

Wilson, Mary Margaret. *Desiring Both/And: Canadian Narratives of Desire*. Thesis (MA [English]), University of Guelph. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 1995. (Publication No. MM00911)

Abstract

In Robert Kroetsch's "Fear of Women", and Aritha Van Herk's *Frozen Tongue*, these two authors argue that the common narrative of desire in Canadian fiction has been a phallogentric soliloquy. As a result, depictions of male-female love relationships have been held in stasis as unsatisfyingly hierarchical affiliations in which the male subject is stranded in lonely self-mediation, preoccupied with the will to power and possess; and women have been relegated to objects identified in terms of the male subject and rendered incapable of speaking as desiring subjects.

By drawing on the possibilities and limitations of contemporary literary theory, this thesis will critique and problematize both phallogentric narratives of desire and the desire for fictionalized utopian oppositions to ideological, cultural and social constructions of desire that hope to overcome obstacles to inter-subjective male-female relationships.

The introduction of this thesis will provide an operational definition of desire and will consider why and how phallogentric constructions of desire have affected representations of individual and social development in Canadian fiction. Chapter One is an analysis of the representations of male and female desires in Robert Kroetsch's *Alibi*. This chapter argues that the author's postmodern narrative techniques reveal the inequities and contradictions experienced by men and women who strive to shape an identity in relation to phallogentric constructions of desire. Chapter Two studies Aritha van Herk's *No Fixed Address: An Amorous Journey*. This thesis proposes that van Herk's novel functions as a periodic critique of the binary constitution of male desire, difference and privilege. *No Fixed Address* draws attention to the manner in which male hegemony is sustained. Van Herk's novel demystifies and denaturalizes the Oedipal narrative of desire and the imbrication of that narrative in contemporary literary practice. (Abstract shortened by UMI.)