. This was just a little thing" (pp. 156-57). But nothing works. Like Ophelia, Elaine has gone a little mad; she has simply exchanged one wasteland world for another, and so has Jesse.

Augustus Mellon, who may be in total simply a figment of Lee's imagination with an invented history by Brautigan, is still plausible in concrete terms. In italicized asides throughout the novel, a point of view in itself like the "Treatise" in Steppenwolf, the reader learns that Colonel Mellon was not really a Colonel, but a Private. Locklen and Stetler say that he could be a character in Catch 22, but he exploits his fellow soldiers without the finesse that Heller gives his characters even at their worst. In Part I the reader learns that Augustus does not even appear in the register, and in Part II through flashbacks that coincide with the decline of the other characters in the novel, the reader learns the truth--if there is such a thing--that Private Augustus in not a good soldier, that he spends his time "out stealing something as usual" (p. 115), that he is the epitome of wasteland characters, real or otherwise. For example:

> Private Augustus Mellon thirty-seven-year-old former slave trader in residence at a famous Southern university ran for his life among the casual but chess-like deaths in the Wilderness. Fear gripped every stitch of his clothing and would have gripped his boots if he'd had a pair.
>
> He ran barefooted through a spring with a shattered branch lying in it, and he was a horse smoldering in the brush, and a crow covered with spider webs, and two dead soldiers lying next to each other, and he could almost hear his own name, Augustus Mellon, searching for himself (p. 132).

Later Jesse describes Augustus Mellon's inadequacy in even greater detail. In a battle in which the South was victorious, Augustus plays dead on the field; his main concern is over the fact that he might have been killed, and discovering that he is not, he becomes irritated with an ant that crawls across his hand. Jesse tells the reader that "Augustus Mellon rang forth a tintinnabulation of silent curses, being dead was one thing, this was another" (p. 141). Later in another flashback Private Mellon is seen stealing a Captain's boots.

> He came upon a Union captain lying headless among the flowers. With no eyes and no mouth, only flowers on the top of his neck, the captain looked like a vase. But this did not distract Augustus Mellon to the point of not seeing the captain's boots. Though his captain's head was absent from this world, his boots were not, and they entertained the barefoot fantasies of Augustus Mellon's feet, and then replaced those fantasies with leather. Private Augustus Mellon left the captain even more dificient, even more unable to cope with reality (p. 142).

In the final flashback the reader sees Private Mellon stumbling into a clearing where a battle has taken place, "a serious assault by Texas troops . . . and then the 8th Big Sur Volunteer Heavy Root Eaters arrived and one of them offered Traveller a limpet to eat, and Private Augustus Mellon had a new pair of boots, and then the 8th Big Sur Volunteer Heavy Root Eaters began dancing in a circle, the general and his horse in the middle, while all around them waged the American Civil War, the last good time this country ever had" (p. 148). Like many of the characters in Catch 22, Private Mellon takes advantage of the war, but the most he can do is steal a pair of boots, and his fear is equally inept; he simply plays dead. Not even Doc. Daneika, who fears death and flying and sulks because he is making "sacrifices" instead of making money doing abortions, is as inane as that. Locklen and Stetler call Augustus a "goof-off soldier,"[5] but he has none of the attributes of Daneika even at his best.

An absurd logic surrounds every character in Catch 22; Private Mellon is simply inane.

Roy Earle is a better example of a Catch 22 character. He is first seen chopping down trees to hide from the police on the highway by Big Sur. When Elaine asks him who he is, he tells her that he is Johnston Wade of Johnston Wade Insurance Company in San Jose, that he has $100,000 in a briefcase, two bottles of Jim Beam in a sack that also has some cheese and a pomegranate in it. Van Vactor in her article "Hip Elect" classifies him as "a crazy San Jose insurance man, mad as a refugee from his family's collective ego-trip,"[6] and he is and should be. His wife wants to put him away; like Big Nurse in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, she wants his money, and she wants him mad; his son and daughter, Stanford and Mills respectively, do also; so instead of watching a blank television set as McMurphy does in Cuckoo or signing Washington Irving to memos as Yossarian does in Catch 22, Roy Earle buys a Bently Bomb, goes to the bank, gets "all the money and the stocks and bonds and the jewelry . . . and a pomegranate, too" (p. 124)--for a dime--and runs from his "cunt" of a daughter, his "asshole" (p. 124) son, and his "bridge playing wife," who wants to lock him up because he has bought the bomb. He concludes the whole scene which has been delivered "as if he were a prisoner of war, giving his name, rank and serial number" (p. 125) with two revealing statements: "That pomegranate dime's gone. She won't spend that dime on her lover in Morgan Hill. . . . My lawyer's going to send me a telegram down at my hidden hunting lodge in San Diego. Near where I got my moose and Kodiak bear" (p. 124). These lines could come out of Catch 22; certainly they contain the black humor of both Catch 22 and Cuckoo, but Earle's insanity is a fact of life just as war and mental institutions. Roy Earle

is plausible in the realistic sense. Even chained to a log in order to keep from hurting hemself, he makes a great deal of sense. When Jesse asks him if he wants the chain off, Roy tells him to leave it because it reminds him of his wife and admits that he goes crazy part of the time. In addition he leaves Big Sur on time--Wednesday--in order to meet a client looking perfectly sane "except for his clothes and body that were rather disheveled with Big Sur grime" (p. 150). Like the protagonist in Joyce Oates' "How I Contemplated the World from the Detroit House of Correction and Began My Life Over Again," Roy Earle goes back to the lesser of two worlds; he simply chooses as the other characters in the novel do; he chooses one wasteland over another; he, like the young girl in Oates' short story, chooses the conventional one with stocks and bonds and shiny toasters.

Lee Mellon, the most completely developed character, is given the most coverage by the critics. William Hogan says of him: "A former Meridian, Miss. lad who considers himself to be something of a rebel general in the war with life, a one time Kansas tractor driver who bones up on Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Kant before he drifted West on the tide of misfits, Mellon has a gift for getting his teeth knocked out and now is content to roll rich queers for a living if that's the word."[7] Locklen and Stetler add:

> Lee Mellon is called 'a kind of weird Balboa' as he wanders along Number One, the nation's most westerly highway, cadging cigaret butts. The chapter is entitled 'The Rites of Tobacco,' summoning associations not only of the golden age of Confederacy, but of the Jamestown settlement itself. Lee Mellon has a fantasy of walking all the way to Seattle, then turning East to New York without ever finding one cigaret butt: 'Not a damn one, and the end of an American dream.' This is an ironically barren end for one who hails from rich tobacco lands.

> By mentioning him in the same breath with John Stuart Mill, Brautigan encourages us to think of Lee Mellon as a man of stature. He like Mill a 'truly gifted faculty.' Whereas, however, Mill learned to translate Greek at the age of three, Lee Mellon's gift is for 'getting his teeth knocked out.'
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The above is to some extent facetious, for Lee Mellon is a genius of sorts, a Mill without humanism. His ambition is to become 'one of the dominant creatures of this shit pile.' He is the master of the put-on, the con. He is ruthless and without a shred of altruism. He might, a century before, have been a robber baron. Hence, his surname.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> In what sense is Lee Mellon a Confederate General? In that sense in which 'confederate' equates with 'counterfeit'? Probably. He is gradually reduced in stature throughout the novel, just as is his ancestor, Augustus Mellon, in a series of flashbacks very reminiscent of In Our Time.[8]

Van Vactor calls Lee a "hero of confusion and beautiful deficiencies, embattled, a kind of monumental ruin, he also has a disturbing innocence of a creature unaffected by temporal modes of being. He has no sense of responsibility whatsoever."[9] Monumental ruin that he is, and exaggerated as he is for fictional purposes and to suit Brautigan's sense of humor, Lee still emerges as a plausible character living in his own little waste-land world which eventually brings all those who surround him to the same ruin.

Just like Jesse's, Lee Mellon's surroundings are wasteland worlds of their own. Oakland and Big Sur and the houses which Lee inhabits there are just like the apartment house where he and Jesse live in San Francisco. In Oakland he lives in an "abnadoned house of a friend who was currently Class C Ping-Pong Champion of a rustic California insane asylum [another throw-away character]. The classification of A, B or C were determined by the number of shock treatments administered to the patients. The gas and electricity had been turned off in 1937 when the friend's mother had been tucked away for keeping chickens in the house" (p. 46). Lee taps

the gas line--poorly--it produces "a six-foot long blue flame" (p. 46), eats occasionally by lantern light and reads the Russians. His total source of income is "panhandling on the streets and going around to the back doors of restaurants, and walking around looking for money in the gutters" (p. 46). Without the humor, the house and the total environment as well as the way Lee exists is grotesque.

Big Sur and Lee's cabin there is simply another burrow. "There was the dirt wall of the hillside, and there was a wooden wall, and a glass wall and no wall, just a space of air that led out to a narrow catwalk that circled part of the frog pond and joined up with a deck that was cantilevered rather precariously, like a World War I airplane, out over a canyon" (p. 62). The ceiling is only five-feet-one-inch because the cabin was built while Lee and his friend were drinking gin. "It had been a hot day when they put the walls up and three bottles of gin and Lee Mellon kept putting it away and the other guy, a deeply disturbed religious sort of person, kept putting it away. It was of course his gin, his land, his building material, his mother, his inheritance, and Lee Mellon said, 'We've dug the holes deep enough, but the posts are a little too long. I'll saw them off'" (p. 61). Below the cabin is a frog pond with "hundreds, thousands, millions, light years of frogs who could make enough noise to break one's soul like kindling" (p. 64). Surrounding the cabin are "lonely stark mountains and clifflike beaches . . . redwood trees and the ticks and the cormorants . . . [the] Santa Lucia Mountains, that thousand-year-old flophouse for mountain lions and lilacs . . . [the] Pacific Ocean . . . that million-year-old skid row for abalone and kelp" (p. 17). Lee and Jesse, when he arrives, dine on abalone, and Jack Mackeral, which the cats would not eat, and Mellon made bread, a "perfect gastronomical

Hiroshima" (p. 69). "Hard as a rock, flavorless and an inch thick, like Betty Crocker gone to Hell" (p. 70), the bread is like the rest of the life there, a slow decline into nothingness.

Lee and Jesse whom Hogan calls "a hip-narrator observer, persumably the author who himself is something less than an IBM card-carrying conformist,"[10] survive through various exploitations. Lee gets $6.72 from two frightened boys trying to steal gas from his truck--if it can be called that--he frightens them with an unloaded gun because they have run out of bullets, and instead of using the money for food, the two go to Monterey and get drunk; in fact, Jesse ends up with Elaine and Lee ends up "passed out underneath the saloon" (p. 88). Jesse hoses the vomit off of him and covers him with cardboard and goes off to bed with Elaine who later joins them in Big Sur. The group grows to five when Elizabeth joins them and Roy Earle appears.

In the final scene in which the two couples indulge in an all night session of whisky and marijuana, the futility of all the lives of those involved is made clear. It is an animal scene, a dreamscape nightmare; even Jesse becomes like the rest. As Locklin and Stetler point out:

> We first notice Jesse's increasing mental instability about two-thirds of the way through the novel when he half-heartedly jokes about the damage to the soul of a steady diet of Lee Mellon's cooking. Up to this point, Jesse has remained in the background, portraying Lee Mellon for us, sometimes dazzling us with his imagery, but making no value judgments and telling us little of his own feelings. Soon, though, we find him irritated with Roy Earle's offer to buy Elaine for the night and, shortly after, he states, 'I wanted reality to be there. What we had wasn't worth it. Reality would be better.' This is a crucial remark, for the progress of the book to this point (and the spiritual thrust of the Sixties as well) has been in the direction of a sur-reality, mind-expansion, a psychedelic rejection of the ordinary, the established, the banal. They have been playing at insanity, but confronted with Roy Earle they can see that real mental illness is no

> laughing matter. Worse, they have played insane to the point where they have actually gone a little mad, the lot of them.[11]

Brautigan does fulfill the realist's obligation to the reader; wasteland characters in a wasteland world equals waste. In the second ending Jesse describes Lee and Elizabeth sitting just where he and Elaine left them during the night. They are just where they were. "Nothing had changed. They were exactly the same. They looked like photographs in an old album. They didn't say anything and we sat down beside them. That's where you've seen us before" (p. 158). Just like the throw-away characters, all the developing characters are simply more impotent and sterile and a little more mad than they were at the beginning--a little more lonely, solipsistic, alienated from both society and each other. The reader on the realistic level has simply seen this waste in action.

Structurally the novel has the traditional realist's balance in character and in scene, and the novel does establish order, but realism does not reign supreme. Even the realistic scenes become mirror reflections of one sort or another. For example, Part I takes place in the city, Part II takes place in the country, and the houses in both locales are surrealistic dreamscapes of nightmare worlds. Lee's house in Oakland in Part I balances with Jesse's glass cabin in Big Sur in Part II, both of which function as mirror reflections of their states of mind. The scene in Part I with Lee and the "rich queer" who gives him his car is mirrored in Part II with the scene with the two young boys who steal gas from the truck and culminates in the final scene with Lee's inhumane treatment of Roy Earle; antithetically balanced is Lee's experience with Susan whom he rejects in Part I with Jesse's experience with Cynthia who rejects him in Part II. In Part I is a "Preface" that gives absurd statistics of generals in the

Civil War, a magic box in itself, which is balanced by the letters in the beginning of Part II, another magic box that gives a subjective revelation of the states of mind of both Lee and Jesse as well as connecting the present at Big Sur with the past. Part I describes the Digger Indians and their participation in the Civil War, and Part II mirrors that past through the historical asides in italics concerning Augustus Mellon--two more magic boxes surrealistic in nature. Tied in with these scenes, statistics, and letters is the Civil War metaphor that functions throughout the novel and ties all the elements together. For example, Lee is "a Confederate General in ruins" (p. 20). When Lee and Jesse eat in the restaurant in San Francisco their plates are "empty now like orders for a battle not yet conceived, in a war not yet invented" (p. 28). James says that Lee "lays seige to Oakland" (p. 46); and when Jesse makes love to Elaine, he says that "we went away with each other like small Republics to join the U. S." (p. 91). "There are hand grenade fragments of apple around the corners of Lee's mouth" (p. 102). At Big Sur "the light was tucked like artillery in and out of the clouds" (p. 110). Elaine wears a blanket "like a ragged Confederate uniform" (p. 121). Jesse awakens to the noise of Roy Earle beating a washtub that sounds like "thousands of ragged Confederate troops going by on Highway 1, with cavalry dashing through and scattering the ranks, and hundreds of wagons filled with ammunition and supplies, and artillery going by, their horses moving at a good pace" (p. 148). These are only a few examples, but the point is made. The metaphor functions like a web of sense, a mode of perception that connects character, scene, and construct.

Minor metaphors connect and support the major Civil War metaphor. One example is Lee Mellon's teeth; he only has a complete set at one time;

he puts them in his pocket in the wheat field; they fall out on the ground and the tractor runs over them. It takes him almost an hour to find them, and when he does, they aren't worth finding. Jesse tells the reader: "I've adjusted to the teeth fantasia always happening to him, and so now every time I see him, I have a good look at his mouth to see how things are going with him, to see if he has been working, what books he has been reading, whether Sara Teasdale or Mein Kampf, and whom he has been sleeping with: blondes or brunettes" (p. 22). Mirroring the teeth metaphor is the Chinese dentist who owns the San Francisco tenant house and who in turn is connected with the dead music teacher. Jesse says that he "heard it was his heart, but the way the Chinese dentist described the business it could have been his teeth" (p. 37); and the next piece of information informs the reader that the old man's death empties the room into which Lee moves. This non sequitur absurdity simply highlights the same point. After an all night drinking bout and futile search in the library for the records of General Mellon, Lee extracts a promise from Jesse concerning the truth of his lineage: "Promise me to your dying day, you'll believe that a Mellon was a Confederate general. It's the truth. That God-damned book lies. There was a Confederate General in my family!" (pp. 33-34). And Jesse responds: "'I promise,' I said and it was a promise that I kept" (p. 34). When the lie is exposed in the flashbacks in Part II, the reader realizes that like Lee's teeth, so-called truth is counterfeit and not worth searching for. Mirroring the same illusion are the capped teeth in the movie which both Jesse and Susan watch and Roy Earle's false teeth that "showed in a light that dangled like an illuminated grave off them" (p. 123). Every reference here surrealistically reflects a wasteland

state of mind and supports the Civil War metaphor which equates with counterfeit, or illusion in place of truth.

Nature personified serves the same function. In his letter to Lee Jesse describes his aborted love affair with Cynthia as a game "turned sour like the bees Isaac Babel writes about in Red Cavalry. . . . Those bees did not know what to do after their hives had been blown up by the soldiers. 'The Sacred Republic of the Bees' was reduced to nothing but anarchy and tatters. The bees circled and died in the air" (p. 131). The description here parallels the description of the Civil War scene at the beginning of the novel and conveys the same wasteland theme. When Cynthia leaves him, he tells Lee that all the bees are dead in his stomach "and getting used to it" (p. 60). When Jesse arrives at Big Sur, he describes the fire and mentions on numerous occasions that the "bugs were standing there on the log and looking at us through the fire" (p. 71). The bugs on the logs follow the decline of the group; in fact, Brautigan places the comments on the bugs in italics to make the reader aware of their importance.

Even more obvious is the war with the frogs. The frogs are silent during the day, but at night "the pond would be changed into the Inquisition. Auto-da-fe at Big Sur. Frogs wearing the robes, carrying the black candles--CROAK! CROAK! CROAK! CROAK!" (p. 64). Lee spends his nights fighting the frogs while Jesse reads Ecclesiastes and counts the punctuation marks. Lee throws rocks at them, beats the pond with the broom, throws boiling water then wine on them; he catches them and throws them in the canyon, throws one in the fireplace, ties rocks on them, while Jesse does his "kind of study in engineering" (p. 75) counting commas, semicolons, colons, question marks, and periods in his notebook titled

"The Punctuation Marks in Ecclesiastes" (p. 75). Jesse counts a chapter every night because he is "curious about the number of rivets and the sizes of those rivets in Ecclesiastes, sailing on our waters" (p. 75). Both exercises are civil wars of sorts, civil wars within the self and external reality; but as in Ecclesiastes, all is vanity.

Later in "Farewell to Frogs" the Jungian level foreshadowed by the description in Part I of the tenant house and its inhabitants in San Francisco begins to come closer to the surface. "Night was coming on in, borrowing the light. It had started out borrowing just a few cents worth of the light, but now it was borrowing thousands of dollars worth of the light every second. The light would soon be gone, the bank closed, the tellers unemployed, the bank president a suicide" (p. 102). The group hears the first frog, and Lee prepares "to send his cavalry in, dust rising in the valley, an excitement in the time of banners, in the time of drums" (pp. 102-03). Lee goes to the car and comes back "with the alligators [and] a nice six-toothed smile on his face" (p. 103). When Lee places one alligator in the pond, there is "an instant silence over the pond as if the pond had been dropped right into the heart of a cemetery" (pp. 103-04), and the crowd is "hypnotized by the silence" (p. 104). The chapters following the frog war become more and more bizarre; the metaphors become more grotesque; the surrealistic level seems at times to be pushing its boundaries to a Kafkaesque level of abstraction.

Obvious clues are given to prepare the reader for the culminating drug scene at the end of the novel which functions almost in total on the surrealistic level. For example, when Jesse describes Elizabeth's reaction to the absurd dialogue about the alligators and the frogs in "The Pork Chop Alligator" chapter, the point of view moves from the conscious

to the subconscious through a combination of dialogue, language, and description.

> "I've never seen any alligators down here before," Elizabeth said. "They're cute. What are they good for?"
> "Frog baths," Elaine said.
> "Companionship," Lee Mellon said. "I'm lonely. Our alligators could make beautiful music together."
> His alligator said, "GROWL!--opp/opp/opp/opp/opp/opp/opp/opp!"
> "Your alligator looks like a harp," Elizabeth said as if she really meant it: with strings coming off her words.
> "Your alligator looks like a handbag filled with harmonicas," Lee Mellon said, lying like a dog with dog whistles coming off his words.
> "Up your alligator!" I said. "Is there any coffee?"
> They both laughed. Elizabeth's voice had a door in it. When you opened that door you found another door, and that door opened yet another door. All the doors were nice and led out of her (pp. 99-100).

A combination of techniques are used here to move the reader into the subconscious level; however, equally important is the fact that Brautigan's Kafkaesque references to doors in Elaine existentially connotes in magic box terms the multiple modes of perception prevalent throughout the novel.

The culminating drug and drinking scene in the novel begins with the chapter "A Short History of America After the War Between the States." Functioning like a dreamscape nightmare, the reader is told that the bugs no longer stare out of the fireplace, that frenzy drips off of Roy Earle "like a flood of detergent soapsuds roaring through Carlsbad Caverns" (p. 122), that he has a hundred thousand dollars in a briefcase and a pomegranate which cost a dime. Roy Earle's ten cent pomegranate, a mythological allusion to Persephine's downfall with Pluto, is contrasted with his hundred thousand dollars. This implies more than his schizophrenic nature which fluctuates between madness and sanity; it also implies the Hell in which he lives which according to so-called conventional values should be Heaven. In the next chapter "Lee Mellon's San Jose Sartorious" the group

sits in silence listening to Lee's "treatment" of Roy Earle. Jesse now tells the reader that "the stars were silent out over the scene. They had to be. . . . They didn't say anything. They waited" (pp. 126-27). Elizabeth offers coffee to the group in an attempt to make reality out of the scene, and Jesse responds trying to help, for he states: "I wanted reality to be there. What we had wasn't worth it. Reality would be better" (pp. 126-27), and adds: "I wish I could have offered the stars a drink. Looking down upon mortals, they probably need a drink from time, to time, certainly on a night like this" (p. 127). By early morning in the following chapter the stars begin to do late things in the sky, in a sky that is "fastened by picture windows above our future" (p. 131), and Roy Earle starts a fire, a mirroring reflection through the elements of Roy Earle's madness, in fact, a reflection of the Hell in which the group exists.

In the next chapter it is the alligators who stare at Jesse, and Roy Earle stares back at them. After Lee puts Roy Earle away, a place where he has been before and does not want to return, the two couples "turn on" (p. 138). The scene begins on a realistic level, but quickly shifts to a dreamscape nightmare. Lee becomes as insane as Roy Earle; Jesse tells the reader that Lee "beat his hands on the floor like a seal and began making seal sounds. To think that less than an hour before he had been taking care of Roy Earle, and now he needed a keeper himself" (p. 140). Jesse gets hung up on Elizabeth's hair, while Elaine stares into the fire, and in the next chapter when Lee falls into the pond, Roy Earle appears out of the woods. Jesse says: "He was chained to a log he had dragged from God knows where. It was just horrible" (pp. 142-43). Even the following morning, everything is strange except Roy Earle who seems more sane

than the other four; even when he beats on the washtub, he simply wants "to drum somebody up" (p. 148). When Jesse asks Lee why he chained him to a log and Lee dismisses it as nothing, Jesse's response is "a sudden wave of vacancy . . . like a hotel being abandoned by its guests for an obvious reason" (p. 149). Later when Roy Earle leaves, Jesse responds again with, "but I didn't feel very good at all. More rooms were being vacated. The elevator was jammed with suitcases" (p. 151). Rooms again play an important part here, magic boxes reflecting a vacuum.

In the final scene of the drug experience which takes place by the ocean, Jesse confesses that he "felt very strange and confused inside. A little bit too much of life had been thrown at me, and I couldn't put it all together. . . . Four people poleaxed by dope" (pp. 154-55), and nature again surrounds the scene. At the conclusion of Elaine's seduction of Jesse and his consequent impotency, flies crawl over both of them while overhead a seagull flies. In fact, all five endings begin with: "A sea gull flew over us" (pp. 157, 158, 159). In the first ending Roy comes back for his pomegranate which he says he is going to take to Los Angeles with him--"Big Business" (p. 158). In the second ending the seagull simply flies over a still life picture of the four; in the third the bird's shadow is in their ears; in the fourth the bird flies over Roy Earle throwing his money in the ocean; in the fifth he slips off Jesse's fingers and flies away. The final ending "186,000 Endings Per Second" (p. 160) which go "faster and faster" mirrors what the seagull reflects. Like the doors in Steppenwolf's Magic Theater, the seagull mirrors a mosaic of sterile sense impressions and wasteland states of mind, a kind of madness that makes Roy Earle the least insane of the five. The whole series of scenes has become a nightmare from which it is impossible to

awaken. Even time has become a nebulous void which simply revolves at maddening speed but goes nowhere; the past, the present and the future are equally sterile.

Brautigan's wasteland theme, then, operates on all levels of reality through multiple modes of perception. On the realistic level he achieves his obligation to truth and the need to restore order by reducing his subculture protagonists to the point of sterility; he accomplishes this through a series of scenes that are cyclic and linear. On the surrealistic level he achieves the same wasteland state of mind through antithetical imagery, metaphor, allusion, dreamscape, and the personification of nature. In addition to these modes of perception are the statistics of Generals at the beginning of the novel, the italicized asides that give the invented history of Augustus Mellon, and Jesse as both narrator and participant. In Confederate General, Brautigan makes use of almost every facet of the magic box metaphor.

NOTES

[1]Gerald Locklin and Charles Stetler, "Some Observations on A Confederate General from Big Sur," Critique, 13, No. 2 (1972), 73.

[2]Richard Brautigan, A Confederate General from Big Sur (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), p. 17. Subsequent references appear in parentheses following quotations.

[3]William Hogan, "Rebels in the War with Life," Saturday Review, 13 Feb. 1965, p. 49.

[4]Locklin and Stetler, p. 81.

[5]Locklin and Stetler, p. 74.

[6]Anita Van Vactor, "Hip Elect," The Listener, 23 Jan. 1971, p. 121.

[7]Hogan, p. 49.

[8]Locklin and Stetler, pp. 73-74.

[9]Van Vactor, p. 121.

[10]Hogan, p. 50.

[11]Locklin and Stetler, p. 76.

CHAPTER III

TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA

In Trout Fishing in America Brautigan uses a different pattern of structure and design which also makes extensive use of the magic box metaphor. More disciplined in artistry than Confederate General, Trout Fishing in America conveys an even more prismatic view for the reader into both the perceptive capabilities of the mind and the Brautigan construct of reality. Thematically the two novels are similar, but the basic structure of Trout Fishing is surrealistic. The narrator of Trout Fishing is more complicated than Jesse is in Confederate General; the major metaphor Trout Fishing, unlike the Civil War metaphor, takes on symbolic proportions; the minor metaphors such as the ponds, wine, monuments, nature, which support the Trout Fishing symbol, are even more uniquely Brautigan. The tenor and vehicle as literal realities are extended even farther into the abstract, and, on a larger scale, each chapter functions like a box in itself. One chapter may be a letter, the next a pure sense impression, another a dreamscape, or a character sketch of a character who is not really a character, but rather a reflector of a statement of value or an attitude. In a sense each chapter is an open door like the doors in the Magic Theater in Steppenwolf. There is, however, symmetry and design in the total pattern through antithetical balances, through repetitive patterns of thought from different perspectives, through the Trout Fishing symbol, its supporting metaphors, and the ever present author, narrator,

persona of the Trout Fishing symbol itself. Structurally Brautigan achieves in Trout Fishing what Shade in his poem in Pale Fire called "a web of sense," a mosaic of perceptions that are resolved for the most part through the imagination.

Tony Tanner states in his review of the novel:

> If there is any narrative in the book it concerns indeed the author's various attempts to find good trout fishing, but Trout Fishing in America becomes a person, a place, a hotel, a cripple, a pen nib, and of course a book. Protean and amorphous, it is a dream to be pursued, a sense of something lost, a quality of life, a spirit that is present or absent in many forms. Because Brautigan exercises complete freedom with words, he can set Trout Fishing in America down saying that he/it is leaving for Alaska, or start a chapter "This is the Autopsy of Trout Fishing in America"--and leave us concluding that the book is an autopsy of the whole American dream. . . . The narrator's quest for Trout Fishing in America is a series of disappointments. It brings him finally to the Cleveland Wrecking Yard, another version of the terminal dump of waste and used things which for so many American writers seems to loom up as a possible end to the American dream. In the yard a trout stream is being sold by the foot, stacked up in a room containing piles of toilets and dusty lumber. The touch of surrealism only deepens the muted sense of something precious lost. . . . One could call Brautigan's book an idyll, a satire, a quest, an exercise in nostalgia, a lament for America, or a joke--but it is a book which floats effortlessly free of all catagories, and it is just this experience of floating free which is communicated while one is reading it.[1]

Tanner's discussion of the surface narrator develops only one of the plot structures that operate here. The multiple role of the narrator involves another surface plot that is more oblique than the trout fishing one.

Kenneth Seib in his article, "Trout Fishing in America: Brautigan's Funky Fishing Yarn," points this out. Primarily a discussion of the function of the title, the article states the following:

> First of all, the narrator (presumably Brautigan himself) is Trout Fishing in America. The opening chapter, entitled "The Cover for Trout Fishing in America," not only describes the front photograph, but suggests the author's disguise--his "cover"! The most obvious objects in the photograph are Brautigan, looking like an unemployed buffalo hunter, and his

> lady companion--but nowhere are they mentioned in the description. Their "cover" is obviously successful. There are false identities, disguises, in several places in the novel: the waterfall that turns out to be a staircase, or the Mayor of the Twentieth Century who "wore trout fishing in America costume to hide his own appearance from the world. . . ." Moreover, there are letters written on Trout Fishing in America from his friend Pard and from "an Ardent Admirer," plus some replies from Trout Fishing in America to the letters and to some of the early chapters. Brautigan, then, is identifying himself with the title. . . . The opening chapter fittingly describes the statue of Benjamin Franklin in San Francisco's Washington Square--Brautigan, like Franklin, is writing an "Autobiography" turned upside down. Not about the way to wealth, Trout Fishing in America is an account of the author's rejection of the Puritan ethic and his discovery of the way to Self. . . . In his disguise as Trout Fishing in America . . . Brautigan presents himself as the typical American Dream, the myth of the Great Outdoors. By the end of the novel, however, the narrator and Trout Fishing in America become two separate personae . . . the narrator has been angling over a sterile waste land . . . [so] he sheds his illusions, discovers his own sexual and creative powers . . . and creates his own world.[2]

Seib sees the novel first as "the autobiography of a societal dropout, a contemporary hipster's progress from Jack Armstrong to Jerry Rubin";[3] second, as a dissection of the American Dream; third, as a romance, "conditioned by Brautigan's concern with the bankrupt ideals of the American past."[4] He concludes with the premise that the book "is the myth of the American Adam, the ideal of the New World Eden that haunts American fiction from Cooper to the present. The narrator of Trout Fishing in America is Leatherstocking perishing on the virgin land that once offered unbounded possibility, modern man longing for the restoration of the agrarian simplicity of pioneer America. That a life of frontier innocence is no longer possible adds to the desperate tone and comic absurdity of the narrator's frustrated excursions into the American wilderness."[5]

Both Tanner and Seib succinctly point out what loosely structured plot there is, and while the two plots do not progress in a linear way

with clear-cut realistic scenes, they do operate simultaneously with each other. In general, however, the plot centered around the narrator's search for good trout fishing evolves into a quest for a resolution to the gap between the American myth of the ideal and the real, and the biographical plot is an expose; the reader is allowed to see the childish and innocent illusion of the American dream develop into an adult awareness of the myth gone sour. Connected to these plots is the multiple-point-of-view-narrator who is, first, a fisherman on a quest for truth as well as good fishing; second, a biographer of the American dream gone sour; third, the divided persona of the Trout Fishing in America symbol, that is, the typical American and the cynic who dissects and rejects the myth, and by extension the persona of the whole Trout Fishing symbol of which he is part. He is also the ever present author-creator in the process of creating. Through these two plots, the multiple-point-of-view-narrator, and the surrealistic form and structure, Brautigan reveals that only through the imagination can one resolve the dilemma. As Vanderwerken aptly states in his article "Trout Fishing in America and the American Tradition," "Brautigan attempts to bridge the gap through the artist's power of imagining America otherwise."[6]

The narrator is in a sense a new world Adam creating his own myth. He tells the reader in the chapter "Knock on Wood (Part I)" how he first heard about trout fishing as a child. It was from a "stepfather . . . [an] old drunk,"[7] who "had a way of describing trout as if they were a precious and intelligent metal . . . trout steel. . . . A steel that comes from trout used to make buildings, trains, and tunnels. The Andrew Carnegie of Trout!" (p. 4). And the Trout Fishing in America cynic persona replies that he remembers with amusement the "three-cornered hats

fishing in the dawn" (p. 5). In the following chapter, "Knock on Wood (Part II)," the narrator describes his first childhood trout fishing in America experience. One spring afternoon, he walks down to a different street corner and sees "a row of houses huddled together like seals on a rock . . . a long field that came sloping down off a hill. The field was covered with green grass and bushes. On top of the hill there was a grove of tall dark trees . . . [and] a waterfall came pouring down off the hill" (p. 6). Dreaming of what it would be like to go fishing the next morning, he makes a child's preparation with "corny fishing tackle" (p. 6), a bent pin and a piece of string and some bread. When he gets to the waterfall, he finds that it is "just a flight of white wooden stairs leading up to a house in the trees" (p. 7). He stands there for a long time having trouble believing until he knocks on the creek and hears "the sound of wood" (p. 8). He tells the reader: "I ended up being my own trout and eating the slice of bread myself" (p. 8). Immediately following is Trout Fishing in America's reply. "There was nothing I could do. I couldn't change a flight of stairs into a creek. The boy walked back to where he came from. The same thing once happened to me. I remember mistaking an old woman for a trout stream in Vermont, and I had to beg her pardon" (p. 8). This non sequitor which shifts both time and character simply highlights the irony, the discrepency between childhood ideals or childish ignorance, an ingenue view as opposed to the sophisticated world-weary view of the adult. However, the resolution to the dilemma exemplified here is made clear; one must be his "own trout" (p. 8).

In the following chapter, "Red Lip," the time is seventeen years later; the fishing scene portrayed here reflects through the monument metaphor, which is surrounded by death and heat imagery, the loss of childhood

enchantment and the growing disenchantment that fills the void. Sitting on a rock beside the highway in front of an abandoned shack, which has "a sheriff's notice nailed like a funeral wreath to the front door" (p. 9), the narrator waits for a ride, but no one will stop. In the background is the sun, "a huge fifty-cent piece that someone had poured kerosene on and then had lit a match and said, 'here, hold this while I get a newspaper,' and put the coin in my hand but never came back" (pp. 9-10); the shack's roof is "a hat worn under the guillotine. A corner of the roof was loose and a hot wind blew down the river and the loose corner clanged in the wind" (p. 10). Behind the shack is "an outhouse with its door flung violently open . . . the inside . . . exposed like a human face . . . [which seems to say] I'm a monument . . . to a good ass gone under. There's no mystery here. That's why the door's open. If you have to crap go in the bushes like a deer" (pp. 10-11). And the narrator responds: "Fuck you . . . all I want is a ride down the river" (p. 11). The shack and the outhouses are both monuments of waste, man's waste of both himself and nature. And these monuments, surrounded by death imagery and metallic references to fire and heat, reflect both the death of nature's beauty caused by man's so-called progress and the narrator's loss of innocence as well as the inevitable effect, that is, a hell on earth and disenchantment with such waste.

Later in the book in the chapter "Footnote Chapter to 'Red Lip,'" Brautigan refers again to waste, this time his garbage which he dumps in an old outhouse behind three abandoned houses. On the wall of this outhouse is a roll of paper that looks "like a relative, perhaps a cousin, to the Magna Carta" (p. 163). The narrator and his family leave just before it becomes "necessary to stand on the toilet seat and step into that

hole, crushing the garbage down like an accordion into the abyss" (p. 163). However, the tone of both narrator and scene is different. Brautigan replaces the excrement in the "monument" of the first "Red Lip" chapter with human garbage, "bright definite and lusty garbage heaped up almost to the top" (p. 163) and warns the reader that "you would've had quite a surprise when you lifted the lid" (p. 163). This "monument" of "tin cans, papers, peelings, bottles, and Popeyes" (p. 162) becomes by association a pun on the scene described in Chapter I, "The Cover of Trout Fishing in America." "Across the street from the Benjamin Franklin statue is a church, and every afternoon around five, people gather in the park across the street from the church. It is sandwich time for the poor . . . the signal is given . . . they all run across the street to the church and get their sandwiches wrapped in newspaper. . . . A friend . . . unwrapped his sandwich one afternoon and looked inside to find just a leaf of spinach. That was all" (p. 2-3). "Popeyes" equates with spinach, the sandwich, the surprise upon lifting the lid in the "Footnote" chapter so that by extension the Benjamin Franklin statue also becomes an outhouse. Brautigan erects his own lusty monument to human waste, in essence, laughing away through the imagination the wasteland world in which he moves. While the narrator's childhood innocence is dead, the fire by imagery burning in the "Red Lip" chapter has been replaced by the writer's imagination. This conclusion is also foreshadowed in that original "Red Lip" chapter. When the narrator cannot get a ride upstream, he makes up his own game; he mentally catches "salmon flies" (p. 10) in his net. "It went like this. I couldn't chase them. I had to let them fly to me. It was something to do with my mind. I caught six" (p. 10). This imagination is simply another multiple perspective through the narrator-creator, who at times is

like McMurphy in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest; he creates his own black humor reality in order to survive.

Reality through the imagination is also apparent in the "Kool-Aid Wino" chapter which follows the first "Red Lip" chapter. Here the role of the narrator-biographer shifts to one of an adult looking back. The narrator tells of a childhood friend "who became a Kool-Aid wino as the result of a rupture" (p. 12). Because the boy comes from a large, poor family, neither an operation or even a truss is possible. To escape from the reality of his hopeless situation, the young boy creates his own world through the ritual of making and drinking watered down Kool-Aid. To the boy "the making of Kool-Aid was a romance and a ceremony" (p. 14). The spigot where he gets the water "thrust itself out of the ground like the finger of a saint, surrounded by a mud puddle" (p. 14), and when the jar is full, the young boy turns "the water off with a sudden but delicate motion like a famous brain surgeon removing a disordered portion of the imagination" (p. 149). In a chicken house "littered with half-rotten comic books" (p. 15) and "an old mattress" (p. 15) in the corner, he fills four quart jars with a gallon of Kool-Aid, which contains twice the amount of water for one package and none of the required sugar. All the processes are performed like a ritual, a ceremony performed like "the inspired priest of an exotic cult" (p. 14). The Kool-Aid becomes in its preparation a wine for a ritual or religious ceremony in which the young boy can escape from the truth. The truth that is reflected in the antithetical metaphor connotes blemishes, excess, and heaviness. The boy's rupture itself connotes a bloated condition as does his addiction to Kool-Aid. He eats "homemade bread covered with Karo syrup and peanut butter" (p. 13) for breakfast. He sleeps under a "tattered revolution of old blankets" (p. 12)

in his clothes because: "You're only going to get up anyway. Be prepared for it. You're not fooling anyone by taking your clothes off when you go to bed!" (p. 13). On the way to purchase the packet of Kool-Aid the boys pass fields "covered with heavy yellow grass" (p. 13) in which were pheasants "fat with summer" (p. 13), too fat to fly away. The grocer is "bald with a red birthmark on his head. The birthmark looked just like an old car parked on his head" (p. 13). When the grocer gets the five cents, the birthmark nods and "the old red car wobbled back and forth on the road as if the driver were having an epileptic seizure" (p. 13). When the boy's mother calls to him on the way to the chicken house--another monument to excrement--and the mother "in a voice filled with sand and string" (p. 13) asks the boy when he is going to do the dishes, he mutters that the dishes can wait. The narrator's response to the boy's reply is: "Bertrand Russell could not have stated it better" (p. 13), and his conclusion to the young boy's addiction to Kool-Aid is: "He created his own Kool-Aid reality and was able to illuminate himself by it" (p. 13). The boy's imagination is his salvation. Thomas Hearron states in his article "Escape Through Imagination in Trout Fishing in America" that: "Magically, almost religiously, the healthy imagination can create a 'Kool-Aid reality' which is more congenial than the urbanized reality of contemporary America."[8] Such a response to the scene indicates an adult observation which enlarges the perspective for the reader in that the whole scene is both experienced and observed simultaneously.

Actually, these first chapters establish the multiple points of view created by the narrator, and while one or more of these views operate with each chapter, the following chapters function also as points-of-view in themselves, that is, magic boxes giving multiple perceptions in a variety

of forms. The chapter "Another Method of Making Walnut Catsup" is a case in point. Immediately following the "Kool-Aid Wino" chapter, it provides "a very small cookbook for Trout Fishing in America as if Trout Fishing in America had Maria Callas for a girl friend and they ate together on a marble table with beautiful candles" (p. 16). The recipes listed--pudding, pie crust, compote, walnut catsup--mirror the Kool-Aid recipe for escape, and the comments in between each recipe mirror the illusion of what the American dream represents. First, Trout Fishing in America is equated with Maria's lover who was Aristotle Onassis at the time the novel was written. Following the first recipe "Compote of Apples" is this comment: "Maria Callas singing to Trout Fishing in America as they ate their apples together" (p. 17). After the pie crust recipe, the couple smile as they eat the crust. After "A Spoonful of Pudding," Trout Fishing in America (Onassis) mentions that the moon is coming out, and Maria agrees. The candlelight and the moon connote night as opposed to day, a dream world, a fantasy in which beautiful people live in luxury. The final recipe, "Another Method of Making Walnut Catsup" is used by Maria and her lover "on their hamburgers" (p. 18). Hamburgers, the all-American lunch and the antithesis of luxury equated with the previously exotic foods, places the dream world fantasy into the total American attitude, that is, the illusion that the recipe to the American dream is wealth and sense gratification.

Immediately following the recipe chapter is a dreamscape nightmare chapter entitled "Prologue to Grider Creek." The narrator places the scene in Mooresville, Indiana, John Dillinger's home town, and comments that some towns are known as "the peach capital . . . the cherry capital or the oyster capital, and there's always a festival and the photograph

of a pretty girl in a bathing suit" (p. 19)--another pun on the Benjamin Franklin statue picture on the cover and its relation to the American dream. With this comment the scene moves to a man and his wife, new residents of the town who discover "hundreds of rats" (p. 19) in the basement. "They were huge, slow moving child-eyed rats" (p. 19). When the wife leaves for a few days, the man goes down to the basement with a gun and starts shooting the rats, but it doesn't "bother the rats at all. They acted as if it were a movie and started eating their dead companions for popcorn" (pp. 19-20). When the man walks over to the rat who is "eating a friend" (p. 20), the rat neither moves nor stops eating. It simply pauses in a friendly way as if to say, "When my mother was young she sang like Deanna Durban" (p. 20). At the end of the scene, the narrator concludes: "There's always a single feature, a double feature and an eternal feature playing at the Greatheater in Mooresville, Indiana: The John Dillinger capital of America" (p. 21). The antithesis of the recipe to the American dream, the lateral content of this nightmare, reveals the truth of American values in actual practice. John Dillinger's museum where one can "go in and look around" (p. 19) is by extension a monument to murder, a point which is made clear in a later dreamscape chapter entitled "Sandbox Minus John Dillinger Equals What?" Here the narrator's daughter, who is playing in the sandbox by the Benjamin Franklin statue, is wearing a red dress. It reminds the narrator of "the woman who set John Dillinger up for the FBI" (p. 141). A few scenes later John Dillinger is shot down in the sandbox, and his daughter is "seen leaving in a huge black car shortly after that" (p. 142). Absurd but connecting images surround this scene. "There was a brick john between her dress and the church. It was there by no accident" (p. 141). There are three

sprinklers "watering the cover" (p. 140), and Benjamin Franklin is getting his feet wet. On the other end of the bench where the narrator sits is a beatnik "eating apple turnovers . . . gobbling them down like a turkey" (p. 140). When the black car pulls away with his daughter, it stops "in front of the ice cream parlor . . . [and] an agent got out and went in and bought two hundred-double-decker ice cream cones" (p. 143). These bizarre references relate to the recipe chapter as well as the "Prologue" chapter and expand the reader's view of dichotomies that exist in the American hierarcy of values. Monuments to crime and citizenship are on the same rung of the ladder and equate with outhouses and johns. Equally related to John Dillinger is the man who kills the rats. His penchant for murder of the innocent is supported by animal references all of which equate with people. In the chapter "The Message," it is sheep who are led by "a young, skinny, Adolf Hitler" (p. 52); in "The Salt Creek Coyotes," the killer is cyanide, "a kind of pistol" (p. 84). The sheep are as innocent as the rats, and the cyanide is equated with capital punishment and "gas chamber flunkies" (p. 85). All these chapters expand the "Prologue" chapter and allow the reader to see in multiple perspective the full range of guises and disguises for violence.

In addition to all of these references, "Prologue to Grider Creek" is a prologue to the creek and pond chapters, a message to the reader as to what those chapters will contain. A dreamscape, the "Prologue" foreshadows that the ponds will contain mirror reflections of attitudes that emanate from both the conscious and subconscious mind. "Grider Creek" expands the message. First, grider has several meanings; it is a metal plate used as a conductor, a support for active material of a storage battery electrode, a network of lines used for locating points on a map, a

wooden frame in which boats are floated at high tide, a postal cancellation with a gridiron pattern. Second, the main point of this one page chapter concerns a map of the creek which "the guy who drove the school bus" (p. 21) gives to the narrator. He draws it "in front of Steelhead Lodge . . . [on] a very hot day. . . . The map was nice. . . . Drawn with heavy dull pencil on a piece of paper bag. With a little square for a sawmill" (p. 21). In essence, the square, like the frame of a picture created by the narrator's pencil, will expose like a sawmill cutting through all the illusions--one can see the total imperfection or blemishes on a ship in dry dock--and will cancel like a postage stamp those faulty frames; the ponds will reflect like a map the various attitudes and values which must be disseminated. These two chapters foreshadow the fact that the ponds will function as reflectors for a reader's total understanding of the true nature of things, a prism of insight into the truth stripped of its illusions.

Like the "Prologue" chapter, the chapter "A Waldon Pond for Winos" does not concern a pond but port wine which the narrator and other "broken-down artists" drink in front of "three poplar trees in the middle of the park" (p. 24) by the statue of Benjamin Franklin. However, the implication of turning water into wine here has the same connotation as the Kool-Aid chapter. The men in a bizarre conversation discuss the future, which they conclude has only two directions. They are "either going to open up a flea circus or commit themselves to an insane asylum" (p. 25). The more wine they drink, the more surrealistic their conversation becomes. They talk about "how to make little clothes for the fleas by pasting pieces of colored paper on their backs . . . [about] the way that you trained fleas was to make them dependent upon you for their food . . . [about] making

little wheel barrows and pool tables and bicycles" (p. 25) for the flea circus. They will charge fifty-cents for admission. They decide to get their fleas from Siamese cats because they should be more intelligent. "It only made sense that drinking intelligent blood would make intelligent fleas" (p. 25). On the other hand the men talk about "how warm it would be in the insane asylum, with television, clean sheets on soft beds, hamburger gravy over mashed potatoes, a dance once a week with the lady kooks, clean clothes, a locked razor and lovely young student nurses" (p. 26). Their conclusion is that there is "a future in the insane asylum" (p. 26). The flea circus, an artistic enterprise, and the insane asylum, a home for the despairing and depressed, are ironically reversed, as the title indicates. Thoreau's Waldon Pond hideaway from false American values becomes a bottle of port wine, and the escape to the woods becomes an escape to the insane asylum because only there can the poor expect the so-called American standard of living which the American dream implies. As Kent Bales aptly states in his article "Fishing the Ambivalence," reality per se "is always an interpreted thing. Of course people are really hungry and really die or are shut up in crazy houses for acting on a wrong perception of reality or because they're in somebody's way, but we see even this reality through myths that give often contradictory values to these facts."[9] The tragedy of the winos lies in the fact that either alternative is simply an escape from one wasteland world to another. The point is, however, that the scene reflects both attitudes and illusions, that both are resolved by illusion, and that these illusions in both instances are the true nature of things.

"Tom Martin Creek" is equally deceptive; it is at first "cold, clear water" (p. 27) out of which the narrator-fisherman takes "a nine-inch

trout" (p. 27), but the reader soon learns that the creek "poured out of a steep brushy canyon filled with poison oak . . . the canyon was so narrow the creek poured out like water from a faucet . . . you had to be a plumber to fish that creek" (p. 28). The creek is a trap like the cobra lily in the chapter "The Ballet for Trout Fishing in America." The cobra lily, an illusion of reality, "attracts insects upon which it feeds" (p. 23). The creek too is a trap, an illusion just like the water for the Kool-Aid which also runs out of a faucet and makes a substance like wine, that is, wine which the reader has already learned in "A Waldon Pond for Winos" creates illusions as well. There is only one trout in the stream, and the narrator is "alone in there" (p. 28) after he catches it, alone just like any fisherman for truth must be in order to realize that true perception is like a single trout in a pond; it comes only in single flashes of insight.

In a later chapter, "The Hunchback Trout," the narrator fishes in a creek which is "like 12,845 telephone booths in a row with high Victorian ceilings and all the doors taken off and all the backs of the booths knocked out" (p. 86). This time the narrator feels like "a telephone repairman" (p. 86), and while he is able to get a ride up the stream this time and catches many and varied kinds of fish, he catches in particular "a twelve-inch rainbow trout with a huge hump on its back. A hunchback trout. The hump was probably due to an injury that occured when the trout was young" (p. 90). This trout as it is caught shows tremendous energy. The narrator can "feel its life energy screaming back up the line. . . . The line feels like sound. It was like an ambulance siren . . . red light flashing, and then going away again and then taking to the air and becoming an air-raid siren" (p. 90). The narrator wishes that he "could

have made a death mask of him. Not of his body though, but of his energy. [But he adds] I don't know if anyone would have understood his body" (p. 91). Later "when the telephone booths began to grow dark at the edges" (p. 91), he "punches" (p. 87) out of the creek, goes home and cooks "the hunchback trout for dinner . . . its hump tasted as sweet as the kisses of Esmeralda" (p. 91). Implied here is the premise that only through the energy of the individual imagination can one really see through the illusion, find reality, and not be trapped by it; a healthy imagination transcends and transforms the distortions in both into something beautiful, just as beautiful as the frog becomes when Esmeralda kisses it in the fairy tale--the frog turns into a handsome prince--or as beautiful as the hunchback in Notre Dame de Paris by Victor Hugo feels when Esmeralda befriends him.

The chapter "Trout Fishing on the Bevel" reflects again the monument metaphor, this time with tombstones in two graveyards which lie on each side of "Graveyard Creek, a slow-moving funeral-procession-on-a-hot-day creek with a lot of fine trout in it" (p. 29). One graveyard has "tall fir trees" (p. 29), grass that is "Peter Pan green all year round . . . [and] fine marble headstones and statues and tombs" (p. 20). The other graveyard is "for the poor and it had no trees and the grass turned flat-tire brown in the summer and stayed that way until rain, like a mechanic, began in the late autumn. . . . Their markers were small boards that looked like heels of stale bread. . . . On some of the graves were fruit jars and tin cans with wilted flowers in them . . . [with this epitaph]:

This Mayonnaise Jar
With Wilted Flowers In It
Was Left Here Six Months Ago
By His Sister
Who Is In
The Crazy Place Now (pp. 29-31).

These rich monuments to the dead parallel the Benjamin Franklin statue; the small boards for the poor by extension function like the outhouses, monuments "to a good ass gone under" (p. 11); and the inscription concerning the mayonnaise jar with wilted flowers recalls an array of problems relating to the poor. That the whole scene is on the bevel clues the reader again to the flash of perception that can take place if one perceives from more than one vantage point. The last two chapters, "Prelude to the Mayonnaise Chapter" and "The Mayonnaise Chapter," complete the reference to the Mayonnaise Jar and by extension make it a monument as well. The "Prelude" chapter consists of three "recipes" of sorts, parodies of scholarship; there are three so-called quotations that refer to man, his language, and his culture. The first quote explains that even the Eskimos have "no single word for ice" (p. 180). The second quote discusses the evolution of language with three theories: "The 'bow-wow' theory, that language started from attempts to imitate animal sounds . . . the 'ding-dong' theory . . . [that] arose from natural sound-producing responses . . . the 'pooh-pooh' theory . . . [that] began with violent outcries and exclamations" (p. 180). The final quote simply states: "But no animal up a tree can initiate a culture" (p. 181). The narrator concludes by saying that simply out of human need he wants to write a book that ends "with the word Mayonnaise" (p. 181). Ironically "The Mayonnaise Chapter" is a letter written like an epitaph about "the passing of Mr. Good" with a postscript which states: "Sorry I forgot to give you the Mayonnaise" (p. 182). These last two chapters function like the first chapter about the cover; they too are a "cover." The Mayonnaise jar filled with wilted flowers is by extension a postscript of sorts, another monument, this time to language, that is, the language of the creative

artist who by the use of his imagination can transcend and transform reality. Hearron calls it a "magical notion . . . an excellent description of Brautigan's view of the imaginative faculty which through language can alter reality by providing a mental escape from its hardships."[10]

Hearron also adds that one of the major themes is much like the theme of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," which is "to summon imagination to one's aid in times of distress."[11] This point is relevant in many of the chapters already discussed here and will appear in chapters that follow; however, the imagination theme in magic box terms in the "Bevel" chapter is especially significant. Like the map of "Grider Creek," the bevel maps out the different slants from which the reader must look in order to comprehend fully the total vision or visions portrayed here. Parallel to Ditsky's analogy of "The Man on the Quaker Oats Box," one must delve deeply into all aspects of both language and scene in order to gain total perception of the novel as a whole. The resolution to the "Bevel" chapter supports this premise. The narrator concludes that "the seasons would take care of their wooden names like a sleepy short-order cook cracking eggs over a grill next to a railroad station. Where as the well-to-do would have their names for a long time written on marble hors d'eouvres like horses trotting up the fancy paths to the sky" (p. 31). Then he explains that once while cleaning the trout he has a vision: "I had a vision of going over to the poor graveyard and gathering up grass and fruit jars and tin cans and markers and wilted flowers and bugs and weeds and clods and going home and putting a hook in the vise and tying a fly with all that stuff and then going outside and casting it up into the sky, watching it float over clouds and then into the evening star" (p. 31). Highlighted here is the premise that one must be able to see beyond mere

mental escape in order to create his own visions of what he wants his reality to be.

The construct is developed in greater detail in the chapter "Sea,Sea, Rider" and is expanded even further in a later chapter "Worsewick." Set in a bookstore, which he calls "a parking lot for used graveyards because all the books there are out of print, a sort of monument to the past" (p. 32), the narrator has a sex fantasy dream which is highlighted and expanded through an invented history by the owner of the bookstore. While reading a book about Billy the Kid with the first page reading like one of the epitaphs on a tombstone, the narrator daydreams that the owner asks him if he wants "to get laid" (p. 34). Even though he responds in the negative, the owner goes out on the street, stops a pair of strangers, a man and a woman, talks with them, and brings them in the store. The narrator is so embarrassed that he hides in the bathroom, but the couple wait, and when he finally comes out of the bathroom, "the woman was lying naked on the couch, and the man was sitting in a chair with his hat on his lap" (p. 34). The girl tells the narrator not to worry because the man watching has "3,859 Rolls Royces" (p. 34). The man remains silent while the narrator "laid the girl" (p. 35). He says: "There was nothing else I could do for my body was like birds sitting on a telephone wire strung out down the world, clouds tossing the wires carefully. . . . It was like the eternal 59th second when it becomes a minute and then looks kind of sheepish" (p. 35). When the act is completed, the girl gets dressed, and, as they leave, she and the man discuss where they will go for dinner. When the narrator returns downstairs, the owner of the bookstore tells him "what happened up there" (p. 36), and what happened is simply another fantasy dream. The owner tells the narrator that he has had many lives, one as

a soldier "in the Spanish Civil War" (p. 36); his love there is "a painter" (p. 36), but the two become strangers on the trip back across the Atlantic because it "was only a war love" (p. 37); they depart "without saying anything and never see each other again" (p. 37). Another life is in Mexico; he is a tough and powerful killer, who rides into town, is "seduced by a thirteen-year-old girl" (p. 38), but all they do is make love, "standing, sitting, lying on the dirt floor with pigs and chickens" (p. 38), and when they started "going around without any clothes on" (p. 38) and making love on the back of their horse, the people become afraid and abandon the town which has been abandoned ever since. At the end of these fantasies, the owner tells the narrator to finish his book, which when resumed, makes the pages "speed up and turn faster and faster until they were spinning like wheels in the sea" (p. 39).

Kent Bales has some interesting comments concerning this chapter:

> The title's a variant of "Easy Rider" now widely known as a result of Dennis Hopper's movie, only with "oceanic" overtones in this case that tune us into the ambivalences Brautigan wants. Not that the allusion isn't pretty ambivalent itself, since the easy rider of the blues gets his off other men's wives but is aced out by their returning husbands. . . . That tragicomedy, however, plays ironically against Brautigan's version, in which the narrator's the easy rider and the woman's man sits stolidly watching, hat where you'd expect gun, knife, or erection. . . . All this bizarrerie is arranged by a bookstore owner who then seizes the self-created occasion to indulge his favorite fantasies. . . . At first glance this seems an irony constructed against the bookstore owner and his heart of cliches under no-nonsense skin, but the ending subverts that conclusion. . . . Somehow this double-thinking bookman . . . has by the conjunction of a bizarre lay and his own threadbare fantasies transformed the narrator's experience into what Emerson, and a lot of others now, would call "transcendental." . . . Apparently even the most banal of fictions can, given the right circumstances, transform experience, for only after the owner tells "what happened" do the pages begin to spin. . . . In "Sea, Sea, Rider" the right circumstances include at the outset one more element besides the gratuitous lay and subsequent commentary. The narrator is reading a book in the shape of a chalice about Billy the Kid, the very book

> that is transformed into a sea by the other circumstances. If we know about him (and who does not?), we should see that Billy, gunned down still warm from his woman's arms, is both like and unlike the narrator who is first relaxed, then exhilarated, but in the end still quite alive. Yet Billy as myth is very like the hero of the second fantasy, a killer and lover whose distance from our book-loving narrator, the actor playing his role, is obvious.[12]

Bales' concludes that the chapter "both exposes banality and shows us banality transcending itself,"[13] and he makes a valid point, but added to the prism of perception must be the consideration that the boy's experience is also simply a favorite dream fantasy, one which an avid young reader would embellish by adding another character, in this case the owner of the bookstore who in turn can enlarge the experience, and in a sense, since he is older, sanction the subconscious sex dream. Both fantasies emanate from the mind of the narrator; the romantic adventures added to the sex fantasy is simply the young boy's "Kool-Aid" reality.

The sex fantasy in "Worsewick" is of a different nature. The narrator is older; he and his woman and child stop at "Worsewick hot spring" (p. 66) to play and relax in the water, but the tub-shaped pool has "green slime growing around the edges . . . dozens of dead fish . . . entwine themselves" (p. 67) so they place the baby in the car and hold intercourse in the slime. Since neither wants another baby, the narrator says that the sperm came out into the water, unaccustomed to the light, and instantly became "a misty stringy kind of thing and swirled out like a falling star, and I saw a dead fish come forward and float into my sperm, bending it in the middle. His eyes were stiff like iron" (p. 68). Bales states that "Brautigan floats together sperm and iron-eyed fish to suggest that he isn't either,"[14] that he is simply being realistic, that "Just because both man and flies 'have at' the woman we needn't reduce man to the

level of a fly. But we're sure warned not to make too much of him."[15] This is a valid point in the light of the fact that this sex dream takes place in an adult mind rather than an adolescent one and would even in a dream stage have a more prominent censor. One creates his own dreams, and the greater the perception becomes in the mind of the individual, the greater the need becomes to compromise. This dreamscape exemplifies the indepth perception that comes when all the superficial layers of illusion are removed. However, the total experience is "like a falling star" (p. 68); the narrator's climax is "in a split second like an airplane in the movies, pulling out of a nosedive and sailing over the roof of a school" (p. 68). The experience is not a totally abortive one; it is rather a transcendent vision of survival which the mind of even a programmed adult can create if he chooses to.

Imagination operates in an even larger context as it relates to the Trout Fishing in America symbol in its full extent. Vanderwerken equates the Trout Fishing in America symbol with Moby Dick in that both are "fluid symbols, metamorphic, and chameleon-like. . . . Both remain mysterious, unknowable, capable of accruing projected associations and values, yet never revealing their initial meanings. . . . As they should, whale and trout finally resist human grasps and swim free. For both Melville and Brautigan, only the pursuit itself, the continuing quest for the ineffable, holds lasting value."[16] The consensus of other critics validates this statement. Hearron sees the symbol to be the essence of "the wilderness [which] has become impossible [to obtain] in contemporary America"[17] in the literal sense, but can be reached through the imagination. In the chapter "Rembrandt Creek," one of the two "Lost Chapters" in Revenge of the Lawn, Brautigan calls Trout Fishing "a vision of America";[18] here the

narrator looks back on a hunting trip that he took as a boy with a bit of nostalgia. Although it was not a fishing creek for him, but rather a place where he got water to wash dishes, he remembers it in his imagination "like a painting hanging in the world's largest museum with a roof that went to the stars and galaxies that knew the whish of comets."[19] This is the essence of the wilderness that exists only in the imagination, a kind of nostalgia for a past that existed only in the mind. Tanner calls this same attitude "a sense of something lost, a quality of life";[20] Mason Smith calls it "a brooding spirit that remembered people with three cornered hats fishing in the dawn and Lewis and Clark discovering the Great Falls of Missouri . . . [a quality of life that is] dead, extinct as the dinosaur."[21] The chapter "The Last Year the Trout Came Up Hayman Creek" exemplifies the loss. In this chapter, the narrator tells about Charles Hayman, a throw away character, like those in Confederate General, who is used primarily to express an attitude; he "built a shack" (p. 40) on the creek, "did odd jobs for years and years and lived on a diet of stone ground wheat and kale . . . years and years . . . never had a cup of coffee, a smoke, a drink or a woman and thought he'd be a fool if he did . . . looked ninety years old for thirty years and then got the notion that he would die and did so. The year he died, the trout didn't come up creek and never went up the creek again" (pp. 40-41). Twenty years later the fish and game department dump "a can full of trout in the creek" (p. 42) to restock it, but when "the trout touched the water . . . they turned their white bellies up and floated down the creek" (p. 42). This picture, the direct opposite of a Rembrandt painting, conveys no nostalgia for the past, but rather a picture of the pioneer spirit which built this country with values that in the process of "progress" have been

lost. The narrator describes Hayman as "a sort of half-assed pioneer in a country that not many wanted to live in because it was poor and ugly and horrible" (p. 40); he also tells the reader that the old man "tended kale as if it were prize winning orchids" (p. 41). This reference implies a sense of personal pride, a quality that is hard to find in the concrete, urbanized, contemporary wasteland world.

The antithesis of this pioneer spirit in George Hayman is the contemporary Trout Fishing in America Shorty, who in the chapter "The Shipping of Trout Fishing in America Shorty to Nelson Algren" is called "a legless screaming middle-aged wino" (p. 69). The trout have chopped off his legs, and he uses this to manipulate "the kids, frightened and embarrased" (p. 69), into pushing him to the liquor store. Shorty has a habit of going "down to L'Italia . . . [and] shouting obscenities in fake Italian" (p. 70). One time "Trout Fishing in America Shorty passed out in Washington Square, right in front of the Benjamin Franklin statue . . . his face spread out like a fan in the grass" (pp. 70-71). The narrator in talking about him with a friend decides "to pack him in a big shipping crate and send him to Nelson Algren . . . the perfect custodian" (p. 71). But they never get around to it, and Shorty disappears. The narrator concludes that if he is dead, he "should be buried right beside the Benjamin Franklin statue in Washington Square. We should anchor his wheelchair to a huge gray stone and write upon the stone:

> Trout Fishing in America Shorty 20¢ Wash
> 10¢ Dry
> Forever" (pp. 73-74).

In this light, Shorty would be a monument, a symbol of the counterfeit American like Lee Mellon in Confederate General; both assume that it is their so-called democratic right to live off of the system of free

enterprise. Later in the "Footnote Chapter to the Shipping of Trout Fishing in America Shorty to Nelson Algren," Shorty is "back in town . . . is famous. The movies have discovered him" (p. 100); so had the latest news magazine for which Shorty "ranted and raved. . . . Later on, probably, a different voice will be dubbed in. It will be a noble and eloquent voice denouncing man's inhumanity to man in no uncertain terms . . . Mon Amour" (p. 100). The narrator's conclusion is that: "They'll milk it for all it's worth and make cream and butter from a pair of empty pants legs and a low budget. But I may be all wrong. What was being shot may have been just a scene from a new science-fiction movie 'Trout Fishing in America Shorty from Outer Space.' One of those cheap thrillers with the theme: Scientists, mad-or-otherwise, who would never play God, that ends with the castle on fire and a lot of people walking home through the dark woods" (p. 100).

In the chapter "The Last Mention of Trout Fishing in America Shorty," the narrator takes his woman and baby down to the park; Trout Fishing in America Shorty is there "sitting under the trees by the Benjamin Franklin statue" (p. 157). Seeing that it is a baby, he tries "to coax her to come over and sit on his legless lap" (p. 157), but at the same time "the Benjamin Franklin statue turned green like a traffic light, and the baby noticed the sandbox at the other end of the park. The sandbox suddenly looked better to her than Trout Fishing in America Shorty" (p. 157). Vanderwerken states that the child's choice of the green light does not necessarily express a hopeful attitude. "She is, after all, a child and will eventually experience the same disillusionment as her father; she is lured only by a sandbox--a miniature wasteland. Given the mood and tone of the novel, one cannot help thinking that autumn will ultimately fall

over her, too."[22] However, the narrator concludes the scene with the statement: "Trout Fishing in America Shorty stared after her as if the space between them were a river growing larger and larger" (p. 158). In the light of the fact that, as Kenneth Seib points out, the half of the divided persona of the Trout Fishing symbol as an ideal remains "to the very end,"[23] the child's decision could symbolize not only the desire of the innocent to search for that dream, but also the refusal to accept the illusions of the counterfeits of what the dream should be, that is, the refusal to accept the fact that every man is like Shorty--someone who has failed to find his dream and indulges in self pity and exploits his loss by asking for sympathy.

Illusion is also part of the Trout Fishing in America symbol. Like the "cover" of a person, the Trout Fishing in America symbol functions as a disguise. In this negative light, Mason Smith sees the Trout Fishing symbol as "a cheap hotel, a revolutionary slogan chalked on the backs of school children . . . a political disguise of the murderous 'Mayor of the Twentieth Century.'"[24] The Trout Fishing symbol as a cheap hotel appears in the chapter "Room 208 Hotel Trout Fishing in America" and is similar to the tenament house in Confederate General. It is:

> . . . a cheap hotel . . . very old and run by some Chinese . . . and filled with the smell of Lysol. The Lysol sits like a guest on the stuffed furniture, reading a copy of the Chronicle, the Sports Section . . . the Lysol sits asleep next to an old Italian pensioner who listens to the heavy ticking of the clock and dreams of eternity's golden pasta, sweet basil and Jesus Christ. . . . The Chinese are always doing something to the hotel. One week they paint a lower banister and the next week they put some new wallpaper on part of the third floor. . . . One day . . . [they] take a bed out of a room and lean it up against the wall. It stays there for a month (pp. 105-06).

The hotel is the microcosm of a wasteland world, and the inhabitants of Room 208 are wasteland characters. The girl is "an ex-hustler who works

for the telephone company . . . [the boy] went to medical school for a while during the Great Depression and then he went into show business. After that he was an errand boy for an abortion mill in Los Angeles. He took a fall and did some time in San Quenton" (p. 106). The friend who takes the narrator there explains that the couple are:

> . . . good people . . . [that the girl] was hustling for a spade pimp . . . [that] she's one of those rare women who just don't have the whore temperament. She's a negro, too . . . [that] the pimp drove by one afternoon and saw her playing in the front yard . . . a teenage girl living on a farm in OK . . . gave her father some money . . . she went with the pimp. Simple as that . . . took her to San Francisco and turned her out and she hated it . . . kept her in line by terrorizing her . . . got her a job with the telephone company during the day, and he had her hustling at night. . . . Art took her away because the locks on the doors would not keep him out. [The pimp] ran up a couple thousand dollars worth of bills in her name. . . . They're still paying them off (pp. 107-08).

And the narrator concludes that with "a little bottle of brandy . . . she [the girl] doesn't make any bad scenes" (p. 108). There are:

> . . . many flowers and plants growing in the room . . . pictures of animals cut out of magazines and tacked to the wall . . . crayola picture wires drawn holding them to the wall . . . pictures of kittens and puppies . . . a bowl of goldfish next to the gun . . . a cat named 208 . . . a red cat and very aggressive. . . . They did their own cooking in the room and had a single hot plate sitting on the floor, next to half a dozen plants, including a peach tree growing in a coffee can. Their closet was stuffed with food. Along with sheets, suits, and dresses, were canned goods, eggs and cooking oil (pp. 107-10).

At the time the narrator meets them they are "still paying the bills that the pimp had run up [and] years had passed" (p. 111). The narrator remembers the room number by the cat. "It was a fib . . . the number was in three hundreds" (p. 111). The number of 208 turns out to be the number in "the Hall of Justice . . . of the bail office" (p. 112), in a sense, a kind of facade that the Mr. or Mrs. "Goods" wear and keep changing for fear of exposure; in another sense like Lysol, a Mr. Clean image to hide

the ugliness underneath; and still in another sense, the fat cats thinking at the expense of others by exploiting this under the guise of goodness, but are the losers, the Shorties when seen in true perspective.

The chapter "Trout Fishing in America Terrorists," which portrays the Trout Fishing symbol as "a revolutionary slogan chalked on the backs of school children,"[25] begins with the quote from an Israelie terrorist chant, "Long live our friend the revolver! / Long live our friend the machine gun!" (p. 56); the chapter depicts a group of sixth graders who write Trout Fishing in America on the back of all the first graders. The narrator who is one of the sixth graders says that it "certainly did add something to the first graders. It completed them and gave them a kind of class" (p. 57). But the whole sixth grade class of "terrorists" is called into the principal's office for reprimand; the principal asks the children how they would like Trout Fishing in America written on the backs of all the teachers who are trying to teach them about Cuba. When the students answer no, he responds: "That's what I thought. . . . The first graders look up to you and admire you like the teachers look up to me and admire me. It just wouldn't do to write 'Trout Fishing in America' on their backs. Are we agreed gentlemen?" (p. 61). It takes several days for the writing to disappear altogether, but it does "as it was destined to from the very beginning, and a kind of autumn fell over the first grade" (p. 62). The irony is obvious here; the principal like the pimp is the terrorist, but the children's revolt against such tyranny connotes an even greater pathos in that the first graders do not understand what the writing means.

Similar to the principal is "The Mayor of the Twentieth Century" who also uses the Trout Fishing in America symbol of the ideal as a disguise. Brautigan tells the reader that:

> He wore a costume of trout fishing in America. He wore mountains on his elbows and bluejays on the collar of his shirt. Deep water flowed through the lilies that were entwined about his shoelaces. A bullfrog kept croaking in his watch pocket and the air was filled with the sweet smell of ripe blackberry bushes.
>
> He wore trout fishing in America as a costume to hide his own appearance from the world while he performed his deeds of murder in the night.
>
> Who would have expected?
>
> Nobody!
>
> Scotland Yard?
>
> (Pouf!)
>
> They were always a hundred miles away, wearing halibut-stalker hats, looking under the dust.
>
> Nobody ever found out.
>
> O, now he's the Mayor of the Twentieth Century! A razor, a knife and a ukelele are his favorite instruments.
>
> Of course, it would have to be a ukelele. Nobody else would have thought of it, pulled like a plow through the intestines (pp. 75-76).

The pimp, the principal, and the Mayor are tyrants with a cover hiding under the disguise of the ideal.

In the chapter "The Last Time I Saw Trout Fishing in America," the narrator tells the reader:

> I told Trout Fishing in America about a winter I spent as a child in Great Falls. It was during the war and I saw a Deanna Durbin movie seven times. . . . The theater was always empty. There was a darkness to that theater different from any theater I've been in since. Maybe it was the snow outside and Deanna Durbin inside. I don't know what it was.
>
> "What was the name of the movie?" Trout Fishing in America said.
>
> "I don't know," I said. "She sang a lot. Maybe she was a chorus girl who wanted to go to college or she was a rich girl or they needed money for something or she did something. Whatever it was about, she sang! and sang! and sang! but I can't remember a God-dam word of it."
>
> One afternoon after I had seen the Deanna Durbin movie again, I went down to the Missouri River. Part of the Missouri was frozen over. There was a railroad bridge there. I was very relieved to see that the Missouri River had not changed and begun to look like Deanna Durbin. . . . To this day I don't know why I saw that movie seven times. It was as deadly as <u>The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari</u> (pp. 145-46).

However, when the narrator asks if the Missouri River is still there, Trout Fishing replies that it is, but that "it doesn't look like Deanna Durbin (p. 146). The rest of the narrator's memories of Great Falls are pleasant ones, the simple things that one takes for granted until they are gone, his breakfast in the restaurant where his "stepfather cooked all night . . . [his] Holy Trinity: me, a piece of pie, and a stone-cold pork sandwich" (pp. 147-48) for his lunch. While he calls these memories the "least important things" (p. 147), they are remembered with nostalgia. Trout Fishing remembers "the day Lewis discovered the falls" (p. 148) and concludes in the same tone: "No, I don't think Lewis would have understood it if the Missouri River had suddenly begun to look like a Deanna Durbin movie, like a chorus girl who wanted to go to college" (p. 148). Reiterated here in extrinsic terms is the mirroring function of the pond chapters; but more important is the extrinsic summing up of the "movie" chapters, which function as dramatic rather than scenic representation of attitudes or statements of value. "Room 208" and "Trout Fishing in America Terrorists" are cases in point; both dramatize one of the meanings of the Trout Fishing in America symbol. However, the fact that the two Trout Fishing in America personae discuss a movie and equate that movie with the Missouri River in the chapter indicates extrinsically that both drama and scene function in similar magic box terms which in total will form a mosaic of perceptions that tie together.

In the climactic chapter "The Cleveland Wrecking Yard" there is a big sign that says:

USED TROUT STREAM FOR SALE.
MUST BE SEEN TO BE
APPRECIATED (p. 168).

Of course waterfalls are separate; trees and birds are extra, but the trout come with the stream and are "stacked in piles of various lengths: ten, fifteen, twenty feet, etc. There was one pile of hundred-foot lengths. There was also a box of scraps. The scraps were in odd sizes ranging from six inches to a couple of feet" (p. 172). The narrator puts his hand in the water; it is cold and feels good. When he follows the road past the lumber to where the animals are, he concludes that the salesman was right; they are almost out of animals, but on the way back to where the trout stream was piled, he finds the insects; they sell "for eighty-cents a square foot" (p. 174). There is everything in the Wrecking Yard, a potpourri of everything one can imagine, which is exactly the point. In one's imagination are the possibilities for limitless resolutions and a multitude of perceptions. He makes the point even clearer in the following chapter, "A Half-Sunday Homage to a Whole Leonardo Da Vinci." The narrator dreams that he sees Leonardo da Vinci as an American on a "South Bend Tackle Company payroll . . . inventing a new lure for trout fishing in America. I saw him first of all working with his imagination, then with the metal and color hooks, trying a little of this and a little of that, and then adding motion and then taking it away and then coming back again with a different motion, and in the end the lure was invented" (pp. 175-76). Leonardo calls his bosses in who faint when they see it; he calls the lure "The Last Supper." The lure becomes a sensation. "The Vatican ordered ten thousand and they didn't even have any trout there. . . . Thirty-four ex-presidents of the United States all said, 'I caught my limit on 'The Last Supper'"(p. 176); the narrator concludes that the lure outstrips the accomplishments of "Hiroshima or Mahatma Gandhi" (p. 176). All these references tie together the ideal, the real, the "cover" or

or illusion of the vision of America which the Trout Fishing symbol represents, and da Vinci's lure becomes by extension an escape through the imagination of the artist.

Hearron credits Brautigan with the ability to make "a particular connection between imagination and reality, that the manner in which one thinks of and describes reality can alter reality itself."[26] In the chapter "Trout Fishing in America Nib" Brautigan makes this clear. An old man who sells Christmas trees shows the narrator "a thirty-dollar fountain pen, one with a gold nib" (p. 179) and offers the following advice: "He showed it to me and said, 'Write with this, but don't write hard because this pen has got a gold nib, and a gold nib is very impressionable. After a while it takes on the personality of the writer. Nobody else can write with it. This pen becomes just like a person's shadow. It's the only pen to have. But be careful'" (p. 179). If there is a resolution to the novel, it is just that. One must establish his own ideals and make them his own unique reality; for Brautigan it is the only alternative to all the illusions which limit and destroy. This alternative, however, is created through the imagination. In essence, Brautigan creates his own "lure" to the reader as the creative artist who guides the reader through a mosaic of perceptions, through many and varied types of magic boxes, so that he might arrive at his own conclusions from the web of sense that he weaves.

Like Confederate General, Trout Fishing in America makes multiple uses of the magic box metaphor, but in a different form. The difference between the novels can be made by an analogy with the Magic Theater in Steppenwolf. Confederate General is similar to Steppenwolf; a scene on scene pattern is supported by surrealistic elements similar to the magic boxes in the Magic Theater. Trout Fishing in America begins there; the

novel as a whole is a mosaic of boxes, controlled by the mind of the narrator and the imagination of the artist. In a sense the narrator is a Twentieth Century Tristram Shandy, creating through the mind's eye a vision of America from the past through the present. In another sense he is an omniscient eye with the imagination to envision America otherwise, but behind this all seeing eye is another center of control, the ever-present Brautigan, whose imagination and artistry arranges the frames through which the reader sees.

NOTES

[1]Tony Tanner, "The Dream and the Pen," The Times, London, 25 July 1970, p. 5g.

[2]Kenneth Seib, "Trout Fishing in America: Brautigan's Funky Fishing Yarn," Critique, 13, No. 2 (1971), 64-65.

[3]Seib, p. 65.

[4]Seib, p. 71.

[5]Seib, p. 71.

[6]David L. Vanderwerken, "Trout Fishing in America and the American Tradition," Critique, 16, No. 2 (1974), 32.

[7]Richard Brautigan, Trout Fishing in America (New York: Dell Inc., 1967), p. 4. Subsequent references appear in parentheses following quotations.

[8]Thomas Hearron, "Escape Through Imagination in Trout Fishing in America," Critique, 16, No. 1 (1974), 27.

[9]Kent Bales, "Fishing the Ambivalence, or, A Reading of Trout Fishing in America," Western Humanities Review, 29 (Winter, 1975), 33.

[10]Hearron, pp. 28-29.

[11]Hearron, p. 30.

[12]Bales, pp. 36-37.

[13]Bales, p. 38.

[14]Bales, p. 35.

[15]Bales, p. 36.

[16]Vanderwerken, pp. 34-35.

[17]Hearron, p. 25.

[18]Richard Brautigan, Revenge of the Lawn (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p. 41.

[19]Brautigan, p. 42.

[20]Tanner, p. 5.

[21]Mason Smith, "Pink and Fading in Watermelon Ink," The New York Times Book Review, 28 March 1971, p. 4.

[22]Vanderwerken, p. 39.

[23]Seib, p. 68.

[24]Smith, p. 4.

[25]Smith, p. 4.

[26]Hearron, p. 27.

CHAPTER IV

VARIATIONS

Confederate General and _Trout Fishing in America_ represent for the most part Brautigan's basic structural patterns. There are, however, some interesting variations in the novels which follow. Brautigan's penchant for experimentation is evident with each new publication. _In Watermelon Sugar_, for example, follows primarily the basic structural pattern of _Trout Fishing in America_, but its perceptual boundaries are in some respects more complicated and abstract. _The Abortion_ follows the pattern of _Confederate General_, but its identifiable boundaries have even greater surrealistic depths. _The Hawkline Monster: A Gothic Western_ is a double parody; surrealistic elements similar to those in _The Castle of Otranto_ superimpose themselves over the chronological plot line, which in many respects is equally surreal in that it spoofs the western to the level of the absurd. Both _Willard and His Bowling Trophies_ and _Sombrero Fallout_ experiment with plot; two chronological plots exist simultaneously, and both are tied together through surrealistic elements until the two plots merge at the end. _Dreaming of Babylon_, Brautigan's last novel, has two plots, one of which is a parody, the other of which is a dream world that is identified from the beginning as just that.

In Watermelon Sugar is similar to _Trout Fishing in America_. Both novels have multiple point-of-view narrators. Both narrators search for a new world to replace a wasteland one; both narrators are, in essence,

archetypical Adams. Harvey Leavitt in his article "The Regained Paradise of Brautigan's In Watermelon Sugar" calls the Watermelon Sugar narrator Adam II, attempting to create a new world, a Utopia or Eden "out of the debris of a highly developed social order."[1] However, the narrator of In Watermelon Sugar functions on one level like Jesse in Confederate General; he interacts with the other characters to a much greater degree than the Trout Fishing in America narrator does. In fact, in In Watermelon Sugar there are more plot connections and more character identifications and more importance is placed on characters in action even though the characters represent attitudes and states of mind. However, in the chapter "My Name," the Watermelon Sugar narrator tells the reader: "My name depends on you. Just call me whatever is in your mind."[2] Brautigan makes it clear that even the narrator is whoever the reader wants him to be, that is, whatever is in his mind--a thought, a sense impression, the past, the future, the self or awareness of self. Even more than the Trout Fishing in America narrator, In Watermelon Sugar's narrator exemplifies the fact that the self alone is real, that the self is the only existent thing and can know nothing but its own modification, that reality is unique to each person, and that no general construct of reality can be made. In a sense, creative solipsism seems to modify and reshape the narrator's world, and it is this world that the reader views. From this perspective, not only the narrator, but also the reader can make use of whatever construct of reality he wishes for himself.

Arlen Hansen states in his article "The Celebration of Solipsism: A New Trend in American Fiction":

> In a way, Richard Brautigan carries the new solipsism to an extreme found nowhere else. Whereas Vonnegut's novel uses a

> cat's cradle to suggest how man's imagination completes constructs, Brautigan's novels are the cat's cradles, and Brautigan's imagination has already provided the cats. His novels, that is, simply describe the cat that his playful imagination has created. By presenting his own particular use of the construct, Brautigan is not necessarily advocating that everyone employ the construct in the same manner; rather, he is merely demonstrating the ability of man to make whatever use of constructs he wishes. The tradition of trout fishing in America, for example, provides Brautigan terms and values by which to define and measure his own experience. By looking at existence in the context of trout-fishing-in-America, Brautigan (like most of us raised on Thoreau and Hemingway) focuses on the simplicity, honesty, fellowship, loneliness, and naturalness of his experience. When he changes the construct to watermelon sugar in his next novel, Brautigan sees experience through, as it were, watermelon sugar glasses.[3]

Equally appropriate is Tanner's comment that the "narrator lives in a happy commune in an unlocated realm called, mysteriously, iDEATH. The prevailing material there is watermelon sugar, which may be food, furniture, fuel, or more generally the sweet secretion of the imagination."[4]

Brautigan's "Watermelon sugar glasses" function like the Trout Fishing in America persona; the narrator looks through the rose colored glasses of the imagination, but he also has a "cover." As the Watermelon Sugar persona, the narrator is an ironist of sorts critically analyzing man's imbalance of sensibility and the various states of mind that each individual must go through so that he can work out his own frame of reference for himself in relation to his experiences in order to understand the problem of death and evil without warping his life; he is also a consciousness or awareness creating a "delicate balance" (p. 1) within the self. For example, time and place in the novel shift like visions in a dream, and each chapter is a construct that can be taken in a variety of ways: nonsense, fantasy, prophecy, science fiction--all possible ways to react to the contradictions in life. The narrator tells the reader that there is a "delicate balance in IDEATH" (p. 1), and he proposes this balance

throughout the novel, but the reader is aware immediately that Margaret is out of balance. She is the only one who steps on the board in front of his shack and makes a noise, and the narrator's response is not to respond in order to keep the balance within himself; he makes the existential choice of not choosing. This is one of the reasons the narrator has no name; everyone's perception in relation to himself is different; everyone's sense of balance depends in one way upon time and what is superimposed on top of it, in another way upon the modifications one makes of the past in relation to the present, and in still another, upon what he makes of the past and present in the future. Each experience is a kind of surrealistic layer of modifications that one makes, a sort of synthesis of opposites in the mind of the observer in order to keep the balance.

Like Trout Fishing in America, every element in the novel suggests layers of meaning, a mosaic or allusions and constructs surrealistically arranged. The Forgotten Works--Tanner calls them "the ultimate wrecking yard"[5]--connote both the history of man and Jung's collective unconscious. The narrator says: "They turned back far beyond memory" (p. 13). But these past experiences always seem to hinder progress rather than help it because they are sometimes barbaric rituals or acts that even the narrator fails to comprehend in total. The artifacts there are ugly; inBOIL and his gang, who are both barbaric and evil, used to dig there, but so does Margaret. The narrator tells the reader that she lives in the past, an ugly past where people get mad at things and go off by themselves. She collects and stores all the ugly things in that past that should be forgotten, all the things that poison one's life. inBOIL makes whiskey out of the same forgotten things that Margaret collects. When inBOIL comes to iDEATH with his gang, goes to the trout factory, and commits the absurd

act of cutting off his fingers, nose, ears--an act that causes him to bleed to death--Margaret is at the Forgotten Works collecting, and, when the citizens of iDEATH come to burn the bodies, she is stunned and shocked. Later when she hangs herself on the branch of an apple tree, and her room, as is the custom, is sealed forever with all the forgotten things, the reader feels a sense of relief in that her death seems to end the preoccupation with the past that poisons people's lives. When the narrator goes with Margaret down to the Forgotten Works, his relief at returning to iDEATH conveys the feeling that he has emerged from the labyrinth of death like a mythological hero who can survive it by not looking back.

The tigers, in one sense, represent clock time, the time that eats away at man's life, the knowledge that each day following birth is one day closer to death. It is not without reason that the tigers help the narrator with his arithmetic after they eat his parents. When inBOIL tells the community of iDEATH that he is going to give them the secret of the tigers, he and his gang dismember themselves by cutting off all their sense organs, that is, all the organs which can test the validity of reality by concrete terms. There is a man who made six or seven silent clocks, but he too is dead, and one of them is hung over his grave, but it no longer works. The clocks also seem to represent the past along with the Forgotten Works and the evolutionary stages that the mind goes through; clocks are modifiers and shapers of one's sensibility and sense of balance. When the narrator at the age of nine watches the tigers eat his parents and they tell him that it is simply what they have to do, he accepts it in very much the same way that he accepts their help in arithmetic. His existential acceptance of death seems to give him a great awareness of life, especially in relation to the senses.

The Statue of Mirrors seems to symbolize the ability to tie together events into meaningful values with the proper perspective as well as the ability to see in the future. The narrator sees both the events of the day and what is going to happen with both Pauline and Margaret. Everything is reflected in the mirrors, but "some people cannot see anything . . . not even themselves" (p. 134). This allusion suggests Jung's theory of the psychic energy of the subconscious mind that can move backward in time, connect it to the present, and forecast in the future. But there are many mirror images relating to the self; in essence every self is its own mythmaker, but opposing forces must be synthesized. Mythological implications and Christian overtones of man's creation abound in the novel. The narrator seems at times like the Egyptian all seeing eye of Ra. At another, he seems like Emerson's oversoul. And at another, he seems like the omnipotent God and creator of the mind of man and the world with two levels that are permeated by both good and evil. And all this is seen by that narrator-creator with disinterested compassion, the watermelon sugar voice. In a sense iDEATH seems a sort of Mount Olympus, a Milton's Paradise, or simply a state of mind where life is more meaningful because of the existential awareness of death and where the pleasure of the senses (both eating and loving are extremely important throughout the novel) is every man's right if done with the proper attitude and with the sense of aesthetic pleasure and an awareness of the value of the texture of things. One must make the most of the moment (the carpe diem theme), but in the proper frame of reference.

The difference lies in the way one works it out within himself and modifies it. But this is not always so because at the foot of the hill lie the Forgotten Works, and the watermelon sugar shacks are in between,

one of which houses the narrator. Dotting the landscape are statues representing the evolutionary stages of man; the reader is introduced to the water by the rivers, the movement to the land, the age of the tigers, and the development of man in iDEATH. There is an old bridge from the age of the tigers half standing and a new bridge into iDEATH that one can cross; one can have his private life in his watermelon sugar shack or cross over the bridge and have communal life in iDEATH; one can grow vegetables and flowers by his shack or visit the Watermelon Works or the Trout Hatchery; one can span the ages by simply crossing the bridge, a bridge that also seems to sustain a balance between the contrary instincts of life and death. The narrator has a room at iDEATH and a watermelon shack on the other side of the bridge.

The characters are also juxtaposed against each other in a mythological way. inBOIL and Charley are brothers, a sort of Abel and Cain except Cain kills himself. In the dinner scene the night before the killing, Margaret, their sister, becomes a kind of Judas at the last supper before the confrontation the following day with inBOIL and his gang, but she denies evil rather than good. Her hanging on the apple tree, however, seems to connect her with Eve. Leavitt sees Margaret as Eve I and Pauline as Eve II.[6] In another respect, the mass self-murder of inBOIL and his gang rings both of an ancient sacrifice that is followed by Margaret's death and burial in a tomb which shines in the dark because she has foxfire upon her robes and also of a celebration that suggests that her life is a sacrifice, her death the expiation of guilt. Evil is as elusive in this novel as it is in Hawthorne's Marble Faun. inBOIL, his gang, and Margaret murder themselves. It appears that evil is something that one can accept or

reject; it isn't necessarily a part of a person unless he wants it to be; original sin seems to be a matter of choice. When Margaret dies, the room is bricked shut as it is done for everyone, but in her case it bricks all the relics she collected from the Forgotten Works. Thus it would seem that the evils of the past or forgotten deeds that were ugly can remain forgotten unless one chooses to dig around in them. Evil is relative to the self.

The Trout Hatchery and the Watermelon Works also convey the same overtones. The Trout Hatchery is built over the spot where the last tiger was killed, and the fish, trout that swim upstream, respond in human fashion to the events that occur under the glass floor of the building. Charley places a necklace that has a small trout encircling it around Margaret's neck, shrouds her body in a bedspread with iDEATH crocheted on it, and buries it in a glass-topped coffin under the water. The fish is the sign of the disciples and the followers of Christ; also being a trout, the fish implies a transcending movement upward toward a higher level. The water, the traditional Christian symbol of purification, when connected with the trout becomes a symbol of immortality or greater awareness. Margaret's death and burial followed by a celebration seems more of a baptismal service than a funeral, and the fact that she is buried on watermelon Thursday, the black silent day on which black watermelon seeds are planted to grow melons that make no noise when one cuts them--they taste so sweet--implies that death is sweet, that death, especially the death of the past, opens a door to a better and higher level of consciousness or that the death of all that is ugly and forgotten as well as the awareness of death itself, purifies and allows transcendence to higher ethereal realms.

The Watermelon Works seem to symbolize the balancing agent that operates within the self, the modifications that one makes in order to find a center around which he can operate. Anything and everything is made out of them; it is a matter of choice. It is not without reason that there is a bat under the floor of the works; there are hidden things in all men that permeate the best of attitudes. The melons themselves, grown under the watermelon sun--Monday, red; Tuesday, golden; Wednesday, gray; Thursday, black; Friday, white; Saturday, blue; Sunday, brown--are all colors of different moods. One can choose whichever mood he wants because all are available. The narrator prefers black because it connects with death; this choice, connected with the implication of iDEATH, in death, tells the reader that for the narrator the existential awareness of death in this life gives it more meaning. But it is merely his favorite; one need not operate his life around this construct unless he chooses to do so.

This is the reason the narrator chooses Pauline. She is the opposite of Margaret; Pauline is one's inner light--it is she who carried the lantern at night--she understands the value of the moment, the aesthetic pleasure of the senses. She cooks for, consoles, and loves the narrator in a quiet but golden frame of reference, quite a contrast to Margaret. While Margaret collects forgotten works, Pauline paints, but even in her cooking, there is an oriental sense of aesthetic appreciation for the so-called ordinary experiences; every meal is a ritual similar to an oriental tea ceremony. In fact, meals are almost like communion, the breaking of bread together by the disciples of life. The last early meal before the celebration after Margaret's funeral is potato salad that ends up with a lot of carrots in it; the golden color of the carrots mirrors the light images that surround Pauline from the beginning. Pauline is the epitome of love

and service to others, the alternative that the narrator chooses in lieu of Margaret. Pauline is not only the light of life; she is also the Fra Eve to all who share her cooking, but only the narrator is her Emil Sinclair; the only difference is that she is younger and they are lovers. But then the narrator and life are lovers, too; the narrator loves dreams, the commonplace, simplicity; in essence, he is aware of all the possible pleasures that one can derive through the senses in the light of the awareness of death.

Both Hernland and Leavitt disagree with this premise. Hernland sees that delicate balance as "the delusion that they can maintain a neutral position disjunct from violence and death without also cutting themselves off from life's fullness. The basic error results in boredom, ritual, and sterility, devoid not only of pleasure but of all feeling and thus all real curiosity, vitality, or a reason for existence. Life in watermelon sugar may be literally the same as dying, since we are told of only one birth (p. 106) to balance twenty-two suicides."[7] Leavitt states it somewhat differently. He states: "Like other utopias, iDEATH creates a sense of boredom, of inaction, and the mundane tasks of existence seem to pale before the activities of an inBOIL who acts out, who literally rebels at the world of pure sensation by his acts of sensory mutilation. Adam II as the passive chronicler is not made of the stuff that we have come to know in traditional prophets, but in a world of new assumptions, he is perhaps the archetype for the future."[8] Certainly both premises have validity, as much validity as the existential one; it depends upon the point of view of the reader and how he views the alternatives. What is Heaven to one is Hell to another, which is exactly what Brautigan sets out to explain. A careful analysis would no doubt reveal other constructs from

which the reader can choose. The really important point to be made here in magic box terms is the level of abstractions involved in the many multi-faceted constructs of reality, and that level is important only in relation to the self. In In Watermelon Sugar reality is unique to each person including the narrator. An analogy could be made with William Carlos William's "The Red Wheelbarrow"; it all depends upon the angle of perception. The construct of reality in In Watermelon Sugar is even more abstract than the construct of reality in Trout Fishing in America. One learns in both novels that one can change reality by imagining it otherwise; in In Watermelon Sugar reality begins there, that is, in the imagination which is the otherwise.

The Abortion follows a traditional plot line which on the whole is less complicated in nature than Confederate General, but the so-called realistic level is deceptively simple. On a literal level the novel concerns a librarian, a first-person-participant narrator, shy, lonely, gentle, who lives inside a library, but it is not the usual type. People of all ages bring in books they have written, books that are a part of their lives, and the librarian accepts them, writes their name and the name of the book in the ledger and lets them choose the shelf on which the donors want the book placed. Veda, who was born inside the wrong body, comes in the library with her book about her problem; the librarian gives her a Milky Way, so ludicrous an act that she is totally disarmed. They become lovers; she becomes pregnant, and Foster, the man at the caves who stores the surplus books, loans them money and promises to watch the library while they go to Tijuana for an abortion. At the end of the novel, all three are living in a little house in Berkeley. Veda is working at a topless place so that she can be a student as the hero is now, and Foster

has a job at Bethlehem Steel and a girl friend from Pakistan who is an exchange student. This surface level is merely that. The library, the central metaphor, is more dream than reality; it actually locks up for safekeeping subconscious revelations and dreams of the people who bring in the manuscripts; these are never read except by the librarian who knows and understands what a dream is worth. For example, He Kissed All Night is a book by a "very plain middleaged woman who looked as if she had never been kissed. You had to look twice to see if she had any lips on her face."[9] The librarian understands this and expresses compassion for her. There are children's books about pets that they love; there is a cookbook of recipes found in Dostoevski's novels; and there are books about flying saucers, horse thieves, and abortion. There is even a book by Richard Brautigan, his third, and it is just another book. But all the books have something in common; they are attempts on the part of each person to find his place in the world, in a sense, an attempt to achieve a sense of order by recording secret thoughts, impressions, and dreams and then storing them in a place where they are safe from the critical eye of reality. It is not without reason that most of the books are stored in the hermetically-sealed caves, while the library keeps the ledgers that record the acceptance of each book. Symbolically the library simply makes concrete the secrets and dreams, the inner lives of all the donors, while the cave keeps the secrets safe. This allows all the donors to make their own myths about themselves and keep them intact. Thus their dreams are more real than commonplace reality.

Veda is an example of a myth that is created for her, a myth or a reality that she, a sexually tempting Eve, is unable to accept. Her beautiful body makes her a sex object, a legend of lust that does not match her

delicate and fragile face; her face reflects the way she wants to see herself. Her book is about her body, "about how horrible it is to have people creeping, crawling, sucking at something" (p. 45) that she is not; she has never used her physical beauty to get anything from anyone. She spends all her time hiding from it, is not at home with it. This is what attracts her to the librarian, who is not at home in this world either; in fact, he has not even been out of the library for several years. Because of this mutual affinity, Veda takes her "awkward machine" (p. 54) and lies down beside the librarian, and the seduction scene which follows is described by the gentle spirit of the narrator in poetic terms which becomes a fantasy dream of sorts. "We lived most of our lives privately under our clothes, except in a case like Veda whose body lived outside of herself like a lost continent, complete with dinosaurs of her own choosing" (p. 55), says the narrator as he goes about the business of unclothing her. Images surrounding the scene such as her body "far away in some lonesome valley and she, on top of a mountain, looking down" (p. 55), her "tropical" (p. 56) face, "not wanting to startle her like a deer and have her go running off in the woods" (p. 56), and clauses like, "I poetically shifted my shoulder like the last lines of a Shakespearean sonnet" (p. 56), "her face became a flower in my hands" (p. 57), her breasts were "so perfectly formed under her sweater that my stomach was standing on a stepladder when I touched them for the first time" (p. 57), "it was like brief blue lightning" (p. 57), makes the whole scene pure poetry in spite of the struggle that the shy librarian has with her clothing. Love to them is beautiful, and the librarian sums up the problem well when he says to her: "Beauty is the hardest damned thing in the world to understand. Don't buy the rest of the world's juvenile sexual thirst. . . . Don't be a fatalist

winner. . . . This body is you and you'd better get used to it because that is all she wrote for this world and you can't hide from yourself. . . . If you get hung up on everybody else's hangups, then the whole world's going to be nothing more than one huge gallows" (p. 62).

While the librarian's statement is true, it is ironic that he makes it since he has been hiding in the library for several years, and it is only Veda's need of an abortion that takes him out. The abortion is necessary. "It's hard enough being born into this world without having immature and confused parents" (p. 81). This is Veda's explanation to Foster, but it is Veda and her experience in the world that carries them through the trip to Tijuana and, in a sense, aborts the librarian's retreat from the so-called world of reality. He feels like a dinosaur plucked from his "grave and thrust into competition with the freeway and metallic fruit" (p. 111). The librarian's state of mind compares and contrasts with the dinosaurs Veda has shed when she accepts her body as part of herself. It is the librarian who is shocked at the "Playboy" (p. 114) atmosphere of the San Francisco airport; he is shocked at how complex people are in large units; and, of course, everyone looks at Veda, which still shocks him even though she has explained that her physical beauty has caused people to lose control of their world. He reacts to the flight in the same way that he reacted to Veda in the love scene. It is a poetic journey. The flap on the wing is a "metal intestine of some kind of bird, retractable and visionary" (p. 119); the clouds are beautiful and grow "like flowers to the hills and mountains below, hiding with blossoms the valleys" (p. 119); the plane bucks "like a phantom horse" (p. 110); and the coffee stain on the wing is "like a talisman" (p. 119), a charm to avert evil and bring good fortune. While Veda goes through the process

of travel, the plane transfers, the ride to Tijuana in a cab, and the interview with the doctor with complete calm, the librarian is nervous, uses the bathroom frequently, and feels the need of a drink of some coffee to calm himself. His adjustment to the reality of the situation is harder than Veda's, but even she turns pale at the sight of the surgical instruments. The narrator watches two abortions, Veda's, a young American girl's, and hears a third, a woman and her husband whom he never sees. He hears the toilet flush away the fetus and abortion left-overs from the bucket three times; each scene is the same, done automatically like a machine or as he calls it, "the ancient ritual of fire and water all over again" (p. 161); and when he and Veda go back on the street, it is as if they have been "in a time capsule . . . [and are now] released again to be in the world" (p. 167). At one time during the whole experience the librarian summarizes the shock of commonplace reality: "Alas, the innocence of love was merely an escalating physical condition and not a thing shaped like our kisses" (p. 149). Dreams are better than reality, and life is more beautiful if one makes them more real. On the return flight home that night the librarian sees a little light on the end of the wing, and he makes it his secret talisman forever. Both of them have aborted, she a child and he his illusions about reality, but not his dreams. He recognizes the chrome smiles and computer voices of the stewardesses, the trivial conversation about polished fingernails in contrast to Veda's power of what he calls "Veda's thing" (p. 185). The conclusion that he comes to on the plane explains what makes him a hero at Berkeley: "I pushed my face against the window and looked very hard and saw a star and I made a wish but I won't tell. Why should I? Purchase a cocktail from pretty

Miss Zero and find your own star. There's one for everyone in the evening sky" (p. 183).

That Brautigan doesn't buy the rest of the world's juvenile values is exemplified even in the lust of Foster who whores and drinks but has a heart and sensitivity for the real. Foster exemplifies that naturalness of experience and the simplicity in which life can be lived if one is at home with himself. He isn't the stuff from which dreams are made as are the librarian and Veda, but he is himself, and to Brautigan that is all that one can know. While the lovers have aborted their illusions, they are still more developed than Foster; they stand above him in their ability to modify their lives with the charm, tenderness, and gentle spirit embodied in their dreams, the kind of dreams that will never be at home in the brutal world of metallic realism. Foster is Brautigan's natural man, but the librarian is his hero. Brautigan's shy loner is merely trying to find a good world in an inhospitable one in spite of reality, not because of it; the librarian, like the narrator in In Watermelon Sugar, is merely trying to create a world within himself that is as beautiful as he wants it to be.

In his review of The Abortion, Jim Langlois states that "Brautigan's vision of life and imagination aborted is painfully unwavering, but the style of the bulk of the book shifts from sustained rhythm of dreams in the library to a fading realism that is often no more than warmed over Hemingway."[10] Granted, this premise is creditable; Confederate General is more consistent on the realistic level, but in magic box terms, the dream level of The Abortion is far more complicated and prismatic in nature. As Jim Langlois also points out: "As he [Brautigan] has successfully done with his Jungian dream world of statues and open graves in In

Watermelon Sugar and with his sprawling transformation of the whole country in Trout Fishing in America, Brautigan again [in The Abortion] declares a war of gentle violence waged by the imagination on the emptiness of contemporary life. . . . Like Donald Barthelme and others he is carving out a new syntax, his own geography of the imagination."[11]

Thomas Lash in his article "Move Over Mr. Tolstoy" succinctly sums up the major difference of The Abortion in magic box terms. He states that the novel is "half amiable fantasy, half realistic documentary so factual you can draw a map from his pages. It is possible to tie the two halves together symbolically or rather hang one half on the other. . . . [The] library is the same way station for the unborn spirit as the abortion mill is for the unborn child. Maybe the author is condemning waste in both instances."[12] Brautigan is condemning waste in both cases, a realistic solution that fulfills the obligation of the author, but in both halves the surrealistic elements operate with equal emphasis. In the first half the factual elements are dotted with the librarian's dream-like impressions of all that is concrete, and, through both sections, the library metaphor functions symbolically. One half of the novel is truly hung on the other and so is the level of perception for the reader. In both character and scene, dream and so-called reality merge.

In The Hawkline Monster Brautigan experiments with a parody of two styles, gothic and western, both of which operate simultaneously. In magic box terms, the fact that Brautigan juxtaposes the two styles together is the most important point. Roderick Nordell says that Brautigan is "turning fantasy into everyday, and everyday into fantasy"[13] to amuse himself. The review in the Times called "Whiskey in the Works" ironically sums up the total plot and its shortcomings. It states:

> A quietly convinced dead-pan voice tells how a couple of really tough hombres, Greer and Cameron, are hired by an Indian girl called Magic Child to bump off a monster they've taken to Hawkline Manor, a curiously cold place, built over some ice caves by a hard swearing but benign Harvard professor and father of two beautiful, identical girls, for pursuing his research into the chemicals. Far from benefiting mankind, however, the professor's substances have emanated an evil force that has turned him into an elephant-foot-umbrella-stand, that kills and shrinks his seven-foot-two-inch butler, has turned one daughter into the Indian, takes away people's clothes from time to time, and generally messes up their minds. The cowboys are not so stupid as to try their firearms on such a foe, and succeed in killing it with a glass of whiskey smartly infiltrated into its storage jar. The dead are restored to life, and everybody lives unhappily after.[14]

Nordell also considers the plot a miserable one, blaming the tone of the novel for the most part for its shortcomings; however, Peter Ackroyd is much more blatant in his criticism. He sees the novel plunging:

> . . . into that world of rough and tough guys which judging by a rather limp photograph of Mr. Brautigan on the cover, is going to be sent up rotten. He describes his book as a "Gothic Western," and it certainly has that mid-Atlantic and cross-cultural flavour which I associate with extremely bad novels. Cameron and Greer are professional hit-men, who will do anything for the money. Richard Brautigan has obviously learned something from them. He rattles out his jokes like wax bullets, he almost hits his targets--it is surprising he doesn't get a little closer since they are the remarkably large ones of conventional horror and conventional adventure--and he uses that ironic and dead-pan manner which is supposed to imply everything but which actually means nothing.[15]

John Yohalem in his article "Cute Brautigan" supports Ackroyd. He says that there is:

> . . . sort of a plot, with tension, conflict and relief--if you watch for them carefully and don't blink. East Oregon takes on the Yorkshire moors; the mysterious mansion and the whimsy of the supernatural something below stairs recalls Otranto . . . [but in total] the story is partly satire and partly an excuse. The excuse is for Brautigan's wit, which consists of anecdotes and similes. . . . [He calls Brautigan] cute . . . [and calls his fiction] lazy, as only inconsequential as the behavior of his compatriots at Big Sur. The emphasis is on unflappability. So go with the flow, man. There's a monster downstairs. Gotta kill it. For sure. But the ladies come first. And the dinner. Then the monster.

> There is, of course, lots of casual sex, casually described. The sex is less an event that matters than a thing the stick figures do to kill time. All the actions here are just as casual. It is as if Brautigan had given up on personalities and their motivations when he began to spend more time on plot.[16]

Obviously The Hawkline Monster is not Bruatigan's best work. In magic box terms, however, the novel is important in its relation to Brautigan's view of the power of the imagination; he makes it clear that the monster is simply:

> . . . an illusion created by a mutated light in The Chemicals, a light that had the power to work its will upon mind and matter and change the very nature of reality to fit its mischievous mind.
>
> The light was dependent upon The Chemicals for sustenance as an unborn baby relies upon the umbilical cord for supper. The light could leave The Chemicals for brief periods of time but it had to return to The Chemicals to revitalize itself and to sleep. The Chemicals were like a restaurant and a hotel for the light.
>
> The light could translate itself into small changeable forms and it had a shadow companion. The shadow was a buffoon mutation totally subservient to the light and quite unhappy in its role and often liked to remember back to the days when harmony reigned in The Chemicals and Professor Hawkline was there. . . . A lot of contents of The Chemicals were not happy with what had happened since the electricity had been passed through them and the mutation occurred that created evil. . . . The chemical now cried a lot and kept to itself near the bottom of the jar.
>
> There were of course chemicals who were basically evil in nature and glad to be free of the professor's good-neighbor policy who exulted now in the goofy terror the light, which was the Hawkline Monster, inflicted upon its hosts, the Hawklines, and anybody who came near them.
>
> Whenever the Hawkline Monster left the laboratory, drifting up the stairs and then slipping like melted butter under the iron door that separated the laboratory from the house, the shadow always felt as if it were going to throw up.
>
> If only the professor were around, if only that terrible fate had not befallen him, he would still be singing:
>
> Me and Mamie O'Rorke,
> Tripped the light fantastic,
> On the sidewalks of New York.[17]

Brautigan is parodying the power of the mind. Besides fostering bizarre behavior by all the participants in the scene by taking over their minds,

the "monster" plays his own games to amuse himself. At one time he becomes a gravy spoon, which forces the shadow to hide in the gravy; this makes the shadow "very uncomfortable, almost sweating" (p. 143); it isn't easy to pretend to be gravy, "but it [the shadow] worked hard at the performance and sort of pulled it off" (p. 142). At another time the monster divides and hides in the Hawkline sisters' pearls; this forces the shadow to divide and hide in their hair. Another time he hides in the fire; the monster is similar to a libido with its own (shadow) alter-ego. The bizarre behavior of the characters is simply a product of the "monster's energy" (p. 147), and it is appropriately the shadow who in the end helps Greer and Cameron destroy the chemicals which restored the monster's powers.

In the chapter "Soliloquy of the Shadow," the shadow dreams that it is the monster, "occupying a bracelet on the wrist of one of the Hawkline sisters" (p. 146). He would simply make the bracelet shine more to make her happy.

> The shadow did not approve of the monster's tactics and was ashamed of the cruel things that the monster had inflicted upon the minds of the Hawkline sisters. The shadow could not understand why the monster did these things. If fate were reversed and the shadow changed into the monster, everything would be different around the house. These cruel jokes would come to an end and the monster's energy would be directed to discovering and implementing new pleasures for the Hawkline sisters.
>
> The shadow was very fond of them and hated to be a part of the monster's sense of humor and wished only pleasure and good times for the Hawkline sisters instead of the evil pranks that the monster loved to play upon their bodies and their minds (pp. 146-47).

When the shadow realizes the monster's final plan, that is, to make all the characters his shadows, the shadow proposes a plan of his own. In the chapter "The Battle," Cameron and Greer go down to the laboratory

to destroy the chemicals; the shadow gets between the monster and the light so that "it would be blinded by darkness for a few seconds" (p. 176) and be confused. Although the shadow knows that "if the monster were destroyed, it would be destroyed too . . . death was better than going on living like this, being a part of this evil" (p. 176). The shadow succeeds, and Cameron manages to get the whiskey into the jar of Chemicals. The chemical reaction causes the monster to turn into "a handful of blue diamonds that had no memory of a previous existence" (p. 178) and causes the laboratory to explode into flames that in the end destroy the whole house. The Chemicals were "quite a batch of stuff" (p. 181), the stuff of which hidden dreams and desires are made, the stuff which is regarded as irrational when left uncensored. What Brautigan does here is show the subconscious mind in action on a surface level and grant it equal credibility with what is normally considered credible only for conscious reality.

In Willard and His Bowling Trophies, Brautigan deals with reality in concrete terms and experiments with plot, but like The Hawkline Monster, the novel is less masterful than some of his earlier novels. Beginning with an epitaph of two quotations: "'The dice of Love are madnesses and melees'--Anacreon, The Great Anthology" and "'This Land is cursed with violence'--Senator Frank Church, Democrat, Idaho," Brautigan relates two plots which merge at the end of the novel only by an erratic accident--the apartment numbers of two couples are reversed. In magic box terms, the reader sees two linear lines of scene on scene instead of the one long sequence of events which takes place in Confederate General, and both plot lines are supported by surrealistic overtones.

Thomas Bedell states about the novel as a whole:

> This mystery concerns Willard (a paper-mache bird capable of changing expressions) and his collection of trophies, stolen three years earlier from the Logan brothers (they are former bowling champions turned criminals in hot pursuit of the trophies). Constance, a critically (but not economically) successful novelist, and her lover Bob (an amateur sadist ever since developing a case of venereal warts) account for the 'perverse.' Brautigan's whimsical style, his wildly imaginative similies, have served him well through five other novels. But here style and substance create an uneasy mix, the 'real' world (represented by a quote from Senator Frank Church: "This land is cursed with violence") strangely intruding into what seems a gentler fantasy.[18]

Michael Rogers in his article "The Gentle Brautigan and the Nasty Seventies" makes some interesting observations about the two plots, particularly the latter of the two. "Willard, in standard Brautigan fashion, really has very little to do with any of it. He is, in fact, a mysterious paper-mache bird, housed on the lower floor of a two-unit apartment building, and surrounded by a collection of stolen bowling trophies. Precisely who stole the trophies is not clear, but the original owners are a trio of brothers who lose their job, self respect, and ultimately commit senseless murder in a misguided attempt at revenge . . . ("slim story").[19]

Rogers also states:

> On the first page we meet Bob, whose memory and powers of concentration are slowly deteriorating. On the next page we meet his girl friend, Constance, who is being bound and gagged for Bob's nightly session of leather belt sadism. Constance isn't really all that happy about the sadism, but it develops that the whole thing may be her fault. Constance has contracted warts in her vagina, as the result of a brief, sad affair, and has transmitted these warts to Bob, precluding normal intercourse and pushing him into what she terms 'an amateur sadist trip!'
>
> We are soon deeply into the spittle ridden details of Constance's gag, and then in short order, of Bob's penile warts. While the rest of the book never gets more intentionally unpleasant than the first few pages, it doesn't get much lighter either, and the Brautigan humor that used to pop up in even the grimmest places is here little in evidence.[20]

Rogers concludes that Brautigan's real strength does not lie in sustained plotting but rather in short fiction and verse with "wit, innovative imagery, and unexpected turns of phrases that will almost certainly retain a lasting audience."[21]

Rogers feels that Brautigan's "banal, ingenuous style, that works so well for wistful depictions of loves lost and gained, of good luck and bad luck and loneliness, just isn't right for a long bleak gaze at unhappy sex and senseless murder."[22] The "senseless murder" as well as the connection between the two plots is truly ludicrous. "Saint Willard of the Stolen Bowling Trophies"[23] sits in the middle of the trophies in the apartment below Constance and Bob, where John, a young film maker, and Patricia, a school teacher, live. They found the bowling trophies in "an abandoned car in Marin County" (p. 33), and simply because one "slightly drunken evening a few months ago Patricia and John decided to play a little joke on Constance and Bob by switching the numbers on the apartment while they were out" (p. 165), the Logan brothers open the door of apartment two and kill the wrong couple. Michael Mason's judgment of the conclusion is appropriate:

> The Logan brothers somehow track down the stolen bowling trophies, and in so doing slaughter by mistake the married couple whose activity constitutes the other half of the [Constance and Bob] plot. This unique and senseless moment of contact is the only reason the two stories belong between the same covers. Connectedness is replaced by the parodic structure, conformism: watching the Johnny Carson Show and eating a turkey sandwich, the new owner of the bowling trophies unknowingly joins millions of insomniac Americans . . . surrounded by fragments of food that they had just laughed out of their mouths. Willard instantiates an aphorism from Confederate General "There's no telling the future and little understanding of what's gone on before,' but it covers with difficulty the weight of randomness that this general, and congenial wisdom about life's incoherence forces it to bear.[24]

Certainly, as most of the critics seem to agree, the connection of the two plots is too contrived; however, in magic box terms, recurring patterns of perception do appear in the novel. For example, the narrator tells us that Willard "was made by an artist who lived in some isolated mountains in a part of California that was hard to find. . . . Willard came to him in a dream, a dream that was composed of miniature silver and gold temples built but never used and waiting for a religion" (p. 45). In the dream, Willard walks over and takes "a good look at the miniature silver and gold temples. He liked them. They would be his family and his home" (p. 46). The next morning the artist recreates "Willard from his dream until Willard was standing there, separated and made real, ready to occupy his own life" (p. 46). Willard is "a kind of bird. Mona Lisa . . . an acquired taste" (p. 84). Patricia and John refer to Willard in other lights, sometimes as a baby, sometimes as a competitive lover for Patricia's affection. But Willard is also the guardian of the bowling trophies, which in the beginning are ironically the "wholesome all-American" (p. 27) reward for the Logan brothers, "an inspiration to the young and old alike, showing how you could make something of your life and be looked up to" (p. 27), an illusion to the American myth of ascendancy, an idol to be worshiped. Even more ironically they become the god of revenge after they are stolen; like the many atrocities which were committed in the name of God, the trophies become the prime motivator for the Logan brothers' crimes. Taken in this context, Willard and his trophies, while not as well developed as the metaphors in Confederate General, Trout Fishing in America, and In Watermelon Sugar, become the symbol of the mind's power, a power analogous to the power of the Hawkline monster and his shadow in that the penchant for good or evil is dependent upon the source from

which it feeds. By extension Willard and his trophies become the mind's construct of reality which in this case depends upon whatever the mind's eye chooses to make an idol of.

That the stolen trophies find their way to the apartment of Patricia and John, which just happens to be the apartment below Bob and Constance, is a bit too contrived to be plausible in realistic terms, but surrealistically the trophies are appropriate to both. To the two couples, the Willard and the trophies are the "dice of Love." On the surface, Patricia and John's love making seems to be the antithesis of Constance and Bob's perversion, but their love making, like their "acquired tastes"--one of Willard's metaphors--are a gratification of the senses or a love of self. For example, Patricia "really turned John on by pretending to be a bowling trophy . . . for some reason or another it sexually aroused him" (p. 109). John watches the Johnny Carson show every night on the television set, the god of the masses and a frame which reflects the illusion of reality. He always turns it off just before one. "He liked to be in control of his television watching and not a prisoner of it. . . . Normally, he just watched twenty or thirty minutes of it and that was enough to get him sleepy. . . . [Then] John didn't feel bad at all. He was the dictator of his television watching and triumphed again" (pp. 130-31). Both eat "big turkey sandwiches and glasses of ice-cold milk" (p. 130) in the bedroom after making love or while watching television. They do "a very good imitation of American health" (p. 130). While the Logan brothers have a preference for their mother's "cakes and pies and cookies" (p. 48) and Bob eats "spaghetti sauce over a couple slices of bread" (p. 107), to all three groups of characters, the foods function as fetishes of sorts, extremes that fit each group's perception of themselves. John and Patricia

consider themselves healthy Americans just as the Logan brothers do before their trophies or illusions are stolen; both instances are simply a "cover," a disguise like the Trout Fishing in America disguise, that is, a charade of the ideal; on the other hand, Bob and Constance's "amateur sadist" trip and the Logans' crime journey to find the trophies are also committed under a disguise, that is, the common scapegoat rationalization that it is the only alternative to an injustice. While Constance feels she deserved the whips, the ropes, and the gag because she contracted venereal warts on a one-night-stand affair and then gave it to Bob, she remembers that "she suffered with them, too" (p. 13) so she uses this illusion of injustice to rationalize her criticism of his bungling it--"He couldn't even gag her well" (p. 12). But both of them mask the pleasure they derive from what begins as "small-time perversion" (p. 21) while Constance is undergoing treatment. They both call their alternative to traditional sex a game they can both play, a game based on "The Story of O . . . a gothic sadomasochist novel" (p. 18) which Bob reads and shares with her. In this sense, both apartments mirror the same illusion. While Johnny Carson is making jokes about his guest's "giant breasts" (p. 142) on the screen in the apartment below, Bob and Constance project the illusion that sex and perversion is a game. More important, however, is the fact that in the case of both couples what is normally classed as irrational is made to appear rational. A similar case could be made for the Logan brothers' excuse for violence, but the point is made. On these terms the seemingly irrational connection between the two surface plots--the trophies and the irrational conclusion, the death of the wrong couple--are not irrational at all. In surrealistic terms, it is the only possible, rational conclusion to all the other irrationalities that mask under the

illusion that they are rational. In magic box terms, the novel is a step further in Brautigan's delivery system of the many modes of perception from which one can view the mind's eye. The Hawkline Monster's imagination, power, and will to mold minds moves to the individual in Willard; the burden of proof is on the self and the power of free will. That man's perceptual screen is clouded by the loaded dice of the sixties wasteland world where the pressures of violence, pornography, and perversion are made the order of the day is a premise made obviously clear, but made equally clear in scenic terms is that mystery in man's mind that makes him rationalize the irrational and come to the conclusion that it is the only so-called reality from which he can choose.

Sombrero Fallout operates around a similar theme and on a similar structural pattern, but with a lighter tone; two-and-a-half plots are tied together through surrealistic elements; however, the connections are made with greater artistry than they are in Willard. Timothy Daum says of Sombrero that: "Only Brautigan could squeeze 2 1/2 plots into so little space, call the concoction the novel, and still maintain the bitter-sweet insanity that has marked his work from the very beginning . . . but there isn't a page that won't make you scratch your head, smile, or want to start it all over again."[25] Another difference lies in Sombrero's use of the narrator; the veil between the protagonist and the ever present author is exquisitely thin. In fact, as the "Books and Writer's" review in the July, 1977, issue of Encounter points out:

> Sombrero Fallout is about an American humorist who is said to have no sense of humour. But of course he has a sense of humour. Look at his jokes. He is having trouble writing. But he isn't really having trouble. Look at this book. Even a piece of paper bearing an idea for a story which he tears up and throws on the floor takes on a life of its own. It is a story about a sombrero which causes a civil war. It is not a very good story.

> That doesn't matter. The American humorist can think of hundreds more stories in the same way that, although he has been left by his latest (Japanese) girlfriend, he can pick up hundreds more girlfriends just as he picked up her. In his junkworld, reality is conferred on objects, human and otherwise, only by the touch of the free-floating ego. Everything else is, as Gore Vidal puts it in his perceptive essay, "American plastic" (New York Review of Books, 15 July 1976). The author tries not to be himself "a maker of dreck but an arranger of dreck." And there is no higher compliment that an American modernist can pay another than to say, as William Gass says of Donald Barthelme, that he "has the art to make a treasure out of trash.[26]

The November, 1976, Atlantic review states a similar point: "Brautigan's novel proceeds on two levels. On one, a narrator come novelist mopes over his Japanese mistress, who has left him because 'the upkeep was too complicated.' On the other, the scraps in the wastebasket compose their own bloody fantasy. The meaning of all this is oblique and the style is relentlessly clever. As the author himself points out, 'After a while nonstop brilliance has the same effect as non-stop boredom.' Reckless of him."[27] Both references point out here in magic box terms that the two-and-a-half linear plot lines or sets of boxes in Sombrero function in a pattern of perception similar to Willard, but there is a difference in that they form a montage of perceptions by themselves. Yukiko's dreams like the story in the wastebasket are an invention of the protagonist, and while both strands, like Moll's story in Moll Flanders, take on a life of their own, they emanate from the creative mind of the protagonist as a resolution to his own dilemma, which is a plot in itself.

However, Harold Beaver in his review entitled "Dead Pan Alley" sums up the major elements of the novel which highlight its importance in magic box terms on the surrealistic level.

> Though subtitled "A Japanese Novel" and dedicated to Junichiro Tanizaki, admirers of Richard Brautigan need not

> worry. His seventh novel is the same mixture as before: a jig saw of anecdotes--part sentimental idyll, part comic-strip fantasy--retailed in eighty bizarre sequences, or shots, as from a film or frames, or chapters varying in length from a picture postcard to an airletter form.
>
> There is this well-known American humorist, heartbroken because his Japanese girlfriend has left him. There is this story of an ice-cold sombrero that falls out of a blue sky (the work of this well-known, heartbroken humorist) which he tears up and drops into an empty wastepaper basket. Mix and shuffle. The Japanese girl dreams a self-obliterating dream that she will never remember. The sombrero story perpetuates itself in the wastepaper basket, developing into gunbattles, mayhem and national holocaust. The humorist potters about his apartment--opening and closing the refrigerator, telephoning girlfriends, searching the floor for a strand of black Japanese hair--consumed by self-propagating obsessions. . . .
>
> It is a three-way scramble, then, between self-perpetuating nightmares, erotic daydreams that mix with dietary or other obsessions to haunt the bored, insecure mind, and the renewal, in deep sleep, of mental stability. . . .
>
> These strands form an interweaving of opposites: of nurse and patient, Asian and Caucasian, purring calm and tearful neurosis, tinkling laughter and fabricated humour. The breakdown of this private bonding simultaneously explodes in a public mystery--a Wild West fission (complete with gunslinging sheriffs, helicopters and the National Guard in the wastepaper basket. . . .
>
> Fracture is the essence of Brautigan's craft: the separation of perceptions, chapters, ideograms, like the separation of the two lovers sixteen blocks apart. It is an art, as Nathanael West would have said, of "the dead pan." Each movement is arrested in a breath, transformed into a metaphor. Like a curator displaying a butterfly case, Brautigan moves on from specimen to specimen. The drollery lies in the narrations; the meaning in their intersections.[28]

One additional element not developed by Beaver is the sombrero as it operates as symbol. While the sombrero appears as itself only in the wastebasket story, its symbolic implications permeate the entire novel. For example, in Chapter I, "Sombrero," the hat simply falls out of the sky; it "landed on the Main Street of town in front of the mayor, his cousin, and a person out of work."[29] It "looked brand-new" (p. 12); it is "Size: 7 1/4" (p. 12); it is "ice-cold" (p. 27). The unemployed man wonders if it will fit him; the cousin considers picking it up and giving it

to the mayor "because he wanted to be mayor himself someday and picking up that hat might get him some political help in the future when his name would be on the ballot" (p. 25). When the cousin touches the hat, he withdraws his hand "as if he had touched electricity" (p. 27). After this the unemployed man decides that if he picks up the hat, "the mayor would give him a job" (p. 29). To both the cousin and the unemployed man, the sombrero represents their hidden desires, their hope for the future. A fight ensues between the two over who will pick it up, and the whole story would have ended if the mayor had intervened. But he loved "the intensity of the two men wanting to please him" (p. 44). When both men rush toward the hat, however, the mayor stops them. "It's only a sombrero, the mayor said, his voice becoming quieter and taking on a patronizing tone. It's only a sombrero, he repeated, almost whispering. I can pick it up myself. . . . Both men just stood there crying. They had lost the power of speech. Their minds had been overpowered by despair. They had been turned into shadows of themselves. The human mind can only handle so much. Then it stops" (pp. 61-63). Immediately following this scene is a chapter "Black" which summarizes the description of the hat; it "is black . . . 24 degrees below zero . . . when the temperature in the street is 81. . . . That makes it a very different sombrero" (pp. 64-65). Brautigan concludes the chapter with the following information: "That's enough for now and the two men still haven't stopped crying and of course a crowd is starting to gather but you knew that was going to happen sooner or later, so it is no surprise that they are now leaving their houses and stores and starting toward the three men and the sombrero in the street. The tempo is now changing. In just a short while this chapter will be looked back upon as

the good old days when men loved one another and peace reigned on earth" (p. 65).

What ensues, of course, is a mass holocaust. When the mayor starts shouting to the two crying men--"He has had it. He was going mad" (p. 85)--someone telephones the police and reports that there is "a full-scale riot on Main Street. 'Bring lots of tear gas!' the person said over the telephone. The person was a little hysterical, so the police didn't know what to think, but they were on their way" (pp. 85-86). But the police never make it; they end up in a mass wreck that kills them all. What began as an argument over a hat becomes a situation similar to the campus riots reminiscent of the sixties that enlarges into an open civil war with guns and tanks from a near by train. The next scene begins with the state police and the governor whose helicopters crash in mid air. Not until the President intervenes and the Federal troops are called in does the civil war stop. Then in a chapter entitled "Lincoln," the President came "to the town and made his binding-the-wounds speech about Americans hand-in-hand walking into a brave and glorious future, etc. . . . The Town was declared a national monument and became quite a tourist attraction with the huge cemetery there being featured on millions of post cards" (pp. 181-82).

All during the time, no one, not even Norman Mailer, who visits the scene, notices the hat; it is not disturbed. "It had a small sanctuary in the center of the riot. The space was ten feet in diameter. It was as if there were an invisible fence around the small circle because people would not step into it. Life and death were now raging outside the circle but not a single person would venture into it" (p. 93). After the three men move out of the circle, "not a single person had stepped into the

circle and tried to pick it up. The sombrero just lay there, unaltered or affected by the commotion going on about it" (p. 94). Only two changes take place in the hat; its temperature rises, with the intensity of the riot "from -24° and still rising" (p. 116) to "-0 blast off! We have a go" (p. 123); and when its temperature returns to -24 degrees it turns from black to a "very cold white" (p. 183). While an allusion suggests that the sombrero may be a UFO from outer space--the sombrero is discussed in one chapter called "Saucers"--Brautigan obviously means it to mean much more than that. In one sense the sombrero seems symbolically similar to the Hawkline Monster, that is, a force that has the power to work its will on one's mind; certainly, its presence affects everyone around it, and it is cold like the caves under Hawkline Manor. In another sense the sombrero is symbolically similar to Willard and His Bowling Trophies, that is, the penchant for good or evil which is dependent upon the source from which it feeds. Like Willard and his trophies, the sombrero is the mind's construct of reality which depends upon whatever the mind's eye chooses to make an idol of. For example, the trophy for the unemployed man is a job, in his case, a Trout Fishing in America ideal; the trophy for the cousin is to be mayor, no doubt a mayor similar to the "Mayor of the Twentieth Century." The trophy for the mayor is more power, a power similar to the penchant for power by the governor, the state, and the local police. The mob is like any victim of either the Hawkline Monster or Willard and His Bowling Trophies. "They just didn't know what had happened" (p. 179). From this point of view, the sombrero is that mind's construct which can as a negative force incite under a Trout Fishing in America disguise, a mass Logan brothers' violence, and as in Confederate General and Willard and His Bowling Trophies is in the end, white washed--the hat turns white

in the same way that the historians white wash the true cause of the civil war. In fact, by extension, those riots of the sixties were the "shadows" of it. In total, the sombrero is a combination of all the Brautigan symbols to date, a many prismed perception of the mind's construct of reality, its dreams, its illusions, its masks, its penchant for the irrational as well as the rational, and its ability to rationalize both. And in the light of the fact that all of these insights in relation to the sombrero come from the story on the scraps of paper in the wastebasket, the sombrero becomes by extension the "fallout" of the creative mind.

In these terms the symbol functions throughout the other plot and a half. For example, the heartbroken American humorist's imagining that his girlfriend is making love to another man when in actuality she is simply dreaming is analogous to the thoughts of the unemployed man and the cousin when they consider picking up the hat. All three instances are the product of a confused mind and are constructs of reality only in relation to each individual. The lover is similar to the symbolic implications associated with the hat; he is simply a "ghost-like energy force with a penis" (p. 16). At the same time that the writer is imagining this "no definite body" (p. 16) in bed with Yukiko, the torn pieces of paper are beginning to take on a life of their own. In like manner so do Yukiko's dreams; she has childhood dreams, dreams of her mother, her father, her mother's infidelity and her father's suicide over it, and dreams of her love for her father as though he is still alive. At the same time her black cat whose purring controls her dreams rests close to her long black hair which sleeps and also dreams. "Her hair dreamt about being carefully combed in the morning" (p. 15). The black cat and the black hair, antithetical forces in relation to the force of the sombrero, symbolize the opposite

extreme of what the imagination can conceive. Her dreams transcend the violence of her father's suicide rather than succumbing to it as her ex-lover does over his loss of her. Just like the pieces of paper in the wastebasket, they, too, decide "to go on without him" (p. 24). Yukiko's story is like the sombrero story, and the humorist is her hat, only she transcends his destructive force.

In this same light the American humorist's despondency over Yukiko's loss parallels the plight of the unemployed man and his relation to the hat. Both cry; both consider food as a possible alleviation to their misery. The unemployed man wants a better diet than berries, the humorist wants a distraction from his suffering, but in both cases the need is the same, that is, the desire for a simple satisfaction of the senses as an alternative to the painful complexities of life. And by extension the pieces on the floor are to the humorist what the sombrero is to the unemployed man. While picking up the sombrero will give the unemployed man an answer to his hidden desires, a hope for the future, picking up the pieces of paper will give the humorist the same thing; that is, a better mental resolution to his emotional dilemma over Yukiko. But neither character acts, so both the hat and the scraps of paper, which by extension are one, make fools out of both of them and turn them into shadows, shadows like the shadow of the Hawkline Monster. Both the humorist and the unemployed man depend upon that force, and in both cases the two react like the narrator of In Watermelon Sugar; they make the existential choice of not choosing. In Sombrero Fallout, however, the choice brings about mental "fall out" rather than a sense of order. Only in Yukiko is balance brought about; like the librarian in The Abortion, she finds her own star in her dreams.

In magic box terms, the Sombrero Fallout symbol conveys the multiple constructs and resolutions of reality which the imaginative mind can create for a variety of reasons; it also conveys in scenic perspective the way in which that "fallout" interacts. What becomes apparent in Sombrero is the fact that total understanding of the novel necessitates an understanding of a culmination of meanings developed in previous novels. Like Blake's symbols, all the elements of Blake's fiction establish a pattern of constructs that grow in and out of each other and build at the same time. In essence, Brautigan has built up through each successive novel a series of magic boxes, a mosaic of constructs that must be assumed as a total web of sense that the reader must bring with him in order to fully appreciate each succeeding novel's meaning and artistry.

Brautigan's latest novel, Dreaming of Babylon: A Private Eye Novel of 1942, operates with all these assumptions understood; it has two plots, one of which is a dream world that is identified from the beginning as just that. In Dreaming of Babylon so-called reality and the imagination operate on equal terms. A spoof on detective thrillers, the novel is in many respects more of a simple narrative, that is, a narrative about C. Card, private-eye, who allows his private dream world to interfere with his day to day experiences to the point that dream and so-called reality co-exist. It is almost as if Brautigan assumes that this type of connection is no longer necessary. Even the symbolism is essentially a fantasy life of a private-eye, which the reader sees through his "private-eyes." In this sense, Brautigan is parodying not only the detective thriller but also the power of the imagination.

Dennis Petticoffer sees the novel as a whole in a similar light:

> Sulking through the bizarre underworld of human consciousness, Brautigan describes a day in the life of private detective C. Card (as in "Seth Hard?"). The hero is sitting out World War II thanks to an ignominious injury suffered in the Spanish Civil War, when he imprudently planted his posterior on a pistol while answering nature's call. Card is a failure, his attempts to subsist above poverty level constantly interrupted by Walter Mitty-ish daydreams. Hired to steal the body of a murdered prostitute from the local morgue, the hero encounters a host of body-snatchers enlisted to perform the same deed. After a battery of harrowing escapades, Card emerges in possession of the body. Unfortunately his prize goes unclaimed, and he is left not with a handsome monetary award, but with the corpse of a beautiful young woman languishing in his refrigerator. Like previous efforts by the author, this is an entertaining, provocative fantasy which should delight and intrigue a wide range of readers.[30]

Choice magazine calls the novel overly simple:

> Brautigan's latest spoof of Hammett, Chandler, et. al.: a period detective piece that takes place in the San Francisco of 1942. His down-on-his-luck detective, C. Card, is in such desperate shape he has to borrow his bullets. Given the odd anachronism, the imitation is not bad, but the resultant mix is more like parody than sincere imitation; the Whimsy is by now getting as tiresome as 60's cant and the fall back upon sub plot, a devise Brautigan seems to wish to patent, is without apparent aim. In short, the book is entertainment; a book his fans will automatically want and, one fears, will automatically read. It will not take them long. It is time someone gave the Brautigan turn table a kick. It is beginning to stick in a most familiar groove. Forgettable fan: an exercise for the children of Evelyn Wood.[31]

Jo Flaherty in his article "The Sam Spade Caper" claims that Brautigan is cartooning because he tries "to impose a 60's mentality on what he supposes to be a 40's form." He states further:

> Brautigan's book makes the same mistake as Peter Bogdanovich's "nostalgic" movies. Both men think that by surrounding their works with the proper dated artifacts they have captured a period while all they have caught are the labels. That a philosophic stance existed in the 40's has escaped them. And their efforts can't be defined as parody or homage, since the original material must be understood before one can be contemptuous or affectionate toward it.

> So the result in this basically plotless book is cartooning. Brautigan delivers a litany of screwups and lame jokes. It's the ice age seen through Fred Flintstone.[32]

The New Yorker reviewer agrees in part with Flaherty. He states: "Babylon is the fantasy world that C. Card escapes to whenever he can, and dreaming of Babylon is a sure way of missing his stop on the bus, losing touch with reality, and messing up in general. The suspense of waiting for that six-o'clock meeting--and then on the tricky assignment that C. Card is given--wouldn't be so bad if the payoff weren't so flat."[33]

The Booklist reviewer, however, returns to Petticoffer's premise: "Brautigan's linguistic antics and gallows humor are extremely apt in his 'perverse' mysteries! Babylon upends the conventional private eye novel. It also wreaks havoc with the line between fantasy and reality. The hapless hero, C. Card has hit the skids as a private investigator; he spends half his time trying to rustle up some bullets for his gun and the other half resisting the inducements of an imaginary, perfect world. A masterful comedy mixed with pathos."[34]

As usual, Brautigan's critics are divided; the important point, however, is the fact that the two plots, one fantasy, one real, operate and intermingle with each other on equal terms. In a structural pattern similar to Willard and Sombrero, the chapters shift back and forth between the dream world and the real; as the novel progresses they begin to merge, but the reader is prepared from the beginning. In chapter II, "Babylon," C. Card, who is a first-person-participant narrator, establishes the connection between his two worlds and defines the Babylon symbol in explicit terms:

> Uh-oh, I started dreaming of Babylon as I walked back down the stairs to my apartment. It was very important that I not dream of Babylon just as I was starting to get something

> worked out. If I got started on Babylon whole hours would pass without my knowing it. . . . The last thing in the world that I needed right now was to start dreaming of Babylon . . . I had to hold Babylon back for a while, long enough for me to get some bullets. . . . It was touch and go there for a few seconds and then Babylon floated back into the shadows, away from me.
>
> I felt a little sad.
>
> I didn't want Babylon to go.[35]

Throughout the novel Card fights off the fantasy which makes him happier than he is in the concrete world. A kind of Walter Mitty reacting to the wasteland world of the 40's, Card shifts back and forth from fantasy to reality to the point that both worlds take on a dream like quality. For example, he begins dreaming of Babylon for the first time when he tries out "for a semi-pro team" (p. 44) and is knocked senseless by the pitcher's ball. (It was his childhood dream to be a famous baseball player.) While unconscious, Card dreams of Babylon, a beautiful place that is "like a song being played on the radio" (p. 48) in his mind. In the Babylon chapter, "The 596 B. C. Baseball Season," Card is a famous baseball player with a beautiful girlfriend Nana-dirat; Nana is with him through all his dreams and changes parts to accommodate his fantasies. Card tells the reader in the "Terry and the Pirates" chapter:

> Sometimes I played around with the form of my adventures in Babylon. They would be done as books that I could see in my mind what I was reading, but most often they were done as movies, though once I did them as a play with me being a Babylonian Hamlet and Nana-dirat being both Gertrude and Ophelia. I abandoned the play halfway through the second act. Someday I must return and pick it up where I left off. . . . Nana-dirat and I will take off in an airplane of my own invention built out of palm fronds and propelled by an engine that burns honey. We will fly to Egypt to have supper on a golden barge floating down the Nile with the Pharaoh.
>
> Yes, I will have to pick that one up soon.
>
> I had also done half-a-dozen adventures in Babylon in the form of comic strips. It was a lot of fun to do them that way. They were modelled after the style of Terry and the Pirates. Nana-dirat looked great as a comic-strip character.

> I had just finished doing a private-eye mystery in detective magazine form like a short novel in Dime Detective. As I read the novel paragraph after paragraph, page following page, I translated the words into pictures that I could see and move rapidly forward in my mind like having a dream (pp. 59-60).

These are his private-eyes. In the chapter "Roast Turkey and Dressing," Card is a private eye in Babylon who is hired by Sidney Greenstreet to report the quality of the food of "a Filipino cook who was having a love affair with his wife" (p. 111). As Peter Lorre, the butler, listens at the door, Card reports the menu and makes derogatory comments about all the entrees for each day including the one he ate and enjoyed. The shifting scenes in Card's dreams operate like a Jungian journey into the unconscious. In some respects, they are like the collective unconscious in that all his dreams of Babylon operate as fantasies that have universal implications. Most people fantasize that they are better than they actually are, and many of Card's dreams are detective fantasies quite the opposite of his concrete experiences.

Even more interesting are the parallels in the dream sequence that are mini-microcosms of previous novels. Dr. Forsythe in the chapter "Ming the Merciless" is similar to the Dr. Hawkline in The Hawkline Monster. Dr. Forsythe has a ray that "changed people into shadow robots that were totally subservient" (p. 63) to him. "He had a plan for creating artificial night composed of his shadow robots that would move during the real night from town to town conquering unsuspecting citizens and changing them into more shadow robots" (p. 63). After he changes the poor and unsuspecting into shadow robots, Forsythe stacks them in piles similar to the stack of streams in Trout Fishing in America's "Cleveland Wrecking Yard,"; he "stacked them like newspapers in a hidden warehouse nearby, waiting for

the time to come when he could turn them loose on the world as artificial night" (p. 64). Mini-microcosms of previous novels appear in Card's concrete world, which in many respects are as much a dream world as his Babylon antics. In the chapter "The Magicians" this is made clear. Lost in fantasy, Card is interrupted by a sound in the distance. "The sound was words. Babylon fell over on its side and lay there. 'Excuse me, C. Card, is that you?' I looked up, totally returned to the so-called real world" (p. 65). That Card's world like Pip's world in Great Expectations is turned upside down is clear. Even his so-called real world is going to be somewhat tilted. This point is also foreshadowed early in the novel. In the first chapter "Good News, Bad News," Card makes up a story about having discovered "oil in Rhode Island" (p. 6) to appease his landlady because he can't pay his rent. This scene is a mini-microcosm of some of Lee Mellon's escapades in Confederate General; it is equally bizarre and as imaginative in many respects as most of his dreams. In fact, the so-called real world plot parallels the plot of The Hawkline Monster. Card's major job is to steal a dead body from a morgue and deliver it to a graveyard; his employer is a rich blonde who drinks beer but never goes "to the toilet" (p. 27); two other "employees of the blonde--three thugs and a group of blacks" (p. 27)--who are hired to do the same job provide the suspense in the plot, and the resolution to the plot is absurd. Card ends up with no cash and a cadaver in his refrigerator. There are many more bizarre scenes that parody the private-eye plots; some scenes resemble comic strip fantasies. In fact, the scenes which portray four black men pursuing Card are totally bizarre, and the morgue scenes with the thugs are equally absurd. Essentially, the only difference in both plots is that Babylon is identified as a dream world, and the other plot is not.

Even as a so-called concrete character, very little distinction is apparent between Card's private-eye life and his "private eye" dreams; being a private-eye is to Card a Babylon of sorts. What he imagines he should be permeates every inept act; even his mistakes contain surrealistic depth. For example, every time he calls his mother, he remembers that he is responsible for his father's untimely death. When he was a child his father was killed trying to get him out of the street. He had run after a ball. In fact, at the climactic scene in the graveyard, Card's mother appears; it is her day to visit her husband's grave. But the scene takes place at midnight; that she is there at that hour shifts her visit into the dream world realm; and when the same argument over the fault for his father's death ensues, Card's hidden guilt about his father merges to the surface, and by extension becomes another cadaver in his refrigerator, something hidden away in the recesses of the unconscious. On the whole, both dream and scene are, in essence, a parody of a fantasy world of the private-eye and a picture of a fantasy world through private eyes. In magic box terms, the most appropriate analogy to the two plots of Dreaming of Babylon is Steppenwolf's "Magic Theatre"; in both instances, all the doors are marked.

Like Confederate General and Trout Fishing in America, Brautigan's six later novels make multiple use of the magic box metaphor, but in a variety of ways. The basic structure of Confederate General is similar to Steppenwolf, that is, a scene on scene pattern supported by surrealistic elements similar to the magic boxes in the "Magic Theatre" is the departure point for The Abortion, Hawkline Monster, Willard and His Bowling Trophies, Sombrero Fallout, and Dreaming of Babylon. The basic structure of Trout Fishing in America, that is, a whole mosaic of boxes

controlled by the mind of the narrator and the imagination of the artist, is the departure point for In Watermelon Sugar. In The Abortion, Brautigan experiments with reality and surreality within identifiable boundries. In Hawkline Monster and Dreaming of Babylon, he experiments with parody; in Sombrero Fallout and Willard and His Bowling Trophies, he experiments with plot. In all these novels realistic and surrealistic elements operate together. In In Watermelon Sugar Brautigan experiments with a mosaic of boxes that pushes the surrealistic boundries even farther into the abstract. However, all eight novels convey the same Brautigan construct of reality, that is, that reality lies in the eyes of the perceiver or in the act of perception itself.

NOTES

[1]Harvey Leavitt, "The Regained Paradise of Brautigan's In Watermelon Sugar," Critique, 16, No. 1 (1974), 19.

[2]Richard Brautigan, In Watermelon Sugar (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968), p. 4. Subsequent references appear in parentheses following quotations.

[3]Arlen J. Hansen, "The Celebration of Solipsism: A Trend in American Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies, 19 (Spring, 1973), 13.

[4]Tony Tanner, "The Dream and the Pen," The Times, London, 25 July 1970, p. 13.

[5]Tanner, p. 50.

[6]Leavitt, pp. 20-21.

[7]Patricia Hernland, "Author's Intent: In Watermelon Sugar," Critique, 16, No. 1 (1974), 16.

[8]Leavitt, p. 24.

[9]Richard Brautigan, The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966 (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1972), p. 26. Subsequent references appear in parentheses following quotations.

[10]Jim Langlois, "The Abortion," Library Journal, 96, No. 2 (May, 1971), 1726.

[11]Langlois, p. 1726.

[12]Thomas Lask, "Move Over, Mr. Tolstoy," The New York Times, 30 March 1971, p. 33.

[13]Roderick Nordell, Christian Science Monitor, 8 Nov. 1974, p. 10.

[14]"Whiskey in the Works," Times Literary Supplement, 11 April 1975, p. 389.

[15]Peter Ackroyd, "Grotesquerie," Spectator, 234 (5 April, 1975), 411.

[16]John Yohalem, "Cute Brautigan," The New York Times Book Review, 8 Sept. 1974, p. 7.

[17]Richard Brautigan, The Hawkline Monster: A Gothic Western (1974; rpt. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), p. 113. Subsequent references appear in parentheses following the quotations.

[18]Thomas D. Bedell, "Willard," Library Journal, 100 (1 Oct., 1975), 1844.

[19]Michael Rogers, "The Gentle Brautigan and the Nasty Seventies," The New York Times Book Review, 14 Sept. 1975, p. 4.

[20]Rogers, p. 4.

[21]Rogers, p. 4.

[22]Rogers, p. 4.

[23]Richard Brautigan, Willard and His Bowling Trophies: A Perverse Mystery (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), p. 32. Subsequent references appear in parentheses following the quotation.

[24]Michael Mason, "Rootin', tootin', and shootin'," Times Literary Supplement, 21 May 1976, p. 600.

[25]Timothy Daum, "Sombrero Fallout: A Japanese Novel," Library Journal, 101, No. 4 (Oct. 1976), 2084.

[26]"Books and Writers," Encounter, 48 (July, 1977), 52.

[27]"Sombrero Fallout," Atlantic, 238 (Nov., 1976), 118.

[28]Harold Beaver, "Dead Pan Alley," Times Literary Supplement, 1 April 1977, p. 392.

[29]Richard Brautigan, Sombrero Fallout: A Japanese Novel (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), p. 11. Subsequent references appear in parentheses following the quotation.

[30]Dennis Petticoffer, "Babylon," Library Journal, 102 (Aug., 1977), 1674.

[31]"Dreaming of Babylon," Choice, 14, No. 11 (Jan., 1978), 1494.

[32]Jo Flaherty, "The Sam Spade Caper," New York Times Book Review, 25 Sept. 1977, p. 20.

[33]"Briefly Noted," New Yorker, 53 (21 Nov., 1977), 230.

[34]"Brautigan, Richard," Booklist, 74, No. 6 (15 Nov., 1977), 525.

[35]Richard Brautigan, Dreaming of Babylon: A Private Eye Novel 1942 (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1977), 7-8. Subsequent references appear in parentheses following the quotation.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Brautigan, along with other writers and literary critics, realizes writers can no longer convey reality in conventional terms. Only through both realistic and surrealistic structure can the writer force from the reader "a reconsideration of the nature of things."[1] Ditsky's statement that contemporary fiction is concerned with the visual sense, concerned with the use of absurd realities as a way to express mental states or conditions of heightened perception, concerned about the disorientation of the normal setting and plot in order to heighten and merge mental state and exterior image, and concerned about the domination of the story line through dreamscape is also Brautigan's concern, a concern which in total creates "a personal expression, a self portrait by collage, that in conventional terms is not responsible according to the rules."[2] Also a concern of Brautigan's is Hansen's statement that reality is simply a construct that can be filled out by the imagination; "it is what the perceiver imagines it to be."[3] Karl and Hamalian state that in contemporary fiction the reader can no longer expect "a common mode of perception that any writer could employ with assurance [that] such a mode assumed that both writer and reader understood certain symbols and tones";[4] that there is no way of knowing the nature of nature, human or otherwise; that there is no neutral witness who can be presumed to have the truth; that only the subjective eye can confer value on what is perceived and how it is

perceived; that one must assume that fiction in order to convey all the layers of reality is a "purely personal flow of perception by the author [that can] reflect accurately the inward state of being or the very process of perception itself."[5] This too fits Brautigan's view; however, Brautigan's constructs of what he perceives reality to be are presented to the reader merely for observation. While these constructs of reality fit the fictional situation in which they exist, they do not necessarily fit the reader and must be taken only in that light.

Brautigan is not a moralist, not a traditional realist, but he does place value on the various levels of realities as he perceives them in their fictional context. For example, it is through Jesse, the first-person-participant-narrator in Confederate General that Brautigan's major premise concerning so-called reality is made. In the climactic drug scene which ends the novel, Jesse tells the reader that playing at madness is no alternative to a mad world, that coping with reality, counterfeit as it may be, is better than this. What Jesse really means when he says that he wants reality to be there is that he wants to return to a world in which values are not mere illusions and where a sense of order exists. But throughout the novel through surrealistic elements Brautigan makes it clear that these values of the past were as much of an illusion as the narrator's present dreams of them are in the present. Jesse wants reality to be there because he realizes that playing at madness in a mad world will not resolve the dilemma, but traditional reality will not solve it either.

In The Abortion the narrator-librarian expresses the same dilemma but from a different angle of perception. The librarian sees reality in the secret dreams in the books that are donated to the library and stored

in the caves, but this too is a counterfeit view. The library and the caves, surrealistic symbols of the protection of these dreams from reality, are equated in equal balance with the brutally realistic trip to the abortion mill in Tijuana. The description of the doctor's office, the process of abortion, and its effect upon the victims is as concrete as the library, the caves, and the books they contain are abstract. This latter half of the novel aborts not only Veda's pregnancy but also the illusions with which the two lovers have lived. Like Harry Haller in Steppenwolf, Veda aborts her illusion that her body is divorced from her total self, and the librarian aborts his illusion that the secret self, the self from which dreams are made, is divorced from the body. Together the two make one just as the two structural divisions in the novel do; reality and surreality must blend and transcend in order for the individual self to be able to perceive the illusions prevalent in either of the two extremes. But that is the extent of it. That the librarian becomes a hero at Berkeley and Veda becomes a topless dancer in a bar are excellent fictional resolutions to both character and scene, but the major message of the novel is voiced through the librarian's response at the plastic smiles of the stewardess and the trivial conversation of the passengers on the plane flight home from Mexico. One must find his own star.

In Trout Fishing in America, Brautigan expresses the same premise but in totally surrealistic terms. Through the subjective voice of the first-person-participant-narrator who controls both structure and scene, Brautigan restates the wasteland values expressed in Confederate General and offers a solution similar to the solution in The Abortion. Like Jesse in Confederate General, Trout Fishing's narrator is a seeker, but he has the imagination of The Abortion's librarian. From these points of view,

reality becomes absurd in the traditional sense because values are perceived by the reader through the narrator in such a fragmented structural pattern that no sense of order seems probable. Through sense impressions, dream scenes, and a variety of forms, the narrator reveals Brautigan's heightened perception of the nature of reality as it really is and offers a solution even more advanced than the solution of Confederate General and The Abortion. Trout Fishing in America does not hide from all the illusions and disillusions, the hopes and dreams of the traditional realist; it presents in surrealistic terms all the dichotomies expressed in realistic terms in Confederate General; and every time the multiple-point-of-view-narrator, who is also the divided persona of the Trout Fishing in America symbol, expresses this view through himself and the structure of the novel as a whole, he resolves the dilemma by imagining the world to be otherwise. When the narrator tells the reader early in the novel that one must be his own trout and later buys his own stream which he picks out in the Cleveland Wrecking Yard, he explains one of Brautigan's alternatives to despair. Even though it is only that, Brautigan still sees the imagination as a catalyst and redeemer. One must first understand the illusions and then imagine them as otherwise.

In In Watermelon Sugar, Brautigan mellows; here he presents in surrealistic form and structure the value of balance between two extremes. Even more abstract than the Trout Fishing narrator, the narrator of In Watermelon Sugar is whatever the reader thinks he is, or for that matter, even thinks, and he travels through multiple levels of reality which are expressed through multiple modes of perception and viewed through watermelon sugar glasses. Time, place, and character are all nebulous terms, and the construct of reality is a matter of choice, but the proper path

is made clear. One travels them all and then decides, and those who cannot choose must be left behind in the process. Life must be lived and enjoyed, and the joy of it lies in the essence of things. Aesthetic appreciation of the present moment is the key; it is one of the balances that resolves the despair. Even no choice is a positive alternative to the counterfeit values of the past and the present because this leaves the imagination free to create whatever reality one wants. To Brautigan that is where the true values lie; they reside within the self, that is, the ability of the self to receive and perceive and then make value judgments that keep the psyche in control.

All of Brautigan's other novels experiment with form but contain similar themes. In The Hawkline Monster, Brautigan plays with style; he parodies the surrealistic gothic technique with a spoof on the romantic western. Reality takes a holiday, but the traditional values remain. In fact, the values are the only element in the novel that are traditionally real. The characters are absurd; the plot is absurd; the conclusion is absurd. But all the elements tie together like a Jane Austen novel if one accepts the novel's conclusion as a statement of value. Everyone in the novel including the monster receives the appropriate reward. The monster is destroyed by the self-sacrificing act of its shadow, and both the Hawkline sisters and the two killers, Cameron and Greer, live unhappily ever after. Even Dr. Hawkline, who is brought back to life after being an umbrella stand, is forced to acquiesce to the greater good.

In Willard and His Bowling Trophies, Brautigan plays with plot, but he also plays with the construct of reality and questions the validity of traditional values when they function merely as masks for irrational behavior. Brautigan ties together two seemingly unrelated plots with

surrealistic elements, but, as it has already been pointed out, his irrational resolution to the novel as a whole is resolved structurally with the premise that an irrational presentation of characters, scene, and structure foreshadows and presumes an irrational conclusion. The thematic resolution is the premise that the penchant for idolatry is prevalent in everyone who chooses to center his construct of reality around an illusion that stands for an ideal. All three groups of characters in the novel choose to make an idol of an illusion which encompasses in some way the myth of ascendancy, the myth of sexuality, and the myth of the American dream. In this light the novel expresses the premise that these myths incorrectly understood will destroy the sense of balance within the self, a balance that the narrator in In Watermelon Sugar so casually tries to achieve. In general terms Confederate General expresses the same theme, but the angle of perception has changed in Willard; the characters idolize the myths that mask as traditional values and so react in an irrational way. They cannot separate themselves from the illusions that the myths mask. Obviously, Brautigan cannot accept the myths either or he would have ended the novel differently. Destroying the one couple, insipid as they may be, through the mythical construct of fortune's wheel is an obvious statement of despair. Willard and His Bowling Trophies portrays no hope for the human race if irrationality is the only level of reality that the self can comprehend.

In Sombrero Fallout Brautigan also experiments with plot, but his modes of perception and his conclusions regarding reality differ. Two and a half plot lines work through surrealistic elements to a conclusion that challenges even the most traditional reader to look for an answer to the question of what reality really could be, because the first-person-

participant-narrator-writer is not sure either. He creates three realities, all of which in their own way are simply alternatives from which the reader can choose. The narrator's dilemma, that is, his lost love for Yukiko, is as plausible as his dreams of what Yukiko is doing in his absence; while his dreams are not true in a so-called traditional realistic sense, they are as true as the sombrero story which takes place in the wastebasket all by itself in spite of the narrator's dismissal of it. In many respects the wastebasket story controls the novel because it is the conscious resolution to the subconscious desires of the writer-protagonist-narrator-creator. On the conscious level the narrator wants to believe that Yukiko is unfaithful so that his subconscious mind can retaliate in kind, but, since he can neither believe nor react to what he undoubtedly knows is untrue, he invents a solution to his frustration, a plot of violence which takes place in the wastebasket. That plot and its resolution is as irrational and violent as the two plots in Willard, and the message is very similar. Irrationalities are acceptable only in the mind; regardless of the reason, they are not acceptable in action.

Dreaming of Babylon states the same theme. If C. Card could only separate his dreams from his reality, he could succeed and fulfill his dreams. But he cannot separate invention from the so-called facts because he simply does not want to. It all depends on the point of view, and Card views both the imagination and the concrete world through watermelon sugar eyes. But he never achieves a balance, and he ends up, human as he is, still wondering why his dreams and reality are not the same. Card never understands any more than The Abortion's librarian seems to, never really perceives what possibilities are contained in all the layers of realities that surround us. While Card may be the parody of Walter Mitty in many

respects, he is also the parody of the existential, modern human being who seeks through any guise he can find some kind of answer to the universal question of who he is, where he is, and what he is supposed to do.

In all these themes, Brautigan simply conveys values in relation to what each narrator thinks reality should be; in each novel he changes those values to fit the construct of reality appropriate to the mode of perception or point of view which the novel and his narrator take. Brautigan gives no answers; he cannot give them; he only conveys the multiple layers of reality that exist within the self for the reader to view. To Brautigan reality has value only on a personal and subjective basis, and he makes this quite clear. In none of his novels to date does he moralize or tell the reader what is what. While he does give the reader many opportunities to see and perceive the difference between illusion and what one takes as truth, Brautigan never really forces a set of values on the reader.

Brautigan simply shows through all the multiple modes of perception what the many alternatives to disillusion with contemporary illusions are. This, however, is not completely new. The use of imagination as a resolution to the same dilemma appears as early as Moll Flanders; subjective states of mind through character, form, symbol, and dream appear in Clarissa; surreality through the mind of Tristram occurs in Tristram Shandy; states of mind revealed through nature originate in the Brontes, Elliot, and Hardy; and multiple perceptions through narrator, form, scene, and structure exist in all of Hesse's and Nabokov's works. Many other examples exemplify this type of fiction: The Trial by Kafka, Crime and Punishment by Dostoevsky, Slaughter House Five by Vonnegut. These are only a few examples that could be developed in this light, but the point has

been made clear. Many modes of perception are essential in order to convey an adequate view of the nature of reality and the values inherent in every layer; the magic box metaphor is an appropriate analogy for one direction that the novel has taken since its inception and for its present experimental form.

In both magic box and thematic terms, multiple modes of perception are an excellent technique through which the novelist can offer the reader all the alternatives of reality from which the total self can choose, and contemporary writers are cognizant of that fact. The Calvanist principle of virtue shown in external behavior but connected with the inherent original sin construct can no longer mold the mores which govern what the truth of reality is, and Brautigan makes this conclusion clear in both theme and structure. The question of what reality is must change to the question of what it is not. For this reason Brautigan's novels identify well with the magic box metaphor; they exemplify through prismatic perception that reality is a multifaceted construct which not only gives the writer unlimited possibility to portray through structure the many layers of reality that exist, but also gives the reader an opportunity to choose which level of reality one can attach value to. From Brautigan's fiction contemporary readers can choose their own alternative to all the various dichotomies that exist and find within themselves a construct of reality which will allow them, if they choose to do so, to transcend the illusions that poison one's life and find their own truths within themselves. Brautigan is important in contemporary fiction in this respect. Brautigan's metaphors will be remembered as long as Hemingway's dialogue will be, and so will his basic construct of reality. If life can be better only through the imagination, it is still a better alternative than the complete denial of

any hope at all. Even black humor is a better alternative than total despair, and Brautigan and Barth laugh at the voids in spite of the multidimensional way they present them to the reader. Brautigan is one of the contemporary spokesmen for what Karl and Hamalian call the "leap into faith."[6]

NOTES

[1]Ditsky, p. 299.

[2]Ditsky, p. 303.

[3]Hansen, p. 7.

[4]Karl and Hamalian, p. 1.

[5]Karl and Hamalian, p. 1.

[6]Karl and Hamalian, p. 2.

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