THE ELEMENTS TRANSCENDED

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THE UNIVERSE which Sheila Watson creates in *The Double Hook* is one of dust and rock, rutted roads and receding streams. With its "flat ribs" it is a starving animal, ruled by a deified beast held responsible for its aridity and barrenness. The pervasive fear of Coyote is related to the repression imposed by the Old Lady, and is intensified by an awareness of isolation from God.

The opening lines of the novel define the limits of its universe by a literal list of its inhabitants, and by a visual typography that abruptly circumscribes the personal relationship it contains. This created world is characterized by isolation, visually presented in the suddenness of its syntax, and shown in the narrative by the presentation of characters either alone or reacting to one another rather than responding. The only unity present is animalistic: "You can always hide in a herd".

Along with the stark physical and psychological isolation is the prevailing passivity of the characters. Felix Prosper fishes and fiddles, refusing both physical activity and the spiritual suffering imposed on him by Angel's departure. Combined with this passivity is a voluntary ignorance embraced in order to protect the negative, self-defensive peace which suffocates rather than activates the wasteland. "I hear nothing. I see nothing."

Inhering in every aspect of this world is repression, embodied psychologically in the Old Lady, sexually in Greta, and supernaturally in Coyote. Ignorance is not only passively accepted, it is actively imposed. Coyote says, "In my mouth is forgetting / In my darkness is rest". James meditates on this world, realizing that his destruction of his mother has left things essentially unchanged:

> This was the way they'd lived. Suspended in silence. . . .
> They'd 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 closer wiping plates and forks while the old lady sat in her corner. Moved her 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.... Eyes multiplied. Eyes. Eyes and padded feet. Coyote moving in rank-smelling.
>
> Nothing had changed. The old lady was there in every fold of the country.

The image of life as a silent suspension, waiting for the end of a factor seen as immortal; the implications of disease and distortion, primitive animalism, and a repressive dictatorship; the fear of vision, knowledge and immortality; the relation of eyes, Coyote, Greta, the Old Lady, death and decay; all these elements are integral to the wasteland of *The Double Hook*. Most of all, this passage reveals James as a native inhabitant of the wasteland. His act of revolt was not an affirmation of the new life, but just an impulsive, essentially irrational rejection of the old.

Irrationality as such is an important part of this world. There is no logical basis for the tyranny of the Old Lady, Greta or Coyote, and most actions are basically purposeless. Ara unconsciously wanders to the Potter home; Felix lives according to the moment; no immediate aim lay behind James' revolt. Underlying this illogicality is the confusion of nature, illusion and the supernatural that informs the superstitious belief in Coyote and the various appearances of Mrs. Potter. But just as irrationality maintains the wasteland's *status quo* of fear, so too it offers the only opportunity for achieving the glory of a redeemed world. The irrationality of superstition must be conquered by the faith which imaginatively transcends the logic of the intellect.

The mythic structure of *The Double Hook* is the archetypal pattern of redemption through death and rebirth, the religious ritual celebrating the re-entry of love into the wasteland.[1] But not just the inhabitants are transformed. The elemental symbolic structure underlying the narrative is metamorphosed into a transcendental symbolic structure, which surpasses the unredeemed state while yet incorporating it into human experience.

In keeping with the setting's primitive starkness, the initial symbolic structure of the novel is elemental, incorporating earth, air, fire and water. In the wasteland water is not creative, but is drying away. It is basically powerless, its motion controlled by the land: "the creek flowed this way and that at the land's whim". Water is even incapable of destruction. In the town, James longs to destroy himself, but is prevented by the water's association with his mother. In turn, the earth

produces only death. "Ara felt death leaking through from the centre of the earth. Death rising to the knee. Death rising to the loin."

These aspects of the elemental universe are associated with fear, darkness, and the primitive force of Coyote, who offers the relief of passivity to those who are only living and partly living. He is usually associated with Mrs. Potter, and between them they pervade the world with negation. But at the same time, Ara notices the ability of water to transform and give life: "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."

For Felix, the rain of the storm merges with remembrance of past events, an essential factor in his contribution to the redemptive process. Felix and Ara seem to accept their premonitions with little immediate awareness of their implications. But the most ironic note of significant interaction between water and earth is sounded by Greta. At the height of her rage against Lenchen, motivated by her repressive instincts, she justifies herself by a *contrast* with the elements: "The pot-holes 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 run-off fills them at last. The bitterness licked up."

Greta's self-insulation from her environment prevents earth and water from providing a comparative analogy for human experience. Until denial gives way to affirmation, nature must remain destructive and earth and water are in constant conflict. For most of the characters the storm is a manifestation of evil, lashing the earth "with adder tongues. With lariats. With bull-whips." This conflict contains within itself the potential to annihilate the wilderness, as William foresees: "The day will come, he'd say, when the land will swallow the last drop. The creek'll be as dry as a parched mouth. The earth, he'd say, won't have enough spit left to smack its lips."

The elements of air and fire are associated with the images of light and glory, and to this extent they are opposed to the fear and darkness related to earth and water. But these elements still have their negative aspects. Greta sees the air as a rope stretched between people, uniting them only partially. The ambiguity of fire is related to the precarious balance of fear and glory. "The curious thing about fire . . . is you need it and fear it at once."

Heinrich Wagner establishes a relation between the four elements that is basic to the symbolic structure of the novel:

> He stood there thinking of the light he had 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 the sunlight and know nothing but the saddle and the sting of sweat on the side 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.

The elements are here related to both the pain of living and to the glory, which exist in opposition. But the stallion is a recurring image for James and his rebellion. Thus there is the implication that if glory and pain are integrated, redemption is achieved through the pain of living, that the heat and the sweat and the pain can transform the hills.

This suggestion is reinforced by the storm, the conflict of the four elements. The storm is cataclysmic rather than creative because Greta's spirit of denial dominates the wasteland. Darkness is preferred to light, which is feared rather than welcomed, as Heinrich demonstrates: "In the sky above darkness had overlaid light. But the boy knew as well as he knew anything that until the hills fell on him or the ground sucked him in the light would come again. He had tried to hold darkness to him, but it grew thin and formless and took shape as something else." The individual embraces the darkness and fear of the passivity offered by Coyote to protect himself from the active responsibility of the light. But the elusive darkness he desires escapes his grasp and takes shape as something he fears, like the vision of Mrs. Potter or the tyranny of Coyote.

The redemption of the wasteland is associated with no single figure, for the entire community must participate to some degree in its own salvation. This rebirth is achieved by the transformation of the elemental structure of earth, air, fire and water into a transcendental one of seeing, knowing, communication and unity. But the redeemed world does not abandon the elemental universe, for the rebirth process is within, affecting not the exterior environment but the attitude to it and use of it by its inhabitants.

In the elemental symbolic structure there is a hierarchy of power; the light and glory of the flame must conquer the pain of living, integrating it with individual experience, so that water may renew the earth. In the transcendental symbolic structure an analogous order exists. Sight gives knowledge, motivating the impulse for communication which is necessary for the social and spiritual integration of the community. The theme of sight and blindness is related to the ideas of light and darkness, fear and glory, desire for knowledge and voluntary igno-

rance. It is Kip who is associated with sight, knowledge and the glory, but just as Mrs. Potter is incapable of significant action in the elemental world, so too Kip, either unaware of or exploiting his perceptive power, dissipates his potential by becoming a go-between, a tale bearer. It is Ara who is granted the vision which is the glory of physical sight, and her insight, significantly, is in terms of a transfigured environment:

> Now her tired eyes saw water issuing from under the burned threshold. Welling up and flowing down to fill the dry creek. Until dry lips drank. Until the trees stood knee-deep in water.
>
> Everything shall live where the river comes, she said out loud. And she saw a great multitude of fish, each fish springing arched through the slanting light.

The physical starkness has been replaced by a vision of abundance. The process of salvation has clarified the confusion of nature, illusion and the supernatural that resulted from the passive ignorance of the characters. The knowledge inherent in this illumination has replaced the sight of Mrs. Potter, whose concentrated ferocity brought fear, darkness and death, with a vision of life, integration and abundance. The Old Lady is seen last by Felix. "But she wasn't fishing, he said. Just standing like a tree with its roots reaching out to water." The power of Mrs. Potter has been broken by a vision in which she can never share; her death is a spiritual terminal rather than a redemption, and the water cannot help her.

> The old lady, lost like Jonah perhaps,
> in the cleft belly of the rock
> the water washing over her.

The only knowledge in the wilderness is the secret knowledge of Greta and the Old Lady. "You don't know what I know." For the rest, passive ignorance is embraced in protective self-defence against both humanity and environment. But after Ara's vision of rebirth, sight enables knowledge and Coyote is really seen for the first time. His voice still preaches the relief of negation: "Happy are the dead / For their eyes see no more", but knowledge by this time is blessing the characters with the courage to really "see". Coyote can no longer enthral, but must take his place in the new order of things.

The idea of communication is not totally absent from the wasteland. Ara wanders to the Potter farm because of a need to talk; Heinrich feels he should have been able to tell Lenchen something; Angel warns the utterly passive Theophil, "A man can't peg himself in so tight that nothing can creep through the cracks." But ruled by Greta and Mrs. Potter, individuals refuse to hear, see

or listen to each other. Through the regenerative process an awareness of the necessity of communication gradually replaces the impulse to isolation. Heinrich says: "Can a man speak to no one because he's a man? Who says so? Those who want to be sheltered by his silence. I've held my tongue . . . when I should have used my voice like an axe to cut down the wall between us."

In the stagnating wasteland unity is feared or ignored. Widow Wagner tells Lenchen to leave if she wishes; Mrs. Potter rejects all society; Lenchen wants only to escape, from James if necessary. The sight of another results only in rejection. When Ara sees Mrs. Potter she is aware of isolation. Felix wants to chase her off, but sinks into physical indifference. Heinrich wants to fence her out, Lenchen sees her as the image of her own frustration, and the Widow sees a reflection of her own despair. The first gathering at the Potter farm is accidental. Such a meeting is instinctive rather than unitive, and any sympathy present is overpowered by the self-destructive violence of Greta's expression of hate.

Angel Prosper talks to Felix about isolation and union in the individual, lovers and the community, in a passage that represents the wasteland's attitudes while attempting to question them, as she pounds Felix's shoulder asking for a denial:

> But if loneliness is being one's own skin and flesh, there's only more lonely people there than here.
>
> . . . 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 could nail together like boards. . . .
>
> Take a man and a woman, she said. There's no word to tell that when they get together in bed they're still anything but two people.

When Angel arrives back at Prosper's home, she realizes that "no word" is necessary. Practical action is required, and through that action Angel helps to achieve the unity she desires.

The final gathering at Felix's mirrors the new integration of the community. Lenchen and Kip have come out of need; Angel has returned to her proper responsibilities after her previous escape; for Felix it is a triumphant restoration of appropriate order. Mrs. Potter and Greta withheld themselves and rejected others; here another mother and daughter, Widow Wagner and Ara, come offering forgiveness and aid. The return of James includes all these motives; he wants human support; he is assuming his proper obligations; he is coming to restore order to the wilderness; and he comes offering a tenderness and compassion whose potency can regenerate his world. This new human inter-dependence is

seen in terms of a proper relation to one's physical environment. "A man needs living things about him", William says, "to remind him he's not a stone or a stick."

Thus the world is reborn from passivity into purposeful significance. Yet this redemption does not mean entry into a world of peaceful perfection; suffering is still a large part of its universe. Ara says, "We don't choose what we will suffer. We can't even see how suffering will come." The pain of living is unavoidable, and in a narrow world results in negative endurance or violence. But the regenerated world is based on the qualitative equation of fear and glory; the enlarged consciousness accepts the inevitable suffering and incorporates it into a meaningful pattern including the transcendent glory of human existence. Thus the regenerative process is cyclic rather than singular; it consists in a conscious maintenance of perspective between resignation to the uncontrollable, and recognition of its constancy. This duality is expressed as well in Mrs. Watson's short story "Antigone", significantly enough in a water image.

> See how quickly the water flows. However agile a man is, however nimbly he swims, or runs, or flies, the water slips away before him. . . .
>
> But after all, Antigone says, one must admit that it is the same kind of water. . . . The gulls cry above the same banks. Boats drift toward the Delta and circle back against the current to gather up the catch.[2]

Thus regeneration consists in a constant awareness of one's environment, physical and social, and one's relation to it. Defiance of the uncontrollable is ineffectual; passivity is even worse. It is spiritual compromise that enables integration to replace inactivity or exploitation.

THE REGENERATION of the wasteland from an elemental to a transcendental universe is accomplished in terms of a quest for value initiated by James and accomplished by community participation. But before examining the process of rebirth, it is interesting to consider the attempt to deal with the wilderness by defiance.

The idea of defiance is inseparable from the figure of Mrs. Potter and her fishing. She fishes "with a concentrated ferocity", "upstream to the source", and "it's not for fish she fishes". Her fishing, associated with the quest for significance in both the religious sense and in terms of the maimed Fisher King of "The Wasteland", is an act of defiance against both God and nature:

> Still the old lady had 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 . . . 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.

Mrs. Potter's defiance is demonstrated as well in her holding up the lamp in broad daylight "looking where there's nothing to be found", for "something hid from every living thing". In each case Mrs. Potter is abusing the natural elements and attempting to assume divine prerogatives. Using the wrong methods and approach, the Old Lady's quest is inevitably sterile, distortive, and self-destructive.

Mrs. Potter is more of a force than a character in the novel, and her figure is comparable to that of Addie Bundren in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. Addie is essentially selfish, refusing the ties of love and family responsibility. Her temperamental isolation imposes itself on others physically and psychologically. Her adultery with the Reverend Whitfield is an act of defiance, a quest for sin so that she might be condemned rather than forgotten by God.[3] So too Mrs. Potter turns her flesh from all living flesh and pursues a course of concentrated defiance.

Addie Bundren dominates and shapes her children's complex psychological reactions, for she is the source of latent tension and violence each of them expresses.[4] A similar relationship exists between mother and child in *The Double Hook*; Mrs. Potter's influence over her children is a matter of blood as well as of power. James' murder of his mother is an act worthy of the Old Lady herself; the ferocious interaction of will, words and hands in a deed that is ineffectual in an immediate sense because it is without definite aim. Similarly, when he blinds Kip, James says, "If you were God Almighty, if you had as many eyes as a spider I'd get them all." In the exact manner of the Old Lady, James defies both God and nature. His final act of violent rejection and defiance is the whipping of Lenchen and Greta. This act demonstrates the flaw inherent in the method of defiance; James is punishing these people because he had relied on them, on forces outside himself, to effect a transformation of his world. Now James is ready to learn that regeneration must come from within.

Greta is the sterile figure who replaces her mother in the unredeemed wasteland. She embodies the same defiance of nature and humanity as the Old Lady, but is even more negative than her mother. The scene of her self-destruction is a complex one, mirroring the ultimate inefficacy of rebellion alone. Greta rejects

the human companionship of her family; she abuses the nature, already distorted, symbolized in her flowered housecoat; she thirsts for revenge against the life-force of Lenchen and the potentiality for salvation of James; finally, all these challenges are consumed in her defiance of the vision of her mother, forbidding her to handle the matches. And Greta's reward is not escape or oblivion, but the embrace of Coyote in his darkness and fear.

In this way the children are deeply related to the mother. Her death is a longed-for event, finally precipitated by James' violent action. Her death is a fundamental necessity for the survival of the community. As Daedalus learns in Sheila Watson's "The Black Farm", some must die so that others may live more abundantly.[5] Furthermore, James must utterly reject his mother and temper the qualities that relate her to him. Like Mrs. Watson's Oedipus in "Brother Oedipus", James must learn that "We are her children. She is not our mother."[6]

The whole concept of defiance, like most of the elements in *The Double Hook*, is an ambiguous one. Ara provides some justification for violence when she says there are some things "that can't be straightened out. They have to be pulled and wrenched and torn." But such action is necessarily limited, since man cannot "hold and shape the world." William, discussing rebellious horses, points out the final uselessness of defiance: "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."

The narrator of Sheila Watson's "Antigone" discusses, in a different context, the ideas of escape and defiance. Antigone lives in a world of sensory experience:

> Yet she defies what she sees with a defiance which is almost denial. Like Atlas she tries to keep the vaulted sky from crushing the flat earth. Like Hermes she brings a message that there is life if one can escape to it in the brush and bulrushes in some dim Hades beyond the river. It is defiance not belief and I tell her that this time we walk the bridge to a walled cave where we can deny death no longer.[7]

Defiance is a denial that leads ultimately to death; escape is possible only to a dim Hades next door to death. To regenerate the wilderness, affirmation and belief, awareness and submission, must unite in a transcendent compromise for the good of the community.

THE PATTERN of rebirth in *The Double Hook* is that which Sheila Watson's Oedipus voices: "recognition, rejection, redemption."[8] Kip is

most closely associated with the power of perception and one of his meditations provides the novel's epigraph and the core of its interior symbolic pattern:

> Kip's mind was on 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 on to 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. . . . Fear walking round in the living shape of the dead. No stone was big enough, no pile of stones, to weigh down fear.
>
> 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.

This passage demonstrates the nature of the wasteland, dominated by fear, Coyote and the living dead. Kip perceives that no heap of broken images is large enough to bury fear, that no fragments can be shored against the ruin of the wilderness. Kip is also aware of Coyote's basic inadequacy. Coyote, like Kip himself, like Mrs. Potter, reaches for the glory and is deceived. And Coyote deceives others with "reflected glory"; the glory he reflects is that of the human consciousness that has been subjected to his potent darkness. Knowing this, Kip can see the pattern that will change the world; the power of knowledge over ignorance, and the integral relation between fear and glory.

For all his perception, Kip is unable to initiate the rebirth process, for his consciousness, though heightened, is essentially passive, "diverted from its course". Coyote calls Kip his servant, and in this relationship Kip's abuse of his perceptive power is made evident. As Coyote's servant, as a messenger, Kip's awareness leads to no discovery of new life, but rather to an increase in the paralyzing fear and passivity of the characters. Kip becomes a true inhabitant of the unredeemed world in his attempt to seduce Lenchen and in his refusal to deliver James' message to her. Above all, the limits of his perception become plain when he errs in assessing James; Kip assumes James is habitually docile and therefore not to be feared.

It is appropriate that Kip be blinded, "because Kip had been playing around with the glory of the world." The power he had abused must be taken from him. But in the community's rebirth through its own efforts Kip too is saved, for he admits his blame. In the redeemed world that integrates glory and fear, Kip

deserves his place, for by his constant antagonizing of the other characters he assists the purgatorial process by which suffering transforms the earth.

James is the catalytic figure who instigates the pattern of renewal. He has no heightened awareness to help him in his progress from recognition to rejection and redemption, but rather achieves perception in his individual participation in the collective experience. In the beginning, James is a native of the wasteland, conditioned by environment. His affair with Lenchen and the conception of his child are initially without meaning, part of the inarticulate and ultimately ineffectual defiance of circumstance. The murder of his mother is an almost ironic symbol; will, words and hands meet in an action that is ferocious but meaningless because rejection has preceded recognition. Thus action leads only to stasis and fear, which James had tried to conquer rather than incorporate into his experience. "Since the fury of the morning he'd not been able to act. He'd thrown fear as a horse balks. Then he'd frozen on the trail. He was afraid. Afraid what Greta might do." Thus violence leads only to further violence, the blinding of Kip and the whipping of Lenchen and Greta. These actions are a logical working out of his initial deed, but they signify a decreasing scale of ferocity. They also represent the infliction of the purgatorial process on other members of the community. James' final act of rejection is the most passive of all; that of escape. "He wanted only one thing. To get away. To bolt noisily and violently out of the present. To leave the valley. To attach himself to another life which moved at a different rhythm." James' search for value is still parasitic and materialistic, just like his mother's questing defiance. He still does not realize that the transformation of the life-rhythm has its source within man rather than in external circumstances.

In the town James no longer defies his environment, but rather moves parallel to it. Its nature is basically that of the wilderness. The hotel, like his home, has a "hanging and a waiting look". The brothel smells of "bodies and kerosene burning away", recalling Greta's self-destruction of which James is unaware. It smells of mud and dead fish, thus including Coyote's bed-hole and Mrs. Potter in its desolation. In effect, James has merely escaped to another wasteland. James sees his mother as he enters the town, continuing to envelop him in fear and darkness. He sees her for the first time since the murder; his departure has thus only brought him closer to the atmosphere of the unredeemed world. James cannot escape his mother. He cannot escape himself.

Confronted with a wilderness even more barren than that he had escaped, for

the first time James asks "what he'd really intended to do when he defied his mother at the head of the stairs." Coyote replies,

> To gather briars and thorns,
> To go down in the holes of the rock
> and into the caves of the earth.
> In my fear is peace.

In Coyote's terms the result of the murder is suffering, the confrontation of fear in a handful of dust. This is of course true, and an essential part of the rebirth process. But Coyote would have the pattern suspended at this point, offering only the peace of surrender to fear, the abdication of the glory inherent in responsible human existence. Here James achieves recognition; Coyote's bed-hole is not enough. "This bed is too short for a man to stretch himself in. The covering's too narrow for a man to wrap himself in." Moreover, James realizes the inadequacy of his defiant attempts to change things. "All he'd done was scum rolled up to the top of a pot by the boiling motion beneath. Now the fire was out." The fire of violence James discovers, burns without cleansing. James' encounter with the hotel parrot who has the rights of a dumb beast and a speaking man adds to his growing awareness of his true situation. Its uniqueness provides a low-keyed analogy for Coyote. Perhaps unconsciously James recognizes that so far he himself has acted as a dumb beast, motivated by fear; it is time to assert the rights of a speaking man, and affirm the individual and collective glory of humanity.

The process of recognition enables James to reject the brothel and its symbolic embodiment of the wasteland. As he leaves it he stands in the cool air by the earthy bank of the flowing river, and he finally experiences the freedom from his mother he had so desperately desired. James exists here in a peaceful isolation which contains the potentiality of his redemption; the elements are converging for his salvation. But the pattern is not complete. Lilly comes to him and the fire of her simulated passion recalls the nature of James' initial attachment to Lenchen. Here James experiences the fire which, ironically, can cleanse without destroying. Lilly steals James' newly purchased wallet, thereby exacting the price of his escape, his escape not from the wasteland, but from the inherited materialistic attitude to it which rendered it sterile.

James' thought now naturally turns to "Lenchen and the child who would wear his face", and he realizes that there lies his "simple hope". His town experiences have "freed him from freedom"; that is, he now recognizes the necessity of assuming his new responsibilities. Freed from its stable, James' horse naturally turns toward home and James moves with it in unified rhythm. Coyote tries to

deny James' quickening spirit of hope, but his purposeful activity creates a tempo more significant than Coyote's advice to rest in the dust. In a microcosm of the regenerative pattern, James moves from dead grass and spraying dust into a meadow of wild hay watered by a hidden spring, upon a stallion that draws life with every breath.

As he nears home, light defines the world for James, validating his rejection of the desolate town. He is uncertain about what he will find, expecting a cry of hate. His perception is still limited, yet from the distanced heights James is aware of the ordered regularity of the terrain to which he returns. He comes with a question and a resolution; he asks if the water must dry up forever, and determines to find Lenchen and transform their relationship. "Out of corruption life had leafed and he'd stepped on it carelessly as a man steps on spring shoots." And in the fulfilment of his resolution, James answers his own question.

The final step in the pattern of recognition, rejection and redemption is accomplished when James confronts the ruin of the Potter farm. Here he recognizes and rejects the fire that burns and only destroys, but he sees that such a flame enables redemption. He sees the "bare hot cinder of a still unpeopled world", and feels that "by some generous gesture he had been turned once more into the first pasture of things". The implication here is not of a newly created world, but of one recreated by a combination of man's effort and some inexplicable but benevolent gift from beyond man's power. And in planning the reconstruction of the reborn world and embracing his child, James fulfils his major role in the redemption of the wasteland.

The child is called Felix, Happy; he is born, not to redeem the world, but to figure forth its redemption. Physically the child of James and Lenchen, he will participate in their regenerative activity; spiritually the child of Felix Prosper, who brings him into the world, he will share the supernatural milieu which Felix contributes to the rebirth of the community.

Felix's initial passivity is seen in his indifference to the storm and his refusal to accept suffering. His earlier association with Angel, like that between James and Lenchen, had come about "by chance. By necessity. By indifference". Felix's gradual awakening to his role as spiritual leader is rooted in this passivity. When Lenchen comes to him for help, his first reaction is to chase her away. This desire, unlike his response to Mrs. Potter, does not sink into indifference, but moves to the half-forgotten ritual of religion and hospitality. This scene, introducing Part II of the novel, adapts the Visitation of the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, the joyous salute, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb". But Felix is still

gripped by inactivity. "He'd had his say. Come to the end of his saying. He put a stick on the fire. There was nothing else he could do."

Felix ends Part II with a dream vision which conceals James' escape with a symbolic fantasy of Angel's return. This vision involves the entry of the Virgin into Bethlehem, and that of Christ into Jerusalem, the ideas of death and life and the deceptive nature of mere appearances. In the dream, Felix assumes his priestly garments in the dawn, stressing the need of remembrance. He feels the pull of Coyote, but rejects him for Angel's return, and he welcomes her with the words that begin the Canon of the Mass, suggesting the mysteries of the Incarnation and the redemption of mankind. This dream, superimposed on James' escape, seems to imply that Felix's passivity has given way to a vision that transcends physical activity. But when confronted by the needs of Kip, Felix undertakes his pilgrimage of humility to Angel. His return home undercuts his vision with gentle irony, for she comes with him, not on a sleek ass, but "on her two feet, her children tagging behind her." Felix's spiritual perception must be modified by the actuality of practical activity.

The invasion of his indifferent isolation by the needs of others enables Felix to achieve both spiritual and practical wisdom, symbolized by the classical image of the owl. It is his assistance at the Nativity that results in his own rebirth, and his contribution to the salvation of his world. "It was not until the girl had come battering at his peace that he'd wondered at all about the pain of a growing root. . . . 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."

Recognition, rejection, redemption. Kip, James, Felix. Each is associated with a particular part of the rebirth pattern, but James, because of his activity, is the main figure who initiates its process. Each of the other characters is caught up in the collective experience, contributing to it in varying degrees. Lenchen, initially marked by fear and frustration, is a passive participant. Her awareness is limited; just before the birth of her child, she fears she has wrecked the world, while, ironically, she is assisting its salvation. But Lenchen's association with the fire image and her natural oneness with her environment make her a fruitful life-force. When she rode, "she was part of the horse. Its crest and the edge of its fire."

Her mother, Widow Wagner, embodies the fatalistic despair, the fear of God and His Judgment, which have turned the terrain into a wilderness of waiting women. Cornered by circumstance at last, her waiting gives way to practical aid, and prompted by Angel, she is able to give of herself spiritually, to offer the con-

cern, help and forgiveness that are the true maternal virtues. Ara has greater perception. She is aware of their passive isolation, and tries to fit the pieces into a pattern. She admits her own blindness, but rejects love as a unifying force and thus fails to find the pattern she is seeking. So Ara embodies the suffering of her world, aware of and experiencing it. She was "made to walk on roads and to climb cliffs. Made to bear her hands against rock faces and to set her foot on sliding shale."

Angel possesses a unique curiosity and tolerance, and the ability to articulate her thoughts. Felix's recollection of her encounter with the imaginary bear implies that she has conquered the fear of mere illusion and so enjoys a relative freedom and sense of realism. Angel has a saving adaptability to circumstances and the art of recognizing and achieving what is needful. She too is associated with the flame, in a personal and redemptive sense, in a passage that deftly reveals her mild superstition, her valid spiritual function, and her human practicality. Felix recalls her: "He'd seen Angel light a lamp against the storm. Not a wax candle to the Virgin, but the light she'd said her father kept burning against the mist that brought death."

Heinrich Wagner acts as a dormant parallel to the activity of James Potter. At first his impulse to isolation is manifest in his fence-building. He fears the light, prefers the darkness, procrastinates in his purpose to confront James about Lenchen, and is inarticulate in his desire to communicate with his sister. But Heinrich offers hope to his mother and goes out to search for Lenchen. Heinrich halts at the destroyed farmhouse, for his role is not of achievement, but the reflection of the potentiality of redemption. His ignorance of love thwarts his activity but not his perception. " . . . 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 which burned but did not destroy."

William Potter is the character who is caught up in the rebirth process, without contributing much more than proof of its efficacy. His irrelevant anecdotes and too-ready explanations give way gradually to more perceptive comments pertinent to the situation. His goal is physical comfort and peace, the completion of his daily chores. His only impulse to unity is a limited familial instinct, against which the final communal integrity can be seen as transcendental. William sees his limitations, but refers only to his own household and not the world at large. Yet William is redeemed by the concerted efforts of others, and aptly finds his task in waiting for James to return, not the passive suspension of the wasteland, but positive waiting with a social purpose.

Thus the wasteland inhabitants undergo a rebirth into a spiritually and physically ordered world, in which fear and glory are both incorporated into human experience. In the redeemed universe, each has his place, even Coyote. He has played his part of imposing fear on his subjects. Recognition of his inadequacy enables a realization of the function of suffering, and hope for a wider world of transformed values. So it is fitting that Coyote should have the last word, announcing man's triumph:

> I have set his feet on soft ground;
> I have set his feet on the sloping shoulders
> of the world.

NOTES

[1] Don Summerhaves, "Glory and Fear," *Alphabet* 3 (Dec. 1961), p. 50 (Review article).
[2] Sheila Watson, "Antigone," *Tamarack Review*, II (Spring, 1959), p. 6.
[3] Peter Swiggart, *The Art of Faulkner's Novels* (University of Texas Press, 1962), p. 118.
[4] Olga W. Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press, 1959), p. 52.
[5] Sheila Watson, "Black Farm," *Queen's Quarterly*, 65 (Summer, 1956), p. 209.
[6] Sheila Watson, "Brother Oedipus," *Queen's Quarterly*, 61 (Summer, 1954), p. 227.
[7] Sheila Watson, "Antigone," p. 8-9.
[8] Sheila Watson, "Brother Oedipus," p. 226.