

Biographical Note

Robert Kroetsch (1927–2011) remains a figure of major influence in Canadian literature, due to his deep and enduring engagements in both the creative process and the literary community. His accolades include a Governor General's Award for Fiction, in 1969, in recognition of his novel *The Studhorse Man*. He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2004 and received a Golden Pen Lifetime Achievement Award from the Writers Guild of Alberta in 2011. Kroetsch is well remembered as a poet, novelist, and critic with an impressive corpus of texts to his credit. He is perhaps most cited for theorizing a uniquely Canadian postmodern inheritance, imagination, and literary approach. In a disjunction typical of his often defiant and always errant intellectual style, Kroetsch developed his rich perspective on the postmodern literary ethos and its applicability to Canada while teaching in the English department of SUNY Binghamton in New York State. The author's rich legacy as a literary critic and artist is matched by the memories of those who knew him as a mentor, professor, and editor. Kroetsch's academic work brought him widespread attention from North American and international thinkers.

Such a range of achievement would not have seemed predictable to many members of his original community, although they reportedly found his bookishness conspicuous. Kroetsch was born in a homesteader's shack near the village of Heisler, southeast of Edmonton, Alberta. During his rural formative years, country-and-western songs, frontier tall tales, and an elusive Cree and Blackfoot cultural mythos were his key literary influences. Only as an adult did he find his footing as a creative writer, after his undergraduate education in English and Philosophy at the University of Alberta, after the time he spent as a labourer in the northern territories, after a master's program at Middlebury College in Vermont, and after his doctoral program in Creative Writing at the University of Iowa. Only then, in 1961, in his mid-thirties, did Kroetsch's notable output as a writer begin

in earnest. By then he was installed at SUNY Binghamton and had been exposed to an exciting array of creative and critical writers. Ten years later, still at Binghamton, he would launch a seminal publication in collaboration with an iconoclast of American Empire, Dr. William Spanos. Their journal, *boundary 2*, laid the groundwork for a strictly North American interpretation of the international postmodern movement. That journal continues to issue numbers to this day (2019), long after the founders ceased their involvement.

Kroetsch's time with the journal he co-edited ended in the late 1970s, when he returned to Canada following two decades in the United States. After brief periods working in Calgary and Lethbridge, he taught in the English Department at the University of Manitoba until 1995. He spent his retirement years first on Vancouver Island and subsequently at Leduc, Alberta. The author's writings continued to appear throughout the early part of the twenty-first century, always vacillating between poetic, fictional, and critical modes, often developing a signature hybridity of form and style. In 2011, Robert Kroetsch was killed in a car accident at the age of eighty-four, while travelling home from a professional engagement in the Rocky Mountains to his home on the prairie.