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### Abstract

*Bodies in the Library: The Murder of the 'Self' in Robert Kroetsch's Mystery Novels* considers how Kroetsch's allusions to the conventions of mystery/detective fiction allow him to humorously scrutinize the dogmas of contemporary critical theory.

Peter Thomas's 1980 biography saw evidence, in the "constant formal renewal" of Kroetsch's work, reflecting the author's notion that "the Death of the Novel might itself make a good story" (124). *Alibi* and *The Puppeteer*, which function as a dialogic pair of murder mysteries, reveal that the "Death of the Author" and the very idea of 'self' also makes a 'good story' – a narrative 'whodunit.'

*Alibi* offers a humorous recapitulation of poststructuralism's "Mystery of the Disappearing/presumed Dead Author-God," and of the failed relationship between authors and readers who 'relate' as adversaries, vying for control of meaning. *The Puppeteer* counters Barthes's notion that "the birth of the reader must be requited by the death of the Author" with the creation of a new kind of author/reader relationship.

The failed relationship of Dorf and Karen in *Alibi*, contrasted with mutual and loving support between Deemer and Maggie in *The Puppeteer*, thus serves as the basis for rethinking the nature of the 'murdered' Author and the vanishing subject. Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic 'self' proves an invaluable model, not only for reforming the concept of 'self' in both novels, but for moving towards an erotics of reading.