

ILLUMINATI IN THE DOUBLE HOOK: FIGURES  
CUT IN SACRED GROUND

by

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Illuminati in The Double Hook: Figures Cut in Sacred Ground

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## ABSTRACT

Sheila Watson's The Double Hook is regarded by many as the best modernist novel written in Canada. Existing criticism of the novel, while undeniably concerned with real and crucial elements in the text, is too often baffled by its syntactical and structural repetitions, couplings, foldings-over, gaps in the text, and by the impulse toward mere dialectical resolution that is prompted by the weight of the doubles and inversions that compose it. Critics tend to "make clear" by analysis, rather than by allowing the visionary clarity that is woven from the fragments and junctures that are the novel.

I attempt a method that proposes an archaeology not an explanation; a geography not a solution. The density of this many-layered text involves the reader-critic in a double dialogue that deepens and multiplies itself. Always, I wish to resist a reading that appropriates the text to a fixed and settled meaning or one that overreaches and obliterates it.

The figures in The Double Hook are not "characters" as fictional people are conventionally understood. When we regard them as figures, the reciprocal illumination that occurs between the reader and the text makes of them mutually revelatory figurae, their figuration a divine praxis. The action is a weaving of a triple mythos that implicates Christian, ancient European, and North American Indian ritual and iconography. The propitiatory gestures made by the male figures are correlate with the recovery of the occulted female in the divine order. The redemptive vision of the novel depends on this recognition, which allows the transfiguration and regeneration of the barren earth which is the ground of the novel's "seeing." As we come to know the integrity and method of the text, what we see are illuminati: figures cut in sacred ground.

For shamanka Sheila

You see the ways the fisherman doth take  
To catch the fish, what engines doth he make?  
Behold! how he engageth all his wits  
Also his snares, lines, angles, hooks, and nets.  
Yet fish there be, that neither hook, nor line,  
Nor snare, nor net, nor engine can make thine;  
They must be groped for, and be tickled too,  
Or they will not be caught, whate'er you do.

(John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress)

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ILLUMINATI IN THE DOUBLE HOOK: FIGURES  
CUT IN SACRED GROUND

. . . what I was concerned with was figures in a  
ground, from which they could not be separated.<sup>1</sup>

In this essay I use the term illuminati in two distinct but inseparable senses. First, I intend those figures that appear in the pages of medieval manuscripts, illuminating--that is to say, "lighting up"--the script of the text while figuring forth the divine action implicit in the sacred writing which is their ground. Second, I mean to suggest the more colloquial "illuminations" signifying the perceptual enlightenments that occur in a single moment in the mind either of a "character" or of a reader.

Sheila Watson tells us that The Double Hook is not to be read merely as a conventional drama meant to mirror the typical behaviour of "people in a place" acting out their various subjective conflicts and resolutions on a stage set landscape. Rather, the dramatis personae exist in the moment of their making, in the hush that follows their creation. Their figuration is like that of a divine praxis; the action is a sacred one that works itself out through them--but not yet.

In the folds of the hills  
under Coyote's eye  
lived  
the old lady, mother of William  
of James and of Greta  
lived James and Greta  
lived William and Ara his wife  
lived the Widow Wagner

the Widow's girl Lenchen  
 the Widow's boy  
 lived Felix Prosper and Angel  
 lived Theophil  
 and Kip

until one morning in July<sup>2</sup>

The figures are etched or engraved in an eternal and continuous ground which is a field of force, but their existence, uttered in a series of repetitive declarations, feels like inertia despite the reiteration of the word "lived" (inert: Without action; but Latin inert: in: + ars, "without art").<sup>3</sup> Sense and tense fold over and against each other in the repeated verb. What at first feels like artlessness is not. Coyote's language is already tricking us, even as the earth begins its begetting.

Any book begins with words. This book reminds us that it does by echoing the beginning of another book that tells us that the world begins with a word. As God begins by naming the world into being, so this book begins by naming--first the earth, then Coyote's voyeuristic eye; then, echoing the genealogies of Genesis, the figures and their relationships. In principio is remembered by "in the folds of the hills," and back of that lies Hesiod. The beginning, in this book, is the earth, which is to say the ground, the text, the inscribing.

Robert Kroetsch, in an unpublished journal, muses on what "ground" means, saying

Ground. That word so much in use today. What does it mean beyond the dirt that the dirt farmer uses to grow wheat? Some kind of urcondition, existence itself beyond any naming. The stuff before the stuff that is history or culture or art. That which is before the self, even. The stuff of which "place" is made. By dwelling in place we hope to get back through the naming to the ground.<sup>4</sup>

Sheila Watson's statement about beginning to write The Double Hook "in answer to a challenge that you could not write about particular places in Canada: that what you'd end up with was a regional novel of some kind" should be set beside Kroetsch's meditation. The milieu that one is very much a part of is the ground of emerging being, is language. It is only in language or in the interstices of language, in the "mediating rituals which manifest themselves in what . . . we call art forms" that we are not driven "either towards violence or towards insensibility . . ." <sup>5</sup> Man is not accidentally, but essentially maker. The beginning of The Double Hook and an article on Wyndham Lewis in which she quotes from his essay The Artist is Older Than the Fish make it clear that she agrees with Lewis when he says "since the artist shares in the work of creation, he too must reach back to the fundamental slime." <sup>6</sup> In another article, she mentions Konrad Fiedler's use of the term form-language or what "Gropius was to call . . . later at the Bauhaus 'the grammar of creation'." <sup>7</sup> Like Lewis, Sheila Watson surveys ground patterns and trains her eye and the eyes of others "to read the arbitrary signs by which mythic objects thrust into the foreground of life, habituate themselves there and generate--or appropriate--ritual patterns and protective coverings . . . 'to meet the terrible needs of life' or 'to work on the psychology of their adversaries'." <sup>8</sup> Her reading of Lewis's art provides Sheila Watson's readers with the instruction that is needed for reading her own.

The grammar of creation on the first page of The Double Hook lies latent in the naming of the figures bound by prepositions, "in" and "under," and by a redundancy that is an insistence on the lamination of language and on the presence of myth, its nowness. The figures are potentiality, a prelude to the breaking into action that is demanded by "until." The preposition holds within it all the tension that has preceded it; these figures are

palimpsest; like Gaea's children and like Adam, they are borne out of the folds of the earth. Theirs is a primary naming that gestures toward the not-yet, the unnamed, even the unnameable.

Waiting to be lit up by their release into action, the figures make their appearance as half-emergent figurae. One is reminded of Michaelangelo's slaves, unreleased from the stone. They are the possibility of man and of meaning, an incomplete tableaux vivant. Since meaning resides in action, these figures and their naming are the seed words of action. Lucretius's atoms are called primordia, principia, elementa, semina, also corpora; they are bodies whose combination, motion, order, position, figura bring forth the things of the world. The figurae in this narrative, like Lucretius's atoms, will become a dance of figures who preserve the character of the dance by combining with and reflecting on and repelling each other.

Sheila Watson is image-maker, shamanka, and shape-shifter. Her shapes are shades until syntax makes them move, until action gives them spirit. Their naming is this paradox. Their shaping invests them with a soul which makes them break into the practice of being.

Greta was at the stove. Turning hotcakes. Reaching for the coffee beans. Grinding away James's voice.

James was at the top of the stairs. His hand half-raised. His voice in the rafters.

James walking away. The old lady falling (p. 19).

(All emphases mine.)

James and Greta lived. James and Greta were. They are placed, "until" the placement of the preposition and the fragmented sentences carry them into a series of gerund-like participles that retain, in the disjointed syntax, the character of nouns and naming. The coupling of noun-verb functions pushes the figures forward into broken gesture that forces the reader to

intensify his participation in the language. We are not permitted either complacency or omniscience; we must engage this language as it hacks away at comfortable grammatic form until we become the ground in which it is inscribed, its seed-bed; as we do, our perception is quickened into life.

Sheila Watson's long consideration of Wyndham Lewis is properly the subject of another study, but Frederic Jameson's comment about Lewis's work and, in context, about modernist writing, helps us to see the extraordinary collection of tasks that are occurring at once when the figures in The Double Hook begin to act. He remarks that "the empty matrix of national allegory is . . . immediately seized on by hitherto unformulable impulses which invest its structural positions and, transforming the whole narrative system into a virtual allegory of the fragmented psyche itself, now reach back to overdetermine the resonance of this increasingly layered text." <sup>9</sup>

The typographical shift on the first page of The Double Hook marks another kind of shift that remembers, resonates and reaches outward. The structural trajectories of its sentence fragments cut cross-ways against the grain of grammar, outward into the reader's eye and thought, vault upward into the architecture of the house, and forward into the narrative of the novel. What happens here is that language, which necessarily takes place in time (we read line by line in time), bends itself into space, extending itself in all directions at once. The reader is both assaulted by and drawn into a narrative that carries the unexpected banality of the almost comically familiar strategies of a domestic quarrel. James and Greta: a couple quarrelling. But an abrupt shift to the sacred is suggested by James's hieratic gesture and by his voice resounding in the vaulted loft--in benediction, perhaps.

This barely formed perception is in its turn undercut by the falling old lady, and we are quickly entangled with death, with matricide "under the jaw of the roof. In the vault of the bed loft. Into the shadows of death" (p. 19). "Under the jaw of the roof" glances backward to "under Coyote's eye," and all of this language action seems suddenly to gather itself inward to be swallowed in death by the form from which it had emerged, from the figure that will say, "In my mouth is forgetting / in my darkness is rest"; "in my mouth is the east wind" (p. 24). The east wind (its Indo-European root meaning "the shining") is origin, and blows westward toward death. The Alpha-Omega paradox haunts all the turns in this book. Invisible, resonating behind "into the shadow of death," lies "the valley of the shadow of death" of the twenty-third Psalm, but here is no comfort except in the half-heard alliteration of "vault" and its shadow "valley" which enclose the mother-murder in circular space which is the birthplace of the narrative's praxis.

The passage we have been discussing begins with Greta "turning," "reaching," "grinding," which faintly echo primary agricultural activity while the nouns "hotcakes" and "coffee beans" literally image breakfast preparations. We can almost see Greta's apron. But the text keeps turning itself and the reader inside out. The necessity of reciprocity, relationship and engagement is relentless in this writing. When, later, we remember that the stove before which Greta here stands turning hotcakes is the same one she turns into an altar for her sacrificial self-immolation, we watch the way narrative and imagery marry domesticity and death, doubling back on themselves. "Dear God," the Widow Wagner will repeatedly say, "There's nothing one can hide," and "How could I know?" It's almost more than one can bear without breaking into wild laughter that confounds darkness

with delight. "Truth," as the Sybil said to Aeneas, "is mingled with darkness." And so is laughter.

The density of this many-layered text inevitably involves the reader-critic in such an intimate dialogue that exegesis runs the risk of turning its readers into voyeurs and eavesdroppers. My own critical method, as it attempts to negotiate the dangers of the double dialogue that I feel must be carried on between the text and its reader-critic and between the critic and the reader of criticism takes its chances weaving itself this way in and out of such compressed language. I have tried to steer my way between the Scylla of appropriation and direction that would affix the vitality of this novel's imagery and syntax to a systematized symbology on the one hand, and the Charybdis of abstract and analytical reading that overreaches and obliterates the text on the other. "Coyote's song fretting the gap between the red boulders" functions chorically here as elsewhere, implying a warning against such readings:

Those who cling to the rocks I will  
bring down  
I will set my paw on the eagle's nest (p. 24).

Meaning resonates somewhere between the fixed and settled, and the ungrounded transcendent; spare clean language, fragmented sentences and sense emerge from empty space, peel flesh to the bone, search out the hidden connexions, look for what's occulted and bring it into the light. It is our response, however, that provides answer to the question "Shall these bones live?"<sup>10</sup>

The effect of this allusive and elusive language on the reader-Gestalt maker is much like what would happen if time-lapse photography were spliced with blank film that forced the viewer to complete the arc of the perceptual narrative incorrectly every time the image disappeared. This



writing leads us "into the shadow of death" through a sequence of events in which syntax and image undergo rapid and radical metamorphoses so that their shifting significance baffles any definite perceptual locus. As if to resist the impulse to entropy, remnants of narrative that propose the possibility of causal exposition attempt to reassemble or reassert themselves: "Pushed by James's will. By James's hand. By James's words." Will becomes act, becomes words, but James's words explain nothing: "This is my day. You'll not fish today" (p. 19). And when we turn the page, we are astonished to read: "Still the old lady fished" (p. 20). The double take we are forced to here when we confront the old lady's sudden resurrection utterly sabotages common sense. The pivotal word here is "still." It doubles over on itself, functioning as both adverb and adjective. It also serves as a conjunction. James's will, hand and words converge simultaneously in the event that kills his mother, but will, act and words ("you'll not fish today") are instantly joined and undercut by the conjunction that insists that the old lady continued to fish. "Nevertheless," says the conjunction. Repetition of the word "fished" and the adverbial sense of "still" ("now as before," "yet") even intensify the fishing activity of the old lady. "Still" makes nonsense of Death the Absolute, of the nature of things in time.

The intensity of the double effect of the sentence is not diminished by the series of subjunctive verb forms. The activities of the old lady are ones we are made to image in the passage that immediately follows what we take to be her death.

Still the old lady fished. If the reeds had dried up and the banks folded and crumbled down she would have fished still. If God had come into the valley, come holding out the long finger of salvation, moaning at the darkness, thundering down the gap at the lake head, skimming across the water, drying up the blue signature like blotting paper, asking

where, asking why, defying an answer, she would have thrown her line against the rebuke; she would have caught a piece of mud and looked it over; she would have drawn a line with the barb when the fire of righteousness baked the bottom (p. 20).

The rigor of this language is unmistakable; its energy gathers force incrementally as image after image arises of the old lady fishing, defying an answer, throwing her line against God's rebuke, salvation and creation alike. (God's long finger of salvation here recalls the long finger of Adam's creator in Michaelangelo's painting on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.) Catching a piece of mud and looking it over, she seems to question primal creation itself or to regard it as materia, possibly for artistic creation. When the fire of God's righteous apocalyptic wrath bakes the lake bottom, she draws a line across it with her barbed hook. The inscribing artist is older than the fish, older than the blue lake which is God's signature. The word embeds and couples two others: "sign" and "nature." The old lady's ferocious desire would take her beyond the signatures of nature, beyond God's sacred writing, to origin itself: the Word. The force that arises from primordial slime, from the baked crust of the earth turns against God's creation, makes it conditional, dependent on the necessity of her search. She seems archaic, at least as old as the earth from which and in which her force is figured, and upon which she makes her mark.

The effect of all this, despite the persistence of the conditional and hypothetical verbs and clauses is to make us see what logic and common sense defy. We seem to see beyond logos, beyond utterance and division and individuation. Further, the shift to more commonplace domestic situations which open the next three passages tends to reinforce our sense of her ordinary reality. Ara is hanging out the washing; Felix is sitting on his porch tipped back on his rocking-chair while thistles crowd out his potato plants which lie baking in the sun; the Widow's boy, presumably

engaged in doing chores around the farm when he sees the old lady, walks into his mother's kitchen. And so it goes, as Kurt Vonnegut would say; life as usual. Except, one after another, all three of them see the old lady we know is dead. The grammar of these passages uses present progressive and present perfect progressive verb tenses; the other "characters," viewed as ordinary human creatures, think they are seeing the actual old woman. They provide evidence of the old lady's continued existence and activity, irresistibly and compulsively seen in the world by her survivors, even though the carcass of the old woman lies on the boards above James and Greta's kitchen. Seeing is stopped in time by a grammar that makes the old lady's fishing an eternal act: "Ara saw . . . fishing." Her figure becomes an icon of fishing. The old lady is fishing, has been fishing, and she continues to fish as she has always fished.

Ara saw her fishing along the creek. Fishing shamelessly with bait. Fishing without a glance towards her daughter-in-law, who was hanging washing on the bushes near the rail fence (p. 20).

Felix saw the old lady. She was fishing in his pool where the water lay brown on the black rocks, where the fish lay still under the fallen log. Fishing far from her own place. Throwing her line into his best pool.

He thought: I'll chase her out (P. 23).

The Widow's boy saw the old lady.

The old lady from above is fishing down in our pool, he said, coming into the widow's kitchen. I'm going down to scare her out (p. 25).

(All emphases mine)

The matter of fact tone that opens these passages does little to soothe our unsettled thinking; in fact it reinforces our uncertainty about the nature of the old woman's existence, especially since the verb tenses here and elsewhere in these passages do not discriminate between the quick and the dead, the animate and the inanimate. Domestic sanity, lunatic

compulsion, hallucination and vision are knotted together in language that overlays them all, folding against itself and over its reader: the old lady "was fishing"; "was rounding the bend of the creek"; "was throwing her line" (p. 20); "water was running low in the creek"; the old lady "was fishing up-stream to the source" (p. 21); Felix "fished himself, letting his line fall"; "[He] fished and came from the creek. Pulled the fish out of his pocket. Slit them from tail to chin . . . Cooked them in peace alone with his dogs" (p. 23). "The hounds came back, yellow forms in the yellow sunlight. Creeping round the barn. Flattening themselves to rest" (p. 25). The dead old lady fishes on "with a concentrated ferocity as if she were fishing for something she'd never found," while Ara thinks, "It's not for fish she fishes," and says, oblivious to the irony of her own words, "I might as well be dead for all of her" (p. 21). The irony is not superficial.

An eerie stillness pervades the whole scene which retains the silence of the word that began the previous passage: "Still the old lady fished." It is so quiet that "Ara could hear the cow mumbling dry grass by the bushes. There was no other sound" (p. 21). As the old lady fishes "up-stream to the source," Ara, watching her back in the midst of a silence and solitude made more profound by the cow's mumbling in the dry grass, imagines her coming to "the bones of the hills" and the flats where the herd cows range: "They'd turn their living flesh from her as she'd turned hers from others . . . ." "As she watched . . . , Ara felt death leaking through from the centre of the earth. Death rising to the knee. Death rising to the loin (p. 21).

"Ara isn't sure where water comes from. In a drought-ridden wasteland where Coyote's spittle eyes the earth with prickly pear, what should be a life-giving substance only runs and divides and spins when Ara empties her basin of water onto the dust; or it rises from the underworld as the

old lady has risen from death. She is, as James will later feel, "there in every fold of the country. Seen by Kip. Seen by Ara" (p. 43). Seen by Felix and the Widow's boy as well, who think to "catch her for once and all" (p. 23), or to put a fence right across the creek . . . so James Potter's mother can't go up and down . . . anymore." She who would survive the wrath of God's righteousness (p. 26) will not so easily die or be turned into a cow or deer or fish to be caught or fenced out, or in either. However, Ara feels caught, and thinks that the handful of people who inhabit these hills are a lost tribe: "There [are] not enough people here to attract his attention"; God's eye could not spy out the men lost here already . . . "who lie " . . . like sift in the cracks of the earth" (pp. 22-23). Neither will following the creek help a man find his way, "for the creek flowed this way and that at the land's whim. The earth fell away in hills and clefts as if it had been dropped carelessly wrinkled on the bare floor of the world," like the apron with which Ara has wiped the table and thrown into a corner (p. 22).

Everywhere in the double vision of this book, the earth is a folded figured surface of conflicts that are not centred, but nevertheless seem to gather themselves in a search for seeing, to become that seeing. In the fixed and uncertain transitions of this language, something is occulted, "hid from every living thing" (p. 31). Space itself turns inward and outward. Like the "whole round world" it is moving and unmoving at the same time. Its flat surface folds and slips perilously from our grasp as we seem to see two ways at once--far outward to the peripheries and edges of things where "the hill [leads] up to the pines and onto the rock rise which flatten[s] out and [falls] off to nowhere on the other side" (p. 33), out to the ridges and wrinkles of the rim, and inward to the "hollows" of the earth that are "waiting to catch you in the pits and snares of

silence" (p. 42). The clutch of figures that fall into its folds, whose houses, connected by the rutted road, cling to the ragged and crevassed declines, expands and contracts. These figures are simultaneously and alternately dwarfed and magnified in the language which inscribes their relationship to the earth which is repeatedly presented to the characters' eyes and to the reader's eye for decipherment. They are presented as Coyote's "omniscient eye" would view them from the cleft rock, but the rock too exists "in the folds of the hills"; it is a formal replication of those folds. Like the author of this text who is wearing Coyote's mask, Coyote is both vulnerable to, and manipulator of, the tricky doubleness of things--along with the rest of us. An omniscient "I" sees as if from outside, but it speaks with a double tongue--oracularly, and as one voice among others.<sup>11</sup>

Seeing and knowing are both indeterminate; connexions are made, but they are "fixed and uncertain," like the figures themselves, like the figure of Coyote, like "the source," the spring which Greta prefers to the fixed and uncertain pump that brings water to the surface of the earth. Greta, like her mother, prefers to go "upstream to the source," believing it is a single point, as if vision were fixed or fixated. That it is not is made clear by the way the writing cross-hatches the lines of vision of the various figures who look for direction up and down the slopes of the hills, along the furrowed roads and in the turns and twists of the creek bed. Some of them try to puzzle out how they could have seen the old lady multiplied several times over in different places at the same time. When the Widow's boy tells the group at James's house that the old lady is fishing their pool, Greta denies that she has gone out at all. Ara cannot believe her ears:

How could we both have seen her? Ara asked. How would we have seen her at both our places? She wasn't fishing downstream. She was fishing up, and I saw her ahead of me and moving on. Greta just doesn't know,

she said. Go back down to your own creek, James.  
I saw her there too. There by the cottonwoods (p. 46).

A few minutes later, Kip, standing on the doorstep, peers into the darkness of the room and announces

If you want to go down to Wagner's now . . . I  
saw your old lady climb down through the split rock  
with Coyote, her fishes stiff in her hand (p. 47).

Whereupon Greta denies the possibility of all seeing: "You didn't see her. . . . You couldn't"; "Ma's lying dead in her bed," she says, freezing James into immobility (p. 47).

The earth extends itself as a backdrop and garment for the creatures that fear its crevices, lie in its creases, disappear into the fissures, get lost in the ground of their being. If God's eye cannot spy them out as Ara fears, Coyote's shifting and shifty eye does. His spittle eyes the earth whose creatures are all eyes looking out of its shadows at each other. Kip, Coyote's servant, sees too much for James's liking. He seems to be everywhere "looking wise. Knowing too much. Like the old lady. Like Greta. Like Angel sitting now in the kitchen. Waiting to catch you in the pits and snares of silence" (p. 42). For James, as for Ara, death rises from the ground as moisture: "mist rising from the land and pressing in. Twigs cracking like bone. The loose boulder and the downdrop. The fear of dying somewhere alone, caught against a tree or knocked over in an inch of water." James's fear of what might emerge as the earth's revenge takes form as crucifixion and death by drowning in the primal slime. He is afraid of seeing and knowing. When words cease, what lies "waiting to catch [one] in the pits and snares of silence" is seeing, and seeing that doesn't speak itself outward is what paralyzes James, transfixes him before a primal scene.

Our "Brother Oedipus"<sup>12</sup> is not freed by matricide because his sister knows and sees. She who has "waited to be mistress in [her] own house," is the duplication of the mother. When James kills the old woman he throws fear as a horse balks and then freezes on the trail; he is unable to act for fear of "what Greta might do." Greta says nothing, does not even look when James slams the door on the death of the mother. What she does is set his breakfast in front of him. Greta takes her mother's place and the two, in silence, partake of the same unholy meal, "while however his mother lay, he knew, her eyes were looking down where the floorboards had been laid apart" (p. 43). Syntactical disorder here marks psychic, social and sacramental disorder, a gap between things done and the things being done. What was done in the Upper Room is represented in the lower room as predatory symbiosis: anamnesis reenacted as a caricature, unholy irony. Where does the mother lie? Upstairs, downstairs, or in my lady's chamber? Or under the floorboards laid apart upon which or through which she has fallen--onto the table or into the earth, under the threshold where dead kin were anciently buried, where her shadow leaves its stain on the ground like blood, while Greta sits in "her mother's doom as she [sits] in her chair" (p. 113).

The language of the text here weaves itself, ply against ply, to evoke a subtext that manages to call up remnants of prehistoric, tribal, pagan and Christian ritual which resonate in the backward and abysm of consciousness; time is abolished: everything happens at once. Greta is body and blood of her mother; she is her mother's resurrection. James's crime against mother-blood is instantly avenged even while he and his sister sit grinding their penitential pancakes between their teeth. Greta incorporates her mother's corruption and James knows it. Mute with fear, he



wants to shout "the whole world's got distemper, . . . You and me and the old lady. The ground's rotten with it." In the absence of a language that will permit speaking about anything more than "hammers and buckles," "water for washing," "rotted posts," "ringbone and distemper," there is only the silence of death and waiting for death. James and Greta have

. . . lived waiting. Waiting to come together at the same lake as dogs creep out of the night to the same fire. Moving their lips when they moved them at all as hunters talk smelling the deer. Edged close wiping plates and forks while the old lady sat in her corner. Moved their lips saying: She'll live forever. And when they'd raised their eyes their mother was watching as a deer watches.

Now Greta'd sat in the old lady's chair. Eyes everywhere. In the cottonwoods the eyes of foolhens. Rats' eyes on the barn rafters. Steers herded together. Eyes multiplied. Eyes. Eyes and padded feet. Coyote moving in rank-smelling (p. 43).

Greta and James, like Orestes and Electra, are both victims of their mother's repressiveness and co-conspirators in her death; like dogs, they huddle together, creep at night from outside to the same fire. Like hunters, waiting for the moment of death, they track their deer-mother with their eyes, edge close wiping the implements of an anticipated cannibalism. But when Greta replaces her mother, James, the hunter-predator becomes, in a sudden reversal, the pursued prey of the multiplied eyes of the whole creaturely world. It is not sufficient to describe James's state of mind as paranoia. He might say with Orestes

These are no fancies of affliction. They are clear  
and real, and here; the bloodhounds of my mother's hate.

and

. . . how they grow and multiply  
repulsive for the blood drops of their dripping eyes. <sup>13</sup>

He will shortly respond, as Orestes does, by bolting, even though he knows it is his own fear from which he flees.

You cannot see them, but I see them. I am driven from this place. I can stay here no longer.<sup>14</sup>

The split between the "subjective" state of mind and the "objective" world simply is not relevant here. It does not exist. James, like Orestes, has become by his act, outsider, outlaw. In his recognition of his solitariness, the multiplied eyes of foolhens and rats, literally there, become for him, precisely, the form of his mother's unrelenting watchfulness. "Since the fury of the morning he'd not been able to act." Within and without, the furies are real. The culpable state of his being is continuous with its manifestation. He is quite right when he says "Nothing had changed. The old lady was there in every fold of the country" (p. 43). Greta too, taking on her mother's watchfulness with her mother's totemic connexion with Coyote, becomes the manifestation of his culpability as well as his repressor and collaborator. Hearing Greta scrape his mother's chair across the floorboards, hearing "her voice dry in his ear: I've been waiting to be mistress in my own house," imagining her listening at doors, and counting the extra wash, refusing to eat at table, James knows Greta will hound him as his mother does, will drag him under the earth, as fury does. He feels "on his shoulder a weight of clay sheets. He [smells] the stench of Coyote's bedhole" (p. 44). Greta knows this too. She says, later, to Lenchen, "He'll kill me too. He'll shove me down for standing in his way" (p. 67).

Greta's venom, like that of the Erinyes, is the fury of a woman scorned, pitied, disregarded and denied a place in the world. Her vengefulness is inflamed and fed by the repression of the incestuous nature of her relationship with her brother which the imagery and intensity of her own language reveal as she attempts to isolate herself and James from all the other figures in the novel; trying to claim her own place, she hurls her vitriolic words at Ara and later at Lenchen, the girl pregnant with

James's unacknowledged child.

I don't want anyone coming here disturbing James and me. There's been more than I could stand. More than anyone could be held responsible for standing. I've been waiting all my life. A person waits and waits. You've got your own house, Ara. You don't have to see lamps in the night and hear feet walking on the stairs and have people coming in on you when they should be in their beds. I want this house to myself. Every living thing has a right to something (pp. 41-42).

The darkened house, the bedroom that Greta doesn't want her mother's lamp and prying eye trained on, is the objective correlative of, is symbolically consubstantial with her own unconscious incestuous desire to take the place of their mother in James's life--to hold the same kind of power over him her mother holds: the power of the woman denied becomes the power of the phallic mother that would devour and paralyze the son-brother's sexuality. Greta clearly does know the effect she has on James, but she cannot release him from her desire. Her words to Lenchen simultaneously assert her domination of him, her fear of losing it, and her dependence on him, while they expose the necessity of all these things, as well as her incestuous hope.

Keep on looking, she said. And think what you want. I don't care. It's what I am, she said. It's what's driven him out into the creek bottom. Into the brush. Into the hogpen. A woman can stand so much, she said. A man can stand so much. A woman can stand what a man can't stand. To be scorned by others. Pitied. Scrimped. Put upon. Laughed at when no one comes for her, when there's no one to come. She can stand it when she knows she still has the power. When the air's stretched like a rope between her and someone else. It's emptiness that can't be borne. The potholes are filled with rain from time to time. I've seen them stiff with thirst. Ashed white and bitter at the edge. But the rain or the runoff fills them at last. The bitterness licked up. I tell you there was only James. I was never let run loose. I never had two to waste and spill like Angel Prosper.

She pulled the girl over to the foot of the stairs.

I heard her breath stop, she said. And the cold setting her flesh. Don't believe what James might say. She's not looking still. I heard what we'd been waiting to hear. What James and me had been waiting to hear all these years. There was only James and me, she said. Only James and me waiting (p. 66).

The language here utterly confounds blood relationship. Greta's words suggest kinship and collaboration in the blood murder, conspiracy in the matricide committed because both she and her brother-husband desire to escape the condemning eye of their mother that would usurp Greta's "rightful" place in the household as her brother's wife. Her own intense desire, she imagines, is what James must escape because there is a correspondent desire in him. Her sexual thirst metamorphosizes her own and her brother's desire to escape their mother's domination of their sexuality into a strange, even grotesque symbolic coupling and imprisonment. The prolonged and constrained tension of the rope is stretched tight between them until the emptiness of potholes stiff with thirst, ashed white and bitter at the edge will be filled at last with rain or runoff, and all the bitterness will be licked up. James will heal her sexual and psychic wound at last. Her language is oblique because she is protecting James from the others' knowledge of the mother-murder which she herself has desired. Her protection is also fidelity to James because James is all she's ever had; she's never had two husbands to waste and spill. Imagery of holes in the earth and rope figure both death and sexuality, speaking the fearful possibilities of noose and grave if the two are discovered, and the possibility of sexual release (now that the mother is no longer looking). Threatening Lenchen, Greta's language negotiates and combines the terms of how the protective, desirous, victimized (and doomed) mother-brother-sister-son conjunction will take place, and how it will be fulfilled. Even though

Greta, a few moments later, has a premonition that James will strike her down as he'd struck his mother down for standing in his way, she only half-sees, and does not really see what lies before her because she is helpless to control others or to control what possesses her.

As if in response to her seeing what she will not fully see, and in confirmation of what she has said, Greta, with Lenchen, hears James's words as he lashes out with the bullwhip at Kip's eyes that have spied on his love-making with Lenchen, blinding him: "If you had as many eyes as a spider I'd get them all" (p. 67). James, caught in a net of circumstance and in a network of eyes is a trapped creature, and when he reaches the two women, his bullwhip lashes them, "tearing through the flowers of [Greta's] housecoat," coiling "with a jerk about Lenchen's knees." And then James bolts, thinking to escape the trap in which Greta has become the doubled over form, the duplication of his mother's control.

The intersection of the sacred and the profane, the familiar and the awesome criss-cross in the vision and voices that play across the ground to form another network which reveals that, despite their different attitudes, the voices and inclinations of all these figures are the modulations of one voice, the voice of the earth that speaks from beneath the text to tell us of the old lady's persistent presence. The reader is made to participate in the questing and questioning activity that outlasts death. Syntactical disjuncture and continuous conditional tenses only bait the hook and spread toils that further our interrogation of the text. Ara, Felix, the Widow's boy and Kip, seeing what cannot, in fact, be there, make us know that the facts of the matter are not the end of the matter. More lies behind Greta's psychological and iconographic duplication of her mother

than meets the corporeal eye. Just as the figures of the text reconstitute her, so must we, if we are not to "let fur grow over [our] eyes" as Theophil does (p. 58). The old lady is an emblem of seeing, of fishing, even to those most hostile to her. Ara tells William

You're seeing things all the time, but you never look at anything here. Sometimes when your mother was going up and down the creek I wanted to call out: What are you looking at? She was the one who noticed.

Greta, polishing the lamp globe, says to Angel,

I've seen Ma standing with the lamp by the fence . . . . Holding it up in broad daylight. I've seen her standing looking for something even the birds couldn't see. Something hid from every living thing . . . . Holding the lamp and looking where there's nothing to be found. Nothing but dust (p. 31).

Ara has already told us that something which lies lost like sift in the cracks of the earth is men. Greta seems unconcerned to look into such matters. Angel's response to this bitter negation of the value of "looking where there's nothing to be found" makes it clear that looking into empty spaces is precisely how one might find things that have been lost, things the ordinary reality of broad daylight have obscured:

There's things people want to see. There's things too, she said as she leant on the brush in the wall shadow below the window light, there's things get lost (p. 31).

Greta seems neither to see Angel leaning in the wall shadow nor to hear what she's saying: "For nothing I'd smash it" she says irrelevantly, but in the language that follows her non sequitur, which combines seeing and fishing and knowing, it becomes evident that it is not only her mother's lamp that Greta would smash, but knowing and seeing, altogether.

A person could stand to see her fish if they had to depend on her doing it to eat. But I can tell you we've not eaten fish of hers in this house . . . . Ask anybody what she did with her fish . . . I don't know anything (p. 31).

Angel responds :

Why didn't you take your own lamp and go looking for something? . . . . You've never all your life burned anything but a little oil to finish doing in the house (pp. 31-32).

To which Greta's sexually vindictive reply is

You don't know a thing. You don't know what a person knows. You don't feel what a person feels. You've burned and spilled enough oil to light up the whole country . . . . It's easy enough to see if you make a bonfire and walk around in the light of it (p. 32).

We are, in this antiphony of voices hearing a stingy virgin chastising a practical Angel for lighting up the countryside. Greta, entirely turned inward, absorbed by her own unjust treatment, cannot see anyone or anything else. Oil, of course, is the Biblical figure for the light of the spirit, and here, an odd twist of the parable of the foolish virgins who have not had foresight enough to buy oil for their lamps and thus knock at the door of the bridegroom in vain, shows us that Angel's generous spilling of her oil has born fruit of her womb. Angel looks toward the light while Greta huddles in the darkness of the house, refusing to allow anyone to light a lamp, refusing to see or hear, closing her eyes against seeing or being seen. A little later, when Ara comes into the storm-darkened room and says "You almost need a lamp," Greta says "Leave it down . . . . I light the lamps in this house now," and tells Ara she's "been seeing things" when she worries that the old lady is still out in the storm:

Like everyone else round here. You've been looking into other people's affairs. Noticing this. Remark- ing that. Seeing too much. Hearing too much (p. 37).

Greta's fear of being seen is, in part, a sexual fear as well as a fear of seeing her own incestuous desire, caught in it as she is; but seeing is a much larger concern that informs the whole book.

Repeatedly, the figures of this narrative close their eyes, like Greta, like Theophil, like the Widow Wagner, not only in holy dread, but also to avoid seeing, or in despair at ever being able to see, or in their attempts to see better, as Ara does, pressing her hands against her eyes. When William cautions her, saying, "I've known men blinded by less. Over a period of time," she retorts, "Could I be blinder than I am? . . . Seeing things only in flashes" (p. 75). Trying so hard to see that she can't hear what she's saying in response to William's remorseful defence of his having left his brother's house in disorder, Ara sits at the kitchen table fraying threads from the edges of the oilcloth.

There are things, she said, that can't be straight- ened out. They have to be pulled and wrenched and torn. And maybe just stay muddled up. Or pushed out of sight and left where they are. You can't tidy up people the way you can tidy up a room, she said. They're too narrow or too big. And even rooms, she said, don't take long to get untidy again.

I don't complain [says William, mistaking her meta- phor for an apology]. Though for myself I like to keep my gear in order (pp. 74-75).

The conversation that follows is the most tender and genuine exchange that takes place between a man and a woman throughout the course of the whole work. It also stands in direct contrapuntal relationship to James's interior monologue about the talk of rotted posts and ringbone, buckles and hammers, distemper and eyes multiplied at the old lady's house, as well as to the diatribe Greta delivers to Lenchen which describes the



stretched rope, empty potholes nature of her constrained connexion with James. William, an innocent, protective rationalist is too uncomplaining, Ara complains, and thinks it means he doesn't care. "You'd care enough to complain if we had a child," says William's barren wife (p. 75). Greta's bitter and indiscriminate retaliation against Ara's report of her sightings of the old woman, psychic source of Greta's own barren desire, has spread its corruption here. Her lashing tongue, telling of men leaning across counters to buy thread, talking to women, laying the Widow's girl down in the leaves has left its mark on Ara. "Who is the father of the Wagner girl's child?" she asks William (p. 76). His mother hated her and he pities her, she says, and asks where a woman can lift herself on the two ropes of hatred and pity, "one pulling her down, the other . . . holding her suspended" (p. 75). William tells the simple truth: "I don't know." The admission frees him to wonder at Ara's uncharacteristic jealousy and to see her anxiety and need. "You're seeing things all the time, but you never look at anything here," Ara says. And William responds to Ara's need to be seen:

Do you know, Ara, he said, for a man who sees so much I've not seen what was growing in my own yard. It's like a man who stands on a rock looking over a valley. He doesn't notice the rock, he said. He just stands on it.

He got up, but he did not move away.

Suppose the rock should begin to move, he said. Or started clutching at you like gumbo.

There's too much supposing, Ara said. Yet how can a man help it since he can't hold and shape the world (p. 76).

Language and seeing do hold and shape the world, though; they compose it, and William and Ara's language composes it differently than does the language James and Greta use. The same kinds of homely metaphors

are used by all four of these figures, but opposed to metaphor that masks and speaks and sees corruption and deformity of spirit and body (rotted posts and ringbone, ropes and barren potholes) are metaphors that mask and reveal recognition of danger, relationship, comfort and support.

The ropes of hatred and pity tear Ara between William and his mother, but Ara's language knows she is connected to William (most obviously by her search for seeing), through his mother who, as Ara recognizes, is "the one who noticed" things. Opposed to the sterile and empty potholes of Greta's language is William's metaphorical description of Ara as rock; his awareness of the danger to their relationship is expressed in the possibility of the rock's movement, or of its becoming gumbo, quicksand that could suck a man under. His acknowledgement that he has not, until now, noticed the ground and support on which he stands appeases Ara and allows her to speak her secret desires and her anxiety, her need for protection and adventure. William's propitiatory gesture generates a true dialogue in the course of which he comforts her with words and coaxes her back to the safety of the familiar (which is what she tells him she wants) without invalidating or denying Ara's double desire.

I often envy the horses, [Ara] said, standing tail to head and head to rump flicking off each other's flies.

And biting one another from time to time, William said. And letting go with their heels. Beasts aren't much different from men . . . though they've often less freedom. Take my horse, he said.

He could break out, Ara said. He's the strength to defy you. Your or any man at all.

He could, William said, but what would he gain . . . . He wouldn't know where to go or what to do after the break. I've seen horses . . . untie themselves and go walking out of barns. I've seen them knock down fences and kick themselves out of corrals. But I've seen them come wandering back to the barn and the hay. Some, he said, are pure

outlaw. But there's the torment of loneliness and the will of snow and heat they can't escape, and the likelihood that some stranger will put a rope on them at last.

Or perhaps even the man that branded them, Ara said. The glory of his face shaded by his hat. Not coaxing with pans of oats, but coming after you with a whip until you stand and face him in the end.

. . . Your god sounds only a step from the Indian's Coyote. Though that one would jump on a man when his back was turned. I've never seen God, he said, but if I did I don't think I'd be very much surprised.

I don't suppose you would, Ara said (pp. 76-77).

The conversation ends with Ara picking up the dishes, putting them in the pan, saying, "You're right . . . . Let's get ready to go. I've a feeling . . . we're wanted," with William half-complaining, "You might have baked something . . . . But it's too late to be thinking of that now." It certainly is. By the time William and Ara get to James's house, Greta will be intent on doing some baking of her own. Greta will solve the difficulties of her sexual, psychic, social and spiritual existence by ending it in the conflagration of flames that consume her body and the house; the kitchen stove is the altar of her sacrifice. The turns and reversals of the raw and the cooked that Sheila Watson/Coyote/Lachesis twist into the broken narrative pattern are astonishing to the reader who pulls its threads together or unravels them to restore time's usual sequential line. The laughter that lies deep in the chasm of the text is almost too dark for words; all the same, it glitters behind them.

The dialogue between William and Ara becomes, through its homely metaphors, a dialectic that resolves and dissolves the destructive tension between them by permitting speech that allows them to present their different ways of seeing the world without destroying the integrity of either view and without dissolving the relationship that is necessary to them

both. Ara has told William she wants the hound of heaven, not the "dryness that has settled on [them] like dust" (p. 75). She wants a god, the glory of whose face is shaded by his hat, a half-hidden stranger who comes after you with a whip until you stand and face him, not a god who coaxes with pans of oats. William has acknowledged he's stood on the rock of what Ara is (her name suggests arid and means altar) looking over the valley where the grass may seem greener. Ara has threatened to break out, defying the coaxing. William counters by telling her about "the torment of loneliness," the "will of snow and heat," the threat of hunger, exposure and a stranger's brand. He gentles her exactly as he'd gentle a high spirited and agitated mare. He talks to her. He coaxes her with oats, with words.

The metalanguage that William and Ara here use to speak their desire and fear allows an exchange of love and trust. It domesticates without destroying the terms and ways of seeing that are its ground. Ara's nervous and sensitive hunger for vision and the placating, sensible, practical man who likes to keep his gear in order are able to meet on the ground and in the language that extends itself to embrace the whole creaturely world in the need of "horses standing tail to head and head to rump flicking off each other's flies." The cipher is a doubled and reversed visual and linguistic rebus. It holds heart and mind and body in language which grounds and images human need in a simple shining figura.

This figure emerges from and lends credence to William's response to Ara when she says

Ever since I was in Greta's kitchen during the storm . . . I've been trying to fit the pieces into a pattern.

Some of the pieces aren't so far to look as you think, he said (p. 76).

Ara here states the dilemma involved with seeing that appears everywhere in this book. Her concern to puzzle out the pattern, to fit the pieces of "seeing only in flashes," which lie scattered all about, into the design that informs the larger vision of a work is the artist's concern. It is also the concern of the artist's audience which reaches for "the shadow of a magnitude," the invisible shaping of mind and being, world and meaning that holds the suspended and luminous figurae of any artistic work, any real seeing. Keats caught it beautifully in his vision of the pitted, broken, eroded figures of the Elgin Marbles: Poseidon, Apollo and Artemis keep

Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye  
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain  
[as]     Bring round the heart an indescribable feud;  
                  . . . a most dizzy pain  
           That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude  
Wasting of old Time--with a billowy main--  
           A sun--a shadow of a magnitude.<sup>15</sup>

Keats, both audience and aspiring artist, catches in his word-net not only the figures, but the artist's shaping process which informs them, and also what lies back of them: the processes that shape the natural world. The archaic images of the gods are thus, paradoxically, all the more able, for the rude shaping of time, to render the eternality of the divine and invisible praxis in which artists, men and gods participate.

It is with a renewed sense of Aristotle's noting of the dramatist's work being a mimesis of a praxis that we must look at the narrative of The Double Hook and the figures that exist for the shape of the action. The reader, like Ara, aspires to see the whole pattern in a single illuminated moment, such as Keats's poem yields. What I have called the illuminati are both the substantiality and darkness of the praxis and its luminous performance. They are masked stage-figures, prattontes or drontes, the doers of what is done, the props on which the action is

hung.<sup>16</sup> They are "characters"; not representations, but presentations. What they present is the illumination figured by the whole narrative as it opens our eyes to the spectacle that mingles what the text calls "glory" and "fear" (p. 61). Kip is the descendent of Oedipus and Teiresias; a self-blinded Theban king and a blind Theban seer are figured in the anti-mask called Kip. And so is a sacrificial animal; his name means the untanned hide of a small or young animal, and it takes us back to the origin of drama in sacrificial rite. I wish here to restore the word "characters" by reinforming it with its origins in scraping, scratching with a pointed stick, cutting or carving, branding or engraving with an instrument the ciphers of a secret writing, alphabet, code or meaning. These figures are not meant to resemble real people, rather, they are false imitations of human beings who perform a true imitation of a secret action which is also, because invisible, secret writing. It writes itself in the blood along the pulses, between heartbeats and in the mind. One feels, in this novel, the effort of the sinewy hand tracing the figures as it confronts life in an effort of interpretation and a presentation of a pattern whose schema is a series of executed figures as in the configurations of the dance. These figures leap backward and forward in the narrative, and sometimes the dance is antic as well as Attic. The mimic gestures of the characters which rhyme with, and transcribe the turns and reversals of their own fortunes, form schemata.

The figures of speech which shape our perceptions of the people named in the beginning of the novel do not define them in particularized ways. We know that Ara looks out from under her bangs like an animal in a herd. We know that Lenchen wears jeans and boots on which she rocks backward on her heels, that she pulls, nervous about her pregnancy,

at her belt and is part of any animal she rides, while Ara rides "clamped stiff as a clothes-peg on the back of William's bald-faced mare" because she's "made to walk on roads and to climb cliffs. Made to beat her hands against rock faces and to set her foot on sliding shale" (p. 81). We know too that Lenchen's yellow hair is pulled back on her head like a helmet; the same yellow hair attracts James to Traff, the man in Book Four who takes him in. We see these figures often in brief but uncharacteristic gestures or as the other figures see and characterize them. There is none of the lengthy conventional literary description of realistic novels. A light, deft hand sketches in a few sharp lines; rarely, it strokes a sudden bright blotch of colour on a canvas-like ground that is, for the most part, a flatly lit wrinkled and folded earth-coloured surface across which light and shadow play from time to time.

The language of the text, the colours of its textured surface, the gestures of its figures are so intrinsicated that we often have little more sense of their physical appearance other than outline. The Widow Wagner waits perennially, shakes a pot of potatoes and looks under the cloth that covers them, stoops over milking pails, puts a stick on the fire while the pot lids rise and fall, throws on a black sweater, takes a cloth off a milking pail, pulls her lambswool bedcover over her eyes. James raises his hand under the rafters, bends over his horse in the darkness. The "figures of William and [Heinrich] beckoning in" "blank smouldering space" are "lank" and "thin" and seem "to occupy space which, too, should have been empty" (p. 131). Angel is "dark and sinewed as bark. Tough and rooted as a thistle" (p. 125). Felix sits "tipped back in his rocking chair, his belly bulging his bibbed overalls," stands "with a fish spine in his hand. Flesh mountainous

contemplating. Saint Felix with a death's head meditating" (pp. 23-24). He is seen by Heinrich as a man who "sits there like the round world all centred in on himself" (p. 129). Or else he stands remembering Angel's comic attempt to frighten a mowing, scraping, genuflecting bear at the fish camp until "remembrance of event and the slash of rain merged. Time annihilated in the concurrence. The present contracted into the sweet hot cup he fondled. Vast fingers circling it" (p. 39). Greta, on the other hand, stands "almost full in the doorway like a tangle of wild flowers grown up between" Lenchen and herself. "Her face above. Fierce. Sharp. Sudden as a bird's swinging out on the topmost surge"--a vulture, an eagle, hawk or shrike? Lenchen shrinks "away from the riot of the falling skirt. Shut[s] her eyes against the tumult of branch and leaf" (p. 63). Earlier, Lenchen had come out of the storm into Felix's cabin, "water . . . dripping from her hair. Her shirt . . . rumpled and caught to her skin" (p. 41).

Walking in her heeled boots as a man might walk.  
Rolling. Lurching. As if legs had taken shape  
from the beast clamped between them. Beast turned  
to muscle and twist. Beast answering movement of  
shank and thigh.

Walked in jerky defiance, Felix thought. Like a  
colt too quickly broken.

She's been rid on the curb, Felix thought. And  
felt the prick of steel (p. 40).

The dead old lady, like all of these figures, is described in her relationship to the creaturely. Her body even in death, seems taboo to William, though he has "handled lots of dead things . . . it didn't seem right to lay a finger on her. She was dry and brittle as a grasshopper . . ." (p. 53). Yet she appears repeatedly, continuously entangled in the narrative of the text, playing her line in the stream in her concentrated, still ferocity, fishing.

A few swiftly incised lines sketch strong presences whose intensity is a function of their "fixed and uncertain" delineation, as with Wyndham



Lewis's almost featureless figures and definite lines and spirals that charge the vortex with energy, as with the figures in the paintings and the drawings of Matisse. Giotto's beautiful figures which seem to exist out of time in the narrative of the Arena Chapel at Padua stand against ground whose pale colours and slanting inclinations are like the ones we encounter here. A sure hand and eye make rags and bones and hanks of hair live with the energy of Lucretius's vital atoms. The incompleteness of outline forces us to close the Gestalt by participating in the making of these figurae, and we must do it on the very ground from which they rise, in the space into which they spring.

The shapeliness of these figures that are pieces of the pattern we must put together begins, as the book does, in the ground: literal dirt. The word figura means "form" or "shape"--of an animal, person, or symbolic object, but its Indo-European root is the verb deigh: to knead clay. From its extended form, dhoigho, we derive our word paradise: pairi (around) + dāēza (walls made of mud or clay). The surname of the old lady, James, William and Ara, and Greta is Potter, and pots are earthenware, clay vessels. Such vessels were incised, marked, imprinted, painted ceremonial objects used in rituals that filled them and poured libations into the earth to appease the Erinyes, to propitiate and make offerings to fertility gods that would return what they embody to the earth. Felix and Angel Prosper's names are figures of what these libation rituals were intended to enact. Vessels and rituals imply artists and priests, the shaping of materia, things, and of the things done; they also imply cooking and culture.

For Lucretius, animals, organs, utensils, stars, constellations, all perceptible things as well as gods and the universe as a whole are figurae: the silent figura of the body, also, is an appearance that betrays what its

owner attempts to conceal, and betrays concealment as well. So figura can be a mask that reveals something. Man is essentially, not accidentally, an image-maker, artist. "Fictor cum dicit fingo figuram: (The image-maker, when he says 'I shape,' puts a figura on the thing.)"<sup>17</sup> Speaking is figura; figura includes all the tropes in rhetoric, the "figures of speech."<sup>18</sup> The term also includes custom, method, the teaching of the right way of doing things: the cloth put over the Widow Wagner's pot of potatoes to absorb the extra moisture, the tumbler filled with fork and knife Ara sets on the table for William, the way a man's gates are hung. (Heinrich takes pride in the fact that "every one of his gates hung well on the hinge") (p. 55); all of these matters are country customs that have to be taught, methods transmitted from one generation to the next; they are cultural rites, cultural transmissions.

Figura means blueprint, diagramme, design, impression and pattern-- in dance, in music, in the praxis of that combination of poesis, lyric ode and choric dance which is the tragoidia or "goat song," the agon performed originally in the agora before the figura (the statue) of Dionysus. There is a pattern in Felix's fiddle-playing, in the soft pad of his paw-foot beating out a rhythm to accompany the rhythm of Lenchen's labour that recalls such things. In music, "figured brass" is conventional notation that indicates chordal structure, the actual method of performance is left up to the performer; ground or ground bass is the continuous undersong upon which harmonic and melodic structures form themselves; in just this way a very few old and well-known sacred stories are performed in early drama, the variations on the pattern of their presentation being left up to the dramatists who present the rite-stories in the competition of the Dionysia.

Everything chimes together, in ritual, in art, in custom, in memory, in the ground pattern of the world's origins which are always taking place now.<sup>19</sup>

Ever since I was in Greta's kitchen during the storm, [Ara] said, I've been trying to fit the pieces into a pattern.

Some of the pieces aren't so far to look for as you think [William] said (p. 76).

This dialogue defines the experience of reading The Double Hook. Throughout, the figures are shown or overheard as they struggle toward an intuition of the meaning that is implied by the fragments of their seeing, hearing and remembering. Ara's concern to puzzle out the pattern, to fit the pieces together, is the artist's concern. William's concern to keep his gear in order is the craftsman's concern. These two concerns balance and complement each other, but despite what Sheila Watson's professor said about "the way you write a novel . . . [being] the way you put together a pig-pen--you do it with craft and skill and in an orderly fashion,"<sup>20</sup> Angel is right about communitas; what she says is also right about art, about claritas and caritas:

. . . One man is one man and two men or ten men aren't something else. One board is one board. Nailed together they might be a pig-pen or a hen-house. But I never knew men you could nail together like boards (p. 86).

Craft and skill and orderliness are important in the making of a work of art, just as manners, custom, decorum and ritual are important in the regulation and government of a community or commonwealth. Finally, however, communitas uninformed by caritas or "sympathy," as Ara calls it (p. 54), and art uninformed by claritas, by genuine illumination, are inadequate "to meet the terrible needs of life."<sup>21</sup> It is out of deepest need that art is born: "a terrible beauty," Yeats called it.<sup>22</sup> In poetry, "the word dances [too], in the literal garden of desire"; it is drawn "out of deep need . . . ," Louis Zukofsky wrote, speaking of these

things made, these poems, as being the source of profound solace--where the heart finds rest. It is the

need to enter what we loosely call the vision, to be one with the Imago Mundi, that image of the world we each of us carry within us as possibility itself.<sup>23</sup>

Art is made of human desire and human craftsmanship. Beauty, according to a slightly pompous Stephen Dedalus, is the issue when the artist combines "the most satisfying relations of the sensible" in such a manner as to make them correspondent with "the necessary phases of artistic apprehension."

Aquinas says: Ad pulcritudinum tria requiruntur integritas, consonantia, claritas. I translate it so: Three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony, and radiance.<sup>24</sup>

Joyce's term for what occurs as the moment of illumination in the act of writing and in the apprehension of that moment is epiphany. The word is made flesh, made real in its quiddity, its "whatness," which cannot be separated from the forging activity of Stephen Dedalus's namesake father, the smithy addressed in his final promise and prayer "as old father, old artificer."<sup>25</sup> Stephen makes himself over to the making of art.

The etymology of this word has "many curious flowers locked in [its] roots";<sup>26</sup> ar, its Indo-European base means "to fit together." Related to, and developing from this root are the Latin ars (art, skill, craft), and artus (joint), from which we get our word articulate. The articulations of the joints of an arm, the veins in a leaf, the branches of a tree all rhyme with each other and grow out of the Indo-European root. The Greek harmos, whence harmony, also means joint and couples what is rooted in the earth to the music of the spheres. Ara's name does something similar. It reminds us, as she so often does, of the arid ground in which the rooted things of this novel wither and grow. Its Indo-European root (as) means "to burn" or "to glow." It becomes ara in Latin, and means "altar" and "hearth" and yields ardor and arson and arid. Altars are made of the stones of the earth and

raised up so that things can be offered up before them or on them--sacrifices of all sorts--burnt flesh and prayers, grain and grapes, bread and wine, body and blood. "Ara" also names a constellation in the southern hemisphere. The figure made of all these things is also the one who talks in figures about art, pulling at the threads of the tablecloth.

A variant suffixed Indo-European form of ar is or-dh; its Latin cognate is ordo (order), which originally meant a row of threads in a loom. The English word "ordain" comes to us through the late Latin word that meant "to arrange in order"; it now means to confirm or invest in office, to confer holy orders upon, to authorize or ratify. The same Indo-European root gives us Latin ordiri, meaning "to begin to weave," which, in a seeming reversal, generates "primordial," while Latin rēri (to consider) provides "ratio" and "reason." A Germanic offshoot of a suffixed Indo-European root results in a whole series of old English words (rāedan, rāeden, rāed, rāedels) which, respectively, result in the verb "read," the conditions of "hatred" and "kindred," "advice" and "riddle." Finally, a variant form, rī- yields, through rī-tu, the Latin ritus: rite, custom, usage.

All of this word work is the groundwork laid for the making of The Double Hook. These knotted etymologies are present in its shaping and are, I am convinced, consciously woven into its pattern. Ground is the actual and literal working surface of works of art--the crafts and skills, pictorial and sculptural images and written symbols which, as objects are figurae, and what they body forth are figurae for the imagination. The method of their making is also figura. Blueprints in architecture and house-building are figurae worked out on a ground plan, and James, toward the end of the novel plans to build a new house, after the old one has been destroyed by fire "further down the creek . . . . All on one floor," closer

to the ground (p. 131). Ara, looking at the smoking ground sill, one of the many thresholds that appear in this book, sees water welling up and flowing down to fill the dry creek . . . . Everything shall live where the river comes," Ara prophesies out loud upon the bones of Greta that lie in the charred ruins of the house (p. 114). Water, in this work, is a figure for the mind, for rebirth and for memory. It laces back and forth, like the reader's mind, following the figures, like the creek in which the old lady fishes, flowing this way and that at the land's whim. Ara, the barren one, no longer seeing in pieces, becomes oracular. Granted vision, she sees "a great multitude of fish, each fish springing arching through the slanting light" (p. 114). In the midst of destruction, an Ovidian shift has transformed "multiplied eyes" into a "multitude of fish," that is, into plenitude. Ara means "everything," and we must, at this moment "trust to the clarity instant in being human, that knows and wants no other place."<sup>27</sup>

The figures of this novel are always seen in their "interaction with the objects, with the things, with the other existences with which they [come] in contact."<sup>28</sup> It was in the images of the place in which she found herself a stranger, Sheila Watson tells us, that she had to say something

"about how people are driven, how if they have no tradition, how if they have no ritual, they are driven in one of two ways, either towards violence or towards insensibility . . ."<sup>29</sup>

With this sense of the necessity of the "mediating rituals which manifest themselves in . . . art forms," The Double Hook began. As readers, we discover that there is no such thing as an absence of mediating rituals, though there may be an absence of consciousness of their presence. The ground of this mythopoeic prose is redolent with the odour of the sacred. A sense of the sacramental extends to all the elements of the actual world in the making, the fabrication of the book's beginning. In the grammar of

creation, syntax is force, is anti-matter with respect to matter, to the named thing. It is energy with respect to mass. Syntax is to sentence as synapse is to perception. Language turns out to be a life sentence in which metonymy and metaphor form a network of energy exchanges; in it, memory manifests itself as pattern in a field of force: virtú, "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower." Physics is one way of confronting what we already know; biology is another, and mythos and poesis are yet others. Poetry patterns itself in our bodies, just as physis and bios do. Just as metal "remembers," our bodies, even without our knowledge, remember. Pulse, heartbeat, foot-padding pattern themselves in the rhythms of poetry which remember them. Felix's hand remembers, vast fingers encircling "the sweet hot cup" he fondles.

We could start anywhere in the narrative of The Double Hook (it is so complexly interwoven) and watch the way syntactical and synaptical connexions make large metaphorical networks. Tiny beginnings resonate and reverberate to become luminous constellations of meaning. I'd like to look now at the implications and extensions of one such pattern.

The country custom which places a tumbler on the table with the knife and fork set inside it is as much a ritual object, William's habitual gesture which removes the cutlery a ritual act, as Felix's "sweet hot cup" and his encircling fingers are. His vast fingers embrace William's glass tumbler, and his "sweet hot cup" of remembrance is a figuration of the sacred cup and ritual of the mass, itself an anamnesis, as we are reminded, of another event.

The cup which Angel had put in his hand, her bitter going, he'd left untouched. Left standing. A something set down. No constraint to make him drink. No struggle against the drinking. No let-it-pass. No it-is-done. Simply redeemed. Claiming before death a share of his inheritance (p. 38).

The cup for which Felix reaches is not the hard ironware one etched with the line of tea and coffee that Angel had put in his hand when she left, but the "knobbed glass moulded to the size of his content." The thunder he now hears which heralds the approaching storm reminds the reader of this novel of "what the thunder said" in T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land whose landscape's infertility and fragmented pattern remind us of this book's.<sup>30</sup> What the thunder says there: Datta (give, yield), Dayadhvan (sympathize), Damyata (control, restrain) also reminds us of what is needed here: an offering and yielding of self and world to discipline and ritual informed with sympathy and love, which permit the performance of joy. Both texts also speak the absence of a sense of origin in the world while reminding us of the Indo-European, Hellenic, Hebraic and Latin-Christian origins of myth and language and rite.

The thunder Felix now hears means nothing to him (p. 39), but the rain, when it comes, does; this rain remembers the rain on the fish-shack roof of another time. The wind that blows receives answer in his memory of Angel's terror as she beats on a billycan with her hunting knife, faced with a bear "prostrating itself before the unsacked winds. Rising as if to strike. Bowing to the spirits let out of the sack, Angel [thinks] by the meddler Coyote. "The bear [advances]." "Mowing. Scraping. Genuflecting." White-faced with fury and terror, Angel beats wildly until Felix's invisible rifle picks off the bear in its devotions. Memory here faintly echoes the theriomorphic rituals of the Arcadian Artemis and her totemic she-bear.<sup>31</sup> Here, however, the killing of Kallisto is another kind of transformation; in a startling twist of language which utterly dislocates image and meaning; logical and perceptual categories dissolve and reform as the bear is picked up as "paper blown off a fish-shack roof" (p. 39). The surreal turn of events in the language of the text performs its own antic



commentary on the paper tigers of archetypal mythic schools of literary criticism and of writing which mechanically turns itself that way. Furthermore, it does even as it implicates itself in myth; twisting myth into counter-myth, it calls myth-making activity to mind. It makes its reader's mind mock its own activity as it is made to mock writing which pretends it is mirroring the "real" world rather than the world the mind makes. We're hooked on a double mockery that neither writer nor reader can twist free of except through laughter which holds more than a little fury and fear. Baited, we too are picked up like paper and blown off a fish-shack roof. The death of our pretensions confronts us when we are confronted with death's indifference to our mowing, scraping, genuflecting protestations.<sup>32</sup>

#### For Felix

The remembrance of event and the slash of rain merged. Time annihilated in the concurrence. The present contracted into the sweet hot cup he fondled. Vast fingers circling it (p. 39).

The slash of the rainstorm acts in Felix's memory as genesis for memory of another event until both merge in one remembrance which begets another across the synapses of the connexions the reader's moving mind makes with other memories. The text makes them too. Felix's reaching for the "knobbed glass" is remembered later when William reaches for the glass tumbler. The language which tells of Angel's bitter going, the "let-it-pass," "it-is-done" remembers Christ's agony in the garden, his agon on the tree. The bitterness of Angel's going is annihilated in the concurrence of event also; Felix chuckles holding the sweet hot cup of remembrance which holds and prefigures his memory of the masses of his own childhood, "the cup lifting. The bread breaking." The elevation of the host is the most sacred moment in the mass, the moment of the miracle which transforms bread and wine into body and blood.

Back of, and in the moment of the sweet hot cup lie other rituals, more formalized than Greta's "turning," "reaching" and "grinding" that begin the narrative movement of this text. As we shall see, these rituals too involve the making of bread and wine to be offered, along with sacrificial bodies and blood and the pouring of libations to the Mother Goddess. The Omega of this narrative recalls all of these figurae in James's "lifting the baby in his two hands." His newborn infant is called Felix, that is to say, "Wonderful," and if we have eyes to see, we "discern the Child in the Bread,"<sup>33</sup> the sacrificial victim and hope of the world.

Mnemosyne is mother of the muses, and we cannot help remembering. The luminous thing Felix holds in his vast fingers, the luminous double of Felix's name which James lifts in his two hands are both offerings; as offerings, they are one thing, and James and Felix are, in their different ways, performing the same rite. That rite weaves birth and death, Eleusis and Golgotha, and Beth-Lehem (the "house of bread") together in a new beginning.

He does what is done in many places  
 what he does other  
                   he does after the mode  
 of what has always been done.  
 What did he do other  
                   recumbent at the garnished supper?  
 What did he do yet other  
                   riding the Axile Tree?<sup>34</sup>

The question that ends David Jones's Anthemata is both a rhetorical question and one that requires response. There is an Other in The Double Hook. Sheila Watson, like David Jones, has "made a heap of all that [she] could find."<sup>35</sup> The heap is matrix, materia that conceals and discloses the deposits of Western civilization. What we find beneath the textual surface is "the arched earth cave"; cut into the walls of that cave is writing which

is cuneiform; problems of relationship confront each other in elemental form. The figures scratched there present us with puzzling patterns that have to do with primary activities: seeing, saying, hearing, doing, remembering, and we have to decipher them as they resolve and dissolve forming reversals of each other--womb, tomb, cave, grave.<sup>36</sup>

What we have seen in the exemplum of "the sweet hot cup" is that although the narrative of The Double Hook is broken, its multiplied pieces gather themselves toward integrity, or wait for illumination. The figures wait to be lit up by our understanding, and we must suspend disbelief, trust that the narrative will reveal its intention. It tends toward vision. Ara sees things in flashes, and Felix remembers in pieces, but, as Crazy Jane said to the Bishop, "Nothing can be sole or whole that has not been rent."<sup>37</sup> The word-world that is the book is broken up in order to make us remember how it means, since

Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression.<sup>38</sup>

The pieces of what Ara sees and what Felix, splitting himself in two, remembers conjoin as transfiguration and visionary experience.

When William and Ara truly "see" each other in a transformed way, they have already begun to move toward a resolution of their portion of the dilemma. They instruct the reader, too, in the dilemma involved in "seeing" that saturates the pages of this book. The intensity of the desire to see, to hear, to say is the invisible praxis that drives the narrative forward to fulfilment. Acting as protagonists and antagonists, the figures sometimes

baffle, sometimes evade, sometimes aid the action, but whichever way they turn, they carry or intensify the force of that desire. They form the morphology of the desire to see and know.

Cut by James's whip, Greta sees more than she can bear to know, and cannot bear to be seen. When Ara fails to gain admission to the house and sits down "like a watchdog on the step," Greta sees her own body as a branch stripped of flowers and leaves, "naked as a bone on the dusty floor" (p. 84). Unable to tolerate such vision, she strips herself, sets fire to leaf and flower, house and flesh and all that flesh housed, sacrificing herself to herself; consumed by knowledge and by fire that is a metaphor of her illicit and unreturned desire, Greta is visible at last only in the dry branched bones which are all that's left for burial.

The Widow Wagner and James are reluctant to see or to remember, but finally reverse their turns of mind and see. The Widow refuses to look at her daughter's pregnant body; lecturing her about what she doesn't know, telling Lenchen that all she'd learn in town is men, the Widow keeps "her eyelids folded over her eyes" and says, "It's easier to remember than to forget" (p. 26). Startled into recognition of the hypocrisy by the denial, her son thinks, "There are things too real for a person to forget . . . . There are things so real that a person has to see them. A person can't keep her eyes glazed over like a dead bird's forever."

The Widow has to hear her own voice, as if she's heard for the first time her chronic lament, "Dear God," to be "afraid that he might come" (p. 55); she has to remember death, and after death the Judgment. Hearing her voice in the silence of her son's response to her complaint, "I had things ready," her face stirs "like ground cracked above a growing shoot" (p. 80). Revoking her judgment of Lenchen, thinking, "Flesh calls for flesh," she

tells Heinrich to look for his sister. But she will have to leave home to look for her daughter herself. And James, who has also abandoned Lenchen, will have to pass through darkness and return home.

James sees in "the dark figure of his mother playing her line out into the full flood" (p. 92) "the brown figure . . . [of his Nemesis, the Fate] he sought to escape" (p. 98). She is the figura of his own fear that unwinds itself again and again, into him until he turns and faces it. Knowing he could "look into his heart as he could look into the guts of a deer when he slit the white underbelly," that he holds "memory like a knife in his hand," he, nevertheless, "clasp[s] it shut" (pp. 126-7). James has to return to the scene of his corruption, to close his mind to memory in order to see his way back through the darkness to his child and to the mother of his child.

Other figures want to see and see in part--like Angel, like Heinrich, who sees but doesn't know how to handle what he sees. He doesn't know how to handle his sister's pregnancy, James's silence, Kip's trouble making, or his own relationship to desire. Of all the figures in the novel, Kip and Heinrich are the ones most frequently associated with light and fire, though all of the figures are shown in some relationship to one or the other, often both. Light drenches the landscape, limns the figures, shows their darkness outlined in doorways, illumines and annoints their faces; as the light of the sun, it parches the earth, dries up the lake and the creek, shines as glory against the hides of things. It lies all about like the pieces of Ara's puzzle, promising meaning. It is a sign of the presence of divinity. It is kindled in lamps, spilled and wasted; it lights up the whole countryside as a bonfire, in Greta's metaphor. Fire has to do, for the most part, with desire, with the hearth, and with sacrifice. Greta's death by fire--her self-immolation--is the fulfilment of her inability to find some acceptable form

for desire. Kip's blinding is the consequence of his having played "around with the glory of the world" (p. 132). James wonders "what could he say [to Heinrich] of the light that had made him want to drink fire into his darkness" (p. 132).

Light defined the world. It picked out the shattered rock, the bleached and pitted bone.

It would edge the empty bottle on Felicia's table, James thought. It would lie congealed in the unwashed plates. It would polish the yellow of Traff's head and count the streaked tears under Lilly's eyes.

It would shine in his own empty mangers. On Greta's bleak reproach. On the loose stones William had piled on his mother's grave.

Daylight called on him to look (p. 126).

Light paints the truth clearly, and beautifully; it is, in large measure, what makes us see this novel as painting light. Words paint "things" with light, with "glory," or as fire. Light is also the transfiguring power of perception. The lightened sky before the storm "stampedes" light together; clouds are "the white bulls of the sky shoulder to shoulder" "bawling before the massed darkness" (p. 36) which bars the earth with light and shadow.

In the unearthly light before the storm, Ara, "higher up on the far side [of the creek] saw the old lady, the branches wrapped like weeds above her head, dropping her line into the stream" (p. 35). Strange combination of Druidic figure and hamadryad, she motions with her hand to Ara, who, when she goes down the path to the creek's edge, sees nothing but the padded imprint of a coyote's foot where the old lady had stood.

She looked up the creek. She saw the twisted feet of the cottonwoods shoved naked into the stone bottom where the water moved, the matted branches of the stunted willow. She saw the shallow water plocking over the roots of the cottonwood, transfiguring bark and stone.

She bent towards the water. Her fingers divided it. A stone breathed in her hand. Then life drained to its centre (p. 35).

Half-light, hallucination, however we see this, it is perception that is transfigured here, in the transfiguration of bark and stone; a painting which is nature mort recapitulates Genesis in miniature. Light is divided from darkness, the waters are divided, dry land is divided from water, and here dry land appears in the form of a stone, "breathing" in Ara's hand as it dries and nearly dies, suddenly separated from its watery element. But the voice of the thunder speaks and startles the creature whose perception mimics creation, and she drops the stone, as if chastized by the voice of God. Matted branches of the willow and weeds and the animal paw-print repeat the grass and tree and herb yielding seed and the bringing forth of animals of God's creation. This sort of perception brings the world into being again, as if for the first time, through the agencies of light and illuminated perception, just as Ara's vision of the multitude of fishes leaping through the slanting light toward the end of the novel recalls the "Go forth and multiply" of Genesis. Kip, too, at the onset of the storm, rises "in his stirrups until the leathers [are] pulled taut. His hand reaching to pull down the glory" (p. 36). Ara looks up, and "for a minute she saw the light" (p. 36).

Heinrich also has this sort of perception of light. Going out of the kitchen into the sun to fence out the old lady, he is stunned into visionary perception:

Outside the world floated like a mote in a straight shaft of glory. A horse coming round the corner of the barn shone copper against the hewn logs. Kip riding back on its reflected brightness.

The boy raised his hand (p. 26).

We don't know whether his hand is raised to protect himself against the wavering, tremulous, distorting light that almost blinds one in the kind of heat that blurs vision, or in salutation; protecting or greeting, his gesture repeats James's hand raised in violence at the beginning of the novel and

links seeing with desire and the possibility of violence. When he sees Kip's face turned to the house and asks "what the hell are you doing?" Kip replies, "looking," and Heinrich, sensing something in that looking which is appropriative tells him to get out, "Wherever you are there's trouble." Bending down over the saddle, his face close to the boy's, Kip taunts him, "When a stallion's broke down your fence he said, there's nothing you can do except put the fence back up again." It's too late for fencing, Kip implies, and helplessly the boy protests he's fencing out James Potter's mother, not James. His defence confesses his inadequacy. Kip is the meddler Coyote's servant.

As Kip moved off, the boy noticed the light again. Caught in the hide of the beast which picked its way along, its eyes on the dust of the road.

He stood thinking of the light he'd known. Of pitch fires lit on the hills. Of leaning out of the black wind into the light of a small flame. Stood thinking how a horse can stand in sunlight and know nothing but the saddle and the sting of sweat on hide and the salt line forming under the saddle's edge. Stood thinking of sweat and heat and the pain of living, the pain of fire in the middle of a haystack. Stood thinking of light burning free on the hills and flashing like the glory against the hides of things (p. 28).

He's afraid, "and even the light won't tell [him] what to do" because he can't distinguish and decipher his feelings about "light," "glory," and fire "burning free on the hills"; light too is here associated with sweat and heat and toil, the pain of living and the pain of desire's fire that burns at the centre of things and can destroy, even though it is also glory manifested in a straight shaft which glorifies the bodies and hides of things, as another shower of gold does: Zeus's. He doesn't know whether he's afraid of his mother or Kip, of his sister or the old lady. He's afraid of women and what they can do to a man, of the destructive possibilities of desire. He's



afraid of seeing because he doesn't, any more than Ara does, know how to make sense of seeing in flashes. He's afraid of water which catches light and draws it into itself (p. 29). He's afraid, in short, of being drawn into some ecstatic union with light, of vision, and he knows he has to find some Apollonian relationship to both desire and light.

When he later tells his mother that he "should have been able to tell Lenchen something . . . should have been able to tell her what to do," his mother says he could know nothing; he'd not loved. He acknowledges the truth of what she says,

But he thought of light blazed into a branch of fire.  
How could he say that the earth scorched his foot.  
That he must become ash and be born into a light  
that burned but did not destroy (p. 81).

The ash that Heinrich must become is the product of burning and it figures rebirth; the boy will shortly witness Greta's fiery transformation in the company of William and Ara. I have already discussed the origin of Ara's name, but I would like to note here that the Germanic development of the root of her name gives us the old English source of the word "ash." The ash tree Yggdrasil is the tree "whose roots men know not,"<sup>41</sup> but it is also the windy tree in which Odin hangs and from which he acquires shamanistic power and knowledge. It is rooted in origin; constantly dying and constantly renewing itself, it is the world tree or soul tree. It figures all beginnings and endings. When it dies, the world will die. Heinrich's last name means "waggoner," and is derived from the Latin via; the boy knows he needs knowledge of the ways of life and death before he can "become ash and be born into a light that burn[s] but [does] not destroy." He is like Odin in this respect, but also like Heimdall, the god whose name, like his own, figures guardianship of the earth-home and its gateways; Heinrich,

too, knows how to wait and to listen for the smallest premonitory sounds. Heimdall is the guardian god of Teutonic myth; he is installed at the threshold of Asgaard, and he, like Heinrich, cannot give up his vigilance. He presides over the ambiguous beginnings of things, and listens for sounds of alarm. It is his horn that will signal the apocalyptic battle of ragna rök, the end of the gods, and that is why he cannot leave his post on the bridge of Bifröst. No more can Heinrich leave his home, and he tells William that (p. 82). He is the guardian of the community through his guardianship of his sister whose name, in its origins, makes her the carrier of the lentil seed, the pod whose child will merge the mythic worlds of Potters and Wagners and Prospers. And Heinrich learns to use his voice like the magical hammer-axe of Teutonic, Norse and Icelandic myth "to cut down the wall" of silence between himself and others (p. 82).

There is something priest-like, or shaman-like in the intensity of the boy's desire which has to be translated into passionate devotion. The desire for proportion and his awareness of the need to bind this community threatened by instinctual fires that could destroy it into harmonious relationship by acting as mediator, messenger and intercessor, coupled with the fact that he says he couldn't leave the place, suggest such a transformation. He's ridden this way and that, looking for Lenchen, looking for ways to repair damage done, for ways of ensuring that things articulate properly with each other--James and Lenchen, Lenchen and his mother, himself and his sister. Unable to find Lenchen and so bring about a right relationship, he finally has to bide his time, waiting.

He sat silent as an osprey on a snag. Waiting. Because he knew how to wait. Watching only the images which he could shatter with a stone or bend

with his hand. He heard a fish break water. He did not stir. He heard a bird's wing cut the air. He heard a mouse turn in the hollow of a log (p. 54).

In the silence, he restores his sense of his relationship to the creaturely, and abandons his search. He's come to the end of his resources as far as his will is concerned, and resolves to try again "tomorrow." Riding back to his yard, he hears the breathing of the animals close to the house. Waiting, like Felix's hounds, which are "yellow forms in the yellow sunlight, creeping round the barn. Flattening themselves to rest" (p. 25).

The Widow waited too. The country. And the moonlight. And the animals breathing close to the house. The horses in the stable. Pawing. Whinnying. The house cow moaning in the darkness, her udders heavy with milk.

A man came when food was cooked. He came unless he'd been gored by a bull. Or fallen into a slough. Or shot for a deer. A man had to come. The horses waited for him. The cow. The pigs. A man was servant to his servants until death tore up the bargain. Until a man lay like Wagner in the big bed under the starched sheets his body full and heavy in death (p. 55).

Everything seems to be in the same state of suspended animation: the animals, the plate on the table, the knife, the fork, the kettle boiling on the stove. "Dear God, she said. The country. The wilderness. Nothing. Nothing but old women waiting" (p. 55). Everything is still, expectant, is waiting on some event: Heinrich's return so that the chores will be done, Lenchen's return. The Widow is waiting for death, afraid of judgment as she remembers "eyes looking from the creek bottom. From the body of another old woman. Knowledge. Silence. Shame." and she tells Heinrich, "Go. Go" (p. 80).

Felix, like Heinrich, is associated with the light of the sun. He sits in his rocking chair, looking at the dead old lady fishing "while the thistles thrust his potato plants aside and the potatoes baked in the shallow

soil" (p. 23). Felix has sown his crop among thistles in shallow soil on rocky ground where the thistles choke it and the sun withers it. The imagery recollects Christ's parable of the sower,<sup>40</sup> delivered as rhetorical instruction to the Apostolic sowers of his word who are reminded: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God." The word, to be effective, must be rooted in the hearts of those who have ears to hear, who will "keep it and bring forth fruit with patience."<sup>41</sup>

The "vertical glory of the July sun" here recalls "the straight shaft of glory" that Heinrich sees. Divinity, the glory of word and world are unheeded by the figures of this novel. Seeing, they do not "see"; hearing, they do not understand. Felix "sits, like the round world all centred in on himself" (p. 129), unresponsive, but language works in him and on him; image and event conspire to entangle him in the book's praxis so that, willy-nilly, he becomes its principle of "affirmation."<sup>42</sup> By necessity or chance, preordination or Grace, Felix the fisherman gathers into his father's house more than fish; all the figures of the novel except Theophil assemble there at the site of the double birth when the child who bears his name, at whose delivery he serves as assistant, is born.

When he sees the old woman fishing, Felix goes to the creek and fishes himself; he is the only figure we see catching and eating fish. He shares the scraps with his dogs and stands "with a fish spine in his hand. Flesh mountainous contemplating. Saint Felix with a death's head meditating" (p. 24). Throwing the bones into the fire, he is ordained as the novel's priest:

The heat from the stove, the heat crept in from the day outside, annointed his face. Blest, he sat down again in the rocker, and the boards creaked and groaned as he fiddled (p. 24).

All unaware of having been chosen (by God or the writer of the novel) Felix fiddles and sleeps and bakes in the noonday sun himself, waking with the sound of the storm to ask "Who's shouting on Kip? . . . What's Kip doing here?" (p. 38) "Recalled as if urgently from sleep," visited perhaps by an omen in a dream, "he looked around for the cause," unconscious of the fact, as we are at this point, that Kip will shortly be blinded by James. Or has he heard Coyote crying "Kip, my servant Kip" in the voice of the thunder? (p. 35)

Annointed by the sun, visited by dreams, holder of "the sweet hot cup" of remembrance, Felix is the novel's priest; though he is reluctant to perform the rituals required of him, he will be forced by circumstances to witness and assist at the birth of the hope and victim of this narrative's little world, even though he says, "I couldn't do anything but play the fiddle" (p. 123). He has lived with Angel

as he'd lived in his father's cabin. By chance. By necessity. By indifference. He'd thought of nothing but the drift of sunlight, the fin-flick of trout, the mournful brisk music made sweet by repetition (p. 40).

Vast indifference and the absence of thought drove Angel away; though she has borne his children, hoed his potatoes, she has borne also his immense lethargy of mind, until one day she walks out of his gate, is taken away in Theophil's wagon. Felix's phlegmatic nature remains unmoved.

Theophil has lived by himself without wife or children. Now Felix lived by himself. Things came. Things went. A colt was dropped in the pasture. A hen's nest was

robbed. A vine grew or it was blown down.

He reached for his fiddle and began to play (pp. 40-41).

The weight of Felix's torpor, the stress and drag of it, makes him seem formless, void as the inert figures at the beginning of the book, immobilized as they, sitting in his rocking chair. But for the repetition of the "mournful brisk music," its pure sharp melody (which seems to be the only shape he can find for his inchoate nature), punctured by an occasional flicker of perception, he seems lost in a Buddha-like meditation that gazes on the flux of things unperturbed. Drifting in a current of light, his mind "float[s] in the content of being" (p. 38).

The old lady doesn't come back to disturb his peace, but Lenchen the outcast one and Kip the blinded one, do, as do the sound of a horse's hooves, dreams and the pieces of his former life. Words begin to move in the formless void and Felix is finally forced out of his inertia into hearing and doing, seeing and understanding, as are the other figures in the book.

Seeing through a glass darkly, they all move in a kind of dream world, trying and refusing to see or hear or know. Theophil's response to Kip's "These eyes seen plenty" is: "it's not always right for the mouth to say what the eyes see . . . . Sometimes, too, it's better for the eyes to close." Kip's rejoinder, "sometimes . . . when the eye's open a thing walks right in and sets down," provokes Angel's desire to know what he saw and Theophil's refusal to hear or see. He shuts the door on Kip saying, "We don't want to hear nothing. We don't want to see nothing" (p. 56). "Forced out [of the cabin] by Theophil under the white lick of the moon," Kip thinks

All the time . . . people go shutting their doors.  
Tying things up. Fencing them in. Shutting out  
what they never rightly know.

He thought: Angel can see but Theophil's let fear grow like fur on his eyes (p. 58).

The imagery here turns Theophil into an animal, and it is clear that the kind of hearing and seeing he shuts out have to do with knowing. Angel gives way to Felix's fear, but later in the night, hearing the beat of horse's hooves, she goes to the window to see "only the dust raised by something that had disappeared," and thinks, "He'd no right to turn Kip out . . . . He's gone off perhaps, and now I'll never hear the things he sees" (p. 68).

William and Ara hear the horse's hooves, and Ara thinks, too, that "It's probably Kip . . . just looking around." "He'll look once too often, William said. But he lay down and reached out his arm toward her" (p. 68).

The Widow Wagner hears and thinks it's her boy gone looking for Lenchen again, but finding him in the kitchen starting the morning fire, she puts "her hand over her eyes" and thinks, "Dear God . . . how easy death would be if there was death and nothing more" (p. 68). Hearing the horse's hooves, she perhaps recalls the pale horse of the Last Judgment with its rider Death. She has already heard her own voice calling on the "Father of the fatherless. Judge of widows" (p. 55). "Afraid that he might come," afraid of Death, and after death the judgment, "she hears in the horse's hooves the sound of her own fear. Putting the pieces of what she hears and fears together, the Widow Wagner will shortly rescind her own judgment of Lenchen.

Felix Prosper sleeps on, but his dream incorporates the sound of the horse's hooves, transforming them into "Angel . . . riding through his gate on a sleek ass" while he is "pulling [a] scratchy white surplice over his uncombed head." In the dream, he thinks, "I mustn't forget . . . I mustn't forget."

He saw a coyote standing near the creek. He wanted to follow it into the hills. He felt its rough smell on his tongue (p. 68).

He turns away from the creek and goes to the gate, the surplice straining at his armpits like a garment shrunk in a storm. The seachange that Felix undergoes in the depths of his dream does not leave his garments unscathed; nevertheless, he pulls his shrunken "garment of joy"<sup>43</sup> over his head.

He reached up  
his hand.

Dignum et justum est, he said as  
he helped Angel down (p. 68).

The language of the dream mingles imagery drawn from North American Indian mythos with the imagery of Christian mythos and with the language of the Roman liturgy. Christ's triumphal entry into the City of Jerusalem is merged with Mary's flight from Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christ, the flight into Egypt to escape Herod's slaughter of the innocents. Angel, riding "a sleek ass" in Felix's dream recalls and combines Giotto's two paintings of these events in the narrative of the Arena Chapel. Christ and the Virgin are one image in the dream-figure Angel: this latter day version of the Virgin is no virgin at all, but mother of Felix's children, "a small cat, trying to step her way through the puddles of the world. Fighting the dogs. Mousing for her young," as Felix will later see (p. 79). Here, his reaching hand repeats all the reaching hands of the members of this community's narrative. The words Felix utters in his dream are the liturgical response to the priest's Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro (Let us give thanks to the Lord our God); Dignum et justum est (it is meet and just) replies the assembly of worshippers. They come from the



Preface to that part of the Eucharist called the Consecration. The Preface acts as a bridge between the Secret and the Sanctus. The Church's mystical and secret embrace with God occurs when the Holy Spirit comes upon and overshadows her priest so that he offers up the desire of the Church along with the matter on the altar--the bread and wine--as well as the whole body of the faithful; all are offered as victims for God's acceptance and approval, including the priest.<sup>44</sup> The Sanctus professes faith in the Divinity, Unity and Trinity of God; in it the voices of the priest, the angels and the people are said to mingle in praise of God. Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, it begins, and ends Hosannah in excelsis. The language of the Sanctus consciously echoes that of the heavenly host that celebrates Christ's birth, and that of the multitude that gathers for Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, just as the imagery of Felix's dream does.

The little bell that rings at the Sanctus indicates that the Consecration is about to take place. Felix's words assent to the consecration, speak the lifting up of hearts and the thanksgiving that precedes and accompanies them while his hand reaches out to help Angel down, welcoming her. Coming, as they do, at the end of the waking and hearing of the other sleeping figures, Felix's words and his dream speak the community's need to be healed while anticipating his own transfiguration. His desire to follow the coyote into the hills, "its rough smell on his tongue" compress in one Proustian moment North American Indian religious belief, the Apostolic desire to follow Christ, and a rite that remembers the smell and taste of sacramental wine and the texture of the wafer placed on the communicant's tongue.

Anointed already, Felix here consecrates himself. Pulling his surplice over his head, he makes himself over to the presence of divinity he is, as yet, aware of only as fragments of a dream that figure a former

integrity. Felix's dream occurs at the end of Part Two of The Double Hook which begins with his remembrance of other ritual phrases and with his recognition that he has "no words." The dream stands midway between his first recollection of pieces of the liturgy and his later use of liturgical language when, as supplicant, he goes to Theophil's house to bring Angel back.

Part Two opens on Felix's attempt to rid himself of the girl who has come battering at his peace.

Introibo. The beginning. The whole thing to live over again. Words said over and over here by the stove. His father knowing them by heart. God's servants. The priest's servants. The cup lifting. The bread breaking. Domine non sum dignus. Words coming. The last words (p. 51).

Felix remembers the beginning of the mass. "I will go unto the altar of the Lord," and the priest's words as he prepares to administer communion: "Lord, I am not worthy." As he watches the sleeping Lenchen, he realizes he has "no words to clear a woman off [his] bench. No words except: Keep moving, scatter, get-the-hell-out" (p. 51).

His mind sifted ritual phrases. Some half forgotten. You're welcome. Put your horse in. Pull up. Ave Maria. Benedictus fructus ventris. Introibo (p. 55).

The words of the Angel of the Annunciation remind us that Lenchen, like the Virgin, is pregnant and outcast. Torn between "get-the-hell-out" and Ave Maria, recognizing that his ordinary vocabulary is inadequate to the occasion, Felix makes up his mind. No Angel of the Annunciation, or even a good substitute for the practical Angel Lenchen had come looking for ("I wanted Angel, she said, But she's not at Theophil's") (p. 41), Felix isn't up to it: Domine non sum dignus he protests. Standing barefoot before the girl, he raises his hands and says "Pax vobiscum," waking her

from her loose-mouthed sleep. "She licked the saliva from the corner of her mouth." (Felix's comparison of Lenchen with "a bitch [who has] crept in by his stove" is not without grounds.) "What the hell," is her startled response. No more than he, does she have words in the fragmented antiphony of voices that form this peculiar liturgy. "Go in peace," Felix translates, "turning away his head. Closing his eyes. Folding his hands across his overalls. Waiting for her to go about her business. . . . Leaving him alone after the storm," which is more than exterior now. "I got no place to go" (p. 51), says the girl for whom Felix has no room.

Pity is made precise by being tempered by an accuracy of language that here shows forth the impoverished speech these figures have to fall back on. When Lenchen leaves Felix's house, she disobeys James's orders and seeks refuge at the Potter's house; there, she will again be driven out by Greta when "outside [is] night. Outside [is] Kip. Outside [is] floorless, roofless, wall-less" (p. 66). The doubling of the Mary-figure in Felix's ritual word siftings here and in the dream of Angel that ends this portion of the text directs him, and forces the reader to a recognition that some acknowledgement of female divinity is necessary.

Lenchen will come looking for Angel again, but when Felix wakes from his dream, "his eyes look . . . out on an empty world[;] his flesh . . . heavy on his bone, [is] a cumbersome coat folded and creased and sagging at the seams. His hands drop empty between his knees" (pp. 71-72).

So one grew old. Haunted by an image of Angel  
 come back filled like a cup with another man's passion.  
 Haunted by the image of a boy Felix come back in sleep  
 asking: Can your joy be bound by a glass rim? Is  
 death a fishbone in your hand? (p. 72).

He reaches for his fiddle, and accomplished fingers begin to play, but his eyes are not gay; then something answers in the bushes by the creek. It

is Kip, blinded, "coming over the rise," his face, which he lifts windward like an animal," is "a livid wound." Felix's "hand reache[s] for Kip's arm, to take him in; then, driven by Kip's need and his own out of his house to walk barefoot in the dust of the road, sweating and toiling under his cotton cap, he goes to get Angel. Behold! we see him stand knocking at Theophil's door, "trying to form the words" to ask for help; he stands listening to the quarrel going on inside, hears Angel say "Am I to answer?"

But the door opened itself. Was opened by Prosper who stood hearing the words before and after the knock. Who stood listening when the occasion for listening had come and gone. Who stood feeling the sweat leak from under the grip of his cotton cap. Stood feeling the dust nagging the soles of his feet.

Felix heavy on the doorstep. Angel spun around like a flame on the wide boards of the floor (p. 78).

"Peace be with you," he says, petitioning in the words of the liturgy's Collect, in 'the midst of a domestic quarrel he will not resolve by his presence. Nevertheless, we silently hear the response: "Et cum spiritu tuo." Angel moves toward him. Felix utters the words of the Pater Noster: "Forgive us our trespasses," but Theophil shoves Angel aside, and, skipping a significant line, continues, "And lead us not into temptation," twisting the prayer to his own devices and curling his hands into fists. "The priest taught me the same way he taught you" (pp. 78-79). Felix, supplicant, shuts his eyes, driven beyond ritual language to simple prayer: Angel . . . I need you"; he bellows like a cow or bull on the sacrificial block from the depth of his need, "Angel, he called as he called the terrier. Angel" (p. 79). He's come for Angel out of deep need ("And let my cry come unto Thee," we hear back of the sound of his roaring, and who is to say it isn't poetry?) and because she is the one who knows "There's things to be done needs ordinary human hands" (p. 118).

The shaping of the liturgy involves "things said," "things done" and "things revealed." Kip's blinding makes Felix see that things must be done, and he knows that it is Angel who can do them. Back of the exchange of words that goes on between Felix and Angel and Theophil here, and entangled in them, as so often in the dialogue of this book, lie the liturgical chants and responses of the Eucharist. In the unfolding of the question and answer pattern of the narrative lies the need for revelation of the divinity of the things of the world. And everywhere darkness is answered by light, by the glory that dwells in the world. "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."<sup>45</sup> The response to Felix's deepest need will come with the transformation he undergoes at the birth of Lenchen's child, but in the meantime, Angel hears and comes with him, though she does not come in peace. "Her voice lap[s] and fret[s] against Felix's silence" (p. 86). When they get home, Lenchen is waiting too.

The hearing of the horse's hooves that ends Part Two of *The Double Hook* initiates a great deal of what happens in Part Three. When William hears and says Kip will "look once too often," he doesn't know Kip already has. His eyes have seen more than they should--James laying his girl down in the hollows of the earth, in the roots of the close-growing pines.

Driven out by Theophil, Kip is "alone under the moon in the white shed of the world" (p. 59), "reaching out to the white tongue of moonlight so that he might swing up to the cool mouth," "raising his hand to the white glory for which he thirsted" (p. 58). As if drawn by Lenchen's thought, by her seeing James in her mind's eye, "his arms reaching forward saying: Did Kip bring my message? Did Kip tell you I was waiting?" (p. 60) Kip comes up the road toward Lenchen who, like him, is "exposed

in the white light," "fear flooding her body as the moonlight flooded the hills" (p. 59). When "the old white moon" has him by the hair, Kip, James's message-bringer, Coyote's servant, tries to trick Lenchen into "oiling up [his] mind" with what she gave James in exchange for James's nonexistent message. Frustrated in his desire, Kip, who "wanted a man's girl . . . [and had] seen enough to buy her," (p. 72) returns to James's barn to strike a bargain. For "playing around with the glory" of things in Diana's grove, Kip has his eyes torn to pieces by the man he has hounded, and James, hounded by his mother, is himself his mother's hound.

The Double Hook is a shadowy figuration of a true and also sensuous reality. Its figures are tentative, fragmentary, missing, yet promising an essential agency of coherence. The reader is pushed always to peer at and search its surface for the veiled eternal reality. I wish here to consider all the figures of this book as glyphs, symbolic figures incised on the pages and in our minds. As such, they are in disorder, deranged. Neither they nor the reader have been able to discern the means to community, wholeness and health toward which each portion of the book strains fruitlessly. Presiding amongst this confusion is "the old lady," the hieroglyph (hieros: Holy, sacred). She is the darkness that measures the relationship of all the other figures. She is, then, the thing against which all other things shine. She is the darkness that allows the glory.

I am saying that every event in The Double Hook is entangled in the concerns of cosmology incorporating mythic incarnation and prophecy. "The old lady" I have earlier described as an icon of fishing is more than that. As an apparition that haunts the community, a ghost both real and not real, especially for James, her function is that of eidolon. In the making of the text, however, she functions for the reader as glyph--that which is

cut into the real, both moving and unmoving, upon which we meditate. The glyph or cuneiform, while incised upon the surface of the world, paradoxically emerges from it, as illumination which enables eyes to see the sacred ground. These "configurations are 'a doctrinal and witty hieroglyphic of a blessed kingdom' . . . [and it] is the task of the responsive and responsible mind to determine"<sup>46</sup> how they mean and what they figure forth.

The old lady is a spectre of the occulted female in the divine order. Once the source and end of being as the Great Mother of the Aegean Pantheon, for example, she combined in herself all the attributes of divinity, influencing the various orders of being. As celestial goddess, she regulated the heavenly bodies and controlled the seasonal alternations; she determined the fertility and well-being of all the creatures of the earth, and was responsible for the protection and guidance of men in battle and at sea. Mistress of life, she was also mistress of the underworld. At once celestial, earthly and chthonic, she is a trinity combined in a single figura.

Various versions of this figure are found in nearly all mythical systems. She has many names. Hesiod called her Gaea. Cretans worshipped her as Rhea, and Celts as Machu. Early Celtic cultures knew her as Tellus Mater. In the Finnish Kalevala, she appears as Luonnatar ("Daughter of Nature"), a virgin who floats, like Aphrodite on the white crests of the waves of the sea. She is impregnated by it and subsequently gives birth to the world. North American Indian myth, reminding us of both Genesis and Hesiod, relates that "[i]n the beginning . . . nothing was here where the world now stands: no earth--nothing but Darkness, Water and Cyclone . . . . It was a lonely place. There were no fishes, no living things."<sup>47</sup>

The Hactcin, who are the Apache version of the masked gods of the Pueblos, are powers which support the "spectacle" of nature, and they

are there from the beginning. It is they who begin the making of the world: first the earth, in the form of a living woman who is called "Mother," then the underworld, then the sky-father. A drop of rain falls from the sky to make mud in the hand of the chief Hactcin who fashions from the mother body the whole creaturely world which is the issue of this making. Early Egyptian figurines made of Nile mud probably also represent a mother goddess as may the stone and ivory fertility figures (the Venus figures) of Paleolithic times and the clay mother figures of South America who are shown giving birth to the sun. Another female figure who is cut in a stone found in the cave at La Madeleine may be a fertility or mother goddess as well, since her animal head does not seem to be a mask as is the male shaman's, carved on the other side of the same limestone.<sup>48</sup>

Over the course of history, this figure has been domesticated, feared, neutered, incorporated, masculinized, hidden in her own folds, or in caves, sentimentalized, worshipped, and most of all, multiplied many times over. Fragmented, she shifts, changes her shape and her name, divides into the different prerogatives of divinity in the metamorphoses of the structures of the mythic systems for which she serves as ground. She splits in two, becoming daughter of herself in Demeter and Persephone (Kore), Mother of Generation and Queen of the Underworld, source of natural creation and of vision: Kore's name means "maiden" and "pupil of the eye," as Pound knew.<sup>49</sup> For the Cretans she is doubled in Diktynna-Britomartis mother-goddess as "lady of nets," and "the sweet virgin." The primitive Italic Tellus Mater partitions herself in Vesta, goddess of fire and hearth, duplicates her function and ramifies later in Flora, goddess of springtime, of cereals, fruit trees, vines and flowers. She shares her position in the early strata of the myth with Feronia, formerly



a chthonic figure, and Pomona, the goddess of fruits. She is doubled and reversed too, in the virgin who becomes mother of Christ, the man-god, and tripled at her Assumption as she becomes Queen of Heaven.

This doubling and tripling activity shows itself in Celtic iconography in the Irish goddesses Danu and Anu who are thought to have been one figure, originally; these two are trebled by a third--Brigit--who survives the Christianization of the Irish Celts as Saint Brigit (or Bride). Along with the others, Brigit is a mother-fertility figure; however, she herself was thought of as being a triple goddess: she became a tutelary deity of learning, culture and skills. Machu, the ancient mother goddess, also triples in her association with Morrigan and Badb. The three form a triad of warrior goddesses who yet retain their connexions with fertility concepts and who frequently resort to shape-shifting to outwit their enemies. Along with many of the figures of Celtic myth, they undertake personal transformations at crucial moments in ways that are reminiscent of those we know from Ovid.

The activities of these goddess figures speak not only personal transformation, or the transformations of the Celtic mythic system, but rather the structural transformations that appear to be inherent in the infinite variety of all mythological systems. Furthermore, the shifts, cleavages and distortions of the figurae that form the knotted network of such systems tell us something about changing cultural and historical contexts; that is to say, they show and illumine for us the relationship of figures and ground, mind and the world it inhabits, interacts with, and makes up.

The divergent, cloven, replicated and scattered forms of the female figurae speak, in however shadowy, or even fossilized ways, whatever sense we have left of what "world" meant for the peoples that invested

them with value. Whether they are worshipped in accord with the localized customs of the place whose people imaged them as figures of a cosmology, or whether they are culturally transmitted to conquered people and incorporated in, and transformed by the already existing mythic system, or carried by emigrating people into new territory, they present themselves to us as permanently open (or empty) signs full of latent possibilities for new configurations; in part, this is so just because they have been so frequently remade, and also because the fullness of their ancient meaning is hidden or inaccessible to us. Sometimes, too, we are "unable to bear in [our] souls the crushing weight of so much past,"<sup>50</sup> so we have to, for our souls' sakes, empty them out, take fragments and re-form them.

When we think of the plurality of mother-fertility goddess figures human history confronts us with, we are confronted in turn by the problem Levi-Strauss was talking about when he said

since all combinations are equally meaningful, at a pinch each one could be made to convey anything we liked. In this case mythography would be reduced to a form of lallorhea.<sup>51</sup>

The various aspects, local and cosmological of Artemis and Artemis-like figures, for example, nearly defeat our capacity to see her because of the proliferation and dispersal of their significance. We know what Ara means about pieces of puzzles. In her primitive form, Artemis was probably a replica of Apollo Nomius; as such, she was worshipped in Arcadia as an agricultural deity: Artemis Agrotera. She is also the chaste huntress, the lady of wild things who imposed the same law of chastity on her companions. She is mystery and beauty that may not be looked at directly, as Jean Cocteau knew when he made Beauty and the Beast, and as Actaeon discovered when he stumbled into her grove while she was bathing, and was transformed into a stag and torn to pieces by his own hounds.

She also, as moon goddess Phoebe, presides over childbirth. Selene is an early version of Artemis, as is Hecate who is powerful as a celestial divinity, and also on earth; she provides riches, victory and wisdom and watches over flocks and the business of navigation. She becomes a divinity of the Underworld as well when she is cast into the Acheron for her own protection after she is rendered impure by her contact with a woman who has just been delivered of a child. In Hades she is a mediator between men and gods and also the goddess of charms and enchantments.

Hecate is merged with Artemis in her moon goddess aspect. Her Roman forms are Lucina and Diana. Her destructive beauty is allied with Helen's, while her severity is testified to in some of the local names she is given and in the stories surrounding her. At Limnaion in Laconia, she is given the name Artemis Orthio ("the Upright") because her statue was found standing upright in a thicket. Its discovery, however, results in an outbreak of madness, murders and epidemics among the population of the area. The inhabitants only succeed in appeasing the goddess by offering human sacrifices to her.<sup>52</sup>

The stories that surround Artemis are filled with horrifying ironies. Agamemnon, bound for Troy with the rest of the Greek fleet to recover the stolen Helen, is becalmed at Aulis for killing a stag in a grove sacred to Artemis. He is promised a return of favourable winds only if he immolates his daughter, Iphigenia, to the goddess. It is this sacrifice that provides Clytaemnestra with her excuse for killing her husband upon his return from the Trojan Wars. Electra, sister of Iphigenia and Orestes, then persuades Orestes to murder their mother to avenge their father's death, whereupon the vengeance of the Furies is invoked by Clytaemnestra's shade. I have already noticed a suggestion of parallels with The Orestiea in James's murder of his mother and in the conspiratorial air of the

brother and sister that surrounds the death.

In Euripides's version of the Iphigenia story, Artemis intervenes at the last minute of the sacrifice and carries Iphigenia off to Tauris where, as priestess, she presides over the sacrificing to Artemis of all strangers shipwrecked off the Taurian coast. Orestes is one of those strangers. Condemned to die at his sister's hand, he reveals his identity and the pair escape, carrying the statue of the grim goddess to the town of Brauron in Attica. It was later removed to a sanctuary on the Acropolis in Athens where it was venerated as Artemis Brauronia.

This name has to do with more than the town's name, though; it is probably connected with the goddess's killing of her hunting companion, Kallisto, who had broken the vow of chastity when she was seduced by Zeus in the guise of Artemis herself. Zeus's effort to save Kallisto by transforming her into a bear was unsuccessful. Angel's confrontation with her mowing genuflecting bear devotee makes her a furious, uncomplying and comic Lady of Wild Things. Kallisto the Bear also makes an appearance in one of Sheila Watson's short stories as a visionary lunatic who, confounding chronology, speaks with the tongue of the beloved of Solomon's Song of Songs. Inmate of an insane asylum, she lives among its other inhabitants whose fingers push paper through the grated windows, reaching in supplication to "Diktyнна, mother of nets and high leaping fear. O Artemis, mistress of wild beasts and wild men."<sup>53</sup>

This view of what the replication of the Artemis figure means in Greek myth is not intended to portray her as a collection of narratives and attributes--as a personification. Artemis is the mask of a whole realm of being, a world<sup>54</sup> that involves severity, chastity, authority--and music too, for as the sister of Apollo, she is the musician-goddess, Artemis Hymnia. Nevertheless, she figures a world that is violent, bloody, which

involves human sacrifice (as does the world of the Celtic goddess, Artio with whom some associate her); madness, vengeance, pestilence, murder and all things done under the moon are invoked by her name; her beauty and glory are coupled with her terrifying nature. It is in this world that Lenchen and Kip meet on the road, under "the white shed of the world." Under its aspect and influence are entangled the pregnant girl with Helen's yellow hair who thinks it's "[a]ll because of me the whole world's wrecked" (p. 117), the boy "the old white moon" has by the hair, and Lenchen's lover James who is the murderer of his mother and victim of his sister's fury, who is herself the victim of her love for him and of her mother-Hecate's doom, to which she offers herself at last.

Greta is both Flora and Fury as the novel images her preparation for death. She makes vivid sense of a cliché: Greta's life is the hell and fury of a woman scorned. Her words recall Eurydice's fate and contrasts her own with it. She says she has been "scorned" and "pitied," and "laughed at" because no one has come for her; "there's no one to come." Imagery that combines Persephone's flowers and the torches of hell that light her way underground and the old lady's lamp as well, emphasize her doom. She stands in the doorway while James's lamp makes "flame rise gold from its blue fire" and shine, slanting downward in the darkness on "the tangle of wild flowers" that cover her body:

All green and gold and purple in the lamplight. Fat  
clinging clumps of purple flowers. Honey tongued.  
Bursting from their green stems. Crowding against  
green leaves (p. 63).

Her face above "the riot of the falling skirt" is "fierce," "sudden," "sharp," like a Harpy's. As if to prove the truth of Greta's words in advance, Kip lifts his face, smiling. "That Greta, he thought. Standing there proud like the glory . . . the way a man fits himself into a shirt and pants" (p. 64).

His condescension and complacent recognition that it's "just the same old Greta inside some plants and bushes," that Greta is a fake Flora, are words that come back to haunt us at her death. Yet he does not properly see Greta. The violence of the colour of flowers and leaves is remarkable in this novel that has so little bright colour in it, and Greta is not dressed at all "like a man."

Kip is guilty himself of trying to grab the glory for which he thirsts and has failed to get. He has hounded Lenchen and will hound James as James has been hounded by his mother and sister. Kip is unable or unwilling to see in himself what he is so ready to see in Greta and the old lady and James.

He's like his old lady, Kip thought. There's a thing he doesn't know. He doesn't know you can't catch the glory on a hook and hold onto it. That when you fish for the glory you catch the darkness too. That if you hook twice the glory you hook twice the fear. That Coyote plotting to catch the glory for himself is fooled and every day fools others. He doesn't know, Kip thought, how much mischief Coyote can make.

Coyote reaching out reflected glory. Like a fire to warm. Then shoving the brand between a man's teeth right into his belly's pit. Fear making mischief. Laying traps for men. The dog and his servants plaguing the earth. Fear skulking round. Fear walking round in the living shape of the dead. No stone was big enough, no pile of stones, to weigh down fear (p. 61).

There are things one ought to be afraid of, and Kip is too busy mocking James's fear of the old lady who is the shape of the living dead, to see that Greta is "the living shape of the dead" in anything but an obvious way. Kip is Coyote's servant but doesn't see that he, as one of the servants of the Dog of the Dead, is plaguing the earth. Nor does he realize until later that one of the manifestations of "the old white moon" is Hecate who visits the earth at night accompanied by the hounds of hell to haunt the scenes of crimes, and tombs, and crossroads.

The pile of stones Kip speaks of here is literally the stones William has used to cover up what he doesn't know is James's murder, but it reminds us of the stones piled at crossroads to propitiate Hermes--trickster god of the Greeks, god of travellers, of crossroads (where suicides are buried), of thieves and merchants. He is also, as Hermes Psychopompus, the guide of the dead and god of all thresholds and gateways--as Coyote is. If Coyote fooling others every day can himself be fooled, Coyote's servant and slave can certainly be branded by the firebrand Coyote thrusts into the belly's pit. Kip too reaches out reflected glory (Coyote's) and reaches for reflected glory (the moon's, Lenchen's love for James). Using glory carelessly, he will be caught in the trap he baits for James. Caught by the white glory, he will be branded and blinded by James's whip and will catch "twice" the darkness before he finally "sees."

Now, however,

His mind awake floated on the tide of objects about him. Was swirled in a pool. Caught in the fork of a tangle. Diverted from its course. Swept into the main stream. Birds' eyes. The veins of leaves dark in the moonlight. A beetle caught blue on a shelved stone (p. 61).

His mind floats without direction, is distracted by discreteness, by beauty, gets caught in a tangle of birds' eyes and branches and moonlight. Bewitched, he turns his horse off the road to wait for Lenchen in the matted willows. Tangled up in his own desire and in the violence of what the branches and flowers and leaves of Greta's housecoat figure, he doesn't see his own danger; when James "walk[s] out of the house with Kip at his heels" (p. 65) he follows, like a hound, to make his proposition.

His attempt to blackmail James with what he's seen fails and makes James "unloose the force in his . . . muscles" (p. 65) and use it on him as he will use it on his sister, since her hounding of him is also more

than he can bear; his whip "tear[s] through the flowers of her housecoat, leaving a line on her flesh" (p. 67), marking her with the sign of his refusal, branding her for sacrifice, filling her with undeniable knowledge. Greta, in the blank space we are given to imagine, hears the others in the same way James sees his mother. When Ara and William and Heinrich arrive, she is mad with clear-seeing.

They're on me now, she said. The pack of them.

What have I done? she asked. What's a moth done that a man strikes it away from the lamp.

There was no one to answer.

Then she heard William's voice: They interfere with a man's proper business. Some eat cloth that's needed for human flesh.

She heard Angel's voice: What do you know about moths? You never felt the flame scorch your wings. You never felt nothing.

.....

How much is nothing? she thought.

She felt the weight of it in her hands. She turned to Angel's voice.

You don't know, she said (p. 84).

The voices Greta hears in her head and speaks to, in part sound like themselves and, in part, they speak the truth about their attitudes to her. What she feels in her hands is her experience of her situation. Greta has no cloth that will cover her naked need now that love has been stripped away from her. The voice Greta hears is quite like William's. He is a man of good will whose concern for cloth that covers human flesh would make him blind to desire that burns poor flesh itself, destroying what cloth would cover.

The actual voices outside the door which offer help are the unreality for Greta; the others are simply the hounds that come to harry her. They expose her pitiful plight; Ara is merely a watchdog on the step. No more



a Fury herself, and without even the imitation of Flora Dea to cover her, Greta is as full of knowledge as if she'd hung, like Odin, nine days in the windy tree, sacrificing herself to herself. Deflowered by knowledge, Greta stuffs her rolled up housecoat into the stove and goes naked except, pitiably, for her shoes, to get a tin of kerosene with which to perform her final ritual act. The language that describes her actions is clear and carefully deliberate. The libation she pours fills the room with fragrance.

Greta reached for the matches. She laid the box on the stove and poured kerosene from the tin. The flowers in the stove-box were breathing out fragrance which filled the whole room. They were raising purple faces and lifting green arms into the air above the stove (p. 85).

The flowers become, like the moth that flies into the flame, the image of her own desire. As they blur in the fumes of the kerosene, Greta's vision blurs, and so does ours because they seem to be supplicants, life pleading the cause of life. Her own supplication refused, Greta refuses her supplicants, and when she hears Ara's voice speaking of Lenchen, the Fury comes upon her again. She wants to "cry abuse . . . to cram the empty space with hate . . . to shatter all memory of the girl" (p. 85) who is her enemy, the thief of her beloved, and her inverted double; "part of any animal she [rides], "Lenchen seems to float "easy as foam on its circling blood . . . [is] part of the horse. Its crest and the edge of its fire" (p. 81). The false Flora, thinking of the sweetness of Aphrodite (the foam-born) hardens her heart with hatred, and as if in response, her mother appears on the stairs, saying "Don't play with those Greta . . . . A person has to know how to play with fire" (p. 85). But her mother has never taught her how to play with fire; she has only haunted the house at night as a ghost-mother that looks in with her lamp to make sure Greta

is not playing with fire. Defying her mother at last,

Greta lit a match and dropped it into the stove.  
The flowers raised gold filaments anthered with  
flame. Greta reached for the tin and emptied it  
into the fire.

And Coyote cried in the hills;  
I've taken her where she stood  
my left hand is on her head  
my right hand embraces her (p. 85).

In her embrace with death, consumed by the holy fire of what has consumed her, on the altar of Artemis filled with the flowers of her desire, Greta becomes the beloved of the Song of Solomon as Coyote's voice cries out the words of the lover and comforter and gathers her into the arms of the hills.

Greta's sacrifice, whether she wills its effect or not, is a horribly mixed blessing; in Christian doctrine, suicide is the great sin of pride, an act that puts itself before God, and yet there does seem to be, even in Christian terms, a necessity that works itself out through her. Ara, looking into the destruction that Greta has wrought, recalls the wrath of God that manifests itself to Ezekiel, the prophet who looks out over the valley of dry bones which are the evidence of the "fire of righteousness" we encountered at the beginning of The Double Hook.

The words of the Lord came, saying: Say now  
to the rebellious house, Know you not what these  
things mean? (p. 123)

These words are prefaced by a command to Ezekiel: "Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel" (Ez. 17:2). The parable concerns an eagle that takes the highest branch of a tree and "carrie[s] it into a land of traffick" where it is "set in a city of merchants"; it grows, but the Lord says

Shall it prosper? Shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it will wither? It shall wither in all the leaves of her spring

shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? It shall wither in the furrow where it grew (Ez. 17:9-10).

The lamentation for the princes of the house of Israel which follows their capture in the nets of their enemies (the snares and pits of silence that James so fears, recall the capture in nets and pits of the princes) is also a lamentation for their mother's fate: "Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood" (Ez. 19:10).

But she was plucked up in fury; she was cast down to the ground, and the east winds dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them.

And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.

And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devastated her fruit (Ez. 19:12-14).

The language Ezekiel speaks is the language used in pouring libations, making sacrifice. God will "pour out" his fury on the rebellious house to accomplish his anger against it. Their libations and burnt offerings of the flesh of their children are blasphemous pollutions of the sacramental which his rage and their own will turn against them: "I polluted them in their own gifts in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb" (Ez. 20:26). Their crimes are crimes against life and kin and against the law of generation carried in a woman's body. They involve incest and the breaking of Mosaic law: "one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife"; "another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law"; "and another hath humbled his sister" (Ez. 22:11). God will, therefore, put an end to generation: his sword shall "smite . . . upon

[their] thigh" (Ez. 21:12) and they shall be "fuel to the fire, and blood shall be in the midst of the land"; they shall "be no more remembered" (Ez. 21:32). Of course, they are remembered--in Jeremiah's book and in Ezekial when God breathes upon the dry bones and they come together, bone to bone and live. They are also remembered in The Double Hook.

Ezekial's prophecies recall Jeremiah's, for they both speak the same warnings, lamentations, and the destruction of the rebellious house. The parable of "the potter's house" reminds us of the fate of the Potters' house in The Double Hook. When "the vessel . . . made of clay" is "marred in the hand of the potter," he makes another; through Jeremiah come the words of God: "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel" (Jer. 18:4-6); the reckoning of abominations also involves the sacrificing of children "with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal "in what will henceforth be called "the valley of slaughter"; God will visit plagues of starvation upon this people that will reduce them to cannibalism, since that is what they are guilty of in any case: "I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters," and He will "break this people as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again" (Jer. 19:5-6).

Greta's fate, in the context of the associative and allusive language of The Double Hook that Beverley Mitchell has already examined with reference to Northrup Frye's "The Theory of Myths,"<sup>55</sup> embraces a more than personal destiny, as Ara's prophecy and Ezekiel's words make clear. These figures are an illumination of a mythic web-work of which they are a remnant. That is part of their ground for the reader, but that is not all they are; they are a new configuration of it. When Ara thinks, "prophecy upon these bones," she does not want to see "Greta fleshed

and sinewed, standing on the ruin that she had made" (p. 114). She wants the world made new, not the restoration of old forms, which is, in any case, impossible. We cannot put new wine into old bottles without breaking the bottles. If form is an extension of content,<sup>56</sup> then new wine makes new bottles necessarily, because it breaks the old ones.

Ara's prophetic vision of the fish leaping in the sunlight overcomes Kip's earlier sighting of the fishes stiff in the old lady's hand as it overcomes old ways of seeing, as, indeed, Kip's blinding makes necessary a reformation of his seeing. What once walked into his eye will now have to "walk into [his] hand," and, he says, "There's no way of telling what will walk into a man's hand" (p. 133). The movement from hearing to seeing to doing is a major one in the book. Doing begins with James's murder of his mother on the first page, and ends with him lifting his child in the air on the last page, as he'd lifted his hand against his mother in the bed loft: a murder to begin, a birth to end, which is a new beginning, of course; Alpha and Omega are married; "introibo. The beginning. The whole thing to live again" (p. 52). Transformed vision always implies a saying and doing that mark conversion (verso: to turn), a turning or returning to beginnings that resurrect dead fish, dead words, dead signs.

Nevertheless, we need to look at the language that draws strength to itself by renewing what does inform it, what makes ritual and passage and praxis possible. "Know you not what these things mean?" is a real question which asks itself in Sheila Watson's novel as well as in Ezekiel. There is a sense in which we must regard the novel as parable and riddle delivered to us for our understanding, just as prophecy does; prophecy means looking into the figurae of things.

The imagery of branch and fire belong to Greta as well as to the prophet. Both Ara and Coyote echo the prophetic voice. The east wind is in Coyote's mouth as it is in Ezekiel's utterance. Coyote too speaks divine judgment, threatening the eagle's nest and those who cling to the rocks. The rebellious house in this novel is the Potters' house, and it is destroyed like the house of Israel whose tribe is cut down. Old Mrs. Potter is "plucked up in fury and cast down to the ground" by her son, yet continues to grow "like a vine" in Greta's blood, who fatally "inherit[s] destruction . . . [and] live[s] no longer than the old lady's shadow [leaves] its stain on the ground . . . [sits] in her mother's doom as she sat in her chair" (p. 113). She is the branch that "wITHERS in all the leaves of her spring." Greta makes of herself a burnt offering, an unholy one, and yet her act is a ritual one. The door of the house opens into the east wind which blows drought in Ezekiel, and destruction to the children of Israel. Here, it makes it impossible for William and Heinrich and Ara to stop the fire. Sitting in her mother's doom, Greta seems withered from the womb, from the furrow in which she grew.

The old lady is "planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground"; Greta becomes "dry bones"; the ground itself is rotten with corruption, as James wants to shout. The imagery of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, as well as much of the imagery that has to do with the figures in this book, is imagery of degeneration in the broadest sense of the word. Ara and Greta are barren. The old lady is "dry and brittle as a grasshopper." There is a sense in which the old lady renders her children degenerate; she paralyzes desire, cannibalizing them as they do her. Man is set against man, parent against child, child against parent. Greta is certainly polluted in the gifts her mother has given her: repression and rage and

and fateful fury. Child of her mother's womb, she passes through a fire her mother is, in part, responsible for. Intent on using her lamp to look for truth, she sees nothing of the lamp of destruction toward which Greta is drawn.

James, in his flight from the destruction he has caused and from his fear of his mother's power (even though he has broken her fishing rod, she fishes on, oblivious) is "carried into a land of traffick . . . and . . . a city of merchants" where he is robbed, carried off in the net of guile spread over him by Traff, the trafficker in human flesh. Felicia--that faux-semblance of happiness--offers James "a mess of pickled fish" that turns out to be a selling of his birthright in a reversal of the Jacob-Esau story (James's name, like Jacob's, means 'the usurper'). It is a "gift" given by his mother he is glad to get rid of in exchange for his right to the birth of his child. "The flick of a girl's hand . . . free[s] James from freedom" so that "[a]lone on the edge of town where men clung together for protection he [sees] clearly for a moment his simple hope" (p. 121).

Seeing, he is able to act, to "return from his ways and live [and to] make a new heart and a new spirit. Ezekiel speaks that return as well.

Cast away from you all your transgressions . . .  
and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why  
would ye die . . .?

For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth,  
saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and  
live ye (Ez. 18:31-32).

And James does turn himself and live, freed by the destruction of a rebellious house to build a new one to house the founding of a new order. However, the flick of Lilly's hand that steals his means of escape is not the only hand that frees James from freedom. The flick of his sister's hand that lights the match and destroys the prison house of doom also frees

James to labour and prosper and build in the wilderness, where water rushes up from beneath the threshold, as the freeing of the earth's waters rhymes with that which announces the advent of the birth of a child.

Ara's vision and the community are born in that same uprising movement.

Greta's suicide occurs in the middle of the third part of a five part book; it is structurally central--the burning bridge that looks both ways. Recalling the old lady's death in the doom of the daughter, it fulfils the necessary destruction of the rebellious house and allows passage of the remnant of the old order that should survive to carry out the founding of the new one; it frees James and the waters for the regeneration "of a still unpeopled world" (p. 131). It is, in other words, simultaneously death and birth. As sacrifice, it figures what the sacrifice of the Mass figures; it is an old form that must be broken and transformed. Greta is victim and holocaust, as Christ is, a vessel broken to be transformed; her death releases the underground spring that had fed the roots of the honeysuckle vine growing at the threshold of the house as Christ's death releases grace when the veil of the temple is "rent in twain" (Matt. 27:51).

It is much more difficult for us to see Greta's transformation as resurrection and restoration than it is to see Felix's or the Widow Wagner's or James's, Kip's, or even the old lady's because it works that way structurally, imagistically. The fire is an illumination that figures death as rebirth, and this is what Ara and William, Heinrich and James do see. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" sees it too.

I had seen birth and  
 death,  
 But had thought they were different;  
 this birth was  
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death,  
 our death.<sup>57</sup>



The Magi come from an old dispensation, as Greta does. It is as hard for them to live in the midst of an old order, as it would be for James and Lenchen and the others. James has already been tempted by the "long arms" of the river and Coyote's voice which promised "peace" in his "fear" and in "the holes of the rock . . . the caves of the earth" (p. 98), but even though James, like the Magus might "be glad of another death," fear of the brown figure which drifts along the shore like a nightwatch" (p. 98) protects him from the suicide to which he is tempted.

It is hard and bitter agony to accept death. But this is just what we unthinkingly accept as children playing cowboys and Indians when, shot by imaginary arrows and bullets, we leap to our feet crying, "I'm a new man!" We accept it as children accepted death and the plague in the transformation of those events which is marked in the words of the song "Ring a Round of Roses," This book goes that deep: straight to our innocence at the moment of its violation. Wonder always occurs as an innocence that is shockingly persistent. The language that immolates Greta speaks horror and glory, wonder and innocence, and the grave dignity and solemn beauty of necessity, and it does this without defying any of the bitterness and fury of the creature who is as much self-condemned and psychologically compelled as she is compelled by the divine and aesthetic praxis that delivers itself to us in her ritualized act.

Life and death are locked in the roots of Greta's name as well as in the structural necessity of her death; many curious stone flowers are entangled there. "Greta" is a German diminutive of Margaret from the Latin margarita (a pearl). The Latin word is derived from the Greek margaritēs which is elliptical for margaritēs lithos which grow in margaros: the oyster that makes such stones. The word is eastern in origin and cognate with the Sanskrit manjari which means both "pearl" and "flower bud," the

latter sense of it carried through in the French word that names a wild-flower we cultivate as the marguerite. The Latin margarita survives as an ecclesiastical term for the "pearl of great price," the sixth mystery Christ reveals in Matthew's retelling of the parables (Matt. 13:46). The great price paid for the pearl is Christ's death, or any man's, and the flower of that death is the kingdom of heaven. The etymology of the word informs our understanding of the metamorphosis Ariel sings in The Tempest:

Of his bones are coral made;  
Those are pearls that were his eyes;  
Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange (I, ii, 398-402).

The change marked in the dirge is also the change wrought by death--literally. The brittle branches of the coral sea-flowers are formed by the skeletons of the once-living colonial creatures of the class Anthozoa. The fire that transforms Greta's body, leaving only bones, also transforms the flowers of her housecoat which raise "gold filaments, anthered with flame"; it also makes a strange metamorphosis in the little colony hidden in the arid sagebrush and prickly pear covered slopes of the earth.

The death that is also a life is marked in William's words when he says "It seems a strange sort of thing . . . to light a fire on top of what fire has destroyed," (p. 128) permitting our recognition of a Phoenix-like renewal. He goes on to describe fire as destroyer and preserver of human life and culture: "The curious thing about fire . . . is you need it and you fear it all at once" (p. 129). In terms that remind us of Levi-Strauss, William tells Heinrich about the necessity of fire for the shaping and altering of things: horseshoes and the curve of a bit, the conservation of life, the filling of belies. But fire also destroys life and culture, returning them to the elemental order of things; it melts butter, sours cream, dries up

water and vegetation, erodes the earth, returning it, as well as man, to dust.

The language of the novel is constantly conversant with the elemental material of which its world is made. Heinrich, just before Greta's suicide, thinks of "light blazed into a branch of fire," feels that "the earth scorche[s] his foot," and knows the necessity of becoming ash and being "born into a light which burns[s] but [does] not destroy." Before and after Greta's immolation, we encounter imagery of the fire-bird. The second sacrificial meal of the book follows its second death. William takes the bird "the boy had snared in the kinnikinic bushes"<sup>58</sup> out of the ashes of the fire they have built and divides its carcass while they wait for James's return. This offering is not a holocaust though, as Greta's was; it is one that speaks the need for community, in William's words, which make human sense of life feeding on death.

A man needs living things about him, . . . To remind him he's not a stone or a stick. That he's not just a lone bull who can put down his head and paw the bank and charge at anything that takes his fancy (p. 129).

This burnt offering is not a human sacrifice, as Greta is; it does not suggest cannibalism as does Greta's and James's meal which follows upon their mother's death. William's language does suggest James's behaviour, though, and recalls the hecatombs of the Greeks at which many bulls and oxen were slaughtered, hence the word (Latin, hecatombe < Greek, hekatombe < hekaton: hundred + be < bous: ox).

It is perhaps fanciful to wonder whether there is a relationship between the moon goddess Hecate and the sacrifice, but we do know that large scale animal sacrifices were made to Artemis, who is one of the exfoliated forms of the triple goddess Hecate; in the Olympian order which comes to

dominate the chthonic nature of its predecessor, Artemis takes on many of Hecate's functions and attributes. The divine forms that figure the entangled nature of life and death in the chthonic worship of the mother goddess are overtaken by divine forms which figure the worlds controlled and ordered by the Olympian father-king Zeus. Olympian will, in other words, overcomes autochthonic regeneration. It is "James's will" that marks that overthrow in The Double Hook; will is first in the series of acts that kills his mother. She is pushed "[b]y James's will. By James's hand. By James's words . . . ." In this novel, as in Hesiod, usurpation is marked by male will, male discipline, and by mother-murder, but the old lady is harder to kill than James's will or even the wrath of God can divine.

The transfer of political power is also marked in the nature of the rituals that enact sacrifice, but religious rituals are remarkably conservative; they hold, formally or structurally, their ancient significance long after they have ceased to mean to the population on whose behalf they are enacted, what they had once meant. And they do this even while they mark the differences between the old and new orders.

Sacrifices to Olympian divinities were usually white bulls or oxen whose throats were cut with their heads held upward before they were burnt on high altars while, during the time of the Olympian divinities, at least, sacrifices to the chthonic divinities were usually black rams with their throats cut downward; they were buried in large pits. Stags were anciently sacrificed to Artemis, during Elephebolion the ninth month of the Attic year named after one of her titles, Elephebolios--the Shooter of the Deer. James's mother, we recall, is described as a deer watching the hunters who stalk her. In Artemis's month occurred the famous festival of the City Dionysia at which the great tragedies were performed; they were always

accompanied by offerings of wine, first fruits and special loaves of long thin rods of bread called obeliai ("like spits"), and by the slaughter of large numbers of bulls (240 were offered in 333 B.C., for example). Gravid pigs were offered to Artemis and piglets in honour of Demeter's fertility festival in the month of Skiraphorion (June).<sup>59</sup>

At the festival of the Skira, at which coincided feasts to Athene and Demeter, three distinct rituals took place: a large number of women assembled separately at the Thesmophorion and went through the mystic sacrificial rite with the piglets; a solemn procession led by members of the city's priesthood moved from the Acropolis to the suburbs; young men carrying vine branches raced from the sanctuary of Dionysus (a god by this time associated with the chthonic mysteries of Eleusis). The festival then combined a mystery, a procession and an athletic contest, which celebrated Demeter and the maiden (Kore), Athene, and Dionysus. Two days later on the Acropolis took place a peculiar festival, the Dipolieia which a character in The Clouds uses as a metaphor of outdated customs, saying they ". . . are archaic and like the Dipolieia and stuffed full of cicadas . . . and the Bouphonia."<sup>60</sup> The festival honoured Zeus by sacrificing a bull but, curiously, the word used to describe the slaughter (a common occurrence in Greek religious ceremony) was the same one used to describe the murder of a man. The bull-slayer, having accomplished the "murder," threw down the poleaxe and fled as if he had committed a crime.<sup>61</sup>

The axe was then brought to trial and "treated as though it were guilty of shedding human blood." Sticks and stones and iron, if they killed persons by falling on them were given the same treatment as the poleaxe tried for the bull slaughter; they were banished--usually thrown into the sea. The ancient custom of beating and stoning the Pharmakoi, the

scapegoats that served to expiate the communal guilt, took place in the month of Thargelion during the purification rites ritually enacted on the sixth day of the month--Artemis's birthday. It is fairly clear that the fig branches and squills used to pelt and drive out the slave scapegoats in the classical period were originally real rods and stones; the victims, a real man and woman, were actually beaten or stoned to death in earlier times.<sup>62</sup>

The ancient custom of beating and stoning persons to death as sacrificial victims tends to lend support to the theory that the original sacrificial victim in the Bouphonia was human. In one account of the bull-slaughter, the animal's hide was stuffed with hay, sewn up, and yoked to a plough as if it were alive. If the hay still had cicadas clinging to it, as Aristophanes's character implies, the stuffed bull must have seemed to be an odd sort of singing oracle. The fact that the flesh of the animal was roasted and eaten by the celebrants may even imply early cannibalistic practices.

Most mythological systems are filled with the residue and transformations of "speaking corpses which . . . provoke an artificial reprieve . . ." <sup>63</sup> of their death in rituals that enact the conjunction of human sacrifice and fertility. It is significant that William speaks of the destructive and constructive transforming possibilities of fire as he and the boy sit roasting a foolhen, the same bird whose eyes are multiplied in James's awareness of the old lady's continued presence in every fold of the country. The sticks and stones, so inanimate in William's half-aware language, so separated from people in a culture divorced from nature, actually did break human bones in the fertility rites of ancient times. They figure largely in, and are worshiped as figurae that hold divinity in the cult of the archaic mother goddess of the Aegeans. In the rites associated with Artemis, sticks and stones enact ritual punishment; in the culture under the order of Zeus, they survive as ritual implements and are transformed to enact legal punishment,

as they do in the time of Christ. In Paleolithic times, they form the weapons used to hunt animals and around them accrue the mythical sensibilities of the tribe; they appear as images of shamanistic magic engraved on the walls at Trois Frères. (Arrows, after all, are made of sticks and worked stone.)

Jane Harrison, following Freud, says that the object, animal, person or god that takes on the character of taboo does so precisely because its power is desired.<sup>64</sup> We should view both the persistent power of James's mother and sister and that of the chthonic mother goddess in the Olympian order in exactly this light; the persistence of their power has to do with the taboo being both feared and desired--or rather its mana is feared and desired. Sacrificed things become sacred things, and human beings and things participate in a sacrament which figures a divine sacrifice. Sacred things are things despised and things lifted up. The root of the word holds both meanings, as David Jones knew; he called his book The Anathemata, and meant "the blessed things that have taken on what is cursed and the profane things that somehow are redeemed . . . ." <sup>65</sup> The Double Hook is filled with objects of this sort; the "things" which everywhere present themselves as charged with meaning that is not easily identified or interpreted. They are, variously ominous portents, warnings, signs of life or death or resurrection. Often, they take on totemic associations, as the old lady's lamp does and, like her broken fishing rod, become magical in their ability to figure ritual and rule, the sacred and the profane simultaneously; that figuring is the very essence of taboo. The "things" of this novel participate, along with the other figurae in the condition which Coleridge, in "Kubla Khan," called "holy dread." They are offered up in the same spirit that David Jones offers up his anethemata.

It is with such matters in our minds too, that we should regard the commentary on the Bouphonia provided by Aristophanes's character. The rite is clearly a despised thing, but it yet retains the form of the divinity it once figured. The bull that is guiltily sacrificed, along with the transference of the guilt from the ox-murderer to the man that sharpened the axe to the maidens that carried the water for sharpening, and finally to the axe itself take us all the way back from the taboo object (the outcast axe) to the theromorphic form of the bull-god, to the mana and divinity released by his sacrifice. When we deconstruct the ritual, what emerges is the inverted geneology of holy dread; the desire for the god's glory is mingled with fear and darkness; the sacrifice tells us that a god is murdered to release a god. That is something an ethical and rational mind finds despicable or comical, but what the rite speaks is something extra-rational or irrational which escapes the boundaries of the Apollonian, and slides into the ecstasy of the Dionysian. A taboo object, a divine victim who is killed so that his mana may leak out for the benefit of the participants in the ritual are figured here in vestigial form, along with a sharing and dispersal of the guilt incurred by the sacrifice; both guilt and benefit are incurred by and conferred upon the community as a whole. The rite also figures the necessity or inevitability of sacrifice in the restoration of divinity to the world, in the resurrection of a god.

The Bouphonia, in the eyes of Aristophanes's character, is a deformed and antiquated rite, but it still carries in its form an ancient and divine praxis, just as the praxis of classical tragedy carries within its transformed rituals the ancient rite of the bull-driving dithyramb which accompanied the ox to the slaughter place, the sacred cave or tree or earth-mound or altar.<sup>66</sup> The topography of the human psyche carries it too, as Freud saw it. In that sense, we are all deformations of a divine praxis which is the Other, the necessity we are driven by: id, which makes its appearance in communal forms that



overpower our individuality. Jung saw that relationship to that Other, that collectivity or Shadow, as what shapes us.

Both Freud and Jung saw the artist as the carrier of that psychic and cultural Otherness. The transmission of divinity resides only (as far as we can see in the industrialized and secular Western world) in "the mediating rituals" and "forms of art." There, too, sacrifice is necessarily engaged with deconstruction--both psychic and formal. The works of Wyndham Lewis and Jonathan Swift, which Sheila Watson is so attracted to, know this. So do her own. So does Roland Barthes. The artist in the twentieth century is in danger of being consumed by the mythologies made by machines and weapons of war, just as the natural world is. He is in danger of becoming a puffed up resurrected buffoon--a caricature of the mythologies he seeks to transmit--unless he deconstructs them and makes artificial counter-myths. There, he is in personal, intellectual and spiritual danger too. Fredric Jameson says, "all of Lewis's works are both expressions of violence and implicit meditations on its source and consequences,"<sup>67</sup> since "the very aim of all satire [is] to blast its victim with the magic of the curse."<sup>68</sup> In Lewis's The Revenge for Love, "there issues at length a force to kill the living. What does not exist reaches out its shadow arm to strike down the real flesh and blood, and, itself insubstantial, to leave real corpses behind it. Paper weapons . . . cut down bodies . . . ." <sup>69</sup> Lewis calls into question the "essential 'innocence'" of intellectuals, Jameson says, and it is in the trip-up involved in the "satirist satirized" that we discover the plight of the artist and intellectual in modern writing. It is, says Jameson, "to 'rue' such terrible innocence that on the closing page of The Revenge for Love, before our astonished eyes there hangs and gleams forever the realest tear in all literature."<sup>70</sup>

The weight of this kind of sacrifice lies back of all good modern novels; it lies in the darkness of The Double Hook as one of its shaping polarities. The responsibility the modern artist has to the reader of his text and to himself lies in an interpretation and bafflement, and, inescapably, an entanglement in the snares and pitfalls of all that darkness. The child who puts on suffering with his baby clothes, born at the end of this book and lifted (when we transpose him into our own time as we do when we read literature) hangs over the same chasm the artist hangs over. James, lifting his baby into the light, is lifting up a sacred thing and a despised thing too, since the world he lifts his baby toward is one over which hangs the danger that no crack in the earth can hide us from--the flames of the ultimate holocaust. When we view the book from this perspective, and we cannot avoid it, since we are of our own time and place, the enormous task art faces in resurrecting what matters is clear. It is also clear that some sort of sacrificial act in service of the community of men, whose fates are held in the hand of whatever we can configure as divine, is required.

The Double Hook knows this. The sacrificial meal that William and Heinrich partake of is a communal rite; their conversation has to do with commonality. The imagery that describes the ritual recalls James's totemic fear of the multiplied eyes of foolhens which has caught him in its snare; it is transformed in the snared and cooked bird that is resurrected; as the sun rises, a grouse rises from the hillside, and James rises from the gully. The death and resurrection imaged here takes place in the context of a conversation about the natural and cultural worlds humans inhabit. The turns the conversation takes are an implicit criticism of individualism which has run rampant. William speaks of the elemental, the natural, and what is made from it: earth and metal, stone and wood, fire and bird,

bull and horse and milk and shoe and bit and belly, and the coffee brewed by Felix who "is a standing lesson for someone to think twice. A man who drinks coffee is dependent on something outside himself" (p. 129).

As William and Heinrich sit talking of Felix, their views of him inform and transform their positions and relations to one another. Heinrich first sees Felix as a "round world all centred in on himself," and William responds, "He drinks coffee like the rest of us. . . ."; but then, after acknowledging Felix's dependence on something outside himself, as he'd earlier acknowledged his own dependence on Ara, the rock on which he'd been standing, he seems to come back to Heinrich's view; doubting that Felix would "be much help to a person in trouble, he says, "He spends all his days lying round like a dog in a strip of sunlight taking warmth where he finds it." We already know that Felix takes warmth not only from the sun, but from the heat of the stove, and from the sweet hot cup of his remembrance figured by the coffee he doesn't merely "find" but brews for himself. And Heinrich has altered his view:

I never heard of a dog brewing himself a pot of coffee . . . . The thing about a dog lying in the sunlight is it just lies in the sunlight. Perhaps no living man can do just that (pp. 129-30).

The rest is silence, for a time; then, as the two watch the sun rise on the backs of the hills, William remarks, "It's going to be another scorcher." But Heinrich isn't listening to him; he's listening to the sound of the bird they've just eaten--a grouse--rising like the sun "on the hillside," booming down a gully, and then he sees a horse and rider parting the branches on a lower slope. It is James returned after "two nights and a day" (p. 131), rising from the gully transformed in "a new plaid shirt" (p. 130). If William is only half-conscious of what he is saying, his maker is not. The

images here rise and fall, combine and are reborn in each other as metaphor; the different figurae merge and blur in reciprocal illumination just as, doubling back on itself, the conversation and silence illumine and transform figures and reader.

James, his mother's murderer, in the ordinary course of things would have met with legal punishment and would have been brought to trial. This does not happen, and it is the mythical ground that lies back of this book, informing and forming its surface that makes sense of this extraordinary fact. Within that context, James would be a scapegoat for the crimes of the community, a slaughtered bull sacrificed so the community members could avoid facing their own responsibility for the mother-murder. One of the ways that The Double Hook gets back to ground is through naming, which is so important to it; James "the usurper," like the figure he is named for, wrestles with an angel in darkness (or at least with the ghost of his mother and three Temptations named Felicia, Lilly and Christine). He overcomes them and is blessed, founding a new order which, like the remnant of the house of Jacob that Jeremiah speaks to, has to suffer the wrath of God and be tried by it.

His good fortune flies in the face of any ordinary sense of justice and of moral and legal codes, narrowly defined, proving and overcoming the logic of primitive ritual punishments: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." He has been both usurper and bull, charging blindly at what takes his fancy or at what gets in the way of his taking what he fancies. The new plaid shirt is as good a figure of the remade man as any, given the way Sheila Watson has worked with it, and so, despite Aristophanes's mockery, is the bull-hide stuffed with hay, and cicadas which survives as a remnant of archaic chthonic rites; it too is a

figure of remaking as rebirth and must have had that significance for those at the festival of the Bouphonia who still had some sense of what the ancient rite meant.

The ghost of the old lady that haunts the community is a kind of resurrected cicada since she leaves her dry and brittle corpse behind, like an old skin, rising from the land of the dead as the old lady in North American Shushwap myth does--come back to tell the stories of dead ancestors, to teach new songs and dances.<sup>71</sup> Like Hecate, the old lady has passage to the underworld and back, whether we think of that chthonic realm as the darkness of the human psyche (Unconscious or Shadow), the actual earth, or the darkness of our understanding or origin: historical, mythical and personal.

The grasshopper is a figure of rebirth in the chthonic religion of the Greeks which, like North American Indian religions, sees the dead as real and powerful; it also figures the bond between the living and the dead and between men and gods (religion < religio < re: back + ligare: to bind) even as it figures rebirth. "In the old days of Locris the men of wisdom carried a grasshopper in their grey hair"<sup>72</sup> remembering, perhaps the immortal Graeae. In chthonic myth, the grasshopper breeds in the earth, feeds on the morning dew. It needs no other food or drink. Born out of darkness and into the light, its song rising joyfully up from the earth in the morning and becoming mournful with the setting sun, the grasshopper makes, like Felix, a brisk and mournful music.

For that matter, so does the Dionysia which arises from chthonic funeral rites and emerges in the singing and dancing of the festival that combines tragedy, satyr play and comedy. It is the combination and complexity of these different and intermingled formal and tonal elements

that give The Double Hook its difficult and baffling structure, figures, harmonics and illuminati which emerge from the ground of these mythic snares, pits and baffles. The book too sings a brisk mournful song; it seems a five part play punctured by choric commentary and lyric ode; mingled in its nature and in its signs, it delivers for our decipherment, a world which is born out of earth on the first page with a death, and delivers to the light and the world on its last, a child. This little book, like the old lady that haunts it, is Cicada hieroglyphica; it brings things forward out of darkness, rims them round with heaped up earth, outlines them with light, figuring their glory by shining against the darkness.

The old lady is not only the repressive phallic mother; she is also the very figure of what she is looking for. Fishing for words, she is the condensation and sign of the occulted mythic female figures looking for vessels to carry their voices, transformed as they are, across time, to sing the undersong of the earth. Looking for a place for their words in the world, the old lady figures the female divinities as a wordless oracle that appears only as an apparition; she speaks once--to Greta--but her words are defiantly disobeyed. Because of the repression of what the old lady figures, she finds form as harpy, Fate, and avenging fury in her daughter.

That too is part of the necessity that guides Greta's destiny. The old order holds "until one morning in July" (the Greek month of Hecatombaion and the festival of the Panathenaia, the most important and famous festival of the Athenians). The old lady who is murdered is more ancient than either Athena or Adam, and the form she takes in the world is, in part, a consequence like the "naming" that goes on in Genesis and in Hesiod's Theogony. The old lady named here, like the first great mother goddesses of the Aegeans is made out of the folds of herself, the earth, and lives

under Coyote's eye. Her consort is not named, nor do we ever hear of him. We know of her association with Coyote only through Kip's report, and in North American myth, the earth's creation precedes Coyote's.

When asked what she was fishing for, James says "no one rightly knew" (p. 101). And that is the trouble. She is fishing for source itself--for origin--and that is something that can only exist now because wherever it began in terms of time and myth is now a fiction. If we think of origin in terms of time, we get lost in mist. Birth is all the origin we know, and even our biological births are occulted in what mists memory and swamps all sense of personal origin. With respect to origin and to death, we are all sabotaged the same way by remembrance.

hether we are now come to pay the rent, for which we are so called unto by overbusie Remembrance, Remembrance, restlesse Remembrance, which claymes not only this dutie of us, but for it will have us for-get ourselves.<sup>73</sup>

Origin is now, in this moment of revelation, whenever it does occur, as it apparently did in the caves and temples of Eleusis, as it does, from time to time, in our experience of works of art, and in suddenly transfigured moments of our common lives. We must see the old lady and her daughter in this work of art as such transfigurations; they are to be seen in the light of their belonging to an old order and as figurations that make their appearances in the light of common day. We need two different eyes to see them, and we need to do the impossible necessary thing: to use both eyes simultaneously. This occurs in the sudden event that springs on us when the shifting perspectives coalesce, when Coyote who "would jump on a man when his back was turned" (p. 77) gets us, "just walking round the side of the house to make water" (p. 57). The darkness of what William and Angel say has its luminous side too. Coyote, as shape-shifter-death-bringer, is also

shape-shifter-artist and culture-bringer; as these, he figures the suddenness of the fully illuminated moment.

Such moments occur more frequently, though not exclusively, in those whose vision is deeply informed by the cultural mythos in which they are immersed. All participation in this mythos makes us civilized (not moral, civilized); a barbarian is one who has no past, who remembers, sees, and knows nothing. With knowledge come, inevitably, loss and love, but I am here talking about the kind of knowledge that possesses us, not the kind that we possess. Knowledge that is assimilated into our bodies as the "actually loved and known"<sup>74</sup> forms a "growing root" that has to do with hands, with handling, bodies and things. In the palimpsest of memory, the real is always incarnate. That is why we have such a strong sense of the "thingness" of things in this novel.

The plates, the knives, the forks, a cup and a lamp, a broken fishing rod, a milk pail, a pair of scissors, bit and shoe, a gate, a burned threshold, a flowered housecoat, a chair, a dish, a wooden box, a watch, a good goose pillow, a basin, a kettle, a pot of potatoes, a hammer, three stoves, a bench, a box of matches, Greta's shoes, an empty box, Felix's cap, a fiddle, Lenchen's belt and boots, a new plaid shirt, a glass, the woodbox, Felix's bibbed overalls, a coffee pot, a wagon. Mute objects wait for use to be made of them; all are exempla of human presence; all are figurae, armour against and witness to the irretrievable vulnerability of human life; all are ceremonial objects and have their own dignity.

The danger inherent in critical activity is the danger of appropriation, of becoming what Wyndham Lewis called "a shopper," when "[a]rt is the ultimate necessity the philosopher comes to out of his discomfiture . . . [and when] The finest art . . . is not pure abstraction, nor is it



unorganized life."<sup>75</sup> It is a seeing of the use to which things have been put in a transformed way, that is, it is revelation. Lewis says,

Have your breakfast in the ordinary way, and as a result of your hunger and unconsciousness, on getting up you will find an air of inevitability about the way that various objects, plates, coffee pot, etc., lie about upon the table, that would be very difficult to get consciously. And it would be still more difficult to convince yourself that the deliberate arrangement was natural.

IN THE SAME WAY THAT SAVAGES, ANIMALS AND CHILDREN HAVE A 'RIGHTNESS,' SO HAVE OBJECTS COORDINATED BY UNCONSCIOUS LIFE AND USEFUL ACTION.<sup>76</sup>

The way that natural objects have been transformed to human use is something that also preoccupies the Anglo-Welsh David Jones who, like Wyndham Lewis, is both writer and painter; for him, as well as being signatures of the human, these objects are, because man is essentially "poet," "Maker," "factor," signifiers or insignia of the more than human and the extra-utile. Like Sheila Watson and Wyndham Lewis, David Jones, both in his Anathemata and In Parenthesis has a strong sense of the relationships between people and the things with which they interact. For him, as for them, the absence of mediating rituals that manifest themselves as art-forms means man is driven toward violence and insensibility. The problem for him, as for so many artists of the period of the first World War (which both he and Lewis speak of as "The Break")<sup>77</sup> "had reference to something affecting the entire world of sacrament and sign."<sup>78</sup>

It is the job of the poet "to lift up valid signs; that is his specific task,"<sup>79</sup> but, he asks, "When is a sign not a sign? When is what was valid no longer valid?"<sup>80</sup> Preoccupations of this sort are not whimsical; they are the result of historical matters fraught with consequences that affect what issues from the concern with "sign and what is signified, now-ness and

place-ness and loves and validities of many sorts and kinds."<sup>81</sup> Jones believes it is axiomatic that the artist make things sub specie aeternitatis, but that his works and the works of man generally "can have no for ever" "unless they are 'now' and of 'this place'."<sup>82</sup>

Sheila Watson's ambiguous remark about the notion current at the time she began to work on The Double Hook that writing novels had to be in some "mysterious way international," that is "about something else" makes much the same point from a different perspective. One can't be international if one is not both part of one's own milieu and "stranger" to it because one's milieu is international, inevitably, in Western culture. Furthermore, it is a major inauthenticity as well as a provincialism to pretend that any place in Canada is not international. We are a colonized country and strangers to the culture and myths of the indigenous peoples we live among, or rather who now live among us. Sheila Watson calls herself a "stranger," teaching school in 1934 at Dog Creek (the English translation of its Shuswap name) in the province of British Columbia; even the name of the province is international, combining as it does, the name of the British conquerors of the country and the name of the continent's "discoverer," Columbus.

The school at Dog Creek was situated a short walk from a cave sacred to shamans, and on its walls are figured rock paintings whose mystical significance impresses itself overwhelmingly by virtue of the vast unknowing which the figures open in their (European trained) viewer. Figurae, hieroglyphs, they are fragments of a whole mythical system which has been almost obliterated by the culture that swamped the population with smallpox and other culturally transmitted diseases. The Shuswap shamans are now extinct.

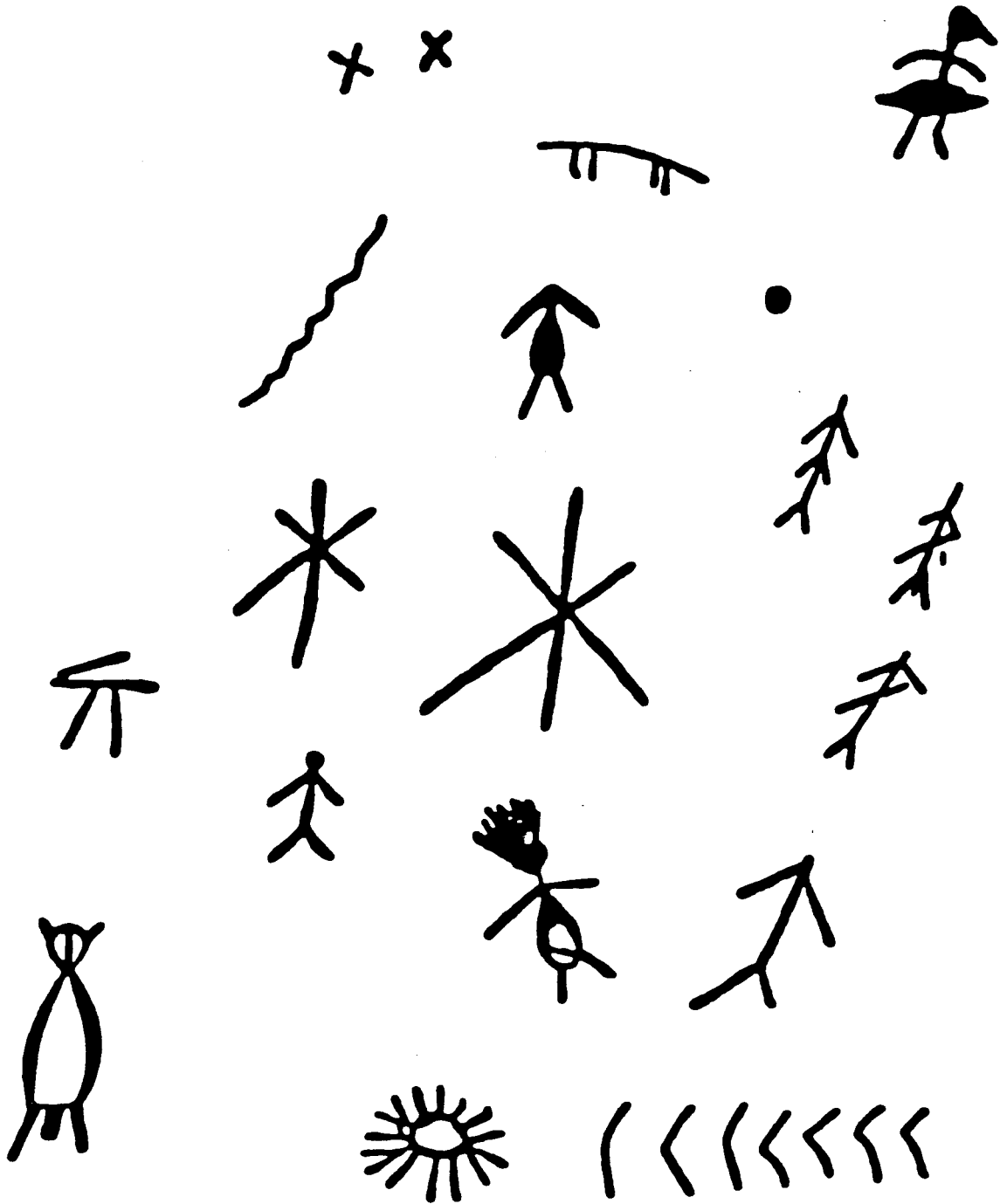


Figure 1. Adapted from Teit, p. 591.

If Sheila Watson saw these figures, she must have been made immediately and intensely aware of precisely the questions that David Jones raises: "When is a sign not a sign? When is what once was valid no longer valid?" What do we do with the absence of a sense of the sacred meanings of things in a culture? We can do a number of things. We can teach; we can take the fragments and make "a heap of all that [we can] find"; we can find ways of transforming those fragments, as makers and teachers and artists; we can record their vestiges (as James Teit does)<sup>83</sup> and we can transform those vestiges (as Sheila Watson does with her Coyote figure); we can leave holes in the texts of our anthropological records that permit space for imaginative inquiry; we can analyze the transformations of their structures, as Levi-Strauss does;<sup>84</sup> We can look at the transformations of linguistic systems into mythological systems which form the signs that are the bases for new mythologies, as Roland Barthes does.<sup>85</sup>

We can indicate the absence, impoverishment, and vulnerability along with the presence, richness and persistence of the forms and fragments of mythic systems that we do have access to and recognize our losses, carrying, by remaking, their luminosity in the mediating forms and rituals of art; we must, if we wish to survive as kin and clan, tribe and species, see the forms of our own "mythologies" as being part of the whole network of mythology that governs, shapes and gives birth to all human fabrication whatsoever. We can only do this if we see that transformation is the essence of what it means to be human, that is to say, a maker of things, and what being human also means is being connected to something that is other than ourselves, other than what we know. We can see transformation taking place, however, only if we know something about the transmission of forms and signs that were once valid for the cultures they informed.

When we do see their validity (and we can only see it in flashes, as James sees "clearly for a moment his simple hope," as Ara sees water "welling up," "issuing from under the burned threshold," as Felix sees his own transfiguration), we find our footing in the illumination and darkness of the lost vision that shows us a via negativa, a way to transfigure those losses that enable them to be reborn as new configurations.

The handful of people that live under the watchful eye of the trickster, shape-shifter Indian Coyote, are themselves a lost remnant, fragments of variously related tribes and cultures as their names indicate: Potter, Wagner, Prosper, Theophil, Kip, Felix, Heinrich, Lenchen, Angel, Greta, James, Ara, William. The etymologies of these names root them in traditions which figure Teutonic, Celtic, Hebraic, Hellenic, North American, Chthonic, Olympian, Christian and Indo-European mythos. An awareness of what these mythical languages hold is present in the language and imagery of The Double Hook. It remembers and teaches us, as Felix's dream teaches him, that we mustn't forget. We must remember and remake and teach each other, and leave such remembering as we can make as inheritances. Names are inheritances. Felix is remembered and split in two at the birth of the new-born child who receives his name. Felix is twice-born, like Dionysus, and remade as felicity.

Sitting beside the girl labouring to give birth, he feels her shaking and biting at his shoulder as she cries. "I want Angel . . . I'm afraid . . . Will it hate to be born?" and "Nobody wants it. . . . It might have a scar like the lash of a whip . . . There's a flower growing against the wall and it's reaching out to cover me." She sobs, "It's me . . . outside in the night. Open the door" (p. 125). This language precisely records what happens to a woman in the transition stages of labour, the trembling and extreme irritation; the mind breaks; one is seized by a "mystery," as the Shuswap

so accurately call any great power that gathers one to it. This broken language also gathers fragments from different parts of the book as well as fragments of myth. It figures Greta as flower-Flora, as Kip explains: "She's thinking of Greta" (p. 125); it recalls herself and the out-cast Mary, calling on Angel, speaking the need for a woman. Her fear is the fear of being buried. As well as being fear for the unwanted child, it is fear of being unwanted herself. Her cries are at once the abducted Persephone's and the sorrowing Demeter's grief for her lost child.

What she sees reminds one of the artificial burial mound from which rises a blossoming tree and over which petals of pansies are scattered in the "Bringing up of Semele" ceremonies pictured on the Anados vases which image the rituals of Gaea worship.<sup>86</sup> They figure an uprising woman under the burial mound, reaching like "a growing shoot"; she is the Earth-Kore who is reborn in Spring. The "green thrust is itself the divine event, the fruit of the marriage at Eleusis. Persephone is in that thrusting tip"<sup>87</sup> as she is present in the perfectly ordinary event of human birth, or of the birth of any kind of new consciousness.

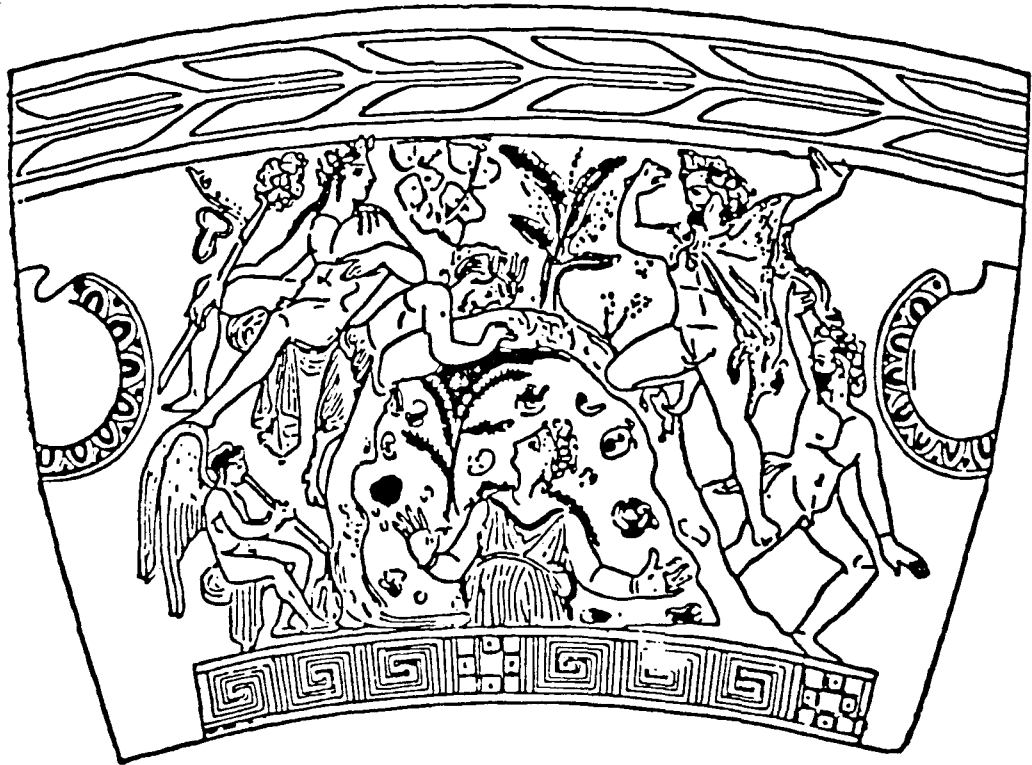


Figure 2: "Bringing Up of Semele"

On the vases which image such ceremonies, satyrs, Hermes Psychopompus, and Dionysus appear--sometimes all together, and sometimes separately. The satyrs sometimes had picks which seem to indicate they have hacked open the ground to help the Earth-Maiden to rise.

We have already seen Lenchen as the doubled and other side of Greta, Artemis, Diana, Hecate, Flora, and her connexion with Venus, Aphrodite, Mary, Helen (whose name is cryptically held in Lenchen's); here, however, Helen is transformed. Instead of being the woman who "wrecks the whole world," as she hyperbolically imagines herself to be, she brings the figures of this novel together in attendance at the birth of the child. The rupturing that is birth is figured in the ruptured writing; the "flower . . . reaching out to cover" Lenchen exfoliates in the many-figured female divinity,

reaffirming and disclosing Demeter and Demeter's daughter rising from what covers her.

At the same time, that divinity contracts and is condensed in Lenchen, whose name is derived from the Indo-European root, leuk--which means light; a Germanic root, liuh, and a Latin root proliferate as well in a network of words that link matters as apparently diverse as pasture land or meadow land drenched with light, Lucina and Lucifer, Loki and lunacy, candle and lamp, lightning, and illumination in all senses of that word, day and deus, Zeus and Diana. The German lengten has to do with the lengthening of days that occurs in the spring, and German Lenz (spring) is related to our word Lent, the season of privation which precedes resurrection as darkness precedes birth.

Just before Angel rides off to get Lenchen's mother, who is still waiting for Heinrich to locate her daughter, Felix, having gone out to the pond with his pail to get water, comes back with it slopped all over himself, saying

I saw James Potter's old mother standing by my brown pool . . . . But she wasn't fishing . . . . Just standing like a tree with its roots reaching out to water (p. 118).

This vision follows upon Ara's and is the last sighting of the old lady in the book. She is not fishing, because she has found what she was looking for: source, origin, birth. The freeing of the waters frees the old fisherwoman; transformed in Felix's pond and in Sheila Watson's language, she becomes one of the earth's ancestral forms--a tree, reaching for what sustains its presence; rooted in the earth, she too waits on the event.

When the girl shuts her eyes, looking "crumpled and worn as an old pillow," Felix thinks of Angel "[d]ark and sinewed as bark. Tough and rooted as thistle. I've never heard her cry" (p. 125), he thinks, and as



he does, he labours to see: "The folds above his eyes contracted" (p. 126). "All centred in on himself," he labours and gives birth to human sympathy, reaches out to take "one of the girl's hands between his thick fingers," for what she has given him: "It was not until the girl had come battering at his peace that he's wondered at all about the pain of a growing root" (p. 124). Here, linked through Lenchen's hand to Lenchen's labour, he suffers himself the rending of flesh, the rending of spirit. He sits on the edge of the bed.

If he could only shed his flesh, moult and feather again, he might begin once more.

His eyelids dropped. His flesh melted. He rose from the bed on soft owl wings. And below he saw his old body crouched down like an ox by the manger (p. 126).

This event is simply a holy event. Exegesis is chatter. In the birth of the child-Felix is the rebirth of the man-Felix. The language which illuminates the miraculous nature of an ordinary birth serves as signifier for all beginnings. The transfiguration of Felix holds the birth of Christ, the birth of Athene, the birth of Sophia, and the double birth of Dionysus. All beginnings inevitably involve us in mythos and in its loss and in our own loss in wonderment.

All beginnings are mysteries, as the chthonic rites at Eleusis were and remain, but I like to think that among the things said and done and shown to the initiates in these mysteries was the birth of a child. Felix's transfiguration is also adoration and bears witness to the thing which is not shown here; or, it is shown only through what happens to him, which is all we know of Eleusis too: the religion of the mother goddess lasted over a thousand years, surviving even in an Olympian patriarchy, and all we know about what actually happened in the inner sanctum of the temple is

darkness and brilliant light and an ear of corn, silently shown. We have only rumours of glory--and darkness too--about what went on there: castration and human sacrifice (perhaps child sacrifice), birth and copulation and death.

We do know of a triumphant shout uttered by the initiates as they were escorted from Athens to Eleusis by the sacred image of Iacchos: "iacche." Iacchos, the god, seems to have originated as the personification of the shout but, gradually, he developed into a young male attendant of Demeter and Persephone, and

became more and more assimilated to Dionysus . . . .  
It could not be truly said that Dionysus penetrated into the cult of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis, but the great procession from Athens became as much a triumphant march of Iacchos as a return of the goddesses' 'Holy Things.'<sup>87a</sup>

A curious rite took place at a bridge along the way to the temple at Eleusis; a yellow woollen thread was tied around an ankle of each initiate. Parke seems to think the thread was magically protective, but perhaps it is symbolically related to the cord attached to one of the hind legs of the sacrificial bull, and the fetter worn on the ankle of the weather king Salmoneus, a pseudo-god connected with fertility rituals. Jane Harrison calls him a disguised Kronos, since Kronos was also a fettered god. The statue of Saturn, furthermore,<sup>87b</sup> slipped its woollen fetter once a year at the Saturnalia. The fetter strikes me, however, because of its connexions with sacrifice, Saturnalia and fertility rites, as one which indicates that the initiates were made over to the goddesses; it suggests a symbolic sacrifice, marks those who offer themselves, and is one of a kind with other marks of self-sacrifice: the ministerial collar, the armbands of ancient warrior groups. The joyful cry "iacche," then, may be the victims' response to this binding over of themselves to what the goddesses figured.

In the myths surrounding Demeter, she, like the people Jeremiah says have defiled the Lord's house, passes a child through the flames, lays Triptolemus in the ashes. Heinrich knows "he must become an ash and be born into a light which burned but did not destroy." Demeter, had she not been interrupted by the child's mother, would have made him immortal. Ovid's story of the wanderings of Ceres (Demeter) makes the goddess say the words of the priest in the Roman Mass: "Go in peace," to the father of Triptolemus, whom she restores to life with a kiss of peace.<sup>88</sup>

Mythos is lost in mystery and wonderment and questions without answers, or whose only answers are the forms in which we figure them; the forms of art inevitably involve us in the forms of mythos. David Jones says there is a "specific factor" which is the "particular quarry" of the artist.

Perhaps we can say that the country to be hunted, the habitat of that quarry where the 'forms' lurk that he's after, will be found to be part of a vast, densely wooded, inherited and entailed domains. It is in that 'sacred wood' that the spoor of those 'forms' is to be tracked. The 'specific factor' to be captured will be pungent with the smell of, asperged with the dew of, those thickets. The venator poeta cannot escape that tangled brake. It is within such a topography that he will feel forward, from a check to a find, from a find to a view, from a view to a possible kill: in the morning certainly, but also in the lengthening shadows.

. . . there is, in the principle that informs the poetic art, a something which cannot be disengaged from the mythus, deposits, matière, ethos, whole res of which the poet is himself a product.

. . . we cannot answer the question 'What is poetry?' (meaning, What is the nature of poetry?) without some involvement in this mythus, deposits, etc.

. . . it goes without saying . . . that the question 'What is the material of poetry?' cannot be answered without some mention of these same deposits.<sup>89</sup>

The Double Hook is made of literal ground, dirt, earth and Earth, with its mythic deposits. The forms of female divinity and the forms of

the female figurae in this novel are the many faces of one female form. It dies and is reborn as the old lady passes through the flames in her daughter's doom, as it gives birth to vision in Ara, as it is reborn in Felix when he gives birth to his own soul-bird--owl Athene or sorceress;<sup>90</sup> and when Lenchen gives birth to her own being in delivering her child, it returns in one of its many forms--a tree, rooted in the waters of its own continuous upwelling.

The old lady, murdered by her son on the first page of this novel and resurrected on the second, who continues to fish upstream to the source, is one of these formal manifestations. But Sheila Watson makes of her also the sign for all the dispersed and occulted fractions of the divine female that are multiplied in the diverse and dying cultures of the world. She is the glyph of origin, cut into origin itself; the earth, searching for origin. Her marking of the baked lake bottom is the signature of the beginnings of all that is made or created: the world; the world of the mind; myth; art; this novel itself, a sign of the beginning of a counter-myth that deconstructs the exfoliated mythologies in order to return to source.

When we recall Robert Kroetsch's recognition that "ground" is "dirt," "the stuff of which 'place' is made," "that which is before the self, even," together with this novel's beginning, "In the folds of the hills," we are drawn to notice both that this place is female body and that this body is layered, has undergone catastrophic shifts, and requires archē-ology.

The geography of this place progressively makes of the terrain a generative body. The figures in turn regard the "arms of the hills," "the ribs of the hills," "the shoulders of the hills," "the brow of the hill," "the foot of the slope," "the arms of the river," "the backs of the hills," and "the mouth of the valley." Lenchen hears "the breath of it in the pause.

The swift indrawing. The silence of the contracting muscle" (p. 41). James sees the hills "pegged like tanned skin to the rack of their own bones" (p. 127). On his return home after his descent to the town, he passes through a "skyless slit" of the ravine. Kip sees the old lady "climb down through the split rock with Coyote, her fishes stiff in her hand" (p. 47), and Angel reports that "Kip seen Coyote carry her away like a rabbit in his mouth" (p. 57).

Clearly, the generative possibility is here. Significantly, there are no nurturing breasts in this sterile wasteland.<sup>91</sup> The sightings of the old lady are themselves double figurae, in that Coyote inhabits the place that is both birth and death. The way that he carries the old lady into the hills is an ambiguity that makes of her both kit and carrion. She is apparently reborn from the cleft rock, with her fish offerings stiff in her hand.

The old lady and her daughter do belong to an old order. Their deaths, since they are governed by human historicity, are necessary, unavoidable. The persistence of the perverse forms of their power in the world, however, tells us of the necessity of their return as transformed inflexions of being--for that is what gender is--grammatically, biologically, and mythologically. In myth and in the womb, female precedes male, is origin; and we (male and female alike) forget that at our peril. That is another perspective this world of shattered and shifting perspectives makes us see. The female figures in the curved space and ruptured syntax of this novel, which is a site for mother-murder, do battle precisely with the light that shines as a shaft of glory (like Zeus's light which overwhelms Leda), as they struggle to release the light that shines in them. The broken features of the many planes of its surface also baffle the incandescent light that shines against the configurations of the ultimate mother:

the earth. In that battle, things are born: a baby, for instance; this book.

Greta's death makes itself a figure of fiery glory. It is a flaming fury of baffled desire that spells female defiance and defeat. It corresponds with Zeus's, and like his, it devours flesh--her own. Zeus's devours others'. Selene-Semele, the mother of Dionysus, is consumed by the glory of Zeus, burnt by his fire. He takes her child from her dead body and implants it in his own thigh; hence, Dionysus is twice born. Torn to pieces by his Maenad followers, who express the same fury Greta does, he is resurrected in Hades as Dionysus-Zagreus. There is also a kind of displaced resurrection figured in Greta's death, though the direction is the reverse of the Dionysian one: the doomed and rebellious house, which reminds us of the house of Atreus as well as of Jeremiah's "potter's house," burns to the ground, but instead of Greta fleshed and sinewed, standing in the ruins, the issue of its burning is water; from it spring the shining fish, leaping like couretes in the slanting light.

Greta's defeat has its own formal dignity and necessity, as if, in Aeschylus's phrase, "From the gods who sit in grandeur/grace comes somehow violent."<sup>92</sup> When "necessity's yoke is put upon" her, she is transformed in spite of our sense that from her "heart the breath came bitter/and sacriligious, utterly infidel,/to warp a will now to be stopped at nothing."<sup>93</sup> Greta is both like and unlike Agememnon, whose sacrifice of his daughter and whose transformation that deed brings about in him these words describe; the virgin she sacrifices to Artemis is herself. She pays for her crimes against life with her own life, and there is a kind of grandeur in her that is ancient. She, like the Eumenides, has some justification for her fury, if we view her from the perspective that

sees an old order violated, particularly when that archaic order speaks origin, as "the old lady" of The Double Hook does.

Gods of the younger generation, you have ridden down  
the laws of the elder time, torn them out of my hands.  
I, disinherited, suffering, heavy with anger  
shall let loose upon the land  
the vindictive poison  
dripping deadly out of my heart upon the ground.  
What shall I do? Afflicted  
I am mocked by these people.  
I have borne what can not  
be borne. Great the sorrow and the dishonour upon  
the sad daughters of the night.<sup>94</sup>

The song of the Eumenides sounds very much like Greta's complaints to Angel and Ara. The Eumenides are called the Children of Night in Hesiod's Theogony, and they are a very ancient order indeed; in the chthonic religion that precedes the reign of the Olympians, they are the descendents of the third created thing: following upon Earth's creation is the creation of Eros (Desire), then Darkness, then Night. In the reign of the gods of "elder time," they were called "the friendly ones," not "the angry ones" as Hesiod names them. Hesiod's account of the genealogy of the gods records a gradual debilitation of a gynocratic order, traced in a progression that marks the overthrow of a natural order by an anthropocentric one; gynocracy is replaced by patriarchy; a regenerative order is overthrown by violence, which eventually establishes the political domination of Zeus's order by the sexual subordination of the female. Gaea and Zeus are the Alpha and Omega of Hesiod's cosmic history.

"In the beginning" of Hesiod's account is Chaos ( < Greek khaos, "empty space," intimately akin to khasma, "Abyss," "a vast cleft in the earth" < Indo-European root kha, "to gape"). Chaos gives birth to Earth, Gaea, who reproduces parthenogenically, giving birth first to Uranus, the god of the sky, and last (in this first generation of children)

to Kronos. Earth begins her regeneration without consort and then incestuously, with her son and husband, Uranus, with whom she produces the child that is to overthrow him. The history of the rebellious house of Atreus is a political and human replication of Greek Theogony. But in the early stages of the earth's origin, the battle is waged in and on the body of the mother, and it is waged in sexual terms.

The first patriarch prevents Gaea's children from being born by thrusting them back in her body; groaning in travail because of the aborted birthing, Gaea persuades her youngest son to castrate his father. The blood that spills into the earth when Kronos accomplishes his aim, springs from Gaea's body as the Furies who are thus not the mother's vengeance on the father for her own murder, but the product of the father's attempt to abort his and Earth's children, to prevent generation. The generative organs of Uranus, falling into the sea, produce the first female born of the father alone: Aphrodite, who "presides over the whispers and smiles and deceits which girls employ, and the sweet delight and tenderness of love"<sup>95</sup> In her contrast with Gaea, Aphrodite is divine symbol and embodiment of female dependence and sexual subordination. When Kronos manifests the same despotic tendencies as his father by consuming each of his children as it is born of Rhea (who, as earth, is the replication of Gaea), the more ancient divinity intervenes and saves Zeus by substituting a stone for the child, and a titanic battle follows that tears asunder the mother's body.

Zeus's reign marks the end of Gaea's. He surpasses both his grandfather and his father in his cunning; instead of thrusting his children back into the mother's body or swallowing them, he marries female Wisdom (Metis) and swallows her while she is pregnant, and he gives birth to Athene



(who is practical, guiding wisdom) through his own forehead. In this second birth of a woman from her father is figured the intellectual domination of female intellectual supremacy. As Aphrodite figures sexual subordination, Athene figures intellectual subordination. Apollo, in defense of Orestes' killing of Clytaemnestra, says:

The mother is no parent of that which is called her  
child; but only nurse of the new-planted seed that  
grows. The parent is he who mounts. A stranger  
she  
preserves a stranger's seed . . . .<sup>96</sup>

In uttering these astonishing words, Apollo cites Athene as his "living witness"; daughter of Zeus, "she . . . was never fostered in the dark of the womb . . . ." <sup>97</sup> Athene agrees in terms that make her allegiance and subordination clear:

There is no mother anywhere who gave me birth,  
and, but for marriage, I am always for the male  
with all my heart, and strongly on my father's side.  
So, in a case where the wife has killed her husband  
lord  
of the house, her death shall not mean most to me.<sup>98</sup>

She thus saves Orestes from the avenging Furies who are enraged not only by this matricide, but by the ancient mother-murder:

I, the mind of the past, to be driven under  
the ground  
outcast, like dirt!  
The wind I breathe is fury and utter hate.  
Earth, ah, earth  
what is this agony that crawls under my ribs?<sup>99</sup>

Here the Eumenides speak the abortion of female intelligence in metaphor that is both biological and intellectual. Henceforth, the wisdom of origin and origin itself is buried, made unconscious; it becomes Other. It is preserved in the form of the chthonic rituals that are hidden from our sight, but which all that we know of Eleusis keeps sacred.

The Double Hook reverses that process. The mind of the past must be ridden down in another way. James, thinking to run from what haunts him--his own guilt--must reverse the Olympian domination. He, like Orestes, flees the wrath of the avenging fury and domination of his sister, only to discover, when a girl's hand frees him from freedom, that his simple hope lies in returning to the place of his crime, not fleeing it. For he recognizes that "out of his corruption life had leafed and he'd stepped on it carelessly as a man steps on spring shoots" (p. 127). I have already noted that Lenchen's name figures spring and the season of penitence. James, penitent, must face his fear and descend through the darkness, tempted not only by false hopes of escape and false hopes of felicity, but by Coyote's voice:

Where is your hope?  
 Better go down to the bars of the pit  
 Better rest in the dust.  
 Justice is swifter than water (p. 122).

He must trust the horse, his unconscious animal self, that instinctively turns toward home. It carries him over the mother body "onto the shoulders of the hills," "through a meadow of wild hay watered by some hidden spring." Over the rising and falling hills they ride until the "descent on the other side," where the sound of the horse's feet "parting the water" which in the "skyless slit" is "opaque and formless," like the beginning of Hesiod's cosmos and like Genesis. Shutting his eyes, James "fasten[s] his free hand in his horse's mane"; he lets go of Olympian will and rides through the chasm of Chaos that is the beginning of birth, trusting, in utter darkness and fear, only the animal's sense of direction. "As they [climb] again, the horse seem[s] to draw life with every breath," holding "close to the rock where nothing but the feel of stone mark[s] the fall below" (p. 122).

His return to the scene of his corruption is a sudden release into space, "nothing but blank smouldering space" (p. 131), and two beckoning figures greet him.

He shut his eyes. In his mind now he could see only the seared and smouldering earth, the bare hot cinder of a still unpeopled world. He felt as he stood with his eyes closed on the destruction of what his heart had wished destroyed that by some generous gesture he had been turned once more into the first pasture of things (p. 131).

The empty space is the space of James's beginning again on the burned and purified ground of what he had desecrated.

The terror of the shifting ground which has been the site of his deliverance is warranted because the ground is also mythic ground, and the layers of it undergo catastrophic shifts; things get destroyed in it. And that ground, if we are to renew it and return it to origin, that is to say, the revelatory, must be transfigured. Mythic forms do alter their positions, slide sideways, and deposits from different layers come into view, merge with each other, and thrust up to the surface, figurae from different contexts; the changing textures make different texts, so Coyote, the Indian god, can speak the words of the Song of Solomon when Greta performs her Greek (and Celtic and Indian) rite.<sup>100</sup>

The Widow Wagner too must shift her ground. She has waited and waited, "moved about the house shifting a chair, a dish, a pile of clothing." Finally, she performs an archaeological task herself. Going to the wooden box in which she keeps the stored up deposits of years, she opens the lid like Pandora and releases time and years of saving up things: the inheritance that was to have been handed down, "cloth of her own spinning, cloth left over from the time when she had made her own children's clothes." Digging into the layers, she takes out her husband's watch which "she'd

meant to give to the boy" and recognized she'd "meant" too many things.

What is time, she thought, but two hands shaking us from sleep. Fifty years or twenty. Forty years in the wilderness. What help a bed and a good goose pillow?

Forty years, she said. Then she put the watch back into the box and closed the lid.

She picked up the cloth and went down to the kitchen. She spread the cloth on the table and took the shears out of the drawer. And out of the cloth she cut a baby's singlet (p. 116).

"Widow" means "to divide" or "to separate," and the terms in which the Widow speaks of herself make her the Magdalene: she has spent "forty years in the wilderness," divided from herself and her children, saving up old hopes, old mythologies. The cloth the Widow's scissors cuts into is the seamless garment of Christ, but also "the eternal pattern spied out by Plato as he rummaged about in the sewing basket of the gods"; it is a "prefabricated and perfect chrysolite . . . [a] paradigm which [makes] love round and whole . . . which leave[s] destruction in the purgatorial ditches outside [the walls of] paradise."<sup>101</sup>

To divide is to begin to make the seamless garment new. To restore the fabric of myth to its original power, to reveal the presence of the word in the world, it is necessary to cut and reshape and break and remake the mythological paradigm. We, like the Widow, are in danger of becoming fixed and complacent; our views and our vision need to be startled into new recognitions. The Widow seems to acknowledge this by cutting into "cloth of her own spinning"; her scissors, like Sheila Watson's, turn against atrophied form to cut into Klotho's spinning as operations of chance or grace take effect in the twisting fingers of Lachesis. Angel, Ara and the Widow Wagner, riding in the Widow's son's wagon which is heaped with quilts and a feather bolster for Lenchen's birthing, are a contemporary

remaking of the triple goddess figure. There is something Greek in the Widow's, "Dear God . . . , shall I be drawn to death by my own son's team? (p. 128) It reminds us, by reversing it, of the story of Hippolytus. It reminds, too, of Hesiod, and of the event that began this book. Angel tells Ara to touch the horses up and takes the whip out of the socket. "What if they bolt?" Ara says, tightening the reins; reminding us of James's bolting, she balks, but Angel tells her to loose the lines or they'll snap, saying "You can't urge and hold a thing at the same time" (p. 128).

The delicate tension of language required to do just this maintains itself over the course of this whole book, as here, where a farm wagon becomes chariot-like with "The horses broke into a trot. They tossed their manes and lifted their feet" (p. 128). What happens here serves as a figura of Sheila Watson's method of writing: it is disciplined to release grace. This figura should be set beside her professor's description of how one makes a work of art; the difference in methods becomes immediately apparent, as do the different results: three women in a farm wagon become or are or always were the same thing as, are consubstantial with, the Norse goddesses that travel the countryside in a wagon making visitations to houses when children are born,<sup>102</sup> are transformations of the shape-shifting warrior-fertility goddesses of Celtic myth and the Greek and Latin chariot-riding goddesses. The three figures in the wagon also figure the merging of mythic systems. In their transformation and condensation of their predecessors' stories, they form another kind of threshold. This novel knows that the latches of the doors that open into beginnings and permit passagings and passengers of all kinds need oil, that awareness of the presence of the miraculous in the ordinary realities of our lives has been obscured by rusted and fixed perception which inhibits passage. The Widow Wagner's "Dear God . . . the latch needs oil," seems to figure, comically, her passage

across a threshold as she promises Angel that her "making" will not be troubling.

One cannot say the same thing of what Sheila Watson's scissors make; the whole book is a disturbance of the configurations of received mythologies. Each figure of this work is disturbed as it merges with its mythic masks. Ara's vision is troubled as water leaks up from the earth like death; James, seeing "shadows of the clouds passing over the water as the shadow of the branches had lain for a moment on Lenchen's throat" seems to become aware of the shadow of death passing over everything, but when that happens, he sees that "all he'd done was scum rolled up to the top of a pot by the boiling motion beneath" (pp. 98-99). That awareness is an accurate and necessary prelude to his turning again toward home. The newly born child will put on suffering with his baby clothes, and will need "a straight back" "to carry round what the world will load on his shoulders" (p. 133). As Ara says, "Right and wrong don't make much difference . . . . We don't choose what we will suffer. We can't even see how suffering will come" (p. 119). The elevated child at the end of the novel, lifted, like the host, is holocaust, the Child in the House of Bread. In the moment of being born, he becomes sacrificial victim, marked for death. Word and word and world are one in this respect, in this book of beginnings. That knowledge is what we must begin with. This birth tells us how men might begin again--not in violation of generation or in violence against the mother, but, but as the baby's birth assistant, Felix-Phoenix-Dionysus does--by midwifery which sympathizes and, in sympathy, gives birth to its own female forms of wisdom; thus it relinquishes the hold which Olympian will and violence have on the world.

What the world will load on this infant Atlas's shoulders is the darkness of all beginnings. As each of the figurae emerges into a newborn

consciousness of what matters, he or she begins again, and that beginning, like birth, is a great disturbance. The rock of ages cleft for any one of us is the mother's body; the cleft place in which we all have our beginnings is also the space between earth and sky in which we live and move and have our being. It is our ending too--the chasm that opens to receive us at last. Chaos is the gaping space, the gateway and rent place from which all things issue: origin is illumination and darkness; its single root has a double flowering.

The ancient beginning gap of Icelandic myth, the "laughless rock" of Eleusis, the folds of the hills in which the book begins, and the cleft rock from which the voice of Coyote cries at the end all speak origin and generation.

I have set his feet on soft ground;  
I have set his feet on the sloping shoulders  
of the world (p. 134).

In the space between the book's beginning and end, earth becomes world as each of the figures is lifted into the light, save Theophil, who lies curled up in the darkness with sleep "pulled . . . about him like an empty sack" (p. 127), like a foetus waiting to be born, or an insensible corpse. He is Morpheus dreaming, perhaps, the empty sign, the outside and other and underneath of the text, the space of divinity waiting to be filled.

The same gesture which offers James's child to the world offers this novel's transfigured vision of word and world and, as it does, "it is as if the whole area lifted." <sup>103</sup>

REFERENCES



## REFERENCES

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3. Throughout this essay, my sources for word derivations and etymologies draw upon Eric Partridge, Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966) and on The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary of the English Language, ed. William Morris (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975).
4. Robert Kroetsch, quoted by Peter Thomas, "Keeping Mum: Kroetsch's Alberta," Journal of Canadian Fiction 2 (Spring, 1973) p. 55.
5. Open Letter, p. 183.
6. Sheila Watson, "The Great War: Wyndham Lewis and the Underground Press," Open Letter, p. 64.
7. Sheila Watson, "Myth and Counter-Myth," Open Letter, p. 120.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
9. Fredric Jameson, Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 96.
10. While I have read and been informed by the several articles and reviews cited in my bibliography, there will be but a few direct references to them in footnotation. Previous critical studies are undeniably concerned with real and crucial elements in the text of The Double Hook, but here I attempt to see the book afresh, freed from certain established critical assumptions and attempting a critical method that addresses the text more as archeology than as explication. That is to say, I have attempted to attend to the text as an illuminated surface that renders its deposits visible.
11. Interestingly, Sheila" is Irish for "Celia" > Latin caecus: "blind." Its Indo-European root Kaiko means "one-eyed." Coyote has only one natural eye; the other got lost after one of his many deaths and resurrections and was replaced by a pebble. Odin also has only one eye, as do the Cyclopes, as does Balor, the Fomarion opponent of the Tuatha De Danaan of Irish Celtic myth. Balor, like Goliath, was blinded by a slingstone. The hurler of the stone was an Irish culture hero, as David was a Hebrew culture hero; Lug was, furthermore, a master of all skills: carpenter, smith, warrior, harper, poet, historian, and sorcerer.

12. Sheila Watson, "Brother Oedipus," Four Stories (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1979).
13. Aeschylus, "The Libation Bearers," Oresteia, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 131.
14. Ibid.
15. John Keats, "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," ll. 8-14, in English Romantic Writers, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), p. 1135. I am indebted to Prof. Robert Dunham for his insight into the concrete basis for the apparent abstractions with which the sonnet concludes.
16. John Jones, On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), pp. 29-46. I am greatly indebted to Prof. Robin Blaser for calling my attention to this very important work.
17. Erich Auerbach, "Figura," Scenes from the Drama of European Literature (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), p. 12. Those who have read Auerbach's essay will recognize how informed I have been by his definitive discussion of figurae.
18. Ibid., p. 18
19. George Whalley, Poetic Process (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953). Prof. Whalley's discussion of "symbolic extrication" and "paradigmatic events" (pp. 104-115), strongly informs my view and discussion of The Double Hook. Compare, also, the final paragraph of his chapter on "Symbol and Myth":

So profound and urgent is the need for myth, that a myth remains fluid, ready always to accommodate whatever is germinal and clarifying, quick to reject what has become inert or sterile. The true myth never hardens into a crystallized system. The personal myth preserves its integrity in an infinity of variations and resonant combinations; the incandescent centre of emphasis falls now on this symbol, now on that; and with each fresh arrangement, each gracious combination of personal symbols, the flow of evoked images, words, sounds is modulated to serve the compelling integrity of the myth. The myth hangs dove-like over the chaos of memory, calling to what creatures it knows not; and those creatures--though they do not know their names, though they do not understand the language in which the cry is uttered--come forth into the light, answering unuttered names, dancing in grave style to the compulsion of a tune, 'ditties of no tone' perhaps, a heart-beat, a rhythm. In the process of integral fusion each individual element preserves its identity and is changed, yet 'abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative.' The primitive and civilized, the communal and the private, the primordial and the personal, the accidental and the permanent, join in a ritual dance gesturing forth the present epiphany, while the poet relives and revives a past in the present from which already a future is taking shape (p. 189).

20. Sheila Watson, "What I'm Going to Do," Open Letter, p. 181.
21. Sheila Watson, "Myth and Counter-Myth," Open Letter, p. 121.
22. William Butler Yeats, "Easter 1916," l. 16, in Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1971).
23. Robert Creeley, "The Creative," Sparrow 6 (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, March 1973) unpaginated.
24. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1960), p. 211.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
26. Sheila Watson, "The Rumble Seat," Four Stories, p. 57.
27. Robert Creeley, "Was That a Real Poem Or Did you Just Make It Up Yourself," Sparrow 40 (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1976), unpaginated.
28. Sheila Watson, "What I'm Going To Do," Open Letter, p. 183.
29. *Ibid.*
30. T. S. Eliot, "What the Thunder Said," The Waste Land and Other Poems (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962), pp. 42-46.
31. Cf. Sheila Watson, "Antigone," Four Stories.
32. Sheila Watson's short story achieves a similar effect when it shows us an alcoholic brother rooting about in the earth at the base of a willow tree, looking for the bottle he has buried. His sister describes the tree as "Persephone's shrub," and says, "the thing is probably rooted in hell." The brother responds, "I rather suspect . . . that it is rooted in our mother's drain." The brother is named Oedipus which makes Jocasta a suburban matron whose animosity toward her son is focussed on the fact that Persephone's bush is destroying her drains. Such reversals and transformations, fantastically enough, do reveal how mountains made of molehills drive people to drink and darkness and madness and death. Compare "Brother Oedipus" (pp. 7-18) to "The Rumble Seat" (pp. 49-62) in Sheila Watson, Four Stories.
33. David Jones, The Anathemata (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 243.
34. *Ibid.*
35. David Jones, "Preface," The Anathemata, p. 9.
36. Sheila Watson, "Brother Oedipus," Four Stories, p. 8.
37. W. B. Yeats, "Crazy Jane Talks With the Bishop," II. 17-18.

38. Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. xx.
39. New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, p. 257.
40. Matthew 13: 18-23 and Luke i:5-15.
41. Luke 8:10-15.
42. John Grube, Introduction to The Double Hook by Sheila Watson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 6.
43. Rev. Vincent Gilbertson, O.S.B., The Holy Mass: Popularly Explained, trans. Very Rev. Eugene Vandeur, O.S.B. (London: Burns Oates and Washburn, 1928), p. 11.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 90. The silence of the priest during the Secret occurs also in the Roman Mass near the beginning of the Ordinary. Following the Priest's "Oremus," neither he nor the assembled offer an oratio or prayer. Something has disappeared from this place; there is a chasm where prayers were once offered for the ordinary needs of the Church, for peace, for the whole hierarchy of its membership down to ascetics, virgins, widows, the sick, the poor, prisoners, travellers and sailors, heretics, schismatics, Jews and pagans. This series of intentions occurs repeatedly in the daily liturgies of the Eastern churches. Only on Good Friday are these prayers offered in the Roman Liturgy, though there is little in their tenor that connects them especially with the Passion or Easter. The silence, however, permits secret prayers to be offered just prior to the Offertory proper.
45. John 1:1, 1:5 and 1:14.
46. Sheila Watson, "Myth and Counter-Myth," Open Letter, p. 121.
47. Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology (New York: Viking Press, 1959), p. 232.
48. Robert Graves, Introduction to New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology (London: Prometheus Press, 1968), p. 2.
49. John Peck, "Pound's Lexical Mythography: King's Journey and Queen's Eye," Paideuma 1 (Spring and Summer, 1972), pp. 3-36.
50. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, cited by Michael Ondaatje, "Bus to Aracataca," in Figures in a Ground: Canadian Essays on Modern Literature Collected in Honor of Sheila Watson, eds. Diane Bessai and David Jackel (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), p. 29.
51. Claude Levi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 333.
52. New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, pp. 121-123.

53. Sheila Watson, "Antigone," Four Stories, p. 43.
54. Vincent Vycinas, Earth and Gods: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 183.
55. Beverley Mitchell S.S.A., "Association and Allusion in The Double Hook," Journal of Canadian Fiction 2 (Winter, 1973), p. 73.
56. Robert Creeley, cited by Charles Olson, "Projective Verse," Human Universe and Other Essays, ed. Donald Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 52.
57. T. S. Eliot, "Journey of the Magi," ll. 37-39 in The Waste Land and Other Poems.
58. James Alexander Teit, The Shuswap, The Jesup North Pacific Expedition, Vol. II, Part VII, ed. Franz Boas (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1909), pp. 574-75, 603. Teit notes that kinnikinic leaves are mixed with the tobacco brought by whites when the Shuswap engage in their sacred smoking ceremonies. The bush, we might conjecture, seems to have power to neutralize the white pollutant of the material used in the sacrament.
59. H. W. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 159.
60. Ibid., p. 162.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 147.
63. Sheila Watson, "Myth and Counter-Myth," Open Letter, p. 130.
64. Jane Ellen Harrison, Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion and Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1969), pp. xvii-L.
65. David Jones, Preface to The Anthemata, pp. 28-29.
66. Cf. Jane Ellen Harrison, Chapter VI, passim.
67. Fredric Jameson, Fables of Aggression, p. 172.
68. Ibid., p. 173.
69. Ibid., p. 176.
70. Ibid., p. 177.
71. Cf. Teit on the old lady resurrected from the dead in Shuswap mythology:

The Alkali Lake band had not performed their ceremonial dance for many years, when an aged woman fell into a trance; and the people, thinking she was dead, carried her away some

distance, and laid her on the ground, covering her over with some old mats and a pile of fir-brush, in the manner that poor people were buried. Eight days afterwards the people were surprised to hear her singing, and some of them went to investigate. She said to them, "I am not dead. I have been to the land of souls, and the chief has sent me back with a message to the people. Let the people assemble, and I will give it to you." For several days the people flocked there, until a large concourse from all the northern and western bands had assembled. She said to them, "I saw all your dead friends. They are happy and dance, and sing many strange songs." Then she gave the names of the people whom she had seen,--many of them persons of whom she could not possibly have had any knowledge on earth. She continued, "The chief gave me several new songs, such as are sung by the shades, and sent me back to earth to teach them to you, and also to show you the proper way to dance. The chief said that the people on earth should sing and dance like the people of the spirit-land, so that they may become like them as far as possible." Then the people danced in circles in the same manner as the Thompson Indians, and she stood in the centre and directed them. She said, "You must all dance in pairs, each man with one woman. It is wrong for a young man or a young woman to dance alone. Young people must dance in couples, holding each other's belts, and in this way choose each other for husband and wife. The chief told me no bachelor man or maiden woman of age will be received by him. Their souls will be turned into animals. All the people of marriageable age who have died single since the beginning of the world have been changed into animals. Therefore all young people who do not wish to meet the same fate must marry, and marry as early as possible." The people danced eight dances that day. The woman described the land of shades, and sang all her new songs. They were like the songs of the souls. The dancing was kept up with great energy for several days, and after the people dispersed they continued to dance every few days at their homes for several months. Afterwards they repeated the dance from time to time. The woman said she had been given the name Tazle'k by the chief, and henceforth people called her by that name. She lived many years afterwards, and could fall into a trance and go to the land of souls whenever she desired. Hostile shamans had no power over her. She could prophesy and tell who was going to die, and at what time. She would sometimes mention a person's name, even that of a Lillooet or Thompson Indian whom the people did not know, saying, "He entered the spirit-land last night. I saw his soul." Upon inquiry, the people would learn that a person of that name had really died. Each time she brought a message or a new song from the spirit-land, she assembled the people and held dances. Once she brought a message, saying the chief had told her it was better for men to have two wives (pp. 604-605).

73. Ironically, the source of this quotation, which I copied carefully years ago, but did not document, is now lost in the mists of my own memory. I would be grateful to anyone who knows its origin, if he or she would provide me with that information.
74. David Jones, Preface to The Anathemata, p. 24.
75. Sheila Watson, "The Great War: Wyndham Lewis and the Underground Press," Open Letter, p. 70.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
77. David Jones, Preface to The Anathemata, p. 15.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
83. The translation of the Shuswap name for Dog Creek reveals both a mythological and a linguistic duplicity. Present day practical orthography used by North American linguists and by the Shuswap transcribes it *xgét'tm* and translates it "Deep Valley." James Teit who lived among the people he wrote about in 1909 called them the "people of the deep hollow." Teit records that the population of the Dog Creek band was reduced after the smallpox epidemics of 1882 and 1883 from over two hundred in 1850 to seventeen by 1902 (Teit, p. 464). The valley must have looked something like the Valley of Slaughter, since whole villages were wiped out; there must not have been enough living or healthy people to bury the dead. The Shuswap still call the place "Dog Creek" and attribute the name to a pack of wild dogs that once lived there which used to attack people. In view of what Teit records of "The Cannibal Dance" and the "Crazy Dog Dance," I suspect the story disguises ritual which bears traces of a sophisticated mythological system and shows a remarkable resemblance to what we know of the practices of the devotees of Orpheus and Dionysus. The performances Teit describes also have parallels with those of tragedy, or at least with the rites which were the predecessors of tragedy, which tragedy's performance preserves. Cf. Teit:

Among all the Shuswap bands of Fraser River, as far south as Alkali Lake or Dog Creek, were men who danced the Dog dance (No. 12). They formed a group by themselves, called the Tseka'ma which name was also applied to their dances. The song of their dances was called the Tseka'ma Song. These people were also called Dogs, Crazy Dogs, Dog-Dancers, and Wolves. Their dance was sometimes called the Dog dance, or the Crazy dance, and their dance-song the Dog Song or Wolf Song. Their dance was generally opened by one man clad in

wolf-skins, who sang the song and danced in a circle in the midst of the people; a chorus of the Dog Society, who were seated on a platform, joining in the song, and accompanying it with drums, beating of sticks, and shaking of rattles. The dancer soon became very excited, shook his head from side to side, and cried and acted like a dog or wolf. At last he became like a madman, and acted violently, hitting and scratching the spectators, throwing water on them, and breaking everything within reach. When he was at the height of his fury, another man dressed in wolf-skins appeared, leading a dog, and he also danced. Then the first dancer attacked the dog, tore it in pieces, and devoured it. Then the second dancer became excited, and joined the first one in devouring the dog. The chorus took up the excitement, and, leaving their places, the members danced behind the actors, each with a wolf-scalp on his head, the rest of the skin and tail hanging down behind. They flourished their batons, shook their rattles, and beat their drums fiercely, singing at the tops of their voices. Finally the spectators were drawn in, and joined in the dance, clapping their hands violently, and singing loudly. After a while the dance ceased and the singing subsided through sheer exhaustion. Meanwhile the Tseka'ma all disappeared. Anything broken or destroyed during the performance had to be paid for by the people giving the dance.

Sometimes the Tseka'ma danced the Dog dance differently. The people sat in a circle, leaving a large open space in the middle. The singers sat at one end, and commenced the Dog Song in a low key. Two quarters of raw venison were buried under the floor of the lodge,--at one end, and another at the opposite end. Soon after the singing commenced, a man with a wolf-skin on his head appeared, leading another man dressed in skins, who represented a dog or wolf. The man began to sing, and led the supposed dog round the circle several times. The man acting like the dog became very fierce, and snapped at the people, sometimes biting them. His excitement increased, he took the scent of the venison, and finally located one of the quarters, which he dug up with his hands in the manner of a dog. He dragged it away and devoured it, attacking and biting any people who came near him. When he had finished, he looked very fierce, his face and hands being covered with blood. In his eagerness to attack and bite the people, he dragged the man around who was holding him. At last he found the other quarter of venison; and when he was devouring it, he was at the height of his frenzy. Then a number of women danced opposite him, singing the Dog or Wolf Song. Gradually he calmed down, and after a couple of hours he acted again like a sane person. He was then surrounded by his friends, who kept him in their midst as they danced, and he disappeared with them amid much shouting and clapping of hands. The Carrier of Fraser River, and the Chilcotin, had these same dances (pp. 579-580).

I am grateful to Dwight Gardiner, a graduate student at Simon Fraser University, who is studying the Shuswap language, for several conversations which provided me with information he had gleaned during his field work from his Shuswap informant, Lilly Harry, for steering me to Teit's work, and for the orthographical and linguistic information.



84. Compare Sheila Watson's comments concerning the mediating rituals and forms of art with Claude Levi-Strauss:

The same community--or communities that are geographically, linguistically, or culturally close to each other--sometimes invent myths that systematically tackle a given problem by envisaging, in one variant after another, the several different ways in which it may be solved. There is, for instance, the problem of mediation, from the Messiah to the Manichean opposite, by way of the androgyne, the trickster, and the Dioscuri; or the problem of dioscurism itself, which may be treated by trying out all possible formulas, one after the other: a divisible hero, identical twins, mutually hostile brothers, a grandmother and a grandson, or an old sorcerer and a young hero; or again, the problem of the duality of the sexes, by switching around the male and female principles in a succession of different relations: sky and earth, ascension and descent, activity and passivity, beneficence and maleficence, the vegetable and the animal, etc.

The Raw and the Cooked, pp. 332-333. See also Claude Levi-Strauss, The Scope of Anthropology, trans. Sherry Ortner Paul and Robert A. Paul (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), pp. 35-39.

85. For a fuller discussion of the transformation of linguistic sign to mythic sign and the relationship of signifier to sign, see Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp. 109-159.
86. Cf. Jane Ellen Harrison, pp. 418-419, 422.
87. D. S. Carne-Ross, cited by Herbert Schneidau, "Wisdom Past Metaphor: Another View of Pound, Fenallosa and Objective Verse," Paideuma 5 (Spring-Summer, 1976), p. 20.
- 87a H. W. Parke, Festivals of the Athenians, p. 65.
- 87b Harrison, p. 207, p. 223.
88. Cited by Charles Mills Gayley, The Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art. 1939, rpt. (Lexington, Massachusetts: Xerox College Publishing, n.d.), pp. 160-161.
89. David Jones, Preface to The Anathemata, pp. 19-20. The emphases are mine.
90. The Scope of Anthropology, p. 35, passim.
91. Interestingly, however, Teit reports that a rock cliff in the territory near Dog Creek, where Sheila Watson taught, was called "Breasts" by the Shuswap. Teit, p. 555.
92. Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," Oresteia, p. 40.
93. Ibid., p. 41.
94. Aeschylus, "The Eumenides," Oresteia, p. 164.

95. Hesiod, Theogony, Trans. Norman O. Brown (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), II. 205-206.
96. Aeschylus, "The Eumenides," Oresteia, p. 158.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid., p. 161.
99. Ibid., pp. 165-66.
100. In Celtic myth, human sacrifice "was offered by drowning, hanging and burning." In Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, p. 237. Wounded Shuswap warriors "asked to be burned, as was the custom of warriors who could not recover." In Teit, p. 548.
101. Sheila Watson, "Antigone," Four Stories, p. 42.
102. H.R. Ellis Davidson, Gods and Myths of Northern Europe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Inc., 1975), pp. 92-96.
103. William Carlos Williams, cited by Robert Creeley, "Olson & Others: Some Orts for the Sports," A Quick Graph: Collected Notes & Essays, ed. Donald Allen (San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1970), p. 163.

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