Chapter 2
THE WAPSHOT CHRONICLE
"A CHRONICLE WITH A DIFFERENCE"

It was maintained in the previous chapter that for John Cheever the novelist the disparate materials which he draws from various sources - his family history and tradition, his personal life, situation and people he has observed in his suburban and urban surroundings and elsewhere, his memories and recollection of persons and places, and above all the people and situation invented by his fictive imagination including the fabulous, the fantastic and the apparently incredible - these constitute the 'facts' which are imaginatively recreated as 'fiction' by him to convey meaning and significance. This generalisation would apply to many novelists. How does The Wapshot Chronicle, Cheever's very first novel, fare in the light of this stand is the theme of the present chapter. The title of the novel is very likely to give the impression that it is a 'documentary' kind of novel which uses the techniques of fiction to present as graphically as possible actual facts. A Chronicle by definition is a recorded chronological account of actual people and events generally of a country. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle started by King Alfred in the ninth century and the Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1577-87) by Raphael Holinshed and others which were important sources of materials for Elizabethan drama, are famous examples for it. But there can be and have been chronicles which recorded accounts of much smaller worlds such as towns or families. A 'documentary' or 'journalistic' novelist well can make use of the materials provided by such chronicles for fictional purposes. It has already been held in the previous chapter that Cheever is not a novelist of this kind.
In what sense, then, *The Wapshot Chronicle*, is a 'chronicle'? Before attempting to answer this question, there is a related issue that may be first considered and disposed off. Susan Cheever in her book on her father, *Home Before Dark*, has said of this novel that 'the book was more of his own story than anything else he had written,' giving the impression that it is largely autobiographical, and that what is recorded is his family history in a heightened form. In the critical commentary on this novel some of the critics, notably Lynne Waldeland and the author of the article 'Ovid in Ossining' in *Time*, have emphasised the autobiographical content in it, although they are cautious enough to recognise that the novel is also 'an act of artistic invention'.

Similarities between certain facts of Cheever's life and those in the novel may be noticed without any difficulty, although they are in no way directly parallel. The closest resemblance is seen between Ezekiel Wapshot, the fictional founder of the Wapshot family in America, and Cheever's own ancestor Ezekiel Cheever. Both Ezekiels, the historical and the fictional, arrived in New England in the 1630s. Some details of Cheever's ancestor as an early colonist of and a Puritan are assigned to Ezekiel Wapshot. Drawing upon his seafaring ancestors Cheever, who was very proud of them, the Wapshot too a one-time seafaring family like his own. There are some noticeable resemblances between the immediate members of the Wapshot family, Leander and Sarah and their two sons Moses and Coverly on the one hand and Cheever's father Frederick Lincoln and mother Mary Devereaux, and Cheever himself and his elder brother Frederick on the other. They seem to have some common traits. However, it is not easy to determine to what extent Cheever was basing his fictional characters on his own family circumstances. Leander
Wapshot, and Cheever’s father were literate businessmen who read Shakespeare to their sons. Having been prosperous businessmen for a time both suffered financial disasters from which they did not recover: As a result Leander’s wife Sarah and Cheever’s mother Mary turned breadwinners of their respective families and ran successfully gift shops. They also took upon themselves with zest and dedication civic responsibilities. Their husbands viewed their wife’s competence as an affront to their self-esteem and felt humiliated and helpless. Consequently their relations were strained. Cheever’s parents were even separated for some time. Though reconciled later, they could not reestablish their earlier relationship. Leander’s experience was much the same though he was not separated from his wife. But Leander’s other occupation—his ferrying an old clumsy boat from the mainland to recreation island, for instance—do not connect with those of Cheever’s father directly. However, they resemble each other in their enormous zest for life and pride, and in keeping a journal. Moreover, Leander’s journal resembles closely in its content and idiosyncratic style of the journal kept by Cheever’s father. As admitted by Cheever himself, he ‘used’ his father’s journal, sometimes verbatim, in *The Wapshot Chronicle* as part of Leander’s journal. But Leander, as Lynne Waldeland has pointed out, grows into legendary and mythical proportions as the novel develops and goes beyond whatever autobiographical basis he may have. There is yet another point of difference between Leander and Cheever’s father. It was their wish that after their death the famous speech of Prospero from *The Tempest* of Shakespeare—’Our revels are now ended—’—should be read over their graves. Coverly, Leander’s younger son, faithfully fulfills this wish of his father’s but according to Susan Cheever, her father when asked ‘refused to do it’, although rather strangely Cheever told his interviewer Hersey that he ‘did’ recite the passage.
Cheever’s treatment of the character of Sarah Wapshot seems to reflect his own ambivalent attitude towards his mother, who, he felt strongly, had done great harm to his father’s self-esteem by turning a successful business woman. Cheever was more in sympathy with his father: some of the traits of his mother which he did not approve of he seems to have ascribed to Sarah. For this reason, as he told Annette Grant, The Wapshot Chronicle was not published until after his mother’s death. The shaping of Moses and Coverly may owe something to Cheever’s relation with his brother Frederick. But the connection appears rather tenuous, and cannot be stretched far. There is a curious fact of Cheever’s personal life which he ascribes to Coverly. According to Susan Cheever, Cheever’s mother had told him that ‘They (i.e herself and her husband) had not wanted another child before he was born. His conception was a drunken accident between two people who no longer cared about each other. When his mother found out that she was pregnant, his father had tried to force her to have an abortion’. In the novel Coverly tells the psychiatrist a similar story about his birth, told him repeatedly by his own mother. But this revelation does not in any way affect his attitude to his father, nor his own attitude towards himself.

There is no need to labour the point that Cheever does make use of some autobiographical facts in The Wapshot Chronicle. But taken together they do not add up to much to enable one to maintain that the novel is largely autobiographical or crypto-autobiography. There are many more things in the novel which have little or nothing to do with Cheever’s life, and which establish it as essentially and pre-eminently a work of artistic invention that exists in its own right and can be read and understood without any reference to the author’s life.
Moreover, to approach a novel through its author's life, tends to shift the reader's attention from the novel, which ought to be the focus, to the author's person. It becomes an exercise in source hunting rather than a critical examination of the text as a work of creative imagination and fiction.

The Wapshots, with whose fluctuating fortunes The Wapshot Chronicle is concerned, are a once affluent and influential but now run down New England family, wholly invented by the novelist. St. Botolphs, the suburban place they live in is equally an imagined locale, which exists only in the imagination of the novelist. By calling their imagined history a chronicle, which naturally includes their past, remote as well as recent, Cheever is inducing in the reader the feeling that what is presented in the novel is all real, is true, as a similar account in any chronicle. In humorous imitation of the manner of the Old Testament Chronicles, the ancestry of the Wapshots is traced. The Wapshots are all said to be copious journalists who scrupulously recorded all facts including the doctoring of a sick horse, buying a sail boat, and the noise of the rain at night. Above all, parts of the journals of Leander, an inveterate diaryist, are faithfully reproduced in the novel. (in chapters 14, 16 and 19). Thus Cheever tries to gratify the reader's expectation of realism to which he has been accustomed. This appears to be the first of the advantages of calling the novel a chronicle. The second advantage relates to the over-riding theme of the novel. Thematically The Wapshot Chronicle is concerned with the question of how far and how much of the tradition and values of the past could be related to the changed and fast changing present day world which is untraditional and even seems to be devaluing them. In the words of Leander, the presiding spirit of the novel as well as its most important character, it is
the problem of carrying on to the present and future, and sustaining 'the excellence and continuousness of things'11, and of connecting the present to a useful and usable past. The chronicle mode helps Cheever to tackle this problem without feeling self-conscious, because the notion of connecting the past to the present and future is inherent in the idea of chronicle itself. The novel as a chronicle of the Wapshot family, tells of its traditional past, its present, and by implication its future. In fact almost every family in St.Botolphs is concerned with its past, and wishes to trace its ancestry to a remote time in the past. "The Harcourts and the Wheelwrights, the Coffins and the Slaters - - - have all had their family histories investigated and published" and the Wapshots "would not want to be considered without some reference to their past.1160. There were also some people outside St.Botolph, who donot have anything nice to remember, and therefore borrow the other people's memories. Coverly, the younger son of Leander, however is actively concerned with the question how to bridge the gap between the past represented by his father and the changed present to which he belongs.

The strategy of the chronicle brings Cheever another advantage. It enables him to present this narrative at an unhurried pace consistent with the life style of his chief characters who are suburban in their origin as well as their attitudes. For many readers of this novel a cause for dissatisfaction with it is that there are too many isolated episodes and incidents in it which, though interesting in themselves, do not pull together to form a unified whole. That there is much warrant in the novel for this view cannot be gain said. Later in this chapter the question of the novel's structural unity would be considered in more detail. At this point it is necessary to note that Cheever himself appears to have been aware of this fact, as may be inferred from
the narrative strategy he adopts in the novel. Having been for a long time almost exclusively a writer of short stories which by and large rely on individual episodes, it could not have been easy for him to move into long fiction and adjust himself to the structural needs of the novel. He seems to have tried to overcome this practical difficulty by adopting analogically the chronicle mode in preference to other narrative modes available to him. Because the events recorded in a chronicle, very much as events in real life, do not appear happen according to a design or plan, it may not rouse in the reader expectations of a tight-bound design and structure, although subsequently one may detest an over-riding design and pattern in its. Therefore a chronicle accommodates several episodes, either ill-connected or not connected at all, and permits a certain looseness of structure. By giving the story of the Wapshots the shape of a chronicle Cheever was trying to circumvent structural difficulties raised by it.

It is obvious, thus, that Cheever adopts the chronicle mode to serve the purpose of fiction-in The Wapshot Chronicle. While outwardly conforming to the form of chronicle, he makes changes to suit his fictional needs. The novel begins, as a chronicle should with an account of as historically important day, the 4th of July Independence Day, commemorated in the form of a parade in the old-fashioned manner in St. Botolphs an old New England river town. It constantly evokes the illustrious past of the town and of New England, and contrasts it with its dull, uninteresting and decaying present. Thus within the short span of the opening paragraph the identity of the ancient town is established with remarkable credibility, its past and present are connected and implicitly contrasted, and a historical perspective is provided to the reader. The members of the Wapshot family, who are among the chief dramatis personae of the novel,
are introduced in the brief first chapter. The novel concludes several years later with Independence Day celebrations at St.Botolphs with which it began. This fact suggests that its "main focus" is on "cyclical time", "not linear time", with which a chronicle generally concerns itself. There is a far more significant departure from the method of the chronicle. As George W. Hunt has pointed out

- - - the events narrated are in most cases impossible to date, save in the most general way. Not only do we not hear of such things as war or war's alarm, memorable disasters, and economic depressions which would provide a chronological handhold, but the length of time-lapses in the story are such that by its end we are not sure how much the characters have aged in the interval. - - -

The story seems to end in the 1950's but where does it begin? As Cheever himself explained to Frederick Bracher in a letter, the absence of specification was deliberate: 'I have carefully avoided dates in order to give my characters freedom to pursue their emotional lives without the interruptions of history - - - A sense of time that revolves around the sinking of ships and declaration of war seems to be a sense of time debased. We live at deeper levels than these and fiction should make this clear'. Since the deeper levels are personal the important events of the novel do not have an ideological as well as a temporal setting. As Bracher points out, "Cheever ignores the major trends in the intellectual history of our times. No one in the Wapshot chronicle shows any interest in politics - - - Economic factors influence the lives of the Wapshots on the practical rather than the theoretical level".

Not only in The Wapshot Chronicle about a wholly invented family living in an invented place but virtually all its essential facts are imagined. St.Botolphs, where the Wapshots live
which is presented in full-bodied historical manner, is a complete fiction, its topography drawn in Cheever’s mind. It is not Cheever’s birthplace Quincy under a disguised name, as Cheever explained to Annette Grant. It is one of the most important invented facts of the novel and outweighs autobiography. However it may owe something to his recollection of the New England villages he had observed. How he came to conceive a place like St. Botolphs Cheever himself has explained. In his “Introduction” to the Time-Life reissue of the novel:

There was no West River, no S.S. Topaze, no St. Botolphs. A boat that looked like Topaze, used to be moored in the Harlem Ship Canal off Northern Manhattan and could be seen from the trains on the Hudson River line. The cannon on the green is in Bristol, New Hampshire, the sound of the adzes was heard by my father, and the impulse to construct such a village at St. Botolphs occurred to me late one night in a third-string hotel on the Hollywood Strip where the world from my window seemed so desperately barbarous and nomadic that the attractions of a provincial and traditional way of life were irresistible.

It is the combination of nostalgia for the recollected real and invention that resulted in the imaginative creation of St. Botolphs, where the past along with its habits and customs appears to linger on into the present. It is obvious that Cheever intends St. Botolphs to serve as a contrast to the more complex and incoherent places of the modern world to which its young have to go to seek their fortunes. It is depicted so vividly and with such realistic and historical exactness that it is recognisable as particular locale. However, as the novel develops it goes beyond the realistic to acquire a symbolic significance.

Cheever uses the town of St. Botolphs with its stable unconscious life, as a convenient
setting for exploring certain themes and defining certain values dear to him. It has surely its attractions. There is the natural beauty of the landscapes which affects one’s feelings deeply. The natural world flourishes in or near it. One can always come upon a "patch of woodland dappled charmingly with sunlight" 'as if it were some reminder of paradise' now lost. Thus there is every warrant for Leander's lyric celebration of the natural world in his journals. In St.Botolphins, as Samuel Coale points out, "the traditions of the past and the continuing cycles of the natural seasons complement each other and suggest that sense of permanence in life that simultaneously eludes and underscores men's dreams". However Cheever wisely does not idealise the place or its people. It is not an earthly paradise. It has its share of dishonesty, lewdness, and drunkenness. St.Botolphins is no longer the boisterous port it had been once. Its population has diminished from year to year. There are more ships in bottles than on the water. Things once built 'for the contentment of hardy men' have 'changed and decayed'. The town is no irresistible bastion of tradition and has developed visible cracks. Eccentricity abounds in it:-Leander and Honora Wapshot are the most conspicuous exemplars of it-but is free from the potentiality to turn it into destructive grotesqueness.

St.Botolphins also emits an air of sadness. The ladies of the town know and are troubled and puzzled that their sons would go away and may not come back. Mrs. Brewster 'had sent her two sons through college with the money she made as a baker'. They 'had done well but - - - they never came home'. They wrote to their mother 'that the first trip they made would be the trip to St.Botolphins'. But 'they went to Yosemite National Park, they went to Mexico City, they even went to Paris, but they never, never came home'. Off go the Wapshot boys, Moses and
overly, to their separate destinations to seek their fortunes and prove themselves, not at all aware of the significance of their departure from the country town of their birth and youth. As Samuel Coale points out

Life is no more easily lived in St.Botolphs that it is in the impersonal suburb Remsen Park. It may appear to have more of a definite shape, more completeness, rounded as it is by a sense of nature, of the past, and of the ceremonial aspects of custom and habit, but in truth it is still subject to the terrors and chaos of any time and age.\textsuperscript{22}

The residents of St.Botolphs, the Wapshots in particular, have their share of the unrelieved pain of isolation, disappointment, of alienation and loneliness, all of which are part of universal human experience in general.

For all its shortcomings St.Botolphs in contrast to its modern counterparts has in its favour the fact that it "has at least evolved through the natural order of things which shaped it as an organic community."\textsuperscript{23} Even in its present decayed condition life is not anonymous nor the individual an unknown entity in it. Within the traditional pattern of its life the worth and dignity of man are still possible. Cheever finds in it, for purposes of fiction, a manageable community of people convenient to dwell on, with the focus of course fixed steadily on the Wapshots.

As the novel presents a series of separate and distinct incidents and episodes - and hence it is called a 'chronicle' - rather than a sequential narrative, it is not easy to summarise its plot. In fact, it does not have a plot in the sense a novel of Jane Austen's or George Eliot's has. And
hence whatever sense of unity it has, is to be sought elsewhere. There are four parts in the novel of which Part Two is the lengthiest and Part Four the shortest. Beginning in the manner of a chronicle Part One first of all establishes the locale of the ancient town of St.Botolphins and gives the novel a topographical particularity and security, as it presents the town in a cinematic way. In this town, which has been the home of the Wapshots for long, traditions are important. Appropriately Part One begins with a vivid and entertaining account of the 4th of July Independence Day Parade in which some of the present members of the Wapshot family are involved. This occasion is used to introduce the Chief members of this family who are also the chief characters in the novel. Leander, his wife Sarah, and their teenage sons Moses and Coverly. Some hoodlum sets off a firecracker under the old mare drawing the Women's Club float. The frightened mare bolts away from the parade for some distance and then moving at a trot takes its own course to reach its stable in the River street. This occasion is also used by the novelist to depict the town in graphic detail touching all of its landmarks. Thus the imaginary town of St.Botolphins is established as a concrete reality.

Since the novel is designed as a family chronicle, familial relationships and characterisation become naturally an important part of it. Four of the central characters are introduced in the first chapter by way of concise and ironically perceptive portraits, which later events prove as accurate. First, appropriately the Wapshot boys, Coverly and Moses, are introduced as they watch the parade. They are, as Lynne Waldeland points out, "most important in terms of the plot development of the novel. It is their participation in the archetypal experience of young men leaving home and childhood to make their ways in the adult world that
serves the main story line", \( ^{24} \):

Coverly was sixteen or seventeen then - fair like his brother but long necked and with a ministerial dip to his head and a bad habit cracking his knuckles. He had an alert and a sentimental mind and worried about the health of Mr. Hiram's cart horse and looked sadly at the inmates of the Sailor's Home - fifteen or twenty old men who sat on benches in a truck and looked unconscionably tired. Moses was in college and in the last year he had reached the summit of his physical maturity and had emerged with the gift of judicious and tranquil self-admiration\(^{25} \).

This sketch succinctly presents what is most characteristic of the brothers, and what distinguishes them from each other.

Next to be introduced one after another are Sarah and Leander. Sarah, the mother of the boys, appears in the parade appropriately seated atop the Woman's Club float. Every year she is said to have taken a leading part in the parade. She is known not only as the founder of the Women's Club in St. Botolphs, who has contributed more than any other to the enlightenment of the town, but one who with remarkable zeal has been responsible for improving the civic amenities of the place. She is also known for her gifts of organisation. That the relation between her and her husband are rather strained is already hinted in the fact that Leander is not only not present at the parade witnessed by the whole town but that 'He did not mind missing his wife's appearance in the parade'\(^{26} \). When she is atop the Independence day float, he is busy ferrying his boat. There is a certain sadness about her, and in spite of her civic zeal she has a taste for melancholy, the reason being her disenchantment with her husband who had proved unfaithful.
her. Anticipating the later developments in the novel, it may be pointed out at this stage itself it contrary to our expectations. Though she is the mother of the boys and potentially as important as her husband, she has a very limited role to play in the events of the novel. Her influence on her sons is very tenuous. So in her power to affect her husband. Of course she sses about Rosalie, she takes under her protective wings for a whole. The only occasion when e asserts herself is when she converts Leander’s damaged boat Topaze into a floating gift shop d becomes the bread-winner of the family, for which he never forgives her. As a character the novel she is completely overshadowed by Leander and his cousin Honora (who is introduced a little later) - who appear titanic by her side. It is they who influence the lives of ir sons. She appears to have little connection with the New England heritage that has a strong influence on Leander and Honora. Her civic zeal may bring to one’s mind social reformers of ie 19th century. As observed by Lynne Waldeland, "Of the major characters in The Wapshot chronicle, she is the least remarkable and the least thematically important".

In sharp contrast to his enlightened wife Sarah. Leander has no pretensions to enlightenment. Having been many things in his life, none too successfully and nothing perhaps ong, now he captains The Topaze, an old, decrepit unseaworthy launch which he ferries with holiday makers between the mainland and the recreation island Nangasak in the Atlantic. The captainsy of the boat is made possible by his generous cousin Honora, who also holds the purse strings of the family, just 'to keep him out of mischief'. It is time that he has a 'taste for romance and nonsense'. Who else, on hearing the sound of the merry-go-round as his boat approached the holiday island, would shout, 'Tie me to the mast, Perimedes', alluding rather
comically to Homer's passionate Odysseus who was fascinated by the song of sirens. However, that there is much more in him than love of 'romance and nonsense' is made clear by his 'Advice to My sons' written on a piece of paper which is found by them after his death in a copy of Shakespeare. Written in his idiosyncratic style it reads:

Never put whisky into hot water bottle crossing borders of dry states or countries. Rubber will spoil taste. Never make love with pants on. Beer on whisky, very risky. Whisky on beer, never fear. Never eat apples, peaches, pears etc. while drinking whisky except long French-style dinners, terminating with fruit. Other viands have mollifying effects. Never sleep in moonlight. Known by scientists to induce madness. Should bed stand beside window on clear night draw shades before retiring. - - - Provide light snorts for ladies if entertaining. Effects of harder stuff on frail sex sometimes disastrous. Bathe in cold water every morning. Painful but exhilarating. Also reduced horniness. - - - Avoid kneeling in unheated stone churches. Ecclesiastical dampness causes prematurely gray hair. Fear tastes like a rusty knife and do not let her into your house. Courage tastes of blood stand up straight. Admire the world. Relish the love of a gentle women. Trust in the Lord.

This 'Advice' is a clear index of Leander's life and character. It is a mixture of the practical and the impracticable, the wise and the ludicrous, the sensible and the superstitions, and the erotic and the religious. It also reveals his concern for good manners and genuine moral guidance. All these inform his life and behaviour throughout the novel.

Leander and Honora are in fact the most fully developed and realised characters in this novel, within its limits. Compared with them the other characters appear rather flat. There are only incidental references to Honora in the initial chapters. While the other four important
characters are introduced through thumbnail sketches, in the first chapter itself, we have to wait till the sixth chapter for a detailed and delightful sketch of her character. By holding the purse-strings of the Wapshot family and by stipulating that Leander's sons Moses and Coverly would divide her fortunes between them 'contingent upon their having male heirs', she plays a crucial role in the novel. It is her will that brings about the crisis in the story and shapes its course.

Leander and Honora make an interesting pair of characters. Both are eccentric, each in an individual way. They seem to be opposites, each representing one major direction taken by the religious and cultural heritage of New England, of which they are consciously aware and proud too. It is as if Leander, who has an enormous zest for life, stands for the sensuous side of life with a remarkable capacity to accommodate and assimilate without any inhibition all manner of experience. In apparent contrast to him and his taste for the grain and hair of life, as if representing an alternative to it, Honora seems to uphold the spiritual side of it with somewhat limited sympathy, and with a tendency to make narrow judgments on life and behaviour. But they are not simple allegorical characters. Honora is no mere kill-joy. She has a real love of nature and enjoys certain pleasures spontaneously. To mention just a few of them. this aged childless, wholly independent matriarch enjoys eating frankfurters and a dish of ice-cream in the five-and-ten-cent store, and sees twice on the same afternoon the movie "Rose of the West", even though she feels somewhat guilty for the time being of doing what is morally unclean.

Late in life she becomes an enthusiastic fan of Boston Red Sox Games. Leander on the other hand, in spite of speaking consistently for earthly pleasures and their vigorous enjoyment, is opposed to a life of indulgence. His love of the sensuous side of life is counterpoised by a respect for tradition and ceremony which he has inherited, and he is eager to pass on to his son:
what according to him are substantial and usable values.

For all the real differences between Leander and Honora, which some episodes in the novel emphasise, they in essentials are like twins. In their vitality as well as eccentricities both are consciously aware of their New England heritage and the power of that tradition on their lives. They are proud of their Wapshot heritage and ancestry. The copious journals of Leander are ample proof of it. Honora says forthrightly: "Lorenzo was very devoted to the family and the older I grow the more important family seems to me. It seems to me that most of the people I trust and admire come from good New England stock". Both are eager that the Wapshot family should continue. It may be presumed that Honora’s choice of Moses and Coverly as heirs to her fortunes on the condition that they have male heirs, stems from this proud attachment to the family. Therefore Leander and Honora are on tenterhooks when Moses falls ill with severe mumps and Coverly accidentally is burnt in the groin. Both are rooted to St Botolphs and cannot dream of living outside its environs. As persons they are, in the words of George Hunt, "generous, stubborn, quixotic and hard-headed, foolish and wise", as the events in which they are involved show. Between them Honora appears to be the more interesting character, although Leander remains the central character of the novel, its most dominating figure, and its presiding spirit even when he is not physically present. As Lynne Waldeland has pointed out these two, "energized by their sense of the past and determined to convey, in their own individual way, the power and usefulness of tradition to the next generation", they raise the novel "from a simple photograph album - - - to a novel with a thematic point". 
Chapter two of the novel, which interrupts the narrative, takes us back to the distant past from the immediate present recounting briefly the history of the Wapshots from their Norman beginnings. The account of the family tree becomes matter of fact from the time of Ezekiel Wapshot, the founder of the family in the 17th century in New England. It also includes lively extracts from the journal of Lorenzo who left all his wealth to his niece (that is, his younger brother Thaddeus's daughter) Honora. Lorenzo's journal, while underlining the continuity of the Wapshot family, anticipates Leander's own journals presented later in the novel, and also reveals similar concerns, and underline in his life 'the continuousness of things'.

The Rosalie Young episode follows the account of the conclusion of the 4th of July parade. That very evening the car in which Rosalie and her boy friend Charlie are returning from the sea coast after a day's pleasure seeking, crashes very close to the Wapshot residence, leaving Charlie dead and Rosalie with minor bruises. She is resumed by the Wapshots. Leander and Sarah indeed are happy to have her with them until she recovers fully and her parents take them back. She meets temporarily their need for a daughter, and in turn is drawn to the peacefulness and quietness of the Wapshots and their residence. Coverly is shy in her presence, but Moses somehow does not like her and even avoids her company. However, one morning when he is fishing in the river he chances to see her in the golden light of the forest and water, alone bathing in the stream. His sexual appetites awaken, and he seeks Rosalie's company. Honora, who come to West Farm to be introduced to this stranger, unwittingly overhears consummation of the sexual longings of the young pair. She is so much upset, even horrified, that she rushes home to read her Bible. She decides that Moses, one of her heirs, should be
made to leave home to go some strange and distant place and prove his worth in the outside world. She sees to it that Leander and Sarah accept her plan: Honora’s reaction to what Moses regards as ‘something that would make us both feel so good’\textsuperscript{40}, may have been caused partly by her puritan background. But, as Lynne Waldeland points out, "It may not be sexuality Per se but its expression outside the rituals of marriage that she is reacting against"\textsuperscript{41}. It may be presumed that she disapproves Moses squandering himself in random affairs while she expects him to marry and beget a son inherit her legacy and continue the race of Wapshot. There is her family pride too, as she tells Leander: 'He (is Moses) hasn’t raised a finger all summer except to indulge himself and all the men of our family went into the world when they were young, all the Wapshots'\textsuperscript{42}. Leander understands her point, and agrees to let Moses go. With Honora’s overhearing the young pair, the true action of the story begins.

Thus the Rosalie episode furthers the plot. But it has a few other functions too. Rosalie is and remains a confused drifter in the realm of sex. Had she chosen to be frank, she might have told Sarah Wapshot that she has always been a very lonely person, and having been led to believe that sex is the remedy 'for all of (her) problems and loneliness and everything'\textsuperscript{43}, she has eagerly looked forward to it only to be disappointed every time. Her father, a 'virtuous and prominent' priest, and her stupid mother have not been of any help to her. She has no interests or values of her own beyond her sexuality 'through which she seeks love and friendship. But, on the day of the fatal crash, on the beach with her date she is not able to separate in her mind the power of love from the power of loneliness. Her erotic confusions anticipate analogous confusions experienced in different degrees by Coverly and Moses and their wives. Similarly,
her awareness of the pain of loneliness points to Leander, Honora, and Coverly's wife Betsey who also are assailed by feelings of loneliness, though for different reasons. Coale has pointed out that "Throughout this novel loneliness as a basic human condition is a constant theme". So is the power of human desire and love as a shield for human loneliness and melancholy.

Long before the Rosalie incident, Leander had begun to teach his sons the importance of nature and tradition in their lives, because he appreciates the need for governing ritual and ceremony in everyday life. Even Honora, eccentric and self-willed though she generally is, is keen on preserving the traditions of the Wapshot family. Ceremony is a formal principle of life. It helps to organise patterns of private and public behaviour. In a traditional society or community, not merely at the time of birth, marriage, and death but each day has its ceremony, its ritual, which by habitual and continuous repetition give life a sense of order, organisation and meaning: This sense of order also helps one to celebrate and discover the continuities and beauties of his life. In the novel Leander's love of ceremony is an expression of his zest for life. On every Christmas Day he went skating without fail on Parson's Pond, because he felt that it was his responsibility to the community to be seen engaged in this 'continuous and innocent sport'. The cold bath he took every morning was 'ceremonious'. The coat he wore at dinner, the grace he said at table, the fishing trip he took each season, the bourbon he drank at dark and the flower in his button-hole were all forms' of ceremony. He had taught his sons 'to fell a tree, pluck and dress a chicken, sow, cultivate and harvest, catch a fish, save money, countersink a nail make cider with a hand press, clean a gun, sail boat, etc.,' all in the same spirit.
Leander performed every one of his everyday activities ceremoniously, whether others agreed with him or not. Viewed thus ordinary events acquire a certain extra dimension. It is Leander's wish that his sons could 'grasp that the unobserved ceremoniousness of his life was a gesture or sacrament toward the excellence and the continuousness of things'. Therefore he tries to initiate them into these age-old ceremonies rather than instruct them in "the facts of life", which they would anyhow get to know from personal experience. It is clear from the narrative context Leander's understanding of the significance of ceremonies is very much that of an average man who has come to grasp their value having practised them in his own life. It is also clear that he has been able to observe all traditional ceremonies only within the traditional bounds of St.Botolphs where the past lingers on into the present to give the impression of the continuity of all things, and therefore of permanence. It is left to the sons of Leander, Moses and Coverly, to verify and find out whether the lessons taught by their father would be of any help to them in their own lives which they have to live away from St.Botolphs.

As part of the initiation Leander devises a fishing trip for his sons in distant Canada in the north as a grand sacramental gesture. It establishes one's solidarity with one's forbears. Fishing is a rite of virility and his ambition is to make complete anglers of his sons. Moses takes to it readily and goes the whole hog, to the great delight and satisfaction of his father. The narrator renders vividly and concretely this fishing expedition, and conveys the very feel of the ritual ceremony and its excitement. But Coverly disappoints him. On his mother's advice he carries a cook book with him to the expedition, which only infuriates Leander who flings it out. And feels that his son has let him down. Ironically, subsequent events show that it is Coverly
rather than Moses who honestly tries to understand his father’s feelings and points of view, and be worthy of him. Later he goes through another rite of initiation at the village fair to which Leander takes him intentionally. There he watches with rapt attention a bawdy cootch show, a debased version of primitive Dionysar rites and walks out of it when one of the girls does something dirty. But her memory torments him in his dreams, and his attempts at mortification fail. The next day when he goes to the fair again to seek her favour, he finds that she has already left the place. Disappointed though he is, this experience has enabled him to cross the border from innocence to experience, from adolescence to adulthood, which his brother Moses has already managed. As the narrator puts it, 'it was only a matter of chance that he (in Moses) was not already a father'47. He is already for advanced by his knowledge of the rites of Dionysm. The confusion Coverly experiences after his visit to the fair anticipates his later frustrations, before he achieves his masculinity.

Honora, who controls more than the finances of the Wapshots, sees to it that Moses is sent out to make his way in the world and prove himself. Moses is only too eager to go away from St.Botolphs because he wants to see the world and try his strength there. He would have certainly done so sometime or other, even if Honora had not precipitated it. If he has any feelings of regret, they are over-ridden by his passionate desire to get out of St.Botolphs. Leander, who is proud of this son, thinks that 'the world meant a place where Moses could display his strong, gentle and intelligent nature; his brightness'48. Unexpectedly, Coverly too decides on his own initiative to leave his place of birth at the same time. The two brothers, having passed through the stormy stages of bad feeling, fighting with sticks, and reviling each
other - stages necessary for their growth and emotional development - now have reached the stage of tenderness and brotherhood which has all the symptoms of love. The galling thought of his brother going away gives Coverly "his first taste of love's dark side". As he explains in his letter to his parents, 'I love Moses so much that I couldn't be in St.Botolphs if he wasn't there. But we are not going to be together because we thought that if we separated we would have a better chance of proving our self-reliance to Cousin Honora'. It is significant that Coverly chooses to go to New York where he has tried to find employment while Moses goes to Washington where Honora has already found a job for him. One would not have expected Coverly to be capable of such initiative and enterprise. The contrast between the brother, which is already indicated, becomes more and more obvious from the time of their departure from home. Coverly is more attached to his parents and St.Botolphs than Moses, and much more keenly aware of his obligations to Honora and the family.

With the departure of Moses and Coverly, and also of Rosalie whose parents come to take her, Part One of the novel ends. From the next part onwards the novel takes the form of a picaresque narrative of, modern times as the experiences and adventures of the Young Wapshots as they make their way in the world are recounted. However three chapters in Part Two (14, 16 and 19) are given to Leander's autobiographical confessional narrative written in an idiosyncratic and telegraphic but eminently expressive style. It is like a chronicle within a chronicle and thus helps to keep up the illusion of actual persons, events and facts which are recalled from a remembered past. The journal chapters alternate those describing the early adventures and trouble of his sons, providing a parallel as well as a contrast to theirs. Leander
embarks on the composition of his journal, soon after his sons go away from St. Botolphs, partly to keep himself occupied but chiefly to record in retrospect memories important and unimportant alike so that he can 'make sense of what is done'\textsuperscript{51}. While he is certainly nostalgic about the past and very proud of his family tradition and his forbears - "There's nothing but the blood of shipmates and school teachers in writer's vein. All grand men\textsuperscript{52} it is quite clear that he does not seek any escape from the present. He records the history of the family with remarkable frankness, his voice being "alternatively lewd, eloquent, and capable of controlled and moving emotion"\textsuperscript{53}. He writes in the journal: Many skeletons in family closet. Dark secrets, mostly carnals Cruelty, illicit love, candor, but not dirty linen. Decisions of taste involved\textsuperscript{54}. The novelist says of Leander the diarist: "He meant to be honest and it seemed, in recording his past, that he was able to strike a level of candor that he had only known in his most lucky friendships\textsuperscript{55}. Composing the journal also enables him "to take his place in the grand lineage of Wapshots, inveterate diarists, and underline in his life 'the continuousness of things'\textsuperscript{56}. His love of his Wapshot forbears is such that he even continues their 'epistolary style' of writing in his own journal.

A part from his sense of the past which energises him to live in the present, two more things emerge from Leander's journal: his sturdy humanity and his sensuous apprehension of the world in which he lives. His senses are keen and alert, especially his sense of smell. To cite one random example, Leander while making his jottings on his ride on a small schooner with his father notes: 'More savory world then, than today. Smell of ship's bread bakery: Green coffee beans roasted once a week. Perfumes of roasted coffee floated miles downriver. Lamp
smoke. Smell of cistern water. Lye from privy. Wood fires. His entry on the 'Great Boston Fire' may be cited as a convincing example for his gift for capturing in his cryptic style graphically the sounds, smells, confusion, grimness and inhumanity of the occasion. Samuel Coale has pointed out that the novel itself "is filled with the smells that assail Leander and other characters, as if the world can be best appreciated through inhaling the abundance of its aroma." Leander is keenly aware of the natural world around him. St.Botolphs and its surroundings have an abundance of natural beauty to foster and nourish his love of it. He celebrates in his journal the sensations roused in him by the different aspects of nature. It is said of him in the novel that he is 'easily charmed with the appearance of the world'. At such moments the earth seems paradisical to him, 'borne along on his conviction of the abundance of life - carp in the inlet, trout in the streams, grouse in the orchard and money in Honora's purse'. Naturally he feels that the world is 'contrived to cheer and delight him'.

Naive and childlike though this view of the world is, Leander's response to the ups and downs of his life is that of a mature man. It is best seen in the restrained manner in which he accepts the death of his lovely first wife Clarissa when he is cajoled and threatened into marrying by his crooked employer Whittier who has impregnated her. His comment on it is characteristically spare and self-denying. He writes in his journal:

Have no wish to dwell on sordid matters, sorrows, etc. Bestiality of grief. Times in life when we can count only on brute will to live. Forget, Forget. (By this Leander meant to say that Clarissa was drowned in the Charles River that night). Took cars to St.Botolphs next morning with old mother and poor Clarissa. Overcast day. Not cold. Variable winds. South southwest. Hearse
at station. Few rubbernecks watching. Father Frisbee said the words - - - Family lot on hill above river, water, hills, fields restore first taste of sense. Never marry again. - - - Wind slacked off in middle of prayer. Distant electrical smell of rain. Sound amongst leaves. - - - Rain more eloquent, heartening, heartening and merciful. Oldest sound to reach porches of man's ear.

Significantly Leander is enabled to recover from his grief by the shower of rain. Chapter Nineteen, which deals with Leander's transactions with his employer and closing with the death of his young wife whom he had come to love and with whom he had spent the happiest days of his life feeling intensely alive, is certainly one of the best and the most moving in the entire novel. Eugene Chesnick's Comments on this episode are most apposite:

Leander blames no one for what has happened, neither his boss, nor Clarissa, nor himself. The rain promises an eventual return to life so that all feelings of guilt and betrayal can be put aside. Even in his oldage, when the possibilities of pleasure are considerably diminished, Leander has no quarrel with his past. He never does attempt to discover the moral contour's of events. What Leander has to teach both his sons - - - pertains to not to responsibility or to guilt but rather to the significance of ceremony. - - -

Of course, it is for his sons to test and find out whether the set of lessons he earnestly taught them would be of any help to them in their lives, lived outside St.Botolphs. The journal of Leander, very meticulously written, not only serves to present a rounded portrait of Leander but also to keep the narrative close to the everyday world of facts particularly in view of his developing legendary and mythical dimensions in the second half of the novel. Since he most consciously tries to pass on his sense of tradition and ceremony to his growing sons, his journal and the episodes in the novel which reveal his own use of tradition contribute to this important
The participation of Coverly and Moses in the archetypal experience of young men leaving home to make their ways in the adult world serves as the main story line of the novel. Their adventures hereafter from the substance of the rest of it. It is by sending them out into the wider world from the narrow and limited world of St.Botolphs that the relevance of the lessons concerning ceremony and traditions on which Leander sets so much store, can be tested. Moses and Coverly seek their fortunes as well as quest for their would be wives in the adult world, the latter being far more important for them than finding jobs. Each quests for a wife in his own way. Thus journey and quest together become an important motif and a central image of this novel. Born and bred in St.Botolphs, Moses and Coverly leave it to enter a world which is not only different in every respect from their accustomed environment and background but without relationship to it. But they are hardly aware of the significance of their departure from home. The novelist presents their adventures in the picaresque mode. Chance, accident and good luck play their part in what befalls them, as in a picaresque narrative. Their experiences and escapades, which may be viewed as knight-errantry of modern times, give the novel its momentum. The novelist uses the opportunity of narrating them to give me an authentic picture of the kind and quality of life in the places to which these knight-errants go.

Moses goes to Washington to work in a Federal secret agency, as arranged by Honora in advance, and Coverly to New York, the biggest city in the world, where he has to fend for himself. Both have their troubles. The differences between the brothers becomes much more
strikingly clear than before in the way they react to the world they have entered and the people they encounter. Moses is full of hopes and expectations about his future and quite confident of himself. He gets into his stride as soon as he goes to work. He grasps in no time that 'much of his social, athletic and spiritual life (is) ordained by the agency where he worked', which includes playing games, taking communion and going to parties at embassies and legations. Little is said about the nature of his work. It is ironically implied that these is perhaps not much else for Moses to do. A strict code of conduct is insisted on curtailing one's liberty even in one's private life, to the annoyance of Moses. Though he enjoys himself he does notice the contrast between St.Botolphs and the city where he works. Having come from a small and close-knit community where one knew his neighbours intimately and thoroughly, he finds that his knowledge of his present companions is no better than the knowledge travellers have of one another. He is also impressed by the 'theatrical atmosphere of impermanence' and 'latitude for imposture' prevailing in the agency. Therefore he sometimes feels depressed and uprooted. His feeling of loneliness and his sensual nature involve him with a married woman in an irresponsible though pleasant arrangement. As a result, he is summarily dismissed as a security risk.

Moses is angry at his dismissal and with himself 'for having failed to come to reasonable terms with the world'. A more significant fact is that he is also deeply aware that his parents and Honora would suffer should they get to know about his dismissal. His way of meeting the situation is to go trout fishing 'to recapture the pleasures of his trips to Langley with Leander and to refresh his common sense'. After all Leander's lessons in fishing to him have not been
n rain. In this and in his love of the hair and grain of life Moses is very much his father's son.

On his way back from the fishing expedition, he chances to rescue bravely the paramour of a wealthy New York businessman, who rewards him promptly by taking him into his employ on handsome pay. With this turn of events he finds contentment Fortune's favoured child that Moses seems to be his romantic quest for a wife takes him to Melissa whom he meets at a lance. She is the ward of a Justitia Wapshot, an ancient cousin from St.Botolphs, now living at Clear Haven in a pseudo-castle, outside New York city. The instant Moses sees Melissa, she seems a most desirable and beautiful woman. He courts her and wins her consent to marry him. What is significant is that 'so far as he knew, this sudden decision had nothing to do with the conditions of Honora's will.' (emphasis added). As subsequent events show, Moser's familial attachments, in contrast to his brother's are not strong. Before he can really marry Melissa and set up his own home, this modern knight-errant has to overcome many a hurdle. More of it later, after Coverly's progress in the wider world is briefly traced.

Coverly who goes to New York as an innocent and inexperienced 'country boy' has to face many more problems than Moses, before he can feel settled. Naïve, timid, awkward, nervous and hesitant by nature, he still shows himself enterprising and self-reliant enough. With a child-like curiosity, he observes everything fascinated, surprised, and disturbed by all that he sees there: the city's sights, smells, noises, crowds of people crossing the streets, traffic, men and women, old and young alike, their dress, the speed and haste of their movements, their self-absorption etc. At every step he is conscious of the difference between St.Botolphs and the city: 'It is a city - - - where the value of permanence has never been grasped. - - - you wonder
about the pace of life in this big city. Everywhere you look you see signs of demolition and creation. The mind of the city seems divided about its purpose and its tastes. They are not only destroying good buildings; they are tearing up good streets; and the noise is so loud that if you should shout for help no one would hear you.\textsuperscript{67}

More sensitive than his brother to his new surroundings, Coverly soon realises that the world they have entered is a complex and incoherent world, not easy to comprehend. In concrete terms, he becomes conscious of the sharp and 'abyssmal' difference between the sweet-smelling farm-house from which he came and the room in which he lives now: 'They seemed to have come from the hands of different creators and to deny one another'.\textsuperscript{68} Coverly, differs greatly from his father who more than once saw in him another Icarus, because he thought that this son of his could not sustain and contribute to the excellence and continuousness of things. But in actual fact it is Coverly who shows a better appreciation of his father's life and values, remains deeply attached to him, and feels the necessity 'to create or build some kind of bridge between Leander's world and that world where he (has) sought his fortune', although it would take 'strength and perseverance'.\textsuperscript{69} A like thought never passes through the mind of Moses. One cannot but wonder whether Cheever is not imposing on the young and inexperienced shoulders of Coverly too heavy a burden. However, this young Wapshot tries consciously to assimilate as far as possible the traditional values and use them in his own life.

Probably his feelings of separation from his father and the distance from St.Botolphs, his native place, rouse in Coverly a measure of reflectiveness, the like of which hardly seen in
Moses, and also provide him with a point of vantage to view his father and his values with imaginative sympathy. Ironically, he becomes a more faithful son to his father than Moses, and fulfills in a way his father's wishes. While Moses decides not to return to St.Botolhs when he learns that his father is dying, rushes to St.Botolhs when the fake telegram reaches him although he is stationed in a far off Pacific island. And it is he who reads the Prospero passage over his father's grave to fulfill his wishes. While Moses ignores his father's appeal for financial help after the wreck of the Topaze, Coverly would certainly have done his best had his father's letter reached him. His sense of familial ties, so important to his father, is far stronger than that of his brother.

Unlike Moses Coverly has to struggle to find even a moderate job. There are two episodes connected with his search for a job which have a bearing on the larger theme of tradition and the possibility of building a bridge between the traditional world of Leander and the contemporary world. The first episode is Coverly's visit to Cousin Mildred, who is also a Wapshot like Justina, and with whose help he hopes to get employed in her husband Brewer's Carpet industry. The other episode is about his being put through a series of psychological tests which find him unfit to be employed because the disturbing 'emotional picture' supposed to have been revealed by the tests. That the unemployable Coverly finds a job easily the very next morning after the tests as a stock clerk for Warburton's Department store, is part of the novelist's oblique comment on the worthwhileness of these tests. Cheever pokes fun at the fact that an innocent small-town young man is put through a battery of psychological tests which are appropriate to the world of business, but not adequate to the complexity of human nature. The
perceptive observation of Marcia Gaunt on this episode deserves to be cited in some detail:

In his interview with the psychiatrist Coverly illustrates Cheever’s conviction that the small-town traditional world accepted the many sides of human nature and helped people channel unruly impulses into a vital affirmation of life. With cheerful, naive self-confidence, Coverly reveals his parents’ phobias, his mother’s account of how his father wanted him aborted, his own homosexual and heterosexual encounters - - - Coverly knows these revelations are only partial and normal aspects of his character, as he tries, apparently rainly, to tell the psychiatrist. - - - In this episode Coverly - - - is a clever foil for Cheever’s mild and indirect ridicule of Coverly’s contemporary, bureaucratic, quantifying world with its fears of human complexity and sexuality and its search for predictable, adjusted employees. - - - The serious point beneath the droll and subtle comedy that dominates the interview is one threat the contemporary world poses to those who want to retain a bridge to Cheever’s traditional world of greater human fulfillment- - - .

Significantly, Coverly remains unaffected by the outcome of these psychological tests.

The earlier episode of Coverly’s visit to Cousin Mildred has a more direct bearing on the theme of tradition and its continuity in the contemporary world, which has begun to engage Coverly’s young mind. He is apt to judge people and places by the standard of St.Botolphs. To his eyes the building in which Cousin Mildred lives seems ‘expensive, pretentions, noisy and unsafe’, not at all like ‘a nice farm’. He is ‘surprised’ but not particularly pleased to find her parlour filled with the furniture bought and brought over from West Farm. Nor does he feel flattered by the enthusiasm that Cousin Mildred and her husband Brewer exude for the Wapshots. Brewer is said to be ‘mad for New England’ and to adore Wapshots so much that he appears to out-Wapshot the Wapshots in his interest in their family. As his wife explains to
Coverly, 'he doesn’t come from any place really, - - - he doesn’t have anything nice to remember and so he borrows other people’s memories’. He got the family history of the Wapshots traced and obtained the crest too. It was his idea to fill their parlour with the things from St.Botolphs\textsuperscript{72}. All this amounts to saying that Brewer has no identity of his own, familial or regional. Much less does he have a sense of tradition, although he seems to feel the need for one, and tries to acquire it.

The eccentric case of Justina Wapshot, Melissa’s rich guardian, may as well be mentioned here although it belongs to a much later chapter (ch.29) in the novel. She too is obsessed with the things of the past, but without an understanding of what they mean to her. She builds her enormous, almost monstrous, spurious castle at Clear Haven by assembling together parts of ancient mansions brought over from Europe. She surrounds herself with archaeological and museum pieces and paintings supposedly by Masters, which ironically are discovered subsequently to be copies and forgeries, ostensibly to make the castle a sanctuary for tradition and the past. The real motive behind this extravagant and vulgar exercise however, is the desire to impress strangers and gratify her vanity\textsuperscript{73}. Both Brewer and Justina have in common this urge to gratify their vanity, although they accumulate antiques for reasons apparently different. The implicit comment of the novelist on them is that neither has a true sense of the past. For they lack a sense of the continuous, which to Leander in the novel is of paramount importance. As he understands it, the past continues into the present and looks forward to the future. Therefore those like Brewer and Justina cannot build a bridge between the past and the present, much less can they a living tradition. Moreover, one cannot make a tradition continuous without adopting
in some form and measure some of its values and style of life. And hence the importance
Leander attaches to ceremony and rituals in everyday life, although his success in this regard
is partial. Significantly it is the young Coverly, though inexperienced as yet, that understands
this problem and also the difficulty of resolving it in times which are changing fast.

The Wapshot boy's quest for jobs, though necessary, is not as important as their search
for wives in view of Honora's will. Cheever uses the occasion of their search for jobs to poke
fun at the current employment situation and its absurd procedures. The differences between the
two shows up once again in their endeavour to find wives too. Coverly is the first to find a wife.
His search, time to his home-loving nature, is short, common-place, and even prosaic with little
or no drama in it, compared with the exciting romantic adventure of Moses. He chances to meet
Betsey Mac Caffery, a waitress, in a sandwich shop, and at once falls in love, with this dark-
haired, thin and not particularly attractive orphan girl. A small town boy falls in love at first
sight with a small town girl. He recognises in her his helpmate as surely as the swan knows its
mate, although there is nothing in particular to recommend her except perhaps her almost
pathological loneliness. Coverly wants to be her defender. After a short spell of courting he is
married to her in a simple ceremony at a church in New York itself. He takes the prudent
decision to marry first, produce a son, and then take his wife and child to St.Botolphins for
Honora to see. Within a week after his marriage, he is appointed as Taper and sent away to
Island 93, a half military and half civil station in the Pacific for a nine-month stay. This is the
first of the two interruption to his married bliss, although on the whole happiness in marriage
is more or less assured to him. During this interruption he experiences the agonies of uxorious
husband. But the second brings about a real crisis in his life, challenging his very identity. Part Three of the novel is largely concerned with the travails of Coverly and the adventures of Moses in resolving the problems created by their respective marriage.

Coverly and Betsey come to live in Remsen Park, a rocket-launching station and a prefabricated jerry-built suburban town with houses all identical to the smallest detail impersonal. It is a location that Coverly knows nothing about. It is wholly impersonal both he and Betsey miss their the friendliness of the small town in which they were raised. She feels the keen edge of it more than her husband. Her complaint against Remsen Park is that it is 'not a very friendly place' Her attempts to make friends with her neighbours fail miserably. Her gestures of friendship are callously ignored. Her need for friendship is so great that when she finds a seemingly time friend in Josephine Tellarman, she clings on to her with an enthusiasm so excessive that in its very nature it cannot be sustained for long. Her disappointment with the Tellarman couple and her discovery of Josephine's hypocrisy in particular the Tellarmans deliberately avoiding Betsy's elaborately planned birthday party - make her pain of loneliness excruciating. She feels "that through every incident - every moment of her life - ran the cutting thread, the wire of loneliness, and that when she thought she had been happy, she had only deceived herself for under all her happiness lay the pain of loneliness and all her travels and friends were nothing and everything was nothing". That very night she has a miscarriage. After this traumatic experience, she turns her helpless rage against poor Coverly: 'I'm sick of you, sick of your earnest damned ways - - - and sick of your old father - - - I'm sick of Wapshots'. She leaves him rather abruptly, when he is away at his office.
Betsey’s situation of course reveals the spiritual uprootedness of modern existence, and is an implicit general indictment of the spiritual wastelands of contemporary life and the dehumanising impact of urban life. However, as Marcia Gaunt has suggested, there is much more to it. Coverly himself feels that Betsey ‘was pushing some kind of stone that had nothing to do with their immediate life - or even with her miscarriage - but with some time in her past’. "It is rather that Betsey’s past, unlike Coverly’s, has not given her a sustaining identity that can affirm life" in the unfriendly environs of Remsen Park. Further such feelings of loneliness and nothingness that she experiences can indeed obliterate one’s sense of identity and push one into the anonymity of alienation, as if possessed by a demon. In choosing Betsey for his wife Coverly is exposed to one of the threatening tendencies of contemporary life which is cut off from a sustaining past - the danger of destroying one’s identity. When she leaves him he feels so lonely and desperate that his optimism and identity are threatened. The mechanised sounds of Remsen Park and its streamlined layout, as he wanders through its streets, bring him neither relief nor consolation. He hungers for the security, simple pleasures, human sounds and natural order of St.Botolphs, although its streets are as excursive and crooked as the human mind.

Left alone now, Coverly suffers a series of emotional unsettlements, the most disturbing of which is his loss of faith in heterosexual love, doubts about his male virility, and rumblings of homosexual lust within himself. He is almost on the point of yielding to the overtures of his gay colleague Pancras, trigerring off a crisis of his sexual identity. But his conscience comes down heavily on him, one of the fruits of his upbringing in St.Botolphs. He dreads that being
fit to be only a homosexual he might not 'inseminate' his kind, having been 'shut away away forever from a delight in girls'. Then the happiness, security and food of his kind parents, which depend on his 'prowess', would be in jeopardy, and he cannot 'discharge his responsibility' to them. Faced with his chaotic amorous impulses he wishes strongly for a school of love which would teach him to explore man's 'indiscriminate erotic impulses', his 'complex demoniac nature', and enable him to come into 'full possession of his powers of love', 'regard the earth with candor and with relish, world without end', and in short affirm life.

Coverly's visit to his brother Moses and his encounter with his brother's beautiful wife Melissa, who reawakens his erotic instincts and reassures him of his heterosexuality, restore in part his confidence in himself and also his sexual identity. But it is the reassuring letter of Leander, to whom he had written in desperation for guidance, that restores his stability courage and confidence in himself fully. It heals his anguish. Leander's letter, written in his characteristic telegraphic style, is frank, forthright, unpretentious and uninhibited. To reassure his son he tells him that he too went through similar sexual confusion, homosexual temptations during the lonesome days of his youth, and urges him to cheer up:


Leander's letter brings Coverly the wisdom he has sought in his imaginary school of love, and
puts into perspective his anguish over his homosexuality. His restoration is complete when Betsy who had left him in a mood of frustration, returns to him before long on her own. The crisis over, he regains his identity.

There could be little doubt that Coverly's apprehension, and his anguish of anxiety about his sexual identity are very real. So is the urgency he feels for finding resolution. Cheever devotes the whole of chapter 34 to them. But strangely, he suggests at the beginning of the chapter that 'any disinterested reader is encouraged to skip' this chapter because it deals with 'the unsavory or homosexual part' of the tale. Does he mean that it is dispensable and therefore can be skipped? If so, why include it at all? Savoury or otherwise, apart justifies itself by the function it has in the total context of the novel. There is a necessary place for an account of Coverly's brush with homosexuality. But Cheever could have done very well with a less elaborate account of it as well as of the imaginary school of love. All the reassuring knowledge that Coverly needs is provided by Leander's letter to him, which is precise and to the point and therefore sure to go home to him. Could it be that Cheever was unwittingly giving expression to his own homosexual urges, which, as his Journal shows, became disturbingly powerful later in his life?

While Coverly and Betsey are struggling to live in the unfriendly environs of Remsen Park, Moses and Melissa who have already become lovers and decided to marry, are busy eating their 'golden apples' at Clear Haven. The preposterous castle of Justina to which he goes preparatory to his wedding becomes the setting for Moses's romance. If Coverly's search for
a wife follows conventional lines, Moses takes the form of a romantic adventure with mythical overtones. Justina, a one-time dancing mistress and wife of a five and dime store Mogul who is now dead, is a witch-like dictatorial person keeping in thrall all the inmates of her castle. Greedy, cruel, hard-hearted, and parsimonious she is also a man-hater and reminds one of the mythical harpy. She is a grotesque parody of Honora. Her castle is virtually a prison for Melissa, on whom she has a mysterious hold, which is never explained. She places a number of obstacles in the way of Moses and Melissa, even after she has consented to their marriage. Therefore Moses has to engage himself in a comic chivalric trial in the surrealistic castle, outwit the witch like guardian and win his damsel. He has to scurry over the castle rooftop night after night to reach his lady love. Of course he thoroughly enjoys this adventure, because his perception of love and relationship is narrow and intensely associated with sexual fulfilment. He reminds one of a satyr. Wrapped up in his sensual gratification, he even forgets for a time his dislike of Clear Haven and see in it 'an excellent place' for lovers. The paradise of his dreams is filled with lovely women.

After the wedding however Moses begins to realise how irksome can be Justina’s ways with the new-weds. And Melissa by stiffening up all of a sudden and adopting invalidism and chastity, adds to his difficulties. It is not at all clear whether her apparent aversion to conjugal life is a whim or caprice or something else. The only basis for surmising that there may be unfortunate factors in her upbringing and in her past which may be responsible for her present behaviour is Justina’s passing comment that Melissa ‘has never been tractable’. But, this is hardly substantial to render convincing her temporary transformation. There is no evidence either
o suggest that she has any inner conflicts which cripple her capacity for love. Betsey's turning
away from her husband is far more convincingly rendered. Beyond petty annoyances and
ealousies which are overcome without much difficulty; Moses and Melissa, unlike Coverly and
Betsey are, not challenged by any real crisis or suffering in their relationship to test the quality
and depths of their attachment. An accidental fire burns down to ashes Clear Haven and all of
Justina’s treasures, and bring the young couple their release from Justina’s grip, to live their
lives in their own home. It is as if their future happiness as man and wife is assured. But the
excessive reliance of Moses on sexual fulfilment almost to the exclusion of every other thought
may hint that one cannot be too sure about it.

As wished and hoped for both Betsey and Melissa give birth to sons in the early summer.
Honora, as good as or better than her word, not only readily divides her fortune between Moses
and Coverly but decides not to have anything to do with the money. They plan to visit
St.Botolphs and buy their father a new boat with Honora’s money. But before they arrive to
show this handsome gesture to Leander, he is dead. Now the wreck that overtakes the Topaze
and its impact on Leander may be briefly recalled. This old hull, rickety, decrepit and
unseaworthy though it is, is much more than a means of income for Leander. It is his very life
in the sense that it symbolises for him his self-respect and esteem, pride and independence, in
addition to nourishing his love of romance and love of life inspite of its age. Its crashing into
the Gull Roch and Wreck, the refusal of Honora and the local bank to finance its repair, and his
wife Sarah’s determination to transform it into a floating gift shop, utterly disregarding his
feelings, all together hurt him very deeply and render him pathetic and helpless. His letter to his
ons begging for money betrays his pathetic need for help and at the same time his unwillingness to admit this fact his sense of pride coming in the way:

Topaze gone, how will I fare? - - - days pass without purpose, meaning, color, form, appetite, glory, squalor, regret, desire, pleasure or pain. - - - Feel hopeful sometimes in early morning but soon discouraged. Sole excitement is to listen to horse races on radio. If I had a stake could quickly recoup price to repair Topaz. Lack even small sum for respectable bet.

Was generous given myself. On several occasions gave large sums to needy strangers. - - - Try to help old father within means. If not, feel out acquaintances - - - Topaze good investment - - - Laugh and the world laughs with you. Weep and you weep alone.  

The last sentence gives the proud man away. There is no response to this appeal from his sons, both being away from their respective places of residence.

Leander's reactions to this emasculating series of embarrassment is moving as well as comic. He makes a nuisance of himself in every possible way. On the day of the tea party to open the floating gift shop, in pique and frustration he fires his pistol out of the window and fakes suicide. It brings only Lulu the cook to the scene, to whom he bemoans, 'I only wanted to be esteemed'. Only Coverly rushes home to comfort him and bring him hope, while Moses his favoured son assumes that his father is malingering and therefore ignores him. Leander certainly does not deserve such a treatment from his son. Part Two of the novel ends with this episode. Part Four is the shortest and has only two brief chapters. The first of them presents the death of Leander, and the second the impressive funeral of Leander, and the return of Coverly with his wife and son to St.Botolphs several years later to celebrate Independence Day.
Leander's death comes about rather unexpectedly. He is happy that his sons 'had gone out in the world and proved themselves and found wives and would now be rich and modest and concerned with the welfare of the blind and retired seamen and would have many sons to carry on their name'\textsuperscript{82}. It is as if the lessons in the ceremoniousness of life and the importance of tradition he had tried to teach his sons have borne fruit. He gives up his job at the tablesilver company and merely announces that he is going back to the sea. As though it is a prologue to it, he goes fishing on a Saturday morning in spite of his age. Probably to celebrate ritualistically his sons', success and his own zest for life. That night he has a sickeningly ugly dream of lewdness and decrepitude. In this dream, as Marcia Gaunt points out, lust appears to Leander "as an ugly defense against death, 'a passion for old age' rather than the celebration of life it is for young people"\textsuperscript{83}. In view of his death by drowning which happens very soon, perhaps he seems to regard the dream as ominous hinting that this time for him to quit.

On the following Sunday, Leander surprises everyone by attending church, where it is not the worth of his prayers that pleases him but the fact that on his knees in the church 'he was more than in any other place in the world face to face with the bare facts of his humanity'. Further, the handful of sere for needles lying on the ecclesiastical malodorous carpet since the Advent Cheer him as if they 'had been shaken from the Tree of Life and reminded him of its fragrance and vitality'\textsuperscript{84}. He thus pays his homage to life. On Monday morning he goes to the sea for a swim and then to Sun himself. And he is not seen again. The nature of his death, whether it is a deliberate suicide or natural or accidental death, remains ambiguous. The few on the beach see him wading out to his knees wetting his wrists and forehead to prepare his
circulation for the shock of cold water and thus avoid a heart attack. From a distance it looks as though he is crossing himself. Then he swims with a sidestroke out into the sea, 'throwing his right arm up like the spar of a windmill'. Thereafter he is not seen. His unexpected appearance at church the previous day, his fervent prayer, and his apparent crossing of himself as he steps into the sea, suggest that it is a deliberate death. But the precautions he takes as he enters the water and the homage he pays life the previous day work in the other direction. It cannot be that "he kills himself because of weakness - for the sake of the Topaze metamorphased into a gift shop", as Marcia Gaunt has argued because the first thing that his sons who have inherited Honora's legacy would do is to buy their father a new boat to enable him to go back to sea.

The very ambiguity surrounding Leander's disappearance adds a sense of mystery to it and gives him a legendary and mythic stature. In death by water, there is reminder of The Tempest and an echo of Don Quixote on the reference to the windmill. Frederick Bracher has observed, "- - - like a God or culture hero, his disappearance from earth is mysterious and ceremonious". As George Hunt points out, the sea function throughout the novel as "a multivalent symbol of vitality, regeneration, erotic potency, purification, and death, of origin and return". In the portrayal of characters, particularly the more important ones, Cheever's method is to present them realistically and at the same time with legendary and mythic stature. This technique is most obvious in his portrayal of Leander who is at the factual realistic level father, husband, cousin, citizen of St.Botolphs, and proud descendant of an old New England family. In the course of the novel, particularly towards its close as noted already, he develops
legendary and mythic dimension, most like a sea-god, in the context. His sons, Moses and
loversly, as seen already, are young men in search of work and wives. At the same time they
are also archetypes of the young initiates entering the world of adult experience. Justina, to cite
one more instance, is a rude, man-hating, dictatorial, kill-joy old woman, but she is also a witch
or a dragon imprisoning a princess to be outwitted by the hero. Instead of working the mythical
parallels literally, Cheever places his characters in archetypal situations, thereby making the
parallel resonant rather than literal. He is most successful in harmonising the realistic details
and their legendary impact in presenting Leander's funeral. The church is so packed with
villagers who have spontaneously flocked to the funeral, that Honora, who is most surprised,
blurts out aloud: 'What are all these people doing here? who are all these people?':

They were the butcher, the baker, the boy who sold him newspapers and the driver of the Travertine bus, --- the librarian, the fire chief, the fish warden, the waitress from Grime's bakery, the ticket seller from the movie theater in Travertine, the man who ran the merry-go-round in Nangasakit, the post-master, the milkman, the station-master, and the old man who filed saws and the one who repaired clocks.

This catalogue of persons serves a double purpose: it reveals how large was his world of
acquaintances and interests how extensive his human sympathies, and secondly it also shows him
as larger than life.

However, viewed as a whole Cheever achieves only a limited success in rendering convincingly the metamorphosis of the real Leander into the mythical. One cannot forget
Leander's comic-pathetic suffering immediately following the wreck of Topaze, and his helpless
appeal to his sons to come to his rescue. Leander here is much too human to rise to the mythical level. Marcia Gaunt makes the following observation in this context: "As a dying god Leander is a great success and his funeral a cheerful affirmation of the continuity of life. But as a realistic character (and example for his sons) facing the anguish of old age, he is deprived of tragedy, pathos, or the dignity of a coherently dramatized human triumph over life and death". Cheever is one of several novelists and poets of this century who have adopted this technique of using mythical parallels and analogies to 'parse the world' of today. Cheever's purpose of such mythologizing in this novel seems to be, as Lynne Waldeland suggests, "to invest the past, the traditions which have informed the life of Leander, and the crucial events of his sons' initiation into adulthood with extra meaning. It is as though in a world which has less and less appreciation for tradition, tradition itself needs to be augmented with legendary and mysterious qualities so as to win our consideration". Upholding the family tradition Honora insists on "Corinthians" rather than "St. John" to be read by the rector during the funeral service of Leander. And as wished by his father Coverly reads the famous Prospero passage, 'Our revels are over - - -' over his grave, as if through this passage he is summing up his life as well as all life, since it acknowledges and lays stress on the transience of all life. But it presents only a partial view of life. His 'Advice to my sons' written out and inserted in the family volume of Shakespeare, in which inspite of its eccentricities and nonsense he honours the values by which healthy men live and thus affirms his zest for life, completes it.

With the death of Leander and the birth of sons to Coverly and Moses a new cycle may be said to begin. The novel ends rather abruptly. It concludes several years after Leander's
deaths when Coverly returns to St. Botolphs with his wife and son to participate in the continuing ritual celebration of the Fourth of July. The fact that the novel begins with a similar celebration of the day gives this loosely constructed novel a semblance of unity. Thematically it is appropriate that Coverly rather than Moses return to St. Botolphs for the celebration, because he has a better appreciation of his father's life and values, and consciously has been trying to assimilate and use them in his own life. He has tried to retain in an alien world a sense of tradition and ceremony which Leander wished to impact to his sons. Although he may not go on a ritual fishing expedition as his father and brother did he understands such steadfast traditional virtues as duty, ceremony, and familial piety. George Hunt has said that this novel is "about the mystery of transformation, and everyone in it undergoes some temporary or permanent metamorphosis". Even Honora becomes a Red Sox fan 'with the ardor of a pilgrim'.

St. Botolphs itself has quietly and solently changed. Sarah's converting the old boat into a floating gift shop is an indication of that.

Regarding 'fact' and fiction in The Wapshot Chronicle, it has been shown in the preceding pages that it is pre-eminently a work of fiction, its characters and situations all invented by the creative imagination of the novelist. While there is some basis to maintain that Cheever makes use of some autobiographical facts in this novel, they are outnumbered by invented characters and situations. The few autobiographical facts have been so transformed as to fit into the fictional scheme of the novel. Though called a 'chronicle', it is neither a documentary novel nor intended to be one. The raw material - the 'facts' for it has been drawn from the author's own close observation of life and people around him and recreated as fiction.
Thus the Wapshots are an invented family and St. Botolphs, the traditional suburban village-like town, a wholly invented place existing in the author's imagination. The characters, major and minor alike, and the situations are all fashioned according to the thematic concerns of the novel, namely the question of usable traditional values and of passing them to the younger generation in a world which disregards tradition. St. Botolphs, which is used as a suitable setting to represent tradition and its values, is not idealised nor presented as the best of all places to live in, even though it is designed to provide a meaningful contrast to the untraditional modern world. Rightly it is given the concrete particularity and authenticity of an actual recognisable traditional town, which combines both excellences and shortcomings. This strategy lends credibility to the exploration of the chosen theme.

Consistent with this strategy the characters in the novel in general are presented realistically and at the same time they are invested with a legendary and mythic stature. The most impressive instances is that of Leander who rises to the stature of a sea-god as the novel draws to a close, without losing any of his essential humanity. Similarly, ordinary everyday events are given an extra dimension of significance by being treated in a ritualistic manner. "These rituals", as Samuel Coale points out, "are often described in terms of mythological and biblical images as if to suggest their ancient and lasting qualities". The burlesque show that young Coverly watches at the village fair is described in terms of 'the rites of Dionysus'. Running water in a stream suggests 'the garbled voice of prophets'. And Betsey and Melissa appear as different forms of Venus. There is enough evidence in the novel to show Cheever's awareness of the dehumanising factor that afflicts life in the modern world. However, he does
not allow the chaotic present to sour his world-view.
Notes and References:

8. *Conversations*, p.99
11. Ibid., p. 53.
11(a) Ibid., p.9.
13. Ibid.,
15. Ibid.,
17. Quoted by George W.Hunt, p.98.
22. Samuel Coals, pp.75-76.
24. Lynne Waldeland, p.44.
26. Ibid., p.6.
27. Lynne Waldeland, p.43.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p.6.
32. Ibid., p.52.
33. Doubts have been expressed by some about the historical accuracy of Cheever's vision of New England as presented in this novel. It is apposite to note here the comment of the author of "Ovid in Ossing" : "Cheever's vision of a New England social and moral aristocracy can probably not be substantiated by historical research. But it is a genuine vision which he successfully imposed upon the fictional past of St.Botolphs in creating The Wapshot Chronicle" (Time, Jan-March 1964, No.13, p.67.).
34. The Wapshot Chronicle, pp.41-42.
35. Ibid., p.305.
36. Ibid., p.52.
37. Ibid., pp.52-58.
38. George W. Hunt, p. 115.
39. Lynne Waldeland, p. 43.
41. Lynne Waldeland, p. 42.
42. The Wapshot Chronicle, p. 86.
43. Ibid., p. 49.
44. Samuel Coale, p. 76.
45. The Wapshot Chronicle, pp. 53-4.
46. Ibid., p. 53.
47. Ibid., p. 65.
48. Ibid., p. 88.
49. Ibid., p. 89.
50. Ibid., p. 92.
51. Ibid., p. 97.
52. Ibid.,
55. Ibid., p. 139.
56. Lynne Waldeland, p. 43.
57. The Wapshot Chronicle, p. 81.
58. Ibid., p. 113.
40. The Wapshot Chronicle, p.81.
41. Ibid., p.152.
43. The Wapshot Chronicle, p.131.
44. Ibid.,
45. Ibid., pp.184-5.
46. Ibid., p.211.
47. Ibid., pp.105-6.
48. Ibid., p.118.
49. Ibid.
50. Marcia Grant, pp.96-97.
52. Ibid., pp.119-20.
53. Ibid., p.280.
54. Ibid., p.243.
55. Ibid., p.245.
56. Ibid., p.244.
57. Marcia Grant, p.96.
59. Ibid., pp.259-60.
60. Ibid., p.249.
81. Ibid., p.194.
82. Ibid., p.300.
83. Marcia Gaunt, p.89.
84. The Wapshot Chronicle, p.300.
85. Marcia Gaunt, p.91.
87. George W.Hunt, p.103.
89. Marcia Gaunt, p.92.
90. Lynne Waldeland, p.47.
91. George W.Hunt, p.120.
92. Samuel Coale, p.74.