Chapter 5
"PRISONER'S PROGRESS" - A STUDY OF FALCONER

The Publication of Falconer, Cheever's fourth novel, in 1977 eight years after Bullet Park, (1969) "was both a literary event and a genuine surprise"\(^1\) It was an "event" in the sense that unlike Cheever's previous works, especially Bullet Park which was not a critical success with a majority of its first reviewers, "Falconer was greeted with impressive critical enthusiasm"\(^2\) and many of the first reviews were genuinely insightful. Further, some critics, notably Samuel Coale and Lynne Waldeland were spurred on to attempt close and evaluative readings of it.\(^3\) Subsequently there were also naturally a few articles critical of both Cheever and this novel. To mention one example, Bryan F. Griffin in his essay, which is a review of the reviews of the novel as well as of Cheever, remarked "that the Falconer effort was doomed to failure, because it was by definition dishonest".\(^4\) Adverse critical comments on a work are useful in that they restrain one from an over-enthusiastic estimate of it and also help to take a balanced view of it.

Both readers and ardent admirers of Cheever were surprised and astonished by Falconer because it seemed to be not only a strange work to come from him but a radical departure - even more than Bullet Park - from all of his previous writings. It was most surprising because it was least anticipated. The reasons are not far to seek. First of all is the changed locale. The scene of action, or of whatever outward action there is in the novel, is Falcon, a prison house gloriously called 'The Falconer Correctional Facility' on the HUDSONS. It is as if Cheever, renowned as the chronicler of the New England suburbia abutting Route 95 between New York and Boston,
his authentic imaginative domain, abruptly abandoned it in favour of the claustrophobic confines of a prison house. And he tells the story mainly of Ezekiel Farragut who is a highly educated man, professor, a heroin addict now on a methadone maintenance regimen, and incarcerated for committing fratricide. His experiences in the prison include a homosexual love affair too. The novelist also presents an impressive account of the cribbed and confined existence of his protagonists fellow prisoners within the four walls of the prison. He focusses on the very characters he had said would not appear in his novels. They are very different from those who generally appeared in his stories. These are not the people who usually inhabit Cheever's urbane world. On the contrary theirs is a grim and sordid world. So is its atmosphere. As Lynne Waldeland remarks, "No work of Cheever's has departed so dramatically from the terrain - both geographical and psychological - of his previous books".

Another and most obvious and embarassing assign departure in this novel from Cheever's practice is his use of coarsened and indelicate vocabulary. The novel is full of obscene and profane language which appears in the character's dialogue as well as the narrative itself. It is so full of scatological imagery as well as homosexuality that one might feel disconcerted that this writer who has written stories about the sex lives of married people without sacrificing decorum has departed radically from his genteel style. Of course it needs to be examined whether there is any artistic justification in this novel for such a departure from his accustomed gentility. It may be said however that Cheever was not certainly attempting a 'lewd novel' in "Falconer", although Bryan Griffin dubs it as one such, and welcomes it for that reason.
It is a fact that *Falconer* is Cheever’s most streamlined novel, though it too had appeared piecemeal when it was still in progress, and it is much more unified than any of his other novels. The entire novel is ordered around one character, its protagonist Farragut, on whom the focus in unflaggingly directed. But for one episode, it concentrates almost exhaustively on him, his past and present. He develops psychologically throughout. And the story is told by the narrator from the protagonist’s point of view. The novel which presents a sustained narrative, begins with Farraguts, arrival at Falconer and ends with his surprising escape from it into freedom. Such single focus is something new in Cheever’s novels. Furthermore, the novel entirely takes place within the confines of the prison house, which is virtually the world of its inmates. The outside world exists only in their memories and is brought into the narrative only in their nostalgic recollections of their activities, real and imaginary, before they were put into prison. Therefore it is not fortuitous that *Falconer* is far more close-knit than Cheever’s other novels.

The basic plot of the novel is easy to outline. Ezekiel Farragut, the central character, is a college professor and a drug addict. Imprisoned for the murder of his brother, he is sent to Falconer, a penitentiary, where he is condemned to share cell-block F with a band of killers and thieves. He is plunged into a sense of loneliness and isolation. His interior life is shaped through his intermittent recollections, about his childhood in New England, his marriage which is a travesty of marriage vows, frustrations, and eccentric dreams. Slowly he changes from an outsider among the prisoners to feel one among them, and actively involves himself in prison life. He falls in love with a young inmate and has "a tender and larky" homosexual liaison with him. He sees him contriving to escape from the prison and even prays for his safety.
Meanwhile he gradually overcomes his drug addiction although without being conscious of it. Finally he concerns himself with the fate of an old fellow prisoner who has none to care for him or visit him, and eases his dying hour by ministering to him. When the old man’s body is being removed for burial, Farragut takes his place in the burial sack and makes his own miraculous escape, Monte Cristo fashion, not to take revenge on anyone but to rejoice in his freedom. It is as if he is reborn into a new and brighter life.

Although Cheever has repeatedly and consistently maintained that fiction is not ‘crypto-autobiography’, and warned against reading his works in terms of his life, the tendency to find connections and parallels between events in his life and those in his novels has persisted. As maintained in the present study, if relating a given work to its author’s life really helps to elucidate it which otherwise would not have been possible, there should be no objection to this procedure. However, it is to be seen whether this approach to Falconer would in anyway enrich our understanding of it. Certain parallels between certain cataclysmic events in Cheever’s life since he wrote Bullet Park and the story of Falconer can be seen. They serve to explain against what background and in what frame of mind did Cheever conceive and write this novel of his. Early in the 1970’s he taught for a little more than a year a creative writing to some of the inmates of Sing Sing a prison house located close to his own home town of Ossining, and thus he had opportunities to observe closely without any deliberate effort, prisoners and prison life and get a grasp of the psychology of imprisonment. Because of a major and near fatal heart attack he had to give up going to Sing Sing. This serious illness necessitated hospitalization and restricted activity. After recovering from it he went to the university of Iowa and after some
time to Boston University to teach, during which period his depression, to which he seemed to be naturally prone, deepened and his drinking increased. He was also addicted to a variety of drugs to keep himself from drinking. His drinking became so heavy as to result in self-destructive alcoholism.

Referring to his desperate condition then, Cheever’s daughter Susan Cheever writes: “He seemed to be waiting for death, if he was clear enough to be waiting for anything specific. Oblivion was his aim - - - he would have gone anywhere with anyone at that time: a hospital, rehabilitation centre, a permanent sleep, it was all the same to him.” But his stay at the Smithers Alcoholism Rehabilitation centre in New York proved a turning point. When he thought he was actually dying, he turned the corner. He realised, as he told his daughter, that his "order for life was quite genuine, and anything (he) could do to continue alive and useful (he) was quite willing to do." He did not drink again as he used to, nor did he resort to drugs again, although they were within his reach. He returned to the work - the first draft of Falconer - he has begun fitfully while at Boston. Restored to health from disintegration and collapse, released from the paralysing effects of drink and drugs, and freed from the sense of confinement of various kinds he had felt, in a new "euphoric burst of creative energy" he began Falconer again and completed it in a little more than a year.

Soon after Falconer was published, Cheever was asked implicitly and explicitly by his several interviewers about the auto-biographical elements in it: Whether Falconer was a faithful replica of Sing Sing and the characters were versions of the prisoners he had met at that
penitentiary, whether there was any connection between his heart ailments, his struggle with his addiction to drink and drugs and his triumph over it and similar experiences of the protagonist Farragut etc. To all of them his uniform reply was that fiction and biography should not be confused, though he admitted that there was some connection between his own gruelling experiences in both alcohol and drug withdrawal and his delight and sense of triumph on being freed from them. He went on to tell John Heresy the interviewer: "That, obviously, is part of the book. I'm only reluctant to admit it because I would not want the novel to be thought an account to Cheever’s escape from a rehabilitation centre". In the same interview he also said explicitly: "the role of autobiography in fiction is precisely the role that reality plays in a dream" and "it is not capricious" that one finds in fiction the "mysterious union of fact and imagination" that one finds in a dream (emphasis added). Therefore, "any confusion between autobiography and fiction debases fiction".

Sing Sing made a tremendous impact on Cheever and impinged on his consciousness as well as conscience. His experiences there during his visits were ‘exciting’ and depressing. He told his daughter: "- - - the horror of the prison - an imponderable I've tried to put into the book, the blasphemy of men building stone by stone, hells for other men - got to me. After that I went there unwillingly. It seemed to me to be participating in an obscenity". However, Cheever firmly maintained that Falcon was an entirely imagined place like his other fictional locales like St.Botolphs and Bullet Park, and not a reproduction or copy of Sing Sing. Emphatically and explicitly he told his daughter in the same interview: "- - - this novel was not written out of a singular experience of alcohol and drugs. I like to think it is the sum of my
living. I like to think my teaching at Sing Sing is a small part of it. I did no research there. I did not, for example, ask to see the showers or the cells. I like to think my confinement at Smithers is a small part of it. I like to think of Falconer as the sum of everything. I've known and smelled and tasted -- -- In fiction one used the available facts merely to create a mood, an illusion. I didn't go to Sing Sing to gather material any more than I got married and had children to gather material." Cheever's replies to other inquiring interviewers were more or less identical. The chief value of his explanatory observations in that they shed some light on the mystery of creative activity, on how disparate experiences, actual and imagined, get amalgamated in the process of imaginative recreation, and, in short, how 'facts' are transformed into 'fiction'.

The locale of Falconer being a prison house and most of the characters, principal and minor alike, being connected with it either as prisoners or as employees, it would appear very natural to view it as a prison novel. The opening chapters one and two establish the prison setting and atmosphere, and introduce the protagonist Farragut some of his fellow prisoners, and a few of the prison officials. There is in the novel an extraordinary evocation of prison life, its repulsive smells, sounds and tastes, its shabbiness, ugliness, boredom and horror, its oppressive loneliness and isolation, its perversion its degrading and dehumanizing environment. In short the grim and forbidding world of Falconer is recreated with such chilling vividness and exactitude that it gives one the actual feel of what it is like to be incarcerated in a 'Correction Facility'. Cheever gives the narrative a realistic surface—he avoids a naturalistic treatment of his explosive material which it tends itself easily and writes about prison as if he has been an inmate of it.
Such is the compulsive power of his description. What he learnt about prison life from Donald Lang, a former prisoner at Sing Sing now on parole, whose friendship he had made during his stint of teaching and who told him afternoon after afternoon everything he remembered about the prison, would also have helped Cheever to get the facts right in his imaginative recreation of Falconer.\textsuperscript{15} All said, \textit{Falconer} is not a prison novel, much less is it a novel of social protest or a social document on prison reform, although in the opening paragraph itself 'Liberty' and 'Justice' are invoked. With his tongue in the cheek Cheever seems to have said: "best-sellers are written about prison reform".\textsuperscript{16} It is not certainly a conventional novel of crime and punishment and redemption in the familiar, a limited sense.

Cheever preferred to regard \textit{Falconer} as a "novel of confinement" as Robert Baun who interviewed him notes.\textsuperscript{17} For him the imaginary prison Falconer was his 'large metaphor' for confinement. In his explanation to John Heresy Cheever maintained that all his fictional locales - St. Botolphs, Bullet Park, Shady Hill etc, were all places of confinement\textsuperscript{18}, which, by implication, curtailed one’s freedom, constrained one’s spirit and rendered him as helpless. In this sense, there could be no place on earth which was not a place of confinement and imprisonment was a general condition of life. To have a first-hand experience of being trapped and imprisoned one did not have to go to a prison. Cheever said that he had this experience "on a surface level in transit areas - in airports, during blizzard - - - in elevators, and - - - in countries where you don't know how to yell 'Help!' etc".\textsuperscript{19} His own experience of enforced confinement during the years of addiction and ill health, debilitating to the body and spirit alike, much have added a sharp edge to his own comprehension of imprisonment, and given an added
zest to his experience of freedom, liberation and redemption when he freed himself from their shackles.

Susan Cheever says of her father: "My father identified with the prisoners. Like them he was at once guilty and innocent, like them he was outside society, like them he was trapped, confined - but by nothing as simple as armed guards and iron bars," and "his experience at the prison gave him the symbols and facts to use in writing about his own sense of confinement and entrapment." If she means or implies that Cheever in telling the story of Farragut and others at Falcon was indirectly telling his own story of entrapment and release, it would be unacceptable. For the novel is much more than that. It's bias is in a different direction. But, it partly accounts for the enormous head of pressure, a white-hot intensity of feeling, one senses in this novel, not felt in any of Cheever's other novels. An insightful remark made by an anonymous reviewer of this novel may be cited here itself, although it would be more appropriate to do so after an analysis of the contents. The reviewer says: "Cheever's story combines many of the gritty details of prison life with a strong sense of the expanding frontiers of the human spirit." (Emphasis added).

The novel has a studied and deliberate opening, with a brief description of the escutcheon crowning the entrance of Falconer, variously known at different times as 'Jail', 'Reformatory', 'Penitentiary', 'State Prison', 'Correction Facility', and 'Day Break House', and the narrator directs our attention on to the emblematic figures of Liberty', 'Government', and 'Justice' on the escutcheons, each of which carries a weapon. Though these are presented from the first-person
point of view, the tone is objective and distanced, as if to suggest the enormous distance the separate the several hundreds of 'miscreants' accommodated in the limited room of the prison, from 'Liberty' and 'Justice'. In the middle of the paragraph is significant reference to "man's endeavor to interpret the mystery of imprisonment in terms of symbols". This long phrase, as George Hunt says, "renders explicit Cheever's writerly efforts" in this novel. *Falconer*, among other things, is an exploration of the theme of 'imprisonment' or 'confinement', as cheever preferred to refer to it, and freedom. It takes the concrete form of following closely the career, the progress of the protagonist Ezekiel Farragut in beginning with his arrival at Falconer to serve term for fratricide and ending with his transformation into a free and redeemed man. More than one important critic of this novel has noted that it is filled with religious diction and allusions, religious dimensions and its ultimate religious meaning are also commented upon. Samuel Coale, for instance, has said that the novel is "filled with religious symbols and images". And more explicitly Lynne Waldeland has drawn attention to Cheever's "use of the religious paradigms to illuminate Farragut's experience". This aspect of the novel is already hinted by the Biblical name he gives his protagonist. The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel is said to have seen visions of God while has was "among the captives by the river". The nomenclature Ezekiel means 'God strengthens'. That the novel has spiritual implications is suggested by its title, which unmistakably recalls W.B. Yeats's poem "The second Coming".

Farragut is introduced in the second paragraph of the opening chapter, and the focus remains on him uninterruptedly till the end, but for a brief episode in the second half of the novel. Though the third person narrative is restored to and maintained till the end, all the
happenings are viewed from Farragut's perspective. He is one of the really articulate male
characters created by Cheever. The entire story is filtered through his consciousness. It is
appropriate that it should be so, "since the character is to undergo radical internal changes, it
is crucial that we be let in on his consciousness of what he is going through. For the novel to
achieve its religious meaning, it is important that we understand not only Farragut's behaviour
but the workings of his soul".  

The novel begins with Ezekiel Farragut being brought to Falconer in a van along with
nine others to whom he is manacled. Though he is torpid because of the permitted dose of
methadone given to him, he wants to see the colour of the sky and the light of the day, which
he cannot because the van shut him out against them. Incidentally one of the first facts
concerning him revealed is that he is a drug addict put on a methadone regimen. At the time of
his entry into the prison he is stunned and disbelieving. He is deprived of his former, identity
and becomes merely 'fratricide Zip to ten, #734-508-32.' That is what would happen to whoever
enter this unnatural world. His mates in the prison are all known only by their nicknames -
Chicken Number Two, Bumpo, the Stone, the Cuckold, Ransome and Tennis. One of the things
that Farragut would discover during his progress in the prison is his true identity. He thinks that
he would die in the prison and never come out of it alive. In a bid to retain his identity of his
former days, he nails "his identity to the blue sky" when he happens to glimpse, and to the
phrasing of four letters that he had begun to write mentally.  
It is a part of his feeble attempt
to retain his hold on the outside world at the very moment of his being forcibly ushered into the
nightmarish world of the prison.
Significantly religious references begin early in the novel. Two religiously charged symbols are introduced soon after Farragut enters Falconer. As he is being driven down a road within the prison's walls, he sees first a convict feeding bread crusts to a dozen pigeons. Soon after in the building which he enters he sees "high on a water pipe at the ceiling, a tarnished silver Christmas garland." Given Farragut's background his response to either of them appears neither strange nor surprising. May be he sees unconscious in the feeding convict a distant image of St. Francis of Assisi." The man was a convict and the bread and the pigeons were all unwanted but for reasons unknown to Farragut the image of a man sharing his crusts with birds had the resonance of great antiquity":. And the Christmas garland supplies not irony but represents "a grain of reason". On this apparently insignificant incident Glen Johnson perceptively remakes :" From the first, - - - Cheever's method supports his vision of finding - or fashioning - transcendent value within a world of suffering and miscreancy":.

After an insulting and humiliating interrogation by a prison official, who taunts him about his becoming a fraticide and a drug addict for getting his vocation as professor, responsible for the education of the young and their intellectual and moral development, Farragut is assigned to cellblock F to be in the company of hardened criminals. He is no ordinary criminal. His upper class educated speech, his cultivated mind and general behaviour set him apart from all other prisoners. He feels lonely. He knows that his predicament is one of radical dislocation and exile. It takes quite sometimes before he can identify himself with the other prisoners and feel one with them. It is very significant that the very first prisoner who talks to him at some length and consolingly is Chicken Number Two, the tattooed man who has forgotten his own
name. Without knowing their far reaching implications he says the following words to Farragut:

"...what I come to tell you is that this all a mistake, I mean you being here...there has to be something good at the end of every journey..." The particular significance of this contact is Farragut is that much later when Chicken Number Two is in his death bed, he ministers to him until he breathes his last, which is an exquisitely gracious gesture. This is immediately followed by his miraculous escape into freedom, as if it is the reward for his service to the dying man.

As soon as Farragut is ushered into cellblock F, unidentified prisoner asks him bluntly and brutally whether he is 'rich', 'clean', and whether he is a cheat ('suck'), to all of which he answers readily in the negative. But to his final questions whether he is innocent, he gives no answer and remains silent. These questions, as George Hunt remarks," soon comprise the explorations that constitute Farragut’s interior journey (involving his family, his addiction, his sexuality, and his guilt)."

The opening chapter ends with Farragut’s meeting with Chicken Number Two. In retrospect it will be seen that there are already hints about the possible direction the novel takes and its conclusion, in this chapter itself. The second chapter begins with the first visit of Farragut’s wife, Marcia, to the prison. And she visits home a second time briefly much later. The first half of the chapter is concerned with her visit and Farragut’s recollection of his relations with her. The latter part is concerned with sketches of his fellow prisoners. Chicken Number Two had predicted that Farragut’s wife would visit him. And she does. She happens
to be his first visitor and perhaps his only visitor. Till he makes his escape from the prison into the world outside, she is his only contact dubious though, with that world. It is obvious from the moment she arrives at the prison that she has anything but contempt for her husband, who longs for her love. Her questions to him about his welfare are perfunctory and her comments are hurting and humiliating. She gives no comfort to him because she does not mean to. Soon after returning his warm greeting perfunctorily, she tells him that she had been in Jamaica all these days, probably holidaying, and therefore did not care to come sooner to look him up. She refuses to allow their soon Peter to see him at the prison because, "He doesn't ask for you. The social worker thinks that, for the general welfare, it's best at the moment that he not see his father in jail for murder". She does not even agree to send their son's photograph to him. Her lame excuse is that she does not have one and she is 'no good with a camera'. She insinuatingly tells Farragut that the army where he served was 'a good preparation' for his present prison life. When he covers her hand with his, thrilled by the touch as well as the recollections of the past, she pulls her hand away as it strung. He reflects; "had she let him touch for a minute, the warmth, - the respite, would have lasted for weeks". This is a measure of his sense of isolation and estrangement.

One would be reminded of this callous refusal of Marcia's to allow a touch of warmth to Farragut when he needs it most, while following the letter he wrote's, sometime later in the loneliness of the prison, to a girl he had lived with for two months when Marcia was away. He writes:
Last night, watching a comedy on TV, I saw a women touch a man with familiarity - a light touch on the shoulder - and I lay on my bed and cried. Prisoners, of course, suffer a loss of identity, but this light touch gave me a terrifying insight into the depth of my alienation. Excepting myself there is truly no one here with whom I can speak. Excepting myself there is nothing I can touch that is warm, human and responsive. An obscene nothing is forced on me. I do not love. I am unloved.

Apart from revealing his feeling of being trapped and confide in the prison, it also suggests that this feeling of confinement must have been growing on him for quite sometime even before he came to Falconer. With Marcia right in front of him, cold, aloof and unsympathetic, Farragut is set to recall nostalgically the different phases of their married life, her capricious behaviour, her uncertain tempers as well as tongue, brief intervals of harmony and happiness. She is an authenticated beauty. She is so much in love with her beauty that even her very young son realises it. Such infatuation with one’s own beauty to the exclusion of all other interests, is a sign of gross immaturity and surely a dangerous from of self-absorption, self-love and of imprisonment or 'confinement'. It also implies that Marcia is an alienated person.

Farragut too has a narcissistic strain in him which is revealed later when he established a homosexual relationship with Jody, a young prisoner. The conversation between Farragut and Marcia as recalled by him reveals that in spite of their sharp differences they do have something in common. In an emotional outburst on an occasion she had told him, "you’ve ruined my life. There is nothing on earth as cruel as a rotten marriage. You are the biggest mistake I ever made" and Farragut’s reaction to it was one of astonishment because she had taken the words of his mouth. However, while he wished to save their marriage, if he could help it, she was decided against it. Nevertheless she represents, as George Hunt observes, "the bifurcation of
Farragut's self. He tries to be fair to her even though she is less than fair to him on most occasions. When he discovers by chance that she is a lesbian and Sally Midland, with whom she did some crewed work is her partner, of course he is put out, but a sense of reasonableness envelops and supports him. He asks himself. "But if she loved Sally Midland, didn't he love Chucky Drew?"

Frustrated and discontented, legitimately or otherwise, Marcia has it out on her husband. She never tries of blaming him for her disappointments. She has a sharp eye for his weaknesses. She asks him during her prison visit about his "fix". When he tells her that he is now on methadone, given to him every morning by a "pansy" and that he has not responded to his advances her curt reaction is, "That's good. I wouldn't want to be married to a homosexual, having already married a homicidal drug addict". She does not even care to consider for a moment his plea that he did not kill his brother Eben. She verbally hits him where it hurts most. It is out of her salacious curiosity rather than real interest that she asks Farragut during her second visit about his "boy friends" in the prison. Again, she also him whether he still dreams of the blonde who never existed. Some of her bitterness is understandable because of the dislocation caused in her life by her husband's crime and conviction. But the disharmony in their married life had begun much earlier, almost from the start of their married life. She does not choose to divorce him even after his conviction, probably because she does not want to lose opportunities to bait him. The hurt she inflicts on him exceeds the distress he has caused her. Here is an instance of her sadistic and murderous delight. Farragut recalls how on the day he returned from a rehabilitation centre, she deliberately slammed their bed-room door several times
making an explosive noise, only to cause him excitement although she knew that he had been advised to avoid all form of recruitment which could be fatal.

It is true that Marcia is seen through Farragut's eyes and his disrupted memory and imagination. But that one sees of Marcia in person shows little to take a favourable or encouraging view of her. She remains "the coldest, least sympathetic heroine in Cheever's fiction, and Cheever does virtually nothing to explain or justify her behaviour. A wife like her makes heroic addiction plausible" although she is not the sole cause for Farragut's addiction or other aberrations. He too does not regard her so. It needs to be noticed that Farragut learns to take a tolerant view of her, and deal with her forgivingly, which helps him gradually to free himself from his sense of confinement. She is one of the problems he has to come to terms with in his progress towards redemption. In any event, Cheever's portrait of Marcia does little to mitigate the suspicion that some have that he is something of a male chauvinist.

The rest of the second chapter is concerned with presenting a picture of the cellblock to which Farragut is assigned, and also brief sketches of his companions. The prison setting is captured even from the beginning of the novel in a few precise details. For instance, one of the first things that Farragut notices is that the bars of the cells, once upon a time painted white, have now turned black at the chest level where the prisoners instinctively grip them. The general disrepair and soul-destroying shabbiness of this large prison is revealed by the fact that most of the toilets and locks on the upper tier are broken, and the toilet in Farragut's cell flushes
itself noisily and independently, disturbing his sleep frequently. Next, "a series of obsessive
close-ups" of the criminal crew, Tennis, Chicken Number Two, the Cuckold, the Stone, Bumpo
etc rush at us. So bold is each sketch, observes Tina Brown," that thereafter it can sustain page
after page of straight dialogue". Following the prison code Farragut learns never to ask his
comrade why he is in Falconer. The convicts talk about everything except what they are in for.
Then talk a great deal but they talk at rather than to one another. They either deny guilt
for what was brought them to prison or fabricate accounts about their glorious past. In any case,
"the truth was not in them". There is Tennis, a minor tennis champion, who is in jail for
forgery but he claims that he is thrown into jail because of "a little jealousy and a clerical
error". Bumpo who explains why Tennis is in Jail for years but says nothing about himself,
although he is supposed to have hijacked an airplane and is on an eighteen year sentence for
kidnapping. He sports however a large ring set with a diamond or a piece of glass, and offers
to give the stone to a defenceless little girl after examining all the relevant documents. Then
there is Ransome, tall and handsome, who almost never speaks to anyone except to the Stone
who is helpless because his eardrums were pierced and was set up for arrest by some criminal
gang. The two, Ransome and the Stone, are inseparable. The precise crime committed by
Ransome is not known, though he is supposed to have killed his father. He keeps a tender
watchfulness over the Stone.

Chicken Number Two, the very first prisoner to talk to Farragut, talks about his brilliant
career as a jewel thief in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. But in his sleep he talks and
shouts on the slang of pander. Unlike others only the Cuckold, who "iced", his wife "by
mistake”, feels a compulsion to talk about his past and about the infidelities practiced by him and his wife. He also runs a business inside the prison. Conniving with the cell corporal. Offering black market peanut butter, chicken etc to his comrades he baits them to listen to his lurid stories about his deceiving wife. It is from these people that Farragut learns the intricate and labyrinthine rules and regulations of prison life and the many brutal customs that make up a prisoner’s daily routine. He also learns about the labyrinths of human nature.

It is not the criminals alone who make life in the prison horrible and disgusting. There is the blood curdling and stomach-turning massacre of prison cats for which Tiny, and "obese guard", is mainly responsible. Perhaps the prison atmosphere engenders unnatural thoughts and behaviour even in those who are otherwise normal. Tiny is known to be gentle and solicitous of the prisoners, especially of Farragut whose addiction to drugs puzzles and upsets him. But he goes berserk when two prison cats snatch away meat from his plate. Bent on revenge he leads a reckless slaughter of cats in the prison, which outnumber the convict. Ironically the prison specially built by men to deny a fair measure of freedom to their own kind, has given the cats the fat and the lean alike all the freedom of movement. There is plenty of food for them in the form of rats and mice, franks, meatballs, bread and oleomargarine. They have been very useful. They not only arrest the rodent menace but solitary and love-lorn men find in them objects to exercise their love an affection in this desert of love. It is a measure of the loneliness the convicts experience that even "the intransigent" are taught by it "to love their cats". As the narrator comments, “loneliness can change anything on earth.” Every convict, including Farragut has his favorite cat which has helped to assuage his loneliness. Farragut, who was a
dog breeder and therefore had not cared for cats, now finds in Bandit, his favorite cat a companion to whom he confides his sorrows and private agonies. In the butchering in which all the guards participate all the less wise cats are murdered, though Farragut's Bandit escapes.

The scene of the massacre is surrealistic in its horror. It is quite possible that Cheever built this horrific scene on an incident told him by Donald Lang, whose friendship he had made during his stint at Sing Sing. Lang told him, as Susan Cheever records, among other things about prison life, "the way one of the assholes killed a prisoner's pet cat with a club one day". This episode in the novel could be taken as an instance of Cheever building and enlarging imaginatively on a reported fact and transforming it to fit into the scheme of his novel. Exaggerated though it is it suits perfectly the nightmarish and unnatural environment of Falconer. The episode is symbolic of Falconer itself.

The fortunate escape of Bandit from being slaughtered could be taken as foreshadowing Farragut's own miraculous escape at the close of the novel. But far more significant is the prayer he makes after the dead cats are shoveled up and the block sluiced. Kneeling in his bunk he mumbles Christ's words, 'Blessed are the meek' from his 'Sermon on the Mount', but he cannot remember what comes next. It is significant that it is Farragut's very first prayer in the prison and that he makes it spontaneously and in all humility. He makes subsequently prayers on several other occasions. They may not be, strictly speaking ritual prayers but he relies on the ritual words for them. That he should feel the need to pray itself is significant. More importantly they are, as in the present instance, "deeply personal expressions torn out of hi
at moments of crisis". They certainly mark his inner and spiritual growth or progress. The words he fails to remember in 'Sermon on the Mount are 'for they shall inherit the earth'. 'What follows', as George Hunt remarks', is the story of Farragut's own, even more miraculous survival in this dungeon of death, a renewed inheritance of the earth". The second chapter ends with the gruesome episode of the cats and Farragut's touching prayer.

Tiny the cell guard asks Farragut every now and then, 'why is you an addict?' The third chapter is concerned with more details of Farragut's drug addiction, his views about it and his attitude to it, and also his relationship with the members of his family - parents, his brother Eben, his wife etc - all revealed in his haphazard recapitulations of his past, some of which are made when he is in a drugged condition or when he is anxiously waiting for his methadone fix. Therefore, some of his recollections are bizarre. Recalling Thomas De Quincey, he feels that "the consciousness of the opium eater was much broader, more vast and representative of the human condition than the consciousness of someone who had never experienced addiction". His introduction to drugs was during a war, when every morning he went into combat, drugged and at peace with suffocation, suppuration and murder. The practice continued into peace times and became a habit, heroin taking the place of other drugs. He did not have to feel guilty about his addiction because almost every voice he heard encouraged it. "His generation was the generation of addiction - - - The declaration of addiction was in every paper, magazine and airborne voice". He even goes to the extent of asserting that" addiction was the law of the prophets" and "drugs belonged to all exalted experiences". Therefore "a life without drugs seems in fact and spirit", not only "both remote and despicable", but to be denied drugs is as
good as death. That is the "crux" of the matter. It should be obvious that Farragut's justification of addiction and his finding great virtues in it are all marks of the influences of drugs on his thinking. Addiction is a form of incarceration and Farragut has to free himself form this prison before he can attain true liberation and redemption.

Why Farragut became an addict, and the reasons for his remaining one for many years are not fully explained in the novel. While several factors, familial and circumstantial must have contributed to making one of him, his addiction itself is a form of self-absorption, an extreme form of self-consciousness and he becomes freed from it without his conscious-knowledge as soon as he transcend such absorption. The fear that he may be denied the medically permitted dose of the "fix" fills him with the dread of death. In this anxious condition, he remembers the times when his life had been threatened. He remembers in particular the two attempts made on his life by his elder brother Eben. And memories of his brother haunt him. Once when the two were walking on a beach in one of the Atlantic islands, Eben tempted him to go for a swim at a most dangerous point of the sea, while he preferred to be on land. Had not a stranger fisherman warned him in time, Farragut would have food for the sharks in the sea. The Eben actually wished him dead dawned on him when he found that by the time he came out of the sea, Eben had gone considerable distance away from the spot. Inspite of his suspicion he chose not to ask his brother about it, happy in that he was still alive and the sky was blue.

A second attempt was made by Eben again at a party in New York when he pushed Farragut swiftly out of the window from behind. As Farragut landed on his knees he could
escape death. This time too he would deliberately not to try to know who it was that pushed him. On both occasions his escape from death was providential. One may, if he wants to, see in it a plausible foreshadowing of his escape from Falcomer. Why Eben should be so hostile towards his younger is not explained. One may see in it one more version of the archetypal conflict between Abel and Cain in the Bible. Years later Eben on his own told Farragut that "it was that man from Chicago" that had pushed him out of the window and thus confirmed his suspicion. It is significant that on both occasions of Eben's attempt to eliminate him, Farragut took a forgiving attitude towards him, revealing his nobler nature in contrast to then boorish, and fraudulent nature of the other. He tried to maintain some kind of communication with Eben. This fact may lend a little - and not more - credence to his contention and belief that he did not really kill Eben but merely hit him once with a fire iron. As Eben was drunk and unsteady he hit his head on the hearth which caused his death. But the testimony of Eben's widow and of the doctor was that Farragut hit him several times over. If he really did so, there was enough provocation from Eben to rouse him to fury and indignation. On the day he was fatally hit Eben in a self-righteous belligerent and drunken mood told Farragut with malicious insistence: "He (is their father) wanted you to be killed. I bet you didn't know that. He loved me, but he wanted you to be killed. Mother told me. He had an abortionist come out to the house. Your own father wanted you to be killed." It is not surprising that Farragut, appalled by this verbal assault on his sanity and hold on life turned violent.

The novelistic context leaves it ambiguous whether Farragut did really commit fratricide. Whatever he did, it is obvious, was unpremeditated. There is no precedence in Cheever's fiction
for this crime. But there are a number of instances of conflicts between brothers or brother-like figures who are antagonistic. For the later, there is the instance of the antagonism between Eliot Nailles and Paul Hammer in *Bullet Park*. Relationship between brothers in Cheever's fiction is often tense and intense. The relationship between Coverly and Moses in *The Wapshot Chronicle* is the mildest and free from an open clash. But in Cheever's short stories "The Low Boy" and "Good-by, My Brother" the relationship between the brothers is marred by fratricidal tensions but the crime is not committed. In *Falconer* this relationship is "at an all-time low". In every instance the clash occurs between two men who embody antithetical qualities. In the story "Good-by, My Brother", the tension is between one who is life-celebrating (his also the narrator) and another who is a gloomy doom-monger. The situation is the same in *Falconer* but the consequences of the conflict are fatal.

While considering this situation in Cheever's fiction in general and *Falconer*, there is some scope for bringing in biographical considerations, despite Cheever's repeated insistence that autobiography and fiction are two different things. Samuel Coale makes the following observation: "One wonders how much the continuing occurrence of this particular conflict in Cheever's fiction, brought to its bloody fulfilment in *Falconer*, reveals about the nature of the relationship between Cheever himself and his older brother Frederick". And here is Susan Cheever's testimony: "Fred's death consolidated the uneasy truce my father had reached with his passionate feelings about his older brother. He had wanted to murder Fred - so much that he once told me that it was fear of this fratricidal instinct that forced him to leave home. He had also wanted to live with him. Much of the conflict in my father's heart, and many of the
themes in his work, grew out of his love for Fred: the fickle bitchiness of pretty women, for whom Iris Gladwin may have been the first model; the murderous anger of the younger, unwanted brother toward the successful older one; the love of men. 53

Tune as it all may be, what matters for an understanding of Falconer is to consider to what fictional purposes does Cheever put the "facts" of his life. The novel, after all is not a mere transcript of his life's experiences. Whatever is drawn from his own life is transmuted into fiction to convey profound meaning. The focus is not on why Farrgut commits fratricide but on the consequences of the act and its effect on him. His imprisonment, which is the immediate consequence of the act, paradoxically proves a blessing in disguise. It change his life for the best because it frees him from the confinements of drugs, and of the past, and the imprisonment of the self. It enables him to make some real spiritual progress. All this happens over a period of time and gradually. He has to experience several emotional convulsions and alienation before he can feel rehabilitated and free and redeemed. Cheever has put into the novel only those facts about the Ezekiel-Eben relationship as are relevant and would be necessary to understand the goings on in his protagonist's mind. A knowledge of the tension between Cheever and his brother Frederick is not necessary to understand the fictional context. Even if one were to have it, it is doubtful whether his understanding of it would be any the better.

Waiting anxiously for his fix in the prison, Farragut recalls his parents and his family background. He believes that the fact that they were a family who tried to be versatile at every political, spiritual and erotic level, helps to explain why he is an addict. His family background
resembles a little that of the Wapshots with this important difference that unlike the Waspshot boys, Moses ad Coverly, it would appear that the Farragut children grew up in an environment of insecurity largely because of the dwindling finances of their parents and their attitude to their children. Farragut's mother resembles Sarah Wapshot in her spirit of independence and enterprise. His image of his mother is that of "a woman pumping gas, curtsying at the Assemblies, and banging a lectern with her gravel." There is, no sign of the maternal tenderness or serenity traditionally associated with mothers. His father resembles Leander Wapshot in taking his son for fishing in the wilderness. He had taught him to climb mountains. Having discharged these responsibilities, he had neglected his sons and spent most of his time tacking around Travertine harbour in a little catboat. From both parents what Farragut did not receive was affection and love.

Death or threat of death pervades Farragut's life. In the prison it is not fear of anyone attempting on his life but the delay in giving him the dose of methadone makes him feel that he is going to die, not at once as in being hanged or sent to an electric chair. It will be, he fears, a long-drawn-out agony. He roars, "get my fix, for Jesus Christ's, sake!" But the sadistic deputy warden Chisholm keen on watching "a withdrawal show", capriciously and illegally denies him the fix. Farragut sweats profusely. His eyes burn. He shivers and shakes and is racked by chilling convulsions. His right arm flies out and his left knee is jerked into the air. He falls and beats his head on the floor hoping to find peace in "the reasonableness of pain", and is disappointed. After enormous effort, he unbuckles his belt, makes a noose out of it and tries to strangle himself to death. At that point Chisholm seems to relent releases. Farragut from
his cell. The description of Farragut's death agonies is both dramatic and vivid. Once again we are reminded of De Quincey's *Confessions*, which presents in greater and more vivid details the withdrawal throes of an addict. On this situation in the novel George Hunt comments justly that "even in the callous climate of the prison, this causal cruelty on the part of the authorities seems far fetched. Nonetheless, implausible as it seems, it serves as "a recapitulation of the four memories of nearness to and escape from death."56 of Farragut.

As soon as the cell is unlocked Farragut rushes and runs for the infirmary any for his fix, when he is savagely "brained" with a chair by Chisholm for an alleged attempt to escape from prison. He is crippled for life, apart form receiving several wounds on his head. Of the prison officials only Tiny shows him some sympathy and asks him again and again, because he is puzzled, why he is an addict. It is this context that Farragut recalls his parents, his brother Eben in particular, and his family background with its pretensions and hypocracies. As noted already, the influence of or impact of his family members is no sufficient explanation for his addiction.

If most of the prison guards exhibit an unengaged indifference towards the prisoners, the doctor and the lawyer who occasionally visit them are seedy, down-at-the-heel rejects of their professions, and are even more inured to human suffering than the guards. Farragut, who wants to sue Chisholm for having denied him his fix as well as annoying himself watching his withdrawal miseries feels outraged by the visiting prison lawyer who instead of helping him, preposterously charges him of attempting to escape. He flings the clipboard at the lawyer, for which he is assigned to a solitary cell. With the lawyer's pen which he has spirited away, he
wants to write an indictment of Chisholm at once. As he has no paper to write on, he decides to write on his well-starched sheet and then commit the writing to memory, and type out the matter when he is back again in cellblock F. Instead of one, he writes three letters in quick succession one to the Governor, another to his bishop, and a third to a girl friend with whom he has lived for two months when Marcia was away. It is not known whether Farragut is able to type out and despatch them. But they are essentially monologues since there is no way of knowing what the response of the addresses would be to them. Until he is able to come closer to the fellow prisoners and identify himself with them, he has to be at the mercy of his memory.

The urge to communicate is so strong Farragut, in the loneliness and estrangement of the prison’s confinement where one is left to burn in his memories, that he seizes this opportunity to establish contact with the outside apparently civilized world of order, and with those who he expects might feel a concern for the like of him. The letters addressed to the Governor and the bishop who are dignitaries, are letters of protest written by an aggrieved party, and make use of a formal style so different from that of the novel’s narrative and dialogue. The third letter, addressed to a lady love, is understandably the longest and appropriately its tone and idiom are personal and intimate. While writing them he is able to let off steam and release bottled up emotions.

The avowed purpose of the letter addressed to the Governor is to protect against the ‘Deputy Wardens’ attack on him and the greater injustice of the withholding of the drug permitted by doctors. The latter, he contends, is a breach in the fabric of authority and trust that
ethics and the law presume. But strangely Farragut begins the letter with doubting the honesty of the Governor himself who attained his elected office through "chicanery". "This letter", as George Hunt observes, "to the governor is by turn precious, self-pitying, sentimental, and arbitrary if not cynical in its logic. What it reveals is a perplexed mind puzzling out the true meaning of human innocence and justice". 57

On its heels comes the letter addressed to the Bishop. It is significant that Farragut chooses to write to a religious authority. Once again he takes up the question of justice and election, and innocence as his faith, christianity understands them. Strangely he does not make even a passing reference to the Deputy Warden's assault on him and the injustice done to him. He writes as if he is the spokesman of all prisoners in Falconer and elsewhere. This letter too betrays a confused and perplexed mind trying to make out the meaning of God's Judgment and Judgment Day which constitutes according to him the most universal image of mankind. Early in the letter he makes the astonishing claim mingled with self-pity "My life follows very closely the traditional lives of the saints, but I seem to have been forgotten by the blessed company of all faithful men and women". He goes further to say: "We prisoners more than any men, have suffered for our sins, we have suffered for the sins of society - - - We are in fact the word made flesh - - -" 58 (Emphasis added). "Word made flesh" is no other than christ himself. Would Farragut's theology permit him to equate the suffering prisoners with Christ? This letter of Farragut's suggests the direction his 'progress' through the prison is taking, although he is not quite clean in his mind about the religious ideas he speaks about. His own belief appears ambivalent. The letter closes on a pessimistic note.
Without a pause the letter to his lady love follows. Living in the prison which is a desert of love, and experiencing acutely a sense of alienation and loneliness, it is most human for Farragut to address a letter to his lady love. "Remember" is the key word in it and it brings together a series of memories of the times spent in her company. They are re-imagined disparate moments rather than specific events. The very first thing he refers to in his letter is his loss of identity, his solitude, his alienation, and his longing for love and the warmth of human touch which are totally absent at Falconer. In recollecting vividly his association with this lady, he relives and experiences once again in imagination what he has missed all these days: "An obscene thing is forced onto me. I do not love. I am unloved. I can only remember the raptness of love faintly, faintly. If I close my eyes and try to pray, I will fall into the torpor of solitude."\(^5^9\) Farragut associates brightness and light with her, more than mere physical beauty. His most vivid memories are about their outdoor activities together such as fishing and skiing, both of which in Cheever's writing stand for a zest for life. This letter of Farragut's more than the other two, works in him the much needed emotional release. "The final memory, that of the two skiing together down a mountain on a spring-like winter day with the snow thawing is symbolic of Farragut's own gradual emotional thaw and descent", says George Hunt.\(^6^0\) Mountain scenery has always a reassuring significance in Cheever.

Chapter two ends with the letters. The next chapter is mostly about Farragut's relationship with Jody, a young fellow prisoner, and their becoming lovers, and finally the incredible escape of Jody from prison. The focus, however, is on the significance this affair has for Farragut in his inward progress. The account of the Farragut-Jody relationship is preceded
by a meaningful and vivid account of Farragut's rediscovering his responsiveness to the mysterious beauty of nature, which he almost seemed to have forgotten since he came to Falconer. The falling leaves of autumn from the three swamp maples within the prison walls arrest his attention. His imagination is stirred by them and he visualises the many trees beyond the wall—beech trees, oaks, tulips, ash, walnut and many varieties of maple—and their leaves. The changing leaves of the multicoloured trees have such power as "to remind (him)" of the enormous and absurd pleasure he had, as a free man, taken in his environment. He liked to walk on the earth, swim in the oceans, climb the mountains, and, in the autumn, watch the leaves fall". The simple phenomenon of light struck him" as a transcendent piece of good news". He also remembers now how an earlier occasion when he was a freeman, while watching autumnal leaves fall across the air, he had" found his vitality and intelligence suddenly stimulated". At Falconer he watches the birds and autumnal leaves "Moving as the air moved, like dust, like pollen, like ashes, like any sign of the invincible potency of nature" (emphasis added).

Responsiveness to nature in Cheever is always a source of strength and sustenance to the human spirit, although one may not be conscious of it. It has a spiritual dimension to it. Samuel coale has the following insightful observations to make on this aspect of cheever in general and Falconer in particular: "At the centre of his (i.e., Cheever's) vision of the world there has always been an essentially lyric consciousness, a celebration of transcendent moments of the human spirit. These moments have been linked to the natural beauty of the landscape and to the spiritual need inherent in man for permanent and human values. No matter how dark the
day in the alien prison world. Farragut’s sustained faith in the ‘invincible potency of nature’ and in his own spiritual strivings does not desert him. Such moments are infrequent but spontaneous in their appearance, and for that very reason Farragut experiences them powerfully. It is paradoxical that they occur in the bleak, cold and barren prison-house and that the prison itself contributes to his lyric awareness, and faith in human nature and man’s spirit. Cheever perhaps suggests that intimations of the spiritual, the transcendent may come even from the least expected places, and that the least likely persons may be instrumental in bringing them about. Farragut’s unseemly affair with Jody, which occupies the rest of this chapter, becomes profoundly meaningful if seen from this angle.

Like obscene and profane language, homosexuality is another component of *Falconer* which would surprise as well as embarrass the reader familiar with Cheever’s previous work in which frequently heterosexual sportiveness is often lyrically celebrated. There are references, though minimal to this perversion or abnormality to human behaviour. In all these instances it is feared, regretted and rejected rather than denounced by the Cheever character. In *The Wapshot chronicle*, as seen already, *Covey* finds himself in a state of helpless emotional confusion. He suspects that he may be homosexual when his wife Betsey leaves him abruptly exposing him to various fears regarding his own sexuality including the rumblings of homosexual lust in him. He is almost on the verge of yielding to a gay colleague of his who makes a pass at him. Fortunately for him, his faith in himself and his sexuality is restored and his confusion put an end to by the understanding and sympathetic letter written by his father Leander. There are the male prostitutes at the auction in *The Wapshot Scandal* some of whom openly incite their
prospective buyers. A similar display of his wares is made by a man whom Asa Bascoms in cheever's short story "The World of Apples" encounters in a Roman urinal. In Bullet Park, Nailles in a confessional mood tells his son of the times when he had endless trouble with the "choppers" at Grand Central where for a time he was "pumping ship".

What differentiates Falconer from all of Cheever's previous works in which homosexually figures, is the dramatic shift in the protagonists' - and Cheever's too - attitude towards this form of sexuality, and his treatment of it. It he were attempting a realistic or naturalistic novel on all aspects of prison life, or bent upon writing frankly and uninhibitedly without any reservations about sex relations, as some of his contemporary novelists were doing-sometimes, doing with a vengeance - he would have certainly dealt in greater and more vivid detail with all the unseemly and nauseating aspects of the sexual problems faced by the imprisoned men. But that is what Cheever refrains from in Falconer, his objective being different. The shift in this novel in his treatment of homosexual relationship is in his dwelling on the emotion that accompany it and their impact on the participants rather than on the merely physical aspects of it. He allows, for the first time in his fiction, for a tender love relationship between two men. Cheever's extended use of homosexuality in this novel, in contrast to the reticence he had observed previously, may provide one more occasion for bringing in biographical consideration to explain it. More than any other novel of his, Falconer raises the question of the relationship between his life and his creative work, and of the particular relevance of taking the facts of his life into account to elucidate it.
During the many years preceding *Falconer* and the years following it, Cheever was very much troubled and perplexed by the very strong bisexual urges in him about which he could not speak out, or write about openly, as several entries in his posthumously published *Journals* reveal. Susan Cheever too has written about her father's anguish over his sexual appetites, which were "one of his major pre-occupations". "His lust for men was as distressing to him as his desire for women was self-affirming and ecstatic. The journals contain argument after argument with himself on the subject of homosexuality..." He was terrified that his enjoyment of homosexual love would estrange him from the natural world, from the pure and anchoring influence of his family, from the many pleasures he loved. He had been brought up in a world and in a religion that rejected homosexuality absolutely.* Therefore, he was more confused and self-condemning than he had ever been when he began to give in to his homosexual urges. Therefore, even after some of his important contemporaries like Norman Mailer, Donleavy, John Updike and others were writing frankly and graphically about the sex life of both men and women, Cheever continued determinedly with his reticence. Summing up her analysis of her father's sexual dilemmas, Susan Cheeven says: "After his heart attacks and his alcoholic collapse and his decision to live, he seemed to come to better terms with himself. *Falconer*, the novel he wrote after he stopped drinking in 1975, is peppered with scatological language and centres on a tender and larky homosexual love.* It does not follow from the above account that homosexuality figures conspicuously in *Falconer* because Cheever had in a fashion come to terms with his own sexual dilemmas by the time he came to write this novel. It would be much to naive to think so.
It only means that this fact of Cheever's life has the same relation to the writing of 
Falconer as his stint of teaching at Sing Sing, his gruelling experience in alcohol and drug 
withdrawal, and his excited sense of triumph on his being freed from them. All these 
experiences had their part to play, as it would happen in the case of any other writer, in stirring 
his creative imagination which transformed facts into fiction. Farragut it hardly needs to be 
pointed out, is only an imaginary character placed in a fictional world. His dreams and 
aspirations, confusions and dilemmas including his homosexuality are entirely his. And the 
reader's task is to see whether these are convincingly presented, consistent with his character 
and personality as developed in the novel, and whether they suggest or point ultimately to any 
significant meaning. Therefore, any reference to cheever's life, excursion into his biography 
for verification and confirmation, would be both unnecessary and irrelevant.

Neither Farragut nor Jody is a confirmed or committed homosexual, though it may be 
presumed that before arriving at Falconer neither was a stranger to that experience. If Farragut 
the middle-aged professor had the reputation of being an avid pursuer and romances of women - 
one of the three letters he composes in prison feverishly is addressed to one of his former lady 
loves - Jody, the seductive younger man who claims to have a wife and a couple of children is 
clever and very resourceful, and knows how to gratify all his needs even in the prison, and 
survive. In the brutality and loneliness of prison life the desperate need for sexual release, 
regardless of the form it takes, seems inescapable and inevitable, especially if it happens to be 
an exclusively male prison house like Falconer. Moreover, at Falconer the inmates are largely 
incapable establishing secure and normal relationships with each other, nor can they make any
meaningful communication among themselves. Few of them reveal to their fellow prisoners the real cause for their imprisonment. To keep them out of mischief such as rioting the prison authorities allow, perhaps indirectly encourage, them the seek self-gratification, and gratification among themselves, however inhuman such an attitude be. In this unnatural environment of enforced idleness and frustration both Farragut and Jody become lovers. Jody quickly adapts himself to the sexual option open to him in the prison.

Within a month of their acquaintance Farragut and Jody becomes lovers, and it is the younger man that seduces the other into it. It is he now seeks out the older man. Farragut is of course not surprised by this development and expects this to happen, from what he has read in the newspapers about prison life. But "what he had not expected was that this grotesque bonding of their relationship would provoke in him so profound a love." As if to strengthen the relationship he has struck with Farragut, Jody soon after making his acquaintance takes him to his "hideout" called "the Millionaire's view", which shows over the roofs of the celiblocks and walls "a two-mile stretch of rivier with cliffs and mountains on the western shore". It is the most commanding sight Farragut has had of the world beyond the walls. He is deeply moved by the soul-stirring prospect of nature. For him it is as important as sexual gratification, but different in the sense that response to nature is impersonal and can bring him suggestion of the transcendental.

Jody, unlike other prisoners, is a loquacious and glib talker and has no scruples except self-interest. He assesses in no time Farragut as trust-worthy and confides in him his carefully
chalked out plan of escape from the prison at the time of the graduation ceremony of the prisoners when His Eminence Cardinal Thaddeus Morgan comes in person to present the diplomas to the graduating class. In this mad venture of escape with the cardinal's retinue he is to be helped by "one of the dudes in the class" called DiMatteo who is the chaplain's assistant. He makes it clear that he has been cultivating this assistant, who is sweet on him, as a part of his strategy of escape. He also tells Farragut that he would not see him again but for a brief moment when he comes to say goodbye. Farragut knows that Jody has virtually abandoned him and spends the intervening time with the chaplain's assistant to make sure of his escape. But strangely, he does not experience any real jealousy. He longs for his lover's company with an extraordinary intensity, as if his heart, soul and mind all crave for his company, but totally free from possessiveness. His earlier loves were marked by sexual possessiveness.

It is quite characteristic of Farragut that during the month long period of waiting and suspense, he does some introspection and analyses the nature of his love for Jody, comparing and contrasting the love of many women he had known and longed for. For it was much more than mere physical consummation. Could it be that in loving Jody he was only loving himself and his own lost youth? But that would be an idle and impossible though a delicious pursuit. Was he not willingly embracing death, decay and corruption by physical relationship with Jody? This honest though painful introspection illuminates his past transgressions and enables him to understand his motives. The absence of Jody and the longing for him affect Farragut so much that this sense of time and space appear imperilled for a time. To provide a parallel as well as
a contrast to his liaison with Jody a fairly detailed and touching account of Cuckold's encounter with a "hustler" who gave himself different names is given. Surprisingly Cuckold tells Farragut that he found this young man to be gentle and affectionate and about the purest person he had ever known. On the fleshly encounters presented in the novel Janet Growth makes the following observation, which also sheds light on Cheever's attitude to them: "At Falconer the flesh is always being aroused or abused, subdued or gratified, either in reality or in recollection. Terrible scenes of cruelty, degradation and lust take place. However, when we look at those fleshly encounters of Farraguts and those of his fellow inmates, Cuckold, Jody, Chicken — and the rest, the quality that distinguishes the greater portion of them is, curiously, purity." perforce Farragut has to witness them or listen to the accounts narrated they all contribute to his psychological growth and expansion of his human sympathies to include the lowliest and the lost.

The particular significance of Farragut's own affair with Jody is that this experience expands his notions of love, "not so much that it can be extended to partners of one's own gender as that it can be emotionally sustaining without being possessive", that it can be genuinely unselfish. That is why when Jody selfishly and unhesitatingly abandons him for the chaplain's assistant he does not feel any jealousy. Further he wishes and prays for his safe escape when the time for it approaches. The night before his planned escape Jody comes to bid goodbye to Farragut. At that moment the older man's feelings are "chaotic", But he feels that he "had done nothing with Jody so exciting as to say goodbye". He even experiences "the conspirational thrill of seeing his beloved escape" into freedom. However as it begins to rain and the weather turns ominous, he is deeply disturbed and filled with apprehension. For in case
of rain there would not be this graduation ceremony as the cardinal’s visit would be cancelled, and there would be no escape for Jody. Farragut prays fervently and silently: “Have pity on him then; try to understand his fear.” These words of prayer could as well apply to Farragut too.

As if in answer to his prayer, after a ten-minute downpour the rain stops, and the threatened storm blows over. When Farragut wakes up the next morning he discovers that he had "got what he had bargained for: a day of incomparable beauty." Rain, a good shower, in Cheever is always a harbinger of good things and answers are sometimes found to teasing and perplexing questions. On the great day of the graduation ceremony, Farragut in the bated breath waits for the arrival of the cardinal. Cheever packs his description of the day with religious references. "The cardinal’s triumphant arrival at the prison", says George Hunt, "is described in updated allusions to the apocalyptic imagery of the Book of Revelation." Though these episode of his arrival in a helicopter at one level is fantastic and mildly satirical the rich religious references exalt and give it a larger dimension of meaning. As soon as the cardinal makes a sign of the cross, a great spell of worship falls over the place.

After the diplomas are given away, the mass begins. Exactly at that moment Jody who has been hiding in a nearly room comes out and takes his place at the right side of the altar looking every inch a consummate figure of a tardy acolyte. It is very significant that the novelist here uses an extended quotation from the Latin mass concerned with mercy, forgiveness of sins, new life and benediction. Farragut’s response to this prayer is noteworthy. We are told
that "the raptness of prayer enthralled Farragut as the raptness of Love". Immediately after
the prayer the cardinal and his retinue including Jody take their place in the helicopter, which
triumphantly rises high into the sky; On the public address system are heard recordings of
church bells and the glorious clamos "Oh glory, glory, glory!". Arriving in new York Jody
is befriended by the cardinal himself, clothed, blessed, and set free. Thus his miraculous escape,
which anticipates Farragut’s own equally miraculous escape later on, is accomplished.

The escape of Jody is one of the odd and extravagant episodes in the novel which test
the reader’s credulity. Escape from a well-guarded prison by itself may not be improbable or
impossible though fraught with risk and danger. But hat a cardinal himself who knows that Jody
is a convict serving a term at Falconer should help him to escape does seem rather farfetched,
even if one takes into account the reference to *Les Miserables*. The use of "apocalyptic
imaginary intermingled with the imagery of Christ’s ascension at the end of Luke’s gospel" in
the passage which describes the taking off of the helicopter does not make the mechanics of
Jody’s escape less farfetched, although George Hunt thinks so. Glen M. Johnson has advanced
a more convincing argument in defence of this improbable episode, which deserves to be cited:

This is the only place in *Falconer* where the point of view seems to leave Farragut. But close reading suggests that the abrupt shift in perspective is only apparent; one is encouraged to read the narrative of Jody’s escape as an interior monologue - as Farragut’s imaginative construction. One hint that this is the case is provided by a woman who appears during the sequence to kiss the cardinal’s ring; she is described as a television actress-an appropriate performer in a fantasy constructed by a prisoner whose only contact with the outside world is -- through television. If one considers Jody’s freedom in this way, as a psychic reward for Farragut, it becomes clear that the significance of the passage lies
precisely in its improbability.  

Jody’s escape is emblematic of Farragut’s redemption from the many offences against love he has committed. Cheever in the Farragut - Jody episode has sought to show that love is possible in the most unlikely circumstance such as the infatuation of a middle-aged murderer with a prison hustler. Farragut’s reward for his unselfish love is appropriately unselfish Joy. Therefore he is able to which wholeheartedly happiness to Jody when the news reaches him that after his escape he is married.

In the last two chapters Farragut is seen to progress further towards his redemption. As he gets more and more involved in prison life and tries to identify himself with the other inmates, he becomes by slow degrees less preoccupied with the prison of his own self. The uprising at the upstate prison of Amana. Known to all prisoners as The Wall, gives him a major opportunity to think less about himself and more about others. His various experiences, especially those at Falconer, gradually lead him to self-knowledge and self-acceptance. They make for his psychological and moral growth. The news of the Amana riot in which several prison officers are held hostage by the inmates to press for their demands reaches the prisoners at Falconer through a radio broadcast. The officers at Falconer are panic-stricken and fear of a similar uprising here grips them. To distract the prisoner’s attention from the riot and to dissipate their excitement several urgent steps are taken. All their radio sets, one of the few means of these limited contact with the world outside, are taken away. For ‘free repair’, congregation are forbidden, and ironically they are invited to pose for a full colour photograph by the side
of a decorated Christmas tree. A copy would be sent free of cost to the person designated by the inmate. This was a gesture sponsored by a woman in memory of her son and had been ignored all these years by the prison authorities but now remembered as a clear bait to keep the prisoners in good humour.

The most humiliating and disgusting of the steps taken is to subject them to "short arm inspection", a mockery of medical examination, by a clownish doctor and a make nurse from the infirmary. They are even decided the TV on the pretext that it is broken, thereby cutting them off from the uprising at Amana, which had filled them with some help of change in their prison too. Farragut feels very much dispirited, not so much for himself as for the fellow prisoners who are all easily gullied by the prison officers. There seems to be no redemption to these fallen men. But his spirits rise once again when he risks building secretly a forbidden radio from the copper wire he has stolen and a toilet paper roll, which enables them all to here the news about the state of affairs at Amana. As Glen M. Johnson remarks "in constructing his radio Farragut seeks, literary and metaphorically, communication outside the prison of his being—even if the communication must be with other prisons". This outreaching act makes him pray, "Praise be to thee, O Lord " as spontaneously as he had done earlier when the prison cats were butchered.

The final chapter begins with the prisoners being stripped naked again and made to line up not to be insulted but to be given new clothes made of green cloth in the place of the earlier gray ones. On the symbolic significance of the colour green George Hunt says: "In Christian
symbolism the color green represents hope, regeneration, and victory. It is indeed appropriate that Farragut should receive his green uniform when he feels most disputed. It anticipates his own release and regeneration before long though he does not know it. During the influenza epidemic, when every prisoner is inoculated. Farragut makes the astonishing discovery that he has not been receiving his methadone. When he demands an explanation the orderly tells him that in fact he has been on placebos for nearly a month, and that they have been wondering when he would notice it: "You’re clean, my fried, you’re clean". Farragut is as much shocked as surprised. But he cannot take the credit for mastering his addiction: "He could not congratulate himself on having mastered his addiction, since he had not been aware of it." Since his extreme self-consciousness has fed his addiction, he can arrive at an understanding of his enthrallment only after he has broken the habit. In his involvement with other prisoners and in his unself-conscious action of improvising a radio at great risk, he completely forgets him need for a fix. His release from the addiction may be viewed as a gift of grace from above for it.

A second gift of grace of deliverance, this time specifically Christian, he receives shortly thereafter. When he is in the throes of fever, he is reminded of the bliss of drugs which he seemed to have forswn. Then a strange thing happens. A stranger "A young man with summery hair and immaculate clericals" and a "very cleanly smell", walks into his cell and says that he has come to celebrate the Eucharist. Farragut gets out of his bed and kneels before the young priest, as he must have done in his youth: "the thought that these might be intended for his last rites did not disconcert him. There was nothing in his mind at all and he entered, completely, into the verbal pavane he had been taught as a youth. "Holy, Holy, Holy", he said
in a loud and manly voice. 'Heaven and earth are full of thy Glory. Praise be to thee, O Lord most high'. when he had been blessed with the peace that passes all understanding, he said "Thank you, Father," and the priest said, 'God Bless you, my son'. The young priest who had come as if from nowhere, vanishes. It dawns on as Farragut that he had not asked for a priest, and he wonders why he alone was chosen to receive the Eucharist. His spontaneous response to it indicates that his redemption is close by.

"The quality of his love for Jody and the assimilation of religious impulses and expressions into his whole life prepare Farragut for redemption". As if to enable him to complete the process of his release form confinement and redemption and earn his of right escape, he renders service to Chicken Number Two, the senile, smelly dying prisoner, who once had strangled an old women for a small sum. The flu which his Falconer affects Chicken too. The infirmary is already full and Farragut is asked to take Chicken into his cell, because the old man needs care. As soon as he takes Chicken in, he washes his body in a Christly gesture and places him in his own bed in clean sheets. This act has clear Christian overtones. The details, George Hunt points out, are "reminiscent of the gospel account following Christ's crucifixion". Immediately after the washing Chicken asks him 'why did you kill your brother, zeke?'. This is a key question. Till now the reader has not been told the details of the crime for which Farragut has been imprisoned. It is significant that they which had been blocked from his consciousness, are revealed now as the day of his freedom approaches. For now he is able to accept responsibility for 'the accident or what they called the murder' of Eben, which he had not done till this moment. In ministering to the dying convict whom none had visited these
twelve years and none on the street would know his name, Farragut has not only expressed his fraternity with an uncared for and unwanted man but has expressed repentance for the fratricide he has been responsible. Thereby he makes himself worthy of a saving gift of grace.

The dying Chicken, who knows that he is dying, tells Farragut with a rare clarity of mind: "I'm dying, Zeke, - - - I can feel that I'm dying. - - - You see, Zeke, I ain't afraid of dying at all. I know that sounds lying - - - I ain't learned all I know through experience. I ain't learned through experience at all - - - I figure I must come into this life with the memories of some other life and so it stands that I'll be going into something else and you know what, Zeke, - - - I can hardly wait to see what it's going to be like, I can hardly wait - - - I'm intensely interested in what's going to happen next - - -." 85 "Farragut's sense of some spiritual commutation between the two of them arises immediately". 87 When he takes the dying man's warm hand in his, he seems paradoxically" to draw from Chicken Number Two's presence a deep sense of freeness; he (seems) to take something that (the other) (is) lovingly giving to him". 86 Unable to control himself he sobs convulsively. The scene, is replete with Christian resonance - - - and the themes of death issuing in new life, of the substitution of one in death that others might be redeemed and free, intensity in the action that follows". 89

Now begins the very last phase of Farragut's life that of his escape into freedom, which is as miraculous and improbable as Jody's escape earlier. However the Christian overtones in the present situation are far more convincing than those in the earlier situation. Glen M. Johnson points out: "since grace is always a miracle, the 'improbability' of Farragut's escape - - - is its
essence. Cheever emphasizes the miraculous in Farragut's deliverance by composing his escape of materials drawn from both scriptures and melodramas. If Jody's escape reminds one of Les Misérables, Farragut's is straight out of the The Count of Monte Cristo. When Chicken dies, Farragut with "cunning and courage to take his rightful place in things" as he sees them, takes Chicken out of the body sack in which he has been placed puts him into his own bed, and climbs into the burial sack feigning death. By a lucky chances he takes with him a blade. The sack is carried outside the walls of the prison. When the opportunity to escape from "his shroud" arrives, he begins to cut the canvas parallel to the Zipper. But the blade slips from his finger. In his frantic search for it in the sack he cuts his fingers and thighs, as though he is marked with stigmata. But it seems to him that it has happened "to someone else". Once the cutting the shroud - like sack open is over, he steps out of it as if "out of his grave" into freedom. It is as if at this point the shroud of death is transformed into a womb of rebirth.

Moving out of the darkness and shadows of Falconer, Farragut steps into "brightly lighted" streets. The lights are so bright that one "could read the small print in a prayerbook in any street where the poor lived". He is alarmed neither by the strong light and his own shadow, nor "by the thought of pursuit and capture". When he stands at the window of a laundromat, he is pleased to see that his blood-stained appearance does not alarm at all the woman who notices him. At a distant corner under a street light he spots another man, a stranger "who could be an agent from the Department of Correction --- or given his luck so far, an agent from heaven." His encounter with this mysterious figure who befriends him turn out to be as significant as his earlier unexpected meeting with the strange young man who administered the
Eucharist to him in the prison during his illness. This utterly inconsequential stranger who smells of whisky, and who has been evicted, equally unaccountably gives him unasked the assistance he needs. He invites him to be his guest and pays his fare on a bus moving away from Falconer. It begins to rain. Having noticed that Farragut has no raincoat he gives him one of his own coats, which fits him perfectly. This gesture of the evicted man is reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount where Christ tells his listeners: "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also" (Matthew 5:40) his entire action, which has symbolic significance, reminds one strongly, as George Hunt has shown, of the lines from the Last Judgment in the Gospel According to Mathew (25:43f).²⁴

Farragut's putting on the stranger's coat is his second exchange - the first being his taking the place of Chicken in the burial bag - that effects has miraculous escape, his transformation from death to life. At the next stop he gets off the bus stepping onto the street his head held high, his back straight, fully self-possessed and free from all fears which had harrassed him till then. It is most significant that it still rains. Rain is a deeply charged symbol. It symbolises the descent of divine grace, rebirth and renewal of life. Farragut is not so much restored as reborn into the world. And the closing sentence of the novel, "Rejoice', he thought, rejoice",²⁵ echoes, as George Hunt has shown, St. Paul's words to the Philippians, "which charles Wesley appropriates in his 'Hymn for Our Lords' Resurrection".²⁶ Farragut's escape is described in terms of resurrection from the dead. However, the reader is bound to ask what would happen to him next. Would he really remain free? Would he not be picked up in no time? John Callaway who interviewed Cheever asked him these very questions. In reply Cheever told him
Farragut, as it is clear, is released from all forms of 'confinement', physical and psychological. He has grown inwardly and spiritually in which his incarceration at Falconer has played no mean part. He is risen, reborn into a new life, with remarkable self-possession, while Jody, in contrast, after his escape was very nervous, sweating and anxious to put as much distance between himself and Falconer as possible until he felt safe. Therefore he can 'rejoice' without the need to think of what may happen to him next. That is a clear proof of his transformation. Appropriately Cheever ends the novel with Farragut rejoicing at the freedom he has been granted.

It has been pointed out by Glen M. Johnson that the stranger who helped Farragut in his improbable miraculous escape "belongs among Cheever's angelic intercessors". He carries a "sky blue" helmet which develops an earlier association of sky and blue with Farraguts higher aspirations. He also has with him an electric heater "with a golden bowl shaped like the sun. The blue sky and the golden bowl are heavenly images. The stranger's significance becomes clearer further if it is remembered that his landlady has refused him hospitality by evicting him. "By raising the topic of hospitality refused and by surrounding the rejected figure with heavenly images, Cheever evokes the Biblical warning that any stranger may be an angel in disguise." In his epistle to the Hebrews St. Paul wrote: 'let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels'. Thus the stranger performs an angelic function. He miraculously intervenes to enable Farragut obtain
redemption through grace which is a gift from above and cannot be commanded.

The world of *Falconer* - for that matter the world of Cheever's fiction - is a fallen and falling world. Where man's spirit is betrayed by his body. Therefore it should not be surprising that the stranger who helps Farragut smells of whisky but his "fermented breath" does not make him any the less angelic in his function. In this novel Cheever has given impressive expression to his faith in the transfiguring power of human relationships with surprising results; a hustler who has nothing but self-interest can become the object of self-less love: and an addict can be cleansed, and a murderer can find brotherhood. All this can happen, as Farragut learns from personal experience, if one has the ability to love without jealousy and possessiveness, combined with a willingness to understand and accept one's impure motivation and limitations. When such a transformation takes place, it would be nothing short of a miracle.

Perhaps it is not necessary to point out once again that *Falconer* is not a documentary or journalistic novel or prison life which it could have been in lesser hands or in the hands of writers with a different perspective or vision. Nor is it a novel of manners on prison life. It might seem to be a conventional novel of crime and punishment and redemption; does not its protagonist kill his brother, go to prison for it, and manage to escape from the prison, a changed man for the better? But, as Joan Didion points out, "the 'Crime' in this novel bears no more relation to the 'punishment' than the punishment bears to the redemption. The surface here glitters and deceives. Cause and effects run deeper.* What Cheever has achieved in *Falconer* is a novel of profound Christian meaning, particularly relevant to the present times.
Religion, Christian faith, always found a place in Cheever's fiction. In his work prior to *Falconer* religion is mostly a matter of manners. Many of his characters, Corby wapshot and Eliot Nailles for example, attend church regularly. But what their religious faith means to them in their everyday lives is not explored in any depth, but limited to their participation in church rituals. In *Falconer*, however, the religious content is direct, open, and pervasive. It is operatively present from first to last. How it functions in the life of Farragut the protagonist has been pointed out in some detail already. Th novelists traces the Christian paradigm of fall, trial, and redemption in his experience and thus elucidates their significance. It is this pattern rather than mere fidelity to verifiable facts of prison life that determines the structure of novel. It is this religious focus of the prisoner protagonist's progress through trial to deliverance holds the novel unified.

Farragut's fall is three-fold: his destructive relationship with his wife Marcia, for which he has to be blamed as much as his wife, his self-destructive addiction, and then his fratricide. His trial is in his having to go through the humiliating and alienating experience of imprisonment in the midst of the seeming drugs of humanity. Paradoxically in the process he discovers not only new aspects of humanity in himself and his fellow prisoners, but also the true meaning of love. He learns to understand his own motives and to accept responsibility for his past action including fratricide. His experiences in *Falconer* bring him self-knowledge. By rendering Christian service to a dying convict voluntarily he virtually qualifies himself to be redeemed. And in an unexpected way the opportunity to escape from the prison as a free man comes to him. The brotherly charity of a total stranger enables him to walk out rejoicing, a
redeemed and reborn man. The sequence of events and the pattern of fall, trial, and redemption in the novel may seem to give it the configuration of an allegory. But *Falconer* is neither a religious allegory analogous to Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress,* nor is it parable with a palpable design to drive home a moral. It is much too complex and packed with psychological drama to be called either an allegory or parable in the sense in which these terms are generally understood.
Notes and References


2. Ibid; p. 197.

3. Some of their comments would be referred to in the course of this chapter, as and when the occasion arises.


10. Faithful reproductions of some of the interviews Cheever gave are found in *Conversations*.


12. Ibid; p. 155.

13. Ibid; p. 125.


15. Susan Cheever, p. 171.

26. Lynne Waldeland, p.133.
27. Ibid; p.135.
28. Falconer, p.5.
29. Ibid; p.7.
32. George W.Hunt, p.203.
33. Falconer, p.16.
34. Ibid; p.17.
35. Ibid; pp.74-75.
37. George W.Hunt, p.204.
38. *Falconer*, p.23.
42. *Falconer*, p.30.
43. Ibid; p.38.
44. Susan Cheever, p.171.
45. Lynne Waldeland, p.133.
46. George W. Hunt, pp.208-209.
47. *Falconer*, p.43.
48. Ibid; p.44.
49. Ibid; p.45.
50. Ibid; p.198.
51. Lynne Waldeland, p.136.
52. Samuel Coale, p.110.
53. Susan Cheever, p.203.
54. *Falconer*, p.57.
55. Ibid; p.58.
56. George W. Hunt, p.211.
57. Ibid; p.213.
58. *Falconer*, pp.72-73.
59. Ibid; p.75.
60. George W. Hunt, p.215.
61. *Falconer*, pp.84-85.
62. Ibid; p.86.
63. Samuel Coale, p.112.
64. *The Journals of John Cheever* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), pp.213-14, 215, 217, 218-19, 232, all chosen at random. there are several more. an interesting entry made during 1978 reads thus "That I have homosexual instincts seems to me a commonplace. what is extraordinary, I think, is the force that was brought to crush these instincts and that exacerbated them beyond their natural importance ---", pp.349-50.
67. *Falconer*, p.91.
68. Ibid; p.87.
70. Lynne Waldeland, p.132.
71. *Falconer*, pp.122-123.
72. Ibid; p.123.
73. Ibid; p.124.
74. George W. Hunt, p.217.
75. *Falconer*, pp.129-130.
76. George W. Hunt, p.217.
78. Samuel Coale says that this riot is "a fictional representation" of the sensational prison riot which took place of Attica in upstate New York in 1972. It might be so. But it is necessary to note that this fact is used by Cheever not to dwell on the sensation it created but to direct the reader's attention on the impact it has on Farragut.

80. *Falconer*, p.156.

81. George W. Hunt, pp.220-221.

82. *Falconer*, p.187.

83. Ibid; pp.187-188.

84. Lynne Waldeland, p.134.

85. George W. Hunt, p.221.


87. George W. Hunt, p.221.

88. *Falconer*, p.201.

89. George W. Hunt, p.222.


92. Ibid;

93. Ibid; p.208.

94. George W. Hunt p.223.

95. *Falconer*, p.211.

96. George W. Hunt, p.223.

97. *Conversations*, p.247. Cheever gave a more or less identical answer to Robert Baun who asked him whether Farragut's escape from prison in a sack was intended to symbolise rebirth. Cheever said: 'well, he recaptured his self-possession. I look on it as an achievement. His escape was not so much running away from something but spiritually positive I know Farragut is n't going to return. see *Conversation*, p.141.

98. Glen M. Johnson. p.28.
99. Ibid;