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Abstract

Robert Kroetsch does not, in his novels and poetry, pretend to mirror the world but on the contrary draws attention to the fact that the literary work is an invention, and that it creates its own world. I will argue that this narrative self-consciousness makes Kroetsch's work not only more intriguing but also more valuable. One of his ventral interests is the relation between the perceiving mind and the world it perceives; insofar as that world consists of other people, that relation is established by communication. Kroetsch's work presents some of the difficulties and successes of communication and community, especially in the context of contemporary Canadian writing.

In Chapter II will analyze the significance of the narrative voice in *The Words of My Roaring*. The novel demonstrates how difficult it may be for a speaker to express his thought accurately and honestly. It shows, as well, that a speaker's attempt to communicate may be frustrated by the conventions of his language, and that he may remain isolated.

Chapter II will extend the consideration of how one may use language to isolate himself. In *Gone Indian* the protagonist falls to establish and meaningful human relations, and is finally reduced to a state of solipsism.

Since communication depends to such a large extent on the conventions and assumptions of a community, I will turn in Chapter III to Kroetsch's analysis of some of the common ideas and values of modern civilization. Jeremy Sadness's failure in *Gone Indian* results partially from the failure of his culture to help him understand his life. In *Studhorse Man* Kroetsch presents his most sever criticism of modern values, showing that it is characteristic of our culture to affirm individualism and deny community.

It will be see from these arguments that Kroetsch is sensitive to two opposite claims – the individual needs a community and yet he may be stifled by it. In Chapter IV I will discuss *Badlands* and *The Ledger*. In both of these works, the protagonist imaginatively recreates past experience so as to understand his purpose in the present. Kroetsch shows that, although imaginative structures such as language may restrict both self-knowledge and knowledge of human community, they are also the best means of achieving that knowledge. The value of fiction and other products of the imagination is that they acknowledge themselves as a means and not as the end of understanding.