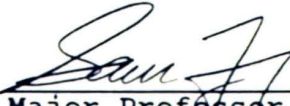


**A STUDY OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP
STYLE ACROSS THE DICHOTOMOUS SITUATIONS OF
GOAL CONGRUENCE, TASK STRUCTURE, AND TIME**

DENISE R. WILSON

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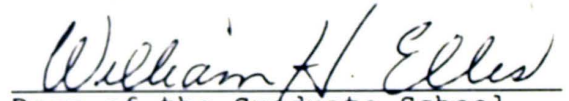

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A Thesis
Presented to the Graduate and
Research Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Psychology

by
Denise R. Wilson
March 1994

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband

Dr. Kevin Drew Wilson

who has given me invaluable support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to my major professor, Dr. Samuel Fung, for his unwavering guidance and dedication to this project. Without Dr. Fung's patience, I may have never completed this thesis. I would also like to thank the other committee members, Dr. Jean G. Lewis and Dr. Buddy Grah for their much appreciated comments. Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Billie Jean Walker for instilling in me the desire to never give up.

ABSTRACT

This research attempted to investigate the participative style of men and women across dichotomous situations of problem structure, goal congruence, and time. Involved in the study were fifty men and fifty women from the Austin Peay State University School of Business. They were administered questionnaires containing questions on the three dichotomous situations. It was proposed that women would be more participative in their decisions than their male counterparts in all situations except when the time to make a decision is limited. Results found that women were more participative only on the goal congruence situations when the subordinates have the same goals as the organization, or when the subordinates did not have the same goals as the organization.

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CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive research has been conducted on the subject of leadership in psychology. According to Bryman (1986), leadership research was motivated by a desire to construct instruments for screening leaders. However, as researchers began uncovering answers about leadership, many questions remained. Soon, it became apparent there was wide disagreement on the criteria of what actually constituted a leader. Researchers not only disagreed on the criteria, but also, on the definition of leadership. Thus began extensive studies that continue today. What began as trait leadership studies evolved into more complex ways of looking at leadership.

TRAITS

As early as the 1930's, leadership studies were being conducted with an emphasis on leadership traits. The idea of a natural leader was deeply ingrained in peoples' thinking (Bryman, 1986). A review by Jenkins (1947) pointed out that trait research, to date, had not been comprehensively or systematically conducted. He reviewed leadership studies in five different areas: industrial and governmental, scientific and professional personnel, activities of children in pre-school and extra school situations, school situations, and military leadership. Jenkins concluded that trait research was inconsistent.

Words and phrases used to illustrate characteristics of a good leader differed, and no single trait had been isolated which set off the leader from the members of the group. Stogdill (1948) reinforced Jenkins' analysis. He agreed that there was no assurance that trait investigations focused on the same kind of leadership behavior revealed in observations of activities in group situations. Furthermore, he found it interesting that different methodologies and definitions yielded similar results. His analysis outlined that leadership must be conceived in terms of the interaction of variables which are in constant flux. More importantly, trait research disregarded situational circumstances.

STYLES

Lewin, Lippit, and White (1939) began a new focus when they looked at leadership styles in terms of personality differences. They studied the effects of different styles of leadership. The three styles used were: authoritarian, laissez-faire, and democratic. An authoritarian leader determined policy, work techniques, and organization. This leader typically remained aloof, but was face-to-face when giving criticism or praise. The laissez-faire leader allowed complete freedom to the group and was a non-participant in the group's activities. Lastly, in the democratic style of leadership, policy matters were decided on a group basis, work organization was freely decided, and

leader was objective on styles of leadership. Lewin, Lippit, and White's study showed children exhibited two reactions toward an authoritarian leader: passive and dependent in nature, and aggression toward the leader. Therefore, the different styles of leaders may have influenced how the children in this study responded.

Sanford (1950) followed Lewin, Lippit, and White's research and found authoritarian personalities regarded authoritarian leaders as more effective. Equalitarian personalities may accept authoritarian leaders only as the circumstances demand it. This was consistent with the findings of Lewin, Lippit, and White; however, Sanford used the term "equalitarian" to refer to a "democratic" style of leadership. Vroom (1960) explained that an authoritarian personality might be relevant for predicting responses to different types of leadership and that highly authoritarian persons are characterized by a tendency toward submission to parents and authority figures. In contrast, equalitarian persons may express disagreement with parents achieving a greater amount of independence from them. Such research provided evidence that different styles of leadership promoted different responses, however, even the concept of "styles" did not fully explain leadership behavior.

NORMATIVE - SITUATIONAL FACTORS

It became clear that research on styles also ignored situational variables which moderate the relationship

between leader behavior and various outcomes as research on traits had done previously (Vroom, 1960). The focus turned to a normative approach which included ideas about what leaders should do in order to enhance their effectiveness.

Likert's System Four introduced by Likert (1961) and The Managerial Grid by Blake and Mouton (1964) were two such normative approaches using situational variables and emphasizing participation. Participation emerged as a new term for equalitarian which had evolved from democratic. Likert's system was built on the principle of supportive relationships. He distinguished between four kinds of management systems: System 1 - "exploitive authoritative," System 2 - "benevolent authoritative," System 3 - "consultive," System 4 - "participative group management." As one moves from System 1 to System 4, the level of participation increases. System 4 tends to motivate in a way that yields positive cooperation rather than fearful antagonism, whereas, Systems 1 and 2 tend to yield more hostile attitudes, or more submissive attitudes (Likert, 1961). The Managerial Grid promotes the development of constituent concerns, awareness of the desirability, and means of generating openness of communication and participation among managers. The grid includes five combinations contrasting "concern for production" which is more authoritative in nature, to "concern for people" which is more participative (Blake & Mouton, 1964). The grid was

designed to give businessmen a language system for describing their current managerial preferences. The implementation of the grid in two organizations (i.e., Piedmont and Sigma) was meant to teach management effectiveness. The study yielded positive results, however, a measurement problem existed in that there was no real satisfactory way of identifying and measuring organizational development when applying the grid (Blake, Mouton, Barnes, & Greiner, 1964). Unfortunately, the Managerial Grid and Likert's System 4 also suffered methodological weaknesses due to the fact that there are no control groups with which to compare (Bryman, 1986).

CONTINGENCY - SITUATIONAL FACTORS

The previous research cited resulted in inconsistent findings. There remained the problem of too little attention being given to situational factors. Contingency theories were then introduced to address this problem.

Fiedler (1967) was one of the first to introduce the contingency theory. Fiedler attempted to identify whether different situations were appropriate for different styles of leadership. He used three situational constants, nature of task, leader power, and liking of the leader by subordinates, which might affect leader behavior. Fiedler suggested that a particular leadership style would be more effective in some situational contexts than in others. His idea was that it was easier to place people in a situation

compatible with their natural leadership style rather than expect them to adapt to the job criteria as Likert, Blake, and Mouton had done. In light of this, Fiedler developed the Leader Match Concept aimed at teaching the leader to learn how to diagnose the favorableness of the situation and, due to his "least preferred coworker" (LPC) score, change it so as to match his leadership style. The model was intended to predict a curvilinear relationship in that leaders with low LPC scores ("task oriented") would perform more effectively in very favorable and unfavorable situations. High LPC leaders ("relationship oriented") would perform more effectively in intermediate favorable situations. Fiedler reviewed twenty-five investigations which tested or extended the model. He concluded that field studies yielded support for predicting leadership performance under field conditions, however, there was little support for the theory in a laboratory setting (Fiedler, 1971).

Fiedler (1973) admitted the contingency model required methodological and theoretical work, however, it did provide clues to understanding the leadership phenomenon. With the contingency model, a new approach to leadership emerged stressing that leadership was not just dependent upon the person but upon situations themselves.

With the development of Vroom and Yetton's model in 1973, the "Vroom-Yetton Contingency Theory," gender

differences were addressed and a significant difference was observed between genders. Women were found to be more participative than their male counterparts.

Vroom and Yetton's theory, though a contingency model, is also a normative approach suggesting a number of situational factors which impinge on the likelihood that either an autocratic or participative approach will be appropriate. Leaders decide which style to adopt by considering seven rules which allow leaders to eliminate step-by-step those styles which are not feasible. The two styles used by leaders are: participative leadership which refers to the degree a leader will allow subordinates to take part in discussion and decision making, and autocratic when the leader makes a decision alone. The leadership styles include:

- A1 You solve the problem or make the decision yourself.
- A11 You obtain any necessary information from subordinates, then decide on a solution to the problem yourself. You may or may not tell subordinates the purpose of your questions or give information about the problem or decision you are working on.
- C1 You share the problem with the relevant subordinates "individually", getting their ideas and suggestions without bringing them together as

a group. Then you make the decision.

C11 You share the problem with your subordinates in a "group meeting". In this meeting you obtain their ideas and suggestions. Then you make the decision.

G11 You share the problem with your subordinates as a group. Together you generate and evaluate alternatives and attempt to reach an agreement or consensus on a solution. Your role is coordinating the discussion. You are willing to accept and implement any solution that has the support of the entire group.

These styles indicate the level of participation a leader may use. The least amount of participation is demonstrated in the A1 level, while G11 responses demonstrate the greatest amount of participation.

Vroom and Yetton's model is also known as a descriptive model of leader behavior because of the problem set which contains written descriptions of concrete and authentic decision making or problem solving situations (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). The goal of a descriptive model is to understand existing behavior in organizations and how leaders do behave in different situations (Jago, 1978). However, because of problems with the original problem set, Jago developed a new set of thirty standardized cases that did not confound hierarchial level as the previous problem

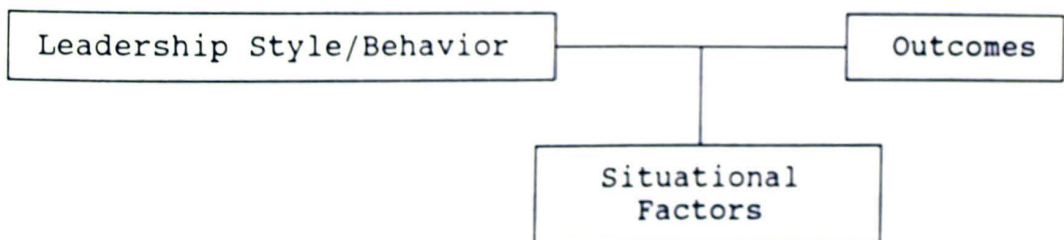
set had done, thus increasing internal validity of the instrument (Field, 1979). Therefore, normatively, a leader can benefit from a set of rules for solving problems in particular situations, and descriptively, the leader can obtain a protocol of his thoughts about alternative solutions to a problem and formulate a model for his decision-making processes (Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

Summarily, leadership effects are contingent on the individual differences (systematic style) of a leader and situational differences (systematic task) (Jago, 1977).

Bryman's 1986 review of the Vroom and Yetton model explained that a leader should be both participative and autocratic, varying his style according to various situational factors.

The basic structure of the contingency theory is represented in the following figure:

Figure 1:



The style of leadership which the leader uses to make a decision (outcome) is influenced, or determined, by situational factors. The focus has now shifted from personalities or traits to situational factors and has remained the focus for much of the contemporary literature

(Vroom and Jago, 1988).

Research indicates there may be a difference in men and women's leadership style. An early study of differing styles between genders indicated that men used a more "exploitive" type of leadership, whereas, women used a more "accommodative" strategy (Bond & Vinacke, 1961). Exploitive is more autocratic in nature and accommodative is a more participative style. Denmark and Diggory (1966) also suggested males and females may differ in leadership styles. They reported that female students were less authoritarian. On the average men are more authoritarian than women with respect to the leaders' exercise of authority and power in group goals. More specifically, the men in the study made decisions without advice from the group, attempted to repress activities initiated by the group which didn't meet with his approval, preferred to assign duties rather than have them decided by a vote, expected group submission to his wishes, etc. These characteristics are indicative of autocratic leadership. It may be that if a woman's self-image incorporates aspects of the stereotypical female role, she may be less inclined to acquire the behavior associated with the masculine managerial position since such behavior would be inconsistent with her self-image. Therefore, if accommodative, which is participative in nature, is a female style then a female will be more inclined to engage in it. Also, behaviors such as understanding, helpful, and

intuitive are requisite characteristics typically ascribed to women and these characteristics are typical of participative leadership (Schein, 1973). A review of empirically based research on female leadership behaviors indicated women tended to adopt more accommodative strategies than do male counterparts in influencing group performance and subordinate goal attainment (Chapman, 1975). Bartol and Butterfield (1976) did not take into account the leadership styles of leaders themselves but used subordinate ratings to observe gender differences. However, their results confirmed the hypothesis that the gender of the manager affects how different managerial styles are evaluated. Females were evaluated more favorably on consideration behaviors (participative) and males were evaluated more favorably on structuring behaviors (autocratic). Therefore, subordinates support participation in females and may actually reinforce this style according to this research. Vroom (1984) explained that this participative reinforcement in women occurred because women who are perceived as autocratic elicit a more negative reaction from subordinates as opposed to males who are perceived as autocratic. Another study by Steers (1977) found female students to be more participative than their male counterparts. Also more recently, Vroom and Jago (1982) found women use a more participative style of leadership than men in their self reports. Their research

suggests women managers are substantially more participative than men. This was also found for management students. Specifically, more women make use of group decision-making procedures more frequently than men, and one-to-one consultation less frequently. Other related research such as Fung, Kipnis, and Rosnow (1987) found females engage in more synthetic benevolent strategies (a positive prosocial act that is not what it appears to be) in gaining compliance. Their strategies included more participative strategies such as reasoning. This was especially true for targeting more powerful others. Men, on the other hand, used a more synthetic malevolent behavior (a negative antisocial act that is not what it appears to be) suggesting more autocratic responses. Therefore, women used more participative strategies in gaining compliance than did males. This, in fact, may be what is happening in leadership situations where women are more participative.

Therefore, situations are very important when making a decision. Three situations of interest are problem structure, goal congruence, and time. When a problem is structured, goals are identified and alternatives are offered to ill-defined situations. In the situation of goal congruence the subordinates share organizational goals. This is also known as the "win-win situation" (Vroom and Jago, 1988). Time is a very valuable and scarce commodity. Leadership style depends on the individual situation

especially where time pressures are great. Some theories are workable under situations but may not be feasible when there is limited time (Weiss, 1976). Participation takes time and decreases the response time of decision making, therefore, participation may not be an option when there is a limited time factor (Vroom and Jago, 1988).

This study hypothesized that women would score higher than their male counterparts across the situations of problem structure, goal congruence, and when there was unlimited time.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects involved in the study included 100 Business major students (50 male and 50 female) from Austin Peay State University.

Materials

A questionnaire which contained questions on the problem structure and goal congruence situations investigated by Vroom and Yetton (1973) was given to the business students. Additional questions on the situations of time supplemented the questionnaire. The subjects answered eight questions offering eight possible combinations of the three dichotomous situations of problem structure, goal congruence, and time.

Problem structure is when goals are identified and alternatives are offered to ill-defined situations. The two situations for problem structure were problem unstructured (S1) and problem structured (S2). Goal congruence defined was when subordinates share organizational goals. It is also known as the "win-win" situation. The goal congruence situations were goals were unshared (G1) and goals were shared (G2). Time was defined as the amount of time a leader had to make a decision. The time situations were unlimited time (T1) and limited time (T2).

Design and Procedure

The method of research involved administering an informed consent form before the questionnaire to gain voluntary consent (see Appendix A). The questionnaire (see Appendix B) was then given to the subjects. The questionnaire was designed by the present researcher to investigate gender differences in leadership styles across situations. By answering the questions, subjects evaluated the situation and made a decision on which style of leadership they would most likely employ. The most participative responses received higher scores. The questionnaires were given in each subject's classroom environment. Subjects answered questions and returned the survey during the class period.

Questionnaires were scored and an analysis of variance was conducted to determine the differences between the two genders.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

This study primarily hypothesized that females would significantly score higher than their male counterparts in situations of problem structure, goal congruence, and unlimited time exhibiting a more participative response to decision making.

Results in Table 1 indicated that there was no significant mean difference between problem unstructured (S1) and problem structured (S2), [$F(1, 98) = 3.394$, $MS_e = 1.114$, $p < .068$]. In addition, there was no significant interaction effect between gender and problem structure [$F(1, 98) = 1.706$, $MS_e = 1.114$, $p < .195$]. That is males and females made similar decisions on both situations of problem structure.

Table 1

Mean Scores for Gender on Problem Structure

Gender	S1	S2	TOTAL
Female	2.920	2.960	2.940
Male	2.675	2.910	2.793
TOTAL	2.798	2.935	

Results for goal congruence indicated that there was a significant difference between the conditions when

subordinates did not share the goal with the organization (G1) and when subordinates did share the goal with the organization (G2) [$F(1, 98) = 107.008$, $MS_e = .922$, $p < .001$]. Both men and women scored higher when goals were shared (G2) showing more participation in that situation (see Table 2). There was also a significant interaction effect between gender and goal congruence [$F(1, 98) = 4.099$, $MS_e = .922$, $p < .046$]. Women scored higher than men when goals were shared.

Table 2

Mean Scores for Gender on Goal Congruence

Gender	G1	G2	TOTAL
Female	2.520	3.360	2.940
Male	2.510	3.075	2.793
TOTAL	2.515	3.218	

A significant result was found between unlimited time (T1) and limited time (T2) [$F(1,98) = 26.675$, $MS_e = 2.289$, $p < .001$]. Both males and females scored higher if they were afforded unlimited time to make a decision (see Table 3). However, there was no significant interaction effect between gender and time [$F(1, 98) = 1.106$, $MS_e = 2.289$, $p < .296$].

Table 3

Mean Scores for Gender on Time

Gender	T1	T2	TOTAL
Female	3.160	2.720	2.940
Male	3.125	2.460	2.793
TOTAL	3.143	2.590	

Even though not hypothesized, results indicated several interaction effects. For example, there was a significant interaction effect between men and women when goals were shared and when there was unlimited time to make the decision. In addition, there was a significant interaction effect between problem structure, goal congruence, and time.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

In the present study, males and females were hypothesized to differ significantly in situations of problem structure, goal congruence, and unlimited time. It was proposed that women would indicate a more participative response. As can be seen from the results, women were in fact more participative in only the goal congruence situation. Women were no more participative in the situations of problem structure or time. Due to the fact that participation requires time and decreases a leader's response, previous research has noted time as a scarce commodity. Therefore, if there is limited time in making a decision, there will be less participativeness (Vroom and Jago, 1988). Both men and women showed this was true. Responses indicated that without time, participation was not a likely choice.

In explaining these effects, certain factors may be considered to be causal. These factors include institutional error, social trend error, or experimental design error. Such factors will be discussed to offer a plausible explanation for the findings in this study.

First, there is a possible problem with the institution sampled. Vroom and Jago (1982) compared male and female managers and found women may have less freedom than men to engage in either autocratic or participative practices.

vroom suggested that these "proper" behaviors for women managers may influence their assignment to certain functions in the organization. Women become more of the social workers of management and may have their sensitivity to the feelings of others enhanced. This may perpetuate a willingness for group involvement in decision making. Therefore, this may explain the magnitude of difference between males and females in management.

Male and female business students used in the present study were not subject to such assignments by the organization. The female students were not privy to these "proper" behaviors. The lack of this social pressure may have accounted for some of the similar responses between genders. However, it is unknown why there exists the similarities on problem structure and time but dissimilarities on goal congruence.

Also, an explanation may be found in the reactions of subordinates toward male and female leaders. Women who are perceived as autocratic in the workplace tend to elicit more negative reactions from subordinates than do men (Vroom, 1984). Since students do not have subordinates, they may not feel this pressure, therefore females are free to react in a fashion that may be more similar to male responses. Again, this is not indicative of the dissimilar responses found in the present study, however, it may be that the female students may have felt a residual of the societal

pressures as described above.

Social trend is a very dynamic characteristic of human behavior. It is conceivable that the change in social trends may have effected the results found in this study. Such a statement is purely speculation since there is no research to support this, but it should not be ignored. Therefore, there is the possibility that a change in societies' trends towards male and female equality and "political correctness" may account for said similarities.

Lastly, as with all unpredictable results, consideration should be given to the design of the study. The sample distribution may have been more heterogeneous than expected even though it was limited to business students. Significant results found for students in the Vroom studies were MBA candidates, whereas undergraduates were sampled in the present study. The difference between undergraduate and postgraduate could be attributable to the insignificant results in this study. Many of these undergraduate business students may not have been contemplating future management positions.

This study may not have been fully conclusive, however, note that the goal congruence variable was indeed significant. Consistent with Vroom (1984), goal congruence was a more powerful variable than time and task structure. It may be advantageous to compare genders from other organizations and gather data from a more specific hierarchy in more conclusive results.

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APPENDICES

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

The purpose of this investigation is to survey attitudes regarding leadership. Your responses are confidential. At no time will you be identified nor will anyone other than the investigators have access to your responses. There are no potential hazards that may occur from your participation. The demographic information collected will be used only for purpose of analysis. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to terminate your participation at any time without any penalty.

The scope of the project will be explained fully upon completion.

Thank you for your cooperation.

I agree to participate in the present study being conducted under the supervision of a faculty member of the Department of Psychology at Austin Peay State University. I have been informed, either orally or in writing or both, about the procedures to be followed and about any discomforts or risks which may be involved. The investigator has offered to answer any further inquiries as I may have regarding the procedures. I understand that I am free to terminate any participation at any time without penalty or prejudice and to have all data obtained from me withdrawn from the study and destroyed. I have also been told of any benefits that may result from my participation.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

LEADERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

please check appropriate box as it pertains to you:

FRESHMAN: ()

SOPHOMORE: ()

JUNIOR: ()

SENIOR: ()

AGE: 17-25 ()

26-30 ()

31-35 ()

36-45 ()

46-ABOVE ()

SEX: MALE ()

FEMALE ()

Instructions:

This is a study of leadership styles a manager might use to make a decision in different situations. Please read the following defined situations and continue to the next page.

Situations Defined:

Problem structured - task has well-defined goals and alternatives.

Problem unstructured - task has unknown goals or an incomplete set of alternatives to evaluate.

Subordinates share organizational (unit) goals - the goal

is important to the subordinates and to the organization or unit as the case may be.

Subordinates do not share organizational (unit) goals - the goal is important to the organization but not to the subordinates.

Limited time - there is a set deadline for the decision to be made.

Unlimited time - you have as much time as needed to make a decision.

Directions:

Which leadership style would you use in the following situations to make a decision? The numbers on the scale below correspond to leadership styles. Use this scale to answer the following questions by circling the corresponding number at the side of the question to indicate which leadership style you would be most likely to use in each situation.

1	2	3	4	5
You make the decision				All share in making the decision

1. The problem is not well structured but the subordinates share the organizational (unit) goals to be attained in solving this problem, however, have limited time to make the decision.

1 2 3 4 5

2. The problem is not well structured and you have as much time as is needed to reach a decision, however, the subordinates do not share the organizational (unit) goals to be attained in solving this problem.

1 2 3 4 5

3. The problem is well structured and the subordinates share the organizational (unit) goals to be attained in solving this problem, however, you have limited time to make the decision.

1 2 3 4 5

4. The problem is well structured and you have as much time as is needed to make a decision, however, the subordinates do not share the organizational (unit) goals to be attained in solving this problem.

1 2 3 4 5

5. The subordinates share the organizational (unit) goals to be attained in solving this problem and you have as much time as is needed to make a decision, however, the problem is not well structured.

1 2 3 4 5

6. The task is not well structured and the subordinates do not share the organizational (unit) goals to be attained in solving this problem, in addition, your time is limited in order to make a decision.

1 2 3 4 5

7. The problem is structured and subordinates share the organizational (unit) goals to be attained in solving this problem, in addition, you have as much time as is needed to make a decision.

1 2 3 4 5

8. The subordinates do not share the organizational (unit) goals to be attained in solving this problem and you have limited time to make a decision, however, the problem is structured.

1 2 3 4 5

which is what Hawkes hopes to evoke in the reader of his fiction:

I no longer believe in the necessity of purgation or expiation. Exposure, facing, knowing, experiencing the worst as well as best of our inner impulses—these are the things that I'm concerned with. (Hawkes, *Craft of Conflict* 164)

In another of her visions, Lou and her husband are stopped by the Sheriff, and the Sheriff and his deputy antagonize the couple, accusing them of sexual indecencies. Lou, in the vision, sees them for what they are as they hold their "Stocks greasy from unshaved cheeks, rubber padded rifle butts and hair triggers" as they met "any couple fool enough to show their faces in that hell's place twice" (154). However, Lou is able to see more than the moral repression and spiritual degradation of the townspeople by the Sheriff. Lou, shortly after arriving in the town, looks out a dormitory window and stares into the face of a Red Devil watching her through the screen. Later, after having spent a little time in the town and among the townspeople and shortly after her vision of the Sheriff accusing her husband of being a pimp and her a prostitute, she again sees a Red Devil looking in on her, and as Kuehl explains:

She and the Red Devil merge and she whispers, "Take me out of here." Lou, the only character in *The Beetle Leg* to acquire self-awareness, has

acknowledged universal evil and exorcised the
search-object. Perhaps she will escape. (Kuehl
60)

perhaps we may all escape, Hawkes implies, if we have the
courage to face the worst in ourselves in order to gain
truth.

CHAPTER III

THE ARCHAIC SLOW DRUMMING

In *The Owl*, as in *The Beetle Leg*, Hawkes seeks to reveal how myths can become coercive rather than an enlightening force thus hindering rather than furthering man's creative growth. Like the townspeople of Clare and Mistletoe, the citizens of Sasso Fetore allow themselves to be dominated by a mythology reduced to dogma and repressive laws. That the people of Sasso Fetore allow themselves to be dominated is important in understanding Hawkes's belief that we create our reality rather than it being created by a force existing outside of us. The people of Sasso Fetore, which means tomb stench, blindly adhere to ancient ritual and taboos brought about by an out-dated, coercive mythology. Riding through the ravine filled with the bones of the dead sons of Sasso Fetore, Il Gufo explains:

The dead were lieges to Sasso Fetore's hangman, a chary parliament with which he met at dusk, having no voices to raise . . . The numbers I stumbled on, pitifully small, did accrue in some historic calculation, out of their tangle raising an arithmetic council that gave more body to their subservience than the hair, cloth, and tissue withering. (147-48)

The citizens of Sasso Fetore, because they fear the unconscious, are as much lieges to Il Gufo and ancient law,

as the dead lining the ground over which he rides, and in a psychic or spiritual sense, they are just as dead.

In Sasso Fetore, "a gothic image of contained psychic energy and sexuality" (O'Donnell 51), the people of Sasso Fetore avoid confrontation with their unconscious and its capricious nature by adhering to myths which lack any power to enlighten or to serve as a lifeline to the unconscious. All that is left of the town's sons, having been slaughtered in wars, is a heap of bones in a ravine. Only two marriageable men reside in Sasso Fetore--the hangman considered by all an inappropriate husband and the foreign prisoner taken each year and ritually hanged in the town's piazza. Rather than embracing the outsider who brings with him hope for a dynamically progressive world, without understanding why, the people of Sasso Fetore destroy him as ancestral ritual dictates they must.

The townspeople, cut off from the outside world on one side by impassable mountains and on the other by the sea, are cut off from the internal world of the unconscious as well. If any foreign ship, representative of the mysterious treasures of the psyche, is sighted on the sea, the people of Sasso Fetore "pretended it was a dream" (138) which they will not allow to enter the confines of their world. The foreign ships are indeed their dreams which they will not heed and which might free them from their psychic self-entombment if they would heed the message of the

unconscious. Instead, they rely on the old myths and rituals to maintain order and ignore the warnings of their more vital, albeit possibly dangerous, unconscious as revealed through dreams and living myths.

Representing the unconscious, everything foreign is kept out of Sasso Fetore or destroyed. Having allowed themselves to be entombed by the ancient rituals and myths which have fossilized, the people of Sasso Fetore are as repulsive in their impotence as Il Gufo is in his dictatorial potency. The people of Sasso Fetore know the power entrusted to Il Gufo by tradition and the dogmatic precepts of their government and church with its "archaic slow drumming of the nocturnal thick wings against their ears, bearing instantaneously the pain of authority injected directly into their blood streams . . ." (139). They do not question Il Gufo's power as overseer of that archaic law and order. Hawkes makes the resultant impotence and sterility of Sasso Fetore clear: ". . . each villa, town house, hut [has] become an urgent convent . . ." with women who "unseen propagated a sense of the timelessness of denial, of death hung rocking around and around on the broken-spoked wheel atop a pole" (140).

Hawkes also makes clear that the townspeople have caused their own stagnation. The "Mongers" or twelve elders want to spare the foreigner who is to be hanged so that he may marry one of their daughters. Signore Barabo intent

on marrying his daughter to the prisoner and intoxicated with the hope of the town awakening from its apathy and putting an end to their sterile lives says, "The baking must begin at once. For I tell you, the weddings will sweep us like grass fires . . ." (159). But the baking begins for naught. The Prisoner cannot breathe new life into the town because Il Gufo, like the scaffold he so affectionately refers to as she, ". . . offered no retraction or leniency once death was in motion" (158), and the elders will not create the world of which they dream but rather defer to the fossilizing past.

Symbolically, Il Gufo also represents an overbearing consciousness and reason, which Jung describes as "nothing more than the sum total of all his [man's] prejudices and myopic views" (Jung 13). Il Gufo is the keeper of the living dead as he dogmatically adheres to laws and rituals of the past. For Il Gufo, the world must be as he reasons it should be, or so Hawkes's narrative method at first seems to imply. But Il Gufo's reason is clouded by the past, and although over time the situation of Sasso Fetore has changed, Il Gufo clings to the old mythology and ritual which does not reflect this change. Although Il Gufo is the seeming controller and destroyer who, as O'Donnell points out, "also exists as the center of sexual power in the novella" (O'Donnell 52) with the citizen's ritual sacrifice given "as to a dark, fertile god who will protect them and

insure the life of their sparse crops" (O'Donnell 52), in Jungian terms he is also, ironically, the embodiment of man whose creative potential has been destroyed as the conscious cuts itself off from the unconscious. Thus, Il Gufo takes "the gallows, the noose and knot, to marry" rather than a woman (Owl 137). Il Gufo, although he controls the town, is also a victim of a consciousness heedless of the unconscious. Chained to past rituals and laws, while he believes he holds the chain and its power, Il Gufo dances the ritual dance just as the white dog does the Gavotte. Unable to free himself from the past, Il Gufo seeks to enslave all others to it as well.

"As the alter ego of the hangman, the id-like spirit of free-flowing energy which threatens the laws of 'Il Gufo' and the clearly defined boundaries of Sasso Fetore" (O'Donnell 54-55), the prisoner does, indeed, threaten the laws of Il Gufo and Sasso Fetore, and when seen as a manifestation of the unconscious, he also presents the possibility of soaring to new heights and can be seen as a momentary breakthrough of the unconscious upon the conscious world. However, Il Gufo succeeds in destroying the Prisoner and repressing this manifestation of the positive creative force of the unconscious.

In *The Owl*, Hawkes exposes the absurdity of the myth of the Virgin, a myth of psychic rebirth in Jungian terms, which perpetuates the wrong-headed Christian belief that we

can create life and goodness by denying our sexuality, which for Hawkes represents all unconscious psychic desires. In Sasso Fetore, myths are read as historical fact rather than as metaphorical messages from the unconscious. As a result of this delusion, Sasso Fetore has become an "urgent convent" where women go unwed and where the women "not merely virgin" but "unseen propagated a sense of the timelessness of denial" (143). Signor Barabo, a leading citizen of the town, carries with him the private purse of his daughter Antonina and displays it "under the priest's window as if a lucky impregnation might come between the secular nectary and the sacred" (143). He hopes for another miracle of Virgin Birth rather than attempting to change the dogma of his church and the laws of his state which keep him from finding a suitable husband for his daughter.

"Politically, historically, Sasso Fetore was an eternal Sabbath" (148), and the patron saint of Sasso Fetore, to whom the townspeople pray for the marriage and fertility of their virgin daughters, is the Donna, the Virgin Mary who gives birth to a fatherless son. A statue of her stands at the mouth of a cave in the forest. The Donna, associated with "the female owl [who] scratched her blue egg with a diamond" (145), is also associated with Il Gufo and death. Il Gufo describes the white Donna as one "who was thought to destroy dreams" (149), and her myth does destroy dreams just as the dogma of the church which she represents denies the

citizens their dreams. Il Gufo says the Madonna makes the scaffold, which he sees as an extension of himself, "majestic." The ancient law, which Il Gufo enforces,

. . . gave bony strength to the lover of Donna and legend. The character and the code, right upon right, crashed into the pale heart when the culprit hanged, her prayers for him so soft as hardly to be heard. She saved none--salvation not being to the purpose. (149)

She, like Il Gufo, offers infertility and death. In the world of Sasso Fetore, miracles do not exist, and no virgin births will take place. The ancient laws, which Il Gufo enforces and which the archaic figure of the Donna represents, deny the integration of unconscious psychic desires with conscious ones.

Il Gufo describes Antonina as having a face like the Donna, and he associates Signor Barabo's eldest daughter, the town's oldest virgin, with the Donna. He sees Antonina as "one of the virgins who have grown knowledgeable as an old wife, select at nursing fires or calling back the dead with circles and chalk" (161). When the Prisoner first arrives in the town, in the excitement over the possibility of a wedding between Antonina and the Prisoner, someone desecrates the statue of the Donna by smearing blood, symbolic of the blood of the nuptial bed, on its face. When Il Gufo comes upon the defamation of the statue of the

Donna, like a jealous, misogynistic lover punishing an unfaithful woman, he gallops toward the Donna and rams her in the chest with his boot knocking her from her pedestal, "as the owl first beat his wings attempting to penetrate to his roost at dusk" (163). Now more determined than ever to deny any possibility of marriage in the town, Il Gufo sets out to destroy Antonina just as he has destroyed the statue of the Donna. As the day after Pentecost approaches, the day which was to be Antonina's wedding day, now the date the prisoner will be hanged, Il Gufo describes Antonina as "white as the Donna these days" and hourly growing "taller as her love increased, and her passion was of moral seriousness to a woman who was herself a covenant" (178). Antonina, even though she will remain forever husbandless, gives herself to the Hangman. As she gives herself to him, "Her slender belly thrashed like all cloistered civilization" (185). She accepts her place as the sterile mate of Il Gufo.

The relationship between Il Gufo and Antonina becomes a relationship of a "victim-victimizer entanglement," and "Il Gufo's need to desecrate life and productivity in order to celebrate death and sterility matches Antonina's longing for love and fulfillment" (Greiner 61). However, the relationship of victim-victimizer between Antonina and Il Gufo also symbolizes the relationship between the townspeople and their bankrupt religion which attempts to

force its citizens to submit to its dogma rather than encourage creativity. As Antonina to Il Gufo, the citizens yield to a death-ridden rather than an invigorating mythology.

Hawkes's juxtaposition of the prisoner's escape from the prison on Icarus-like wings with Antonina's and the Hangman's assignation on the mountainside reveals promise and its destruction in one moment. Antonina, like the prisoner attempting in desperation to free herself, gives herself to Il Gufo who crushes her just as the townspeople destroy the prisoner. The prisoner is recaptured by the people of Sasso Fetore who burn his wings which "cowered, withered, fell to ash" (192), and Antonina becomes "gray and her complexion altered, the lips compressed, the temples shiny, and her habits and her character so true and poorly tempered that no man would come for her" (199). The people of Sasso Fetore are left with "nothing else to think of, nothing else to prepare for" (194). The Prisoner is hanged, and with his death, Sasso Fetore is doomed.

Although she conjugally unites with Il Gufo, who sees himself as God-like in his repressive power, Antonina remains childless, prematurely aged with her days spent "with the manual for the virgins not yet released to marriage" (199). Births do not happen without fathers, and psychic rebirth does not occur without an understanding of the nature of the Self, which is denied by Il Gufo in Sasso

Fetore. The people of Sasso Fetore bow to the will of their religious and social rituals denying their sexual desire and the unconscious life force it represents. Continuing to carry out the archaic sacrifice to Il Gufo, the townspeople of Sasso Fetore, who grow more and more intolerant, are described as "a judgement passed upon the lava, long out of date" (141).

Although in *The Owl* the fate of the people of Sasso Fetore is one of psychic entombment and living death, the novel is not without hope for our world. While our world may share much with Sasso Fetore as we adhere to out-dated religious dogma and social taboos which have resulted from them, the novel when read as a creative myth implies that we can escape the fate of Sasso Fetore. Having followed archaic rituals of the "judgment supper" to "perpetuate the feast of the law body which preceded Sasso Fetore's original compulsory execution" (164), Signor Barabo asks that the prisoner be presented as a husband instead of being hanged. Il Gufo gives his answer, but he doesn't quote himself as he tells the story because he assumes that those listening to his tale, like the "Mongers," already know what he has said. Instead he explains that the Mongers, and the oligarchy to which they belong, are "yet familiar enough with the ancient tongue to understand me, these old masters having in their histories sentenced not a few" (168). Because Il Gufo also refuses to tell us what he has said, he, and in turn Hawkes,

implies that the readers are also members of this "oligarchy," and that they are familiar enough with the rituals of the past to know what Il Gufo has said and have also sentenced not a few, and perhaps even themselves, to a living death by adhering to empty rites, rather than heeding the deeper knowledge imparted by the myths on which these now barren rituals often are based. But Hawkes offers the fate of Sasso Fetore as a warning, not as a mirror. Sasso Fetore may be doomed because it will not rebel, but if we heed the warning Hawkes's story offers, we may be saved. We do not have to be like Il Gufo or the people he tyrannizes.

The Hangman closes his narrative with a kind of benediction, "*Thus stands the cause between us, we are entered into covenant for this work, we have drawn our own articles and have professed to enterprise upon these actions and these ends, and we have besought favor, and we have bestowed blessing*" (199), which sums up the town's complicity in its own entombment; but his use of "we" again seems to imply the complicity of the reader. However, what Il Gufo doesn't see, and what the reader does, is the evil behind the entombment of Sasso Fetore. If the reader is able to look into Il Gufo's, and by analogy Hawkes's tale, in a way that the townspeople clearly cannot examine their own myths, the reader may find an opening to the unconscious. If this occurs in the reader then hope exists for mankind. The Owl as Hawkes's creative myth is akin to

an individual's dream, which Jung suggests is often a warning or revelation whose hints of destruction can be avoided if the message is understood and heeded. To believe otherwise is to believe that Hawkes, like Guido da Montefeltro in Dante's *Inferno*, is a "False Counselor" who would not tell his story unless he believed that "from this depth none ever returned alive" (Dante xxVII 58-63), and in light of Hawkes's own words this seems unlikely:

I want my fiction to destroy conventional morality and conventional attitudes. That's part of its purpose—to challenge us in every way possible in order to cause us to know ourselves better and to live with more compassion (Hawkes, *Craft of Conflict* 157).

CHAPTER IV

BREAKING OUT OF STONE

While out-dated rituals, laws, and myths can hold a society captive to the past, so also can its art and literature. John Hawkes's early works, *The Beetle Leg* and *The Owl*, reflect the author's own youthful rebellion against a literary form which he felt could no longer reflect reality and against ideas of art and literature which attempt to force the artist to conform to longstanding traditions of structure and theme, a demand that has been heard and often still is heard from critics and writers such as John Irving, Iris Murdoch, and the now deceased John Gardner. In his article "Pynchon, Hawkes, and Updike: Readers and The Paradox of Accessibility," Donald J. Greiner, a formidable Hawkes scholar, discusses the controversy over whether a writer should write accessible, traditionally "moral" fiction and defends writers such as Hawkes who are often criticized for being abstruse, lacking a moral center, and being inaccessible to the reader. Greiner argues that experimental writers are not inaccessible if the reader is willing to explore new literary forms and if he will see himself as a partner in the formation of the novel rather than passively ingesting an easily read, traditional novel. For Hawkes, the form of the novel had to change if it were to reflect modern reality, and like other experimental writers he realized that

the systematic repetition of the forms of the past is not only absurd and futile, but that it can even become harmful: by blinding us to our real situation in the world today, it keeps us, ultimately from constructing the world and man of tomorrow. (Robbe-Grillet 9)

Literary structures, like myths which may harden into hollow dogma, can become fossilized forms which no longer communicate with the reader in a vital way.

Hawkes, as a young artist realizing the danger of being tied too closely to the literary forms of the past, attempts to breathe new life into the novel by adapting it to a twentieth-century sensibility and sense of reality. Hawkes, who finds no solace in Christianity or in the promise of an afterlife, attempts to create his own fictional world which more accurately reflects the disorder and chaos of a world in which the once sustaining myths of our past no longer offer any comfort:

I think of the act of writing as an act of rebellion because it is so single and it dares to presume to create the world. I enjoy a sense of violation, a criminal resistance to safety, to the security provided by laws or systems. I'm trying to find the essential human experiences when we are unhinged or alienated from familiar, secure life (Hawkes, *Craft of Conflict* 162).

Thus, in his early works, Hawkes creates a novel structure which reflects the content of his story and the modern world where annihilation looms over civilization rather than a structure which relies on traditional character and plot devices to reflect a more ordered, less threatening world view of the past.

In *The Beetle Leg* and *The Owl* Hawkes constantly ambushes the reader with the unexpected, forcing the reader to move carefully through its pages as one might through a battlefield. The reader as participant in the creative process of the novel fights for his life, and in the act of participating, saves himself from the impotence of passivity and habitual acceptance of the expected, which is the sin of the characters of Hawkes's early works. As the reader shares in Hawkes's individual mythic vision, together author and audience are able to experience the power of a living mythology which serves to open the reader to a broader, more profound experience of life as it is as opposed to what a stultifying dogma dictates it should be.

For Hawkes life is redeemable through art because, like creative myths, art has the potential to awaken humans to their potential for evil as well as good, and art, in helping us to know ourselves better, also helps us to live with more compassion. The reader's ability to come to this realization through participation in the creative process determines whether Hawkes's fiction succeeds or fails.

Therefore, how Hawkes tells his story becomes as important as the story itself.

The Beetle Leg, structurally, is a closed system with the story seemingly framed by a conversation between the Sheriff and Cap Leech as represented by the italicized lines of the Sheriff at the beginning and the italicized lines of Cap Leech at the end. The reader senses that the story is being told as a flashback, a traditional literary method, but Hawkes soon upsets the reader's understanding of this traditional storytelling technique.

In creating a sense of a battle between the conscious and unconscious, while the structure of *The Beetle Leg* seems to be circular with a monologue by the Sheriff at the beginning and an echoing monologue by Leech at the end, these two monologues are actually a part of the conversation between the Sheriff and Cap Leech which begins on page 40 and then continues on page 126 after the Sheriff has Wade bring Cap Leech to the jail:

Therefore, even though the final line of the epilogue might suggest that Leech is moving on at the end Far from moving on, he has come home; the 'one town further' he told the Sheriff he wanted to see was, as the context makes plain, Mistletoe, where the dam is. He has seen it; his journey is ended. And thus, if we perceive the narrative structure sufficiently plainly, the plot

of the novel comes clearer to us as well. The narration is formally cyclical or circular, as O'Donnell suggests, but the plot—like the world depicted in the novel—is terminal. (Heineman 138)

But Heineman's explanation of the significance of the enclosing of the story between the Sheriff's opening speech about Mulge and Cap Leech's echoing of it at the end of the novel is incomplete. Hawkes uses the psychological battle waged between the Sheriff and Cap Leech to give the novel some forward momentum and conflict, but he also uses it to demonstrate the sterility behind fossilized myths as well as the danger of the alienated psyche. The Sheriff and Cap Leech are representative of the evil potential of the rational as well as the irrational side of the psyche when isolated from rather than integrated with one another. While Cap Leech may at first seem an unlikely vehicle to represent the unconscious, which Jung sees as our "wiser, inward self," he doesn't if we realize that he represents the destructive potential of the unconscious. He is Leviathan or the shadowed side, dangerously locked behind walls of cultural taboos and religious dogma, its energy lying in wait to erupt without warning and without the temperance of an integrated, psychically whole Self.

In approximately the first third of the narrative, the Sheriff attempts to keep the irrational in check as he struggles with Cap Leech, symbol of the unconscious, dark

water of the psyche that exists as a part of us all. The Sheriff has anticipated Cap Leech's arrival, "I knew he was coming, Wade. I heard of it" (31). Eagerly anticipating his greatest showdown, the Sheriff sends Wade to bring Cap Leech to the jail. The Sheriff, confident in his authority and seeing the jail as an extension of his own power tells Wade, "Twelve years ago, Wade, I left this cell unguarded. And that night, when a break or most anything could have blown . . . the jail held" (32), and in the jail a group of captured Red Devils, themselves a lesser symbol of the dark water, seem to lie helpless in a heap in the middle of the jail cell.

Cap Leech, "kept alive by a spirit half stimulant, half sleep" (39), arrives at the jail where he slowly begins to unleash his power as he draws out his canister of ether. The Sheriff, inhaling the ether, begins to nod as he comes under its spell and Cap Leech's influence. In Cap Leech, the man who has been "concerned even more than himself with noxious growth, who was allowed, obviously schooled, to approach his fellow men with the intimate puncture of a needle" (42), the Sheriff has met his match. Cap Leech's puncture allows blood to seep through. The Sheriff, trying to coax Cap Leech into leaving by peaceful, rational means, says, ". . . there's not much doctoring or tooth pulling for you here" (43). In response, Cap Leech asks the Sheriff to open his hand and draws a circle in the Sheriff's palm:

"Disease," he said, "thriving. Catch a fly in your fist and you could infect the town." Quickly, with the iced cotton, he swabbed the hand, let it go. "Clean. For awhile." (43)

Rattled by Cap Leech's sinister reply, the Sheriff, attempting to regain his composure, calls for Wade, who brings in a dog injured by the Red Devils. Countering, Cap Leech takes out his ether once again. The Sheriff, hearing "a spark of truth in the watery tapping" of Cap Leech's fingers, blurts out, "Don't say anything . . . I'll do the talking" (45). Desperate, the Sheriff reverts to reading the Zodiac, a very irrational and antiquated yet mythologically sanctioned means for interpreting the world. Then the Sheriff begins to tell of his first sighting of the now deified Mulge. At this point, the novel structurally echoes the first chapter as the Sheriff describes his only meeting with Mulge as he attempts to invoke Clare and Mistletoe's deity. The Sheriff invokes Mulge in the hope that Mulge will give him the strength to hold in check the power of Cap Leech, the dark waters of the unconscious. This effort is doomed to failure, however, because the artificial deification of Mulge stifles rather than fosters life.

In about the third quarter of the novel, in what seems to be a continuation of the conversation between the Sheriff and Cap Leech, mysteriously, the two have moved into Cap

Leech's dominion and are in Cap Leech's wagon where "more soft now came the Sheriff's muddled sermon through drifting leaves, as something, a dream, slowly stopped his mouth" (123). Having usurped the Sheriff's power, Captain Leech echoes the Sheriff's words, "Now I'll talk" (159). He then begins the speech which will close the novel, demonstrating the unconscious superseding the conscious--but to no better end, as the two forces remain estranged, two parts of an alienated Self.

Cap Leech's final speech, along with his victory over the Sheriff, demonstrates the sterility of the mystification of Mulge which the townspeople expected to save them. In the first chapter and in the Sheriff's description Mulge, although mysterious as he sits near the river, is very much alive. Echoing the Sheriff's earlier description of Mulge, Cap Leech's final speech, however, describes Mulge as though he were undergoing the process of fossilization:

You've answered to me for having found him
crouched with bare, folded feet, for having
watched the thinly wrinkled, perforated breath of
skin that was his throat--dry now, untouched,
except for the soothing pressure of some tons of
earth--for having spied on the wrappings, the
colorless cloth, the complete expulsion of the
bodily fluids, the immobility of ten dangling

fingers shoved like minnows into the shriveled ground. (159)

Mulge, who in life broke the hearts of all the women he knew, has caused more harm in death by giving the townspeople an object to mystify and by distracting them from their own insufferably empty lives, just as religion and traditional art can numb rather than awaken us to life. Rather than seeking to create their own lives, they worship at the feet of an empty myth. By analogy Hawkes shows how the traditional novel, like the myth of Mulge, has fossilized and become an imprint of where life has been but not where it may go.

By fragmenting the conversation between the Sheriff and Cap Leech and weaving it in and out of the narrative, Hawkes prevents the reader from being carried unconsciously along the arch of suspense created in the traditional adventure story; the reader, rather, must engage himself in following the complex pattern of repeated images that Hawkes weaves. Repeating images hold the novel together creating a coherent whole while the psychic battle portrayed in the dialogue between the Sheriff and Cap Leech, discussed earlier, and the constant emergence of the Red Devils give the novel its forward momentum. The Red Devils, a curious motorcycle gang, slink in and out of the town and the novel's pages. They appear as a roaring group and individually as spies who watch the townspeople. They are

neither all human nor all beast, and even appear to be part machine. Hawkes leads us to expect, through their spying and sinister movements in and around the town, that the Red Devils will mount a full-fledged, bloody attack on the town. As they weave in and out of the town, the Red Devils add to the novel's sense of "the pit, the blackness of reality which we do not want to face . . . they [the Red Devils] are our shadows, dogging our footsteps, haunting our waking hours until they are inseparable from us" (Greiner 106).

Hawkes's use of complex patterns of repeated images enhances the sense of the novel as a creative myth which establishes a path into the depths of the unconscious. By using an elaborate structure of interwoven images that constantly echo one another rather than using traditional plot devices based on time related events, Hawkes gives *The Beetle Leg* a dreamlike quality, and the reader experiences the novel as though he were trying to fathom recurring images in his own dreams. Images echo through the novel: the Sheriff constantly quotes the Zodiac; Ma remains ringless, Lou removes her ring at the poker game; the dam moves "a beetle leg every several anniversaries" (68), Leech crawls on the "shell of a beetle sweeping . . . on its wire legs" (123), Luke is described as a shard--a beetle's wing case; and everything harks back to the great slide and Mulge's death. As the echoing images rush past, the reader tries to grasp who Mulge is, whether he really ever existed

or whether he just left Claire without notice since no one actually saw his death and his body has never been found. The reader, however, also must confront his own expectations of what a novel is or should be as Hawkes refuses to fulfill our traditional expectations.

Hawkes is not content to upset the reader's expectations of dramatic structure. His narrator takes no moral position as he tells his story. Echoing an earlier description of Cap Leech's delivery of Bohn from his dead mother's womb, "The son, fished none too soon from the dark hollow, swayed coldly too and fro between his fingers" (121), the narrator even more graphically draws the picture of Luke fishing the body of a fetus from the river. However, the narrator takes no emotional position. Luke and the others present seem indifferent to the fetus, a sight which we would normally expect to be emotionally moving. Thus, as readers,

We do not know how to handle it because Hawkes's detachment leaves us free to go our own way. If anything our disgust works in favor of these damned characters. For as repulsive as they are . . . we find ourselves sympathizing with them when we read this scene. They are not at fault. Hawkes summons us to identify, to enter the circumstances of those who revolt us. This is what he means when he insists that "the product of

extreme fictive detachment is extreme fictive sympathy. (Greiner 103)

The fictive detachment forces us to decide how we should feel about the fetus and the detachment with which Luke and the others in the boat deal with it. Hawkes hopes the reader, unlike the characters on seeing the fetus, will be disturbed by the lack of narrative interpretation and the lack of emotion displayed by the characters as they witness the scene. He seeks to hit a psychic nerve and as a result connect the reader to the unconscious: "my concept of a fictive world means that it draws heavily on what Bernard Malamud once called 'psychic leakage'. . . . I want to find the underground conduit or germinal, pestilential 'stuff' of life itself as it exists in the unconscious" (Hawkes, *Life and Art* 125). Hawkes's hope is to shock the reader as such a "psychic leakage" opens the reader's psyche to a symbolic sense of the fetus and the image's archetypal power.

As in *The Beetle Leg*, in *The Owl* Hawkes explores both the psychic battle waged when the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche become alienated and the effect this alienation can have on a society as well as on the individual. To do so, Hawkes draws on the archetypal structure of the fairy tale, and as Greiner points out in *Comic Terror*, Hawkes creates a fairy tale gone amok (65). Il Gufo, the narrator of the tale and the hangman/magician, maintains his strangling grip over the town rather than

being defeated by the forces of good. The hero does not marry the fair maiden or save the town; he instead is a captured prisoner who is ultimately destroyed. The fairy-tale castle is a bleak fortress which stands high on the cliffs above Sasso Fetore. Rather than being a symbol of hope it has become a symbol of enslavement to the past and a prison for its inhabitants. In a traditional fairy tale, the hero would defeat the evil that terrorizes the town, marry the fair maiden and, in so doing, restore vitality and fertility to the desolate landscape. However, in Hawkes's fairy tale, the evil that paralyzes life in Sasso Fetore derives from the townspeople themselves. They must save themselves and then allow the hero to marry the maiden, but they will not.

The structure of *The Owl* reflects the traditional perspective of its narrator, Il Gufo, but he is not the typical narrator of a fairy tale. Il Gufo is the upholder of the past so he uses traditional story-telling techniques to tell a seemingly traditional tale. As a teller of a fairy tale, Il Gufo uses linear chronology and the traditional symbols of Christianity to describe life in Sasso Fetore. Hawkes, by allowing Il Gufo to use traditional story-telling techniques, reveals how they, like myths which have fossilized into dogma, can deaden creative potential. The carefully plotted novel that depends on clearly defined events and rising action and conflicts which

are tied up neatly in the end belies reality in a world where satisfying resolutions of complex problems are rare just as does dogma that insists on virgin births and the resurrection of the dead.

While the narrative point of view of the fairy tale is usually that of third-person omniscient, Hawkes has *Il Gufo* narrate his fairy tale. However, as Greiner points out, Hawkes allows *Il Gufo*, as narrator, almost omniscient power. As a first-person narrator, he should not know the thoughts of the people he describes, but he seems to. While *Il Gufo* seems to control his tale completely, "removed from the conventions of narration and from the limitations of time and cause and effect" (Greiner 65), including describing the motives of others he cannot possibly know, he is not able to control the impression his story makes on its audience. *Il Gufo*, seemingly freed from the constraints of narrative conventions, cannot control his audience as he wishes to do precisely because he is not free from narrative constraints. Despite Greiner's assertion that *Il Gufo* appears more diabolical because he is removed from the conventions of narration, his very removal from those conventions alerts an observant audience that *Il Gufo* is describing a subjective rather than objective reality and that his point of view may not be that believable. The reader becomes aware that *Il Gufo* is manipulating his narration to further the ends of his dogmatic world. *Il Gufo*, in the end, may dictate the

actions of the actors in his story, but he cannot dictate the readers' reaction to it. By questioning the authority of the narrative voice, the reader can refuse to be drawn into Il Gufo's repressive world. Hawkes's technique of undermining Il Gufo's authority by giving him too much authority also works to undermine the reader's confidence in all traditional narratives which allow one to hide behind conventions which belie the truth while claiming to impart it.

In *The Owl*, Hawkes attempts to create the voice of the artist as dictator and thus Il Gufo tells his tale as he wishes to tell it. He "is the absolute narrator of his story, the creator of his own realm which, if it is terrible and repressive, is also mannered, precise, stylized"

(O'Donnell 55). However, while Il Gufo sees himself as having almost God-like power over Sasso Fetore's citizens, like an artist chained to archaic artistic forms, he cannot see that he is as much a prisoner of his forefathers as they. In *The Owl* Hawkes uses Il Gufo's description of Pucento and the white dog dancing the gavotte as an objective correlative which exposes the relationship of the people of the town to Il Gufo and their past. Furthermore, Il Gufo's narrative becomes an objective correlative which reveals the self-deception inherent in literature which does not question its own motives and methods.

In the scene of the gavotte, Il Gufo describes the beginning of the dance with Pucento commanding the dog, and as Pucento and the dog walk to the center of the green where they will dance, Il Gufo says the walk was "itself determined by the beauty of the aged provincial combat between man and dog" (180). Later, Il Gufo also describes Pucento as one who "sweat[s], himself straining to duplicate the measure, the ruthless footstep of the past" (182). Ironically, Il Gufo is as much a handmaiden to the past as Pucento. He too dances to archaic drums. Il Gufo, as well as those he controls, is imprisoned "in the walls falling away from proclamations hundreds of years old, still readable, still clear and binding" (138). Il Gufo doesn't have to pull the chain of the past with which he holds the citizens of Sasso Fetore, just as Pucento doesn't have to pull the leash of the white dog to make him dance. Like Pucento and the white dog, Il Gufo and the citizens of the town "maneuvered together and the one obeyed the other" (181).

Hawkes pushes the analogy of the "Gavotte" one step further, however, making the Gavotte, which is an ancient stylized dance, analogous to obsolete artistic and literary forms which, like fossilized myths, no longer reflect modern life and which keep the artist and his audience from recreating the world in a more meaningful way. Like the gavotte and the oil painting which hangs over the banquet

table in Il Gufo's fortress, "the air of longevity" is strong in out-moded literary forms, and thus the unquestioning reader may become tethered to the past by the literary pen which relies only on the techniques of the traditional novel.

Since Hawkes has Il Gufo include the reader as though he were a member of the "Mongers" and thus one of the condemned, the reader is saved only if he can extricate himself from the power of Il Gufo and the sterile world he creates by questioning and ultimately seeing through the now archaic myths and literary structure which Il Gufo uses to create his tale. Likewise, the reader who cannot or will not see through the implications of the structure of the traditional novel which no longer reflects modern reality remains imprisoned in the past and unable to create his own world just as Il Gufo remains a captive of the ancient rituals of Sasso Fetore. The author and the reader who remain senselessly tied to a literature which has become static, rather than creating an ever-evolving literature which reflects changes in man's relationship to the world, become entombed in their own creations just as the people of Sasso Fetore have become entombed in their culture's dogma and rituals which no longer reflect their world in a meaningful way. In essence *The Owl* is Hawkes's effort to regenerate the novel as well as the fairy tale and make them anew.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In *The Beetle Leg* and *The Owl*, Hawkes explores the dangers of cutting the unconscious off from the conscious, and in so doing, Hawkes's early novels become living, creative myths. As such, they warn about the danger of abiding by cultural taboos and dogma based on traditional myths which have long since lost their ability to connect man with his inner self. In these works, Hawkes uses tightly controlled language and artistic structure to recreate the psychic battle constantly waged between the conscious and unconscious realms of the human psyche as the self struggles toward individuation. Without integrating the conscious with the unconscious, as Jung and Hawkes would agree, men can only endure life rather than live creatively; and as living myths and as works of a visionary artist, Hawkes's works, for those open to their message, can help to reestablish a lifeline between the conscious and unconscious.

As Hawkes attempts to reveal the workings of the psyche and humankind's need to integrate all aspects of the psyche, *The Owl* and *The Beetle Leg* present such shocking and vivid personal visions that they can help the reader face the unconscious, making integration of the conscious with the unconscious possible. *The Beetle Leg* and *The Owl*, like our myths and dreams, serve as a lifeline to our shared as

well as our personal unconscious. As Hawkes draws the world of the psychically self-entombed, he gives us in *The Owl* and *The Beetle Leg* living myths which may help us understand the dark desires of the unconscious so that we may avoid spiritual and creative stagnation and impotence. Freed to examine our complex and often volatile nature, we can advance our lives purposefully and creatively rather than cowering before our imminent annihilation.

In *The Beetle Leg* and *The Owl*, Hawkes creates living myths which seek to reveal how myths which have given way to dogma hinder rather than further man's creative growth and possibilities. In these two early works, the citizens in both *The Beetle Leg* and *The Owl* allow themselves to be dominated by ancient mythology reduced to dogma and repressive laws as enforced by the Sheriff and Il Gufo. Symbolically, these two characters represent consciousness and reason heedless of the unconscious. They are keepers of the living dead as they dogmatically adhere to laws and rituals of the past rather than integrating the wisdom of the unconscious with the conscious psyche.

While our world may share much with those portrayed by Hawkes in *The Beetle Leg* and *The Owl* as we adhere to outdated religious dogma and the social taboos which have resulted from them, these novels when read as creative myths imply that we can escape the fate shared by Hawkes's characters. Hawkes offers the fate shared by the citizens

of Mistletoe and Sasso Fetore as a warning not as a mirror. While the inhabitants of Mistletoe and Sasso Fetore may be doomed because they will not rebel, if we heed the warning Hawkes's stories offer, we may be saved. If the reader is able to explore and understand Hawkes's tales, in a way that the inhabitants of the two novels clearly cannot examine their own myths, the reader may find an opening to the unconscious, thus sharing in the creation of life-encouraging myths.

While out-dated rituals, laws, and myths can hold a society captive to the past so also can its art and literature. Literary structures, like myths which may harden into hollow dogma, can become fossilized forms which no longer communicate with the reader in a vital way. Hawkes, realizing the danger of being tethered to the literary forms of the past, attempts to breathe new life into the novel by adapting it to a twentieth-century sensibility and sense of reality. Thus in *The Beetle Leg* and *The Owl*, he creates his own fictional world which more accurately reflects the disorder and chaos of a world in which the once sustaining myths of our past no longer enlighten.

Because in his early works Hawkes creates desolate landscapes of human waste, these works are often criticized as unnecessarily bleak. Their critics claim they portray man as helpless to free himself from the grips of paralyzing

conformity and his fear of his subconscious desires. However, in his early works, the hope Hawkes offers the reader of escaping the confines of socially dictated conformity lies not in the reader's ability to fathom the traditional novel which relies on fully developed, believable characters who, if allowed by the author, discover life's eternal truths, but rather in the reader's creative response to the author's distinctive style which, in turn, encourages the reader to examine his own psychic enclosures. Hawkes's very means of telling his story denies that men must remain enclosed in a sterile world, for in refusing to cling to the traditional symbolic and structural formulas of the traditional western or fairy tale, Hawkes implies that we can free ourselves from our societal and psychological enclosures by rebelling against mindless conformity and by exploring and facing our unconscious desires and our fear of them just as the artist can challenge and breath new life into old artistic forms.

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