Severed from Roots:
Settling Culture in Sheila Watson's Novels

by

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ABSTRACT

Sheila Watson's two novels, The Double Hook and Deep Hollow Creek, are both set in Dog Creek, British Columbia at the same historical moment. A comparative analysis of Watson's two novels demonstrates both their shared ideological foundations and the different ideological ramifications of their respective cultural representations. These are two very different novels, though they each aspire to a similar kind of cultural resolution. The complicated cultural negotiations involve both European settlers and local First Nations struggling beneath the powerful colonial influence of various cultural centres. In the end, both First Nations culture and the influence from the cultural centre remain active within the small communities, and it becomes the settlers' role to balance the demands of each cultural force. As a result of cultural hybridity, the settlers gain a cultural power and authenticity that enables them to become the naturalised, indigenized culture of the land.

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Acknowledgements

Started in Summer and now ending in Summer, this year long voyage is in full homage to the work and genius of Sheila Watson. Even despite everything already written, there is still plenty to pick at in these two short novels. Special thanks to Stephen Scobie and Misao Dean for all your guidance, editing, comments, ideas, and support. Thanks to my family for all your warm enthusiasm about my western adventure, my burgeoning love, and all my academic and political peculiarities. Other thanks to the UVic Library Staff, the GSS Staff (for the resources!), Smaro Kamboureli, and Chris Keep.

this thesis is dedicated to Lister

Winter persisted. The sweeping rhythm of the water could be seen only when the axe had cut a hole in the thick ice crust. On the ice-surface of the valley life moved severed from its roots.

-- Sheila Watson, Deep Hollow Creek --

Introduction

To Build a Culture

In 1959, Sheila Watson published a short novel called The Double Hook[1] set in Dog Creek, British Columbia, in the 1930's. Her novel, with its rich mosaic of myth and literary and religious references, inspired great enthusiasm amongst academics and writers alike despite the modesty of its length. The great impact of her novel has been acknowledged by such figures as Eli Mandel, who compared it to a "highly charged atomic accelerator" (Mandel 145), and George Bowering, who described it as a "very short but just about perfect novel" (Bowering "Narrative Valley" 132). Her story explores the physical, psychological, and spiritual struggle of a community trying to emerge from its debilitating isolation. Watson's exquisite language and narrative style has been extensively documented and analysed, and the only reservation expressed by scholars is that such a fine writer only produced one short novel and a small list of short stories. To the benefit of Canadian literature, however, Sheila Watson allowed a second novel to be published in 1992. Deep Hollow Creek[2] takes us back to Dog Creek in the 1930's, where we are again witness to the cultural power struggles within the young community[3].

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1 Pagination will follow the 1966 McClelland & Stewart edition.

2 Pagination will follow the 1992 McClelland & Stewart edition.

3 The town is specifically called "Deep Hollow Creek" in Deep Hollow Creek, and is never explicity named in The Double Hook. In a 1984 interview, however, Watson identified both communities as developing from her experiences in the Cariboo region, where she worked in Dog Creek (Meyer 158). While geographical descriptions of both communities are identical, the social predicament and inhabitants in each are notably different. They are, therefore, the same town but also not the same town. This thesis will

Though it explores nearly identical themes to The Double Hook, Watson's second novel presents an opposite vision of a small town society: what brought people together in The Double Hook divides the community in Deep Hollow Creek; and what was mythological becomes realistic. Watson overturns all of the central building blocks that shape the society in The Double Hook and creates an antithetical vision in Deep Hollow Creek. At the same time, despite their surface differences, both novels document a power struggle involving cultures and individuals within the small community. Each novel appeals to a resolution of the struggle through a hybridised culture in which the power dynamics of the cultures at play in Dog Creek and Deep Hollow Creek become interwoven into a new *indigenized* culture.

There are three clear cultural forces at play in both novels, and, while both books contain a unique representation of each cultural group, the hierarchy of power remains constant. The most powerful cultural force lies outside of Dog Creek and Deep Hollow Creek in what is hereafter referred to as the cultural centre. The singular noun-phrase "cultural centre" somewhat obscures the multiplicity of the manifest locations (i.e. the cities and countries) of external power, but the term attempts to draw attention to the whole social hierarchy above and beyond the small B.C. communities. Victoria, Vancouver, Toronto, New York, London, and even "The Rock" each occupy various positions on an international hierarchy of power, but all appear in Watson's novels as a loosely homogenised external source of culture and capital. The cultural centre possesses

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hereafter refer to the community in Deep Hollow Creek as Deep Hollow Creek and Dog Creek for the community in The Double Hook, but does so only for the convenience of identification and to avoid confusion.

the cultural authenticity and power that the people in Dog Creek and Deep Hollow Creek struggle to achieve. Cultural products and rituals stream into the small communities (at different rates in either novel) and dramatically change the dynamic of the society. The cultural centre plays a major role -- though not the only role -- in shaping the dynamic cultural situation at play in each community.

The second most powerful cultural group, and the location of all the dominant characters in each novel, are the European-descendant settlers in Dog Creek and Deep Hollow Creek. Though they occupy the deprivileged, cultural margins of the national and international social hierarchy, the settler culture holds the position of cultural dominance in the communities. Watson shapes each novel around the settlers' development into an authentic cultural presence. At the beginning of The Double Hook, they are dominated and constrained by the inertia of the land and only gradually achieve an autonomy and power over it. In Deep Hollow Creek, the settlers are shown to be incapable of accessing the truth of both nature and the land until they forego their acquiescence to the authority of the cultural centre. Both novels depict the settlers navigating the cultural influences at play in their communities, and conclude by proposing a way for the communities to become natural cultures in the Canadian landscape.

The presence of the settler culture and the cultural centre comes at the expense of the power and authenticity of the third cultural group, the "other" culture in both novels, the First Nations people. In Deep Hollow Creek, the Shuswap people physically appear and interact with the central settler characters. In The Double Hook, the First Nations people of Dog Creek are only explicitly acknowledged in one passing reference to a reservation (TDH 91). The enigmatic character Coyote, an important figure from

Shuswap mythology, is the only active and identifiable First Nations representative -- at least, the only one who is openly identified as such -- who influences the shape of the settlers' emerging culture[4]. Despite their marginality, the First Nations people and their mythology play an important role in the establishment of the new, authentic culture in each community. They are important for they (and they alone) provide the settlers with an authentic connection to the land. The First Nations' function in both novels is, however, limited to authenticating the settlers' connection to the land, which, as a result, both legitimises the settlers' claim on the land and further disempowers the First Nations people. It is through, and at the expense of, the First Nations people and mythology that the settlers' culture can become authenticated as the natural culture of Dog Creek and Deep Hollow Creek. Margery Fee's "Romantic Nationalism and the Image of the Native People in Contemporary English-Canadian Literature" includes Watson's The Double

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[4] Sheila Watson does not explicitly identify the national or racial backgrounds of any of the characters, except Coyote, in the novel. There is speculation amongst critics, however, that some characters, most notably Kip, are in fact native (see Barbara Godard 164). This thesis, on the other hand, uses the sociological pattern set in Deep Hollow Creek to determine the racial and historical background of characters in Dog Creek, where it is necessary to do so. In Deep Hollow Creek, the white settler population lives in fixed houses within the community, while the First Nations characters live, somewhat ambiguously, on a reservation outside of the community. In The Double Hook, there is also a distinctively and exclusively First Nations living space that physically separates the main characters from the First Nations population. Thus, in Dog Creek, I assume that all characters with houses in the community (which is everyone except Kip, who is essentially homeless throughout the novel) are caucasian settlers. This presumption is also supported by the scant, and admittedly ambiguous, cultural evidence in the text, such as William's explicit sense of separation from "the Indians" (TDH 77), Felix's ability to play the European fiddle, and the Wagner family's slavic names. William's expressed distinction from "the Indians" makes it easier to assume that his siblings, James and Greta, are also caucasian, but this too is only speculation.

Hook as an example of Canadian settler populations' attempt to naturalise their presence in a foreign land by appropriating the culture they have replaced and/or decimated:

> The simultaneous marginality and ubiquity of the Native people in our literature can be explained to some extent, then, by our desire to naturalise our appropriation of their land. It also explains the general lack of interest in Native culture or history: we want to *be* them, not to understand them. (Fee 24)

Watson's representation of Native people, as Fee describes of the technique in general, uses them, not to authenticate and demonstrate their own culture and continued presence in the world, but to demonstrate the naturalisation of the settler culture by its ability to appropriate First Nations culture, mythology, and knowledge. When Stella, Deep Hollow Creek's protagonist, has her quasi-mystical experience of nature, of "the primitive urge," the vision is coloured by "the red of Indian paint-brush" (DHC 125). Stella's experience of the essence of nature, of the land, is authenticated by Watson's inclusion of a reference to First Nations culture. Though the novel's community does not fulfil its cultural potential, the integrity Watson affords First Nations culture makes it a necessary source of knowledge and power that the settlers must embrace in order to become indigenized and authenticated.

On the other hand, Watson also demonstrates the historic denigration of the native population by European settlers. For example, Mamie Flower, the outspoken defender of the cultural centre in Deep Hollow Creek, dismisses Nicholas Farish, a local pensioner, because of his interest in First Nations culture: "Farish is not much good, she said. He spends too much time with the Indians" (60). Mamie Flower is heavily influenced by the colonialist pull of the cultural centre, and thereby lacks any desire to establish a unique

local culture. From her perspective, the First Nations people represent the negation of *real* culture, which exists somewhere closer to the top of the international social hierarchy.

The cultural dilemma of Watson's two novels is thus framed by the conflicting polarities of the First Nations culture and the cultural centre, whose influences the settler population must evaluate and negotiate in order to create their own authentic cultural space. Sheila Watson's novels depict the process of that negotiation and the necessity of hybridising the polar cultural extremes. In her depiction of the negotiation, Watson employs colonial and post-colonial techniques by both appealing to the cultural centre as a site of cultural authority and yet disrupting its absolute cultural integrity. While the First Nations people are disempowered and occupy the lowest position on the international cultural hierarchy (at least as it is represented in these novels), the settler population can only achieve authenticity, and fully emerge as the indigenous culture of the land, through the negotiation (and appropriation) of First Nations culture and mythology. Cultural power is thus located in both the cultural centre and, though to a far smaller extent, in the marginalized First Nations community. While it seems paradoxical to give authenticity to the centre and the margins, Watson's fluid prose style merges the contradictory social dynamics into a cultural web of hybridisation that naturalises and empowers the settlers' culture in both Dog Creek and Deep Hollow Creek.

The novels, and the intricate cultural situations they depict, are themselves the product of a strange and complicated history. The novels were both written and promptly shelved for years before the author considered submitting them to a publisher. The precise dates of completion and of the time spent writing and composing are unknown. By conventional estimations, The Double Hook was written, and rewritten, over the

course of the 1950's. Deep Hollow Creek, on the other hand, took at least half a century after completion to be published, and was actually written prior to The Double Hook by approximately twenty years! The complications in the production, however, do not change the implications of the ideological or thematic contents of either novel *as published.* The bibliographical puzzle will be appropriately and necessarily resolved in any biographical account of Watson, or in any study that attempts to unravel the literary influences in either text. This thesis, however, is concerned with the representation of culture, cultural power, and the relationships of the individual characters to the various cultural groups in the novels. As such, this thesis will consider Watson's novels as simultaneously existent cultural artefacts, and separate them entirely from the chronology and the historical context of their making. Influence or development between the works is thus left entirely for future biographers and bibliographers.

On a similar note, the cultural theories of Marshall McLuhan are referenced to help unravel the sophistication of the social network in Dog Creek and Deep Hollow Creek. Prior to the publication of either of her novels, Sheila Watson studied under Marshall McLuhan at the University of Toronto. After she graduated, they also maintained a personal and professional relationship. It is also a fact that McLuhan's The Gutenberg Galaxy (1962) and Understanding Media (1964) were both published after The Double Hook, but long before the more technologically savvy Deep Hollow Creek. The complicated process of the construction of Watson's novels, however, makes any inferences about influence from (or on) McLuhan difficult to assess. In keeping with my theoretical stance, this thesis will not attempt to prove directional influence, but will use McLuhan's work to explain the cultural dynamics at play in Watson's fictional universe.

It is, indeed, remarkable how well McLuhan and Watson corroborate each others representation of culture.

To dissect the ideological parallels and differences between Watson's two constructions of culture and power in the novels, I begin in Chapter One by analysing the colonialist and post-colonialist implications of each narrative. Both novels explore cultural authenticity and power in relation to the influence that either the cultural centre or the aboriginal cultures have on the settler population. By appealing to the cultural centre for guidance in The Double Hook, Dog Creek seems to be locked under the influence of colonialism. The actual ideological composition of the community is, however, much more complicated and there are examples of an active resistance in the novel. Deep Hollow Creek depicts a community that is overwhelmingly connected to, and influenced by, the cultural centre, and that must struggle to break free from colonial attitudes in order to construct an authentic culture for the land. While her second book seems predominantly post-colonial, Watson closes the novel by ambiguously leaving the colonial order in full power. Chapter One explores how both novels incorporate colonial and post-colonial ideologies into their construction of culture.

Chapter Two explores in greater detail the thematic implications of the differences between Watson's depictions of culture. Though each novel represents the same town at the same historical moment, the actual constructions of the communities are vastly different. The Double Hook represents a quiet, sedate and rustic community. Deep Hollow Creek, on the other hand, reveals a small community caught up in the swirl of international culture and modern technology. Without the sophistication of modern culture and technology, The Double Hook isn't forced to grapple with the same economic

and social complications that can be found in Deep Hollow Creek. Rather than depending on the First Nations culture to balance the influence of the external, international social hierarchy, as happens in Deep Hollow Creek, Watson depicts the settler population in Dog Creek as the *already naturalised* inhabitants of the land. They assume the indigenous position within the community, and struggle to develop and increase their cultural power. The presence and influence of First Nations people and culture is almost totally ignored, or at least rendered irrelevant, by the novel. Watson, for the sake of enabling the community's hybridised cultural resolution, doesn't include the contradictions and complications of building a culture at the expense of an already existent natural culture. At the same time, the international community's presence is also severely curtailed in The Double Hook, when compared with Deep Hollow Creek. The balance between the cultural polarities is thereby sustained, though at the expense of the complicated cultural, economic, and political experience of the historical Dog Creek. My second chapter explores how both novels strive toward the same ambition of enabling a hybridised, indigenized culture to emerge, though with variant representations of the three cultural forces at play in the small communities. These fictional communities are shaped around a Modernist assumption of the possibility of cultural authenticity, of constructing an indigenized culture, despite the malleability of culture and individual identity.

Paradox is a common term in the criticism of Sheila Watson's novels, and it can even be argued that the two novels, put side-by-side, are themselves paradoxical representations of Dog Creek, B.C. While identifying paradox and contradictions might be a useful method of explaining the differences between the novels, my third chapter offers a closer examination and analysis of how Watson's depiction of contradiction does

not undermine the emerging cultures. Seeming contradictions abound in and between the novels, but Watson uses the cultural incompatibilities to build a social web flexible enough to contain those contradictions. Just as a double hook embraces the contradictory elements of glory and darkness, so too does a potential, hybridised culture embrace the contradictory elements between the cultural centre and the First Nations culture. Both cultural forces must influence the settler population in order for the settlers to become the authentic heirs to the land. The process of this negotiation occurs throughout both novels, and can even be traced into the intriguing and elusive titles of either book.

A comparative analysis of Watson's two novels demonstrates both their shared ideological foundations and the different ideological ramifications of their respective cultural representations. These are two very different novels, though they aspire to a similar kind of cultural resolution. In the end, both First Nations culture and the cultural centre remain active and influential in the small communities, and it becomes the settler population's role to balance the demands of each cultural force. As a result of cultural hybridity, the settlers gain a cultural power and authenticity that enables them to become the naturalised, indigenized culture of the land.

Sheila Watson is not a post-colonial writer, but her novels demonstrate how and why post-colonial societies emerge from colonial situations. At the same time, she is not a post-modern writer, but her unique configuration of modernism, as a result of her post-colonial tendencies, demonstrates a distinct step beyond what is traditionally identified as modernism. Post-modernism is, however, still beyond the edge of her horizon. Watson's writing takes place somewhere in the liminal space between the modernist to post-modernist era, somewhere between the colonial to post-colonial era, and just on the inside

edge of the McLuhan's Electric Age. Watson uses both works to register the theoretical implications of the paradigm shift happening in a volatile social landscape, but yet resists a total commitment to any of the options on hand. The interactive, syncretic cultural portrait that she provides offers a rich depiction of the philosophical landscape, as older ideas fade and new ideas begin to take shape. For the critic, Watson's work can be awkward and often troubling because she does not easily fit into the traditional theoretical models. The method I have chosen for this thesis follows Watson's own example in adopting a syncretic approach to the texts. I refer to many theoretical positions in order to illuminate the cultural predicament in the novels, but readers will notice that I commit to none. The ambition of this thesis is not to establish a proper theoretical label for Watson and her works. Instead, I aim to prove the existence of colonial, post-colonial, modernist, post-modernist, literate, and post-literate ideological perspectives within Watson's novels, and to show how the swirling interaction of these ideologies influences the plot structure of both narratives.

Chapter One

Cultural Denigration and the Development of Post-Colonial Resistance

On the margin of the world, hidden from the human eye amidst the crevices and hills, lies the small, isolated community of Dog Creek where Sheila Watson's only two novels are set. "Even God's eye could not spy out the men lost here," Ara complains in The Double Hook, "there were not enough people to attract his attention" (TDH 22-3). The isolation of the location profoundly shapes the interaction of all the characters. Both novels quickly establish dysfunctional communities and document the struggle to overcome the individual characters' isolation from each other. Watson challenges the harmful hierarchical order established by the European descendant settlers in Deep Hollow Creek by undermining the integrity of its determination. The community in The Double Hook, on the other hand, exists without ritual, custom, or linguistic competence and demonstrates the emptiness of cultural and social existence without them. The culture developed by the settlers, and the displaced First Nations culture, are both debased in favour of the Imperial powers from the cultural centre that rules over them both. While both novels undermine the integrity and power of both levels of local culture, the settlers and the First Nations, each novel also demands that the influence of the cultural centre be compromised in order to enable a naturalised culture for the community to emerge. The original, flawed, cultural situation is overcome in the process of hybridising the apparently superior influence of the cultural centre with the First Nations culture. The community in Deep Hollow Creek begins with a complicated network of cultural and

religious rituals, economic networks, and an advanced linguistic cognisance already established. Those cultural practices and rituals are, however, products of the cultural centre and, as a result, ignore the physical presence and history of the land. The central struggle in each novel is to connect people to the land, to reunite figures with the ground they exist within. In The Double Hook, the community overcomes the degenerative effects of isolation and cultural absence by re-establishing a cultural link to Europe, and building a communal space around the Christian tradition. Deep Hollow Creek's inability to achieve cultural resolution and communal stability, however, marks an important distinction between the two novels' relationships to the cultural forces at play in each community. The community in The Double Hook overcomes isolation by rediscovering and reaffirming a commitment to the external world, while sustaining the active influence of First Nations mythology. Deep Hollow Creek, on the other hand, documents how the commitment to external imperial powers actually prevents the community from accessing the truth of the land as known by the First Nations community. Both novels demand both the presence of the cultural centre and First Nations culture in order for the local culture to become naturalised. Watson's novels, thus, demonstrate both a colonialist mentality and the beginnings of a post-colonial resistance to a colonialist mentality.

Historically, these two important novels in the Canadian tradition emerge from a colonial past and introduce many of the social criticisms that have since developed into a post-colonial literature. Contemporary post-colonialist theoretical language, in its analysis and suspicion of the colonialist project, has developed an ideological perspective that is both useful and appropriate to identify and decode Watson's struggles to determine identity for her characters and communities within the delicate balance of the cultural

centre and the First Nations culture at play in Canada. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's book The Empire Writes Back[5] outlines and distinguishes three central features that make a text a post-colonial work: "The silencing and marginalizing of the post-colonial voice by the imperial centre; the abrogation of this imperial centre in the text; and the active appropriation of the language and culture of that centre" (Ashcroft 83). The relationship of the individual to the community is shaped by the relationship of the community to the imperial centre that has colonised or settled it. The pervasive influence of the imperial centre shapes identity and evaluates the marginalized community, and individual, by how well they mimic the cultural centre. Difference from the imperial model is, of course, a sign of weakness and, as Homi Bhabha writes in "Of Mimicry and Men," is completely unavoidable in a colonialist relationship. He explains that

> colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as *a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite,* which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess of difference. (Bhabha 235)

The colonised people retain their status of Other regardless of their commitment to the cultural centre, and will always necessarily rank below the coloniser. A colonial text will demonstrate how an individual (or a community) is empowered by appealing to the influence of an imperial power, while systematically denigrating all marginal positions. A post-colonial text understands, as Bhabha does, the limitations of the colonial model, and will seek power and identity in the margins, away from the dominant ideology. It recognises the arbitrary authority behind colonial cultural denigration, and attempts to

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[5] Hereafter referred to as the work of the first alphabetical author, Bill Ashcroft.

overcome the negative influence. This thesis will follow the general pattern of Ashcroft's definition of cultural denigration as "the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model" (Ashcroft 9), but modify the implications of his word "indigenous" to recognise the two tiers of cultural denigration that are crucial to the narratives of Watson's novels: by the cultural centre against the settlers, and by the settlers against the First Nations culture. Cultural denigration, one of the means by which the dominant ideology marginalizes difference, establishes an important ideological difference between Watson's two novels: The Double Hook depicts denigration as a positive and necessary step on the path to redemption while Deep Hollow Creek depicts denigration as a divisive and destructive attribute of the settler population (and of the cultural centre) that blinds the inhabitants to the essential value of First Nations culture. The occurrence of cultural denigration in both novels is differentiated by the depiction of the influence the process has on the local community.

Ironically, The Double Hook appears to use the tools of post-colonialist narratives to authenticate the colonialist sensibility. Watson abrogates and decentralises Imperial English for a regional dialect, but does so to underline the limitations of decentralised communication. Desperately isolated and moribund, Dog Creek acknowledges its marginalized status and appeals to the cultural centre for redemption and identity. Stella, in Deep Hollow Creek, becomes aware of the international hierarchy in her community and questions its authority. Even though she is new to the community, arriving in town on the very first page, Stella comes from the city on a personal quest to redefine herself outside of the cultural centre. She struggles to unwrite the influence of colonialism upon

her own life by pursuing isolation and independence from the world. Watson introduces the central post-colonial struggle in Stella's endeavour to redefine herself, to "find life for herself" (DHC 7) in the deprivileged margins. Both novels, however, show an acute interaction with the technical devices and ideological concerns that have come to define post-colonialist literature. The Double Hook's reconciliation of the post-colonialist themes and technical devices with an apparently blunt indoctrination of colonialist centralised ideology is problematic. However, the appeal to the imperial model in The Double Hook also contains the distinguishing mark of a new culture by the novel's end that separates it from a purely colonialist stance; the community's redemption is greatly assisted, after all, by the persistent influence of First Nations culture in the "meddler" figure of Coyote (TDH 39). His character pesters and motivates the other characters -- intentionally or not -- to establish a protective community and a new society. As Ashcroft explains, "Within the syncretic reality of a post-colonial society it is impossible to return to an idealised pure pre-colonial cultural condition" (Ashcroft 109). At the same time, under the influence of the natural and spiritual processes of the new world, it is equally impossible to create an idealised, pure *colonial* cultural condition. Watson brings this fact to the foreground by closing the novel with the final words coming from Coyote, implying that the community is still, even with the presence of Christianity, "under Coyote's eye" (TDH 19). In Deep Hollow Creek, post-colonial ideology is given a terribly limited influence, while the colonial models, even though thoroughly (and appropriately) critiqued, remain firmly in power. Stella, it must be remembered, eventually leaves the community without having changed anything outside of herself. Mamie Flower's Stopping House, which symbolically dominated and controlled the

community while Stella was there, and that used its governmental, financial, and intellectual influence to maintain its colonialist advantage over the other inhabitants, remains firmly in power after Stella leaves. The ambition of this chapter is to demonstrate the interaction of colonialist and post-colonialist ideologies in The Double Hook and Deep Hollow Creek, and to reveal how Watson uses her awareness of the tension between the cultural centre and the First Nations culture to develop a potentially authentic model for a naturalised local culture. The First Nations and the imperial influence must simultaneously merge and be contained within a cultural double hook in both communities.

With the first words of Deep Hollow Creek, Watson reveals the deeply cut divisions between the characters that will emerge in greater detail through the book. Stella's position as the community's new schoolteacher leads to her billeting at Sam and Rose Flower's farmhouse. Instead of showing gratitude or kindness, Stella immediately denounces Rose for lacking any visible sign of the spiritual vitality she finds in her favourite literature:

> Her eyes, Stella thought, were the colour of Spanish mahogany, but they lacked the lustre of organic fibre. The soul had gone out of the wood, had dissipated. What was life, she asked herself, that the soul could escape so. . . . It is not difficult, she thought, to recall all the fine things which have been written about life. (DHC 7)

Stella employs cultural denigration in her appeal to European literature to form the contrast by which she invalidates Rose as a spiritual source. Watson quickly establishes the colonialist paradigm within Stella, who will eventually become one of the novel's strongest reactionaries against colonialist influence. Her condescension and ingratitude demonstrate the lingering influence of the international hierarchy, even as she struggles

against her cultural background. The early stages of her post-colonial resistance also appear in the first paragraph, nestled in her condemnation of Rose, by the fact that she chooses to search and "find life for herself" in the deprivileged margin. Detaching herself from an imperial centre, as Auerbach noted in his 1953 essay "Philology and Weltliteratur," is an important method for an individual to gain the ability to understand and recognise the culture she has left behind (Auerbach 17). Edward Said's 1983 definition of culture also identifies how distinction and difference makes culture visible: culture "designates a boundary by which the concepts of what is extrinsic or intrinsic to the culture come into forceful play" (Said 9). Stella chooses to confront her culturally biased perception of the world by stepping out of the centre and moving into the cultural margins. It is ironic, though perhaps inevitable, that her first cognitive act as a cultural exile from the cultural centre is to demonstrate her affiliation to it by attacking Rose. After all, is it possible that she could think radically differently so soon after first exiting from its ideological influence? The conflict between the colonialist tradition and the emerging post-colonial resistance is thus located on all levels of (using Margaret E. Turner's terms) the personal, the community, and the cultural (Turner 77). Stella is highly educated and sent by the cultural centre into the community to change and regulate the inhabitants' knowledge with a curriculum determined by the cultural centre. In this way, she embodies one of the methods by which colonialist cultural values are distributed into the marginal communities. Watson makes Stella's connection to the cultural centre quite explicit by attributing to the character numerous overt literary allusions to canonical writers such as Donne, Browne, and Taylor. These references are extremely important in relation to the historical period of Deep Hollow Creek, for while the Romantic aesthetic

sensibility had rejected the Metaphysical writers of England, T.S. Eliot campaigned through essays in the Times Literary Supplement from 1921 to 1924 to re-evaluate their achievements. His influence gradually changed the literary canon, but Stella's early embrace and acute analysis of the 17th Century poets demonstrates a tight connection to the leading edge of Imperial thought. Though Stella is employed as an agent of the imperial forces, she is not fully reconciled to the role. Jane Urquhart describes Stella's position as follows: "A young woman highly educated in things of an intellectual nature, Stella has come into the valley in order to make contact with the sort of physical existence that does not depend on, nor, for that matter, have time for cerebral reflection and scientific analysis" (Urquhart 115). Urquhart hints that Stella has come into Deep Hollow Creek to *get back to the land* or to *find her inner peace*. These thinly veiled humanist clichés at the very least introduce the stage upon which Stella's foremost battle is set: in her own conscious mind, on the personal level. Stella's resistance to the cultural centre is limited by her tendency toward abstraction, toward separating herself from her physical situation and retreating into a cerebral connection with the world beyond. Such behaviour is endemic to her residual attachment to a colonialist perspective. As the colonialist perspective is exactly that -- a perspective, a way of looking at and interpreting the world -- Stella's primary struggle occurs within her own mind, and in her own life. Upon realising that her independence is being limited by billeting with Sam and Rose Flower, Stella moves into her own house and slowly cuts away her ties to the community. She buries herself in books and work, ironically convinced that she is increasing the vitality of her life. Miriam, her housemate, friend, and another urbanite who has recently

moved into the community in search of "real life," confronts Stella's perpetual isolation directly in the following exchange:

> Why don't you relax when you come in? Miriam asked. You poke round at the school all day and as soon as you come in you begin to read.
>
> It's part of my life, said Stella. Just because I'm here there's no reason for letting my mind lose its colour. (DHC 95)

At this point in her development, Stella sustains her limited conception that intelligence is exclusively determined by one's connection to (and importance in) the cultural centre, and that her time spent outside of the cultural centre somehow puts her mental ability at risk.

Stella's attachment to literature, and to the role played by the numerous other cultural products (such as magazines, newspapers etc.) demonstrates the debilitating influence of the external world on the community of Deep Hollow Creek. This influence allows for the dubious hierarchy that ranks settlers above First Nations people to be established and empowered, and for empty religious rituals that represent Christianity as nothing more than a social club to become the established practice of the community. The inhabitants are deeply divided from each other, and the cultural centre actively limits all incentives to overcome the divisions. The community store, the post office, the government mediator, and the local hotel are all sites in the desperately poor community that control all of the external finances that enter the community. They, thereby, exert a powerful control over the development and shape of the community. The advantage gained by Dick Mockett and Mamie Flower by their control of all four positions elevates them far above the common lot. As Stella comes to realise, the external money helps construct a dangerously powerful social, financial, and legal hierarchy in the community.

The owners of the Stopping House act as the community's gatekeepers to the outside world by controlling the distribution of both the essential goods necessary for survival (groceries, money, and government contracts) and the cultural rituals of the community (mail, religion, and social life). Deep Hollow Creek unveils some of the negative effects of colonialism, and the various levels of resistance to it by Stella, Rose, Nicholas Farish, and Miriam. Though it fails to unwrite the colonialist system, Deep Hollow Creek documents the advent of a post-colonial mistrust of the cultural centre.

Stella's struggle, then, following these terms, is to free her perspective from the imperial, hierarchical model, to align her internal mind with her external physical situation, and to construct her identity from within. At the beginning of the novel, despite her mental acuity, she is powerless; she is told when to clean herself (8), when to eat (9), and where she will live (9). She doesn't even speak a word until 49 pages into the novel! Her abstract literary sensibility pulls her outside of her physical life and into an/other's ideas without providing her any means to repossess her life upon return. Urquhart notices the conflict between abstraction and physical presence: "These opening pages, then, present us with what I believe is a central theme in the book, refined culture thrown into the midst of stark nature and, with the marriage of these opposites, the birth of narrative" (Urquhart 115). Urquhart's message here is very important for catching the thematic metaphor of self as narrative that shapes Stella's struggle with identity. The negotiation between the mind and the environment is symbolically represented as narrative. But if the character's identity in the novel is itself a narrative, who is its author? Who is its reader? George Bowering expands the metaphor, following a similar interpretative stream: "in relationship to story, [Stella] is the reader in the text" (Bowering "Narrative Valley" 132).

Though her life is compared to a complete story, she does not author her own narrative, but exists passively as a reader of the story of her life. Her detachment from her own life is not absolute, however, for Deep Hollow Creek traces the development of Stella from reader to author. Urquhart describes Stella "as a person to whom a tale is told" (Urquhart 115) but that she eventually "starts to live completely in the landscape" (116) culminating with the arrival of spring/redemption. Her success at overcoming her tendency for abstraction, however, is undermined in the final scene of the novel, where she becomes a "spectator" while watching a match burn her finger (DHC 141). The episode is not an example of someone who is "completely" *grounded*. Despite this momentary loss of sense, though, Stella does embrace the post-colonial preference for multiplicity over the colonial binary code: "I could never divide myself from any man on the difference of opinion, or be angry with his judgement for not agreeing with me in that from which perhaps in a few days I should dissent myself. Every man is not a proper champion for truth" (135). By rejecting the stability of colonial authority, she has enabled for herself a space in the margins that yet retains the potential for complete fulfilment of identity.

The process of the fulfilment of her identity is intertwined with references, meetings, and experiences of First Nations people. They, and their affinity to the natural world, are the necessary conduit through which she must pass in order to gain access to her authentic self. Stella defines First Nations culture as *natural* by associating it with the cycles of nature: "The Indian gets the deer and the winter gets the Indian" (91). When she experiences the truth of nature, it comes as an awakening of the essential self in her, mirrored by the onset of Spring around her. She relates the experience to discovering a part of herself unadorned and uninfluenced by civilisation (i.e. like finding her First

Nations self): she "felt the need to talk as she felt other primitive and essential desires. And, if the word had become for her the shroud, the thought had become the vital essence which could find realisation only in the word" (113). Her conscious connection between "primitive" urges and discovering the "vital essence" in herself merges her identity with the First Nations. They represent the lingering presence of *the primitive* in the world, something she is able to uncover within herself, and which allows her to reclaim words from the cultural centre and let her own thoughts determine them. The metaphor of self-as-narrative is repossessed by Stella through her ability to access the power of nature: "She had learned from Mockett and from nature itself" and she "gave thanks to Coyote" (134). Stella is convinced that the First Nations culture offers an important and essential role in the development of an individual's authentic self, but her pairing of Mockett and nature, in the above passage, demonstrates her commitment to the culture of hybridisation. An individual must remain open to the universal lessons of the world, such as the capitalism that Mockett represents, and to the particular lessons of the natural world he/she lives in, such as the primitivism that the First Nations community represents.

Earlier, Nicholas Farish complains about the difficulties involved in becoming naturalised into the Canadian landscape: "I wish my mother had dreamed about beavers, he said, then the beaver would be my manitou. It would have saved me a great deal of trouble" (41). The nearly surreal self-consciousness he displays about his endeavour to naturalise himself into the land defines First Nations culture as being essentially natural to Canada. Just like Stella, he struggles to overcome the influence of his past in order to find his authentic self. The First Nations culture, through such cultural assumptions, is

consistently represented as an authentic cultural presence, despite the ignorance of many of the influential characters in the community, such as Mamie Flower and Dick Mockett. While some characters fail to recognise any value in the First Nations culture, and those characters control a lion's share of the community's power, Watson constructs the First Nations community as providing a positive and authentic cultural force that influences many of the settlers, such as Stella and Nicholas Farish[6]. The extensive interaction and inter-group influence in the community suggests that it is already a hybridised culture, even if some characters resist the fact. Stella's experiences with First Nations culture bring her closer to understanding Dog Creek, and herself, than those characters who remain blinded by external influence.

After all of her experiences in Deep Hollow Creek, Stella realises that she no longer follows another's vision, or any imperial vision, but is able to see life for herself: "If I hadn't come here, she said, I doubt whether I should ever have seen through the shroud of printer's ink, through to the embalmed essence" (DHC 112). The image of a

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[6] Terry Goldie offers an important analysis of Canadian literary representations of First Nations communities that suggests a common ground between the different responses of the settlers to the First Nations community in Watson's novels. He argues that "To overcome alienation, to 'belong,' the white must become as though indigenous, must become 'indigenized,' through rejecting or incorporating the previous indigene" (Goldie 85). Though his study does not comment on Watson's work in particular, Goldie's concept of indigenization implies that there is no difference between the cultural endeavours of Mamie (and Mockett) and Stella (and Farish): both seek to achieve cultural naturalization in a foreign land. Hybridizing and annihilating the First Nations are both attempts to create a naturalized space for the settler populations. Watson values the hybridization model, and the incorporation of First Nations culture into the settlers' culture, over the rejection of the First Nations culture. From the settlers' perspective, which is the perspective of both her narratives, the integration model makes more ethical sense than American-style genocide, and Watson's books respond to the fact that the

dead core, whose death is hidden by cultural products, horrifically disrupts the stability of all authorial power. Furthermore, she rejects her earlier notion that without her constant devotion to the cultural centre (through literature) her mind would dull; "That there was no rawhide stay for the mind was a fact that she had come to accept. The mind took care of itself -- growing and expanding from some inner force" (140). At this stage in her development, the individual authors, by whose judgement Stella was earlier able to condemn Rose, no longer contain an emancipating wisdom, but offer yet another form of bondage. Stella resists cultural denigration and its insistence that the imperial model offers the only authentic source of identity, and adopts the post-colonial preference for diversity. Her achievement, though, as a lonely, single woman who, at the novel's end, leaves a community where she has had very little influence, is negligible but for the token presence of ideological resistance to the colonial order.

Ironically, the cultural distinction of the new world from the European centre is most poignantly registered through Mamie Flower, despite the fact that, even afterwards, she remains committed to the latter's ideological supremacy. Following the literary tradition that Sara Jeannette Duncan created in The Imperialist, Watson sends her character over to England to confront the ideological gap between her former homeland and what she has become since her time in Deep Hollow Creek:

> Mamie had thought she would keep Bill [her husband] in England. But after a while she wasn't so sure. She felt herself a little lost in London. She had no importance at all. And when she met some of the girls she had known and saw the way they lived she was a little frightened. . . . When

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settlers have no intention of leaving the land they have just moved into. The only options are brutality or integration, and Watson chooses integration.

> Mamie spoke of their coming back, she said I chose to come and I chose to stay. That was all. (DHC 36)

Watson's image of a poor, floundering Canadian in the Old World both secures the distinction between the two cultures, and also denigrates the influence of Deep Hollow Creek by showing how it has debilitated Mamie's ability to cope with her former home. Just as Stella appeals to the authority of canonical literature, Mamie's valorises the cultural centre to the point that it blinds her to the unique and powerful value of the hybrid cultural situation already at play in her community. When she is forced to return to Canada, she takes with her a determination not to deteriorate any further from the imperial model: "She had, Mockett suggested, transplanted the delicate flower of culture into a barren soil. . . . she determined that she would never let the country beat her, and look what she's done" (82). Mockett's praise draws to light the success of Mamie's position in the community, even despite the fact that she is completely separated from her cultural role model. The resultant contradiction foregrounds the arbitrariness of her social powers by removing the source from which she claims it originates, and constructs Mamie as the focal point for the restrictive, colonialist tendencies that suffocate Deep Hollow Creek.

It is important to note that the specific wording in Mockett's suggestion that Deep Hollow Creek is a culturally "barren soil" equals a total dismissal of First Nations culture. He subtly attempts to erase any authenticity in any other cultural group besides the cultural centre. It is highly appropriate, and even more offensive, that in his dismissal of First Nations culture he feels no need to name them even as he insults them. To the confident colonialist, the aboriginal populations are not even worthy of direct insult.

Watson's explicit inclusion and (marginal) authentication of First Nations characters and mythology, however, directly contradicts Mockett's evaluation of the cultural situation, and further invalidates Mamie's colonialist cultural ambition. The hierarchy Mamie and Mockett appeal to is both arbitrary and entirely hollow.

In a similar, but opposite, progression, The Double Hook begins by denigrating the local culture of Dog Creek and appealing to a higher moral order that will unify the community around a stable centre. In this way, the novel can be said to favour homogeneity, and the discourse of a dominant, central culture as fundamental to the formation of a *civilised* community. People need, the novel seems to suggest, a common language and ideological ground to bind them together. More importantly, however, the novel compares two languages and cultures and seems to evaluate their comparative integrity in favour of the cultural centre. Of the numerous critics who have approached this text, all agree that the theme of isolation dominates the start of The Double Hook. John Lennox describes Dog Creek as a "closed environment which exists apart from the larger world and which suggests the restricted psychological attitudes of the characters" (Lennox 45). The community is detached from the influence of the external world (Jones (45), Mitchell (105), Scobie (42), and Corbett (115) amongst others), while the characters are also isolated from each other (Lennox (51), Northey (60), Jones (44) and Grube (76) amongst others). The community remains completely barren until the turning point when Ara senses the returning of the water (33), which is promptly followed by the rain storm that forces the community to interact (TDH 34). Watson never explicitly provides the historical reasons that would explain why the community fails to function -- as other Modernist writers such as Hugh MacLennan and Frederick Grove were prone to do -- but

allows the sensation of a bleak and isolated environment and society to emerge without any historical contextualization. The portrait of Dog Creek, during the first section of the novel, is consistently dark: "The water was running low in the creek. Except in the pools, it would be hardly up to the ankle. Yet as she watched the old lady, Ara felt death leaking through the centre of the earth. Death rising to the knee. . . . The water was drying away" (21). A sense of lifelessness and struggle to survive emerges; "I've seen cows," William says, "with lard running off of them into the ground" (22). Watson's landscape is equally menacing: composed of "burnt grass" (22), "mud bake" (28), "nothing but dust" (31), and with the characters moving "through the sand and dust and patches of scorched grass" (37). The parched landscape mirrors the loveless interrelations of the inhabitants: James kills his Mother (19); Felix, the Widow Wagner and Heinrich each consider chasing the Old Lady off their property (23, 25); Heinrich chases Kip away (27); the Widow Wagner says of her daughter, Lenchen, "A fat pig of a girl, Almighty Father. Who would want such a girl?" (29); and Greta frets about the potential threat posed by the men of her community: "If I'd married a man and gone off, there's no telling what might have happened. He might be riding round the country in a truck. Stopping and talking to women in the road [an allusion to William]. He might be playing the fiddle while the pains was on me [an allusion to Felix]. He might be meeting the Widow's girl down in the creek bottom [an allusion to James]" (37). As there are many other examples of this kind of anti-social behaviour and attitudes in the early stages of the text, Greta's imagined betrayals express the entire community's deep mistrust and refusal to commit meaningfully to one another.

The eventual appeal to Christianity allows the community to overcome its fear of interaction, and to be able to cope with the punishing physical environment of Dog Creek. Margaret Morris explains the way the relationship between the landscape and its redeemed inhabitants functions: "the rebirth process is within, affecting not the external environment but the attitude to it by its inhabitants" (Morris 86). Even Morris has argued, however – ironically later in the same essay! -- that the landscape actually mirrors, and externalizes, the characters' spiritual and psychological conditions. For example, when the initial moment of redemption comes, the landscape changes. Ara feels water coming (33), and what was a dry and lifeless desert is erased by a powerful storm (34). Beverly Mitchell, though, counters that the storm still represents a destructive power, and is, itself, a "manifestation of evil" whose influence is entirely hostile (Mitchell 85). The storm can also be associated with the community's developing interaction and support, however, for it forces the inhabitants to interact unselfishly; James offers Ara shelter in his house (TDH 36), and Felix does the same for Lenchen (40). The water it brings, though, only temporarily relieves the arid landscape, and as Morris states, the landscape doesn't change only the attitude to it. Even much later, as James comes back into the community, in what most critics agree is an important final sign of the community's redemption, the landscape remains barren: "dead grass snapped beneath the horse's feet as it moved, and the dust rose like spray in the moonlight" (122). The first sign of redemption, or at least of its potential, when Ara prophetically feels the return of water, is yet critically important to the thematic structure of the entire text and the community's change in attitude is registered in one of the novel's *other* central leitmotifs. Immediately following Ara's prophetic vision of water, but before the storm, Watson makes two direct

biblical allusions to Nineveh and Jonah, both of which are examples of the Christian God offering salvation to a degenerated humanity[7]. From the storm on, the process of redemption is specifically intertwined with Christian imagery and no longer determined by the condition of the landscape: Ara remembers the pardon that was given Nineveh and Jonah (22, 33, 34); while Felix is "redeemed" (38) through his meditation on a cup that Stephen Scobie conjectures might represent the Holy Grail (Scobie 43); and, much later, when Felix is kneeling beside Lenchen's bed as she gives birth, Felix relates the moment to the birth of Christ: "he saw his old body crouched down like an ox by the manger" (126). Watson amplifies the Christian implications in Felix by having him embrace both Christian vocabulary and the memory of himself as one of "God's servants" (TDH 51). The same progression continues with the Widow Wagner, despite Margaret Turner's note that the Widow stops her appeal to the Christian God (Turner 68) because she is "Afraid that he might come" (TDH 55). Turner's analysis neglects to follow the character into her acquiescence to Christian ideology that follows shortly thereafter: "Dear God, she thought. How easy death would be if there was death and nothing more" (68). Her prayer directly rejects Coyote and his pronouncement of the finality in death: "Happy are the dead for their eyes see no more" (125). By the next morning, the Widow is committed to the redemptive, de-isolating, energy sweeping the community: "Go out and bring back Lenchen, the Widow said to the boy. Then together we will think what to do" (80). Like God's mistaken wrath against the people of Nineveh, "She had done wrong. She had seen

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[7] The two stories are from Jonah Chapter 2,3. God shows mercy upon both Nineveh and Jonah; "and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" from Chapter 3, Verse 10.

the wrong" and she knows that "It was God who would judge." Two thematic movements shape the novel until Part IV: a portrait of the physical and spiritual degeneration of the community, and a collective appeal to Christianity. The landscape throughout the redemptive process remains constant while the community's relationship to Christianity changes. Ara's prophetic vision of fertility and bounty occurs exclusively within her own mind (114) and deepens the separation between the inhabitants and the "shattered rock, the bleached and pitted bone" that defines the physical world (126). Dog Creek without Christian influence lies in shambles, but with the entrance of God into the community, its inhabitants begin to overcome the land and its depraved influence over them.

Chinua Achebe's powerful and influential 1975 essay "Colonialist Criticism" explores the process by which European colonialism conditions those outside the power centre (he argues for Africa, but his point stands in general) to "manifest self-contempt" (Achebe 1191). This contempt is focused on a degenerative local culture, which must logically appeal to the privileged European standard or risk losing, he says with a wonderful touch of irony, "the blessing of civilisation." In The Double Hook, Felix's appeal to imperial culture, via Christianity, brings to him the power and authority of a colonialist attempting to save a degenerate local culture from its own influence. Achebe further dissects the ideological position of *being* a colonialist by providing examples of how the colonialist perceives (and constructs) the local inhabitants: "To the colonialist mind it was always of the utmost importance to be able to say: 'I know my natives,' a claim which implied two things at once: (a) that the native was really quite simple and (b) that understanding him and controlling him went hand in hand" (Achebe 1192). The relationship between Felix and the Coyote figure, who is the only prominent and explicit

representative of First Nations culture in The Double Hook, parallels the domination of the colonialist and denigration of the native that Achebe identifies with colonialist texts. In keeping with the derogatory and subordinate role that Coyote seems to play in the colonialist situation, Stephen Scobie interprets Coyote's influence in the novel as "unambiguously negative. He counsels fear, despair, divisiveness, darkness" (Scobie 34). Watson, he argues with textual support, constructs the demigod as something to be confronted and overcome on the path to truth and cultural authenticity. "Saint Felix" (TDH 24), the man who will eventually lead the community out of Coyote's influence, celebrates his resistance to native culture by remembering an incident he had with "Coyote":

> The rain pounding the tar-paper roof. The memory of the time Angel had seen the bear at the fish camp. Seen the bear rising on its haunches. Prostrating itself before the unsacked winds. Rising as if to strike. Bowing to the spirits let out of the sack, Angel thought, by the meddler Coyote. The bear advancing. Mowing. Scraping. Genuflecting. Angel furious with fear beating wildly. Her hunting-knife pounding the old billycan.
>
> He chuckled, remembering the noise and the white face of Angel when he picked up the bear in its devotions. Picked up paper blown off the fish-shack roof. (39)

I've quoted this passage extensively to demonstrate how fully Watson develops Angel's hallucination, and how it associates Coyote with the empty, foolish, powers of a charlatan. In this example, Angel is also shown to be really quite simple, and her fear is controlled when Felix is able to understand both her delusion and the greater reality of the situation. Similarly, Coyote's illusion is destroyed with such apparent ease by Felix that his powers, too, seem light and manageable. Felix assumes the cultural authority of Achebe's colonialist and denigrates Coyote's power as being only destructive and unsubstantial. Felix is given a power beyond that of his settler neighbours, far beyond

Coyote, and arguably even beyond his own humble and characteristically helpless self. Nowhere is this more clear than in his successful attempt to bring Angel back to him, after she left him for Theophil:

> Peace be with you, he said.
> Angel took a step forward.
> Forgive us our trespasses, Felix said. (78)

Theophil, with the wit of a modern, captures the awkward absurdity of Felix's words by continuing the prayer as a threat, "And lead us not into temptation, Theophil said. His fingers curled into the palms of his hands." But Watson, while allowing the joke to arise, also continues to allow Felix to gain power; he does win Angel back and thus proves himself more persuasive than Theophil, who slumps down in defeat. He also compares Angel to a simple cat, an understandable -- and thereby controllable -- animal: "He put out his hand. He saw her for a moment as a small cat, trying to step her way through the puddles of the world. Fighting the dogs" (79). Watson lets Felix gain power over her, and eventually over everybody, and, by his ability to defeat the influence of Coyote ("the dogs"), re-establish Christianity in the community. While Achebe attacks the attitude of "superiority and arrogance" in the colonialist (Achebe 1192), Watson does not share his concern or resistance to such a figure. Felix is fashioned as a sympathetic, even pathetic, character and given heroic strength, power, and redemptive influence because of his openness to imperial influence. His strength is enhanced by the dog-cat binary, in which dogs represent an evil force in the world and cats symbolise the good. His power frees the settlers from being totally constricted by the degenerative influence of Coyote and the land he represents.

While the colonialist model helps to decode these central moments in The Double Hook, there are numerous examples of resistance to imperialism that complicate the cultural situation. The very fact that Coyote, and thereby local culture, plays a profound and active role in the town's development separates The Double Hook from any pure imperial tradition. Coyote's influence appears throughout the text, but especially in his intriguing relationship with the Old Lady. Her continual appearances in the world after her death occur by the undefined powers of Coyote. It is also significant that Watson plays tricks with her readers by sometimes hinting that the Old Lady is really Coyote in disguise, and other times letting the Old Lady seem like a true and full human[8]. The unclear line between the two characters, coupled with the fact that Coyote is the only active supernatural presence in the novel with the power to sustain her in the living world, demands that Coyote receive at least partial credit for her post-humous influence over the community. Upon her death, the town is trapped in a dangerous and divisive spiral of individualism that is commonly attributed to the ongoing influence of the Old Lady. After her death, however, the Old Lady is transformed into a force that prompts the inhabitants to interact in a more meaningful way. John Lennox notes that "The Old Lady, like an Old Testament prophet, seems to be a kind of reluctant messenger whose duty, ironically, is to inform the community to turn from death to life" (Lennox 49). With each appearance, the illusion of her presence produces an invigorating life-giving response. Lennox further

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[8] More than once, the illusion of the Old Lady dissolves into footprints or other physical signs of Coyote (24, 29, 35, 47, etc.). Watson, however, seems to separate them in the fire scene, where Greta burns herself despite the pleas of the Old Lady (85). Even here, though, the scene concludes with the Old Lady disappearing, and Coyote stepping

explains how she challenges the community, by her own example, to abandon their fear-filled isolation: "In moving along the creek bed to fish, she also reminds those who see her of their inability to participate actively in living, for it is the dead who are mobile and the living who are stationary" (51). Through her relationship with Coyote, she is transformed into a positive influence on the community. While Coyote's technique is at best sneaky and at worst inadvertent, his powers allow a necessary, invigorating force to enter the community. Most importantly, because the Coyote figure, as an identifiable representative of First Nations culture, has a profound effect on the interaction of the community, he introduces a significant difference between Dog Creek and any pure colonial situation. Coyote's constant meddling pulls the community's inhabitants beyond the imperial tradition into negotiation and participation with local culture. Watson shows that this kind of interaction, which leads the settlers into a cultural compromise, strengthens and naturalises the community's connection to the geographical location.

The language of the novel is, however, the more striking example of how Dog Creek is different from the European tradition. Ashcroft explains that "Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated. . . . Such power is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice" (Ashcroft 7). Thus, while The Double Hook institutes hierarchy, Watson simultaneously uses its language to challenge the traditional implications of that hierarchy. As Helen Tiffin notes, in her useful essay "Colonial Motifs in The Double Hook and The Cat and Shakespeare," "In The Double Hook colonialism is not the main issue, but where its paradigms are

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in to take possession of the dead Greta: "And Coyote in the hills:/ I've taken her where

pervasive, and where it provides the off-stage context for the action. . . . it is not surprising to find that questions of language. . . . and of the need for its reactivation in the present are, like the house motif, crucial" (Tiffin 213). Most of Watson's critics have attempted to explain the peculiar broken English in The Double Hook, but perhaps the greatest description of the implications of the style arrives inadvertently in Smaro Kamboureli's description of her own writing:

> Writing in broken english does not mean translating from one language into another. It is instead a translation of contrasting systems of perception, a simultaneous rendering of the past and the present. Broken English is written in the rhythm of a being that lives beneath language. This being exists through violent silence, instinctual knowledge, restlessness. Its language is the bastard child of the coming together of two selves, of two geographies, of two languages. This being suspends itself on the edge of dying and of giving birth. It has an aleatory nature, for it is constantly becoming its other, what it is not, what it can be, ultimately, what it is being. (Kamboureli 36)

While Professor Kamboureli assures me that she was not writing about The Double Hook directly, this beautifully written passage draws out many of the themes of the novel, as well as its fundamental plot. She captures the post-colonial sense that changing circumstances are reflected in a hybridised language that fulfils the change through words by creating something new from the mix. In The Double Hook, despite the influx of and appeal to European Christianity, a new culture emerges from the ashes of the old with, as explained by Margaret Turner, "the tentative nature of the new world's discursive construction" (Turner 20).

The final section of The Double Hook does not confirm the colonial situation, but compromises it significantly. Though the community stands redeemed in most senses,

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she stood."

and redemption is itself a Christian concept, the presence of Coyote remains as it has throughout, and he is even given the final words of the novel. The two extremes of the critical interpretations of Coyote come from the works of Scobie and Turner, who fundamentally disagree on the importance of the final passage. Scobie considers the final scene to be a reiteration of the degenerate local culture that must be overcome, with Coyote just "being up to his old tricks, claiming credit to which he has no right" (Scobie 53). While this is better than Beverly Mitchell's use of the final scene to argue that Coyote is actually the Christian God (Mitchell 110), Scobie's interpretation of Coyote as unambiguously negative does not take into account the fact that Coyote has become a part of the community rather than being merely antithetical to it. Though his illusions and influence seem to have been undone, Coyote's presence and voice reappear within Ara's final prophetic vision:

> Above her the sky stretched like a tent pegged to the broken rock. And from a cleft of the rock she heard the voice of Coyote crying down through the boulders:
>
> I have set his feet on soft ground:
> I have set his feet on the sloping shoulders
> of the world. (TDH 134)

Turner, in the other corner, understands that Coyote continues to play a significant role in the metaphoric implications of the emergent community. His final words denote, she claims, "the power of the transformation in the text" away from the discursive structures of the Old World (Turner 75). Turner's interpretation lets Coyote's final judgement determine the final status of the community, as a place totally resistant to the essential value of any form of cultural structure. She asserts that in "Watson's creation of new world discourse" the old world social structures lose all meaningful content, leaving

"only the imperative that they be re-created" (66). Turner's analysis draws important attention to the "hybrid condition" of culture in Watson's text (65), but fails to recognise the essential power and stabilising influence that Watson affords to the Old World discursive structures. Watson's consistent appeal to stable Christian symbols significantly beyond the reach of Coyote undermines any claim that he has an all-powerful influence, as we've previously explored. Turner's insistence upon his continuing role is, however, still important. The final sections, which depict a minor triumph of Christianity in Dog Creek, also demonstrate that a new consciousness has emerged that is simultaneously aware of both Christian theology and the First Nations mythology represented by Coyote. Coyote provides the test that characters must pass to reach redemption and is, therefore, inextricably connected to the redemptive process -- even though redemption, itself, is a uniquely Christian device. W.H. New's analysis of Germaine Guevrement's Le Survenant offers these useful comments regarding the conflict of local and foreign culture; "always the local identity is being altered. . . . When the local community resists change, moreover, it runs a greater danger of disappearing than it does if it manages to redefine itself" (New 113). Following New's analysis, it is quite disconcerting that the human face of First Nations culture has all but disappeared in Watson's depiction of the negotiation of the natural and authentic culture for Dog Creek. Coyote's presence thus contains a heightened symbolic function for he represents the last explicitly and identifiably native voice in the text. Perhaps, as New explains, he is there because his character is flexible enough to fit into the new mythological structure, whereas the humans, by implication, are not. The First Nations historical and cultural significance has been unwritten as insignificant, if existent, to the social structure and cultural negotiation

of the community. The moment of compromise similar to New's analysis occurs in The Double Hook when the binary opposition of God and the Devil is replaced by the more ambiguous God and Coyote, distinguishing both from their root cultures. The anachronistic tension of the Christian presence in the community is overcome by intertwining it with First Nations mythology and creating something new. Similarly, Coyote is able to sustain a vitality and importance in the community despite the influx of European culture, by incorporating himself into the redemptive process. Steven Putzel goes even further to find the cultural hybridisation contained in the singular figure of Coyote: with Coyote, "Watson has created a voice which resonates with the Indians' past, the settlers' present, and with prophecies of their future" (Putzel 15). Putzel's argument also presumes the presence of cultural hybridisation in Dog Creek.

Turner's useful post-colonial analysis of The Double Hook in her book Imagining Culture takes the novel's commitment to a post-colonial ideology to the opposite extreme. She explores the metaphor of destabilised language within Watson's construction of a hybridised culture, but ignores how it also appeals to imperial stability in order to achieve that end. She claims that Watson "fragments the intertexts of Western culture to show that meaning and human being are possible only within discursive structures" (Turner 64). Discursive structures, Turner implies, represent a lack of essential authenticity in all forms of cultural discourse. Turner mistakes Watson's awareness of the unstable construction and perpetual negotiation of culture as demonstrating a rejection of the essential value and power of all discursively based cultural structures. My concern with Turner's position, which I believe captures the essence of the predicament the novel may eventually have had to confront had it

continued, is with her idea that Watson has totally destabilised the old world discursive structures. She says, "Although [Watson] privileges Western culture with her choice of intertexts, her suggestion of infinite possibilities makes us recognise that those texts no longer contain the world" (67). Turner glosses over the whole colonialist paradigm that allows the novel to achieve its redemptive closure, and focuses exclusively on the development of the new world anti-structural resistance. Watson, on the other hand, spends most of her novel documenting how the influence of the cultural centre is able to salvage ritual and community from the isolation of Dog Creek, and only briefly implies that the rituals and community that emerge must also incorporate elements of the local First Nations culture. As Watson, herself, explained in an 1984 interview:

> I didn't want it to be an ethnic novel -- not a novel about Indians or any other deprived group, but rather a novel about a number of people who had no ability to communicate because they had found little to replace the myths and rituals which might have bound them together. (Meyer 159)

In the interview, she proceeds to explain how Felix falls back on fragments of the Catholic mass ceremony as his only available means of communication. The rituals of the Christian faith are also echoed, she says, in "the scriptural fragments associated with Ara and echoing from the mouth of Coyote" (160). Watson lists three central figures as inextricably connected to, and dependent upon, the Christian faith[9]. Christianity's role in

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[9] Her comment also problematizes Coyote's relationship to First Nations culture. Coyote's voice and native language are compromised by his speaking a Christianized tongue, and, as many critics have noted, his ability to represent First Nations culture is questionable. The debate about the level of the character's appropriation into the settler culture, however, obscures his confrontational role against the settlers and their Christian god, as well as his cultural origins. In the novel, Coyote is from Dog Creek as "the Indian's Coyote," and clearly constructed to represent the absent First Nations

the novel, despite Turner's views, is strong and stable. David Staines, in his book Beyond the Provinces, astutely captures the unique and significant negotiation The Double Hook manages between the two ideologies: "Here is the end of colonial fiction and the assertive beginning of post-colonial fiction; here is the first naturalised Canadian novel" (Staines 19). Staines identifies both colonial and post-colonial ideologies in the novel, and how the work as a whole functions as a kind of liminal moment, itself, between the two ideologies. Much to her credit, Turner recognises Watson's negotiation of the "liminal moment between old and new world discourse" (Turner 77), but proceeds to locate Watson's novel entirely in the latter: "The Double Hook both performs and embodies the cultural and linguistic practice of the new world" (78). The novel does not, however, as claimed by Turner or Scobie, fully commit itself to either mode.

Deep Hollow Creek, on the other hand, does not manage to achieve a cultural synthesis to the same extent as does The Double Hook. Watson provides four characters (Nicholas Farish, Rose Flower, Stella, and Miriam) who actively resist colonialism, but severely limits their ability to influence the total cultural situation. Nicholas Farish and his wife Myrtle create between themselves an early model of the eventual cultural hybridisation the novel demands. Nicholas fills his mind with the stories and wisdom of the Shuswap people. Watson identifies the Shuswap as the true representatives of locality, and, in so doing, draws attention to their displacement from authority: "Rá'tltem the Shuswaps had called their village here; they were the people of the deep hollow" (DHC 18). Myrtle, on other hand, is a practising Anglican steeped in the European tradition, and

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community (TDH 77). The comparison between Watson's Coyote and the Shuswap's

is thereby favoured by Mamie: "Farish is not much good, [Mamie] said. He spends too much time with the Indians. I wouldn't say a word against [Myrtle], poor little thing. She likes coming here to play the piano and to borrow books" (60). Though Nicholas and Myrtle successfully combine the two cultures into one happy settler family, their success is diminished by their ultimate failure to achieve sustainable harmony in the community. When Nicholas explains why he and his wife feel the need to temporarily return to the city, he blames their isolation; "It's the country, he said, and the worry. [Myrtle]'s been lonely since the ice locked us up" (94). They can find no balance or stability and eventually leave for good (137). On the other hand, Rose's resistance to the imperialism that Mamie represents never develops into anything beyond a blanket negation of culture. Watson, however, uses the character -- quite poignantly considering the unambiguously positive role of Christianity in The Double Hook -- to undermine the divisive influence of the religion in the community. Stella notices, while thinking of Rose, that the Church only serves to reinforce and empower the current divisions in the community, rather than working to overcome them: "Up on the hill, Stella thought, Rose is sitting by herself. Only the smallest of her six children is with her. No one had asked her to come to church, to be sure" (39). Watson offers a rare moment of sympathy for Rose, and proceeds to give her a voice of reasoned, spiritual insight into the absurdity of the Christian presence in Deep Hollow Creek: "Their church is only an excuse for parties and dancing. If God takes any notice of anybody as little as her all this washing and white shirts and dancing will only bring harm where there's enough already." Her comments are validated by a

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historical Coyote mythology is regretably beyond the boundaries of this thesis.

previous passage given by the Christian minister himself: "I come, said Mr. Ellicott, to bring the word of God to whoever will listen. Let us not be too serious about it. . . . and we will enjoy Mrs. Flower's famous hospitality" (38). The religious meeting is criticised for being little more than a social event, but the only language Rose has to critique it with is from the dominant culture itself, by denigrating Mamie for not appreciating the *true* greatness of God as she herself does. Her insight into the limitations of the society provides her with no further understanding or intelligence, no new language, and she is lost and ostracised from the entire populace.

Stella, like the Farishes, does not achieve a sustainable position or influence in the community of Deep Hollow Creek (as previously explored in this chapter). Her eventual failure leaves only her friend Miriam as the final figure of resistance. Miriam's trading with the Shuswap, though potentially a relationship of exploitation, or as Stella cynically puts it, a means of collecting evidence of her time "slumming in the wilds" (90), offers an interesting and rare depiction of cultural hybridisation at work in the community. While Mamie does her best to ignore the First Nations people, and Farish and Stella fail in their resistance to the dominant ideology, Miriam is able to successfully negotiate both worlds: the Shuswap call her "ca-wa" which means friend (96), while she is also welcomed by Mamie at the Stopping House (84), and, even more importantly, brings First Nations cultural products (sweaters) out beyond Deep Hollow Creek to the cultural centre. She represents the only influential force of resistance that also participates in the cultural centre. She connects the two cultural polarities, despite the settler population, and begins the complicated and powerful cultural hybridisation. She is able to persuade the cultural centre of the value to be found in a marginalized culture, and, though she originates from

the cultural centre, is still able to persuade the Shuswap people that her interests in them are sincere and not oppressive or exploitive. Still though, even as Miriam claims that her role is stable ("As far as I'm concerned though I could live like this forever," she says (94)), Watson undermines her success by having her leave Deep Hollow Creek even before Stella and the Farishes do (118). By the novel's end, the cultural centre remains in power, but Watson has provided a model and an explanation for why the community must change. Furthermore, Watson has shown how the process of hybridisation is already occurring in Deep Hollow Creek, even if the leaders of the community are blind and resistant to it. Those who are aware, and open to respectful interaction with the First Nations community, are brought closer to the land than the colonialists will ever get.

The model of hybridisation, of the cultural integration of opposite ideologies, constitutes the overarching double hook in both of Watson's novels. Though The Double Hook is steeped in colonial rhetoric, Watson distinguishes the final community in Dog Creek from any European model it may seem to simulate. Similarly, despite the best efforts of the Farishes, Stella, or Rose, the dominant culture still reigns in Deep Hollow Creek, just as Mamie's efforts fail to completely annihilate the local culture. Both extremes are compromised in the hybridising abilities of Miriam who successfully bridges the cultural borders of each and demonstrates the beginnings of a new post-colonial, interactive society.

Benedict Anderson's influential book Imagining Communities draws our attention to how national rhetoric deflates the unquestioned hegemony of a religious community, and undermines the notion of a culture's inherent or absolute "rightness" (Anderson 24). Similarly, Watson unwrites the inherent "truth" of both the First Nations' and the cultural

centre's independent ideologies through a bilateral cultural denigration, and offers a synthesis of the two as a necessary and positive alternative. A new Canadian culture must incorporate elements of both the local and the imperial in order to respond to our continuing relationship with other cultural centres (such as England and the United States) while also recognising the cultural history and fact of landscape that distinguishes Canada from everywhere else in the world. Watson, of course, offers a much subtler demonstration of this process by documenting in The Double Hook and Deep Hollow Creek the humanity at play behind the process of hybridisation. It is not that both cultural positions are wrong on their own, but that both are simultaneously present and create, thereby, a new composite culture. As Anderson explains about another novel, "we are in a world of plurals" (36). A more appropriate phrase for Watson might be that both novels are trapped in a world of double hooks. The power of both is obliterated by the simultaneous participation of each in the new, authentic society that both novels demand.

Cultural denigration in Watson's two novels represents an attempt to overcome the settlers' cultural destitution by integrating elements of the cultural centre. Despite their intentions, all cultural groups in both novels ultimately resolve into a hybridised synthesis. More strikingly, and to return to Ashcoft's formula for a post-colonial text, both novels document attempts to silence and denigrate the resistant forces to the imperial centre, yet also show the power of imperialism being displaced, or abrogated, by the local culture as it appropriates and rewrites the imperial model. The resultant culture is a hybrid, or a synthesis, of the two opposing cultures with its own unique language and traditions, which has achieved a stable *difference* from its cultural forebears.

Chapter Two

Figures and Their Ground

Media, McLuhan, and the Dawn of the Electric Age

In 1973, Sheila Watson introduced her first public reading of The Double Hook with the following comment:

> I would say that what I was concerned with was figures in a ground, from which they could not be separated. I don't think of them as people in a place, in a stage set, in a place which had to be described for itself, as it existed outside the interaction of the people with the objects, with the things, with the other existences with which they came in contact. So that 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)

Ground is the landscape, and the arena in which action takes place. Figures are the objects, whose characteristics and method of navigating their ground and relationships with other figures provide the traditional elements of plot. George Bowering noted that, in general, prose works tend to separate figures from ground, while poetry does the opposite (Bowering Afterword 189). Watson has taken this characteristic of poetry and adapted it in her novel to develop her characters and their ground as inseparable elements of a total environment. In a 1984 interview with Bruce Meyer and Brian O'Riordan, Watson expressed a similar sentiment about her intentions: "I wasn't thinking of these figures, or whatever one calls them, as characters in the conventional sense. . . . I was thinking rather of a cry of voices -- a *vox clamantis* -- voices crying out in the wilderness. . . . They are related to a ground. They are emerging from that ground" (Meyer 158-160). The total environment, including the community, the landscape and its animals, swallows each 'character' into the multiplicity of the whole.

The many critics who have responded to Watson's figure/ground configuration unanimously agree that in The Double Hook she has achieved a rare and sustained unity between figures and their ground, but none more eloquently and passionately than Angela Bowering. Bowering's Figures Cut in Sacred Ground delves into the semiotic implications of The Double Hook with specific attention paid -- as her title suggests -- to the figure/ground relationship Watson introduced. She translates the characters into *figurae*, which usually denotes the "form" or "shape" of objects, but in her study implies both the figures *and* their connection to their ground. Bowering's study considers how all the disparate elements of the community in Dog Creek are contained and participate in the cultural whole, similar to the cultural hybridisation discussed in the preceding chapter. Bowering adeptly identifies a similar cultural synthesis on numerous levels in the narrative:

> The intersection of the sacred and the profane, the familiar and the awesome, criss-cross [sic] 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 those figures are the modulations of one voice, the voice of the earth that speaks from beneath the text. (Bowering 19-20)

Bowering overlooks the specific colonial stakes at play in Dog Creek by considering exclusively how the characters and their individual symbols form the general *characteristic* elements of a unified system which she refers to here as "the voice of the earth," but also in an earlier passage as "a field of force" (2), and later, most importantly, as "the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things" (59). Thus, individuals are no longer isolated pods, but woven into an organic mesh that includes all of the land, the life, and the supernatural as the indivisible elements of a whole. Bowering traces the

linguistic heritage of The Double Hook beyond the borders of Dog Creek to reveal the complex cultural history that participates in an interactive network: "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" (33). Using such an inclusive perspective enables Bowering to find significance in references as diverse as the Indo-European roots behind character names, or the Latin and Germanic offshoots of words that never actually appear in the text but are yet *potentially* present. These roots represent the multiple cultures that combine to give meaning to the present cultural situation, and the simultaneous multiplicity behind every seemingly stable element. As she explains, the novel paradoxically reveals "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" (39). She later appropriately extends her cultural *dramatis personae* to recognise the presence of the North American Indian mythos (55). The specific roots and origins that inform the cultural situation of the novel, however, are important only in how they illustrate the complexity of the simultaneity of the cultural network in the novel. The presence of simultaneous different origins of the same element disrupts the very concept of origin, of there ever having been an *original* origin. Language is inseparable from the past that enabled it, and inseparable from the present that employs it. Developing from this example, Bowering argues that the individual "characters" in The Double Hook are inseparable from the world they live within; figures and their ground are merged into *figurae* (29). As a result of the linguistic and transcultural dynamics, Dog Creek's settler culture is naturalised and reconciled with the land.

Bowering interprets The Double Hook's initial appeal to individualism, of characters separating themselves from their ground and community, as an error that is eventually corrected when the community develops into an environment that accepts interconnection and interaction. The influence from characters like old Mrs. Potter and Theophil, who cling to their sense of themselves as detached individuals, prevents the other characters from uniting with their ground and from forming a community. A similar kind of development occurs in Deep Hollow Creek, but Watson complicates the cultural situation by depicting the community interacting and interdependent with a global community through cultural products and modern technologies. The electric technology and media externalise the multicultural presence that Bowering identified in The Double Hook and demonstrate a similar paradigmatic shift away from individualism. In Deep Hollow Creek, Watson locates cultural interaction in Deep Hollow Creek's use of cultural products and technologies that also shapes the fundamental plot movement of The Double Hook. The latter, however, abandons Deep Hollow Creek's appeal to realism in its attempt to demonstrate the historical interconnections and interdependencies of the inhabitants in a specific culture. The complicated global participation found in Deep Hollow Creek is stripped bare to demonstrate a similar cultural paradigmatic shift occurring on a more primitive and mythological level than in the remote, *disaccommodated* community in The Double Hook.

Global participation, by the influence from numerous external cultural centres and First Nations communities, disrupts the stability of the whole idea of cultural unity by demonstrating the multiplicity, interdependence, and hybridisation of the specific cultures that appear in Dog Creek and Deep Hollow Creek. Hybridisation undermines the

traditional implications of cultural, and even individual, identity, and yet offers a new conception of identity that is based on interaction and participation in the world. This chapter will demonstrate some of the dramatic structural and compositional differences between the two communities, especially in relation to technology, but will also explain these differences in relationship to a shared ideological ambition: to make their communities an inseparable and essential part of the land. In this way, Watson's novels use their provincial setting as a means to engage the essential relationship between humanity and nature, and to demonstrate why the Western traditional separation of humans and nature (figures from ground) no longer accurately represents -- if it ever did -- the cultural situation of the world.

Even though Deep Hollow Creek sits on the extreme margins of the civilised Western world, it is still inextricably connected to the external world through such media and technologies as cars, newspapers, and literature. The continual interaction between the marginalized community and the cultural centre obscures the boundaries between the two regions and demonstrates how the fragmented culture of the industrial age has been replaced by the communal, interactive culture of the technological age. The "cultural centre," itself, is splintered into numerous cities, countries and continents such that there are many centres, interacting with each other and with what was formerly referred to as the cultural margins. Deep Hollow Creek develops a challenge to the colonialist hierarchy that favours urban cultural centres above rural margins. Marshall McLuhan's cultural studies, particularly in his analysis of the influence of media on identity, consider the same ideological dilemma as Deep Hollow Creek by recognising the distinction between a literate, fragmented society and a post-literate, interactive society. McLuhan provides

the categories of pre-literate, literate, and the post-literate (which he also refers to as the Electric Age) to represent the historical development of Western society as it has moved from cultures of tribalism to individualism and, now, back again towards tribalism. He stresses the unique historical situation that human society has recently achieved: "Our extended senses, tools, technologies, through the ages, have been closed systems incapable of interplay or collective awareness. Now, in the electric age, the very instantaneous nature of co-existence among our technological instruments has created a crisis quite new in human history" (GG 5). While the technology in Deep Hollow Creek offers merely a hint of the electric wonders to come, Watson's novel captures the initial moment of confrontation between a pre-electric detachment from the world and the instantaneous, and perpetual, global connection produced by the speed of electricity. Watson addresses the arrival of a new age through her character Stella, who confronts the limitations of her literate-era definitions of selfhood, identity and individuality in the post-literate environment. Stella comes to realise that the entire population of Deep Hollow Creek, herself included, participates in an interactive and interdependent society. After a valiant attempt to elude the world, to discover her true identity by means of stripping away the influence of the external world, Stella concedes defeat: "so much then for freedom and liberty" (66). She learns to understand her own participation in the world, and in nature, through her own dependence and intractable connection to others. McLuhan provides a useful theoretical explanation for Stella's conflict and realisation: "Fragmented, literate, and visual individualism is not possible in an electrically patterned and imploded society" (UM 59). Even though McLuhan's post-literate age is generally associated with modern technologies such as radio and television, he also explores more

traditional technologies such as newspapers and automobiles to demonstrate how they have contributed to the arrival of a new type of society. Watson has Stella experience and negotiate the tension between Old World values and this new type of social interaction.

Ironically, because Watson focuses on the era at the dawn of the electric age, the expression and evidence of post-literate ideology often appears through the reading material characters encounter! The semantic contradiction, however, is much less a problem than it might seem. McLuhan coined the term "post-literate," not to represent an era when humanity has given up reading, but of an era when the traditional function of reading and literature has been so tremendously altered by the rapid speed up of production and distribution of information that the entire nature of the activity has changed. He explains that the "literate era" refers to the post-Gutenburg society of widespread literacy, but yet with slow and non-electric production of books and distribution of news. The reading material, in such an environment, is always out of date and distant from actual events. McLuhan notes that readers in the early stages of the literate era were much more interested in material that was *extremely* out of date than with the thoughts and experiences of their contemporaries: "the first two centuries of printing from movable type were motivated much more by the desire to see ancient and medieval books than by the need to read and write new ones" (UM 155). The "post-literate" era, of course, introduces a profound increase in the speed of information gathering and in the possibility of rapid travel, causing the focus of reading material to shift towards the present. Suddenly, anybody in the world has the opportunity to read of current events happening on the other side of the globe, even as they are occurring. The distance and separation between geographical and cultural locations has been

exponentially reduced, while a sense of involvement in the world's affairs has entered the collective global consciousness. McLuhan coined the now famous term "global village" to express the sensation of total human interaction. Reading, in a global village, especially nonfiction and news items, no longer allows for the detachment of the literate age, but rather demands that each reader feel implicated and involved in the information presented: "Electric writing and speed pour upon him, instantaneously and continuously, the concerns of all other men. He becomes tribal once more. The human family becomes one tribe again" (UM 156). The faster the technology gets, the more constantly and totally involved each individual becomes in the state of the world. The technology in Watson's work is primitive by contemporary standards, but her story demonstrates an important moment of tension between the two ideologies, just a moment before the literate era consciousness is overwhelmed by advancements in technology. She shows exactly how the early technology contradicts literate-era ideology, and depicts the experience of living in that transition period. McLuhan also explores how early technology, like the newspaper, the automobile, and the magazine, enhanced the development of a post-literate ideology "as a mosaic successor to the book-form" (189). The fact that reading continues to happen in the post-literate world enables a comparison of the function of the activity in both environments. Post-literate individuals become more involved and increasingly implicated in the world with everything they read, having abandoned the detachment of a literate era reader. The dawn of a post-literate age has arrived in Deep Hollow Creek and with it must follow a radical new conception of the individual as an integrated member of the environment. Similarly, communities as a

whole must also become increasingly aware of both the natural world and the global community they exist within.

Conveniently, coincidentally, or otherwise, McLuhan defined his terms pre-literate, literate, and post-literate using a similar figure/ground configuration Watson used to describe her own work. The post-colonial situation in Watson's novels and the cultural shift that McLuhan identified reveal an identical relationship between characters and their respective grounds. In both of their works: local/tribal cultures perceive the world as figures in a ground, with the two elements inseparably connected; the representatives of dominant Western ideology have separated themselves from their ground and believe in themselves as fragmented and distinct individuals; and the emerging culture combines Western ideology and technology with the tribal perception of the world to reunite figures with their ground. The crucial similarity between the two writers expands the theoretical implications of Watson's work into a study of the fundamental relationship between humanity and nature, and the way that relationship is constructed and perceived by human society. McLuhan looks behind the cultural shift and examines the factors that have allowed the post-literate world to emerge, while Watson depicts the experience of the shift in dramatic and tacit form. Watson's two novels achieve a similar cultural situation that McLuhan describes as post-literate, although technology is a dominating influence only in Deep Hollow Creek. As a result, the presence of technology changes the implications of the figure/ground configuration in Deep Hollow Creek. Cultural hybridisation is the result of trans-cultural interaction within a localised community. In order to sustain (or attain) its authentic position within the natural landscape, the local

culture (both First Nations and the settlers) must be aware of both the particularities of their immediate natural world and of the global community at large.

The overwhelming presence of cultural products and the continual human traffic throughout Deep Hollow Creek reveals the interactive cultural network that McLuhan identified as characteristic of the Electric Age. In the linear time span of the 134 page novel (i.e. excluding the numerous anecdotes and histories in the novel whose events precede Stella's arrival) three permanent residents join the community (7, 80, 103), seven different groups of visitors arrive (25, 36, 56, 86, 100, 107, 108), seven permanent residents leave on visits (26, 68, 75, 95, 117, 127), five residents leave Deep Hollow Creek permanently (109, 129, 137, 141), and people from a total of nine different national backgrounds are identified in the community (47, 61, 74, 100, 103, 126). The fluid population of the small community continually changes because of its constant interaction with the larger global community. As for cultural products, the characters (not including the narrator) identify 26 different writers from seven different countries (7, 12, 13, 37, 44, 57, 66, 83, 89, 94, 104, 106, 122, 135), read magazines and newspapers eight times that originate from three different countries (19, 44, 47, 49, 123, 126, 135, 140), and consult mail-order catalogues from central Canada eight times (8, 20, 21, 68, 73, 107, 129, 130). I've documented these examples thoroughly to demonstrate exactly how pervasive the presence of the external world is in such a short novel. By contrast, The Double Hook has one birth (132), two deaths (19, 85), and one visit to an outside community (91). Only one cultural product appears in the whole novel, an unspecified "catalogue" (53), and, despite numerous allusions to the Bible, only one city -- the ancient, long dead city of Nineveh -- is explicitly named (22). When McLuhan refers to

the post-literate era, he indicates a society wherein "our central nervous system is technologically extended to involve us in the whole of mankind and. . . . we necessarily participate" (UM 20). An early form of the accelerated and constant cultural interaction that McLuhan envisions in a post-literate, electric society is exemplified in Deep Hollow Creek. The inhabitants are heavily involved with the world beyond the borders of their tiny community because of its pervasive presence in their daily lives.

In a dazzling example of her compact prose style, Watson demonstrates how technology prevents the separation and isolation that is characteristic of a literate society. Stella rides with her friend Myrtle Farish up to the cleft of a canyon, and the two stare out at the vanishing point in the distance where the physical path to the Rock, the nearby city, and the horizon converge. The vanishing point is framed by two hills on either side:

> Here the hills pressed together as if they wished to cut the valley off from the rest of the world.
>
> We will be cut off soon, said Myrtle, as if in response to Stella's thought. When the snow falls it drifts into the gap. Only the water keeps flowing, under the ice (DHC 66)

Instead of seeing what lies before them, both characters only register their detachment from human society. The impending separation from the greater human community, a prominent concern for both, juxtaposes the free flowing water and the interaction of the natural world. Technology, however, prevents their total detachment and realigns the human community with the *natural* freedom of movement: "One can always get about on a saddle horse, though, [Myrtle] said, if it's kept rough shod." The presence of the technology of the saddle and the horseshoe fundamentally changes the dynamics of the community, and of the horse, by allowing the characters to overcome the *unnatural* restriction of their interaction. Myrtle appeals to knowledge and technology (in

the horseshoe and saddle technology) as a cure for isolation: "Perhaps now that you *know* the way and *have* a horse you can come up on the weekends. It's lonesome here, she said" [emphasis added]. Her sense of urgency to reconnect with society reveals an anxiety about being outside the human collective beyond the borders of her local community. While the technology Myrtle indicates is noticeably pre-literate and non-electric, the scene demonstrates an electric era awareness of and need for the larger, external society. Watson poignantly uses the novel's only vanishing point to illustrate the threat of isolation, and how technology and interdependence can overcome fragmentation:

> I couldn't shoe a horse, said Stella, I hadn't thought of that. Sam would do it, I suppose, but so much then for freedom and liberty.
> *A man is not an island unto himself*, she thought. (66)

Overturning words reminiscent of Thomas Paine and the rhetoric of individualism[10], Stella dismisses the whole Western tradition of fragmentation as irreconcilable with reality. She is forced to confront her dependency on her community, and her inextricable tie to her physical environment. The quotation (which Stella claims is from Thoreau[11]) expresses Stella's developing awareness that a fragmented conception of individuality doesn't adequately reflect the reality of social interdependence and of figures' relationship to their ground. Her dependence on even the most basic technology forces her to accept, even without the ultra-fast equipment that McLuhan witnessed, the underlying pattern of interconnectedness that will become the electric age.

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10 The Thomas Paine allusion is made explicit on page 57.

11 Quote source unidentified, though the first phrase is very suggestive of John Donne's famous line, "No man is an island, entire of itself" taken from his Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions #17 [1624]. UVic does not currently have a concordance of Thoreau's work.

Marshall McLuhan, in The Gutenberg Galaxy, also considers saddle technology an important precursor to the post-literate age (GG i), but a more astonishing parallel to Watson's work occurs in his analysis of the vanishing point in Shakespeare's King Lear (14-17). McLuhan focuses his attention on Act IV, Scene VI, at the point where Edgar leads the blind Gloucester to the crest of a cliff and describes the world that lies before them. McLuhan suggests that this moment in King Lear, which is echoed throughout literature right up to the previously discussed scene in Deep Hollow Creek, is the first literary moment when the use of sight changes from its traditional interpretation of the visual world and "confers on man the illusion of the third dimension" (16). E.H. Gombrich's book Art and Illusion explains in more detail how seeing the third dimension demands interpreting and transforming contextual clues of movement, shading, and size into mere guesses about the objects that lie before us. Gombrich suggests that the easily mistaken interpretations of physical information are conditioned and limited by experience and culture, thereby making our perception of the third dimension an arbitrary and illusory (though useful) technology (Gombrich 242-87). In order to see the third dimension and the resultant vanishing point, McLuhan explains, the viewer must unnaturally dislocate figures from their ground and focus exclusively on arbitrarily defined figures. Regardless of whether that scene in Shakespeare is truly the first (or the second etc.) example of this phenomenon, McLuhan uses the vanishing point produced in three-dimensional perspectival vision, which is a conventional (rather than natural) mode of seeing, to demonstrate the fragmentation "of the private sense life into specialised segments" that occurs in the post-Gutenberg era of pervasive literacy (GG 17). King Lear,

McLuhan noted earlier, dramatises "the dissolution of the tribal state" into the paradigms of the isolated individual that defines the literate age (8).

Watson also uses her instance of the vanishing point to dramatise how literature separates the individual from a communal situation, but parodies the integrity of individualism by dramatising it to an absurd extreme. After accepting her dependence on society, Stella retreats from her physical situation into an abstract contemplation of phrases from Thoreau and Stefansson, respectively: "*A man is not an island unto himself*, she thought. *There was a time when all the body's members*...[sic]" (DHC 66). The first line reads ironically as Stella dislocates herself from her physical situation with Myrtle and retreats into private thoughts, effectively making herself an island unto herself. Watson continues the humorous self-conscious allegory by having Stella recognise that, indeed, "One could fob off a fact with a line." In Stella's case, the fact of her physical situation is rendered inferior (*fobbed*) by the abstract interpretation of her situation through its relationship to Thoreau's writing. Watson proceeds to comically literalize Stella's second quotation, which comes from Canadian arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson[12], by dividing Stella into a host of fragmented consciousnesses: "The right eye scanned the testimony of the left and in the margin the hand wrote *lyrical self-pity*" (66). The result is a perfectly Modernist moment of self-reflexivity, where the writing demonstrates how Stella's mind is fragmented, and yet also draws attention to how the fragmentation resists her physical situation and the interdependence that she, just

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[12] Watson's different spelling of Stefansson's name probably reflects the problems that arrive from his having translated his Canadian birth name Stephenson into Icelandic

moments before, claimed to accept. Stella's moment of abstraction and fragmentation occurs through literature, and literary criticism, and thus parallels McLuhan's idea about the influence that print can have on the individual. The ironic tone of Watson's narration further implies the inadequacy of a print-based notion of individuality in an interactive, or post-literate, environment. At the middle point in the novel, Stella is perfectly caught between the two contradictory ideologies.

The transcultural interaction and simultaneous participation in multiple cultures of the post-literate age, McLuhan explains, radically redefine an individual's relationship with the world: "We can now live, not just amphibiously in divided and distinguished worlds, but pluralistically in many worlds and cultures simultaneously" (GG 31). Watson enhances this idea by demonstrating exactly how media create this extreme state of cultural transgression. In one example, Watson shows how newspapers provide an instantaneous cultural bridge: "Do you see this? [Mockett] said, flattening the paper out on the counter -- the Japanese in Manchuria -- trouble in Spain -- the market falling, falling. It's not natural, he said, to play at God Almighty in this narrow rocky pit" (DHC 126). Dick Mockett experiences anxiety and resistance at the participation that modern newspapers demand from a reader. The immediacy and reality of the news items prevent Mockett from maintaining the comfortable detachment of a literate-era reader, while the global scope of the stories forces him to imagine the simultaneous existence of the whole world. While newspapers have been around since long before McLuhan's post-literate

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form midway through his life, and around the time that Watson began writing Deep Hollow Creek.

era, Watson's example demonstrates how print-media can present the mosaic model of the electric era. As McLuhan explains:

> the newspaper, from its beginnings has tended, not to the book form, but to the mosaic or participational form. With the speed-up of printing and news-gathering, this mosaic form has become a dominant aspect of human association; for the mosaic form means, not a detached "point of view," but participation in process. . . . This participation is communal rather than private, inclusive rather than exclusive." (UM 188-189)

While *reading* a newspaper seems like a traditional literate (or industrial) era activity, both Watson and McLuhan point to the mosaic nature of the news page as contradicting literate era ideology. Wildly disparate events, such as the affairs of the Japanese and the British, are implicitly linked together through a reader's existence in a global environment. The reader is, thereby, implicated in the news events being told. With advancing electric technology, the divisions among cultures, nations, and people around the world are increasingly blurred. When reading side-by-side articles about Spain, Manchuria, and Manchester, Dick Mockett confronts the concurrent existence of multiple cultures around the world that are active at the same time as his own life. The newspaper forces him to realise that he participates in a self-aware world, rather than simply being a separate and detached observer.

McLuhan's work attempts to demonstrate the cultural similarities that exist between pre-literate and post-literate cultures, and thus he spends only a minimal effort distinguishing between the two. He goes far enough to identify a central paradox in economics that will shape and perhaps inhibit the post-literate world:

> [though t]he vision will be tribal and collective, the expression [will still be] private and marketable. . . . Western man knows that his values and modalities are the product of literacy. Yet the very means of extending those values, technologically, seem to deny and reverse them. (GG 269)

The capitalist system is built upon the very ideals of individualism that a post-literate system is supposed to discard. McLuhan backs away from the conflict, however, claiming that it is too early to determine how the conflict will be resolved: "Today it is futile to discuss it at all" (273). Watson, in contrast to McLuhan's reserve, confronts the paradox directly by involving the pre-literate Shuswap in an economic relationship with modernised characters like Dick Mockett and Stella. Watson finds a strained resolution to the cultural dilemma by juxtaposing the rigid and absolutist "city" economic methods of department stores like Eaton's and Simpson's (DHC 129) with a more *natural* and interactive system: Stella's "method of exchange she had learned from Mockett and from nature itself. . . . those who *had*, bartered [emphasis added]" (134). Thus, while the consumer-based structure sustains itself in the post-literate culture, its closed system of fixed prices and impersonal exchange is replaced by the interactive and naturalised bartering system. Watson's repeated appeal to "nature" attempts to connect the post-literate with the pre-literate culture to form a synthesis between the First Nations and cultural centre ideologies. Though the discourse of capitalism still holds substantial "power" in the community (134), subversive traits such as gift-giving and trading attempt to demonstrate the emergence of a new order. Mamie Flower, the novel's staunch proponent of capitalist and traditional colonial values, resists the new world economic order: "And Mamie, peering from behind the veil of lace in the public parlour, would say [of Mockett freely giving away vegetables to neighbours], The old fool has no sense -- giving what it's natural to sell" (125). What defines "natural" to Mamie, and a literate society, however, no longer appropriately expresses the post-literate world of Deep Hollow Creek's conception of nature. A more caring and participatory individual who is

indivisible from his or her environment and community replaces the traditional Western separation between the individual and the environment. The First Nations culture represents an important contrast to Mamie's blinding colonialist attachment to the cultural centre. Both cultural groups fail, on their own, to come to terms with the new, emerging cultural situation. Watson demonstrates that they must merge into a hybridised and interactive culture or else lose their rightful place in the new social order.

Watson's answer to the cultural paradox of capitalism's continued role in a post-literate environment is strained, however, by its limited focus on only the method of economic exchange, without confronting the traditional individualistic tendencies of technology and property ownership. The foreigner Mrs. Hawkins' obsessive claim on land ownership is presented as unnatural, but the sign she posts to scare Nicholas Farish from her property is wonderfully evocative of her ideological stance: "IF YOU DON'T MIND YOUR RIGHTS I'LL HAVE THE LAW ON YOU" (42). The pronounced appeal to the rhetoric of individual rights appears again, but now it becomes more obvious that Watson does not have a functional alternative, a truly post-literate alternative, to issues of ownership and individual property rights beyond traditional paradigms: society and its laws are clearly on Mrs. Hawkins' side, regardless of the profundity of Stella or Farish's insights. Nicholas Farish is forced to concede to the rules of the foreign woman, and abide by conventional property divisions.

Watson also tries to use capitalism to demonstrate cultural interdependence in The Double Hook, in the instance when James Potter directly confronts his relationship to his community through his economic position. He has money, so he leaves Dog Creek freely (93). He loses his money, goes into debt, and is forced to resume his role in Dog Creek;

he realises that "a debt is a sort of bond" (121). Watson coyly suggests that individualism and freedom only exist abstractly, or to those with excess money to spend. To earn or owe money, on the other hand, is to participate and exist in the world. Capitalist ideology is perverted to produce an economic situation that forces commitment and participation, rather than fragmentation and isolation. In The Double Hook, she avoids the conflict between capitalism and post-literate ideology she faced in Deep Hollow Creek by disaccommodating her community and stripping it of technology and ownership. As Angela Bowering points out, The Double Hook does not make itself accountable to an accurate representation of historical reality. Bowering specifically draws our attention to the fantastic communal reaction to James's matricide:

> in the ordinary course of things [James] 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. (Bowering 90)

The detachment from historicity extends to the whole economic structure of Dog Creek, which is also scraped bare and provides only the mythological and allegorical implications of economic exchange. For instance, of the many characters involved in the novel only a few are given any sort of profession. Watson goes so far as to openly announce, through William Potter, the lack of financial background to her character Felix Prosper: "He drinks coffee like the rest of us, William said. Though, he said, I'd be hard pressed to know how he comes by the money to pay for it" (TDH 129). The mystery is never clarified implying that the pun of Felix's last name is obviously not intended to reflect his financial prosperity, but to draw our attention to his spiritual prosperity, with

which the novel is primarily concerned. The Double Hook avoids the paradox of an interdependent and interactive society in a world legally and economically structured by individualism by ignoring the technical realities of capitalism and the law, and instead focusing on the community as an interactive, mythological unit. The technology that connects Deep Hollow Creek to the external world is all but absent in Dog Creek, yet both communities are still able to develop into cultures that embrace a similar post-literate ideology. Bowering's attention to the language, itself, as a technology, attempts to demonstrate exactly how the linguistic background of Watson's second novel provides a global cultural link.

Angela Bowering asserts that even with the first words of The Double Hook the situation within Dog Creek is connected to the etymological and mythological history of the *other* languages and cultures that have endowed Watson's and Dog Creek's words with meaning:

> 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. (Bowering 2)

Bowering uses the parallel between The Double Hook and The Bible to draw our attention to the essential act of creation occurring through Watson's language: she is inventing a fictive universe where language still contains and conveys meaning. Being, in the fictional universe, is dependent upon the roots and grammatical structures that allow meaning (and even existence itself) to exist: "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" (4). The syntax and etymology of Watson's language determine the shape and essential meaning of the figures, even though, once shaped, the figures exist only unto themselves. Bowering capitalises on the freedom such a method of textual interrogation allows by exhaustively analysing both Watson's use of grammar and the mythological parallels suggested by her text. Bowering's analysis of Kip looks backward in history to find parallel myths, and then combines the historical parallels with the etymological root of the name "Kip" to define the essential shape of his figure:

> Kip is the descendant of Oedipus and Tiresias: 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. (29)

What is so astonishing about Bowering's argument is that it connects The Double Hook to a cultural network that remains for the most part invisible throughout the text. There are a number of Christian references in The Double Hook, as I've explored in the preceding chapter, as well as a number of local references, but by and large the novel's community is extremely remote from European influence, not to mention from ancient mythology. Leslie Monkman notes that Watson's local references are also even distinct from the actual Shuswap legends of Coyote (Monkman 65). The implication is that Watson has created a distinctly *new* culture that has loosely appropriated and manipulated cultural icons from numerous antecedent cultures. Her *creation* is thereby more original and total, while yet loosely sustaining the cultural paradigms from which it developed. The fact that Watson's words gain their present meaning through the historic influence of other cultures implicates and incorporates those other cultures into the present moment of

Dog Creek, negating the possibility of a detached "present" moment without the influence of the past both forward and backward in time. Watson, herself, explicitly expresses her concern with the stability of time in The Double Hook: "The remembrance of event and the slash of rain merged. Time annihilated in the concurrence [sic]" (TDH 39). Felix's experience of the present evokes his past and forces him to confront the continual presence of the past in the present, and the necessary disruption in linear time. Bowering explains that situations like this remind the reader that the whole world is upset, destabilised, and set into an interactive motion, rather than developing progressively: "Seeing and knowing are both indeterminate," she writes, "like the figures themselves, like the figure of Coyote, like 'the source'" (Bowering 13). Without origin, without "source," the figures are forced into participation and association with their ground, just as Watson's prose style forces the reader into participation in the text: "The incompleteness of outlines forces us to close the Gestalt by participating in the making of these *figurae*" (32). Bowering's endeavour to fill in the immense gaps between the sparse details of The Double Hook with her own abstractions, though sometimes difficult to reconcile with Watson's text, evokes the post-literate characteristic of Dog Creek operating from within its own expression. Though it is very low on electric technology, or even print, Bowering details exactly how The Double Hook participates in an interconnected cultural network that contradicts the fragmentation and individualism of a literate society. Watson expresses this sentiment in The Double Hook by having Angel Prosper wisely note, "A man can't peg himself in so tight that nothing can creep through the cracks" (TDH 57). The idea of an individual as a totally self-contained unit is an impossible fantasy created by Western, literate-era, logic.

McLuhan and Watson's depictions of the post-literate era present a problematic paradox where cohesive individuals operate within a realm of intense interdependance. The problem, as Homi Bhabha said in his unpublished conference paper "The Idea of 'Nation' in a Post-Colonial World," is that "you can't have identity without difference." In a post-literate environment, because everything is intrinsically connected to something else, there can be no absolute separation between objects, for to make such a division obscures the co-dependence of all objects. If distinctions are made, they are necessarily defined by imaginary boundaries. Removing the separation between figures and ground dissolves the whole binary dialectic of identity. As Bhabha suggests, the Western consensual notion of identity depends on difference to exist. If subject is necessarily entwined with object, as in a world of electric transference, everything becomes subject*ive*, and thus arbitrary and unstable. Watson captures this instability in a rich and complex metaphor: "In the circus Truth sat in a tub, chin-deep, and the reflection meeting its face mocked its reality" (DHC 123). The vague line that separates Truth from simulacra, in this case its own reflection, dissolves into a Baudrillard-ian state of hyper-reality, wherein "Truth" is little more than a representation of itself. The world and the individual become *processes* set in motion rather than essential, stable *objects*: Stella notes, "Everywhere the thing which wasn't, became, and the thing which was, altered" (139). Nothing remains 'itself,' for the whole concept of a stable self-contained unit has been discarded. Benedict Anderson addresses the arbitrary nature of boundaries, particularly national boundaries, in Imagined Communities: these boundaries are "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image

of their communion" (Anderson 15). His definition removes authenticity from the arbitrary divisions between nations, and replaces it with a more malleable and interactive notion of nation as an imaginary construction. Anderson's model provides a useful parallel to the situation of identity in an electric environment, where the individual is as much an imagined construct as are the community of individuals and the nation of communities.

It is interesting to note that though Watson never uses the word "Canada" or "Canadian" in Deep Hollow Creek, she does specifically name foreign countries. The "Canada" that emerges in the novel is an undefined, imaginary community made up of a wide array of disparate parts. She resists the temptation to reify, and thereby stabilise, the ground beneath her characters' feet by naming it, and so allows it to remain inseparable from the contradictory and different characters it contains. Her novel does not allow the characters to become trapped in the rhetoric of national identities, or to be pigeonholed as regional examples, which are both entirely constructed and imagined sources of identity. Similarly, the contradictions, multiplicity, and dependencies of each individual are documented, thereby problematizing the entire possibility of an isolated, *non-imaginary* individual.

The notion that individuality is an imaginary concept is difficult to reconcile with other traditional definitions of terms like interaction, difference, and agency. Accommodating the radical change in cultural organisation from a literate to a post-literate society demands that the concept of an "individual" undergo an equivalent alteration in order to reflect its interactive and post-literate situation. Michel Foucault, in The Order of Things, provides a functional answer to this dilemma of individuality:

> the general area of knowledge is no longer that of identities and differences. . . . but an area made up of organic structures, that is, of internal relations between elements whose totality performs a function. . . . the link between one organic structure and another can no longer, in fact, be the identity of one or several elements, but must be the identity of the relation between the elements (a relation in which visibility no longer plays a role) and of the functions they perform. (Foucault 218)

In Foucault's system, as in Anderson's, the type and extent of the interaction of the organic structures (even if all structures do not interact with every structure) determines the identity of the individual structures, while the same concept applies for the elements whose totality defines the structure, itself. The way a community is defined, for example, is determined by the way it interacts with other communities, or by the way its inhabitants interact with each other, and not by its stability as a fixed and coherent entity. It follows that individuality is determined by the manner in which an individual interacts with other individuals, and not by the *fact* of their existence as separate, fragmented objects. As Watson, herself, explained: "The people in the novel are defined in terms of their relationships" (Marlatt 358).

Just as the significance of the individual is created through a relationship to an interactive, interdependent environment, so too do the physical senses within the individual become more powerful by their interaction. Foucault's comment about the decreased role of vision in this interactive environment is a theme repeatedly, and enthusiastically, supported by McLuhan in all his works. Just as the individual is no longer separated from his/her environment, so too are all five senses awakened and involved in the new social order. Watson, too, personifies 'nature' coming to Stella, not as an object, but as a voice: "Then she heard an undulating voice crying, Throw off the bands of custom, break down the barriers. Nature stirs deep within you. I am the primitive

urge, out of the blastoderm endlessly calling" (124). Stella's experience of retribalization demands an increased participation from her other senses, and overcomes the visual specialisation that is characteristic of a literate society. The individual in the liminal space of a post-literate era has unified senses, participates in the world, and must remove all "barriers" that limit interaction. Individuals are thus freed from the restrictive hold of the custom of self-awareness, and from the impossible task of carving out a stable identity from a dynamic and ever-changing environment, to be defined, instead, by how they are able to act and function inside arbitrarily defined boundaries.

Glenn Willmott's analysis of modernism and postmodernism in Watson's work helps to demonstrate how Watson's use of the unique post-colonial situation in Western Canada imply the broader issues of modernism and postmodernism that both he and McLuhan explore. Willmott finds postmodernism expressed in the Coyote figure, who "represents an authority more of a natural than a divine order of things, and more of an existential becoming, a turning, twisting or 'trickiness,' than of a metaphysical being, an essence, or a centre in life" (Willmott 37). His comment on Coyote is informed by its contrast with the Christian God to reveal the paradigmatic distinction between modernism (that considers life in relation to a stable centre) and postmodernism (that considers life as being subject to perpetual change). His comment also provides a bridge to the discourse of post-colonialism that considers the sociological and historical situation of European settler cultures confronting the cultural paradigms of First Nations societies on foreign ground. Willmott's conclusion identifies how Watson uses the tension between colonial and First Nations cultures to address the tension between the two cultural perspectives:

> The characters of *Deep Hollow Creek* are figures in a ground, and the ground of grounds is not an existential darkness, void, or chaos, within which a Cartesian subject begins *ex nihilo*, making values, choices, decisions -- making herself, making history. The ground is a living place, an environment which demands expression in a linguistic and material economy of exchange. As such it exists no less in the wilderness than in the city. (44)

The Cartesian duality in Deep Hollow Creek is reconfigured within an organic whole that renders any separation absurd and abstract. Willmott's final point, that "it exists no less in the wilderness than in the city," provides an important insight into Stella's final decision to leave the cultural margins and return to the city. Willmott suggests, while acknowledging the potential to consider her departure a type of personal failure, that Stella's decision to leave Deep Hollow Creek indicates that she has overcome the individualism that inspired her to strip away the influence of the world as a means to find herself, and that she has embraced an organic, participatory perception of the world. After making the perspectival shift, her underlying appeal to individualism, which demands both isolation and a detached lifestyle, no longer makes any sense. The insanity she confronts in the final sequence becomes the existential paradox of individualism -- rather than the instability of the post-colonial voice -- which she promptly discards by reconnecting and re-engaging with the world.

Stella confronts the tension of capitalism in the post-colonial world that Watson was unable to fully balance in her limited economic model. For even though post-colonial/post-literate ideology resists boundaries and hierarchies, the interaction in an electric environment is mediated through technology. Access to the newest and best technologies that increase interaction determines the post-colonial subject's ability to participate in the world. The dilemma is that technology is produced in relation to wealth,

and communities with greater wealth -- a formula that usually favours urban over rural areas -- have better access to technology-based interaction. Thus, while Stella discovers the interactivity of the natural world and the natural resistance to hierarchical structures, she is still driven to flee the rural environment as a negative space for a better life in the city. The post-colonial dependence on capital and technology ironically, and for the most part inadvertently, re-inscribes hierarchy and privilege in a form that is barely distinguishable from the metropolitan-centric attitudes of colonialism. One critic goes so far as to note that Deep Hollow Creek "belongs on a long shelf of Anglo-colonial novels in which civilised white women go to the bush, fall under the spell of darker people's gods, and come away repelled or changed (see, for example, the works of E.M. Forster and D.H. Lawrence)" (Glover 47). Though Deep Hollow Creek participates in a post-colonial ideology, its resolution is indeed problematic in the way that Glover suggests (though his comment, I believe, dismisses the work too quickly and easily). The contradiction of a hierarchical space inside boundaries is not confidently resolved or embraced in Deep Hollow Creek, and might provide a useful explanation for the awkward anxiety that dominates the final portion of the novel. The integrity of the novel's ideological development is jeopardised by the re-emergence of a technological hierarchy.

In The Double Hook, Watson tidies up Deep Hollow Creek's cultural progression from individualism to collectivism by almost entirely erasing and avoiding the capital/technological dimension of human culture. Even though the two novels represent a similar community at the same historical moment, the difference between the cultural sophistication of the communities is shocking. Glenn Willmott notes in comparison that in The Double Hook, Watson disaccommodates even disaccommodated man; he raises

the question, "what then remains? What other, more final nakedness can there be?" (Willmott 32). To answer his question, as Stephen Scobie explained in his book on Watson, a "more final" nakedness might appear something like Watson's short-story "And the Four Animals" in which the rules of realism have been euphorically disrupted; all that remains is a bare skeleton of landscape description and mythological fantasy, what Scobie calls "frankly mythological" (Scobie 20). Another version of a "more final" nakedness might be Watson's earlier short-story "A Rough Answer," which explores an opposite extreme vision of the Dog Creek found in "And the Four Animals." In this story, Watson avoids any outspokenly mythological implications by strictly following the Modernist short-story tradition of clean and bare language. The plot of "A Rough Answer" is a skeleton version of Deep Hollow Creek: a young woman from the city comes to Dog Creek to be their new school teacher, billeting with a local family, but leaves prematurely without affecting any influence on the community. While significant issues arise in "A Rough Answer," such as cultural barriers, individualism, and the location of culture, the mythological and intellectual significance of such issues is watered down to a dull pulse by the flat language. If "And the Four Animals" reaches a nearly incomprehensible level of mythological extreme, "A Rough Answer" reaches toward the opposite, and mostly uninteresting, extreme of realism and mimesis. Each story, on its own, fails to negotiate or approach the paradox of the simultaneous existence of their cultural opposite, i.e. what occurs in the other story, in their own geographical and historical location. The Double Hook, itself, appeals to a level of realism that is beyond mythology but is still resistant to the strict rules of reality. Deep Hollow Creek makes an even greater appeal to the conditions that govern reality, which results in the

painful increase of the tensions between the mythological/post-colonial perspective and the strict rules of capitalism and individualism. Watson shows that Stella embraces the fundamentally interactive perspective of a post-literate, electric era, but also how the interaction Stella embraces is left unfulfilled in a rural environment. The rural technology is too slow, too limited, and controlled by too few people. The people who successfully remain in the cultural margins, the Mamie Flowers and the Sam Flowers, compete to dominate and control the cultural information from the centres and use that power to re-inscribe a hierarchical cultural structure. Urban areas, and the technological advancement they represent and contain, become the physical space where cultural freedom and the new ideology exists. As a result, the frailty of Watson's interactive, interdependent model becomes quite apparent and threatens to disappear, like Thomas Paine's individualism, as yet another abstract-to-reality philosophy. A similar tension exists in The Double Hook's appeal to Euro-centric religion, though the technological implications of a few biblical quotes and a sluggish mail system are obviously marginal when compared to the electronic experience in Deep Hollow Creek. The Double Hook is able to sustain the integrity of its mythological voice by erasing any obstructing element of reality -- such as laws against murder, or the need for capital in a capitalistic economy -- that might challenge or disrupt its authenticity. The Double Hook is much more ideologically stable for it presents the post-colonial/post-literate perspective without the complications of capitalism and technology that created the electric environment, and enabled the post-colonial/post-literate ideologies to develop. Figures are indeed reunited with their ground in The Double Hook, but at the cost of a complete separation from the ideological and technological framework that allowed for the cultural situation. Figures are only

tentatively reunited with their ground in Deep Hollow Creek, for Watson includes the unresolved tension between post-literate and capitalistic ideologies operating under the rubric of a single culture. The dilemma is more pronounced in Deep Hollow Creek, her more *realistic* novel, which offers a less abstracted and disaccommodated insight into the paradox at the heart of post-colonial discourse.

Marshall McLuhan and Sheila Watson approach a parallel cultural dilemma from their respective fields of literary theory and fiction. They both depict a new, interactive social situation that negates the ardent individualism that has dominated Western ideology since the invention of the printing press. Though the two enjoyed a personal and professional relationship, this thesis has not attempted to identify influence or origin in their similar ideas, or the complication created by their relationship, but has instead attempted both to explore the profound similarities in their published work, and to address how they have responded to the theoretical implications of a similar cultural situation. McLuhan makes it his task to demonstrate how our current post-literate era has adopted many of the characteristics of a pre-literate society. Sheila Watson, on the other hand, admits the parallel but concentrates more on the ensuing, unique cultural situation of a post-literate environment. They are both keenly aware of the implications such a radical cultural shift has on how the individuals in an electric culture are to be understood. They both attempt to reconfigure individuals as inseparable from their physical and cultural setting, although they also recognise the cultural paradox of post-literate ideology functioning in an individualistic society. Sheila Watson once admitted about Deep Hollow Creek, "I didn't want a voice talking about something. I wanted voices" (Meyer 158). Watson replaces the dogmatic impulse of individualism with

multiplicity and hybridisation to express the dynamic social network she envisioned. Her attention to the method of interaction, and the necessary limitations of realism, complicated Deep Hollow Creek to the point that it no longer worked for her as a coherent novel (Meyer 158). With The Double Hook, she removed all the complications of technology and realistic capitalism and was able to produce a stable environment that allowed her idea of an interactive, interdependent society to blossom: she managed to create a literary universe where figures were both perfectly reunited with their ground and free from the paradox of realism. Both works, however, introduce a new configuration of identity that works for both the individual and the community, defined by interaction and participation. The settler population thus represents an ideal cultural dilemma for Watson to explore, because it lies between two established cultural forces, and is itself relatively undefined. The First Nations and the colonialist impulse of the cultural centre are both limited by their inability (or willingness) to meaningfully interact in the new post-literate cultural milieu. It becomes the setters' role (and sole responsibility) to negotiate between the two cultural forces above and below them and to increase humanity's connection to the natural world.

Chapter Three

Beyond Paradox: Modernism and the Search for Structure

Sheila Watson's novels use the regional particularities of their cultural situations to gain access to broader, more international, cultural implications. The specific historical community of Dog Creek is twisted and distorted to fit the particular narrative shape of each novel. As each narrative is different, so too must their respective representations of Dog Creek be different. Watson uses the malleability of historical representation to document different failures and successes in the negotiation of cultural power and authenticity among the cultural centre, the settlers, and the First Nations community. With the specific inclusion of these cultural bodies in the negotiation of cultural power, Watson's narrative necessarily includes issues of colonialism, cultural appropriation, and even post-colonialism. Neither novel, however, offers total cultural authority to any of the established cultural groups. Cultural authenticity is depicted as a potential outcome of a community's ability to open itself to unbiased interaction with multiple levels of society. In this way, Watson's novels analyse the whole constructive process of culture and identity, of individuality in a culture, of communities in nations, and of nations in the world. The negotiation of cultural power in the small community of Dog Creek, B.C., becomes emblematic of the negotiation of identity that occurs on all levels of human experience.

What does identity mean, then, in Sheila Watson's fictive universe? Rather than plainly explaining her own answers to the essential issues at stake in the novels, Watson demonstrates both the question and the answer by showing how identity is constructed in

the world. Interaction, contradiction, and multiplicity are all integral elements in Watson's depiction of identity. What we do and whom we do it with in the world determines who we are. On a cultural level, this means that identity is determined by an arbitrarily defined cultural unit's interaction with other arbitrarily defined cultural units. On an individual level, identity is shaped by how an individual negotiates and interacts with the individuals surround them. On all levels, identity is set free of essentialism and remains open to change and influence.

Many critics, as this chapter will show, interpret Watson's construction of identity as paradoxical. The argument is that one thing can't also be that which it is not: identity must be located in essential properties and stable qualities, such as Coyote's goodness (or badness). Many critics invoke the title of The Double Hook as the central image of paradox that informs all subsequent paradox in the novel. The title, as well as the title of her other novel, participates in and signifies the theoretical structure that shapes both narratives. By way of summarising and concluding the discussions in the previous chapters, this final chapter will explore the titles of Watson's novels in relation to paradox, identity, and the negotiation of cultural power in the communities. Paradox inappropriately dominates the discourse of the critical studies of Watson's work, for the use of such a term arrives from a consistent failure amongst her critics to recognise the principle of simultaneous multiplicity in the author's construction of individual and cultural identity. The complex issues of cultural and individual multiplicity, of opposing elements being simultaneously merged into a new, hybridised unity, are appropriately expressed in the titles that identify each work.

Sheila Watson changed the relative significance of a particular passage in her first novel when she extracted from it the provocative image of a double-pronged fishhook for use as the title. The title is strange and intriguing, for while it seems to introduce the consistent role of fishing throughout the novel, and act as an allusion to the Fisher King mythology of T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," the only passage that actually uses the image of a double hook is decidedly abstract and metaphysical. The image, and the way it is used in the text, has often been taken to represent numerous contradictions, and even the whole idea of paradox in the novel. Watson publicly admitted ignorance with a laugh to one critic from The Globe and Mail's coy reminder that a "double hook" was also a boxing term for a quick left-right combination, defusing the only truly aberrant interpretation of the title (Meyer 160). Paradox has since been an important and central element in all readings of Sheila Watson's work, and is used to explain any of the numerous contradictions that swirl and intermingle throughout the course of her novels. Critics use Watson's tendency to structure conflict into a binary relationship, which thus forms paradox, to focus on polarities such as the living/the dead (see Lennox's "The Past: Themes and Symbols of Confrontation"), the natural/the supernatural (see McPherson's "An Important New Voice"), damnation/redemption (see Northey's "Symbolic Grotesque"), regional/universal (see Grube's "Introduction") and realism/mythology (see Corbett's "Closed Circle"). Consistently, when critics attempt to apply the abstract concept of paradox to Watson's fictive universe, they invoke the novel's central image of duality, the double hook, as an incontestable proof of the importance of paradox (see Child 33, and Moss 126 amongst others). The specific use of the title, however, changes from critic to critic. There still exists a certain vagueness, or breadth, to its symbolic role

in the text. Hugo McPherson, for example, uses the title to explain the emotional turmoil felt by James Potter in his relationship with Lenchen (McPherson 24), as well as to parallel the new, awakened, consciousness of the community (25). John Lennox, on the other hand, connects the title with the Christian implications of the novel: "The double hook itself is an image of fishing and calls to mind Christ's statement that he would make his disciples fishers of men" (Lennox 53). Nancy Corbett considers the title to be a reflection on the community's "acceptance of the dual nature of existence" and the indication of a philosophic statement, that "Life is a double hook" (Corbett 121). The fishing hook is sufficiently flexible and indefinite to allow each critic to shape its implication to suit the particular aim of his or her argument. The nature of the double hook, as a paradox, a duality, and a symbol, has thus far sustained a level of mystery and elusiveness that demands further interrogation.

John Moss, in "The Double Hook and The Channel Shore," attempts to reconcile the title with the novel's paradoxes and dualities by considering the whole novel as a progression from one side of a polar spectrum, namely death and darkness, to the opposite side, namely birth and glory. He claims that the title represents the development of a binary-based plot movement throughout the novel: "Duality, as suggested by the title and reiterated by the fish hook imprint at the beginning of every section, is the keynote of The Double Hook" (Moss 126). Moss breaks apart the duality of the text as a whole to examine how the space in, essentially the novel's plot, informs and predicts the novel's resolution. The characters exist within "the pendulum's swing from fear and divisiveness to hope and community, they are existentialist measures of the breadth of its arc" (127). He uses each character to indicate a different stage in the novel's progression from

darkness to glory. For the purpose of his argument, the binary image of the double hook becomes a tool that justifies translating the individual characters into absolute and stable positions between the polar options. The Old Lady, thus, represents "the illusions of fear" and one far extreme, the *dark* side of the binary (126). The new baby that appears in the final chapter, on the opposite extreme, the *redemptive* side of the spectrum, represents "the joyous awakening." In other words, Moss resists considering the glory and darkness as a simultaneous experience, or as the interactive and interdependent elements of a unified whole. He separates and even privileges "glory" as the progressive and more desirable half of the double hook. Watson, despite Moss and every other critic who argues a similar notion, specifically and explicitly explains that the double hook represents the inseparability of the darkness and the glory: they are flip sides of the same coin.

The passage that informs the title directly contradicts any assertion that the title indicates an unreconcilable *difference* between contradictory elements. The double hook is, instead, a perfect representation of contradictory elements that are simultaneously merged into a new and unique thing. While the passage contains its own controversies[13] and complexity, its connection to the title is fairly clear:

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[13] Douglas Barbour explains in "Editors and Typesetters" that a section of the paragraph was selected in the first edition without Watson's knowledge for use as an epigraph. Barbour argues that "it cannot be denied that the prominence its appearance as an epigraph has bestowed upon it has made Kip's statement appear far more important to critics of the novel than might have been the case had it existed only as the thoughts of a single character at a certain point in the narrative" (Barbour 9). Barbour's reliance on authorial intent, however, is undermined by the fact that Watson had already made the paragraph more important than simply "the thoughts of a single character at a certain point in the narrative" by selecting an image contained within it, and nowhere else in the

> [James is] like his old lady, Kip thought. There's a thing he doesn't know. He doesn't know that 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. (TDH 61)

Watson uses the fundamental and traditional Christian binary of glory and darkness to demonstrate how her double hook simultaneously denotes contradiction. Watson's model does not permit the merged elements to be separated. The only option she provides for her characters is whether or not they resist (as Coyote does) accepting the fact of its implications. It is more than appropriate that Watson's example of the phenomenon of the double hook positions Coyote in pursuit of Christian redemption, but locked into a perpetual cycle of rejection. Coyote tries "every day" to catch the glory, fails, and inflicts the dark side of the double hook on himself and the vaguely distinguished "others" (who might be assumed to be the named and unnamed inhabitants of the world under Coyote's eye). The double hook, which is also fairly similar to an inverted cross, is a Christian symbol that reaches humanity through the mediation and perverting influence of Coyote. The icon effortlessly binds two cultures together by a representative process of hybridity. Leslie Monkman and John Grube failed to notice that darkness is an inherent property of the double hook, in conjunction with its glory, and that Watson thereby distinguishes

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text, for the title of the whole book. Furthermore, every subsequent reprinting of The Double Hook has continued to use the same epigraph, and Watson never publicly stated that she didn't support its continued use (even if she didn't originally choose it herself). At what point does the intertextual book become more important than the extratextual and *original* authorial intent? Given the fact that *every* reprint of the novel has used the epigraph, and that there is no public evidence to suggest that Watson tried to have the epigraph removed, it would be irresponsible to ignore the special significance of the paragraph from which the epigraph is taken, especially considering its contribution to the novel's title.

Coyote from darkness. Coyote's evil influence, the existence of which is also debatable (see pages 30-36), is clearly an inadvertent by-product of his (and the Old Lady's) major vice of vanity: he is "fooled" into the darkness. It may be that the Old Lady's failings are the result of Coyote's, but Coyote's influence on her is only a bastardisation of the Christian system and not evidence of his equivalence to the Biblical role of Satan, as some critics have implied. The two cultures interact and confuse each other, all the while influencing the community with a compromised version of both cultures.

Watson's double hook captures and manifests the complicated structural and theoretical patterns of the novel. Foucault, Derrida and Bhabha, and many others, have argued that an identity defined by difference is actually co-dependent and unified with its Other. Identity, as they point out, in traditional configurations depends upon a separation from what it is not in order to come into existence, just as the idea of darkness depends on the idea of glory in order to be meaningful. The double hook, however, merges the subject and its Other into a singular coexistent, simultaneous identity. Watson uses the simultaneous binary pattern to structure the plot of The Double Hook in such a way that the double hook also performs as a verb to represent the recurrent pattern of experience throughout the novel. James, for example, is continually double-hooked: Lenchen's pregnancy, and the oncoming birth (glory), prompts him to murder his mother (darkness); his flight from Dog Creek (darkness) allows him to become an active member of the community (glory). Glory causes darkness. Darkness causes glory. A similar sequence is spread through the whole novel, shaping how each character connects to everything else. The interaction among the characters brings the double hook into the world. As the double hook expresses the relationship between the characters, and determines the

actions, the difference, by which the characters gains their individual identities, it thereby also represents the post-literate interactive environment. Watson's depiction of the positive value of cultural hybridity and interaction between social groups is combined, through the image of the double hook, with the post-literate condition of identity-through-interaction. The double hook is, thereby, an iconic representation of the theoretical framework that conditions Watson's narrative. The double hook, as verb, is also the consistent pattern of cultural experience in Dog Creek, and thus shapes the plot as well as the thematic implications of the story.

The symbol, which never physically manifests in the novel[14], does not represent paradox, despite the incredible proliferation of critical material that suggests it does. Paradox is the illusion produced by a phrase that seems to contain a contradiction, but in which the two seemingly opposing elements actually refer to non-oppositional ideas[15].

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[14] Strangely, despite the icon's never actually appearing within the novel, and despite the fact that it is mentioned only once, Watson felt the need to prove the physical reality of the image when challenged by Professor Salter, who wrote the introduction to the first edition of The Double Hook. In a rare book reading, Watson said "Before I start to read I think I want to say something about the original cover of The Double Hook [which was a close-up photocopy of a double-hook fishing lure], because it was one of the things that interested me most. . . . [After being challenged that double hooks didn't actually exist] I sent one to Mr. Salter, to prove that such a thing existed in nature. I said we used to use them in British Columbia" ("What I'm Going to Do" 14). She felt it was very important that the symbol be an appropriate one for the setting of her novel, which thus aligns the icon with the historical, biographical, intertextual, and symbolic occupations of the novel.

[15] For example, in the common example of paradox, "More haste, less speed," the two synonyms seem to contradict each other, when in fact "haste" refers to a particular type of speed that is both rushed and sloppy. "Haste" identifies the specific type of behaviour of the one who makes haste, whereas "speed" refers to the total time it takes the one who makes haste to complete the effort after correcting their rushed and sloppy performance. Thus, while the terms seem to be synonyms used to oppose each other, they

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines paradox as a "statement that seems to say the opposite to common sense or the truth, but which may contain a truth" (S.O.E.D. 1428). Paradox is the illusion produced when two (or more) terms are mistakenly connected and seem to produce a contradiction, when in fact they refer to entirely different, and non-comparable, things. The double hook, on the other hand, represents an actual contradiction because its two elements, glory and darkness, are set together in reference to the same thing. It is a positive image in the sense that it attempts to draw contradictory elements together and demonstrate how they have been unified and combined in reference to the same thing. The result is not paradox but a balanced and contained contradiction, much closer to *oxymoron* than paradox. Watson's icon indicates a process of merging, hybridity, and synthesis similar to oxymoron, which the S.O.E.D. defines as the moment when "contradictory terms are conjoined so as to give point to the statement or expression" (1411). The contradictory terms "glory" and "darkness" are combined in Watson's use of the double hook. The confrontation between contradictory elements finds a resolution without negating or isolating one or the other. Oxymoron is, however, also somewhat inappropriate, for as a rhetorical device, it doesn't fully express the balance of contradictions that Watson attempts to demonstrate in the world.[16] The point is not so much being nit-picky about the specific word chosen by critics, especially when considering that meanings of paradox and oxymoron seem to be shifting and

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are in fact modifying different elements in a situation. The relationship is causational, rather than oppositional. Paradox lies in the illusion of their opposition.

[16] I will continue to use the term "oxymoron" with the understanding that in my thesis, the term also indicates the simultaneous inclusion of contradictory elements into a stable unity as it occurs at all levels of experience.

expanding in modern usage, but rather to draw specific attention to the fundamental theoretical foundation of The Double Hook as a space where contradictory elements positively interact and interinfluence each other and resolve into unique cultural situations. Watson's novel, strictly speaking, contains no intentional paradox.

The title for Watson's second novel is equally suggestive and also participates on all of the novel's literal, symbolic, and theoretical levels. Since there has been no formal analysis of her title yet, any progress in this area must begin at the most rudimentary level by considering each word of the title as an individual entity. "Deep" suggests fundamental, important and significant. "Hollow" suggests that something is missing, that there is no centre, and draws attention to the contrast between centre and perimeter. "Creek" suggests a fluid space of movement that is notably shallow. Watson's title combines all these words, and thus expresses the contradictions between each term. How can there be a hollow creek? How can a creek be deep *and* hollow? Isn't a deep creek called a *river*? The convoluted implications of each specific term are important, but the geographical roots of the name also provide a revealing stream of logic. According to the S.O.E.D., the first recorded use of the noun "hollow" happened in 1533 in England, in reference to a basin or ravine system. A deep hollow, then, can be understood as a particularly well entrenched and hilly area. Such geographical instances are particularly prone to creeks and rivers and might profoundly affect the placement of a human community within the valley. All of these descriptions appear almost consistent with the physical face of the world in Watson's text, except that the term "hollow," even when modified by "deep," fails to accurately express the landscape of the tiny community surrounded by the huge rolling hills and massive cliff faces of the Cariboo region. The

colonial English language from which the name is derived does not match the magnitude of the Canadian landscape. Watson reveals that every act of naming is necessarily political and culturally determined by using the name Deep Hollow Creek to represent the cultural composition of the British Columbian community. The application of an (inappropriate) English signifier to the community also comes at the expense of the native Shuswap people's original name for the community site, which Watson explains was once "Rá'tltem" (18). The colonial imposition of a new name in a foreign language attempts to become the natural expression of the landscape by then renaming and translating the original inhabitants into "the people of the deep hollow" as if the land identified as "Deep Hollow Creek" predated the Shuswap. The attempt to amalgamate and erase the native language and culture for the colonial model, however, disrupts the purity of the colonial experience by exposing it to the influence of native spiritual symbols, like Coyote, and the Shuswap people's relationship to the land. The First Nations people, despite being appropriated into the imperial culture, are constructed as both the symbolic and the authentic inhabitants of the land. Both cultures (although to severe and vastly different extents) are compromised and changed by their relationship, and Watson makes it clear that, despite an extreme loss of the power of self-determination, the Shuswap people and their culture are very much alive and remain active in the world. The title draws our attention to and registers the importance of naming in the process of cultural colonisation and hybridisation. The implications of the title quickly escalate to a complicated theoretical level.

Deep Hollow Creek is a place where cultures, landscape, and people interact, merge, change, and become interdependent. The process of hybridisation separates each

participating culture from the stable or essential characteristics that distinguished and defined them in the past, and none can sustain a claim to cultural purity. The title, as an image of both identity and perpetual change, captures the fundamental hollowness and instability of the community's cultural situation. Culture is set in motion, is a process rather than an absolute, much like water in a creek. As Watson's title also serves as the identity of a specific name of a community, it thereby connects the idea of a deep hollow creek, as a malleable and fluid experience, to the essential problem of identity as an unstable and arbitrary construction. In the traditional configuration of an individual, his or her identity is gained through relative difference from other individuals. Individuals, in order to determine and establish difference, must be separated and divided from each other and the world as distinct objects. The process of dividing people from the landscape (figures from their ground), and further from other people, however, fails to account for the interaction and interdependency of all elements within the mix. This problem in individual identity is similar to what occurs to cultural, and even national, identity, and all of these concerns are implicated in Watson's title. While the looseness of culture and identity might suggest a conflict, the community is a stable site *of change*, similar to the mental image of a creek, and thus holds all of its inherent contradictions in an oxymoron.

The tension between social structures based upon interactivity and collectivity versus hierarchy and individuality, explored in Chapter Two, parallels the difference between paradox and oxymoron. In a historical context, the opposition between paradox and oxymoron also resembles the difference between postmodernism and modernism. Modernism characteristically attempts to secure stability and find patterns despite contradictions, while postmodernism characteristically uses contradictions to disrupt

power structures that provide illusions of identity, and stability. The titles of both novels indicate and suggest how each work explores similar post-colonial and post-literate experiences, but also provide an important difference within their theoretical post-modern/modern outlook. While both novels are consistently, and appropriately, labelled modernist texts, they vary in the manner by which they embrace and fulfil modernist aesthetics. A double hook is a stable, resolved object, while a deep hollow creek is a fluid and ever changing process. The difference between the two images suggests an important variation between the expressions of the modernist impulse in each text. Linda Hutcheon's 1988 study The Canadian Postmodern distinguishes between modernism and postmodernism, and tells where The Double Hook fits into the theoretical debate:

> Despite what some critics call postmodern techniques (fragmentation, parody), both novels [Watson's The Double Hook and Margaret Laurence's The Diviners] reveal more of a *modernist* search for order in the face of moral and social chaos than a *postmodern* urge to trouble, to question, to make problematic and provisional any such desire for order or truth through the human imagination. (Hutcheon 2)

The Double Hook struggles to regain a functional social order despite cultural contradictions and conflicts, and to establish oxymoron despite impending conflict and contradiction. Hutcheon's assertion of the text's modernist position assumes that the novel achieves the cultural resolution it claims, but Stephen Scobie is not so sure: "All this talk of 'regeneration,' of which I have done my share, perhaps implies that the final situation in the novel is more definite than in fact it is. . . . as always, there is a double hook" (Scobie 49). Scobie's comment stems from the violence through which the resolution is achieved, and the confounding, continuing influence of Coyote, "the double hook, duality and duplicity" (50). His point, however, is extremely important in

understanding the full shape of Watson's modernism. The Double Hook is not ordered by a banal progression from evil to goodness, but by a simultaneous and perpetual duality that is the double hook. Watson finds an ordering device in the face of moral and social chaos, and thereby fulfils the modernist pursuit. The human experience is shaped by the double hook's impermeable presence.

Deep Hollow Creek also contains a modernist search for social and cultural stability, though its resolution is more tenuous and subtle. Watson discards all cultural and individual essentialism by demonstrating their malleable and fluid nature in her second novel, but yet avoids the postmodern impulse to completely problematize the dilemma by attempting to recreate culture and identity around a different structuring mechanism. The stable element that Watson identifies behind all human society is not any of the specific manifestations of culture and identity, but the essential social mechanism *of having* a culture and *of having* an identity. Through her representation of the negotiation of cultural power, Watson demonstrates how variant sections of the human population have different rituals and ways of constructing the identity of the participants in those rituals. The different cultural bodies, however, are not invalidated by the existence of oppositional cultural configuration of identity and ritual. Margaret Turner describes the representation of culture in Watson's fictional universe as "a functioning discursive framework" (Turner 77). Accordingly, the discursive frames of culture, ritual, and identity enable language to retain meaningfulness and power in the world. Watson shows how having ritual, myth, and identity unites all cultures. In her 1984 interview, Watson explained that "Ritual is the organisation of community. If ritual becomes the ritual of commercial ads, then that is ritual for better or for worse. . . . it preserves [the

culture's myths] in their variant forms" (Meyer 160). The ritual behind the organisation of human society provides the essential structure that Watson attempts to uncover in the novel. The Double Hook introduces a community without culture and ritual, and how the absence of these elements causes, as Watson said, "violence" or "insensibility" ("What I'm Going to Do" 183), but the novel is clearly more *about* ritual and culture than about the negation of ritual and culture. When ritual and culture are threatened, or weakened, the bonds that hold the community are weakened. As ritual and culture are stabilised and empowered, the community is empowered. In Deep Hollow Creek, Watson does not add the social condition of the double hook to her fictive universe, and instead focuses exclusively on the negotiation and development of ritual, power, and individual identity. As with The Double Hook, the quest for establishing a fundamental social order also dominates the plot and movement of the novel.

While both Marshall McLuhan's theories of post-literacy and the analysis of colonial themes have helped to deconstruct the difference in the sociological, theoretical, and historical composition of Watson's two novels, her general tendency towards modernism brings the two novels back into a shared ideological frame. In each novel, an exploration of how the swirling contradictions in human societies resolves into a modernist ideological structure more akin to oxymoron, regardless of whether the characters are willing to recognise and interact with the situation. The differences between the two novels, while seeming to suggest an inherent paradox for their radical difference despite sharing a specific historically-based location in the world, also imply oxymoron as the contradictions are expressed within the body of one small, remote British Columbian community. Watson uses the numerous specific conflicts within and

between both of her novels to examine culture and ritual as complicated sociological and theoretical structures that enable contradictions to be contained within a stable pattern of human culture. Both novels are at once universal and regional, realistic and mythological, as these and many other polarities are combined in the patterns of human culture and ritual. The culture that emerges through all of the ideological influences that Watson identifies, and that manages to remain open to those influences, represents the authentic human representation of the natural land beneath the community. By extension, this community also contributes and participates in the large, international community of humanity. Any group, or individual, that stays blind to the complex cultural diversity in the community threatens to undermine the interactive cultural network of the new world. Cultural power thus has the ability to both connect people and overcome individual isolation, as in The Double Hook, or to divide them by inscribing harmful hierarchies, as in Deep Hollow Creek. But in giving authenticity to all configurations of culture and ritual, Watson privileges social environments that enable and encourage inhabitants to be open and willing to learn and interact with multiple cultural groups. Her main characters from the settler population, at least those open to the negotiation of identity and culture involving both the cultural centre and the First Nations community, emerge as the representatives of the natural and authentic culture for their new world communities.

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