

Deer, Glenn George. *Rhetoric, Ideology, and Authority: Narrative Strategies in Six Innovative Canadian Novels*. Thesis (PhD [English]), York University. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 1987. (Publication No. NL35790)

Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the relationship between narrative strategies (or rhetoric) and ideology in six innovative or experimental English-Canadian novels. The contemporary experimental novel has been noted for its revolutionary formal innovations and critics have often claimed that these formal innovations signify a critique of dominant ideologies or institutions of authority. The purpose of this study is not to construct a rigid typology or anatomy of experimental fiction, but to analyze the actual rhetorical strategies, the addresser-addressee levels or discourse relationships set up by an implied author, and to describe the nature of the relationship between rhetorical form and the propositions concerning authority that the authors try to persuade the reader to accept. Six novels covering the period from 1959 to 1985 have been selected for this study: Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* (1959), Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* (1966), Dave Godfrey's *The New Ancestors* (1970), Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands* (1975), George Bowering's *Burning Water* (1980), and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985).

Chapter One, "The Politics of Literary Innovation and Experiment," describes how the term experimental has been used by different generations of writers and critics to distinguish themselves from their predecessors as much as to denote innovations in fictional technique. The counter-ideological status of recent avant-garde and postmodern writing is examined from the perspectives of both the defenders of postmodern experiment and the detractors. An analysis of the actual addresser-addressee relations is proposed as the necessary pragmatic testing of the ideological claims of the defenders of fictional experiment. Chapters Two through Seven contain rhetorical and ideological analyses of the selected novels.