

Lent, Vanessa Louise. *In Visible Cities: Envisioning the Canadian Prairie City in Literature and Film*. Thesis (MA [English]), University of Manitoba. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 2005. (Publication No. MR08892)

Abstract

In my thesis I examine Robert Kroetsch's novel *The Studhorse Man* (1969), Aritha van Herk's novel *Restlessness* (1998), and Guy Maddin's film *The Saddest Music in the World* (2004) to determine how each work uses non-representational narrative strategies in order to reproduce the pedestrian experience of seeing the prairie city. In a tradition that is predominantly associated with rural landscapes, there is a struggle for artists who work outside of what has come to be known as "authentic" prairie symbols and themes: the empty and barren land, the farmer struggling with his fields, the lonely wife sequestered in her home. Such icons came to be established within the formative years of artistic development in the prairies. In literature, this movement is known as "prairie realism" and featured linear trajectories and narrative continuity. It was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that prairie literature began to react against these realist narrative forms and experiment with more fragmented, abstract forms that, instead of being based on linear trajectories, adopted spatial narrative constructions. Such spatialization abandons narrative continuity in order to more closely represent the mechanics of human perception. Instead of producing a mimetic *style* of narrative, which attempts to mirror the surface of the world resulting in a flat, one-dimensional plane, these artists produced a mimesis of *effect*, which attempts to mirror the workings of human consciousness resulting in a fragmented, multi-layered construction. Such a spatialization, I argue, allows artists to more easily enter into the urban prairie landscape because it effectively recreates the "imaginative reconstruction" the city's pedestrian must perform in order to make the "partial visibilities" of the cityscape comprehensible.