

# INTRODUCTION

There has been quite a bit of discussion lately in Canada about our relationship to the North. One of those discussions involves the issue of Arctic sovereignty. With the warming temperatures and increased melting of the polar ice cap, reference is made to the Northwest Passage as a viable route for shipping and thus to whether Canada has political sovereignty over northern waters. Another prominent topic has been the enormous resource wealth in the North and the economic prosperity that those resources might bring. If the first decades of the twentieth century saw the focus of Canada shift to the West, it seems that in the first decades of the twenty-first century we are witnessing a shift in focus to the North. To paraphrase Robert Kroetsch (1995), if the earlier injunction was “go West,” now the injunction is “go North.”

This work complies with Kroetsch’s injunction to go North. My desire, though, is not to explore the issues of political sovereignty or resource wealth but instead to explore the much different issue of love. The issue of love has not been front and centre in the recent discussions of the Canadian North, but I believe that it is a very significant element that needs serious attention. Political sovereignty and resource wealth may be important issues for Canadians, but I would contend that the issue of love is as well. In a sense, I am calling for the debate on the North to be expanded somewhat beyond issues of political control and economic power and to encompass the complex bonds and desires that tie humans together in what we often refer to as love.

What I mean by ‘love’ will emerge as the analysis in the book progresses, but let me say that when I refer to the importance of love,

and in this case a distinctively northern love, I am referring to love in a gendered sense. More specifically, I am referring to the love of the mother and the love of the father. My analysis will explore the distinctiveness of a maternal and a paternal northern love. And the analysis narrows itself once more in a gendered way, because my intent is to explore maternal and paternal love in relation to the specific experience of Canadian men and the influence of masculine ideals on their lives. This book, then, will explore in some depth the relationship between northern love and Canadian masculinity.

In order to understand better the rationale for focusing on Canadian masculinity within the context of maternal and paternal love, it may be helpful to return to the West-North contrast for a moment and overlay the American-Canadian contrast. Michael Kimmel, in his social-historical work on American manhood (1996), claims that the American push to the West was an attempt by men to escape cultural feminization, a feminization associated with a male who had become far too domesticated. The escape from the maternal domestic scene and the feminized home led, according to Kimmel, to a reaffirmation of a particular kind of oedipal frontier male, virile, uncontained, and proudly violent (see also Bosso, McCall, and Garceau 2001). Kimmel believes that this western frontier masculinity has had and continues to have an enormous influence on the identities of American men.

If it is true that a reassertion of oedipal masculinity and a fear of cultural feminization are important characteristics of the movement of American men West then what can we say about the movement of Canadian men North? If there is a strong American cultural ideal of the West that says that men who love can only do so through fear of a love that comes through the maternal domesticated home, does this same relation to love hold for Canadian men who move North, or do Canadian men who move North present us with a different conception of love and a different relationship to the maternal domesticated home? And what kind of paternal ideal emerges for Canadian men who move North as they negotiate a distinctive relationship with the maternal? The intent of this book is to try and answer these questions by situating them within the overall context of northern love.

Another approach in beginning to understand the importance of the North for Canadian men and Canadian masculinity is to think of Canada as a northern nation. In her wonderfully crafted book,

*Canada and the Idea of North* (2002), Sherrill Grace refers to her “desire to understand this stubborn, complex, infuriating place called home.” (xii) In pursuing her quest she asks “how the *here* called Canada has been constructed, represented, and articulated.” (xi, xii, italics in text) Grace, though, believes that to understand Canada we must look North. She says:

[I]t seems to me that now, more than ever before, it is important for Canadians to look North and in looking North to celebrate the creation of Nunavut, to appreciate the dependence of the South on Canada’s Northern resources, to recognize the crucial role we must play in safeguarding an Arctic environment and in articulating policies for a circumpolar world. (xii)

According to Grace, in order to meet the challenges of the future, we as Canadians need to “come to terms with how we got here from there when there ... was also defined as North.” (xi) She is thus led to investigate what she believes are various important “ideas” of the North that are represented in writing, painting, music, and film.

Take the example of “writing the North.” (Part 2) Grace refers to Northrop Frye’s *The Bush Garden* as important in establishing a tradition where the North is seen as a “sinister and menacing monster” which evokes “stark terror.” (Frye in Grace, 32) This evocation of terror is accompanied by a mystical vision of the North “as pure but overwhelmingly white, silent, and spiritual as *opposed* to material or bodily presence.” (33) From Frye in the late 1960s to Margot Northey (*The Haunted Wilderness*) in the 1970s, to Allison Mitcham (*The Northern Imagination*) and Ann Davis (*A Distant Harmony*) in the 1980s, to Margaret Atwood (*Strange Things*) in the 1990s, we can “trace a critical construction of a deadly, inhuman North characterized by mystery, danger and adventure....” (33)

Grace also has a chapter in her book entitled “Fictions of the North” (chapter 5) in which she highlights the work of Rudy Wiebe and Robert Kroetsch. She emphasizes that “together with Robert Kroetsch, he [Wiebe] identifies himself categorically with the North and with Northern narratives of Nation.” (186) Grace’s reference to the importance of Wiebe and Kroetsch was significant in the conception

of this book and my decision to concentrate on their work, in particular their work on the North.



This idea of Canada as a northern nation is explored by Wiebe in his essay “Exercising Reflection,” which forms the lead article in his collection *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic* (1989). Wiebe’s essay can be seen as setting the reflective ground for his later imaginative explorations of love in the novel *A Discovery of Strangers* (1994), which will be analyzed in detail in Section One of this book. In the essay “Exercising Reflection,” Wiebe refers to the distinctive northern experience of borders and boundaries. He tells us that, after having flown over Canada many times, “I have become convinced that the only natural human boundary is water.” (1989, 9) When we think of borders in Canada, we often think of our southern border with the United States. According to Wiebe, this border is geographically artificial because it is not defined by water.

This does not seem to be true of our northern border, however. Wiebe tells us that “when you stand on the sand of Darnley Bay or on the ice ridge pressured up the beach of Kittizazuit, the boundary of Canada is nothing if not absolute.... The water declares it.” (10) This northern perspective is quickly complicated as Wiebe considers the relationship between ocean and river. Standing at the edge of Canada on the shores of the Arctic Ocean, he wonders, “where does the ocean begin and where do the rivers end?” (10)

The importance of this question is reinforced for Wiebe by an experience in a small boat moving through the ocean fog. They are trying to find the Hornaday River, and although the owner of the boat assures Wiebe that they are moving toward the river, his eyes tell him nothing. He sees only “angry water ... vicious waves breaking against the edge of the boat.” (10, 11) Then suddenly the engine of the boat is cut and the owner declares to him that they are no longer in the ocean, but on the river. Yet, Wiebe remains confused: “The waves and shoals looked the same, the fog which destroyed not only perspective but eliminated all horizon seemed exactly the same.” (11) There was one subtle difference, though: the water was not salty. This leads Wiebe to ask whether the only sensory indication that they had entered the river was that it tasted different.

We often say that when we move from the ocean to the river we are moving inland. Wiebe responds:

But 'inland' is a convenient chimera, a mythological beast concocted by our refusal to imagine and thereby to understand. Though we ordinarily think the rivers run from the heights of land and mountains to eventually vanish in the sea, when you approach a river from the ocean it becomes more enlightening to recognize that rivers are the gnarled fresh fingers of the sea reaching for the mountains. (12)

As he writes, Wiebe is sitting in his office overlooking the North Saskatchewan River. Influenced by the perspective that moves from North to South, he concludes that the North Saskatchewan River is one small tentacle of "the Circumpolar Sea ... that great global sea which surrounds us and in so doing defines our true boundaries." (13) If this is true, if the tentacles of the northern ocean are stretched out through the land called Canada, then "it is both philosophically proper and imaginatively pleasing that the first whites to explore the Canadian Arctic tundra and its coast were sailors." (13)

Wiebe's reflections about the importance of the northern landscape provide inspiration for his novel *A Discovery of Strangers* (1994), which charts the journey of the sailors of the first Franklin Expedition through northern Canada. The novel explores the contact between the men of the Expedition and the Tetsot'ine Indians of the Yellowknife region. It seems that the strong consideration of Canada as a northern nation defined by a northern landscape leads, by a kind of force of desire, to the question of northern love. It is as if Wiebe's own travels through the North of Canada led him to think of love. Landscape and love go together hand in hand. They are intimately intertwined, such that consideration of one leads to consideration of the other. They are in partnership. By writing this novel, Wiebe seems to be telling us that the partnership that develops between the English sailors and the northern landscape cannot be properly understood without a strong consideration of the partnership that develops between these sailors and the Tetsot'ine Indians. Especially the partnership of love. This is why the novel focuses its attention on the love affair between Robert Hood, one of the officers on the Expedition, and Greenstockings, a young Tetsot'ine woman.

There are three episodes in the story Wiebe tells that I would like to highlight and reflect upon in Section One of this book. The first episode involves the relationship between Hood and the shaman Keskarrah, and principally Keskarrah teaching Hood how to see and

draw. The second is the emerging love affair between Hood and Greenstockings. The third is Hood's tragic death out on the barrens.

In these three episodes we witness an unravelling of English masculinity. What kind of unravelling? Is it the same as the unravelling that dominates the American experience, one where there is a return to a dominating and violent masculinity? My thesis will be that, at least in the imagination of Wiebe, the encounter of the English sailors with the northern frontier, and the Aboriginal people living there, leads to a distinctive encounter with the presence of the father in both imaginary and oedipal forms, and that this encounter with two fathers occurs through a dramatic encounter with the love of the mother. In Wiebe's telling, it is this playing out of maternal love in relation to paternal love that is at the heart of the drama of love. You could even say that maternal love in relation to paternal love is the distinctive experience of masculinity on the Canadian frontier, the distinctive experience of northern love.

There are five theoretical issues that I address in Section One. These theoretical issues will be approached in the context of contemporary debates in psychoanalysis and social theory.

The first theoretical issue in Section One concerns the relationship between naming and seeing. In the context of Wiebe's novel, I attempt to make sense of the unravelling of the English name and the encounter with the Tetsot'ine image. The men of the English Expedition seek to name everything in the North, the rivers, the lakes, the hills, the rocks. Yet this naming is quickly troubled and the English find that they are heavily reliant, for their very survival in the North, on the ability of the Tetsot'ine, especially, the shaman Keskarrah, to access images of the land – images that, for example, tell where the caribou are travelling and where the esker of trees for shelter might lie.

My contention will be that it is the unravelling of the English word that allows an affective transfer back to images of the mother. I turn to the work of psychoanalytic theorist Kaja Silverman in *World Spectators* (2000), where she tries to bring Lacan and Heidegger together by turning back to Freud's work on the image. Silverman argues that the word is more bound to the ego and its quest to keep pleasure constant (and thus under control), whereas the image allows for an increase in pleasure (that can be very disturbing for the ego) and, subsequently, an affective transfer to new experiences. My argument will be that one of the fundamental encounters in the North is the encounter of the English word with the Aboriginal image.

This is especially true in the experience of Robert Hood, who is a sketcher on the Expedition. Hood wants to draw Greenstockings, and, as this desire to draw her image unfolds we find him increasingly moving into the imagined world of the maternal. The question for Hood's masculinity is what relation this affective transfer back to the imagined world of the maternal has with his ongoing struggle with the love of the father.

The second theoretical issue in Section One involves interpretations of the master-slave relationship. The English of the Franklin Expedition readily see themselves as masters in relation to the original inhabitants of the land. I make use of Judith Butler's (1997) provocative reading of the master-slave relationship in Hegel to argue for an overcoming of the positions of master and slave, such that the subject considered slave ultimately has the means for productive transformation. In the context of Wiebe's novel, I will argue that the original presentation of a master-English in relation to slave-Tetsot'ine slowly unravels and produces unexpected reversals.

The third theoretical issue in Section One explores the importance of the imaginary in the Lacanian triad of imaginary/symbolic/real. My argument will be that in Wiebe's novel we witness, especially in the figure of Robert Hood, a return to the real. A fuller explanation of the Lacanian concept of the real will be provided in the main body of this work, but we can say for now that the real refers to an order of being that escapes all symbolic conceptualization. A subject has access to the real through a special kind of object, what the Lacanians call *objet a* (literally, object of the other), but which I will refer to as a "strange" object. Ordinary objects are conceptualized within the normative forms provided by the culture and society in which we live. An encounter with strange objects tends to make ordinary conceptualization fail, and it is when ordinary conceptualization fails that the subject begins to experience the real.

There are, however, differing ways of understanding the relationship of the real to those two other important Lacanian registers, the imaginary and the symbolic. There is a common understanding of this relationship which I see represented in the work of Slavoj Žižek, one that privileges the relationship between the symbolic and the real with the connection to the imaginary seen primarily as an obstacle to be overcome. If we privilege the relationship to the real through the *objet a*, then for Žižek, the encounter with *objets a* occurs principally in the symbolic register. The imaginary register, with its

primarily narcissistic demand for ideal identification, will always thwart the revelatory power of the *objet a*. I turn to a critique of Žižek by Judith Butler (1993) which attempts to rescue the concept of the imaginary from the Lacanian critique. Butler sees the symbolic in the form of symbolic law as being an historically received normative order that thwarts resistance, and it is through imaginary ideals of lost possibilities (ones denied by the prevailing symbolic law) that strange objects are given the space to thrive.

My argument will be that Robert Hood is returned to the real through his encounter with strange objects of the imaginary, principally his encounter with Greenstockings, a young Aboriginal woman and her father, Keskarrah. This imaginary return to lost possibilities is significantly connected to Hood's experience of the paternal and the maternal. First, we have the failure of his Anglican priest father, who abandons him. This is an abandonment that causes Hood trauma, one could say a trauma of the real. Second, in the face of this traumatic encounter, we witness Hood re-experiencing the mother's love, an imaginary return to his mother in the kitchen of his English home, a return that is induced by his experience in the family lodge of Keskarrah, the Tetsot'ine shaman. Rather than a denial of the experience of hitting the real (which I presume would be Žižek's interpretation), I will interpret this movement of Hood back to the maternal as representing a productive relationship between the imaginary and the real.

The fourth theoretical issue in Section One concerns the question of gender and what I will refer to as the emergence of a strange gender. The relationship between Robert Hood and Greenstockings takes peculiar routes, and one effect of these routes is the unfolding of unstable and precarious gender identities for each, that rub against any normative understanding of masculine and feminine in our society. In order to flesh out the implications of this emergence of a strange gender, I will spend some time looking at Judith Butler's explorations of gender in her work *Antigone's Claim* (200). Against the grain of both Hegel's and Lacan's interpretations of the story of Antigone, Butler wishes to propose a reading that allows us to productively entertain alternative forms of gender construction that are able to consistently resist the norm. In working through the relationship of Hood and Greenstockings, I will propose that northern love invites the possibility of strange gender.

The fifth theoretical issue to be addressed in Section One concerns the relationship of love and trauma. Robert Hood both

experiences intense love as he lies in the Keskarrah family lodge with Greenstockings and relives extreme trauma as he lies dying on the barrens.

There is a strong tradition in Lacanian psychoanalysis, especially the work of Žižek (2002), which argues that subjective destitution leads to a traumatic encounter with the real. What are the characteristics of Hood's particular form of subjective destitution? Wiebe presents a narrative wherein Hood's particular traumas originate in a lack of paternal love from his priest-father. If there is, in Hood's case, a strong relationship between trauma and the paternal, how does this relate to the experience of love which Hood constantly associates with the maternal? Žižek (2002) has made a strong argument for the link between trauma and love, claiming that trauma allows us to love that which is real for the subject through the subject's experience of lack in the symbolic order. I will challenge Žižek's interpretation by positing a relation to the real that can occur through the presence of the "imaginary father."

The concept of the imaginary father will be articulated through the work of the psychoanalytic theorist Julia Kristeva (1987). The imaginary father is the father of identification and idealization who, through the effect of the mirror, presents the subject with an image of the ego that allows a distance from the maternal container. Kristeva is at pains to emphasize the importance of this formation of the narcissistic ego for the emergence of the subject, as distinct from the hold of the primary maternal presence. And she takes issue with the Lacanian tendency to collapse the imaginary structure back into a form of autoeroticism that lacks any form of separation and freedom from the maternal. For Kristeva, the imaginary father is a figure (who can be either male or female) that is both like the mother and not like the mother, a figure that provides the mother's love but at a distance from the wrapping of the mother. The imaginary father is thus, in Kristeva's judgment, an important and necessary form of the third presence that comes between the maternal and the subject.

Yet, my challenge to Žižek's interpretation of trauma, an interpretation that emphasizes symbolic separation over imaginary bonds, is qualified. Kristeva herself, in some of her latest works (2000, 2002), has emphasized the importance of both the imaginary father and the oedipal father. Although the imaginary father is, in her view, necessary for the constitution of the subject, the oedipal father is as well. The oedipal father is the father of the symbolic law, and here

Kristeva agrees with the Lacanian emphasis (one echoed by Žižek) on the form of separation provided by the figure of law. The figure of law who says “no” is also a figure of love for the subject who, through the struggle with prohibition, allows the subject access to a world and the new and the exciting.

It will be my argument that Robert Hood’s trauma is precipitated by an absence of both the imaginary father and the oedipal father, and that what he searches for in his journey north and what he longs for as he lies dying on the barrens is for a love that comes from both sides of the paternal. This is an important point to emphasize. I want to be clear that I am not arguing in this book that the uniqueness of northern love for masculine desire lies in the privileging of the imaginary father over the classic oedipal father. Rather, my intent is to articulate the missed possibilities that are inherent in imaginary love, and, moreover, that a law-like oedipal love that is shorn of these imaginary possibilities of love is problematic. You could say that the uniqueness of northern love is precisely the necessity for imaginary love to accompany oedipal love and that the uniqueness of Canadian masculinity in this regard is its ability to demonstrate that necessity.



As Sherrill Grace has emphasized, Robert Kroetsch is, along with Wiebe, a Canadian novelist who identifies himself with the North. The idea of Canada as a northern nation has been explored by Robert Kroetsch in an essay entitled “Why I Went Up North” (1995). Kroetsch’s essay can be seen as inspiring his later imaginative explorations in the novel *The Man from the Creeks* (1998), which will be analyzed in detail in Section Two of this book. In “Why I Went Up North,” Kroetsch tells us that when he was twenty years old he travelled to the North not to discover gold, but to write a novel. However, he soon discovers that the two searches are not so unrelated, that searching for gold and searching for words to write a story are, in fact, deeply connected. Kroetsch reflects on the poetic phrase “The men who moil for gold,” indicating that to moil – to toil, to work hard – has a special signification in relation to the North, a signification that applies equally to the search for gold and the search for words.

To write is to step or stumble over the edge of the known into that category of desire that defines itself, always, just a hair’s

breadth short of fulfillment. To write is, in some metaphorical sense, to go North. To go North is, in some metaphorical sense, to write. One goes North at the very point on the page where the word is in the process of extending itself onto the blankness of the page. Whatever inscription might exist behind the point of the pen, there can only be blankness ahead. (14)

What a trip to the North will teach the attentive observer is the intricate relationship between word and space. Kroetsch explains that it is the “uneasy relationship ... between the word one is writing and the space that will contain the word and threaten it with erasure that constitutes the Northward swerve.” (15) As with Wiebe, there is a sacrificial logic evident in Kroetsch’s reflections. The movement to the northern frontier represents an unravelling or shedding of the self in the hopes of capturing a sense of freedom – here in Kroetsch’s reflections, the freedom of writing. Yet, Kroetsch also recognizes the different forms of that quest – the difference between moving headlong West, as the Americans seem to have done in keeping with their European nation-state heritage, and the opportunity to move North – when he tells us that “[t]he enduring impulse of European culture is the impulse to go westward with latitude unwavering.” (16) In short, the rush westward refuses the movement northwards. Kroetsch chooses to go North.

The movement North to capture once again the freedom of the word can be viewed as a unique form of heroism. Kroetsch says that “the trick is, often, to match a sense of destiny to a sense of the individual heroic act.” (16) However, Kroetsch’s understanding of a northern heroism does not comply with the usually understood form of heroism often associated with the frontier, a heroism immortalized for us in the American Western novel, where the hero conquers the unknown. This is because a northern heroism is linked fundamentally to the experience of silence. Kroetsch maintains that “[t]he North was a silence that desired as much to be spoken as I desired to speak.” (16) He refers to an old Inuit man who had spent his entire life on the tundra. For this Inuit man “there was hardly such a thing as silence, only significant sound.” (17) For Kroetsch, silence speaking itself as significant sound becomes the inspiration for writing a novel that is in homage to the North. This form of writing involves the accurate representation of northern experience, an experience that cannot be conceived of in the mode of conquering and controlling

the unknown. Kroetsch tells us that he conceived of a novel of the North “as the direct transport of experience onto a page.” (17) That’s why, back in 1948, he went up North: “I went up North to have the necessary experience; the novel would take care of itself.” (17)

It wasn’t until the 1990s that Kroetsch wrote a novel of the North that ties the search for words and story with the search for gold and the heroic act. *The Man from the Creeks* is a novel that liberally expands on the Robert Service poem “The Shooting of Dan McGrew.” It follows the journey of Lou and her son Peek up the Alaskan coast and from Skagway to Chilkoot Pass, then down to Bennett City, and from there travelling down the Yukon River by boat to Dawson City and the Klondike Gold Rush. Lou and Peek are joined along the way by Ben, and then Gussie Meadows, and finally, in Dawson City, by Dan McGrew.

In Section Two of this book, I will explore in some detail the relationships that unfold between Lou, Peek, Ben, Gussie, and Dan in *The Man from the Creeks*. In particular, I will analyze the quest for gold as a quest for a heroic masculinity, one that, I believe, cannot be properly understood outside the context of the quest for intersubjective love. Tying the quest for gold and a heroic masculinity to intersubjective love may seem odd, given what Kroetsch has said in “Why I Went Up North” about moving into blankness and silence. In fact, Kroetsch has often been identified as one of the exemplary writers in the Canadian tradition who employs a kind of postmodern textuality, one that thrives on a movement past expectation into the nothingness of desire, a nothingness from which the freedom of writing draws its inspiration. I will argue in Section Two that the perspective emerging from *The Man from the Creeks* is one that can more properly be situated within a Hegelian understanding of intersubjective love.

There are three primary theoretical issues that I address in Section Two. As in Section One, these theoretical issues will be approached in the context of contemporary debates in psychoanalysis and social theory. My desire here will be to articulate the concept of intersubjective love by working through some significant theoretical debates around the Hegelian concepts of recognition, intersubjectivity, and the contract.

The first theoretical issue in Section Two concerns the concept of recognition. Kroetsch’s novel begins with the emerging form of recognition between Lou and Ben as they travel north to the Klondike. Drawing on the work of the psychoanalytic feminist Jessica Benjamin

(1985), I will argue for an affirmative understanding of our identification with others and our dependency on their recognition. Within the context of mutuality, identification and recognition can produce a negation where the other emerges as an outside other who can provide the subject with ideals of change that are transformative. I want to argue for the connection of recognition and negativity and show how this connection is demonstrated in the ongoing relationship between Lou and Ben.

The second theoretical issue in Section Two concerns the concept of intersubjectivity. The concept of intersubjectivity is strongly tied to the workings of the dialectic. There are, however, different ways of interpreting the dialectic. Against the grain of Tiefensee's critique (1994, chapter 4) that Kroetsch's stories give us heroes whose dialectical struggles with otherness end up conquering and mastering otherness, I will argue that in *The Man from the Creeks* we are given heroes whose dialectical struggles with otherness do not conquer and master otherness, but reveal an intersubjective ground of love.

The debate over the dialectic will involve a turn to interpretations of Hegel. I will first look at Žižek's fascinating Lacanian defense of Hegel (1989, 1993), where he sees the move from external reflection to determinate reflection as the production of an alienated image grounded in pure negativity from which the subject reconciles himself with his lack. Thus, for Žižek, the Hegelian hero would not master otherness but, through the dialectical struggle, arrive at an absolute knowing of the non-mastery of otherness.

The problem, though, from the vantage point of this work, is that Žižek's Lacanian reading of Hegel demonstrates a considerable bias against the notion of intersubjectivity, believing that the bonds of intersubjectivity are tied to imaginary forms of misrecognition, especially a misrecognition of the subject's lack. I want to argue for the value of intersubjectivity in understanding the nature of Hegelian heroes. I will critique Žižek for ignoring the emergence in Hegel's *Logic* of an intersubjective structure. In contrast to Žižek, I will view the final movement of the "determinations of reflection" as being established through the concept of "ground" which allows for a relation between conflicting determinations that define subjects and a commonality that lies beyond singular perspectives. Peter Dews (1985) refers to this relation and this commonality as one of "love," a love that does not cancel the difference of subjects but retains difference through the dynamics of intersubjectivity.

On the basis of these reflections, I will argue that Hegelian heroes generally, and the particular heroes in *The Man from the Creek*, do not wish to close the gap between subjects through absolute knowing (Tiefensee and the critics of Hegel), nor are they seeking to work through negativity to the prime subjective awareness of lack (Žižek), but rather they seek out partnerships of love that form the ground for the freedom of their desire.

The third theoretical issue in Section Two concerns the concept of the contract. In attempting to make sense of the contract between Ben and Dan on the digging for gold and how that contrasts with the partnership established between Ben and Lou, I will turn once again to the work of Hegel and this time to his understanding of the contract in the *Philosophy of Right* (1981).

I will argue along with Hegel that, ideally, we can establish the contract on an intersubjective rather than individualistic ground. This begins with the understanding that the other is not a barrier to freedom but rather a realization of freedom. Despite some of the conservative readings of Hegel's notions of the family and community in the *Philosophy of Right*, I will maintain, along with Michael Theunissen (1991), that if we ground the contract in intersubjectivity we arrive at an expression of communal love that gives us access to a living good and a taste of universal life.

The fundamental movement in establishing an intersubjectively based contract is for the subjects in the contract to allow themselves to be exchangeable. This exchangeability of subjectivity occurs not through abstract identical wills, but through the movement from "mine-ness" to "own-ness" where a permanent tension is established between individuality and universality. My accomplishments are sublated in their immediacy, and thus shorn of their solipsism, by being presented in external form in the communal contract, where others see themselves through those accomplishments. Thus, I am, in my accomplishments, the other I am for others as they are the others they are for me.

My contention will be that Ben's understanding of the contract is through the structure of own-ness, and that understanding conflicts with Dan's which is that of mine-ness. This sets up the fateful showdown in the Malamute Saloon between Ben and Dan and the final episode in the "Shooting of Dan McGrew."



One of my main objectives in this book is to contribute to theoretical debates in psychoanalysis and social theory. My concept of northern love and my understanding of Canadian masculinity emerge first from the experience of the characters in the two novels by Wiebe and Kroetsch, and second from a theoretical interrogation of those experiences. In that sense, the theoretical articulations arise immanently, rather than externally, from the occasion of the experience of the characters. Yet, despite its base in the narrated experiences of the characters in the two novels, my articulations of the image and seeing, the relationship between the imaginary, symbolic and real, the understanding of trauma, the significance of recognition, intersubjectivity and the contract, and the emerging concept of northern love in its relationship to Canadian masculinity, can be judged on their own merits as to the extent to which they contribute to those theoretical debates.

The organization of the book will take place according to both the unfolding of the narrated experiences of the principal characters in the two novels and the unfolding of the theoretical concepts that are engaged on the ground of that experience. Thus, Section One will be split into five chapters, and the five chapters are named according to the five theoretical issues spoken of above, namely, naming and seeing, master and slave, the imaginary, strange gender, and love and trauma. Section Two will be split into three chapters and also named according to the three theoretical issues referred to earlier, that is, recognition, intersubjectivity, and the contract.

