RICHARD BRAUTIGAN: A CRITICAL LOOK AT
TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA,
IN WATERMELON SUGAR
AND _THE ABORTION_

By

FARHAT MOHAMMED IFTEKHARUDDIN

Bachelor of Arts
Dacca University
Dacca, Bangladesh
1974

Master of Arts
Dacca University
Dacca, Bangladesh
1976

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
July, 1989

Thesis
1989D
I999r
cop. 2

Oklahoma State Univ. Library

RICHARD BRAUTIGAN: A CRITICAL LOOK AT

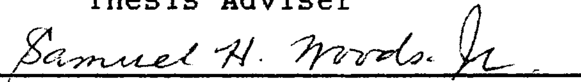
TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA,

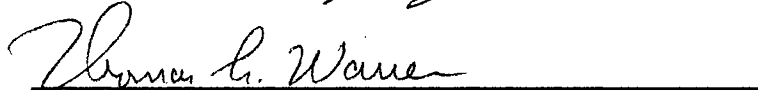
IN WATERMELON SUGAR,

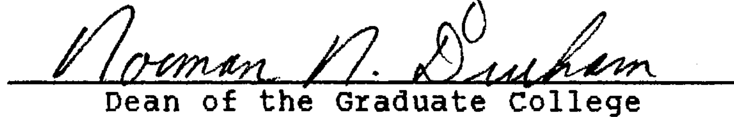
AND THE ABORTION

Thesis Approved:

Thesis Adviser







Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to Dr. Mary Rohrberger for her guidance, encouragement, and indispensable advice throughout my graduate program. My appreciation also goes to Dr. David S. Berkeley, Dr. Samuel H. Woods, Jr., Dr. Thomas Warren, and Dr. Santiago Garcia for serving on my graduate committee. Their suggestions and guidance were of utmost value to me.

My thanks are also extended to my special friends Dorothy Petty and Dr. Zia Hasan for their continued support, advice, and encouragement. Finally, my deepest love and indebtedness go to my family. Without their support and indomitable patience, this endeavor would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA	32
III.	IN WATERMELON SUGAR	101
IV.	THE ABORTION	151
V.	CONCLUSION	204

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Literary innovations in the novels of the 1960s took diverse forms. Writers continued to challenge on epistemological grounds linear story telling, with causal plots having beginnings, middles, and endings. In an interview with Joe David Bellamy, Ronald Suckenick noted the feelings of a troubled generation no longer willing to accept a "willing suspension of disbelief": "one of the reasons people have lost faith in the novel is that they don't believe it tells the truth anymore, which is another way of saying that they don't believe in the conventions of the novel. They pick up a novel and they know it's make believe."[1] The same year (1972) Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. wrote in _Breakfast of Champions_ "They [Americans] were doing their best to live like people invented in story books. This was the reason Americans shot each other so often: It was a convenient literary device for ending short stories and books."[2]

Changes in American political and social thought patterns needed a new means of expression, a different aesthetic. Malcolm Bradbury in the _Modern American_

Novel states that in his study of novels of the sixties "history is seen not as a haunting progress, but as a landscape of lunacy and pain; the doubting of a rational and intelligent history leads to a mocking of the world's substance, a sense of inner psychic disored, a cartooning of character, a fantasizing of so-called 'facts' or actualities, and a comic denominalization."[3] Bradbury further observed that one direction in which the novel moved was "towards fantastic factuality, attempting to penetrate the fictionality of the real."[4]

It would be foolhardy to state that the sixties is an era independent of itself, devoid of any influence of the past or that conditions of the world of human nature observed by writers of the sixties had no precedence. The conditions of the world and of human nature, of human history as seen by many novelists of the sixties are in various ways identical to what was observed and written about at least since the end of World War II. The difference is only in treatment and response to what are perhaps the same conditions. One of the major definitions of the aesthetic for the novel of the sixties can be seen in John Barth's essay "The Literature of Exhaustion" where he explains that novel writers faced "the used-upness of certain forms or exhaustion of certain possibilities."[5] His own work Lost In the Funhouse seems to provide an alternative to this problem

of "used-upness" or "exhaustion of . . . possibilities." He subtitles Lost in the Funhouse not as novel about something or other, but as Fiction for print, tape, live voice. In the "Author's Note," Barth continues to provide a definition for his fiction: "it's neither a collection, nor a selection, but a series . . . meant to be received 'all at once' and as here arranged."[6] Lost in the Funhouse is to make "something new and valid."[7] To Barth, the major issue is "how an artist may paradoxically turn the felt ultimacies of our own time into material and means for his own work."[8]

Kurt Vonnegut's fiction of the 1960s demonstrates another way to approach what Barth calls "felt ultimacies of our times." Vonnegut's intentions are to reorder our perceptions of life and of the world and re-evaluate our basis for meaning. One of the places where Kurt Vonnegut explains why fiction making is so important to us is Cat's Cradle where two parables appear. The first states,

> Tiger got to hunt,
> Bird got to fly;
> Man got to sit and wonder; "Why, Why, Why?"
> Tiger got to sleep,
> Bird got to land;
> Man got to tell himself he understand[9]

The second parable is central to Vonnegut's definition of man's role in the universe:

> In the beginning God created the earth, and he looked upon it in his cosmic loneliness.
> And God said, "Let us make living creatures out of mud, so the mud can see what we have done." And God created every living creature that now moveth, and one was man. Mud as man alone could speak. God leaned close as mud as man sat up, looked around, and spoke. Man blinked "what is the purpose of all this?" he asked politely.
> "Everything must have a purpose?" asked God.
> "Certainly," said man. "Then I leave it up to you to think of one for all of this," said God. And he went away.[10]

The yearning to understand and the seeking after knowledge is a preoccupation for many of Vonnegut's protagonists.

In Slaughterhouse Five through the Tralfamadorian viewpoint, Vonnegut reveals his concept of fictional form by means of the Tralfamadorian notion that all time is continuously and eternally present:

> Each clump of symbol is a brief, urgent message--describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time.[11]

The description of the form of the Tralfamadorian novel is of course Vonnegut's attempt to describe his own work and that of contemporary's like Reed, Barthelme, and

Brautigan. Jerome Klinkowitz makes the point in The American 1960s: Imaginative Acts in a Decade of Change that "the Tralfamadorian novel, with its fragmentary paragraphs defying all traditional conventions and existing outside the continuum of linear time, is nothing other than Vonnegut's description of the appropriate form for fiction in the American 1960s."[12]

The works of Ishmael Reed, an important black writer, provide us with further evidence of the kind of innovations being used in the sixties. Reed's forms are anything but conventional. In The Free-Lance Pallbearers (1976), the narrative is actually the lyrical exploration of what was, as Reed himself mentions, a political expose of Newark. Actually, it's not called Newark at all: "I live in HARRY SAM. HARRY SAM is something else. A big not-to-be-believed out-of-sight, sometimes referred to as O-BOP-SHE-BANG or KLANG-A-LANG-A-DING-DONG. Sam has not been seen since the day thirty years ago when he disappeared into the John with a weird ravagin illness."[13] Jerome Klinkowitz, commenting on Reed's writing has this to say: "For his description of the new American city, Reed has assembled a heap of adjectives and then deftly removed the nouns which they modify. The result is a hideous appropriate surreal real, an accurate portrait of what happens when our daily world loses its common sense."[14]

While Ishmael Reed "deftly removes nouns," Donald Barthelme plays a mathematical game of permutation and combination with language. The character who announces "give me the old linguistic trip, stutter and fall, and I will be content"[15] offers a reasonable approach to Barthelme's works. His most concerted exploitation of language and the forms created as a result are evident in the novel Snow White. Lanugage, in essence, words themselves, are the theme of Snow White "Oh I wish there were some words in the world that were not the word I always hear!"[16] Barthelme's primary concern is the way that language is used and he enforces the way that his works are to be read. Using the techniques of deletion and various forms of combination of language and words themselves, Barthelme successfully represents the fragmentary nature of our contemporary lives. His best known stories many of which appeared in The New Yorker, "Robert Kennedy Saved from Drowning" and "Views of My Father Weeping" are, as Klinkowitz observed, "Composed of Tralfamadorian-like 'clumps'--independent paragraphs whose principle of relation is more spatial than linear, because their effect depends upon the longer and wider view of the reader who considers them all at once, rather than in a sequential order building to a point."[17] For Barthelme, structure was the key to ultimate realities, and since fiction is composed of words, Barthelme's focus

was almost lexical. one of his publications in The New Yorker "Down the Line with the Annual" presented a collage of Consumer Report language that provided for the reader a universal view of existence for mankind:

> The World is sagging, snagging, sealing, spalling, pilling, pinging, pitting, warping, checking, fading, chipping, cracking, yellowing, leaking, stalling, shrinking, and in dynamic unbalance, and there is mildew to think about, and ruptures, and fractures of internal organs from lap belts, and substandard brake fluids, and plastic pipes alluring to rats, and transistor radios who estimated battery life of man, is nasty, brutish, and short.[18]

There are of course critics who find no literary value in Barthelme's use of language and form. Pearl Kazin Bell in her 1973 "Dissent" essay has this to say of the new fiction especially that of Donald Barthelme:

> He is a perversely dedicated student of contemporary junk heap, and his tin-can-and-broken-bottle collages attempt a frontal assault on language that seems extraordinarily altered to the kind of radical sensibility that strains against the "repression" of words as it gropes for "consciousness," nonverbal sensitivities, and the psychedelic innocence of the full-blown mind. Barthelme's writing consistently reduces language--and the things language names and identifies--to a kitchen midden of dehumanized potswords that no literary archaeologist in his right mind would ever try to piece together.[19]

And there is more, such as this from Alfred Kazin:

> And Barthelme? Literature itself? This too has been divided, stripped down to the absurd,

> reduced to its consumers. What is exotic in so much banality is the fact that we consumers of "culture" naturally stick our attentive inquisitive conciousness into everything. Nothing that will be put into a paperback is alien to us. The comic in Barthelme is this extreme unrelenting reference system--match us up with any subject--without any free choice. We are computers.
>
> Kenneth Burke says somewhere that "we have been sentenced to the sentence," and Barthelme sentences us right back again to sentences constructed vidictively of American newspeak. Is Barthelme a "novelist"? He is one of the few authentic examples of the "anti-novelist."[20]

Perhaps we find a response to all of this in the words of Charles Newman, editor of Tri-Quarterly; "If we have changed so much, then never has a major mutation been absorbed so quickly, or described so sloppily."[21]

If we pay credence to Klinkowitz's statement that "Fiction breeds its own continuity"[22] then the "junk heap" of Barthelme becomes only too integral an element in that continuity, for this author picks with the delicacy of a Chinese man using chopsticks the structures and the phrases, and the words from contemporary diction and arranges them in the fragments that form the collage that creates his new fiction. "The principle of collage," Barthelme explains to Richard Schickel, "is the central principle of all art in the twentieth century in all media."[23] And in a 1974 interview, he spoke with specific reference to fiction: "the point of collage is that unlike things are stuck together to make, in the

best case, a new reality. This new reality, in the best case, may be or imply a comment on the other reality from which it came, and may also be much else. It's an _itself_."[24] It is this "stuck together" form that gives his works the fragmentary look. It is interesting to note that the words of one of his own characters are so closely associated to being the approach of Barthelme himself:

> Here is the word and here are the knowledge knowers knowing. What can I tell you? What has been pieced together from the reports of travelers. Fragments are the only forms I trust. Look at my walls, it's all there.[25]

Through such an approach, Barthelme was able to successfully capture the fragments of contemporary American life. Barthelme's "fragments" and Vonnegut's "Tralfamadorian clumps" appeared to be the characteristics of American new fiction. They achieved continuity within their works primarily through the exploitation of language and through spatial rather than linear connections between each segment of their works. This form of fictional innovation is characteristic of not only the writing of Barthelme and Vonnegut alone, but also of another young American author, Richard Brautigan.

Richard Brautigan was a child of the Depression, World War II and its aftermath. Born on 30 January 1933,

Richard Brautigan grew up under some dire conditions. Abandoned at the age of nine in a hotel room in Great Falls, Montana, Richard Brautigan found himself not only alone but responsible for a four year old, his sister Barbara. Although the mother later picked them up and took them home, it was a considerable length of time during which Richard and his sister had to fend for themselves. From Tacoma, Washington, the family later moved to Eugene, Oregon. Richard virtually raised his sister while their mother worked. His sister in recollection said "I can never remember our mother giving Richard a hug or telling us she loved us. We were just there. We never had a birthday party, not even a cake--it was just a day. Same with Christmas." Richard himself claimed that he had once tried to locate his father, Bernard Brautigan, and having met him on a street, his father supposedly gave him five dollars saying "that's all you'll ever get from me." After Richard's death however, the elderly Mr. Brautigan denied the incident stating that he wasn't aware that he had a son. He cited an incident where when he asked Richard's mother who Richard was, she told him that Richard was a child she had found in the gutter. Richard Brautigan graduated from school, holding multiple odd jobs. He had turned to writing at an early age. At the age of 22, Christmas Eve of 1955, after being released from Oregon

State Hospital (diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic) where he was sent after a week in jail for throwing a rock through a police station window in order to get arrested, Richard Brautigan called his sister to tell her he was leaving Tacoma forever.[26]

> It was 1956, and Brautigan found himself in California. "It was a historic moment in America, but the country was not yet aware of it. Every Friday evening, at the poet Kenneth Rexworth's you could find Robert Creeley, Michael McClure, Phillip Whelan, Gary Snyder, Robert Duncan--a fleet of ambitions awaiting the tide of fame. Lenny Bruce was appearing at the hungry i. Jack Kerouac had hopped a Southern Pacific freight to San Francisco, with the unpublished manuscript for On the Road in his rucksack. Allen Ginsberg was a baggage handler at the Greyhound bus station, but he had already read Howl in public . . . Literature had found an angry, new American voice. They called themselves the Beat Generation."[40]

Richard Brautigan stayed in the shadows, too shy perhaps to read his own material and not quite fitting into the Beat Generation, for he had a sense of humor peculiar to himself and a benign outlook toward humanity that was quite out of step with the "indignant" beat society. At that time Richard Brautigan was holding a job delivering telegrams for Western Union.

It was not until 1961, and on the road loaded down with camping gear and books--Rimbaud, Thoreau, Whitman and others--that he began writing Trout Fishing in America, the book that would start him on his way to

becoming a significant author of the 1960s. His first published novel however was A Confederate General from Big Sur (1964) followed by Trout Fishing in America (1967), In Watermelon Sugar (1968), The Abortion (1971). Brautigan went on to write nineteen books, among them nine novels and a collection of short stories.

In 1964, a small magazine Kulcher in its Spring issues gave Richard Brautigan his first national exposure by publishing one of his short stories "The Post Offices of Eastern Oregon." This short story revealed several techniques of Richard Brautigan that were to become central to the writer's art. One of the techniques easily identifiable in "Post Offices" and later to become a hallmark of his writing was the art of synthesizing basic childlike fancies with elegant poetic images that would become the energizers of his fiction. The story is about a little boy out for a day's hunting with his uncle. As they pass an old farmhouse the reader encounters the first of multiple images: "Nobody lives there. It was abandoned like a musical instrument"; and immediately following that another: "There was a good pile of wood beside the house. Do ghosts burn wood? I guess it's up to them, but the wood was the color of years."[28] And when the boy and the uncle stop to look at a couple of dead bear on the front porch of an old house, the narrator informs us that "the house had wooden

frosting all around the edges. It was a birthday cake from a previous century. Like candles we were going to stay there for the night."[29] It is not simply the image making power of Brautigan that provides the supercharged to the story; it is the uniqueness of the images also. Jerome Klinkowitz defines a typical Brautigan image as "a thought cast in such unfamiliar shape that no one in the straight culture could be expected to think of it first."[30] Not only are the images brilliant poetic products, but they are also vehicles of extension. Brautigan achieves his narrative form through the use of such extended images. One is not surprising that he should utilize such a method since the story itself is generated (or perhaps regenerated), as the narrator informs us, from an image, "a photograph in the newspaper of Marilyn Monroe, dead from a sleeping pill suicide."[31] There is a two-fold extension here: a process of actual images creating a series of mental associations--news of the death of the recollection of dead bear to the recollection of a nude image of Marilyn Monroe on an Oregon post office wall to hunting in the Oregon countryside. As Brautigan continued to write, he would isolate his images into paragraphs and even into chapters, giving his work on first glance a fragmentary appearance but providing for a reader not only the whole picture but an immediate field of play to the reader.

The reader does not find it difficult to note the seeming evidences of Vonnegut, Barth and Barthelme in the works of Richard Brautigan and needless to say, the criticism levied against the authors of the Sixties, covered earlier in this chapter, did not discount Brautigan either. I believe, however, that a few critics went beyond the package criticism of the authors of the sixties and aimed their wrath not only toward specific works but also to Richard Brautigan himself. Hiding behind anonymity one critic in reviewing Brautigan's The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966 had this to say:

> Mr. Brautigan is a cult-figure of the American Young . . . along with Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Mr. Vonnegut earned this following by being artfully artless. Mr. Brautigan on the other hand, got it by being artlessly artless . . . as usual with Mr. Brautigan, motives are explored hardly at all and mood only by a doped, moonish obliquity in the recording of external events and settings. The responsibility is therefore firmly placed on the quality of the prose, and it is here that Mr. Brautigan flops on his face. The Abortion reads as if it were written--or murmured into a tape recorder--over a long weekend.
>
> For the most part the style is irreducibly banal, a simpering goo goo baby-talk drizzle of the kind thoughts that come into the mind crying out to be imperiously dismissed . . . Mr. Brautigan's prose is not about people or objects or behavior but about Mr. Brautigan--his charm, tenderness, innocence, and self-infatuation . . . There is possibly a minor talent flitting around somewhere in Mr. Brautigan's books. He will continue to write and be read; but it is too late for him ever to begin to try.[32]

Commenting on the same novel, Myron Greenman states: "the truth is that Brautigan's The Abortion succeeds only to the extent that it permits us to sympathize with its librarian hero and his girl friend as real . . . . The book's lack of reality is a pretended lack, a feigning at romance. We are not able to enjoy the book very much, because its slight narrative substance is not compensated by any noteworthy aesthetic, stylistic, psychological, or commentarial innovations or values; but to the slight degree that we do find pleasure in it, and despite all of Brautigan's cuteness, we are indebted to his believable presentation of setting, story, and character."[33] Auberon Waugh believes that The Abortion "is surely the best thing that Brautigan has ever written, deserving to be considered a classic of the California drop-out school. Brautigan has a real touch of poetry in his poor, freaked-out soul . . . Brautigan never quite knows when he is being a bore."[34] The basic values of Brautigan's books that these critics have failed to notice in their preoccupation with criticism is the tragic message imbedded in them.

The Abortion is not simply a story of a lonely librarian sitting in a lonely library awaiting the arrival of unknown authors with their unknown books to be shelved by the authors themselves among an endless series of books that nobody will ever read. Brautigan's central

metaphor is the library. It is Brautigan's gentle war waged by his imagination on the emptiness of contemporary life. Brautigan's library serves as the clinic in which authors come to abort the product of their minds. This abortion Brautigan ties in with actual child abortion as the narrator and his girl-friend travel to Tijuana to abort their unborn child. The association is stark and painful--the authors who leave their books on self-chosen shelves come back to receive, as though in a communion, cookies for their labor. At the end of the book, the librarian has a new life but loses his library. The loss of the library, the abortion of the child, and the abortion of the books all merge and leave the reader with the concept of emptiness that Vida felt after her abortion "unconscious with her stomach vacant like a chalk board."[35]

If Brautigan was making a serious commentary on contemporary social emptiness, which I believe he was, then he has successfully and artfully done so. Brautigan does not jar us into some awakening and recognition of ourselves and life around us with a huge pill that asserts its presence in its slow descent through the esophagus, but he draws our attention and awakens our sensibilities to the painful world around us by means of brilliant images, subtle wit, and magically apt metaphors. His style provides the energy for most of his

works. If Brautigan's The Abortion is a lesser novel, it is only in terms of two of his other novels Trout Fishing in America and In Watermelon Sugar. Writing smack in the middle of the "Beat Generation," Brautigan has often been stereotyped as the novelist of the hippies. Although a member of that generation in physical appearance and mental attitude and although surrounded by members of the drug culture of the Sixties, Brautigan himself was free of drugs, and the mental attitudes observed in his works is far from being drug induced; on the contrary, his thinking is an expression of his spontaneity, his felt connection with nature, a product of a wounded sensibility at the realization that there was no longer a Walden pond as Thoreau had seen it, that our streams no longer hold live trout, but trout transformed into the macabre shape of a beer bottle: "a glass backed trout is sleeping,"[36] he once observed (on one of his trips to Walden Pond), pointing at a beer bottle half buried in the muddy bottom of the pond. It is an error to type Brautigan's works as "hippie" oriented or even "radical"; he has the talent and the linguistic power to expose the bogus nature of what commonly passes for reality in contemporary American culture so much so that readers are often left to distrust their deepest understanding of the "real" and the "absurd." Perhaps it is an overzealous attempt at aiming to be the so called "academician" that

leads critics like John Ditsky to comment that Brautigan's works resemble that "of that other Californian, Steinbeck," lacks "coherent philosophy and sense of apparent purpose."[37] And that "he [Brautigan] is accessible on a level just a cut above sentimentality and mass-art: obviously beyond Rod McKuen, but perhaps on a par with Kurt Vonnegut."[38] Perhaps the worst form of criticism evolves when critics begin to stereotype any writing of any author as Martin Levin does in his analysis of Richard Brautigan and his novel _A Confederate General from Big Sur_. Levin labels Brautigan as a disciple of Jack Kerouac and his book as a "beat" product:

> Not having heard from Jack for some time, his admirers may like to keep in touch through a volume by what seems to be a disciple: Richard Brautigan, a young man from the Pacific Northwest, has put into _A Confederate General from Big Sur_ some essential beatificnick ingredients. A couple of rolling stones whose main occupation is hitch hiking. Local color like drinking muscatel in S.F. doorways. Turning on with whatever is at hand. And for a second-act backdrop, the magnificent scenery amid which lives Henry Miller, the daddy primitivist of them all.[39]

Richard Brautigan uses, as writers through generations have frequently used, elements of his own surroundings, be it society, politics, culture, or even nature as tools for his creation. If Brautigan's _A Confederate General From Big Sur_ draws upon the hippie atmosphere, or the

winos of San Francisco as his source for creativity, he simply does what writers have always done. The artistic purpose of the book is not to create a lexical account of hippies or winos, but it is a brilliantly funny, often times zany, but always a serious, if submerged, view of dehumanized America.

In A Confederate General From Big Sur, Brautigan reminds us, in his way, of the drop-outs of our society, a society that for the most part has no sustaining values. It is therefore not surprising at all that the first word with which the novel starts is "attrition." And as one reads on, the associative importance of that word begins to take form; the reader experiences the reminiscences of the attritions of the civil war and associates it with the less obvious attritions of life in California, and contemporary life in general. As Bradbury notes, the novel also "plays solid images from the American past, above all those arising from the civil war, against the latter day skirmishing of a contemporary 'confederate general,' Lee Mellon, as he battles with hippie irony against ideology and system."[40] The point is that Brautigan is not suggesting a hippie alternative as many of his critics want to believe. When critics like William Hogan state that "Richard Brautigan's comedy of disaffiliation, A Confederate General From Big Sur, is a quaint, if unnecessary, contribution to the California

beat literature" and that "Kerouac and the ghost of Sherwood Anderson may have been looking over Brautigan's shoulder as he shaped his prose,"[41] they have missed the picture entirely. Hogan, in particular, has failed to consider the sense of loss and desolation that pervades this novel.

Beyond all the humor that Brautigan employs as a vehicle to carry the reader along, this sense of loss is ever present. The narrator at more than one place in the novel describes loss and isolation. The narrator feels "a sudden wave of vacancy go over" him, and he asserts that "there was nothing else to do, for after all this was the destiny of our lives. A long time ago this was our future, looking for a lost pomegranate at Big Sur."[42] Brautigan was definitely not the first author to dwell on the sense of loss or isolation created by war or modern technology, but he certainly is among the best in presenting those ideas and impressing on readers an awareness of that fact through his unique ability to create images and through his oftentimes biting humor and frankly cynical, but always serious observation of life around him and us. One does not have to look too far for Brautigan's humor:

> I'd like a slice of motorcycle on dark rye, please. Anything to drink sir: Gasoline? No. No, I don't think so.[43]

Or too long to experience his ability to create images:

> I found our way along the road like a spoon probing carefully through a blindman's soup, looking for alphabets.[44]

Or too deep to realize that he is, among a lot of things also a very serious writer. Looking into a deserted garden, the narrator of Confederate General tells us that

> It is perfectly still and empty except for some dirt and shells and deer antlers which had perhaps been composed in the course of some indecipherable children's game. Or--perhaps it wasn't a game at all, only the grave of a game.[45]

There has been less critical attack on Brautigan's In Watermelon Sugar and Trout Fishing in America, perhaps because they are undeniably Brautigan's best, with Trout Fishing in America enjoying a slight edge over In Watermelon Sugar. Or it may be that the elements of the American dream upon which the novels are built are so close to Americans' perception of what was and what isn't there anymore and their ultimate realization that the American dream is far from attainment that critics avoid hostile approaches to the works. However, some have tried. Michael Feld finds "Richard's pen dipped in shmalz herring"[46] when he was writing Trout Fishing in America. About In Watermelon Sugar Feld states, "It's difficult to detect whether one is meant to be

overwhelmed by the sentiment and phrasing of these hand picked words, or by a sense of relief at their paucity."[47] Feld's dislike of Brautigan and Brautigan's works is evident in the crudity of his own language. He begins his attack by stating that Brautigan

> is currently heavily backed by pushers of brown sugar and water cress and nut omelets--people too determined to achieve a more beautiful and profound vision of things that they reconcile the implacable eating of 'natural' food with the swallowing, inhaling, and injecting of various chemical concoctions. Indeed, he's name dropped in most places where there's lots of sensitivity and modernity and drugs and no common sense going on, where cool languid personalities slump about passing joints like sweaty kisses, speaking of power to the people and freedom and the plight of the gypsies. Such figures and fully paid-up members of the ever expanding market for Richard and his California prose pertry (sic), an eminently greasy brand of verbal psychedelicatessen.[48]

Perhaps a more intelligent critical approach comes from Jonathan Yardley, who although stereotyping, Brautigan still seems to find some value in his works; Mr. Yardley avoids the vulgarity of Feld's criticism and puts Brautigan in the historical framework of Woodstock:

> He is the literary embodiment of Woodstock, his little novels and poems being right in the let's-get-back-to-nature-and-get-it-all-together groove. His exceedingly casual, offhand style is wholly vogue, and I readily concede that there is a certain charm about it and him. His imagination is . . . 'stoned,' and it is capable of coming up with funny pleasant surprises. <u>Trout Fishing in America</u> may not really be a novel, much less a

> good one, but it has an antic quality I like; the famous chapter entitled "The Cleveland Wrecking Yard," in which Brautigan visits a junkyard which is selling a trout stream cut into sections and priced by the foot, is not bad at all.[49]

It has often been noted that Brautigan is akin to Ernest Hemingway in his use of short staccato sentences, his treatment of human conditions in relation to nature, and in his very sensitivity to nature itself. Larry Duberstein in his review of _Revenge of the Lawn_ compares Brautigan with Hemingway:

> Tracking the ghost of his childhood through the Pacific mist, Brautigan tends to sound like the Hemingway of the Nick Adams stories. Yet as he fishes the Long Tom River for trout and plods the wet woods for deer, it is the awareness of nature and not the challenge of the hunt that inspires him. He never seems actually to shoot at anything. And where Nick Adams natural paradise is spoiled by intimations of mortality in "Big Two-Hearted River," Brautigan's is spoiled by the sudden appearance of a house "right there in the middle of my private nowhere," breaking a spell he has woven over himself. Thus he returns to the theme of _Trout Fishing in America_, where distant waterfalls turn out to be white staircases and where ten-room trailers from New York fill the Challis National Park.[50]

Whether Richard Brautigan's works reflect certain traits of literary giants before his time, or are in harmony with his immediate predecessors and colleagues of the same era, whether he is a part of the "new fiction" or the "disruptivist fiction," are all I believe to a certain extent viewpoints relative to perspectives. One

thing that is for certain is that he is a notable author whose novels, especially In Watermelon Sugar, and Trout Fishing in America, have already made an impression and left a mark on the genre itself.

How far any author stretches from the 'conventional' depends on where one sets the 'conventional'.Brautigan is no iconoclast--his deviation may be from the conventions of the Thirties, but he is definitely in line with the conventions of the Sixties and the Seventies. Brautigan's major deviation, like those of his contemporaries, is in the area of form--especially a deviation from the plot lines. Using the synthesizing power of the imagination Brautigan's intent is to create a "modern text, dissolving old natural narrative."[51] Malcolm Bradbury rightly stresses the factor that

> he [Brautigan] writes about the ironizing of the world, the waning of pastoral myths of innocence and of escape from social constriction into nature; he shows the power of old images and then of the endeavors of the imagination to dissolve them, both through the struggle of his fictional outsiders, and of the poetic imagination itself. If the world wanes, the writer's exuberant comic imagination thrives; form in its collapse promises recovery, the fixities of time, space, and ideology dissolve."[52]

What evolves is a revitalized form of the genre itself where the reader comes to grips with the idea that Brautigan's novels do not merely mirror life, that they

are not pseudo-realistic documents, and that the value of his works cannot be judged simply on the basis of their social, moral, political, or commercial value, but that they should be judged, if they must be, for what they are and what they do as an art form.Richard Brautigan has too often and too readily been dismissed as a writer of 'hippie' fiction. He has proven himself vastly more than that. In the following chapters, I will attempt to show this point by pointing to the artistic excellences of three of his works: Trout Fishing in America, In Watermelon Sugar, and The Abortion: An Historical Romance, 1966.

From my analysis of three of his novels Trout Fishing in America, In Watermelon Sugar, and The Abortion: An Historical Romance, 1966, it will be clear that Richard Brautigan is a thoroughly accomplished author and that his works are marked by a personal vision that is truly representative of many aspects of the American imagination. Brautigan's genius lies in his ability to portray age old themes of human alienation, broken dreams, and loneliness in completely new images. Writing counter to the conventional form, Brautigan creates a new dimension for the novel that belies rational order. The reader finds coherence in his novels not so much through discourse as in the mind by means of the juxtaposition of images often startling in their

originality. Clusters of images oscillates in a reader's mind expanding ordinary perceptions. This is Brautigan's new aesthetic - a kind of spontaneous fiction that expands the vision and the experience through metaphores that are so uniquely his own that critics have termed his language "magical". A long time ago Emerson asked a very relevant question, "why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition?"[53] Brautigan's works show that we can.

ENDNOTES

[1]Joe David Bellamy, "Imagination as Perception: An Interview with Ronald Sukenick," Chicago Review, 23 (Winter, 1972), 60.

[2]Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Breakfast of Champions (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1973), pp. 209-210.

[3]Malcolm Bradbury, The Modern American Novel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 158.

[4]Bradbury, p. 158.

[5]John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion," Atlantic Monthly, 220 (August, 1967), 29.

[6]John Barth, "Author's Note" to Lost in the Funhouse (New York: Doubleday).

[7]Barth, Lost in the Funhouse, p. 109.

[8]"The Literature of Exhaustion," 32.

[9]Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Cat's Cradle (New York: Dell, 1963), p. 124.

[10]Cat's Cradle, p. 177.

[11]Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Slaughterhouse-Fire (New York: Delacorte, 1969), p. 82.

[12]Jerome Klinkowitz, *The American 1960s: Imaginative Acts in a Decade of Change* (Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 57-58.

[13]Ishmael Reed, *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), p. 1.

[14]*Literary* Disruptions, pp. 185-186.

[15]Donald Barthelme, *Snow White* (New York: Atheneum, 1978), p. 139.

[16]*Snow White*, p. 6.

[17]*The American 1960s*, p. 59.

[18]Donald Barthelme, "Down the Line with the Annual," *The New Yorker*, 21 Mar. 1964, p. 34.

[19]Pearl Kazin Bell, "American Fiction: Forgetting the Ordinary Truths," *Dissent*, Winter, 1973, 26.

[20]Alfred Kazin, *Bright Book of Life: American Novelist and Storytellers from Hemingway to Mailer* (Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1973), pp. 272-273. [16]Charles Newman, "The Uses and Abuses of Death: A Little Preamble through the Remnants of Literary Culture," *Tri-Quarterly*, 26 (Winter, 1973), p. 40.

[21]Charles Newman, "The Use and Abuses of Death: A Little Preamble through the Remnants of Literary Culture," *Tri-Quarterly*, 26 (Winter, 1973), p. 40.

[22]Jerome Klinkowitz, *Literary Disruptions: The Making of a Post-Contemporary American Fiction* (Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1975), p. 1.

[23]Richard Schickel, "Freaked Out on Barthelme," New York Times Magazine, August 16, 1970, p. 15.

[24]Jerome Klinkowitz, "Donald Barthelme," in Joe David Bellamy, The New Fiction: Interviews with Innovative American Writers (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1974), pp. 51-52.

[25]Donald Barthelme, "See the Moon" in Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts (New York: Farrar, Straws, and Giroux, 1968), p. 169.

[26]Lawrence Wright, Rolling Stone, April 11, 1985, pp. 30-61.

[27]Wright, pp. 33-34.

[28]Richard Brautigan, "The Post Offices Eastern Oregon," in Revenge of the Lawn (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 91.

[29]"The Post Office of Eastern Oregon," p. 93.

[30]The American 1960s, p. 42.

[31]"The Post Office of Eastern Oregon," p. 96.

[32]"Precious Little: a review of Richard Brautigan's The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966, in The Times Literary Supplement, 2 Feb. 1973, p. 1113.

[33]Myron Greenman, "Some Experimental Modes: Understanding New Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies, 20 (Autumn 1974), 309-310.

[34]Auberon Waugh, "Unwanted books--in fiction and fact," Spectator, 7544 (27 Jan. 1973), 108-109.

[35]Richard Brautigan, _The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966_ (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p. 186.

[36]John Stickney, "Gentle Poet of the Young," _Life_, 69 (14 August 1970), 52.

[37]John Ditsky, "The Man on the Quaker Oats Box: Characteristics of Recent Experimental Fiction, "_The Georgia Review_, 26 (Fall 1972) 304.

[38]Ditsky, p. 304.

[39]Martin Levin, "A Reader's Report," _The New York Times Book Review_, 24 Jan. 1965, p. 42.

[40]Malcolm Bradbury, p. 169-70.

[41]William Hogan, "Rebels in the War with Life," a review of _A Confederate General from Big Sur_ in _Saturday Review_, 48 (13 Feb. 1965), 45-50.

[42]_A Confederate General from Big Sur_, p. 158.

[43]_Confederate General_, p. 109.

[44]_Confederate General_, p. 118.

[45]_Confederate_ General, p. 87.

[46]Michael Feld, "A Double with Christina," _London Magazine_, NS11 (Aug/Sept 1971), 151.

[47]Michael Feld, p. 151.

[48]Michael Feld, p. 150.

[49]Jonathan Yardley, "Still Loving," _New Republic_, 164 (20 March 1971), 24-25.

[50]Larry Duberstein, "A Review of Revenge of the Lawn Stories 1962-1970," Saturday Review, 54 (4 Dec. 1971), 50.

[51]The American 1960s, p. 44.

[52]Malcolm Bradbury, p. 170.

[53]Ralph W. Emerson, "Nature," Nature: Addresses and Lectures, p. 3.

CHAPTER II

TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA

For readers and reviewers who have difficulty in appreciating, understanding, or even attempting to tolerate any of Richard Brautigan's works, I suggest that if they try one more time, and this time begin with *Trout Fishing in America* and read it in one sitting, then close the book and run the experiences encountered in the book in any sequence through the mind then, they will perceive images encompassing Brautigan's vision of America. *Trout Fishing in America*, published in 1967, although written a few years before that, is a magnificent work of montage, one experience placed on top of another until the accumulation produces a picture that is bigger than the sum of the individual parts rendered.

Trout Fishing in America had been conceived "on the road," so to speak. Ginny Alder, Brautigan's first companion remembers 1961 when with income tax refunds they bought a ten-year-old Plymouth station wagon and, packing it with baby diapers, books by Rimbaud, Thoreau, Whitman, and Coleman camping paraphernalia, they set out for the Snake River country of Idaho. On this road with

frequent stops by streams and creeks Richard Brautigan began writing Trout Fishing in America.[1] Upon its completion, a small non-profit press, Four Seasons Foundation, published and sold 29,000 copies before Delacorte Press bought the rights and ultimately sold two million copies,[2] helped along, no doubt, by sporting goods stores that ordered, stock piled, and sold copies of the book until they realized that it was not in the same line as outdoor sporting magazines.

The confusion seems appropriate. Trout Fishing in America provides many ambiguities, beginning from the title to its contents. Totally in keeping with the conventions of fiction in the 1960s, the novel defied obvious form and appears to be the disjointed ramblings of an author in love with the pastoral. However unoriginal this method of looking at society through nature may be, the style is unique, peculiarly Brautigan's. If one finds echoes of Walden in Brautigan, it is not surprising either, for Thoreau is among the most notable writers preoccupied with nature. It may not be irrelevant to remind the reader that early critics of Thoreau had made the same criticism of his Walden Pond as being disjointed ramblings with no apparent form that critics today make of Richard Brautigan's Trout Fishing in America. I believe the two authors worked on the same level of perception. As Charles Anderson says about

Thoreau, they both sought "an asymmetrical pattern that would satisfy the aesthetic sense of form and still remain true to the nature of experience, art without the appearance of artifice."[3]

Since its publication, _Trout Fishing in America_ has been reviewed in multiple articles appearing in a variety of newspapers, magazines, and critical journals ranging from _The London Times_, _Time_ magazine to _Modern Fiction Studies_. The novel has received, I believe, an equal share of positive and negative criticisms, and it appears that critics of both viewpoints have reduced their criticisms to virtually a one phrase or one line observation of the novel. Michael Feld in his article "A Double With Christina" views _Trout Fishing in America_ as "Richard's pen dipped in schmaltz herring," and Cheryl Walker in her article "Relapses and Reprisals" reduces the novel to a "collage of scraps about life."[5] Richard Walters after stating that Brautigan "blasphemes the continuing tradition of American literature"[6] reduces the novel to a slogan: "Come to _Trout Fishing in America_, come to Happytown U.S.A., overlooking the banks of the Chase Manhattan."[7]

Even those critics who have viewed this novel with a more sympathetic eye have used cosmetic adjectives in defining its values. Thomas McGuane talks about the "sunniness"[8] of _Trout Fishing in America_; Tonny Tanner

finds the novel to be "funny" and "very poignant"[9]; Kenneth Seib in the title of his article calls the novel "Brautigan's Funky Fishing Yarn."[10] John Clayton in his article "Richard Brautigan: The Politics of Woodstock" states that Brautigan is addressing "the WE of a subculture."[11] Having been "seduced" by Brautigan's "stoned imagination,"[12] Clayton's ultimate observation is that "the book runs profoundly counter to the bourgeois instincts of the novel"[13] and therefore suggests that Trout Fishing in America be called an "un-novel."[14]

Among this medley of critics, there are a few who have attempted a serious approach to the novel. Brad Hayden traces reminiscences of Thoreau's Walden Pond in Trout Fishing in America[15]; Thomas Hearron concentrates on the "imaginative escape"[16] operative in the novel; and Neil Schmitz's assertion is that "it is not Whitman whom Brautigan resembles in his fiction, but Hawthorne, the cross-purposed and ambivalent Hawthorne of the 'The Maypole of Merrymount' and The Blithedale Romance."[17]

None of the critics mentioned so far accomplished an in depth analysis of Trout Fishing in America. Their observations, however serious and pointed they may be, have only attempted to define either a chapter of the novel or provide a general overview of the work from a given angle. There are critics, however, who have attempted a fuller study of Richard Brautigan's works

such as E. H. Foster's Richard Brautigan, Terence Malley's Richard Brautigan, and Marc Chenetier's Richard Brautigan.

Foster analyzes Trout Fishing in America from a Zen point of view. He states that "Trout Fishing in America and its narrator do not really document America. What they document is a highly selective vision of America and therein lies, as we will find, a unique appropriation of Zen Theory."[18] Marc Chenetier states that "The pastoral theme and myths" evident in Trout Fishing in America "do not provide us with the stuff of a 'unified' and 'homogeneous' reading."[19] He suggests that "another guide is needed if we are to give the 'bookness' back to the book, and this guide is the writing itself".[20] Through a complicated analysis of what he calls "plural reading" and "cooperation of 'static' images and 'autonomous images,'" Chenetier attempts to provide the formula for a unified reading of Trout Fishing in America.[21] Terence Malley on the other hand provides a very simplistic analysis of Brautigan's works, perhaps because his critical work Richard Brautigan is one of a series of works under a collective title "Writers of the Seventies." The intent of this series is to provide a "critical appreciation" of whatever author is being discussed in order to "arrive at qualitative judgments" and to "define the value" of the author "for readers of

all ages."[22] That may be the reason behind Malley's simplistic classroom lecture type approach to Brautigan's works.

The various bents that critics adopt in order to analyze *Trout Fishing in America* might very well derive from the complexity of the novel itself. Beginning with a brief summary of the novel, this chapter will discuss the mode in which this novel can be read as a unified and coherent artistic work. In that endeavor it will be necessary to explore the basic structure of the novel, the theme of real America vs. ideal America, the growth of the narrator from innocence to experience, and the major symbols used in the novel.

Trout Fishing in America consists of forty-seven chapters that are not connected through narrative continuity. Each chapter appears to be a separate unit from both the preceding and following chapters. A reader, upon first reading the novel, might conclude that Brautigan has forced together a series of chapters with no relevance to each other, covering in each of these chapters a variety of subjects ranging from the statue of Benjamin Franklin through references to Leonardo da Vinci and mayonnaise. The problem is further accentuated when the reader realizes that a large number of the chapters are not about trout fishing in the sense of fishing for trout as the title of the novel would suggest. All of

these issues mentioned so far give the novel a disparate and fragmentary appearance.

The novel as I had mentioned earlier, however, should be read as a montage, each chapter being a vignette within this montage, each being connected thematically. At the risk of oversimplifying the structural complexity of Trout Fishing in America, one could state that the novel deals with a young couple along with their little daughter travelling through America looking for the ideal fishing hole. The emphasis is not on the interaction among the family members within this family unit, but on the condition of this family unit (and by extension any family unit) pitched against a growing industrialized America and a rapidly receding wilderness, thus portraying Brautigan's theme of real versus the ideal America in this novel. Another important theme that Brautigan develops in the novel is the growth of the protagonist from the state of innocence into that of experience. These two themes work concurrently in the novel; when we follow them in the novel through to their conclusion, we find that there is a traditional linear development of beginning, middle and end in Trout Fishing in America.

In my view, the forty-seven chapters of this novel can be grouped in the following manner to show the development of both the theme of the real versus the

ideal America and the theme of innocence and experience: The first four chapters beginning with "The Cover for Trout Fishing in America" to "Red Lip" set the tone of the novel. In the first chapter Brautigan asserts the condition of twentieth century America, its degeneracy, ennui, and frustrations. He then quickly moves to the childhood and teenage years of the narrator in the next three chapters developing further the condition of frustration and ennui.

The next two chapters "The Kool-Aid Wino" and "Another Method of Making Walnut Catsup" can be classified as chapters of early initiation. Here, Brautigan puts his narrator through the initiation of rituals, not cult rituals of any sort, but the rituals of mixing the proper ingredients to make the perfect kool-aid and the perfect walnut catsup. The formula for mixing and producing any given product is systematic. Brautigan thus having brought his protagonist, the initiate, through a systematic process has armed him with the formula to cope with not only the frustrations of the past but also those frustrations that he will encounter in the future. The next six chapters beginning with "Prologue to Grider Creek" and concluding with "Trout Fishing on the Bevel" deal directly with fishing for trout in various streams across America. All of these chapters metaphorically and symbolically function as the

chase for the illusive American dream. It is important to remember that in all of these chapters, the narrator details his frustration and failure to hook a respectable trout. Immediately following these chapters is "Sea Sea Rider," where the narrator goes through a second initiation. This is the transitory chapter between childhood/teenage stages of the narrator to his becoming an adult, so to speak. It is here that we are told of the narrator's first sexual encounter taking place in a bookstore. The three chapters following this catalogs what we can call the `experience' chapters. The narrator undergoes harsher forms of frustration as he this time experiences not the failure to catch a trout, but observes the death of trout in Hayman Creek and personally witnesses the death of a trout as a result of port wine being poured into its mouth.

The following three chapters "The Message," "Trout Fishing in America Terrorists" and "Trout Fishing in America with the FBI" deal with the actual decline or the negation of "trout fishing" in America (symbolically the apathy towards nature). The promotion or advertising of "trout fishing" is prohibited even at the sixth grade level; and those individuals involved in attempting to promote "trout fishing" are classified as "terrorists." The irony in these chapters is clear as we realize that the apathy towards nature is readily acceptable and

nurtured by the school authorities, the very educators who have the responsibility to strengthen and build the young minds of America.

The next twenty-three chapters are perhaps the most provocative of all the chapters in this novel. Beginning with the "Worsewick" chapter and ending with the "Footnote Chapter to 'Red Lip,'" Brautigan paints a comprehensive picture of the decline of American values and the further waning and unattainability of the American dream. It is in these chapters also that Brautigan's narrator develops to a state of maturity and learning so that when we arrive, following these twenty-three chapters, to "The Cleveland Wrecking Yard" chapter, we find a more mature protagonist.

"The Cleveland Wrecking Yard" chapter is perhaps the finest and most famous of all the chapters of this novel. Here the narrator, who has searched so long for the America of the time of the people with "three-cornered" hats, finally encounters what appears to be America for sale by the foot-length. All that goes to create the values that one grows up with is for sale at this wrecking yard. The protagonist completes his education and growth here. The protagonist does not turn bitter or cynical; expectedly, be resigns himself to the world around him and finds consolation in the fact that the streams, trout, birds, trees, and insects (nature

itself) although cut up in foot-lengths or portioned in selected lots or groups are still available and have not disappeared altogether.

The last four chapters beginning with "A Half-Sunday Homage to a Whole Leonardo da Vinci" and ending with the last chapter of the novel "The Mayonnaise Chapter" can be classified as chapters of recollection and prophecy. Instead of ending a novel on a pessimistic note, Brautigan allows his protagonist the resiliency to survive what has been essentially a journey through a maze of frustrations and failures in seeking a healthy and vibrant America symbolized by a healthy trout stream. Brautigan symbolically expresses this resiliency and optimism by having Leonardo de Vinci design the perfect trout lure, thus connecting the great painter, sculptor, architect, engineer and scientist of the Rennaisance with his call to regenerate the twentieth century America.

A much quoted statement made by a Viking Press editor draws our awareness toward what the novel is actually about: "Mr. Brautigan submitted a book to us in 1962 called Trout Fishing in America. I gather from the reports that it was not about trout fishing."[23] I suppose if one were to approach the novel expecting it to be an account of angling one would have to set it down with the same exasperated statement made by a soldier who had approached Nabokov's Lolita as a book of pornography:

"'Damn!' yelled Stockade, throwing the book against the wall, 'It's God-dam Litachure!!'"[24] _Trout Fishing in America_ is as Brautigan himself stated "a vision of America,"[25] a vision of perhaps a time that was but definitely what isn't anymore. The novel is a quest, the search of a young man pursuing the myth of a healthy land full of trout pursuing the pleasure and serenity of a sustaining wilderness. But the quest fails and the young man comes to realize that the myth remains only a myth and cannot be transformed into reality.

Richard Brautigan's _Trout Fishing in America_ explores a very traditional theme--ideal America vs real America. One continually experiences the author's exploration of the ideal and the real as he contrasts temporal America with timeless America which is often just "a place in the mind."[4] Brautigan places Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia, that pioneer time and place of promise, the home of the American Dream, against Pittsburgh, the modern industrial mammoth, the leviathan of horror. A sense of loss and desolation accompanies our understanding that the promise is unattainable and the past is gone forever.

The opening chapter, "The Cover for Trout Fishing in America", sets this theme of the ideal vs the real in motion. In it, Brautigan draws a sharp contrast between the statue of Benjamin Franklin with the message

"WELCOME" (engraved on all four sides) and events and places surrounding it. Significantly located in Washington Square Park, the statue sits across from a "tall church . . . with crosses, steeples, bells and a vast door that looks like a huge mouse hole," (TF2). Along with a current description of the park and its surroundings, Brautigan informs the reader of an event of the past: "Adlai Stevenson spoke under the tree in 1956, before a crowd of 40,000 people" (TF2). The irony of the optimistic mood created by the "welcome" message is set into motion as we recall that Adlai Stevenson, although being a very optimistic presidential candidate, was decisively defeated during the elections, rejected by the very people in whom he felt he could instill his level of optimism. And right there with Benjamin Franklin

> Around five o'clock in the afternoon . . . people gather in the park across the street from the church and they are hungry.
>
> It's sandwich time for the poor. But they cannot cross the street until the signal is given. Then they all run across the street to the church and get their sandwiches that are wrapped in newspaper. They go back to the park and unwrap the newspaper and see what their sandwiches are all about. A friend of mine unwrapped his sandwich one afternoon and looked inside to find just a leaf of spinach. That was all (TF2-3).

The striking image of a single spinach leaf in a bread sandwich wrapped in newsprint immediately indicates that America promises much but delivers little; the

paltry spinach-leaf sandwiches are in stark contrast with the values associated with Benjamin Franklin. And when Brautigan ends the chapter with the mention of Kafka's knowledge of Franklin's autobiography "I like Americans because they are healthy and optimistic," (TF3) he provides the final stamp of irony by revealing the nightmare that is currently at the base of the remnants of the American Dream.

The theme of ideal or mythic vs real or reality is continued through the second chapter, "Knock on Wood (Part One)." The first time that the narrator had heard about Trout Fishing in America was from his stepfather who "had a way of describing trout as if they were a precious and intelligent metal" (TF4). The narrator commenting on his stepfather's description of trout states:

> Silver is not a good adjective to describe what I felt when he told me about trout fishing. I'd like to get it right. Maybe trout steel. Steel made from trout. The clear snow-filled river acting as foundry and heat. Imagine Pittsburgh. A steel that comes from trout, used to make buildings, trains and tunnels. The Andrew Carnegie of Trout! (TF4)

Having presented past and present time in striking images, Brautigan goes on to add another level to his metaphor. The narrator comments: "I remember with particular amusement, people with three-cornered hats fishing in the dawn" (TF5) evoking the true association

of trout fishing in America, not steel mills. David L. Vanderwerken in his article "*Trout Fishing in America* and American Tradition" points out that when Trout Fishing in America fondly remembers the people with the three-cornered hats, Brautigan is alluding to "America's founding Fathers and to the nexus of ideals, values, and beliefs associated with them."[26] While Vanderwerken's observation is quite correct, it is important to note that the reference to people with "three-cornered hats" goes beyond just the allusion to those people. It also suggests that the purity and simplicity of life and nature as it existed in the mythic past of America no longer exists.

To understand better the theme of the myth vs the real in *Trout Fishing in America* it is important to take note of the major symbol in the novel, the actual phrase "Trout Fishing in America." There are various aspects to Brautigan's title phrase. The implications of the phrase are elusive and often overlap as the novel progresses. First and most obvious is the literal meaning that of the experience of trout fishing that Brautigan evidently believes can provide answers to "complicated questions."[27] Trout Fishing in America is also a place, as the narrator states on his return to California: "I've come home from Trout Fishing in America" (TF149), thus providing the reader the sad realization of the

narrator's unsuccessful attempt to be one of the people with the "three-cornered" hats, realizing also that total freedom in nature is not possible in the contemporary world since there isn't total nature anymore. "Trout Fishing in America" is also a state of mind. In addition, "Trout Fishing in America" is a character, a person who talks to the narrator, receives letters, and even signs his name. "Trout Fishing in America" is a pen nib that takes on the "personality of the writer" and become his "shadow" (TF179). On the shadow side, "Trout Fishing in America" is a cripple, Trout Fishing in America Shorty, and also a building, Trout Fishing in America Hotel, where an ex-whore is boarded up with her present lover/savior. Most of all, "Trout Fishing in America" is a spirit, an idyllic/mythic component, that acts as the cohesive element for the novel.

Much like Melville's Moby Dick, Trout Fishing in America is a fluid symbol, metamorphic and oftentimes elusive. Melville states in his novel Moby Dick that Moby Dick was ubiquitous; so is Trout Fishing in America. The ubiquity of Trout Fishing in America allows Brautigan not only to oscillate between past and present in the novel, but to emphasize his theme of real vs ideal. The omnipresent mythic quality of Trout Fishing in America is capable also of projecting the degeneracy of the real American as through metamorphosis Trout Fishing in

America becomes Trout Fishing in America Shorty and Hotel Trout Fishing in America.

These two entities are not, however, the true disciples of Trout Fishing in America. They are the perverted manifestation of what has become of ideal America (that pastoral mythical land), the land of freedom. Trout Fishing in America Shorty is the twentieth-century wino, the debased, urbanized symbol of American life, the personification of contemporary American reality. And it is in this kind of reality that it is possible for Trout Fishing in America Shorty to reach success as he commercializes his deformity in "The New Wave" movies: "Last week 'The New Wave' took him out of his wheelchair and laid him out in a cobblestone alley. They shot some footage of him. He ranted and raved and they put it down on film" (TF100).

The Trout Fishing in America Shorty reality of America works well as a social commentary on the American life pattern. From the moment he is introduced, we learn of the negativity of this character: "He descended upon the North Beach like a chapter from the Old Testament. He was the reason birds migrate in the autumn. . . he was the cold turning of the earth; the bad wind that blows off sugar" (TF69). Brautigan deepens the chasm of ideal vs real America as in "The Last Mention of Trout Fishing in America Shorty" chapter, by placing the

narrator's daughter in a situation where she must choose between ideal America and real America and she "decided to take advantage of the green light" of Benjamin Franklin's statue and "crossed over to the sandbox" (TF158).

Irony cuts deep into the sensibility here, as readers realize that the child in an attempt to choose the ideal America has walked into the same web of disillusionment as her father, for the statue of Benjamin Franklin stands impotent against the food-line image of poverty across the street at the doors of the church. The sandbox near Benjamin Franklin's statue exaggerates the theme of ideal vs real, providing an irony of disillusionment by means of a contrast between Franklinesque America and contemporary America represented by the sandbox which is akin to a miniature wasteland.

Similarly, Hotel Trout Fishing in America is not a hotel skirting the blue lagoons of some distant paradise island, but the symbol of lost dreams and a perverted society. It is a skid row hotel epitomizing the degenerate society of contemporary America where the family unit is depicted as a drop-out shacked up with a whore who is hiding from her "spade pimp." The young man protecting the whore, we learn, "went to medical school for a while" (TF106). The hotel owned by Chinese

immigrants is a haven for a medical student turned con, and a little farm girl from Oklahoma turned whore. Brautigan's social commentary is pointed: contemporary society is incapable of sustaining its healthy young and is offering no future to immigrants of today. The ideal America moves even farther away, and Benjamin Franklin's WELCOME sign becomes even more distorted.

Trout stream in this novel is a central metaphor for the dissipating American wilderness and the social and political values that are associated with this wilderness. Brautigan uses this metaphor to accentuate the theme of the ideal vs the real. The narrator who is attempting to realize his dread of trout fishing in "Knock on Wood (Part One)" finds a different result in "Knock on Wood (Part Two)." Waking up early in the morning (since he had heard that early morning was a better time to fish for trout and that "the trout were better for it") and finding himself with no fishing tackle, the narrator has to make some creative adjustments: to make a hook, he bends a common paper pin and ties a white string to it, and for bait he plans on making dough balls out of everyday white bread.

Thus thoroughly equipped, he sets out toward the creek that he had not quite seen from a distance the night before; the narrator had thought it must be there since what he saw (and again presumed he saw) was a

"waterfall come pouring down off the hill . . . There must be a creek there . . . and probably has trout in it" (TF6). Because the narrator is young and has a dream to fulfill, he readily subjects himself to associative assumptions. As he approaches the vicinity where the assumed creek would be, he finds that "the waterfall was just a flight of white wooden stairs leading up to a house in the trees" (TF7). The narrator experiences early the taste of the evasive American dream--"I ended up being my own trout and eating the slice of bread myself" (TF8). The reply of Trout Fishing in America (the character) is "I couldn't change a flight of stairs into a creek" (TF8). The trout stream as the American dream is unattainable, and "Knock on Wood," commonly an expression of hope, is turned into an expression of disappointment and disillusionment.

The next few episodes deal, for the most part, with the narrator's frustrations. In "Red Lip" the narrator has moved forward seventeen years in time. This time, he is better equipped with fishing tackle, but he cannot get to his destination because as he explains

> it was all very simple. No one would stop and pick me up even though I was carrying fishing tackle. People usually stop and pick up a fisherman (TF9).

Not so in the fast lanes of the 20th century. Not only is the wilderness a thing of the past, "many rivers had

flowed past . . . and thousands of trout" (TF9), in addition, the redemptive act of fishing is also gone. Nothing is left but the feeling that what we have is like the experience of sitting under a sun that 'was like a huge fifty-cent piece that someone had poured kerosene on and then had lit it with a match and said, 'Here, hold this while I get a newspaper,' and put the coin in my hand, but never came back" (TF9-10).

Thus as he sat there on the roadside, the narrator, as he tells us, "had nothing else to do, so . . . I made up my own game" (TF10). The narrator's game is to catch salmon flies in his landing net, a virtually impossible task; however, he catches six, and he credits his success to that indomitable faculty of man, the imagination: "It was something to do with my mind" (TF10). Games are products of the imagination and in that realm we create not only fantasies, but also rituals. Because of the personalized nature of fantasies and rituals, it is possible to make happen in an orderly manner what is in essence unattainable. Thus, it is not only possible to catch salmon flies in a landing net, it is also relatively easy to become a wino without partaking of alcoholic beverages as we shall see in the chapter "The Kool-Aid Wino."

Brautigan gives us a formula for attaining the ideal in the next chapter "The Kool-Aid Wino," one of the two

chapters in the novel that provides recipes that must be followed in a ritualistic manner. In "The Kool-Aid Wino" chapter, Brautigan provides the recipe that one could call "How to mix a reality." In brief the chapter is another flashback, another childhood reminiscence. The narrator recollects the story of a friend "who became a kool-aid wino as a result of a rupture" (TF12). The narrator describes the painstaking step-by-step process that his friend follows everyday to make his drink, his fix of a much diluted, unsugared gallon of grape kool-aid. Defining this ritualistic motion, the narrator states that "to him [the narrator's friend] the making of kool-aid was a romance and ceremony" (TF14); and at the end of the chapter the narrator states "he created his own kool-aid reality and was able to illuminate himself by it" (TF15).

One wonders at the significance of this episode. On one hand, we have an example of the power of imagination symbolized by the ceremony where the narrator's friend can transcend the cruelties of poverty and his handicap. This transcendence is almost spiritual in nature, as though in a spiritual communion the ceremony "had to be performed in an exact manner and with dignity" (TF14). The faucet that fills the jar protrudes from the ground like "the finger of a saint," and when the jug is filled and shaken, the narrator's friend had "like an inspired

priest of an exotic cult . . . performed the ceremony well" (TF14).

The language in this entire description of the ceremony suggests the link between the kool-aid making ceremony and that of the Christian ceremony of performing and receiving communion. By no accident, the kool-aid is grape flavored and the term _wino_ suggests the miracle with which kool-aid turns to wine; the wine being symbolic of Christ's blood in the holy communion. Thomas Hearron suggests that the narrator's friend is both priest and brain surgeon. A suggestion evolving from the description that Brautigan provides: "When the jar was full he turned the water off with a sudden but delicate motion like a famous brain surgeon removing a disordered portion of the imagination" (TF14). Hearron who discusses this ceremony as an act of salvation states:

> Salvation requires that one have a healthy imagination, and by curing defects of the imagination the priest-surgeon opens the way to salvation. In this way, the friend can survive.[28]

Whatever the result, then salvation or simple transcendence, the "kool-aid reality" thus created is far more acceptable to the narrator's friend than the superficial reality of our contemporary society. On the other hand, Brautigan's recipes suggest order. Much like the way that the kool-aid wino ascribes order to his life

in the ceremonial process of making the kool-aid and then drinking it, not all at once, but little portions at a time, the Betty Crocker Cookbook which Brautigan parodies in "Another Method for Making Walnut Catsup," provides the formula for order in life in general. The primary implication of the cookbook language of this chapter deals with this concept of order: follow the prescribed procedures or steps, and the aspired result will always be attained.

Within this realm of order, Brautigan inserts Trout Fishing in America (presented as "a rich gourmet" [TF161]) who is dining with the glamorous Maria Callas. They eat a variety of dishes; each dish mentioned is accompanied by a detailed recipe. Everything works out--they eat their dishes, Maria Callas sings to Trout Fishing in America, and the moon comes out--a perfect evening. As long as one follows the formula, performs the ceremony, all turns out well; the introduction of Maria Callas provides the extension of this concept and ties it in with the American dream--follow prescribed steps, go through the proper motions, and success will naturally follow. This sequence of events circles back to the statue of Benjamin Franklin. One cannot help imagining that Brautigan in his own funky way is referring to the recipe for order and success in life that Benjamin Franklin suggests in his autobiography; his "list of

virtues" he called it, which aspiring, enterprising young men should follow so that success and good fortune would come their way, as they did for Benjamin Franklin, who had worked his way from poverty to richness.

In the overall development of Brautigan's novel "The Kool-Aid Wino" and "Another Method for Making Walnut Catsup" serve as the first stages of initiation into life relative to one of the two concurrent themes of the novel, the narrator's growth from innocence to experience. These two chapters also function very well within Brautigan's overall theme of ideal vs real America. They highlight the contrast between idyllic America and contemporary America. On a more important level, Brautigan with these two chapters and also the chapter "The Cover for Trout Fishing in America," "Knock on Wood (Part One)," and "Knock on Wood (Part Two)" has set the framework for the entire novel.

In a series of chapters following "Another Method of Making Walnut Catsup" the author catalogs in a variety of ways the condition of twentieth century America. All of the chapters from here on portray in one form or another the growth of the narrator himself as well as the frustrations he experiences in his search for the ideal America. Each chapter is distinctively different in the sense that it discusses a different situation in the narrator's life and also that each situation takes place

at a different place and, more often than not, at a different time in the narrator's life. Nevertheless, Brautigan achieves unity in the novel through the common themes that each chapter contributes toward: the theme of innocence and experience on the narrator's part, and the overall theme of ideal America versus real America.

In the chapter, "Prologue to Grider Creek" immediately following "Another Method of Making Walnut Catsup," we are introduced to a way of life in America that in general all Americans either deny or hesitate to acknowledge--violence; nevertheless, violence remains an integral part of life in America. Being plagued by rats in the basement, the man buys a .38 revolved and begins the process of elimination. The house that the rats inhabit is conveniently located in Mooresville, Indiana "the John Dillinger Capital of America" (TF20). Brautigan carefully describes this elimination of the "child-eyed" rats:

> The man walked over to a rat that was busy eating a friend and placed the pistol against the rat's head. The rat did not move and continued eating away. When the hammer clicked back, the rat paused between bites and looked out of the corner of its eyes. First at the pistol and then at the man (TF20).

Not that rats cannot be a nuisance, and we do kill them occasionally, but there is something chilling, something cold about the procedure in which he kills the child-eyed

rats. The act of violence suggests not killing them as they occur every now and then, but systematic elimination, almost to the point where it appears as though the man is enjoying it.

Obviously, the man and gun work as the agents of civilization, proponents of law and order if you will, killing all the vermin of this world. The underlying suggestion is that we tend to seek total elimination as a quick and easy means of solution. We must remember here the chapter "Trout Fishing on the Street of Eternity" where the narrator while cleaning up an old woman's garden refuses to kill garter snakes because he "couldn't see any percentage in wasting a garter snake" (TF131-2). What Brautigan is objecting to in his continued commentary on American society is an attitude toward wanton killing. The most important chapters that present this view are "The Salt Creek Coyotes" and "Trout Death by Port Wine."

In "The Salt Creek Coyotes" Chapter, Brautigan comes close to making a direct association between killing coyotes and capital punishment. As the narrator approaches Salt Creek he runs across this sign:

> WATCH OUT FOR CYANIDE CAPSULES PUT ALONG THE CREEK TO KILL COYOTES. DON'T PICK THEM UP AND EAT THEM. NOT UNLESS YOU'RE A COYOTE. THEY'LL KILL YOU. LEAVE THEM ALONE (TF83).

The sign is repeated in Spanish. Parodying the McArthur

ideology (we will find more such parody in subsequent chapters), the narrator points out that the sign does not appear in Russian, implying perhaps whether we should be concerned about life under a communistic society when our own value systems are questionable. The narrator shows that we seem to derive an almost demonic satisfaction from killing as he aptly describes the reaction that the above mentioned sign draws from surrounding inhabitants. The habitants of the neighboring area equate the cyanide capsules with a pistol.

> I asked an old guy in a bar about those cyanide capsules on Salt Creek and he told me that they were a kind of pistol. They put a pleasing coyote scent on the trigger and then a coyote comes along and gives it a good sniff, a fast feel and BLAM! That's all, brother (TF84).

The narrator leaves the bar and heads back to Salt Creek to fish for trout but after a while he "could think only of the gas chamber of San Quentin" (TF84). Brautigan makes the final association:

> Then it came to me up there on Salt Creek, capital punishment being what it is . . . that they should take the head of a coyote killed by one of those God-damn cyanide things up on Salt Creek . . . and make it into a crown.
>
> Then the witnesses and newspaper men and gas chamber flunkies would have to watch a king wearing a coyote crown die there in front of them, the gas rising in the chamber like a rain mist drifting down the mountain from Salt Creek (TF84-85).

Brautigan's use of black humor magnifies his cynicism

with regard to wanton killing of animals and capital punishment.

If it appears that Brautigan is sympathetic towards American outlaws, like Dillinger, Larry Chessman, Pretty Boy Floyd, Billy the Kid, it is because he is in general a spokesman for the less fortunate, be it by nature, by choice, or by an act of society. This sympathetic feeling is an extension of his feeling for losers, underdogs, and outcasts of all kinds. Similarly, the narrator along with his wife and child perceive themselves as outlaws as they trek across America in search of America. In the chapter "The Teddy Roosevelt Chingader," they are told via a sign "IF YOU FISH IN THIS CREEK, WE'LL HIT YOU IN THE HEAD" (TF95). Here also at Challis National Forest the narrator receives a lecture on communism and later on is chastised for being a "commie bastard" in a manner reminiscent of McArthurism, a condition parodied not only in this chapter, but also in a previous chapter titled "Trout Fishing in America Terrorists" where sixth graders, while awaiting the beginning of class that would teach them about Cuba, stop the first graders and with chalk write "Trout Fishing in America" on their backs. Needless to say they are punished. But the importance of this apparently simple prank is difficult to overlook. These boys became "first by accident and then by premeditation, trout fishing in

America terrorists" (TF56). The underlying implication is felt at the end of the chapter when in a few days the signs on the back of the first graders gradually disappeared. The narrator states "after a few more days trout fishing in America disappeared altogether as it was destined to from its very beginning, and a kind of autumn fell over the first grade" (TF62). Not only is there the suggestion that the pastoral, idyllic vision of America has disappeared, but also that in this violence-ridden society looking for ideal America symbolized by trout fishing and the narrator's endeavours toward seeking that ideal America can be branded as communistic.

Brautigan continues this parody of McArthurism in three other subsequent chapters: "Trout Fishing With the FBI," "The Mayor of the Twentieth Century" and "The Witness for Trout Fishing in America Peace." FBI agents monitor the path of trout streams in "Trout Fishing in America with the FBI" chapter:

> I saw two FBI agents watching a trout stream last week . . . The FBI agents watched the path, the trees, the black stump, the pool and the trout as if they were all holes punched in a card that had just come out a of a computer . . . The FBI agents keep changing with the sun. It appears to be part of their training (TF64-65).

In the chapter "The Mayor of the Twentieth Century," the Mayor stomps the grounds dressed in the costume of trout fishing in America.

> He wore mountains on his elbows and blue jays on the collar of his shirt. Deep water flowed through the lillies that were entwined about his shoelaces (TF75).

The serenity of wilderness, of nature in this case is only a disguise because "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" (TF75). The mayor's weapons are a razor, a knife, and a Ukulele. This last item is the Mayor's own special invention as an object of violence: "of course, it would have to be a Ukulele. Nobody else would have thought of it, pulled like a plow through the intestines" (TF76).

In the chapter "The Witness for Trout Fishing in America Peace," the narrator describes the group of people that formed the peace parade for trout fishing in America as "college- and highschool-trained communists" who "along with some communist clergymen, and their Marxist-taught children, marched to San Francisco from Sunnyville, a communist nerve center about forty mile away" (TF159). This group of so-called communists carried posters that read: "DON'T DROP AN H-BOMB ON THE OLD FISHING HOLE" (TF159). The narrator goes on to describe the peace parade as the "Gandhian nonviolence Trojan horse," (TF160). The dichotomy presented here--"Ghandian non-violence" and "Trojan horse" is perhaps the most effective criticism of twentieth century America.

It draws attention to a society which because of its waning values has reached a state of paranoia. The seeking of the act of doing something regenerative is in our present society considered to be an act against the state--in American vernacular it is paramount to communism. Trout/fish which is a symbol of peace, trout stream which is a source of that peace, and fishing (in our case trout fishing), a redemptive act, have all, in contemporary America, become questionable elements.[29] The overall simplification in all of this is not simply that ideal America is a thing of the past, that trout fishing itself is communistic activity, and that people in search of America are comparable to communists as they deviate from the norm, but also that there is a systematic plan in process to eliminate the wilderness; moreover, the projection of an image of America the beautiful has become only a guise much like that of the twentieth century Mayor, and under this guise are hidden the horrors of a society in total decline with all its hunger, poverty, violence, and systematic destruction of nature.

Along with "The Salt Creek Coyotes" chapter, the other chapter that deals directly with issues regarding wanton killing of natural beings is "Trout Death by Port Wine." Here the narrator succeeds in catching an eleven-inch rainbow trout, but the positive values associated

with that are perverted when his companion destroys the fish by giving it a drink of port wine. The act so distraughts the narrator that even his telling of the incident is dramatic. At the very beginning of the chapter the narrator states,

> It was not an outhouse resting upon the imagination.
> It was reality.
> An eleven-inch rainbow trout was killed. Its life taken forever from the waters of the earth, by giving it a drink of port wine (TF43).

The narrator, who is constantly attempting to commune with nature, is constantly thwarted. In this situation the unnatural act conflicts with his feeling of communion with nature. It is all right for a trout to be caught as food, and we must kill it in order to eat it, but killing it with port wine is not right. The narrator catalogues a whole series of natural ways in which trout die: necks being broken by anglers or being eaten by birds or choking to death in a polluted stream. He lists a whole assortment of books on trout fishing, but nowhere is killing trout by port wine mentioned. The natural conclusion that the narrator draws is that "It is against the natural order of death for a trout to die by having a drink of port wine" (TF43). Not only is the natural balance of things disturbed by this act, but also the reverence which the narrator holds for nature is

interrupted; the narrator's companion turns that reverence to burlesque. The death scene described in this chapter is vivid and dramatic:

> The trout went into spasm. Its body shook very rapidly like a telescope during an earthquake. The mouth was wide open and chattering almost as if it had human teeth (TF48).

This death by violence complements the death by violence in "The Salt Creek Coyotes" chapter, and the whole idea of wanton killing runs like a climactic series of associations--trout killed by port wine to coyotes killed by cyanide to humans killed by poisonous gas. Brautigan does not deny that death is the ultimate natural order of things, or that death is an inherent part of the organic process of nature. What he objects to is that in our retreat from ideologies set forth by our founding fathers, those men in "three-cornered hats," we have not only embraced a mechanical world where nature is continually being pushed back, but also that we are continually creating new devices for death. Killing the trout as a careless joke is "another thing" (TF 44); it is something degrading as well as unnatural.

The death motif is evident in this novel as we find death discussed and mentioned sporadically through the entire novel. It is important to remember, however, that these incidents of death are used not to draw an absolute bleak picture of America as a wasteland (as scenes of

death and decay are used to highlight a total wasteland image in T. S. Eliot's poem The Waste Land), but used often as a tool to express the imaginative power of creation as in the chapter "Trout Fishing on the Bevel" or as a device for creating associations as in the chapter "The Autopsy of Trout Fishing in America" or even as a comic device as in the chapter "A Note on the Camping Craze That is Currently Sweeping America."

In the "Trout Fishing on the Bevel" chapter, the narrator is fishing for trout in the graveyard creek that flowed between two graveyards. One graveyard exists solely for the rich with all its marble fixings, and the other graveyard is for the poor. Since Brautigan is naturally concerned with the less fortunate, the narrator's attention is drawn toward the graveyard for the dead. The inscription on one of the headstones at the graveyard reads as follows:

Devoted Slob Father of
and
Beloved Worked-to-Death Mother of
and
Sacred
To the Memory
of
John Talbot
Who at the Age of Eighteen
Had His Ass Shot Off
In a Honky-Tonk
November 1, 1936
This Mayonnaise Jar
With Wilted Flowers In It
Was Left Here Six Months Ago
By His Sister
Who Is In
The Lazy Place Now. (TF30)

Comic as the inscription may be, it is to the point, describing within the space of a headstone the entire sorry history of a family thus providing the tragic vision of an entire sub-culture of our 20th century that resides, even in death, just a stone's throw away from the privileged.

The chapter however does not end with this tragic vision. The narrator shares with us the vision he has had as a result of his experiencing the disparity between the two graveyards.

> Once, while cleaning the trout before I went home in the almost night, 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 (TF31).

Brautigan endows his narrator with the power of the imagination to create a remedial device by means of which all the pains and sorrows of the underprivileged in America may be tied together and tossed to the heavens, thereby revitalizing this land of opportunities. Through the richness of his imagination, the narrator is capable of purging his society of poverty. This deep sensitivity toward poverty is also indicative of the rapid maturity of the narrator. The narrator has already passed through various stages of experience, and Brautigan continues

this development of his narrator in the next chapter "Sea Sea Rider."

In the chapter "Sea Sea Rider," the narrator (in his adolescent stage) recounts his first sexual encounter in a bookstore with a rich woman he has never met before. He learns of sex not love, as that is not possible in a contemporary society with waning moral values. The narrator makes love as the rich lady's companion looks on with no emotional or even intellectual involvement in the whole encounter: "The man sat there without speaking or moving or sending out any emotion into the room. I guess he was rich and owned 3,859 Rolls Royces" (TF35). We are told that the man who owned the bookstore "was not magic," which indicates to the reader that what the narrator was about to discuss in this chapter were aspects of the real. The narrator in describing the bookstore owner states that he was a retired Jewish merchant seaman who, by contemporary standards, had a normal life: "He had a young wife, a heart attack, a Volkswagen and a home in Marin County" (TF32). Although Jews are traditionally perceived as prudent businessmen and America is traditionally viewed as the land of opportunities, such positive notions no longer exist in contemporary America. In his attempt to portray the state of degeneracy in contemporary American society, Brautigan inverts the concept of the traditionally

successful Jewish businessman. The bookstore is not a successful enterprise; in fact, the narrator associates it with a graveyard stating that the books in the store were like "thousands of graveyards . . . parked in rows like cars. Most of the books were out of print, and no one wanted to read them" (TF32). Furthermore, in providing background information, the narrator informs us that the bookstore owner "liked the works of George Orwell" (TF32) and that "he learned about life at sixteen, first from Dostoevsky and then from the whores of New Orleans" (TF32).

The mention of George Orwell is important here, remembering that we are given accounts of a sterile world of no human emotional or intellectual involvement in his satire 1984. This picture of sterility is further accentuated with the mention of Dostoevsky and the whores of New Orleans. Neither the lessons drawn from Dostoevsky nor the lives of the prostitutes of New Orleans offer a healthy viewpoint of life. The bookstore owner having perhaps read about the grueling inner struggles of Dostoesvsky's characters and about the dark cold vision of life projected in Dostoevsky's novels where man is often presented as a pawn in the vicious game of life has had an early initiation of the particular kind of life that is complemented in the contemporary society with the association of whores in

New Orleans where all the glitter and light are unnatural and everything is a pawn. Not surprisingly, with such a background, it is this bookstore owner who mediates the sexual encounter between the young narrator and unknown rich lady. This sexual encounter remains only that and is not transposed into an act of love thus becoming a sterile gesture, a non-commital and non-productive performance. The narrator describes his sexual experience in the following terms:

> There was nothing else I could do for my body was like birds sitting on a telephone wire strung out down the world . . .
> It was like the eternal 59th second when it becomes a minute and then looks kind of sheepish (TF35)

Nothing in this description leads anyone to believe that the narrator has just experienced the happiness that is associated, by normal moral standards, with the procreative act, sexual intercourse. As one is made to share in the emptiness of the narrator, one is also made to ponder at the title of this chapter "Sea Sea Rider." This title reminds us of a 1943 folk song written and sung by "MA" Rainey, "See See Rider." The sense of disillusionment portrayed in Brautigan's chapter is emphasized as one recalls the lines of the song:

> See Rider, just see what you have done
> You made me love you now your women's come.
> You caused me, Rider, to hang my head and cry,

> You put me down; God knows I don't see why
> If I had a headlight like on a passenger
> train,
> I'd shine my light on cool Colorado Springs.

"Sea Sea Rider" is not the only chapter in which one finds the description of a fertile sexual encounter. The evidence that procreative sexual encounters are absent in Trout Fishing in America lies not only in the fact that the first woman with whom the narrator performs his sexual act is a whore from New Orleans, but also that his second (and only other encounter mentioned in the novel), that with his own wife, is non-productive.

The Worsewick Hot Springs in which that narrator swims in the "Worsewick" chapter is described not as a hot springs at all but as a bathtub that has "green slime growing around the edges" and with "dozens of dead fish floating" (TF67) in it. In this sterile world the narrator finds an opportunity in his tedious journey through the American wilderness to make love with his wife. However, there is no orgasmic satisfaction. The narrator pulls away from his wife as he approaches orgasm and his "sperm came out into the water, unaccustomed to the light, and instantly it became a misty, stringy kind of thing and swirled out like a falling star, and a . . . dead fish [came] forward and floated into [his] sperm, [bent] it in the middle. His eyes were stiff like iron" (TF68). Death in nature and death in human regenerative

acts come together. Hot springs, normally agents of regeneration and revitalization, are presented in this chapter as an agent of fish kill and as a spermatocide. Once again Brautigan completes a frame of loss and disillusionment as he deftly directs us through the novel.

In the chapter "The Autopsy of Trout Fishing in America," immediately following the "Trout Death by Port Wine," the narrator relates the autopsy of, apparently, the trout that died of port wine. I say apparently because through a form of logic which is Brautigan's own, accomplished via rapid transitions, the association is quickly made: beautiful rainbow trout killed by port wine to mythic figure Trout Fishing in America as a corpse preserved not in formaldehyde but in whiskey, thus the first association through death motif. The second association, which in fact is possible only because of the first, is made between the death of Trout Fishing in America (the mythic figure) with the death of Lord Byron: "This is the autopsy of Trout Fishing in America as if Trout Fishing in America had been Lord Byron and had died in Missolough1, Greece, and afterward never saw the shores of Idaho again, never saw Carrie Creek, Worsewick Hot Springs, Paradise Creek, Salt Creek and Duck Lake again" (TF50). Byron in essence was a liberator who had fought in Greece for Greek independence. Brautigan by

associating Trout Fishing in America with Byron thus indicates that by frivously killing the trout by giving it a drink of port wine we are not killing just any fish, but killing a fish which symbolically represents in the form of the mythic figure Trout Fishing in America the true spirit of rebellion and freedom. Brautigan continuously presents Trout Fishing in America as a positive character who has reverence for life of all forms and also a character who is continually being pushed back, exiled so to say, from our everyday lives. In "The Last Time I Saw Trout Fishing in America" chapter, Brautigan seems to accept the exile or banishment of Trout Fishing in America since that spirit was a healthy welcomed spirit that flourished during the dawn of America with Lewis and Clark, but whose place no longer exists in the Sixties.

In "A Note on the Camping Craze That is Currently Sweeping America" chapter, the narrator relates the story of Mr. Norris who takes to trout fishing as a remedy against forgetting the names of his children. He is told at a bar that "Trout fishing is one of the best things in the world for remembering children's names . . . 'You try some camping and that trout fishing and you'll remember the names of your unborn children'" (TF118). So the next morning Mr. Norris charges all his camping and fishing equipment and sets out for the American camp grounds in

the mountains. But something is wrong. The first sixteen camp grounds are packed. He ultimately finds a place to pitch his tent on the seventeenth campground in the only spot available: "a man had died of a heart attack and the ambulance attendants were taking down his tent . . . Mr. Norris pitched his tent right there and set up all this equipment. . ." (TF119-120). The whole episode is comically presented by the narrator, but as in so many cases there is a cold serious undercurrent to all such comic presentations. The realization that the only way to get a camping place is to take one made available by death emphasizes the pathetic plight of the wilderness in America--reduced by industrialization, camping grounds in the American wilderness are a rare commodity. The plight of Mr. Norris dramatically re-emphasizes our regression from the early dawns of America, from the time of the three-cornered hats, and from the America of Ben Franklin when land was plentiful, nature flourished, and basic human values were adhered to. More than that, although we may be amused at the plight of Mr. Norris, this chapter effectively documents the tremendous and ever growing frustration of the narrator in his attempt to seek a peaceful natural setting in America. This frustration seems to reach a significant height in the chapter "The Message."

The narrator's futile attempts at getting to any

good fishing hole has him so flustered that his thought patterns take on a distorted vision. In "The Message" chapter, a shepherd is viewed as an Adolph Hitler simply because the shepherd and his flock of sheep are blocking the path of the narrator who is in search of the perfect trout fishing hole. Simply by virtue of extension, Brautigan ties him in with Adolph Hitler who was the monstrous obstacle to a free world. But Brautigan is careful not to associate the violence that accompanies Adolph Hitler so he defines the shepherd as "a young, skinny Adolph Hitler, but friendly" (TF52). The message being that this Adolph Hitler shepherd is shepherding the conformist sheep of the Twentieth Century.

In all the chapters discussed so far, we have not only experienced the growing distance between the cool, pastoral, idyllic America of the past and the cold industrialized, non-feeling, steel-oriented America of the present, the disillusionment of the narrator and other fellow countrymen in their effort to seek the 'real' America, but also the ennui of the narrator as he journeys from the state of innocence to the state of experience. The ennui of the narrator as a young boy turns to frustrated exasperations in adolescence and then to resigned complacency as an adult. One of the finest examples of this growing process (which unfortunately is a documentary on disillusionments, one after the other)

appears in the "Trout Fishing On The Street of Eternity" chapter. Here the narrator shares with us his discovery of _The Trout Fishing Diary of Alonso Hagen_ in the attic of an old lady's house that he helped maintain. Immediately following the title page, Alonso Hagen offers up a list that covers nine pages of the diary cataloging all of Alonso's trips and trout lost on each trip. On "the last page of the diary was the grand totals . . . Alonso Hagen went fishing 160 times and lost 2,231 trout" (TF 136). Over nine pages, the visual contact with 160 repetitions of the word _LOST_ seems to tell the tale. Brautigan has been using trout fishing to symbolize the search for the elusive American dream; Alonso Hagen's Trout Fishing in America Epitaph provides the disillusionment:

> I've had it
> I've gone fishing now for seven years
> and I haven't caught a single trout.
> I've lost every trout I ever hooked.
> They either jump off
> or twist off
> or squirm off
> or break my leader
> or flop off
> or fuck off
> I have never even gotten my hands on a trout
> For all its frustration,
> I believe it was an interesting experiment
> in total loss
> but next year somebody else
> will have to go out trout fishing.
> Somebody else will have to go
> out there (TF137).

Alonso Hagen has provided the perfect epitaph for the elusive and even perhaps the last American Dream.

The narrator's peripatetic journey, his rapid transition from innocence to experience, the theme of ideal America vs real America, and the general disillusionment and ennui felt by the contemporary American can be followed as we trace the streams that the narrator attempts to reach and to fish in. Every stream is a statement of disappointment: Grider Creek is inaccessible (TF19); Tom Martin Creek "turned out to be a real son-of-a-bitch . . . you had to be a plumber to fish that creek" (TF28); Graveyard Creek has its own suggestive limitations: "the poverty of the dead bothered me" (TF31); Hayman Creek had a curse upon it. When Mr. Hayman died "the creek was . . . dry and there was no fish in it." And twenty years later the fish and game people faced this when they tried to stock the creek: "no sooner had the trout touched the water, than they turned their white bellies up and floated dead down the creek" (TF41-42); Salt Creek had cyanide capsules along its banks (TF83); even the apparent good fishing at Lake Josephus is cut short as the baby falls sick (TF125). The difficulty that the narrator encounters "out there" is representative of the lack of spontaneity in life in the Twentieth Century. Much like the streams, the people encountered are equally obstinate: a young

shepherd turns out to be "young skinny Adolf Hitler"; the bitter surgeon in "The Surgeon" chapter fumes about "bad debts"; a hostile clerk calls the narrator a "commie bastard" and finally on a hot day in July, the narrator learns of the death of that other great American angler, Hemingway and visits with Trout Fishing in America for the last time. It is soon after this that the narrator ends his journey--"I've come home from Trout Fishing in America" (TF149), but not before he has visited The Cleveland Wrecking Yard.

Perhaps the most memorable of all the chapters in this novel is the one titled "The Cleveland Wrecking Yard." The narrator's quest has brought him finally to a junkyard where the sign reads:

USED TROUT STREAM FOR SALE
MUST BE SEEN TO BE
APPRECIATED (TF168)

As he steps into the store and expresses his interest and curiosity about the trout stream to the salesman, this is the conversation that ensues:

> "We're selling it [the trout stream] by the foot length. You can buy as little as you want or you can buy all we've left . . ."
> "How much are you selling the stream for?"
> "Six dollars and fifty cents a foot . . . That's for the first hundred feet. After that it's five dollars a foot."
> ....
> "How much are the birds?" I asked.

> "Thirty-five cents a piece," he said. "But of course they are used. We can't guarantee anything" (TF168-169).

It is obvious that Nature is on sale at this dump ground. This salvage yard offers everything: chopped up trout streams, used birds, animals, insects, trees, waterfalls, toilets, lumber, and plumbing equipment. The narrator has finally found the ideal America he has been looking for preserved ironically at a junkyard. The whole episode is a tell-tale story of the tragic conditions of America today. It provides a vivid picture of failures on the part of twentieth century America to preserve not only the wilderness of America, but also the failure to preserve the moral and social values of its past.

In this way, Brautigan indicates that it is not simply that we have failed in the preservation of values, but that we have actually distorted them to fit our needs. This is evident in the complete distortion of the Franklin business ethics that we find in this chapter. Instead of doing good business to develop not only one's own financial condition but also the economy of the country, we have tragically succeeded in putting America on sale at the Cleveland Wrecking Yard: the more you buy, the cheaper it gets (like the mileage system in rent-a-car) and of course there's a bargain--the insects are being given away free with a "minimum purchase of ten

feet of stream" (TF169). The deals are clearly twentieth century, and so is the friendly hustler, the salesman.

Not only is the state of affairs in the twentieth century quite aptly portrayed in this chapter, but also the theme of ideal America as opposed to real America is clearly brought forth. Brautigan seems to be making the statement that since the real pastoral is no longer available, the pastoral created in the imagination still is. Perhaps the most ironic part of this entire episode is the juxtaposition of the waterfalls with toilets in the used plumbing department of this salvage yard; our natural water sources have become the natural water closets and dumping grounds for a host of unnatural and harmful waste products that have led to and are continuing to lead to a fast depletion of our wilderness and are creating a dangerous ecological imbalance that (already has) is upsetting the balance between man and nature. This juxtaposition also takes us back to the chapter "Trout Death by Port Wine" where the narrator tells us about trout killed by pollution in "a river of suffocating human excrement" (TF43). In the "Trout Death by Port Wine" chapter, too, that Brautigan first talks about compartmentalized nature: "I fished upstream coming ever closer and closer to the narrow staircase of the canyon. Then I went up into it as if I were entering a department store. I caught three trout in the lost and

found department" (TF47).

"The Cleveland Wrecking Yard" chapter however does not deal with the death motif of the "Port Wine" chapter, nor do we find the latent anger here that we felt in the "Port Wine" chapter. The whole episode in "The Cleveland Wrecking Yard' is related in a gentle, humorous manner. It is in this gentleness, this lack of bitterness of presentation that the irony and terrible sense of loss is conveyed. What could be more descriptive of the values of the twentieth century than the fact of a wilderness hurriedly destroyed and whose elements are finally stacked up in a wrecking yard and put up for sale. The cycle is vicious, and the bargain is fatalistic--millions of free insects and rats, the natural inheritors of this earth; pathetic, yet an appropriate legacy of man.

Lest one gets too depressed at reading Trout Fishing in America, it is important to point out that the novel is far from nihilistic. Certainly there is a strong evocation of the death motif, and certainly there is the massive compilation of one disillusionment after another, and of course the book makes a rigid statement about the ecological state of affairs in America today and Brautigan has also successfully cataloged the growing distance between the ideal America, America as the land of promise, the positive vision with which thousands of immigrants landed on the shore of America and the real

America of the 60s trailing into even the 80s with its enormous stride away from the pastoral directly to the nightmare of industrialization. We think no longer of man with three-cornered hats flying a kite to attract a bolt of electricity but about fiber-optics that allow a whisper to be magnified into a roar. Even with all this sense of loss projected through two main vehicles trout stream, and Trout Fishing in America, Brautigan's omnipresent multifaceted symbol, the author gives poignant little hints of optimism. The magic that did not exist in the "Knock on Wood (Part Two)" chapter where the narrator experiences perhaps his first disillusionment at finding that his waterfall is nothing but a "flight of white wooden stairs" (TF7) and Trout Fishing in America replying "There was nothing I could do. I couldn't change a flight of stairs into a creek" (TF8) appears to exist in the most comical and also most depressing chapter "The Cleveland Wrecking Yard" where even though nature is sliced up and stock piled in a salvage yard, the cool streams are there, and, extraordinarily, trout swimming in them too. The narrator's pathetic statement in the early chapter "Knock on Wood (Part Two) "I ended up by being my own trout and eating the slice of bread myself" (TF8) changes to one of wonder and delight:

> O I had never in my life seen anything like that trout stream . . . I could see some trout in them. I saw one good fish. I saw some crawdads crawling around the rocks at the bottom.
>
> It looked like a fine stream. I put my hand in the water. It was cold and felt good (TF173).

Alonso Hagen in "Trout Fishing On the Street of Eternity" calls his fishing trips an "interesting experiment in total loss" (TF137), yet his Trout Fishing in America epitaph does not end with the suggestion that we give up trying to fish the streams for trout, to chase the American Dream; on the contrary, it ends with a hope for the future: "somebody else will have to go out there" (TF137) next year. And if we are looking for hints of optimism in this novel, we find them in those sixth graders in "Trout Fishing in America Terrorists" who on an April morning found themselves to be trout fishing in America terrorists "first by accident and then by premeditation" (TF56). This "strange bunch of kids" (TF56) will grow up to replace those who are currently partaking in the trout fishing in America peace parade, and they will ultimately follow what Brautigan cynically calls "the Communist world conquest line: The Gandhian nonviolence Trojan horse" (TF160). The "witnesses for Trout Fishing in America Peace" marches may not be a massive and influential group of people, but the narrator believes that at the very least, the seed for redemption

and correction has been sown:

> America needs no other proof. The Red Shadow of the Gandhian nonviolence Trojan horse has fallen across America . . .
>
> Obsolete is the mad rapist's legendary piece of candy. At this very moment, communist agents are handing out witness for trout fishing in America peace tracts to innocent children riding the cable cars (TF161).

Perhaps the strongest statement of optimism is made in the chapter titled "A Half-Sunday Homage To A Whole Leonardo Da Vinci." Here, Brautigan's optimistic vision is carried out by reference to the fifteenth century Florentine master painter, sculptor, architect, and engineer. Brautigan's statement is clear in this chapter--he is hopeful of a new beginning for America; why else would he pick a genius out of the Renaissance period to be a vehicle for the future? Brautigan seems to indicate that if we have come full circle away from all that is vital and potent in our society, then the only proper place to begin again would have to be the Renaissance. Brautigan is hoping that that period which was marked by a humanistic revival of classical influence expressed in a flowering of the arts and literature and also marked the beginning of modern science could be the magic that would spark the revival in America. Thus he has Leonardo Da Vinci designing a new spinning lure for trout fishing in America:

> . . . first of all working with his imagination, then with metal and color and 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 (TF175-76).

Brautigan names this lure "The Last Supper," establishing Biblical allusion of the Eucharist itself: "Take, eat this is my body . . . Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26). Thus the lure is not only symbolic of a new beginning for America, but also symbolic of forgiveness and purification.

In the chapter "Trout Fishing in America Nib" Brautigan's creative genius and his imaginative power blend into the most powerful instrument of all times--the pen. And the nib to that pen is quite obviously made of the one omnipresent and multi-dimensional symbol, trout:

> What a lovely nib trout fishing in America would make with a stroke of cool green trees along the river's shore, wild flowers and dark fins pressed against the paper (TF179).

Brautigan can only hope that this pen would be readily accepted by our contemporary society because it is no ordinary pen; it has a magic to it. It not only "takes on the personality of the writer" (TF179) but also becomes his shadow. Trout has been projected as the source of all potential energy in the novel, and this

energy the author uses as the fulcrum of imagination and creativity. Thus in the "The Hunchback Trout" chapter, the narrator's favorite fishing hole is defined as a pencil sharpener; in essence, the fishing hole is a venue to sharpening our faculties: "I put my reflexes in and they came back out with a good point on them" (TF88).

One of the most enjoyable aspects of Brautigan's writing is that while reading Trout Fishing in America, Brautigan does not allow a reader the time to get mired into any particular frame of mind, any particular mood. Just about the time when one anticipates that the author is going to take us on a comical trip through the varied aspects of American culture, land, and politics, he gently inserts one of his many tragic and ironic observations, and the reader is immediately affected by it; and just as easily as Brautigan paints the gloomy side of our contemporary society, with equal grace does he leave strokes of hope and optimism deftly stroked into his overall montage of a modern wasteland.

Take for instance the figure of Trout Fishing in America Shorty, the crippled wino of the twentieth century. Brautigan symbolizes through him all the negativity and degeneracy of twentieth century man, and through him defines the exploitary and perverseness of American industrialism when a movie company uses his deformity to enhance its monetary goals. Small children

are contrasted with Shorty. He is the inverted Christ of modern times. The phrase "suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not" (Luke 18:16) is reversed. And when the narrator's daughter in "The Last Mention of Trout Fishing in America Shorty" refuses to be touched by Shorty, it would appear that the "kingdom of God" is preserved,

> He [Trout Fishing in America Shorty] tried to coax her to come over and sit on his legless lap. She hid behind his wheel chair . . .
> "Come here, kid," he said. "Come over and see old Trout Fishing in America Shorty."
> Just then 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 . . She decided to take advantage of the green light, and she crossed over to the sandbox.
> Trout Fishing in America Shorty stared after her as if the space between them were a river growing larger and larger (TF157-58).

The narrator's baby is quite obviously the symbol of not only innocence but also of our future. Her denial of Trout Fishing in America Shorty emphasizes the anticipated hope for the future, and this hope is further magnified by the object toward which the baby moves, that of the statue of Benjamin Franklin.

Brautigan has used the figure of a child (in the only two places where he mentions them) as an image of the positive. In "The Pudding Master of Stanely Basin"

chapter, the child is seen playing with minnows. The narrator specifically points out that although she playfully picks up the fish by their tails, she returns them to the water without killing them.

> She tipped the pan over and a dozen fish flopped out onto the shore . . . she picked up those silver things, one at a time, and put them back in the pan. There was still a little water in it. The fish liked this (TF104).

But Brautigan does not assume the posture of sentimentality by either this incidence with the minnows or the baby's choice of Benjamin Franklin's "green-light." His purpose, as it would seem, is to create disparate frames of life and present them in juxtaposition so as to make clear the urgency of our situation. In that respect, he makes the acute observation that Trout Fishing in America Shorty "should be buried right beside Benjamin Franklin statue in Washington Square" (TF73). It is with oscillations like these between hope and despair, intermingled with keen ironic observations and cynical humor that Brautigan weaves his novel, holds the reader's attention, and delivers a nostalgic message to the contemporary American.

Brautigan traces the human need to commune with nature almost historically from our three-cornered hatted forefathers to disillusioned surgeons and businessmen of

the twentieth century almost in the same manner in which he discusses the evolution of language through the ages. The books mentioned in relation to that evolution show the historical progression: Man: His First Million Years, Man in Nature, and Twilight of Men.

Finally the author expresses his own human need--to end a book with the word mayonnaise. He does so in the last chapter in which he writes about the passing of Mr. Good which can be interpreted as the passing of the myth, the poet, the friend, the omnipresent and omnipotent pastoral image of America, and even trout fishing in America, the literal action of fishing itself, that seems to have passed away in the Carnegie Hall of steel-oriented America. The chapter ends with the word mayonnaise making one final connection with an earlier chapter "Trout Fishing on the Bevel," where the author notes the impoverished markers on the graves, one being a mayonnaise jar. Just as the empty mayonnaise jar sits as a hollow reminder on one American dream, so does the passing of Mr. Good rest lightly on death, decay, and impotency of the twentieth century. In this last chapter the narrator seems ultimately to accept the fact that the American Dream is still a dream, that the myth remains a myth.

The narrator is a more experienced, if not a better individual at this point in his journey; he has acquired

the ability to accept things as they are: "Gods will be done" (TF182). In the "California Bush" chapter the narrator states "I've come home from Trout Fishing in America . . . It took my whole life to get here" (TF149). He now lives with a friend in Mill Valley, not in the valley itself, but on a hilltop. The narrator has climbed to a higher place than where he started from. He can barely see civilization for it is blocked from view by eucalyptus trees. On this high perch, the narrator, although accepting the factor that the American dream is only a place in the mind, still communes with nature. He lives not in the cabin but under the eucalyptus trees. Although high above the routine humdrum of society, this temporary retreat is by no means free of the realities of contemporary life: along with deer comes the dog. The narrator for one last time offers up the perfect heart wrenching view of the twentieth century. "The wife and kid are gone now, blown away like apples by the fickle wind of the Twentieth Century. I guess the fickle wind of all time" (TF150).

Brautigan uses the tradition of trout fishing in America as his one particular form of contact with nature to create his novel Trout Fishing in America. The tradition of fishing for trout allows Brautigan the elements and values by which he is able to exemplify and weigh his own experience. By looking at contemporary

America through the context of trout-fishing, he is able of focus on the sterility and the emptiness of twentieth century society and at the same time shed light on the loneliness and naturalness of his own experience. It is not surprising at all that within that experience, the author finds honesty and fellowship among other contemporary Americans out searching for America.

Trout Fishing in America is Brautigan's finest achievement in structure and narrative technique. However chaotic a reader's initial impression of the novel may be, there is definite form in this novel. It is the story of one man on a journey to find America and his and our meaning in that experience in that land. Brautigan's concern is with the abandoned ideals of the American past. And every chapter, however fragmentary it may appear to be is a bead, a frame which is at once isolated and at the same time a very integral part of the whole that goes to accentuate this very concern.

The method by which Brautigan creates this unique 'romance' of the twentieth century is his use of juxtaposed images, the power of which lies in the language that primarily created the images. Thus when Brautigan quotes M. F. Ashley Montagu in saying "The Eskimos live among ice all their lives but have no single word for ice," he seems to assert the fact that not one word but a combination of words, the language, is capable

of defining and giving form to what we live with. _Trout Fishing in America_ is a language all by itself, depicting through comic encounters, through ironies, and tragic observations the bankruptcy of ideals and virtues of contemporary America.

Not only is the novel a remarkable accomplishment in structure, but also a disclosure of the power of imagination. This power of the imagination comes from the author's refusal to passively accept actuality. Thus the author makes real the elusive spirit of America. The mysterious reality of the American dream is lured into language by the imagination, allowing the dream to be held while the element itself is lost. Brautigan shows us that when imagination is properly employed, it can create the uncreatable, bring into existence the unattainable. The power of the imagination forces the magic to be real, allowing streams to be sold in pieces and allowing trout to exist in those disparate lengths of stream.

While it is true that the imagination does provide an avenue for escape, it is not the only goal that Brautigan succeeds in achieving. In Brautigan's hands the element of imagination is a form of power play--it provides him with the ability to create a remarkable narrative out of the most common place materials making that narrative as easy to accept and absorb as reality

itself. What allows his imaginative power to attain that level of actuality is of course Richard Brautigan's most effective and rare ability to create images. Drawing heavily on this talent, he overloads his pages with image upon image. He creates these images out of recognizable components of our daily lives, so that the narrative speaks to the reader through vivid mental pictures: "A ukulele . . . pulled like a plow through the intestines" (TF76); the odor of Lysol in a hotel lobby, sitting "like another guest on the stuffed furniture, reading a copy of the Chronicle, the Sports section" (TF105); or dust looking "like the light from a Coleman lantern" (TF120). Even perceptions are set forth as an act of constant comparison: "The water bugs were so small I practically had to lay my vision like a drowned orange on the mud puddle" (TF80), a marshy part of a creek "spread out in the grass like a beer belly" (TF78), or the descriptions of a ferris wheel on a hot day: "The ferris wheel was turning in the air like a thermometer bent in a circle and giving the grace of music" (TF156).

Brautigan's metaphors compel the reader to actively participate in the novel since it is the reader who must connect the various images, and out of this action the novel comes together in the reader's mind as a living structure.

Not only does Brautigan bring to life the myth of

the American dream through the vehicle of imagination, he also endows the narrator with the same power. Thus endowed, the narrator projects the development of an imaginative faculty as he travels from the state of innocence to the state of experience. As a young boy, the narrator fails to transform a flight of stairs into a waterfall, but as a man he has gained that power of transformation: a waterfall can stand upright in the plumbing department of the wrecking yard and a stream can be cut up into sections and yet retain its identity as a trout stream. That the two stages of the narrator's ability are presented in the novel, only confirms one of the themes of the novel: the two stages of innocence and experience. In moving from the first stage to the second, there is a development in the narrator's imaginative faculty that permits transformation and has the power to change reality.

For an author whose roots lie in the turmoil of the American 60s, Brautigan effectively accomplishes his goal in Trout Fishing in America to create a vision of America. The sixties was an era of instability for American society. The decade posed a serious difficulty for American writers in determining and projecting their attitude towards it. However, Brautigan has managed to capture the desolate conditions of our contemporary society and present it to the readers in a remarkably

refreshing and original manner.

Trout Fishing in America is Brautigan's search for America; it is a sustained criticism of the American dream had become and a poetic confession of that dream's continuing attractive values. When one steps into a trout stream in _Trout Fishing in America_, one steps inescapably into the current of American literature. The nostalgia of the pastoral in this novel provides reminiscences of Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, and Hemingway. Yet he continues the catholicity of the pastoral myth with a sense of horror at contemporary distortions of this myth. It is no longer Hemingway's hero washing his wounded spirit in "The Big Two-Hearted River," or Thoreau's calm of Walden pond, or Mark Twain's Huck and Jim hoisting catfish from the broad Mississippi, or Whitman "undisguised and naked" by the banks; it is now rivers left sterile by industrialization, wilderness pushed back towards annihilation, and streams scarred by human abuse. The national parks represent flop houses where one must die to provide tent space for another. Yet the novel escapes total pessimism with the abiding presence of Trout Fishing in America, the myth, the place, the phrase that remains alive in Brautigan's imagination and in ours. In suggesting that the America which is "often a place in the mind" (TF116) is the real America, Brautigan embraces the tradition of Thoreau who

states, "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains."[30] In _Trout Fishing in America_, the myth remains unattainable, but reality of the search for its existence remains; the object may be elusive, but the search is real. _Trout Fishing in America_ is an original novel plotted in the changing shapes of a disturbing, heart-breaking, and definitely awakening search for what is happening to America.

ENDNOTES

[1]Lawrence Wright, "Life and Death of Richard Brautigan," Rolling Stone, April 11, 1985, 36.

[2]Wright, p. 36.

[3]Charles B. Anderson in The Magic Circle of Walden (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968), p. 18.

[4]Michael Feld, "A Double With Christina," London Magazine, NS 11 (Aug/Sept 1971), 151.

[5]Cheryl Walker, "Relapses and Reprisals," Modern Occasions.

[6]Richard Walters, "Brautigan's Trout Fishing in America, The Pill Versus The Springhill Mine Disaster, In Watermelon Sugar," in Magill's Literary Annual, eds. Frank N. Magill and Dayton Kohler (New York: Salem Press, 1970), p. 56.

[7]Walters, p. 57.

[8]Thomas McGuane, "Trout Fishing in America, The Pill Versus The Springhill Mine Disaster, In Watermelon Sugar," The New York Times Book Review, 15 Feb. 1970, p. 49.

[9]Tonny Tanner, "The Dream and The Pen, "The London Times, 25 Jul. 1970, p. 5, col. g.

[10]Kenneth Seib, "Brautigan's Funky Fishing Yarn," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, vol. xiii, no. 2, p. 63.

[11]John Clayton, "Richard Brautigan: The Politics of Woodstock," New American Review, No. 11 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971) p. 56.

[12]Clayton, p. 57.

[13]Clayton, p. 64.

[14]Clayton, p. 64.

[15]Brad Hayden, "Echoes of Walden in Trout Fishing in America," Thoreau Journal Quarterly, v. 8. iii, July 1976.

[16]Thomas Hearron, "Escape Through Imagination in Trout Fishing in America," Critique, 16, 1 (1974), 25.

[17]Neil Schmitz, "Richard Brautigan and the Modern Pastoral," Modern Fiction Studies, Vol. 19, No. 1, Spring 1987, p. 109.

[18]E. H. Foster, Richard Brautigan (Boston: Twayne, 1983), p. 52.

[19]Marc Chenetier, Richard Brautigan (Boston: Twayne, 1983), p. 52.

[20]Chenetier, p. 42.

[21]Chenetier, pp. 42-43.

[22]Terence Malley, Richard Brautigan (New York: Warner, 1972), p. 10.

[23]Quoted on the back cover of the Delta edition of Trout Fishing in America (New York: Delta, 1967).

[24]Alfred Appel, Jr. "Backgrounds of Lolita," Nabokov: Criticism, Reminiscences, Translations, and Tributes, ed. Alfred Appel, Jr. and Charles Newman (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970), p. 19.

[25]Richard Brautigan, "The Lost Chapters of Trout Fishing in America," Esquire, 74 (Oct. 1970), 153.

[26]David L. Vanderwerken, "Trout Fishing in America and American Tradition," Critique, 16, 1 (1974), 36.

[27]Richard Brautigan, "Forgiven," Revenge of the Lawn Stories 1962-1970 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p. 165.

[28]Hearron, p. 27.

[29]From my discussion on March 31, 1989 with Professor Samuel H. Woods, Jr. (Department of English, Oklahoma State University) concerning the Christian perspective of "fish," he stated that "during the 1960s, while many figures in the counter-culture had a largely secular outlook, an important minority continued to identify themselves with Christianity and some institutionalized churches. These people revived the "fish" as a symbol for Christ and Christians. Up until the time when Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire, early Christians used the Greek word Ichthus

meaning _fish_ to symbolize Christianity (Ichthus is an anagram for Christ). Because of Constantine's vision in which he saw a cross in the sky, the cross generally replaced the fish as the primary Christian symbol. These counter-culture Christians apparently identifed the cross with Establishment Institutionalized Christianity. In their protest against the Establishment Culture, they believed that the fish represented a purer, more primitive variety of Christianity. Since Brautigan uses the Garden of Eden myth in one of his works, it seems quite probable that he would use other Christian myths and symbols."

[30]Henry David Thoreau, _Walden_ (New York: Norton Critical Addition, 1966), p. 66.

CHAPTER III

IN WATERMELON SUGAR

With In Watermelon Sugar (1968), Richard Brautigan like many of his contemporaries deviates from the great tradition of realism that pervades American literature. As readers delve into Brautigan's world of fantasy, no longer are we concerned with the idea of searching for facts or even questioning what the facts are. Richard Brautigan was renting a house in Bolinas, California, from the poets David and Tina Meltzer at the time that he was writing this third novel. If there is any relevance of locality here, then it is in the fact that Bolinas was apparently a secluded spot for contemporary poets and novelists in California, a place for a recluse, much like iDeath of In Watermelon Sugar.[1] But other than that, I do not see any connection between Bolinas and iDeath. The novel is a conjured up creation of Brautigan's imagination, a conjuring much like Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan."

In Watermelon Sugar is a fantasy set in the peaceful community of iDeath, where in the manner of creating a fiction, the inhabitants of iDeath create all

that they are and own spun out of watermelon sugar. What we should now begin to call Brautiganesque qualities continue: a highly stylized, uniquely conceived product, eloquently executed, and of course coated with his trademarks of casual style, quick humor, and unpredictable and eloquent images, reasserting again and again the author's power over and control of the language. Although commonly held by critics as a lesser novel than Trout Fishing in America, In Watermelon Sugar is more concrete in structure and offers a complete story, placed within a set environment, and concludes inside a well-definable period of time. Thus the novel adheres to the Aritotalian concept of time, place and action. I have often suggested to non-readers of Richard Brautigan's works that this novel is an excellent place to begin reading the works of this author since the novel is relatively easy to decipher and there is a lot more incorporated into the novel than just a surface fantasy.

The critical analyses that In Watermelon Sugar has received have been few but varied. Patricia Hernlund believes that although the unraveling of the novel reveals a utopian society, In Watermelon Sugar has an "unpleasant, negative effect."[2] Harvey Leavitt suggests that Brautigan is "responding to the cumulative ages of man" unlike other "utopian dreamers [who] have responded directly to the events of their age."[3] Robert Adams

believes the work is a "fable" and a "nightmare,"[4] while Ron Loewinsohn contends that it is "at once concrete and evanescent."[5] Michael Feld contends that Brautigan's work is appreciated "where there's lots of sensitivity and modernity and drugs and no common sense,"[6] while Richard Walters states that the novel is "quite simply an opera, a complete story, fully staged and cast and set to the music of Brautigan's prose."[7] Thomas McGuane states that "In Watermelon Sugar is a relentlessly enigmatic novel."[8] Noting the complexity of the novel, Mare Chenetier states that in the novel "all reality is mobile, unsteady, and fluctuating"[9] and Edward Hasley Foster asserts that in _In Watermelon Sugar_ we find "a fundamental Buddhist assertion that the root of suffering lies in the endemic human belief in the phenomenal world and its pageant of perpetual change."[10] Mary Rohrberger, noting that there are opposing interpretations to _In Watermelon Sugar_ because of apparent contradictions within the novel itself, suggests that readers need to "understand how surrealism operates" in order to determine the structure and meaning of the novel. Rohrberger states that "it is in the surrealist refraction of reality through the poet-narrator's point of view, the incandescent force of imagination, and, finally, the dream vision structure that the contradictions of the novel are illumined and

resolved."[12] It is obvious from such varied perspectives, that there is a complexity to the novel which is seemingly overshadowed by its surface simplicity.

In brief, In Watermelon Sugar is a novel in three parts of fairly equal length. Book one carries the same name as the novel itself, "In Watermelon Sugar." Much of the author's intent appears in this first book in the chapter "Charley's Idea." The narrator provides twenty-four items of discussion, the last one being this book itself. We are not told the narrator's name; in fact, it is suggested through an entire chapter entitled "My Name" that the narrator is what we make of him: "My name depends on you. Just call me whatever is in your mind."[13] We learn a little bit about the narrator's friends, among whom is Pauline, introduced early in the novel as "my favorite" (WS11), and especially Margaret who, as we are told in due course, was once the narrator's girl friend. In the first chapter the narrator provides a very poetic description of the place called In Watermelon Sugar.

The story begins on a Tuesday when the sun is golden. The narrator wakes up with Margaret knocking on his door, he refuses to answer, she leaves, and Fred comes in a little after Margaret leaves ("He just opened the door and came in"). Fred informs the narrator that

he would like to see him at the watermelon works the next morning; then he shows the narrator an object that neither he nor the narrator can identify; and they both decide that Charley ought to know what it is since "he knows about everything there is" (WS7). Fred leaves; the narrator writes for a while; it gets close to sundown so the narrator walks down to iDeath for dinner. Afterwards, he goes to bed with Pauline, and the next morning after having breakfast at iDeath again, the narrator walks to the watermelon works, one of the two major industries. After arranging to meet his friend Fred for lunch, the narrator returns to his shack to write some more.

Such is the uneventfulness of the narrator's day; and it conforms to the narrator's claim of a "gentle life" and the idyllic atmosphere of In Watermelon Sugar in general. But that is not all that we learn from this first book. The peacefulness of the narrator's life is only superficial, for we are informed through the narrator's memory and in the past tense of certain not so gentle incidents of the past. We are told about how some sociable tigers ate the narrator's parents and at the same time helped him with his arithmetic. We learn that there were lots of these tigers around at one time, but that they have all been eliminated. We also learn about inBoil and his terrible gang, who live at the Forgotten

Works. We must, however, wait till Book Two to find out more about them. The last disturbing note in Book One is the series of references to Margaret who was at one point the narrator's girl friend, but now the narrator desires nothing but to be free of her: "I wish Margaret would leave me alone" (WS5). Besides hints of such recollections of turmoil, the first book moves along fairly serenely, much like the multiple rivers of In Watermelon Sugar.

Book Two is entirely a dream. After returning to his shack, the narrator, instead of working or responding to a note left by Margaret, decides to take a nap. After an initial short dream, the narrator moves into a larger dream of "again the history of inBoil and that gang of his and the terrible things that happened just a few short months ago" (WS68). Via the narrator's dream, we learn of inBoil the malcontent, who after a big argument with his brother Charley, left iDeath and settled in the Forgotten Works. The argument, we understand, concerned the true meaning of iDeath that inBoil claimed only he knew about. inBoil was soon joined by a few "unhappy . . . nervous and shifty" men.

This group of cohorts or "trash," as the narrator calls them seemingly pass their days totally inebriated with whiskey which they produce from "forgotten things"

found in the Forgotten Works (those things do not, of course, exist in iDeath or In Watermelon Sugar). The Forgotten Works is the other edge of In Watermelon Sugar and it stretches, according to the narrator, for a "million miles." The contents of the Forgotten Works are never defined, but the reader well comprehends that it is some form of gigantic trash-heap that the inhabitants of iDeath avoid.

Among the trash of the Forgotten Works are millions of books that at one time were used for fuel. inBoil and his gang, after having lived in the Forgotten Works for several years and constantly drinking whiskey and brooding over the true meaning of iDeath, one day decided to travel en masse to iDeath and show the inhabitants "what real iDeath is like" (WS92). What followed was a grotesque series of self-mutilations as one by one each member of the gang cut off their own thumbs, noses, ears, fingers till iDeath was slippery with blood. inBoil's last words were, "I am iDeath," (WS114) to which Pauline simply replies, "You're an asshole" (WS114).

Not one person at iDeath was the least perturbed at this horrifying episode of communal suicide. Pauline mopped up the blood; and the rest of the people at iDeath gathered the bodies; piled them in wagons; took them to their shacks in the Forgotten Works; and set fire to both the bodies and the shacks. Just before the fires were

being lit, "Margaret came waltzing out of the Forgotten Works," (WS119).

Margaret is the most recent member of iDeath who has practically migrated to the Forgotten Works. She spent more and more time digging amongst the trash-heap. The narrator and others at iDeath were all aware of her fondness for the Forgotten Works, and in Book One the narrator tells us that although there was no evidence, "almost everybody thought she had conspired with inBoil and that gang of his " (WS20). Margaret, however, was never known to have been intoxicated. She was the only member of iDeath who was in the least manner affected by this act of self-mutilation. In fact, "she was very shocked, dazed" (WS120). The narrator, who has been entirely displeased with her ever since her trips to the Forgotten Works started, now feels totally alienated from her: "I could only stare at her who had disappeared into the Forgotten Works that morning" (WS121).

Book Three begins with the narrator waking up from his dream utterly unaffected by the encounters in his dream. He wakes up "refreshed," has no thought of the dream, and prepares to keep his luncheon date with Fred. The placid tone of Book One returns in Book Three. The narrator keeps his appointment and after lunch decides to "work on [his] book for a while" (WS132). However, on his way to his shack, he changes his mind and decides to

go to a place called the Statue of Mirrors.

The Statue of Mirrors is a place where "everything is reflected . . . if you stand there long enough and empty your mind of everything else but the mirrors, and you must be careful not to want anything from the mirrors" (WS134). In the Statue of Mirrors the narrator observes the daily routine of his community of friends and their surroundings: the town, the Forgotten Works, rivers, fields, old Chuck on the front porch of iDeath scratching his head, Doc Edwards on his rounds, Ron's shack, a dog, and even the ashes of the burnt shacks of the Forgotten Works.

Then Margaret appears in the mirror. She climbs an apple tree and hangs herself from it: "She stepped off the branch and then she was standing by herself on the air" (WS135). The narrator although displeased with her for some time is now visibly disturbed: "I stopped looking into the Statue of Mirrors. I'd seen enough for the day. I sat down on a couch by the river and stared into the water of the deep pool that's there. Margaret was dead" (WS136). A little while later he summons Fred and goes over to give Margaret's brother the news. They eventually cut her down and bring her body to iDeath for "that's where she belongs" (WS144). Everybody at iDeath prepares for her funeral and burial. She's buried the following day in the usual manner in a tomb and in total

silence, an attribute that is typical of Thursday's black sun. As is usual in the community, everybody is ready for a dance after the funeral. The novel ends with all of iDeath waiting patiently for the black sun to go down so that the music for the dance can begin.

There is a key problem with this kind of laborious summary of the main narrative of In Watermelon Sugar. Not only does it not reproduce the rhetorical power of Brautigan's writing, it does not bring out the full intent of the novel either. However, what a summary must do is cause a reader to ask some critical questions about the novel: what is the author's intent in this novel? What are the various levels of consideration for this novel? What is the significance of iDeath? Who is inBoil? These questions lead to several other questions that ultimately must be resolved through a systematic analysis in order to understand the meaning incorporated in this very brief novel by Richard Brautigan.

A good place to begin such analysis is to consider the setting of the novel itself. In Watermelon Sugar is a fantasy place enclosed among hills that encircle one side and the Forgotten Works around the other. The place is idyllic. It apparently has all the amenities that provide for a "gentle life." In Watermelon Sugar seems in many ways like Coleridge's"pleasure dome," "Kubla Khan".

Although there is no evidence or even the slightest notion that In Watermelon Sugar was conceived by Brautigan in a dream (and I do not suggest that either), there seem to me to be similarities between both the physical description of the "pleasure dome" and In Watermelon Sugar and also the force with which both seem to have been created. "Khubla Khan" is a poem about the act of poetic creation as much as In Watermelon Sugar is a novel about the act of creating fiction, although Brautigan seems to be skeptical about it: "I hope this works out" (WS1). The dome has come into being by Kubla's decree as In Watermelon Sugar attains existence through Brautigan's decree. Within both landscapes, there is pervasive order. The fertility of the plains in both landscapes is made possible by the mysterious energy of the source. Like the river Alph in Kubla Khan, the river in In Watermelon Sugar meanders generously through the landscape, and the paradise in both contains knowledge of the threat of its own possible destruction: Kubla hears "Ancestral voices prophesizing war" and In Watermelon Sugar is threatened by inBoil and that terrible gang of his.

I draw these similarities because of their remarkable likeness, because "Kubla Khan" is a poem about poetic creation at the imaginative level, and In Watermelon Sugar is about creation of fiction at the

imaginative level. I don't intend to equate the two. In fact, in a matter of equation one would find the differences a formidable task to bridge. "Kubla Khan" is a dream (as many have argued); In Watermelon Sugar is dream-like, it is a fantasy weighing the possibilities: what if we did have different colors of the sun? What if we drew all our resources out of one magnificent agrarian product--Watermelon? The dream factor in In Watermelon Sugar is a technical device enhancing the dream-like quality of the setting as well as a symbolic device revealing the fears imbedded in the subconscious.

In In Watermelon Sugar, the gentle life of the community at large is made possible by the abundance of one key product--watermelon. The "rivers" the narrator talks about in the first chapter must contribute to the fertility of the land which then becomes a congenial place to grow watermelons. Of course, the sun is a major contributing factor as well. Watermelons are the chief crop out of which the community extracts watermelon sugar and with this product they "make a great many things . . . including this book being written near iDeath" (WS2). At the local factory which is, of course, called the watermelon works, are produced different colored planks depending on the color of the watermelons being used.

Surprisingly, no one is seen to eat any watermelon in the entire novel. Apparently, this product is used

solely to create other things including their lives: "Our lives we have carefully constructed from watermelon sugar" (WS1). By "our lives" the narrator means life patterns and not the act of creating life--the biological means of creating life still exists in this fantasy world. In Watermelon Sugar is a place complete with industry, employment, school teachers, children, farmers, brick layers, tomb setters, restaurants, and, of course, as in any communal surrounding, a wonderfully designed community hall--iDeath.

The overall effect of the place is one of life and time suspended in a traumatized situation--possibly after some major holocaust of one kind or another. The reminder of that massive upheaval--whether it be a holocaust (perhaps nuclear) or massive rebellion--is found in the bordering area called the Forgotten Works. The very name suggests that whatever happened, happened a long time ago. The members of the community have little or no recollection of it. In fact, the time of that holocaust must have been far in the past because items found in the Forgotten Works call forth no sense of recognition in the minds of the inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar.

We are informed of this lack of a common memory in the first book. In the chapter titled "Fred," the narrator relates an incident about a "strange-looking"

object sticking out of Fred's pocket.

> "What's in your pocket, Fred?"
> "I don't know what it is myself. I have never seen it before . . ."
> He took it out of his pocket and handed it to me. I didn't know how to hold it. I tried to hold it like you would hold a flower and a rock at the same time.
> "How do you hold it?" I said.
> "I don't know, I don't know anything about it."
> "It looks like one of those things inBoil and his gang used to dig up down at the Forgotten Works. I have never seen anything like it" (WS7).

A hellish place, the Forgotten Works is a junk yard of unrecognizable and undefinable objects that are piled high; piles that can be seen from In Watermelon Sugar on clear days. There are things there that are "two miles long and green" (WS12).

The inhabitants of the gentle commune are not interested in the Forgotten Works. "Nobody knows how old the Forgotten Works are, reaching as they do into distances that we cannot travel nor want to," the narrator states; "It's a big place, much bigger than we are" (WS82). The enter-at-your-own-risk kind of sign that marks the beginning of the Forgotten Works sets the tone of this place:

> THIS IS THE ENTRANCE
> TO THE FORGOTTEN WORKS
> BE CAREFUL
> YOU MIGHT GET LOST (WS83)

The only people who have chosen to live in this abominable place are inBoil the malcontent and a handful of others who have joined him over the years. These people are diametrically opposite, both in physical attire and in mental orientation to the inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar and iDeath. InBoil and his gang are shabbily clothed, dirty and most always drunk. InBoil, having failed to assert himself as leader in iDeath, has done so in the Forgotten Works. He addresses this diabolical place in female terms as "She." The expanse and magnitude of the Forgotten Works are not dream-like and gentle in the sense that In Watermelon Sugar is; on the contrary, it has all the ingredients of a nightmare: "The Forgotten Works . . . . gradually towered above us until the big piles of forgotten things were mountains that went on for at least a million miles" (WS85). The fertility of In Watermelon Sugar is absent in the Forgotten Works. This wasteland is marked by objects that melt repulsively in one's hand. Except for inBoil and his gang, there exists no other life form: "There were no plants growing and no animals living in the Forgotten Works. There was not even so much as a blade of grass in there, and the birds refused to fly over the place" (WS86).

The proximity of a hell being placed so close to paradise is not only logical but dramatically quite

effective. The concept of a hell and a paradise does not necessarily have to be realized through a physical manifestation of those two elements. Ideas of paradise and hell are antitheses, opposites that we accept just as we acknowledge love and hate and good and bad. Their existence is as primal as the existence of humans themselves. By creating such a setting, Brautigan is not offering something original; the originality lies in the mode in which he presents it. The success of his presentation is evident in the atmosphere that is created as a result; the atmosphere is at once concrete and ethereal. The evanescent quality of the novel puts it entirely in the realm of fantasy and imagination and yet the strains of the actual and the earthly remain as major undercurrents. What is real are all the attributes that the Forgotten Works represents. It is representative of a total physical and mental wasteland of contemporary society, the Carnegie Hall of steel, cold and non-responsive, the world of corporate dealing of IBM megabytes where the personality and the person are non-functional entities and therefore non-existent. Perhaps the need to create a world that negates the cold reality of Contemporary America is the reason for this novel: current situations agitate the sensibilities, and the attempt to rebell against these situations and that agitation and the rejection of the notion that people and

their environment are rapidly becoming inconsequential in our contemporary world are given form through an author's imagination and the medium used to complete the undertaking. Brautigan chose to create fiction out of this basic human need to tell. As I have stated earlier, the form of the novel has varied and changed as the form of life, politics, and society have changed. Thus Brautigan's In Watermelon Sugar offers the jigsaw puzzle of life itself through the jigsaw puzzle of the form of his novel; making use of fragments and imaginative juxtapositions, Brautigan provides a new aesthetic convention for the novel, separate from traditional concept that we have been accustomed to.

There are several ways to approach this novel, one of which is by means of its analogues to the Garden of Eden. Brautigan takes us back to the beginning. In Watermelon Sugar is the Eden with its own source of power and soul--iDeath. It is not decreed by God we must assert; it is decreed by perhaps nothing less--the imaginative force of the human mind. In this recreation of Eden, the opening line of the novel is important: "In Watermelon Sugar the deeds were done and done again" (WS1). The "again" phrase that is suggestive of a second coming, not of Christ but of paradise itself. The setting of this paradise is not extraterrestrial; Brautigan is dealing with the recreation of an earthly

paradise. Realizing the failures of the past, the narrator skeptically points out, "I hope this works out" (WS1). There's a two-fold wish pattern in this statement: one, the narrator hopes this earthly paradise works out and two, he hopes that this novel works out. The overall serenity, gentility, and fertility of In Watermelon Sugar with all the physical descriptions of the rivers comes close to the overall gentleness of environment and placidity of the four rivers of Eden itself.

Also noteworthy is the narrator's list of twenty-four items to be discussed which is numerically parallel to the number of books in the current Hebrew edition of the Old Testament. Furthermore, the three part division of the novel parallels the three-fold division of the Old Testament: historical, poetical and prophetical (In the English version of the Old Testament the first seventeen books--Genesis through Esther--are considered to provide a historical survey or sacred history, the next five--Job through Song of Solomon--are the poetical books also referred to as wisdom literature, and the rest--Isaiah through Malachi--are prophetic books that record the activities and messages of the prophets). Although there are evidences of biblical allusions spread throughout the novel, I do not believe that they break down in the same historical, poetical, and prophetical divisions generally

used for Testament. However, Brautigan does provide historical backgrounds for incidents in the novel, and the qualities of the dreams suggest prophetical hints. It is important to remember, that although there are analogues to certain parts of the Bible, it would be foolhardy to equate the two. We must at all points remember that this earthly paradise is not decreed by God--Brautigan's recreation of paradise is an imaginative will at work.

Harvey Leavitt in his analysis of In Watermelon Sugar designates the narrator is Adam II and states that "Adam II is created, not by the hand of God, but out of a disintegrating social order whose meaning is lost. It is not a world in which God is dead, for God has never existed."[14] I hesitate to call the narrator Adam II because it is suggestive of "New Adam" which is traditionally and typologically a term used for Christ; furthermore, I don't believe Brautigan intended that the narrator be a clone of Adam, particularly if we are to consider the chapter "My Name" seriously. Through the statement "My name depends on you" (WS4) and followed by twelve varied incidents and situations the narrator establishes the universality of his name. To such an end, a more appropriate term would be the generic and secular name "man." In this symbolic role, the narrator attains omniscience, existing at the same time in

Charley, Fred, Pauline, Margaret, and the other characters as well as in all of us that comprise the generations.

Getting back to the Eden analogue of In Watermelon Sugar, one must realize that since the hand of God is absent in this creation, In Watermelon Sugar may carry the qualities of Eden but must not necessarily be a perfect paradise, and it is not. One must also recognize that although the divisions and sectionings may parallel those of the Hebraic version of the Old Testament, they certainly are not and were not meant to be equal to the purpose, message, and divinity of the Old Testament itself. What Brautigan does succeed in accomplishing by virtue of the physical parallels is the creation of a testament of the contemporary society; a testament designed not towards some divine order but toward a social order. The narrator then, be he "Adam II" or representative man, is a creation or rather a left over from a highly developed and intensely technological society whose only remains are to be found in a pile of debris at the Forgotten Works. Brautigan's role is much like Khubla Khan in decreeing this paradise into being; the creation is instantaneous and thus seems apparently timeless. The narrator's parentage lies not in "our Father in Heaven" but in persons of flesh and bone who have been devoured by rational talking man-eating tigers.

The tigers are the symbolic incorporations of all qualities that are both human and brutish. They offer rational, logical explanations to explain instinctive killings--they devour the narrator's parents not out of any premeditation or malice, but because they are easy prey and provide food for survival. This basic form of rationalization is easily carried to its extreme, and Brautigan effectively captures the intent.

As civilization or society progresses, as advancements in technology and industry displace human involvement, the connecting line between instinctive acts of violence and survival are drawn so thin that the means and the end no longer justify each other. People lose their ability to justify deeds by means goals. Such regressive and perverted notions cannot sustain a paradise and must therefore be eliminated and in In Watermelon Sugar, the tigers are.

Even though the tigers have all been eliminated; however, their memory remains in the minds of the people and seems to have a constant negative effect on the community. The narrator at one point states, "It had taken years to get over the tigers and the terrible things they had done to us" (WS90). Although the memory remains, the physical elimination of the tigers is complete. In fact, the inhabitants have built the trout hatchery right over the spot where the last tiger was

burned, thus substituting the eternal life force symbolized by trout and trout hatchery for agents of violence and death. In interpreting the function of the tigers, Terrence Malley suggests associations with Blake's use of tigers:

> Whether Brautigan had Blake consciously in mind when writing In Watermelon Sugar I don't know, but I do think that his tigers, like Blake's tiger, are intended to function as symbols of unbridled energy. More explicitly, I think that Brautigan means the tigers to represent a kind of self-destructive aggression that generally comes with adulthood (as I've said the tigers never harmed children, respecting, as it were, the Blakean state of Innocence).[15]

Certainly there is reason for such an interpretation, especially when the narrator tells us that the tigers helped him with his arithmetic while chewing on the bodies of his parents. Had not the tigers been eliminated, the narrator who was at that time only nine years of age, would in all likelihood have been devoured and never reached the state of adulthood.

In another sense, one could also make the case that the tigers are representative of the enigma of the corporate world that consumes the full potential of an individual before discarding him as bare bones, a statement much like Arthur Miller's when he has Willie Loman contend to no avail that "a man is not a piece of

fruit" where one can eat the inside and throw the peel away. No matter how one asserts the negativity of the tigers, it is important to remember Charley's theory that "maybe we were tigers a long time ago" (WS36). The potential that the tiger may still be in "us" (the inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar) makes it necessary to kill the tigers because the purging of aggressive instincts (no matter how painful), the elimination of "the tiger-ness that comes with maturity"[16] is prerequisite to the recreation or even the initial creation of a paradise.

The Edenic analogue in In Watermelon Sugar is an outcome of Brautigan's calculated design. All the natural amenities have been placed and balanced: the representative man with his initial partner, Margaret (perhaps the original Eve figure) and then his more current partner, Pauline (the new Eve for the new Eden) play their designated roles, and finally the Tree of Knowledge quite appropriately substituted for this contemporary Eden by the Forgotten Works. The difference between the Biblical Eden and In Watermelon Sugar as Eden is that the concept of a Biblical Eden precludes a supreme God; In Watermelon Sugar is an Eden without this supremacy and without the authority that comes with a supreme God.

In Watermelon Sugar is an Eden without a

transcendant reference. It functions entirely on self-discipline. This self-discipline is not taught by scholars or parents; it could be passed on by association. The perfect nature of this self-discipline makes one wonder whether the biological development amongst the inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar has not reached a higher order where self-discipline is not so much an acquired virtue, as it is a genetic quality. Brautigan seems to have been aware of the Biblical layout of Eden as he was meticulously designing his. The Garden of Eden is eastward of Eden itself: "the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden: (Genesis 2:8). Although the direction is not clearly noted in the novel, Brautigan's garden of Eden is clearly iDeath with In Watermelon Sugar being the Eden out of which flow the rivers that nourish life in the garden itself.

The immediate relevance of iDeath in the novel is that it serves as a huge communal hall for the 375 inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar. Here the inhabitants gather frequently for dinner and always to make decisions about themselves and the state of In Watermelon Sugar. iDeath is the heartbeat, the soul of In Watermelon Sugar. The rivers that flow through iDeath, the trees, the rocks, the healthy atmosphere, all combine to give iDeath the special effect of a garden within a paradise itself. The narrator walks under a river to get to the kitchen:

"I could hear the river above me, flowing out of the living room. The river sounded fine" (WS19). It is out of iDeath that life In Watermelon Sugar flows, and back to iDeath come the bodies after death.

The spirituality involved with iDeath is almost magical. The narrator says, "Just before I arrived at iDeath, it changed." Why, we are not told, except that "iDeath's like that: always changing." If there is a deity in this novel, perhaps it is what iDeath stands for in the minds of the inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar. The acceptance of iDeath is absolute: "It's for the best" says the narrator (WS18).

The trout hatchery symbolizing continued re-birth and life is situated at iDeath. All aspects of life are celebrated in great detail in both In Watermelon Sugar and iDeath. The narrator's description of the trout hatchery vividly describes the celebration of life:

> the hatchery is small but designed with great care. The trays and ponds are made from watermelon sugar . . . The hatchery has a beautiful tile floor with the tiles put together so gracefully that it's almost like music. It's a swell place to dance (WS109).

Just as life is celebrated at iDeath, so are the dead honored with equal grace. The keepers of the hatchery, "Charley's folks," are buried at the bottom of the pond in the trout hatchery. The narrator tells us

very simply: "They wanted it that way, so they got it" (WS109). Decisions occur simply and easily at iDeath and In Watermelon Sugar, quite contrary to the committees, the political jargon, and the rebukes and rebuttals that constitute decision making in contemporary society. The inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar by virtue of their self-discipline arrive at decisions compatible to all.

Even Margaret, who strayed into the Forgotten Works was brought to iDeath for preparations for her funeral and only one person decided that: "'Let's take her to iDeath,' Fred said. 'That's where she belongs'" (WS144). And so it was. iDeath as the central nerve system of In Watermelon Sugar is also the receptacle for its dead. The bodies of the dead prior to the funeral are placed on a couch near the trout hatchery. Charley, in directing where Margaret should be placed, states "on the couch back in the trout hatchery. That's where we put our dead" (WS146). In this action they balance the scales in a symbolic way.--the dead return to the source of life, reminiscent of the Biblical confirmation "for out of it (dust) was thou taken . . . and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

In the Nabokovian manner of playing with words, Brautigan incorporates several configuration within the word iDeath. The most obvious is the indication of the death of the I, in essence the death of the Self. The

celebration and magnification of the Self that dominates the works of Walt Whitman is absent in In Watermelon Sugar and iDeath. Whitman's love affair with the Self is not a functionl or even compatible quality in Brautigan's Edenic realm. There is a joyous celebration of life here, but it is not with the I; it is a communal celebration with nature. The first person pronoun is pronounced dead in a communal setting that recognizes the value of us and respects interdependency.

The symbolic levels of iDeath do not get complicated till we consider inBoil's definition of iDeath. Prior to that, iDeath stands also for id death and idea death;[17] both concepts function well in the overall significance of In Watermelon Sugar and iDeath. The id must be eliminated if the author is to succeed in creating paradise and that is precisely what has been accomplished. Not only is that id absent in the inhabitants of iDeath, but extraneous sources of it have also been either eliminated or banished: the tigers were killed a long time ago, and inBoil and his terrible gang live in self-banishment at the Forgotten Works which are outside of In Watermelon Sugar.

The equitable balance of bliss existing in iDeath can also be endangered by the intrusion of ideas, concepts, and ideologies. All of these elements are volatile components that have led to the separation of

human relationships and to military confrontations. Thus the ingredient _idea_ is most definitely absent from Brautigan's recipe for paradise. Without ideas the narrator quite understandably has difficulty writing a book; the last book was written thirty-five years ago but no one can recall its subject. The inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar avoid books or materials in print which are the primary sources that document ideas and ideologies. The Forgotten Works contains many books, but Charley points out "Those are terrible books" (WS12). The only use for books in In Watermelon Sugar has been as Pauline explains "to burn those books for fuel . . . they burned for a long time" (WS24). And whatever memory there is of books or ideas is distant memory, vague recollection.

inBoil however has a different design for iDeath. He is the brooding malcontent who correctly defines himself and others of his kind through his name inBoil, suggesting boiling within or fermenting within. He is Charley's brother, but his diametrical opposite. Charley is the gentle all-knowing wise old man of In Watermelon Sugar, and inBoil is the drunken, egotistical agitator who has been threatening for quite some time to do something about iDeath. We thus have the Cain and Abel syndrome. inBoil is thoroughly dissatisfied with the way of life in In Watermelon Sugar and iDeath. In an

argument with his brother Charley, inBoil lets loose his feeling and intent:

> This place stinks. This isn't iDeath at all. This is just a figment of your imagination. All of you guys here are just a bunch of clucks, doing clucky things at your clucky iDeath . . . you wouldn't know iDeath if it walked up and bit you . . . To hell with iDeath. I've forgotten more iDeath than you guys will ever know. I'm going down to the Forgotten Works to live. You guys can have this damn rat hole (WS74).

As the years have gone by, inBoil has attracted a few others like him, and their agitation increased in the same proportion to their drinking. inBoil has continued his threat against the inhabitants of paradise:

> You guys don't know anything about iDeath. I'm going to show you something about it soon. What real iDeath is like.
>
> You guys are a bunch of sissies. Only the tigers had any guts. I'm going to show you. We're going to show you all (WS92).

inBoil is the outcast, the Lucifer who threatens to disrupt the balance of paradise. In his diabolical frame of mind, he considers the self-discipline of the inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar to be detrimental to his concept of iDeath which is not the negation of the self but the assertion of it. His id and his libido are similar to those of the tigers. In Watermelon Sugar, where tigers have been eliminated, therefore poses a serious threat to inBoil's embodiment and assertion of

the total Self. He would much rather have, I am, than iDeath. And one day inBoil literally boils over as he and his gang march up to iDeath and in a grotesque act of defiance and willful self-destruction mutilate their own sense organs.

In his attempt to negate the negation of the self, in order to assert the I permanently, inBoil and his gang hack off their thumbs, noses, ears, and gouge out their eyes. According to Terence Malley inBoil cuts off "pieces of himself to assert his selfhood."[18] With this suicide ended the threat of the Lucifer who, as the narrator recalls used to spend "a lot of time at night in the trout hatchery and sometimes he would laugh out loud and [one] could hear this enormous laugh . . . echoing through the rooms and halls . . . of iDeath" (WS71-72). As inBoil looks on, Pauline mops up his blood, and "when the bucket was almost full of blood inBoil died" (WS114). His last vision was his own blood being mopped up and his last words were "I am iDeath," making that perverted and inverted equation I am = iDeath.

inBoil and his gang do not find a burial spot in In Watermelon Sugar or iDeath. Being forms of destruction, even their own, they cannot be immortalized in Eden. They are piled up in a wagon and carried off to the Forgotten Works where they and their shacks are set afire. The forces of hell are returned to hell.

In creating this contemporary Eden, Brautigan seems to have taken lessons from the Biblical Eden. Keeping the Fall in mind, the author deliberately recreates his paradise in order to avoid a second Fall and in that perspective, he keeps all attributes that may contribute to such a Fall out of In Watermelon Sugar. The Forgotten Works, the possible source of knowledge with its piles of books is Brautigan's version of the Tree of Knowledge, with inBoil the serpent. Whereas in the Biblical Eden, the Tree of Knowledge grows in Eden itself, in In Watermelon Sugar the Tree of Knowledge/Forgotten Works is placed outside this contemporary Eden thus avoiding the Biblical version's siting the Temptation in the "midst" of the garden.

The tree of life/iDeath however is maintained within the boundaries of In Watermelon Sugar. By design, Eve/Margaret fails to "beguile" the narrator. The narrator discontinues his visits to the Forgotten Works with Margaret. Margaret perhaps out of dejection at being rejected by the narrator and definitely out of curiosity, spends more and more time "poking" around the Forgotten Works and surrounds herself with objects found there. The extent of her indulgence amongst the Forgotten Works is revealed after her death and prior to her room being bricked up (In Watermelon Sugar it is customary to brick up the rooms of the dead): "The room

was filled with things from the Forgotten Works. Every place you looked, there was something forgotten that was piled on another forgotten thing" (WS152). As the Forgotten Works claims another victim, the portentous sign at the entry point takes on a deeper warning:

This is the Entrance
To the Forgotten Works
Be Careful
You might get lost

The ominous tone is much like the warning at the gates of hell that Dante tells us about: "ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE." inBoil abandons hope out of defiance and through self banishment; Margaret abandons hope by falling out of sync with the pattern of life in In Watermelon Sugar and giving in to curiosity. The narrator literally turns down a piece of apple pie, and soon after Margaret hangs herself from an apple tree. The death of Margaret as Eve does not disturb the balance of things in In Watermelon Sugar. Harvey Leavitt argues that Margaret plays the role of Eve, but he believes that she is also Lillith, a demon who flies away from him.[19] Perhaps identifying Margaret as "demon" is too harsh a value judgment unless Eve is to be identified with Satan. What Margaret does is tempt the narrator with knowledge and even more than that she tempts herself.

Fortunately for the overall design of In Watermelon

Sugar, Margaret as Old Testament Eve eliminates herself because Pauline makes a much better Eve for this particular Eden. She is entirely committed to In Watermelon Sugar and iDeath, so much so that she's the only one who shows any emotion as she gets "madder and madder' and her face turns "red with anger" (WS113) when inBoil's presence threatens the sanctity of iDeath. As the new Eve, Pauline dreams not of the Forgotten Works but of lambs, and she has no desire to walk the path to the Forgotten Works.

Brautigan's recreation of his new paradise finds its completion at the end of the novel, when the inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar are poised to begin the music and the dance. Although this kind of festivity customarily follows a funeral at In Watermelon Sugar, it has in this case even greater significance; it is the celebration of the beginning of a paradise free of all possible threats to its existence.

Through this novel, Brautigan, acknowledging the detriments of the 20th century, has attempted to create a world free of such detriments. By eliminating all elements or products of elements that stir up emotions or curiosities that contribute to a need to know and by gathering information that might create disparity and dissension, Brautigan creates a society where serene gentle surroundings are perfectly balanced with gentle

inhabitants leading gentle lives. Harvey Leavitt observes that "In Watermelon Sugar, like the Old Testament, is a work of teaching and guidance. It sets up the law and creates the myths of the future."[20]

While the book may teach, guide or even create laws for the future, it certainly lacks the action of the Old Testament. The vigorous if contemplative action of the mind, the miraculous deeds of the chosen as evidenced in the Old Testament is absent in In Watermelon Sugar. Inhabitants of iDeath involve themselves in mundane routine chores of the day but in little else. Dealing in the creation of a paradise, Brautigan attempts to define a utopian society. Society in the Old Testament is, however, hardly utopian. Eden fell from the ranks of utopia as soon as the serpent appeared to begin the process of beguiling both Adam and Eve. There can be no "action" in a perfect society, since there is no conflict. The fact that iDeath seems to pale before the overcharged world of inBoil's contradictory human desires--a need for vigorous activity and contention and a simultaneous desire for peace. Ironically, inBoil's kind of world motivates speculation about utopias and Brautigan's trouble-free society. In Watermelon Sugar offers half-inch rivers, statues of grass and fruit, glass tombs at river bottoms, grand old trout, a sun of a different color each day, and watermelons that mold life

patterns; delightful fantasies such as these provide the base for Brautigan's novel.

A puzzling component of In Watermelon Sugar is the time sequence as it relates to the structure of the novel. One of the key points to establish is the fact that In Watermelon Sugar will celebrate its first day as a paradise on a Friday. Actions prior to Friday are incidents that take place during a period of creation. The basic structure of the novel is its division into three books. The actual time period of the novel is three days, beginning with Tuesday when the sun is golden and ending with Thursday when the sun is black. In Watermelon Sugar as a full-fledged utopia begins the next day, Friday, when the sun is quite appropriately white to signify the purity of paradise.

Within the three-days of the novel, there are actually four time sequences; the past of a long time ago, the twenty-nine years of the narrator's life, the immediate past, and the present. The distant past informs us of the possible beginning of the Forgotten Works: "nobody knows how old they are" (WS82). The reference to a past that is not dated except by very faint recollections of a time long gone works well as a technical device to establish the aura that normally surrounds a science fiction or fantasy. Reference to a kind of collective unconscious long past it leaves a

reader to speculate as to the real event that clearly destroyed a previous society: the causative events could be anything from a simple rejection of a lifestyle to a nuclear holocaust. In any event, the Forgotten Works with its millions of books and stretching into "distances that we cannot travel," for it "went on for at least a million miles" settles itself permanently outside a recreated paradise as a constant symbol of that "something" that must at all costs by avoided.

Anyone who comes in contact with the Forgotten Works, or anyone who is drawn to it is literally and symbolically lost in body, soul, and ideology among its undefinable contents. The cut-off date of this distant past is 171 years ago. Following the cut-off date came an intermediate stage when the tigers were rampant, vegetable statues were built, twenty-three books were written, and Old Chuck and two significant characters of the novel, Charley and inBoil, were born. Both of these characters are considerably older than the narrator. Old Chuck is the oldest member of the community: "must be ninety years old if he is a day" (WS16).

The second time sequence constitutes the narrator's childhood through his twenty-eighth year. He recalls the demise of his parents (they were devoured by the tigers). We are also told how the narrator sat on inBoil's knee (this was before inBoil turned bad) to hear stories;

Margaret a child too at that time was present during these sessions. The significant events during this period are the systematic way in which the tigers were eliminated (the whole event seems to have taken about two years), the growing annoyance of inBoil with the status quo of iDeath, and then the final departure of inBoil for the Forgotten Works. He was gradually joined by twenty others who for some reason or other were disillusioned with In Watermelon Sugar. Pauline comes onto the scene during this time period (she's six when she's first mentioned in the novel).

The third time sequence is the immediate past, events that took place during the twenty-ninth year but before the present time. It is presented entirely in a dream sequence by means of a flash back. The events in the dream begin on a Saturday. There are portentous signs of trouble everywhere. The first of these is the straining of relationship between the narrator and Margaret. As Margaret's interest in the Forgotten Works increases, the narrator's interest in Margaret decreases. A month goes by as the psychological gap between the narrator and Margaret grows wider; during this time also the rumors about threats from inBoil begin to spread:

> Toward the end of the month strange rumors began coming up from the Forgotten Works, rumors of violent denouncements of iDeath by inBoil.

> There were rumors about him ranting and raving that iDeath was all wrong the way we did it and he knew how it should be done and then he said we handled the trout hatchery all wrong. It was a disgrace (WS91).

The fruition of these rumors takes a more concrete shape on Sunday when Charley confronts inBoil: "I asked inBoil what was up and he said, we'd see soon enough" (WS95). The narrator finally breaks with Margaret the following Monday, during dinner time at iDeath:

> Dinner that night was troubled at iDeath. Everybody played with their food. Al had cooked up a mess of carrots. They were good, mixed with honey and spices, but nobody cared.
>
> Everybody was worried about inBoil. Pauline didn't touch her food. Neither did Charley. Strange thing, though: Margaret ate like a horse (WS94).

In response to Charley's inquiry whether Margaret, who had by now been spending considerable time at the Forgotten Works, knows anything about inBoil's plan, she replies, "They don't tell me anything. They're always nice to me" (WS95). This was perhaps not the response that Charley and company were expecting. The narrator recounts the immediate reaction of the people around the dinner table: "Everybody tried hard not to look away from Margaret, but they couldn't help themselves, and looked away" (WS95). Following dinner, the narrator informs us about his personal reaction and decision:

> I was very angry with Margaret. She wanted to sleep with me at iDeath, but I said, "No, I want to go up to my shack and be alone." . . . Her performance at dinner time had really disgusted me (WS96).

As Margaret leaves the scene, Pauline enters. The narrator loses no time in establishing this second relationship; as the narrator praises her painting, Pauline blushes, and he remarks, "It became her" (WS96).

The next day, Tuesday, while Margaret is gone to the Forgotten Works, inBoil and gang march down to iDeath. In protest of the "sissies" that live there and bent on showing what iDeath is all about, they mutilate themselves at the trout hatchery. The scene is just as grotesque, if not more so, as that of the tigers eating the narrator's parents. Following the cleaning up of iDeath and the disposal of the bodies, the narrator sleeps with Pauline thus shutting out Margaret from his life and her life at In Watermelon Sugar.

The last time sequence is the present time: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. This time sequence is interwoven with the other time sequences, thus providing an air of mystery and complexity. During this time, a child is born, a tomb is built, and Margaret hangs herself. The critic Patricia Hernlund focuses on the birth of this child: "Life in Watermelon Sugar may be literally the same as dying, since we are told of only

one birth to 'balance' twenty-two suicides"[21] Hernlund's observation is not entirely correct. We are told specifically about the birth of a little girl (WS128) which is true, but that birth took place within the present three days of the novel where there is only one death, that of Margaret.

Thus the balance of life and death is maintained. The twenty-one suicides (inBoil and his gang) are happenings of the recent past; there are also incidents of multiple other deaths in the distant past. If one is looking to equate the balance between life and death, there are clear evidences of not only children being born, but also that there is a poetic celebration of life at In Watermelon Sugar. If life in In Watermelon Sugar were the same as dying as Patricia Hernlund would have it, where did the gathering of children come from during the march to the Forgotten Works to dispose of the bodies of inBoil and his gang? Brautigan gives life a value far above the death of malcontents and the destruction of elements, showing that this particular society is seeking to achieve a balance of life without conflicts and contradictions is clearly stated by the narrator:

> An almost festive spirit was coming now from the crowd. They were relieved that inBoil and that gang of his were dead.
>
> Children began picking flowers along the way and pretty soon there were many flowers in the parade, so that it became a kind of vase

> filled with roses and daffodils and poppies and bluebells (WS118).

An important consideration must be noted with regard to grotesque deaths in In Watermelon Sugar since they function to enhance the beauty and vibrancy of life that exists there. The multiplicity of detail--the details of life and death, of rebuilding, of entombing--is revealed through the viewpoint of the narrator. The reader must unravel these details since they are presented in a fragmentary manner through the fragmented time sequence. As the reader unfolds the time sequence, details fall into order, and the makings and the workings of this paradise/utopian society are revealed.

Fragmentation of time, place, and incidents provide for the exposition, the setting, and the structure of the novel. This technique is so deftly handled by Brautigan, that he is able to create a novel of the briefest kind and at the same time to provide for a reader information covering nearly 180 years. The fragments are sketches complete with a chronology in themselves. Coherence in the novel is achieved through symbolic associations that cause a reader to reorder the fragments as though they were pieces of a puzzle. Thus structurally this novel is more complex than _Trout Fishing in America_ or any other novel by Richard Brautigan.

If America is more often a "state of mind" than a place, as we are told in Trout Fishing in America, then In Watermelon Sugar is doubly state of mind imaged as a place as varied as a kaleidoscope. This kaleidoscopic nature of In Watermelon Sugar contributes to the structural complexity of the novel, and also allows for greater structural compression than the earlier novel. The shifting nature of the narrator's name, the varied nature of the world of In Watermelon Sugar such as the different colors of the sun for each day that causes the staple crop, the watermelons, to be different colors, and the "indescribable way" that the central meeting place iDeath goes through a series of alterations all these contribute toward the kaleidoscopic effect of In Watermelon Sugar.

Besides the structural complexity and compression of the novel, the reader must also deal with the series of textual symbols that Brautigan uses in In Watermelon Sugar. I have already discussed the major symbols--In Watermelon Sugar, iDeath, The Trout Hatchery, The Forgotten Works, inBoil, and the tigers. Four other major symbols--the different colors of the sun, the grand old trout, the Statue of mirrors, and the foxfires need to be considered.

These four symbols work as complementary patterns to enhance the fantasy world of In Watermelon Sugar. The

various colors of the sun are not there simply to produce a calendar effect (the names of the days are enough), but they are additions that help in distancing the reader even further from the contemporary world by providing a variety of colored lenses to identify the fantasy world. While providing variety, they also add an element of predictability within the ever changing shades of In Watermelon Sugar; for although the sun is a different color each day, it is the same color over and over again for the same day (red on Monday, golden on Tuesday, etc.).

Brautigan's favorite symbol "trout" reappears in this novel, but this time it's not the "hunchback" of Trout Fishing in America: it is the Grand Old Trout. The qualifier "Grand Old" provides a sage like quality to this symbol of life and vitality. In fact, the introduction of the Grand Old Trout where it watches the building of a tomb works as a foreshadowing of impending sorrow, if you will, or unpleasantness to be encountered at a later point. The narrator simply watches the activity of this trout, but the reader grasps the meaning. And of course no fantasy on Brautigan's part would be complete without grand old trout swimming in 1/2 inch rivers.

The exact function of the Statue of Mirrors, although not very clear in the novel, appears to work as

a crystal-ball for the narrator. We are told that everything is reflected in the Statue of Mirrors "if you stand there long enough and empty your mind" (WS134). Like the different colors of the sun that allow for a certain measure of predictability, the mirrors reflect the controlled predictability of incidents within the society of In Watermelon Sugar. The narrator warns us that one "must be careful not to want anything from the mirrors. They just have to happen" (WS134). He also informs us that "some people cannot see anything in the Statue of Mirrors, not even themselves" (WS 134). Although it appears that the mirrors work for a select few, there is no mention in the novel of anyone else using the Statue of Mirrors other than the narrator. For the narrator, the Statue of Mirrors functions as a device that reflects a pictorial guide to the everyday events taking place in In Watermelon Sugar.

The final textual symbol to be considered are the foxfires. In the fantasy world of In Watermelon Sugar, foxfires are used during burial. These evanescent lights are used not only to provide a constant source of light within the glass tombs that used to bury the inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar in, but also symbolically the glow of foxfires represents the retrievable goodnesses of each individual buried within the tomb. One must remember that not everyone is buried in glass tombs with foxfires

glowing within. Representatives of aggression such as the inBoils and the tigers are burned rather than buried. The only evidence of the existence of the tigers lies in the traces of their bones found at river bottoms or via statues that stand forlorn on an unlit abandoned bridge. Gentleness and order are painstakingly preserved (evidenced by the amount of labor put into building and placing the glass tombs) in In Watermelon Sugar. Margaret had come close to crossing that fine line that would have condemned her to the fires of Hell/Forgotten Works. She finds a burial spot at iDeath because her digression from the values of In Watermelon Sugar had only reached the level of deep inquisitiveness about the contents of the Forgotten Works and not the level of aggression.

Margaret's digression and ultimate fate brings out an interesting point of the novel and the society of In Watermelon Sugar. It appears that she's the only woman to have traversed so far and so often into the Forgotten Works. The other migrants have been old men--inBoil and his men, and a long time before the author of the book about the Forgotten Works. Of course the narrator has traveled a few times there, but only to accompany Margaret before he is disgusted with it and Margaret, leading to their separation and finally leading to Margaret's suicide.

Patricia Hernlund objects to the treatment that Margaret received at the hands of the narrator. She considers the narrator to be a "moral coward" and makes the following observation about Margaret's place in In Watermelon Sugar:

> We see Margaret's position as a woman in this society: she does not contribute food, the narrator rejects her body, and she dies . . . What were her choices if Charley had not assigned her to cooking and she had no children after nine years or more? She uses her loneliness in the only creative way she has--collecting. In our society she would at least have had a few rights as a common law wife.[22]

She further raises the question of sexual pleasure, in the narrator's relationship with both Margaret and Pauline:

> If the narrator cannot find satisfaction with Margaret, did he find sexual pleasure with Pauline? Pauline is willing . . . Yet when they make love, neither Pauline, nor the narrator expresses much pleasure or satisfaction.[23]

There are multiple problems with these observations. To begin with, there is no evidence in the novel that asserts that if the women in In Watermelon Sugar do not contribute food or offer up their bodies for sexual gratification they must die. Margaret's choice to frequent the Forgotten Works is a decision made entirely by Margaret herself. Margaret's hobby of collecting is

not the result of the narrator's rejection of her as Professor Hernlund indicates; in fact, the narrator's rejection follows his failed attempts to dissuade Margaret from her association with inBoil and the Forgotten Works.

In Watermelon Sugar is not a novel about the roles of men and women. It is not a novel about male domination over females, and sexuality is not a central point. The society of In Watermelon Sugar makes no judgment concerning sexual activities. The harmony of life, the balance between life and nature, is the result of this particular utopia, and within its framework there is perfect balance between men and women and both with nature. For this reason all forms of aggression and materialism must come to an end in In Watermelon Sugar society. In this new Eden of In Watermelon Sugar's, the old Eve that was beguiled by the serpent may not beguile the Adam and to that end a new Eve, if you will, must out of necessity be made available to sustain the balance--and that is embodied in Pauline's role in In Watermelon Sugar.

In Watermelon Sugar is a lyric description of a society many times removed from contemporary norms. Brautigan creates a new Eden, filled with 1/2 inch rivers, flowers and fruit, showing a balance and discipline that may be unattractive to some but are

acceptable to the inhabitants of In Watermelon Sugar and iDeath. The novel projects in familiar terms unfamiliar events and compiles these events into a collage that provides full recognition to each of its parts while at the same moment constructing a new dimension and new reality transcending its parts.

Qualities such as these and all the other attributes of In Watermelon Sugar that I and others have discussed form the base for the success of this novel. I must confess that unlike Thomas Lask, a contemporary reviewer, it took me more than "30 minutes"[24] to read the novel. At the very least In Watermelon Sugar offers an alternative life pattern without being didactic, or judgmental. If one is looking for a central message in the novel, it would have to be what the narrator tells us on the first page of In Watermelon Sugar: "Wherever you are, we must do the best we can" (WS1). The ultimate appeal of this novel comes from the complexity of its structure, the enigmatic quality of Brautigan's idiosyncratic symbols and the very manner in which he weaves an entire novel about a society that asserts itself into existence not by outward hostility or inner aggression but by what the narrator calls "strength gained through the process of gentleness" (WS23).

ENDNOTES

[1]Lawrence Wright, "Life and Death of Richard Brautigan," Rolling Stone, April 11, 1985, p. 38.

[2]Richard Brautigan, In Watermelon Sugar (New York: Dell, 1968), p. 4. Subsequent refernces will be made from this edition and will be parenthetically cited in the text as WS followed by page number.

[3]Harvey Leavitt, "The Regained Paradise of Brautigan's In Watermelon Sugar, Critique, 16, 1 (1974), p. 19.

[4]Malley, p. 125.

[5]Malley, p. 125.

[6]Both Harvey Leavitt and Terrence Malley use similar breakdowns of the word iDeath.

[7]Leavitt, p. 21.

[8]Malley, p. 128.

[9]Leavitt, p. 20.

[10]Leavitt, p. 20.

[11]Leavitt, p. 20.

[12]Patricia Hernlund. "Author's Intent: In Watermelon Sugar," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, Vol. XVI, No. 1., 16.

[13]Hernlund, p. 13.

[14]Hernlund, p. 14.

[15]Thomas Lask, "Move Over, Mr. Tolstoy," New York Times (daily), 30, March 1971, p. 33.

CHAPTER IV

ABORTION

With the publication in 1970 of The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966, Brautigan presents another stirring view of human alienation in contemporary America. This novel also like Brautigan's other works has drawn little critical review. Although critics like Terence Malley have found both "charm and complexity"[1] in The Abortion, most of the criticisms levied on this novel have been disparaging of it. Auberon Waugh states that in The Abortion, Brautigan "never quite knows when he is being brilliantly funny and original and when he is being a bore."2 In a similar note, Thomas Lask states,"anyone interested in . . . an operation in Tijuana . . . will find The Abortion tense with excitement. The rest of us (some million maybe) will find it a paralyzing bore."3 Joseph Butwin draws the conclusion that through the "simplicity" of the style in The Abortion Brautigan transforms "literature . . . into cult."4 Myron Greenman claims that the reader is not "able to enjoy the book . . . because its slight narrative substance is not compensated by any noteworthy aesthetic, stylistic,

psychological or commentarial innovations or values,"[5] and E. H. Foster's observation is that The Abortion is "a mildly amusing, inoffensive, but, on the whole, bland novel about a San Francisco librarian."6 Needless to say such pungent criticisms do justice neither to the author nor the novel itself, for with his fourth novel, The Abortion, Brautigan modifies a stereotypical idea of a librarian in startling ways. The narrator-hero of this novel is a librarian working for a library that is funded by a mysterious perhaps philanthropic organization "The American Forever, etc." This librarian is not an eight-to-five forty-hour-week worker, sharing the responsibilities with several dozen other co-workers. Rather the narrator is the only individual who is in charge of the library, and his responsibility compels him to be on call twenty-four hours of the day. To that extent, he is more a curator or caretaker of the library rather than just a librarian. The library that he works for is also not the usual sort of place where people come in to borrow books, newspapers, journals or to browse or simply carry on some activity related to research. This is, as the narrator puts it, "another kind of library"[7]. Although this library performs a significant public service, that service is one-way in the sense that books are received but not checked out:

We don't use the Dewey decimal classification

> or any index system to keep track of our books. We record this entrance into the library in the Library Contents Ledger and then we give the book back to its author who is free to place it anywhere he wants in the library, on whatever shelf catches his fancy.
>
> It doesn't make any difference where a book is placed because nobody ever checks them out and nobody ever comes here to read them. This is not that kind of library (TA20).

Thus, functioning only as a receiving station, this library has become a sanctuary for the products of all kinds of writers from that of an old woman who wrote a book by candlelight titled _Growing Flowers by Candlelight in Hotel Rooms_ to that of a sixteen year old who brings in a book he has written on masturbation; there is even a book called _Moose_ by an author named Richard Brautigan who defines _Moose_ the book as "just another book" (TA28).

As the novel progresses, we are introduced to the circumstances surrounding the narrator's first meeting with his current partner Vida (pronounced v-eye-da). Vida Kramar was among the library's several contributors. She came to the library one evening to deposit a book that she had just finished writing: "my book is about my body, about how horrible it is to have people creeping, crawling, sucking at something I am not" (TA45). Vida's body is "horrible" to her, but it is certainly the opposite to everyone outside of herself. We are all familiar with the old cliche that "beauty lies in the

eyes of the beholder"; but in Vida's case, the attraction of her body is far more acute than can be described as "beauty" perceived through the "eyes of the beholder."

> She had a fantastically full and developed body under her clothes that would have made the movie stars and beauty queens and showgirls bitterly ooze dead make-up in envy.
> She was developed to the most extreme of Western man's desire in this century for women to look:" the large breasts, the tiny waist, the large hips, the coy "Playboy" furniture legs.
> She was so beautiful that the advertising people would have made her into a national park if they would have gotten their hands on her (TA43).

Every male who sees her desires a situation that fills Vida with understandable disgust of her own body: "I hate it. It's too big for me. It's somebody else's body. It's not mine" (TA43). Through the process of a series of dialogues range from self-pity on Vida's part to reciprocal consolatory speeches by the narrator, including the narrator's seduction of Vida with the help of a candy bar (Milky Way), the narrator and Vida ultimately end up in bed together: "I brought a book in here tonight denouncing my own body as grotesque and elephant-like, but now I want to take this awkward machine and lie down beside you here in this strange library" (TA56). The end product of this sexual encounter is Vida's pregnancy. The decision, made primarily by Vida, to abort the unborn fetus is almost

automatic. The narrator is thus led to seek the help of his counterpart Foster, who is responsible for guarding the caves in Northern California where overflow books are stored once the space runs out in the narrator's library; Foster is also responsible for transporting the books from the library to the caves and, since the narrator cannot leave the library, Foster also brings with him the necessities that the narrator needs to sustain himself. Compared to the narrator, Foster is a regular cavalier; "he . . . brings . . . food and the little things" that the narrator needs. "The rest of the time he stays drunk and chases the local women, mostly Indians. He's quite a guy. A regular explosion of a man" (TA73). Foster has had the experience not too long ago of getting an Indian girl pregnant and then having to take her to Dr. Garcia in Tijuana, Mexico for an abortion. The narrator naturally turns to Foster for assistance in terminating Vida's pregnancy. Foster arranges with uncanny ease the hotel reservation and the appointment with Dr. Garcia, also paying for the entire trip and the abortion costs. The entire abortion episode is over in a couple of days, and Vida and the narrator return to San Francisco and to Foster.

Although the abortion is a complete success and apparently both Vida and the narrator are in a relaxed frame of mind, not all is well; upon their return to the

library, they find Foster sitting outside the library ousted from his designated role of librarian. A woman has replaced Foster at the desk, having relieved him of his responsibilities as a librarian and established herself in that position. She has considered that the manner in which the place was run by Foster (during the brief two days of the narrator's absence) was a "disgrace." Foster has also been relieved of his duties at the caves and replaced by the same woman's brother. The only individual to be alarmed and dismayed at all of this is the narrator: "I stood there like Lot's wife on one of her bad days. Vida was laughing like hell and Foster was, too" (TA223).

The novel ends with Vida, Foster, and the narrator moving to Berkeley. They all live together along with Foster's new found girl friend, an exchange student from Pakistan. Vida finds a job "at a topless place" and formulates plans of saving enough money to go back to school; Foster is holding a job working at night on an aircraft carrier needing a repair job, and the narrator while actually becoming a hero in Berkeley as predicted by Vida, still gathers contributions for the "American Forever, Etc."

Structurally, The Abortion is distinctly different from both Trout Fishing in America and In Watermelon Sugar. The novel can be broken down into two basic

parts: the first being the incidents surrounding the library and its contents, and the second the incident surrounding Vida's trip to Tijuana and the actual abortion itself. The novel besides being considerably longer than both of its predecessors, is also much slower in pace. Although this slow pace has been a control point of criticism on the part of various reviewers of _The Abortion_, pace actually is an important factor in the novel. It effectively creates the mood and setting for the entire novel; pregnancy and abortion, we must remember, are not processes of great rapidity. The actual performance of the abortion may be quick, but the process of recovery is tedious and sometimes painful. And besides, the abortion dealt with in this novel is not limited solely to the abortion of Vida's unborn fetus. The novel is a cataloging of a series of American cultural, social, and literary abortions.

The hundreds of books brought to this library are at the same time wasted ejaculations and abortions of the intellect. The products of such aborted minds find no receptacle in normal public or institutional libraries, but are aborted a second time at the library overseen by the narrator and then are aborted a third time where they are delivered to the caves in Northern California overseered by Foster. The authors of these books too, it would appear, are individuals aborted from society.

Although Brautigan's description of the various books brought to this library is comic, the undertone is pathetic: "MY TRIKE by Chuck . . . There was no title on the book and no word inside, just pictures" (TA25); ALWAYS BEAUTIFUL by Charles Green." According to the fifty year old author himself the "book has set the world's record for rejections. It has been rejected 459 times and now I am an old man" (TA26); "HE KISSED ALL NIGHT by Susan Margar," a woman with virtually no lips." You had to look twice to see if she had any lips on her face" (TA27-28); "IT'S THE QUEEN OF DARKNESS, PAL by Rod Keen" a man who works in the city sewers. The list goes on over several pages with titles like BACON DEATH, UFO VERSUS CBS, THE EGG LAYED TWICE, THE NEED FOR LEGALIZED ABORTION, and PRINTER'S INK by Fred Sinkus, who was a "former journalist whose book was almost illegibly written in longhand with his words wrapped around whiskey10 (TA30). VIETNAM VICTORY by Salward Fox: "The author was a very serious young man who said that victory could only be achieved in Vietnam by killing everybody there" (TA30). Nearly two-thirds into the novel we encounter Vida receiving a book on masturbation called THE OTHER SIDE OF MY HAND by Harlow Blade, Jr., a sixteen year old who "seemed a little sadder than he should have been for his age," (TA82) and finally Foster's encounter with an "insane" woman with a book that was not quite

delivered to the library:

> The last I saw of her (Foster relates) she was yelling, 'It isn't right that I should end up like this, doing these crazy things that I do, feeling the way I do, saying these things,' and she was tearing pages out of the book and throwing them over her head . . . but the pages didn't have any writing on them. They were blank like snow (TA100).

The regularity with which such books are aborted at this library parallels the regularity with which abortions are carried on by Dr. Garcia in Mexico; the cold quiet library is as much a clinic for abortion as the clinic run by Dr. Garcia. From the samplings provided us of the brief descriptions that are entered into the Library Contents Ledger, a reader is slowly drawn to the realization that Brautigan has just sketched a picture of estrangement, sterility, and often times ennui found in contemporary society, the society that on the surface provides a deceptive notion of calm and stability.

Through his central metaphor, the library, Brautigan gathers the aborted and provides them with a momentary period of warmth before they become one more nameless face. Jim Langlois quite correctly states that in The Abortion, "Brautigan again declares a war of gentle violence waged by the imagination on the emptiness of contemporary life"[8] Our sensibilities are stirred as we

wind through passages of humorous observations that subtly create images of emptiness, an emptiness that seems to be a quiet partner to virtually all of us in contemporary society, a partner who surrounds us like pages that are "blank like snow."

Brautigan continues to wage his "gentle war" using various vehicles. This time the vehicle is a human body--that of a voluptuous, incredibly attractive woman, Vida. The vehicle is Vida's body, not Vida the person. The fast paced, male-dominated society surges forth in its insane drive for instant gratification, so much so that a fellow student of Vida consumes hydrochloric acid when he fails to possess her, and English teachers "fall like guillotines" (TA53) when she approaches. Vida aborts her soul to the library and offers her body to the librarian. There is no love here, neither is there a clue of a suggestion about any form of commitment toward a sustained relationship. At best it is mutual admiration grown out of an understanding that both the narrator and Vida are lost in their own peculiar ways--both aborted from society: "Do you want to sleep with me?" the narrator asks. The consent is vague and intangible: "I don't know what it is about you . . . But you make me feel nice." The narrator's supporting rationale is just as fleeting: "It's my clothes. They are relaxing" (TA55). The whole sequence of this seduction is summed

up by Vida herself: "I brought a book in here tonight denouncing my own body as grotesque and elephant-like, but now I want to take this awkward machine and lie down beside you here in this strange library" (TA56). There is no real issue from this encounter; the pregnancy is aborted. Brautigan's vehicles of abortion, the library and the body, merge as Vida lies "unconscious with her stomach vacant like a chalkboard," (TA186) vacant as the pages that are "blank like snow" that are as blank and sterile as the trail that leads to Mexico and Dr. Garcia. Vida's body lies aborted in Dr. Garcia's clinic as her mind and soul lie aborted in the library and as her personality lies aborted among the male dominated society; and the narrator returns to find himself aborted from the library. These visions of abortions of life and imagination rattle the sensibilities. A library imaged as a womb aborting books and misfits of society presents a striking picture enhanced by an additional irony: the presence of the narrator who must necessarily also be aborted as the books that are brought here eventually are, because it would appear that a society incapable of sustaining life and its values aborts all issues whether they be books, a lost individual, or an unborn fetus. The escape from all of this is not pleasant nor is it life supporting. Vida's groggy remark after the abortion is "you're looking at the future biggest fan The Pill

ever had" (TA200).

This sad but realistic picture would have us all wonder in unison with the narrator. "What are we all doing [here]? The 'we' is not a plurality used for a group of people of one special kind, but a group consisting of people from varied aspects of society. There is a young couple traumatized perhaps by their own nervousness; a high school girl and her very agitated but vigorously respectable parents (the father a banker and the mother with a lot of social contact); and also a grim terse couple who according to the narrator "were awfully tense people and the woman said only three words all the time she was there" (TA189). What was common to all of them was abortion, Dr. Garcia's clinic, and Tijuana. The common thread of anguish among them was their imbedded awareness of illegality: "Everybody looked at everybody else in a nervous kind of way that comes when time and circumstance reduce us to seeking illegal operation in Mexico" (TA173).

Although Mexico is often depicted negatively in the novel, it is not done with the intent to degrade this neighboring country. Brautigan's depiction of the sordidness of life merely spills over into Tijuana, not into all of Mexico. Tijuana "THE MOST VISITED CITY IN THE WORLD" (TA159) is a cynical observation at best. It may be the most "visited city" but not by the whole

world, but by Americans needing a quick fix, and in its Yankee oriented bustle aimed at the pocket book of Americans with a problem, Tijuana becomes much like Vida's body which is separate from the individual.

In much the same manner, actual Tijuana can only watch this strange pilgrimage made by Americans through the eyes of its children: "The children were still playing in front of the doctor's office and again they stopped their games of life to watch two squint-eyed gringos holding, clinging, holding to each other walk up the street and into a world without them" (TA195). The sleaziness observed in Tijuana is no different from that of San Diego. Vida is hesitant to spend the night there: "I hope we don't have to stay overnight in San Diego . . . There are too many unlaid sailors there and everything is either stone stark or near cheap. It's not a good town" (TA106).

If San Diego is not a "good town" then San Francisco holds nothing different for the narrator and company. On the way to the San Francisco International Airport, the narrator makes this observation: "the San Francisco International Airport waited, looking almost medieval in the early morning like a castle of speed on the entrails of space" (TA129), and later on while in the air the narrator recalls that "San Francisco was a . . . gray mark" (TA140).

Of course the whole journey to Tijuana is described in terms that are negative and almost fatalistic in tone: "Everybody who got on the airplane joined the same brotherhood of nervousness" (TA135), "the airplane was a nunnery" (TA138), "The windows of the airplane were filled with terrified passengers" (TA40), "It was an overcast nothing day in San Diego" (TA148), "The young conservative couple sat like frozen beans in their seat in front of us" (TA157), "Those people in front of us are worse than the idea of the abortion," and the perfect description of border towns that "bring out the worst in both countries, and everything that is American stands out like a neon sore" (TA155). Brautigan's descriptive power heightens the atmosphere created around the abortion motif, be the procedure figuratively performed at the library in San Francisco or literally in the cold impersonal rooms in Dr. Garcia's clinic in Tijuana. Brautigan's observations cast into sentences that are wrought with images lend to the creation of frustration, loneliness, and pain that can be shared and experienced in sensory terms by the reader to such a point that we can truly agree that in our contemporary society "the innocence of love" is "merely an escalating physical condition" which is truly "not a thing shaped like our kisses" (TA173). Brautigan's "ten minutes" is "forever" (TA174), and while we wait, we are made to listen, along

with Vida (the symbol of America's sexuality), to the narrator and Dr. Garcia "arbitrate the price of her stomach" (TA175). The novel takes us through a guided tour of the ritualistic procedures of the actual abortion process: The sterile surgical tools carving out the fetus, and through Dr. Garcia's incantation of "no pain, no pain, no pain" almost like "a nervous nursery rhyme" (TA177) each fetus is flushed and flushed again. The cutting edge of this whole episode is our realization that with each premature termination of life, "the surgical hands of Mexico" (TA107) maintain the anonymity of the conservative couple, the respectability of the banker and his wife, and the sexuality of all America embodied in the big busted flat stomached, thin waisted Vida.

There is no doubt that from reading the novel, we understand Brautigan's distaste for abortion, not simply child abortion, but abortions of any kind. One has to be careful not to draw the conclusion that Brautigan is making an anti-women's rights or anti-women's liberation statement. Such a conclusion would be incorrect for reasons that it would be too simplistic an interpretation or equation and that such an interpretation negates all the figurative abortions in the novel. If Brautigan is making a statement of any sort, then it is about the perversions that we are driven to as a result of a

conditional contemporary society that seems to have lost its touch with key life supporting elements.

We must remember that the narrator describes the procedures before and after the abortions performed by Dr. Garcia in relation to two primary elements of life, fire and water: "It was the ancient ritual of fire and water all over again to be all over again and again in Mexico today" (TA189). And when Vida and the narrator finally depart they bid "Farewell" to Tijuana the "Kingdom of Fire and Water" (TA201).

Brautigan's statement on contemporary perversions are complicated since he associates the elements of fire and water with that of child abortion and Tijuana. Clearly, the roles of fire and water have been inverted in Dr. Garcia's clinic and in Tijuana. The Biblical connotations of fire and water are associated with Christ and baptism: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Mat. 3:11). Baptism by water purifies the flesh; baptism by fire (i.e. the Holy Ghost) purifies the spirit. John Trapp in his commentary on the new Testament defines baptism by water as "putting away of the pollution of the flesh" and baptism with fire as baptism with "the fiery Holy Ghost, that spirit of judgment and of burning, where with the

'filth of the daughters of Zion is washed away' (Isa. iv.4)."[9] Fire as purifier through the Holy Spirit is used to "elevate us and carry the heart heavenward, as fire naturally aspireth."[10] In this symbolic sense, fire is then equated with Christ. Mythologically, the elements of fire and water have in one sense or other been associated with either purification or fertility.[11] Even when used for destruction, as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire, the result is the removal of unwanted elements in order to attain a purified status or a more stable condition. In Tijuana, the application of either fire or water appears to be used in a continuous process of elimination, with the intent not to purify but either to hide the shame of a daughter so the family may continue its social activities and maintain their transitory social status, or to maintain the slim, tight figure of Vida, the sex object and desire of all males.

Interspersed with the images of sterility, pseudo social structures, uncontrolled sex drives, and inhospitable neon cities, Brautigan provides images of fertility and regeneration. The narrator describes Foster's van as "egg-like" (TA121). Prior to their arrival at the San Francisco airport, the narrator looks out the window of their vehicle to observe "a sign with a chicken holding a gigantic egg." (TA128). And following that we are given hints about a positive future for the

narrator. In the ensuing dialogue between Vida and the narrator, Vida assures the narrator that he would be a "hero" in Berkeley, and promises to fix him up "with a new life" (TA129).

At the airport, Vida parks the van near the "Benny Bufano Statue of Peace" (TA130) and the table at which they sat to kill the time before departure was "next to a plant with large green leaves" (TA131). In fact, throughout the journey, Vida and the narrator encounter the color green which is the normal color that generally signifies new life, new vitality, and fertility; they reside at the Green Hotel which has large green plants at the windows as part of the decor; and even the clinic in Tijuana was painted green. Whether it is by design or by fateful coincidence, the season in which the narrator and Vida arrive at Tijuana is spring. It is the season of rebirth, and, as the narrator observes, the big display windows of the local Woolworth's were "all filled up with Easter stuff: lots and lots of bunnies and yellow chicks bursting happily out of huge eggs" (TA165).

Interestingly, Brautigan's abortion motif is almost anti-climactic in its resolution as far as the patented reader expectation is concerned. If we recall certain incidents of child birth and abortion in fiction, we realize that there has developed a certain form of conditioning through fiction of expecting the worst

during and following child birth or abortion. Only too frequently in British novels, as for example in those by Charles Dickens, the mother expires following child birth. In Hemingway's Farewell to Arms, not only is the baby still-born, but Catherine, the mother, dies as well from resulting complications. The hero of Faulkner's The Wild Palms, although being an ex-internist, botches up an abortion, and the woman subsequently succumbs from internal hemorrhaging. We cannot forget the incident in Barth's End of the Road when the woman dies a treacherous death suffocating on her own vomit.[12] So it seems to happen in much modern and contemporary literature that the course of birth results in abortion, death and despair.

Not so in The Abortion. Vida is in the reliable hands of Dr. Garcia, and all is well. The actual narration of the abortion process is perhaps the most powerful of all sections of the novel. As Malley says, the whole incident is described with "a Hemingway-like restraint, by means of which the narrator's fear and helplessness comes through very powerfully, as he sits there in the dark, waiting."[13] The wait by the narrator is reminiscent of Henry waiting for Catherine to deliver. The mood of the situation in Brautigan's novel is akin to that presented in A Farewell to Arms, so much so, that we are led to recollect Henry's thoughts as he sits and

waits:

> Poor, poor dear Catherine. And this was the price you paid for sleeping together. This was the end of the trap. This was what people got for loving each other . . . Catherine had a good time in the time of pregnancy. It wasn't bad. She was hardly ever sick. She was not awfully uncomfortable until toward the last. So now they got her in the end. You never get away with anything. Get away hell![14]

We along with Henry expected the worst, and so it was. The doctors fail to save Catherine, and following a series of internal hemorrhaging, Catherine died. Similarly in The Abortion we along with the narrator are expecting the worst but it doesn't happen. After a period of "noisy silence" (TA179), Vida is brought to rest in an adjacent room in the clinic. After the anesthesia wears off, she is able to walk, out of the clinic on her own, and a few hours following she is eating clam chowder at the sparkling "antiseptic and clean and orderly" local Woolworth.

Although the description of the abortion process, and the interminable wait is powerfully portrayed, the whole journey to Mexico, the actual abortion itself, and the return to San Francisco are treated in a low-keyed and anti-dramatic manner. If we combine this form of treatment with an anti-hero librarian, we find the basic contrast between Brautigan's treatment of the abortion motif as opposed to the treatment of abortion and birth

in the usual literary treatment of the subjects. Brautigan fights off this normal tendency of abortions or births ending in death, despair, or alienation and offers his young couple a positive option, a new life. Although using Hemingway-like constraints in describing the abortion process, Brautigan doesn't use the Hemingway fatalistic ending. Unlike the couple in Hemingway's abortion story "Hills Like White Elephants," who find themselves at opposite poles not able to communicate, totally estranged as a result of not an abortion, but of the idea of an abortion, Brautigan's Vida and the librarian actually come closer in their relationship and growth.

The low-keyed quality of the novel is directly related to the anti-heroic, low-keyed personality of the main character, the narrator/librarian. He is nameless (as is the narrator of both Trout Fishing in America and In Watermelon Sugar), suggesting the non-especiality of his existence, and tying him closely to the general mass, at least to those who number among the fairly passive in our society. He seems reminiscent of the undiscriminating "love-everybody" kind of person, forever at the head of a "peace and love" parade. One of the first things Vida does upon bringing the librarian to her apartment (after his expulsion from the library) is to play the Beatles' album Rubber Soul for him.

We must also remember that a series of taxi drivers in Mexico identify the narrator as a Beatle. These associations of the librarian with the Beatles suggest that Brautigan would have us consider this timid and passive librarian to be a hero of our time. Lest we overlook it, the author would also have us consider, rather seriously, that the narrator-librarian turns into a hero at Berkeley. The narrator is a rather acceptable young man. In fact, the narrator's passive qualities make him quietly versatile. The qualities that contribute to his becoming the caretaker of a library for losers also serve as factors toward causing him to become a hero of our time. "My clothes are not expensive" he says at the very beginning "but they are friendly and neat and my human presence is welcoming. People feel better when they look at me" (TA13). The key words to note in this description are friendly, human, and welcoming. Brautigan seems to stress these very basic, yet very essential, and in today's society, very rare qualities.

In Brautigan's scheme of rebuilding a sustained and vital society, we must return to those basic human qualities that were at the roots of our society, and from which we seem to have strayed. In essence, man must begin at a primordial virgin stage. Such is the level at which the narrator/librarian begins his journey into a

society of estrangement. Ensconced in his sanctuary or protective womb of the library, he encounters a first stage of seduction with the entry of Vida. Although the narrator's sexuality is stirred at the sight of Vida, his approach towards Vida is that of a sexually inexperienced man as we watch not the seduction of Vida, but the seduction of the narrator himself. Vida's motions as she slowly turns toward the narrator are measured in fractions and percentages: "She turned her eyes 3/4 toward me" (TA55); "'I've never slept with a librarian before,' she said, 99% toward me. The other 1% was waiting to turn. I saw it starting to turn" (TA56). The seduction takes place not in leaps and bounds but slowly and yet deliberately, a fraction at a time. The fractions also function as a design mechanism to maintain the slow deliberate pace of the action which is in keeping with the pace of the entire novel. The shedding of clothes is an "abstract" experience for the librarian, and with the first physical contact, he seems to come awake from a long stage of dormancy: "I reached out and, for the first time in two billion years, I touched her" (TA58).

To the narrator each phase of this seduction is an entirely new experience; and each experience adds to his development. The stage of virginity in the present condition of our society is a stage long abandoned or

aborted and in the narrator's aborted state, the decision to perform an act of love as opposed to an act of sex, poses great difficulties. The condition of estrangement is so dominant today that it has forced the "gentle" and the "friendly" backward into a fetal stage where decision making is difficult. The dichotomy of the human condition is aptly expressed in the personality of the narrator. Although capable at some level of intellectual ability (since he has written a few works which, granted, may never be read), he is incapable of any social activity--be it sexual or developing a human relationship. Vida's pervasiveness contributes to this particular problem. The narrator has the desire to take Vida, but he lacks the motor skills to unclothe her: "soon we arrived at the time to take off her clothe . . . She wasn't going to help . . . It was all up to me. Damn it . . . I had my own problems" (TA62).

The narrator's seclusion into a literary world of losers helps only to express his frustrations in literary terms: "It would have been much simpler just to have kindly taken her book for the library and sent her on her way but that was history now or like the grammar of a forgotten language." (TA63). The narrator too represents a breed forgotten, a quality abandoned. He is tragically the Alfred J. Pufrock of our contemporary society who is presently faced with a great task of entering into a

sexual relationship with a woman who is the epitome of sexuality: "It was my mission in life to take her bra off . . . It may take me a few days but I'll get it. Don't dishearten" (TA63-64). With such self reassurances, he completes the task and at the end of it all he is surrounded by "a difficult pile of clothes. Each garment won in a strange war" (TA64). The entire episode ends with a simple phrase "we kissed" (TA68). The consummation thus completed, the sex act never reaches the level of lust but remains as an act of love. Although Vida automatically generates lust in all other male members of the society, her relationship with the librarian is gentle and genuine. In the time given, the seduction seems endless, but the outcome and the pace complement each other. The process towards revitalization, towards growth, towards a more positive future must be gentle, and must be slow.

Brautigan art, as a writer, comes through rather impressively as we observe that through the entire seduction scene, there are multiple meanings at play. While the narrator on the one hand is gently and pleasantly moved into a real life situation while still within the confines of his library/sanctuary, Vida on the other hand is gently conditioned to accept her body as her own and made less aware of the reaction that it has drawn all her life up to that point. While the narrator

is presented as a hermit out of contact with the world around him and at the same time aborted by that same world around him, he is shown also to be endowed with a natural ability to make people "feel better" in his presence. The therapeutic treatment which brings together two individuals lost in their own particular ways is reciprocal. The common path toward rehabilitation for both the narrator and Vida in this seduction episode is not so much the act of sex, as it is the recognition of each other, emotionally, sexually, intellectually, and on the narrator's part body part by body part ("There certainly are a lot of parts to a girl" (TA64)). Their nakedness asserts the factor that they must shed their old clothing to start anew; and to achieve regeneration they must begin as humans begin, naked.

Although both the narrator and Vida are integral parts of the journey motif, the narrator requires the most growth. Vida is already aware of the complexities of the outside world. It is the narrator who must step out of his library to receive his christening. To the narrator, the library has served as a sanctuary, both for himself and for the unwanted authors with their unwanted books. Within this sanctuary, the narrator is fully developed. He is sure of the dimensions of the library as well as the limitations of it. He is also entirely

comfortable in having to deal with the lonely contributors to the library; in fact, besides greeting these contributors with a smile, he often treats them with a candy bar and sherry, and, after Vida's arrival, with cookies baked by Vida. Although never having "any formal library training," he has made himself quite "compatible with the running of the library." More than that, the narrator has total control not only of himself but of most situations. "I have an understanding of people and I love what I am doing" (TA23). He has a strong conviction about the worth of his task as caretaker, so much so that he is almost fanatical about protecting it and genuinely concerned about its welfare.

Because of the narrator's feelings about the library and also because of the diverse groups of contributors that frequent it at all times of the night and day (the library is open 24 hours), it is more than just a sanctuary for the narrator. It is also a kind of asylum, a monastery and a fortress all rolled into one. It is a world within itself, devoid and despite the world outside, serving, as it does the librarian, as a cocoon, sheltering the aborted (even if momentarily) individuals of our fast paced society and harboring forever their unwanted products.

Needless to say, the narrator is hesitant to leave this protective environment. He is reluctant to give up

or even leave for a brief moment this womb in which he has cloistered himself from the outside world for three years. His reluctance stems from his memory of his pre-library days that "it was all pretty complicated before I started working here" (TA54) and also that prior to his take-over of the library, "a woman had supported" him "for a couple of years" before she grew tired of him and kicked his "ass out" (TA54). The passivity of the narrator is clear from his own recollections of his life, and this passivity led him to become a virtual recluse as he withdrew from the "complex" world into the library. He is therefore obviously hesitant and nervous in developing a meaningful relationship with another individual (in this case Vida), which can be interpreted to mean that he is reluctant to make that contact with life again. Terrence Malley observes that "this is why the narrator clings so determinedly--even fanatically--to the elaborate ceremonies of the library; ritualization is a kind of detachment; dealing with people's lonely unwanted books enables him to avoid having to really deal with their (or his) lonely unwanted lives."[15] But the narrator does take that first decisive step toward human contact and thereby toward life, perhaps because of his understanding of people, or because of his sexual desire for Vida, or even maybe because of Vida herself who in the latinate form of her name _vita_ stands for life. But

the process is not simple and certainly not easy.

However difficult it may be for the narrator to step outside of his limited world, he and Vida together seem to make major decisions with relative ease. One of the first decisions that the couple makes is to end Vida's pregnancy. Normally a matter such as an abortion suggests ethical, medical, and moral considerations on the part of the parties concerned. The narrator and Vida make the decision which involves such major implications simply and quietly. Once again, Brautigan surprises us with endowing his major character with capabilities that appear to not only travel against the grain of normal literary trends, but also seem to contradict the personality of the character himself. We as the reader would not anticipate the narrator to be able to make such a major decision without due process of first indecision, then a period of heart wrenching soul searching, and finally a fatalistic surrender. The society seems to approve of such traditional literary rituals, but none of this is offered. Instead, the decision to abort is made congenially between the narrator himself and Vida. They readily realize that neither one of them is mature enough to have and rear a child yet.

Vida explains the situation very succinctly to Foster: "Yes, we're too immature right now to have a child. It would only confuse us and this confusion would

not be good for a child. It's hard enough being born into this world without having immature and confused parents" (TA89). They both agree "An abortion is the only answer" (TA71). Once the decision is made, they do not hesitate or reconsider. The mental sifting and resifting of possibilities and options is entirely absent before and after their decision to have the abortion. Brautigan seems to take us back to the very basic issue of human survival and discards all the complexities of contemporary society and law such as the definition of conception and the rights of the fetus. Issues that in today's social, ethical, medical, and moral considerations compile and keep compiling with a host of other issues to finally form a coagulated, complex, and mind boggling something that entirely overshadows the initial problem that generated the whole issue.

In going back to the essentials in his process of regeneration, Brautigan rekindles an old forgotten consideration necessity. In The Abortion, he terms it "gentle necessity." The narrator informs us that the joint decision to have an abortion was "arrived at without bitterness and . . . calmly guided by gentle necessity" (TA71). Combine "gentle necessity" with "friendly," "loving," and "human," and we arrive at the key ingredients that in Brautigan's perspective were the essentials for the founding fathers of this great nation.

Such essentials are important for the narrator too. All that needs to be reignited in him is the willingness and direction to carry on.

The issue of Vida's abortion seems to be the pivotal point of change in the narrator's personality. Whereas he has been depicted as entirely passive in the abortion decision, he begins now to assume a more active role in the reshaping of both his and Vida's life. His change of personality, however, is not massive or sudden. Through a series of gentle maneuvers, a couple of understanding aides (Vida and Foster), and with a touch of Brautigan humor, the process begins. The narrator's hesitance and insecurity in facing the real world is evident once again as he decides to call Foster and leave the library for the first time in three years. Vida's reassurances and the promise that she'll provide "royal carpet treatment" to the contributors to the library in the narrator's absence help him to step outside of the library in order to get to a phone booth. Once outside, the narrator feels that "being in that library for so many years was almost like being in some kind of timeless thing. Maybe an airplane of books, flying through the pages of eternity" (TA75). His struggle to open the telephone booth door is similar to his struggle with Vida's bra. These struggles together with his indecisiveness and feelings of insecurity at the notion of having to step

outside the library and his lack of trust in Vida to make proper entries in the Library Contents Ledger all indicate his inner and outer conflicts. The roles seem to have been reversed; whereas Vida felt awkward at being undressed because it would reveal the body that she hates and in fact believes that it is not her, the narrator is equally if not more uneasy in having to shed the garb of the library/sanctuary. But the undressing for both is a necessary step toward a new starting over, toward the eventual maturity of both of them, and toward a better realization of each other.

The call to Foster is completed after an extra trip back to the library to retrieve the dime that is required to make the call. "I searched all my pockets but, alas, not a cent. I didn't need money in the library" (TA75). The narrator decided to call Foster (his counterpart in charge of the caves) not only because "he got into a thing like this last year and had to go down the Tijuana with one of his Indian girls" (TA72), but also because "he knows a very good doctor there" (TA73). But perhaps more than both of these reasons, the need to call Foster is based on the factor that the narrator relies heavily on him for two basic reasons: one, Foster is responsible for relieving the library of its overload (the caves in Northern California are used to store the excess books); and secondly, Foster is the only one who every few months

brings the food and "the little things" that the narrator needs to survive on.

There is a close kinship between Foster and the narrator. Foster calls the narrator "The kid" and in the narrator's view, Foster is "quite a guy, a regular explosion of a man" (TA73). Their two personalities are diametrically opposite yet are apparently drawn together like the opposite poles of a magnet. Foster's explosive personality thus balances the passivity of the narrator. Needless to say, Foster as the name itself implies serves as a foster parent to the librarian and later on to Vida as well. In fact, by the time that all the arrangements are made to begin the trip to Tijuana, Vida besides being friend and lover to the narrator also assumes a surrogate mother's role. Her initial reassurances help soothe the narrator's nerves and his concern at having to leave the library to make the call to Foster: "'Don't worry. Everything is going to be all right. Stop worrying, Mr. Librarian. I think you have been here too long. I think I'll kidnap you soon'" (TA74). It is Vida who drives herself and the narrator to the airport (since the narrator cannot drive), and it is also Vida who mentions first like a loving mother prophesying a child's future that the narrator would be a hero in Berkeley: "'It's nice over there. You'd be a hero'" (TA129).

Vida has not always been this self-confident. The

relationship between Vida and the narrator has served as a catalyst toward their mutual growth. The young woman who walked into the library with terrible hatred for her own body and considering it as her major handicap in life has adjusted to her voluptuous parts. The narrator's fond observation of Vida at this later stage indicates this adjustment: "My, how her body had relaxed these few months we'd been going together. She was still a little awkward, but now instead of treating it as a handicap, she treated it as a form of poetry and it was fantastically charming" (TA86). This observation on the part of the narrator is also indicative of his own growth. He is more comfortable now, and, in fact, he is quite happy with the relationship--the first vital step toward making a connection with real life.

The narrator having found genuine support from Vida and Foster quickly develops an inner strength that manifests itself outwardly as the couple gets closer to Tijuana. The control shifts from Vida to the narrator. The narrator has already accepted the fact that he has to "discover the Twentieth Century all over again" (TA121). And he has also come to the realization that "the simple things in life go on while we become difficult" (TA109). He of course fully realizes the magnitude of the problem (the impending abortion) at hand and by the time they arrive at the Green Hotel, the narrator assumes more than

a lover's role: "Vida watched me as I signed our new instant married name" (TA151), Mr. and Mrs. Smith. With the name the narrator assumes responsibility. As they travel by bus from San Diego to Tijuana, the narrator this time who reassures Vida: "'It will be all right. Don't worry'" (TA158). Once they arrive at Tijuana, the narrator takes complete charge as he calls the clinic for directions and finally arbitrates the price to be paid for the abortion.

Perhaps the strongest signal of the narrator's growing maturity is evident in the narrator's unquestioning acceptance of "gentle necessity." This phrase is used synonymously with "Fate." At Green Hotel in San Diego while setting the clocks the narrator confirms that "it was absolutely too late for remorse now or to cry against the Fates" (TA107). This realization, however, does not cause either Vida or the librarian to panic. As Vida becomes weaker and more tired, the narrator becomes more decisive. The decision that has left them "firmly in the surgical hands of Mexico" (TA107) has also allowed the couple, not to panic, but to be in a "gentle form of shock" (TA108).

Through the course of the entire novel, the narrator goes through the slow but sure process of learning. The narrator/librarian comes to the realization that the process of learning to arrive at an acceptable level of

maturity is made easier by human contact, that is by contact with life. In the narrator's case this contact ultimately leads him outside his monastery to experience the "real" world of contemporary America and ultimately into Tijuana "the most visited city in the world" (TA159). The narrator's baptism with the outside world is complete with his total expulsion from the library, his womb for three years.

"Gentle necessity" had already become a stern task master for the couple when they had to decide in favor of abortion, and it becomes even sterner when upon return to San Francisco, the narrator finds his library taken over by a fierce woman. He immediately undergoes a kind of internal upheaval, a painful internal convulsion: "My heart and my stomach started doing funny things in my body" (TA221-2). The narrator has become the aborted fetus expelled from the library womb. Although the whole experience to him was quite traumatic, the narrator by now has reached a stage where abortions and explusion and rude awakenings are more readily acceptable to him and thus continues to cope with life. But none of these adjustments have been easy; part of the narrator continues to cling to the idea of library, to that comfortable concept of the warmth and protectiveness of the womb. Even at the end, while enjoying a comfortable life, apparently totally settled with Vida and Foster and

a Pakistani girl, and as Vida had prophesied "a hero in Berkeley," the narrator informs us that he has been "gathering contributions for The American Forever, Etc." (TA226), the organization that is in charge of the library.

"Gentle necessity" has guided the narrator and Vida through the journey through a revisited twentieth century. It would appear that fate had a hand in the journey from the very beginning. If we look closely at the name of the foundation "The American Forever, Etc.", the initials can be rearranged to form the anagram FATE. The numerous references to "gentle necessity" or fate in the novel add to the plausibility that Brautigan intended the anagram be notice. The undressing of Vida is described in such terms: "It was my mission in life to take her bra off" (TA63). After the abortion, also guided by "gentle necessity" the narrator reflects "It was absolutely too late for remorse now or to cry against the Fates. We were firmly in the surgical hands of Mexico" (TA107). And when they arrive at Tijuana looking for Dr. Garcia's clinic, the narrator says, "Fourth Street had waited eternally for us to come as we were always destined to come, Vida and me, and now we'd come, having started out that morning in San Francisco and our lives many years before" (TA167). Once they arrive at the clinic, the narrator makes the following

observations: "the door to the doctor's office opened effortlessly as if it had always planned to open at that time . . ." (TA171). Even earlier than this, while still at the library, the narrator speculates that the reason why so many books end up at the library is "either by design or destiny" (TA35), and he explains to Vida that by taking the job as the librarian he had answered a "rather strange calling" (TA91). And in keeping with the narrator's own prophetical statement in the second chapter of the novel, "I think that the future has quite a lot in store for me" (TA23), upon returning safely to San Francisco following the abortion, he feels that he has completed that futuristic "store" and has travelled a predestined route: "It felt very good to be in the van after having travelled the story of California" (TA219).

These references to fate are tied in with Brautigan's concept of a world of change where his characters who are caught in that change survive either by gentle necessity or fate. They undergo a change either in condition or personality, but a change of one form or another is inevitable. These characters, being entirely removed from the normal accepted definition of the term _hero_ or _heroic_ are subject to being buffetted about within the ever changing currents of the twentieth century, where conditions, for the most part, alienated them and most definitely a condition that they did not

make and one which they have very little control over. Such circumstances provide the key ingredients for some form of social tragedy, but not in Brautigan novels and not among Brautigan characters.

Brautigan's characters travel the tragic, the sterile, the degenerate road of our contemporary society and yet elements of life and perhaps even strains of vitality, however thin that may be, seem to provide an optimistic outlook for the future. In Trout Fishing in America, the narrator is able to find good trout in the cut up streams that were for sale at the Cleveland Wrecking Yard. Although nature had been commercialized, the water in these streams remained crystal, cold and good to the touch. In In Watermelon Sugar, the narrator finds himself in a futuristic society where the essence of life is recreated out of the crisp sweet juice of a most basic commodity, watermelons. The dislocated and uprooted characters of A Confederate General from Big Sur find themselves on the shores of the Pacific, and there too fate has a part to play as the narrator sums up the purpose of their lives: "for after all this was the destiny of our lives. A long time ago this was our future, looking now for a lost pomegranate at Big Sur."[16]

The roads that Brautigan's characters travel are hazardous, and the settings and conditions under which

they function are beyond their control, but there are no violent deaths or tragic misfortunes because Brautigan's characters enjoy a special immunity. And so it is for the librarian and Vida. Their growth as individuals is not imperiled because of a special immunity, and this is evident in the narrator's reaction to the statement made by the desk clerk of the Green Hotel who tells the couple that "People should never change. They should always be the same" (TA202). One would almost predict the narrator to agree to this concept since he has the most transition to make and is most prone to resist change, but he does not agree; in fact, he "holds a straight face" (TA202) only out of courtesy. The narrator does change, but not dramatically and not overnight.

The maturity of the narrator is dictated by that "gentle necessity," through his proper understanding of the situation surrounding him, and he ultimately comes of age to realize that "we have the power to transform our lives into brand-new instantaneous rituals that we calmly act out when something hard comes up that we must do. We become like theatres " (TA109). This belief is perhaps the foremost lesson that the narrator learns, that in this theatre of contemporary society, one flaw among the props, one deviation from the rituals, and one instance of panic can bring the whole process to an end. Through the entire novel, the narrator grows and learns to live,

and this process of growth and learning is one of the central themes of The Abortion. If one wonders how the couple avoids imminent disaster and why the abortion does not end in a tragedy as used to be common in literature, it is only because of the final lesson that "it is easier to do one little thing after another, fragile step by fragile step, until you've done the big difficult thing waiting at the end, no matter what it is" (TA109). Through controlled, guided, fragile steps the narrator himself learns to cope with his own premature expulsion from the library that has nourished and protected him for so long. This protection while keeping the outside world from entering the serene controlled atmosphere of the library has also kept the narrator cocooned from a realistic pattern of life in an outside world where a man's life and success are tested by his ability to survive on his own among terms that are not his own making. The inevitable cutting of the umbilical cord follows the narrator's ousting from the protection of the library and allows him to pursue a life among his fellow humans, to accomplish what the narrator himself had prophesied: "I think the future has quite a lot in store for me" (TA23).

"Gentle necessity" or Fate has helped to determine the future for the narrator, and what the future holds is basically positive. Fate or "gentle necessity," although

being a stern taskmaster, in this case attains the form quite contrary to what we find in Hardy's concept of Fate which in most cases leads to a cruel twist in the fortunes and futures of Hardy's characters. It is because of this highly optimistic quality to Brautigan's concept of Fate that the inevitable that we think should happen at the end of the abortion does not; instead of being a failure or a fatal complication, the abortion succeeds. Granted that pains and anguishes were present and experienced by both Vida and the narrator, but both of these experiences contribute to the growth of the characters and not to their ultimate destruction. Fate as found in Hardy's novels is cruel and destructive; Fate in Brautigan's novel is stern but compassionate and thus "gentle necessity." The end result, therefore, is not the dislocation of Vida, Foster, or the librarian, but their joint relocation within a harmonious life style at Berkeley. Nostalgia for the past still haunts the narrator, but not to such an extent that it debilitates him. He has adjusted to his new life style while still keeping in touch with his old provider, "The American Forever, Etc." organization. He "has been gathering contributions for The American Forever, Etc." but this time more as a social and active contributor than previously in his role as hermit and seeker. At the end of the novel the narrator is at relative peace with

himself and his surroundings:

> I like to set my table up around lunch time near the fountain, so I can see the students when they come pouring through Sather Gate like the petals of a thousand-colored flower. I love the joy of their intellectual perfume and the political rallies they hold at noon on the steps of Sprout Hall.
>
> It's nice near the fountain with green trees all around and bricks and people that need me . . . .. I think it's important that you find things like this at the University of California.
>
> Vida was right when she said that I would be a hero in Berkeley (TA226).

The narrator feels needed and enjoys the fertile surrounding of green trees and fountains. Instead of desiring to retreat into the library, he now cherishes human contact as he mingles with the students who are the future intellectual leaders of this country. Brautigan has successfully transformed the narrator from a hermit to the American forever--the character who can seek peace within a society and yet not forsake the basic radicalism that provides him with an identity. Brautigan incorporates both these elements into his narrator who finds peace in the serenity of the green trees and fountains, and also identifies with basic radicalism represented by the student political rallies.

Critics of the novel have pointed to various apparent weaknesses such as discontinuity of the library fable and shifting to the abortion journey; Brautigan's

failure to develop the character of Foster to greater extent; and also the author's failure to portray Vida as a stereotype. I say apparent because what is observed as discontinuity is actually the element of fragmentation. Brautigan takes the library fable as far as it will go. The section that deals with the abortion is virtually a real description. This realistic experience of abortion balances the imagined section of a mysterious library situated in San Francisco where minds rather than bodies are aborted. By combining the two fragments, Brautigan has successfully portrayed life in these modern times. Foster's character is only incidental in the growth of the main character, the librarian. And if he remains half mysterious, then that is more consistent with the character of this boisterous T-shirted all-American male than our being given a detailed close view of him. The lack of specific detail in the characterization of Foster and indeed also of Vida actually contributes to the sense of remoteness and emphasizes distancing. By placing Foster and the overflow books in a cave somewhere in California, Brautigan adds to the enigma surrounding the imagined library operated by an imagined foundation, The American Forever, etc. Also, by associating the half mysterious Foster with a one-time dealing with Dr. Garcia, Brautigan achieves the effect of having Tijuana seem farther from San Francisco than it actually is.

This distancing of Tijuana is important for the rehabilitation and recuperation of both Vida and the narrator.

Vida, although remaining a stereotype through most of the novel, I think, is finally given a reprieve, beginning with "The Freewayers" chapter. She's at that point very much free of her self-consciousness of the voluptuousness of her body. She seems totally free of her handicap and her conversation with the narrator deals entirely with the curiosity about the intriguing library that the narrator works for and the foundation that supports it. Although in the 60s it may have been virtually impossible to seperate any female with the build of a Vida from stereotyping as a sex object, the narrator with his special heroic ability of perceiving the humanity in people is able to understand and respect (and even to love) the gentle, energetic personality and spirit of Vida as a human being. This realization on the part of the narrator is somewhat self-serving as well---it helps him to ease into a relationship with another human being that acts as a buffer to the many jolts that he experiences as he steps out of his cloistered, protected life inside the library.

A real weakness of the novel may be in what appears to be digressions that seem unrelated to the main thrust. One such section is the chapter "The Man from

Guadalajara" (TA159-63). This section deals with the chance meeting with a nice gentleman from Guadalajara whose story has little to contribute to the overall progression of the novel. Commenting on the problem of unnecessary passages in the novel, Terrence Malley says, "it appears that Brautigan believes that any group of words or sound has intrinsic interest."[17] Malley refers to a poem from Brautigan's Rommel Drives on Deep into Egypt:

> I feel so bad today that I want to write a poem.
> I don't care; any poem, this poem. ("April 7, 1969," Rommel Drives, 54).

Malley goes on to comment that "the kind of deliberate unselectivity implied in this poem--'any poem'--is perhaps responsible for some of the occasions when The Abortion seems to bog down"[18] It is possible to isolate places of weaknesses in The Abortion as it is possible with any work, but they do not appreciably lessen the overall affect of the novel. The novel as a whole works fairly well. The two fragments qualify each other and taken together they heighten the abortion theme. Also, via the imaginary library of unwanted books by unwanted authors, and via the unwanted babies, born of unplanning couples, Brautigan brings together two distinctively different cities and societies, San Francisco and

Tijuana, that unfortunately share a common ground, abortion. Although the abortion theme runs through the whole novel, the two sections portray their own separate stylistic identities.

Despite the fact that The Abortion is criticized as being a lesser novel than either Trout Fishing or In Watermelon Sugar, there is still the evidence of a literary craftsman at work in this novel. There is more variety of tone and style in The Abortion than there is in Trout Fishing in America. In the first section of The Abortion the style is very much like that of Trout Fishing and the tone is involved and quietly, but very definitely, enthusiastic. In the second section, the style is much like Hemingway's (e.g. mirroring the anxiety of the narrator as he waits for the results of the abortion). The tone is less enthusiastic than the first section; it is detached, the anxiety level is high, enthusiasm gives way to cautious anticipation, and in many sections the tone is entirely restrained. Brautigan tells a sad story of our contemporary times without lapsing into sentimentality. Warm, tender scenes in the novel are balanced by scenes of insanity and anguish. In this novel we find not only Brautigan the novelist but also Brautigan the poet. The author uses his creative imagery and his intense descriptive ability to create each of his characters complete with their own peculiar

distinctive identities.

Lest we forget the eighty-year-old woman who has written a book on how to grow flowers by candlelight in a lonely hotel room with no windows, he draws our attention to her mannerisms: "By now the old woman had finished the last drops of coffee in her cup, but she drank them again, even though they were gone. She wanted to make sure that she did not leave a drop in the cup, even to the point of drinking the last drop of coffee twice" (TA20). We may conclude that Brautigan's unheroic, ordinary, and often bedraggled characters survive their alienated state in the contemporary world because of their intangible ability to drink that "last drop" of coffee (of life) twice.

Although Brautigan may not have achieved the uniqueness of either Trout Fishing in America or In Watermelon Sugar with The Abortion; none the less, it is a novel of both depth and complexity. With The Abortion, Brautigan seems to have moved back to the format of his first novel A Confederate General From Big Sur. Not only are there similarities between the characters, but also between their structures. The narrators of both The Abortion and A Confederate General From Big Sur are gentle, oftentimes unsure, and fairly withdrawn individuals. They share the same kinds of anxieties---feeling out of place---and perhaps experiencing those

anxieties with the same degree of intensity. Both the narrators have boisterous counterparts who at certain periods assume the foster parent roles and the women in the lives of both narrators serve not only as lovers, but also as surrogate mothers. Both the novels are predominantly realistic (unlike In Watermelon Sugar); both novels are on the whole continuous and coherent; structurally, both share a similar form of fragmentation allowing the appearance of two rather different books joined together within the same novel. In both cases, the themes and motifs are developed initially in an imaginative level and then given a more realistic setting. As with The Abortion we have the transition from the library fable to the abortion journey, in A Confederate General From Big Sur, we have the transition from a comic review of the Civil War to a life in shacks at Big Sur. Both novels offer a melancholy and in many instances a true to life story of the condition of human being in our times.

In The Abortion, Brautigan provides another example of his versatility as a writer. From the author who has given us a genuinely imaginative and powerfully controlled vision of America in Trout Fishing in America, in a most original view of a futuristic Eden created out of and sustained by one of the most common of all commodities--watermelons, has with The Abortion provided

through a simple style of writing a view of a complex society. Literary style as we have come to accept with all its highly structured sentences and meticulously worked on paragraphs is immediately transformed into an everyday lifestyle format at the hands of Brautigan. The dedication of The Abortion, "Frank: come on in--read novel--it's on table in front room. I'll be back in about 2 hours. Richard" sets the simplicity of style that is to be found in the novel. It is with this simplicity of style that Brautigan has successfully created a novel that focuses on the unspoken demands of a society that seems to have alienated not only the young but the old as well. And it is also with the same simplicity in the same novel that the author offers the possibility of a fresh start within the emptiness of a contemporary society where life and imagination seem to be aborted with the same relative ease. Perhaps this arrogance of simplicity in Brautigan's style in The Abortion that, with all its weaknesses noted, makes the novel still believable in its presentation of setting, story, and character. And through the use of simple and yet powerful writing Brautigan draws the picture of life itself, reminding us of his wishful poem "Shasta Daisy" in Please Plant This Book (1968):

> I pray that in thirty-two years passing that
> flowers and vegetables will water the Twenty-

First Century with their voices telling that
they were once a book turned by loving hands
into life.

ENDNOTES

[1]Terence Malley, _Richard Brautigan_ (New York: Warner, 1972), p. 89.

[2]Auberon Waugh, "Unwanted Books--In Fiction and Fact," _Spectator_, 7544 (27 Jan. 1973), p, 109.

[3]Thomas Lask, "Move Over, Mr. Tolstoy," _New York Times_ (daily), 30 March 1971, p. 33.

[4]Joseph Butwin, "_The Abortion: An Historical Romance_," _Saturday Review_, 54 (12 June 1971), p. 67.

[5]Myron Greenman, "Understanding New Fiction," _Modern Fiction Studies_, 20 (Autumn 1974), p. 309.

[6]E. H. Foster, _Richard Brautigan_ (Boston: Twayne, 1983), p. 98.

[7]_The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966_ (New York: Simon and Schurter, 1971), p. 20. Subsequent references will be made parenthetically in the text via page numbers.

[8]Jim Langlois, "A Review of _The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966_" in _Library Journal_, 96 (15 May, 1971), 1726.

[9]John Trapp, _Commentary on Exposition Upon All the Books of the New Testament_ (London: Baker House, 1647), pp. 20-21.

[10]Trapp, p. 21.

11See *Fire* and *Water* in *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, ed. Funk and Wagnale and *Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols* by Gertrude Jobes (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1961).

[12]Terrence Malley in his book *Richard Brautigan* makes similar observations.

[13]Malley, p. 79.

[14]Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner, 1957), p. 303.

[15]Terrence Malley, p. 76.

[16]Richard Brautigan, *A Confederate General From Big Sur* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 158.

[17]Malley, p. 86.

[18]Malley, p. 86.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

What is Brautigan's special appeal to readers of all ages? Perhaps that appeal lies in his ability to capture a basic vulnerability of the people, to encapsulate a nakedness and frame it within, either a lost pastoral background, or a futuristic vision of a society or even to transform that nakedness into a sad burlesque and thus ultimately produce a fiction that on one hand incorporates the country's sense of growing disaster and on the other provides a continuing spectrum of possibilities for attainment within an increasingly detached contemporary society.

A writer's work does not take its being from initial approval or disapproval. Its life and form is its own, and I have deliberately chosen to discuss Brautigan's novels on the basis of their uniqueness and internal harmonies. The creative energy emanating from Brautigan's works illumines the past anew and as a result certain aspects of the American imagination take on deeper perspective and acquire a richer hue. Brautigan's novels are an assertion of his own identity in the

development of the American myth.

It is important to remember that in America, particular in the last quarter century, change in any realm or format of our social, political, moral or literal aesthetics changes again and again at a peculiarly rapid pace. Much of this rapid change is focused on the constant advancement and giant strides in technology, but a lot of it may be the result of the dissipation of older values. In order to keep pace with this change, whatever the reasons behind the change may be, literature almost unavoidably has had to adjust itself in order to portray the essence of the times. One of the most obvious trends observable in contemporary literature is its reconsideration of history and the idea of progress itself, particularly American history and American progress. As science has progressed to examine the extraterrestrial space, some authors have questioned the historical decisions of our political leaders and satirized the technological advancements of this nation; others have sought brevity and economy of language to keep pace with and define this fast paced, almost inhuman technologically oriented society, and yet others noticed the silent but persistent and ever increasing gap that has been created as a result of a combination of multiple factors such as the advancement of technology and the collapse of traditional values and our ever increasing

drive toward a more and more materialistic life resulting in a wide variety of contemporary literature.

Life in the present culture is best defined as non-linear and the literature of the present times is thus marked. A reader of contemporary American literature no longer experiences the linear consistencies of the past, because the consistencies no longer exist. History as it is being created even today rests, as Ihab Hassan points out in his Contemporary American Literature 1945-1972, "on quicksand."[1] The effect of this phenomena is felt as we notice the shifts in the structures of our intellect so much so that the works produced are perceived "through the kaleidoscope of our consciousness, a changing and many-colored thing."[2] The complexities of the contemporary period and the need to address and express those complexities in terms of their influencing our human needs and our contemporary social, philosophical and political outlook have produced a variety of powerful authors, each bearing a distinctive style. Not only are there variations of style, but the literature also is marked by "formal multiplicity, interfusion, and artistic synaesthesia."[3] The power of imagination in literature is as varied as the multiple forms themselves. The term now being used for all these styles and novel tendencies is post-modernism.

The need to express and define the particular

feeling of vacuity and ennui of the modern world led authors to experiment with the structure, the form, and the language itself as they constructed their novels. The combination of these diverse styles, structures, and forms evident in the works of authors such as Nabokov, Vonnegut, Barth, Barthelme, and Brautigan, to name a few, have come to be known as post-modernism. Malcolm Bradbury explains that the post-modern novel "sought not just to reinvent itself but to display the nature of its inventive process, offering itself as a form of renaming, a form of decreation leading to recreation.

The term "postmodernism" appears to lack concrete boundaries of definition; that is because the term encompasses a whole host of variants within it as it attempts to define and associate the works of multiple new American authors and their varied interests. Malcolm Bradbury quite correctly and economically states that the term postmodernism "suggested a return to the experimental and avant-garde spirit of modernism, but also a revolt against modernism's high seriousness and hope for formal coherence and transcendence."[5] Bradbury goes on to argue that "what it describes and attempts to define has been a fundamental challenge to the past realism and naturalism in American fiction, and to previous experimentalism; and it has opened up the novel as experimental ground in a time when many old images of

America went into dissolution."[6] The works of Nabokov (especially Transparent Things (1972)), Pynchon, Vonnegut, Brautigan, Barth, Gass, and Barthelme to name a few, depict the range of postmodernism, its expanse of coverage, its intent, direction, and style.

Critics have argued that the works of these experimental fictionists within the definition of postmodernism revealed the language crisis of the times. They comment on the collapse of the traditional format and blame it on the late twentieth-century historical, moral, and political condition. Of course it is always debatable whether postmodernism is actually the dominant style of the times as it is with other forms of styles of other genres, but what is assured is that the works of postmodernists have raised initial questions regarding the formal structure of the novel. What is also assured is that as the reader is introduced to different novelistic structures, he is exposed to the talents and mind sets of postmodern authors, not in their indulgence with the language, but through their economy of usage.

Although many may disagree with the forms of the novel created by postmodernists, what is undeniable is a striking vitality in their works. Some American writers as Bradbury states, "are self-conscious fictionalists, others playful or serious users of fantasy and grotesquerie; some are writers of intense historical

preoccupations, others primarily concerned with the formation of text."[7] Works of novelists like Pynchon are marked by excess and mass; works of Barthelme are marked by reductive economy of language, dwelling on lessness and fragmentation ("'Fragments are the only forms I trust'" says one of Barthelme's character in "See the Moon"); and there is Richard Brautigan whose works covering a variety of styles provide us with evidence of his linguistic fortitude as he projects his mastery in the creation of unique images. It would appear that Brautigan in his novels is offering, as it were, a clinic in the art of creating images. Brautigan offers the notion that depth of observation, the creation of magical images out of trivial, mundane, everyday objects combined with the frugality of language and presented with stylistic ease within an open-ended free flowing structure, are the ingredients of a new aesthetics.

Richard Brautigan's use of new fictional forms to describe the current conditions in America as opposed to those conditions that existed during the founding of this country, his attempts to capture the elusive American dream, at least in fiction, and his portrayal of humanity lost in the fast moving technology driven twentieth century is evident in his novels. His novels on the whole do not adhere to the traditional form of narrative. His novels find coherence and meaning primarily on the

imaginative level and therefore it is possible for one of his works A Confederate General in Big Sur to generate "more endings, faster and faster" till it generates "186,000 endings per second."[8]

Not only does the poetic imagination at work in Brautigan novels enable the author to break free from the formal, traditional structure of the novel as we know it, the very same imagination enables him to break free of all concrete definitions and restrictions of the world. Nowhere is this escape from the traditional form of the novel and the concretized nature of the world more evident than in his novel Trout Fishing in America. Consisting of forty-seven chapters, the novel from its very title gives one the deceptive notion that it contains information regarding fishing paraphenalia or the technique of trout fishing. In fact, unlike Melville's Moby Dick, nowhere in the novel is a single piece of fishing equipment, or method of fishing for trout described. On the contrary, through an old pastoral form, Brautigan shows the extent to which mechanization has intruded upon the wilderness. As the mechanical world imposes itself upon the pastoral setting of America, it generates mechanical images; from the juxtaposition of the pastoral and mechanical come strange mergings and contrasts such as "trout steel," and such juxtapositions allow for a new discourse from

everyday linguistics, allowing for invention and fantasy. In this field of invention and fantasy, the title phrase "Trout Fishing in America" undergoes a continuous process of change, until it becomes at once place, person, thing, and idea. The novel begins by remembering trout fishing at the most literal level, people in "three-cornered hats" fishing at sunrise. The experience and action at that point is direct, but with the intrusion of modernity, trout fishing has lost its original meaning and taken on conceptual identity. Neil Schmitz makes the observation that "deprived of its organic predicate, streams, and its physical object, trout, it [trout fishing] becomes a concept, the object of an intensely motivated quest which alters completely the simplicity of its original meaning."[9] Thus trout fishing in America transformed into "Trout Fishing in America" becomes a legless wino, a cheap hotel, a revolutionary slogan chalked on the backs of school children, the political disguise of the murderous "Mayor of the Twentieth Century," and a brooding spirit that remembered "people with three-cornered hats fishing in the dawn."

The transformation is not limited to the metamorphosis of trout fishing to the conceptual phrase "Trout Fishing," but extends to almost all areas of the American wilderness: a woodcock with a fire hydrant for a bill, a stream transformed into a staircase, and a

narrow green stretch of one creek 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" (TF86).

The startling effect of the urban mechanical images attached to bucolic objects portrays the narrator's (or the writer's) sense of his alienation in the wilderness, and our intrusion upon nature; furthermore, it describes the mutilated condition of the place. Pastoral America, as presented in one place in the novel is an outhouse with its door ripped open. Yet the text remains free of polemical accusations and suggestions. Brautigan does not take his myth with its cool greenness and turn it into some didactic social or political statement. All expeditions into the wilderness ultimately and inevitably lead back to the stony presence of Benjamin Franklin, and as Schmitz points out, "what exists in history, things as they are--the leaf spinach in the poor man's sandwich, the dead trout in the spoiled creek--emerge in _Trout Fishing_ with a power the myth can neither allay nor abstract."[10]

However, the imaginative force of the writer seems to pound out an optimistic view from the outer edges of a diminishing wilderness and keep alive the elusive American dream as the narrator of _Trout Fishing in America_ is able to retrieve animate from the inanimate as

he discovers lengths of trout stream "stacked in piles" at the Cleveland Wrecking Yard. Although as readers we come to realize fully the tragic descent of trout fishing in America into "Trout Fishing in America," the narrator is able to find trout in the sections of streams for sale and it "felt good."

Brautigan's constant effort to retrieve the animate from an inanimate world is even more evident in In Watermelon Sugar. The novel is a surreal fantasy set in a peaceful (but not tranquil) community called iDeath which is banked on one side by a junkheap of technological remnants called The Forgotten Works. The inhabitants of iDeath, although living a simple almost bucolic life have yet attained a higher rate of intellectual and technological advancement. They have and continue to mold a gentle world from the juice and sugar extracted from the quite basic and almost universal natural product, the watermelon.

The world of In Watermelon Sugar is a fantasy created out of watermelon sugar: "our lives we have carefully constructed from watermelon sugar and then travelled to the length of our dreams, along roads lined with pines and stones" (TF1). The success of this overtly innocent bucolic community is the defusion of the "I" to "i" and along with that the defusion of an overt emotional reaction and irrational behavior which is

embodied in the outcast inBoil. The threat to this idyllic community is not so much "inBoil and that gang of his" but memory itself---that subconscious association of inBoil and gang (or any deviation by any inhabitant from a strictly communal commitment) with the aggressive tigers that once dominated this place. The tigers, symbolic of all forms of aggression, materialism, and selfish drives, although physically eliminated from the In Watermelon Sugar topography, have established their permanence in the minds of the inhabitants. At least one of the functions of the black soundless day (Thursday) is to create black soundless bricks that are used to entomb and silence forever all that is deemed detrimental to the intricate balance of this community. What is bad is either burned, exiled to the Forgotten Works, or bricked up with black soundless bricks into eternal silence; on the other hand, what is viable and good is enshrined in clear glass tombs and eternally lit with fox fires. Thus, the creation of a new Eden or a totally utopian society is not without some element of tyranny.

The "Gentle life" so sought after and so deliberately constructed at iDeath, tyrannizes in its denial of knowledge (books used as kindling) and in its refusal to name the strange and disliked objects. But knowledge and recognition of incompatible objects is a threat to the very innocence that the writer and

inhabitants of iDeath have so strived to sustain. Thus Brautigan, again in his unique way offers an Eden, a utopia, and at the same time puts it to test. The balance that is created and achieved at iDeath also systemizes and stylizes the inhabitants and the resultant factor is the disfiguring of their humanity, and yet the conditions at iDeath, the Edenic quality remains appealing to us, and even with all the underlying strains of limited tyranny, the creation of such a place offers itself as an alternative to the harshness and cold realities of the modern world.

Brautigan takes us on an imaginative journey where watermelon sugars are an everyday possibility. The "have watermelon will travel" idea finds artistic credibility in the essence and definition of the central extract itself, "watermelon sugar." Thomas A. Volger makes the observation that "watermelon sugar" is "like 'Trout Fishing in America,' a phrase which can be anything from a person to the name of a book. It is a combination of language, and attitude, a sense of form and response which is at once amorphous and particular, innocent and cunning."[11] _In Watermelon Sugar_ offers possibilities and impossibilities extracted from the sweet secretion of the imagination that if we are not careful, and if we wanted could manifest itself as nothing more than sentimental reading. Malcolm Bradbury observes that _In Watermelon_

Sugar with all "its apparent restitution of an innocent pastoral world . . . is open to sentimental reading" but he goes on to state that the novel is "also about the decentreing of the subject, the death of the self (iDeath), about consciousness fading and changing, objects displacing into pure phenomenal existence, then being recovered as random ikons. As in other postmodern texts, words lose their fixity and attachment to things, becoming fluid, just like watermelon sugar."[12]

Brautigan's reluctance to adhere to fixities is evident in the statements of his narrator in In Watermelon Sugar: "My name depends on you. Just call me whatever is in you mind" (WM4), and the same notion is observable in the different colored sun that apparently denies fixities of traditional time. The assertion against fixities is made again as all the books in In Watermelon Sugar have either been burned or relegated to the Forgotten Works, the land of fixed ideas. Brautigan via In Watermelon Sugar not only presents an artistic work employing brilliant imaginative creativity, but also presents a metafictional work that through the denial of fixed writing and solid forms reveals his aesthetic concern for the spontaneous and the immediate.

With the The Abortion: A Historical Romance 1966, Brautigan successfully mixes genres to reveal again his rejection of traditional literary definitions. The first

part of the novel deals totally on the level of fantasy, with a bizarre library where authors literally abort their works. These books are placed anywhere on the library shelves at the will of the authors themselves. The narrator very early in the novel makes it abundantly clear that "this is another kind of library" (TA20). The books are randomly placed thus signifying denial of categorization on one hand, and since none of these books are ever checked out by readers, the futility and resultant vacuity of an abortion is immediately felt.

The second part of the novel is written within the traditional framework of a love story. As Vida (life) intrudes into the library and as the relationship between her and the librarian/narrator develops leading to Vida's pregnancy, the narrator is compelled to step outside of the library womb to face the real world. The novel at this point becomes a realistic love-story as both the narrator and Vida journey to Tijuana, Mexico for an abortion. The abortion motif is the cohesive element that connects the two parts. Although the novel ranks behind both Trout Fishing in America and In Watermelon Sugar on the imaginative level, it is more defined as far as its adherence to traditional structure and continuity is concerned. The novel continues to showcaseBrautigan's mastery at creating remarkable images and subtle ironies. The story,however, is fairly simple and straightforward

beginning with a displaced librarian confined partly by choice and mostly as an aborted product of the Twentieth Century in a library sanctuary and leading ultimately to Mexico to abort a creation that ironically is a product of th narrator's and Vida's own delivery

The novel is not simply limited to the relationship between the narrator and Vida but extends to a variety of observations resulting not only from this relationship, but also from their interaction with or against forces outside of themselves both individually and as a couple. The novel considers not only the condition of twentieth century America, but also travels into international territory: "Border towns are not very pleasant places. They bring out the worst in both countries, and everything that is American stands out like a neon sore in border towns" (TA155).

The Tijuana chapters provide evidence of yet another variation of style within the same novel. The clever phrases and sometimes cute observations seem to disappear in these chapters and in their place we observe "a spare reportorial discourse sharpened and defined by the brutalizing specifics of a tragic experience."[13] The ultimate power of the Tijuana chapters derive not only from the author's remarkable economy of word and effect, but also from the implied judgment that dictates this style: "Alas, the innocence of love was merely an

escalating physical condition and not a thing shaped like our kisses" (TA173). Almost immediately following this sad realistic observation, the narrator seems to acquire a surge of indefatigable optimism as he stoically states,

> ... it is easier to do one little thing after another, fragile step by fragile step, until you've done the big difficult thing waiting at the end, no matter what it is.
>
> I think we have the power to transform our lives into brand-new instantaneous rituals that we calmly act out when something hard comes up that we must do (TA109).

This observation is grotesquely echoed by Dr. Garcia: "No pain and clean, all clean, no pain. Don't worry. No pain and clean. Nothing left" (TA175). As the ordeal and ritual of a macabre baptism by fire and water is passed, we are allowed to rest almost unconscious, as a result of the frenzy, along with Vida "with her stomach" and our souls "vacant like a chalkboard" (TA186).

The narrator ultimately departs from Tijuana with the perfect shape of Vida intact to lead a new life in Berkeley but not before they are reminded by Vida about another social control: "You're looking at the future biggest fan The Pill ever had" (TA200). Sad, realistic, and to the point, this single observation resounds with irony and the irony is all the more cutting for its subtlety. But in keeping with almost all of Brautigan's characters, this couple too is endowed with tremendous

resilience, perhaps because as pawns of fate they accept fate or "gentle necessity" with the same "so-it-goes" attitude revealed by Kurt Vonnegut in Slaughterhouse Five, or perhaps because they must survive all corruptions and catastrophes by confronting and dealing with them "fragile step by fragile step." Brautigan's characters learn, survive, and resist. And so, the young couple along with Foster and a Pakistani exchange student reenter the real world, not with any high expectations of changing the shape of things and situations around them, but to be heroes in their own ways in our times.

As author, Brautigan has many affinities with past American writers. Some of the most noticeable affinities are with writers such as Whitman, Thoreau, Jack Kerouac, Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, and William Carlos Williams. Like them, Brautigan, had a special ear for American English and for its sound and rhythms, and bends, and quirks. Brautigan endows his characters with believable language, if not always believable content, but in the rambling, oftentimes exaggerating story-telling, and yarn-spinning narrative techniques that are so clearly evident in most of his novels, we can see characteristics of Twain, and in the economy of language and oftentimes staccato sentence structures one notices a Hemingway style.

The many fishing scenes and distinct descriptions of rivers, creeds and streams are also clearly reminiscent of Hemingway. It is clear, at least from Trout Fishing in America, that both Brautigan and Hemingway besides loving the outdoor life, share an almost religious view of the curative attributes of nature, of a simplistic mode of living, and of a closeness to earth and water. The stoicism that pervades "Big Two Hearted River" or even The Sun Also Rises also runs through Brautigan's works, that quality of holding on is most clearly evident in The Sun Also Rises as it is in The Abortion. But we must be careful in carrying the analogy too far, because in many cases the two authors are entirely opposite. One vital difference is that the codes by which Hemingway characters are driven (especially Hemingway heroes) and live by are quite contrary to those that provide the resiliency to Brautigan characters. Hemingway heroes go to nature (and sometimes to women) to prove themselves and also to escape from civilization; machismo is an important part of the mental framework of Hemingway characters. On the other hand, although Brautigan's characters seek refuge among the creeks and rivers of the American wilderness or even the sand dunes of the American California coast, they are able to endure not because of machismo, but by taking "one fragile step" at a time; grace under pressure

is converted to "strength through gentleness."

Because of the reflections of the writings of notable earlier American authors in Brautigan's works, critics who have not written him off as a writer of the Beat Generation have categorized him as a parodist. If Brautigan is parodying anything in his works it would be the mimicking of formulaic types of writing from which he and other postmodern writers strive to break. Brautigan's writing reflects the wit, the humor, and even the exaggerations of Mark Twain, but to say that he thus parodies Twain would be entirely incorrect. Brautigan does what Twain did in his time, that is the younger man, like Twain, captures the sounds and rhythms of American English, the human, social, and political weaknesses of America and portrays those entities with, when necessary, exaggeration and understatement. The similarity however ends when we note the peculiarly Brautigan humor and exaggeration. Lee Mellon's preoccupation (in Confederate General) with eliminating the deafening sounds created by the hundreds of frogs that reside in his pond and his final solution to the problem is a key example of this. At the same time that Brautigan's works show traces of Twain influences, the works also reflect the precision of observation that marks the works of William Carlos Williams. Terence Malley notes that "from Dr. Williams, like so many of his contemporaries, Brautigan seems to

have learned to see, to observe precisely, and to bring the apparently trivial or commonplace alive and thereby to raise it above banality."[14] Brautigan also portrays a similar sense of William Carlos Williams's perception of the undisturbed rhythm of Nature as opposed to the almost self-destructive and disruptive lack of harmony between man and nature.

A sardonic undertone in Trout Fishing in America is the realization that with every step the narrator (and others in the novel) takes into the American wilderness to distance himself from metal America, he brings modernized America along with him, thus violating the sanctity of nature that he attempts to commune with. Mr. Norris in "A Note on the Camping Craze that is Currently Sweeping America" not only brings himself to the camping grounds, but a whole paraphernalia that includes an air alarm clock, two-burner Coleman stove, Coleman lantern, aluminum table and a portable ice box. The human intrusion upon the wilderness and the lack of harmony with nature are most succinctly described in the opening sentence of "A Note On The Camping Craze That Is Currently Sweeping America": "As much as anything else, the Coleman lantern is the symbol of the camping craze that is currently sweeping America, with its unholy white light burning in the forests of America" (TF117). Observations such as this and the feelings thus generated

speak for the author as artist in Brautigan; his effectiveness as a writer comes alive from the sensibility he projects and sustains in his writing.

Brautigan's preoccupation with the conditions of contemporary America accentuated by his preoccupations with an American mythic past--the strong undercurrent of nostalgia and elegy in his works--does not define him as a totally original author but rather place him very much in the American tradition. The issues he discusses, the themes he dwells upon are all central concerns in American literature, for many American authors have in one way or another "gone to look for America" and all in their own ways have considered that America is "often only a place in the mind" but none have put it in the terms Brautigan uses. As Ron Loewinsohn states, "Brautigan's language is magical, and absolutely accurate, a kind of lens which allows you to see his vision of America, an America you never suspected was there, but of course it has been there all along and you have lived in it, and now you recognize it."[15] Such capabilities with the language are at the base of Brautigan's writing.

Brautigan's writing does certainly merit critical appreciation, since the novels not only represent and explore pertinent concerns of the 1960s and 1970s but most definitely incorporate concerns that have been at

the nerve center of all American literature. Brautigan will not "vanish" as Jonathan Yardley argues: "Everyday, I expect to come in from lunch and find that the Brautigan cult has vanished in my absence."[16]
Brautigan's works will survive not only because of his gifts of language but also because of their substance and subject material which are America themselves. In his works Brautigan portrays disarming wit, and a magnificent West Coast humor. A strong instinctive sense of craft secures the effortlessness of his prose and a keen sense of time modulates the flights of his imagination to the level of validity and credibility. Brautigan through the use of metamorphoses of sense and subtlety of observation generates a whole range of authentic feelings. As a parodist, he mocks fixities of form. Besides mocking the form of the "romance" in The Abortion in which he also attempts to raze the library of literature itself, he also parodies the fixities of other forms such as the gothic and the Western in The Hawkline Monster, which carries the subtitle "A Gothic Western" forcing together two incompatible forms of writing: Western and Gothic. In Willard and His Bowling Trophies which is subtitled "A Perverse Mystery" Brautigan mocks the fixed form of the gangster genre in film and he touches on pornography as well by dissolving all thrills, suspense, and anticipations common to of mystery writing. In these

novels in particular, we observe the author's almost deliberate attempt to break free of not only the restraints of the traditional form of the novel, but also from its various classifications and genre conventions.

It is this attempt and desire to be free from forms, orders, and fixities that places Brautigan well within the category of postmodernists and one of his more recent works The Tokyo-Montana Express (1980) is a good example of the postmodern novel. The structure is reminiscent of Trout Fishing in America with each chapter seemingly an autonomous piece. Instead of dealing with two different genres, this time he deals with two different cultures, the East and the West. According to Malcolm Bradbury this novel

> has emphasized the poetic and conceptual underpinnings of his work--it emphasizes on the instant, the sense of severance from the past, the awareness of the dissolution of the classic identity, the claims of the fluid moment. It illuminates the serious postmodern 'game' of his work, a work that proposes the wasting of old forms and orders, the exhaustion of writing.[17]

Brautigan compel the reader to exercise his imagination since his novel Tokyo-Montana itself in one sense celebrates the power of the imagination as it connects distances between two hemispheres, two languages, and two cultures. Brautigan's Tokyo-Montana Express is a brand new image of the fluidity of form that connects him to

the postmodernists.

Brautigan presents his ideas through similes and metaphors peculiar to him; although similes and metaphors are certainly not his invention, his particular use of them seem strikingly unique: "crushing the garbage down like an accordian into the abyss" (TF,163); "a ukelele . . . pulled like a plow through the intestines" (TF,76. "like a castle of speed on the entrails of space" (TA,129); "unconscious with her stomach vacant like a chalkboard" (TA,186). With his unique ability to create extraordinary images, sometimes out of the most mundane of objects, Brautigan provides lyrical description, which is often sad and ironic, of conditions in the twentieth century.

Brautigan's works expose the worst in our culture, and yet remains free of polemical accusations. Brautigan has achieved a desirable success in making no judgments about the way of life he presents and his works provide no bromides for living. His dialogues are remarkably exact, his descriptions precise, and his language is consistently inventive and delicate. Malcolm Bradbury quite correctly points out that "Brautigan has proved to be vastly more than an innocently hippie writer, rather an author of gnomic knowledge and imaginative discovery whose spirit of saddened yet finally optimistc hope would pass on to a number of literary successors in the

seventies"[18] and I would add into the eighties and beyond. Even with the death (suicide) of the author in 1984, I dare say Mr. Yardley's desire to see Brautigan's works "vanish" will not come true. Brautigan's works will continue to be considered. His attempts to traverse beyond the traditional and beyond the fixities of genre and narrative styles assert his position as an author of substance; his imaginative prowess enables him to break free of the solidity of forms, to bend language, and to shape a universe of half inch rivers.

ENDNOTES

[1]Ihab Hassan, _Contemporary American Literature 1945-1972_ (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1973), p. 169.

[2]Hassan, p. 169.

[3]Bradbury, p. 160.

[4]Bradbury, p. 162.

[5]Bradbury, p. 160.

[6]Bradbury, pp. 162-63.

[7]Bradbury, p. 163.

[8]Richard Brautigan, _A Confederate General from Big Sur_ (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 160.

[9]Neil Schmitz, "Richard Brautigan and the Modern Pastoral," _Modern Fiction Studies_, Vol. 19, No. 1, Spring 1973.

[10]Neil Schmitz, p. 124.

[11]Thomas A. Volger, "Brautigan," _Contemporary Novelists_, ed. James Vinson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972),
p. 173.

[12]Bradbury, pp. 170-71.

[13]Neil Schmitz, p. 114.

[14]Terence Malley, p. 147.

[15]Ron Loewinsohn, "After The (Mimeograph) Revolution," Tri-Quarterly, 18 (Spring 1970), p. 228.

[16]Yardley, p. 24.

[17]Bradbury, p. 171.

[18]Bradbury, p. 171.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Novels by Brautigan

A Confederate General from Big Sur. New York: Grove Press, 1964.

Trout Fishing in America. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1967.

In Watermelon Sugar. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1968.

The Abortion: An Historical Romance: 1966. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

The Hawkline Monster: A Gothic Western. New York: Pocket Books, 1974.

The Tokyo-Montana Express. New York: Delta/Seymour, 1980.

So the Wind Won't Blow It All Away. New York: Delta/Seymour, 1982.

Poetry by Brautigan

Please Plant This Book. Printed by Graham Mackintosh, 1968.

The Pill Versus The Springhill Mine Disaster. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1968.

Rommel Drives On Deep Into Egypt. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1970.

Loading Mercury with a Pitchfork. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

Short Stories by Brautigan

Revenge of the Lawn. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963.

Primary Works by Other Authors

Barthelme, Donald. Snow White. New York: Atheneum, 1978.

Hemingway, Ernest. A Farewell to Arms. New York: Scribner, 1957.

Reed, Ishmael. The Free-Lance Pallbearers. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967.

Vonnegut, Kurt Jr. Slaughterhouse-Fire. New York: Delacorte, 1969.

------. Cat's Cradle. New York: Dell, 1963.

------. Breakfast of Champions. New York: Delacorte, 1973.

Secondary Sources

Adams, Robert. "Brautigan Was Here." New York Review of Books, 22 April 1971, 24-26.

Bales, Kent. "Fishing the Ambivalence, or, A Reading of Trout Fishing in America." Western Humanities Review, 29 (Winter 1975), 29-42.

Barth, John. "The Literature of Exhaustion." Atlantic Monthly, 220 (August 1967), 29-34.

Bradbury, Malcolm. The Modern American Novel. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Brady, Baruch. Abortion and the Sanctity of Human Life: A Philosophical View. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975.

Butwin, Joseph. Review of The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966. Saturday Review, 54 (12 June 1971), 52, 67.

Chenetier, Marc. Richard Brautigan. New York: Methuen, 1983.

Callahan, David. Abortion: Law Choice and Morality. London: Macmillan, 1970.

Clayton, John. "Richard Brautigan: The Politics of Woodstock." New American Review, 11 (1971), 56-68.

Conover, Pamela Johnston and Virginia Gray. Feminism and the New Right: Conflict Over the American Family. New York: Praeger, 1983.

Ditsky, John. "The Man on the Quaker Oats Box: Characteristics of Recent Experimental Fiction." Georgia Review, 26 (Fall 1972), 297-313.

Duberstein, Larry. Review of Revenge of the Lawn: Stories 1962-1970. Saturday Review, 54 (4 Dec 1971), 43, 49.

Feld, Michael. "A Double with Christina." London Magazine. NS11 (Aug/Sept 1971), 150-52.

Foster, Edward Hasley. Richard Brautigan. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983.

Greenman, Myron. "Some Experimental Modes: Understanding New Fiction." Modern Fiction Studies, 20 (Autumn 1974), 307-16.

Hansen, Arlen J. "The Celebration of Solipsism: A New Trend in American Fiction." Modern Fiction Studies, 19 (Spring 1973), 5-15.

Hayden, Brad. "Echoes of Walden in Trout Fishing in America." Thoreau Journal Quarterly, 8 (July 1976), 21-26.

Hearron, Thomas. "Escape Through Imagination in Trout Fishing in America." Critique, 16, 1 (1974), 25-31.

Hernlund, Patricia. "Author's Intent: In Watermelon Sugar." Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 16, 1 (1974), 5-17.

Hertzler, Joyce Dramel. The History of Utopian Thought. New York: Macmillan, 1973.

Hogan, William. "Rebels in the War with Life." Saturday Review, 48 (13 Feb 1965), 49-50.

Johnson, J. W. ed. Utopian Literature: A Solution. New York: Modern Library, 1968.

Klinkowitz, Jerome. Literary Disruptions: The Making of a Post-Contemporary American Fiction. urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975.

------ The American 1960s: Imaginative Acts in a Decade of Change. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1980.

Langlois, Jim. A Review of The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966. Library Journal, 96 (15 May 1971), 1726.

Lask, Thomas. "Move Over Mr. Tolstoy." New York Times (daily), 30 march 1971, p. 33.

Leavitt, Harvey. "The Regained Paradise of Brautigan's In Watermelon Sugar." Critique, 16, 1 (1974), 18-24.

Locklin, Gerald and Charles Stetler. "Some Observations on A Confederate General from Big Sur." Critique, 13, 2 (1972), 72-83.

Loewinsohn, Ron. "After the (Mimeograph) Revolution." Tri-Quarterly, 18 (Spring 1970), 221-36.

Lotstra, Han. Abortion: The Catholic Debate in America. New York: Irvington Publishers, 1985.

Malley, Terence. Richard Brautigan. New York: Warner, 1972.

Marx, Leo. The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964.

McCormick, E. Patricia. Attitudes Toward Abortion. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1975.

McDonnell, Kathleen. Not An East Choice: A Feminist Re-Examines Abortion. Boston: South End Press, 1984.

McGuane, Thomas. "An Optimist vis-a-vis the Present: Trout Fishing in America, The Pill versus The Springhill Mine Disaster, In Watermelon Sugar." The New York Times Book Review. 15 Feb 1970, 49-50.

Mellard, James M. The Exploded Form: The Modernist Novel in America. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980.

Nash, Roderick. Wilderness and the American Minds. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

O'Hara, J. D. "Happier (but not holier) Than Thou: Trout Fishing in America, The Pill Versus the Springhill Mine Disaster, In Watermelon Sugar." Book World. 11 Jan 1970, p. 3.

"Precious Little." The Times Literary Supplement. 2 Feb 1973, p. 113.

Reich, Charles A. The Greening of America. New York: Random House, 1970.

Rohrberger, Mary and Peggy C. Gardner. "Multicolored Loin Cloths, Glass Trinkets of Words: Surrealism in In Watermelon Sugar." Ball State University Forum, 23, 1 (Winter 1982), 61-67.

Ross, Harry. Utopias Old and New. London: Nicholson, 1938.

Schmitz, Neil. "Richard Brautigan and the Modern Pastoral," Modern Fiction Studies, 19, 1 (Spring 1973), 109-125.

Schneck, Stephen. A Review of Trout Fishing in America. Ramparts, 6 (Dec 1967), 80-87.

Seib, Kenneth. "Trout Fishing in America: Brautigan's Funky Fishing Yarn." Critique 13, 2 (1972), 63-71.

Smith, Mason. "Pink and Fading, in Watermelon Ink: The Abortion." New York Times Book Review, 28 march 1977, 4 and 26.

Stickney, John. "Gentle Poet of the Young." Life, 69 (14 Aug 1970), 49-54.

Tanner, Tony. City of Words. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

------. "The Dream and the Pen." The Times, 25 July 1970, p. 5g.

Thoreau, Henry David. Walden. New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1966.

Vanderwerken, David L. "Trout Fishing in America and the American Tradition." Critique, 16, 1 (1974), 32-40.

Vogler, Thomas. Contemporary Novelists. Ed. James Vinson. New York: St. Martin's 1972.

Walker, Cheryl. "Richard Brautigan: Youth Fishing in America." Modern Occasions, 2, 2 (1972), 308-13.

Walters, Richard. "Brautigan's Trout Fishing in America, The Pill Versus the Springhill Mine Disaster, In Watermelon Sugar." Magill's Literary Annual. Eds. Frank N. Magill and Dayton Kohler. New York: Salem Press, 1970.

Waugh, Auberon. "The Rest of the Iceberg." Spectator, 7444 (27 Feb 1971), 287-8.

------. "Unwanted Books -- In Fiction and Fact." Spectator, 7544 (27 Jan 1973), 108-9.

Wright, Lawrence. "Life and Death of Richard Brautigan." Rolling Stone. 11 April 1985, 30-61.

Yardley, Jonathan. "Still Loving." New Republic, 164 (20 March 1971), 24-25.

VITA

Farhat M. Iftekharuddin

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: RICHARD BRAUTIGAN: A CRITICAL LOOK AT TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA, IN WATERMELON SUGAR, AND THE ABORTION

Major Field: English

Personal Data: Born in Bangladesh, 17 May 1952, the son of Mohammed Mohiyuddin and Bilquis Begum.

Education: Received Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in English from University of Dacca in 1974 and 1976 respectively; completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy at Oklahoma State University in July, 1989.

Professional Experience: Teaching Associate, Department of English, Oklahoma State University, January 1979 to December 1984; International Admissions Counselor, Office of Admissions, Oklahoma State University, June 1985 till present.