Chapter VII

Making Connections: Concluding Remarks.

The study has attempted to demonstrate how Robert Kroetsch is a Canadian postmodernist vis-à-vis his fiction by discussing on issues/concepts like temptation of silence, presence/absence, an erotic tension, ambiguities, doubleness and language as his major concerns. In studying these aspects of Kroetsch’s fiction, one invariably comes across certain cultural psychological, historical and language codes in the form of self, discourse, gender identity, mythological conventions and grammar of signifying practices. The relation between the text and the self reflexivity in Robert Kroetsch writings enable one to reconstruct, and view how the Canadian multiplicity in writing literature, emerges as double and fluid in Kroetsch fiction.

An important contribution of this study lies in its examination of Kroetsch’s fiction, a new way as his fiction portrays the issues of Canadian identity through a wide range of non-realistic modes and self reflexive prose, autobiography and so forth in his writing’s. As these techniques are prominently used in numerous theoretical essays, which like his fiction, deal with the issues of the self, religion, gender, genre and nation.

Different approaches are taken recourse to comprehend the meaning in a text through grounding the self, decoding the self, sub coding the self and, re-decoding the self. The thesis traces the self from the view points of new criticism, deconstruction, psychology and postmodernism showing how these theories always depend on pre-existent history and biographical detail of the author and the reader. In contrast to subject/sign/signifier, approach, the theories mentioned above explore the methods through which readers enter into a displaced communication with the text and actively
participate in producing a text beyond postmodern theoretical assumptions. Kroetsch’s novels also reveal that the past is not something to be escaped, avoided or controlled, as various forms of modernist art suggest through their implicit view of the ‘nightmare’ of history. In other words kroetsch perhaps seems to suggest that we only have representations of the past from which to construct our narratives or explanations.

An examination of character as self recorders leads one to discover a contiguous relationship of a character to the realistic and imaginative narration, like where home emerges either somewhere else or not worth of consideration at all. It appears as if there was no Alberta, no landscape, and no life. There are no Alberta writers to name and describe the place where they lived then and where they are living now. Atwood claims that, those living north of the 49th parallel need “geography of the mind”. The interrogation of how characters produce meaning in Robert Kroetsch’s novels Studhorse Man, Badlands Gone Indian and What The Crow Said reveals the ways in which Kroetsch uses objects in the form of post identity. Most of the critics have branded Kroetsch’s work as going native and not reading the cultural aspects of Robert Kroetsch’s fiction as ethnic or as a study in ethnicity. This illustrates the performative nature of identity. Kroetsch’s characters experience an initial anxiety at the dissolution of identity, but the anxiety is typically followed by an acceptance of the continuing freedom that dissolution brings.

Further the split entity demythologizes the notion of coherent and unified self and helps Robert Kroetsch to achieve his chief objectives which are comically inept. An attempt is made to examine the role and contribution of Robert Kroetsch to the flourishing of New Literatures in general and Canadian literature in particular, by a
re-examination of boundaries in Robert Kroetsch’s works and has one to view and act out a journey and to embody the doubleness of geographical sensibilities.

Interestingly Re-assessment of realism in Kroetsch’s fiction leads one to discover certain important aspects in his narratives that he gives only hints and the readers have to produce everything. An examination of the self-reflexive and the self-conscious moments in *But We Are Exile*, *Puppeteer* and *Alibi* directs one to discuss transgression, embedding, undermining oppositions and theatrical elements in his approaches which is fundamentally shaped by his childhood experience in the Canadian west and by his wide reading of other writers and works. Analysis of his fiction reveals that there rests a tendency Robert Kroetsch to install realist conventions and subvert them. Robert Kroetsch’s text also reveals him as both literary nationalist and literary internationalist and going through his writing one can witness displacement constantly vis-à-vis the oral and the written.

Re-examination of Intertextuality involves a knowledge and acknowledgement of previous writing, A critical grounding in Derrida, Lacan, Freud, Foucault and other Post Structuralist and Post Modernist theorists help one to understand the displacement meaning. Kroetsch’s dream of origin, multiple names for his practice of writing indicates the attempt to get back to the beginnings by removing layers of meanings and conventions: Deconstructing, Demythologizing unhiding, unnaming, and uninventing as Lecker avers: “his involvement in penetrating “the encrustations that build up over the years and attach themselves to words, word, pattern, myths, so that originality and freshness can be re-instilled and released.”(*Canadian Writers and Their Works*, Robert Lecker. 79)

In reading Kroetsch one is bound to understand the world through words he or she is inhabiting. Robert Kroetsch’s words are apt here, he observes:
The feeling must come from an awareness of the authenticity of our own lives. People who feel invisible try to borrow visibility from those who are visible. To understand others is surely difficult. But to understand ourselves becomes impossible if we do not see images of ourselves in the mirror be that mirror theatre or literature or historical writing. A local pride does not exclude the rest of the world, or other experiences; rather, it makes them possible. It creates an organizing centre. Or as Williams put it, more radically: the acquiring of a local pride enables us to create our own culture- “by lifting an environment to expression.” (“On Being an Alberta Writer,” in Robert Kroetsch ,pp. 75)

Thus Kroetsch’s writing is a fine instance of “to be parochial is to view/create a history in a universal light”. A reader gets not only an awareness of the oral tradition but is also made to witness the opening of possibility in language and the association of the various elements like grammar syllable, syntax, image, speech, discourse, difference and sense of a particular geographical locale which can be understood by any sensitive reader. In this sense Robert Kroetsch through rooted very much in the Canadian soil (Alberta here) transcends the geographical and psychological boundaries through his memorable characters revealing the fashion of human existence which in the very “business of living” in a journey called LIFE.