

Building Bridges in Contemporary English-Canadian Literature

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In accordance with the topic of the forum, my talk will show how the building of bridges and the breaking of barriers has been a major theme in contemporary Canadian literature. I shall concentrate on four areas: first, the bridging of global cultures and spaces in Canadian multi- and transcultural writing especially since the 1980s; secondly, the building of bridges between communities within Canada, like for example Canadians of European extraction and recent immigrants from Non-European source countries, and First Nations peoples and the non-indigenous. Thirdly, I shall investigate how literature has connected individual regions and the whole of Canada. Last, but not least, I will discuss the ways in which contemporary historical fiction has shown how present-day Canada has been shaped by its history, thereby bridging the country's past and present. My examples are works by M. G. Vassanji, Michael Ondaatje, Rohinton Mistry, Dionne Brand, Tomson Highway, Alice Munro and recent novels dealing with Canadian experiences of the First World War.