2 MASTER AND SLAVE

The English men of the Franklin Expedition consider themselves masters of all the people they encounter in the New World, especially the Aboriginal men and women, considering them for the most part as slaves. This is particularly true of George Back, an officer on the Expedition, who treats both the men and women of the Tetsot'ine with disgust. In this chapter, both Back's understanding of the master-slave dynamic and Greenstockings' response to that understanding will be articulated. Greenstockings is angry. She is angry at the slave-like position that women in particular occupy, especially in the imagination of the English, and for Back in particular. I will then move on to theoretically engage the Hegelian master-slave dialectic by working through Judith Butler's reading of that dialectic. Through this theoretical and conceptual exploration, I will argue that the unfolding of northern love involves an articulation of the productive position of the slave in the unfolding of desire.

Greenstockings wants to know what the other young man's name means, the one who "does not seem to know how to draw his name in the air" and "will do almost everything else with [her hand] except that." (27) His name is Back, and Greenstockings thinks it fits: "his short back is much stronger than slender Hood's." (27) He is able to lift Greenstockings "easily over his curly head" such that "she is forced to know, as with every man she has ever met, the power of his name: 'George Back!'" (28)

Thinking of Back, Greenstockings is led to think of "everyman." She thinks of those who are powerful and force their presence, their name, upon her. She knows where the English men keep their names, which for her is inherently dangerous. She also knows where her mother keeps her name, which for her is not dangerous. In what ways does Hood participate in these dangerous manly characteristics mentioned by Greenstockings? Or alternatively, in what ways does he deviate from them, such that he no longer is "everyman"? In what way does Hood keep a name where his mother keeps hers?

As Back attempts to overpower her "she feels him shift hard between her thighs like every man always has, hard bone." (28) Everyman announces his name through a hard bone. Greenstockings remembers how Back's hands grappled for her. Back's grappling hands are contrasted with the hands of her mother, Birdseye: "Once those hands fondled Greenstockings until she cried in ecstasy, cried in ways the four men who have already fought and nearly killed themselves over her cannot find anywhere in the brief duration of their manly imaginations." (29) All the men who fight over her cannot bring her the pleasure that comes from her mother's touch, the maternal touch, the ground of care.

We soon discover that Hood will fight over Greenstockings, in a classic duel with Back. Does this mean that Hood is just like Everyman? Earlier Greenstockings had noticed the peculiarity or strangeness of Hood's hands in drawing his name with her hand on his skin. In that instant, Hood's name and hands and skin are different from "everyman." Greenstockings often feels that "men's hands are fit only to clutch knives, to claw at clubs and lances, to strip hide or flesh from dead bones, to knot into fists, perhaps – now – to grope and jerk at triggers." (29) To clutch and strip and knot and grope and jerk – that is what defines Everyman's hands for Greenstockings.

Greenstockings' Tetsot'ine husband, Broadface, has had his left hand severely mangled from a gun misfiring. Greenstockings asks:

What can a person fondle with such a hand? Broadface is strong enough to carry a grizzly, but a woman does not need such force to be entered. Greenstockings thinks that all the men, including the Tetsot'ine men, treat their women like the Whites treat the land: forceful entry.

According to Greenstockings' account, Back, who is also a sketcher on the Expedition, "can draw his own short back in one line so fast you can see it exactly, the way it bends, and then he curls the bottom end of it up, pointing down at himself, he's so proud, hooked up as he draws it almost as long!" (30) The strong back of Back is inseparable from his hard bone, inseparable from the enduring image of his backbone. The Tetsot'ine women with Greenstockings respond in shouts of laughter to her description of Back. They can see that he has backbone. Back tries to "tower" with his tall hat, acting "imperiously" by pointing everywhere, ordering work from those he considers his slaves. The Tetsot'ine women laugh at Back and mock him. They chant, "Back, back, bone of a back!" (31)

One of the women, Angelique, who has married a mixed-blood, and knows of the English, comments that "maybe the thin young one could draw his name out of his bone too." (31) She says that in English his name can mean "cap." To which another responds that Hood must be able to draw his name from his bone, because "every man has a cap on his bone!" (31) And they all laugh again, laughing "at the same dangly, miserable, hard thing about men." (31) Angelique interrupts their laughter by saying that "sometimes Whites don't have any cap there … because they think they'll be stronger then, they cut that cap off." (31)

Greenstockings and the other Tetsot'ine women seem to be commenting on a particular imaginary illusion of the English men they have encountered, men who think they can become stronger through the power of the cut. It is a general tenet of Lacanian theory that the oedipal cut is necessary for the experience of lack, lack constituting the privileged entry into the social and representing a movement away from the illusions of the imaginary. Is the cut, though, needed to experience loss? Is there the necessity of the cut for there to be a retroactive symbolization of an originary loss, based in the non-object of desire? It seems that this is what the English men believe, what they believe about the phallus: cutting the phallus makes a man stronger.

However, the Tetsot'ine women understand "the simple and continually unfathomable burden women must carry – all men. For

the strangers clearly are men." (32) The women understand "the inescapable power and fear – sometimes joy, often brutality, even terror – that men forever carry about them like their cocks, limp or rigid, hanging somehow gently, possibly tender or abruptly lethal … thrust … jerk … grab, ram, pound into them." (32) Yet, at the same time, Greenstockings' skin remembers how Back and Hood were so different from each other, as well as different form Broadface. This means that Hood demonstrates a different form of masculinity from the other men, one that does not originate from the cut.

We need to be reminded that Greenstockings' critique of everyman includes a critique of the Tetsot'ine men. She extends that critique in a conversation with her mother, Birdseye. Birdseye says to Greenstockings that Thick English (Franklin) wants the best Tetsot'ine hunters to kill animals for his men. And that Bigfoot, one of the Tetsot'ine leaders, says they will do this. Yet, Greenstockings wonders how Bigfoot can do this; he is not their boss – they have no boss or chief. Moreover, Greenstockings can't figure out why the men would do it. Perhaps the men really do want to hunt for the Whites? Maybe the men have been seduced by the Whites and their guns? And suddenly Greenstockings "feels a woman's contempt for this illogical acquiescence, this feeble agreement of all accepting what a stranger wants of them." (34)

Birdseye responds by saying that the Whites have so many things that the men want. Bigfoot will get "another shiny medal" (35) which he seems to prize dearly. The English will give the hunters "more tea … then whisky … more nets for fishing and more guns and more bullets and powder." (35) Greenstockings replies: "Things piled up! Is that what our men think should happen?" (35) Theirs is a society on the move, light, walking. How are they supposed to carry these things, all these heavy things? And it is primarily the burden of women to carry and cook. Where are the English women? Greenstockings thinks that the Tetsot'ine women now become slaves for the English men. She links this form of slavery to the acquiescence of the Tetsot'ine men. She says, "Yes! All our mighty men agree … and they pile those things on us to carry…. Let them freeze stiff as cocks in their cloth!" (36)

Birdseye thinks Greenstockings' words "are as strange in the mouth, or the ears, of a woman as anything These English have dragged into their country." (36) She believes that "anger is always dangerous." (37) Yet, as her mother, Birdseye understands that

Greenstockings' strange angry words are in response to a strange feeling her daughter has. She asks: "What is it? What have you felt?" (37) Birdseye will not let Greenstockings avoid confronting this feeling, this transfer of affect that comes from the other. Birdseye continues with her motherly questions: "What have you felt… When you feel all over that head, those Snow Man arms and hands feeling you?" Is it that Greenstockings' strange anger at her own Tetsot′ine men is associated with her strange desire for Hood, a man who is, according to the English standards, a strange man?

Perhaps the angry voice of Greenstockings can be understood through the ambivalent workings of the master-slave dialectic. When we first hear the English voice, in particular the voice of George Back, we hear an articulation of the master-slave relationship, a relationship that quickly unravels. Back acknowledges that "the Indians must work for us if our expedition is not to prove impossible." (46) And, given this dependency, he also acknowledges the usefulness of Franklin's strategy of treating the Tetsot′ine "with the distant gravity of King George III himself." (46) At the same time, Back is annoyed and troubled by this acceptance of the power and dignity of the Tetsot′ine: "if we permit and help enact such pretentious charades for too long, I am confident disaster will strike." (47) Thus, Back thinks disaster will come if they (the English) acknowledge their dependency on the Tetsot′ine at the level of symbolic dignity, a recognition of equal status.

When Back considers the Tetsot′ine male he is ambivalent: he marvels at "his stitched-together retinue of leather and fur and nakedness…. [and] strong handsome limbs." But he also sees a "wild people" who seem not to "know what work is." (47) And despite seeing the need to enter into an agreement with the Tetsot′ine that accords them symbolic dignity, Back says that "the native must obey us if we are to succeed." (47) The Tetsot′ine male must obey the English male even though the English male is dependent on the Tetsot′ine male. Back says: "they must find and kill enough deer to feed us and all our labouring men." (47)

We have in Back's commentary an expression of the master-slave relationship. If we are to believe Judith Butler, in her commentary on the master-slave relationship in Hegel, the slave's encounter with autonomy in relation to the master comes through the experience of

fear. (1997: 39–41) This fear relates to the subject's loss of control through labour, a loss that speaks to a profound feeling of transience. This reverses things somewhat, according to Butler. It would seem, at first glance, that the master is the one who is able to experience the transience of life because it is the master who consumes everything that the slave produces, leaving nothing behind, nothing of permanence, and that the slave is the one who experiences permanency because of the creating of permanent things. For the master, the transitory status of the object is related to the transitory state of desire, whereas for the slave the permanence of object-filled labour leads to the permanence and fixity of desire. Yet, now we see that the relationship is quite different. According to Butler, the slave experiences a unique form of loss in relation to the object, due to the fact that he is constantly losing the object, giving the object up to the master to be consumed. Although the slave gives form to objects through labour, and thus creates a kind of permanence, that permanence does not last, because the object is quickly gone, consumed.

In the case of the Tetsot'ine male hunters, hunting for them is a production that is oriented around loss. The Tetsot'ine men realize that what they hunt will be taken by the English men. However, they are not forced into this, but do so willingly, as a fundamental mode of being of their culture and of their desire, to give up the object to the other. This is because the experience of loss is one that marks their productive practice whether the English are there or not. They gain, they lose, understanding that for small bands thriving in the North, gain is never permanent. If they trade, they trade for what they need at the moment.

On the basis of Butler's analysis, we can identify an important characteristic in the Tetsot'ine male hunter's experience of loss. If the male hunter places his signature on the hunted object, and we know that that object is sacrificed, then the male hunter shows himself to be a being marked by sacrifice. His signature is a form of self-erasure, a kind of vanishing of his subjectivity. The male hunter demonstrates that what is irreducibly his own is his own vanishing, and that this vanishing occurs through the presence of an other, an other for which he provides in the mode of care.

It is important to note here the presence of a sacrificial logic, for that will constitute a fundamental feature of desire in the unfolding of this story. If sacrifice is the logic of the Tetsot'ine male hunter, what happens when he is seduced by the English male logic of the

commodity? For the English man, in his position as master, faces an impasse, not only because of his unacknowledged dependency on the Tetsot'ine male, but also, and probably more importantly, because his consumption is marked by a lack of consciousness of loss – the English master seeks to accumulate property, to build up, to create heaviness, permanence. If the Tetsot'ine male desires what the English male has, then he in effect gives up his position as one who achieves freedom through vanishing, through the sacrifice of self. This is what Greenstockings is disgusted with as she witnesses the transformation of desire in her people's men.

Moreover, are not the turns and twists of the master-slave relationship related to the relationship between seeing and naming, in Silverman's terminology, between word-presentation and thing-presentation? Although the name or word of the English conceives of itself as independent of the bodily and earthly thing, the Tetsot'ine attachment to seeing the thing belies that. It turns out that the seeing of the Tetsot'ine, especially the dream-seeing of Keskarrah, is what guides the English through the North, except when the English dismiss that dream-seeing, much to their peril, and rely on their name-based technology. Indeed, there is a solidarity between the stasis of the English name or word and the stasis of English technology, in that neither is open to affective transfers, and thus to the experience of loss, an experience only possible through a kind of dream-seeing.

Keskarrah is a dream-seer, and it is interesting to see Back contrasting the Tetsot'ine shaman's masculinity with that of the masculinity of Franklin, the commander of the Expedition. Back refers to Keskarrah as a "hesitating old man" (48), while he admires Franklin for his planned decisiveness as a commander. To Back, Keskarrah seems confused about the route that the English should take, seems confused about a return river. The Tetsot'ine fear what they called the "Everlasting Ice", which for them demands an awareness of how to return. However, Back tells the Tetsot'ine that "we have no intention of returning again this way." (48) Although English planning does not fear the Arctic, Back registers this fear in speaking of the voyageur's lack of experience on an "ice-filled ocean." (49)

Hood expresses to Back his concern for the Tetsot'ine, given that the English have hired the best hunters in the Tetsot'ine band. He wonders "who will feed all their families this winter." (49) Hood

conveys to Back that this assistance goes beyond the hunters to the Tetsot'ine women, who will have to help the three voyageur women skin and cut and dry the meat. These concerns of Hood irk Back, who finds annoying Hood's speaking in "moral imperatives," what he refers to as "the dry echo of a small clergyman." (50) This is a clear reference to Hood's father, who is an Anglican priest. We will have an opportunity later to consider the extent to which Hood's voice appropriates the voice of his preacher-father.

In response to Hood's concerns, Back simply states the obvious: the Tetsot'ine leader, Bigfoot, has committed them. Is Bigfoot their leader? Remember Greenstockings saying that Bigfoot has no right to commit her people because he is not the leader, even if the English think so. As well, Greenstockings recognizes the hardship this will bring to the Tetsot'ine women. Hood intuits the voice of Greenstockings, a voice already aberrant to the Tetsot'ine, when he asks, concerning Bigfoot: "A leader does not consider the disadvantages for his people?" (50)

What constitutes leadership anyway? Hood compares Bigfoot to Napoleon, who also betrayed his people. Back finds the comparison ludicrous: "this greasy primitive." (50) This echoes his earlier dismissal of Franklin's attempt to create an analogy between the Tetsot'ine conflict with the northern Inuit and the conflicts of Europe: "What can the inhabitants of such a desolate land understand concerning political and national philosophies of Empire? To compare their elementary hostilities to England's conflict with Napoleon … is ludicrous." (44) To Back, the Inuit have "no discernible social organization" and are "wandering about at random." (44)

However, more is at stake in the attempt by Hood to draw in the figure of Napoleon. He refers sarcastically to Napoleon as "the short Great Emperor." (50) Back clearly sees Hood's slight against him. He responds: "Hood can only resort to the elementary accident of his own length. Though I outweigh him by two stone and can easily outwalk him twice in a day." Back seems to be saying: I may not be long, but I am heavy and strong.

For Hood, though, Back is aligned with Bigfoot in thinking in terms of power and strategic advantage while disregarding the overall welfare of the people. In this he is in agreement with Greenstockings, who also slides from a negative appraisal of Back to a negative appraisal of Bigfoot – to her, that is what men do, there is nothing can you do about it.

The twists and turns of the English-Tetsot'ine/master-slave scenario are played out in a similar vein in the relationship between the English sailors and the Canadian voyageurs. This is especially true in the mutiny of the Canadians. We are told that “all their working lives these men have portaged 180-pound packs, and four of them can carry the 600-pound canoe over any rocky defile without betraying the slightest weariness.” (51) The Canadian men exhibit a particular form of “male pride.” (51) This is manifested in them being able to “wrestle or dance around their fires even after fourteen hours of indescribable labour.” (51)

Back, a British naval officer, registers a fascination with the masculine character of the voyageur men who serve the British. He says that their songs “bespeak a certain courageous humanity.” (51) Despite this fascination, Back reports that if the Canadian men are in mutiny, they must be dealt with swiftly. Back is annoyed at Hood for not instantly reacting as a British officer should. Hood is simply “standing there with nothing but pencil and paper in hand.” (51) Hood has pencil and paper instead of a loaded gun.

The Canadian voyageurs have had little to eat for seven days and they are refusing to work any more that day until they are provided with fresh meat. Again, despite his admiration for particular masculine features of their character, Back here claims that the “weathercock minds of Canadians are stirred to reflection only by their bellies.” (52) The Canadian men – who are half-breeds, French and native – may be strong and courageous but they cannot reflect like the British.

Franklin responds to their mutiny by reminding the Canadian men of their “contracted duty” and that he will treat them like English sailors and punish them if they do not obey. Hood finally walks up, in Back's words, “very calmly, still holding his futile pencil.” (53) And not his gun loaded. The ironic thing here is that Back realizes that the Canadian men could easily overtake the three officers with loaded pistols – Back, Franklin, and Richardson (Hood is useless with his pencil). As the voyageurs advance, Back, Franklin, and Richardson raise their pistols. Although the two biggest voyageurs and the Mohawk continue to advance, sixteen in their group have stopped. Back is amazed: they could crush us. But, as he says, “no Canadian can outface British character.” (54) The character of the Canadian men is strong and courageous, but the steely resolve of the British officer with his drawn pistol overmatches their brute

strength. The mutiny is over, and the Canadian men are to be docked three full days' pay.

Back's characterizations of the Tetsot'ine men and the Canadian men are reproduced, in slightly different form, by his commander, Sir John Franklin. To Franklin, the Hudson's Bay traders who had traded with the Tetsot'ine were "very lax in establishing any sense of duty required by a work contract." (58) In fact, the hunters "lacked almost completely the discipline necessary for efficient service to the Expedition." (59)

These comments indicate the extent to which the traditional Tetsot'ine male hunter throws a wrench in the master-slave drama. The Canadian men seem to be more open to a commonly understood expression of the master-slave drama. The Canadian men can work efficiently. And they can produce in such a way that the English can consume. Franklin's assessment is that the Tetsot'ine men do not seem to be able to produce like the Canadian men do. For Franklin, "only an extended and very firm experience of English order would achieve that [the sense of duty] – as it had for the voyageurs." (59) Only this sense of duty will allow the Tetsot'ine men to produce for the English. This intensifies the production-loss bond mentioned earlier. The very production of the Tetsot'ine male hunters is marked by a lack that the English men find troubling.

Dr. Richardson agrees with Franklin's analysis. Richardson is a man who exhibits a "trained Scottish thoroughness." (59) His notebooks are "full of numbers … including decimal points." (59) He says to Franklin, "we will never control any Indians, not in this wild country, until we teach them the absolute, practical necessity of money." (59) Franklin responds: "They hardly seem to require it; since they trade for what they need." (59) Richardson believes this is the "fundamental problem in the economic development of primitives. If they understood money, they would work harder to get more of it, in order to buy what they want." (59). To Franklin's comment that the Tetsot'ine do not seem to want that much, Richardson responds, "they must want more than they need. That is civilization." (59)

Richardson, thinking the English to be the master, believes that the master's position is one that allows him to freely desire. He believes that the use of money and technology will bring a freeing up of want into insatiable desire, the mark of civilization. Yet, the use of money, as we know from Marx, can quickly lead not to free desire, but to a want of money, and a stasis of character and culture that requires the

order and discipline to acquire more money. So a reversal is in place: what looked like the master's open desire and the slave's stasis turns into the master's stasis and the slave's open desire. For it is the Tetsot'ine who, in not wanting to take on the order and discipline of duty required for a money economy, are able to continually experience the ground of loss that opens them to desire. But have they really rejected this offer? Greenstockings' assessment is that the Tetsot'ine men seem to be eagerly taking up the project of the master: give me guns, give me gold chains, give me commodities, give me property.