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Review of *The Margin Speaks: A Study of Margaret Laurence and Robert Kroetsch from a Post-Colonial Point of View* By Gunilla Florby

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The Margin Speaks: A Study of Margaret Laurence and Robert Kroetsch from a Post-Colonial Point of View. By Gunilla Florby. Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1997. Works cited, index. 252 pp. 132 Svenska Kroner.

Between the literatures of "First World" nations like the United States and the literatures of "Third World" nations like those in the Caribbean lie those of the "Second World." These are countries, like Canada and Australia, often glibly defined as having "First World" standards of living but "Third World" political clout and frequently ignored on the world stage. As Margaret Atwood noted wryly in a conversation with Victor Levy-Beaulieu, "it was said that Canadian literature didn't exist, that Canadian identity didn't exist, but when you wrote a novel, the Americans and the British said, 'This is too Canadian for us.'"

Literature departments reflect this paradoxical situation: beefing up the number of courses devoted to "postcolonial" and "post-modern" texts but seldom including the study of literatures of "settler" colonies like Canada. Indeed, the question of how to categorize such literature—as postcolonial, imperial, or a third thing altogether—remains hotly contested among literary scholars. Gunilla Florby, in a well-written and cogent discussion, suggests that at least two Canadian writers, Robert Kroetsch and Margaret Laurence, deserve to be considered from a postcolonial perspective. She argues persuasively that while Canada has not experienced the worst kinds of colonial conditions, it continues to be dominated to this day by three different empires—French, British, and American. She further demon-

strates that Canadian writers use the same forms of resistance as do other writers whose works are more easily identifiable as post-colonial.

Although the two writers seem an unlikely pairing—Laurence being primarily a realist, Kroetsch a postmodernist—Florby finds common ground based on their status as writers from a peripheral, rather than a central, nation. She sees Laurence and Kroetsch as twice removed from the center, first as Canadians on the edge of the Anglo-American empire, and then as regional prairie writers far from the Canadian center of power in Ontario. In prose refreshingly free of the most abstruse forms of literary jargon, she shows how the novels in each writer's body of work exemplify the kinds of cultural resistance found in postcolonial writing (and also evident in much of the literature written in Canada since the 1960s). Supporting her close readings with extensive and useful citations from other scholars, Florby offers a convincing case that these disparate writers' common desire to express a distinct Canadian ethos unites them within the postcolonial framework claimed, for the most part, by nations quite unlike their own.

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