

Pane, Samuel Anthony. *Paper Dinosaurs: Field Notes as Finds in Robert Kroetsch's Badlands.* Thesis (PhD [English]), Université de Montréal. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 2009. (Publication No. NR60497)

Abstract

Paper Dinosaurs: Field Notes as Finds in Robert Kroetsch's Badlands revisits the 1975 postmodern novel about a fictionalized palaeontological expedition down Alberta's Red Deer River in light of recent calls for systematic investigation into the source materials of historiographic meta-fictions in anglophone Canadian literature. Inspired by John Livingston-Lowes' canonical dissection of the major poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, via the treasure trove of the Gutch Memorandum Book in *The Road to Xanadu*, this study undertakes a new process focused inquiry into the archive and into the documentary tradition. By excavating unpublished holograph materials from Quebec, Ontario, and Alberta repositories written by Geological Survey of Canada collectors, geologists, and palaeontologists, in addition to field-notes, research notes and diaries produced by Robert Kroetsch during the writing of *Badlands*, this critical examination reveals hitherto unseen strata underlying a particular work of fiction.

In most any palaeontological dig the removal of overburden from a target specimen often exposes surprising ancillary data, which through careful interpretation may give vital clues to palaeo-environments. A dinosaur skeleton is rarely pried whole from a sterile quarry. Neither is any inquiry into literary process. No text exists unto itself. Because Kroetsch so self-consciously crafted his narrative as an interrogation of history generation and transmission--specifically via the written word in the vehicle of field-notes--this study surveys a broad field encompassing inter-texts from antiquity, science, history, popular history, travel writing, Canadian and World literatures. Recourse is freely made to widely divergent authors and periods from Thomas Jefferson and the barrow mounds to Bruce Chatwin and his "brontosaurus" skin.

Of course no such inter-disciplinary enterprise can be exhaustive. Rather this project assembles a kind of literary cabinet of curiosities grouped around the principal specimen of Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands*. In their most reductive configuration, field notes are messages to posterity. Through three main themes this study explores how these messages may be conveyed: "*Saxa Loquuntur!*," so titled after Freud's archaeological analogy, investigates metaphors of stone speaking; "Good Jones" interrogates how taxonomy can be made to serve a bone collector's desire to be remembered; and finally "Box 16" follows a documentary trail into Kroetsch's papers to trace not only the construction of a novel but also notions of time and place, and authorship.