

## “No Short Cuts”: The Evolution of *The Double Hook*

In her copy of *The Letters of Katherine Mansfield*, Sheila Watson noted the following passage:

You see I too have a passion for technique. I have a passion for making the thing into a whole . . . . Out of technique is born real style, I believe. There are no short cuts. (92)

Certainly the evolution of her novel *The Double Hook* illustrates that few short cuts were available to Watson and that technique was crucial in articulating her vision of “the whole.” Based on her two years of teaching in the Cariboo District of British Columbia (1934-1936), the novel, written in the early 1950s, was finally published in 1959, after two major revisions. These revisions create and recreate the story and illustrate an increasing sophistication of structure and style. As a result, a comparatively naturalistic fiction gradually turns into prose sculpted by poetic technique and rhythm, a uniquely fashioned expression of Watson’s vision of the Cariboo District.

Watson’s reworking of her materials demonstrates her efforts to realize in narrative what she had envisioned, her gradual discovery of how to embody her experience and her response to that experience. Watson’s *Deep Hollow Creek* (written in the 1930s, before *The Double Hook*, but published only in 1992) also records her response to the austere landscape and its inhabitants. *Deep Hollow Creek* is presented from the perspective of Stella, a newcomer to the isolated community, who provides an identification point for the reader, a transition from the everyday to the fictional world. Here the historical, geographical and social context of the characters and their locale provides background but, in *The Double Hook*, the identification tags of

nationality and history are discarded, along with the familiar narrative mode; the narrator becomes an impersonal, disembodied, almost oracular voice. These transformations foreground the imaginative and mythical qualities of the landscape and its people; the readers, bereft of a personal narrative voice, experience all the uncertainty of entering a new terrain. By eliminating links between everyday reality and the fictional world, Watson forces the reader to participate in the symbolic quest of its characters from isolation to community (see Morriss). In one sense, *Deep Hollow Creek* describes Watson's actual experience of the Cariboo country, while *The Double Hook* enacts her apprehension of its significance. The erasure of the self allows concentration on the imaginative implications of what the self has observed.

Watson's desire to articulate her response to the Cariboo Country in a narrative as arresting as her experience was clear from the start. To achieve this effect, Watson knew that her work must transcend the familiar techniques of omniscient narration and character description: "When I began the work which became *The Double Hook* I knew I had to create a total fiction out of an experience which was concrete—which defied the clichés imposed on it. I wanted to get rid of the reportage, the condescension of omniscience" ("Interview" 352-53). In an unpublished "Commentary" on her novel, Watson describes the District as "devious" and "hostile," filled with "the isolation of which spatial separation is a symbol, the isolation of mind from mind, the intolerable burden of I-ness. In this country the symbol and the thing symbolized seemed nakedly exposed. . . ." Watson notes the contrariety of the country: "It is essentially a country of opposites—heat and cold; flat rolling plateau and sheared-off hills; streams, rivers, potholes and alkali waste; large ranches and small holdings; native Indians and expatriated Europeans and great stretches where no one lives at all." In her revisions, Watson forges unity out of these opposites, honing the local and the particular to give shape to the universal human paradox of isolation and interdependence. Her purpose is to demonstrate

. . . the isolation of the individual who has from time to time in the course of history found images which establish for him a sense of union with others and consequently a pattern of behaviour. The theme of the book is simply this: a man thrown back on the resources of his own nature alone responds to life with violence or inertia. If men are thrown back on their own nature alone and on the contemplation of natural or mechanical forces, if they have neither an image of church or state or even tribal unity, if they are cut off from a rooted pattern of behaviour . . . they respond to life with violence or apathy, because overwhelmed with a sense of isolation they attempt to wrench themselves away from human

contact, to force themselves into conjunction with it, or retreat further into themselves to seek protection in their own loneliness. They want to bear witness to the curious power which they feel in themselves and yet to shrink from the hostile attention of others.

Watson's statement focuses on how the isolation of individuals, lacking any meaningful community, can lead to violence (as in James Potter) or apathy (as in Felix Prosper). When physical isolation is compounded by a spiritual vacuum, men will try to force connection with others, or separate and retreat into further loneliness. Above all, Watson recognizes the significance and necessity of *images*, of the *imagination*, in creating an authentic human society, based on those rituals and traditions which Watson has defined as "the organization of community" (Meyer and O'Riordan 160). These images or rituals, created during "the course of human history," allow the characters not to "shrink from the hostile attention of others" ("the fear") but to "bear witness to the curious power they feel in themselves" ("the glory").

Changes in technique between the realism of *Deep Hollow Creek* and the symbolism of *The Double Hook* forcefully draw attention to the imagery and language of the latter novel and the ways in which characters, action, voice, locale, and language are all entwined. As a result, the book

evoke[s] 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 . . . [t]he language of the text . . . the attitudes of its figures are so implicated with each other that often our sense of the physical appearance of the characters is that of outline and gesture. (Bowering 15, 30)

Thus in the final version of *The Double Hook*, the regional is absorbed into the universal; the isolated inhabitants, with vague memories of ritual and harmony, form a true community when these rituals regain their power to bring people together. The remnants of ritual are reinvigorated by the cycle of death and rebirth undergone by the community, whereby its members perceive that their strength lies in their relationships with each other, and in a landscape animated by human consciousness as a whole rather than Coyote alone. In this way, Watson's novel demonstrates what Joseph Frank describes as the essence of modernism in fiction: "historical depth" has vanished, replaced by a "spatial fusion" of past and present "for which historical time does not exist" (59).

II

The two major revisions constitute successive emendations to the text rather than substantive changes to plot, setting, theme and character. In her unpublished “Commentary” on the novel, Watson reveals that Rupert Hart-Davis, a British publisher/editor to whom she unsuccessfully submitted the typescript, wanted fewer characters. Such a change, Watson says, “would amount to a complete re-intuiting of the whole story,” since “character comments on character and action on action.” He also complained that there was too much “motion and dust.” Again, Watson remains true to her original purpose and vision: “the motion and dust are the motion and dust of men who have not been taught their manage [sic]—men corraled by existence, men pawing the ground.” The revisions show Watson’s certainty of purpose, enabling her to refute commentary she found misguided. They also indicate her own determination to rework her materials until her original intuition was adequately expressed.

The development from drafts to the published version includes the removal of most details of personal and family history, of national or racial origin, and of references to the more institutionalized world of civilization, such as a doctor to sign the Old Lady’s death certificate or the law that Kip would bring down on James, if he knew how to go about it: “Gone are the origins and options and even causes” (Flahiff 123). Watson’s revisions remove details serving to anchor the story and its characters in a too-familiar world. In her final revision of the novel

. . . [Watson] moved against such guarantees as are provided by *possibility* and *causality* and *memory* in order more fully to realize that spareness and immediacy that come to characters when they have no alternative but to be in their time and place. (Flahiff 123; italics in original text).

Cumulatively, the revisions remove context and connectivity and increase specificity. As Watson explained, she aimed at defining the characters by their relationships rather than by “documented history” or description, just as living people elude definition, although they are “resolutely there.” Language merges with locale: “. . . I wanted to fuse the dialogue with the context—the reaching toward speech—the speaking out of silence—out of space” (“Interview” 358–59). Watson further fuses characters and context with language; she depicts them as “figures in a ground from which they could not be separated. . . . the people are entwined in, they’re interacting with the landscape, and the landscape is interacting with them” (“What I’m Going To Do” 183).

## III

There are three major versions to be considered, Draft I, Draft II and the published text of the novel. Draft I exists in two closely related forms, differing only in typography. A third typescript, at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Room at the University of Toronto, is identical to the published version, with some sentences altered on the first page.<sup>1</sup>

The first major revision to the text (Draft I to Draft II) occurs in response to the commentary of Frederick M. Salter, a Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Alberta, in 1954. As the first enthusiastic reader of *The Double Hook*, Professor Salter provided encouragement as well as practical advice, and may well have stimulated Watson's further re-thinking of the novel. Salter advocated removing vulgarities such as "bugger" and "bullshit." As well, Salter suggested that some expressions were anomalous, such as the description of yokes resting on jaws, or incongruous, as the awkwardness of picking James' pocket if it is buttoned. Other phrases, such as "the heat of a private retreat" have an unfortunate rhyming effect. Similarly, the description of James as "A name in a stud book. James Potter out of Old Lady" suggests a more sophisticated image of horse breeding than is available in the Cariboo. Watson welcomed Salter's suggestion that she clarify the description of Angel beating her knife against the billycan to frighten away the supposed bear, only to reverse her decision in the published version. Salter's response may have liberated Watson to make her own aesthetic decisions as well as to accept advice from others. Salter's most significant contribution is to ask that an incident be removed: in Draft I, Felix teases his dogs before giving them the fish leavings to eat, cruel behaviour that Salter sees as out of character for the passive but well-intentioned Felix. Here Watson agreed. Salter also suggested that the original six sections of the novel would benefit from titles, but here Watson demurred. Overall, Salter's comments were minor; he considered the novel "perfect" and encouraged her to publish it. In this sense, his support may well have been crucial.

Watson's major revisions took place in the first half of 1956, during her stay in Paris. In her journals she notes her work on the typescript, and her desire that it go back to "something like the original form—a better form" (March 31 and April 6, [1956]). "Form," in life and work, was crucial to Watson: "I think of life as a piece of metal which must be shaped not thrown away—of work as something which must be shaped not thrown away—the something to write once given or elected turned until it has form—until it lives" (Jan. 25, [1956]).

The revisions of Draft I into Draft II consist largely of paring down repetitions and details. Kip looks at the light before the storm, “Shrinking into a pool. Elixir of light,” but this phrase disappears in Draft II; the Widow Wagner, looking at her moonlit ranch, no longer senses the animals breathing, as if “Every breath breathed through her own lungs.” Sometimes Draft II additions disappear in the final text: when Heinrich is looking for Lenchen and asking questions of James, he hears the loon and the killdeer: “the birds are free, he thought, like Kip. Their law is not the law of chickens.” So too Lenchen says to James “[w]hat we did together couldn’t be hid for always . . . . You know enough about beasts to know that,” a comment not found in Draft II. James’ thoughts after taking his money from the bank are too explicit for Watson’s purpose: “In his pocket was the sum of life he had before him. He had already cut off miles of escape. Yet if he had the money to go to the end, at the end of the railway was the slaughterhouse.”

A sense of Watson’s revisions is best gained by examining one passage from all three versions. Here (in Draft I) is Heinrich in what becomes Part 2, Section 4:

The boy stood in the reeds at the water’s edge. Face answering face in the flat mirror of the lake. The night coming down. The mind at last turned away from self. Turned home by the thought that James Potter’s mother had looked and found death.

He had gone back a second time to have it out with James. He had let his sister wander, but Kip had been his eyes. Yet his suspicion and Kip’s story fitted like bolt and screw. He had come back a second time. Riding away from the road. Thinking to come down on James from a different point. He would catch him in the barnyard. Away from the house.

They had gone home the night before from James’s like a crowd of fools—Ara, Angel, himself. For Kip had simply vanished. Having his own way of going and his own places to go. And he was left there to lead the horse and walk with the women. Or to mount and leave them.

Ara had put everything at ease. Despite the fear [in] her eyes. Saying: We will go as we came. Singly. Meeting here by chance. Untimely.

This relatively long passage is modified in Draft II, as follows:

The boy stood in the reeds by the water’s edge. Face answering face in the lake. Ply on ply the night folded over the image. Masking the floating rootless self.

James Potter’s mother, he thought, had looked and found death.  
He had gone back a second time to have it out with James.

He had slept. But Kip had been his eyes. Kip had seen the fact. Unless Kip lied. Yet Kip’s story fitted his suspicion as a bolt fits a nut.

He had gone back a second time. Riding away from the road. Hoping to come down on James from a different point. To catch him in the barnyard. Away from the house.

They had gone away from James last night like a crowd of fools—Ara, Angel and himself. For Kip had simply vanished. Having his own way of going and his own places to go. And he was left there to lead the horse and walk with the women. Or mount and leave them.

But Ara had put everything at ease. Despite the fear he saw in her eyes. Saying: We will all go as we came. Singly. Having met here by chance.

In the published novel, this passage is reduced to this section:

The boy sat by the lake edge. Ply on ply, night bound the floating images of things.

They had stood like a crowd of fools outside of James's door. He and Ara and Angel. Since Kip had gone off.

Having come together by accident, Ara said. (43)

Clearly, Watson's most drastic revisions occur between Draft II and the published version. Sentences are shortened and sometimes fragmented, mirroring the human and natural isolation. Paragraphs consist of brief and jagged statements, shorn of all context and detail. Anecdotes, however appropriate, are ruthlessly excised if they do not have an immediate bearing on the central theme of the novel. Thus we lose a funny story from William about a man called Farish and his difficulties with his government pension, and one from Shepherd the game warden, looking for a stolen horse and mistaking James's gelding for a mare. The connections of the terrain of *The Double Hook* with the outside world are reduced to William the postman and Theophil's rating of Coyote at "fifty cents a brush" (47) in government bounties. Many shorter descriptive passages are removed, such as the Old Lady's capture of a muskrat, or Ara's desire for order: "All about her was the world, but she did not know where to start to find the connection of its separate parts. And she thought: It's like trying to find the first line which makes the first pattern in the kitchen linoleum." Most of the dialectical syntax (non-standard grammar) is corrected, partly to free the story from the potential clichés of its locale, which may unhappily suggest the stereotypical Hollywood western.

The most dramatic change from draft to final version occurs in the structural organization. Drafts I and II have a six-part division, modified to five in the published text. This revision simply removed a division at the end of Part 5, Section 7 (Flahiff 122). But each of the five sections now has new subdivisions which vary in number—18(1), 14(2), 9(3), 11(4) and 21(5). This

numerical partition suggests further fragmentation of the universe of the novel, further alienation of part from part, person from person. It also clarifies the montage-like composition of the novel, formally distinguishing separate scenes and signalling shifts in focus. Ironically, these formal divisions streamline the novel, reducing one sort of “choppiness,” while typographically increasing the sense of disjunction and separation. The decline and subsequent rise in the number of subsections may also mirror the thematic scheme of the novel, from increasing isolation to growing community.

Drafts I and II contain far more background information: Old Man Potter was an Englishman, while no one knows where the Old Lady came from; Kip and Angel are “pure-blooded” Indians, but William and James (and presumably Greta) are “a mixed lot”; Felix is descended from “the Spaniards and Frenchmen who had come carrying boxes and taking bales of skin pressed flat for the trade”; William and Greta have bamboo chairs from the Potter household. Omitting these details of family possessions and history serves to highlight the Widow Wagner’s dependence on them. Widow Wagner complains more in the drafts, and tells of her premarital pregnancy, which Lenchen now also undergoes. Coyote, Watson tells us in her “Commentary,” “is fear incarnate, both cause and response. He is the eye of God and the destroyer of men.” But in Draft II he is also part of a creation myth: “The country was Coyote’s. He had opened the ground here, said Kip, to let men creep out into the sky.” Perhaps this detail was sacrificed to maintain consistency in the presentation of Coyote.

The effects achieved by the reordering of some incidents, the fragmentation of sentences and paragraphs, and the formal separation of the subsections are enhanced by changes Watson made to the indented chant/poems, which in the final draft are used mainly for Coyote. These passages exemplify how Watson’s revisions function. The scattered associations of the draft versions are reduced to concentrate on the Biblical rhythms and phrasings. Watson uses Old Testament references to create expressions of fear (“Interview” 354), and her Notebooks for the period of her revisions to the novel have dozens of citations from the Prophets. In Draft II, for example, the following occurs in Part 1 [Section 4]:

Evil Coyote,  
if I open my mouth you will fill it with dust.  
Set your eyes toward the North  
and the lone butte  
above the chasm.



Let me wash my feet  
 in the ripple of the creek round the rock.  
 . . . . . (one paragraph of text)  
 No.  
 Felix's god is not Coyote.  
 In Coyote's mouth is the east wind.  
 There is no peace, said Coyote.  
 . . . . . (two pages of text)  
 Up over the boulder through the gap in the red rock  
 Went Coyote  
 Those who cling to the cleft rock he will bring down.  
 He will set his paw on the eagle's nest.

In the published version, these diverse images are reduced to:

In my mouth is the east wind.  
 Those who cling to the rock I will  
                                     bring down  
 I will set my paw on the eagle's nest (16)

Similarly, passages such as: "Said Felix, the dragon, / My river is my own / and I have made it for myself" are entirely omitted, as are Ara's thoughts (in Draft I) about wringing/breaking the necks of bottles, hens and fool hens. Watson's revisions simplify and intensify the image patterns of the novel, and link the poem/chants almost exclusively to Coyote's gnomic, ambiguous, menacing presence. Coyote's utterances become more concentrated and mysterious. In Draft II (Part I, [Section 7]) appears the following:

And Coyote  
 looked at his work, saying:  
 It is good  
 Where now is the stalking and the budding?  
 Where the longing and thrusting?  
 I have said to the living:  
 In my fear is peace.

Ultimately, only the last line survives, moved to the end of Coyote's speech in Part 4, Section 4 when James is going to the hotel in town. Again, in Draft II we have:

Eyes in the hill by the boulder.  
 I have set man against man  
 and to their hearts given certainty  
 for only in darkness is rest.  
 My daughter lit a candle against the day;  
 the day ate it.  
 Let her seek peace in darkness. (Part 1, [Section 7])

None of this appears in the final text; its image patterns of searching eyes, human conflict, the dubious security of darkness and the lighting of a candle in daylight (referring either to the Old Lady's questing lamp, or to Angel's candle against the storm) are already firmly inscribed. Repetition can reinforce a motif, but at times redundancy can dissipate the impact of the image pattern. Here Watson chooses concentration over repetition.

The most dramatic revision of Coyote's voice occurs at the end of the novel. In the drafts, Coyote speaks before Lenchen has her vision of James holding the baby in his hands. In the published text, one of Coyote's more tangential deliveries is deleted; Lenchen "sees" James, and tells him the baby's name is Felix. The novel concludes with Coyote's blend of blessing and observation: "I have set his feet on soft ground; / I have set his feet upon the sloping shoulders / of the world" (118). The placement of Coyote's words in the final position has an effect out of proportion to the mechanics involved. Frederick M. Salter had suggested that Watson might consider adding "a hint or suggestion of some kind that you have been dealing with things eternal and not transitory." Watson's simple adjustment gives Coyote, the preternatural focus of discord and abdicated humanity, the last word; the dynamic pattern of renewal instigated by his threat has completed itself, and he grants closure to it.

The drafts offer much more information, earlier in the story: Lenchen's pregnancy and her relationship with James are more fully described, for instance, as are Ara's barrenness and Angel's curiosity. Above all, the death of the Old Lady is made far more explicit; her burial by William, observed by other characters, is described for the reader. Yet in the final version, all that remains of this incident is a vague description by William (42) of his diffidence in handling his mother's body, and Kip's observation, evocative of *The Wasteland*: "No stone was big enough, no pile of stones, to weigh down fear" (50).

Revisions of the drafts do not change the contents of the story, but the experience of reading the published version is far more demanding—and rewarding—than reading earlier drafts. The reader must proceed carefully in the world of *The Double Hook*, remembering details and diction, and gradually achieving understanding along with the characters. The complex image patterns accumulate resonance as they wind their way through the texture of the novel. Watson's reworking of the text creates a heightened concentration of imagery. Felix's cup, for instance, is a literal coffee cup at the same time as it has mythic meaning (comparing Felix's pain at losing

Angel to Christ's Agony in the Garden) and a metaphoric quality, "the knobbed glass moulded to the size of his content" (29). This fusion of multiple meanings is found throughout the novel; Angels' lamp is at once a practical device against the dark of the storm, a religious emblem ("a candle to the Virgin") and a piece of folklore, a light "against the mist that brought death" (28). As well, it echoes the lamp that the Old Lady holds up in broad daylight, and the lamp Greta claims as her own. The revisions intensify the imagery, animating the earth (it has skin and ribs and lips), and reducing people and objects to their bare essences, essences which nonetheless reverberate with accumulated meanings.

In some cases Watson has added detail to the original. For instance, in Draft II the Widow Wagner, waiting for Heinrich's return, thinks as follows:

My boy comes. Heinrich comes. The close comfort of words  
spoken over. Words taking body. Wrenching substance from unformed darkness.  
Let Heinrich be. And Heinrich is.

Of course, this passage does not survive; the perhaps unfortunate picture of Heinrich as a kind of Newtonian Incarnation does not fit easily into the other, more closely integrated, image patterns. But Watson creates an entirely new passage for the published text, relating Heinrich more closely to the complex of natural/human imagery in the novel, and granting him his role in the community about to be redeemed:

Now he sat silent as an osprey on a snag. Waiting. Because he knew how to wait. Watching only the images he could shatter with a stone or bend in 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. (44)

Heinrich's role as the wisely passive observer is well-earned; his efforts to find Lenchen, confront James, scare away the Old Lady fishing in his pool, are all ineffective, for Heinrich's function is, with William, to await and welcome the return of James to the destroyed (soon to be recreated) Potter homestead.

Revisions made to the text are often quite subtle, such as the transformation of many simple verbs into participles, a tactic that creates a dynamic tone of process rather than dwelling on reported events or description. Diction is simplified as well, to remove abstractions and render the world of the novel in harder, more concrete words. It is easier to demonstrate than to describe the numerous stylistic revisions Watson undertook, since small deletions, reorderings and additions have a cumulative effect. Once again, it is worth comparing draft and final versions of the same passage:

She [Ara] looked up the creek. Nothing crossed in the still air. Only the twisted feet of the cottonwoods thrust naked into the stone bottom where the water moved. Only the intersecting branches of the stunted willow. Only the creek plucking over the feet of the cottonwoods, washing over the rocks, transfiguring the tree bark and hard stone. The blood of the world running low in its clay vein. Creeping around. Contracting. Indrawing. The upper lip of the margin twisted and dry.

Ara bent toward the water. The water passed through her fingers. Fingers dividing the water. Rending the veil of transfiguration. The stone lay for a minute in her hand. Until life flowed slowly from the centre.

And Coyote in a loud voice cried:

Kip. My servant Kip.

.....

Kip glanced at the sky. At the light and darkness embraced in conflict. The light retreating. The light gathering in before the massed forces of darkness. Light draining out of the sky into a pond of brightness.

Ara, pausing, looked upward in the path of Kip's glance. Violence and beauty kissing in the spaceless fields of being. But she saw the tight stretched skin hold. The sack out of which one had to struggle.

Kip raised his hand as if to grasp. Rising in the stirrups. Stirrup pulling leather taut as he reached up. Reaching to pull the glory from the sky. The hills touched with the light of it. The darkness thrusting in. Then the rain swinging into the mouth of the valley like a web. Strand added to strand. Waving like a veil. Growing and increasing. The sky, Ara thought, filled with adder tongues. With lariats. With bull whips. (Draft II)

And here is the final version:

She looked up the creek. She saw the twisted feet of the cottonwoods shoved naked into the stone bottom where the water moved, and the matted branches of the stunted willow. She saw the shallow water plucking over the roots of the cottonwood, transfiguring bark and stone. She bent toward the water. Her fingers divided it. A stone breathed in her hand. Then life drained to its centre.

And in a loud voice

Coyote cried:

Kip, my servant Kip.

.....

Kip's face was turned up to the sky. To the light stampeded together and bawling before the massed darkness. The white bulls of the sky shoulder to shoulder. He had risen in his stirrups till the leathers were pulled taut. His hand reaching up to pull down the glory.

Ara looked up too. For a minute she saw the light. Then only the raw skin of the sky drawn over them like a sack.

Then the rain swung into the mouth of the valley like a web. Strand added to strand. The sky, Ara thought, filled with adder tongues. With lariats. With bull-whips. (26)

Five paragraphs become six much shorter ones, with details removed (“blood of the world,” “lip of the margin,” the scattered images of embracing and kissing, the veil) and details added (the startlingly immediate image of the “massed bulls” of the sky). Repetition has vanished and the whole passage has been condensed by elision and by fused images, such as the double-layered sky as both skin and sack in the final version, rather than the separation of the two in the draft. The same effect is achieved by the compression of images when the stone “breathes” in Ara’s hand. Thus Watson’s focus on her central images of light and dark, on the animation of nature and Kip’s reaching for “the glory” is accentuated while other, ultimately distracting images, are discarded. Diction becomes more concrete in the erasure of adjectives and abstractions such as “violence,” “the spaceless fields of being,” and “the veil of transfiguration.” The clear physical presentation of the scene is matched by revisions which simplify shifts from character to character, from Ara to Kip and back again, thus dramatizing the dynamic of human response to the vivid and stormy landscape. These revisions create a more intense, coherent scene; the final passage achieves the suggestive yet concrete power of poetry, in keeping with Watson’s revisions throughout her reworking of the text.

Watson’s working toward the final text includes the ways in which she situates her characters to participate in the action of the novel. The published version is much more specific about the role each character plays, but these roles are not essentially changed: James as active but unthinking, Ara as suffering, barren, yet visionary; Angel as practical yet curious; Felix as priest and refuge; the Widow as a negative materialist; Theophil as the cynic who sees no immanence in the world; Greta and the Old Lady as life-denying and repressive; William as the pseudo-philosopher; Lenchen as life source or earth mother. As Watson explains, the characters are intended to function together, both as actors in their drama and as “voices,” replacing the traditional narrative voice: “I was thinking of a group of bodies that were virtually inarticulate and I had to make them articulate without making them *faux-semblants* so to speak” (Meyer and O’Riordan 158).

Greta is more sympathetically presented in the draft versions, with references to her carefree youth. In the final text, she is more consistently repressive and controlling. Her identity with her mother, the Old Lady, is clear in the final version, though it appears even more strongly in Draft II:

How did I know she was dead up there? She asked. How did I know without setting my foot on the steps? Because her eyes were loosed from me. I felt them

shut, she said. I felt her breath stop and the cold settle on her flesh . . . She can't be looking still. William nailed the lid tight. I heard the hammer strokes.

Earlier drafts provide more of James's thoughts too. In Draft I, when James is in the bank, Bascom asks if he has any cheques out. He answers: "If you're speaking to me, James said, I'm overdrawn. But if you're speaking of this chap Potter, he doesn't ever write cheques." This puzzling split does not survive to the next draft, nor does the following excerpt, where, at the beginning of Part 4, James examines his hand:

It was part of him. Part of James Potter. He spoke his own name as he lifted his horse into a lope. But he heard the name only as something given to a pile of gear that men called James Potter. Body, head, limbs, shirt, hat. A name given to a number of characteristics which somehow identified him as an animal might be identified at large on the range or penned in a man's stock yard.

Such reflections are rare for James. In the final text, his inner life is more often turned into action: "He wanted only one thing. To get away. To bolt noisily and violently out of the present" (79). In Draft I James is more reflective. He and Lilly are talking about time, "before" and "after":

Before is tightness and fear, the waiting with your finger on the trigger, eyes watching from the brush, your mother watching. After is fear again, looking for escape after the violence, not knowing how to make before and after square with one another. Now gets crushed between the two.

The suggestions of fear, eyes watching, conflict and violence agree readily enough with the structural images of the novel.

But James' words may too easily suggest the clichés of the trigger-happy Western movie. In this passage, there is a sense of the incongruous and the overly explicit which does not chime with the dominant tone of the novel, its powerful effects achieved by nuance, implication and suggestion.

The same discretion rules Watson's revisions to the relationship of James and Greta. The draft versions, with more factual information, insinuate their incestuous bond more strongly. United in their opposition to the Old Lady, waiting for her death to achieve some wished-for liberation, Greta shares James's rebellion against their mother, but his deed transforms that bond to a power struggle: "Greta had heard his voice and would not climb a step to help her. And his act delivered him bound to Greta."

In the drafts, Watson gives greater emphasis to the claustrophobic atmosphere of the Potter household: "The three of them, himself, the old lady, and Greta had seemed closed in and shut off somehow." James's recognition that "Ma's flesh like me" curiously acts as a catalyst for his hatred; he says

that “her flesh is my flesh and we are one and separate,” and that “her search is my search.” This paradox extends to Greta: “And he’d wanted to catch hold of Greta there in the face of the old lady, saying, What is divided is one.” James’s rebellion against their mother is in some way connected to the way she seems to have fostered their bond:

She’s drove Greta and me together. We don’t know nothing but each other. She got us in tugs and we can’t slip the harness. Mare and stallion of the same get, she’s worked us together and kept the wagon pole somehow between us. And he’d thought how, if anything happened to her, he and Greta might come together at the same lake. As dogs creep out of the darkness to the same fire.

Greta concurs, when talking to Lenchen: “You thought, she said, that James burned with all the beauty in the world. But, she said, I was the oil that fed the flame . . . *I tell you there was only James. I was never let run loose. I never had two to waste and spill [out] like Angel Prosper.*” And before her fiery suicide, Greta thinks: “Something lay in my hand like a bird and I crushed it fearing it might fly away.” As well, Greta is associated with two kinds of rebirth. Ara fears that “*she would see Greta fleshed and sinewed, standing in the ruin she had made.*” Like the Old Lady, Greta may still be a presence after death. But later, Ara also sees Greta’s death as somehow facilitating the birth of Lenchen’s baby: “If it’s not too late, she said to the boy, Greta’s death will turn down the covers for Lenchen and she will bear her child in the hollow Greta made.” During her labour Lenchen cries out: “It’s Greta’s baby I tell you. Ask her. She’ll tell you,” though immediately after she revokes her odd statement: “It’s a lie, the girl cried. A lie. It’s my own. My very own.”

Apart from the section in italics none of the passages quoted above appears in the final version. Revisions stress Greta’s likeness to her mother and her desire for control over others, if she cannot have James or another man. At the end of Part 1 she says: “Go way. This is my house. Now Ma’s lying dead in her bed I give the orders here” (37). James fears Greta: “He was afraid what Greta might do . . . Now Greta’d sat in the old Lady’s chair. Eyes everywhere” (33). Similarly, Greta fears James: “He’ll kill me too, Greta said. He’ll shove me down for standing in his way” (55). The Potter household is still claustrophobic, its inhabitants living like animals, associated with the stench of Coyote’s bedhole. Kip connects Greta with Coyote, “fitting herself into a glory” (53), while Angel blames Greta’s sterility for her destructiveness: “An old hen pheasant, Angel said. Never bred. Looking for mischief. Trying to break up other birds’ nests” (44). And indeed when Greta dies, Coyote claims her, and her epitaph links her to her mother:

Greta had inherited destruction like a section surveyed and fenced. She had lived no longer than the old lady's shadow left its stain upon the ground. She sat in her mother's doom as she'd sat in her chair. (99)

Greta's suicide is depicted as an act of hate and revenge, specifically against James and Lenchen: "She wanted to cry abuse through the boards. She wanted to cram the empty space with hate. She wanted her voice to shatter all memory of the girl who had stayed too long, then gone off perhaps to die in the hills" (74). Thus Watson preserves the suggestion of an incestuous attraction between Greta and James, but, as with other revisions, she discards explicit comment and uses nuance to encourage readers to engage with the meaning of the text. Perhaps the incest theme, as originally presented, was too sensational; perhaps it disturbed the tight complex of imagery in the novel. This theme certainly distracts from central motifs in the novel; in the drafts, it causes confusion (as in Lenchen's saying her baby is Greta's). But by linking Greta less with James and more with the Old Lady, Watson retains the implication of a peculiar bond between brother and sister, while simultaneously accentuating the almost ritual pattern of destruction the Old Lady has initiated; until her shadow leaves the ground, her power continues with Greta. As Watson explains it, Greta "needs something to love and she loves James because there is no one else there. It is a displaced love. The emphasis in *The Double Hook* is not on family but on the problem of a community reduced to a single unit" (Meyer and O'Riordan 163).

#### IV

*The Double Hook* is the splendid result of Watson's determination to articulate what she wanted to say in the manner in which she wished to say it. Watson's revisions serve to foreground the immediate drama recorded in the tale, those who participate in it and the terrain in which it occurs. The style and tone of the novel mirror the starkness of the landscape, the enigmatic nature of Coyote and the deceptiveness of both. The author moves from the potential stereotype of the regional novel, to a universal and archetypal pattern of action. Any incongruous note disappears, so that the consistency and density of the text are sculpted into a self-contained whole, where every element is essential to the meaning and the construction of the tale, and to each other. In such an autonomous world, the concrete and specific smoothly become symbolic. The story that begins with the death of the Old Lady in a hostile and menacing landscape ends with the birth of the baby who signals



the transformation of that landscape and its inhabitants. As Watson said in her "Commentary," "In this country the symbol and the thing symbolized are nakedly exposed . . . image and idea came to me together."

## NOTES

- 1 Barbour notes that the publisher made a most important change from the original manuscript by using Kip's speech from Part 2, Section 10 as the epigraph to the novel. This emendation made Watson uneasy about the prominence given Kip by this change, but she did not force withdrawal of the epigraph then or in later editions.

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