The females within the design/debris motif in three novels by John Hawkes

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THE FEMALES WITHIN THE DESIGN/DEBRIS
MOTIF IN THREE NOVELS BY JOHN HAWKES

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Introduction

John Hawkes, according to Tony Tanner, is perhaps the most "disturbing" contemporary American writer. Many people would agree with this commentary on Hawkes, a man whose work has moved from the surreal in The Cannibal (1949) toward the more realistic, a movement predicted by Albert Guerard in his introduction to The Cannibal. As this movement away from the surreal has occurred, then why does Tanner find Hawkes' "disturbing" in a review of his most recent novel, Travesty? Perhaps because this movement was not from the surreal to the realistic as we generally use the term, but rather a movement from extraordinary, confusing distortion toward novels which are more orderly and less difficult to read. The "disturbance," then, lies in the intrigue generated by the content.

Hawkes's early novels are indeed puzzling. The Cannibal is a hallucinative vision of wartime Germany. In it Hawkes's nightmare of war is sustained, an unrelenting vision of the grotesqueries of war. The novel is difficult to follow on the first reading because Hawkes uses a dream-like structure to support the nightmarish content.

The Beetle Leg (1951), the author's second novel, is a surprise in the corpus of Hawkes's work. The landscape remains unreal, but now the setting is the American west. Indeed, in looking at Hawkes's landscapes we find such diverse locales
as a mythic England, the surreal Germany already mentioned, an unidentified European countryside, and a tropical island somewhere. Hawkes has commented,

I take literally the idea that the imagination should always uncover new worlds for us....I want to write about worlds that are fresh to me. ...Conrad speaks of the sights and sounds of London crowding in on him and inhibiting his imagination. And this danger of familiarity is something I have tried almost unthinkingly to avoid. 9

The Beetle Leg, set in an imaginative American west, is a peculiar concoction of the grotesque and the comic. Guerard sees it as comic ritual honoring the dead, a novel preceding but along the same lines as Barthelme's The Dead Father. The tone of Faulkner's tragi-comic As I Lay Dying is also evident in The Beetle Leg.

The Lime Twig (1960) is probably the best known novel by Hawkes. It is here that his nightmare vision is most dynamic, the violence of postwar England forming a focus for the work. Although the dream landscape is again functioning, it is not the difficult and at times seemingly incoherent "dreamscape" of The Cannibal. In The Lime Twig a detective plot is superficially at work; churning beneath this "plot" is the sinister undertone of violence done to England's war children, appropriately named here Michael and Margaret Banks.

The novel which follows The Lime Twig is Second Skin (1963), a work which is laden with the horror of The Lime Twig but generates, finally, a new vision, a relief of harmony and beauty after the drudgery and violence endured in the novels
which preceded it. In this work Skipper, the protagonist, endures extreme pain and psychological agony, all the while remaining rather cheerful himself. The terror he undergoes is counterpointed by comedy, an interplay which Hawkes has mastered. At the conclusion of Second Skin Skipper has shed an existence of horror and found an apparent Nirvana, a tropical island where he is blissfully happy.

The three works which follow Second Skin make the harmony of that book's conclusion seem a silly illusion. The reader may, in fact, feel that he/she has been duped by Skipper's happy ending. These three novels, The Blood Oranges (1970), Death, Sleep, & the Traveler (1973), and Travesty (1976) are examined in this paper.

As previously stated, these works, the most recent in Hawkes's career, are more readable and more "realistic" than his earlier novels. Nonetheless, they are "disturbing," as Tanner has pointed out. Hawkes is regarded as an experimentalist, and has said that "the true enemies of the novel [are] plot, character, setting, and theme...." He goes on to say, however, that his novels are "elaborately structured."

And structure--verbal and psychological coherence--is still my largest concern as a writer. Related or corresponding event, recurring image and recurring action, these constitute the essential substance or meaningful density of my writing.

The three fictions to be examined in this paper resonate with recurring images and motifs. One of these motifs, that
of complementation, shall form the foundation for this discussion. The use of complements, of course, is not new. It is Hawkes's use of complements which intrigues—or disturbs—the reader.
The Design/Debris Motif
Hawkes's narrator in *Travesty* uses the terms "design" and "debris" in speaking of harmony and its antithesis. But Hawkes's use of complementation goes beyond the formula of design's being equated with harmony and debris' being equated with disharmony. Within the three novels, *The Blood Oranges, Death, Sleep, & the Traveler*, and *Travesty*, Hawkes moves from a basis of harmony/disharmony to a more involved use of complements, delving into the complementary capacities of particular characters who may function as complements with more than one other figure. Further, the characters from one novel seem reflected, although not exactly, in the other works, forcing the reader to ponder the patterns as they are illustrated in the three novels working as one whole.

John Graham sees a theme of willfulness spiraling more and more tightly inward in the three works, and he proffers the argument that "human constructs are nothing but constructs on the positive side, but effective only toward death." He sees the progression going so far toward isolation that he suggests that Hawkes's next offering may be a blank page. By examining the complementation motif I draw different conclusions. The patterns of complements, based in the wider theme of design and debris, build to a final statement of not only destruction, but also of survival.

One of the most readily discernible ancestors of Hawkes's complementation motif is the Taoist symbology of yang and yin.
Although yang and yin may be individually identified as good and evil, active and passive, light and dark, male and female, etc., they are not elements in opposition. Rather, they are components of a balance which is sustained by its own tension. The symbol poises contraries to achieve balance. The apparent opposites invade the territory of one another, and create a unity of complements.

The designs to be considered in this study are similarly poised; they are composed of complementary elements which balance for a time. What may appear to be opposites are revealed to be components of a pattern of contraries which is necessary if the design is to exist at all. Disharmony informs the state of harmony; debris underlies and is thus always a part of design.

Carl Jung commented on complements in his writings about the conscious and unconscious:

And just as the conscious mind can put the question, "Why is there this frightful conflict between good and evil?", so the unconscious can reply, "Look closer! Each needs the other. The best, just because it is the best, holds the seed of evil, and there is nothing so bad but good can come of it." 24

For our purposes, we might say that Hawkes's design "holds the seed" of debris. Again, it should be emphasized that we are not speaking of opposites or an "either/or" operation. Just as Jung, in discussing the elements of the self, uses the word "compensatory" and not the word "opposed," Hawkes uses the elements of design and debris as compensatory to
one another to make up the "selves" of his fictions.

Jung is especially pertinent to a study of Hawkes's fictions, for in talking about the creation of his works Hawkes has stated that his art is the result of his conscious mind working on the unconscious elements. Further, in the three novels to be analyzed here we have characters who can be understood as projections of the narrators' unconsciences, figures who fill compensatory roles in the narrators' selves.

This paper will specifically focus on the females in the three novels, and again the Jungian perspective proves to be valuable. In his writings Jung has also focused on the complementary, compensatory nature of man and woman, whether as two selves or as man and his anima self. Hawkes's females, I shall try to show, are projections of facets of the male narrators' psyches: their animae incarnate. The needs of the narrators are, for a time, compensated for by the females, and design, or harmony, is created. The females themselves interrelate in that they appear to complement not only the male narrators but each other as well. Again yang and yin are brought to mind: one female may be active, the other passive; one may be sexual (profane) and the other may be sacred in her innocence. The two work together to form one concept of Woman, or at least Woman as perceived by the narrator. This woman embodies parts of the narrator and also compensates for his psychological gaps. "Woman," said Jung, "with her very dissimilar psychology, is and
always has been a source of information about things for which a man has no eyes." Furthermore:

...a man, in his love choice, is strongly tempted to win the female who best corresponds to his own unconscious femininity—a female, in short, who can unhesitatingly receive the projection of his soul. 28

When a balance is achieved between the male and these "projections of his soul," the result is design, harmonic pattern which is especially prominent and lyrical in The Blood Oranges. However, as the balance cannot be sustained in the fragmented world of post-World War II writers, the shift from design to its inherent complement, debris, begins. Each of the three novels, The Blood Oranges, Death, Sleep, & the Traveler, and Travesty, has its own internal design/debris motif; yet viewed on a grander scale we can see that the motif is extended to encompass the three works as a whole, moving, metamorphosing, from The Blood Oranges through Death, Sleep, & the Traveler, and culminating in Travesty.

The design which is composed of the females and their relationship to their respective narrator also metamorphoses from lyricism, through ambiguity, to a forceful statement in celebration of debris. Jung stated that, "...when a man recognizes that his ideal persona is responsible for his anything but ideal anima, his ideals are shattered, the world becomes ambiguous, he becomes ambiguous even to himself." 29

Hawkes's work invokes the vision which is, for the male, destroyed, leaving man ambiguous or self-annihilative.
Hawkes's design/debris motif, then, reflects both the Taoist yang and yin and the archetypes of Jung. It has roots even in man's earliest attempts to understand his existence, his creation of myth. In Greek mythology Eros, who was the Greek principle of Order, was spawned by Chaos and Erebus. Similarly, John Hawkes has said that "The Illyric vision, harmony, can exist only because of the power of chaos." In this paper we shall examine the balance of harmony and chaos, design and debris, with emphasis on the female characters as components of the complementation pattern as revealed in Hawkes's The Blood Oranges, Death, Sleep, & the Traveler, and Travesty.
The Blood Oranges
In his earlier works (*The Cannibal*, 1949, and *The Beetle Leg*, 1951) Hawkes presented the nightmare. In *The Lime Twig* (1960) the nightmare was revealed to be the complement of the most cherished, or "best" dreams of the characters. In *Second Skin* (1963) the "worst" dream, or nightmare, was again suffered, but the best dream prevailed. In the three works which followed, the "triad" of *The Blood Oranges*, *Death, Sleep, & the Traveler*, and *Travesty*, the pattern of design and debris as interdependent components emerges. Harmony such as Skipper found in *Second Skin* exists in the triad, but it is harmony informed by disharmony as real or potential debris. Whereas parts of life were examined in the earlier novels, the triad seems to illustrate a totality of vision which would by necessity include both harmony and disharmony, design and debris.

It may appear, as Guerard has suggested, that in *Second Skin* Hawkes was offering a departure from the horror of his earlier works. If Skipper's dream island does exist, and if harmony is finally achieved for Skipper, Catalina Kate, Sonny, and Sister Josie, that harmonic vision is a short-lived one in the corpus of Hawkes's work thus far. *The Blood Oranges*, *Death, Sleep, & the Traveler*, and *Travesty* seem to reverse any positivism *Second Skin* may have offered. The regenerative activity of Skipper is vague in Cyril's attempts to regenerate love with the schizoid Catherine, is absent in the meaningless
survival of Allert in *Death, Sleep, & the Traveler*, and annihilated in the narrator's will for destruction in *Travesty*. If Hawkes was promoting a sense of harmonic triumph in *Second Skin*, in his triad he seems convinced that design implies debris and perhaps the travesty is to try to force any re-creative process upon that. Cyril in *The Blood Oranges* is optimistic about his capacity to redeem design from his "tapestry's" debris, but his optimism looks less realistic than it does foolhardy; Allert in *Death, Sleep, & the Traveler* lacks the regenerative possibilities even of a Cyril as he is left in the ambiguous wreckage of his home and family; and the narrator in *Travesty* sees the design of their car wreck, with the mangled bodies within, as potential regeneration of their debris—a questionable version of continuation and harmonic triumph which, in any case, is rendered impossible even by the narrator himself. The pattern of the triad does, as Graham suggests, seem to be spiraling more tightly inward toward annihilation.

Functioning within this pattern are the female figures who work both with the various protagonists and with each other in tapestries of their own. To analyze these women, therefore, is to look at design within design, and to observe any loss of design for them is to understand deterioration in the larger pattern.

Design in *The Blood Oranges* is based primarily on sexual relationships, or "love's tapestry," as Cyril calls it. The
primary female figures, Fiona and Catherine, are complementary figures projected by Cyril, the protagonist. Cyril's foil, Hugh, is yet another compensatory, balancing figure, in that he is all that Cyril does not want in his own maleness.

The Blood Oranges, like most of Hawkes's other works, does not move chronologically and its time scheme is fragmented. Cyril, the narrative voice on which we must depend for information, informs us immediately of his views regarding love's designs and the fact that his tapestry now hangs in shreds. (p. 3) The novel then moves in and out of the present, as Cyril recounts his past when the tapestry was whole.

The debris of Cyril's situation is clearly evident in his first descriptions. He mentions the abandoned villa, the broken red tiles, the snails and sediment and gloom of funeral cypresses (pp.2-5), all of which provide contrast to the light, peace, and charm of the walled sanctuary where Catherine has taken refuge. The beauty of the villas has decayed; the peace and grace which emanated from the two villas in better days is now debris. As Hawkes would have it, beauty has been fully completed by its inherent debris, yang is finally balanced by yin.

The Blood Oranges is replete with such images of contraries which are, ultimately, parts of one whole. The theory of Giordano Bruno that all contraries are finally coincident rings true in this and the other novels of the triad. For example, consider Cyril's comments as he views two game birds
locked in sexual harmony: "Grace and chaos, control and helplessness, mastery and collapse— it was all there...." (p. 15) The parts create a more dynamic whole; the design is greater than the singular contributions. The yang and yin symbol again protrudes. (Ironically, Cyril is himself mounted on a decrepit bicycle, a perverse and displaced image of the coupled birds. This symbolizes how "shredded" his love tapestry has become.)

In a similar way, the individuals of The Blood Oranges create, when together, a greater harmony, a design which cannot exist without the simultaneous contribution of all four people involved. The interrelationships of the two females and the two males are multi-vectored; each relates to each of the others and a precarious balance is achieved. A diagram to represent these relationships might look like this:

```
Cyril       Hugh
  ↓          ↓
Fiona       Catherine
```

Each combination has its own special properties; each complements the inherent shortcomings of each of the other three. As a foursome, the design is complete. Note Cyril's comments on this harmony: "...we were a quartet of tall and large-boned lovers aged in the wood." (p. 16) "There were four of us then, not merely two, and in our quaternion the vintage sap flowed freely...." (p. 17) "--together we sat
with legs outstretched, soles of our feet touching or nearly touching, a four-pointed human starfish resting together...." (p. 37) "...the four of us...fit together like the shapely pieces of a perfectly understandable puzzle." (p. 88)

Cyril again and again states that the foursome was in Illyria, a blissful state, but one which had to end. Indeed, the reader knows from the beginning that the harmony has ended. As Cyril reflects as he tells the story he seems to have always known that the design would deteriorate; he wondered "how long we could fend off the inevitable nemesis." (p. 88)

Cyril attributes the deterioration of their Illyria to Hugh, the weak link in the design. Hugh has not cooperated, has been a villain in the sex-singer's opera. He is Cyril's explanation for the demise of the quaternion. However, as readers we must be aware that this is Cyril's exclusive view, and not necessarily Hawkes's. It may be that behind Cyril's lyrical ponderings and wishful musings Hawkes expects us to see that the grand design could have nothing but an ephemeral existence. The tapestry had to come to shreds, for it had to confront reality, a reality in which Fiona, Catherine, and Hugh were more than pawns of Cyril's psyche and had their own individual lives to lead, scripts not necessarily in keeping with Cyril's lyric opera. Cyril's version of Illyria, after all, depended on the three other characters' behaving as projections of his psyche. When Hugh refused to be a "negative animus" figure and Fiona and Catherine exercised wills other
than those of Cyril's animae, the design, at least from Cyril's point of view, had to crumble.

Fiona and Catherine appear, at first, to be merely mechanisms in the narrator's version of reality. Repeatedly the two women are contrasted to suggest that they are parts of a mythical female whole. Cyril projects anima roles upon the two to suit his needs, and in so doing emphasizes their diverse natures. What one lacks, he sees in the other. He would not need, psychologically speaking, two females if one sufficed. Neither one is both, so Cyril frolicks between the two for as long as he can. He is unaware of his real motive for desiring Catherine; he states that monogamy is the enemy of marriage. However, it is only when Fiona fails to fulfill him as an anima figure that he seeks others, in this case the compensatory figure of Catherine.

Fiona is described as proud, elegant, fawn-like, tall, beautiful, and supple, in contrast to Catherine's broad cheeks, round face, and heavy limbs. Fiona is impetuous, kissing impulsively objects or people for whom she feels a spontaneous burst of emotion. Catherine moves more slowly, more thoughtfully. Fiona is more active, perhaps even more profane, while Catherine is passive and rather sacred.

Cyril, as has been said, is necessarily attracted to both women. Fiona, his wife of eighteen years, and he have had a "nearly perfect marriage." She is, for him, beauty and erotic spontaneity, while Catherine is beauty of another sort,
beauty domesticated. Fiona is Cyril's near-equal as a sex-singer; Catherine is a mother of children, a comforter, and at the same time, childishly innocent herself. Cyril remarks as he reflects on two rather similar nights (he thinks of them as wedding nights): "I was now grateful to Catherine for coming to share my speculations on the painted bones of love as I had once been to Fiona for feasting with me on the marrow." (p. 98) He thus makes Catherine the figure of his conscious or intellectualized reflection while Fiona had been the figure for his unconscious appetites.

Clearly, then, Fiona is the feaster while Catherine is more speculative. Both aspects of Woman are appealing to Cyril, and when the harmony of the foursome is destroyed by Hugh's death, he attempts to regenerate Illyria by "marrying" Catherine. The prospects for such a regeneration are dim, even given Cyril's highly provocative lyricism; for a more skeptical reader the possibilities of bringing Catherine from near catatonia to a blissful "marriage" with Cyril seem remote.

What Cyril does not realize is that he needed both females, the "two opposite and equally desirable females" (p. 118) to create his Illyric state, his fully realized persona. Fiona provided him with an equal, a strong, radiant personality, while Catherine represented for him a mother/daughter. As complementary figures Fiona and Catherine worked well, but as design inevitably becomes debris their complementary existence
was shortlived. Hugh, who was "always doomed to the extreme left" of the four, technically because of his missing left arm, could never, symbolically or literally, experience the two women. His resentment at Cyril's reveling in the two females is repeatedly borne out, most obviously when he binds his wife, Catherine, in an ancient chastity belt. Throughout the novel Hugh has been unable to join in the celebration. He insists on the painful journey into the fortress; he refuses to kiss the goat-girl; he cannot enjoy Fiona. He has his greatest revenge by destroying the total symmetry with his death. Even so, it may be said that he was a necessary complement to the other parts of the design. From a Jungian perspective, Cyril needed Hugh as a projection of what he did not like in his own animus as much as he needed the two females as animae.

Hugh, then, is superficially the agent of debris. Cyril's vision of harmony, which always held suggestions of its mortality, is finally destroyed. The twin villas are decayed and the grape arbor and lemon grove are now overshadowed by the funeral cypresses. The tapestry of the four characters is clearly collapsed; the four appendages of the "human starfish" are now single entities. Cyril mourns for the destroyed tapestry, resisting acknowledgement of the ultimate state of debris. Fiona, ever willful, departs with Hugh and Catherine's children. Hugh has died, and Catherine is rejecting the complexities of the reality which was the "blood
orange feast" by entering a world of partial catatonia. The
design generated by Cyril's psyche has come finally to its
complement, debris. Although the protagonist may view it
as ruination, the vision lacked completion and totality until
the latent debris emerged.
Death, Sleep, & the Traveler
In *The Blood Oranges* we saw a lyrical vision of Illyria, in which the debris associated with destructive forces was compensated for by the lyricism in Cyril's tone. In *Travesty* we shall see the blatant face of destructive elements, in which lyricism is only a gossamer thread. *Death, Sleep, & the Traveler* is an ambiguous mixture of the two. The sensual harmony of *The Blood Oranges* has, in *Death, Sleep, & the Traveler*, become more vague, yet the destructive components are not fully drawn. It appears that this work is an intermediary one, revealing some shift away from lyric design but not quite stepping into the stark wreckage of *Travesty*.

Like *The Blood Oranges*, *Death, Sleep, & the Traveler* is fragmented in presentation. The events are recalled in segmented fashion, again beginning with the conclusive knowledge of what has occurred. Again the narrator, this time named Allert, describes the debris which his life has become, but Allert has never fully seen the design as Cyril has, and seems to have a soporific perception of what it was and what it has become.

The design which was so clearly discernible through Cyril's eyes in *The Blood Oranges* is more difficult to see here. Two designs, a double triangle composed of the Allert-Ursula-Peter triangle and the Allert-Ariane-wireless operator triangle, appear as mirror images of one another. The
complementary components are not dealt with simultaneously as they were in *The Blood Oranges*, but are experienced at different times and in different locations.

The first configuration, which may be seen as Allert's "reality," consists of Allert, Ursula (his wife), and Peter (her lover). The three of them enjoy sexual sojourns which are tantalizingly dangerous (a parallel, perhaps, to Peter's therapy for his mental patients in which he puts them further and further into coma to cure them, the drawback being, of course, the risk of death). After the three share sensuality there exists "deep peace and clarity" (p. 82), tainted only by Peter's sharp remarks. Several scenes are drawn in similar fashion, the two men sensually engaged with Ursula, until the apparently harmonious triangle is ripped apart by Peter's killing himself in the presence of the other two, dying with "the extreme joy of pain." (p. 169) Note in this the paradox which is, after all, the merger of contraries.

If all this sounds familiar, it's no surprise. As noted in the introduction to this paper, Hawkes himself has said that in the absence of using plot or theme the modern writer relies on recurrent images. In the triad, the characters themselves are transmuted versions of each other. The character of Peter is obviously drawn along the same lines as Hugh, and Peter is a complement to Allert, whose narrative voice is somewhat like that of Cyril. Peter and Allert are described as being totally different, as were Hugh and Cyril, yet they
are cared for equally by Ursula, who is definitively drawn on the model of Fiona. Ursula is another powerful female, capable of driving at least two men to suicide; she is elegant, changeable, smoldering, practical, physical, and mythical. She is, to Allert, both "one woman and every woman" (p. 61) and possesses the vitality and sexuality of Fiona.

The second triangle consists of Allert, Ariane, and the wireless operator. This triangle is another version of the first. The first occurs on land, and the second occurs in the more amorphous setting of the sea. Again, the two males are intrigued by and share (although at separate times) one female. Just as the first triangle is tainted by Peter's animosity for Allert, the second is colored by the antipathy between Allert and the wireless operator. Allert's role seems to be a reflection of his role on land. If his "reality" was with Ursula and Peter, his role at sea seems to be a mythical duplication. The ship provides appropriate backdrop for enactment of the mythical version of the shore's reality: It sails by islands with imaginary goats where Ariane becomes the child-nymph, playing the flute and wearing primitive animal costume. Indeed, the ship seems to Allert to be out of reality, not making any real progress whatsoever; it seems to be a timeless, motionless vessel.

Allert's double triangles, the designs Allert perceives himself to be part of, might be construed in this way:
Thus has Allert constructed his dual vision, but he has made some necessary changes. On land Allert could not control his relationship with Ursula and Peter, and was forced into a passive condition both by Peter's suicide and by Ursula's decisive departure. His reconstructed version on sea has given him the opportunity to select a female who is more appropriate to his needs, the nymph-like Ariane, an anima figure who could restore his wounded sense of ego. Not surprisingly, Allert controls Ariane's "departure."

Ariane is child-like, small, innocent in her playfulness. She represents the naivete that Catherine embodies in The Blood Oranges. The similarities of the two females are striking. Once again it is the experienced, rather profane Ursula (Fiona) who has been long married to the protagonist-narrator, and the childlike innocent, rather daughterly sacred figure of Ariane (Catherine) who is her complement.

Allert, like Cyril, is a persona with needs. Ursula and Peter fulfill those needs for a time, although not with the lyrical beauty of the foursome in The Blood Oranges. Peter, like Hugh, cannot sustain his role of the negative animus in the protagonist's design, and speaking to his own needs
commits suicide. The harmonic triangle is thus shattered and Allert, soon abandoned by Ursula, seeks to compensate for his losses with his experiences on the ship. The design he creates aboard ship has no alternative to becoming debris because it is, from the start, a mirror image of the design already enacted on land. Allert ends the mythical enactment appropriately, casting Ariane into the incomprehensible sea. He is, as he comments finally in the novel, not guilty, for he only acts as the design compelled him—toward debris. He, like Cyril, is unaware of that unconscious motivation; Hawkes is maintaining distance between himself as creator and his protagonists.

It is curious to note that in the two pairs of females examined thus far, the passive, more "feminine" anima figures (Catherine, Ariane) are victimized as the pattern of design moves toward debris. The strong, more dominating females (Fiona, Ursula) depart independently from the scene of collapsed design. It is also of interest that in The Blood Oranges Cyril loses his twinned anima figures through no will of his own. In Death, Sleep, & the Traveler Allert loses the first, Ursula, but destroys the second, Ariane. The will of the protagonist appears, like the design/debris motif itself, to be metamorphosing, while the roles of the females appear comparatively constant.
Travesty
In *The Blood Oranges* Cyril deludes himself into believing that a lyrical regeneration of Illyria is possible; in *Death, Sleep, & the Traveler* Allert, seemingly devoid of lyricism, stares at the incomprehensible sea with a fleeting thought of suicide; in *Travesty* the narrator culminates the developing recognition of the inevitability of design's debris with his murder/suicide. Perhaps that explains why the narrator is, in this final work of the triad, nameless—he is the culminating figure of Cyril and Allert, re-integrating with the complementary figures of Hugh and Peter and making the ultimate move from previous designs to a seemingly irrevocable debris.

It is in *Travesty* that Hawkes most clearly articulates the design/debris motif:

"In its own way it is a form of ecstasy, this utter harmony between design and debris." (p. 17)

"The greater the incongruity, the greater the truth." (p. 20)

"Design and debris permeates all tissues of existence...." (p. 27)

"...the olive tree is beautiful only because it is so deformed." (p. 29)

The primary design in *Travesty* is once again based on a foursome: the narrator, Honorine (his wife), Chantal (their daughter), and Henri (a poet who has been lover to both Honorine and Chantal). The narrator forcefully commands the destruction of the design in a compelling motion from
the start to the finish of the novel. This book, unlike its predecessors in the triad, is written in one long thrust rather than as fragments bobbing from one time or another. The structure of the novel implies the torque of the speeding automobile, a sexual force, while simultaneously illustrating design's compulsion toward debris which the earlier books only suggest.

There is no mistaking that design must become debris in Travesty. The various facets of the work illustrate incongruities and the necessity for those incongruities if reality is to be sustained. It is the fact that the narrator's life has not had enough balance (design counterbalanced with debris) which forces his destructive act. It is because he has a lovely wife, a beautiful marriage, no physical infirmities to cause him trouble, etc., that he has to induce his own debris. Reality is the delicate balance of two complements. Lacking that balance when the novel opens, the narrator of Travesty takes pains to create the debris which balance demands. Once again, the protagonist here is unaware of the author's greater design. The narrator here declares his reason for the destruction to be his blissful state of harmony, when we as readers see that his life is not all that harmonious. Nonetheless, the protagonist sees it that way and acts accordingly. The author would, in any case, have design fulfill itself with its complement, debris.

Consequently the narrator divorces his "harmonious" reality by entering his car. It, like Allert's ship, is a
timeless vessel, speeding yet motionless, a mythical capsule in the midst of reality. Hawkes seems to have found the still voice mentioned at the end of Second Skin, the still point of Eliot's "Burnt Norton," the terrific hiatus which pervades the works of Faulkner. Hawkes's still point is a quiet retreat in the storm of reality; its design, too, must end.

For a moment Travesty hints at the possibility of debris' becoming yet more design, the same notion which Cyril romantically embraces in The Blood Oranges. The narrator in Travesty suggests that the resultant wreckage of the car with its mangled bodies might form yet another design with nature, to be discovered by wandering schoolboys. However, this romance is not held for long because the narrator realizes that in reality the wreck will not exist, that fire will ignite the gasoline and destroy everything, the wreck's sculpture thus being annihilated before anyone could appreciate it. The narrator exhibits here a realistic perspective which Cyril does not know, a sense of reality which Skipper thinks he has escaped. It can be seen, then, that design becomes debris, and that any further design is lyrical illusion fit only for romantics.

Neither are there any romantic women in Travesty. We find in this novel versions of the same females who appear in the earlier ones of the triad. Honorine is the surviving female, a forceful, sensual woman drawn along the lines of Fiona and Ursula. The complementary figure to Honorine is Chantal, who is literally her daughter, rather than metaphorically as
Catherine was to Fiona and Ariane to Ursula. Chantal follows the pattern noted in the discussion of the earlier novels: she is small in comparison to her larger mother, passive rather than forceful. She does excite the narrator, as did Catherine and Ariane, and her escapades as the winner of the sensual carrot game are reminiscent of Catherine in the grape arbor and Ariane amongst the goats. The narrator in *Travesty* circumvents the incest taboo by engaging in sexual activity not with Chantal herself, but with her surrogate, a girl named Monique who is her age and similarly small in stature and of the same coloring. With the entrance of Henri into the scheme, the narrator subconsciously no longer needs the surrogate Monique, for Henri, as the narrator's own complement (once again Henri, like Hugh and Peter, is everything which the narrator despises, a negative animus figure) breaks the incest taboo outright by engaging himself with both mother and daughter. This arrangement, or design, must, like the others, come to an end, and the reader is the spectator of the forceful journey toward final debris for the narrator, Chantal, and Henri.

Honorine and Chantal/Monique are anima figures for the narrator's persona. As has been stated, Honorine resembles Fiona and Ursula, strong and sexual. The narrator, like the protagonists who preceded him, also has need of a more passive anima, and thus turns to Chantal/Monique.

Chantal is involved with the negative animus figure, Henri, just as Ariane was involved with the wireless operator and
Catherine was involved with Hugh. Chantal, the child, innocent and passive, is willfully destroyed by the narrator. This is a decisive move from the totally innocent destruction of Catherine by Cyril, the ambiguous tones surrounding the murder of Ariane by Allert, to the blatant destruction of Chantal by her father. The passive animae are all destroyed; it is the will of the protagonist which has changed.

Honorine and Chantal seem, then, to be clearly more versions of the females in *The Blood Oranges* and *Death, Sleep, & the Traveler*. The three pairs of females have functioned as animae for their respective protagonists and as complements of one another. While many other elements in the three novels of the triad have undergone change (e.g., the tone shifts from lyrical to destructive, the protagonist's will develops, the structure changes from fragmented to tour de force) the relationships of the females and their roles in the works are not only similar, but unchanging. It is this point which warrants some concluding observations.
Conclusions
Upon reading John Hawkes's triad the reader might ask why there are pairs of females in the novels and what significance, if any, these pairs might have in the analyses of the works. It is clear that a pattern of complementation, of design and debris, is a motif in _The Blood Oranges_, _Death, Sleep, & the Traveler_, and _Travesty_. The function of the twinned female figures within the design/debris tapestry, anima figures which interestingly complement both their protagonist and one another, appears to be a constant in the triad. It is worthwhile to examine this constant to see if it suggests a thematic statement valuable to the understanding of Hawkes's work.

Each pairing of females—Fiona/Catherine, Ursula/Ariane, Honorine/Chantal—is composed of strength and weakness, assertion and passivity, bold sexuality and comparative innocence, a type of profanity and a naive sacredness. Each pairing, like yang and yin, is for a time balanced in harmonic tension, but is then forced to split apart. The twinned figures serve as facets of the male protagonist's anima needs, and for a time a harmony, from the protagonist's point of view, is sustained. When a negative animus figure—Hugh, Peter, or Henri—disturbs the harmonic complementation of the protagonist's persona, the anima figures lose their roles as projections of the protagonist's psyche and take on identities of their own.

The debris which engulfs the three male narrators does not destroy all of the females involved. Fiona, Ursula, and
Honorine, the more "animus" parts of the three female pairings, survive. Hawkes has made connections among these three throughout the three books by using certain images and colors to form associations among them. For example, the grape game and the lunches of grapes which Fiona prepares in *The Blood Oranges* are seen again as a tattoo of grapes on Honorine's abdomen. Fiona dresses in yellows, and yellow is also associated with Ursula. All three are large women, with strong sexual appetites and demanding personalities. These three command the attention of the reader, and yet quietly leave the novels while attention is focused on the protagonist mired in his real or impending destruction. It is on reflection that we realize that Fiona departed with Hugh and Catherine's children, that Ursula left her home to find anyone but a Dutchman, and that Honorine is waiting in her villa. None of these three has been significantly altered by the events of the novels; rather it appears that each survives unscathed. (Although we do not see Honorine after she learns of the destruction of her family, there is no indication that she will suffer unduly, if at all.) Fiona, Ursula, and Honorine are survivors, independent women who for a time contributed to and depended upon harmonic balance which included other, weaker, women and men.

Cyril, Allert, and *Travesty*'s narrator all succumb to debris. Catherine, Ariane, and Chantal are sloughed in the process of design's becoming debris. These six lack the power and strength of the survivors, and are defeated by the
very tapestries of which they are parts. Their destruction captures the focus of the reader's attention, and the comparative subtlety of the others' survival is nearly lost.

Hawkes is then finally suggesting that although twentieth century existence is moving from ephemeral, often illusory harmony increasingly toward its own demise, there is a true survivor and she is the strong female, Faulkner's Dilsey brought into the post-World War II era. The narrator of *Travesty* tells us, "There will be no survivors. None." But we, the readers, know that Honorine is sleeping, and quite peacefully, in her villa. The private apocalypse of Cyril, Allert, and *Travesty*’s protagonist is complemented finally by the quiet and strong survival of three of Hawkes's most masterfully drawn characters: Fiona, Ursula, and Honorine.
Footnotes


5 Guerard, p. 3.

6 Guerard, p. 2.

7 John Graham, in his essay "on The Cannibal" in the John Hawkes Symposium disagrees vehemently with the uses of such words as "hallucination" and "nightmare" when referring to The Cannibal. He regards these words as barriers to the book; I regard them as explanatory. His essay is, however, an interesting one on the novel, especially in his explication of images therein.


10 Guerard, p. 2.


12 For an extensive and interesting analysis of The Lime


17 In thinking of realism in regard to Hawkes I think of the term as explicated by Christopher Fry in his essay "How Lost, How Amazed, How Miraculous We Are" c. 1952, reprinted in *The Modern Theater* by Robert Corrigan. This reality is not the superficial make-up of day to day existence, but rather the incredible phantasmagoria of the pandemonium we call life. Fry goes on to say that "poetry is the language in which man explores his own amazement." (Corrigan, p. 1043) The use of poetic language and poetic landscapes in Hawkes's work is undeniable and oft commented upon. See Guerard, et al.


19 Enck interview, p. 11.

20 *Travesty*, pp. 17, 27.


22 Graham, p. 49.


25  Jung, p. 147: "So far as our present experience goes, we can lay it down that the unconscious processes stand in a compensatory relation to the conscious mind. I expressly use the word "compensatory" and not the word "opposed," because conscious and unconscious are not necessarily in opposition to one another, but complement one another to form a totality, which is the self.

26  Enck interview, p. 11.

27  Jung, p. 158.

28  Jung, p. 159.

29  Jung, p. 165.


32  The use of the word "triad" in reference to these three works has been made by many critics (see Graham, Veron, Greiner, among others) and seems, for lack of a better term, the best way to indicate association among the three novels without resorting to the word "trilogy" (see Tanner) which implies, I think, a continuation of a same story with same or literally related characters. Hawkes is doing something rather different, I'm sure it will be agreed.

33  For essays of analysis on Second Skin, see The
The word "tapestry" is used frequently by Cyril in *The Blood Oranges* and is an appropriate metaphor for his lyrical vision of sexual harmony, i.e., for "design." See p. 1 in *The Blood Oranges*.

List of Works Cited


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