Chapter I

Introduction

Robert Kroetsch the well-known Canadian Novelist’s writings/settings and geographical maps are fraught with relationships between people, places and time. In spite of this, he challenged the relevance of geo-political boundaries to literary culture and organized the experience and canons according to the nation and region. He incorporates maps into his work as illustrations or metaphors more or less as terms embracing and troubling the territorial imperatives that maps represent and reveal that they are not what they are. A fine instance is his *Field Notes*. It is a cognitive map of landscape and spatial experiences. Kroetsch negotiates the shared and contested spaces of the map by charting and re-charting which frequently refer back to the physical/real geographical places and spaces.

The Maple leaf is a symbol in the national flag of Canada which represents independence to repose identities and communities and also the geographical space and place because of the varying degrees of national and regional affiliation that accompany Canada’s Indigenous, settler, immigrant, and diasporic imaginaries, reflecting the persistent relevance of Northrop Frye’s famous question, “Where is here?” Both individually and collectively, Kroetsch’s literary texts help to provide that “here” implies the Canadian shape and character, the regionalist as well as nationalist strains in Canadian culture that jostle to define not only the country as a whole but also its regions, provinces, territories, and cities, the “Canadian Mosaic”.

Robert Kroetsch has been viewed as the father of Canadian postmodernism. The novels that he has published over a period of more than thirty years explore issues of Canadian identity through a wide range of modes. Several volumes of self-
reflexive, poetic, prose and autobiography accompany his writings and along with numerous theoretical essays, which like his fiction, deal with issues such as Self, Religion, Gender, Genre and Nation.

Kroetsch’s works draw a broad range of cultural inter texts ranging from Greek myths and eighteenth century English novels to Western Canadian oral tales. His ideas grapple with the politics of regional and cultural specificities to a great extent.

Robert Kroetsch was born on 26 June 1927 in rural Alberta, attended Heisler public school, he graduated in 1945 from the Red Deer High School majoring in English and Philosophy at the university of Alberta in Edmonton (1945-48) during this period he discovered Joseph Conrad’s the Nigger of the Narcissus and Hennery Jame’s the Turn of The Screw. The Impact over time was profound. After Kroetsch became an acute observer of the passing scene and seasons and the inventor of complete story worlds, he observes “I can’t walk from my parked car to my office without inventing a story” (“Taking The Risk,” in Robert Kroetsch, p66). He attempts to discover the experience beyond books. From 1954 to 1955 he attended McGill University, studying the development of English prose with Hugh Maclennan. During this time Kroetsch began to work on a novel about his experience on the Mackenzie River and in 1955 MacLean’s published his first story of note, “That Yellow Prairie Sky.” Kroetsch received his Ph.D in 1961 for the unpublished novel “Coulee Hill,” and from 1961 until 1978 he was on the faculty in the English Department at the State University of New York at Binghamton. In 1962 he returned briefly to the Mackenzie to research on But We Are Exiles, published in 1965 when he was in his late thirties. Primarily a novelist in these first years, Kroetsch next published his “Out West” series of three interrelated novels: The Worlds of My Roaring (1966), Alberta (1968) his

In the seventies and eighties, Kroetsch also emerged as an important poet, working chiefly with the long poem, *The Stone Hammer poems* 1975, collects his earlier, shorter, poems. *The Ledger* 1975, and *Seed Catalogue* 1977, attracted special interest for his creation of a palimpsest, in which his poem is super imposed onto found documents of an earlier era. His writing goes far beyond the unexpected and it offers a mythopoeia vision that is partly periodic and partly metonymic. Thus, his writing results a generative unfolding rather than immobilizing surrender to the givens of a particular story.

### 1.1 Postmodernism

Postmodernism has no definitive answer as Robert Kroetsch says, “a version of story” (Newman and wilson30) Many definitions of postmodernism have emerged as there are minds! Hence, postmodernism can be viewed as a cultural discourse that attempts to dismantle cultural constructs thus paving way for reconstruction of thought, ideas and culture itself. Postmodernism expresses a distrust of all totalizing power structures, to use Lytords’s term *grand narratives*. In fact the prominent cultural periodization which begins with realism in nineteenth century and continues in twentieth century modernism and finally ends with contemporary postmodernism is not accepted by Lyotard. In “answering the question; what is postmodernism?” (Lyotard 110) he argues that a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Thus postmodernism is not modernism at its end, but in a nascent state and this state
is recurrent. In other words, postmodern does not replace a worn out modernity, but recurs through modernity as a nascent state of modernism that is in transformation. On the other hand, Frederic Jameson calls postmodernism “the cultural logic of late capitalism” while Jean- Francois Lyotard names it, “the period of incredulity toward metanarratives”. Interestingly, Jean Baudrillard refers to postmodern society as Hyperreal society. Steven Conner in *Cambridge companion to postmodernism* is more appropriate when he argues that Fredric Jameson once amused himself and his readers with a diagram that permuted the ways in which being pro- or anti- modernism could be combined with being pro- or anti- postmodernist. Therefore, one might adopt his strategy and permutate the possibilities according to which the credence and approval accorded to the idea of the postmodern can be combined. A fine distinction is made between modernism and postmodernism by Ilhab Hassan, one of the postmodern theorists, who sheds light on the most general characteristics of postmodernism (qtd. in Powell, 17)

This dissertation attempts to examine how the construction of postmodernism is done in the Canadian context vis-à-vis the oeuvre of Roberst Kroetsch who is viewed as “Mr.Canadian Postmodern” (Hutcheon Canadian postmodernism 160). In his works Robert Kroetschhas a dual objective- one, describing some of the chief characteristics of postmodernism and two, examining the relevance of the postmodernist discourse in the context of Canadian culture.

1.2 Canadian Postmodernism

"When I say I can't believe in truth, it doesn't mean I believe in nothing,...

I guess against the idea of truth. I would posit the idea of play or game (Robert Kroetsch, in Newman” (1981:237-38),"
Although the term ‘Postmodern’ is elusive, of late, both French and English Canadian literary theorists have made a concerted effort to define it. This study has exclusively made use of only those writings which have responded in some tangible way to the works of Robert Kroetsch like, “Future Indicative symposium,” the 1988 Learned Societies Conference, Frank Davey's Canadian Reading (1988) and Linda Hutcheon's books on Postmodernism A Poetics of Postmodernism(1988), The Canadian Postmodernism (1988) and Politics of Postmodernism (1989) as well as various works on individual authors like Lecker's Readings of Robert Kroetsch and Stephen Scobie's Collection Signature, Event, Context (1989).

One distinctive feature of Canadian postmodernism seems to be the loosening of genre distinction between fiction and criticism. Linda Hutcheon points out. “[W]e have Robert Kroetch's novels and poetry, but we also have his interviews, his own criticism, and his unorthodox essays that challenge the borders of genre and of traditional academic argument.” (pp. 13). Other creative writers involved who try to connect postmodernism with criticism and theory are George Bowering, Frank Davey and Stephen Scobie who emphasize on the different aspects of postmodernism. Bowring's predominantly literary interest is in 'The Relationships Between Language, Writing And Literature" (Bowring in Moss; 1987: 242) while Davey is “arguing not so much for a literary as for a sociological postmodernism” (Davey; 1988, 108) On the other hand, Kroetsch claims that "criticism is really a version of story" (in Newman and Wilson, 1982: 70). In the work of other critics and theorists such as Linda Hutcheon, Robert Lecker, Stan Fogel, Robert Wilson, Brian Edeards, Susan Rudy "Dorscht, and a non-Canadian critic Walter pache, the following "characteristics of Canadian postmodernism” emerge:

1. A paradoxical simultaneous asserting.
2. Subverting of traditional literary and cultural conventions and values

3. Preference for multiplicity and fragmentation

4. Discontinuity over the modernist preference for unity, order and wholeness.

5. Inter-textuality, Meta-fiction, Historiographic Meta-fiction, Techno-culture and Hyper reality, Faction, Minimalism, Magical realism, Space, Participation, Traces and Re-presentation.

According to these postmodern writers, these paradoxical themes or method and these postmodernist preferences drastically disturb traditional values, conventions and modes of thought. Challenging and subverting the patriarchal control, these writers help one in re-examining the existing social, political and cultural interaction with one another.

A lucid description of the term postmodernism is given by the Canadian critic Robert Wilson. In his article entitled "National Frontiers and International Movements" Wilson says that postmodernism in its application to literature exhibits:

Self-consciousness or reflexivity, a putting of the conventions of writing into the foreground of the text, a disregard for conventional forms of writing perhaps an even greater disregard for conventional expectations of readers, a delight in puzzles, riddles, aporia of all types, a continuous breaking down of barriers, .... kinds of discourse and genres. In a word postmodernism seems to be highly intelligent, rather disrespectful, even nose thumbing, innovative and (above all) playful (51).

Unlike Robert Wilson, Critics like Gerald Graff feel that postmodern fiction "simply carries to its logical and questionable extremes the anti-rationalist, anti-realist, and bourgeois program of modernism defined itself and against". 
Commenting on this aspect of postmodern fiction, Linda Hutcheon claims, postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts the very concepts and it challenges, Kroetsch also highlights a similar notion. Kroetsch is very clear when he opines that if one has entered the world where possibilities not only co-exist but contradict in, "Where thesis inspires antithesis. Where day and night of chapter one become the night and darkness of chapter two, when the blind see and the seeing are fooled, not only by the trickster and each other but by seeing "(Kroetsch, Bessai 1978, 1982 : 177).

The Thesis attemptsto demonstrate how these traditional patterns of thought are unwittingly reaffirmed by these preferences and practices vis-à-vis the prose and theories of Robert Kroetsch who perhaps has emerged as the ultimate of Canadian postmodernism. Because of his extensive criticism on Canadian literature and his postmodern creative writing, many critics and theorists regard him as the guiding force behind Canadian postmodernism.

### 1.3 Situating Robert Kroetsch in Canadian Postmodernism

Robert Kroetsch’s colleagues have considered him to be at the cutting edge of postmodernism in all aspects of his work. In 1972, he and William Spanos founded the influential critical journal “Boundary 2”, A Journal of post-modern literature. According to Robert Lecker, Kroetsch, "attempts to defy the tyranny of narrative, and explains his involvement or co-edits of a journal of postmodern aesthetics significantly entitled Boundary2” (Lecker, 1986; 12). Linda Hutcheon also alludes to his postmodernist, attempt to defy "the tyranny of narrative", telling how the editing contradicted Kroetsch's constant desire to combat ordering impulses”. She assesses Kroetsch as the motivating force behind Canadian postmodernism "In many ways it is probably redundant to call Robert Kroetsch a postmodernist; he is Mr. Canadian
Postmodern" (1988:160). Therefore, in the Introduction to *The Canadian Postmodern*, the chapters in which she defines postmodernism, she quotes Koetsch extensively and briefly discusses some of his novels as examples of postmodern works.

The Four major postmodern contents used in Robert Kroetsch's writings are

1. Meta – Narrative
2. Quest - narrative
3. Subversive identity
4. Amplification or Resistance to closure

1.3.1 Meta-narrative

In an essay "Disunity as Unity: A Canadian Strategy" like Kroetsch explains 'Meta-narrative' as concerns with the narrative itself, "The shared story has traditionally been basic to nationhood. As a writer I'm interested in these assumed stories what I call Meta-narratives. It may be that the writing of particular narratives, within a culture, is dependent on these Meta-narratives." Kroetsch defines a Meta-narrative as a kind of archaeological art that succeeds against the traditional narrative. His writing and criticism reveals that he is against ‘totalizing Centre and the coherent narrative’.

His meta-narrative structure is nothing but multilayered and abounds in the use of mythological fragments with reference to the myths and stories of the Canadian past and present, which takes the form of uncovering, revealing a new layer of meaning under the surface story. Apart from layer, the archeological technique allows for the existence of fragments, the interrelationships of which expand the meaning of the main narrative by means of imaginative speculation.
Kroetsch states, a postmodern mind asserts the fragmented margin, the archeological sense that "Every unearthing is problematic, tentative, subject to a story making act that is itself subject to further changes as the "dig" goes "on". In “The Crow Journals,” Robert Kroetsch explains "the text beneath the text, as in Gone Indian, is at the root of our Canadian writing”. Thus the use of meta-narratives is a typical Canadian strategy and the phenomenon is reflected in Gone Indian by parodying and exploding the surface narrative.

1.3.2 Quest narrative

Kroetsch problematizes the Canadian quest problematic in the quest-narratives of his protagonists. All his protagonists are questers and the quest is actually or figuratively always in terms of and with reference to the idea of self-assertion and self-actualization. However, his narratives do not posit resolutions of the narrative quests with in a prophetic vision of closure. Instead his narratives leave a sense of endless trace.

1.3.3 Subversive Identity

Frank Davey’s notion of Identity very much relates to Kroetsch's notion of subversive identity. In Frank Davey’s opinion, the heterogeneous and multi-cultural mix of Canadian society, disallows a centred Canadian Identity. For Kroetsch, therefore the Canadian monolithic notion of Identity and reality is questionable and untenable. This enforces logicality and coherence and he believes the differences in culture that can neither be denied nor inscribed within the generic label 'Canadian.'

For Kroetsch, in fact, Canada is an apt site for postmodernism which, as against the totalizing and homogenizing impulses of modernism, acknowledges and encourages the idea of plurality. As Shirley Newman and Robert Wilson note, Kroetsch "Prefers multiplicity and fragmentation to unities; the voices of Bable to the
prophetic voice” (New Man XI) and in so doing expresses his postmodern impulses. Contestual discourse on identity, as Kroetsch says "The fiction makes us real" (Neuman: 34). In the Studhorse Man, for instance, Demeter Proud foot, the naked man narrator, ostensibly attempts to write Hazard Leapage's biography, but ends up eventually fabricating an identity for himself. In Gone Indian, Mark Madham de-creates himself in his professed recreation of Jeremy's story. In Badlands, similarly, Anna Dawe's narrative of William Dawe's quest becomes the narrative of Anna's own quest for Identity. Thus in each of these novels, it is the fiction and fabrications of the narrators that make them real.

1.3.4 Amplification or Resistance to closure

Kroetsch's narratives leave a sense of endlessness and "endless beginning" (Kroetsch, 1982: 44). He provides no definitive predictions of logical endings and thus repudiates the humanist, modernist notions of logicality. Coherence and closure, the lived-reality, he knows, falsifies such givens. As Frank Davey says, "The classical artistic concept of the totally integrated whole has no incarnation in a sensory reality that is everywhere fragmented, discontinuous, post-logical" (Davey 1975:20). Kroetsch therefore wants the reader to "Un-learn concepts of character, of motivation of plot and ending" (Bessai and Kroetsch 210). Into post-logical postmodern fictive structures, he finds an apt metaphor for the Canadian predicament because the Canadians are, as he says "a very open structure" as they "don't have this history of self or what it means to be a Canadian".

There is amplification of the opening and close, for as mentioned early, they are of several playing on the idea of growth and making up a principle in the work, others being amplification too is characteristic of the imagery. Rather what we see is what we get or, more precisely, what we get again and again. The mode is
postmodern. That means repeating the message in different ways. Resistance to closure is the dominant feature of postmodern thought. This resistance in Kroetsch's writing may be seen not only in such formal elements as abrupt shifts of subject and style and the absence of a rounded ending, but also in contradiction. For Kroetsch, thus, the Canadian quest for identity becomes one of discovering the form that can best express the dilemma.

1.4 Literature Survey

There are approximately more than hundred journals, books, articles, essays and research works which have examined and described Kroetsch and his works. Interestingly, many researchers have attempted to prove Kroetsch as a postmodern writer.

The primary aim of this study is to demonstrate how these traditional patterns of thought unwittingly are reaffirmed by such preferences and practices and how the writings of Robert Kroetsch are reflections of Canadian postmodernism. In Linda Hutcheon's words, Mr. Kroetsch is ‘Mr. Canadian post modernism.’ Because of his extensive research on Canadian literature and creative writing with postmodern slant, many critics and theorists regard him as the guiding force behind Canadian postmodernism. In this connection is the book-length interview *Labyrinth of Voice*, edited by Robert Lecker, Jack David, and Ellen Quigley which reads almost like the fiction of an interview. It organizes the conversations around four subjects: influence, game, myth and narration. There are autobiographical aspects to the book, as one gets a personal glimpse of Kroetsch: remembering the big farm of his childhood, the garden he grew, the death of his mother and so forth. There are also regional aspects, as Kroetsch speaks of the significance of western geography. Most notable are the ways in which the book demonstrates its underlying postmodernist posit. On a
number of occasion, Kroetsch describes his belief in challenging his readers, keeping them off-balance and making them work (or play, as in game theory) hard.

*Women reading Kroetsch* written by Susan Rudy Dorscht discusses the feminist theory of subjectivity in Kroetsch’s works and the implications for the female subject of the Post-Structuralist theory which Kroetsch has been instrumental in introducing into the Canadian intellectual community. Susan attempts to bring together the agenda of liberal feminism with the intellectual context of French poststructuralist theory. She attempts to show how readers are, like the texts we read, shaped by discourses of one’s culture and how one is able to speak and effect change—how we a reader is both subject and an agent—becomes essential to account for the changes that feminism has brought about, including the changes in wo/men’s her thinking that have arisen as a result of research.

*The Old Dualities* by Dianne Tifensee, attempts to provide an explication of Derridean deconstruction and a demonstration of its relevance with regard to critiquing the philosophical presuppositions that underlie Robert Kroetsch’s postmodern literary theory—the postmodern asserting—subverting and these postmodern preferences do not significantly challenge the hegemony that their practitioners would subvert; rather, they serve to reinforce, in a more subtle and more complicated way than do modernist practices and preferences, the very attitudes and modes of thought the postmodern would contest. Dianne reaffirms that it is not only the modes of thought by which hegemony operates but also the values, prejudices, and violence that are part and parcel of those familiar and largely unexamined thought patterns in Kroetsch’s writings that are crucial to view Kroetsch as a Canadian Postmodern.
Another important essay is “Telling/ Making up The Canadian Story: Robert Kroetsch” which revises concerns with the recovery of cultural/national identity in Kroetsch’s writings. It brings out the desire and harmony, posits a vision wherein all binary oppositions are reconciled and united or are contained in a transcendental vision that coalesces the opposites. Thus, peace and violence, whites and Indians, past and present, these and such other dualities, at the end of his novels, are subsumed by a prophetic vision that points towards a resolution of the binary oppositions and an end of the dualities and dichotomies. He stresses that Robert Kroetsch consciously rejects notions of end and closure in his novels.

Dorothy Seaton’s essay “The Post-Colonial as Deconstruction” defines the post-colonial effort of rewriting the strange land. Being a specific discourse of the land, it exhibits the initial, irrevocable, and all affecting assumption of difference, deferral and resistance that is associated with any discourse on Space. The essay generates a counter discursive strategy, unlike the deconstructive, entirely rejects the possibility of achieving a “correct” or appropriate” rendering of the land, whether imperial or post-colonial, and it embraces instead the endless strangeness of both land and discourse, interrogating the very capacity of discourse to constitute the land.

But the first really substantial exposition of Kroetsch’s developing control of narrative form came with a piece by Morton L. Ross, “Robert Kroetsch and his novels,” in Writers of The Prairies. Ross argues that problems of language and storytelling has grown more pressing and insistent with each of Kroetsch’s three novels to date, and that the Studhorse Man was “a parable” of his struggle with that problem. It marks, writes Ross, “a shift in his interest from a mimetic to an expressive theory of art in which the experiencing consciousness is of more concern than that which is experienced.”
Serious critical appraisal of Kroetsch’s writing begins with W.H. New who went on to devote two sections of his articulating west: “Essays on Purpose and Form in Modern Canadian Literature an Account of The Studhorse man,” in which he reasserted Kroetsch’s tendency to parody or undercut the epic or other literary conventions used in the novel. He defines Kroetsch’s interest in the narrative and the narrative theory. Nivedita Majumdar’s “Can the Woman Speak? A Reading of Ross, Kroetsch and Atwood” is intertwined with feminist concerns of oppression, representation and resistance by addressing the central postmodern concerns of authenticity and representation. She asserts that a dominant strain within the postmodern school holds that there is a need for history of the oppressed by the oppressed.

Robert Lecker’s Robert Kroetsch (1989) a book and a complete work on Kroetsch’s writings perhaps is the best secondary source to understand Robert Kroetsch the man and the artist. The work explains the corporeal texture of ethnicities, costume, performance and other modes of self-styling representation of identities illustrating the political importance of crossing boundaries, of traversing the limits whereby identity gets conventionally fixed. On the other hand Catherine Bate’s “Messing with The Archive: Back Doors, Rubbish and Traces in Robert Kroetsch’s Writings,” reviews the mixing of citation. she suggests that, Kroetsch, as elsewhere, strives productively for an exchange of ideas between several parts of his powerful personality, the academic, the poet, the prairie bullshit artist, the lover, the preserver, the material details of the intimate and the familiar. In the process of this anatomization, Kroetsch’s not only asserts his powerful presence as an author and individual, but also his enjoyment of the “bullshit” and the importance he places on the material and the familiar. The different part of Kroetsch’s personality becomes, to
a certain extent, a separate, alternative personality, reflecting the multifacets of Kroetsch’s personality.

Rama Kundu’s *Great Resonance: Kroetsch’s use of Myth* compares Robert Kroetsch with Linda Hutcheon and other Canadian postmodernists. This work is a chronological study of Kroetsch’s novels, a progression towards multiplicity, particularly with regard to the use of myths and mythological systems. Rama Kundu also notes in an interview of Kroetsch by an unknown interviewer where, Kroetsch states, “Behind us is no one culture, but ten cultures or fifteen cultures. I think I hit on these multiplicities” (1982:116). Aritha Van Herk in an essay “Space and Landscape in Robert Kroetsch’s Fiction” communicates the juxtaposition of the actual and the documented experiences of Kroetsch and the intimate relationship between language and place, which provides a literary map. Rudy Wiebe’s Article “The Home Triptych via modernism and Post Modernism: Naipaul and Kroetsch” defines the characteristics of commonwealth literature, Home and its environs. ‘Home place’ in the phrase of Canadian writer Robert Kroetsch “traditionally featured in literature as emblems of security and identity for author or characters.” He claims that Home may be an ideal, but it is scarcely idealized. He finds the home place similarly represented as ideal, as and less than ideal, and in this broad sense, there is little departure from continuities. In Rudy Wiebe’s views, Kroetsch’s writings scarcely have an European equivalent, representing and abandoning of one culture, usually that of the ‘old world’ and an imposition on another, often deemed that of a ‘New world’. He agrees that, home place compels writers to sense the problematic vis-a-vis ‘belonging’ and ‘place’.

This Research highlights how this present work is different from the existing other research works on Kroetsch's. They are:
The present study goes beyond the “isms” and concentrates on a holistic study of Kroetsch’s writings through a close reading of some of his seminal works.

The Thesis attempts to criticize Rudy Wiebe’s notion of "produce" and it proves that 'produce' can be as new as our own thought. The fact is, ignored thoughts and things have to be investigated clearly. This is not the problem of 'produce' but the problem of the fashion in which one views or 'understands vis-à-vis the works of Robert Kroetsch

The Dissertation argues that Kroetsch's writings depict the "Multiplication' of all these. But the "formulas" are different to solve the problem of frustrated thoughts.

The theoretical basis for this study traces the linear development of the revolution that has taken place in the conception of language and its effects on literature and criticism from Aristotle to the present age. The Dissertation brings out the differences and similarities in comprehending the meaning in a literary work and tries to derive relevant tools and concepts for the discussion of Kroetsch novels.

The methodology used for the study at the outset is an objective textual analysis and Close Reading method followed by the application of Postmodern theories of Lyotard, Baudrillard, Jameson, Linda Hutcheon to mention a few followed by psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, Subjectivity theories and so forth. Cultural and Sociological Theoretical posits of Max Weber, Mary Douglas and Raymond Williams’ perspectives are applied in the thesis depending on the contextual and thematic exegesis.
The first chapter titled “Introduction” provides a general background to the origin and development of the twentieth century Canadian Novels. Care is being taken to examine the freshness in Thematic Preoccupations, and Innovation in Narrative Techniques. The role of Robert Kroetsch in Canadian fiction and his contribution to the Canadian postmodernism is discussed. Relevant key terms, theme of immigrant writings and the concept of Kroetsch’s writings are deliberated.

**Chapter II: The Grounding of the Self and the Subject**

This chapter introduces the multiple perspective and conception of the Self and the Subject from Aristotle to recent theorists like Freud, Lacan, Foucault, Stuart Hall, Derrida, Saussure, Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Lyotard, and so-on to demonstrate the ways in which the Subject is implicated and linked to other subjects, general truths and shared principles. The issues of the Subject in Robert Kroetsch’s novels indicate that there is no one transcendental meaning from Subjects vis-à-vis their referents. Kroetsch’s Subject enables the question of who “am I” to be brought into focus, and subjected to analysis, question and critique without which cultural studies cannot exist or proceed.


This chapter attempts to examine the various definitions of ‘Historiographic Metafiction’ and ‘postmodernism’, a concept that Linda Hutcheon and Robert Kroetsch accepted and practiced, throughout their writing career. According to Hutcheon, the study of Historiography in postmodernism is directed either on Literature, History, or Theory and is a narrative in all the three. ‘Historiographic Metafiction,’ therefore, is the best source for understanding postmodernism because it, “incorporates all three of these domains…. its theoretical self-awareness of history
and fiction as human constructs…. has made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past”. (Linda.p.p.5). In this chapter an attempt at re-discovering, re-assessing and re-investigating Kroetsch’s metafictional strategies is made to bring out the “contradictory doubleness: the intertexts of history and fiction that takes parallel status in parodic reworking of the textual past of both “world” and “literature.” (Poetics of postmodernism .124). Foucault and Kroetsch’s sense of textual past of the world means “tradition” (Archaeology of Knowledge.pp.23) with its attendant themes of sameness, permanence and origin. Foucault dismantles and breaks this order to “isolate the new against a (spurious) background of permanence” (Archaeology of Knowledge .25) and replaces the history of structured “ready-made syntheses” (Foucault.24) with a mere “population of dispreads events” (Foucault.24). For him the “linked, but opposite” (Foucault.27) ones of origin and the “already-said”, are both beyond the actual, specific, material statements of the historical archive toward the “real”( Foucault.27) but unexpressed ideas or sprit that underlie them. Foucault argues that to illustrate the origin one should think like Aristotelian philosophy of ‘mere copies of the original’ these “divisions or groupings with which we have become so familiar,” (Foucault.24) like politics, philosophy, and literature have dispersed and the events and historical materials got divided up and spread out like a contingent “facts of discourse” (Foucault.25) or history become an evenly distributed fields of statements, with their own materiality beyond the text in an endless origin. These results and statements can be read and better understood only in its relation to other statements.

This paves way to make possible things that can be read in the field of related statement rather than the meaning. For Kroetsch, in tradition there is a sense of an “anxiety” and “temptation of meaning up on all the time” (Labyrinth of Voice.15) he
says the better we know the tradition “the better be viewing it as a kind of risk relationship” (Labyrinth of Voice.3) which never helps to retain the meaning or the originality but a “trace”. Tradition helps to play a “much more exciting game” (Labyrinth of Voice.8) in ruptures, breaks and fragmentation of history in the 20th century literary world. Intention is not to collapse distinction”, but to retain, “indeed celebrates difference” (linda 61). The open site suggests “back tracking’s… perhaps, a path to the center” at the center “it may contain the sign of itself, the double- bladed labyrinths, pointing back to what has been argued and forwarded to what might be argued”(Labyrinth of Voice.xii).thus the historiographic writings first installs and then “critically confronts” the new critical return” and their processes “grounds themselves”(Poetics of postmodernism.92).

For Kroetsch and Foucault The “textual past of literature” exist through the notion of “influence” (Foucault.24). This is the phenomena of “resemblance or repetition; which links, at a distance and through time… medium of propagation …make it possible to group a succession of dispersed events, to link them to one and the same organizing principle” (Foucault.24). It is a trace without “being definitive” (Neuman. Labyrinth of Voice.10). The concept of ‘influence’ has its inherent flaws. Therefore “the material individualization of the book, which occupies a determined space, which has an economic value… signs, the limits of its beginning and its end;… establishment of an œuvre… delimits … an author” (Foucault .25). Foucault dismantles an authorship or “œuvre” (Foucault .26) from the text because he is a sign attached to the text but signifies something else. They say the idea of an “œuvre” (Foucault.26) depends on the imagination of a certain “expressive function,” (Foucault .27) a process that is highly variable. Thus the “secret origin” (Foucault.27) that precedes it, “an ever –receding point that is never itself present in
any history.” (Foucault.27) but actual statements and “manifest discourse” (Foucault.27) to be expressions of a deeper, silent “already –said that makes statements possible. He suggests seeing the irruption and actual statements. He seeks to “grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence” (Foucault .30) as and when they occur. This allows us to target and critique the central problem of the human subject. This field of statement-events is the field of Foucault and Kroetsch’s investigation. They say those are not like the rules of linguistics or nor it aligned with the history of thought; rather the reason for occurrence.

Chapter IV: Identity, Women and the Canadian Prairies in *Badlands* (1975) and *Studhorse Man* (1969),

Kroetsch fiction not only offer a variety of representations of women and the feminine but also opens up questions of how women and the feminine are caught up in the literary and cultural processes of representations like presence/absence in *Badlands* and *The Studhorseman*. Though autobiographical studies shows the contradictions and paradoxes in Kroetsch’s association and attitudes to women, one of the interesting ways of narration traced in his writing is the post-modern as well as the colonial doctrine of female self –immolation, which suggests that Canadian indigenous,/ Indian/ native is oppressed and English women are the colonizers/oppressors/over- rulers.

Therefore the exploitation of indigene is entirely different from sexual oppression of an English woman. At the same time the tale of an English woman cannot be told in the absence of an Indian woman because they are the subjects and the Indian woman as her subaltern shadow as Kroetsch argues that an Indian woman “did not wait for the empty dishes but politely excused herself and slipped away into the shadows”(54 *Studhorseman*) Incidentally, Spivak’s focus is on the female
subaltern who has been traditionally doubly marginalized: “If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (“Can the Subaltern Speak?” 280). For Spivak indigene, were voiceless, doubly unheard under a colonial regime, “that women in formerly colonized societies were doubly colonized by both imperial and patriarchal ideologies” became an idiom of postcolonial and feminist discourses (Ashcroft, Griffiths, et al 250). Hence, the colonial and postmodern contemporary theories of female agency move parallel and the chapter argues that some models are appropriate for Indian women and some are in appropriate for English women as well.

Chapter V: Myth and Mythology in What the Crow Said (1978) and The Man from the Creeks (1980)

In this chapter how the emergence of postmodernist and post-colonial theories and ideas of Kroetsch have opened the door to renewed interest in the question of new world myth in the literatures of Canada is examined. As Linda Hutcheon notes the, “entire question of Canadian identity has become a kind of playground- or battlefield- for the postmodern as well as the post-colonial defining of ‘difference’ and value” (“Circling the Downspout of Empire,” pp.166). The complexities of these areas of investigation –identity, postmodernism, post-colonialism, and myth –form the basis of this chapter. The Chapter investigates the presence of new world myth in Kroetsch and other contemporary fictional works in Canadian literature. Although one of the issues for grounded in the three novels under consideration is the double problematic of myth and national identity. This study seeks to examine the various ways in which these contemporary fiction strive to destabilize the accepted workings of traditional myth like the quest myth, geographical myth and the relationship between myth and psychology.
Chapter VI: Sexuality, Presence/Absence in *But we are Exiles* (1965) *Alibi* (1983) and *Puppeteer* (1992)

In *Labyrinth of Voice* Kroetsch avers, “nothing to write about, that is what we have to write about” but “naming act in a radical sense” and he goes on to say that he is in “Adam’s position, with no beasts out there. We even have to invent the beasts. He at least could say that’s a cow, that’s a chicken.” (pp. 145). Kroetsch becomes disappointed because before he arrives on the scene, he finds his place already taken, already written and the field already occupied in, “I cannot be Adam early in the morning. There have been too many Adams, and they have named everything” (Bloom, *Anxiety*, pp.96). Therefore Kroetsch’s act of naming is something, he accepts, as a separation from it. The naming of objects separates him from them. For the acquisition of a name results in a thorough-going transformation of the position of the subject in his object world:

That a name, no matter how confused, designates a particular person—this is precisely what the passage to the human state consists in. If we must define that moment in which man becomes human, we would say that it is at that instant when, as minimally as you like, he enters into a symbolic relationship” (Jameson, “Imaginary” 18).

In other words, Kroetsch’s self becomes illusionary. It does not mean there is no self at all but he reserves the word ‘Self’ for one version of human being. Since the theorization of the relationship between signifier and signified, there has been a significant change in understanding and writing about literary works. Any literary work that claims to provide a direct or transcendental relationship between words and the world has been identified as nothing but an ideological entrapment. This awareness has led to a re-examination of various aspects of literary works and has
also initiated a new way of understanding the concept of identity. How the Character as a representation of a living being and thus possessive of a fixed identity is evasive and illusory is examined in the chapter. How Kroetsch reveals that Identity is not fixed and importance is given to writers who, in addition to creating this illusion, remind readers of characters' (as well as the written texts) constructed nature is discussed in the chapter.

**Chapter VII: Making Connections: Concluding Remarks.**

The thesis has attempted to demonstrate that Robert Kroetsch is emphatically a Canadian postmodernist and his fiction is generated through the temptation of silence, presence/absence, erotic tension, ambiguities, doubleness and language. In studying these aspects of Kroetsch’s fiction, one can come across certain cultural, psychological, historical and language codes in the form of self, discourse, gender identity, mythological conventions and grammar of signifying practices. The hanger between the text and the self-reflexivity enables one to reconstruct, and examine the Canadian multiplicity which emerges as double and fluid in Kroetsch’s fiction.

The Dissertation also attempts to answer the question of what precisely qualifies a novel to be considered postmodern. In what way Robert Kroetsch’s writings not only look for postmodern theory but also for posits that move beyond the postmodern, to delve into the present reality and provide a glimpse of the future. As Kroetsch’s Novels grapple with issues of Canadian identity through a wide range of non-realistic modes, self reflexive prose and Autobiographical elements, the study investigates and reveals the world-view that emanates from the novels of Robert Kroetsch, for change is the reality of life and reality cannot be grasped in totality, for we are all living in a world of flux.