

## CONCLUSION

One of the central arguments in this work has been that the uniqueness of northern love lies principally in a unique struggle with the love of the father and the love of the mother. In terms of what this might say about possible features of Canadian masculinity, perhaps we could say that the relationship to the Canadian frontier differentiates itself from the American experience of the frontier by pointing North rather than West. Northern males, at least northern males who can be said to be heroes, do not flee the domesticated mother to identify with a powerful, undomesticated father, but remain tied to the mother's love and from that base negotiate a relationship to the father and his love.

This return of the northern male to the mother and the unique bond that dominates that return raises an important theoretical question that has preoccupied this work. The persistent question has been whether the trauma of the father that is experienced by Hood (in Wiebe's novel) and Peek (in Kroetsch's novel) leads to a regressive return to the mother. In other words, to put it in more precise psychoanalytic language, does remaining steadfast in the mother's love point to the lack of a strong paternal function, a lack of that paternal force that can lead the young boy out into the exciting activity of the outside world? Does this mean that northern males, like Hood and Peek, miss out on the pleasures of an aggressive, active masculinity, traditionally associated with the oedipal father?

The answer to this question that I have provided is that, although there are not, in Wiebe and Kroetsch's novels, strong depictions of oedipal fathers, there is the strong presence of imaginary fathers. In

other words, when we are able to distinguish between two kinds of paternal presence, we can see that a lack of a strong oedipal father does not mean a lack of the father altogether.

In order to flesh this insight out a bit more in this conclusion, I would like to focus once again on the love experienced by two principal characters in the novels, Hood and Peek. I want to especially concentrate on the role the father plays in each of their lives, and how that intersects with each of their relationships with their mothers. Both Hood and Peek experience distress and anxiety about fathers who were, in their own distinct ways, absent in providing a source of identification for them. How did this absence unfold in each case and how did it initiate a unique return to the mother and her love?



First, Hood. We know that while Hood is dying out on the barrens he hallucinates his father's voice and that the experience of that voice is traumatic. Hood returns in memory to childlike vulnerability and pictures the father not as a keeper of that vulnerability, but as a violator of it. Hood's memory is of a father who did not entice his son out of vulnerability into a confident, active subjectivity. Instead, his father has taken on a condemning voice that sounds like the voice of God to Job. He insistently hounds Hood, forever leaving a guilty, trembling, passive subject.

I have argued that Hood, like Job, can be seen as a subject who is sacrificed for the sins of the father. In essence, he could be viewed as a scapegoat. Certainly, the idea of Job as scapegoat resonates for Hood, because it fits the particular memories he has of his father. Hood never moves to a position of reconciliation because there was no reconciliation with the father in his experience. And as he experiences abandonment on the barrens, he is returned to what feels like a foundational abandonment, the feeling of a young boy exceedingly vulnerable in the presence of an austere, distant father, a father who refused to cross the divide of vulnerability and provide a nurturing hand to lead his son forward.

The abandonment of Hood by his father speaks to the absence of the imaginary father. In one sense, Hood's father did take on one aspect of the oedipal task, namely, that of intervening in the mother-child dyad (for Hood was a mama's boy) and sending him out into the outside world, in this case, the hyper-masculine world of the British navy. However, what was missing in Hood's experience was

the preparation for oedipal masculinity by the presence of an imaginary father who, prior to the instance of law and prohibition, could serve as an ideal figure of identification and thus serve as both like the mother (through the close bonds fostered by identification) and not like the mother (a distance from the maternal imago). Hood's austere Anglican father had no ability or desire to perform the role of imaginary father; nor did he want to fulfill the remaining oedipal tasks (beyond the cut itself and having to do with the struggle with law and prohibition), leaving those tasks to Franklin. This left Hood with a choice between the cold void of Franklin's masculinity and a return to the mother through his experience with Greenstockings in the maternal lodge. He chooses the latter and can only represent the former as a haunting presence.

Nonetheless, Hood's experience with Keskarrah and Greenstockings in the maternal lodge can be viewed as providing him with an experience of the imaginary father. Keskarrah, the shaman, who the English consider to be a feminized dreamer, teaches Hood how to draw properly. And it is in his encounter with the vital image as opposed to the abstract name that Hood is able to properly draw the things around him, especially Greenstockings. And as Greenstockings moves from mother to sister to lover, Hood is finally able to feel free and alive as a human, a feeling he could never gain in relation to his father or Franklin in their austere oedipal demands. Yet, despite this powerful relationship to the imaginary father, Hood, while dying on the barrens, is still haunted and traumatized by his experience of abandonment by his father back in England.

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What about Peek? Peek shares with Hood the experience of being abandoned by the father. The difference is that while Hood knew his father, Peek did not, having no conscious memories of his father. And while Hood experiences his father in memory as traumatic, Peek is left with a vacant space that is filled by other figures who become figures of identification for him.

Certainly, Peek demonstrates a strong maternal connection. He is devoted to his mother, and that devotion structures his subsequent love and desire. Yet, what distinguishes Peek's experience is the presence of mediating figures who embody the mother's love while at the same time providing a lure to the exciting outside world. In effect, what Peek experiences is the mediating presence of the imaginary

father. Peek encounters many figures who provide both the distancing lure of the paternal at the same time as the containing presence of maternal love. Gussie Meadows can be viewed this way, for Gussie, besides being Peek's lover (in a motherly way), is also his boss who teaches him the skills of work and shows him how to use a gun to protect himself.

It is in his relationship with Ben, though, that we see this unique paternal role of an imaginary father played out most dramatically. It is important, though, to note how Peek's openness to the paternal presence of Ben is made possible by his encounter with his father, J Badger. Peek's encounter with his father is structured by a parodic overturning. Peek's father is overturned through humour and laughter, and this clears out the paternal space for Peek so that he is open to new influences in that space. Peek finds his father frozen and stiff, after having died in an avalanche. One can't help but laugh in encountering J Badger, hunched over the back of a horse, hugging its rear end.

Ben is the figure who enters the paternal space just opened up. Ben becomes a stepfather to Peek, and provides for Peek a figure of identification from which he can accept the frailties of human action, as well as a model for love, work, and desire. And it is from the ground of this relationship to Ben that Peek learns about the ideals of partnership, home, and intersubjective recognition.



On the basis of these concluding reflections on Hood and Peek, I would like to propose the figure of the imaginary father as the distinctive and exemplary figure of northern love. The uniqueness of northern love in contrast to western love (go North, not West) is that imaginary fathers play an ideal role in the construction of masculine identity. The imaginary father is a preparation for the work of the oedipal father, and this means that in northern love there is no demand that the masculine subject radically cut ties with maternal love. The imaginary father allows for a movement away from the maternal into a space that is like that of maternal love yet also unlike it, partaking in the pleasures of paternal distance. Maternal love and paternal distance are, in their intertwining, reflected in the strong and enduring presence of the imaginary father. It is in this way that Canadian masculinity can look to the imaginary father as the ideal figure of northern love.